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THE CROSSING

By Winston Churchill

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AFTERWORD

THE CROSSING

BOOK I

THE BORDERLAND

CHAPTER I

THE BLUE WALL

I was born under the Blue Ridge, and under that side which is blue in the evening light, in a wild land of game and forest and rushing waters. There, on the borders of a creek that runs into the Yadkin River, in a cabin that was chinked with red mud, I came into the world a subject of King George the Third, in that part of his realm known as the province of North Carolina.

The cabin reeked of corn-pone and bacon, and the odor of pelts. It had two shakedowns, on one of which I slept under a bearskin. A rough stone chimney was reared outside, and the fireplace was as long as my father was tall. There was a crane in it, and a bake kettle; and over it great buckhorns held my father's rifle when it was not in use. On other horns hung jerked bear's meat and venison hams, and gourds for drinking cups, and bags of seed, and my father's best hunting shirt; also, in a neglected corner, several articles of woman's attire from pegs. These once belonged to my mother. Among them was a gown of silk, of a fine, faded pattern, over which I was wont to speculate. The women at the Cross-Roads, twelve miles away, were dressed in coarse butternut wool and huge sunbonnets. But when I questioned my father on these matters he would give me no answers.

My father was—how shall I say what he was? To this day I can only surmise many things of him. He was a Scotchman born, and I know now that he had a slight Scotch accent. At the time of which I write, my early childhood, he was a frontiersman and hunter. I can see him now, with his hunting shirt and leggings and moccasins; his powder horn, engraved with wondrous scenes; his bullet pouch and tomahawk and hunting knife. He was a tall, lean man with a strange, sad face. And he talked little save when he drank too many "horns," as they were called in that country. These lapses of my father's were a perpetual source of wonder to me,—and, I must say, of delight. They occurred only when a passing traveller who hit his fancy chanced that way, or, what was almost as rare, a neighbor. Many a winter night I have lain awake under the skins, listening to a flow of language that held me spellbound, though I understood scarce a word of it.

> "Virtuous and vicious every man must be,
> Few in the extreme, but all in a degree."

The chance neighbor or traveller was no less struck with wonder. And many the time have I heard the query, at the Cross-Roads and elsewhere, "Whar Alec Trimble got his larnin'?"

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The truth is, my father was an object of suspicion to the frontiersmen. Even as a child I knew this, and resented it. He had brought me up in solitude, and I was old for my age, learned in some things far beyond my years, and ignorant of others I should have known. I loved the man passionately. In the long winter evenings, when the howl of wolves and "painters" rose as the wind lulled, he taught me to read from the Bible and the "Pilgrim's Progress." I can see his long, slim fingers on the page. They seemed but ill fitted for the life he led.

The love of rhythmic language was somehow born into me, and many's the time I have held watch in the cabin day and night while my father was away on his hunts, spelling out the verses that have since become part of my life.

As I grew older I went with him into the mountains, often on his back; and spent the nights in open camp with my little moccasins drying at the blaze. So I learned to skin a bear, and fleece off the fat for oil with my hunting knife; and cure a deerskin and follow a trail. At seven I even shot the long rifle, with a rest. I learned to endure cold and hunger and fatigue and to walk in silence over the mountains, my father never saying a word for days at a spell. And often, when he opened his mouth, it would be to recite a verse of Pope's in a way that moved me strangely. For a poem is not a poem unless it be well spoken.

In the hot days of summer, over against the dark forest the bright green of our little patch of Indian corn rippled in the wind. And towards night I would often sit watching the deep blue of the mountain wall and dream of the mysteries of the land that lay beyond. And by chance, one evening as I sat thus, my father reading in the twilight, a man stood before us. So silently had he come up the path leading from the brook that we had not heard him. Presently my father looked up from his book, but did not rise. As for me, I had been staring for some time in astonishment, for he was a better-looking man than I had ever seen. He wore a deerskin hunting shirt dyed black, but, in place of a coonskin cap with the tail hanging down, a hat. His long rifle rested on the ground, and he held a roan horse by the bridle.

"Howdy, neighbor?" said he.

I recall a fear that my father would not fancy him. In such cases he would give a stranger food, and leave him to himself. My father's whims were past understanding. But he got up.

"Good evening," said he.

The visitor looked a little surprised, as I had seen many do, at my father's accent.

"Neighbor," said he, "kin you keep me over night?"

“Come in,” said my father.

We sat down to our supper of corn and beans and venison, of all of which our guest ate sparingly. He, too, was a silent man, and scarcely a word was spoken during the meal. Several times he looked at me with such a kindly expression in his blue eyes, a trace of a smile around his broad mouth, that I wished he might stay with us always. But once, when my father said something about Indians, the eyes grew hard as flint. It was then I remarked, with a boy’s wonder, that despite his dark hair he had yellow eyebrows.

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After supper the two men sat on the log step, while I set about the task of skinning the deer my father had shot that day. Presently I felt a heavy hand on my shoulder.

“What’s your name, lad?” he said.

I told him Davy.

“Davy, I’ll larn ye a trick worth a little time,” said he, whipping out a knife. In a trice the red carcass hung between the forked stakes, while I stood with my mouth open. He turned to me and laughed gently.

“Some day you’ll cross the mountains and skin twenty of an evening,” he said. “Ye’ll make a woodsman sure. You’ve got the eye, and the hand.”

This little piece of praise from him made me hot all over.

“Game rare?” said he to my father.

“None sae good, now,” said my father.

“I reckon not. My cabin’s on Beaver Creek some forty mile above, and game’s going there, too.”

“Settlements,” said my father. But presently, after a few whiffs of his pipe, he added, “I hear fine things of this land across the mountains, that the Indians call the Dark and Bluidy Ground.”

“And well named,” said the stranger.

“But a brave country,” said my father, “and all tramped down with game. I hear that Daniel Boone and others have gone into it and come back with marvellous tales. They tell me Boone was there alone three months. He’s saething of a man. D’ye ken him?”

The ruddy face of the stranger grew ruddier still.

“My name’s Boone,” he said.

“What!” cried my father, “it wouldn’t be Daniel?”

“You’ve guessed it, I reckon.”

My father rose without a word, went into the cabin, and immediately reappeared with a flask and a couple of gourds, one of which he handed to our visitor.

“Tell me aboot it,” said he.

That was the fairy tale of my childhood. Far into the night I lay on the dewy grass listening to Mr. Boone's talk. It did not at first flow in a steady stream, for he was not a garrulous man, but my father's questions presently fired his enthusiasm. I recall but little of it, being so small a lad, but I crept closer and closer until I could touch this superior being who had been beyond the Wall. Marco Polo was no greater wonder to the Venetians than Boone to me.

He spoke of leaving wife and children, and setting out for the Unknown with other woodsmen. He told how, crossing over our blue western wall into a valley beyond, they found a "Warrior's Path" through a gap across another range, and so down into the fairest of promised lands. And as he talked he lost himself in the tale of it, and the very quality of his voice changed. He told of a land of wooded hill and pleasant vale, of clear water running over limestone down to the great river beyond, the Ohio—a land of glades, the fields of which were pied with flowers of wondrous beauty, where roamed the buffalo in countless thousands, where elk and deer abounded, and turkeys and feathered game, and bear in the tall brakes of cane. And, simply, he told how, when the others had left him, he stayed for three months roaming the hills alone with Nature herself.

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“But did you no’ meet the Indians?” asked my father.

“I seed one fishing on a log once,” said our visitor, laughing, “but he fell into the water. I reckon he was drowned.”

My father nodded comprehendingly,—even admiringly.

“And again!” said he.

“Wal,” said Mr. Boone, “we fell in with a war party of Shawnees going back to their lands north of the great river. The critters took away all we had. It was hard,” he added reflectively; “I had staked my fortune on the venter, and we’d got enough skins to make us rich. But, neighbor, there is land enough for you and me, as black and rich as Canaan.”

“‘The Lord is my shepherd,’” said my father, lapsing into verse. “’The Lord is my shepherd. I shall not want. He leadeth me into green pastures, and beside still waters.’”

For a time they were silent, each wrapped in his own thought, while the crickets chirped and the frogs sang. From the distant forest came the mournful hoot of an owl.

“And you are going back?” asked my father, presently.

“Aye, that I am. There are many families on the Yadkin below going, too. And you, neighbor, you might come with us. Davy is the boy that would thrive in that country.”

My father did not answer. It was late indeed when we lay down to rest, and the night I spent between waking and dreaming of the wonderland beyond the mountains, hoping against hope that my father would go. The sun was just flooding the slopes when our guest arose to leave, and my father bade him God-speed with a heartiness that was rare to him. But, to my bitter regret, neither spoke of my father’s going. Being a man of understanding, Mr. Boone knew it were little use to press. He patted me on the head.

“You’re a wise lad, Davy,” said he. “I hope we shall meet again.”

He mounted his roan and rode away down the slope, waving his hand to us. And it was with a heavy heart that I went to feed our white mare, whinnying for food in the lean-to.

CHAPTER II

WARS AND RUMORS OF WARS

And so our life went on the same, but yet not the same. For I had the Land of Promise to dream of, and as I went about my tasks I conjured up in my mind pictures of its beauty. You will forgive a backwoods boy,—self-centred, for lack of wider interest, and with a little imagination. Bear hunting with my father, and an occasional trip on the white mare twelve miles to the Cross-Roads for salt and other necessaries, were the only diversions to break the routine of my days. But at the Cross-Roads, too, they were talking of Kaintuckee. For so the Land was called, the Dark and Bloody Ground.

The next year came a war on the Frontier, waged by Lord Dunmore, Governor of Virginia. Of this likewise I heard at the Cross-Roads, though few from our part seemed to have gone to it. And I heard there, for rumors spread over mountains, that men blazing in the new land were in danger, and that my hero, Boone, was gone out to save them. But in the autumn came tidings of a great battle far to the north, and of the Indians suing for peace.

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The next year came more tidings of a sort I did not understand. I remember once bringing back from the Cross-Roads a crumpled newspaper, which my father read again and again, and then folded up and put in his pocket. He said nothing to me of these things. But the next time I went to the Cross-Roads, the woman asked me:—

“Is your Pa for the Congress?”

“What’s that?” said I.

“I reckon he ain’t,” said the woman, tartly. I recall her dimly, a slattern creature in a loose gown and bare feet, wife of the storekeeper and wagoner, with a swarm of urchins about her. They were all very natural to me thus. And I remember a battle with one of these urchins in the briers, an affair which did not add to the love of their family for ours. There was no money in that country, and the store took our pelts in exchange for what we needed from civilization. Once a month would I load these pelts on the white mare, and make the journey by the path down the creek. At times I met other settlers there, some of them not long from Ireland, with the brogue still in their mouths. And again, I saw the wagoner with his great canvas-covered wagon standing at the door, ready to start for the town sixty miles away. ’Twas he brought the news of this latest war.

One day I was surprised to see the wagoner riding up the path to our cabin, crying out for my father, for he was a violent man. And a violent scene followed. They remained for a long time within the house, and when they came out the wagoner’s face was red with rage. My father, too, was angry, but no more talkative than usual.

“Ye say ye’ll not help the Congress?” shouted the wagoner.

“I’ll not,” said my father.

“Ye’ll live to rue this day, Alec Trimble,” cried the man. “Ye may think ye’re too fine for the likes of us, but there’s them in the settlement that knows about ye.”

With that he flung himself on his horse, and rode away. But the next time I went to the Cross-Roads the woman drove me away with curses, and called me an aristocrat. Wearily I tramped back the dozen miles up the creek, beside the mare, carrying my pelts with me; stumbling on the stones, and scratched by the dry briers. For it was autumn, the woods all red and yellow against the green of the pines. I sat down beside the old beaver dam to gather courage to tell my father. But he only smiled bitterly when he heard it. Nor would he tell me what the word *aristocrat* meant.

That winter we spent without bacon, and our salt gave out at Christmas. It was at this season, if I remember rightly, that we had another visitor. He arrived about nightfall one gray day, his horse jaded and cut, and he was dressed all in wool, with a great coat

wrapped about him, and high boots. This made me stare at him. When my father drew back the bolt of the door he, too, stared and fell back a step.

“Come in,” said he.

“D’ye ken me, Alec?” said the man.

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He was a tall, spare man like my father, a Scotchman, but his hair was in a cue.

“Come in, Duncan,” said my father, quietly. “Davy, run out for wood.”

Loath as I was to go, I obeyed. As I came back dragging a log behind me I heard them in argument, and in their talk there was much about the Congress, and a woman named Flora Macdonald, and a British fleet sailing southward.

“We’ll have two thousand Highlanders and more to meet the fleet. And ye’ll sit at hame, in this hovel ye’ve made yeresel” (and he glanced about disdainfully) “and no help the King?” He brought his fist down on the pine boards.

“Ye did no help the King greatly at Culloden, Duncan,” said my father, dryly.

Our visitor did not answer at once.

“The Yankee Rebels ’ll no help the House of Stuart,” said he, presently. “And Hanover’s coom to stay. Are ye, too, a Rebel, Alec Ritchie?”

I remember wondering why he said *Ritchie*.

“I’ll no take a hand in this fight,” answered my father.

And that was the end of it. The man left with scant ceremony, I guiding him down the creek to the main trail. He did not open his mouth until I parted with him.

“Puir Davy,” said he, and rode away in the night, for the moon shone through the clouds.

I remember these things, I suppose, because I had nothing else to think about. And the names stuck in my memory, intensified by later events, until I began to write a diary.

And now I come to my travels. As the spring drew on I had had a feeling that we could not live thus forever, with no market for our pelts. And one day my father said to me abruptly:—

“Davy, we’ll be travelling.”

“Where?” I asked.

“Ye’ll ken soon enough,” said he. “We’ll go at crack o’ day.”

We went away in the wild dawn, leaving the cabin desolate. We loaded the white mare with the pelts, and my father wore a woollen suit like that of our Scotch visitor, which I had never seen before. He had clubbed his hair. But, strangest of all, he carried in a small parcel the silk gown that had been my mother’s. We had scant other baggage.

We crossed the Yadkin at a ford, and climbing the hills to the south of it we went down over stony traces, down and down, through rain and sun; stopping at rude cabins or taverns, until we came into the valley of another river. This I know now was the Catawba. My memories of that ride are as misty as the spring weather in the mountains. But presently the country began to open up into broad fields, some of these abandoned to pines. And at last, splashing through the stiff red clay that was up to the mare's fetlocks, we came to a place called Charlotte Town. What a day that was for me! And how I gaped at the houses there, finer than any I had ever dreamed of! That was my first sight of a town. And how I listened open-mouthed to the gentlemen at the tavern! One I recall had a fighting head with a lock awry, and a negro servant to wait on him, and was the principal spokesman. He, too, was talking of war. The Cherokees had risen on the western border. He was telling of the massacre of a settlement, in no mild language.

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“Sirs,” he cried, “the British have stirred the redskins to this. Will you sit here while women and children are scalped, and those devils” (he called them worse names) “Stuart and Cameron go unpunished?”

My father got up from the corner where he sat, and stood beside the man.

“I ken Alec Cameron,” said he.

The man looked at him with amazement.

“Ay?” said he, “I shouldn’t think you’d own it. Damn him,” he cried, “if we catch him we’ll skin him alive.”

“I ken Cameron,” my father repeated, “and I’ll gang with you to skin him alive.”

The man seized his hand and wrung it.

“But first I must be in Charlestown,” said my father.

The next morning we sold our pelts. And though the mare was tired, we pushed southward, I behind the saddle. I had much to think about, wondering what was to become of me while my father went to skin Cameron. I had not the least doubt that he would do it. The world is a storybook to a lad of nine, and the thought of Charlestown filled me with a delight unspeakable. Perchance he would leave me in Charlestown.

At nightfall we came into a settlement called the Waxhaws. And there being no tavern there, and the mare being very jaded and the roads heavy, we cast about for a place to sleep. The sunlight slanting over the pine forest glistened on the pools in the wet fields. And it so chanced that splashing across these, swinging a milk-pail over his head, shouting at the top of his voice, was a red-headed lad of my own age. My father hailed him, and he came running towards us, still shouting, and vaulted the rails. He stood before us, eying me with a most mischievous look in his blue eyes, and dabbling in the red mud with his toes. I remember I thought him a queer-looking boy. He was lanky, and he had a very long face under his tousled hair.

My father asked him where he could spend the night.

“Wal,” said the boy, “I reckon Uncle Crawford might take you in. And again he mightn’t.”

He ran ahead, still swinging the pail. And we, following, came at length to a comfortable-looking farmhouse. As we stopped at the doorway a stout, motherly woman filled it. She held her knitting in her hand.

“You Andy!” she cried, “have you fetched the milk?”

Andy tried to look repentant.

“I declare I’ll tan you,” said the lady. “Git out this instant. What rascality have you been in?”

“I fetched home visitors, Ma,” said Andy.

“Visitors!” cried the lady. “What ’ll your Uncle Crawford say?” And she looked at us smiling, but with no great hostility.

“Pardon me, Madam,” said my father, “if we seem to intrude. But my mare is tired, and we have nowhere to stay.”

Uncle Crawford did take us in. He was a man of substance in that country,—a north of Ireland man by birth, if I remember right.

I went to bed with the red-headed boy, whose name was Andy Jackson. I remember that his mother came into our little room under the eaves and made Andy say his prayers, and me after him. But when she was gone out, Andy stumped his toe getting into bed in the dark and swore with a brilliancy and vehemence that astonished me.

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It was some hours before we went to sleep, he plying me with questions about my life, which seemed to interest him greatly, and I returning in kind.

“My Pa’s dead,” said Andy. “He came from a part of Ireland where they are all weavers. We’re kinder poor relations here. Aunt Crawford’s sick, and Ma keeps house. But Uncle Crawford’s good, an’ lets me go to Charlotte Town with him sometimes.”

I recall that he also boasted some about his big brothers, who were away just then.

Andy was up betimes in the morning, to see us start. But we didn’t start, because Mr. Crawford insisted that the white mare should have a half day’s rest. Andy, being hustled off unwillingly to the “Old Field” school, made me go with him. He was a very headstrong boy.

I was very anxious to see a school. This one was only a log house in a poor, piny place, with a rabble of boys and girls romping at the door. But when they saw us they stopped. Andy jumped into the air, let out a war-whoop, and flung himself into the midst, scattering them right and left, and knocking one boy over and over. “I’m Billy Buck!” he cried. “I’m a hull regiment o’ Rangers. Let th’ Cherokees mind me!”

“Way for Sandy Andy!” cried the boys. “Where’d you get the new boy, Sandy?”

“His name’s Davy,” said Andy, “and his Pa’s goin’ to fight the Cherokees. He kin lick tarnation out’n any o’ you.”

Meanwhile I held back, never having been thrown with so many of my own kind.

“He’s shot painters and b’ars,” said Andy. “An’ skinned ’em. Kin you lick him, Smally? I reckon not.”

Now I had not come to the school for fighting. So I held back. Fortunately for me, Smally held back also. But he tried skilful tactics.

“He kin throw you, Sandy.”

Andy faced me in an instant.

“Kin you?” said he.

There was nothing to do but try, and in a few seconds we were rolling on the ground, to the huge delight of Smally and the others, Andy shouting all the while and swearing. We rolled and rolled and rolled in the mud, until we both lost our breath, and even Andy stopped swearing, for want of it. After a while the boys were silent, and the thing became grim earnest. At length, by some accident rather than my own strength, both

his shoulders touched the ground. I released him. But he was on his feet in an instant and at me again like a wildcat.

“Andy won’t stay throwed,” shouted a boy. And before I knew it he had my shoulders down in a puddle. Then I went for him, and affairs were growing more serious than a wrestle, when Smally, fancying himself safe, and no doubt having a grudge, shouted out:—

“Tell him he slobbers, Davy.”

Andy *did* slobber. But that was the end of me, and the beginning of Smally. Andy left me instantly, not without an intimation that he would come back, and proceeded to cover Smally with red clay and blood. However, in the midst of this turmoil the schoolmaster arrived, haled both into the schoolhouse, held court, and flogged Andrew with considerable gusto. He pronounced these words afterwards, with great solemnity:—

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“Andrew Jackson, if I catch ye fightin’ once more, I’ll be afther givin’ ye lave to lave the school.”

I parted from Andy at noon with real regret. He was the first boy with whom I had ever had any intimacy. And I admired him: chiefly, I fear, for his fluent use of profanity and his fighting qualities. He was a merry lad, with a wondrous quick temper but a good heart. And he seemed sorry to say good-by. He filled my pockets with June apples—-unripe, by the way—and told me to remember him when I got *till* Charlestown.

I remembered him much longer than that, and usually with a shock of surprise.

CHAPTER III

CHARLESTOWN

Down and down we went, crossing great rivers by ford and ferry, until the hills flattened themselves and the country became a long stretch of level, broken by the forests only; and I saw many things I had not thought were on the earth. Once in a while I caught glimpses of great red houses, with stately pillars, among the trees. They put me in mind of the palaces in Bunyan, their windows all golden in the morning sun; and as we jogged ahead, I pondered on the delights within them. I saw gangs of negroes plodding to work along the road, an overseer riding behind them with his gun on his back; and there were whole cotton fields in these domains blazing in primrose flower,—a new plant here, so my father said. He was willing to talk on such subjects. But on others, and especially our errand to Charlestown, he would say nothing. And I knew better than to press him.

One day, as we were crossing a dike between rice swamps spread with delicate green, I saw the white tops of wagons flashing in the sun at the far end of it. We caught up with them, the wagoners cracking their whips and swearing at the straining horses. And lo! in front of the wagons was an army,—at least my boyish mind magnified it to such. Men clad in homespun, perspiring and spattered with mud, were straggling along the road by fours, laughing and joking together. The officers rode, and many of these had blue coats and buff waistcoats,—some the worse for wear. My father was pushing the white mare into the ditch to ride by, when one hailed him.

“Hullo, my man,” said he, “are you a friend to Congress?”

“I’m off to Charlestown to leave the lad,” said my father, “and then to fight the Cherokees.”

“Good,” said the other. And then, “Where are you from?”

“Upper Yadkin,” answered my father. “And you?”

The officer, who was a young man, looked surprised. But then he laughed pleasantly.

“We’re North Carolina troops, going to join Lee in Charlestown,” said he. “The British are sending a fleet and regiments against it.”

“Oh, aye,” said my father, and would have passed on. But he was made to go before the Colonel, who plied him with many questions. Then he gave us a paper and dismissed us.

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We pursued our journey through the heat that shimmered up from the road, pausing now and again in the shade of a wayside tree. At times I thought I could bear the sun no longer. But towards four o'clock of that day a great bank of yellow cloud rolled up, darkening the earth save for a queer saffron light that stained everything, and made our very faces yellow. And then a wind burst out of the east with a high mournful note, as from a great flute afar, filling the air with leaves and branches of trees. But it bore, too, a savor that was new to me,—a salt savor, deep and fresh, that I drew down into my lungs. And I knew that we were near the ocean. Then came the rain, in great billows, as though the ocean itself were upon us.

The next day we crossed a ferry on the Ashley River, and rode down the sand of Charlestown neck. And my most vivid remembrance is of the great trunks towering half a hundred feet in the air, with a tassel of leaves at the top, which my father said were palmettos. Something lay heavy on his mind. For I had grown to know his moods by a sort of silent understanding. And when the roofs and spires of the town shone over the foliage in the afternoon sun, I felt him give a great sigh that was like a sob.

And how shall I describe the splendor of that city? The sandy streets, and the gardens of flower and shade, heavy with the plant odors; and the great houses with their galleries and porticos set in the midst of the gardens, that I remember staring at wistfully. But before long we came to a barricade fixed across the street, and then to another. And presently, in an open space near a large building, was a company of soldiers at drill.

It did not strike me as strange then that my father asked his way of no man, but went to a little ordinary in a humbler part of the town. After a modest meal in a corner of the public room, we went out for a stroll. Then, from the wharves, I saw the bay dotted with islands, their white sand sparkling in the evening light, and fringed with strange trees, and beyond, of a deepening blue, the ocean. And nearer,—greatest of all delights to me,—riding on the swell was a fleet of ships. My father gazed at them long and silently, his palm over his eyes.

"Men-o'-war from the old country, lad," he said after a while. "They're a brave sight."

"And why are they here?" I asked.

"They've come to fight," said he, "and take the town again for the King."

It was twilight when we turned to go, and then I saw that many of the warehouses along the wharves were heaps of ruins. My father said this was that the town might be the better defended.

We bent our way towards one of the sandy streets where the great houses were. And to my surprise we turned in at a gate, and up a path leading to the high steps of one of

these. Under the high portico the door was open, but the house within was dark. My father paused, and the hand he held to mine trembled. Then he stepped across the threshold, and raising the big polished knocker that hung on the panel, let it drop. The sound reverberated through the house, and then stillness. And then, from within, a shuffling sound, and an old negro came to the door. For an instant he stood staring through the dusk, and broke into a cry.

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“Marse Alec!” he said.

“Is your master at home?” said my father.

Without another word he led us through a deep hall, and out into a gallery above the trees of a back garden, where a gentleman sat smoking a long pipe. The old negro stopped in front of him.

“Marse John,” said he, his voice shaking, “heah’s Marse Alec done come back.”

The gentleman got to his feet with a start. His pipe fell to the floor, and the ashes scattered on the boards and lay glowing there.

“Alec!” he cried, peering into my father’s face, “Alec! You’re not dead.”

“John,” said my father, “can we talk here?”

“Good God!” said the gentleman, “you’re just the same. To think of it—to think of it! Breed, a light in the drawing-room.”

There was no word spoken while the negro was gone, and the time seemed very long. But at length he returned, a silver candlestick in each hand.

“Careful,” cried the gentleman, petulantly, “you’ll drop them.”

He led the way into the house, and through the hall to a massive door of mahogany with a silver door-knob. The grandeur of the place awed me, and well it might. Boy-like, I was absorbed in this. Our little mountain cabin would almost have gone into this one room. The candles threw their flickering rays upward until they danced on the high ceiling. Marvel of marvels, in the oval left clear by the heavy, rounded cornice was a picture.

The negro set down the candles on the marble top of a table. But the air of the room was heavy and close, and the gentleman went to a window and flung it open. It came down instantly with a crash, so that the panes rattled again.

“Curse these Rebels,” he shouted, “they’ve taken our window weights to make bullets.”

Calling to the negro to pry open the window with a walking-stick, he threw himself into a big, upholstered chair. ’Twas then I remarked the splendor of his clothes, which were silk. And he wore a waistcoat all sewed with flowers. With a boy’s intuition, I began to dislike him intensely.

“Damn the Rebels!” he began. “They’ve driven his Lordship away. I hope his Majesty will hang every mother’s son of ’em. All pleasure of life is gone, and they’ve folly

enough to think they can resist the fleet. And the worst of it is," cried he, "the worst of it is, I'm forced to smirk to them, and give good gold to their government." Seeing that my father did not answer, he asked: "Have you joined the Highlanders? You were always for fighting."

"I'm to be at Cherokee Ford on the twentieth," said my father. "We're to scalp the redskins and Cameron, though 'tis not known."

"Cameron!" shrieked the gentleman. "But that's the other side, man! Against his Majesty?"

"One side or t'other," said my father, "'tis all one against Alec Cameron."

The gentleman looked at my father with something like terror in his eyes.

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“You’ll never forgive Cameron,” he said.

“I’ll no forgive anybody who does me a wrong,” said my father.

“And where have you been all these years, Alec?” he asked presently. “Since you went off with—”

“I’ve been in the mountains, leading a pure life,” said my father. “And we’ll speak of nothing, if you please, that’s gone by.”

“And what will you have me do?” said the gentleman, helplessly.

“Little enough,” said my father. “Keep the lad till I come again. He’s quiet. He’ll no trouble you greatly. Davy, this is Mr. Temple. You’re to stay with him till I come again.”

“Come here, lad,” said the gentleman, and he peered into my face. “You’ll not resemble your mother.”

“He’ll resemble no one,” said my father, shortly.

“Good-by, Davy. Keep this till I come again.” And he gave me the parcel made of my mother’s gown. Then he lifted me in his strong arms and kissed me, and strode out of the house. We listened in silence as he went down the steps, and until his footsteps died away on the path. Then the gentleman rose and pulled a cord hastily. The negro came in.

“Put the lad to bed, Breed,” said he.

“Whah, suh?”

“Oh, anywhere,” said the master. He turned to me.

“I’ll be better able to talk to you in the morning, David,” said he.

I followed the old servant up the great stairs, gulping down a sob that would rise, and clutching my mother’s gown tight under my arm. Had my father left me alone in our cabin for a fortnight, I should not have minded. But here, in this strange house, amid such strange surroundings, I was heartbroken. The old negro was very kind. He led me into a little bedroom, and placing the candle on a polished dresser, he regarded me with sympathy.

“So you’re Miss Lizbeth’s boy,” said he. “An’ she dade. An’ Marse Alec rough an’ hard es though he been bo’n in de woods. Honey, ol’ Breed’ll tek care ob you. I’ll git you one o’ dem night rails Marse Nick has, and some ob his’n close in de mawnin’.”

These things I remember, and likewise sobbing myself to sleep in the four-poster. Often since I have wished that I had questioned Breed of many things on which I had no curiosity then, for he was my chief companion in the weeks that followed. He awoke me bright and early the next day.

“Heah’s some close o’ Marse Nick’s you kin wear, honey,” he said.

“Who is Master Nick?” I asked.

Breed slapped his thigh.

“Marse Nick Temple, Marsa’s son. He’s ‘bout you size, but he ain’ no mo’ laik you den a Jack rabbit’s laik an’ owl. Dey ain’ none laik Marse Nick fo’ gittin’ into trouble-and gittin’ out agin.”

“Where is he now?” I asked.

“He at Temple Bow, on de Ashley Ribber. Dat’s de Marsa’s barony.”

“His what?”

“De place whah he lib at, in de country.”

“And why isn’t the master there?”

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I remember that Breed gave a wink, and led me out of the window onto a gallery above the one where we had found the master the night before. He pointed across the dense foliage of the garden to a strip of water gleaming in the morning sun beyond.

“See dat boat?” said the negro. “Sometime de Marse he tek ar ride in dat boat at night. Sometime gentlemen comes heah in a pow’ful hurry to git away, out’n de harbor whah de English is at.”

By that time I was dressed, and marvellously uncomfortable in Master Nick’s clothes. But as I was going out of the door, Breed hailed me.

“Marse Dave,”—it was the first time I had been called that,—“Marse Dave, you ain’t gwineter tell?”

“Tell what?” I asked.

“Bout’n de boat, and Marsa agwine away nights.”

“No,” said I, indignantly.

“I knowed you wahn’t,” said Breed. “You don’ look as if you’d tell anything.”

We found the master pacing the lower gallery. At first he barely glanced at me, and nodded. After a while he stopped, and began to put to me many questions about my life: when and how I had lived. And to some of my answers he exclaimed, “Good God!” That was all. He was a handsome man, with hands like a woman’s, well set off by the lace at his sleeves. He had fine-cut features, and the white linen he wore was most becoming.

“David,” said he, at length, and I noted that he lowered his voice, “David, you seem a discreet lad. Pay attention to what I tell you. And mark! if you disobey me, you will be well whipped. You have this house and garden to play in, but you are by no means to go out at the front of the house. And whatever you may see or hear, you are to tell no one. Do you understand?”

“Yes, sir,” I said.

“For the rest,” said he, “Breed will give you food, and look out for your welfare.”

And so he dismissed me. They were lonely days after that for a boy used to activity, and only the damp garden paths and lawns to run on. The creek at the back of the garden was stagnant and marshy when the water fell, and overhung by leafy boughs. On each side of the garden was a high brick wall. And though I was often tempted to climb it, I felt that disobedience was disloyalty to my father. Then there was the great

house, dark and lonely in its magnificence, over which I roamed until I knew every corner of it.

I was most interested of all in the pictures of men and women in quaint, old-time costumes, and I used during the great heat of the day to sit in the drawing-room and study these, and wonder who they were and when they lived. Another amusement I had was to climb into the deep windows and peer through the blinds across the front garden into the street. Sometimes men stopped and talked loudly there, and again a rattle of drums would send me running to see the soldiers. I recall that I had a poor enough notion of what the fighting was all about. And no wonder. But I remember chiefly my insatiable longing to escape from this prison, as the great house soon became for me. And I yearned with a yearning I cannot express for our cabin in the hills and the old life there.

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I caught glimpses of the master on occasions only, and then I avoided him; for I knew he had no wish to see me. Sometimes he would be seated in the gallery, tapping his foot on the floor, and sometimes pacing the garden walks with his hands opening and shutting. And one night I awoke with a start, and lay for a while listening until I heard something like a splash, and the scraping of the bottom-boards of a boat. Irresistibly I jumped out of bed, and running to the gallery rail I saw two dark figures moving among the leaves below. The next morning I came suddenly on a strange gentleman in the gallery. He wore a flowered dressing-gown like the one I had seen on the master, and he had a jolly, round face. I stopped and stared.

“Who the devil are you?” said he, but not unkindly.

“My name is David Trimble,” said I, “and I come from the mountains.”

He laughed.

“Mr. David Trimble-from-the-mountains, who the devil am I?”

“I don’t know, sir,” and I started to go away, not wishing to disturb him.

“Avast!” he cried. “Stand fast. See that you remember that.”

“I’m not here of my free will, sir, but because my father wishes it. And I’ll betray nothing.”

Then he stared at me.

“How old did you say you were?” he demanded.

“I didn’t say,” said I.

“And you are of Scotch descent?” said he.

“I didn’t say so, sir.”

“You’re a rum one,” said he, laughing again, and he disappeared into the house.

That day, when Breed brought me my dinner on my gallery, he did not speak of a visitor. You may be sure I did not mention the circumstance. But Breed always told me the outside news.

“Dey’s gittin’ ready fo’ a big fight, Marse Dave,” said he. “Mister Moultrie in the fo’t in de bay, an’ Marse Gen’l Lee tryin’ for to boss him. Dey’s Rebels. An’ Marse Admiral Parker an’ de King’s reg’ments fixin’ fo’ to tek de fo’t, an’ den Charlesto’n. Dey say Mister Moultrie ain’t got no mo’ chance dan a treed ’possum.”

“Why, Breed?” I asked. I had heard my father talk of England’s power and might, and Mister Moultrie seemed to me a very brave man in his little fort.

“Why!” exclaimed the old negro. “You ain’t neber read no hist’ry books. I knows some of de gentlemen wid Mister Moultrie. Dey ain’t no soldiers. Some is fine gentlemen, to be suah, but it’s jist foolishness to fight dat fleet an’ army. Marse Gen’l Lee hisself, he done sesso. I heerd him.”

“And he’s on Mister Moultrie’s side?” I asked.

“Sholy,” said Breed. “He’s de Rebel gen’l.”

“Then he’s a knave and a coward!” I cried with a boy’s indignation. “Where did you hear him say that?” I demanded, incredulous of some of Breed’s talk.

“Right heah in dis house,” he answered, and quickly clapped his hand to his mouth, and showed the whites of his eyes. “You ain’t agwineter tell dat, Marse Dave?”

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“Of course not,” said I. And then: “I wish I could see Mister Moultrie in his fort, and the fleet.”

“Why, honey, so you kin,” said Breed.

The good-natured negro dropped his work and led the way upstairs, I following expectant, to the attic. A rickety ladder rose to a kind of tower (cupola, I suppose it would be called), whence the bay spread out before me like a picture, the white islands edged with the whiter lacing of the waves. There, indeed, was the fleet, but far away, like toy ships on the water, and the bit of a fort perched on the sandy edge of an island. I spent most of that day there, watching anxiously for some movement. But none came.

That night I was again awakened. And running into the gallery, I heard quick footsteps in the garden. Then there was a lantern’s flash, a smothered oath, and all was dark again. But in the flash I had seen distinctly three figures. One was Breed, and he held the lantern; another was the master; and the third, a stout one muffled in a cloak, I made no doubt was my jolly friend. I lay long awake, with a boy’s curiosity, until presently the dawn broke, and I arose and dressed, and began to wander about the house. No Breed was sweeping the gallery, nor was there any sign of the master. The house was as still as a tomb, and the echoes of my footsteps rolled through the halls and chambers. At last, prompted by curiosity and fear, I sought the kitchen, where I had often sat with Breed as he cooked the master’s dinner. This was at the bottom and end of the house. The great fire there was cold, and the pots and pans hung neatly on their hooks, untouched that day. I was running through the wet garden, glad to be out in the light, when a sound stopped me.

It was a dull roar from the direction of the bay. Almost instantly came another, and another, and then several broke together. And I knew that the battle had begun. Forgetting for the moment my loneliness, I ran into the house and up the stairs two at a time, and up the ladder into the cupola, where I flung open the casement and leaned out.

There was the battle indeed,—a sight so vivid to me after all these years that I can call it again before me when I will. The toy men-o’-war, with sails set, ranging in front of the fort. They looked at my distance to be pressed against it. White puffs, like cotton balls, would dart one after another from a ship’s side, melt into a cloud, float over her spars, and hide her from my view. And then presently the roar would reach me, and answering puffs along the line of the fort. And I could see the mortar shells go up and up, leaving a scorched trail behind, curve in a great circle, and fall upon the little garrison. Mister Moultrie became a real person to me then, a vivid picture in my boyish mind—a hero beyond all other heroes.

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As the sun got up in the heavens and the wind fell, the cupola became a bake-oven. But I scarcely felt the heat. My whole soul was out in the bay, pent up with the men in the fort. How long could they hold out? Why were they not all killed by the shot that fell like hail among them? Yet puff after puff sprang from their guns, and the sound of it was like a storm coming nearer in the heat. But at noon it seemed to me as though some of the ships were sailing. It was true. Slowly they drew away from the others, and presently I thought they had stopped again. Surely two of them were stuck together, then three were fast on a shoal. Boats, like black bugs in the water, came and went between them and the others. After a long time the two that were together got apart and away. But the third stayed there, immovable, helpless.

Throughout the afternoon the fight, kept on, the little black boats coming and going. I saw a mast totter and fall on one of the ships. I saw the flag shot away from the fort, and reappear again. But now the puffs came from her walls slowly and more slowly, so that my heart sank with the setting sun. And presently it grew too dark to see aught save the red flashes. Slowly, reluctantly, the noise died down until at last a great silence reigned, broken only now and again by voices in the streets below me. It was not until then that I realized that I had been all day without food—that I was alone in the dark of a great house.

I had never known fear in the woods at night. But now I trembled as I felt my way down the ladder, and groped and stumbled through the black attic for the stairs. Every noise I made seemed louder an hundred fold than the battle had been, and when I barked my shins, the pain was sharper than a knife. Below, on the big stairway, the echo of my footsteps sounded again from the empty rooms, so that I was taken with a panic and fled downward, sliding and falling, until I reached the hall. Frantically as I tried, I could not unfasten the bolts on the front door. And so, running into the drawing-room, I pried open the window, and sat me down in the embrasure to think, and to try to quiet the thumpings of my heart.

By degrees I succeeded. The still air of the night and the heavy, damp odors of the foliage helped me. And I tried to think what was right for me to do. I had promised the master not to leave the place, and that promise seemed in pledge to my father. Surely the master would come back—or Breed. They would not leave me here alone without food much longer. Although I was young, I was brought up to responsibility. And I inherited a conscience that has since given me much trouble.

From these thoughts, trying enough for a starved lad, I fell to thinking of my father on the frontier fighting the Cherokees. And so I dozed away to dream of him. I remember that he was skinning Cameron,—I had often pictured it,—and Cameron yelling, when I was awakened with a shock by a great noise.

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I listened with my heart in my throat. The noise seemed to come from the hall,—a prodigious pounding. Presently it stopped, and a man's voice cried out:—

"Ho there, within!"

My first impulse was to answer. But fear kept me still.

"Batter down the door," some one shouted.

There was a sound of shuffling in the portico, and the same voice:—

"Now then, all together, lads!"

Then came a straining and splitting of wood, and with a crash the door gave way. A lantern's rays shot through the hall.

"The house is as dark as a tomb," said a voice.

"And as empty, I reckon," said another. "John Temple and his spy have got away."

"We'll have a search," answered the first voice.

They stood for a moment in the drawing-room door, peering, and then they entered. There were five of them. Two looked to be gentlemen, and three were of rougher appearance. They carried lanterns.

"That window's open," said one of the gentlemen. "They must have been here to-day. Hello, what's this?" He started back in surprise.

I slid down from the window-seat, and stood facing them, not knowing what else to do. They, too, seemed equally confounded.

"It must be Temple's son," said one, at last. "I had thought the family at Temple Bow. What's your name, my lad?"

"David Trimble, sir," said I.

"And what are you doing here?" he asked more sternly.

"I was left in Mr. Temple's care by my father."

"Oho!" he cried. "And where is your father?"

"He's gone to fight the Cherokees," I answered soberly. "To skin a man named Cameron."

At that they were silent for an instant, and then the two broke into a laugh.

“Egad, Lowndes,” said the gentleman, “here is a fine mystery. Do you think the boy is lying?”

The other gentleman scratched his forehead.

“I’ll have you know I don’t lie, sir,” I said, ready to cry.

“No,” said the other gentleman. “A backwoodsman named Trimble went to Rutledge with credentials from North Carolina, and has gone off to Cherokee Ford to join McCall.”

“Bless my soul!” exclaimed the first gentleman. He came up and laid his hand on my shoulder, and said:—

“Where is Mr. Temple?”

“That I don’t know, sir.”

“When did he go away?”

I did not answer at once.

“That I can’t tell you, sir.”

“Was there any one with him?”

“That I can’t tell you, sir.”

“The devil you can’t!” he cried, taking his hand away. “And why not?”

I shook my head, sorely beset.

“Come, Mathews,” cried the gentleman called Lowndes.

“We’ll search first, and attend to the lad after.”

And so they began going through the house, prying into every cupboard and sweeping under every bed. They even climbed to the attic; and noting the open casement in the cupola, Mr. Lowndes said:—

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“Some one has been here to-day.”

“It was I, sir,” I said. “I have been here all day.”

“And what doing, pray?” he demanded.

“Watching the battle. And oh, sir,” I cried, “can you tell me whether Mister Moultrie beat the British?”

“He did so,” cried Mr. Lowndes. “He did, and soundly.”

He stared at me. I must have looked my pleasure.

“Why, David,” says he, “you are a patriot, too.”

“I am a Rebel, sir,” I cried hotly.

Both gentlemen laughed again, and the men with them.

“The lad is a character,” said Mr. Lowndes.

We made our way down into the garden, which they searched last. At the creek’s side the boat was gone, and there were footsteps in the mud.

“The bird has flown, Lowndes,” said Mr. Mathews.

“And good riddance for the Committee,” answered that gentleman, heartily. “He got to the fleet in fine season to get a round shot in the middle. David,” said he, solemnly, “remember it never pays to try to be two things at once.”

“I’ll warrant he stayed below water,” said Mr. Mathews.

“But what shall we do with the lad?”

“I’ll take him to my house for the night,” said Mr. Lowndes, “and in the morning we’ll talk to him. I reckon he should be sent to Temple Bow. He is connected in some way with the Temples.”

“God help him if he goes there,” said Mr. Mathews, under his breath. But I heard him.

They locked up the house, and left one of the men to guard it, while I went with Mr. Lowndes to his residence. I remember that people were gathered in the streets as we passed, making merry, and that they greeted Mr. Lowndes with respect and good cheer. His house, too, was set in a garden and quite as fine as Mr. Temple’s. It was ablaze with candles, and I caught glimpses of fine gentlemen and ladies in the rooms.

But he hurried me through the hall, and into a little chamber at the rear where a writing-desk was set. He turned and faced me.

“You must be tired, David,” he said.

I nodded.

“And hungry? Boys are always hungry.”

“Yes, sir.”

“You had no dinner?”

“No, sir,” I answered, off my guard.

“Mercy!” he said. “It is a long time since breakfast.”

“I had no breakfast, sir.”

“Good God!” he said, and pulled the velvet handle of a cord. A negro came.

“Is the supper for the guests ready?”

“Yes, Marsa.”

“Then bring as much as you can carry here,” said the gentleman. “And ask Mrs. Lowndes if I may speak with her.”

Mrs. Lowndes came first. And such a fine lady she was that she frightened me, this being my first experience with ladies. But when Mr. Lowndes told her my story, she ran to me impulsively and put her arms about me.

“Poor lad!” she said. “What a shame!”

I think that the tears came then, but it was small wonder. There were tears in her eyes, too.

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Such a supper as I had I shall never forget. And she sat beside me for long, neglecting her guests, and talking of my life. Suddenly she turned to her husband, calling him by name.

“He is Alec Ritchie’s son,” she said, “and Alec has gone against Cameron.”

Mr. Lowndes did not answer, but nodded.

“And must he go to Temple Bow?”

“My dear,” said Mr. Lowndes, “I fear it is our duty to send him there.”

CHAPTER IV

TEMPLE BOW

In the morning I started for Temple Bow on horseback behind one of Mr. Lowndes’ negroes. Good Mrs. Lowndes had kissed me at parting, and tucked into my pocket a parcel of sweetmeats. There had been a few grave gentlemen to see me, and to their questions I had replied what I could. But tell them of Mr. Temple I would not, save that he himself had told me nothing. And Mr. Lowndes had presently put an end to their talk.

“The lad knows nothing, gentlemen,” he had said, which was true.

“David,” said he, when he bade me farewell, “I see that your father has brought you up to fear God. Remember that all you see in this life is not to be imitated.”

And so I went off behind his negro. He was a merry lad, and despite the great heat of the journey and my misgivings about Temple Bow, he made me laugh. I was sad at crossing the ferry over the Ashley, through thinking of my father, but I reflected that it could not be long now ere I saw him again. In the middle of the day we stopped at a tavern. And at length, in the abundant shade of evening, we came to a pair of great ornamental gates set between brick pillars capped with white balls, and turned into a drive. And presently, winding through the trees, we were in sight of a long, brick mansion trimmed with white, and a velvet lawn before it all flecked with shadows. In front of the portico was a saddled horse, craning his long neck at two panting hounds stretched on the ground. A negro boy in blue clutched the bridle. On the horse-block a gentleman in white reclined. He wore shiny boots, and he held his hat in his hand, and he was gazing up at a lady who stood on the steps above him.

The lady I remember as well—Lord forbid that I should forget her. And her laugh as I heard it that evening is ringing now in my ears. And yet it was not a laugh. Musical it was, yet there seemed no pleasure in it: rather irony, and a great weariness of the

amusements of this world: and a note, too, from a vanity never ruffled. It stopped abruptly as the negro pulled up his horse before her, and she stared at us haughtily.

“What’s this?” she said.

“Pardon, Mistis,” said the negro, “I’se got a letter from Marse Lowndes.”

“Mr. Lowndes should instruct his niggers,” she said. “There is a servants’ drive.” The man was turning his horse when she cried: “Hold! Let’s have it.”

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He dismounted and gave her the letter, and I jumped to the ground, watching her as she broke the seal, taking her in, as a boy will, from the flowing skirt and tight-laced stays of her salmon silk to her high and powdered hair. She must have been about thirty. Her face was beautiful, but had no particle of expression in it, and was dotted here and there with little black patches of plaster. While she was reading, a sober gentleman in black silk-breeches and severe coat came out of the house and stood beside her.

“Heigho, parson,” said the gentleman on the horse-block, without moving, “are you to preach against loo or lansquenet to-morrow?”

“Would it make any difference to you, Mr. Riddle?”

Before he could answer there came a great clatter behind them, and a boy of my own age appeared. With a leap he landed sprawling on the indolent gentleman’s shoulders, nearly upsetting him.

“You young rascal!” exclaimed the gentleman, pitching him on the drive almost at my feet; then he fell back again to a position where he could look up at the lady.

“Harry Riddle,” cried the boy, “I’ll ride steeplechases and beat you some day.”

“Hush, Nick,” cried the lady, petulantly, “I’ll have no nerves left me.” She turned to the letter again, holding it very near to her eyes, and made a wry face of impatience. Then she held the sheet out to Mr. Riddle.

“A pretty piece of news,” she said languidly. “Read it, Harry.”

The gentleman seized her hand instead. The lady glanced at the clergyman, whose back was turned, and shook her head.

“How tiresome you are!” she said.

“What’s happened?” asked Mr. Riddle, letting go as the parson looked around.

“Oh, they’ve had a battle,” said the lady, “and Moultrie and his Rebels have beat off the King’s fleet.”

“The devil they have!” exclaimed Mr. Riddle, while the parson started forwards. “Anything more?”

“Yes, a little.” She hesitated. “That husband of mine has fled Charlestown. They think he went to the fleet.” And she shot a meaning look at Mr. Riddle, who in turn flushed red. I was watching them.

“What!” cried the clergyman, “John Temple has run away?”

“Why not,” said Mr. Riddle. “One can’t live between wind and water long. And Charlestown’s—uncomfortable in summer.”

At that the clergyman cast one look at them—such a look as I shall never forget—and went into the house.

“Mamma,” said the boy, “where has father gone? Has he run away?”

“Yes. Don’t bother me, Nick.”

“I don’t believe it,” cried Nick, his high voice shaking. “I’d—I’d disown him.”

At that Mr. Riddle burst into a hearty laugh.

“Come, Nick,” said he, “it isn’t so bad as that. Your father’s for his Majesty, like the rest of us. He’s merely gone over to fight for him.” And he looked at the lady and laughed again. But I liked the boy.

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As for the lady, she curled her lip. “Mr. Riddle, don’t be foolish,” she said. “If we are to play, send your horse to the stables.” Suddenly her eye lighted on me. “One more brat,” she sighed. “Nick, take him to the nursery, or the stable. And both of you keep out of my sight.”

Nick strode up to me.

“Don’t mind her. She’s always saying, ‘Keep out of my sight.’” His voice trembled. He took me by the sleeve and began pulling me around the house and into a little summer bower that stood there; for he had a masterful manner.

“What’s your name?” he demanded.

“David Trimble,” I said.

“Have you seen my father in town?”

The intense earnestness of the question surprised an answer out of me.

“Yes.”

“Where?” he demanded.

“In his house. My father left me with your father.”

“Tell me about it.”

I related as much as I dared, leaving out Mr. Temple’s double dealing; which, in truth, I did not understand. But the boy was relentless.

“Why,” said he, “my father was a friend of Mr. Lowndes and Mr. Mathews. I have seen them here drinking with him. And in town. And he ran away?”

“I do not know where he went,” said I, which was the truth.

He said nothing, but hid his face in his arms over the rail of the bower. At length he looked up at me fiercely.

“If you ever tell this, I will kill you,” he cried. “Do you hear?”

That made me angry.

“Yes, I hear,” I said. “But I am not afraid of you.”

He was at me in an instant, knocking me to the floor, so that the breath went out of me, and was pounding me vigorously ere I recovered from the shock and astonishment of it

and began to defend myself. He was taller than I, and wiry, but not so rugged. Yet there was a look about him that was far beyond his strength. A look that meant, *never say die*. Curiously, even as I fought desperately I compared him with that other lad I had known, Andy Jackson. And this one, though not so powerful, frightened me the more in his relentlessness.

Perhaps we should have been fighting still had not some one pulled us apart, and when my vision cleared I saw Nick, struggling and kicking, held tightly in the hands of the clergyman. And it was all that gentleman could do to hold him. I am sure it was quite five minutes before he forced the lad, exhausted, on to the seat. And then there was a defiance about his nostrils that showed he was undefeated. The clergyman, still holding him with one hand, took out his handkerchief with the other and wiped his brow.

I expected a scolding and a sermon. To my amazement the clergyman said quietly:—

“Now what was the trouble, David?”

“I’ll not be the one to tell it, sir,” I said, and trembled at my temerity.

The parson looked at me queerly.

“Then you are in the right of it,” he said. “It is as I thought; I’ll not expect Nicholas to tell me.”

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“I will tell you, sir,” said Nicholas. “He was in the house with my father when—when he ran away. And I said that if he ever spoke of it to any one, I would kill him.”

For a while the clergyman was silent, gazing with a strange tenderness at the lad, whose face was averted.

“And you, David?” he said presently.

“I—I never mean to tell, sir. But I was not to be frightened.”

“Quite right, my lad,” said the clergyman, so kindly that it sent a strange thrill through me. Nicholas looked up quickly.

“You won’t tell?” he said.

“No,” I said.

“You can let me go now, Mr. Mason,” said he. Mr. Mason did. And he came over and sat beside me, but said nothing more.

After a while Mr. Mason cleared his throat.

“Nicholas,” said he, “when you grow older you will understand these matters better. Your father went away to join the side he believes in, the side we all believe in—the King’s side.”

“Did he ever pretend to like the other side?” asked Nick, quickly.

“When you grow older you will know his motives,” answered the clergyman, gently. “Until then; you must trust him.”

“You never pretended,” cried Nick.

“Thank God I never was forced to do so,” said the clergyman, fervently.

It is wonderful that the conditions of our existence may wholly change without a seeming strangeness. After many years only vivid snatches of what I saw and heard and did at Temple Bow come back to me. I understood but little the meaning of the seigniorial life there. My chief wonder now is that its golden surface was not more troubled by the winds then brewing. It was a new life to me, one that I had not dreamed of.

After that first falling out, Nick and I became inseparable. Far slower than he in my likes and dislikes, he soon became a passion with me. Even as a boy, he did everything with a grace unsurpassed; the dash and daring of his pranks took one’s breath; his

generosity to those he loved was prodigal. Nor did he ever miss a chance to score those under his displeasure. At times he was reckless beyond words to describe, and again he would fall sober for a day. He could be cruel and tender in the same hour; abandoned and freezing in his dignity. He had an old negro mammy whose worship for him and his possessions was idolatry. I can hear her now calling and calling, “Marse Nick, honey, yo’ supper’s done got cole,” as she searched patiently among the magnolias. And suddenly there would be a shout, and Mammy’s turban go flying from her woolly head, or Mammy herself would be dragged down from behind and sat upon.

We had our supper, Nick and I, at twilight, in the children’s dining room. A little white room, unevenly panelled, the silver candlesticks and yellow flames fantastically reflected in the mirrors between the deep windows, and the moths and June-bugs tilting at the lights. We sat at a little mahogany table eating porridge and cream from round blue bowls, with Mammy to wait on us. Sometimes there floated in upon us the hum of revelry from the great drawing-room where Madame had her company. Often the good Mr. Mason would come in to us (he cared little for the parties), and talk to us of our day’s doings. Nick had his lessons from the clergyman in the winter time.

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Mr. Mason took occasion once to question me on what I knew. Some of my answers, in especial those relating to my knowledge of the Bible, surprised him. Others made him sad.

“David,” said he, “you are an earnest lad, with a head to learn, and you will. When your father comes, I shall talk with him.” He paused—“I knew him,” said he, “I knew him ere you were born. A just man, and upright, but with a great sorrow. We must never be hasty in our judgments. But you will never be hasty, David,” he added, smiling at me. “You are a good companion for Nicholas.”

Nicholas and I slept in the same bedroom, at a corner of the long house, and far removed from his mother. She would not be disturbed by the noise he made in the mornings. I remember that he had cut in the solid shutters of that room, folded into the embrasures, “Nicholas Temple, His Mark,” and a long, flat sword. The first night in that room we slept but little, near the whole of it being occupied with tales of my adventures and of my life in the mountains. Over and over again I must tell him of the “painters” and wildcats, of deer and bear and wolf. Nor was he ever satisfied. And at length I came to speak of that land where I had often lived in fancy—the land beyond the mountains of which Daniel Boone had told. Of its forest and glade, its countless herds of elk and buffalo, its salt-licks and Indians, until we fell asleep from sheer exhaustion.

“I will go there,” he cried in the morning, as he hurried into his clothes; “I will go to that land as sure as my name is Nick Temple. And you shall go with me, David.”

“Perchance I shall go before you,” I answered, though I had small hopes of persuading my father.

He would often make his exit by the window, climbing down into the garden by the protruding bricks at the corner of the house; or sometimes go shouting down the long halls and through the gallery to the great stairway, a smothered oath from behind the closed bedroom doors proclaiming that he had waked a guest. And many days we spent in the wood, playing at hunting game—a poor enough amusement for me, and one that Nick soon tired of. They were thick, wet woods, unlike our woods of the mountains; and more than once we had excitement enough with the snakes that lay there.

I believe that in a week’s time Nick was as conversant with my life as I myself. For he made me tell of it again and again, and of Kentucky. And always as he listened his eyes would glow and his breast heave with excitement.

“Do you think your father will take you there, David, when he comes for you?”

I hoped so, but was doubtful.

“I’ll run away with you,” he declared. “There is no one here who cares for me save Mr. Mason and Mammy.”

And I believe he meant it. He saw but little of his mother, and nearly always something unpleasant was coupled with his views. Sometimes we ran across her in the garden paths walking with a gallant,—oftenest Mr. Riddle. It was a beautiful garden, with hedge-bordered walks and flowers wondrously massed in color, a high brick wall surrounding it. Frequently Mrs. Temple and Mr. Riddle would play at cards there of an afternoon, and when that musical, unbelieving laugh of hers came floating over the wall, Nick would say:—

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“Mamma is winning.”

Once we heard high words between the two, and running into the garden found the cards scattered on the grass, and the couple gone.

Of all Nick’s escapades,—and he was continually in and out of them,—I recall only a few of the more serious. As I have said, he was a wild lad, sobered by none of the things which had gone to make my life, and what he took into his head to do he generally did,—or, if balked, flew into such a rage as to make one believe he could not live. Life was always war with him, or some semblance of a struggle. Of his many wild doings I recall well the time when—fired by my tales of hunting—he went out to attack the young bull in the paddock with a bow and arrow. It made small difference to the bull that the arrow was too blunt to enter his hide. With a bellow that frightened the idle negroes at the slave quarters, he started for Master Nick. I, who had been taught by my father never to run any unnecessary risk, had taken the precaution to provide as large a stone as I could comfortably throw, and took station on the fence. As the furious animal came charging, with his head lowered, I struck him by a good fortune between the eyes, and Nicholas got over. We were standing on the far side, watching him pawing the broken bow, when, in the crowd of frightened negroes, we discovered the parson beside us.

“David,” said he, patting me with a shaking hand, “I perceive that you have a cool head. Our young friend here has a hot one. Dr. Johnson may not care for Scotch blood, and yet I think a wee bit of it is not to be despised.”

I wondered whether Dr. Johnson was staying in the house, too.

How many slaves there were at Temple Bow I know not, but we used to see them coming home at night in droves, the overseers riding beside them with whips and guns. One day a huge Congo chief, not long from Africa, nearly killed an overseer, and escaped to the swamp. As the day fell, we heard the baying of the bloodhounds hot upon his trail. More ominous still, a sound like a rising wind came from the direction of the quarters. Into our little dining-room burst Mrs. Temple herself, slamming the door behind her. Mr. Mason, who was sitting with us, rose to calm her.

“The Rebels!” she cried. “The Rebels have taught them this, with their accursed notions of liberty and equality. We shall all be murdered by the blacks because of the Rebels. Oh, hell-fire is too good for them. Have the house barred and a watch set to-night. What shall we do?”

“I pray you compose yourself, Madame,” said the clergyman. “We can send for the militia.”

“The militia!” she shrieked; “the Rebel militia! They would murder us as soon as the niggers.”

“They are respectable men,” answered Mr. Mason, “and were at Fanning Hall to-day patrolling.”

“I would rather be killed by whites than blacks,” said the lady. “But who is to go for the militia?”

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“I will ride for them,” said Mr. Mason. It was a dark, lowering night, and spitting rain.

“And leave me defenceless!” she cried. “You do not stir, sir.”

“It is a pity,” said Mr. Mason—he was goaded to it, I suppose—“’tis a pity Mr. Riddle did not come to-night.”

She shot at him a withering look, for even in her fear she would brook no liberties. Nick spoke up:—

“I will go,” said he; “I can get through the woods to Fanning Hall—”

“And I will go with him,” I said.

“Let the brats go,” she said, and cut short Mr. Mason’s expostulations. She drew Nick to her and kissed him. He wriggled away, and without more ado we climbed out of the dining-room windows into the night. Running across the lawn, we left the lights of the great house twinkling behind us in the rain. We had to pass the long line of cabins at the quarters. Three overseers with lanterns stood guard there; the cabins were dark, the wretches within silent and cowed. Thence we felt with our feet for the path across the fields, stumbled over a sty, and took our way through the black woods. I was at home here, and Nick was not to be frightened. At intervals the mournful bay of a bloodhound came to us from a distance.

“Suppose we should meet the Congo chief,” said Nick, suddenly.

The idea had occurred to me.

“She needn’t have been so frightened,” said he, in scornful remembrance of his mother’s actions.

We pressed on. Nick knew the path as only a boy can. Half an hour passed. It grew brighter. The rain ceased, and a new moon shot out between the leaves. I seized his arm.

“What’s that?” I whispered.

“A deer.”

But I, cradled in woodcraft, had heard plainly a man creeping through the underbrush beside us. Fear of the Congo chief and pity for the wretch tore at my heart. Suddenly there loomed in front of us, on the path, a great, naked man. We stood with useless limbs, staring at him.

Then, from the trees over our heads, came a chittering and a chattering such as I had never heard. The big man before us dropped to the earth, his head bowed, muttering. As for me, my fright increased. The chattering stopped, and Nick stepped forward and laid his hand on the negro's bare shoulder.

"We needn't be afraid of him now, Davy," he said. "I learned that trick from a Portuguese overseer we had last year."

"You did it!" I exclaimed, my astonishment overcoming my fear.

"It's the way the monkeys chatter in the Canaries," he said. "Manuel had a tame one, and I heard it talk. Once before I tried it on the chief, and he fell down. He thinks I'm a god."

It must have been a weird scene to see the great negro following two boys in the moonlight. Indeed, he came after us like a dog. At length we were in sight of the lights of Fanning Hall. The militia was there. We were challenged by the guard, and caused sufficient amazement when we appeared in the hall before the master, who was a bachelor of fifty.

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"'Sblood, Nick Temple!" he cried, "what are you doing here with that big Congo for a dog? The sight of him frightens me."

The negro, indeed, was a sight to frighten one. The black mud of the swamps was caked on him, and his flesh was torn by brambles.

"He ran away," said Nick; "and I am taking him home."

"You—you are taking him home!" sputtered Mr. Fanning.

"Do you want to see him act?" said Nick. And without waiting for a reply he filled the hall with a dozen monkeys. Mr. Fanning leaped back into a doorway, but the chief prostrated himself on the floor. "Now do you believe I can take him home?" said Nick.

"'Swounds!" said Mr. Fanning, when he had his breath. "You beat the devil, Nicholas Temple. The next time you come to call I pray you leave your travelling show at home."

"Mamma sent me for the militia," said Nick.

"She did!" said Mr. Fanning, looking grim. "An insurrection is a bad thing, but there was no danger for two lads in the woods, I suppose."

"There's no danger anyway," said Nick. "The niggers are all scared to death."

Mr. Fanning burst out into a loud laugh, stopped suddenly, sat down, and took Nick on his knee. It was an incongruous scene. Mr. Fanning almost cried.

"Bless your soul," he said, "but you are a lad. Would to God I had you instead of—"

He paused abruptly.

"I must go home," said Nick; "she will be worried."

"*She* will be worried!" cried Mr. Fanning, in a burst of anger. Then he said: "You shall have the militia. You shall have the militia." He rang a bell and sent his steward for the captain, a gawky country farmer, who gave a gasp when he came upon the scene in the hall.

"And mind," said Nick to the captain, "you are to keep your men away from him, or he will kill one of them."

The captain grinned at him curiously.

"I reckon I won't have to tell them to keep away," said he.

Mr. Fanning started us off for the walk with pockets filled with sweetmeats, which we nibbled on the way back. We made a queer procession, Nick and I striding ahead to show the path, followed by the now servile chief, and after him the captain and his twenty men in single file. It was midnight when we saw the lights of Temple Bow through the trees. One of the tired overseers met us near the kitchen. When he perceived the Congo his face lighted up with rage, and he instinctively reached for his whip. But the chief stood before him, immovable, with arms folded, and a look on his face that meant danger.

“He will kill you, Emory,” said Nick; “he will kill you if you touch him.”

Emory dropped his hand, limply.

“He will go to work in the morning,” said Nick; “but mind you, not a lash.”

“Very good, Master Nick,” said the man; “but who’s to get him in his cabin?”

“I will,” said Nick. He beckoned to the Congo, who followed him over to quarters and went in at his door without a protest.

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The next morning Mrs. Temple looked out of her window and saw the militiamen on the lawn.

“Pooh!” she said, “are those butternuts the soldiers that Nick went to fetch?”

CHAPTER V

CRAM’S HELL

After that my admiration for Nick Temple increased greatly, whether excited by his courage and presence of mind, or his ability to imitate men and women and creatures, I know not. One of our amusements, I recall, was to go to the Congo’s cabin to see him fall on his face, until Mr. Mason put a stop to it. The clergyman let us know that we were encouraging idolatry, and he himself took the chief in hand.

Another incident comes to me from those bygone days. The fear of negro insurrections at the neighboring plantations being temporarily lulled, the gentry began to pluck up courage for their usual amusements. There were to be races at some place a distance away, and Nick was determined to go. Had he not determined that I should go, all would have been well. The evening before he came upon his mother in the garden. Strange to say, she was in a gracious mood and alone.

“Come and kiss me, Nick,” she said. “Now, what do you want?”

“I want to go to the races,” he said.

“You have your pony. You can follow the coach.”

“David is to ride the pony,” said Nick, generously. “May I go in the coach?”

“No,” she said, “there is no room for you.”

Nicholas flared up. “Harry Riddle is going in the coach. I don’t see why you can’t take me sometimes. You like him better than me.”

The lady flushed very red.

“How dare you, Nick!” she cried angrily. “What has Mr. Mason been putting into your head?”

“Nothing,” said Nick, quite as angrily. “Any one can see that you like Harry. And I *will* ride in the coach.”

“You’ll not,” said his mother.

I had heard nothing of this. The next morning he led out his pony from the stables for me to ride, and insisted. And, supposing he was to go in the coach, I put foot in the stirrup. The little beast would scarce stand still for me to mount.

“You’ll not need the whip with her,” said Nick, and led her around by the side of the house, in view of the portico, and stood there at her bridle. Presently, with a great noise and clatter of hoofs, the coach rounded the drive, the powdered negro coachman pulling up the four horses with much ceremony at the door. It was a wondrous great vehicle, the bright colors of its body flashing in the morning light. I had examined it more than once, and with awe, in the coach-house. It had glass windows and a lion on a blue shield on the door, and within it was all salmon silk, save the painted design on the ceiling. Great leather straps held up this house on wheels, to take the jolts of the road. And behind it was a platform. That morning two young negroes with flowing blue coats stood on it. They leaped to the ground when the coach stopped, and stood each side of the door, waiting for my lady to enter.

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She came down the steps, laughing, with Mr. Riddle, who was in his riding clothes, for he was to race that day. He handed her in, and got in after her. The coachman cracked his whip, the coach creaked off down the drive, I in the trees one side waiting for them to pass, and wondering what Nick was to do. He had let go my bridle, folded his whip in his hand, and with a shout of "Come on, Davy," he ran for the coach, which was going slowly, caught hold of the footman's platform, and pulled himself up.

What possessed the footman I know not. Perchance fear of his mistress was greater than fear of his young master; but he took the lad by the shoulders—gently, to be sure—and pushed him into the road, where he fell and rolled over. I guessed what would happen. Picking himself up, Nick was at the man like a hurricane, seizing him swiftly by the leg. The negro fell upon the platform, clutching wildly, where he lay in a sheer fright, shrieking for mercy, his cries rivalled by those of the lady within. The coachman frantically pulled his horses to a stand, the other footman jumped off, and Mr. Harry Riddle came flying out of the coach door, to behold Nicholas beating the negro with his riding-whip.

"You young devil," cried Mr. Riddle, angrily, striding forward, "what are you doing?"

"Keep off, Harry," said Nicholas. "I am teaching this nigger that he is not to lay hands on his betters." With that he gave the boy one more cut, and turned from him contemptuously.

"What is it, Harry?" came in a shrill voice from within the coach.

"It's Nick's pranks," said Mr. Riddle, grinning in spite of his anger; "he's ruined one of your footmen. You little scoundrel," cried Mr. Riddle, advancing again, "you've frightened your mother nearly to a swoon."

"Serves her right," said Nick.

"What!" cried Mr. Riddle. "Come down from there instantly."

Nick raised his whip. It was not that that stopped Mr. Riddle, but a sign about the lad's nostrils.

"Harry Riddle," said the boy, "if it weren't for you, I'd be riding in this coach to-day with my mother. I don't want to ride with her, but I will go to the races. If you try to take me down, I'll do my best to kill you," and he lifted the loaded end of the whip.

Mrs. Temple's beautiful face had by this time been thrust out of the door.

"For the love of heaven, Harry, let him come in with us. We're late enough as it is."

Mr. Riddle turned on his heel. He tried to glare at Nick, but he broke into a laugh instead.

“Come down, Satan,” says he. “God help the woman you love and the man you fight.”

And so Nicholas jumped down, and into the coach. The footman picked himself up, more scared than injured, and the vehicle took its lumbering way for the race-course, I following.

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I have seen many courses since, but none to equal that in the gorgeous dress of those who watched. There had been many, many more in former years, so I heard people say. This was the only sign that a war was in progress,—the scanty number of gentry present,—for all save the indifferent were gone to Charlestown or elsewhere. I recall it dimly, as a blaze of color passing: merrymaking, jesting, feasting,—a rare contrast, I thought, to the sight I had beheld in Charlestown Bay but a while before. Yet so runs the world,—strife at one man's home, and peace and contentment at his neighbor's; sorrow here, and rejoicing not a league away.

Master Nicholas played one prank that evening that was near to costing dear. My lady Temple made up a party for Temple Bow at the course, two other coaches to come and some gentlemen riding. As Nick and I were running through the paddock we came suddenly upon Mr. Harry Riddle and a stout, swarthy gentleman standing together. The stout gentleman was counting out big gold pieces in his hand and giving them to Mr. Riddle.

"Lucky dog!" said the stout gentleman; "you'll ride back with her, and you've won all I've got." And he dug Mr. Riddle in the ribs.

"You'll have it again when we play to-night, Darnley," answered Mr. Riddle, crossly. "And as for the seat in the coach, you are welcome to it. That firebrand of a lad is on the front seat."

"D—n the lad," said the stout gentleman. "I'll take it, and you can ride my horse. He'll —he'll carry you, I reckon." His voice had a way of cracking into a mellow laugh.

At that Mr. Riddle went off in a towering bad humor, and afterwards I heard him cursing the stout gentleman's black groom as he mounted his great horse. And then he cursed the horse as it reared and plunged, while the stout gentleman stood at the coach door, cackling at his discomfiture. The gentleman did ride home with Mrs. Temple, Nick going into another coach. I afterwards discovered that the gentleman had bribed him with a guinea. And Mr. Riddle more than once came near running down my pony on his big charger, and he swore at me roundly, too.

That night there was a gay supper party in the big dining room at Temple Bow. Nick and I looked on from the gallery window. It was a pretty sight. The long mahogany board reflecting the yellow flames of the candles, and spread with bright silver and shining dishes loaded with dainties, the gentlemen and ladies in brilliant dress, the hurrying servants,—all were of a new and strange world to me. And presently, after the ladies were gone, the gentlemen tossed off their wine and roared over their jokes, and followed into the drawing-room. This I noticed, that only Mr. Harry Riddle sat silent and morose, and that he had drunk more than the others.

"Come, Davy," said Nick to me, "let's go and watch them again."

“But how?” I asked, for the drawing-room windows were up some distance from the ground, and there was no gallery on that side.

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“I’ll show you,” said he, running into the garden. After searching awhile in the dark, he found a ladder the gardener had left against a tree; after much straining, we carried the ladder to the house and set it up under one of the windows of the drawing-room. Then we both clambered cautiously to the top and looked in.

The company were at cards, silent, save for a low remark now and again. The little tables were ranged along by the windows, and it chanced that Mr. Harry Riddle sat so close to us that we could touch him. On his right sat Mr. Darnley, the stout gentleman, and in the other seats two ladies. Between Mr. Riddle and Mr. Darnley was a pile of silver and gold pieces. There was not room for two of us in comfort at the top of the ladder, so I gave place to Nick, and sat on a lower rung. Presently I saw him raise himself, reach in, and duck quickly.

“Feel that,” he whispered to me, chuckling and holding out his hand.

It was full of money.

“But that’s stealing, Nick,” I said, frightened.

“Of course I’ll give it back,” he whispered indignantly.

Instantly there came loud words and the scraping of chairs within the room, and a woman’s scream. I heard Mr. Riddle’s voice say thickly, amid the silence that followed:—

“Mr. Darnley, you’re a d—d thief, sir.”

“You shall answer for this, when you are sober, sir,” said Mr. Darnley.

Then there came more scraping of chairs, all the company talking excitedly at once. Nick and I scrambled to the ground, and we did the very worst thing we could possibly have done,—we took the ladder away.

There was little sleep for me that night. I had first of all besought Nick to go up into the drawing-room and give the money back. But some strange obstinacy in him resisted.

“’Twill serve Harry well for what he did to-day,” said he.

My next thought was to find Mr. Mason, but he was gone up the river to visit a sick parishioner. I had seen enough of the world to know that gentlemen fought for less than what had occurred in the drawing-room that evening. And though I had neither love nor admiration for Mr. Riddle, and though the stout gentleman was no friend of mine, I cared not to see either of them killed for a prank. But Nick would not listen to me, and went to sleep in the midst of my urgings.

“Davy,” said he, pinching me, “do you know what you are?”

“No,” said I.

“You’re a granny,” he said. And that was the last word I could get out of him. But I lay awake a long time, thinking. Breed had whiled away for me one hot morning in Charlestown with an account of the gentry and their doings, many of which he related in an awed whisper that I could not understand. They were wild doings indeed to me. But strangest of all seemed the duels, conducted with a decorum and ceremony as rigorous as the law.

“Did you ever see a duel, Breed?” I had asked.

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“Yessah,” said Breed, dramatically, rolling the whites of his eyes.

“Where?”

“Whah? Down on de riveh bank at Temple Bow in de ea’ly mo’nin’! Dey mos’ commonly fights at de dawn.”

Breed had also told me where he was in hiding at the time, and that was what troubled me. Try as I would, I could not remember. It had sounded like Clam Shell. That I recalled, and how Breed had looked out at the sword-play through the cracks of the closed shutters, agonized between fear of ghosts within and the drama without. At the first faint light that came into our window I awakened Nick.

“Listen,” I said; “do you know a place called Clam Shell?”

He turned over, but I punched him persistently until he sat up.

“What the deuce ails you, Davy?” he asked, rubbing his eyes. “Have you nightmare?”

“Do you know a place called Clam Shell, down on the river bank, Nick?”

“Why,” he replied, “you must be thinking of Cram’s Hell.”

“What’s that?” I asked.

“It’s a house that used to belong to Cram, who was an overseer. The niggers hated him, and he was killed in bed by a big black nigger chief from Africa. The niggers won’t go near the place. They say it’s haunted.”

“Get up,” said I; “we’re going there now.”

Nick sprang out of bed and began to get into his clothes.

“Is it a game?” he asked.

“Yes.” He was always ready for a game.

We climbed out of the window, and made our way in the mist through the long, wet grass, Nick leading. He took a path through a dark forest swamp, over logs that spanned the stagnant waters, and at length, just as the mist was growing pearly in the light, we came out at a tumble-down house that stood in an open glade by the river’s bank.

“What’s to do now?” said Nick.

“We must get into the house,” I answered. But I confess I didn’t care for the looks of it.

Nick stared at me.

“Very good, Davy,” he said; “I’ll follow where you go.”

It was a Saturday morning. Why I recall this I do not know. It has no special significance.

I tried the door. With a groan and a shriek it gave way, disclosing the blackness inside. We started back involuntarily. I looked at Nick, and Nick at me. He was very pale, and so must I have been. But such was the respect we each held for the other’s courage that neither dared flinch. And so I walked in, although it seemed as if my shirt was made of needle points and my hair stood on end. The crackings of the old floor were to me like the shots in Charlestown Bay. Our hearts beating wildly, we made our way into a farther room. It was like walking into the beyond.

“Is there a window here?” I asked Nick, my voice sounding like a shout.

“Yes, ahead of us.”

Groping for it, I suddenly received a shock that set me reeling. Human nature could stand no more. We both turned tail and ran out of the house as fast as we could, and stood in the wet grass, panting. Then shame came.

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“Let’s open the window first,” I suggested. So we walked around the house and pried the solid shutter from its fastenings. Then, gathering our courage, we went in again at the door. In the dim light let into the farther room we saw a four-poster bed, old and cheap, with ragged curtains. It was this that I had struck in my groping.

“The chief killed Cram there,” said Nick, in an awed voice, “in that bed. What do you want to do here, Davy?”

“Wait,” I said, though I had as little mind to wait as ever in my life. “Stand here by the window.”

We waited there. The mist rose. The sun peeped over the bank of dense green forest and spread rainbow colors on the still waters of the river. Now and again a fish broke, or a great bird swooped down and slit the surface. A far-off snatch of melody came to our ears,—the slaves were going to work. Nothing more. And little by little grave misgivings gnawed at my soul of the wisdom of coming to this place. Doubtless there were many other spots.

“Davy,” said Nick, at last, “I’m sorry I took that money. What are we here for?”

“Hush!” I whispered; “do you hear anything?”

I did, and distinctly. For I had been brought up in the forest.

“I hear voices,” he said presently, “coming this way.”

They were very clear to me by then. Emerging from the forest path were five gentlemen. The leader, more plainly dressed than the others, carried a leather case. Behind him was the stout figure of Mr. Darnley, his face solemn; and last of all came Mr. Harry Riddle, very pale, but cutting the tops of the long grass with a switch. Nick seized my arm.

“They are going to fight,” said he.

“Yes,” I replied, “and we are here to stop them, now.”

“No, not now,” he said, holding me still. “We’ll have some more fun out of this yet.”

“Fun?” I echoed.

“Yes,” he said excitedly. “Leave it to me. I shan’t let them fight.”

And that instant we changed generals, David giving place to Nicholas.

Mr. Riddle retired with one gentleman to a side of the little patch of grass, and Mr. Darnley and a friend to another. The fifth gentleman took a position halfway between the two, and, opening the leather case, laid it down on the grass, where its contents glistened.

“That’s Dr. Ball,” whispered Nick. And his voice shook with excitement.

Mr. Riddle stripped off his coat and waistcoat and ruffles, and his sword-belt, and Mr. Darnley did the same. Both gentlemen drew their swords and advanced to the middle of the lawn, and stood opposite one another, with flowing linen shirts open at the throat, and bared heads. They were indeed a contrast. Mr. Riddle, tall and white, with closed lips, glared at his opponent. Mr. Darnley cut a merrier figure,—rotund and flushed, with fat calves and short arms, though his countenance was sober enough. All at once the two were circling their swords in the air, and then Nick had flung open the shutter and leaped through the window, and was running and shouting towards the astonished gentlemen, all of whom wheeled to face him. He jingled as he ran.

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“What in the devil’s name now?” cried Mr. Riddle, angrily. “Here’s this imp again.”

Nicholas stopped in front of him, and, thrusting his hand in his breeches pocket, fished out a handful of gold and silver, which he held out to the confounded Mr. Riddle.

“Harry,” said he, “here’s something of yours I found last night.”

“You found?” echoed Mr. Riddle, in a strange voice, amidst a dead silence. “You found where?”

“On the table beside you.”

“And where the deuce were you?” Mr. Riddle demanded.

“In the window behind you,” said Nick, calmly.

This piece of information, to Mr. Riddle’s plain discomfiture, was greeted with a roar of laughter, Mr. Darnley himself laughing loudest. Nor were these gentlemen satisfied with that. They crowded around Mr. Riddle and slapped him on the back, Mr. Darnley joining in with the rest. And presently Mr. Riddle flung away his sword, and laughed, too, giving his hand to Mr. Darnley.

At length Mr. Darnley turned to Nick, who had stood all this while behind them, unmoved.

“My friend,” said he, seriously, “such is your regard for human life, you will probably one day—be a pirate or an outlaw. This time we’ve had a laugh. The next time somebody will be weeping. I wish I were your father.”

“I wish you were,” said Nick.

This took Mr. Darnley’s breath. He glanced at the other gentlemen, who returned his look significantly. He laid his hand kindly on the lad’s head.

“Nick,” said he, “I wish to God I were your father.”

After that they all went home, very merry, to breakfast, Nick and I coming after them. Nick was silent until we reached the house.

“Davy,” said he, then, “how old are you?”

“Ten,” I answered. “How old did you believe me?”

“Eighty,” said he.

The next day, being Sunday, we all gathered in the little church to hear Mr. Mason preach. Nick and I sat in the high box pew of the family with Mrs. Temple, who paid not the least attention to the sermon. As for me, the rhythm of it held me in fascination. Mr. Mason had written it out and that afternoon read over this part of it to Nick. The quotation I recall, having since read it many times, and the gist of it was in this wise:—

“And he said unto him, ’What thou wilt have thou wilt have, despite the sin of it. Blessed are the stolid, and thrice cursed he who hath imagination,—for that imagination shall devour him. And in thy life a sin shall be presented unto thee with a great longing. God, who is in heaven, gird thee for that struggle, my son, for it will surely come. That it may be said of you, “Behold, I have refined thee, but not with silver, I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction.” Seven days shalt thou wrestle with thy soul; seven nights shall evil haunt thee, and how thou shalt come forth from that struggle no man may know.’”

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CHAPTER VI

MAN PROPOSES, BUT GOD DISPOSES

A week passed, and another Sunday came,—a Sunday so still and hot and moist that steam seemed to rise from the heavy trees,—an idle day for master and servant alike. A hush was in the air, and a presage of we knew not what. It weighed upon my spirits, and even Nick's, and we wandered restlessly under the trees, seeking for distraction.

About two o'clock a black line came on the horizon, and slowly crept higher until it broke into giant, fantastic shapes. Mutterings arose, but the sun shone hot as ever.

"We're to have a hurricane," said Nick. "I wish we might have it and be done with it."

At five the sun went under. I remember that Madame was lolling listless in the garden, daintily arrayed in fine linen, trying to talk to Mr. Mason, when a sound startled us. It was the sound of swift hoof beats on the soft drive.

Mrs. Temple got up, an unusual thing. Perchance she was expecting a message from some of the gentlemen; or else she may well have been tired of Mr. Mason. Nick and I were before her, and, running through the house, arrived at the portico in time to see a negro ride up on a horse covered with lather.

It was the same negro who had fetched me hither from Mr. Lowndes. And when I saw him my heart stood still lest he had brought news of my father.

"What's to do, boy?" cried Nicholas to him.

The boy held in his hand a letter with a great red seal.

"Fo' Mistis Temple," he said, and, looking at me queerly, he took off his cap as he jumped from the horse. Mistress Temple herself having arrived, he handed her the letter. She took it, and broke the seal carelessly.

"Oh," she said, "it's only from Mr. Lowndes. I wonder what he wishes now."

Every moment of her reading was for me an agony, and she read slowly. The last words she spoke aloud:—

"'If you do not wish the lad, send him to me, as Kate is very fond of him.' So Kate is very fond of him," she repeated. And handing the letter to Mr. Mason, she added, "Tell him, Parson."

The words burned into my soul and seared it. And to this day I tremble with anger as I think of them. The scene comes before me: the sky, the darkened portico, and Nicholas running after his mother crying: "Oh, mamma, how could you! How could you!"

Mr. Mason bent over me in compassion, and smoothed my hair.

"David," said he, in a thick voice, "you are a brave boy, David. You will need all your courage now, my son. May God keep your nature sweet!"

He led me gently into the arbor and told me how, under Captain Baskin, the detachment had been ambushed by the Cherokees; and how my father, with Ensign Calhoun and another, had been killed, fighting bravely. The rest of the company had cut their way through and reached the settlements after terrible hardships.

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I was left an orphan.

I shall not dwell here on the bitterness of those moments. We have all known sorrows in our lives,—great sorrows. The clergyman was a wise man, and did not strive to comfort me with words. But he sat there under the leaves with his arm about me until a blinding bolt split the blackness of the sky and the thunder rent our ears, and a Caribbean storm broke over Temple Bow with all the fury of the tropics. Then he led me through the drenching rain into the house, nor heeded the wet himself on his Sunday coat.

A great anger stayed me in my sorrow. I would no longer tarry under Mrs. Temple's roof, though the world without were a sea or a desert. The one resolution to escape rose stronger and stronger within me, and I determined neither to eat nor sleep until I had got away. The thought of leaving Nick was heavy indeed; and when he ran to me in the dark hall and threw his arms around me, it needed all my strength to keep from crying aloud.

"Davy," he said passionately, "Davy, you mustn't mind what she says. She never means anything she says—she never cares for anything save her pleasure. You and I will stay here until we are old enough to run away to Kentucky. Davy! Answer me, Davy!"

I could not, try as I would. There were no words that would come with honesty. But I pulled him down on the mahogany settle near the door which led into the back gallery, and there we sat huddled together in silence, while the storm raged furiously outside and the draughts banged the great doors of the house. In the lightning flashes I saw Nick's face, and it haunted me afterwards through many years of wandering. On it was written a sorrow for me greater than my own sorrow. For God had given to this lad every human passion and compassion.

The storm rolled away with the night, and Mammy came through the hall with a candle.

"Whah is you, Marse Nick? Whah is you, honey? You' suppah's ready."

And so we went into our little dining room, but I would not eat. The good old negress brushed her eyes with her apron as she pressed a cake upon me she had made herself, for she had grown fond of me. And presently we went away silently to bed.

It was a long, long time before Nick's breathing told me that he was asleep. He held me tightly clutched to him, and I know that he feared I would leave him. The thought of going broke my heart, but I never once wavered in my resolve, and I lay staring into the darkness, pondering what to do. I thought of good Mr. Lowndes and his wife, and I decided to go to Charlestown. Some of my boyish motives come back to me now: I should be near Nick; and even at that age,—having lived a life of self-reliance,—I

thought of gaining an education and of rising to a place of trust. Yes, I would go to Mr. Lowndes, and ask him to let me work for him and so earn my education.

With a heavy spirit I crept out of bed, slowly disengaging Nick's arm lest he should wake. He turned over and sighed in his sleep. Carefully I dressed myself, and after I was dressed I could not refrain from slipping to the bedside to bend over him once again,—for he was the only one in my life with whom I had found true companionship. Then I climbed carefully out of the window, and so down the corner of the house to the ground.

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It was starlight, and a waning moon hung in the sky. I made my way through the drive between the black shadows of the forest, and came at length to the big gates at the entrance, locked for the night. A strange thought of their futility struck me as I climbed the rail fence beside them, and pushed on into the main road, the mud sucking under my shoes as I went. As I try now to cast my memory back I can recall no fear, only a vast sense of loneliness, and the very song of it seemed to be sung in never ending refrain by the insects of the night. I had been alone in the mountains before. I have crossed great strips of wilderness since, but always there was love to go back to. Then I was leaving the only being in the world that remained to me.

I must have walked two hours or more before I came to the mire of a cross-road, and there I stood in a quandary of doubt as to which side led to Charlestown.

As I lingered a light began to tremble in the heavens. A cock crew in the distance. I sat down on a fallen log to rest. But presently, as the light grew, I heard shouts which drew nearer and deeper and brought me to my feet in an uncertainty of expectation. Next came the rattling of chains, the scramble of hoofs in the mire, and here was a wagon with a big canvas cover. Beside the straining horses was a great, burly man with a red beard, cracking his long whip, and calling to the horses in a strange tongue. He stopped still beside his panting animals when he saw me, his high boots sunk in the mud.

“Gut morning, poy,” he said, wiping his red face with his sleeve; “what you do here?”

“I am going to Charlestown,” I answered.

“Ach!” he cried, “dot is pad. Mein poy, he run avay. You are ein gut poy, I know. I vill pay ein gut price to help me vit mein wagon—ja.”

“Where are you going?” I demanded, with a sudden wavering.

“Up country—pack country. You know der Proad River—yes?”

No, I did not. But a longing came upon me for the old backwoods life, with its freedom and self-reliance, and a hatred for this steaming country of heat and violent storms, and artificiality and pomp. And I had a desire, even at that age, to make my own way in the world.

“What will you give me?” I asked.

At that he put his finger to his nose.

“Thruppence py the day.”

I shook my head. He looked at me queerly.

“How old you pe,—twelve, yes?”

Now I had no notion of telling him. So I said: “Is this the Charlestown road?”

“Fourpence!” he cried, “dot is riches.”

“I will go for sixpence,” I answered.

“Mein Gott!” he cried, “sixpence. Dot is robbery.” But seeing me obdurate, he added: “I vill give it, because ein poy I must have. Vat is your name,—Tavid? You are ein sharp poy, Tavid.”

And so I went with him.

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In writing a biography, the relative value of days and years should hold. There are days which count in space for years, and years for days. I spent the time on the whole happily with this Dutchman, whose name was Hans Koppel. He talked merrily save when he spoke of the war against England, and then contemptuously, for he was a bitter English partisan. And in contrast to this he would dwell for hours on a king he called Friedrich der Grosse, and a war he waged that was a war; and how this mighty king had fought a mighty queen at Rossbach and Leuthen in his own country,—battles that were battles.

“And you were there, Hans?” I asked him once.

“Ja,” he said, “but I did not stay.”

“You ran away?”

“Ja,” Hans would answer, laughing, “run avay. I love peace, Tavid. Dot is vy I come here, and now,” bitterly, “and now ve haf var again once.”

I would say nothing; but I must have looked my disapproval, for he went on to explain that in Saxe-Gotha, where he was born, men were made to fight whether they would or no; and they were stolen from their wives at night by soldiers of the great king, or lured away by fair promises.

Travelling with incredible slowness, in due time we came to a county called Orangeburg, where all were Dutchmen like Hans, and very few spoke English. And they all thought like Hans, and loved peace, and hated the Congress. On Sundays, as we lay over at the taverns, these would be filled with a rollicking crowd of fiddlers and dancers, quaintly dressed, the women bringing their children and babies. At such times Hans would be drunk, and I would have to feed the tired horses and mount watch over the cargo. I had many adventures, but none worth the telling here. And at length we came to Hans’s farm, in a prettily rolling country on the Broad River. Hans’s wife spoke no English at all, nor did the brood of children running about the house. I had small fancy for staying in such a place, and so Hans paid me two crowns for my three weeks’ service; I think, with real regret, for labor was scarce in those parts, and though I was young, I knew how to work. And I could at least have guided his plough in the furrow and cared for his cattle.

It was the first money I had earned in my life, and a prouder day than many I have had since.

For the convenience of travellers passing that way, Hans kept a tavern,—if it could have been dignified by such a name. It was in truth merely a log house with shakedowns, and stood across the rude road from his log farmhouse. And he gave me leave to sleep there and to work for my board until I cared to leave. It so chanced that on the second day after my arrival a pack-train came along, guided by a nettlesome old man and a

strong, black-haired lass of sixteen or thereabouts. The old man, whose name was Ripley, wore a nut-brown hunting shirt trimmed with red cotton; and he had no sooner slipped the packs from his horses than he began to rail at Hans, who stood looking on.

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“You damned Dutchmen be all Tories, and worse,” he cried; “you stay here and till your farms while our boys are off in the hill towns fighting Cherokees. I wish the devils had every one of your fat sculps. Polly Ann, water the nags.”

Hans replied to this sally with great vigor, lapsing into Dutch. Polly Ann led the scrawny ponies to the trough, but her eyes snapped with merriment as she listened. She was a wonderfully comely lass, despite her loose cotton gown and poke-bonnet and the shoepacks on her feet. She had blue eyes, the whitest, strongest of teeth, and the rosiest of faces.

“Gran’pa hates a Dutchman wuss’n pizen,” she said to me. “So do I. We’ve all been burned out and sculped up river—and they never give us so much as a man or a measure of corn.”

I helped her feed the animals, and tether them, and loose their bells for the night, and carry the packs under cover.

“All the boys is gone to join Rutherford and lam the Indians,” she continued, “so Gran’pa and I had to go to the settlements. There wahn’t any one else. What’s your name?” she demanded suddenly.

I told her.

She sat down on a log at the corner of the house, and pulled me down beside her.

“And whar be you from?”

I told her. It was impossible to look into her face and not tell her. She listened eagerly, now with compassion, and now showing her white teeth in amusement. And when I had done, much to my discomfiture, she seized me in her strong arms and kissed me.

“Poor Davy,” she cried, “you ain’t got a home. You shall come home with us.”

Catching me by the hand, she ran like a deer across the road to where her grandfather was still quarrelling violently with Hans, and pulled him backward by the skirts of his hunting shirt. I looked for another and mightier explosion from the old backwoodsman, but to my astonishment he seemed to forget Hans’s existence, and turned and smiled on her benevolently.

“Polly Ann,” said he, “what be you about now?”

“Gran’pa,” said she, “here’s Davy Trimble, who’s a good boy, and his pa is just killed by the Cherokees along with Baskin, and he wants work and a home, and he’s comin’ along with us.”

“All right, David,” answered Mr. Ripley, mildly, “ef Polly Ann says so, you kin come. Whar was you raised?”

I told him on the upper Yadkin.

“You don’t tell me,” said he. “Did ye ever know Dan’l Boone?”

“I did, indeed, sir,” I answered, my face lighting up. “Can you tell me where he is now?”

“He’s gone to Kaintuckee, them new settlements, fer good. And ef I wasn’t eighty years old, I’d go thar, too.”

“I reckon I’ll go thar when I’m married,” said Polly Ann, and blushed redder than ever. Drawing me to her, she said, “I’ll take you, too, Davy.”

“When you marry that wuthless Tom McChesney,” said her grandfather, testily.

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“He’s not wuthless,” said Polly hotly, “he’s the best man in Rutherford’s army. He’ll git more sculps then any of ’em,—you see.”

“Tavy is ein gut poy,” Hans put in, for he had recovered his composure. “I wish much he stay mit me.”

As for me, Polly Ann never consulted me on the subject—nor had she need to. I would have followed her to kingdom come, and at the thought of reaching the mountains my heart leaped with joy. We all slept in the one flea-infested, windowless room of the “tavern” that night; and before dawn I was up and untethered the horses, and Polly Ann and I together lifted the two bushels of alum salt on one of the beasts and the ploughshare on the other. By daylight we had left Hans and his farm forever.

I can see the lass now, as she strode along the trace by the flowing river, through sunlight and shadow, straight and supple and strong. Sometimes she sang like a bird, and the forest rang. Sometimes she would make fun of her grandfather or of me; and again she would be silent for an hour at a time, staring ahead, and then I knew she was thinking of that Tom McChesney. She would wake from those reveries with a laugh, and give me a push to send me rolling down a bank.

“What’s the matter, Davy? You look as solemn as a wood-owl. What a little wiseacre you be!”

Once I retorted, “You were thinking of that Tom McChesney.”

“Ay, that she was, I’ll warrant,” snapped her grandfather.

Polly Ann replied, with a merry peal of laughter, “You are both jealous of Tom—both of you. But, Davy, when you see him you’ll love him as much as I do.”

“I’ll not,” I said sturdily.

“He’s a man to look upon—”

“He’s a rip-roarer,” old man Ripley put in. “Ye’re daft about him.”

“That I am,” said Polly, flushing and subsiding; “but he’ll not know it.”

As we rose into the more rugged country we passed more than one charred cabin that told its silent story of Indian massacre. Only on the scattered hill farms women and boys and old men were working in the fields, all save the scalawags having gone to join Rutherford. There were plenty of these around the taverns to make eyes at Polly Ann and open love to her, had she allowed them; but she treated them in return to such scathing tirades that they were glad to desist—all but one. He must have been an

escaped redemptioner, for he wore jauntily a swanskin three-cornered hat and stained breeches of a fine cloth. He was a bold, vain fellow.

“My beauty,” says he, as we sat at supper, “silver and Wedgwood better become you than pewter and a trencher.”

“And I reckon a rope would sit better on your neck than a ruff,” retorted Polly Ann, while the company shouted with laughter. But he was not the kind to become discomfited.

“I’d give a guinea to see you in silk. But I vow your hair looks better as it is.”

“Not so yours,” said she, like lightning; “’twould look better to me hanging on the belt of one of them red devils.”

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In the morning, when he would have lifted the pack of alum salt, Polly Ann gave him a push that sent him sprawling. But she did it in such good nature withal that the fellow mistook her. He scrambled to his feet, flung his arm about her waist, and kissed her. Whereupon I hit him with a sapling, and he staggered and let her go.

“You imp of hell!” he cried, rubbing the bump. He made a vicious dash at me that boded no good, but I slipped behind the hominy block; and Polly Ann, who was like a panther on her feet, dashed at him and gave him a buffet in the cheek that sent him reeling again.

After that we were more devoted friends than ever.

We travelled slowly, day by day, until I saw the mountains lift blue against the western sky, and the sight of them was like home once more. I loved them; and though I thought with sadness of my father, I was on the whole happier with Polly Ann than I had been in the lonely cabin on the Yadkin. Her spirits flagged a little as she drew near home, but old Mr. Ripley’s rose.

“There’s Burr’s,” he would say, “and O’Hara’s and Williamson’s,” marking the cabins set amongst the stump-dotted corn-fields. “And thar,” sweeping his hand at a blackened heap of logs lying on the stones, “thar’s whar Nell Tyler and her baby was sculped.”

“Poor Nell,” said Polly Ann, the tears coming into her eyes as she turned away.

“And Jim Tyler was killed gittin’ to the fort. He can’t say I didn’t warn him.”

“I reckon he’ll never say nuthin’, now,” said Polly Ann.

It was in truth a dismal sight,—the shapeless timbers, the corn, planted with such care, choked with weeds, and the poor utensils of the little family scattered and broken before the door-sill. These same Indians had killed my father; and there surged up in my breast that hatred of the painted race felt by every backwoods boy in my time.

Towards the end of the day the trace led into a beautiful green valley, and in the middle of it was a stream shining in the afternoon sun. Then Polly Ann fell entirely silent. And presently, as the shadows grew purple, we came to a cabin set under some spreading trees on a knoll where a woman sat spinning at the door, three children playing at her feet. She stared at us so earnestly that I looked at Polly Ann, and saw her redden and pale. The children were the first to come shouting at us, and then the woman dropped her wool and ran down the slope straight into Polly Ann’s arms. Mr. Ripley halted the horses with a grunt.

The two women drew off and looked into each other’s faces. Then Polly Ann dropped her eyes.

“Have ye—?” she said, and stopped.

“No, Polly Ann, not one word sence Tom and his Pa went. What do folks say in the settlements?”

Polly Ann turned up her nose.

“They don’t know nuthin’ in the settlements,” she replied.

“I wrote to Tom and told him you was gone,” said the older woman. “I knowed he’d wanter hear.”

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And she looked meaningly at Polly Ann, who said nothing. The children had been pulling at the girl's skirts, and suddenly she made a dash at them. They scattered, screaming with delight, and she after them.

"Howdy, Mr. Ripley?" said the woman, smiling a little.

"Howdy, Mis' McChesney?" said the old man, shortly.

So this was the mother of Tom, of whom I had heard so much. She was, in truth, a motherly-looking person, her fleshy face creased with strong character.

"Who hev ye brought with ye?" she asked, glancing at me.

"A lad Polly Ann took a shine to in the settlements," said the old man. "Polly Ann! Polly Ann!" he cried sharply, "we'll hev to be gittin' home." And then, as though an afterthought (which it really was not), he added, "How be ye for salt, Mis' McChesney?"

"So-so," said she.

"Wal, I reckon a little might come handy," said he. And to the girl who stood panting beside him, "Polly, give Mis' McChesney some salt."

Polly Ann did, and generously,—the salt they had carried with so much labor threescore and ten miles from the settlements. Then we took our departure, the girl turning for one last look at Tom's mother, and at the cabin where he had dwelt. We were all silent the rest of the way, climbing the slender trail through the forest over the gap into the next valley. For I was jealous of Tom. I am not ashamed to own it now.

In the smoky haze that rises just before night lets her curtain fall, we descended the farther slope, and came to Mr. Ripley's cabin.

CHAPTER VII

IN SIGHT OF THE BLUE WALL ONCE MORE

Polly Ann lived alone with her grandfather, her father and mother having been killed by Indians some years before. There was that bond between us, had we needed one. Her father had built the cabin, a large one with a loft and a ladder climbing to it, and a sleeping room and a kitchen. The cabin stood on a terrace that nature had levelled, looking across a swift and shallow stream towards the mountains. There was the truck patch, with its yellow squashes and melons, and cabbages and beans, where Polly Ann and I worked through the hot mornings; and the corn patch, with the great stumps of the primeval trees standing in it. All around us the silent forest threw its encircling arms,

spreading up the slopes, higher and higher, to crown the crests with the little pines and hemlocks and balsam fir.

There had been no meat save bacon since the McChesneys had left, for of late game had become scarce, and old Mr. Ripley was too feeble to go on the long hunts. So one day, when Polly Ann was gone across the ridge, I took down the long rifle from the buckhorns over the hearth, and the hunting knife and powder-horn and pouch beside it, and trudged up the slope to a game trail I discovered. All day I waited, until the forest light grew gray, when a buck came and stood over the water, raising his head and stamping from time to time. I took aim in the notch of a sapling, brought him down, cleaned and skinned and dragged him into the water, and triumphantly hauled one of his hams down the trail. Polly Ann gave a cry of joy when she saw me.

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“Davy,” she exclaimed, “little Davy, I reckoned you was gone away from us. Gran’pa, here is Davy back, and he has shot a deer.”

“You don’t say?” replied Mr. Ripley, surveying me and my booty with a grim smile.

“How could you, Gran’pa?” said Polly Ann, reproachfully.

“Wal,” said Mr. Ripley, “the gun was gone, an’ Davy. I reckon he ain’t sich a little rascal after all.”

Polly Ann and I went up the next day, and brought the rest of the buck merrily homeward. After that I became the hunter of the family; but oftener than not I returned tired and empty-handed, and ravenously hungry. Indeed, our chief game was rattlesnakes, which we killed by the dozens in the corn and truck patches.

As Polly Ann and I went about our daily chores, we would talk of Tom McChesney. Often she would sit idle at the hand-mill, a light in her eyes that I would have given kingdoms for. One ever memorable morning, early in the crisp autumn, a grizzled man strode up the trail, and Polly Ann dropped the ear of corn she was husking and stood still, her bosom heaving. It was Mr. McChesney, Tom’s father—alone.

“No, Polly Ann,” he cried, “there ain’t nuthin’ happened. We’ve laid out the hill towns. But the Virginna men wanted a guide, and Tom volunteered, and so he ain’t come back with Rutherford’s boys.”

Polly Ann seized him by the shoulders, and looked him in the face.

“Be you tellin’ the truth, Warner McChesney?” she said in a hard voice.

“As God hears me,” said Warner McChesney, solemnly. “He sent ye this.”

He drew from the bosom of his hunting shirt a soiled piece of birch bark, scrawled over with rude writing. Polly seized it, and flew into the house.

The hickories turned a flaunting yellow, the oaks a copper-red, the leaves crackled on the Catawba vines, and still Tom McChesney did not come. The Cherokees were homeless and houseless and subdued,—their hill towns burned, their corn destroyed, their squaws and children wanderers. One by one the men of the Grape Vine settlement returned to save what they might of their crops, and plough for the next year—Burrs, O’Haras, Williamsons, and Winns. Yes, Tom had gone to guide the Virginia boys. All had tales to tell of his prowess, and how he had saved Rutherford’s men from ambush at the risk of his life. To all of which Polly Ann listened with conscious pride, and replied with sallies.

“I reckon I don’t care if he never comes back,” she would cry. “If he likes the Virginny boys more than me, there be others here I fancy more than him.”

Whereupon the informant, if he were not bound in matrimony, would begin to make eyes at Polly Ann. Or, if he were bolder, and went at the wooing in the more demonstrative fashion of the backwoods—Polly Ann had a way of hitting him behind the ear with most surprising effect.

One windy morning when the leaves were kiting over the valley we were getting ready for pounding hominy, when a figure appeared on the trail. Steadying the hood of her sunbonnet with her hand, the girl gazed long and earnestly, and a lump came into my throat at the thought that the comer might be Tom McChesney. Polly Ann sat down at the block again in disgust.

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“It’s only Chauncey Dike,” she said.

“Who’s Chauncey Dike?” I asked.

“He reckons he’s a buck,” was all that Polly Ann vouchsafed.

Chauncey drew near with a strut. He had very long black hair, a new coonskin cap with a long tassel, and a new blue-fringed hunting shirt. What first caught my eye was a couple of withered Indian scalps that hung by their long locks from his girdle. Chauncey Dike was certainly handsome.

“Wal, Polly Ann, are ye tired of hanging out fer Tom?” he cried, when a dozen paces away.

“I wouldn’t be if you was the only one left ter choose,” Polly Ann retorted.

Chauncey Dike stopped in his tracks and haw-hawed with laughter. But I could see that he was not very much pleased.

“Wal,” said he, “I ’low ye won’t see Tom very soon. He’s gone to Kaintuckee.”

“Has he?” said Polly Ann, with brave indifference.

“He met a gal on the trail—a blazin’ fine gal,” said Chauncey Dike. “She was goin’ to Kaintuckee. And Tom—he ’lowed he’d go ’long.”

Polly Ann laughed, and fingered the withered pieces of skin at Chauncey’s girdle.

“Did Tom give you them sculps?” she asked innocently.

Chauncey drew up stiffly.

“Who? Tom McChesney? I reckon he ain’t got none to give. This here’s from a big brave at Noewee, whar the Virginny boys was surprised.” And he held up the one with the longest tuft. “He’d liked to tomahawked me out’n the briers, but I throwed him fust.”

“Shucks,” said Polly Ann, pounding the corn, “I reckon you found him dead.”

But that night, as we sat before the fading red of the backlog, the old man dozing in his chair, Polly Ann put her hand on mine.

“Davy,” she said softly, “do you reckon he’s gone to Kaintuckee?”

How could I tell?

The days passed. The wind grew colder, and one subdued dawn we awoke to find that the pines had fantastic white arms, and the stream ran black between white banks. All that day, and for many days after, the snow added silently to the thickness of its blanket, and winter was upon us. It was a long winter and a rare one. Polly Ann sat by the little window of the cabin, spinning the flax into linsey-woolsey. And she made a hunting shirt for her grandfather, and another little one for me which she fitted with careful fingers. But as she spun, her wheel made the only music—for Polly Ann sang no more. Once I came on her as she was thrusting the tattered piece of birch bark into her gown, but she never spoke to me more of Tom McChesney. When, from time to time, the snow melted on the hillsides, I sometimes surprised a deer there and shot him with the heavy rifle. And so the months wore on till spring.

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The buds reddened and popped, and the briers grew pink and white. Through the lengthening days we toiled in the truck patch, but always as I bent to my work Polly Ann's face saddened me—it had once been so bright, and it should have been so at this season. Old Mr. Ripley grew querulous and savage and hard to please. In the evening, when my work was done, I often lay on the banks of the stream staring at the high ridge (its ragged edges the setting sun burned a molten gold), and the thought grew on me that I might make my way over the mountains into that land beyond, and find Tom for Polly Ann. I even climbed the watershed to the east as far as the O'Hara farm, to sound that big Irishman about the trail. For he had once gone to Kentucky, to come back with his scalp and little besides. O'Hara, with his brogue, gave me such a terrifying notion of the horrors of the Wilderness Trail that I threw up all thought of following it alone, and so I resolved to wait until I heard of some settlers going over it. But none went from the Grape Vine settlement that spring.

War was a-waging in Kentucky. The great Indian nations were making a frantic effort to drive from their hunting grounds the little bands of settlers there, and these were in sore straits.

So I waited, and gave Polly Ann no hint of my intention.

Sometimes she herself would slip away across the notch to see Mrs. McChesney and the children. She never took me with her on these journeys, but nearly always when she came back at nightfall her eyes would be red, and I knew the two women had been weeping together. There came a certain hot Sunday in July when she went on this errand, and Grandpa Ripley having gone to spend the day at old man Winn's, I was left alone. I remember I sat on the squared log of the door-step, wondering whether, if I were to make my way to Salisbury, I could fall in with a party going across the mountains into Kentucky. And wondering, likewise, what Polly Ann would do without me. I was cleaning the long rifle,—a labor I loved,—when suddenly I looked up, startled to see a man standing in front of me. How he got there I know not. I stared at him. He was a young man, very spare and very burned, with bright red hair and blue eyes that had a kind of laughter in them, and yet were sober. His buckskin hunting shirt was old and stained and frayed by the briers, and his leggins and moccasins were wet from fording the stream. He leaned his chin on the muzzle of his gun.

"Folks live here, sonny?" said he.

I nodded.

"Whar be they?"

"Out," said I.

"Comin' back?" he asked.

“To-night,” said I, and began to rub the lock.

“Be they good folks?” said he.

“Yes,” I answered.

“Wal,” said he, making a move to pass me, “I reckon I’ll slip in and take what I’ve a mind to, and move on.”

Now I liked the man’s looks very much, but I did not know what he would do. So I got in his way and clutched the gun. It was loaded, but not primed, and I emptied a little powder from the flask in the pan. At that he grinned.

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“You’re a good boy, sonny,” he said. “Do you reckon you could hit me if you shot?”

“Yes,” I said. But I knew I could scarcely hold the gun out straight without a rest.

“And do you reckon I could hit you fust?” he asked. At that I laughed, and he laughed.

“What’s your name?”

I told him.

“Who do you love best in all the world?” said he.

It was a queer question. But I told him Polly Ann Ripley.

“Oh!” said he, after a pause. “And what’s *she* like?”

“She’s beautiful,” I said; “she’s been very kind to me. She took me home with her from the settlements when I had no place to go. She’s good.”

“And a sharp tongue, I reckon,” said he.

“When people need it,” I answered.

“Oh!” said he. And presently, “She’s very merry, I’ll warrant.”

“She used to be, but that’s gone by,” I said.

“Gone by!” said he, his voice falling, “is she sick?”

“No,” said I, “she’s not sick, she’s sad.”

“Sad?” said he. It was then I noticed that he had a cut across his temple, red and barely healed. “Do you reckon your Polly Ann would give me a little mite to eat?”

This time I jumped up, ran into the house, and got down some corn-pone and a leg of turkey. For that was the rule of the border. He took them in great bites, but slowly, and he picked the bones clean.

“I had breakfast yesterday morning,” said he, “about forty mile from here.”

“And nothing since?” said I, in astonishment.

“Fresh air and water and exercise,” said he, and sat down on the grass. He was silent for a long while, and so was I. For a notion had struck me, though I hardly dared to give it voice.

“Are you going away?” I asked at last.

He laughed.

“Why?” said he.

“If you were going to Kaintuckee—” I began, and faltered. For he stared at me very hard.

“Kaintuckee!” he said. “There’s a country! But it’s full of blood and Injun varmints now. Would you leave Polly Ann and go to Kaintuckee?”

“Are you going?” I said.

“I reckon I am,” he said, “as soon as I kin.”

“Will you take me?” I asked, breathless. “I—I won’t be in your way, and I can walk—and —shoot game.”

At that he bent back his head and laughed, which made me redden with anger. Then he turned and looked at me more soberly.

“You’re a queer little piece,” said he. “Why do you want to go thar?”

“I want to find Tom McChesney for Polly Ann,” I said.

He turned away his face.

“A good-for-nothing scamp,” said he.

“I have long thought so,” I said.

He laughed again. It was a laugh that made me want to join him, had I not been irritated.

“And he’s a scamp, you say. And why?”

“Else he would be coming back to Polly Ann.”

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“Mayhap he couldn’t,” said the stranger.

“Chauncey Dike said he went off with another girl into Kaintuckee.”

“And what did Polly Ann say to that?” the stranger demanded.

“She asked Chauncey if Tom McChesney gave him the scalps he had on his belt.”

At that he laughed in good earnest, and slapped his breech-clouts repeatedly. All at once he stopped, and stared up the ridge.

“Is that Polly Ann?” said he.

I looked, and far up the trail was a speck.

“I reckon it is,” I answered, and wondered at his eyesight. “She travels over to see Tom McChesney’s Ma once in a while.”

He looked at me queerly.

“I reckon I’ll go here and sit down, Davy,” said he, “so’s not to be in the way.” And he walked around the corner of the house.

Polly Ann sauntered down the trail slowly, as was her wont after such an occasion. And the man behind the house twice whispered with extreme caution, “How near is she?” before she came up the path.

“Have you been lonesome, Davy?” she said.

“No,” said I, “I’ve had a visitor.”

“It’s not Chauncey Dike again?” she said. “He doesn’t dare show his face here.”

“No, it wasn’t Chauncey. This man would like to have seen you, Polly Ann. He—” here I braced myself,—“he knew Tom McChesney. He called him a good-for-nothing scamp.”

“He did—did he!” said Polly Ann, very low. “I reckon it was good for him I wasn’t here.”

I grinned.

“What are you laughing at, you little monkey,” said Polly Ann, crossly. “’Pon my soul, sometimes I reckon you are a witch.”

“Polly Ann,” I said, “did I ever do anything but good to you?”

She made a dive at me, and before I could escape caught me in her strong young arms and hugged me.

“You’re the best friend I have, little Davy,” she cried.

“I reckon that’s so,” said the stranger, who had risen and was standing at the corner.

Polly Ann looked at him like a frightened doe. And as she stared, uncertain whether to stay or fly, the color surged into her cheeks and mounted to her fair forehead.

“Tom!” she faltered.

“I’ve come back, Polly Ann,” said he. But his voice was not so clear as a while ago.

Then Polly Ann surprised me.

“What made you come back?” said she, as though she didn’t care a minkskin. Whereat Mr. McChesney shifted his feet.

“I reckon it was to fetch you, Polly Ann.”

“I like that!” cried she. “He’s come to fetch me, Davy.” That was the first time in months her laugh had sounded natural. “I heerd you fetched one gal acrost the mountains, and now you want to fetch another.”

“Polly Ann,” says he, “there was a time when you knew a truthful man from a liar.”

“That time’s past,” retorted she; “I reckon all men are liars. What are ye tom-foolin’ about here for, Tom McChesney, when yere Ma’s breakin’ her heart? I wonder ye come back at all.”

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“Polly Ann,” says he, very serious, “I ain’t a boaster. But when I think what I come through to git here, I wonder that I come back at all. The folks shut up at Harrod’s said it was sure death ter cross the mountains now. I’ve walked two hundred miles, and fed seven times, and my sculp’s as near hangin’ on a Red Stick’s belt as I ever want it to be.”

“Tom McChesney,” said Polly Ann, with her hands on her hips and her sunbonnet tilted, “that’s the longest speech you ever made in your life.”

I declare I lost my temper with Polly Ann then, nor did I blame Tom McChesney for turning on his heel and walking away. But he had gone no distance at all before Polly Ann, with three springs, was at his shoulder.

“Tom!” she said very gently.

He hesitated, stopped, thumped the stock of his gun on the ground, and wheeled. He looked at her doubtingly, and her eyes fell to the ground.

“Tom McChesney,” said she, “you’re a born fool with wimmen.”

“Thank God for that,” said he, his eyes devouring her.

“Ay,” said she. And then, “You want me to go to Kaintuckee with you?”

“That’s what I come for,” he stammered, his assurance all run away again.

“I’ll go,” she answered, so gently that her words were all but blown away by the summer wind. He laid his rifle against a stump at the edge of the corn-field, but she bounded clear of him. Then she stood, panting, her eyes sparkling.

“I’ll go,” she said, raising her finger, “I’ll go for one thing.”

“What’s that?” he demanded.

“That you’ll take Davy along with us.”

This time Tom had her, struggling like a wild thing in his arms, and kissing her black hair madly. As for me, I might have been in the next settlement for all they cared. And then Polly Ann, as red as a holly berry, broke away from him and ran to me, caught me up, and hid her face in my shoulder. Tom McChesney stood looking at us, grinning, and that day I ceased to hate him.

“There’s no devil ef I don’t take him, Polly Ann,” said he. “Why, he was a-goin’ to Kaintuckee ter find me for you.”

“What?” said she, raising her head.

“That’s what he told me afore he knew who I was. He wanted to know ef I’d fetch him thar.”

“Little Davy!” cried Polly Ann.

The last I saw of them that day they were going off up the trace towards his mother’s, Polly Ann keeping ahead of him and just out of his reach. And I was very, very happy. For Tom McChesney had come back at last, and Polly Ann was herself once more.

As long as I live I shall never forget Polly Ann’s wedding.

She was all for delay, and such a bunch of coquetry as I have never seen. She raised one objection after another; but Tom was a firm man, and his late experiences in the wilderness had made him impatient of trifling. He had promised the Kentucky settlers, fighting for their lives in their blockhouses, that he would come back again. And a resolute man who was a good shot was sorely missed in the country in those days.

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It was not the thousand dangers and hardships of the journey across the Wilderness Trail that frightened Polly Ann. Not she. Nor would she listen to Tom when he implored her to let him return alone, to come back for her when the redskins had got over the first furies of their hatred. As for me, the thought of going with them into that promised land was like wine. Wondering what the place was like, I could not sleep of nights.

“Ain’t you afeerd to go, Davy?” said Tom to me.

“You promised Polly Ann to take me,” said I, indignantly.

“Davy,” said he, “you ain’t over handsome. ’Twouldn’t improve yere looks to be bald. They hev a way of takin’ yere ha’r. Better stay behind with Gran’pa Ripley till I kin fetch ye both.”

“Tom,” said Polly Ann, “you kin just go back alone if you don’t take Davy.”

So one of the Winn boys agreed to come over to stay with old Mr. Ripley until quieter times.

The preparations for the wedding went on apace that week. I had not thought that the Grape Vine settlement held so many people. And they came from other settlements, too, for news spread quickly in that country, despite the distances. Tom McChesney was plainly a favorite with the men who had marched with Rutherford. All the week they came, loaded with offerings, turkeys and venison and pork and bear meat—greatest delicacy of all—until the cool spring was filled for the feast. From thirty miles down the Broad, a gaunt Baptist preacher on a fat white pony arrived the night before. He had been sent for to tie the knot.

Polly Ann’s wedding-day dawned bright and fair, and long before the sun glistened on the corn tassels we were up and clearing out the big room. The fiddlers came first—a merry lot. And then the guests from afar began to arrive. Some of them had travelled half the night. The bridegroom’s friends were assembling at the McChesney place. At last, when the sun was over the stream, rose such Indian war-whoops and shots from the ridge trail as made me think the redskins were upon us. The shouts and hurrahs grew louder and louder, the quickening thud of horses’ hoofs was heard in the woods, and there burst into sight of the assembly by the truck patch two wild figures on crazed horses charging down the path towards the house. We scattered to right and left. On they came, leaping logs and brush and ditches, until one of them pulled up, yelling madly, at the very door, the foam-flecked sides of his horse moving with quick heaves.

It was Chauncey Dike, and he had won the race for the bottle of “Black Betty,”—-Chauncey Dike, his long, black hair shining with bear’s oil. Amid the cheers of the bride’s friends he leaped from his saddle, mounted a stump and, flapping his arms, crowed in victory. Before he had done the vanguard of the groom’s friends were upon

us, pell-mell, all in the finest of backwoods regalia,—new hunting shirts, trimmed with bits of color, and all armed to the teeth—scalping knife, tomahawk, and all. Nor had Chauncey Dike forgotten the scalp of the brave who leaped at him out of the briers at Neowee.

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Polly Ann was radiant in a white linen gown, woven and sewed by her own hands. It was not such a gown as Mrs. Temple, Nick's mother, would have worn, and yet she was to me an hundred times more beautiful than that lady in all her silks. Peeping out from under it were the little blue-beaded moccasins which Tom himself had brought across the mountains in the bosom of his hunting shirt. Polly Ann was radiant, and yet at times so rapturously shy that when the preacher announced himself ready to tie the knot she ran into the house and hid in the cupboard—for Polly Ann was a child of nature. Thence, coloring like a wild rose, she was dragged by a boisterous bevy of girls in linsey-woolsey to the spreading maple of the forest that stood on the high bank over the stream. The assembly fell solemn, and not a sound was heard save the breathing of Nature in the heyday of her time. And though I was happy, the sobs rose in my throat. There stood Polly Ann, as white now as the bleached linen she wore, and Tom McChesney, tall and spare and broad, as strong a figure of a man as ever I laid eyes on. God had truly made that couple for wedlock in His leafy temple.

The deep-toned words of the preacher in prayer broke the stillness. They were made man and wife. And then began a day of merriment, of unrestraint, such as the backwoods alone knows. The feast was spread out in the long grass under the trees—-sides of venison, bear meat, corn-pone fresh baked by Mrs. McChesney and Polly Ann herself, and all the vegetables in the patch. There was no stint, either, of maple beer and rum and "Black Betty," and toasts to the bride and groom amidst gusts of laughter "that they might populate Kaintuckee." And Polly Ann would have it that I should sit by her side under the maple.

The fiddlers played, and there were foot races and shooting matches. Ay, and wrestling matches in the severe manner of the backwoods between the young bucks, more than one of which might have ended seriously were it not for the high humor of the crowd. Tom McChesney himself was in most of them, a hot favorite. By a trick he had learned in the Indian country he threw Chauncey Dike (no mean adversary) so hard that the backwoods dandy lay for a moment in sleep. Contrary to the custom of many, Tom was not in the habit of crowing on such occasions, nor did he even smile as he helped Chauncey to his feet. But Polly Ann knew, and I knew, that he was thinking of what Chauncey had said to her.

So the long summer afternoon wore away into twilight, and the sun fell behind the blue ridges we were to cross. Pine knots were lighted in the big room, the fiddlers set to again, and then came jigs and three and four handed reels that made the puncheons rattle,—chicken-flutter and cut-the-buckle,—and Polly Ann was the leader now, the young men flinging the girls from fireplace to window in the reels, and back again; and when, panting and perspiring, the lass was too tired to stand longer, she dropped into the hospitable lap of the nearest buck who was perched on the bench along the wall awaiting his chance. For so it went in the backwoods in those days, and long after, and no harm in it that ever I could see.

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Well, suddenly, as if by concert, the music stopped, and a shout of laughter rang under the beams as Polly Ann flew out of the door with the girls after her, as swift of foot as she. They dragged her, a struggling captive, to the bride-chamber which made the other end of the house, and when they emerged, blushing and giggling and subdued, the fun began with Tom McChesney. He gave the young men a pretty fight indeed, and long before they had him conquered the elder guests had made their escape through door and window.

All night the reels and jigs went on, and the feasting and drinking too. In the fine rain that came at dawn to hide the crests, the company rode wearily homeward through the notches.

CHAPTER VIII

THE NOLLICHUCKY TRACE

Some to endure, and many to quail,
Some to conquer, and many to fail,
Toiling over the Wilderness Trail.

As long as I live I shall never forget the morning we started on our journey across the Blue Wall. Before the sun chased away the filmy veil of mist from the brooks in the valley, the McChesneys, father, mother, and children, were gathered to see us depart. And as they helped us to tighten the packsaddles Tom himself had made from chosen tree-forks, they did not cease lamenting that we were going to certain death. Our scrawny horses splashed across the stream, and we turned to see a gaunt and lonely figure standing apart against the sun, stern and sorrowful. We waved our hands, and set our faces towards Kaintuckee.

Tom walked ahead, rifle on shoulder, then Polly Ann; and lastly I drove the two shaggy ponies, the instruments of husbandry we had been able to gather awry on their packs, —a scythe, a spade, and a hoe. I triumphantly carried the axe.

It was not long before we were in the wilderness, shut in by mountain crags, and presently Polly Ann forgot her sorrows in the perils of the trace. Choked by briers and grapevines, blocked by sliding stones and earth, it rose and rose through the heat and burden of the day until it lost itself in the open heights. As the sun was wearing down to the western ridges the mischievous sorrel mare turned her pack on a sapling, and one of the precious bags burst. In an instant we were on our knees gathering the golden meal in our hands. Polly Ann baked journeycakes on a hot stone from what we saved under the shiny ivy leaves, and scarce had I spancelled the horses ere Tom returned with a fat turkey he had shot.

“Was there ever sech a wedding journey!” said Polly Ann, as we sat about the fire, for the mountain air was chill. “And Tom and Davy as grave as parsons. Ye’d guess one of you was Rutherford himself, and the other Mr. Boone.”

No wonder he was grave. I little realized then the task he had set himself, to pilot a woman and a lad into a country haunted by frenzied savages, when single men feared to go this season. But now he smiled, and patted Polly Ann’s brown hand.

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“It’s one of yer own choosing, lass,” said he.

“Of my own choosing!” cried she. “Come, Davy, we’ll go back to Grandpa.”

Tom grinned.

“I reckon the redskins won’t bother us till we git by the Nollichucky and Watauga settlements,” he said.

“The redskins!” said Polly Ann, indignant; “I reckon if one of ’em did git me he’d kiss me once in a while.”

Whereupon Tom, looking more sheepish still, tried to kiss her, and failed ignominiously, for she vanished into the dark woods.

“If a redskin got you here,” said Tom, when she had slipped back, “he’d fetch you to Nick-a-jack Cave.”

“What’s that?” she demanded.

“Where all the red and white and yellow scalawags over the mountains is gathered,” he answered. And he told of a deep gorge between towering mountains where a great river cried angrily, of a black cave out of which a black stream ran, where a man could paddle a dugout for miles into the rock. The river was the Tennessee, and the place the resort of the Chickamauga bandits, pirates of the mountains, outcasts of all nations. And Dragging Canoe was their chief.

It was on the whole a merry journey, the first part of it, if a rough one. Often Polly Ann would draw me to her and whisper: “We’ll hold out, Davy. He’ll never now.” When the truth was that the big fellow was going at half his pace on our account. He told us there was no fear of redskins here, yet, when the scream of a painter or the hoot of an owl stirred me from my exhausted slumber, I caught sight of him with his back to a tree, staring into the forest, his rifle at his side. The day was dawning.

“Turn about’s fair,” I expostulated.

“Ye’ll need yere sleep, Davy,” said he, “or ye’ll never grow any bigger.”

“I thought Kaintuckee was to the west,” I said, “and you’re making north.” For I had observed him day after day. We had left the trails. Sometimes he climbed tree, and again he sent me to the upper branches, whence I surveyed a sea of tree-tops waving in the wind, and looked onward to where a green velvet hollow lay nestling on the western side of a saddle-backed ridge.

“North!” said Tom to Polly Ann, laughing. “The little devil will beat me at woodcraft soon. Ay, north, Davy. I’m hunting for the Nollichucky Trace that leads to the Watauga settlement.”

It was wonderful to me how he chose his way through the mountains. Once in a while we caught sight of a yellow blaze in a tree, made by himself scarce a month gone, when he came southward alone to fetch Polly Ann. Again, the tired roan shied back from the bleached bones of a traveller, picked clean by wolves. At sundown, when we loosed our exhausted horses to graze on the wet grass by the streams, Tom would go off to look for a deer or turkey, and often not come back to us until long after darkness had fallen.

“Davy’ll take care of you, Polly Ann,” he would say as he left us.

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And she would smile at him bravely and say, “I reckon I kin look out for Davy awhile yet.”

But when he was gone, and the crooning stillness set in broken only by the many sounds of the night, we would sit huddled together by the fire. It was dread for him she felt, not for herself. And in both our minds rose red images of hideous foes skulking behind his brave form as he trod the forest floor. Polly Ann was not the woman to whimper.

And yet I have but dim recollections of this journey. It was no hardship to a lad brought up in woodcraft. Fear of the Indians, like a dog shivering with the cold, was a deadened pain on the border.

Strangely enough it was I who chanced upon the Nollichucky Trace, which follows the meanderings of that river northward through the great Smoky Mountains. It was made long ago by the Southern Indians as they threaded their way to the Hunting Lands of Kaintuckee, and shared now by Indian traders. The path was redolent with odors, and bright with mountain shrubs and flowers,—the pink laurel bush, the shining rhododendron, and the grape and plum and wild crab. The clear notes of the mountain birds were in our ears by day, and the music of the water falling over the ledges, mingled with that of the leaves rustling in the wind, lulled us to sleep at night. High above us, as we descended, the gap, from naked crag to timber-covered ridge, was spanned by the eagle’s flight. And virgin valleys, where future generations were to be born, spread out and narrowed again,—valleys with a deep carpet of cane and grass, where the deer and elk and bear fed unmolested.

It was perchance the next evening that my eyes fell upon a sight which is one of the wonders of my boyish memories. The trail slipped to the edge of a precipice, and at our feet the valley widened. Planted amidst giant trees, on a shining green lawn that ran down to the racing Nollichucky was the strangest house it has ever been my lot to see —of no shape, of huge size, and built of logs, one wing hitched to another by “dog alleys” (as we called them); and from its wide stone chimneys the pearly smoke rose upward in the still air through the poplar branches. Beyond it a setting sun gilded the corn-fields, and horses and cattle dotted the pastures. We stood for a while staring at this oasis in the wilderness, and to my boyish fancy it was a fitting introduction to a delectable land.

“Glory be to heaven!” exclaimed Polly Ann.

“It’s Nollichucky Jack’s house,” said Tom.

“And who may he be?” said she.

“Who may he be!” cried Tom; “Captain John Sevier, king of the border, and I reckon the best man to sweep out redskins in the Watauga settlements.”

“Do you know him?” said she.

“I was chose as one of his scouts when we fired the Cherokee hill towns last summer,” said Tom, with pride. “Thar was blood and thunder for ye! We went down the Great War-path which lies below us, and when we was through there wasn’t a corn-shuck or a wigwam or a war post left. We didn’t harm the squaws nor the children, but there warn’t no prisoners took. When Nollichucky Jack strikes I reckon it’s more like a thunderbolt nor anything else.”

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“Do you think he’s at home, Tom?” I asked, fearful that I should not see this celebrated person.

“We’ll soon l’arn,” said he, as we descended. “I heerd he was agoin’ to punish them Chickamauga robbers by Nick-a-jack.”

Just then we heard a prodigious barking, and a dozen hounds came charging down the path at our horses’ legs, the roan shying into the truck patch. A man’s voice, deep, clear, compelling, was heard calling:—

“Vi! Flora! Ripper!”

I saw him coming from the porch of the house, a tall slim figure in a hunting shirt—that fitted to perfection—and cavalry boots. His face, his carriage, his quick movement and stride filled my notion of a hero, and my instinct told me he was a gentleman born.

“Why, bless my soul, it’s Tom McChesney!” he cried, ten paces away, while Tom grinned with pleasure at the recognition “But what have you here?”

“A wife,” said Tom, standing on one foot.

Captain Sevier fixed his dark blue eyes on Polly Ann with approbation, and he bowed to her very gracefully.

“Where are you going, Ma’am, may I ask?” he said.

“To Kaintuckee,” said Polly Ann.

“To Kaintuckee!” cried Captain Sevier, turning to Tom. “Egad, then, you’ve no right to a wife,—and to such a wife,” and he glanced again at Polly Ann. “Why, McChesney, you never struck me as a rash man. Have you lost your senses, to take a woman into Kentucky this year?”

“So the forts be still in trouble?” said Tom.

“Trouble?” cried Mr. Sevier, with a quick fling of his whip at an unruly hound, “Harrodstown, Boonesboro, Logan’s Fort at St. Asaph’s,—they don’t dare stick their noses outside the stockades. The Indians have swarmed into Kentucky like red ants, I tell you. Ten days ago, when I was in the Holston settlements, Major Ben Logan came in. His fort had been shut up since May, they were out of powder and lead, and somebody had to come. How did he come? As the wolf lopes, nay, as the crow flies over crag and ford, Cumberland, Clinch, and all, forty miles a day for five days, and never saw a trace—for the war parties were watching the Wilderness Road.” And he swung again towards Polly Ann. “You’ll not go to Kaintuckee, ma’am; you’ll stay here with us until the redskins are beaten off there. He may go if he likes.”

“I reckon we didn’t come this far to give out, Captain Sevier,” said she.

“You don’t look to be the kind to give out, Mrs. McChesney,” said he. “And yet it may not be a matter of giving out,” he added more soberly. This mixture of heartiness and gravity seemed to sit well on him. “Surely you have been enterprising, Tom. Where in the name of the Continental Congress did you get the lad?”

“I married him along with Polly Ann,” said Tom.

“That was the bargain, and I reckon he was worth it.”

“I’d take a dozen to get her,” declared Mr. Sevier, while Polly Ann blushed. “Well, well, supper’s waiting us, and cider and applejack, for we don’t get a wedding party every day. Some gentlemen are here whose word may have more weight and whose attractions may be greater than mine.”

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He whistled to a negro lad, who took our horses, and led us through the court-yard and the house to the lawn at the far side of it. A rude table was set there under a great tree, and around it three gentlemen were talking. My memory of all of them is more vivid than it might be were their names not household words in the Western country. Captain Sevier startled them.

“My friends,” said he, “if you have despatches for Kaintuckee, I pray you get them ready over night.”

They looked up at him, one sternly, the other two gravely.

“What the devil do you mean, Sevier?” said the stern one.

“That my friend, Tom McChesney, is going there with his wife, unless we can stop him,” said Sevier.

“Stop him!” thundered the stern gentleman, kicking back his chair and straightening up to what seemed to me a colossal height. I stared at him, boylike. He had long, iron-gray hair and a creased, fleshy face and sunken eyes. He looked as if he might stop anybody as he turned upon Tom. “Who the devil is this Tom McChesney?” he demanded.

Sevier laughed.

“The best scout I ever laid eyes on,” said he. “A deadly man with a Deckard, an unerring man at choosing a wife” (and he bowed to the reddening Polly Ann), “and a fool to run the risk of losing her.”

“Tut, tut,” said the iron gentleman, who was the famous Captain Evan Shelby of King’s Meadows, “he’ll leave her here in our settlements while he helps us fight Dragging Canoe and his Chickamauga pirates.”

“If he leaves me,” said Polly Ann, her eyes flashing, “that’s an end to the bargain. He’ll never find me more.”

Captain Sevier laughed again.

“There’s spirit for you,” he cried, slapping his whip against his boot.

At this another gentleman stood up, a younger counterpart of the first, only he towered higher and his shoulders were broader. He had a big-featured face, and pleasant eyes —that twinkled now—sunken in, with fleshy creases at the corners.

“Tom McChesney,” said he, “don’t mind my father. If any man besides Logan can get inside the forts, you can. Do you remember me?”

“I reckon I do, Mr. Isaac Shelby,” said Tom, putting a big hand into Mr. Shelby’s bigger one. “I reckon I won’t soon forget how you stepped out of ranks and tuk command when the boys was runnin’, and turned the tide.”

He looked like the man to step out of ranks and take command.

“Pish!” said Mr. Isaac Shelby, blushing like a girl; “where would I have been if you and Moore and Findley and the rest hadn’t stood ’em off till we turned round?”

By this time the third gentleman had drawn my attention. Not by anything he said, for he remained silent, sitting with his dark brown head bent forward, quietly gazing at the scene from under his brows. The instant he spoke they turned towards him. He was perhaps forty, and broad-shouldered, not so tall as Mr. Sevier.

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“Why do you go to Kaintuckee, McChesney?” he asked.

“I give my word to Mr. Harrod and Mr. Clark to come back, Mr. Robertson,” said Tom.

“And the wife? If you take her, you run a great risk of losing her.”

“And if he leaves me,” said Polly Ann, flinging her head, “he will lose me sure.”

The others laughed, but Mr. Robertson merely smiled.

“Faith,” cried Captain Sevier, “if those I met coming back helter-skelter over the Wilderness Trace had been of that stripe, they’d have more men in the forts now.”

With that the Captain called for supper to be served where we sat. He was a widower, with lads somewhere near my own age, and I recall being shown about the place by them. And later, when the fireflies glowed and the Nollichucky sang in the darkness, we listened to the talk of the war of the year gone by. I needed not to be told that before me were the renowned leaders of the Watauga settlements. My hero worship cried it aloud within me. These captains dwelt on the border-land of mystery, conquered the wilderness, and drove before them its savage tribes by their might. When they spoke of the Cherokees and told how that same Stuart—the companion of Cameron—was urging them to war against our people, a fierce anger blazed within me. For the Cherokees had killed my father.

I remember the men,—scarcely what they said: Evan Shelby’s words, like heavy blows on an anvil; Isaac Shelby’s, none the less forceful; James Robertson compelling his listeners by some strange power. He was perchance the strongest man there, though none of us guessed, after ruling that region, that he was to repeat untold hardships to found and rear another settlement farther west. But best I loved to hear Captain Sevier, whose talk lacked not force, but had a daring, a humor, a lightness of touch, that seemed more in keeping with that world I had left behind me in Charlestown. Him I loved, and at length I solved the puzzle. To me he was Nick Temple grown to manhood.

I slept in the room with Captain Sevier’s boys, and one window of it was of paper smeared with bear’s grease, through which the sunlight came all bleared and yellow in the morning. I had a boy’s interest in affairs, and I remember being told that the gentlemen were met here to discuss the treaty between themselves and the great Oconostota, chief of the Cherokees, and also to consider the policy of punishing once for all Dragging Canoe and his bandits at Chickamauga.

As we sat at breakfast under the trees, these gentlemen generously dropped their own business to counsel Tom, and I observed with pride that he had gained their regard during the last year’s war. Shelby’s threats and Robertson’s warnings and Sevier’s exhortations having no effect upon his determination to proceed to Kentucky, they

began to advise him how to go, and he sat silent while they talked. And finally, when they asked him, he spoke of making through Carter's Valley for Cumberland Gap and the Wilderness Trail.

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“Egad,” cried Captain Sevier, “I have so many times found the boldest plan the safest that I have become a coward that way. What do you say to it, Mr. Robertson?”

Mr. Robertson leaned his square shoulders over the table.

“He may fall in with a party going over,” he answered, without looking up.

Polly Ann looked at Tom as if to say that the whole Continental Army could not give her as much protection.

We left that hospitable place about nine o’clock, Mr. Robertson having written a letter to Colonel Daniel Boone,—shut up in the fort at Boonesboro,—should we be so fortunate as to reach Kaintuckee: and another to a young gentleman by the name of George Rogers Clark, apparently a leader there. Captain Sevier bowed over Polly Ann’s hand as if she were a great lady, and wished her a happy honeymoon, and me he patted on the head and called a brave lad. And soon we had passed beyond the corn-field into the Wilderness again.

Our way was down the Nollichucky, past the great bend of it below Lick Creek, and so to the Great War-path, the trail by which countless parties of red marauders had travelled north and south. It led, indeed, northeast between the mountain ranges. Although we kept a watch by day and night, we saw no sign of Dragging Canoe or his men, and at length we forded the Holston and came to the scattered settlement in Carter’s Valley.

I have since racked my brain to remember at whose cabin we stopped there. He was a rough backwoodsman with a wife and a horde of children. But I recall that a great rain came out of the mountains and down the valley. We were counting over the powder gourds in our packs, when there burst in at the door as wild a man as has ever been my lot to see. His brown beard was grown like a bramble patch, his eye had a violet light, and his hunting shirt was in tatters. He was thin to gauntness, ate ravenously of the food that was set before him, and throwing off his soaked moccasins, he spread his scalded feet to the blaze, and the steaming odor of drying leather filled the room.

“Whar be ye from?” asked Tom.

For answer the man bared his arm, then his shoulder, and two angry scars, long and red, revealed themselves, and around his wrists were deep gouges where he had been bound.

“They killed Sue,” he cried, “sculped her afore my very eyes. And they chopped my boy outen the hickory withes and carried him to the Creek Nation. At a place where there was a standin’ stone I broke loose from three of ’em and come here over the mountains, and I ain’t had nothin’, stranger, but berries and chainey brier-root for ten days. God

damn ’em!” he cried, standing up and tottering with the pain in his feet, “if I can get a Deckard—”

“Will you go back?” said Tom.

“Go back!” he shouted, “I’ll go back and fight ’em while I have blood in my body.”

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He fell into a bunk, but his sorrow haunted him even in his troubled sleep, and his moans awed us as we listened. The next day he told us his story with more calmness. It was horrible indeed, and might well have frightened a less courageous woman than Polly Ann. Imploring her not to go, he became wild again, and brought tears to her eyes when he spoke of his own wife. "They tomahawked her, ma'am, because she could not walk, and the baby beside her, and I standing by with my arms tied."

As long as I live I shall never forget that scene, and how Tom pleaded with Polly Ann to stay behind, but she would not listen to him.

"You're going, Tom?" she said.

"Yes," he answered, turning away, "I gave 'em my word."

"And your word to me?" said Polly Ann.

He did not answer.

We fixed on a Saturday to start, to give the horses time to rest, and in the hope that we might hear of some relief party going over the Gap. On Thursday Tom made a trip to the store in the valley, and came back with a Deckard rifle he had bought for the stranger, whose name was Weldon. There was no news from Kaintuckee, but the Carter's Valley settlers seemed to think that matters were better there. It was that same night, I believe, that two men arrived from Fort Chiswell. One, whose name was Cutcheon, was a little man with a short forehead and a bad eye, and he wore a weather-beaten blue coat of military cut. The second was a big, light-colored, fleshy man, and a loud talker. He wore a hunting shirt and leggings. They were both the worse for rum they had had on the road, the big man talking very loud and boastfully.

"Afeard to go to Kaintuckee!" said he. "I've met a parcel o' cowards on the road, turned back. There ain't nothin' to be afeard of, eh, stranger?" he added, to Tom, who paid no manner of attention to him. The small man scarce opened his mouth, but sat with his head bowed forward on his breast when he was not drinking. We passed a dismal, crowded night in the room with such companions. When they heard that we were to go over the mountains, nothing would satisfy the big man but to go with us.

"Come, stranger," said he to Tom, "two good rifles such as we is ain't to be throwed away."

"Why do you want to go over?" asked Tom. "Be ye a Tory?" he demanded suspiciously.

"Why do you go over?" retorted Riley, for that was his name. "I reckon I'm no more of a Tory than you."

"Whar did ye come from?" said Tom.

“Chiswell’s mines, taking out lead for the army o’ Congress. But there ain’t excitement enough in it.”

“And you?” said Tom, turning to Cutcheon and eying his military coat.

“I got tired of their damned discipline,” the man answered surlily. He was a deserter.

“Look you,” said Tom, sternly, “if you come, what I say is law.”

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Such was the sacrifice we were put to by our need of company. But in those days a man was a man, and scarce enough on the Wilderness Trail in that year of ’77. So we started away from Carter’s Valley on a bright Saturday morning, the grass glistening after a week’s rain, the road sodden, and the smell of the summer earth heavy. Tom and Weldon walked ahead, driving the two horses, followed by Cutcheon, his head dropped between his shoulders. The big man, Riley, regaled Polly Ann.

“My pluck is,” said he, “my pluck is to give a redskin no chance. Shoot ’em down like hogs. It takes a good un to stalk me, Ma’am. Up on the Kanawha I’ve had hand-to-hand fights with ’em, and made ’em cry quits.”

“Law!” exclaimed Polly Ann, nudging me, “it was a lucky thing we run into you in the valley.”

But presently we left the road and took a mountain trail,—as stiff a climb as we had yet had. Polly Ann went up it like a bird, talking all the while to Riley, who blew like a bellows. For once he was silent.

We spent two, perchance three, days climbing and descending and fording. At night Tom would suffer none to watch save Weldon and himself, not trusting Riley or Cutcheon. And the rascals were well content to sleep. At length we came, to a cabin on a creek, the corn between the stumps around it choked with weeds, and no sign of smoke in the chimney. Behind it slanted up, in giant steps, a forest-clad hill of a thousand feet, and in front of it the stream was dammed and lined with cane.

“Who keeps house?” cried Tom, at the threshold.

He pushed back the door, fashioned in one great slab from a forest tree. His welcome was an angry whir, and a huge yellow rattler lay coiled within, his head reared to strike. Polly Ann leaned back.

“Mercy,” she cried, “that’s a bad sign.”

But Tom killed the snake, and we made ready to use the cabin that night and the next day. For the horses were to be rested and meat was to be got, as we could not use our guns so freely on the far side of Cumberland Gap. In the morning, before he and Weldon left, Tom took me around the end of the cabin.

“Davy,” said he, “I don’t trust these rascals. Kin you shoot a pistol?”

I reckoned I could.

He had taken one out of the pack he had got from Captain Sevier and pushed it between the logs where the clay had fallen out. “If they try anything,” said he, “shoot

’em. And don’t be afeard of killing ’em.” He patted me on the back, and went off up the slope with Weldon. Polly Ann and I stood watching them until they were out of sight.

About eleven o’clock Riley and Cutcheon moved off to the edge of a cane-brake near the water, and sat there for a while, talking in low tones. The horses were belled and spancelled near by, feeding on the cane and wild grass, and Polly Ann was cooking journey-cakes on a stone.

“What makes you so sober, Davy?” she said.

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I didn't answer.

"Davy," she cried, "be happy while you're young. 'Tis a fine day, and Kaintuckee's over yonder." She picked up her skirts and sang:—

"First upon the heeltap,
Then upon the toe."

The men by the cane-brake turned and came towards us.

"Ye're happy to-day, Mis' McChesney," said Riley.

"Why shouldn't I be?" said Polly Ann; "we're all a-goin' to Kaintuckee."

"We're a-goin' back to Cyarter's Valley," said Riley, in his blustering way. "This here ain't as excitin' as I thought. I reckon there ain't no redskins nohow."

"What!" cried Polly Ann, in loud scorn, "ye're a-goin' to desert? There'll be redskins enough by and by, I'll warrant ye."

"How'd you like to come along of us," says Riley; "that ain't any place for wimmen, over yonder."

"Along of you!" cried Polly Ann, with flashing eyes. "Do you hear that, Davy?"

I did. Meanwhile the man Cutcheon was slowly walking towards her. It took scarce a second for me to make up my mind. I slipped around the corner of the house, seized the pistol, primed it with a trembling hand, and came back to behold Polly Ann, with flaming cheeks, facing them. They did not so much as glance at me. Riley held a little back of the two, being the coward. But Cutcheon stood ready, like a wolf.

I did not wait for him to spring, but, taking the best aim I could with my two hands, fired. With a curse that echoed in the crags, he threw up his arms and fell forward, writhing, on the turf.

"Run for the cabin, Polly Ann," I shouted, "and bar the door."

There was no need. For an instant Riley wavered, and then fled to the cane.

Polly Ann and I went to the man on the ground, and turned him over. His eyes slid upwards. There was a bloody froth on his lips.

"Davy!" cried she, awestricken, "Davy, ye've killed him!"

I grew dizzy and sick at the thought, but she caught me and held me to her. Presently we sat down on the door log, gazing at the corpse. Then I began to reflect, and took out my powder gourd and loaded the pistol.

“What are ye a-doing?” she said.

“In case the other one comes back,” said I.

“Pooh,” said Polly Ann, “he’ll not come back.” Which was true. I have never laid eyes on Riley to this day.

“I reckon we’d better fetch it out of the sun,” said she, after a while. And so we dragged it under an oak, covered the face, and left it.

He was the first man I ever killed, and the business by no means came natural to me. And that day the journey-cakes which Polly Ann had made were untasted by us both. The afternoon dragged interminably. Try as we would, we could not get out of our minds the Thing that lay under the oak.

It was near sundown when Tom and Weldon appeared on the mountain side carrying a buck between them. Tom glanced from one to the other of us keenly. He was very quick to divine.

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“Whar be they?” said he.

“Show him, Davy,” said Polly Ann.

I took him over to the oak, and Polly Ann told him the story. He gave me one look, I remember, and there was more of gratitude in it than in a thousand words. Then he seized a piece of cold cake from the stone.

“Which trace did he take?” he demanded of me.

But Polly Ann hung on his shoulder.

“Tom, Tom!” she cried, “you beant goin’ to leave us again. Tom, he’ll die in the wilderness, and we must git to Kaintuckee.”

* * * * * * *

The next vivid thing in my memory is the view of the last barrier Nature had reared between us and the delectable country. It stood like a lion at the gateway, and for some minutes we gazed at it in terror from Powell’s Valley below. How many thousands have looked at it with sinking hearts! How many weaklings has its frown turned back! There seemed to be engraved upon it the dark history of the dark and bloody land beyond. Nothing in this life worth having is won for the asking; and the best is fought for, and bled for, and died for. Written, too, upon that towering wall of white rock, in the handwriting of God Himself, is the history of the indomitable Race to which we belong.

For fifty miles we travelled under it, towards the Gap, our eyes drawn to it by a resistless fascination. The sun went over it early in the day, as though glad to leave the place, and after that a dark scowl would settle there. At night we felt its presence, like a curse. Even Polly Ann was silent. And she had need to be now. When it was necessary, we talked in low tones, and the bell-clappers on the horses were not loosed at night. It was here, but four years gone, that Daniel Boone’s family was attacked, and his son killed by the Indians.

We passed, from time to time, deserted cabins and camps, and some places that might once have been called settlements: Elk Garden, where the pioneers of the last four years had been wont to lay in a simple supply of seed corn and Irish potatoes; and the spot where Henderson and his company had camped on the way to establish Boonesboro two years before. And at last we struck the trace that mounted upward to the Gateway itself.

CHAPTER IX

ON THE WILDERNESS TRAIL

And now we had our hands upon the latch, and God alone knew what was behind the gate. Toil, with a certainty, but our lives had known it. Death, perchance. But Death had been near to all of us, and his presence did not frighten. As we climbed towards the Gap, I recalled with strange aptness a quaint saying of my father's that Kaintuckee was the Garden of Eden, and that men were being justly punished with blood for their presumption.

As if to crown that judgment, the day was dark and lowering, with showers of rain from time to time. And when we spoke,—Polly Ann and I,—it was in whispers. The trace was very narrow, with Daniel Boone's blazes, two years old, upon the trees; but the way was not over steep. Cumberland Mountain was as silent and deserted as when the first man had known it.

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Alas, for the vanity of human presage! We gained the top, and entered unmolested. No Eden suddenly dazzled our eye, no splendor burst upon it. Nothing told us, as we halted in our weariness, that we had reached the Promised Land. The mists weighed heavily on the evergreens of the slopes and hid the ridges, and we passed that night in cold discomfort. It was the first of many without a fire.

The next day brought us to the Cumberland, tawny and swollen from the rains, and here we had to stop to fell trees to make a raft on which to ferry over our packs. We bound the logs together with grapevines, and as we worked my imagination painted for me many a red face peering from the bushes on the farther shore. And when we got into the river and were caught and spun by the hurrying stream, I hearkened for a shot from the farther bank. While Polly Ann and I were scrambling to get the raft landed, Tom and Weldon swam over with the horses. And so we lay the second night dolefully in the rain. But not so much as a whimper escaped from Polly Ann. I have often told her since that the sorest trial she had was the guard she kept on her tongue,—a hardship indeed for one of Irish inheritance. Many a pull had she lightened for us by a flash of humor.

The next morning the sun relented, and the wine of his dawn was wine indeed to our flagging hopes. Going down to wash at the river's brink, I heard a movement in the cane, and stood frozen and staring until a great, bearded head, black as tar, was thrust out between the stalks and looked at me with blinking red eyes. The next step revealed the hump of the beast, and the next his tasselled tail lashing his dirty brown quarters. I did not tarry longer, but ran to tell Tom. He made bold to risk a shot and light a fire, and thus we had buffalo meat for some days after.

We were still in the mountains. The trail led down the river for a bit through the worst of canebrakes, and every now and again we stopped while Tom and Weldon scouted. Once the roan mare made a dash through the brake, and, though Polly Ann burst through one way to head her off and I another, we reached the bank of Richland Creek in time to see her nose and the top of her pack above the brown water. There was nothing for it but to swim after her, which I did, and caught her quietly feeding in the cane on the other side. By great good fortune the other horse bore the powder.

"Drat you, Nancy," said Polly Ann to the mare, as she handed me my clothes, "I'd sooner carry the pack myself than be bothered with you."

"Hush," said I, "the redskins will get us."

Polly Ann regarded me scornfully as I stood bedraggled before her.

"Redskins!" she cried. "Nonsense! I reckon it's all talk about redskins."

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But we had scarce caught up ere we saw Tom standing rigid with his hand raised. Before him, on a mound bared of cane, were the charred remains of a fire. The sight of them transformed Weldon. His eyes glared again, even as when we had first seen him, curses escaped under his breath, and he would have darted into the cane had not Tom seized him sternly by the shoulder. As for me, my heart hammered against my ribs, and I grew sick with listening. It was at that instant that my admiration for Tom McChesney burst bounds, and that I got some real inkling of what woodcraft might be. Stepping silently between the tree trunks, his eyes bent on the leafy loam, he found a footprint here and another there, and suddenly he went into the cane with a sign to us to remain. It seemed an age before he returned. Then he began to rake the ashes, and, suddenly bending down, seized something in them,—the broken bowl of an Indian pipe.

“Shawnees!” he said; “I reckoned so.” It was at length the beseeching in Polly Ann’s eyes that he answered.

“A war party—tracks three days old. They took poplar.”

To take poplar was our backwoods expression for embarking in a canoe, the dugouts being fashioned from the great poplar trees.

I did not reflect then, as I have since and often, how great was the knowledge and resource Tom practised that day. Our feeling for him (Polly Ann’s and mine) fell little short of worship. In company ill at ease, in the forest he became silent and masterful—-an unerring woodsman, capable of meeting the Indian on his own footing. And, strangest thought of all, he and many I could name who went into Kentucky, had escaped, by a kind of strange fate, being born in the north of Ireland. This was so of Andrew Jackson himself.

The rest of the day he led us in silence down the trace, his eye alert to penetrate every corner of the forest, his hand near the trigger of his long Deckard. I followed in boylike imitation, searching every thicket for alien form and color, and yearning for stature and responsibility. As for poor Weldon, he would stride for hours at a time with eyes fixed ahead, a wild figure,—ragged and fringed. And we knew that the soul within him was torn with thoughts of his dead wife and of his child in captivity. Again, when the trance left him, he was an addition to our little party not to be despised.

At dark Polly Ann and I carried the packs across a creek on a fallen tree, she taking one end and I the other. We camped there, where the loam was trampled and torn by countless herds of bison, and had only parched corn and the remains of a buffalo steak for supper, as the meal was mouldy from its wetting, and running low. When Weldon had gone a little distance up the creek to scout, Tom relented from the sternness which his vigilance imposed and came and sat down on a log beside Polly Ann and me.

“’Tis a hard journey, little girl,” he said, patting her; “I reckon I done wrong to fetch you.”

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I can see him now, as the twilight settled down over the wilderness, his honest face red and freckled, but aglow with the tenderness it had hidden during the day, one big hand enfolding hers, and the other on my shoulder.

“Hark, Davy!” said Polly Ann, “he’s fair tired of us already. Davy, take me back.”

“Hush, Polly Ann,” he answered; delighted at her raillery. “But I’ve a word to say to you. If we come on to the redskins, you and Davy make for the cane as hard as you kin kilter. Keep out of sight.”

“As hard as we kin kilter!” exclaimed Polly Ann, indignantly. “I reckon not, Tom McChesney. Davy taught me to shoot long ago, afore you made up your mind to come back from Kaintuckee.”

Tom chuckled. “So Davy taught you to shoot,” he said, and checked himself. “He ain’t such a bad one with a pistol,”—and he patted me,—“but I allow ye’d better hunt kiver just the same. And if they ketch ye, Polly Ann, just you go along and pretend to be happy, and tear off a snatch of your dress now and then, if you get a chance. It wouldn’t take me but a little time to run into Harrodstown or Boone’s Station from here, and fetch a party to follow ye.”

Two days went by,—two days of strain in sunlight, and of watching and fitful sleep in darkness. But the Wilderness Trail was deserted. Here and there a lean-to—silent remnant of the year gone by—spoke of the little bands of emigrants which had once made their way so cheerfully to the new country. Again it was a child’s doll, the rags of it beaten by the weather to a rusty hue. Every hour that we progressed seemed to justify the sagacity and boldness of Tom’s plan, nor did it appear to have entered a painted skull that a white man would have the hardihood to try the trail this year. There were neither signs nor sounds save Nature’s own, the hoot of the wood-owl, the distant bark of a mountain wolf, the whir of a partridge as she left her brood. At length we could stand no more the repression that silence and watching put upon us, and when a rotten bank gave way and flung Polly Ann and the sorrel mare into a creek, even Weldon smiled as we pulled her, bedraggled and laughing, from the muddy water. This was after we had ferried the Rockcastle River.

Our trace rose and fell over height and valley, until we knew that we were come to a wonderland at last. We stood one evening on a spur as the setting sun flooded the natural park below us with a crystal light and, striking a tall sycamore, turned its green to gold. We were now on the hills whence the water ran down to nourish the fat land, and I could scarce believe that the garden spot on which our eyes feasted could be the scene of the blood and suffering of which we had heard. Here at last was the fairyland of my childhood, the country beyond the Blue Wall.

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We went down the river that led into it, with awes as though we were trespassers against God Himself,—as though He had made it too beautiful and too fruitful for the toilers of this earth. And you who read this an hundred years hence may not believe the marvels of it to the pioneer, and in particular to one born and bred in the scanty, hard soil of the mountains. Nature had made it for her park,—ay, and scented it with her own perfumes. Giant trees, which had watched generations come and go, some of which mayhap had been saplings when the Norman came to England, grew in groves,—the gnarled and twisted oak, and that godsend to the settlers, the sugar-maple; the coffee tree with its drooping buds; the mulberry, the cherry, and the plum; the sassafras and the pawpaw; the poplar and the sycamore, slender maidens of the forest, garbed in daintier colors,—ay, and that resplendent brunette with the white flowers, the magnolia; and all underneath, in the green shade, enamelled banks which the birds themselves sought to rival.

At length, one afternoon, we came to the grove of wild apple trees so lovingly spoken of by emigrants as the Crab Orchard, and where formerly they had delighted to linger. The plain near by was flecked with the brown backs of feeding buffalo, but we dared not stop, and pressed on to find a camp in the forest. As we walked in the filtered sunlight we had a great fright, Polly Ann and I. Shrill, discordant cries suddenly burst from the branches above us, and a flock of strange, green birds flecked with red flew over our heads. Even Tom, intent upon the trail, turned and laughed at Polly Ann as she stood clutching me.

“Shucks,” said he, “they’re only paroquets.”

We made our camp in a little dell where there was short green grass by the brookside and steep banks overgrown with brambles on either hand. Tom knew the place, and declared that we were within thirty miles of the station. A giant oak had blown down across the water, and, cutting out a few branches of this, we spread our blankets under it on the turf. Tethering our faithful beasts, and cutting a quantity of pea-vine for their night’s food, we lay down to sleep, Tom taking the first watch.

I had the second, for Tom trusted me now, and glorying in that trust I was alert and vigilant. A shy moon peeped at me between the trees, and was fantastically reflected in the water. The creek rippled over the limestone, and an elk screamed in the forest far beyond. When at length I had called Weldon to take the third watch, I lay down with a sense of peace, soothed by the sweet odors of the night.

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I awoke suddenly. I had been dreaming of Nick Temple and Temple Bow, and my father coming back to me there with a great gash in his shoulder like Weldon's. I lay for a moment dazed by the transition, staring through the gray light. Then I sat up, the soft stamping and snorting of the horses in my ears. The sorrel mare had her nose high, her tail twitching, but there was no other sound in the leafy wilderness. With a bound of returning sense I looked for Weldon. He had fallen asleep on the bank above, his body dropped across the trunk of the oak. I leaped on the trunk and made my way along it, stepping over him, until I reached and hid myself in the great roots of the tree on the bank above. The cold shiver of the dawn was in my body as I waited and listened. Should I wake Tom? The vast forest was silent, and yet in its shadowy depths my imagination drew moving forms. I hesitated.

The light grew: the boles of the trees came out, one by one, through the purple. The tangled mass down the creek took on a shade of green, and a faint breath came from the southward. The sorrel mare sniffed it, and stamped. Then silence again,—a long silence. Could it be that the cane moved in the thicket? Or had my eyes deceived me? I stared so hard that it seemed to rustle all over. Perhaps some deer were feeding there, for it was no unusual thing, when we rose in the morning, to hear the whistle of a startled doe near our camping ground. I was thoroughly frightened now,—and yet I had the speculative Scotch mind. The thicket was some one hundred and fifty yards above, and on the flooded lands at a bend. If there were Indians in it, they could not see the sleeping forms of our party under me because of a bend in the stream. They might have seen me, though I had kept very still in the twisted roots of the oak, and now I was cramped. If Indians were there, they could determine our position well enough by the occasional stamping and snorting of the horses. And this made my fear more probable, for I had heard that horses and cattle often warned pioneers of the presence of redskins.

Another thing: if they were a small party, they would probably seek to surprise us by coming out of the cane into the creek bed above the bend, and stalk down the creek. If a large band, they would surround and overpower us. I drew the conclusion that it must be a small party—if a party at all. And I would have given a shot in the arm to be able to see over the banks of the creek. Finally I decided to awake Tom.

It was no easy matter to get down to where he was without being seen by eyes in the cane. I clung to the under branches of the oak, finally reached the shelving bank, and slid down slowly. I touched him on the shoulder. He awoke with a start, and by instinct seized the rifle lying beside him.

"What is it, Davy?" he whispered.

I told what had happened and my surmise. He glanced then at the restless horses and nodded, pointing up at the sleeping figure of Weldon, in full sight on the log. The Indians must have seen him.

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Tom picked up the spare rifle.

“Davy,” said he, “you stay here beside Polly Ann, behind the oak. You kin shoot with a rest; but don’t shoot,” said he, earnestly, “for God’s sake don’t shoot unless you’re sure to kill.”

I nodded. For a moment he looked at the face of Polly Ann, sleeping peacefully, and the fierce light faded from his eyes. He brushed her on the cheek and she awoke and smiled at him, trustfully, lovingly. He put his finger to his lips.

“Stay with Davy,” he said. Turning to me, he added: “When you wake Weldon, wake him easy. So.” He put his hand in mine, and gradually tightened it. “Wake him that way, and he won’t jump.”

Polly Ann asked no questions. She looked at Tom, and her soul was in her face. She seized the pistol from the blanket. Then we watched him creeping down the creek on his belly, close to the bank. Next we moved behind the fallen tree, and I put my hand in Weldon’s. He woke with a sigh, started, but we drew him down behind the log. Presently he climbed cautiously up the bank and took station in the muddy roots of the tree. Then we waited, watching Tom with a prayer in our hearts. Those who have not felt it know not the fearfulness of waiting for an Indian attack.

At last Tom reached the bend in the bank, beside some red-bud bushes, and there he stayed. A level shaft of light shot through the forest. The birds, twittering, awoke. A great hawk soared high in the blue over our heads. An hour passed. I had sighted the rifle among the yellow leaves of the fallen oak an hundred times. But Polly Ann looked not once to the right or left. Her eyes and her prayers followed the form of her husband.

Then, like the cracking of a great drover’s whip, a shot rang out in the stillness, and my hands tightened over the rifle-stock. A piece of bark struck me in the face, and a dead leaf fluttered to the ground. Almost instantly there was another shot, and a blue wisp of smoke rose from the red-bud bushes, where Tom was. The horses whinnied, there was a rustle in the cane, and silence. Weldon bent over.

“My God!” he whispered hoarsely, “he hit one. Tom hit one.”

I felt Polly Ann’s hand on my face.

“Davy dear,” she said, “are ye hurt?”

“No,” said I, dazed, and wondering why Weldon had not been shot long ago as he slumbered. I was burning to climb the bank and ask him whether he had seen the Indian fall.

Again there was silence,—a silence even more awful than before. The sun crept higher, the magic of his rays turning the creek from black to crystal, and the birds began to sing again. And still there was no sign of the treacherous enemy that lurked about us. Could Tom get back? I glanced at Polly Ann. The same question was written in her yearning eyes, staring at the spot where the gray of his hunting shirt showed through the bushes at the bend. Suddenly her hand tightened on mine. The hunting shirt was gone!

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After that, in the intervals when my terror left me, I tried to speculate upon the plan of the savages. Their own numbers could not be great, and yet they must have known from our trace how few we were. Scanning the ground, I noted that the forest was fairly clean of undergrowth on both sides of us. Below, the stream ran straight, but there were growths of cane and briers. Looking up, I saw Weldon faced about. It was the obvious move.

But where had Tom gone?

Next my eye was caught by a little run fringed with bushes that curved around the cane near the bend. I traced its course, unconsciously, bit by bit, until it reached the edge of a bank not fifty feet away.

All at once my breath left me. Through the tangle of bramble stems at the mouth of the run, above naked brown shoulders there glared at me, hideously streaked with red, a face. Had my fancy lied? I stared again until my eyes were blurred, now tortured by doubt, now so completely convinced that my fingers almost released the trigger,—for I had thrown the sights into line over the tree. I know not to this day whether I shot from determination or nervousness. My shoulder bruised by the kick, the smoke like a veil before my face, it was some moments ere I knew that the air was full of whistling bullets; and then the gun was torn from my hands, and I saw Polly Ann ramming in a new charge.

“The pistol, Davy,” she cried.

One torture was over, another on. Crack after crack sounded from the forest—from here and there and everywhere, it seemed—and with a song that like a hurtling insect ran the scale of notes, the bullets buried themselves in the trunk of our oak with a chug. Once in a while I heard Weldon’s answering shot, but I remembered my promise to Tom not to waste powder unless I were sure. The agony was the breathing space we had while they crept nearer. Then we thought of Tom, and I dared not glance at Polly Ann for fear that the sight of her face would unnerve me.

Then a longing to kill seized me, a longing so strange and fierce that I could scarce be still. I know now that it comes in battle to all men, and with intensity to the hunted, and it explained to me more clearly what followed. I fairly prayed for the sight of a painted form, and time after time my fancy tricked me into the notion that I had one. And even as I searched the brambles at the top of the run a puff of smoke rose out of them, a bullet burying itself in the roots near Weldon, who fired in return. I say that I have some notion of what possessed the man, for he was crazed with passion at fighting the race which had so cruelly wronged him. Horror-struck, I saw him swing down from the bank, splash through the water with raised tomahawk, and gain the top of the run. In less time than it takes me to write these words he had dragged a hideous, naked warrior out of

the brambles, and with an avalanche of crumbling earth they slid into the waters of the creek.

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Polly Ann and I stared transfixed at the fearful fight that followed, nor can I give any adequate description of it. Weldon had struck through the brambles, but the savage had taken the blow on his gun-barrel and broken the handle of the tomahawk, and it was man to man as they rolled in the shallow water, locked in a death embrace. Neither might reach for his knife, neither was able to hold the other down, Weldon's curses surcharged with hatred. the Indian straining silently save for a gasp or a guttural note, the white a bearded madman, the savage a devil with a glistening, paint-streaked body, his features now agonized as his muscles strained and cracked, now lighted with a diabolical joy. But the pent-up rage of months gave the white man strength.

Polly Ann and I were powerless for fear of shooting Weldon, and gazed absorbed at the fiendish scene with eyes not to be withdrawn. The tree-trunk shook. A long, bronze arm reached out from above, and a painted face glowered at us from the very roots where Weldon had lain. That moment I took to be my last, and in it I seemed to taste all eternity, I heard but faintly a noise beyond. It was the shock of the heavy Indian falling on Polly Ann and me as we cowered under the trunk, and even then there was an instant that we stood gazing at him as at a worm writhing in the clay. It was she who fired the pistol and made the great hole in his head, and so he twitched and died. After that a confusion of shots, war-whoops, a vision of two naked forms flying from tree to tree towards the cane, and then—God be praised—Tom's voice shouting:—

"Polly Ann! Polly Ann!"

Before she had reached the top of the bank Tom had her in his arms, and a dozen tall gray figures leaped the six feet into the stream and stopped. My own eyes turned with theirs to see the body of poor Weldon lying face downward in the water. But beyond it a tragedy awaited me. Defiant, immovable, save for the heaving of his naked chest, the savage who had killed him stood erect with folded arms facing us. The smoke cleared away from a gleaming rifle-barrel, and the brave staggered and fell and died as silent as he stood, his feathers making ripples in the stream. It was cold-blooded, if you like, but war in those days was to the death, and knew no mercy. The tall backwoodsman who had shot him waded across the stream, and in the twinkling of an eye seized the scalp-lock and ran it round with his knife, holding up the bleeding trophy with a shout. Staggering to my feet, I stretched myself, but I had been cramped so long that I tottered and would have fallen had not Tom's hand steadied me.

"Davy!" he cried. "Thank God, little Davy! the varmints didn't get ye."

"And you, Tom?" I answered, looking up at him, bewildered with happiness.

“They was nearer than I suspicioned when I went off,” he said, and looked at me curiously. “Drat the little deevil,” he said affectionately, and his voice trembled, “he took care of Polly Ann, I’ll warrant.”

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He carried me to the top of the bank, where we were surrounded by the whole band of backwoodsmen.

“That he did!” cried Polly Ann, “and fetched a redskin yonder as clean as you could have done it, Tom.”

“The little deevil!” exclaimed Tom again.

I looked up, burning with this praise from Tom (for I had never thought of praise nor of anything save his happiness and Polly Ann’s). I looked up, and my eyes were caught and held with a strange fascination by fearless blue ones that gazed down into them. I give you but a poor description of the owner of these blue eyes, for personal magnetism springs not from one feature or another. He was a young man,—perhaps five and twenty as I now know age,—woodsman-clad, square-built, sun-reddened. His hair might have been orange in one light and sand-colored in another. With a boy’s sense of such things I knew that the other woodsmen were waiting for him to speak, for they glanced at him expectantly.

“You had a near call, McChesney,” said he, at length; “fortunate for you we were after this band,—shot some of it to pieces yesterday morning.” He paused, looking at Tom with that quality of tribute which comes naturally to a leader of men. “By God,” he said, “I didn’t think you’d try it.”

“My word is good, Colonel Clark,” answered Tom, simply.

Young Colonel Clark glanced at the lithe figure of Polly Ann. He seemed a man of few words, for he did not add to his praise of Tom’s achievement by complimenting her as Captain Sevier had done. In fact, he said nothing more, but leaped down the bank and strode into the water where the body of Weldon lay, and dragged it out himself. We gathered around it silently, and two great tears rolled down Polly Ann’s cheeks as she parted the hair with tenderness and loosened the clenched hands. Nor did any of the tall woodsmen speak. Poor Weldon! The tragedy of his life and death was the tragedy of Kentucky herself. They buried him by the waterside, where he had fallen.

But there was little time for mourning on the border. The burial finished, the Kentuckians splashed across the creek, and one of them, stooping with a shout at the mouth of the run, lifted out of the brambles a painted body with drooping head and feathers trailing.

“Ay, Mac,” he cried, “here’s a sculp for ye.”

“It’s Davy’s,” exclaimed Polly Ann from the top of the bank; “Davy shot that one.”

“Hooray for Davy,” cried a huge, strapping backwoodsman who stood beside her, and the others laughingly took up the shout. “Hooray for Davy. Bring him over, Cowan.”

The giant threw me on his shoulder as though I had been a fox, leaped down, and took the stream in two strides. I little thought how often he was to carry me in days to come, but I felt a great awe at the strength of him, as I stared into his rough features and his veined and weathered skin. He stood me down beside the Indian's body, smiled as he whipped my hunting knife from my belt, and said, "Now, Davy, take the sculp."

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Nothing loath, I seized the Indian by the long scalp-lock, while my big friend guided my hand, and amid laughter and cheers I cut off my first trophy of war. Nor did I have any other feeling than fierce hatred of the race which had killed my father.

Those who have known armies in their discipline will find it difficult to understand the leadership of the border. Such leadership was granted only to those whose force and individuality compelled men to obey them. I had my first glimpse of it that day. This Colonel Clark to whom Tom delivered Mr. Robertson's letter was perchance the youngest man in the company that had rescued us, saving only a slim lad of seventeen whom I noticed and envied, and whose name was James Ray. Colonel Clark, so I was told by my friend Cowan, held that title in Kentucky by reason of his prowess.

Clark had been standing quietly on the bank while I had scalped my first redskin. Then he called Tom McChesney to him and questioned him closely about our journey, the signs we had seen, and, finally, the news in the Watauga settlements. While this was going on the others gathered round them.

"What now?" asked Cowan, when he had finished.

"Back to Harrodstown," answered the Colonel, shortly.

There was a brief silence, followed by a hoarse murmur from a thick-set man at the edge of the crowd, who shouldered his way to the centre of it.

"We set out to hunt a fight, and my pluck is to clean up. We ain't finished 'em yet."

The man had a deep, coarse voice that was a piece with his roughness.

"I reckon this band ain't a-goin' to harry the station any more, McGary," cried Cowan.

"By Job, what did we come out for? Who'll take the trail with me?"

There were some who answered him, and straightway they began to quarrel among themselves, filling the woods with a babel of voices. While I stood listening to these disputes with a boy's awe of a man's quarrel, what was my astonishment to feel a hand on my shoulder. It was Colonel Clark's, and he was not paying the least attention to the dispute.

"Davy," said he, "you look as if you could make a fire."

"Yes, sir," I answered, gasping.

"Well," said he, "make one."

I lighted a piece of punk with the flint, and, wrapping it up in some dry brush, soon had a blaze started. Looking up, I caught his eye on me again.

“Mrs. McChesney,” said Colonel Clark to Polly Ann, “you look as if you could make johnny-cake. Have you any meal?”

“That I have,” cried Polly Ann, “though it’s fair mouldy. Davy, run and fetch it.”

I ran to the pack on the sorrel mare. When I returned Mr. Clark said:—

“That seems a handy boy, Mrs. McChesney.”

“Handy!” cried Polly Ann, “I reckon he’s more than handy. Didn’t he save my life twice on our way out here?”

“And how was that?” said the Colonel.

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“Run and fetch some water, Davy,” said Polly Ann, and straightway launched forth into a vivid description of my exploits, as she mixed the meal. Nay, she went so far as to tell how she came by me. The young Colonel listened gravely, though with a gleam now and then in his blue eyes. Leaning on his long rifle, he paid no manner of attention to the angry voices near by,—which conduct to me was little short of the marvellous.

“Now, Davy,” said he, at length, “the rest of your history.”

“There is little of it, sir,” I answered. “I was born in the Yadkin country, lived alone with my father, who was a Scotchman. He hated a man named Cameron, took me to Charlestown, and left me with some kin of his who had a place called Temple Bow, and went off to fight Cameron and the Cherokees.” There I gulped. “He was killed at Cherokee Ford, and—and I ran away from Temple Bow, and found Polly Ann.”

This time I caught something of surprise on the Colonel’s face.

“By thunder, Davy,” said he, “but you have a clean gift for brief narrative. Where did you learn it?”

“My father was a gentleman once, and taught me to speak and read,” I answered, as I brought a flat piece of limestone for Polly Ann’s baking.

“And what would you like best to be when you grow up, Davy?” he asked.

“Six feet,” said I, so promptly that he laughed.

“Faith,” said Polly Ann, looking at me comically, “he may be many things, but I’ll warrant he’ll never be that.”

I have often thought since that young Mr. Clark showed much of the wisdom of the famous king of Israel on that day. Polly Ann cooked a piece of a deer which one of the woodsmen had with him, and the quarrel died of itself when we sat down to this and the johnny-cake. By noon we had taken up the trace for Harrodstown, marching with scouts ahead and behind. Mr. Clark walked mostly alone, seemingly wrapped in thought. At times he had short talks with different men, oftenest—I noted with pride—with Tom McChesney. And more than once when he halted he called me to him, my answers to his questions seeming to amuse him. Indeed, I became a kind of pet with the backwoodsmen, Cowan often flinging me to his shoulder as he swung along. The pack was taken from the sorrel mare and divided among the party, and Polly Ann made to ride that we might move the faster.

It must have been the next afternoon, about four, that the rough stockade of Harrodstown greeted our eyes as we stole cautiously to the edge of the forest. And the sight of no roofs and spires could have been more welcome than that of these logs and cabins, broiling in the midsummer sun. At a little distance from the fort, a silent

testimony of siege, the stumpy, cleared fields were overgrown with weeds, tall and rank, the corn choked. Nearer the stockade, where the keepers of the fort might venture out at times, a more orderly growth met the eye. It was young

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James Ray whom Colonel Clark singled to creep with our message to the gates. At six, when the smoke was rising from the stone chimneys behind the palisades, Ray came back to say that all was well. Then we went forward quickly, hands waved a welcome above the logs, the great wooden gates swung open, and at last we had reached the haven for which we had suffered so much. Mangy dogs barked at our feet, men and women ran forward joyfully to seize our hands and greet us.

And so we came to Kaintuckee.

CHAPTER X

HARRODSTOWN

The old forts like Harrodstown and Boonesboro and Logan's at St. Asaph's have long since passed away. It is many, many years since I lived through that summer of siege in Harrodstown, the horrors of it are faded and dim, the discomforts lost to a boy thrilled with a new experience. I have read in my old age the books of travellers in Kentucky, English and French, who wrote much of squalor and strife and sin and little of those qualities that go to the conquest of an empire and the making of a people. Perchance my own pages may be colored by gratitude and love for the pioneers amongst whom I found myself, and thankfulness to God that we had reached them alive.

I know not how many had been cooped up in the little fort since the early spring, awaiting the chance to go back to their weed-choked clearings. The fort at Harrodstown was like an hundred others I have since seen, but sufficiently surprising to me then. Imagine a great parallelogram made of log cabins set end to end, their common outside wall being the wall of the fort, and loopholed. At the four corners of the parallelogram the cabins jutted out, with ports in the angle in order to give a flanking fire in case the savages reached the palisade. And then there were huge log gates with watch-towers on either sides where sentries sat day and night scanning the forest line. Within the fort was a big common dotted with forest trees, where such cattle as had been saved browsed on the scanty grass. There had been but the one scrawny horse before our arrival.

And the settlers! How shall I describe them as they crowded around us inside the gate? Some stared at us with sallow faces and eyes brightened by the fever, yet others had the red glow of health. Many of the men wore rough beards, unkempt, and yellow, weather-worn hunting shirts, often stained with blood. The barefooted women wore sunbonnets and loose homespun gowns, some of linen made from nettles, while the children swarmed here and there and everywhere in any costume that chance had

given them. All seemingly talking at once, they plied us with question after question of the trace, the Watauga settlements, the news in the Carolinys, and how the war went.

“A lad is it, this one,” said an Irish voice near me, “and a woman! The dear help us, and who’d ’ave thought to see a woman come over the mountain this year! Where did ye find them, Bill Cowan?”

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“Near the Crab Orchard, and the lad killed and sculped a six-foot brave.”

“The Saints save us! And what’ll be his name?”

“Davy,” said my friend.

“Is it Davy? Sure his namesake killed a giant, too.”

“And is he come along, also?” said another. His shy blue eyes and stiff blond hair gave him a strange appearance in a hunting shirt.

“Hist to him! Who will ye be talkin’ about, Poulsson? Is it King David ye mane?”

There was a roar of laughter, and this was my introduction to Terence McCann and Swein Poulsson. The fort being crowded, we were put into a cabin with Terence and Cowan and Cowan’s wife—a tall, gaunt woman with a sharp tongue and a kind heart—-and her four brats, “All hugemsmug together,” as Cowan said. And that night we supped upon dried buffalo meat and boiled nettle-tops, for of such was the fare in Harrodstown that summer.

“Tom McChesney kept his faith.” One other man was to keep his faith with the little community—George Rogers Clark. And I soon learned that trustworthiness is held in greater esteem in a border community than anywhere else. Of course, the love of the frontier was in the grain of these men. But what did they come back to? Day after day would the sun rise over the forest and beat down upon the little enclosure in which we were penned. The row of cabins leaning against the stockade marked the boundaries of our diminutive world. Beyond them, invisible, lurked a relentless foe. Within, the greater souls alone were calm, and a man’s worth was set down to a hair’s breadth. Some were always to be found squatting on their door-steps cursing the hour which had seen them depart for this land; some wrestled and fought on the common, for a fist fight with a fair field and no favor was a favorite amusement of the backwoodsmen. My big friend, Cowan, was the champion of these, and often of an evening the whole of the inhabitants would gather near the spring to see him fight those who had the courage to stand up to him. His muscles were like hickory wood, and I have known a man insensible for a quarter of an hour after one of his blows. Strangely enough, he never fought in anger, and was the first to the spring for a gourd of water after the fight was over. But Tom McChesney was the best wrestler of the lot, and could make a wider leap than any other man in Harrodstown.

Tom’s reputation did not end there, for he became one of the two bread-winners of the station. I would better have said meat-winners. Woe be to the incautious who, lulled by a week of fancied security, ventured out into the dishevelled field for a little food! In the early days of the siege man after man had gone forth for game, never to return. Until Tom came, one only had been successful,—that lad of seventeen, whose achievements

were the envy of my boyish soul, James Ray. He slept in the cabin next to Cowan's, and long before the dawn had revealed the forest line had been wont to steal

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out of the gates on the one scrawny horse the Indians had left them, gain the Salt River, and make his way thence through the water to some distant place where the listening savages could not hear his shot. And now Tom took his turn. Often did I sit with Polly Ann till midnight in the sentry's tower, straining my ears for the owl's hoot that warned us of his coming. Sometimes he was empty-handed, but sometimes a deer hung limp and black across his saddle, or a pair of turkeys swung from his shoulder.

"Arrah, darlin'," said Terence to Polly Ann, "'tis yer husband and James is the jools av the fort. Sure I niver loved me father as I do thim."

I would have given kingdoms in those days to have been seventeen and James Ray. When he was in the fort I dogged his footsteps, and listened with a painful yearning to the stories of his escapes from the roving bands. And as many a character is watered in its growth by hero-worship, so my own grew firmer in the contemplation of Ray's resourcefulness. My strange life had far removed me from lads of my own age, and he took a fancy to me, perhaps because of the very persistence of my devotion to him. I cleaned his gun, filled his powder flask, and ran to do his every bidding.

I used in the hot summer days to lie under the elm tree and listen to the settlers' talk about a man named Henderson, who had bought a great part of Kentucky from the Indians, and had gone out with Boone to found Boonesboro some two years before. They spoke of much that I did not understand concerning the discountenance by Virginia of these claims, speculating as to whether Henderson's grants were good. For some of them held these grants, and others Virginia grants—a fruitful source of quarrel between them. Some spoke, too, of Washington and his ragged soldiers going up and down the old colonies and fighting for a freedom which there seemed little chance of getting. But their anger seemed to blaze most fiercely when they spoke of a mysterious British general named Hamilton, whom they called "the ha'r buyer," and who from his stronghold in the north country across the great Ohio sent down these hordes of savages to harry us. I learned to hate Hamilton with the rest, and pictured him with the visage of a fiend. We laid at his door every outrage that had happened at the three stations, and put upon him the blood of those who had been carried off to torture in the Indian villages of the northern forests. And when—amidst great excitement—a spent runner would arrive from Boonesboro or St. Asaph's and beg Mr. Clark for a squad, it was commonly with the first breath that came into his body that he cursed Hamilton.

So the summer wore away, while we lived from hand to mouth on such scanty fare as the two of them shot and what we could venture to gather in the unkempt fields near the gates. A winter of famine lurked ahead, and men were goaded near to madness at the thought of clearings made and corn planted in the spring within reach of their hands, as it were, and they might not harvest it. At length, when a fortnight had passed, and Tom and Ray had gone forth day after day without sight or fresh sign of Indians, the weight

lifted from our hearts. There were many things that might yet be planted and come to maturity before the late Kentucky frosts.

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The pressure within the fort, like a flood, opened the gates of it, despite the sturdily disapproving figure of a young man who stood silent under the sentry box, leaning on his Deckard. He was Colonel George Rogers Clark,[1] Commander-in-chief of the backwoodsmen of Kentucky, whose power was reenforced by that strange thing called an education. It was this, no doubt, gave him command of words when he chose to use them.

[1] It appears that Mr. Clark had not yet received the title of Colonel, though he held command.—*Editor*.

“Faith,” said Terence, as we passed him, “’tis a foine man he is, and a gintleman born. Wasn’t it him gathered the Convintion here in Harrodstown last year that chose him and another to go to the Virginia legislatoor? And him but a lad, ye might say. The divil fly away wid his caution! Sure the redskins is as toired as us, and gone home to the wives and childher, bad cess to thim.”

And so the first day the gates were opened we went into the fields a little way; and the next day a little farther. They had once seemed to me an unexplored and forbidden country as I searched them with my eyes from the sentry boxes. And yet I felt a shame to go with Polly Ann and Mrs. Cowan and the women while James Ray and Tom sat with the guard of men between us and the forest line. Like a child on a holiday, Polly Ann ran hither and thither among the stalks, her black hair flying and a song on her lips.

“Soon we’ll be having a little home of our own, Davy,” she cried; “Tom has the place chose on a knoll by the river, and the land is rich with hickory and pawpaw. I reckon we may be going there next week.”

Caution being born into me with all the strength of a vice, I said nothing. Whereupon she seized me in her strong hands and shook me.

“Ye little imp!” said she, while the women paused in their work to laugh at us.

“The boy is right, Polly Ann,” said Mrs. Harrod, “and he’s got more sense than most of the men in the fort.”

“Ay, that he has,” the gaunt Mrs. Cowan put in, eying me fiercely, while she gave one of her own offsprings a slap that sent him spinning.

Whatever Polly Ann might have said would have been to the point, but it was lost, for just then the sound of a shot came down the wind, and a half a score of women stampeded through the stalks, carrying me down like a reed before them. When I staggered to my feet Polly Ann and Mrs. Cowan and Mrs. Harrod were standing alone. For there was little of fear in those three.

“Shucks!” said Mrs. Cowan, “I reckon it’s that Jim Ray shooting at a mark,” and she began to pick nettles again.

“Vimmen is a shy critter,” remarked Swein Poulsson, coming up. I had a shrewd notion that he had run with the others.

“Wimmen!” Mrs. Cowan fairly roared. “Wimmen! Tell us how ye went in March with the boys to fight the varmints at the Sugar Orchard, Swein!”

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We all laughed, for we loved him none the less. His little blue eyes were perfectly solemn as he answered:—

“Ve send you fight Injuns mit your tongue, Mrs. Cowan. Then we haf no more troubles.”

“Land of Canaan!” cried she, “I reckon I could do more harm with it than you with a gun.”

There were many such false alarms in the bright days following, and never a bullet sped from the shadow of the forest. Each day we went farther afield, and each night trooped merrily in through the gates with hopes of homes and clearings rising in our hearts—-until the motionless figure of the young Virginian met our eye. It was then that men began to scoff at him behind his back, though some spoke with sufficient backwoods bluntness to his face. And yet he gave no sign of anger or impatience. Not so the other leaders. No sooner did the danger seem past than bitter strife sprang up within the walls. Even the two captains were mortal enemies. One was Harrod, a tall, spare, dark-haired man of great endurance,—a type of the best that conquered the land for the nation; the other, that Hugh McGary of whom I have spoken, coarse and brutal, if you like, but fearless and a leader of men withal.

A certain Sunday morning, I remember, broke with a cloud-flecked sky, and as we were preparing to go afield with such ploughs as could be got together (we were to sow turnips) the loud sounds of a quarrel came from the elm at the spring. With one accord men and women and children flocked thither, and as we ran we heard McGary’s voice above the rest. Worming my way, boylike, through the crowd, I came upon McGary and Harrod glaring at each other in the centre of it.

“By Job! there’s no devil if I’ll stand back from my clearing and waste the rest of the summer for the fears of a pack of cowards. I’ll take a posse and march to Shawanee Springs this day, and see any man a fair fight that tries to stop me.”

“And who’s in command here?” demanded Harrod.

“I am, for one,” said McGary, with an oath, “and my corn’s on the ear. I’ve held back long enough, I tell you, and I’ll starve this winter for you nor any one else.”

Harrod turned.

“Where’s Clark?” he said to Bowman.

“Clark!” roared McGary, “Clark be d—d. Ye’d think he was a woman.” He strode up to Harrod until their faces almost touched, and his voice shook with the intensity of his anger. “By G—d, you nor Clark nor any one else will stop me, I say!” He swung around and faced the people. “Come on, boys! We’ll fetch that corn, or know the reason why.”

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A responding murmur showed that the bulk of them were with him. Weary of the pent-up life, longing for action, and starved for a good meal, the anger of his many followers against Clark and Harrod was nigh as great as his. He started roughly to shoulder his way out, and whether from accident or design Captain Harrod slipped in front of him, I never knew. The thing that followed happened quickly as the catching of my breath. I saw McGary powdering his pan, and Harrod his, and felt the crowd giving back like buffalo. All at once the circle had vanished, and the two men were standing not five paces apart with their rifles clutched across their bodies, each watching, catlike, for the other to level. It was a cry that startled us—and them. There was a vision of a woman flying across the common, and we saw the dauntless Mrs. Harrod snatching her husband's gun from his resisting hands. So she saved his life and McGary's.

At this point Colonel Clark was seen coming from the gate. When he got to Harrod and McGary the quarrel blazed up again, but now it was between the three of them, and Clark took Harrod's rifle from Mrs. Harrod and held it. However, it was presently decided that McGary should wait one more day before going to his clearing, whereupon the gates were opened, the picked men going ahead to take station as a guard, and soon we were hard at work, ploughing here and mowing there, and in another place putting seed in the ground: in the cheer of the work hardships were forgotten, and we paused now and again to laugh at some sally of Terence McCann's or odd word of Swein Poulsson's. As the day wore on to afternoon a blue haze—harbinger of autumn—settled over fort and forest. Bees hummed in the air as they searched hither and thither amongst the flowers, or shot straight as a bullet for a distant hive. But presently a rifle cracked, and we raised our heads.

"Hist!" said Terence, "the bhoys on watch is that warlike! Whin there's no redskins to kill they must be wastin' good powdher on a three."

I leaped upon a stump and scanned the line of sentries between us and the woods; only their heads and shoulders appeared above the rank growth. I saw them looking from one to another questioningly, some shouting words I could not hear. Then I saw some running; and next, as I stood there wondering, came another crack, and then a volley like the noise of a great fire licking into dry wood, and things that were not bees humming round about. A distant man in a yellow hunting shirt stumbled, and was drowned in the tangle as in water. Around me men dropped plough-handles and women baskets, and as we ran our legs grew numb and our bodies cold at a sound which had haunted us in dreams by night—the war-whoop. The deep and guttural song of it rose and fell with a horrid fierceness. An agonized voice was in my ears, and I halted, ashamed. It was Polly Ann's.

"Davy!" she cried, "Davy, have ye seen Tom?"

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Two men dashed by. I seized one by the fringe of his shirt, and he flung me from my feet. The other leaped me as I knelt.

“Run, ye fools!” he shouted. But we stood still, with yearning eyes staring back through the frantic forms for a sight of Tom’s.

“I’ll go back!” I cried, “I’ll go back for him. Do you run to the fort.” For suddenly I seemed to forget my fear, nor did even the hideous notes of the scalp halloo disturb me. Before Polly Ann could catch me I had turned and started, stumbled,—I thought on a stump,—and fallen headlong among the nettles with a stinging pain in my leg. Staggering to my feet, I tried to run on, fell again, and putting down my hand found it smeared with blood. A man came by, paused an instant while his eye caught me, and ran on again. I shall remember his face and name to my dying day; but there is no reason to put it down here. In a few seconds’ space as I lay I suffered all the pains of captivity and of death by torture, that cry of savage man an hundred times more frightful than savage beast sounding in my ears, and plainly nearer now by half the first distance. Nearer, and nearer yet—and then I heard my name called. I was lifted from the ground, and found myself in the lithe arms of Polly Ann.

“Set me down!” I screamed, “set me down!” and must have added some of the curses I had heard in the fort. But she clutched me tightly (God bless the memory of those frontier women!), and flew like a deer toward the gates. Over her shoulder I glanced back. A spare three hundred yards away in a ragged line a hundred red devils were bounding after us with feathers flying and mouths open as they yelled. Again I cried to her to set me down; but though her heart beat faster and her breath came shorter, she held me the tighter. Second by second they gained on us, relentlessly. Were we near the fort? Hoarse shouts answered the question, but they seemed distant—too distant. The savages were gaining, and Polly Ann’s breath quicker still. She staggered, but the brave soul had no thought of faltering. I had a sight of a man on a plough horse with dangling harness coming up from somewhere, of the man leaping off, of ourselves being pitched on the animal’s bony back and clinging there at the gallop, the man running at the side. Shots whistled over our heads, and here was the brown fort. Its big gates swung together as we dashed through the narrowed opening. Then, as he lifted us off, I knew that the man who had saved us was Tom himself. The gates closed with a bang, and a patter of bullets beat against them like rain.

Through the shouting and confusion came a cry in a voice I knew, now pleading, now commanding.

“Open, open! For God’s sake open!”

“It’s Ray! Open for Ray! Ray’s out!”

Some were seizing the bar to thrust it back when the heavy figure of McGary crushed into the crowd beside it.

“By Job, I’ll shoot the man that touches it!” he shouted, as he tore them away. But the sturdiest of them went again to it, and cursed him. And while they fought backward and forward, the lad’s mother, Mrs. Ray, cried out to them to open in tones to rend their hearts. But McGary had gained the bar and swore (perhaps wisely) that he would not sacrifice the station for one man. Where was Ray?

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Where was Ray, indeed? It seemed as if no man might live in the hellish storm that raged without the walls: as if the very impetus of hate and fury would carry the ravages over the stockade to murder us. Into the turmoil at the gate came Colonel Clark, sending the disputants this way and that to defend the fort, McGary to command one quarter, Harrod and Bowman another, and every man that could be found to a loophole, while Mrs. Ray continued to run up and down, wringing her hands, now facing one man, now another. Some of her words came to me, shrilly, above the noise.

“He fed you—he fed you. Oh, my God, and you are grateful—grateful! When you were starving he risked his life—”

Torn by anxiety for my friend, I dragged myself into the nearest cabin, and a man was fighting there in the half-light at the port. The huge figure I knew to be my friend Cowan’s, and when he drew back to load I seized his arm, shouting Ray’s name. Although the lead was pattering on the other side of the logs, Cowan lifted me to the port. And there, stretched on the ground behind a stump, within twenty feet of the walls, was James. Even as I looked the puffs of dust at his side showed that the savages knew his refuge. I saw him level and fire, and then Bill Cowan set me down and began to ram in a charge with tremendous energy.

Was there no way to save Ray? I stood turning this problem in my mind, subconsciously aware of Cowan’s movements: of his yells when he thought he had made a shot, when Polly Ann appeared at the doorway. Darting in, she fairly hauled me to the shake-down in the far corner.

“Will ye bleed to death, Davy?” she cried, as she slipped off my legging and bent over the wound. Her eye lighting on a gourdful of water on the puncheon table, she tore a strip from her dress and washed and bound me deftly. The bullet was in the flesh, and gave me no great pain.

“Lie there, ye imp!” she commanded, when she had finished.

“Some one’s under the bed,” said I, for I had heard a movement.

In an instant we were down on our knees on the hard dirt floor, and there was a man’s foot in a moccasin! We both grabbed it and pulled, bringing to life a person with little blue eyes and stiff blond hair.

“Swein Poulsson!” exclaimed Polly Ann, giving him an involuntary kick, “may the devil give ye shame!”

Swein Poulsson rose to a sitting position and clasped his knees in his hands.

“I haf one great fright,” said he.

“Send him into the common with the women in yere place, Mis’ McChesney,” growled Cowan, who was loading.

“By tam!” said Swein Poulsson, leaping to his feet, “I vill stay here und fight. I am prave once again.” Stooping down, he searched under the bed, pulled out his rifle, powdered the pan, and flying to the other port, fired. At that Cowan left his post and snatched the rifle from Poulsson’s hands.

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“Ye’re but wasting powder,” he cried angrily.

“Then, by tam, I am as vell under the bed,” said Poulsson. “Vat can I do?”

I had it.

“Dig!” I shouted; and seizing the astonished Cowan’s tomahawk from his belt I set to work furiously chopping at the dirt beneath the log wall. “Dig, so that James can get under.”

Cowan gave me the one look, swore a mighty oath, and leaping to the port shouted to Ray in a thundering voice what we were doing.

“Dig!” roared Cowan. “Dig, for the love of God, for he can’t hear me.”

The three of us set to work with all our might, Poulsson making great holes in the ground at every stroke, Polly Ann scraping at the dirt with the gourd. Two feet below the surface we struck the edge of the lowest log, and then it was Poulsson who got into the hole with his hunting knife—perspiring, muttering to himself, working as one possessed with a fury, while we scraped out the dirt from under him. At length, after what seemed an age of staring at his legs, the ground caved on him, and he would have smothered if we had not dragged him out by the heels, sputtering and all powdered brown. But there was the daylight under the log.

Again Cowan shouted at Ray, and again, but he did not understand. It was then the miracle happened. I have seen brave men and cowards since, and I am as far as ever from distinguishing them. Before we knew it Poulsson was in the hole once more—had wriggled out of it on the other side, and was squirming in a hail of bullets towards Ray. There was a full minute of suspense—perhaps two—during which the very rifles of the fort were silent (though the popping in the weeds was redoubled), and then the barrel of a Deckard was poked through the hole. After it came James Ray himself, and lastly Poulsson, and a great shout went out from the loopholes and was taken up by the women in the common.

* * * * * * *

Swein Poulsson had become a hero, nor was he willing to lose any of the glamour which was a hero’s right. As the Indians’ fire slackened, he went from cabin to cabin, and if its occupants failed to mention the exploit (some did fail so to do, out of mischief), Swein would say:—

“You did not see me safe James, no? I vill tell you Joost how.”

It never leaked out that Swein was first of all under the bed, for Polly Ann and Bill Cowan and myself swore to keep the secret. But they told how I had thought of digging

the hole under the logs—a happy circumstance which got me a reputation for wisdom beyond my years. There was a certain Scotchman at Harrodstown called McAndrew, and it was he gave me the nickname “Canny Davy,” and I grew to have a sort of precocious fame in the station. Often Captain Harrod or Bowman or some of the others would pause in their arguments and say gravely, “What does Davy think of it?” This was not good for a boy, and the wonder of it is that it did not make me altogether insupportable. One effect it had on me—to make me long even more earnestly to be a man.

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The impulse of my reputation led me farther. A fortnight of more inactivity followed, and then we ventured out into the fields once more. But I went with the guard this time, not with the women,—thanks to a whim the men had for humoring me.

“Arrah, and beant he a man all but two feet,” said Terence, “wid more brain than me an’ Bill Cowan and Poulsson togither? ’Tis a fox’s nose Davy has for the divils, Bill. Sure he can smell thim the same as you an’ me kin see the red paint on their faces.”

“I reckon that’s true,” said Bill Cowan, with solemnity, and so he carried me off.

At length the cattle were turned out to browse greedily through the clearing, while we lay in the woods by the forest and listened to the sound of their bells, but when they strayed too far, I was often sent to drive them back. Once when this happened I followed them to the shade at the edge of the woods, for it was noon, and the sun beat down fiercely. And there I sat for some time watching them as they lashed their sides with their tails and pawed the ground, for experience is a good master. Whether or not the flies were all that troubled them I could not tell, and no sound save the tinkle of their bells broke the noonday stillness. Making a circle I drove them back toward the fort, much troubled in mind. I told Cowan, but he laughed and said it was the flies. Yet I was not satisfied, and finally stole back again to the place where I had found them. I sat a long time hidden at the edge of the forest, listening until my imagination tricked me into hearing those noises which I feared and yet longed for. Trembling, I stole a little farther in the shade of the woods, and then a little farther still. The leaves rustled in the summer’s breeze, patches of sunlight flickered on the mould, the birds twittered, and the squirrels scolded. A chipmunk frightened me as he flew chattering along a log. And yet I went on. I came to the creek as it flowed silently in the shade, stepped in, and made my way slowly down it, I know not how far, walking in the water, my eye alert to every movement about me. At length I stopped and caught my breath. Before me, in a glade opening out under great trees, what seemed a myriad of forked sticks were piled against one another, three by three, and it struck me all in a heap that I had come upon a great encampment. But the skeletons of the pyramid tents alone remained. Where were the skins? Was the camp deserted?

For a while I stared through the brier leaves, then I took a venture, pushed on, and found myself in the midst of the place. It must have held near a thousand warriors. All about me were gray heaps of ashes, and bones of deer and elk and buffalo scattered, some picked clean, some with the meat and hide sticking to them. Impelled by a strong fascination, I went hither and thither until a sound brought me to a stand—the echoing crack of a distant rifle. On the heels of it came another, then several

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together, and a faint shouting borne on the light wind. Terrorized, I sought for shelter. A pile of brush underlain by ashes was by, and I crept into that. The sounds continued, but seemed to come no nearer, and my courage returning, I got out again and ran wildly through the camp toward the briers on the creek, expecting every moment to be tumbled headlong by a bullet. And when I reached the briers, what between panting and the thumping of my heart I could for a few moments hear nothing. Then I ran on again up the creek, heedless of cover, stumbling over logs and trailing vines, when all at once a dozen bronze forms glided with the speed of deer across my path ahead. They splashed over the creek and were gone. Bewildered with fear, I dropped under a fallen tree. Shouts were in my ears, and the noise of men running. I stood up, and there, not twenty paces away, was Colonel Clark himself rushing toward me. He halted with a cry, raised his rifle, and dropped it at the sight of my queer little figure covered with ashes.

“My God!” he cried, “it’s Davy.”

“They crossed the creek,” I shouted, pointing the way, “they crossed the creek, some twelve of them.”

“Ay,” he said, staring at me, and by this time the rest of the guard were come up. They too stared, with different exclamations on their lips,—Cowan and Bowman and Tom McChesney and Terence McCann in front.

“And there’s a great camp below,” I went on, “deserted, where a thousand men have been.”

“A camp—deserted?” said Clark, quickly.

“Yes,” I said, “yes.” But he had already started forward and seized me by the arm.

“Lead on,” he cried, “show it to us.” He went ahead with me, travelling so fast that I must needs run to keep up, and fairly lifting me over the logs. But when we came in sight of the place he darted forward alone and went through it like a hound on the trail. The others followed him, crying out at the size of the place and poking among the ashes. At length they all took up the trail for a way down the creek. Presently Clark called a halt.

“I reckon that they’ve made for the Ohio,” he said. And at this judgment from him the guard gave a cheer that might almost have been heard in the fields around the fort. The terror that had hovered over us all that long summer was lifted at last.

You may be sure that Cowan carried me back to the station. “To think it was Davy that found it!” he cried again and again, “to think it was Davy found it!”

“And wasn’t it me that said he could smell the divils,” said Terence, as he circled around us in a mimic war dance. And when from the fort they saw us coming across the fields they opened the gates in astonishment, and on hearing the news gave themselves over to the wildest rejoicing. For the backwoodsmen were children of nature. Bill Cowan ran for the fiddle which he had carried so carefully over the mountain, and that night we had jigs and reels on the common while the big fellow played “Billy of the Wild Woods” and “Jump Juba,” with all his might, and the pine knots threw their fitful, red light on the wild scenes of merriment. I must have cut a queer little figure as I sat between Cowan and Tom watching the dance, for presently Colonel Clark came up to us, laughing in his quiet way.

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“Davy,” said he, “there is another great man here who would like to see you,” and led me away wondering. I went with him toward the gate, burning all over with pride at this attention, and beside a torch there a broad-shouldered figure was standing, at sight of whom I had a start of remembrance.

“Do you know who that is, Davy?” said Colonel Clark.

“It’s Mr. Daniel Boone,” said I.

“By thunder,” said Clark, “I believe the boy *is* a wizard,” while Mr. Boone’s broad mouth was creased into a smile, and there was a trace of astonishment, too, in his kindly eye.

“Mr. Boone came to my father’s cabin on the Yadkin once,” I said; “he taught me to skin a deer.”

“Ay, that I did,” exclaimed Mr. Boone, “and I said ye’d make a woodsman sometime.”

Mr. Boone, it seemed, had come over from Boonesboro to consult with Colonel Clark on certain matters, and had but just arrived. But so modest was he that he would not let it be known that he was in the station, for fear of interrupting the pleasure. He was much the same as I had known him, only grown older and his reputation now increased to vastness. He and Clark sat on a door log talking for a long time on Kentucky matters, the strength of the forts, the prospect of new settlers that autumn, of the British policy, and finally of a journey which Colonel Clark was soon to make back to Virginia across the mountains. They seemed not to mind my presence. At length Colonel Clark turned to me with that quiet, jocose way he had when relaxed.

“Davy,” said he, “we’ll see how much of a general you are. What would you do if a scoundrel named Hamilton far away at Detroit was bribing all the redskins he could find north of the Ohio to come down and scalp your men?”

“I’d go for Hamilton,” I answered.

“By God!” exclaimed Clark, striking Mr. Boone on the knee, “that’s what I’d do.”

CHAPTER XI

FRAGMENTARY

Mr. Boone’s visit lasted but a day. I was a great deal with Colonel Clark in the few weeks that followed before his departure for Virginia. He held himself a little aloof (as a leader should) from the captains in the station, without seeming to offend them. But he had a fancy for James Ray and for me, and he often took me into the woods with him by day, and talked with me of an evening.

“I’m going away to Virginia, Davy,” he said; “will you not go with me? We’ll see Williamsburg, and come back in the spring, and I’ll have you a little rifle made.”

My look must have been wistful.

“I can’t leave Polly Ann and Tom,” I answered.

“Well,” he said, “I like that. Faith to your friends is a big equipment for life.”

“But why are you going?” I asked.

“Because I love Kentucky best of all things in the world,” he answered, smiling.

“And what are you going to do?” I insisted.

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“Ah,” he said, “that I can’t tell even to you.”

“To catch Hamilton?” I ventured at random.

He looked at me queerly.

“Would you go along, Davy?” said he, laughing now.

“Would you take Tom?”

“Among the first,” answered Colonel Clark, heartily.

We were seated under the elm near the spring, and at that instant I saw Tom coming toward us. I jumped up, thinking to please him by this intelligence, when Colonel Clark pulled me down again.

“Davy,” said he, almost roughly, I thought, “remember that we have been joking. Do you understand?—joking. You have a tongue in your mouth, but sense enough in your head, I believe, to hold it.” He turned to Tom. “McChesney, this is a queer lad you brought us,” said he.

“He’s a little deevil,” agreed Tom, for that had become a formula with him.

It was all very mysterious to me, and I lay awake many a night with curiosity, trying to solve a puzzle that was none of my business. And one day, to cap the matter, two woodsmen arrived at Harrodstown with clothes frayed and bodies lean from a long journey. Not one of the hundred questions with which they were beset would they answer, nor say where they had been or why, save that they had carried out certain orders of Clark, who was locked up with them in a cabin for several hours.

The first of October, the day of Colonel Clark’s departure, dawned crisp and clear. He was to take with him the disheartened and the cowed, the weaklings who loved neither work nor exposure nor danger. And before he set out of the gate he made a little speech to the assembled people.

“My friends,” he said, “you know me. I put the interests of Kentucky before my own. Last year when I left to represent her at Williamsburg there were some who said I would desert her. It was for her sake I made that journey, suffered the tortures of hell from scalded feet, was near to dying in the mountains. It was for her sake that I importuned the governor and council for powder and lead, and when they refused it I said to them, ’Gentlemen, a country that is not worth defending is not worth claiming.’”

At these words the settlers gave a great shout, waving their coonskin hats in the air.

“Ay, that ye did,” cried Bill Cowan, “and got the amminition.”

“I made that journey for her sake, I say,” Colonel Clark continued, “and even so I am making this one. I pray you trust me, and God bless and keep you while I am gone.”

He did not forget to speak to me as he walked between our lines, and told me to be a good boy and that he would see me in the spring. Some of the women shed tears as he passed through the gate, and many of us climbed to sentry box and cabin roof that we might see the last of the little company wending its way across the fields. A motley company it was, the refuse of the station, headed by its cherished captain. So they started back over the weary road that led to that now far-away land of civilization and safety.

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During the balmy Indian summer, when the sharper lines of nature are softened by the haze, some came to us from across the mountains to make up for the deserters. From time to time a little group would straggle to the gates of the station, weary and footsore, but overjoyed at the sight of white faces again: the fathers walking ahead with watchful eyes, the women and older children driving the horses, and the babies slung to the pack in hickory withes. Nay, some of our best citizens came to Kentucky swinging to the tail of a patient animal. The Indians were still abroad, and in small war parties darted hither and thither with incredible swiftness. And at night we would gather at the fire around our new emigrants to listen to the stories they had to tell,—familiar stories to all of us. Sometimes it had been the gobble of a wild turkey that had lured to danger, again a wood-owl had cried strangely in the night.

Winter came, and passed—somehow. I cannot dwell here on the tediousness of it, and the one bright spot it has left in my memory concerns Polly Ann. Did man, woman, or child fall sick, it was Polly Ann who nursed them. She had by nature the God-given gift of healing, knew by heart all the simple remedies that backwoods lore had inherited from the north of Ireland or borrowed from the Indians. Her sympathy and loving-kindness did more than these, her never tiring and ever cheerful watchfulness. She was deft, too, was Polly Ann, and spun from nettle bark many a cut of linen that could scarce be told from flax. Before the sap began to run again in the maples there was not a soul in Harrodstown who did not love her, and I truly believe that most of them would have risked their lives to do her bidding.

Then came the sugaring, the warm days and the freezing nights when the earth stirs in her sleep and the taps drip from red sunrise to red sunset. Old and young went to the camps, the women and children boiling and graining, the squads of men posted in guards round about. And after that the days flew so quickly that it seemed as if the woods had burst suddenly into white flower, and it was spring again. And then—a joy to be long remembered—I went on a hunting trip with Tom and Cowan and three others where the Kentucky tumbles between its darkly wooded cliffs. And other wonders of that strange land I saw then for the first time: great licks, trampled down for acres by the wild herds, where the salt water oozes out of the hoofprints. On the edge of one of these licks we paused and stared breathless at giant bones sticking here and there in the black mud, and great skulls of fearful beasts half-embedded. This was called the Big Bone Lick, and some travellers that went before us had made their tents with the thighs of these monsters of a past age.

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A danger past is oft a danger forgotten. Men went out to build the homes of which they had dreamed through the long winter. Axes rang amidst the white dogwoods and the crabs and redbuds, and there were riotous log-raisings in the clearings. But I think the building of Tom's house was the most joyous occasion of all, and for none in the settlement would men work more willingly than for him and Polly Ann. The cabin went up as if by magic. It stood on a rise upon the bank of the river in a grove of oaks and hickories, with a big persimmon tree in front of the door. It was in the shade of this tree that Polly Ann sat watching Tom and me through the mild spring days as we barked the roof, and none ever felt greater joy and pride in a home than she. We had our first supper on a wide puncheon under the persimmon tree on the few pewter plates we had fetched across the mountain, the blue smoke from our own hearth rising in the valley until the cold night air spread it out in a line above us, while the horses grazed at the river's edge.

After that we went to ploughing, an occupation which Tom fancied but little, for he loved the life of a hunter best of all. But there was corn to be raised and fodder for the horses, and a truck-patch to be cleared near the house.

One day a great event happened,—and after the manner of many great events, it began in mystery. Leaping on the roan mare, I was riding like mad for Harrodstown to fetch Mrs. Cowan. And she, when she heard the summons, abandoned a turkey on the spit, pitched her brats out of the door, seized the mare, and dashing through the gates at a gallop left me to make my way back afoot. Scenting a sensation, I hurried along the wooded trace at a dog trot, and when I came in sight of the cabin there was Mrs. Cowan sitting on the step, holding in her long but motherly arms something bundled up in nettle linen, while Tom stood sheepishly by, staring at it.

"Shucks," Mrs. Cowan was saying loudly, "I reckon ye're as little use to-day as Swein Poulsson,—standin' there on one foot. Ye anger me—just grinning at it like a fool—and yer own doin'. Have ye forgot how to talk?"

Tom grinned the more, but was saved the effort of a reply by a loud noise from the bundle.

"Here's another," cried Mrs. Cowan to me. "Ye needn't act as if it was an animal. Faith, yereself was like that once, all red an' crinkled. But I warrant ye didn't have the heft," and she lifted it, judicially. "A grand baby," attacking Tom again, "and ye're no more worthy to be his father than Davy here."

Then I heard a voice calling me, and pushing past Mrs. Cowan, I ran into the cabin. Polly Ann lay on the log bedstead, and she turned to mine a face radiant with a happiness I had not imagined.

“Oh, Davy, have ye seen him? Have ye seen little Tom? Davy, I reckon I’ll never be so happy again. Fetch him here, Mrs. Cowan.”

Mrs. Cowan, with a glance of contempt at Tom and me, put the bundle tenderly down on the coarse brown sheet beside her.

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Poor little Tom! Only the first fortnight of his existence was spent in peace. I have a pathetic memory of it all—of our little home, of our hopes for it, of our days of labor and nights of planning to make it complete. And then, one morning when the three of us were turning over the black loam in the patch, while the baby slept peacefully in the shade, a sound came to our ears that made us pause and listen with bated breath. It was the sound of many guns, muffled in the distant forest. With a cry Polly Ann flew to the hickory cradle under the tree, Tom sprang for the rifle that was never far from his side, while with a kind of instinct I ran to catch the spancelled horses by the river. In silence and sorrow we fled through the tall cane, nor dared to take one last look at the cabin, or the fields lying black in the spring sunlight. The shots had ceased, but ere we had reached the little clearing McCann had made they began again, though as distant as before. Tom went ahead, while I led the mare and Polly Ann clutched the child to her breast. But when we came in sight of the fort across the clearings the gates were closed. There was nothing to do but cower in the thicket, listening while the battle went on afar, Polly Ann trying to still the cries of the child, lest they should bring death upon us. At length the shooting ceased; stillness reigned; then came a faint halloo, and out of the forest beyond us a man rode, waving his hat at the fort. After him came others. The gates opened, and we rushed pell-mell across the fields to safety.

The Indians had shot at a party shelling corn at Captain Bowman's plantation, and killed two, while the others had taken refuge in the crib. Fired at from every brake, James Ray had ridden to Harrodstown for succor, and the savages had been beaten off. But only the foolhardy returned to their clearings now. We were on the edge of another dreaded summer of siege, the prospect of banishment from the homes we could almost see, staring us in the face, and the labors of the spring lost again. There was bitter talk within the gates that night, and many declared angrily that Colonel Clark had abandoned us. But I remembered what he had said, and had faith in him.

It was that very night, too, I sat with Cowan, who had duty in one of the sentry boxes, and we heard a voice calling softly under us. Fearing treachery, Cowan cried out for a sign. Then the answer came back loudly to open to a runner with a message from Colonel Clark to Captain Harrod. Cowan let the man in, while I ran for the captain, and in five minutes it seemed as if every man and woman and child in the fort were awake and crowding around the man by the gates, their eager faces reddened by the smoking pine knots. Where was Clark? What had he been doing? Had he deserted them?

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“Deserted ye!” cried the runner, and swore a great oath. Wasn’t Clark even then on the Ohio raising a great army with authority from the Commonwealth of Virginia to rid them of the red scourge? And would they desert him? Or would they be men and bring from Harrodstown the company he asked for? Then Captain Harrod read the letter asking him to raise the company, and before day had dawned they were ready for the word to march—ready to leave cabin and clearing, and wife and child, trusting in Clark’s judgment for time and place. Never were volunteers mustered more quickly than in that cool April night by the gates of Harrodstown Station.

“And we’ll fetch Davy along, for luck,” cried Cowan, catching sight of me beside him.

“Sure we’ll be wanting a dhrummer b’y,” said McCann.

And so they enrolled me.

CHAPTER XII

THE CAMPAIGN BEGINS

“Davy, take care of my Tom,” cried Polly Ann.

I can see her now, standing among the women by the great hewn gateposts, with little Tom in her arms, holding him out to us as we filed by. And the vision of his little, round face haunted Tom and me for many weary miles of our tramp through the wilderness. I have often thought since that that march of the volunteer company to join Clark at the Falls of the Ohio was a superb example of confidence in one man, and scarce to be equalled in history.

In less than a week we of Captain Harrod’s little company stood on a forest-clad bank, gazing spellbound at the troubled waters of a mighty river. That river was the Ohio, and it divided us from the strange north country whence the savages came. From below, the angry voice of the Great Falls cried out to us unceasingly. Smoke rose through the tree-tops of the island opposite, and through the new gaps of its forest cabins could be seen. And presently, at a signal from us, a big flatboat left its shore, swung out and circled on the polished current, and grounded at length in the mud below us. A dozen tall boatmen, buckskin-clad, dropped the big oars and leaped out on the bank with a yell of greeting. At the head of them was a man of huge frame, and long, light hair falling down over the collar of his hunting shirt. He wrung Captain Harrod’s hand.

“That there’s Simon Kenton, Davy,” said Cowan, as we stood watching them.

I ran forward for a better look at the backwoods Hercules, the tales of whose prowess had helped to while away many a winter’s night in Harrodstown Station. Big-featured and stern, yet he had the kindly eye of the most indomitable of frontier fighters, and I

doubted not the truth of what was said of him—that he could kill any redskin hand-to-hand.

“Clark’s thar,” he was saying to Captain Harrod. “God knows what his pluck is. He ain’t said a word.”

“He doesn’t say whar he’s going?” said Harrod.

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“Not a notion,” answered Kenton. “He’s the greatest man to keep his mouth shut I ever saw. He kept at the governor of Virginny till he gave him twelve hundred pounds in Continentals and power to raise troops. Then Clark fetched a circle for Fort Pitt, raised some troops thar and in Virginny and some about Red Stone, and come down the Ohio here with ’em in a lot of flatboats. Now that ye’ve got here the Kentucky boys is all in. I come over with Montgomery, and Dillard’s here from the Holston country with a company.”

“Well,” said Captain Harrod, “I reckon we’ll report.”

I went among the first boat-load, and as the men strained against the current, Kenton explained that Colonel Clark had brought a number of emigrants down the river with him; that he purposed to leave them on this island with a little force, that they might raise corn and provisions during the summer; and that he had called the place Corn Island.

“Sure, there’s the Colonel himself,” cried Terence McCann, who was in the bow, and indeed I could pick out the familiar figure among the hundred frontiersmen that gathered among the stumps at the landing-place. As our keel scraped they gave a shout that rattled in the forest behind them, and Clark came down to the waterside.

“I knew that Harrodstown wouldn’t fail me,” he said, and called every man by name as we waded ashore. When I came splashing along after Tom he pulled me from the water with his two hands.

“Colonel,” said Terence McCann, “we’ve brought ye a dhrummer b’y.”

“We’d have no luck at all without him,” said Cowan, and the men laughed.

“Can you walk an hundred miles without food, Davy?” asked Colonel Clark, eying me gravely.

“Faith he’s lean as a wolf, and no stomach to hinder him,” said Terence, seeing me look troubled. “I’ll not be missing the bit of food the likes of him would eat.”

“And as for the heft of him,” added Cowan, “Mac and I’ll not feel it.”

Colonel Clark laughed. “Well, boys,” he said, “if you must have him, you must. His Excellency gave me no instructions about a drummer, but we’ll take you, Davy.”

In those days he was a man that wasted no time, was Colonel Clark, and within the hour our little detachment had joined the others, felling trees and shaping the log-ends for the cabins. That night, as Tom and Cowan and McCann and James Ray lay around their fire, taking a well-earned rest, a man broke excitedly into the light with a kettle-shaped object balanced on his head, which he set down in front of us. The man proved

to be Swein Poulsson, and the object a big drum, and he straightway began to beat upon it a tattoo with improvised drumsticks.

“A Red Stone man,” he cried, “a Red Stone man, he have it in the flatboat. It is for Tavy.”

“The saints be good to us,” said Terence, “if it isn’t the King’s own drum he has.” And sure enough, on the head of it gleamed the royal arms of England, and on the other side, as we turned it over, the device of a regiment. They flung the sling about my neck, and the next day, when the little army drew up for parade among the stumps, there I was at the end of the line, and prouder than any man in the ranks. And Colonel Clark coming to my end of the line paused and smiled and patted me kindly on the cheek.

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“Have you put this man on the roll, Harrod?” says he.

“No, Colonel,” answers Captain Harrod, amid the laughter of the men at my end.

“What!” says the Colonel, “what an oversight! From this day he is drummer boy and orderly to the Commander-in-chief. Beat the retreat, my man.”

I did my best, and as the men broke ranks they crowded around me, laughing and joking, and Cowan picked me up, drum and all, and carried me off, I rapping furiously the while.

And so I became a kind of handy boy for the whole regiment from the Colonel down, for I was willing and glad to work. I cooked the Colonel’s meals, roasting the turkey breasts and saddles of venison that the hunters brought in from the mainland, and even made him journey-cake, a trick which Polly Ann had taught me. And when I went about the island, if a man were loafing, he would seize his axe and cry, “Here’s Davy, he’ll tell the Colonel on me.” Thanks to the jokes of Terence McCann, I gained an owl-like reputation for wisdom amongst these superstitious backwoodsmen, and they came verily to believe that upon my existence depended the success of the campaign. But day after day passed, and no sign from Colonel Clark of his intentions.

“There’s a good lad,” said Terence. “He’ll be telling us where we’re going.”

I was asked the same question by a score or more, but Colonel Clark kept his own counsel. He himself was everywhere during the days that followed, superintending the work on the blockhouse we were building, and eying the men. Rumor had it that he was sorting out the sheep from the goats, silently choosing those who were to remain on the island and those who were to take part in the campaign.

At length the blockhouse stood finished amid the yellow stumps of the great trees, the trunks of which were in its walls. And suddenly the order went forth for the men to draw up in front of it by companies, with the families of the emigrants behind them. It was a picture to fix itself in a boy’s mind, and one that I have never forgotten. The line of backwoodsmen, as fine a lot of men as I ever wish to see, bronzed by the June sun, strong and tireless as the wild animals of the forest, stood expectant with rifles grounded. And beside the tallest, at the end of the line, was a diminutive figure with a drum hung in front of it. The early summer wind rustled in the forest, and the never ending song of the Great Falls sounded from afar. Apart, square-shouldered and indomitable, stood a young man of twenty-six.

“My friends and neighbors,” he said in a firm voice, “there is scarce a man standing among you to-day who has not suffered at the hands of savages. Some of you have seen wives and children killed before your eyes—or dragged into captivity. None of you can to-day call the home for which he has risked so much his own. And who, I ask you,

is to blame for this hideous war? Whose gold is it that buys guns and powder and lead to send the Shawnee and the Iroquois and Algonquin on the warpath?”

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He paused, and a hoarse murmur of anger ran along the ranks.

“Whose gold but George’s, by the grace of God King of Great Britain and Ireland? And what minions distribute it? Abbott at Kaskaskia, for one, and Hamilton at Detroit, the Hair Buyer, for another!”

When he spoke Hamilton’s name his voice was nearly drowned by imprecations.

“Silence!” cried Clark, sternly, and they were silent. “My friends, the best way for a man to defend himself is to maim his enemy. One year since, when you did me the honor to choose me Commander-in-chief of your militia in Kentucky, I sent two scouts to Kaskaskia. A dozen years ago the French owned that place, and St. Vincent, and Detroit, and the people there are still French. My men brought back word that the French feared the Long Knives, as the Indians call us. On the first of October I went to Virginia, and some of you thought again that I had deserted you. I went to Williamsburg and wrestled with Governor Patrick Henry and his council, with Mr. Jefferson and Mr. Mason and Mr. Wythe. Virginia had no troops to send us, and her men were fighting barefoot with Washington against the armies of the British king. But the governor gave me twelve hundred pounds in paper, and with it I have raised the little force that we have here. And with it we will carry the war into Hamilton’s country. On the swift waters of this great river which flows past us have come tidings to-day, and God Himself has sent them. To-morrow would have been too late. The ships and armies of the French king are on their way across the ocean to help us fight the tyrant, and this is the news that we bear to the Kaskaskias. When they hear this, the French of those towns will not fight against us. My friends, we are going to conquer an empire for liberty, and I can look onward,” he cried in a burst of inspired eloquence, sweeping his arm to the northward toward the forests on the far side of the Ohio, “I can look onward to the day when these lands will be filled with the cities of a Great Republic. And who among you will falter at such a call?”

There was a brief silence, and then a shout went up from the ranks that drowned the noise of the Falls, and many fell into antics, some throwing their coonskin hats in the air, and others cursing and scalping Hamilton in mockery, while I pounded on the drum with all my might. But when we had broken ranks the rumor was whispered about that the Holston company had not cheered, and indeed the rest of the day these men went about plainly morose and discontented,—some saying openly (and with much justice, though we failed to see it then) that they had their own families and settlements to defend from the Southern Indians and Chickamauga bandits, and could not undertake Kentucky’s fight at that time. And when the enthusiasm had burned away a little the disaffection spread, and some even of the Kentuckians began to murmur against Clark, for faith or genius was needful to inspire men to his plan. One of the malcontents from Boonesboro came to our fire to argue.

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“He’s mad as a medicine man, is Clark, to go into that country with less than two hundred rifles. And he’ll force us, will he? I’d as lief have the King for a master.”

He brought every man in our circle to his feet,—Ray, McCann, Cowan, and Tom. But Tom was nearest, and words not coming easily to him he fell on the Boonesboro man instead, and they fought it out for ten minutes in the firelight with half the regiment around them. At the end of it, when the malcontents were carrying their champion away, they were stopped suddenly at the sight of one bursting through the circle into the light, and a hush fell upon the quarrel. It was Colonel Clark.

“Are you hurt, McChesney?” he demanded.

“I reckon not much, Colonel,” said Tom, grinning, as he wiped his face.

“If any man deserts this camp to-night,” cried Colonel Clark, swinging around, “I swear by God to have him chased and brought back and punished as he deserves. Captain Harrod, set a guard.”

I pass quickly over the rest of the incident. How the Holston men and some others escaped in the night in spite of our guard, and swam the river on logs. How at dawn we found them gone, and Kenton and Harrod and brave Captain Montgomery set out in pursuit, with Cowan and Tom and Ray. All day they rode, relentless, and the next evening returned with but eight weary and sullen fugitives of all those who had deserted.

The next day the sun rose on a smiling world, the polished reaches of the river golden mirrors reflecting the forest’s green. And we were astir with the light, preparing for our journey into the unknown country. At seven we embarked by companies in the flatboats, waving a farewell to those who were to be left behind. Some stayed through inclination and disaffection: others because Colonel Clark did not deem them equal to the task. But Swein Poulsson came. With tears in his little blue eyes he had begged the Colonel to take him, and I remember him well on that June morning, his red face perspiring under the white bristles of his hair as he strained at the big oar. For we must needs pull a mile up the stream ere we could reach the passage in which to shoot downward to the Falls. Suddenly Poulsson dropped his handle, causing the boat to swing round in the stream, while the men damned him. Paying them no attention, he stood pointing into the blinding disk of the sun. Across the edge of it a piece was bitten out in blackness.

“Mein Gott!” he cried, “the world is being ended just now.”

“The holy saints remember us this day!” said McCann, missing a stroke to cross himself. “Will ye pull, ye damned Dutchman? Or we’ll be the first to slide into hell. This is no kind of a place at all at all.”

By this time the men all along the line of boats had seen it, and many faltered. Clark's voice could be heard across the waters urging them to pull, while the bows swept across the current. They obeyed him, but steadily the blackness ate out the light, and a weird gloaming overspread the scene. River and forest became stern, the men silent. The more ignorant were in fear of a cataclysm, the others taking it for an omen.

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“Shucks!” said Tom, when appealed to, “I’ve seed it afore, and it come all right again.”

Clark’s boat rounded the shoal: next our turn came, and then the whole line was gliding down the river, the rising roar of the angry waters with which we were soon to grapple coming to us with an added grimness. And now but a faint rim of light saved us from utter darkness. Big Bill Cowan, undaunted in war, stared at me with fright written on his face.

“And what ’ll ye think of it, Davy?” he said.

I glanced at the figure of our commander in the boat ahead, and took courage.

“It’s Hamilton’s scalp hanging by a lock,” I answered, pointing to what was left of the sun. “Soon it will be off, and then we’ll have light again.”

To my surprise he snatched me from the thwart and held me up with a shout, and I saw Colonel Clark turn and look back.

“Davy says the Ha’r Buyer’s sculp hangs by the lock, boys,” he shouted, pointing at the sun.

The word was cried from boat to boat, and we could see the men pointing upwards and laughing. And then, as the light began to grow, we were in the midst of the tumbling waters, the steersmen straining now right, now left, to keep the prows in the smooth reaches between rock and bar. We gained the still pools below, the sun came out once more and smiled on the landscape, and the spirits of the men, reviving, burst all bounds.

Thus I earned my reputation as a prophet.

Four days and nights we rowed down the great river, our oars double-manned, for fear that our coming might be heralded to the French towns. We made our first camp on a green little island at the mouth of the Cherokee, as we then called the Tennessee, and there I set about cooking a turkey for Colonel Clark, which Ray had shot. Chancing to look up, I saw the Colonel himself watching me.

“How is this, Davy?” said he. “I hear that you have saved my army for me before we have met the enemy.”

“I did not know it, sir,” I answered.

“Well,” said he, “if you have learned to turn an evil omen into a good sign, you know more than some generals. What ails you now?”

“There’s a pirogue, sir,” I cried, staring and pointing.

“Where?” said he, alert all at once. “Here, McChesney, take a crew and put out after them.”

He had scarcely spoken ere Tom and his men were rowing into the sunset, the whole of our little army watching from the bank. Presently the other boat was seen coming back with ours, and five strange woodsmen stepped ashore, our men pressing around them. But Clark flew to the spot, the men giving back.

“Who’s the leader here?” he demanded.

A tall man stepped forward.

“I am,” said he, bewildered but defiant.

“Your name?”

“John Duff,” he answered, as though against his will.

“Your business?”

“Hunters,” said Duff; “and I reckon we’re in our rights.”

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“I’ll judge of that,” said our Colonel. “Where are you from?”

“That’s no secret, neither. Kaskasky, ten days gone.”

At that there was a murmur of surprise from our companies. Clark turned.

“Get your men back,” he said to the captains, who stood about them. And all of them not moving: “Get your men back, I say. I’ll have it known who’s in command here.”

At that the men retired. “Who commands at Kaskaskia?” he demanded of Duff.

“Monseer Rocheblave, a Frenchy holding a British commission,” said Duff. “And the British Governor Abbott has left Post St. Vincent and gone to Detroit. Who be you?” he added suspiciously. “Be you Rebels?”

“Colonel Clark is my name, and I am in the service of the Commonwealth of Virginia.”

Duff uttered an exclamatory oath and his manner changed. “Be you Clark?” he said with respect. “And you’re going after Kaskasky? Wal, the mility is prime, and the Injun scouts is keeping a good lookout. But, Colonel, I’ll tell ye something: the Frenchies is etarnal afeard of the Long Knives. My God! they’ve got the notion that if you ketch ’em you’ll burn and scalp ’em same as the Red Sticks.”

“Good,” was all that Clark answered.

“I reckon I don’t know much about what the Rebels is fighting for,” said John Duff; “but I like your looks, Colonel, and wharever you’re going there’ll be a fight. Me and my boys would kinder like to go along.”

Clark did not answer at once, but looked John Duff and his men over carefully.

“Will you take the oath of allegiance to Virginia and the Continental Congress?” he asked at length.

“I reckon it won’t pizen us,” said John Duff.

“Hold up your hands,” said Clark, and they took the oath. “Now, my men,” said he, “you will be assigned to companies. Does any one among you know the old French trail from Massacre to Kaskaskia?”

“Why,” exclaimed John Duff, “why, Johnny Saunders here can tread it in the dark like the road to the grogshop.”

John Saunders, loose limbed, grinning sheepishly, shuffled forward, and Clark shot a dozen questions at him one after another. Yes, the trail had been blazed the Lord knew how long ago by the French, and given up when they left Massacre.

“Look you,” said Clark to him, “I am not a man to stand trifling. If there is any deception in this, you will be shot without mercy.”

“And good riddance,” said John Duff. “Boys, we’re Rebels now. Steer clear of the Ha’r Buyer.”

CHAPTER XIII

KASKASKIA

For one more day we floated downward on the face of the waters between the forest walls of the wilderness, and at length we landed in a little gully on the north shore of the river, and there we hid our boats.

“Davy,” said Colonel Clark, “let’s walk about a bit. Tell me where you learned to be so silent?”

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“My father did not like to be talked to,” I answered, “except when he was drinking.”

He gave me a strange look. Many the stroll I took with him afterwards, when he sought to relax himself from the cares which the campaign had put upon him. This night was still and clear, the west all yellow with the departing light, and the mists coming on the river. And presently, as we strayed down the shore we came upon a strange sight, the same being a huge fort rising from the waterside, all overgrown with brush and saplings and tall weeds. The palisades that held its earthenwork were rotten and crumbling, and the mighty bastions of its corners sliding away. Behind the fort, at the end farthest from the river, we came upon gravelled walks hidden by the rank growth, where the soldiers of his Most Christian Majesty once paraded. Lost in thought, Clark stood on the parapet, watching the water gliding by until the darkness hid it,—nay, until the stars came and made golden dimples upon its surface. But as we went back to the camp again he told me how the French had tried once to conquer this vast country and failed, leaving to the Spaniards the endless stretch beyond the Mississippi called Louisiana, and this part to the English. And he told me likewise that this fort in the days of its glory had been called Massacre, from a bloody event which had happened there more than three-score years before.

“Threescore years!” I exclaimed, longing to see the men of this race which had set up these monuments only to abandon them.

“Ay, lad,” he answered, “before you or I were born, and before our fathers were born, the French missionaries and soldiers threaded this wilderness. And they called this river ’La Belle Riviere,’—the Beautiful River.”

“And shall I see that race at Kaskaskia?” I asked, wondering.

“That you shall,” he cried, with a force that left no doubt in my mind.

In the morning we broke camp and started off for the strange place which we hoped to capture. A hundred miles it was across the trackless wilds, and each man was ordered to carry on his back provisions for four days only.

“Herr Gott!” cried Swein Poulsson, from the bottom of a flatboat, whence he was tossing out venison flitches, “four day, und vat is it ve eat then?”

“Frenchies, sure,” said Terence; “there’ll be plenty av thim for a season. Faith, I do hear they’re tinder as lambs.”

“You’ll no set tooth in the Frenchies,” the pessimistic McAndrew put in, “wi’ five thousand redskins aboot, and they lying in wait. The Colonel’s no vera mindful of that, I’m thinking.”

“Will ye hush, ye ill-omened hound!” cried Cowan, angrily. “Pitch him in the crick, Mac!”

Tom was diverted from this duty by a loud quarrel between Captain Harrod and five men of the company who wanted scout duty, and on the heels of that came another turmoil occasioned by Cowan's dropping my drum into the water. While he and McCann and Tom were fishing it out, Colonel Clark himself appeared, quelled the mutiny that Harrod had on his hands, and bade the men sternly to get into ranks.

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“What foolishness is this?” he said, eying the dripping drum.

“Sure, Colonel,” said McCann, swinging it on his back, “we’d have no heart in us at Kaskasky widout the rattle of it in our ears. Bill Cowan and me will not be feeling the heft of it bechune us.”

“Get into ranks,” said the Colonel, amusement struggling with the anger in his face as he turned on his heel. His wisdom well knew when to humor a man, and when to chastise.

“Arrah,” said Terence, as he took his place, “I’d as soon l’ave me gun behind as Davy and the dhrum.”

Methinks I can see now, as I write, the long file of woodsmen with their swinging stride, planting one foot before the other, even as the Indian himself threaded the wilderness. Though my legs were short, I had both sinew and training, and now I was at one end of the line and now at the other. And often with a laugh some giant would hand his gun to a neighbor, swing me to his shoulder, and so give me a lift for a weary mile or two; and perchance whisper to me to put down my hand into the wallet of his shirt, where I would find a choice morsel which he had saved for his supper. Sometimes I trotted beside the Colonel himself, listening as he talked to this man or that, and thus I got the gravest notion of the daring of this undertaking, and of the dangers ahead of us. This north country was infested with Indians, allies of the English and friends of the French their subjects; and the fact was never for an instant absent from our minds that our little band might at any moment run into a thousand warriors, be overpowered and massacred; or, worst of all, that our coming might have been heralded to Kaskaskia.

For three days we marched in the green shade of the primeval wood, nor saw the sky save in blue patches here and there. Again we toiled for hours through the coffee-colored waters of the swamps. But the third day brought us to the first of those strange clearings which the French call prairies, where the long grass ripples like a lake in the summer wind. Here we first knew raging thirst, and longed for the loam-specked water we had scorned, as our tired feet tore through the grass. For Saunders, our guide, took a line across the open in plain sight of any eye that might be watching from the forest cover. But at length our column wavered and halted by reason of some disturbance at the head of it. Conjectures in our company, the rear guard, became rife at once.

“Run, Davy darlin,’ an’ see what the throuble is,” said Terence.

Nothing loath, I made my way to the head of the column, where Bowman’s company had broken ranks and stood in a ring up to their thighs in the grass. In the centre of the ring, standing on one foot before our angry Colonel, was Saunders.

“Now, what does this mean?” demanded Clark; “my eye is on you, and you’ve boxed the compass in this last hour.”

Saunders’ jaw dropped.

“I’m guiding you right,” he answered, with that sullenness which comes to his kind from fear, “but a man will slip his bearings sometimes in this country.”

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Clark's eyes shot fire, and he brought down the stock of his rifle with a thud.

"By the eternal God!" he cried, "I believe you are a traitor. I've been watching you every step, and you've acted strangely this morning."

"Ay, ay," came from the men round him.

"Silence!" cried Clark, and turned again to the cowering Saunders. "You pretend to know the way to Kaskaskia, you bring us to the middle of the Indian country where we may be wiped out at any time, and now you have the damned effrontery to tell me that you have lost your way. I am a man of my word," he added with a vibrant intensity, and pointed to the limbs of a giant tree which stood at the edge of the distant forest. "I will give you half an hour, but as I live, I will leave you hanging there."

The man's brown hand trembled as he clutched his rifle barrel.

"'Tis a hard country, sir," he said. "I'm lost. I swear it on the evangels."

"A hard country!" cried Clark. "A man would have to walk over it but once to know it. I believe you are a damned traitor and perjurer,—in spite of your oath, a British spy."

Saunders wiped the sweat from his brow on his buckskin sleeve.

"I reckon I could get the trace, Colonel, if you'd let me go a little way into the prairie."

"Half an hour," said Clark, "and you'll not go alone." Sweeping his eye over Bowman's company, he picked out a man here and a man there to go with Saunders. Then his eye lighted on me. "Where's McChesney?" he said. "Fetch McChesney."

I ran to get Tom, and seven of them went away, with Saunders in the middle, Clark watching them like a hawk, while the men sat down in the grass to wait. Fifteen minutes went by, and twenty, and twenty-five, and Clark was calling for a rope, when some one caught sight of the squad in the distance returning at a run. And when they came within hail it was Saunders' voice we heard, shouting brokenly:—

"I've struck it, Colonel, I've struck the trace. There's a pecan at the edge of the bottom with my own blaze on it."

"May you never be as near death again," said the Colonel, grimly, as he gave the order to march.

The fourth day passed, and we left behind us the patches of forest and came into the open prairie,—as far as the eye could reach a long, level sea of waving green. The scanty provisions ran out, hunger was added to the pangs of thirst and weariness, and here and there in the straggling file discontent smouldered and angry undertone was

heard. Kaskaskia was somewhere to the west and north; but how far? Clark had misled them. And in addition it were foolish to believe that the garrison had not been warned. English soldiers and French militia and Indian allies stood ready for our reception. Of such was the talk as we lay down in the grass under the stars on the fifth night. For in the rank and file an empty stomach is not hopeful.

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The next morning we took up our march silently with the dawn, the prairie grouse whirring ahead of us. At last, as afternoon drew on, a dark line of green edged the prairie to the westward, and our spirits rose. From mouth to mouth ran the word that these were the woods which fringed the bluff above Kaskaskia itself. We pressed ahead, and the destiny of the new Republic for which we had fought made us walk unseen. Excitement keyed us high; we reached the shade, plunged into it, and presently came out staring at the bastioned corners of a fort which rose from the centre of a clearing. It had once defended the place, but now stood abandoned and dismantled. Beyond it, at the edge of the bluff, we halted, astonished. The sun was falling in the west, and below us was the goal for the sight of which we had suffered so much. At our feet, across the wooded bottom, was the Kaskaskia River, and beyond, the peaceful little French village with its low houses and orchards and gardens colored by the touch of the evening light. In the centre of it stood a stone church with its belfry; but our searching eyes alighted on the spot to the southward of it, near the river. There stood a rambling stone building with the shingles of its roof weathered black, and all around it a palisade of pointed sticks thrust in the ground, and with a pair of gates and watch-towers. Drooping on its staff was the standard of England. North and south of the village the emerald common gleamed in the slanting light, speckled red and white and black by grazing cattle. Here and there, in untidy brown patches, were Indian settlements, and far away to the westward the tawny Father of Waters gleamed through the cottonwoods.

Through the waning day the men lay resting under the trees, talking in undertones. Some cleaned their rifles, and others lost themselves in conjectures of the attack. But Clark himself, tireless, stood with folded arms gazing at the scene below, and the sunlight on his face illumined him (to the lad standing at his side) as the servant of destiny. At length, at eventide, the sweet-toned bell of the little cathedral rang to vespers,—a gentle message of peace to war. Colonel Clark looked into my upturned face.

“Davy, do you know what day this is?” he asked.

“No, sir,” I answered.

“Two years have gone since the bells pealed for the birth of a new nation—your nation, Davy, and mine—the nation that is to be the refuge of the oppressed of this earth—the nation which is to be made of all peoples, out of all time. And this land for which you and I shall fight to-night will belong to it, and the lands beyond,” he pointed to the west, “until the sun sets on the sea again.” He put his hand on my head. “You will remember this when I am dead and gone,” he said.

I was silent, awed by the power of his words.

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Darkness fell, and still we waited, impatient for the order. And when at last it came the men bustled hither and thither to find their commands, and we picked our way on the unseen road that led down the bluff, our hearts thumping. The lights of the village twinkled at our feet, and now and then a voice from below was caught and borne upward to us. Once another noise startled us, followed by an exclamation, “Donnerblitzen” and a volley of low curses from the company. Poor Swein Poulsson had loosed a stone, which had taken a reverberating flight riverward.

We reached the bottom, and the long file turned and hurried silently northward, searching for a crossing. I try to recall my feelings as I trotted beside the tall forms that loomed above me in the night. The sense of protection they gave me stripped me of fear, and I was not troubled with that. My thoughts were chiefly on Polly Ann and the child we had left in the fort now so far to the south of us, and in my fancy I saw her cheerful, ever helpful to those around her, despite the load that must rest on her heart. I saw her simple joy at our return. But should we return? My chest tightened, and I sped along the ranks to Harrod’s company and caught Tom by the wrist.

“Davy,” he murmured, and, seizing my hand in his strong grip, pulled me along with him. For it was not given to him to say what he felt; but as I hurried to keep pace with his stride, Polly Ann’s words rang in my ears, “Davy, take care of my Tom,” and I knew that he, too, was thinking of her. A hail aroused me, the sound of a loud rapping, and I saw in black relief a cabin ahead. The door opened, a man came out with a horde of children cowering at his heels, a volley of frightened words pouring from his mouth in a strange tongue. John Duff was plying him with questions in French, and presently the man became calmer and lapsed into broken English.

“Kaskaskia—yes, she is prepare. Many spy is gone out—cross la riviere. But now they all sleep.”

Even as he spoke a shout came faintly from the distant town.

“What is that?” demanded Clark, sharply.

The man shrugged his shoulders. “Une fete des negres, peut-etre,—the negro, he dance maybe.”

“Are you the ferryman?” said Clark.

“Oui—I have some boat.”

We crossed the hundred and fifty yards of sluggish water, squad by squad, and in the silence of the night stood gathered, expectant, on the farther bank. Midnight was at hand. Commands were passed about, and men ran this way and that, jostling one another to find their places in a new order. But at length our little force stood in three

detachments on the river's bank, their captains repeating again and again the part which each was to play, that none might mistake his duty. The two larger ones were to surround the town, while the picked force under Simon Kenton himself was to storm the fort. Should he gain it by surprise and without battle, three shots

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were to be fired in quick succession, the other detachments were to start the war-whoop, while Duff and some with a smattering of French were to run up and down the streets proclaiming that every habitan who left his house would be shot. No provision being made for the drummer boy (I had left my drum on the heights above), I chose the favored column, at the head of which Tom and Cowan and Ray and McCann were striding behind Kenton and Colonel Clark. Not a word was spoken. There was a kind of cow-path that rose and fell and twisted along the river-bank. This we followed, and in ten minutes we must have covered the mile to the now darkened village. The starlight alone outlined against the sky the houses of it as we climbed the bank. Then we halted, breathless, in a street, but there was no sound save that of the crickets and the frogs. Forward again, and twisting a corner, we beheld the indented edge of the stockade. Still no hail, nor had our moccasined feet betrayed us as we sought the river side of the fort and drew up before the big river gates of it. Simon Kenton bore against them, and tried the little postern that was set there, but both were fast. The spikes towered a dozen feet overhead.

“Quick!” muttered Clark, “a light man to go over and open the postern.”

Before I guessed what was in his mind, Cowan seized me.

“Send the lad, Colonel,” said he.

“Ay, ay,” said Simon Kenton, hoarsely.

In a second Tom was on Kenton’s shoulders, and they passed me up with as little trouble as though I had been my own drum. Feverishly searching with my foot for Tom’s shoulder, I seized the spikes at the top, clambered over them, paused, surveyed the empty area below me, destitute even of a sentry, and then let myself down with the aid of the cross-bars inside. As I was feeling vainly for the bolt of the postern, rays of light suddenly shot my shadow against the door. And next, as I got my hand on the bolt-head, I felt the weight of another on my shoulder, and a voice behind me said in English:—

“In the devil’s name!”

I gave the one frantic pull, the bolt slipped, and caught again. Then Colonel Clark’s voice rang out in the night:—

“Open the gate! Open the gate in the name of Virginia and the Continental Congress!”

Before I could cry out the man gave a grunt, leaned his gun against the gate, and tore my fingers from the bolt-handle. Astonishment robbed me of breath as he threw open the postern.

“In the name of the Continental Congress,” he cried, and seized his gun. Clark and Kenton stepped in instantly, no doubt as astounded as I, and had the man in their grasp.

“Who are you?” said Clark.

“Name o’ Skene, from Pennsylvanya,” said the man, “and by the Lord God ye shall have the fort.”

“You looked for us?” said Clark.

“Faith, never less,” said the Pennsylvanian. “The one sentry is at the main gate.”

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“And the governor?”

“Rocheblave?” said the Pennsylvanian. “He sleeps yonder in the old Jesuit house in the middle.”

Clark turned to Tom McChesney, who was at his elbow.

“Corporal!” said he, swiftly, “secure the sentry at the main gate! You,” he added, turning to the Pennsylvanian, “lead us to the governor. But mind, if you betray me, I’ll be the first to blow out your brains.”

The man seized a lantern and made swiftly over the level ground until the rubble-work of the old Jesuit house showed in the light, nor Clark nor any of them stopped to think of the danger our little handful ran at the mercy of a stranger. The house was silent. We halted, and Clark threw himself against the rude panels of the door, which gave to inward blackness. Our men filled the little passage, and suddenly we found ourselves in a low-ceiled room in front of a great four-poster bed. And in it, upright, blinking at the light, were two odd Frenchified figures in tasselled nightcaps. Astonishment and anger and fear struggled in the faces of Monsieur de Rocheblave and his lady. A regard for truth compels me to admit that it was madame who first found her voice, and no uncertain one it was.

First came a shriek that might have roused the garrison.

“Villains! Murderers! Outragers of decency!” she cried with spirit, pouring a heap of invectives, now in French, now in English, much to the discomfiture of our backwoodsmen, who peered at her helplessly.

“Nom du diable!” cried the commandant, when his lady’s breath was gone, “what does this mean?”

“It means, sir,” answered Clark, promptly, “that you are my prisoner.”

“And who are you?” gasped the commandant.

“George Rogers Clark, Colonel in the service of the Commonwealth of Virginia.” He held out his hand restrainingly, for the furious Monsieur Rocheblave made an attempt to rise. “You will oblige me by remaining in bed, sir, for a moment.”

“Coquins! Canailles! Cochons!” shrieked the lady.

“Madame,” said Colonel Clark, politely, “the necessities of war are often cruel.”

He made a bow, and paying no further attention to the torrent of her reproaches or the threats of the helpless commandant, he calmly searched the room with the lantern, and

finally pulled out from under the bed a metal despatch box. Then he lighted a candle in a brass candlestick that stood on the simple walnut dresser, and bowed again to the outraged couple in the four-poster.

“Now, sir,” he said, “you may dress. We will retire.”

“Pardieu!” said the commandant in French, “a hundred thousand thanks.”

We had scarcely closed the bedroom door when three shots were heard.

“The signal!” exclaimed Clark.

Immediately a pandemonium broke on the silence of the night that must have struck cold terror in the hearts of the poor Creoles sleeping in their beds. The war-whoop, the scalp halloo in the dead of the morning, with the hideous winding notes of them that reached the bluff beyond and echoed back, were enough to frighten a man from his senses. In the intervals, in backwoods French, John Duff and his companions were heard in terrifying tones crying out to the habitants to venture out at the peril of their lives.

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Within the fort a score of lights flew up and down like will-o'-the-wisps, and Colonel Clark, standing on the steps of the governor's house, gave out his orders and despatched his messengers. Me he sent speeding through the village to tell Captain Bowman to patrol the outskirts of the town, that no runner might get through to warn Fort Chartres and Cohos, as some called Cahokia. None stirred save the few Indians left in the place, and these were brought before Clark in the fort, sullen and defiant, and put in the guard-house there. And Rocheblave, when he appeared, was no better, and was put back in his house under guard.

As for the papers in the despatch box, they revealed I know not what briberies of the savage nations and plans of the English. But of other papers we found none, though there must have been more. Madame Rocheblave was suspected of having hidden some in the inviolable portions of her dress.

At length the cocks crowing for day proclaimed the morning, and while yet the blue shadow of the bluff was on the town, Colonel Clark sallied out of the gate and walked abroad. Strange it seemed that war had come to this village, so peaceful and remote. And even stranger it seemed to me to see these Arcadian homes in the midst of the fierce wilderness. The little houses with their sloping roofs and wide porches, the gardens ablaze with color, the neat palings,—all were a restful sight for our weary eyes. And now I scarcely knew our commander. For we had not gone far ere, timidly, a door opened and a mild-visaged man, in the simple workaday smock that the French wore, stood, hesitating, on the steps. The odd thing was that he should have bowed to Clark, who was dressed no differently from Bowman and Harrod and Duff; and the man's voice trembled piteously as he spoke. It needed not John Duff to tell us that he was pleading for the lives of his family.

"He will sell himself as a slave if your Excellency will spare them," said Duff, translating.

But Clark stared at the man sternly.

"I will tell them my plans at the proper time," he said and when Duff had translated this the man turned and went silently into his house again, closing the door behind him. And before we had traversed the village the same thing had happened many times. We gained the fort again, I wondering greatly why he had not reassured these simple people. It was Bowman who asked this question, he being closer to Clark than any of the other captains. Clark said nothing then, and began to give out directions for the day. But presently he called the Captain aside.

"Bowman," I heard him say, "we have one hundred and fifty men to hold a province bigger than the whole of France, and filled with treacherous tribes in the King's pay. I must work out the problem for myself."

Bowman was silent. Clark, with that touch which made men love him and die for him, laid his hand on the Captain's shoulder.

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“Have the men called in by detachments,” he said, “and fed. God knows they must be hungry,—and you.”

Suddenly I remembered that he himself had had nothing. Running around the commandant’s house to the kitchen door, I came unexpectedly upon Swein Poulsson, who was face to face with the linsey-woolsey-clad figure of Monsieur Rocheblave’s negro cook. The early sun cast long shadows of them on the ground.

“By tam,” my friend was saying, “so I vill eat. I am choost like an ox for three days, und chew grass. Prairie grass, is it?”

“Mo pas capab’, Michie,” said the cook, with a terrified roll of his white eyes.

“Herr Gott!” cried Swein Poulsson, “I am red face. Aber Herr Gott, I thank thee I am not a nigger. Und my hair is bristles, yes. Davy” (spying me), “I thank Herr Gott it is not vool. Let us in the kitchen go.”

“I am come to get something for the Colonel’s breakfast,” said I, pushing past the slave, through the open doorway. Swein Poulsson followed, and here I struck another contradiction in his strange nature. He helped me light the fire in the great stone chimney-place, and we soon had a pot of hominy on the crane, and turning on the spit a piece of buffalo steak which we found in the larder. Nor did a mouthful pass his lips until I had sped away with a steaming portion to find the Colonel. By this time the men had broken into the storehouse, and the open place was dotted with their breakfast fires. Clark was standing alone by the flagstaff, his face careworn. But he smiled as he saw me coming.

“What’s this?” says he.

“Your breakfast, sir,” I answered. I set down the plate and the pot before him and pressed the pewter spoon into his hand.

“Davy,” said he.

“Sir?” said I.

“What did you have for your breakfast?”

My lip trembled, for I was very hungry, and the rich steam from the hominy was as much as I could stand. Then the Colonel took me by the arms, as gently as a woman might, set me down on the ground beside him, and taking a spoonful of the hominy forced it between my lips. I was near to fainting at the taste of it. Then he took a bit himself, and divided the buffalo steak with his own hands. And when from the camp-fires they perceived the Colonel and the drummer boy eating together in plain sight of all, they gave a rousing cheer.

“Swein Poulsson helped get your breakfast, sir, and would eat nothing either,” I ventured.

“Davy,” said Colonel Clark, gravely, “I hope you will be younger when you are twenty.”

“I hope I shall be bigger, sir,” I answered gravely.

CHAPTER XIV

HOW THE KASKASKEIANS WERE MADE CITIZENS

Never before had such a day dawned upon Kaskaskia. With July fierceness the sun beat down upon the village, but man nor woman nor child stirred from the darkened houses. What they awaited at the hands of the Long Knives they knew not,—captivity, torture, death perhaps. Through the deserted streets stalked a squad of backwoodsmen headed by John Duff and two American traders found in the town, who were bestirring themselves in our behalf, knocking now at this door and anon at that.

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“The Colonel bids you come to the fort,” he said, and was gone.

The church bell rang with slow, ominous strokes, far different from its gentle vesper peal of yesterday. Two companies were drawn up in the sun before the old Jesuit house, and presently through the gate a procession came, grave and mournful. The tone of it was sombre in the white glare, for men had donned their best (as they thought) for the last time,—cloth of camlet and Cadiz and Limbourg, white cotton stockings, and brass-buckled shoes. They came like captives led to execution. But at their head a figure held our eye,—a figure that spoke of dignity and courage, of trials borne for others. It was the village priest in his robes. He had a receding forehead and a strong, pointed chin; but benevolence was in the curve of his great nose. I have many times since seen his type of face in the French prints. He and his flock halted before our young Colonel, even as the citizens of Calais in a bygone century must have stood before the English king.

The scene comes back to me. On the one side, not the warriors of a nation that has made its mark in war, but peaceful peasants who had sought this place for its remoteness from persecution, to live and die in harmony with all mankind. On the other, the sinewy advance guard of a race that knows not peace, whose goddess of liberty carries in her hand a sword. The plough might have been graven on our arms, but always the rifle.

The silence of the trackless wilds reigned while Clark gazed at them sternly. And when he spoke it was with the voice of a conqueror, and they listened as the conquered listen, with heads bowed—all save the priest.

Clark told them first that they had been given a false and a wicked notion of the American cause, and he spoke of the tyranny of the English king, which had become past endurance to a free people. As for ourselves, the Long Knives, we came in truth to conquer, and because of their hasty judgment the Kaskaskians were at our mercy. The British had told them that the Kentuckians were a barbarous people, and they had believed.

He paused that John Duff might translate and the gist of what he had said sink in. But suddenly the priest had stepped out from the ranks, faced his people, and was himself translating in a strong voice. When he had finished a tremor shook the group. But he turned calmly and faced Clark once more.

“Citizens of Kaskaskia,” Colonel Clark went on, “the king whom you renounced when the English conquered you, the great King of France, has judged for you and the French people. Knowing that the American cause is just, he is sending his fleets and regiments to fight for it against the British King, who until now has been your sovereign.”

Again he paused, and when the priest had told them this, a murmur of astonishment came from the boldest.

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“Citizens of Kaskaskia, know you that the Long Knives come not to massacre, as you foolishly believed, but to release from bondage. We are come not against you, who have been deceived, but against those soldiers of the British King who have bribed the savages to slaughter our wives and children. You have but to take the oath of allegiance to the Continental Congress to become free, even as we are, to enjoy the blessings of that American government under which we live and for which we fight.”

The face of the good priest kindled as he glanced at Clark. He turned once more, and though we could not understand his words, the thrill of his eloquence moved us. And when he had finished there was a moment’s hush of inarticulate joy among his flock, and then such transports as moved strangely the sternest men in our ranks. The simple people fell to embracing each other and praising God, the tears running on their cheeks. Out of the group came an old man. A skullcap rested on his silvered hair, and he felt the ground uncertainly with his gold-headed stick.

“Monsieur,” he said tremulously “you will pardon an old man if he show feeling. I am born seventy year ago in Gascon. I inhabit this country thirty year, and last night I think I not live any longer. Last night we make our peace with the good God, and come here to-day to die. But we know you not,” he cried, with a sudden and surprising vigor; “ha, we know you not! They told us lies, and we were humble and believed. But now we are Americains,” he cried, his voice pitched high, as he pointed with a trembling arm to the stars and stripes above him. “Mes enfants, vive les Bostonnais! Vive les Americains! Vive Monsieur le Colonel Clark, sauveur de Kaskaskia!”

The listening village heard the shout and wondered. And when it had died down Colonel Clark took the old Gascon by the hand, and not a man of his but saw that this was a master-stroke of his genius.

“My friends,” he said simply, “I thank you. I would not force you, and you will have some days to think over the oath of allegiance to the Republic. Go now to your homes, and tell those who are awaiting you what I have said. And if any man of French birth wish to leave this place, he may go of his own free will, save only three whom I suspect are not our friends.”

They turned, and in an ecstasy of joy quite pitiful to see went trooping out of the gate. But scarce could they have reached the street and we have broken ranks, when we saw them coming back again, the priest leading them as before. They drew near to the spot where Clark stood, talking to the captains, and halted expectantly.

“What is it, my friends?” asked the Colonel.

The priest came forward and bowed gravely.

“I am Pere Gibault, sir,” he said, “cure of Kaskaskia.” He paused, surveying our commander with a clear eye. “There is something that still troubles the good citizens.”

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“And what is that, sir?” said Clark.

The priest hesitated.

“If your Excellency will only allow the church to be opened—” he ventured.

The group stood wistful, fearful that their boldness had displeased, expectant of reprimand.

“My good Father,” said Colonel Clark, “an American commander has but one relation to any church. And that is” (he added with force) “to protect it. For all religions are equal before the Republic.”

The priest gazed at him intently.

“By that answer,” said he, “your Excellency has made for your government loyal citizens in Kaskaskia.”

Then the Colonel stepped up to the priest and took him likewise by the hand.

“I have arranged for a house in town,” said he. “Monsieur Rocheblave has refused to dine with me there. Will you do me that honor, Father?”

“With all my heart, your Excellency,” said Father Gibault. And turning to the people, he translated what the Colonel had said. Then their cup of happiness was indeed full, and some ran to Clark and would have thrown their arms about him had he been a man to embrace. Hurrying out of the gate, they spread the news like wildfire, and presently the church bell clanged in tones of unmistakable joy.

“Sure, Davy dear, it puts me in mind of the Saints’ day at home,” said Terence, as he stood leaning against a picket fence that bordered the street, “savin’ the presence of the naygurs and thim red divils wid blankets an’ scowls as wud turrn the milk sour in the pail.”

He had stopped beside two Kaskaskia warriors in scarlet blankets who stood at the corner, watching with silent contempt the antics of the French inhabitants. Now and again one or the other gave a grunt and wrapped his blanket more tightly about him.

“Umrrhh!” said Terence. “Faith, I talk that langwidge mesilf when I have throuble.” The warriors stared at him with what might be called a stoical surprise. “Umrrh! Does the holy father praych to ye wid thim wurrds, ye haythens? Begorra, ’tis a wondher ye wuddent wash yereselves,” he added, making a face, “wid muddy wather to be had for the askin’.”

We moved on, through such a scene as I have seldom beheld. The village had donned its best: women in cap and gown were hurrying hither and thither, some laughing and some weeping; grown men embraced each other; children of all colors flung themselves against Terence's legs,—dark-haired Creoles, little negroes with woolly pates, and naked Indian lads with bow and arrow. Terence dashed at them now and then, and they fled screaming into dooryards to come out again and mimic him when he had passed, while mothers and fathers and grandfathers smiled at the good nature in his Irish face. Presently he looked down at me comically.

"Why wuddent ye be doin' the like, Davy?" he asked. "Amusha! 'tis mesilf that wants to run and hop and skip wid the childher. Ye put me in mind of a wizened old man that sat all day makin' shoes in Killarney,—all savin' the fringe he had on his chin."

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“A soldier must be dignified,” I answered.

“The saints bar that wurrd from hiven,” said Terence, trying to pronounce it. “Come, we’ll go to mass, or me mother will be visitin’ me this night.”

We crossed the square and went into the darkened church, where the candles were burning. It was the first church I had ever entered, and I heard with awe the voice of the priest and the fervent responses, but I understood not a word of what was said. Afterwards Father Gibault mounted to the pulpit and stood for a moment with his hand raised above his flock, and then began to speak. What he told them I have learned since. And this I know, that when they came out again into the sunlit square they were Americans. It matters not when they took the oath.

As we walked back towards the fort we came to a little house with a flower garden in front of it, and there stood Colonel Clark himself by the gate. He stopped us with a motion of his hand.

“Davy,” said he, “we are to live here for a while, you and I. What do you think of our headquarters?” He did not wait for me to reply, but continued, “Can you suggest any improvement?”

“You will be needing a soldier to be on guard in front, sir,” said I.

“Ah,” said the Colonel, “McChesney is too valuable a man. I am sending him with Captain Bowman to take Cahokia.”

“Would you have Terence, sir?” I ventured, while Terence grinned. Whereupon Colonel Clark sent him to report to his captain that he was detailed for orderly duty to the commanding officer. And within half an hour he was standing guard in the flower garden, making grimaces at the children in the street. Colonel Clark sat at a table in the little front room, and while two of Monsieur Rocheblave’s negroes cooked his dinner, he was busy with a score of visitors, organizing, advising, planning, and commanding. There were disputes to settle now that alarm had subsided, and at noon three excitable gentlemen came in to inform against a certain Monsieur Cerre, merchant and trader, then absent at St. Louis. When at length the Colonel had succeeded in bringing their denunciations to an end and they had departed, he looked at me comically as I stood in the doorway.

“Davy,” said he, “all I ask of the good Lord is that He will frighten me incontinently for a month before I die.”

“I think He would find that difficult, sir,” I answered.

“Then there’s no hope for me,” he answered, laughing, “for I have observed that fright alone brings a man into a fit spiritual state to enter heaven. What would you say of those slanderers of Monsieur Cerre?”

Not expecting an answer, he dipped his quill into the ink-pot and turned to his papers.

“I should say that they owed Monsieur Cerre money,” I replied.

The Colonel dropped his quill and stared. As for me, I was puzzled to know why.

“Egad,” said Colonel Clark, “most of us get by hard knocks what you seem to have been born with.” He fell to musing, a worried look coming on his face that was no stranger to me later, and his hand fell heavily on the loose pile of paper before him. “Davy,” says he, “I need a commissary-general.”

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“What would that be, sir,” I asked.

“A John Law, who will make something out of nothing, who will make money out of this blank paper, who will wheedle the Creole traders into believing they are doing us a favor and making their everlasting fortune by advancing us flour and bacon.”

“And doesn’t Congress make money, sir?” I asked.

“That they do, Davy, by the ton,” he replied, “and so must we, as the rulers of a great province. For mark me, though the men are happy to-day, in four days they will be grumbling and trying to desert in dozens.”

We were interrupted by a knock at the door, and there stood Terence McCann.

“His riverence!” he announced, and bowed low as the priest came into the room.

I was bid by Colonel Clark to sit down and dine with them on the good things which Monsieur Rocheblave’s cook had prepared. After dinner they went into the little orchard behind the house and sat drinking (in the French fashion) the commandant’s precious coffee which had been sent to him from far-away New Orleans. Colonel Clark plied the priest with questions of the French towns under English rule: and Father Gibault, speaking for his simple people, said that the English had led them easily to believe that the Kentuckians were cutthroats.

“Ah, monsieur,” he said, “if they but knew you! If they but knew the principles of that government for which you fight, they would renounce the English allegiance, and the whole of this territory would be yours. I know them, from Quebec to Detroit and Michilimackinac and Saint Vincennes. Listen, monsieur,” he cried, his homely face alight; “I myself will go to Saint Vincennes for you. I will tell them the truth, and you shall have the post for the asking.”

“You will go to Vincennes!” exclaimed Clark; “a hard and dangerous journey of a hundred leagues!”

“Monsieur,” answered the priest, simply, “the journey is nothing. For a century the missionaries of the Church have walked this wilderness alone with God. Often they have suffered, and often died in tortures—but gladly.”

Colonel Clark regarded the man intently.

“The cause of liberty, both religious and civil, is our cause,” Father Gibault continued. “Men have died for it, and will die for it, and it will prosper. Furthermore, Monsieur, my life has not known many wants. I have saved something to keep my old age, with which to buy a little house and an orchard in this peaceful place. The sum I have is at your service. The good Congress will repay me. And you need the money.”

Colonel Clark was not an impulsive man, but he felt none the less deeply, as I know well. His reply to this generous offer was almost brusque, but it did not deceive the priest.

“Nay, monsieur,” he said, “it is for mankind I give it, in remembrance of Him who gave everything. And though I receive nothing in return, I shall have my reward an hundred fold.”

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In due time, I know not how, the talk swung round again to lightness, for the Colonel loved a good story, and the priest had many which he told with wit in his quaint French accent. As he was rising to take his leave, Pere Gibault put his hand on my head.

“I saw your Excellency’s son in the church this morning,” he said.

Colonel Clark laughed and gave me a pinch.

“My dear sir,” he said, “the boy is old enough to be my father.”

The priest looked down at me with a puzzled expression in his brown eyes.

“I would I had him for my son,” said Colonel Clark, kindly; “but the lad is eleven, and I shall not be twenty-six until next November.”

“Your Excellency not twenty-six!” cried Father Gibault, in astonishment. “What will you be when you are thirty?”

The young Colonel’s face clouded.

“God knows!” he said.

Father Gibault dropped his eyes and turned to me with native tact.

“What would you like best to do, my son?” he asked.

“I should like to learn to speak French,” said I, for I had been much irritated at not understanding what was said in the streets.

“And so you shall,” said Father Gibault; “I myself will teach you. You must come to my house to-day.”

“And Davy will teach me,” said the Colonel.

CHAPTER XV

DAYS OF TRIAL

But I was not immediately to take up the study of French. Things began to happen in Kaskaskia. In the first place, Captain Bowman’s company, with a few scouts, of which Tom was one, set out that very afternoon for the capture of Cohos, or Cahokia, and this despite the fact that they had had no sleep for two nights. If you will look at the map,[1] you will see, dotted along the bottoms and the bluffs beside the great Mississippi, the string of villages, Kaskaskia, La Prairie du Rocher, Fort Chartres, St. Philip, and

Cahokia. Some few miles from Cahokia, on the western bank of the Father of Waters, was the little French village of St. Louis, in the Spanish territory of Louisiana. From thence eastward stretched the great waste of prairie and forest inhabited by roving bands of the forty Indian nations. Then you come to Vincennes on the Wabash, Fort St. Vincent, the English and Canadians called it, for there were a few of the latter who had settled in Kaskaskia since the English occupation.

[1] The best map which the editor has found of this district is in vol. *Vi*, Part 11, of Winsor's "Narrative and Critical History of America," p. 721.

We gathered on the western skirts of the village to give Bowman's company a cheer, and every man, woman, and child in the place watched the little column as it wound snakelike over the prairie on the road to Fort Chartres, until it was lost in the cottonwoods to the westward.

Things began to happen in Kaskaskia. It would have been strange indeed if things had not happened. One hundred and seventy-five men had marched into that territory out of which now are carved the great states of Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois, and to most of them the thing was a picnic, a jaunt which would soon be finished. Many had left families in the frontier forts without protection. The time of their enlistment had almost expired.

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There was a store in the village kept by a great citizen,—not a citizen of Kaskaskia alone, but a citizen of the world. This, I am aware, sounds like fiction, like an attempt to get an effect which was not there. But it is true as gospel. The owner of this store had many others scattered about in this foreign country: at Vincennes, at St. Louis, where he resided, at Cahokia. He knew Michilimackinac and Quebec and New Orleans. He had been born some thirty-one years before in Sardinia, had served in the Spanish army, and was still a Spanish subject. The name of this famous gentleman was Monsieur Francois Vigo, and he was the Rothschild of the country north of the Ohio. Monsieur Vigo, though he merited it, I had not room to mention in the last chapter. Clark had routed him from his bed on the morning of our arrival, and whether or not he had been in the secret of frightening the inhabitants into making their wills, and then throwing them into transports of joy, I know not.

Monsieur Vigo's store was the village club. It had neither glass in the window nor an attractive display of goods; it was merely a log cabin set down on a weedy, sun-baked plot. The stuffy smell of skins and furs came out of the doorway. Within, when he was in Kaskaskia, Monsieur Vigo was wont to sit behind his rough walnut table, writing with a fine quill, or dispensing the news of the villages to the priest and other prominent citizens, or haggling with persistent blanketed braves over canoe-loads of ill-smelling pelts which they brought down from the green forests of the north. Monsieur Vigo's clothes were the color of the tobacco he gave in exchange; his eyes were not unlike the black beads he traded, but shrewd and kindly withal, set in a square saffron face that had the contradiction of a small chin. As the days wore into months, Monsieur Vigo's place very naturally became the headquarters for our army, if army it might be called. Of a morning a dozen would be sitting against the logs in the black shadow, and in the midst of them always squatted an unsavory Indian squaw. A few braves usually stood like statues at the corner, and in front of the door another group of hunting shirts. Without was the paper money of the Continental Congress, within the good tafia and tobacco of Monsieur Vigo. One day Monsieur Vigo's young Creole clerk stood shrugging his shoulders in the doorway. I stopped.

"By tam!" Swein Poulsson was crying to the clerk, as he waved a worthless scrip above his head. "Vat is money?"

This definition the clerk, not being a Doctor Johnson, was unable to give offhand.

"Vat are you, choost? Is it America?" demanded Poulsson, while the others looked on, some laughing, some serious. "And vich citizen are you since you are ours? You vill please to give me one carrot of tobacco." And he thrust the scrip under the clerk's nose.

The clerk stared at the uneven lettering on the scrip with disdain.

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“Money,” he exclaimed scornfully, “she is not money. Piastre—Spanish dollare—then I give you carrot.”

“By God!” shouted Bill Cowan, “ye will take Virginny paper, and Congress paper, or else I reckon we’ll have a drink and tobacey, boys, take or no take.”

“Hooray, Bill, ye’re right,” cried several of our men.

“Lemme in here,” said Cowan. But the frightened Creole blocked the doorway.

“Sacre’!” he screamed, and then, “Voleurs!”

The excitement drew a number of people from the neighborhood. Nay, it seemed as if the whole town was ringed about us.

“Bravo, Jules!” they cried, “garde-tu la porte. A bas les Bostonnais! A bas les voleurs!”

“Damn such monkey talk,” said Cowan, facing them suddenly. I knew him well, and when the giant lost his temper it was gone irrevocably until a fight was over. “Call a man a squar’ name.”

“Hey, Frenchy,” another of our men put in, stalking up to the clerk, “I reckon this here store’s ourn, ef we’ve a mind to tek it. I ’low you’ll give us the rum and the ’bacey. Come on, boys!”

In between him and the clerk leaped a little, robin-like man with a red waistcoat, beside himself with rage. Bill Cowan and his friends stared at this diminutive Frenchman, open-mouthed, as he poured forth a veritable torrent of unintelligible words, plentifully mixed with sacres, which he ripped out like snarls. I would as soon have touched him as a ball of angry bees or a pair of fighting wildcats. Not so Bill Cowan. When that worthy recovered from his first surprise he seized hold of some of the man’s twisting arms and legs and lifted him bodily from the ground, as he would have taken a perverse and struggling child. There was no question of a fight. Cowan picked him up, I say, and before any one knew what happened, he flung him on to the hot roof of the store (the eaves were but two feet above his head), and there the man stuck, clinging to a loose shingle, purpling and coughing and spitting with rage. There was a loud gust of guffaws from the woodsmen, and oaths like whip-cracks from the circle around us, menacing growls as it surged inward and our men turned to face it. A few citizens pushed through the outskirts of it and ran away, and in the hush that followed we heard them calling wildly the names of Father Gibault and Clark and of Vigo himself. Cowan thrust me past the clerk into the store, where I stood listening to the little man on the roof, scratching and clutching at the shingles, and coughing still.

But there was no fight. Shouts of “Monsieur Vigo! Voici Monsieur Vigo!” were heard, the crowd parted respectfully, and Monsieur Vigo in his snuff-colored suit stood glancing from Cowan to his pallid clerk. He was not in the least excited.

“Come in, my frens,” he said; “it is too hot in the sun.” And he set the example by stepping over the sill on to the hard-baked earth of the floor within. Then he spied me. “Ah,” he said, “the boy of Monsieur le Colonel! And how are you called, my son?” he added, patting me kindly.

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“Davy, sir,” I answered.

“Ha,” he said, “and a brave soldier, no doubt.”

I was flattered as well as astonished by this attention. But Monsieur Vigo knew men, and he had given them time to turn around. By this time Bill Cowan and some of my friends had stooped through the doorway, followed by a prying Kaskaskian brave and as many Creoles as could crowd behind them. Monsieur Vigo was surprisingly calm.

“It make hot weather, my frens,” said he. “How can I serve you, messieurs?”

“Hain’t the Congress got authority here?” said one.

“I am happy to say,” answered Monsieur Vigo, rubbing his hands, “for I think much of your principle.”

“Then,” said the man, “we come here to trade with Congress money. Hain’t that money good in Kaskasky?”

There was an anxious pause. Then Monsieur Vigo’s eyes twinkled, and he looked at me.

“And what you say, Davy?” he asked.

“The money would be good if you took it, sir,” I said, not knowing what else to answer.

“Sapristi!” exclaimed Monsieur Vigo, looking hard at me. “Who teach you that?”

“No one, sir,” said I, staring in my turn.

“And if Congress lose, and not pay, where am I, mon petit maitre de la haute finance?” demanded Monsieur Vigo, with the palms of his hands outward.

“You will be in good company, sir,” said I.

At that he threw back his head and laughed, and Bill Cowan and my friends laughed with him.

“Good company—c’est la plupart de la vie,” said Monsieur Vigo. “Et quel garcon—what a boy it is!”

“I never seed his beat fer wisdom, Mister Vigo,” said Bill Cowan, now in good humor once more at the prospect of rum and tobacco. And I found out later that he and the others had actually given to me the credit of this coup. “He never failed us yet. Hain’t

that truth, boys? Hain't we a-goin' on to St. Vincent because he seen the Ha'r Buyer sculped on the Ohio?"

The rest assented so heartily but withal so gravely, that I am between laughter and tears over the remembrance of it.

"At noon you come back," said Monsieur Vigo. "I think till then about rate of exchange, and talk with your Colonel. Davy, you stay here."

I remained, while the others filed out, and at length I was alone with him and Jules, his clerk.

"Davy, how you like to be trader?" asked Monsieur Vigo.

It was a new thought to me, and I turned it over in my mind. To see the strange places of the world, and the stranger people; to become a man of wealth and influence such as Monsieur Vigo; and (I fear I loved it best) to match my brains with others at a bargain, —I turned it all over slowly, gravely, in my boyish mind, rubbing the hard dirt on the floor with the toe of my moccasin. And suddenly the thought came to me that I was a traitor to my friends, a deserter from the little army that loved me so well.

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“Eh bien?” said Monsieur Vigo.

I shook my head, but in spite of me I felt the tears welling into my eyes and brushed them away shamefully. At such times of stress some of my paternal Scotch crept into my speech.

“I will no be leaving Colonel Clark and the boys,” I cried, “not for all the money in the world.”

“Congress money?” said Monsieur Vigo, with a queer expression.

It was then I laughed through my tears, and that cemented the friendship between us. It was a lifelong friendship, though I little suspected it then.

In the days that followed he never met me on the street that he did not stop to pass the time of day, and ask me if I had changed my mind. He came every morning to headquarters, where he and Colonel Clark sat by the hour with brows knit. Monsieur Vigo was as good as his word, and took the Congress money, though not at such a value as many would have had him. I have often thought that we were all children then, and knew nothing of the ingratitude of republics. Monsieur Vigo took the money, and was all his life many, many thousand dollars the poorer. Father Gibault advanced his little store, and lived to feel the pangs of want. And Colonel Clark? But I must not go beyond the troubles of that summer, and the problems that vexed our commander. One night I missed him from the room where we slept, and walking into the orchard found him pacing there, where the moon cast filmy shadows on the grass. By day as he went around among the men his brow was unclouded, though his face was stern. But now I surprised the man so strangely moved that I yearned to comfort him. He had taken three turns before he perceived me.

“Davy,” he said, “what are you doing here?”

“I missed you, sir,” I answered, staring at the furrows in his face.

“Come!” he said almost roughly, and seizing my hand, led me back and forth swiftly through the wet grass for I know not how long. The moon dipped to the uneven line of the ridge-pole and slipped behind the stone chimney. All at once he stopped, dropped my hand, and smote both of his together.

“I *will* hold on, by the eternal!” he cried. “I will let no American read his history and say that I abandoned this land. Let them desert! If ten men be found who will stay, I will hold the place for the Republic.”

“Will not Virginia and the Congress send you men, sir?” I asked wonderingly.

He laughed a laugh that was all bitterness.

“Virginia and the Continental Congress know little and care less about me,” he answered. “Some day you will learn that foresight sometimes comes to men, but never to assemblies. But it is often given to one man to work out the salvation of a people, and be destroyed for it. Davy, we have been up too long.”

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At the morning parade, from my wonted place at the end of the line, I watched him with astonishment, reviewing the troops as usual. For the very first day I had crossed the river with Terence, climbed the heights to the old fort, and returned with my drum. But no sooner had I beaten the retreat than the men gathered here and there in groups that smouldered with mutiny, and I noted that some of the officers were amongst these. Once in a while a sentence like a flaming brand was flung out. Their time was up, their wives and children for all they knew sculped by the red varmints, and, by the etarnal, Clark or no man living could keep them.

“Hi,” said one, as I passed, “here’s Davy with his drum. He’ll be leadin’ us back to Kaintuck in the morning.”

“Ay, ay,” cried another man in the group, “I reckon he’s had his full of tyranny, too.”

I stopped, my face blazing red.

“Shame on you for those words!” I shouted shrilly. “Shame on you, you fools, to desert the man who would save your wives and children. How are the redskins to be beaten if they are not cowed in their own country?” For I had learned much at headquarters.

They stood silent, astonished, no doubt, at the sight of my small figure a-tremble with anger. I heard Bill Cowan’s voice behind me.

“There’s truth for ye,” he said, “that will slink home when a thing’s half done.”

“Ye needn’t talk, Bill Cowan; it’s well enough for ye. I reckon your wife’d scare any redskin off her clearin’.”

“Many the time she scart me,” said Bill Cowan.

And so the matter went by with a laugh. But the grumbling continued, and the danger was that the French would learn of it. The day passed, yet the embers blazed not into the flame of open mutiny. But he who has seen service knows how ominous is the gathering of men here and there, the low humming talk, the silence when a dissenter passes. There were fights, too, that had to be quelled by company captains, and no man knew when the loud quarrel between the two races at Vigo’s store would grow into an ugly battle.

What did Clark intend to do? This was the question that hung in the minds of mutineer and faithful alike. They knew the desperation of his case. Without money, save that which the generous Creoles had advanced upon his personal credit; without apparent resources; without authority, save that which the weight of his character exerted,—how could he prevent desertion? They eyed him as he went from place to place about his business,—erect, thoughtful, undisturbed. Few men dare to set their will against a

multitude when there are no fruits to be won. Columbus persisted, and found a new world; Clark persisted, and won an empire for thoughtless generations to enjoy.

That night he slept not at all, but sat, while the candles flickered in their sockets, poring over maps and papers. I dared not disturb him, but lay the darkness through with staring eyes. And when the windows on the orchard side showed a gray square of light, he flung down the parchment he was reading on the table. It rolled up of itself, and he pushed back his chair. I heard him call my name, and leaping out of bed, I stood before him.

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“You sleep lightly, Davy,” he said, I think to try me.

I did not answer, fearing to tell him that I had been awake watching him.

“I have one friend, at least,” said the Colonel.

“You have many, sir,” I answered, “as you will find when the time comes.”

“The time has come,” said he; “to-day I shall be able to count them. Davy, I want you to do something for me.”

“Now, sir?” I answered, overjoyed.

“As soon as the sun strikes that orchard,” he said, pointing out of the window. “You have learned how to keep things to yourself. Now I want you to impart them to others. Go out, and tell the village that I am going away.”

“That you are going away, sir?” I repeated.

“That I am going away,” he said, “with my army, (save the mark!), with my army and my drummer boy and my paper money. Such is my faith in the loyalty of the good people of these villages to the American cause, that I can safely leave the flag flying over their heads with the assurance that they will protect it.”

I stared at him doubtfully, for at times a pleasantry came out of his bitterness.

“Ay,” he said, “go! Have you any love for me?”

“I have, sir,” I answered.

“By the Lord, I believe you,” he said, and picking up my small hunting shirt, he flung it at me. “Put it on, and go when the sun rises.”

As the first shaft of light over the bluff revealed the diamonds in the orchard grass I went out, wondering. *Suspecting* would be a better word for the nature I had inherited. But I had my orders. Terence was pacing the garden, his leggings turned black with the dew. I looked at him. Here was a vessel to disseminate.

“Terence, the Colonel is going back to Virginia with the army.”

“Him!” cried Terence, dropping the stock of his Deckard to the ground. “And back to Kaintuckee! Arrah, ‘tis a sin to be jokin’ before a man has a bit in his sthummick. Bad cess to yere plisantry before breakfast.”

“I’m telling you what the Colonel himself told me,” I answered, and ran on. “Davy, darlin’!” I heard him calling after me as I turned the corner, but I looked not back.

There was a single sound in the street. A thin, bronzed Indian lad squatted against the pickets with his fingers on a reed, his cheeks distended. He broke off with a wild, mournful note to stare at me. A wisp of smoke stole from a stone chimney, and the smell that corn-pone and bacon leave was in the air. A bolt was slammed back, a door creaked and stuck, was flung open, and with a “Va t’en, mechant!” a cotton-clad urchin was cast out of the house, and fled into the dusty street. Breathing the morning air in the doorway, stood a young woman in a cotton gown, a saucepan in hand. She had inquisitive eyes, a pointed, prying nose, and I knew her to be the village gossip, the wife of Jules, Monsieur Vigo’s clerk. She had the same smattering of English as her husband. Now she stood regarding me narrowly between half-closed lids.

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“A la bonne heure! Que fais-tu donc? What do you do so early?”

“The garrison is getting ready to leave for Kentucky to-day,” I answered.

“Ha! Jules! Ecoute-toi! Nom de dieu! Is it true what you say?”

The visage of Jules, surmounted by a nightcap and heavy with sleep, appeared behind her.

“Ha, e’est Daveed!” he said. “What news have you?”

I repeated, whereupon they both began to lament.

“And why is it?” persisted Jules.

“He has such faith in the loyalty of the Kaskaskians,” I answered, parrot-like.

“Diable!” cried Jules, “we shall perish. We shall be as the Acadians. And loyalty—she will not save us, no.”

Other doors creaked. Other inhabitants came in varied costumes into the street to hear the news, lamenting. If Clark left, the day of judgment was at hand for them, that was certain. Between the savage and the Briton not one stone would be left standing on another. Madame Jules forgot her breakfast, and fled up the street with the tidings. And then I made my way to the fort, where the men were gathering about the camp-fires, talking excitedly. Terence, relieved from duty, had done the work here.

“And he as little as a fox, wid all that in him,” he cried, when he perceived me walking demurely past the sentry. “Davy, dear, come here an’ tell the b’ys am I a liar.”

“Davy’s monstrous cute,” said Bill Cowan; “I reckon he knows as well as me the Colonel hain’t a-goin’ to do no such tomfool thing as leave.”

“He is,” I cried, for the benefit of some others, “he’s fair sick of grumblers that haven’t got the grit to stand by him in trouble.”

“By the Lord!” said Bill Cowan, “and I’ll not blame him.” He turned fiercely, his face reddening. “Shame on ye all yere lives,” he shouted. “Ye’re making the best man that ever led a regiment take the back trail. Ye’ll fetch back to Kaintuck, and draw every redskin in the north woods suckin’ after ye like leaves in a harricane wind. There hain’t a man of ye has the pluck of this little shaver that beats the drum. I wish to God McChesney was here.”

He turned away to cross the parade ground, followed by the faithful Terence and myself. Others gathered about him: McAndrew, who, for all his sourness, was true;

Swein Poulsson, who would have died for the Colonel; John Duff, and some twenty more, including Saunders, whose affection had not been killed, though Clark had nearly hanged him among the prairies.

“Begob!” said Terence, “Davy has inflooence wid his Excellency. It’s Davy we’ll sind, prayin’ him not to lave the Frinch alone wid their loyalty.”

It was agreed, and I was to repeat the name of every man that sent me.

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Departing on this embassy, I sped out of the gates of the fort. But, as I approached the little house where Clark lived, the humming of a crowd came to my ears, and I saw with astonishment that the street was blocked. It appeared that the whole of the inhabitants of Kaskaskia were packed in front of the place. Wriggling my way through the people, I had barely reached the gate when I saw Monsieur Vigo and the priest, three Creole gentlemen in uniform, and several others coming out of the door. They stopped, and Monsieur Vigo, raising his hand for silence, made a speech in French to the people. What he said I could not understand, and when he had finished they broke up into groups, and many of them departed. Before I could gain the house, Colonel Clark himself came out with Captain Helm and Captain Harrod. The Colonel glanced at me and smiled.

“Parade, Davy,” he said, and walked on.

I ran back to the fort, and when I had gotten my drum the three companies were falling into line, the men murmuring in undertones among themselves. They were brought to attention. Colonel Clark was seen to come out of the commandant’s house, and we watched him furtively as he walked slowly to his place in front of the line. A tremor of excitement went from sergeant to drummer boy. The sentries closed the big gates of the fort.

The Colonel stood for a full minute surveying us calmly,—a disquieting way he had when matters were at a crisis. Then he began to talk.

“I have heard from many sources that you are dissatisfied, that you wish to go back to Kentucky. If that be so, I say to you, ’Go, and God be with you.’ I will hinder no man. We have taken a brave and generous people into the fold of the Republic, and they have shown their patriotism by giving us freely of their money and stores.” He raised his voice. “They have given the last proof of that patriotism this day. Yes, they have come to me and offered to take your places, to finish the campaign which you have so well begun and wish to abandon. To-day I shall enroll their militia under the flag for which you have fought.”

When he had ceased speaking a murmur ran through the ranks.

“But if there be any,” he said, “who have faith in me and in the cause for which we have come here, who have the perseverance and the courage to remain, I will reenlist them. The rest of you shall march for Kentucky,” he cried, “as soon as Captain Bowman’s company can be relieved at Cahokia. The regiment is dismissed.”

For a moment they remained in ranks, as though stupefied. It was Cowan who stepped out first, snatched his coonskin hat from his head, and waved it in the air.

“Huzzay for Colonel Clark!” he roared. “I’ll foller him into Canady, and stand up to my lick log.”

They surrounded Bill Cowan, not the twenty which had flocked to him in the morning, but four times twenty, and they marched in a body to the commandant’s house to be reenlisted. The Colonel stood by the door, and there came a light in his eyes as he regarded us. They cheered him again.

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“Thank you, lads,” he said; “remember, we may have to whistle for our pay.”

“Damn the pay!” cried Bill Cowan, and we echoed the sentiment.

“We’ll see what can be done about land grants,” said the Colonel, and he turned away.

At dusk that evening I sat on the back door-step, by the orchard, cleaning his rifle. The sound of steps came from the little passage behind me, and a hand was on my head.

“Davee,” said a voice (it was Monsieur Vigo’s), “do you know what is un coup d’e’tat?”

“No, sir.”

“Ha! You execute one to-day. Is it not so, Monsieur le Colonel?”

“I reckon he was in the secret,” said Colonel Clark. “Did you think I meant to leave Kaskaskia, Davy?”

“No, sir.”

“He is not so easy fool,” Monsieur Vigo put in. “He tell me paper money good if I take it. C’est la haute finance!”

Colonel Clark laughed.

“And why didn’t you think I meant to leave?” said he.

“Because you bade me go out and tell everybody,” I answered. “What you really mean to do you tell no one.”

“Nom du bon Dieu!” exclaimed Monsieur Vigo.

Yesterday Colonel Clark had stood alone, the enterprise for which he had risked all on the verge of failure. By a master-stroke his ranks were repleted, his position recovered, his authority secured once more.

Few men recognize genius when they see it. Monsieur Vigo was not one of these.

CHAPTER XVI

DAVY GOES TO CAHOKIA

I should make but a poor historian, for I have not stuck to my chronology. But as I write, the vivid recollections are those that I set down. I have forgotten two things of great importance. First, the departure of Father Gibault with several Creole gentlemen and a

spy of Colonel Clark's for Vincennes, and their triumphant return in August. The sacrifice of the good priest had not been in vain, and he came back with the joyous news of a peaceful conquest. The stars and stripes now waved over the fort, and the French themselves had put it there. And the vast stretch of country from that place westward to the Father of Waters was now American.

And that brings me to the second oversight. The surprise and conquest of Cahokia by Bowman and his men was like that of Kaskaskia. And the French there were loyal, too, offering their militia for service in the place of those men of Bowman's company who would not reenlist. These came to Kaskaskia to join our home-goers, and no sooner had the hundred marched out of the gate and taken up their way for Kentucky than Colonel Clark began the drilling of the new troops.

Captain Leonard Helm was sent to take charge of Vincennes, and Captain Montgomery set out across the mountains for Williamsburg with letters praying the governor of Virginia to come to our assistance.

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For another cloud had risen in the horizon: another problem for Clark to face of greater portent than all the others. A messenger from Captain Bowman at Cohos came riding down the street on a scraggly French pony, and pulled up before headquarters. The messenger was Sergeant Thomas McChesney, and his long legs almost reached the ground on either side of the little beast. Leaping from the saddle, he seized me in his arms, set me down, and bade me tell Colonel Clark of his arrival.

It was a sultry August morning. Within the hour Colonel Clark and Tom and myself were riding over the dusty trace that wound westward across the common lands of the village, which was known as the Fort Chartres road. The heat-haze shimmered in the distance, and there was no sound in plain or village save the tinkle of a cowbell from the clumps of shade. Colonel Clark rode twenty paces in front, alone, his head bowed with thinking.

“They’re coming into Cahokia as thick as bees out’n a gum, Davy,” said Tom; “seems like there’s thousands of ’em. Nothin’ will do ’em but they must see the Colonel,—the varmints. And they’ve got patience, they’ll wait thar till the b’ars git fat. I reckon they ’low Clark’s got the armies of Congress behind him. If they knowed,” said Tom, with a chuckle, “if they knowed that we’d only got seventy of the boys and some hundred Frenchies in the army! I reckon the Colonel’s too cute for ’em.”

The savages in Cahokia were as the leaves of the forest. Curiosity, that mainspring of the Indian character, had brought the chiefs, big and little, to see with their own eyes the great Captain of the Long Knives. In vain had the faithful Bowman put them off. They would wait. Clark must come. And Clark was coming, for he was not the man to quail at such a crisis. For the crux of the whole matter was here. And if he failed to impress them with his power, with the might of the Congress for which he fought, no man of his would ever see Kentucky again.

As we rode through the bottom under the pecan trees we talked of Polly Ann, Tom and I, and of our little home by the Salt River far to the southward, where we would live in peace when the campaign was over. Tom had written her, painfully enough, an affectionate scrawl, which he sent by one of Captain Linn’s men. And I, too, had written. My letter had been about Tom, and how he had become a sergeant, and what a favorite he was with Bowman and the Colonel. Poor Polly Ann! She could not write, but a runner from Harrodstown who was a friend of Tom’s had carried all the way to Cahokia, in the pocket with his despatches, a fold of nettle-bark linen. Tom pulled it from the bosom of his hunting shirt to show me, and in it was a little ring of hair like unto the finest spun red-gold. This was the message Polly Ann had sent,—a message from little Tom as well.

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At Prairie du Rocher, at St. Philippe, the inhabitants lined the streets to do homage to this man of strange power who rode, unattended and unafraid, to the council of the savage tribes which had terrorized his people of Kentucky. From the ramparts of Fort Chartres (once one of the mighty chain of strongholds to protect a new France, and now deserted like Massacre), I gazed for the first time in awe at the turgid flood of the Mississippi, and at the lands of the Spanish king beyond. With never ceasing fury the river tore at his clay banks and worried the green islands that braved his charge. And my boyish fancy pictured to itself the monsters which might lie hidden in his muddy depths.

We lay that night in the open at a spring on the bluffs, and the next morning beheld the church tower of Cahokia. A little way from the town we perceived an odd gathering on the road, the yellowed and weathered hunting shirts of Bowman's company mixed with the motley dress of the Creole volunteers. Some of these gentlemen wore the costume of coureurs du bois, others had odd regimental coats and hats which had seen much service. Besides the military was a sober deputation of citizens, and hovering behind the whole a horde of curious, blanketed braves, come to get a first glimpse of the great white captain. So escorted, we crossed at the mill, came to a shady street that faced the little river, and stopped at the stone house where Colonel Clark was to abide.

On that day, and for many days more, that street was thronged with warriors. Chiefs in gala dress strutted up and down, feathered and plumed and blanketed, smeared with paint, bedecked with rude jewellery,—earrings and bracelets. From the remote forests of the north they had come, where the cold winds blow off the blue lakes; from the prairies to the east; from the upper running waters, where the Mississippi flows clear and undefiled by the muddy flood; from the villages and wigwams of the sluggish Wabash; and from the sandy, piny country between the great northern seas where Michilimackinac stands guard alone,—Sacs and Foxes, Chippeways and Maumies and Missesogies, Puans and Pottawattomies, chiefs and medicine men.

Well might the sleep of the good citizens be disturbed, and the women fear to venture to the creek with their linen and their paddles!

The lives of these people hung in truth upon a slender thing—the bearing of one man. All day long the great chiefs sought an audience with him, but he sent them word that matters would be settled in the council that was to come. All day long the warriors lined the picket fence in front of the house, and more than once Tom McChesney roughly shouldered a lane through them that timid visitors might pass. Like a pack of wolves, they watched narrowly for any sign of weakness. As for Tom, they were to him as so many dogs.

"Ye varmints!" he cried, "I'll take a blizz'rd at ye if ye don't keep the way clear."

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At that they would give back grudgingly with a chorus of grunts, only to close in again as tightly as before. But they came to have a wholesome regard for the sun-browned man with the red hair who guarded the Colonel's privacy. The boy who sat on the door-step, the son of the great Pale Face Chief (as they called me), was a never ending source of comment among them. Once Colonel Clark sent for me. The little front room of this house was not unlike the one we had occupied at Kaskaskia. It had bare walls, a plain table and chairs, and a crucifix in the corner. It served as dining room, parlor, bedroom, for there was a pallet too. Now the table was covered with parchments and papers, and beside Colonel Clark sat a grave gentleman of about his own age. As I came into the room Colonel Clark relaxed, turned toward this gentleman, and said:—

"Monsieur Gratiot, behold my commissary-general, my strategist, my financier." And Monsieur Gratiot smiled. He struck me as a man who never let himself go sufficiently to laugh.

"Ah," he said, "Vigo has told me how he settled the question of paper money. He might do something for the Congress in the East."

"Davy is a Scotchman, like John Law," said the Colonel, "and he is a master at perceiving a man's character and business.

"What would you call me, at a venture, Davy?" asked Monsieur Gratiot.

He spoke excellent English, with only a slight accent.

"A citizen of the world, like Monsieur Vigo," I answered at a hazard.

"Pardieu!" said Monsieur Gratiot, "you are not far away. Like Monsieur Vigo I keep a store here at Cahokia. Like Monsieur Vigo, I have travelled much in my day. Do you know where Switzerland is, Davy?"

I did not.

"It is a country set like a cluster of jewels in the heart of Europe," said Monsieur Gratiot, "and there are mountains there that rise among the clouds and are covered with perpetual snows. And when the sun sets on those snows they are rubies, and the skies above them sapphire."

"I was born amongst the mountains, sir," I answered, my pulse quickening at his description, "but they were not so high as those you speak of."

"Then," said Monsieur Gratiot, "you can understand a little my sorrow as a lad when I left it. From Switzerland I went to a foggy place called London, and thence I crossed the ocean to the solemn forests of the north of Canada, where I was many years, learning the characters of these gentlemen who are looking in upon us." And he waved

his arm at the line of peering red faces by the pickets. Monsieur Gratiot smiled at Clark. “And there’s another point of resemblance between myself and Monsieur Vigo.”

“Have you taken the paper money?” I demanded.

Monsieur Gratiot slapped his linen breeches. “That I have,” and this time I thought he was going to laugh. But he did not, though his eyes sparkled. “And do you think that the good Congress will ever repay me, Davy?”

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“No, sir,” said I.

“Peste!” exclaimed Monsieur Gratiot, but he did not seem to be offended or shaken.

“Davy,” said Colonel Clark, “we have had enough of predictions for the present. Fetch this letter to Captain Bowman at the garrison up the street.” He handed me the letter. “Are you afraid of the Indians?”

“If I were, sir, I would not show it,” I said, for he had encouraged me to talk freely to him.

“Avast!” cried the Colonel, as I was going out. “And why not?”

“If I show that I am not afraid of them, sir, they will think that you are the less so.”

“There you are for strategy, Gratiot,” said Colonel Clark, laughing. “Get out, you rascal.”

Tom was more concerned when I appeared.

“Don’t pester ’em, Davy,” said he; “fer God’s sake don’t pester ’em. They’re spoilin’ fer a fight. Stand back thar, ye critters,” he shouted, brandishing his rifle in their faces. “Ugh, I reckon it wouldn’t take a horse or a dog to scent ye to-day. Rank b’ar’s oil! Kite along, Davy.”

Clutching the letter tightly, I slipped between the narrowed ranks, and gained the middle of the street, not without a quickened beat of my heart. Thence I sped, dodging this group and that, until I came to the long log house that was called the garrison. Here our men were stationed, where formerly a squad from an English regiment was quartered. I found Captain Bowman, delivered the letter, and started back again through the brown, dusty street, which lay in the shade of the great forest trees that still lined it, doubling now and again to avoid an idling brave that looked bent upon mischief. For a single mischance might set the tide running to massacre. I was nearing the gate again, the dust flying from my moccasined feet, the sight of the stalwart Tom giving me courage again. Suddenly, with the deftness of a panther, an Indian shot forward and lifted me high in his arms. To this day I recall my terror as I dangled in mid-air, staring into a hideous face. By intuition I kicked him in the stomach with all my might, and with a howl of surprise and rage his fingers gripped into my flesh. The next thing I remember was being in the dust, suffocated by that odor which he who has known it can never forget. A medley of discordant cries was in my ears. Then I was snatched up, bumped against heads and shoulders, and deposited somewhere. Now it was Tom’s face that was close to mine, and the light of a fierce anger was in his blue eyes.

“Did they hurt ye, Davy?” he asked.

I shook my head. Before I could speak he was at the gate again, confronting the mob of savages that swayed against the fence, and the street was filled with running figures. A voice of command that I knew well came from behind me. It was Colonel Clark's.

"Stay where you are, McChesney!" he shouted, and Tom halted with his hand on the latch.

"With your permission, I will speak to them," said Monsieur Gratiot, who had come out also.

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I looked up at him, and he was as calm as when he had joked with me a quarter of an hour since.

“Very well,” said Clark, briefly.

Monsieur Gratiot surveyed them scornfully.

“Where is the Hungry Wolf, who speaks English?” he said.

There was a stir in the rear ranks, and a lean savage with abnormal cheek bones pushed forward.

“Hungry Wolf here,” he said with a grunt.

“The Hungry Wolf knew the French trader at Michilimackinac,” said Monsieur Gratiot. “He knows that the French trader’s word is a true word. Let the Hungry Wolf tell his companions that the Chief of the Long Knives is very angry.”

The Hungry Wolf turned, and began to speak. His words, hoarse and resonant, seemed to come from the depths of his body. Presently he paused, and there came an answer from the fiend who had seized me. After that there were many grunts, and the Hungry Wolf turned again.

“The North Wind mean no harm,” he answered. “He play with the son of the Great White Chief, and his belly is very sore where the Chief’s son kicked him.”

“The Chief of the Long Knives will consider the offence,” said Monsieur Gratiot, and retired into the house with Colonel Clark. For a full five minutes the Indians waited, impassive. And then Monsieur Gratiot reappeared, alone.

“The Chief of the Long Knives is mercifully inclined to forgive,” he said. “It was in play. But there must be no more play with the Chief’s son. And the path to the Great Chief’s presence must be kept clear.”

Again the Hungry Wolf translated. The North Wind grunted and departed in silence, followed by many of his friends. And indeed for a while after that the others kept a passage clear to the gate.

As for the son of the Great White Chief, he sat for a long time that afternoon beside the truck patch of the house. And presently he slipped out by a byway into the street again, among the savages. His heart was bumping in his throat, but a boyish reasoning told him that he must show no fear. And that day he found what his Colonel had long since learned to be true that in courage is the greater safety. The power of the Great White Chief was such that he allowed his son to go forth alone, and feared not for his life. Even so Clark himself walked among them, nor looked to right or left.

Two nights Colonel Clark sat through, calling now on this man and now on that, and conning the treaties which the English had made with the various tribes—ay, and French and Spanish treaties too—until he knew them all by heart. There was no haste in what he did, no uneasiness in his manner. He listened to the advice of Monsieur Gratiot and other Creole gentlemen of weight, to the Spanish officers who came in their regimentals from St. Louis out of curiosity to see how this man would treat with the tribes. For he spoke of his intentions to none of them, and gained the more respect by it. Within

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the week the council began; and the scene of the great drama was a field near the village, the background of forest trees. Few plays on the world's stage have held such suspense, few battles such excitement for those who watched. Here was the spectacle of one strong man's brain pitted against the combined craft of the wilderness. In the midst of a stretch of waving grass was a table, and a young man of six-and-twenty sat there alone. Around him were ringed the gathered tribes, each chief in the order of his importance squatted in the inner circle, their blankets making patches of bright color against the green. Behind the tribes was the little group of hunting shirts, the men leaning on the barrels of their long rifles, indolent but watchful. Here and there a gay uniform of a Spanish or Creole officer, and behind these all the population of the village that dared to show itself.

The ceremonies began with the kindling of the council fire,—a rite handed down through unknown centuries of Indian usage. By it nations had been made and unmade, broad lands passed, even as they now might pass. The yellow of its crackling flames was shamed by the summer sun, and the black smoke of it was wafted by the south wind over the forest. Then for three days the chiefs spoke, and a man listened, unmoved. The sound of these orations, wild and fearful to my boyish ear, comes back to me now. Yet there was a cadence in it, a music of notes now falling, now rising to a passion and intensity that thrilled us.

Bad birds flying through the land (the British agents) had besought them to take up the bloody hatchet. They had sinned. They had listened to the lies which the bad birds had told of the Big Knives, they had taken their presents. But now the Great Spirit in His wisdom had brought themselves and the Chief of the Big Knives together. Therefore (suiting the action to the word) they stamped on the bloody belt, and rent in pieces the emblems of the White King across the water. So said the interpreters, as the chiefs one after another tore the miniature British flags which had been given them into bits. On the evening of the third day the White Chief rose in his chair, gazing haughtily about him. There was a deep silence.

"Tell your chiefs," he said, "tell your chiefs that to-morrow I will give them an answer. And upon the manner in which they receive that answer depends the fate of your nations. Good night."

They rose and, thronging around him, sought to take his hand. But Clark turned from them.

"Peace is not yet come," he said sternly. "It is time to take the hand when the heart is given with it."

A feathered headsman of one of the tribes gave back with dignity and spoke.

“It is well said by the Great Chief of the Pale Faces,” he answered; “these in truth are not the words of a man with a double tongue.”

So they sought their quarters for the night, and suspense hung breathless over the village.

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There were many callers at the stone house that evening,—Spanish officers, Creole gentlemen, an English Canadian trader or two. With my elbow on the sill of the open window I watched them awhile, listening with a boy's eagerness to what they had to say of the day's doings. They disputed amongst themselves in various degrees of English as to the manner of treating the red man,—now gesticulating, now threatening, now seizing a rolled parchment treaty from the table. Clark sat alone, a little apart, silent save a word now and then in a low tone to Monsieur Gratiot or Captain Bowman. Here was an odd assortment of the races which had overrun the new world. At intervals some disputant would pause in his talk to kill a mosquito or fight away a moth or a June-bug, but presently the argument reached such a pitch that the mosquitoes fed undisturbed.

"You have done much, sir," said the Spanish commandant of St. Louis, "but the savage, he will never be content without present. He will never be won without present."

Clark was one of those men who are perforce listened to when they begin to speak.

"Captain de Leyba," said he, "I know not what may be the present policy of his Spanish Majesty with McGillivray and his Creeks in the south, but this I do believe," and he brought down his fist among the papers, "that the old French and Spanish treaties were right in principle. Here are copies of the English treaties that I have secured, and in them thousands of sovereigns have been thrown away. They are so much waste paper. Gentlemen, the Indians are children. If you give them presents, they believe you to be afraid of them. I will deal with them without presents; and if I had the gold of the Bank of England stored in the garrison there, they should not touch a piece of it."

But Captain de Leyba, incredulous, raised his eyebrows and shrugged.

"Por Dios," he cried, "whoever hear of one man and fifty militia subduing the northern tribes without a piastre?"

After a while the Colonel called me in, and sent me speeding across the little river with a note to a certain Mr. Brady, whose house was not far away. Like many another citizen of Cahokia, Mr. Brady was terror-ridden. A party of young Puan bucks had decreed it to be their pleasure to encamp in Mr. Brady's yard, to peer through the shutters into Mr. Brady's house, to enjoy themselves by annoying Mr. Brady's family and others as much as possible. During the Indian occupation of Cahokia this band had gained a well-deserved reputation for mischief; and chief among them was the North Wind himself, whom I had done the honor to kick in the stomach. To-night they had made a fire in this Mr. Brady's flower-garden, over which they were cooking venison steaks. And, as I reached the door, the North Wind spied me, grinned, rubbed his stomach, made a false dash at me that frightened me out of my wits, and finally went through the pantomime of scalping me. I stood

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looking at him with my legs apart, for the son of the Great Chief must not run away. And I marked that the North Wind had two great ornamental daubs like shutter-fastenings painted on his cheeks. I sniffed preparation, too, on his followers, and I was sure they were getting ready for some new deviltry. I handed the note to Mr. Brady through the crack of the door that he vouchsafed to me, and when he had slammed and bolted me out, I ran into the street and stood for some time behind the trunk of a big hickory, watching the followers of the North Wind. Some were painting themselves, others cleaning their rifles and sharpening their scalping knives. All jabbered unceasingly. Now and again a silent brave passed, paused a moment to survey them gravely, grunted an answer to something they would fling at him, and went on. At length arrived three chiefs whom I knew to be high in the councils. The North Wind came out to them, and the four blanketed forms stood silhouetted between me and the fire for a quarter of an hour. By this time I was sure of a plot, and fled away to another tree for fear of detection. At length stalked through the street the Hungry Wolf, the interpreter. I knew this man to be friendly to Clark, and I acted on impulse. He gave a grunt of surprise when I halted before him. I made up my mind.

“The son of the Great Chief knows that the Puans have wickedness in their hearts to-night,” I said; “the tongue of the Hungry Wolf does not lie.”

The big Indian drew back with another grunt, and the distant firelight flashed on his eyes as on polished black flints.

“Umrrhh! Is the Pale Face Chief’s son a prophet?”

“The anger of the Pale Face Chief and of his countrymen is as the hurricane,” I said, scarce believing my own ears. For a lad is imitative by nature, and I had not listened to the interpreters for three days without profit.

The Hungry Wolf grunted again, after which he was silent for a long time. Then he said:—

“Let the Chief of the Long Knives have guard tonight.” And suddenly he was gone into the darkness.

I waded the creek and sped to Clark. He was alone now, the shutters of the room closed. And as I came in I could scarce believe that he was the same masterful man I had seen at the council that day, and at the conference an hour gone. He was once more the friend at whose feet I sat in private, who talked to me as a companion and a father.

“Where have you been, Davy?” he asked. And then, “What is it, my lad?”

I crept close to him and told him in a breathless undertone, and I knew that I was shaking the while. He listened gravely, and when I had finished laid a firm hand on my head.

“There,” he said, “you are a brave lad, and a canny.”

He thought a minute, his hand still resting on my head, and then rose and led me to the back door of the house. It was near midnight, and the sounds of the place were stilling, the crickets chirping in the grass.

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“Run to Captain Bowman and tell him to send ten men to this door. But they must come man by man, to escape detection. Do you understand?” I nodded and was starting, but he still held me. “God bless you, Davy, you are a brave boy.”

He closed the door softly and I sped away, my moccasins making no sound on the soft dirt. I reached the garrison, was challenged by Jack Terrill, the guard, and brought by him to Bowman’s room. The Captain sat, undressed, at the edge of his bed. But he was a man of action, and strode into the long room where his company was sleeping and gave his orders without delay.

Half an hour later there was no light in the village. The Colonel’s headquarters were dark, but in the kitchen a dozen tall men were waiting.

CHAPTER XVII

THE SACRIFICE

So far as the world knew, the Chief of the Long Knives slept peacefully in his house. And such was his sense of power that not even a sentry paced the street without. For by these things is the Indian mind impressed. In the tiny kitchen a dozen men and a boy tried to hush their breathing, and sweltered. For it was very hot, and the pent-up odor of past cookings was stifling to men used to the open. In a corner, hooded under a box, was a lighted lantern, and Tom McChesney stood ready to seize it at the first alarm. On such occasions the current of time runs sluggish. Thrice our muscles were startled into tenseness by the baying of a hound, and once a cock crew out of all season. For the night was cloudy and pitchy black, and the dawn as far away as eternity.

Suddenly I knew that every man in the room was on the alert, for the skilled frontiersman, when watchful, has a sixth sense. None of them might have told you what he had heard. The next sound was the faint creaking of Colonel Clark’s door as it opened. Wrapping a blanket around the lantern, Tom led the way, and we massed ourselves behind the front door. Another breathing space, and then the war-cry of the Puans broke hideously on the night, and children woke, crying, from their sleep. In two bounds our little detachment was in the street, the fire spouting red from the Deckards, faint, shadowy forms fading along the line of trees. After that an uproar of awakening, cries here and there, a drum beating madly for the militia. The dozen flung themselves across the stream, I hot in their wake, through Mr. Brady’s gate, which was open; and there was a scene of sweet tranquillity under the lantern’s rays,—the North Wind and his friends wrapped in their blankets and sleeping the sleep of the just.

“Damn the sly varmints,” cried Tom, and he turned over the North Wind with his foot, as a log.

With a grunt of fury the Indian shed his blanket and scrambled to his feet, and stood glaring at us through his paint. But suddenly he met the fixed sternness of Clark's gaze, and his own shifted. By this time his followers were up. The North Wind raised his hands to heaven in token of his innocence, and then spread his palms outward. Where was the proof?

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“Look!” I cried, quivering with excitement; “look, their leggings and moccasins are wet!”

“There’s no devil if they beant!” said Tom, and there was a murmur of approval from the other men.

“The boy is right,” said the Colonel, and turned to Tom. “Sergeant, have the chiefs put in irons.” He swung on his heel, and without more ado went back to his house to bed. The North Wind and two others were easily singled out as the leaders, and were straightway escorted to the garrison house, their air of injured innocence availing them not a whit. The militia was dismissed, and the village was hushed once more.

But all night long the chiefs went to and fro, taking counsel among themselves. What would the Chief of the Pale Faces do?

The morning came with a cloudy, damp dawning. Within a decent time (for the Indian is decorous) blanketed deputations filled the archways under the trees and waited there as the minutes ran into hours. The Chief of the Long Knives surveyed the morning from his door-step, and his eyes rested on a solemn figure at the gate. It was the Hungry Wolf. Sorrow was in his voice, and he bore messages from the twenty great chiefs who stood beyond. They were come to express their abhorrence of the night’s doings, of which they were as innocent as the deer of the forest.

“Let the Hungry Wolf tell the chiefs,” said Colonel Clark, briefly, “that the council is the place for talk.”

And he went back into the house again.

Then he bade me run to Captain Bowman with an order to bring the North Wind and his confederates to the council field in irons.

The day followed the promise of the dawn. The clouds hung low, and now and again great drops struck the faces of the people in the field. And like the heavens, the assembly itself was charged with we knew not what. Was it peace or war? As before, a white man sat with supreme indifference at a table, and in front of him three most unhappy chiefs squatted in the grass, the shame of their irons hidden under the blanket folds. Audacity is truly a part of the equipment of genius. To have rescued the North Wind and his friends would have been child’s play; to have retired from the council with threats of war, as easy.

And yet they craved pardon.

One chief after another rose with dignity in the ring and came to the table to plead. An argument deserving mention was that the North Wind had desired to test the friendship of the French for the Big Knives,—set forth without a smile. To all pleaders Colonel

Clark shook his head. He, being a warrior, cared little whether such people were friends or foes. He held them in the hollow of his hand. And at length they came no more.

The very clouds seemed to hang motionless when he rose to speak, and you who will may read in his memoir what he said. The Hungry Wolf caught the spirit of it, and was eloquent in his own tongue, and no word of it was lost. First he told them of the causes of war, of the thirteen council fires with the English, and in terms that the Indian mind might grasp, and how their old father, the French King, had joined the Big Knives in this righteous fight.

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“Warriors,” said he, “here is a bloody belt and a white one; take which you choose. But behave like men. Should it be the bloody path, you may leave this town in safety to join the English, and we shall then see which of us can stain our shirts with the most blood. But, should it be the path of peace as brothers of the Big Knives and of their friends the French, and then you go to your homes and listen to the bad birds, you will then no longer deserve to be called men and warriors,—but creatures of two tongues, which ought to be destroyed. Let us then part this evening in the hope that the Great Spirit will bring us together again with the sun as brothers.”

So the council broke up. White man and red went trooping into town, staring curiously at the guard which was leading the North Wind and his friends to another night of meditation. What their fate would be no man knew. Many thought the tomahawk.

That night the citizens of the little village of Pain Court, as St. Louis was called, might have seen the sky reddened in the eastward. It was the loom of many fires at Cahokia, and around them the chiefs of the forty tribes—all save the three in durance vile—were gathered in solemn talk. Would they take the bloody belt or the white one? No man cared so little as the Pale Face Chief. When their eyes were turned from the fitful blaze of the logs, the gala light of many candles greeted them. And above the sound of their own speeches rose the merrier note of the fiddle. The garrison windows shone like lanterns, and behind these Creole and backwoodsman swung the village ladies in the gay French dances. The man at whose bidding this merrymaking was held stood in a corner watching with folded arms, and none to look at him might know that he was playing for a stake.

The troubled fires of the Indians had died to embers long before the candles were snuffed in the garrison house and the music ceased.

The sun himself was pleased to hail that last morning of the great council, and beamed with torrid tolerance upon the ceremony of kindling the greatest of the fires. On this morning Colonel Clark did not sit alone, but was surrounded by men of weight,—by Monsieur Gratiot and other citizens, Captain Bowman and the Spanish officers. And when at length the brush crackled and the flames caught the logs, three of the mightiest chiefs arose. The greatest, victor in fifty tribal wars, held in his hand the white belt of peace. The second bore a long-stemmed pipe with a huge bowl. And after him, with measured steps, a third came with a smoking censer,—the sacred fire with which to kindle the pipe. Halting before Clark, he first swung the censer to the heavens, then to the earth, then to all the spirits of the air,—calling these to witness that peace was come at last,—and finally to the Chief of the Long Knives and to the gentlemen of dignity about his person. Next the Indian turned, and spoke to his brethren in measured, sonorous tones.

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He bade them thank that Great Spirit who had cleared the sky and opened their ears and hearts that they might receive the truth,—who had laid bare to their understanding the lies of the English. Even as these English had served the Big Knives, so might they one day serve the Indians. Therefore he commanded them to cast the tomahawk into the river, and when they should return to their land to drive the evil birds from it. And they must send their wise men to Kaskaskia to hear the words of wisdom of the Great White Chief, Clark. He thanked the Great Spirit for this council fire which He had kindled at Cahokia.

Lifting the bowl of the censer, in the eyes of all the people he drew in a long whiff to bear witness of peace. After him the pipe went the interminable rounds of the chiefs. Colonel Clark took it, and puffed; Captain Bowman puffed,—everybody puffed.

“Davy must have a pull,” cried Tom; and even the chiefs smiled as I coughed and sputtered, while my friends roared with laughter. It gave me no great notion of the fragrance of tobacco. And then came such a hand-shaking and grunting as a man rarely sees in a lifetime.

There was but one disquieting question left: What was to become of the North Wind and his friends? None dared mention the matter at such a time. But at length, as the day wore on to afternoon, the Colonel was seen to speak quietly to Captain Bowman, and several backwoodsmen went off toward the town. And presently a silence fell on the company as they beheld the dejected three crossing the field with a guard. They were led before Clark, and when he saw them his face hardened to sternness.

“It is only women who watch to catch a bear sleeping,” he said. “The Big Knives do not kill women. I shall give you meat for your journey home, for women cannot hunt. If you remain here, you shall be treated as squaws. Set the women free.”

Tom McChesney cast off their irons. As for Clark, he began to talk immediately with Monsieur Gratiot, as though he had dismissed them from his mind. And their agitation was a pitiful thing to see. In vain they pressed about him, in vain they even pulled the fringe of his shirt to gain his attention. And then they went about among the other chiefs, but these dared not intercede. Uneasiness was written on every man’s face, and the talk went haltingly. But Clark was serenity itself. At length with a supreme effort they plucked up courage to come again to the table, one holding out the belt of peace, and the other the still smouldering pipe.

Clark paused in his talk. He took the belt, and flung it away over the heads of those around him. He seized the pipe, and taking up his sword from the table drew it, and with one blow clave the stem in half. There was no anger in either act, but much deliberation.

“The Big Knives,” he said scornfully, “do not treat with women.”

The pleading began again, the Hungry Wolf interpreting with tremors of earnestness. Their lives were spared, but to what purpose, since the White Chief looked with disfavor upon them? Let him know that bad men from Michilimackinac put the deed into their hearts.

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“When the Big Knives come upon such people in the wilderness,” Clark answered, “they shoot them down that they may not eat the deer. But they have never talked of it.”

He turned from them once more; they went away in a dejection to wring our compassion, and we thought the matter ended at last. The sun was falling low, the people beginning to move away, when, to the astonishment of all, the culprits were seen coming back again. With them were two young men of their own nation. The Indians opened up a path for them to pass through, and they came as men go to the grave. So mournful, so impressive withal, that the crowd fell into silence again, and the Colonel turned his eyes. The two young men sank down on the ground before him and shrouded their heads in their blankets.

“What is this?” Clark demanded.

The North Wind spoke in a voice of sorrow:—

“An atonement to the Great White Chief for the sins of our nation. Perchance the Great Chief will deign to strike a tomahawk into their heads, that our nation may be saved in war by the Big Knives.” And the North Wind held forth the pipe once more.

“I have nothing to say to you,” said Clark.

Still they stood irresolute, their minds now bereft of expedients. And the young men sat motionless on the ground. As Clark talked they peered out from under their blankets, once, twice, thrice. He was still talking to the wondering Monsieur Gratiot. But no other voice was heard, and the eyes of all were turned on him in amazement. But at last, when the drama had risen to the pitch of unbearable suspense, he looked down upon the two miserable pyramids at his feet, and touched them. The blankets quivered.

“Stand up,” said the Colonel, “and uncover.”

They rose, cast the blankets from them, and stood with a stoic dignity awaiting his pleasure. Wonderful, fine-limbed men they were, and for the first time Clark’s eyes were seen to kindle.

“I thank the Great Spirit,” said he, in a loud voice, “that I have found men among your nation. That I have at last discovered the real chiefs of your people. Had they sent such as you to treat with me in the beginning all might have been well. Go back to your people as their chiefs, and tell them that through you the Big Knives have granted peace to your nation.”

Stepping forward, he grasped them each by the hand, and, despite training, joy shone in their faces, while a long-drawn murmur arose from the assemblage. But Clark did not stop there. He presented them to Captain Bowman and to the French and Spanish gentlemen present, and they were hailed by their own kind as chiefs of their nation. To

cap it all our troops, backwoodsmen and Creole militia, paraded in line on the common, and fired a salute in their honor.

Thus did Clark gain the friendship of the forty tribes in the Northwest country.

CHAPTER XVIII

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"*An' ye had been where* I *had been*"

We went back to Kaskaskia, Colonel Clark, Tom, and myself, and a great weight was lifted from our hearts.

A peaceful autumn passed, and we were happy save when we thought of those we had left at home. There is no space here to tell of many incidents. Great chiefs who had not been to the council came hundreds of leagues across wide rivers that they might see with their own eyes this man who had made peace without gold, and these had to be amused and entertained.

The apples ripened, and were shaken to the ground by the winds. The good Father Gibault, true to his promise, strove to teach me French. Indeed, I picked up much of that language in my intercourse with the inhabitants of Kaskaskia. How well I recall that simple life,—its dances, its songs, and the games with the laughing boys and girls on the common! And the good people were very kind to the orphan that dwelt with Colonel Clark, the drummer boy of his regiment.

But winter brought forebodings. When the garden patches grew bare and brown, and the bleak winds from across the Mississippi swept over the common, untoward tidings came like water dripping from a roof, bit by bit. And day by day Colonel Clark looked graver. The messengers he had sent to Vincennes came not back, and the coureurs and traders from time to time brought rumors of a British force gathering like a thundercloud in the northeast. Monsieur Vigo himself, who had gone to Vincennes on his own business, did not return. As for the inhabitants, some of them who had once bowed to us with a smile now passed with faces averted.

The cold set the miry roads like cement, in ruts and ridges. A flurry of snow came and powdered the roofs even as the French loaves are powdered.

It was January. There was Colonel Clark on a runt of an Indian pony; Tom McChesney on another, riding ahead, several French gentlemen seated on stools in a two-wheeled cart, and myself. We were going to Cahokia, and it was very cold, and when the tireless wheels bumped from ridge to gully, the gentlemen grabbed each other as they slid about, and laughed.

All at once the merriment ceased, and looking forward we saw that Tom had leaped from his saddle and was bending over something in the snow. These chanced to be the footprints of some twenty men.

The immediate result of this alarming discovery was that Tom went on express to warn Captain Bowman, and the rest of us returned to a painful scene at Kaskaskia. We reached the village, the French gentlemen leaped down from their stools in the cart, and in ten minutes the streets were filled with frenzied, hooded figures. Hamilton, called the

Hair Buyer, was upon them with no less than six hundred, and he would hang them to their own gateposts for listening to the Long Knives. These were but a handful after all was said. There was Father Gibault, for example. Father Gibault would doubtless be exposed to the crows in the belfry of his own church because he had busied himself at Vincennes and with other matters. Father Gibault was human, and therefore lovable. He bade his parishioners a hasty and tearful farewell, and he made a cold and painful journey to the territories of his Spanish Majesty across the Mississippi.

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Father Gibault looked back, and against the gray of the winter's twilight there were flames like red maple leaves. In the fort the men stood to their guns, their faces flushed with staring at the burning houses. Only a few were burned,—enough to give no cover for Hamilton and his six hundred if they came.

But they did not come. The faithful Bowman and his men arrived instead, with the news that there had been only a roving party of forty, and these were now in full retreat.

Father Gibault came back. But where was Hamilton? This was the disquieting thing.

One bitter day, when the sun smiled mockingly on the powdered common, a horseman was perceived on the Fort Chartres road. It was Monsieur Vigo returning from Vincennes, but he had been first to St. Louis by reason of the value he set upon his head. Yes, Monsieur Vigo had been to Vincennes, remaining a little longer than he expected, the guest of Governor Hamilton. So Governor Hamilton had recaptured that place! Monsieur Vigo was no spy, hence he had gone first to St. Louis. Governor Hamilton was at Vincennes with much of King George's gold, and many supplies, and certain Indians who had not been at the council. Eight hundred in all, said Monsieur Vigo, using his fingers. And it was Governor Hamilton's design to march upon Kaskaskia and Cahokia and sweep over Kentucky; nay, he had already sent certain emissaries to McGillivray and his Creeks and the Southern Indians with presents, and these were to press forward on their side. The Governor could do nothing now, but would move as soon as the rigors of winter had somewhat relented. Monsieur Vigo shook his head and shrugged his shoulders. He loved les Americains. What would Monsieur le Colonel do now?

Monsieur le Colonel was grave, but this was his usual manner. He did not tear his hair, but the ways of the Long Knives were past understanding. He asked many questions. How was it with the garrison at Vincennes? Monsieur Vigo was exact, as a business man should be. They were now reduced to eighty men, and five hundred savages had gone out to ravage. There was no chance, then, of Hamilton moving at present? Monsieur Vigo threw up his hands. Never had he made such a trip, and he had been forced to come back by a northern route. The Wabash was as the Great Lakes, and the forests grew out of the water. A fox could not go to Vincennes in this weather. A fish? Monsieur Vigo laughed heartily. Yes, a fish might.

"Then," said Colonel Clark, "we will be fish."

Monsieur Vigo stared, and passed his hand from his forehead backwards over his long hair. I leaned forward in my corner by the hickory fire.

"Then we will be fish," said Colonel Clark. "Better that than food for the crows. For, if we stay here, we shall be caught like bears in a trap, and Kentucky will be at Hamilton's mercy."

“Sacre’!” exclaimed Monsieur Vigo, “you are mad, mon ami. I know what this country is, and you cannot get to Vincennes.”

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“I *will* get to Vincennes,” said Colonel Clark, so gently that Monsieur Vigo knew he meant it. “I will *swim* to Vincennes.”

Monsieur Vigo raised his hands to heaven. The three of us went out of the door and walked. There was a snowy place in front of the church all party-colored like a clown’s coat,—scarlet capotes, yellow capotes, and blue capotes, and bright silk handkerchiefs. They surrounded the Colonel. Pardieu, what was he to do now? For the British governor and his savages were coming to take revenge on them because, in their necessity, they had declared for Congress. Colonel Clark went silently on his way to the gate; but Monsieur Vigo stopped, and Kaskaskia heard, with a shock, that this man of iron was to march against Vincennes.

The gates of the fort were shut, and the captains summoned. Undaunted woodsmen as they were, they were lukewarm, at first, at the idea of this march through the floods. Who can blame them? They had, indeed, sacrificed much. But in ten minutes they had caught his enthusiasm (which is one of the mysteries of genius). And the men paraded in the snow likewise caught it, and swung their hats at the notion of taking the Hair Buyer.

“’Tis no news to me,” said Terence, stamping his feet on the flinty ground; “wasn’t it Davy that pointed him out to us and the hair liftin’ from his head six months since?”

“Und you like schwimmin’, yes?” said Swein Poulsson, his face like the rising sun with the cold.

“Swimmin’, is it?” said Terence, “sure, the divil made worse things than wather. And Hamilton’s beyant.”

“I reckon that’ll fetch us through,” Bill Cowan put in grimly.

It was a blessed thing that none of us had a bird’s-eye view of that same water. No man of force will listen when his mind is made up, and perhaps it is just as well. For in that way things are accomplished. Clark would not listen to Monsieur Vigo, and hence the financier had, perforce, to listen to Clark. There were several miracles before we left. Monsieur Vigo, for instance, agreed to pay the expenses of the expedition, though in his heart he thought we should never get to Vincennes. Incidentally, he was never repaid. Then there were the French—yesterday, running hither and thither in paroxysms of fear; to-day, enlisting in whole companies, though it were easier to get to the wild geese of the swamps than to Hamilton. Their ladies stitched colors day and night, and presented them with simple confidence to the Colonel in the church. Twenty stands of colors for 170 men, counting those who had come from Cahokia. Think of the industry of it, of the enthusiasm behind it! Twenty stands of colors! Clark took them all, and in due time it will be told how the colors took Vincennes. This was because Colonel Clark was a man of destiny.

Furthermore, Colonel Clark was off the next morning at dawn to buy a Mississippi keel-boat. He had her rigged up with two four-pounders and four swivels, filled her with provisions, and called her the Willing. She was the first gunboat on the Western waters. A great fear came into my heart, and at dusk I stole back to the Colonel's house alone. The snow had turned to rain, and Terence stood guard within the doorway.

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“Arrah,” he said, “what ails ye, darlin’?”

I gulped and the tears sprang into my eyes; whereupon Terence, in defiance of all military laws, laid his gun against the doorpost and put his arms around me, and I confided my fears. It was at this critical juncture that the door opened and Colonel Clark came out.

“What’s to do here?” he demanded, gazing at us sternly.

“Savin’ your Honor’s prisence,” said Terence, “he’s afeard your Honor will be sending him on the boat. Sure, he wants to go swimmin’ with the rest of us.”

Colonel Clark frowned, bit his lip, and Terence seized his gun and stood to attention.

“It were right to leave you in Kaskaskia,” said the Colonel; “the water will be over your head.”

“The King’s drum would be floatin’ the likes of him,” said the irrepressible Terence, “and the b’ys would be that lonesome.”

The Colonel walked away without a word. In an hour’s time he came back to find me cleaning his accoutrements by the fire. For a while he did not speak, but busied himself with his papers, I having lighted the candles for him. Presently he spoke my name, and I stood before him.

“I will give you a piece of advice, Davy,” said he. “If you want a thing, go straight to the man that has it. McChesney has spoken to me about this wild notion of yours of going to Vincennes, and Cowan and McCann and Ray and a dozen others have dogged my footsteps.”

“I only spoke to Terence because he asked me, sir,” I answered. “I said nothing to any one else.”

He laid down his pen and looked at me with an odd expression.

“What a weird little piece you are,” he exclaimed; “you seem to have wormed your way into the hearts of these men. Do you know that you will probably never get to Vincennes alive?”

“I don’t care, sir,” I said. A happy thought struck me. “If they see a boy going through the water, sir—” I hesitated, abashed.

“What then?” said Clark, shortly.

“It may keep some from going back,” I finished.

At that he gave a sort of gasp, and stared at me the more.

“Egad,” he said, “I believe the good Lord launched you wrong end to. Perchance you will be a child when you are fifty.”

He was silent a long time, and fell to musing. And I thought he had forgotten.

“May I go, sir?” I asked at length.

He started.

“Come here,” said he. But when I was close to him he merely laid his hand on my shoulder. “Yes, you may go, Davy.”

He sighed, and presently turned to his writing again, and I went back joyfully to my cleaning.

On a certain dark 4th of February, picture the village of Kaskaskia assembled on the river-bank in capote and hood. Ropes are cast off, the keel-boat pushes her blunt nose through the cold, muddy water, the oars churn up dirty, yellow foam, and cheers shake the sodden air. So the Willing left on her long journey: down the Kaskaskia, into the flood of the Mississippi, against many weary leagues of the Ohio’s current, and up the swollen Wabash until they were to come to the mouth of the White River near Vincennes. There they were to await us.

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Should we ever see them again? I think that this was the unspoken question in the hearts of the many who were to go by land.

The 5th was a mild, gray day, with the melting snow lying in patches on the brown bluff, and the sun making shift to pierce here and there. We formed the regiment in the fort, —backwoodsman and Creole now to fight for their common country, Jacques and Pierre and Alphonse; and mother and father, sweetheart and wife, waiting to wave a last good-by. Bravely we marched out of the gate and into the church for Father Gibault's blessing. And then, forming once more, we filed away on the road leading northward to the ferry, our colors flying, leaving the weeping, cheering crowd behind. In front of the tall men of the column was a wizened figure, beating madly on a drum, stepping proudly with head thrown back. It was Cowan's voice that snapped the strain.

"Go it, Davy, my little gamecock!" he cried, and the men laughed and cheered. And so we came to the bleak ferry landing where we had crossed on that hot July night six months before.

We were soon on the prairies, and in the misty rain that fell and fell they seemed to melt afar into a gray and cheerless ocean. The sodden grass was matted now and unkempt. Lifeless lakes filled the depressions, and through them we waded mile after mile ankle-deep. There was a little cavalcade mounted on the tiny French ponies, and sometimes I rode with these; but oftenest Cowan or Tom would fling me; drum and all, on his shoulder. For we had reached the forest swamps where the water is the color of the Creole coffee. And day after day as we marched, the soft rain came out of the east and wet us to the skin.

It was a journey of torments, and even that first part of it was enough to discourage the most resolute spirit. Men might be led through it, but never driven. It is ever the mind which suffers through the monotonies of bodily discomfort, and none knew this better than Clark himself. Every morning as we set out with the wet hide chafing our skin, the Colonel would run the length of the regiment, crying:—

"Who gives the feast to-night, boys?"

Now it was Bowman's company, now McCarty's, now Bayley's. How the hunters vied with each other to supply the best, and spent the days stalking the deer cowering in the wet thickets. We crossed the Saline, and on the plains beyond was a great black patch, a herd of buffalo. A party of chosen men headed by Tom McChesney was sent after them, and never shall I forget the sight of the mad beasts charging through the water.

That night, when our chilled feet could bear no more, we sought out a patch of raised ground a little firmer than a quagmire, and heaped up the beginnings of a fire with such brush as could be made to burn, robbing the naked thickets. Saddle and steak sizzled, leather steamed and stiffened, hearts and bodies thawed; grievances that men had

nursed over miles of water melted. Courage sits best on a full stomach, and as they ate they cared not whether the Atlantic had opened between them and Vincennes. An hour agone, and there were twenty cursing laggards, counting the leagues back to Kaskaskia. Now:—

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“C’etait un vieux sauvage
Tout noir, tour barbouilla,
Ouich’ ka!
Avec sa vieill’ couverte
Et son sac a tabac.
Ouich’ ka!
Ah! ah! tenaouich’ tenaga,
Tenaouich’ tenaga,
Ouich’ ka!”

So sang Antoine, dit le Gris, in the pulsing red light. And when, between the verses, he went through the agonies of a Huron war-dance, the assembled regiment howled with delight. Some men know cities and those who dwell in the quarters of cities. But grizzled Antoine knew the half of a continent, and the manners of trading and killing of the tribes thereof.

And after Antoine came Gabriel, a marked contrast—Gabriel, five feet six, and the glare showing but a faint dark line on his quivering lip. Gabriel was a patriot,—a tribute we must pay to all of those brave Frenchmen who went with us. Nay, Gabriel had left at home on his little farm near the village a young wife of a fortnight. And so his lip quivered as he sang:—

> “Petit Rocher de la Haute Montagne,
> Je vien finir ici cette campagne!
> Ah! doux echos, entendez mes soupirs;
> En languissant je vais bientot mouir!”

We had need of gayety after that, and so Bill Cowan sang “Billy of the Wild Wood,” and Terence McCann wailed an Irish jig, stamping the water out of the spongy ground amidst storms of mirth. As he desisted, breathless and panting, he flung me up in the firelight before the eyes of them all, crying:—

“It’s Davy can bate me!”

“Ay, Davy, Davy!” they shouted, for they were in the mood for anything. There stood Colonel Clark in the dimmer light of the background. “We must keep ’em screwed up, Davy,” he had said that very day.

There came to me on the instant a wild song that my father had taught me when the liquor held him in dominance. Exhilarated, I sprang from Terence’s arms to the sodden, bared space, and methinks I yet hear my shrill, piping note, and see my legs kicking in the fling of it. There was an uproar, a deeper voice chimed in, and here was McAndrew flinging his legs with mine:—

"I've faught on land, I've faught at sea,
At hame I faught my aunty, O;
But I met the deevil and Dundee
On the braes o' Killiecrankie, O.
An' ye had been where I had been,
Ye wad na be sae cantie, O;
An' ye had seen what I ha'e seen
On the braes o' Killiecrankie, O."

In the morning Clark himself would be the first off through the gray rain, laughing and shouting and waving his sword in the air, and I after him as hard as I could pelt through the mud, beating the charge on my drum until the war-cries of the regiment drowned the sound of it. For we were upon a pleasure trip—lest any man forget,—a pleasure trip amidst stark woods and brown plains flecked with ponds. So we followed him until we came to a place where, in summer, two quiet rivers flowed through green forests—the little Wabashes. And now! Now hickory and maple, oak and cottonwood, stood shivering in three feet of water on what had been a league of dry land. We stood dismayed at the crumbling edge of the hill, and one hundred and seventy pairs of eyes were turned on Clark. With a mere glance at the running stream high on the bank and the drowned forest beyond, he turned and faced them.

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“I reckon you’ve earned a rest, boys,” he said. “We’ll have games to-day.”

There were some dozen of the unflinching who needed not to be amused. Choosing a great poplar, these he set to hollowing out a pirogue, and himself came among the others and played leap-frog and the Indian game of ball until night fell. And these, instead of moping and quarrelling, forgot. That night, as I cooked him a buffalo steak, he drew near the fire with Bowman.

“For the love of God keep up their spirits, Bowman,” said the Colonel; “keep up their spirits until we get them across. Once on the farther hills, they cannot go back.”

Here was a different being from the shouting boy who had led the games and the war-dance that night in the circle of the blaze. Tired out, we went to sleep with the ring of the axes in our ears, and in the morning there were more games while the squad crossed the river to the drowned neck, built a rough scaffold there, and notched a trail across it; to the scaffold the baggage was ferried, and the next morning, bit by bit, the regiment. Even now the pains shoot through my body when I think of how man after man plunged waist-deep into the icy water toward the farther branch. The pirogue was filled with the weak, and in the end of it I was curled up with my drum.

Heroism is a many-sided thing. It is one matter to fight and finish, another to endure hell’s tortures hour after hour. All day they waded with numbed feet vainly searching for a footing in the slime. Truly, the agony of a brave man is among the greatest of the world’s tragedies to see. As they splashed onward through the tree-trunks, many a joke went forth, though lips were drawn and teeth pounded together. I have not the heart to recall these jokes,—it would seem a sacrilege. There were quarrels, too, the men striving to push one another from the easier paths; and deeds sublime when some straggler clutched at the bole of a tree for support, and was helped onward through excruciating ways. A dozen held tremblingly to the pirogue’s gunwale, lest they fall and drown. One walked ahead with a smile, or else fell back to lend a helping shoulder to a fainting man.

And there was Tom McChesney. All day long I watched him, and thanked God that Polly Ann could not see him thus. And yet, how the pride would have leaped within her! Humor came not easily to him, but charity and courage and unselfishness he had in abundance. What he suffered none knew; but through those awful hours he was always among the stragglers, helping the weak and despairing when his strength might have taken him far ahead toward comfort and safety. “I’m all right, Davy,” he would say, in answer to my look as he passed me. But on his face was written something that I did not understand.

How the Creole farmers and traders, unused even to the common ways of woodcraft, endured that fearful day and others that followed, I know not. And when a tardy justice shall arise and compel the people of this land to raise a shaft in memory of Clark and

those who followed him, let not the loyalty of the French be forgotten, though it be not understood.

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At eventide came to lurid and disordered brains the knowledge that the other branch was here. And, mercifully, it was shallower than the first. Holding his rifle high, with a war-whoop Bill Cowan plunged into the stream. Unable to contain myself more, I flung my drum overboard and went after it, and amid shouts and laughter I was towed across by James Ray.

Colonel Clark stood watching from the bank above, and it was he who pulled me, bedraggled, to dry land. I ran away to help gather brush for a fire. As I was heaping this in a pile I heard something that I should not have heard. Nor ought I to repeat it now, though I did not need the flames to send the blood tingling through my body.

“McChesney,” said the Colonel, “we must thank our stars that we brought the boy along. He has grit, and as good a head as any of us. I reckon if it hadn’t been for him some of them would have turned back long ago.”

I saw Tom grinning at the Colonel as gratefully as though he himself had been praised.

The blaze started, and soon we had a bonfire. Some had not the strength to hold out the buffalo meat to the fire. Even the grumblers and mutineers were silent, owing to the ordeal they had gone through. But presently, when they began to be warmed and fed, they talked of other trials to be borne. The Embarrass and the big Wabash, for example. These must be like the sea itself.

“Take the back trail, if ye like,” said Bill Cowan, with a loud laugh. “I reckon the rest of us kin float to Vincennes on Davy’s drum.”

But there was no taking the back trail now; and well they knew it. The games began, the unwilling being forced to play, and before they fell asleep that night they had taken Vincennes, scalped the Hair Buyer, and were far on the march to Detroit.

Mercifully, now that their stomachs were full, they had no worries. Few knew the danger we were in of being cut off by Hamilton’s roving bands of Indians. There would be no retreat, no escape, but a fight to the death. And I heard this, and much more that was spoken of in low tones at the Colonel’s fire far into the night, of which I never told the rank and file,—not even Tom McChesney.

On and on, through rain and water, we marched until we drew near to the river Embarrass. Drew near, did I say? “Sure, darlin’,” said Terence, staring comically over the gray waste, “we’ve been in it since Choosd’y.” There was small exaggeration in it. In vain did our feet seek the deeper water. It would go no higher than our knees, and the sound which the regiment made in marching was like that of a great flatboat going against the current. It had been a sad, lavender-colored day, and now that the gloom of the night was setting in, and not so much as a hummock showed itself above the surface, the Creoles began to murmur. And small wonder! Where was this man leading

them, this Clark who had come amongst them from the skies, as it were? Did he know, himself? Night fell as though a blanket had been spread over the tree-tops, and above the dreary splashing men could be heard calling to one another in the darkness. Nor was there any supper ahead. For our food was gone, and no game was to be shot over this watery waste. A cold like that of eternal space settled in our bones. Even Terence McCann grumbled.

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“Begob,” said he, “’tis fine weather for fishes, and the birrds are that comfortable in the threes. ’Tis no place for a baste at all, at all.”

Sometime in the night there was a cry. Ray had found the water falling from an oozy bank, and there we dozed fitfully until we were startled by a distant boom.

It was Governor Hamilton’s morning gun at Fort Sackville, Vincennes.

There was no breakfast. How we made our way, benumbed with hunger and cold, to the banks of the Wabash, I know not. Captain McCarty’s company was set to making canoes, and the rest of us looked on apathetically as the huge trees staggered and fell amidst a fountain of spray in the shallow water. We were but three leagues from Vincennes. A raft was bound together, and Tom McChesney and three other scouts sent on a desperate journey across the river in search of boats and provisions, lest we starve and fall and die on the wet flats. Before he left Tom came to me, and the remembrance of his gaunt face haunted me for many years after. He drew something from his bosom and held it out to me, and I saw that it was a bit of buffalo steak which he had saved. I shook my head, and the tears came into my eyes.

“Come, Davy,” he said, “ye’re so little, and I beant hungry.”

Again I shook my head, and for the life of me I could say nothing.

“I reckon Polly Ann’d never forgive me if anything was to happen to you,” said he.

At that I grew strangely angry.

“It’s you who need it,” I cried, “it’s you that has to do the work. And she told me to take care of you.”

The big fellow grinned sheepishly, as was his wont.

“’Tis only a bite,” he pleaded, “’twouldn’t only make me hungry, and”—he looked hard at me—“and it might be the savin’ of you. Ye’ll not eat it for Polly Ann’s sake?” he asked coaxingly.

“’Twould not be serving her,” I answered indignantly.

“Ye’re an obstinate little deevil!” he cried, and, dropping the morsel on the freshly cut stump, he stalked away. I ran after him, crying out, but he leaped on the raft that was already in the stream and began to pole across. I slipped the piece into my own hunting shirt.

All day the men who were too weak to swing axes sat listless on the bank, watching in vain for some sight of the Willing. They saw a canoe rounding the bend instead, with a

single occupant paddling madly. And who should this be but Captain Willing's own brother, escaped from the fort, where he had been a prisoner. He told us that a man named Maisonville, with a party of Indians, was in pursuit of him, and the next piece of news he had was in the way of raising our despair a little. Governor Hamilton's astonishment at seeing this force here and now would be as great as his own. Governor Hamilton had said, indeed, that only a navy could take Vincennes this year. Unfortunately, Mr. Willing brought no food. Next in order came five Frenchmen, trapped

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by our scouts, nor had they any provisions. But as long as I live I shall never forget how Tom McChesney returned at nightfall, the hero of the hour. He had shot a deer; and never did wolves pick an animal cleaner. They pressed on me a choice piece of it, these great-hearted men who were willing to go hungry for the sake of a child, and when I refused it they would have forced it down my throat. Swein Poulsson, he that once hid under the bed, deserves a special tablet to his memory. He was for giving me all he had, though his little eyes were unnaturally bright and the red had left his cheeks now.

“He haf no belly, only a leedle on his backbone!” he cried.

“Begob, thin, he has the backbone,” said Terence.

“I have a piece,” said I, and drew forth that which Tom had given me.

They brought a quarter of a saddle to Colonel Clark, but he smiled at them kindly and told them to divide it amongst the weak. He looked at me as I sat with my feet crossed on the stump.

“I will follow Davy’s example,” said he.

At length the canoes were finished and we crossed the river, swimming over the few miserable skeletons of the French ponies we had brought along. We came to a sugar camp, and beyond it, stretching between us and Vincennes, was a sea of water. Here we made our camp, if camp it could be called. There was no fire, no food, and the water seeped out of the ground on which we lay. Some of those even who had not yet spoken now openly said that we could go no farther. For the wind had shifted into the northwest, and, for the first time since we had left Kaskaskia we saw the stars gleaming like scattered diamonds in the sky. Bit by bit the ground hardened, and if by chance we dozed we stuck to it. Morning found the men huddled like sheep, their hunting shirts hard as boards, and long before Hamilton’s gun we were up and stamping. Antoine poked the butt of his rifle through the ice of the lake in front of us.

“I think we not get to Vincennes this day,” he said.

Colonel Clark, who heard him, turned to me.

“Fetch McChesney here, Davy,” he said. Tom came.

“McChesney,” said he, “when I give the word, take Davy and his drum on your shoulders and follow me. And Davy, do you think you can sing that song you gave us the other night?”

“Oh, yes, sir,” I answered.

Without more ado the Colonel broke the skim of ice, and, taking some of the water in his hand, poured powder from his flask into it and rubbed it on his face until he was the color of an Indian. Stepping back, he raised his sword high in the air, and, shouting the Shawanee war-whoop, took a flying leap up to his thighs in the water. Tom swung me instantly to his shoulder and followed, I beating the charge with all my might, though my hands were so numb that I could scarce hold the sticks. Strangest of all, to a man they came shouting after us.

“Now, Davy!” said the Colonel.

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"I've faught on land, I've faught at sea,
At hame I faught my aunty, O;
But I met the deevil and Dundee
On the braes o' Killiecrankie, O."

I piped it at the top of my voice, and sure enough the regiment took up the chorus, for it had a famous swing.

"An' ye had been where I had been,
Ye wad na be sae cantie, O;
An' ye had seen what I ha'e seen'
On the braes o' Killiecrankie, O."

When their breath was gone we heard Cowan shout that he had found a path under his feet,—a path that was on dry land in the summer-time. We followed it, feeling carefully, and at length, when we had suffered all that we could bear, we stumbled on to a dry ridge. Here we spent another night of torture, with a second backwater facing us coated with a full inch of ice.

And still there was nothing to eat.

CHAPTER XIX

THE HAIR BUYER TRAPPED

To lie the night on adamant, pierced by the needles of the frost; to awake shivering and famished, until the meaning of an inch of ice on the backwater comes to your mind,—-these are not calculated to put a man into an equable mood to listen to oratory. Nevertheless there was a kind of oratory to fit the case. To picture the misery of these men is well-nigh impossible. They stood sluggishly in groups, dazed by suffering, and their faces were drawn and their eyes ringed, their beards and hair matted. And many found it in their hearts to curse Clark and that government for which he fought.

When the red fire of the sun glowed through the bare branches that morning, it seemed as if the campaign had spent itself like an arrow which drops at the foot of the mark. Could life and interest and enthusiasm be infused again in such as these? I have ceased to marvel how it was done. A man no less haggard than the rest, but with a compelling force in his eyes, pointed with a blade to the hills across the river. They must get to them, he said, and their troubles would be ended. He said more, and they cheered him. These are the bare facts. He picked a man here, and another there, and these went silently to a grim duty behind the regiment.

"If any try to go back, shoot them down!" he cried.

Then with a gun-butt he shattered the ice and was the first to leap into the water under it. They followed, some with a cheer that was most pitiful of all. They followed him blindly, as men go to torture, but they followed him, and the splashing and crushing of the ice were sounds to freeze my body. I was put in a canoe. In my day I have beheld great suffering and hardship, and none of it compared to this. Torn with pity, I saw them reeling through the water, now grasping trees and bushes to try to keep their feet, the strongest breaking the way ahead and supporting the weak between them. More than

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once Clark himself tottered where he beat the ice at the apex of the line. Some swooned and would have drowned had they not been dragged across the canoe and chafed back to consciousness. By inches the water shallowed. Clark reached the high ground, and then Bill Cowan, with a man on each shoulder. Then others endured to the shallows to fall heavily in the crumbled ice and be dragged out before they died. But at length, by God's grace, the whole regiment was on the land. Fires would not revive some, but Clark himself seized a fainting man by the arms and walked him up and down in the sunlight until his blood ran again.

It was a glorious day, a day when the sap ran in the maples, and the sun soared upwards in a sky of the palest blue. All this we saw through the tracery of the leafless branches,—a mirthless, shivering crowd, crept through a hell of weather into the Hair Buyer's very lair. Had he neither heard nor seen?

Down the steel-blue lane of water between the ice came a canoe. Our stunted senses perceived it, unresponsive. A man cried out (it was Tom McChesney); now some of them had leaped into the pirogue, now they were returning. In the towed canoe two fat and stolid squaws and a pappoose were huddled, and beside them—God be praised! —food. A piece of buffalo on its way to town, and in the end compartment of the boat tallow and bear's grease lay revealed by two blows of the tomahawk. The kettles—long disused—were fetched, and broth made and fed in sips to the weakest, while the strongest looked on and smiled in an agony of self-restraint. It was a fearful thing to see men whose legs had refused service struggle to their feet when they had drunk the steaming, greasy mixture. And the Colonel, standing by the river's edge, turned his face away—down-stream. And then, as often, I saw the other side of the man. Suddenly he looked at me, standing wistful at his side.

"They have cursed me," said he, by way of a question, "they have cursed me every day." And seeing me silent, he insisted, "Tell me, is it not so, Davy?"

"It is so," I said, wondering that he should pry, "but it was while they suffered. And—and some refrained."

"And you?" he asked queerly.

"I—I could not, sir. For I asked leave to come."

"If they have condemned me to a thousand hells," said he, dispassionately, "I should not blame them." Again he looked at me. "Do you understand what you have done?" he asked.

"No, sir," I said uneasily.

“And yet there are some human qualities in you, Davy. You have been worth more to me than another regiment.”

I stared.

“When you grow older, if you ever do, tell your children that once upon a time you put a hundred men to shame. It is no small thing.”

Seeing him relapse into silence, I did not speak. For the space of half an hour he stared down the river, and I knew that he was looking vainly for the Willing.

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At noon we crossed, piecemeal, a deep lake in the canoes, and marching awhile came to a timber-covered rise which our French prisoners named as the Warriors' Island. And from the shelter of its trees we saw the steely lines of a score of low ponds, and over the tops of as many ridges a huddle of brown houses on the higher ground.

And this was the place we had all but sold our lives to behold! This was Vincennes at last! We were on the heights behind the town,—we were at the back door, as it were. At the far side, on the Wabash River, was the front door, or Fort Sackville, where the banner of England snapped in the February breeze.

We stood there, looking, as the afternoon light flooded the plain. Suddenly the silence was broken.

"Hooray for Clark!" cried a man at the edge of the copse.

"Hooray for Clark!"—it was the whole regiment this time. From execration to exaltation was but a step, after all. And the Creoles fell to scoffing at their sufferings and even forgot their hunger in staring at the goal. The backwoodsmen took matters more stolidly, having acquired long since the art of waiting. They lounged about, cleaning their guns, watching the myriad flocks of wild ducks and geese casting blue-black shadows on the ponds.

"Arrah, McChesney," said Terence, as he watched the circling birds, "Clark's a great man, but 'tis more riverince I'd have for him if wan av thim was sizzling on the end of me ramrod."

"I'd sooner hev the Ha'r Buyer's sculp," said Tom.

Presently there was a drama performed for our delectation. A shot came down the wind, and we perceived that several innocent Creole gentlemen, unconscious of what the timber held, were shooting the ducks and geese. Whereupon Clark chose Antoine and three of our own Creoles to sally out and shoot likewise—as decoys. We watched them working their way over the ridges, and finally saw them coming back with one of the Vincennes sportsmen. I cannot begin to depict the astonishment of this man when he reached the copse, and was led before our lean, square-shouldered commander. Yes, monsieur, he was a friend of les Americains. Did Governor Hamilton know that a visit was imminent? Pardieu (with many shrugs and outward gestures of the palms), Governor Hamilton had said if the Long Knives had wings or fins they might reach him now—he was all unprepared.

"Gentlemen," said Colonel Clark to Captains Bowman and McCarty and Williams, "we have come so far by audacity, and we must continue by audacity. It is of no use to wait for the gunboat, and every moment we run the risk of discovery. I shall write an open letter to the inhabitants of Vincennes, which the prisoner shall take into town. I shall tell

them that those who are true to the oath they swore to Father Gibault shall not be molested if they remain quietly in their houses. Let those who are on the side of the Hair Buyer General and his King go to the fort and fight there."

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He bade me fetch the portfolio he carried, and with numbed fingers wrote the letter while his captains stared in admiration and amazement. What a stroke was this! There were six hundred men in the town and fort,—soldiers, inhabitants, and Indians,—while we had but 170, starved and weakened by their incredible march. But Clark was not to be daunted. Whipping out his field-glasses, he took a stand on a little mound under the trees and followed the fast-galloping messenger across the plain; saw him enter the town; saw the stir in the streets, knots of men riding out and gazing, hands on foreheads, towards the place where we were. But, as the minutes rolled into hours, there was no further alarm. No gun, no beat to quarters or bugle-call from Fort Sackville. What could it mean?

Clark's next move was an enigma, for he set the men to cutting and trimming tall sapling poles. To these were tied (how reverently!) the twenty stands of colors which loving Creole hands had stitched. The boisterous day was reddening to its close as the Colonel lined his little army in front of the wood, and we covered the space of four thousand. For the men were twenty feet apart and every tenth carried a standard. Suddenly we were aghast as the full meaning of the inspiration dawned upon us. The command was given, and we started on our march toward Vincennes. But not straight, —zigzagging, always keeping the ridges between us and the town, and to the watching inhabitants it seemed as if thousands were coming to crush them. Night fell, the colors were furled and the saplings dropped, and we pressed into serried ranks and marched straight over hill and dale for the lights that were beginning to twinkle ahead of us.

We halted once more, a quarter of a mile away. Clark himself had picked fourteen men to go under Lieutenant Bayley through the town and take the fort from the other side. Here was audacity with a vengeance. You may be sure that Tom and Cowan and Ray were among these, and I trotted after them with the drum banging against my thighs.

Was ever stronghold taken thus?

They went right into the town, the fourteen of them, into the main street that led directly to the fort. The simple citizens gave back, stupefied, at sight of the tall, striding forms. Muffled Indians stood like statues as we passed, but these raised not a hand against us. Where were Hamilton, Hamilton's soldiers and savages? It was as if we had come a-trading.

The street rose and fell in waves, like the prairie over which it ran. As we climbed a ridge, here was a little log church, the rude cross on the belfry showing dark against the sky. And there, in front of us, flanked by blockhouses with conical caps, was the frowning mass of Fort Sackville.

"Take cover," said Williams, hoarsely. It seemed incredible.

The men spread hither and thither, some at the corners of the church, some behind the fences of the little gardens. Tom chose a great forest tree that had been left standing, and I went with him. He powdered his pan, and I laid down my drum beside the tree, and then, with an impulse that was rare, Tom seized me by the collar and drew me to him.

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“Davy,” he whispered, and I pinched him. “Davy, I reckon Polly Ann’d be kinder surprised if she knew where we was. Eh?”

I nodded. It seemed strange, indeed, to be talking thus at such a place. Life has taught me since that it was not so strange, for however a man may strive and suffer for an object, he usually sits quiet at the consummation. Here we were in the door-yard of a peaceful cabin, the ground frozen in lumps under our feet, and it seemed to me that the wind had something to do with the lightness of the night.

“Davy,” whispered Tom again, “how’d ye like to see the little feller to home?”

I pinched him again, and harder this time, for I was at a loss for adequate words. The muscles of his legs were as hard as the strands of a rope, and his buckskin breeches frozen so that they cracked under my fingers.

Suddenly a flickering light arose ahead of us, and another, and we saw that they were candles beginning to twinkle through the palings of the fort. These were badly set, the width of a man’s hand apart. Presently here comes a soldier with a torch, and as he walked we could see from crack to crack his bluff face all reddened by the light, and so near were we that we heard the words of his song:—

“O, there came a lass to Sudbury Fair,
With a hey, and a ho, nonny-nonny!
And she had a rose in her raven hair,
With a hey, and a ho, nonny-nonny!”

“By the etarnal!” said Tom, following the man along the palings with the muzzle of his Deckard, “by the etarnal! ‘tis like shootin’ beef.”

A gust of laughter came from somewhere beyond. The burly soldier paused at the foot of the blockhouse.

“Hi, Jem, have ye seen the General’s man? His Honor’s in a ’igh temper, I warrant ye.”

It was fortunate for Jem that he put his foot inside the blockhouse door.

“Now, boys!”

It was Williams’s voice, and fourteen rifles sputtered out a ragged volley.

There was an instant’s silence, and then a score of voices raised in consternation,—-shouting, cursing, commanding. Heavy feet pounded on the platform of the blockhouse. While Tom was savagely jamming in powder and ball, the wicket gate of the fort opened, a man came out and ran to a house a biscuit’s throw away, and ran back again before he was shot at, slamming the gate after him. Tom swore.

“We’ve got but the ten rounds,” he said, dropping his rifle to his knee. “I reckon ’tis no use to waste it.”

“The Willing may come to-night,” I answered.

There was a bugle winding a strange call, and the roll of a drum, and the running continued.

“Don’t fire till you’re sure, boys,” said Captain Williams.

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Our eyes caught sight of a form in the blockhouse port, there was an instant when a candle flung its rays upon a cannon's flank, and Tom's rifle spat a rod of flame. A red blot hid the cannon's mouth, and behind it a man staggered and fell on the candle, while the shot crunched its way through the logs of the cottage in the yard where we stood. And now the battle was on in earnest, fire darting here and there from the black wall, bullets whistling and flying wide, and at intervals cannon belching, their shot grinding through trees and houses. But our men waited until the gunners lit their matches in the cannon-ports,—it was no trick for a backwoodsman.

At length there came a popping right and left, and we knew that Bowman and McCarty's men had swung into position there.

An hour passed, and a shadow came along our line, darting from cover to cover. It was Lieutenant Bayley, and he sent me back to find the Colonel and to tell him that the men had but a few rounds left. I sped through the streets on the errand, spied a Creole company waiting in reserve, and near them, behind a warehouse, a knot of backwoodsmen, French, and Indians, lighted up by a smoking torch. And here was Colonel Clark talking to a big, blanketed chief. I was hovering around the skirts of the crowd and seeking for an opening, when a hand pulled me off my feet.

"What'll ye be afther now?" said a voice, which was Terence's.

"Let me go," I cried, "I have a message from Lieutenant Bayley."

"Sure," said Terence, "a man'd think ye had the Hair Buyer's sculp in yere pocket. The Colonel is treaty-makin' with Tobacey's Son, the grreatest Injun in these parrts."

"I don't care."

"Hist!" said Terence.

"Let me go," I yelled, so loudly that the Colonel turned, and Terence dropped me like a live coal. I wormed my way to where Clark stood. Tobacco's Son was at that moment protesting that the Big Knives were his brothers, and declaring that before morning broke he would have one hundred warriors for the Great White Chief. Had he not made a treaty of peace with Captain Helm, who was even then a prisoner of the British general in the fort?

Colonel Clark replied that he knew well of the fidelity of Tobacco's Son to the Big Knives, that Tobacco's Son had remained stanch in the face of bribes and presents (this was true). Now all that Colonel Clark desired of Tobacco's Son besides his friendship was that he would keep his warriors from battle. The Big Knives would fight their own fight. To this sentiment Tobacco's Son grunted extreme approval. Colonel Clark turned to me.

“What is it, Davy?” he asked.

I told him.

“Tobacco’s Son has dug up for us King George’s ammunition,” he said. “Go tell Lieutenant Bayley that I will send him enough to last him a month.”

I sped away with the message. Presently I came back again, upon another message, and they were eating,—those reserves,—they were eating as I had never seen men eat but once, at Kaskaskia. The baker stood by with lifted palms, imploring the saints that he might have some compensation, until Clark sent him back to his shop to knead and bake again. The good Creoles approached the fires with the contents of their larders in their hands. Terence tossed me a loaf the size of a cannon ball, and another.

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“Fetch that wan to wan av the b’ys,” said he.

I seized as much as my arms could hold and scurried away to the firing line once more, and, heedless of whistling bullets, darted from man to man until the bread was exhausted. Not a one but gave me a “God bless you, Davy,” ere he seized it with a great hand and began to eat in wolfish bites, his Deckard always on the watch the while.

There was no sleep in the village. All night long, while the rifles sputtered, the villagers in their capotes—men, women, and children—huddled around the fires. The young men of the militia begged Clark to allow them to fight, and to keep them well affected he sent some here and there amongst our lines. For our Colonel’s strength was not counted by rifles or men alone: he fought with his brain. As Hamilton, the Hair Buyer, made his rounds, he believed the town to be in possession of a horde of Kentuckians. Shouts, war-whoops, and bursts of laughter went up from behind the town. Surely a great force was there, a small part of which had been sent to play with him and his men. On the fighting line, when there was a lull, our backwoodsmen stood up behind their trees and cursed the enemy roundly, and often by these taunts persuaded the furious gunners to open their ports and fire their cannon. Woe be to him that showed an arm or a shoulder! Though a casement be lifted ever so warily, a dozen balls would fly into it. And at length, when some of the besieged had died in their anger, the ports were opened no more. It was then our sharpshooters crept up boldly to within thirty yards of them—nay, it seemed as if they lay under the very walls of the fort. And through the night the figure of the Colonel himself was often seen amongst them, praising their markmanship, pleading with every man not to expose himself without cause. He spied me where I had wormed myself behind the foot-board of a picket fence beneath the cannon-port of a blockhouse. It was during one of the breathing spaces.

“What’s this?” said he to Cowan, sharply, feeling me with his foot.

“I reckon it’s Davy, sir,” said my friend, somewhat sheepishly. “We can’t do nothin’ with him. He’s been up and down the line twenty times this night.”

“What doing?” says the Colonel.

“Bread and powder and bullets,” answered Bill.

“But that’s all over,” says Clark.

“He’s the very devil to pry,” answered Bill. “The first we know he’ll be into the fort under the logs.”

“Or between them,” says Clark, with a glance at the open palings. “Come here, Davy.”

I followed him, dodging between the houses, and when we had got off the line he took me by the two shoulders from behind.

“You little rascal,” said he, shaking me, “how am I to look out for an army and you besides? Have you had anything to eat?”

“Yes, sir,” I answered.

We came to the fires, and Captain Bowman hurried up to meet him.

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“We’re piling up earthworks and barricades,” said the Captain, “for the fight to-morrow. My God! if the Willing would only come, we could put our cannon into them.”

Clark laughed.

“Bowman,” said he, kindly, “has Davy fed you yet?”

“No,” says the Captain, surprised, “I’ve had no time to eat.”

“He seems to have fed the whole army,” said the Colonel. He paused. “Have they scented Lamothe or Maisonville?”

“Devil a scent!” cried the Captain, “and we’ve scoured wood and quagmire. They tell me that Lamothe has a very pretty force of redskins at his heels.”

“Let McChesney go,” said Clark sharply, “McChesney and Ray. I’ll warrant they can find ’em.”

Now I knew that Maisonville had gone out a-chasing Captain Willing’s brother,—he who had run into our arms. Lamothe was a noted Indian partisan and a dangerous man to be dogging our rear that night. Suddenly there came a thought that took my breath and set my heart a-hammering. When the Colonel’s back was turned I slipped away beyond the range of the firelight, and I was soon on the prairie, stumbling over hummocks and floundering into ponds, yet going as quietly as I could, turning now and again to look back at the distant glow or to listen to the rifles popping around the fort. The night was cloudy and pitchy dark. Twice the whirring of startled waterfowl frightened me out of my senses, but ambition pricked me on in spite of fear. I may have gone a mile thus, perchance two or three, straining every sense, when a sound brought me to a stand. At first I could not distinguish it because of my heavy breathing, but presently I made sure that it was the low drone of human voices. Getting down on my hands and knees, I crept forward, and felt the ground rising. The voices had ceased. I gained the crest of a low ridge, and threw myself flat. A rattle of musketry set me shivering, and in an agony of fright I looked behind me to discover that I could not be more than four hundred yards from the fort. I had made a circle. I lay very still, my eyes watered with staring, and then—the droning began again. I went forward an inch, then another and another down the slope, and at last I could have sworn that I saw dark blurs against the ground. I put out my hand, my weight went after, and I had crashed through a coating of ice up to my elbow in a pool. There came a second of sheer terror, a hoarse challenge in French, and then I took to my heels and flew towards the fort at the top of my speed.

I heard them coming after me, leap and bound, and crying out to one another. Ahead of me there might have been a floor or a precipice, as the ground looks level at night. I hurt my foot cruelly on a frozen clod of earth, slid down the washed bank of a run into the Wabash, picked myself up, scrambled to the top of the far side, and had gotten

away again when my pursuer shattered the ice behind me. A hundred yards more, two figures loomed up in front, and I was pulled up choking.

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“Hang to him, Fletcher!” said a voice.

“Great God!” cried Fletcher, “it’s Davy. What are ye up to now?”

“Let me go!” I cried, as soon as I had got my wind. As luck would have it, I had run into a pair of daredevil young Kentuckians who had more than once tasted the severity of Clark’s discipline,—Fletcher Blount and Jim Willis. They fairly shook out of me what had happened, and then dropped me with a war-whoop and started for the prairie, I after them, crying out to them to beware of the run. A man must indeed be fleet of foot to have escaped these young ruffians, and so it proved. When I reached the hollow there were the two of them fighting with a man in the water, the ice jangling as they shifted their feet.

“What’s yere name?” said Fletcher, cuffing and kicking his prisoner until he cried out for mercy.

“Maisonville,” said the man, whereupon Fletcher gave a war-whoop and kicked him again.

“That’s no way to use a prisoner,” said I, hotly.

“Hold your mouth, Davy,” said Fletcher, “you didn’t ketch him.”

“You wouldn’t have had him but for me,” I retorted.

Fletcher’s answer was an oath. They put Maisonville between them, ran him through the town up to the firing line, and there, to my horror, they tied him to a post and used him for a shield, despite his heart-rending yells. In mortal fear that the poor man would be shot down, I was running away to find some one who might have influence over them when I met a lieutenant. He came up and ordered them angrily to unbind Maisonville and bring him before the Colonel. Fletcher laughed, whipped out his hunting knife, and cut the thongs; but he and Willis had scarce got twenty paces from the officer before they seized poor Maisonville by the hair and made shift to scalp him. This was merely backwoods play, had Maisonville but known it. Persuaded, however, that his last hour was come, he made a desperate effort to clear himself, whereupon Fletcher cut off a piece of his skin by mistake. Maisonville, making sure that he had been scalped, stood groaning and clapping his hand to his head, while the two young rascals drew back and stared at each other.

“What’s to do now?” said Willis.

“Take our medicine, I reckon,” answered Fletcher, grimly. And they seized the tottering man between them, and marched him straightway to the fire where Clark stood.

They had seen the Colonel angry before, but now they were fairly withered under his wrath. And he could have given them no greater punishment, for he took them from the firing line, and sent them back to wait among the reserves until the morning.

“Nom de Dieu!” said Maisonville, wrathfully, as he watched them go, “they should hang.”

“The stuff that brought them here through ice and flood is apt to boil over, Captain,” remarked the Colonel, dryly.

“If you please, sir,” said I, “they did not mean to cut him, but he wriggled.”

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Clark turned sharply.

“Eh?” said he, “did you have a hand in this, too?”

“Peste!” cried the Captain, “the little ferret—you call him—he find me on the prairie. I run to catch him with some men and fall into the crick—” he pointed to his soaked leggings, “and your demons, they fall on top of me.”

“I wish to heaven you had caught Lamothe instead, Davy,” said the Colonel, and joined despite himself in the laugh that went up. Falling sober again, he began to question the prisoner. Where was Lamothe? Pardieu, Maisonville could not say. How many men did he have, *etc*., *etc*.? The circle about us deepened with eager listeners, who uttered exclamations when Maisonville, between his answers, put up his hand to his bleeding head. Suddenly the circle parted, and Captain Bowman came through.

“Ray has discovered Lamothe, sir,” said he. “What shall we do?”

“Let him into the fort,” said Clark, instantly.

There was a murmur of astonished protest.

“Let him into the fort!” exclaimed Bowman.

“Certainly,” said the Colonel; “if he finds he cannot get in, he will be off before the dawn to assemble the tribes.”

“But the fort is provisioned for a month,” Bowman expostulated; “and they must find out to-morrow how weak we are.”

“To-morrow will be too late,” said Clark.

“And suppose he shouldn’t go in?”

“He will go in,” said the Colonel, quietly. “Withdraw your men, Captain, from the north side.”

Captain Bowman departed. Whatever he may have thought of these orders, he was too faithful a friend of the Colonel’s to delay their execution. Murmuring, swearing oaths of astonishment, man after man on the firing line dropped his rifle at the word, and sullenly retreated. The crack, crack of the Deckards on the south and east were stilled; not a barrel was thrust by the weary garrison through the logs, and the place became silent as the wilderness. It was the long hour before the dawn. And as we lay waiting on the hard ground, stiff and cold and hungry, talking in whispers, somewhere near six of the clock on that February morning the great square of Fort Sackville began to take shape. There was the long line of the stockade, the projecting blockhouses at each corner with

peaked caps, and a higher capped square tower from the centre of the enclosure, the banner of England drooping there and clinging forlorn to its staff, as though with a presentiment. Then, as the light grew, the close-lipped casements were seen, scarred with our bullets. The little log houses of the town came out, the sapling palings and the bare trees,—all grim and gaunt at that cruel season. Cattle lowed here and there, and horses whinnied to be fed.

It was a dirty, gray dawn, and we waited until it had done its best. From where we lay hid behind log house and palings we strained our eyes towards the prairie to see if Lamothe would take the bait, until our view was ended at the fuzzy top of a hillock. Bill Cowan, doubled up behind a woodpile and breathing heavily, nudged me.

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“Davy, Davy, what d’ye see!”

Was it a head that broke the line of the crest? Even as I stared, breathless, half a score of forms shot up and were running madly for the stockade. Twenty more broke after them, Indians and Frenchmen, dodging, swaying, crowding, looking fearfully to right and left. And from within the fort came forth a hubbub,—cries and scuffling, orders, oaths, and shouts. In plain view of our impatient Deckards soldiers manned the platform, and we saw that they were flinging down ladders. An officer in a faded scarlet coat stood out among the rest, shouting himself hoarse. Involuntarily Cowan lined his sights across the woodpile on this mark of color.

Lamothe’s men, a seething mass, were fighting like wolves for the ladders, fearful yet that a volley might kill half of them where they stood. And so fast did they scramble upwards that the men before them stepped on their fingers. All at once and by acclamation the fierce war-whoops of our men rent the air, and some toppled in sheer terror and fell the twelve feet of the stockade at the sound of it. Then every man in the regiment, Creole and backwoodsman, lay back to laugh. The answer of the garrison was a defiant cheer, and those who had dropped, finding they were not shot at, picked themselves up again and gained the top, helping to pull the ladders after them. Bowman’s men swung back into place, the rattle and drag were heard in the blockhouse as the cannon were run out through the ports, and the battle which had held through the night watches began again with redoubled vigor. But there was more caution on the side of the British, for they had learned dearly how the Kentuckians could measure crack and crevice.

There followed two hours and a futile waste of ammunition, the lead from the garrison flying harmless here and there, and not a patch of skin or cloth showing.

CHAPTER XX

THE CAMPAIGN ENDS

“If I am obliged to storm, you may depend upon such treatment as is justly due to a murderer. And beware of destroying stores of any kind, or any papers or letters that are in your possession; or of hurting one house in the town. For, by Heaven! if you do, there shall be no mercy shown you.

“To Lieutenant-Governor Hamilton.”

So read Colonel Clark, as he stood before the log fire in Monsieur Bouton’s house at the back of the town, the captains grouped in front of him.

“Is that strong enough, gentlemen?” he asked.

“To raise his hair,” said Captain Charleville.

Captain Bowman laughed loudly.

“I reckon the boys will see to that,” said he.

Colonel Clark folded the letter, addressed it, and turned gravely to Monsieur Bouton.

“You will oblige me, sir,” said he, “by taking this to Governor Hamilton. You will be provided with a flag of truce.”

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Monsieur Bouton was a round little man, as his name suggested, and the men cheered him as he strode soberly up the street, a piece of sheeting tied to a sapling and flung over his shoulder. Through such humble agencies are the ends of Providence accomplished. Monsieur Bouton walked up to the gate, disappeared sidewise through the postern, and we sat down to breakfast. In a very short time Monsieur Bouton was seen coming back, and his face was not so impassive that the governors message could not be read thereon.

“’Tis not a love-letter he has, I’ll warrant,” said Terence, as the little man disappeared into the house. So accurately had Monsieur Bouton’s face betrayed the news that the men went back to their posts without orders, some with half a breakfast in hand. And soon the rank and file had the message.

“Lieutenant-Governor Hamilton begs leave to acquaint Colonel Clark that he and his garrison are not disposed to be awed into any action unworthy of British subjects.”

Our men had eaten, their enemy was within their grasp and Clark and all his officers could scarce keep them from storming. Such was the deadliness of their aim that scarce a shot came back, and time and again I saw men fling themselves in front of the breastworks with a war-whoop, wave their rifles in the air, and cry out that they would have the Ha’r Buyer’s sculp before night should fall. It could not last. Not tuned to the nicer courtesies of warfare, the memory of Hamilton’s war parties, of blackened homes, of families dead and missing, raged unappeased. These were not content to leave vengeance in the Lord’s hands, and when a white flag peeped timorously above the gate a great yell of derision went up from river-bank to river-bank. Out of the postern stepped the officer with the faded scarlet coat, and in due time went back again, haughtily, his head high, casting contempt right and left of him. Again the postern opened, and this time there was a cheer at sight of a man in hunting shirt and leggings and coonskin cap. After him came a certain Major Hay, Indian-enticer of detested memory, the lieutenant of him who followed—the Hair Buyer himself. A murmur of hatred arose from the men stationed there; and many would have shot him where he stood but for Clark.

“The devil has the grit,” said Cowan, though his eyes blazed.

It was the involuntary tribute. Lieutenant-Governor Hamilton stared indifferently at the glowering backwoodsmen as he walked the few steps to the church. Not so Major Hay. His eyes fell. There was Colonel Clark waiting at the door through which the good Creoles had been wont to go to worship, bowing somewhat ironically to the British General. It was a strange meeting they had in St. Xavier’s, by the light of the candles on the altar. Hot words passed in that house of peace, the General demanding protection for all his men, and our Colonel replying that he would do with the Indian partisans as he chose.

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“And whom mean you by Indian partisans?” the undaunted governor had demanded.

“I take Major Hay to be one of them,” our Colonel had answered.

It was soon a matter of common report how Clark had gazed fixedly at the Major when he said this, and how the Major turned pale and trembled. With our own eyes we saw them coming out, Major Hay as near to staggering as a man could be, the governor blushing red for shame of him. So they went sorrowfully back to the gate.

Colonel Clark stood at the steps of the church, looking after them.

“What was that firing?” he demanded sharply. “I gave orders for a truce.”

We who stood by the church had indeed heard firing in the direction of the hills east of the town, and had wondered thereat. Perceiving a crowd gathered at the far end of the street, we all ran thither save the Colonel, who directed to have the offenders brought to him at Monsieur Bouton’s. We met the news halfway. A party of Canadians and Indians had just returned from the Falls of the Ohio with scalps they had taken. Captain Williams had gone out with his company to meet them, had lured them on, and finally had killed a number and was returning with the prisoners. Yes, here they were! Williams himself walked ahead with two dishevelled and frightened coureurs du bois, twoscore at least of the townspeople of Vincennes, friends and relatives of the prisoners, pressing about and crying out to Williams to have mercy on them. As for Williams, he took them in to the Colonel, the townspeople pressing into the door-yard and banking in front of it on the street. Behind all a tragedy impended, nor can I think of it now without sickening.

The frightened Creoles in the street gave back against the fence, and from behind them, issuing as a storm-cloud came the half of Williams’ company, yelling like madmen. Pushed and jostled ahead of them were four Indians decked and feathered, the half-dried scalps dangling from their belts, impassive, true to their creed despite the indignity of jolts and jars and blows. On and on pressed the mob, gathering recruits at every corner, and when they reached St. Xavier’s before the fort half the regiment was there. Others watched, too, from the stockade, and what they saw made their knees smite together with fear. Here were four bronzed statues in a row across the street, the space in front of them clear that their partisans in the fort might look and consider. What was passing in the savage mind no man might know. Not a lip trembled nor an eye faltered when a backwoodsman, his memory aflame at sight of the pitiful white scalps on their belts, thrust through the crowd to curse them. Fletcher Blount, frenzied, snatched his tomahawk from his side.

“Sink, varmint!” he cried with a great oath. “By the etarnal! we’ll pay the H’ar Buyer in his own coin. Sound your drums!” he shouted at the fort. “Call the garrison fer the show.”

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He had raised his arm and turned to strike when the savage put up his hand, not in entreaty, but as one man demanding a right from another. The cries, the curses, the murmurs even, were hushed. Throwing back his head, arching his chest, the notes of a song rose in the heavy air. Wild, strange notes they were, that struck vibrant chords in my own quivering being, and the song was the death-song. Ay, and the life-song of a soul which had come into the world even as mine own. And somewhere there lay in the song, half revealed, the awful mystery of that Creator Whom the soul leaped forth to meet: the myriad green of the sun playing with the leaves, the fish swimming lazily in the brown pool, the doe grazing in the thicket, and a naked boy as free from care as these; and still the life grows brighter as strength comes, and stature, and power over man and beast; and then, God knows what memories of fierce love and fiercer wars and triumphs, of desires gained and enemies conquered,—God, who has made all lives akin to something which He holds in the hollow of His hand; and then—the rain beating on the forest crown, beating, beating, beating.

The song ceased. The Indian knelt in the black mud, not at the feet of Fletcher Blount, but on the threshold of the Great Spirit who ruleth all things. The axe fell, yet he uttered no cry as he went before his Master.

So the four sang, each in turn, and died in the sight of some who pitied, and some who feared, and some who hated, for the sake of land and women. So the four went beyond the power of gold and gewgaw, and were dragged in the mire around the walls and flung into the yellow waters of the river.

Through the dreary afternoon the men lounged about and cursed the parley, and hearkened for the tattoo,—the signal agreed upon by the leaders to begin the fighting. There had been no command against taunts and jeers, and they gathered in groups under the walls to indulge themselves, and even tried to bribe me as I sat braced against a house with my drum between my knees and the sticks clutched tightly in my hands.

“Here’s a Spanish dollar for a couple o’ taps, Davy,” shouted Jack Terrell.

“Come on, ye pack of Rebel cutthroats!” yelled a man on the wall.

He was answered by a torrent of imprecations. And so they flung it back and forth until nightfall, when out comes the same faded-scarlet officer, holding a letter in his hand, and marches down the street to Monsieur Bouton’s. There would be no storming now, nor any man suffered to lay fingers on the Hair Buyer. * * * * * * *

I remember, in particular, Hamilton the Hair Buyer. Not the fiend my imagination had depicted (I have since learned that most villains do not look the part), but a man with a great sorrow stamped upon his face. The sun rose on that 25th of February, and the mud melted, and one of our companies drew up on each side of the gate. Downward

slid the lion of England, the garrison drums beat a dirge, and the Hair Buyer marched out at the head of his motley troops.

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Then came my own greatest hour. All morning I had been polishing and tightening the drum, and my pride was so great as we fell into line that so much as a smile could not be got out of me. Picture it all: Vincennes in black and white by reason of the bright day; eaves and gables, stockade line and capped towers, sharply drawn, and straight above these a stark flagstaff waiting for our colors; pigs and fowls straying hither and thither, unmindful that this day is red on the calendar. Ah! here is a bit of color, too,—the villagers on the side streets to see the spectacle. Gay wools and gayer handkerchiefs there, amid the joyous, cheering crowd of thrice-changed nationality.

“Vive les Bostonnais! Vive les Americains! Vive Monsieur le Colonel Clark! Vive le petit tambour!”

“Vive le petit tambour!” That was the drummer boy, stepping proudly behind the Colonel himself, with a soul lifted high above mire and puddle into the blue above. There was laughter amongst the giants behind me, and Cowan saying softly, as when we left Kaskaskia, “Go it, Davy, my little gamecock!” And the whisper of it was repeated among the ranks drawn up by the gate.

Yes, here was the gate, and now we were in the fort, and an empire was gained, never to be lost again. The Stars and Stripes climbed the staff, and the folds were caught by an eager breeze. Thirteen cannon thundered from the blockhouses—one for each colony that had braved a king.

There, in the miry square within the Vincennes fort, thin and bronzed and travel-stained, were the men who had dared the wilderness in ugliest mood. And yet none by himself would have done it—each had come here compelled by a spirit stronger than his own, by a master mind that laughed at the body and its ailments.

Colonel George Rogers Clark stood in the centre of the square, under the flag to whose renown he had added three stars. Straight he was, and square, and self-contained. No weakening tremor of exultation softened his face as he looked upon the men by whose endurance he had been able to do this thing. He waited until the white smoke of the last gun had drifted away on the breeze, until the snapping of the flag and the distant village sounds alone broke the stillness.

“We have not suffered all things for a reward,” he said, “but because a righteous cause may grow. And though our names may be forgotten, our deeds will be remembered. We have conquered a vast land that our children and our children’s children may be freed from tyranny, and we have brought a just vengeance upon our enemies. I thank you, one and all, in the name of the Continental Congress and of that Commonwealth of Virginia for which you have fought. You are no longer Virginians, Kentuckians, Kaskaskians, and Cahokians—you are Americans.”

He paused, and we were silent. Though his words moved us strongly, they were beyond us.

“I mention no deeds of heroism, of unselfishness, of lives saved at the peril of others. But I am the debtor of every man here for the years to come to see that he and his family have justice from the Commonwealth and the nation.”

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Again he stopped, and it seemed to us watching that he smiled a little.

“I shall name one,” he said, “one who never lagged, who never complained, who starved that the weak might be fed and walk. David Ritchie, come here.”

I trembled, my teeth chattered as the water had never made them chatter. I believe I should have fallen but for Tom, who reached out from the ranks. I stumbled forward in a daze to where the Colonel stood, and the cheering from the ranks was a thing beyond me. The Colonel’s hand on my head brought me to my senses.

“David Ritchie,” he said, “I give you publicly the thanks of the regiment. The parade is dismissed.”

The next thing I knew I was on Cowan’s shoulders, and he was tearing round and round the fort with two companies at his heels.

“The divil,” said Terence McCann, “he dhrummed us over the wather, an’ through the wather; and faix, he would have dhrummed the sculp from Hamilton’s head and the Colonel had said the worrd.”

“By gar!” cried Antoine le Gris, “now he drum us on to Detroit.”

Out of the gate rushed Cowan, the frightened villagers scattering right and left. Antoine had a friend who lived in this street, and in ten minutes there was rum in the powder-horns, and the toast was “On to Detroit!”

Colonel Clark was sitting alone in the commanding officer’s room of the garrison. And the afternoon sun, slanting through the square of the window, fell upon the maps and papers before him. He had sent for me. I halted in sheer embarrassment on the threshold, looked up at his face, and came on, troubled.

“Davy,” he said, “do you want to go back to Kentucky?”

“I should like to stay to the end, Colonel,” I answered.

“The end?” he said. “This is the end.”

“And Detroit, sir?” I returned.

“Detroit!” he cried bitterly, “a man of sense measures his force, and does not try the impossible. I could as soon march against Philadelphia. This is the end, I say; and the general must give way to the politician. And may God have mercy on the politician who will try to keep a people’s affection without money or help from Congress.”

He fell back wearily in his chair, while I stood astonished, wondering. I had thought to find him elated with victory.

“Congress or Virginia,” said he, “will have to pay Monsieur Vigo, and Father Gibault, and Monsieur Gratiot, and the other good people who have trusted me. Do you think they will do so?”

“The Congress are far from here,” I said.

“Ay,” he answered, “too far to care about you and me, and what we have suffered.”

He ended abruptly, and sat for a while staring out of the window at the figures crossing and recrossing the muddy parade-ground.

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“Tom McChesney goes to-night to Kentucky with letters to the county lieutenant. You are to go with him, and then I shall have no one to remind me when I am hungry, and bring me hominy. I shall have no financier, no strategist for a tight place.” He smiled a little, sadly, at my sorrowful look, and then drew me to him and patted my shoulder. “It is no place for a young lad,—an idle garrison. I think,” he continued presently, “I think you have a future, David, if you do not lose your head. Kentucky will grow and conquer, and in twenty years be a thriving community. And presently you will go to Virginia, and study law, and come back again. Do you hear?”

“Yes, Colonel.”

“And I would tell you one thing,” said he, with force; “serve the people, as all true men should in a republic. But do not rely upon their gratitude. You will remember that?”

“Yes, Colonel.”

A long time he paused, looking on me with a significance I did not then understand. And when he spoke again his voice showed no trace of emotion, save in the note of it.

“You have been a faithful friend, Davy, when I needed loyalty. Perhaps the time may come again. Promise me that you will not forget me if I am—unfortunate.”

“Unfortunate, sir!” I exclaimed.

“Good-by, Davy,” he said, “and God bless you. I have work to do.”

Still I hesitated. He stared at me, but with kindness.

“What is it, Davy?” he asked.

“Please, sir,” I said, “if I might take my drum?”

At that he laughed.

“You may,” said he, “you may. Perchance we may need it again.”

I went out from his presence, vaguely troubled, to find Tom. And before the early sun had set we were gliding down the Wabash in a canoe, past places forever dedicated to our agonies, towards Kentucky and Polly Ann.

“Davy,” said Tom, “I reckon she’ll be standin’ under the ’simmon tree, waitin’ fer us with the little shaver in her arms.”

And so she was.

BOOK II

FLOTSAM AND JETSAM

CHAPTER I

IN THE CABIN

The Eden of one man may be the Inferno of his neighbor, and now I am to throw to the winds, like leaves of a worthless manuscript, some years of time, and introduce you to a new Kentucky,—a Kentucky that was not for the pioneer. One page of this manuscript might have told of a fearful winter, when the snow lay in great drifts in the bare woods, when Tom and I fashioned canoes or noggins out of the great roots, when a new and feminine bit of humanity cried in the bark cradle, and Polly Ann sewed deer leather. Another page—nay, a dozen—could be filled with Indian horrors, ambuscades and massacres. And also I might have told how there drifted into this land, hitherto unsoiled, the refuse cast off by the older colonies. I must add quickly that we got more than our share of their best stock along with this.

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No sooner had the sun begun to pit the snow hillocks than wild creatures came in from the mountains, haggard with hunger and hardship. They had left their homes in Virginia and the Carolinas in the autumn; an unheralded winter of Arctic fierceness had caught them in its grip. Bitter tales they told of wives and children buried among the rocks. Fast on the heels of these wretched ones trooped the spring settlers in droves; and I have seen whole churches march singing into the forts, the preacher leading, and thanking God loudly that He had delivered them from the wilderness and the savage. The little forts would not hold them; and they went out to hew clearings from the forest, and to build cabins and stockades. And our own people, starved and snowbound, went out likewise,—Tom and Polly Ann and their little family and myself to the farm at the river-side. And while the water flowed between the stumps over the black land, we planted and ploughed and prayed, always alert, watching north and south, against the coming of the Indians.

But Tom was no husbandman. He and his kind were the scouts, the advance guard of civilization, not tillers of the soil or lovers of close communities. Farther and farther they went afield for game, and always they grumbled sorely against this horde which had driven the deer from his cover and the buffalo from his wallow.

Looking back, I can recall one evening when the long summer twilight lingered to a close. Tom was lounging lazily against the big persimmon tree, smoking his pipe, the two children digging at the roots, and Polly Ann, seated on the door-log, sewing. As I drew near, she looked up at me from her work. She was a woman upon whose eternal freshness industry made no mar.

“Davy,” she exclaimed, “how ye’ve growed! I thought ye’d be a wizened little body, but this year ye’ve shot up like a cornstalk.”

“My father was six feet two inches in his moccasins,” I said.

“He’ll be wallopin’ me soon,” said Tom, with a grin. He took a long whiff at his pipe, and added thoughtfully, “I reckon this ain’t no place fer me now, with all the settler folks and land-grabbers comin’ through the Gap.”

“Tom,” said I, “there’s a bit of a fall on the river here.”

“Ay,” he said, “and nary a fish left.”

“Something better,” I answered; “we’ll put a dam there and a mill and a hominy pounder.”

“And make our fortune grinding corn for the settlers,” cried Polly Ann, showing a line of very white teeth. “I always said ye’d be a rich man, Davy.”

Tom was mildly interested, and went with us at daylight to measure the fall. And he allowed that he would have the more time to hunt if the mill were a success. For a month I had had the scheme in my mind, where the dam was to be put, the race, and the wondrous wheel rimmed with cow horns to dip the water. And fixed on the wheel there was to be a crank that worked the pounder in the mortar. So we were to grind until I could arrange with Mr. Scarlett, the new storekeeper in Harrodstown, to have two grinding-stones fetched across the mountains.

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While the corn ripened and the melons swelled and the flax flowered, our axes rang by the river's side; and sometimes, as we worked, Cowan and Terrell and McCann and other Long Hunters would come and jeer good-naturedly because we were turning civilized. Often they gave us a lift.

It was September when the millstones arrived, and I spent a joyous morning of final bargaining with Mr. Myron Scarlett. This Mr. Scarlett was from Connecticut, had been a quartermaster in the army, and at much risk brought ploughs and hardware, and scissors and buttons, and broadcloth and corduroy, across the Alleghanies, and down the Ohio in flatboats. These he sold at great profit. We had no money, not even the worthless scrip that Congress issued; but a beaver skin was worth eighteen shillings, a bearskin ten, and a fox or a deer or a wildcat less. Half the village watched the barter. The rest lounged sullenly about the land court.

The land court—curse of Kentucky! It was just a windowless log house built outside the walls, our temple of avarice. The case was this: Henderson (for whose company Daniel Boone cut the wilderness road) believed that he had bought the country, and issued grants therefor. Tom held one of these grants, alas, and many others whom I knew. Virginia repudiated Henderson. Keen-faced speculators bought acre upon acre and tract upon tract from the State, and crossed the mountains to extort. Claims conflicted, titles lapped. There was the court set in the sunlight in the midst of a fair land, held by the shameless, thronged day after day by the homeless and the needy, jostling, quarrelling, beseeching. Even as I looked upon this strife a man stood beside me.

"Drat 'em," said the stranger, as he watched a hawk-eyed extortioner in drab, for these did not condescend to hunting shirts, "drat 'em, ef I had my way I'd wring the neck of every mother's son of 'em."

I turned with a start, and there was Mr. Daniel Boone.

"Howdy, Davy," he said; "ye've growed some sence ye've ben with Clark." He paused, and then continued in the same strain: "'Tis the same at Boonesboro and up thar at the Falls settlement. The critters is everywhar, robbin' men of their claims. Davy," said Mr. Boone, earnestly, "you know that I come into Kaintuckee when it waren't nothin' but wilderness, and resked my life time and again. Them varmints is wuss'n redskins,—-they've robbed me already of half my claims."

"Robbed you!" I exclaimed, indignant that he, of all men, should suffer.

"Ay," he said, "robbed me. They've took one claim after another, tracts that I staked out long afore they heerd of Kaintuckee." He rubbed his rifle barrel with his buckskin sleeve. "I get a little for my skins, and a little by surveyin'. But when the game goes I reckon I'll go after it."

“Where, Mr. Boone?” I asked.

“Whar? whar the varmints cyant foller. Acrost the Mississippi into the Spanish wilderness.”

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“And leave Kentucky?” I cried.

“Davy,” he answered sadly, “you kin cope with ’em. They tell me you’re buildin’ a mill up at McChesney’s, and I reckon you’re as cute as any of ‘em. They beat me. I’m good for nothin’ but shootin’ and explorin’.”

We stood silent for a while, our attention caught by a quarrel which had suddenly come out of the doorway. One of the men was Jim Willis,—my friend of Clark’s campaign,—-who had a Henderson claim near Shawanee Springs. The other was the hawk-eyed man of whom Mr. Boone had spoken, and fragments of their curses reached us where we stood. The hunting shirts surged around them, alert now at the prospect of a fight; men came running in from all directions, and shouts of “Hang him! Tomahawk him!” were heard on every side. Mr. Boone did not move. It was a common enough spectacle for him, and he was not excitable. Moreover, he knew that the death of one extortioner more or less would have no effect on the system. They had become as the fowls of the air.

“I was acrost the mountain last month,” said Mr. Boone, presently, “and one of them skunks had stole Campbell’s silver spoons at Abingdon. Campbell was out arter him for a week with a coil of rope on his saddle. But the varmint got to cover.”

Mr. Boone wished me luck in my new enterprise, bade me good-by, and set out for Redstone, where he was to measure a tract for a Revolutioner. The speculator having been rescued from Jim Willis’s clutches by the sheriff, the crowd good-naturedly helped us load our stones between pack-horses, and some of them followed us all the way home that they might see the grinding. Half of McAfee’s new station had heard the news, and came over likewise. And from that day we ground as much corn as could be brought to us from miles around.

Polly Ann and I ran the mill and kept the accounts. Often of a crisp autumn morning we heard a gobble-gobble above the tumbling of the water and found a wild turkey perched on top of the hopper, eating his fill. Some of our meat we got that way. As for Tom, he was off and on. When the roving spirit seized him he made journeys to the westward with Cowan and Ray. Generally they returned with packs of skins. But sometimes soberly, thanking Heaven that their hair was left growing on their heads. This, and patrolling the Wilderness Road and other militia duties, made up Tom’s life. No sooner was the mill fairly started than off he went to the Cumberland. I mention this, not alone because I remember well the day of his return, but because of a certain happening then that had a heavy influence on my after life.

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The episode deals with an easy-mannered gentleman named Potts, who was the agent for a certain Major Colfax of Virginia. Tom owned under a Henderson grant; the Major had been given this and other lands for his services in the war. Mr. Potts arrived one rainy afternoon and found me standing alone under the little lean-to that covered the hopper. How we served him, with the aid of McCann and Cowan and other neighbors, and how we were near getting into trouble because of the prank, will be seen later. The next morning I rode into Harrodstown not wholly easy in my mind concerning the wisdom of the thing I had done. There was no one to advise me, for Colonel Clark was far away, building a fort on the banks of the Mississippi. Tom had laughed at the consequences; he cared little about his land, and was for moving into the Wilderness again. But for Polly Ann's sake I wished that we had treated the land agent less cavalierly. I was soon distracted from these thoughts by the sight of Harrodstown itself.

I had no sooner ridden out of the forest shade when I saw that the place was in an uproar, men and women gathering in groups and running here and there between the cabins. Urging on the mare, I cantered across the fields, and the first person I met was James Ray.

"What's the matter?" I asked.

"Matter enough! An army of redskins has crossed the Ohio, and not a man to take command. My God," cried Ray, pointing angrily at the swarms about the land office, "what trash we have got this last year! Kentucky can go to the devil, half the stations be wiped out, and not a thrip do they care."

"Have you sent word to the Colonel?" I asked.

"If he was here," said Ray, bitterly, "he'd have half of 'em swinging inside of an hour. I'll warrant he'd send 'em to the right-about."

I rode on into the town, Potts gone out of my mind. Apart from the land-office crowds, and looking on in silent rage, stood a group of the old settlers,—tall, lean, powerful, yet impotent for lack of a leader. A contrast they were, these buckskin-clad pioneers, to the ill-assorted humanity they watched, absorbed in struggles for the very lands they had won.

"By the eternal!" said Jack Terrell, "if the yea'th was ter swaller 'em up, they'd keep on a-dickerin in hell."

"Something's got to be done," Captain Harrod put in gloomily; "the red varmints'll be on us in another day. In God's name, whar is Clark?"

"Hold!" cried Fletcher Blount, "what's that?"

The broiling about the land court, too, was suddenly hushed. Men stopped in their tracks, staring fixedly at three forms which had come out of the woods into the clearing.

“Redskins, or there’s no devil!” said Terrell.

Redskins they were, but not the blanketed kind that drifted every day through the station. Their war-paint gleamed in the light, and the white edges of the feathered head-dresses caught the sun. One held up in his right hand a white belt,—token of peace on the frontier.

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“Lord A’mighty!” said Fletcher Blount, “be they Cricks?”

“Chickasaws, by the headgear,” said Terrell. “Davy, you’ve got a hoss. Ride out and look em over.”

Nothing loath, I put the mare into a gallop, and I passed over the very place where Polly Ann had picked me up and saved my life long since. The Indians came on at a dog trot, but when they were within fifty paces of me they halted abruptly. The chief waved the white belt around his head.

“Davy!” says he, and I trembled from head to foot. How well I knew that voice!

“Colonel Clark!” I cried, and rode up to him. “Thank God you are come, sir,” said I, “for the people here are land-mad, and the Northern Indians are crossing the Ohio.”

He took my bridle, and, leading the horse, began to walk rapidly towards the station.

“Ay,” he answered, “I know it. A runner came to me with the tidings, where I was building a fort on the Mississippi, and I took Willis here and Saunders, and came.”

I glanced at my old friends, who grinned at me through the berry-stain on their faces. We reached a ditch through which the rain of the night before was draining from the fields Clark dropped the bridle, stooped down, and rubbed his face clean. Up he got again and flung the feathers from his head, and I thought that his eyes twinkled despite the sternness of his look.

“Davy, my lad,” said he, “you and I have seen some strange things together. Perchance we shall see stranger to-day.”

A shout went up, for he had been recognized. And Captain Harrod and Ray and Terrell and Cowan (who had just ridden in) ran up to greet him and press his hand. He called them each by name, these men whose loyalty had been proved, but said no word more nor paused in his stride until he had reached the edge of the mob about the land court. There he stood for a full minute, and we who knew him looked on silently and waited.

The turmoil had begun again, the speculators calling out in strident tones, the settlers bargaining and pushing, and all clamoring to be heard. While there was money to be made or land to be got they had no ear for the public weal. A man shouldered his way through, roughly, and they gave back, cursing, surprised. He reached the door, and, flinging those who blocked it right and left, entered. There he was recognized, and his name flew from mouth to mouth.

“Clark!”

He walked up to the table, strewn with books and deeds.

“Silence!” he thundered. But there was no need,—they were still for once. “This court is closed,” he cried “while Kentucky is in danger. Not a deed shall be signed nor an acre granted until I come back from the Ohio. Out you go!”

Out they went indeed, judge, brokers, speculators—the evicted and the triumphant together. And when the place was empty Clark turned the key and thrust it into his hunting shirt. He stood for a moment on the step, and his eyes swept the crowd.

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“Now,” he said, “there have been many to claim this land—who will follow me to defend it?”

As I live, they cheered him. Hands were flung up that were past counting, and men who were barely rested from the hardships of the Wilderness Trail shouted their readiness to go. But others slunk away, and were found that morning grumbling and cursing the chance that had brought them to Kentucky. Within the hour the news had spread to the farms, and men rode in to Harrodstown to tell the Colonel of many who were leaving the plough in the furrow and the axe in the wood, and starting off across the mountains in anger and fear. The Colonel turned to me as he sat writing down the names of the volunteers.

“Davy,” said he, “when you are grown you shall not stay at home, I promise you. Take your mare and ride as for your life to McChesney, and tell him to choose ten men and go to the Crab Orchard on the Wilderness Road. Tell him for me to turn back every man, woman, and child who tries to leave Kentucky.”

I met Tom coming in from the field with his rawhide harness over his shoulders. Polly Ann stood calling him in the door, and the squirrel broth was steaming on the table. He did not wait for it. Kissing her, he flung himself into the saddle I had left, and we watched him mutely as he waved back to us from the edge of the woods.

* * * * * * *

In the night I found myself sitting up in bed, listening to a running and stamping near the cabin.

Polly Ann was stirring. “Davy,” she whispered, “the stock is oneasy.”

We peered out of the loophole together and through the little orchard we had planted. The moon flooded the fields, and beyond it the forest was a dark blur. I can recall the scene now, the rude mill standing by the water-side, the twisted rail fences, and the black silhouettes of the horses and cattle as they stood bunched together. Behind us little Tom stirred in his sleep and startled us. That very evening Polly Ann had frightened him into obedience by telling him that the Shawanees would get him.

What was there to do? McAfee’s Station was four miles away, and Ray’s clearing two. Ray was gone with Tom. I could not leave Polly Ann alone. There was nothing for it but to wait.

Silently, that the children might not be waked and lurking savage might not hear, we put the powder and bullets in the middle of the room and loaded the guns and pistols. For Polly Ann had learned to shoot. She took the loopholes of two sides of the cabin, I of the other two, and then began the fearful watching and waiting which the frontier knows

so well. Suddenly the cattle stirred again, and stampeded to the other corner of the field. There came a whisper from Polly Ann.

“What is it?” I answered, running over to her.

“Look out,” she said; “what d’ye see near the mill?”

Her sharp eyes had not deceived her, for mine perceived plainly a dark form skulking in the hickory grove. Next, a movement behind the rail fence, and darting back to my side of the house I made out a long black body wriggling at the edge of the withered corn-patch. They were surrounding us. How I wished that Tom were home!

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A stealthy sound began to intrude itself upon our ears. Listening intently, I thought it came from the side of the cabin where the lean-to was, where we stored our wood in winter. The black shadow fell on that side, and into a patch of bushes; peering out of the loophole, I could perceive nothing there. The noise went on at intervals. All at once there grew on me, with horror, the discovery that there was digging under the cabin.

How long the sound continued I know not,—it might have been an hour, it might have been less. Now I thought I heard it under the wall, now beneath the puncheons of the floor. The pitchy blackness within was such that we could not see the boards moving, and therefore we must needs kneel down and feel them from time to time. Yes, this one was lifting from its bed on the hard earth beneath. I was sure of it. It rose an inch—-then an inch more. Gripping the handle of my tomahawk, I prayed for guidance in my stroke, for the blade might go wild in the darkness. Upward crept the board, and suddenly it was gone from the floor. I swung a full circle—and to my horror I felt the axe plunging into soft flesh and crunching on a bone. I had missed the head! A yell shattered the night as the puncheon fell with a rattle on the boards, and my tomahawk was gone from my hand. Without, the fierce war-cry of the Shawanees that I knew so well echoed around the log walls, and the door trembled with a blow. The children awoke, crying.

There was no time to think; my great fear was that the devil in the cabin would kill Polly Ann. Just then I heard her calling out to me.

“Hide!” I cried, “hide under the shake-down! Has he got you?”

I heard her answer, and then the sound of a scuffle that maddened me. Knife in hand, I crept slowly about, and put my fingers on a man’s neck and side. Next Polly Ann careened against me, and I lost him again. “Davy, Davy,” I heard her gasp, “look out fer the floor!”

It was too late. The puncheon rose under me, I stumbled, and it fell again. Once more the awful changing notes of the war-whoop sounded without. A body bumped on the boards, a white light rose before my eyes, and a sharp pain leaped in my side. Then all was black again, but I had my senses still, and my fingers closed around the knotted muscles of an arm. I thrust the pistol in my hand against flesh, and fired. Two of us fell together, but the thought of Polly Ann got me staggering to my feet again, calling her name. By the grace of God I heard her answer.

“Are ye hurt, Davy?”

“No,” said I, “no. And you?”

We drifted together. ’Twas she who had the presence of mind.

“The chest—quick, the chest!”

We stumbled over a body in reaching it. We seized the handles, and with all our strength hauled it athwart the loose puncheon that seemed to be lifting even then. A mighty splintering shook the door.

“To the ports!” cried Polly Ann, as our heads knocked together.

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To find the rifles and prime them seemed to take an age. Next I was staring through the loophole along a barrel, and beyond it were three black forms in line on a long beam. I think we fired—Polly Ann and I—at the same time. One fell. We saw a comedy of the beam dropping heavily on the foot of another, and he limping off with a guttural howl of rage and pain. I fired a pistol at him, but missed him, and then I was ramming a powder charge down the long barrel of the rifle. Suddenly there was silence,—even the children had ceased crying. Outside, in the dooryard, a feathered figure writhed like a snake towards the fence. The moon still etched the picture in black and white.

Shots awoke me, I think, distant shots. And they sounded like the ripping and tearing of cloth for a wound. 'Twas no new sound to me.

"Davy, dear," said a voice, tenderly.

Out of the mist the tear-stained face of Polly Ann bent over me. I put up my hand, and dropped it again with a cry. Then, my senses coming with a rush, the familiar objects of the cabin outlined themselves: Tom's winter hunting shirt, Polly Ann's woollen shift and sunbonnet on their pegs; the big stone chimney, the ladder to the loft, the closed door, with a long, jagged line across it where the wood was splintered; and, dearest of all, the chubby forms of Peggy and little Tom playing on the trundle-bed. Then my glance wandered to the floor, and on the puncheons were three stains. I closed my eyes.

Again came a far-off rattle, like stones falling from a great height down a rocky bluff.

"What's that?" I whispered.

"They're fighting at McAfee's Station," said Polly Ann. She put her cool hand on my head, and little Tom climbed up on the bed and looked up into my face, wistfully calling my name.

"Oh, Davy," said his mother, "I thought ye were never coming back."

"And the redskins?" I asked.

She drew the child away, lest he hurt me, and shuddered.

"I reckon 'twas only a war-party," she answered. "The rest is at McAfee's. And if they beat 'em off—" she stopped abruptly.

"We shall be saved," I said.

I shall never forget that day. Polly Ann left my side only to feed the children and to keep watch out of the loopholes, and I lay on my back, listening and listening to the shots. At last these became scattered. Then, though we strained our ears, we heard them no more. Was the fort taken? The sun slid across the heavens and shot narrow blades of

light, now through one loophole and now through another, until a ray slanted from the western wall and rested upon the red-and-black paint of two dead bodies in the corner. I stared with horror.

“I was afeard to open the door and throw ’em out,” said Polly Ann, apologetically.

Still I stared. One of them had a great cleft across his face.

“But I thought I hit him in the shoulder,” I exclaimed.

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Polly Ann thrust her hand, gently, across my eyes. “Davy, ye mustn’t talk,” she said; “that’s a dear.”

Drowsiness seized me. But I resisted.

“You killed him, Polly Ann,” I murmured, “you?”

“Hush,” said Polly Ann.

And I slept again.

CHAPTER II

“*The beggars are come to town*”

“They was that destitute,” said Tom, “’twas a pity to see ’em.”

“And they be grand folks, ye say?” said Polly Ann.

“Grand folks, I reckon. And helpless as babes on the Wilderness Trail. They had two niggers—his nigger an’ hers—and they was tuckered, too, fer a fact.

“Lawsy!” exclaimed Polly Ann. “Be still, honey!” Taking a piece of corn-pone from the cupboard, she bent over and thrust it between little Peggy’s chubby fingers “Be still, honey, and listen to what your Pa says. Whar did ye find ’em, Tom?”

“’Twas Jim Ray found ’em,” said Tom. “We went up to Crab Orchard, accordin’ to the Colonel’s orders and we was thar three days. Ye ought to hev seen the trash we turned back, Polly Ann! Most of ’em was scared plum’ crazy, and they was fer gittin ’out ’n Kaintuckee at any cost. Some was fer fightin’ their way through us.”

“The skulks!” exclaimed Polly Ann. “They tried to kill ye? What did ye do?”

Tom grinned, his mouth full of bacon.

“Do?” says he; “we shot a couple of ’em in the legs and arms, and bound ‘em up again. They was in a t’arin’ rage. I’m more afeard of a scar’t man,—a real scar’t man—nor a rattler. They cussed us till they was hoarse. Said they’d hev us hung, an’ Clark, too. Said they hed a right to go back to Virginny if they hed a mind.”

“An’ what did ye say?” demanded Polly Ann, pausing in her work, her eyes flashing with resentment. “Did ye tell ’em they was cowards to want to settle lands, and not fight for ’em? Other folks’ lands, too.”

“We didn’t tell ’em nothin’,” said Tom; “jest sent ’em kitin’ back to the stations whar they come from.”

“I reckon they won’t go foolin’ with Clark’s boys again,” said Polly Ann, resuming a vigorous rubbing of the skillet. “Ye was tellin’ me about these fine folks ye fetched home.” She tossed her head in the direction of the open door, and I wondered if the fine folks were outside.

“Oh, ay,” said Tom, “they was comin’ this way, from the Carolinys. Jim Ray went out to look for a deer, and found ’em off ’n the trail. By the etarnal, they *was* tuckered. *He* was the wust, Jim said, lyin’ down on a bed of laurels she and the niggers made. She has sperrit, that woman. Jim fed him, and he got up. She wouldn’t eat nothin’, and made Jim put him on his hoss. She walked. I can’t mek out why them aristocrats wants to come to Kaintuckee. They’re a sight too tender.”

“Pore things!” said Polly Ann, compassionately. “So ye fetched ’em home.”

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“They hadn’t a place ter go,” said he, “and I reckoned ’twould give ’em time ter ketch breath, an’ turn around. I told ’em livin’ in Kaintuck was kinder rough.”

“Mercy!” said Polly Ann, “ter think that they was use’ ter silver spoons, and linen, and niggers ter wait on ’em. Tom, ye must shoot a turkey, and I’ll do my best to give ’em a good supper.” Tom rose obediently, and seized his coonskin hat. She stopped him with a word.

“Tom.”

“Ay?”

“Mayhap—mayhap Davy would know ’em. He’s been to Charlestown with the gentry there.”

“Mayhap,” agreed Tom. “Pore little deevil,” said he, “he’s hed a hard time.”

“He’ll be right again soon,” said Polly Ann. “He’s been sleepin’ that way, off and on, fer a week.” Her voice faltered into a note of tenderness as her eyes rested on me.

“I reckon we owe Davy a heap, Polly Ann,” said he.

I was about to interrupt, but Polly Ann’s next remark arrested me.

“Tom,” said she, “he oughter be eddicated.”

“Eddicated!” exclaimed Tom, with a kind of dismay.

“Yes, eddicated,” she repeated. “He ain’t like you and me. He’s different. He oughter be a lawyer, or somethin’.”

Tom reflected.

“Ay,” he answered, “the Colonel says that same thing. He oughter be sent over the mountain to git l’arnin’.”

“And we’ll be missing him sore,” said Polly Ann, with a sigh.

I wanted to speak then, but the words would not come.

“Whar hev they gone?” said Tom.

“To take a walk,” said Polly Ann, and laughed. “The gentry has sech fancies as that. Tom, I reckon I’ll fly over to Mrs. McCann’s an’ beg some of that prime bacon she has.”

Tom picked up his ride, and they went out together. I lay for a long time reflecting. To the strange guests whom Tom in the kindness of his heart had brought back and befriended I gave little attention. I was overwhelmed by the love which had just been revealed to me. And so I was to be educated. It had been in my mind these many years, but I had never spoken of it to Polly Ann. Dear Polly Ann! My eyes filled at the thought that she herself had determined upon this sacrifice.

There were footsteps at the door, and these I heard, and heeded not. Then there came a voice,—a woman's voice, modulated and trained in the perfections of speech and in the art of treating things lightly. At the sound of that voice I caught my breath.

"What a pastoral! Harry, if we have sought for virtue in the wilderness, we have found it."

"When have we ever sought for virtue, Sarah?"

It was the man who answered and stirred another chord of my memory.

"When, indeed!" said the woman; "'tis a luxury that is denied us, I fear me."

"Egad, we have run the gamut, all but that."

I thought the woman sighed.

"Our hosts are gone out," she said, "bless their simple souls! 'Tis Arcady, Harry, 'where thieves do not break in and steal.' That's Biblical, isn't it?" She paused, and joined in the man's laugh. "I remember—" She stopped abruptly.

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“Thieves!” said he, “not in our sense. And yet a fortnight ago this sylvan retreat was the scene of murder and sudden death.”

“Yes, Indians,” said the woman; “but they are beaten off and forgotten. Troubles do not last here. Did you see the boy? He’s in there, in the corner, getting well of a fearful hacking. Mrs. McChesney says he saved her and her brats.”

“Ay, McChesney told me,” said the man. “Let’s have a peep at him.”

In they came, and I looked on the woman, and would have leaped from my bed had the strength been in me. Superb she was, though her close-fitting travelling gown of green cloth was frayed and torn by the briers, and the beauty of her face enhanced by the marks of I know not what trials and emotions. Little, dark-pencilled lines under the eyes were nigh robbing these of the haughtiness I had once seen and hated. Set high on her hair was a curving, green hat with a feather, ill-suited to the wilderness.

I looked on the man. He was as ill-equipped as she. A London tailor must have cut his suit of gray. A single band of linen, soiled by the journey, was wound about his throat, and I remember oddly the buttons stuck on his knees and cuffs, and these silk-embroidered in a criss-cross pattern of lighter gray. Some had been torn off. As for his face, ’twas as handsome as ever, for dissipation sat well upon it.

My thoughts flew back to that day long gone when a friendless boy rode up a long drive to a pillared mansion. I saw again the picture. The horse with the craning neck, the liveried servant at the bridle, the listless young gentleman with the shiny boots reclining on the horse-block, and above him, under the portico, the grand lady whose laugh had made me sad. And I remembered, too, the wild, neglected lad who had been to me as a brother, warm-hearted and generous, who had shared what he had with a foundling, who had wept with me in my first great sorrow. Where was he?

For I was face to face once more with Mrs. Temple and Mr. Harry Riddle!

The lady started as she gazed at me, and her tired eyes widened. She clutched Mr. Riddle’s arm.

“Harry!” she cried, “Harry, he puts me in mind of—of some one—I cannot think.”

Mr. Riddle laughed nervously.

“There, there, Sally,” says he, “all brats resemble somebody. I have heard you say so a dozen times.”

She turned upon him an appealing glance.

“Oh!” she said, with a little catch of her breath, “is there no such thing as oblivion? Is there a place in the world that is not haunted? I am cursed with memory.”

“Or the lack of it,” answered Mr. Riddle, pulling out a silver snuff-box from his pocket and staring at it ruefully. “Damme, the snuff I fetched from Paris is gone, all but a pinch. Here is a real tragedy.”

“It was the same in Rome,” the lady continued, unheeding, “when we met the Izards, and at Venice that nasty Colonel Tarleton saw us at the opera. In London we must needs run into the Manners from Maryland. In Paris—”

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“In Paris we were safe enough,” Mr. Riddle threw in hastily.

“And why?” she flashed back at him.

He did not answer that.

“A truce with your fancies, madam,” said he. “Behold a soul of good nature! I have followed you through half the civilized countries of the globe—none of them are good enough. You must needs cross the ocean again, and come to the wilds. We nearly die on the trail, are picked up by a Samaritan in buckskin and taken into the bosom of his worthy family. And forsooth, you look at a backwoods urchin, and are nigh to swooning.”

“Hush, Harry,” she cried, starting forward and peering into my face; “he will hear you.”

“Tut!” said Harry, “what if he does? London and Paris are words to him. We might as well be speaking French. And I’ll take my oath he’s sleeping.”

The corner where I lay was dark, for the cabin had no windows. And if my life had depended upon speaking, I could have found no fit words then.

She turned from me, and her mood changed swiftly. For she laughed lightly, musically, and put a hand on his shoulder.

“Perchance I am ghost-ridden,” she said.

“They are not ghosts of a past happiness, at all events,” he answered.

She sat down on a stool before the hearth, and clasping her fingers upon her knee looked thoughtfully into the embers of the fire. Presently she began to speak in a low, even voice, he looking down at her, his feet apart, his hand thrust backward towards the heat.

“Harry,” she said, “do you remember all our contrivances? How you used to hold my hand in the garden under the table, while I talked brazenly to Mr. Mason? And how jealous Jack Temple used to get?” She laughed again, softly, always looking at the fire.

“Damnably jealous!” agreed Mr. Riddle, and yawned. “Served him devilish right for marrying you. And he was a blind fool for five long years.”

“Yes, blind,” the lady agreed. “How could he have been so blind? How well I recall the day he rode after us in the woods.”

“’Twas the parson told, curse him!” said Mr. Riddle. “We should have gone that night, if your courage had held.”

“My courage!” she cried, flashing a look upwards, “my foresight. A pretty mess we had made of it without my inheritance. ’Tis small enough, the Lord knows. In Europe we should have been dregs. We should have starved in the wilderness with you a-farming.”

He looked down at her curiously.

“Devilish queer talk,” said he, “but while we are in it, I wonder where Temple is now. He got aboard the King’s frigate with a price on his head. Williams told me he saw him in London, at White’s. Have—have you ever heard, Sarah?”

She shook her head, her glance returning to the ashes.

“No,” she answered.

“Faith,” says Mr. Riddle, “he’ll scarce turn up here.”

She did not answer that, but sat motionless.

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“He’ll scarce turn up here, in these wilds,” Mr. Riddle repeated, “and what I am wondering, Sarah, is how the devil we are to live here.”

“How do these good people live, who helped us when we were starving?”

Mr. Riddle flung his hand eloquently around the cabin. There was something of disgust in the gesture.

“You see!” he said, “love in a cottage.”

“But it is love,” said the lady, in a low tone.

He broke into laughter.

“Sally,” he cried, “I have visions of you gracing the board at which we sat to-day, patting journey-cakes on the hearth, stewing squirrel broth with the same pride that you once planned a rout. Cleaning the pots and pans, and standing anxious at the doorway staring through a sunbonnet for your lord and master.”

“My lord and master!” said the lady, and there was so much of scorn in the words that Mr. Riddle winced.

“Come,” he said, “I grant now that you could make pans shine like pier-glasses, that you could cook bacon to a turn—although I would have laid an hundred guineas against it some years ago. What then? Are you to be contented with four log walls? With the intellectual companionship of the McChesneys and their friends? Are you to depend for excitement upon the chances of having the hair neatly cut from your head by red fiends? Come, we’ll go back to the Rue St. Dominique, to the suppers and the card parties of the countess. We’ll be rid of regrets for a life upon which we have turned our backs forever.”

She shook her head, sadly.

“It’s no use, Harry,” said she, “we’ll never be rid of regrets.”

“We’ll never have a barony like Temple Bow, and races every week, and gentry round about. But, damn it, the Rebels have spoiled all that since the war.”

“Those are not the regrets I mean,” answered Mrs. Temple.

“What then, in Heaven’s name?” he cried. “You were not wont to be thus. But now I vow you go beyond me. What then?”

She did not answer, but sat leaning forward over the hearth, he staring at her in angry perplexity. A sound broke the afternoon stillness,—the pattering of small, bare feet on

the puncheons. A tremor shook the woman's shoulders, and little Tom stood before her, a quaint figure in a butternut smock, his blue eyes questioning. He laid a hand on her arm.

Then a strange thing happened. With a sudden impulse she turned and flung her arms about the boy and strained him to her, and kissed his brown hair. He struggled, but when she released him he sat very still on her knee, looking into her face. For he was a solemn child. The lady smiled at him, and there were two splashes like raindrops on her fair cheeks.

As for Mr. Riddle, he went to the door, looked out, and took a last pinch of snuff.

"Here is the mistress of the house coming back," he cried, "and singing like the shepherdess in the opera."

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It was Polly Ann indeed. At the sound of his mother's voice, little Tom jumped down from the lady's lap and ran past Mr. Riddle at the door. Mrs. Temple's thoughts were gone across the mountains.

"And what is that you have under your arm?" said Mr. Riddle, as he gave back.

"I've fetched some prime bacon fer your supper, sir," said Polly Ann, all rosy from her walk; "what I have ain't fit to give ye."

Mrs. Temple rose.

"My dear," she said, "what you have is too good for us. And if you do such a thing again, I shall be very angry.

"Lord, ma'am," exclaimed Polly Ann, "and you use' ter dainties an' silver an' linen! Tom is gone to try to git a turkey for ye." She paused, and looked compassionately at the lady. "Bless ye, ma'am, ye're that tuckered from the mountains! 'Tis a fearsome journey."

"Yes," said the lady, simply, "I am tired."

"Small wonder!" exclaimed Polly Ann. "To think what ye've been through—yere husband near to dyin' afore yere eyes, and ye a-reskin' yere own life to save him—so Tom tells me. When Tom goes out a-fightin' red-skins I'm that fidgety I can't set still. I wouldn't let him know what I feel fer the world. But well ye know the pain of it, who love yere husband like that."

The lady would have smiled bravely, had the strength been given her. She tried. And then, with a shudder, she hid her face in her hands.

"Oh, don't!" she exclaimed, "don't!"

Mr. Riddle went out.

"There, there, ma'am," she said, "I hedn't no right ter speak, and ye fair worn out." She drew her gently into a chair. "Set down, ma'am, and don't ye stir tell supper's ready." She brushed her eyes with her sleeve, and, stepping briskly to my bed, bent over me. "Davy," she said, "Davy, how be ye?"

"Davy!"

It was the lady's voice. She stood facing us, and never while I live shall I forget that which I saw in her eyes. Some resemblance it bore to the look of the hunted deer, but in the animal it is dumb, appealing. Understanding made the look of the woman terrible

to behold,— understanding, ay, and courage. For she did not lack this last quality. Polly Ann gave back in a kind of dismay, and I shivered.

“Yes,” I answered, “I am David Ritchie.”

“You—you dare to judge me!” she cried.

I knew not why she said this.

“To judge you?” I repeated.

“Yes, to judge me,” she answered. “I know you, David Ritchie, and the blood that runs in you. Your mother was a foolish—saint” (she laughed), “who lifted her eyebrows when I married her brother, John Temple. That was her condemnation of me, and it stung me more than had a thousand sermons. A doting saint, because she followed your father into the mountain wilds to her death for a whim of his. And your father. A Calvinist fanatic who had no mercy on sin, save for that particular weakness of his own—”

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“Stop, Mrs. Temple!” I cried, lifting up in bed. And to my astonishment she was silenced, looking at me in amazement. “You had your vengeance when I came to you, when you turned from me with a lift of your shoulders at the news of my father’s death. And now —”

“And now?” she repeated questioningly.

“Now I thought you were changed,” I said slowly, for the excitement was telling on me.

“You listened!” she said.

“I pitied you.”

“Oh, pity!” she cried. “My God, that you should pity me!” She straightened, and summoned all the spirit that was in her. “I would rather be called a name than have the pity of you and yours.”

“You cannot change it, Mrs. Temple,” I answered, and fell back on the nettle-bark sheets. “You cannot change it,” I heard myself repeating, as though it were another’s voice. And I knew that Polly Ann was bending over me and calling me.

* * * * * * *

“Where did they go, Polly Ann?” I asked.

“Acrost the Mississippi, to the lands of the Spanish King,” said Polly Ann.

“And where in those dominions?” I demanded.

“John Saunders took ’em as far as the Falls,” Polly Ann answered. “He ‘lowed they was goin’ to St. Louis. But they never said a word. I reckon they’ll be hunted as long as they live.”

I had thought of them much as I lay on my back recovering from the fever,—the fever for which Mrs. Temple was to blame. Yet I bore her no malice. And many other thoughts I had, probing back into childhood memories for the solving of problems there.

“I knowed ye come of gentlefolks, Davy,” Polly Ann had said when we talked together.

So I was first cousin to Nick, and nephew to that selfish gentleman, Mr. Temple, in whose affectionate care I had been left in Charlestown by my father. And my father? Who had he been? I remembered the speech that he had used and taught me, and how his neighbors had dubbed him “aristocrat.” But Mrs. Temple was gone, and it was not in likelihood that I should ever see her more.

CHAPTER III

WE GO TO DANVILLE

Two years went by, two uneventful years for me, two mighty years for Kentucky. Westward rolled the tide of emigrants to change her character, but to swell her power. Towns and settlements sprang up in a season and flourished, and a man could scarce keep pace with the growth of them. Doctors came, and ministers, and lawyers; generals and majors, and captains and subalterns of the Revolution, to till their grants and to found families. There were gentry, too, from the tide-waters, come to retrieve the fortunes which they had lost by their patriotism. There were storekeepers like Mr. Scarlett, adventurers and ne'er-do-weels who hoped to start with a clean slate, and a host of lazy vagrants who thought to scratch the soil and find abundance.

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I must not forget how, at the age of seventeen, I became a landowner, thanks to my name being on the roll of Colonel Clark's regiment. For, in a spirit of munificence, the Assembly of the Commonwealth of Virginia had awarded to every private in that regiment one hundred and eight acres of land on the Ohio River, north of the Falls. Sergeant Thomas McChesney, as a reward for his services in one of the severest campaigns in history, received a grant of two hundred and sixteen acres! You who will may look at the plat made by William Clark, Surveyor for the Board of Commissioners, and find sixteen acres marked for Thomas McChesney in Section 169, and two hundred more in Section 3. Section 3 fronted the Ohio some distance above Bear Grass Creek, and was, of course, on the Illinois shore. As for my own plots, some miles in the interior, I never saw them. But I own them to this day.

I mention these things as bearing on the story of my life, with which I must get on. And, therefore, I may not dwell upon this injustice to the men who won an empire and were flung a bone long afterwards.

It was early autumn once more, and such a busy week we had had at the mill, that Tom was perforce obliged to remain at home and help, though he longed to be gone with Cowan and Ray a-hunting to the southwest. Up rides a man named Jarrott, flings himself from his horse, passes the time of day as he watches the grinding, helps Tom to tie up a sack or two, and hands him a paper.

"What's this?" says Tom, staring at it blankly.

"Ye won't blame me, Mac," answers Mr. Jarrott, somewhat ashamed of his role of process-server. "'Tain't none of my doin's."

"Read it, Davy," said Tom, giving it to me.

I stopped the mill, and, unfolding the paper, read. I remember not the quaint wording of it, save that it was ill-spelled and ill-writ generally. In short, it was a summons for Tom to appear before the court at Danville on a certain day in the following week, and I made out that a Mr. Neville Colfax was the plaintiff in the matter, and that the suit had to do with land.

"Neville Colfax!" I exclaimed, "that's the man for whom Mr. Potts was agent."

"Ay, ay," said Tom, and sat him down on the meal-bags. "Drat the varmint, he kin hev the land."

"Hev the land?" cried Polly Ann, who had come in upon us. "Hev ye no sperrit, Tom McChesney?"

"There's no chance ag'in the law," said Tom, hopelessly. "Thar's Perkins had his land tuck away last year, and Terrell's moved out, and twenty more I could name. And thar's

Dan'l Boone, himself. Most the rich bottom he tuck up the critters hev got away from him."

"Ye'll go to Danville and take Davy with ye and fight it," answered Polly Ann, decidedly. "Davy has a word to say, I reckon. 'Twas he made the mill and scar't that Mr. Potts away. I reckon he'll git us out of this fix."

Mr. Jarrott applauded her courage.

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“Ye have the grit, ma’am,” he said, as he mounted his horse again. “Here’s luck to ye!”

The remembrance of Mr. Potts weighed heavily upon my mind during the next week. Perchance Tom would have to pay for this prank likewise. ’Twas indeed a foolish, childish thing to have done, and I might have known that it would only have put off the evil day of reckoning. Since then, by reason of the mill site and the business we got by it, the land had become the most valuable in that part of the country. Had I known Colonel Clark’s whereabouts, I should have gone to him for advice and comfort. As it was, we were forced to await the issue without counsel. Polly Ann and I talked it over many times while Tom sat, morose and silent, in a corner. He was the pioneer pure and simple, afraid of no man, red or white, in open combat, but defenceless in such matters as this.

“‘Tis Davy will save us, Tom,” said Polly Ann, “with the l’arnin’ he’s got while the corn was grindin’.”

I had, indeed, been reading at the mill while the hopper emptied itself, such odd books as drifted into Harrodstown. One of these was called “Bacon’s Abridgment”; it dealt with law and it puzzled me sorely.

“And the children,” Polly Ann continued,—“ye’ll not make me pick up the four of ’em, and pack it to Louisiana, because Mr. Colfax wants the land we’ve made for ourselves.”

There were four of them now, indeed,—the youngest still in the bark cradle in the corner. He bore a no less illustrious name than that of the writer of these chronicles.

It would be hard to say which was the more troubled, Tom or I, that windy morning we set out on the Danville trace. Polly Ann alone had been serene,—ay, and smiling and hopeful. She had kissed us each good-by impartially. And we left her, with a future governor of Kentucky on her shoulder, tripping lightly down to the mill to grind the McGarrys’ corn.

When the forest was cleared at Danville, Justice was housed first. She was not the serene, inexorable dame whom we have seen in pictures holding her scales above the jars of earth. Justice at Danville was a somewhat high-spirited, quarrelsome lady who decided matters oftenest with the stroke of a sword. There was a certain dignity about her temple withal,—for instance, if a judge wore linen, that linen must not be soiled. Nor was it etiquette for a judge to lay his own hands in chastisement on contemptuous persons, though Justice at Danville had more compassion than her sisters in older communities upon human failings.

There was a temple built to her “of hewed or sawed logs nine inches thick”—so said the specifications. Within the temple was a rude platform which served as a bar, and since Justice is supposed to carry a torch in her hand, there were no windows,—nor any

windows in the jail next door, where some dozen offenders languished on the afternoon that Tom and I rode into town.

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There was nothing auspicious in the appearance of Danville, and no man might have said then that the place was to be the scene of portentous conventions which were to decide the destiny of a State. Here was a sprinkling of log cabins, some in the building, and an inn, by courtesy so called. Tom and I would have preferred to sleep in the woods near by, with our feet to the blaze; this was partly from motives of economy, and partly because Tom, in common with other pioneers, held an inn in contempt. But to come back to our arrival.

It was a sunny and windy afternoon, and the leaves were flying in the air. Around the court-house was a familiar, buzzing scene,—the backwoodsmen, lounging against the wall or brawling over their claims, the sleek agents and attorneys, and half a dozen of a newer type. These were adventurous young gentlemen of family, some of them lawyers and some of them late officers in the Continental army who had been rewarded with grants of land. These were the patrons of the log tavern which stood near by with the blackened stumps around it, where there was much card-playing and roistering, ay, and even duelling, of nights.

“Thar’s Mac,” cried a backwoodsman who was sitting on the court-house steps as we rode up. “Howdy, Mac; be they tryin’ to git your land, too?”

“Howdy, Mac,” said a dozen more, paying a tribute to Tom’s popularity. And some of them greeted me.

“Is this whar they take a man’s land away?” says Tom, jerking his thumb at the open door.

Tom had no intention of uttering a witticism, but his words were followed by loud guffaws from all sides, even the lawyers joining in.

“I reckon this is the place, Tom,” came the answer.

“I reckon I’ll take a peep in thar,” said Tom, leaping off his horse and shouldering his way to the door. I followed him, curious. The building was half full. Two elderly gentlemen of grave demeanor sat on stools behind a puncheon table, and near them a young man was writing. Behind the young man was a young gentleman who was closing a speech as we entered, and he had spoken with such vehemence that the perspiration stood out on his brow. There was a murmur from those listening, and I saw Tom pressing his way to the front.

“Hev any of ye seen a feller named Colfax?” cries Tom, in a loud voice. “He says he owns the land I settled, and he ain’t ever seed it.”

There was a roar of laughter, and even the judges smiled.

“Whar is he?” cries Tom; “said he’d be here to-day.”

Another gust of laughter drowned his words, and then one of the judges got up and rapped on the table. The gentleman who had just made the speech glared mightily, and I supposed he had lost the effect of it.

“What do you mean by interrupting the court?” cried the judge. “Get out, sir, or I’ll have you fined for contempt.”

Tom looked dazed. But at that moment a hand was laid on his shoulder, and Tom turned.

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“Why,” says he, “thar’s no devil if it ain’t the Colonel. Polly Ann told me not to let ’em scar’ me, Colonel.”

“And quite right, Tom,” Colonel Clark answered, smiling. He turned to the judges. “If your Honors please,” said he, “this gentleman is an old soldier of mine, and unused to the ways of court. I beg your Honors to excuse him.”

The judges smiled back, and the Colonel led us out of the building.

“Now, Tom,” said he, after he had given me a nod and a kind word, “I know this Mr. Colfax, and if you will come into the tavern this evening after court, we’ll see what can be done. I have a case of my own at present.”

Tom was very grateful. He spent the remainder of the daylight hours with other friends of his, shooting at a mark near by, serenely confident of the result of his case now that Colonel Clark had a hand in it. Tom being one of the best shots in Kentucky, he had won two beaver skins before the early autumn twilight fell. As for me, I had an afternoon of excitement in the court, fascinated by the marvels of its procedures, by the impassioned speeches of its advocates, by the gravity of its judges. Ambition stirred within me.

The big room of the tavern was filled with men in heated talk over the day’s doings, some calling out for black betty, some for rum, and some demanding apple toddies. The landlord’s slovenly negro came in with candles, their feeble rays reenforcing the firelight and revealing the mud-chinked walls. Tom and I had barely sat ourselves down at a table in a corner, when in came Colonel Clark. Beside him was a certain swarthy gentleman whom I had noticed in the court, a man of some thirty-five years, with a fine, fleshy face and coal-black hair. His expression was not one to give us the hope of an amicable settlement,—in fact, he had the scowl of a thundercloud. He was talking quite angrily, and seemed not to heed those around him.

“Why the devil should I see the man, Clark?” he was saying.

The Colonel did not answer until they had stopped in front of us.

“Major Colfax,” said he, “this is Sergeant Tom McChesney, one of the best friends I have in Kentucky. I think a vast deal of Tom, Major. He was one of the few that never failed me in the Illinois campaign. He is as honest as the day; you will find him plain-spoken if he speaks at all, and I have great hopes that you will agree. Tom, the Major and I are boyhood friends, and for the sake of that friendship he has consented to this meeting.”

“I fear that your kind efforts will be useless, Colonel,” Major Colfax put in, rather tartly. “Mr. McChesney not only ignores my rights, but was near to hanging my agent.”

“What?” says Colonel Clark.

I glanced at Tom. However helpless he might be in a court, he could be counted on to stand up stanchly in a personal argument. His retorts would certainly not be brilliant, but they surely would be dogged. Major Colfax had begun wrong.

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“I reckon ye’ve got no rights that I know on,” said Tom. “I cleart the land and settled it, and I have a better right to it nor any man. And I’ve got a grant fer it.”

“A Henderson grant!” cried the Major; “’tis so much worthless paper.”

“I reckon it’s good enough fer me,” answered Tom. “It come from those who blazed their way out here and druv the redskins off. I don’t know nothin’ about this newfangled law, but ‘tis a queer thing to my thinkin’ if them that fit fer a place ain’t got the fust right to it.”

Major Colfax turned to Colonel Clark with marked impatience.

“I told you it would be useless, Clark,” said he. “I care not a fig for a few paltry acres, and as God hears me I’m a reasonable man.” (He did not look it then.) “But I swear by the evangels I’ll let no squatter have the better of me. I did not serve Virginia for gold or land, but I lost my fortune in that service, and before I know it these backwoodsmen will have every acre of my grant. It’s an old story,” said Mr. Colfax, hotly, “and why the devil did we fight England if it wasn’t that every man should have his rights? By God, I’ll not be frightened or wheedled out of mine. I sent an agent to Kentucky to deal politely and reasonably with these gentry. What did they do to him? Some of them threw him out neck and crop. And if I am not mistaken,” said Major Colfax, fixing a piercing eye upon Tom, “if I am not mistaken, it was this worthy sergeant of yours who came near to hanging him, and made the poor devil flee Kentucky for his life.”

This remark brought me near to an untimely laugh at the remembrance of Mr. Potts, and this though I was far too sober over the outcome of the conference. Colonel Clark seized hold of a chair and pushed it under Major Colfax.

“Sit down, gentlemen, we are not so far apart,” said the Colonel, coolly. The slovenly negro lad passing at that time, he caught him by the sleeve. “Here, boy, a bowl of toddy, quick. And mind you brew it strong. Now, Tom,” said he, “what is this fine tale about a hanging?”

“’Twan’t nothin’,” said Tom.

“You tell me you didn’t try to hang Mr. Potts!” cried Major Colfax.

“I tell you nothin’,” said Tom, and his jaw was set more stubbornly than ever.

Major Colfax glanced at Colonel Clark.

“You see!” he said a little triumphantly.

I could hold my tongue no longer.

“Major Colfax is unjust, sir,” I cried. “’Twas Tom saved the man from hanging.”

“Eh?” says Colonel Clark, turning to me sharply. “So you had a hand in this, Davy. I might have guessed as much.”

“Who the devil is this?” says Mr. Colfax.

“A sort of ward of mine,” answers the Colonel. “Drummer boy, financier, strategist, in my Illinois campaign. Allow me to present to you, Major, Mr. David Ritchie. When my men objected to marching through ice-skimmed water up to their necks, Mr. Ritchie showed them how.”

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“God bless my soul!” exclaimed the Major, staring at me from under his black eyebrows, “he was but a child.”

“With an old head on his shoulders,” said the Colonel, and his banter made me flush.

The negro boy arriving with the toddy, Colonel Clark served out three generous gourdfuls, a smaller one for me. “Your health, my friends, and I drink to a peaceful settlement.”

“You may drink to the devil if you like,” says Major Colfax, glaring at Tom.

“Come, Davy,” said Colonel Clark, when he had taken half the gourd, “let’s have the tale. I’ll warrant you’re behind this.”

I flushed again, and began by stammering. For I had a great fear that Major Colfax’s temper would fly into bits when he heard it.

“Well, sir,” said I, “I was grinding corn at the mill when the man came. I thought him a smooth-mannered person, and he did not give his business. He was just for wheedling me. ‘And was this McChesney’s mill?’ said he. ‘Ay,’ said I. ‘Thomas McChesney?’ ‘Ay,’ said I. Then he was all for praise of Thomas McChesney. ‘Where is he?’ said he. ’He is at the far pasture,’ said I,’ and may be looked for any moment.’ Whereupon he sits down and tries to worm out of me the business of the mill, the yield of the land. After that he begins to talk about the great people he knows, Sevier and Shelby and Robertson and Boone and the like. Ay, and his intimates, the Randolphs and the Popes and the Colfaxes in Virginia. ’Twas then I asked him if he knew Colonel Campbell of Abingdon.”

“And what deviltry was that?” demanded the Colonel, as he dipped himself more of the toddy.

“I’ll come to it, sir. Yes, Colonel Campbell was his intimate, and ranted if he did not tarry a week with him at Abingdon on his journeys. After that he follows me to the cabin, and sees Polly Ann and Tom and the children on the floor poking a ’possum. ‘Ah,’ says he, in his softest voice, ‘a pleasant family scene. And this is Mr. McChesney?’ ’I’m your man,’ says Tom. Then he praised the mill site and the land all over again. ‘Tis good enough for a farmer,’ says Tom. ’Who holds under Henderson’s grant,’ I cried. ’Twas that you wished to say an hour ago,’ and I saw I had caught him fair.”

“By the eternal!” cried Colonel Clark, bringing down his fist upon the table. “And what then?”

I glanced at Major Colfax, but for the life of me I could make nothing of his look.

“And what did your man say?” said Colonel Clark.

“He called on the devil to bite me, sir,” I answered. The Colonel put down his gourd and began to laugh. The Major was looking at me fixedly.

“And what then?” said the Colonel.

“It was then Polly Ann called him a thief to take away the land Tom had fought for and paid for and tilled. The man was all politeness once more, said that the matter was unfortunate, and that a new and good title might be had for a few skins.”

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“He said that?” interrupted Major Colfax, half rising in his chair. “He was a damned scoundrel.”

“So I thought, sir,” I answered.

“The devil you did!” said the Major.

“Tut, Colfax,” said the Colonel, pulling him by the sleeve of his greatcoat, “sit down and let the lad finish. And then?”

“Mr. Boone had told me of a land agent who had made off with Colonel Campbell’s silver spoons from Abingdon, and how the Colonel had ridden east and west after him for a week with a rope hanging on his saddle. I began to tell this story, and instead of the description of Mr. Boone’s man, I put in that of Mr. Potts,—in height some five feet nine, spare, of sallow complexion and a green greatcoat.”

Major Colfax leaped up in his chair.

“Great Jehovah!” he shouted, “you described the wrong man.”

Colonel Clark roared with laughter, thereby spilling some of his toddy.

“I’ll warrant he did so,” he cried; “and I’ll warrant your agent went white as birch bark. Go on, Davy.”

“There’s not a great deal more, sir,” I answered, looking apprehensively at Major Colfax, who still stood. “The man vowed I lied, but Tom laid hold of him and was for hurrying him off to Harrodstown at once.”

“Which would ill have suited your purpose,” put in the Colonel. “And what did you do with him?”

“We put him in a loft, sir, and then I told Tom that he was not Campbell’s thief at all. But I had a craving to scare the man out of Kentucky. So I rode off to the neighbors and gave them the tale, and bade them come after nightfall as though to hang Campbell’s thief, which they did, and they were near to smashing the door trying to get in the cabin. Tom told them the rascal had escaped, but they must needs come in and have jigs and toddies until midnight. When they were gone, and we called down the man from the loft, he was in such a state that he could scarce find the rungs of the ladder with his feet. He rode away into the night, and that was the last we heard of him. Tom was not to blame, sir.”

Colonel Clark was speechless. And when for the moment he would conquer his mirth, a glance at Major Colfax would set him off again in laughter. I was puzzled. I thought my Colonel more human than of old.

“How now, Colfax?” he cried, giving a poke to the Major’s ribs; “you hold the sequel to this farce.”

The Major’s face was purple,—with what emotion I could not say. Suddenly he swung full at me.

“Do you mean to tell me that you were the general of this hoax—you?” he demanded in a strange voice.

“The thing seemed an injustice to me, sir,” I replied in self-defence, “and the man a rascal.”

“A rascal!” cried the Major, “a knave, a poltroon, a simpleton! And he came to me with no tale of having been outwitted by a stripling.” Whereupon Major Colfax began to shake, gently at first, and presently he was in such a gale of laughter that I looked on him in amazement, Colonel Clark joining in again. The Major’s eye rested at length upon Tom, and gradually he grew calm.

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“McChesney,” said he, “we’ll have no bickerings in court among soldiers. The land is yours, and to-morrow my attorney shall give you a deed of it. Your hand, McChesney.”

The stubbornness vanished from Tom’s face, and there came instead a dazed expression as he thrust a great, hard hand into the Major’s.

“’Twan’t the land, sir,” he stammered; “these varmints of settlers is gittin’ thick as flies in July. ’Twas Polly Ann. I reckon I’m obleeged to ye, Major.”

“There, there,” said the Major, “I thank the Lord I came to Kentucky to see for myself. Damn the land. I have plenty more,—and little else.” He turned quizzically to Colonel Clark, revealing a line of strong, white teeth. “Suppose we drink a health to your drummer boy,” said he, lifting up his gourd.

CHAPTER IV

I CROSS THE MOUNTAINS ONCE MORE

“’Tis what ye’ve a right to, Davy,” said Polly Ann, and she handed me a little buckskin bag on which she had been sewing. I opened it with trembling fingers, and poured out, chinking on the table, such a motley collection of coins as was never seen,—Spanish milled dollars, English sovereigns and crowns and shillings, paper issues of the Confederacy, and I know not what else. Tom looked on with a grin, while little Tom and Peggy reached out their hands in delight, their mother vigorously blocking their intentions.

“Ye’ve earned it yerself,” said Polly Ann, forestalling my protest; “’tis what ye got by the mill, and I’ve laid it by bit by bit for yer eddication.”

“And what do you get?” I cried, striving by feigned anger to keep the tears back from my eyes. “Have you no family to support?”

“Faith,” she answered, “we have the mill that ye gave us, and the farm, and Tom’s rifle. I reckon we’ll fare better than ye think, tho’ we’ll miss ye sore about the place.”

I picked out two sovereigns from the heap, dropped them in the bag, and thrust it into my hunting shirt.

“There,” said I, my voice having no great steadiness, “not a penny more. I’ll keep the bag for your sake, Polly Ann, and I’ll take the mare for Tom’s.”

She had had a song on her lips ever since our coming back from Danville, seven days agone, a song on her lips and banter on her tongue, as she made me a new hunting

shirt and breeches for the journey across the mountains. And now with a sudden movement she burst into tears and flung her arms about my neck.

“Oh, Davy, ’tis no time to be stubborn,” she sobbed, “and eddication is a costly thing. Ever sence I found ye on the trace, years ago, I’ve thought of ye one day as a great man. And when ye come back to us so big and l’arned, I’d wish to be saying with pride that I helped ye.”

“And who else, Polly Ann?” I faltered, my heart racked with the parting. “You found me a homeless waif, and you gave me a home and a father and mother.”

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“Davy, ye’ll not forget us when ye’re great, I know ye’ll not. Tis not in ye.”

She stood back and smiled at me through her tears. The light of heaven was in that smile, and I have dreamed of it even since age has crept upon me. Truly, God sets his own mark on the pure in heart, on the unselfish.

I glanced for the last time around the rude cabin, every timber of which was dedicated to our sacrifices and our love: the fireplace with its rough stones, on the pegs the quaint butternut garments which Polly Ann had stitched, the baby in his bark cradle, the rough bedstead and the little trundle pushed under it,—and the very homely odor of the place is dear to me yet. Despite the rigors and the dangers of my life here, should I ever again find such happiness and peace in the world? The children clung to my knees; and with a “God bless ye, Davy, and come back to us,” Tom squeezed my hand until I winced with pain. I leaped on the mare, and with blinded eyes rode down the familiar trail, past the mill, to Harrodsburg.

There Mr. Neville Colfax was waiting to take me across the mountains.

There is a story in every man’s life, like the kernel in the shell of a hickory nut. I am ill acquainted with the arts of a biographer, but I seek to give in these pages little of the shell and the whole of the kernel of mine. ’Twould be unwise and tiresome to recount the journey over the bare mountains with my new friend and benefactor. He was a strange gentleman, now jolly enough to make me shake with laughter and forget the sorrow of my parting, now moody for a night and a day; now he was all sweetness, now all fire; now he was abstemious, now self-indulgent and prodigal. He had a will like flint, and under it a soft heart. Cross his moods, and he hated you. I never thought to cross them, therefore he called me Davy, and his friendliness grew with our journey. His anger turned against rocks and rivers, landlords and emigrants, but never against me. And for this I was silently thankful.

And how had he come to take me over the mountains, and to put me in the way of studying law? Mindful of the kernel of my story, I have shortened the chapter to tell you out of the proper place. Major Colfax had made Tom and me sup with himself and Colonel Clark at the inn in Danville. And so pleased had the Major professed himself with my story of having outwitted his agent, that he must needs have more of my adventures. Colonel Clark gave him some, and Tom,—his tongue loosed by the toddy,—others. And the Colonel added to the debt I owed him by suggesting that Major Colfax take me to Virginia and recommend me to a lawyer there.

“Nay,” cried the Major, “I will do more. I like the lad, for he is modest despite the way you have paraded him. I have an uncle in Richmond, Judge Wentworth, to whom I will take him in person. And when the Judge has done with him, if he is not flayed and tattooed with Blackstone, you may flay and tattoo me.”

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Thus did I break through my environment. And it was settled that I should meet the Major in seven days at Harrodstown.

Once in the journey did the Major make mention of a subject which had troubled me.

“Davy,” said he, “Clark has changed. He is not the same man he was when I saw him in Williamsburg demanding supplies for his campaign.”

“Virginia has used him shamefully, sir,” I answered, and suddenly there came flooding to my mind things I had heard the Colonel say in the campaign.

“Commonwealths have short memories,” said the Major, “they will accept any sacrifice with a smile. Shakespeare, I believe, speaks of royal ingratitude—he knew not commonwealths. Clark was close-lipped once, not given to levity and—to toddy. There, there, he is my friend as well as yours, and I will prove it by pushing his cause in Virginia. Is yours Scotch anger? Then the devil fend me from it. A monarch would have given him fifty thousand acres on the Wabash, a palace, and a sufficient annuity. Virginia has given him a sword, eight thousand wild acres to be sure, repudiated the debts of his army, and left him to starve. Is there no room for a genius in our infant military establishment?”

At length, as Christmas drew near, we came to Major Colfax’s seat, some forty miles out of the town of Richmond. It was called Neville’s Grange, the Major’s grandfather having so named it when he came out from England some sixty years before. It was a huge, rambling, draughty house of wood,—mortgaged, so the Major cheerfully informed me, thanks to the patriotism of the family. At Neville’s Grange the Major kept a somewhat roisterous bachelor’s hall. The place was overrun with negroes and dogs, and scarce a night went by that there was not merrymaking in the house with the neighbors. The time passed pleasantly enough until one frosty January morning Major Colfax had a twinge of remembrance, cried out for horses, took me into Richmond, and presented me to that very learned and decorous gentleman, Judge Wentworth.

My studies began within the hour of my arrival.

CHAPTER V

I MEET AN OLD BEDFELLOW

I shall burden no one with the dry chronicles of a law office. The acquirement of learning is a slow process in life, and perchance a slower one in the telling. I lacked not application during the three years of my stay in Richmond, and to earn my living I worked at such odd tasks as came my way.

The Judge resembled Major Colfax in but one trait: he was choleric. But he was painstaking and cautious, and I soon found out that he looked askance upon any one whom his nephew might recommend. He liked the Major, but he vowed him to be a roisterer and spendthrift, and one day, some months after my advent, the Judge asked me flatly how I came to fall in with Major Colfax. I told him. At the end of this conversation he took my breath away by bidding me

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come to live with him. Like many lawyers of that time, he had a little house in one corner of his grounds for his office. It stood under great spreading trees, and there I was wont to sit through many a summer day wrestling with the authorities. In the evenings we would have political arguments, for the Confederacy was in a seething state between the Federalists and the Republicans over the new Constitution, now ratified. Between the Federalists and the Jacobins, I would better say, for the virulence of the French Revolution was soon to be reflected among the parties on our side. Kentucky, swelled into an unmanageable territory, was come near to rebellion because the government was not strong enough to wrest from Spain the free navigation of the Mississippi.

And yet I yearned to go back, and looked forward eagerly to the time when I should have stored enough in my head to gain admission to the bar. I was therefore greatly embarrassed, when my examinations came, by an offer from Judge Wentworth to stay in Richmond and help him with his practice. It was an offer not to be lightly set aside, and yet I had made up my mind. He flew into a passion because of my desire to return to a wild country of outlaws and vagabonds.

“Why, damme,” he cried, “Kentucky and this pretty State of Franklin which desired to chip off from North Carolina are traitorous places. Disloyal to Congress! Intriguing with a Spanish minister and the Spanish governor of Louisiana to secede from their own people and join the King of Spain. Bah!” he exclaimed, “if our new Federal Constitution is adopted I would hang Jack Sevier of Franklin and your Kentuckian Wilkinson to the highest trees west of the mountains.”

I can see the little gentleman as he spoke, his black broadcloth coat and lace ruffles, his hand clutching the gold head of his cane, his face screwed up with indignation under his white wig. It was on a Sunday, and he was standing by the lilac bushes on the lawn in front of his square brick house.

“David,” said he, more calmly, “I trust I have taught you something besides the law. I trust I have taught you that a strong Federal government alone will be the salvation of our country.”

“You cannot blame Kentucky greatly, sir,” said I, feeling that I must stand up for my friends. “The Federal government has done little enough for its people, and treated them to a deal of neglect. They won that western country for themselves with no Federal nor Virginia or North Carolina troops to help them. No man east of the mountains knows what that fight has been. No man east of the mountains knows the horror of that Indian warfare. This government gives them no protection now. Nay, Congress cannot even procure for them an outlet for their commerce. They must trade or perish. Spain closes the Mississippi, arrests our merchants, seizes their goods, and

often throws them into prison. No wonder they scorn the Congress as weak and impotent."

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The Judge stared at me aghast. It was the first time I had dared oppose him on this subject.

“What,” he sputtered, “what? You are a Separatist,—you whom I have received into the bosom of my family!” Seizing the cane at the middle, he brandished it in my face.

“Don’t misunderstand me, sir,” said I. “You have given me books to read, and have taught me what may be the destiny of our nation on this continent. But you must forgive a people whose lives have been spent in a fierce struggle for their homes, whose families have nearly all lost some member by massacre, who are separated by hundreds of miles of wilderness from you.”

He looked at me speechless, and turned and walked into the house. I thought I had sinned past forgiveness, and I was beyond description uncomfortable, for he had been like a parent to me. But the next morning, at half after seven, he walked into the little office and laid down some gold pieces on my table. Gold was very scarce in those days.

“They are for your journey, David,” said he. “My only comfort in your going back is that you may grow up to put some temperance into their wild heads. I have a commission for you at Jonesboro, in what was once the unspeakable State of Franklin. You can stop there on your way to Kentucky.” He drew from his pocket a great bulky letter, addressed to “Thomas Wright, Esquire, Barrister-at-law in Jonesboro, North Carolina.” For the good gentleman could not bring himself to write Franklin.

It was late in September of the year 1788 when I set out on my homeward way—for Kentucky was home to me. I was going back to Polly Ann and Tom, and visions of that home-coming rose before my eyes as I rode. In a packet in my saddle-bags were some dozen letters which Mr. Wrenn, the schoolmaster at Harrodstown, had writ at Polly Ann’s bidding. I have the letters yet. For Mr. Wrenn was plainly an artist, and had set down on the paper the words just as they had flowed from her heart. Ay, and there was news in the letters, though not surprising news among those pioneer families whom God blessed so abundantly. Since David Ritchie McChesney (I mention the name with pride) had risen above the necessities of a bark cradle, two more had succeeded him, a brother and a sister. I spurred my horse onward, and thought impatiently of the weary leagues between my family and me.

I have often pictured myself on that journey. I was twenty-one years of age, though one would have called me older. My looks were nothing to boast of, and I was grown up tall and weedy, so that I must have made quite a comical sight, with my long legs dangling on either side of the pony. I wore a suit of gray homespun, and in my saddle-bags I carried four precious law books, the stock in trade which my generous patron had given me. But as I mounted the slopes of the mountains my spirits rose too at the prospect of the life before me. The woods were all aflame with color, with wine and amber and

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gold, and the hills wore the misty mantle of shadowy blue so dear to my youthful memory. As I left the rude taverns of a morning and jogged along the heights, I watched the vapors rise and troll away from the valleys far beneath, and saw great flocks of ducks and swans and cackling geese darkening the air in their southward flight. Strange that I fell in with no company, for the trail leading into the Tennessee country was widened and broadened beyond belief, and everywhere I came upon blackened fires and abandoned lean-tos, and refuse bones gnawed by the wolves and bleached by the weather. I slept in some of these lean-tos, with my fire going brightly, indifferent to the howl of wolves in chase or the scream of a panther pouncing on its prey. For I was born of the wilderness. It had no terrors for me, nor did I ever feel alone. The great cliffs with their clinging, gnarled trees, the vast mountains clothed in the motley colors of the autumn, the sweet and smoky smell of the Indian summer,—all were dear to me.

As I drew near to Jonesboro my thoughts began to dwell upon that strange and fascinating man who had entertained Polly Ann and Tom and me so lavishly on our way to Kentucky,—Captain John Sevier. For he had made a great noise in the world since then, and the wrath of such men as my late patron was heavy upon him. Yes, John Sevier, Nollichucky Jack, had been a king in all but name since I had seen him, the head of such a principality as stirred the blood to read about. It comprised the Watauga settlement among the mountains of what is now Tennessee, and was called prosaically (as is the wont of the Anglo-Saxon) the free State of Franklin. There were certain conservative and unimaginative souls in this mountain principality who for various reasons held their old allegiance to the State of North Carolina. One Colonel Tipton led these loyalist forces, and armed partisans of either side had for some years ridden up and down the length of the land, burning and pillaging and slaying. We in Virginia had heard of two sets of courts in Franklin, of two sets of legislators. But of late the rumor had grown persistently that Nollichucky Jack was now a kind of fugitive, and that he had passed the summer pleasantly enough fighting Indians in the vicinity of Nick-a-jack Cave.

It was court day as I rode into the little town of Jonesboro, the air sparkling like a blue diamond over the mountain crests, and I drew deep into my lungs once more the scent of the frontier life I had loved so well. In the streets currents of excited men flowed and backed and eddied, backwoodsmen and farmers in the familiar hunting shirts of hide or homespun, and lawyers in dress less rude. A line of horses stood kicking and switching their tails in front of the log tavern, rough carts and wagons had been left here and there with their poles on the ground, and between these, piles of skins were heaped up and bags of corn and grain. The log meeting-house was deserted, but the court-house was the centre of such a swirling crowd as I had often seen at Harrodstown. Now there are brawls and brawls, and I should have thought with shame of my Kentucky bringing-up had I not perceived that this was no ordinary court day, and that an unusual excitement was in the wind.

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Tying my horse, and making my way through the press in front of the tavern door, I entered the common room, and found it stifling, brawling and drinking going on apace. Scarce had I found a seat before the whole room was emptied by one consent, all crowding out of the door after two men who began a rough-and-tumble fight in the street. I had seen rough-and-tumble fights in Kentucky, and if I have forborne to speak of them it is because there always has been within me a loathing for them. And so I sat quietly in the common room until the landlord came. I asked him if he could direct me to Mr. Wright's house, as I had a letter for that gentleman. His answer was to grin at me incredulously.

"I reckoned you wah'nt from these parts," said he. "Wright's-out o' town."

"What is the excitement?" I demanded.

He stared at me.

"Nollichucky Jack's been heah, in Jonesboro, young man," said he.

"What," I exclaimed, "Colonel Sevier?"

"Ay, Sevier," he repeated. "With Martin and Tipton and all the Caroliny men right heah, having a council of mility officers in the court-house, in rides Jack with his frontier boys like a whirlwind. He bean't afeard of 'em, and a bench warrant out ag'in him for high treason. Never seed sech a recklessness. Never had sech a jamboree sence I kept the tavern. They was in this here room most of the day, and they was five fights before they set down to dinner."

"And Colonel Tipton?" I said.

"Oh, Tipton," said he, "he hain't afeard neither, but he hain't got men enough."

"And where is Sevier now?" I demanded.

"How long hev you ben in town?" was his answer.

I told him.

"Wal," said he, shifting his tobacco from one sallow cheek to the other, "I reckon he and his boys rud out just afore you come in. Mark me," he added, "when I tell ye there'll be trouble yet. Tipton and Martin and the Caroliny folks is burnin' mad with Chucky Jack for the murder of Corn Tassel and other peaceful chiefs. But Jack hez a wild lot with him,—some of the Nollichucky Cave traders, and there's one young lad that looks like he was a gentleman once. I reckon Jack himself wouldn't like to get into a fight with him. He's a wild one. Great Goliah," he exclaimed, running to the door, "ef thar ain't a-goin' to be another fight! Never seed sech a day in Jonesboro."

I likewise ran to the door, and this fight interested me. There was a great, black-bearded mountaineer- farmer- desperado in the midst of a circle, pouring out a torrent of abuse at a tall young man.

“That thar’s Hump Gibson,” said the landlord, genially pointing out the black-bearded ruffian, “and the young lawyer feller hez git a jedgment ag’in him. He’s got spunk, but I reckon Hump’ll t’ar the innards out’n him ef he stands thar a great while.”

“Ye’ll git jedgment ag’in me, ye Caroliny splinter, will ye?” yelled Mr. Gibson, with an oath. “I’ll pay Bill Wilder the skins when I git ready, and all the pinhook lawyers in Washington County won’t budge me a mite.”

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“You’ll pay Bill Wilder or go to jail, by the eternal,” cried the young man, quite as angrily, whereupon I looked upon him with a mixture of admiration and commiseration, with a gulping certainty in my throat that I was about to see murder done. He was a strange young man, with the rare marked look that would compel even a poor memory to pick him out again. For example, he was very tall and very slim, with red hair blown every which way over a high and towering forehead that seemed as long as the face under it. The face, too, was long, and all freckled by the weather. The blue eyes held me in wonder, and these blazed with such prodigious wrath that, if a look could have killed, Hump Gibson would have been stricken on the spot. Mr. Gibson was, however, very much alive.

“Skin out o’ here afore I kill ye,” he shouted, and he charged at the slim young man like a buffalo, while the crowd held its breath. I, who had looked upon cruel sights in my day, was turning away with a kind of sickening when I saw the slim young man dodge the rush. He did more. With two strides of his long legs he reached the fence, ripped off the topmost rail, and his huge antagonist, having changed his direction and coming at him with a bellow, was met with the point of a scantling in the pit of his stomach, and Mr. Gibson fell heavily to the ground. It had all happened in a twinkling, and there was a moment’s lull while the minds of the onlookers needed readjustment, and then they gave vent to ecstasies of delight.

“Great Goliah!” cried the landlord, breathlessly, “he shet him up jest like a jack-knife.”

Awe-struck, I looked at the tall young man, and he was the very essence of wrath. Unmindful of the plaudits, he stood brandishing the fence-rail over the great, writhing figure on the ground. And he was slobbering. I recall that this fact gave a twinge to something in my memory.

“Come on, Hump Gibson,” he cried, “come on!”—at which the crowd went wild with pure joy. Witticisms flew.

“Thought ye was goin’ to eat ’im up, Hump?” said a friend.

“Ye ain’t hed yer meal yet, Hump,” reminded another.

Mr. Hump Gibson arose slowly out of the dust, yet he did not stand straight.

“Come on, come on!” cried the young lawyer-fellow, and he thrust the point of the rail within a foot of Mr. Gibson’s stomach.

“Come on, Hump!” howled the crowd, but Mr. Gibson stood irresolute. He lacked the supreme test of courage which was demanded on this occasion. Then he turned and walked away very slowly, as though his pace might mitigate in some degree the shame

of his retreat. The young man flung away the fence-rail, and, thrusting aside the overzealous among his admirers, he strode past me into the tavern, his anger still hot.

“Hooray fer Jackson!” they shouted. “Hooray fer Andy Jackson!”

Andy Jackson! Then I knew. Then I remembered a slim, wild, sandy-haired boy digging his toes in the red mud long ago at the Waxhaws Settlement. And I recalled with a smile my own fierce struggle at the schoolhouse with the same boy, and how his slobbering had been my salvation. I turned and went in after him with the landlord, who was rubbing his hands with glee.

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“I reckon Hump won’t come crowin’ round heah any more co’t days, Mr. Jackson,” said our host.

But Mr. Jackson swept the room with his eyes and then glared at the landlord so that he gave back.

“Where’s my man?” he demanded.

“Your man, Mr. Jackson?” stammered the host.

“Great Jehovah!” cried Mr. Jackson, “I believe he’s afraid to race. He had a horse that could show heels to my Nancy, did he? And he’s gone, you say?”

A light seemed to dawn on the landlord’s countenance.

“God bless ye, Mr. Jackson!” he cried, “ye don’t mean that young daredevil that was with Sevier?”

“With Sevier?” says Jackson.

“Ay,” says the landlord; “he’s been a-fightin with Sevier all summer, and I reckon he ain’t afeard of nothin’ any more than you. Wait—his name was Temple—Nick Temple, they called him.”

“Nick Temple!” I cried, starting forward.

“Where’s he gone?” said Mr. Jackson. “He was going to bet me a six-forty he has at Nashboro that his horse could beat mine on the Greasy Cove track. Where’s he gone?”

“Gone!” said the landlord, apologetically, “Nollichucky Jack and his boys left town an hour ago.”

“Is he a man of honor or isn’t he?” said Mr. Jackson, fiercely.

“Lord, sir, I only seen him once, but I’d stake my oath on it.

“Do you mean to say Mr. Temple has been here—Nicholas Temple?” I said.

The bewildered landlord turned towards me helplessly.

“Who the devil are you, sir?” cried Mr. Jackson.

“Tell me what this Mr. Temple was like,” said I.

The landlord’s face lighted up.

“Faith, a thoroughbred hoss,” says he; “sech nostrils, and sech a gray eye with the devil in it fer go—yellow ha’r, and ez tall ez Mr. Jackson heah.”

“And you say he’s gone off again with Sevier?”

“They rud into town” (he lowered his voice, for the room was filling), “snapped their fingers at Tipton and his warrant, and rud out ag’in. My God, but that was like Nollichucky Jack. Say, stranger, when your Mr. Temple smiled—”

“He is the man!” I cried; “tell me where to find him.”

Mr. Jackson, who had been divided between astonishment and impatience and anger, burst out again.

“What the devil do you mean by interfering with my business, sir?”

“Because it is my business too,” I answered, quite as testily; “my claim on Mr. Temple is greater than yours.”

“By Jehovah!” cried Jackson, “come outside, sir, come outside!”

The landlord backed away, and the men in the tavern began to press around us expectantly.

“Gallop into him, Andy!” cried one.

“Don’t let him git near no fences, stranger,” said another.

Mr. Jackson turned on this man with such truculence that he edged away to the rear of the room.

“Step out, sir,” said Mr. Jackson, starting for the door before I could reply. I followed perforce, not without misgivings, the crowd pushing eagerly after. Before we reached the dusty street Jackson began pulling off his coat. In a trice the shouting onlookers had made a ring, and we stood facing each other, he in his shirt-sleeves.

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“We’ll fight fair,” said he, his lips wetting.

“Very good,” said I, “if you are still accustomed to this hasty manner. You have not asked my name, my standing, nor my reasons for wanting Mr. Temple.”

I know not whether it was what I said that made him stare, or how I said it.

“Pistols, if you like,” said he.

“No,” said I; “I am in a hurry to find Mr. Temple. I fought you this way once, and it’s quicker.”

“You fought me this way once?” he repeated. The noise of the crowd was hushed, and they drew nearer to hear.

“Come, Mr. Jackson,” said I, “you are a lawyer and a gentleman, and so am I. I do not care to be beaten to a pulp, but I am not afraid of you. And I am in a hurry. If you will step back into the tavern, I will explain to you my reasons for wishing to get to Mr. Temple.”

Mr. Jackson stared at me the more.

“By the eternal,” said he, “you are a cool man. Give me my coat,” he shouted to the bystanders, and they helped him on with it. “Now,” said he, as they made to follow him, “keep back. I would talk to this gentleman. By the heavens,” he cried, when he had gained the room, “I believe you are not afraid of me. I saw it in your eyes.”

Then I laughed.

“Mr. Jackson,” said I, “doubtless you do not remember a homeless boy named David whom you took to your uncle’s house in the Waxhaws—”

“I do,” he exclaimed, “as I live I do. Why, we slept together.”

“And you stumped your toe getting into bed and swore,” said I.

At that he laughed so heartily that the landlord came running across the room.

“And we fought together at the Old Fields School. Are you that boy?” and he scanned me again. “By God, I believe you are.” Suddenly his face clouded once more.

“But what about Temple?” said he.

“Ah,” I answered, “I come to that quickly. Mr. Temple is my cousin. After I left your uncle’s house my father took me to Charlestown.”

“Is he a Charlestown Temple?” demanded Mr. Jackson. “For I spent some time gambling and horse-racing with the gentry there, and I know many of them. I was a wild lad” (I repeat his exact words), “and I ran up a bill in Charlestown that would have filled a folio volume. Faith, all I had left me was the clothes on my back and a good horse. I made up my mind one night that if I could pay my debts and get out of Charlestown I would go into the back country and study law and sober down. There was a Mr. Braiden in the ordinary who staked me two hundred dollars at rattle-and-snap against my horse. Gad, sir, that was providence. I won. I left Charlestown with honor, I studied law at Salisbury in North Carolina, and I have come here to practise it.”

“You seem to have the talent,” said I, smiling at the remembrance of the Hump Gibson incident.

“That is my history in a nutshell,” said Mr. Jackson.

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“And now,” he added, “since you are Mr. Temple’s cousin and friend and an old acquaintance of mine to boot, I will tell you where I think he is.”

“Where is that?” I asked eagerly.

“I’ll stake a cowbell that Sevier will stop at the Widow Brown’s,” he replied. “I’ll put you on the road. But mind you, you are to tell Mr. Temple that he is to come back here and race me at Greasy Cove.”

“I’ll warrant him to come,” said I.

Whereupon we left the inn together, more amicably than before. Mr. Jackson had a thoroughbred horse near by that was a pleasure to see, and my admiration of his mount seemed to set me as firmly in Mr. Jackson’s esteem again as that gentleman himself sat in the saddle. He was as good as his word, rode out with me some distance on the road, and reminded me at the last that Nick was to race him.

CHAPTER VI

THE WIDOW BROWN’S

It was not to my credit that I should have lost the trail, after Mr. Jackson put me straight. But the night was dark, the country unknown to me, and heavily wooded and mountainous. In addition to these things my mind ran like fire. My thoughts sometimes flew back to the wondrous summer evening when I trod the Nollichucky trace with Tom and Polly Ann, when I first looked down upon the log palace of that prince of the border, John Sevier. Well I remembered him, broad-shouldered, handsome, gay, a courtier in buckskin. Small wonder he was idolized by the Watauga settlers, that he had been their leader in the struggle of Franklin for liberty. And small wonder that Nick Temple should be in his following.

Nick! My mind was in a torment concerning him. What of his mother? Should I speak of having seen her? I went blindly through the woods for hours after the night fell, my horse stumbling and weary, until at length I came to a lonely clearing on the mountain side, and a fierce pack of dogs dashed barking at my horse’s heels. There was a dark cabin ahead, indistinct in the starlight, and there I knocked until a gruff voice answered me and a tousled man came to the door. Yes, I had missed the trail. He shook his head when I asked for the Widow Brown’s, and bade me share his bed for the night. No, I would go on, I was used to the backwoods. Thereupon he thawed a little, kicked the dogs, and pointed to where the mountain dipped against the star-studded sky. There was a trail there which led direct to the Widow Brown’s, if I could follow it. So I left him.

Once the fear had settled deeply of missing Nick at the Widow Brown’s, I put my mind on my journey, and thanks to my early training I was able to keep the trail. It doubled

around the spurs, forded stony brooks in diagonals, and often in the darkness of the mountain forest I had to feel for the blazes on the trees. There was no making time. I gained the notch with the small hours of the morning, started on with the descent, crisscrossing, following a stream here and a stream there, until at length the song of the higher waters ceased and I knew that I was in the valley. Suddenly there was no crown-cover over my head. I had gained the road once more, and I followed it hopefully, avoiding the stumps and the deep wagon ruts where the ground was spongy.

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The morning light revealed a milky mist through which the trees showed like phantoms. Then there came stains upon the mist of royal purple, of scarlet, of yellow like a mandarin's robe, peeps of deep blue fading into azure as the mist lifted. The fiery eye of the sun was cocked over the crest, and beyond me I saw a house with its logs all golden brown in the level rays, the withered cornstalks orange among the blackened stumps. My horse stopped of his own will at the edge of the clearing. A cock crew, a lean hound prostrate on the porch of the house rose to his haunches, sniffed, growled, leaped down, and ran to the road and sniffed again. I listened, startled, and made sure of the distant ring of many hoofs. And yet I stayed there, irresolute. Could it be Tipton and his men riding from Jonesboro to capture Sevier? The hoof-beats grew louder, and then the hound in the road gave tongue to the short, sharp bark that is the call to arms. Other dogs, hitherto unseen, took up the cry, and turning in my saddle I saw a body of men riding hard at me through the alley in the forest. At their head, on a heavy, strong-legged horse, was one who might have stood for the figure of turbulence, and I made no doubt that this was Colonel Tipton himself,—Colonel Tipton, once secessionist, now champion of the Old North State and arch-enemy of John Sevier. At sight of me he reined up so violently that his horse went back on his haunches, and the men behind were near overriding him.

"Look out, boys," he shouted, with a fierce oath, "they've got guards out!" He flung back one hand to his holster for a pistol, while the other reached for the powder flask at his belt. He primed the pan, and, seeing me immovable, set his horse forward at an amble, his pistol at the cock.

"Who in hell are you?" he cried.

"A traveller from Virginia," I answered.

"And what are you doing here?" he demanded, with another oath.

"I have just this moment come here," said I, as calmly as I might. "I lost the trail in the darkness."

He glared at me, purpling, perplexed.

"Is Sevier there?" said he, pointing at the house.

"I don't know," said I.

Tipton turned to his men, who were listening.

"Surround the house," he cried, "and watch this fellow."

I rode on perforce towards the house with Tipton and three others, while his men scattered over the corn-field and cursed the dogs. And then we saw in the open door

the figure of a woman shading her eyes with her hand. We pulled up, five of us, before the porch in front of her.

“Good morning, Mrs. Brown,” said Tipton, gruffly.

“Good morning, Colonel,” answered the widow.

Tipton leaped from his horse, flung the bridle to a companion, and put his foot on the edge of the porch to mount. Then a strange thing happened. The lady turned deftly, seized a chair from within, and pulled it across the threshold. She sat herself down firmly, an expression on her face which hinted that the late lamented Mr. Brown had been a dominated man. Colonel Tipton stopped, staggering from the very impetus of his charge, and gazed at her blankly.

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“I have come for Colonel Sevier,” he blurted. And then, his anger rising, “I will have no trifling, ma’am. He is in this house.”

“La! you don’t tell me,” answered the widow, in a tone that was wholly conversational.

“He is in this house,” shouted the Colonel.

“I reckon you’ve guessed wrong, Colonel,” said the widow.

There was an awkward pause until Tipton heard a titter behind him. Then his wrath exploded.

“I have a warrant against the scoundrel for high treason,” he cried, “and, by God, I will search the house and serve it.”

Still the widow sat tight. The Rock of Ages was neither more movable nor calmer than she.

“Surely, Colonel, you would not invade the house of an unprotected female.”

The Colonel, evidently with a great effort, throttled his wrath for the moment. His new tone was apologetic but firm.

“I regret to have to do so, ma’am,” said he, “but both sexes are equal before the law.”

“The law!” repeated the widow, seemingly tickled at the word. She smiled indulgently at the Colonel. “What a pity, Mr. Tipton, that the law compels you to arrest such a good friend of yours as Colonel Sevier. What self-sacrifice, Colonel Tipton! What nobility!”

There was a second titter behind him, whereat he swung round quickly, and the crimson veins in his face looked as if they must burst. He saw me with my hand over my mouth.

“You warned him, damn you!” he shouted, and turning again leaped to the porch and tried to squeeze past the widow into the house.

“How dare you, sir?” she shrieked, giving him a vigorous push backwards. The four of us, his three men and myself, laughed outright. Tipton’s rage leaped its bounds. He returned to the attack again and again, and yet at the crucial moment his courage would fail him and he would let the widow thrust him back. Suddenly I became aware that there were two new spectators of this comedy. I started and looked again, and was near to crying out at sight of one of them. The others did cry out, but Tipton paid no heed.

Ten years had made his figure more portly, but I knew at once the man in the well-fitting hunting shirt, with the long hair flowing to his shoulders, with the keen, dark face and

courtly bearing and humorous eyes. Yes, humorous even now, for he stood, smiling at this comedy played by his enemy, unmindful of his peril. The widow saw him before Tipton did, so intent was he on the struggle.

“Enough!” she cried, “enough, John Tipton!” Tipton drew back involuntarily, and a smile broadened on the widow’s face. “Shame on you for doubting a lady’s word! Allow me to present to you—Colonel Sevier.”

Tipton turned, stared as a man might who sees a ghost, and broke into such profanity as I have seldom heard.

“By the eternal God, John Sevier,” he shouted, “I’ll hang you to the nearest tree!”

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Colonel Sevier merely made a little ironical bow and looked at the gentleman beside him.

“I have surrendered to Colonel Love,” he said.

Tipton snatched from his belt the pistol which he might have used on me, and there flashed through my head the thought that some powder might yet be held in its pan. We cried out, all of us, his men, the widow, and myself,—all save Sevier, who stood quietly, smiling. Suddenly, while we waited for murder, a tall figure shot out of the door past the widow, the pistol flew out of Tipton’s hand, and Tipton swung about with something like a bellow, to face Mr. Nicholas Temple.

Well I knew him! And oddly enough at that time Riddle’s words of long ago came to me, “God help the woman you love or the man you fight.” How shall I describe him? He was thin even to seeming frailness,—yet it was the frailness of the race-horse. The golden hair, sun-tanned, awry across his forehead, the face the same thin and finely cut face of the boy. The gray eyes held an anger that did not blaze; it was far more dangerous than that. Colonel John Tipton looked, and as I live he recoiled.

“If you touch him, I’ll kill you,” said Mr. Temple. Nor did he say it angrily. I marked for the first time that he held a pistol in his slim fingers. What Tipton might have done when he swung to his new bearings is mere conjecture, for Colonel Sevier himself stepped up on the porch, laid his hand on Temple’s arm, and spoke to him in a low tone. What he said we didn’t hear. The astonishing thing was that neither of them for the moment paid any attention to the infuriated man beside them. I saw Nick’s expression change. He smiled,—the smile the landlord had described, the smile that made men and women willing to die for him. After that Colonel Sevier stooped down and picked up the pistol from the floor of the porch and handed it with a bow to Tipton, butt first. Tipton took it, seemingly without knowing why, and at that instant a negro boy came around the house, leading a horse. Sevier mounted it without a protest from any one.

“I am ready to go with you, gentlemen,” he said.

Colonel Tipton slipped his pistol back into his belt, stepped down from the porch, and leaped into his saddle, and he and his men rode off into the stump-lined alley in the forest that was called a road. Nick stood beside the widow, staring after them until they had disappeared.

“My horse, boy!” he shouted to the gaping negro, who vanished on the errand.

“What will you do, Mr. Temple?” asked the widow.

“Rescue him, ma’am,” cried Nick, beginning to pace up and down. “I’ll ride to Turner’s. Cozby and Evans are there, and before night we shall have made Jonesboro too hot to hold Tipton and his cutthroats.”

“La, Mr. Temple,” said the widow, with unfeigned admiration, “I never saw the like of you. But I know John Tipton, and he’ll have Colonel Sevier started for North Carolina before our boys can get to Jonesboro.”

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“Then we’ll follow,” says Nick, beginning to pace again. Suddenly, at a cry from the widow, he stopped and stared at me, a light in his eye like a point of steel. His hand slipped to his waist.

“A spy,” he said, and turned and smiled at the lady, who was watching him with a kind of fascination; “but damnably cool,” he continued, looking at me. “I wonder if he thinks to outride me on that beast? Look you, sir,” he cried, as Mrs. Brown’s negro came back struggling with a deep-ribbed, high-crested chestnut that was making half circles on his hind legs, “I’ll give you to the edge of the woods, and lay you a six-forty against a pair of moccasins that you never get back to Tipton.”

“God forbid that I ever do,” I answered fervently.

“What,” he exclaimed, “and you here with him on this sneak’s errand!”

“I am here with him on no errand,” said I. “He and his crew came on me a quarter of an hour since at the edge of the clearing. Mr. Temple, I am here to find you, and to save time I will ride with you.”

“Egad, you’ll have to ride like the devil then,” said he, and he stooped and snatched the widow’s hand and kissed it with a daring gallantry that I had thought to find in him. He raised his eyes to hers.

“Good-by, Mr. Temple,” she said,—there was a tremor in her voice,—“and may you save our Jack!”

He snatched the bridle from the boy, and with one leap he was on the rearing, wheeling horse. “Come on,” he cried to me, and, waving his hat at the lady on the porch, he started off with a gallop up the trail in the opposite direction from that which Tipton’s men had taken.

All that I saw of Mr. Nicholas Temple on that ride to Turner’s was his back, and presently I lost sight of that. In truth, I never got to Turner’s at all, for I met him coming back at the wind’s pace, a huge, swarthy, determined man at his side and four others spurring after, the spume dripping from the horses’ mouths. They did not so much as look at me as they passed, and there was nothing left for me to do but to turn my tired beast and follow at any pace I could make towards Jonesboro.

It was late in the afternoon before I reached the town, the town set down among the hills like a caldron boiling over with the wrath of Franklin. The news of the capture of their beloved Sevier had flown through the mountains like seeds on the autumn wind, and from north, south, east, and west the faithful were coming in, cursing Tipton and Carolina as they rode.

I tethered my tired beast at the first picket, and was no sooner on my feet than I was caught in the hurrying stream of the crowd and fairly pushed and beaten towards the court-house. Around it a thousand furious men were packed. I heard cheering, hoarse and fierce cries, threats and imprecations, and I knew that they were listening to oratory. I was suddenly shot around the corner of a house, saw the orator himself, and gasped.

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It was Nicholas Temple. There was something awe-impelling in the tall, slim, boyish figure that towered above the crowd, in the finely wrought, passionate face, in the voice charged with such an anger as is given to few men.

“What has North Carolina done for Franklin?” he cried. “Protected her? No. Repudiated her? Yes. You gave her to the Confederacy for a war debt, and the Confederacy flung her back. You shook yourselves free from Carolina’s tyranny, and traitors betrayed you again. And now they have betrayed your leader. Will you avenge him, or will you sit down like cowards while they hang him for treason?”

His voice was drowned, but he stood immovable with arms folded until there was silence again.

“Will you rescue him?” he cried, and the roar rose again. “Will you avenge him? By to-morrow we shall have two thousand here. Invade North Carolina, humble her, bring her to her knees, and avenge John Sevier!”

Pandemonium reigned. Hats were flung in the air, rifles fired, shouts and curses rose and blended into one terrifying note. Gradually, in the midst of this mad uproar, the crowd became aware that another man was standing upon the stump from which Nicholas Temple had leaped. “Cozby!” some one yelled, “Cozby!” The cry was taken up. “Huzzay for Cozby! He’ll lead us into Caroliny.” He was the huge, swarthy man I had seen riding hard with Nick that morning. A sculptor might have chosen his face and frame for a type of the iron-handed leader of pioneers. Will was supreme in the great features,—inflexible, indomitable will. His hunting shirt was open across his great chest, his black hair fell to his shoulders, and he stood with a compelling hand raised for silence. And when he spoke, slowly, resonantly, men fell back before his words.

“I admire Mr. Temple’s courage, and above all his loyalty to our beloved General,” said Major Cozby. “But Mr. Temple is young, and the heated counsels of youth must not prevail. My friends, in order to save Jack Sevier we must be moderate.”

His voice, strong as it was, was lost. “To hell with moderation!” they shouted. “Down with North Carolina! We’ll fight her!”

He got silence again by the magnetic strength he had in him.

“Very good,” he said, “but get your General first. If we lead you across the mountains now, his blood will be upon your heads. No man is a better friend to Jack Sevier than I. Leave his rescue to me, and I will get him for you.” He paused, and they were stilled perforce. “I will get him for you,” he repeated slowly, “or North Carolina will pay for the burial of James Cozby.”

There was an instant when they might have swung either way.

“How will ye do it?” came in a thin, piping voice from somewhere near the stump. It may have been this that turned their minds. Others took up the question, “How will ye do it, Major Cozby?”

“I don’t know,” cried the Major, “I don’t know. And if I did know, I wouldn’t tell you. But I will get Nollichucky Jack if I have to burn Morganton and rake the General out of the cinders!”

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Five hundred hands flew up, five hundred voices cried, “I’m with ye, Major Cozby!” But the Major only shook his head and smiled. What he said was lost in the roar. Fighting my way forward, I saw him get down from the stump, put his hand kindly on Nick’s shoulder, and lead him into the court-house. They were followed by a score of others, and the door was shut behind them.

It was then I bethought myself of the letter to Mr. Wright, and I sought for some one who would listen to my questions as to his whereabouts. At length the man himself was pointed out to me, haranguing an excited crowd of partisans in front of his own gate. Some twenty minutes must have passed before I could get any word with him. He was a vigorous little man, with black eyes like buttons, he wore brown homespun and white stockings, and his hair was clubbed. When he had yielded the ground to another orator, I handed him the letter. He drew me aside, read it on the spot, and became all hospitality at once. The town was full, and though he had several friends staying in his house I should join them. Was my horse fed? Dinner had been forgotten that day, but would I enter and partake? In short, I found myself suddenly provided for, and I lost no time in getting my weary mount into Mr. Wright’s little stable. And then I sat down, with several other gentlemen, at Mr. Wright’s board, where there was much guessing as to Major Cozby’s plan.

“No other man west of the mountains could have calmed that crowd after that young daredevil Temple had stirred them up,” declared Mr. Wright.

I ventured to say that I had business with Mr. Temple.

“Faith, then, I will invite him here,” said my host. “But I warn you, Mr. Ritchie, that he is a trigger set on the hair. If he does not fancy you, he may quarrel with you and shoot you. And he is in no temper to be trifled with to-day.”

“I am not an easy person to quarrel with,” I answered.

“To look at you, I shouldn’t say that you were,” said he. “We are going to the court-house, and I will see if I can get a word with the young Hotspur and send him to you. Do you wait here.”

I waited on the porch as the day waned. The tumult of the place had died down, for men were gathering in the houses to discuss and conjecture. And presently, sauntering along the street in a careless fashion, his spurs trailing in the dust, came Nicholas Temple. He stopped before the house and stared at me with a fine insolence, and I wondered whether I myself had not been too hasty in reclaiming him. A greeting died on my lips.

“Well, sir,” he said, “so you are the gentleman who has been dogging me all day.”

“I dog no one, Mr. Temple,” I replied bitterly.

“We’ll not quibble about words,” said he. “Would it be impertinent to ask your business —and perhaps your name?”

“Did not Mr. Wright give you my name?” I exclaimed.

“He might have mentioned it, I did not hear. Is it of such importance?”

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At that I lost my temper entirely.

“It may be, and it may not,” I retorted. “I am David Ritchie.”

He changed before my eyes as he stared at me, and then, ere I knew it, he had me by both arms, crying out:—

“David Ritchie! My Davy—who ran away from me—and we were going to Kentucky together. Oh, I have never forgiven you,”—the smile that there was no resisting belied his words as he put his face close to mine—“I never will forgive you. I might have known you—you’ve grown, but I vow you’re still an old man,—Davy, you renegade. And where the devil did you run to?”

“Kentucky,” I said, laughing.

“Oh, you traitor—and I trusted you. I loved you, Davy. Do you remember how I clung to you in my sleep? And when I woke up, the world was black. I followed your trail down the drive and to the cross-roads—”

“It was not ingratitude, Nick,” I said; “you were all I had in the world.” And then I faltered, the sadness of that far-off time coming over me in a flood, and the remembrance of his generous sorrow for me.

“And how the devil did you track me to the Widow Brown’s?” he demanded, releasing me.

“A Mr. Jackson had a shrewd notion you were there. And by the way, he was in a fine temper because you had skipped a race with him.”

“That sorrel-topped, lantern-headed Mr. Jackson?” said Nick. “He’ll be killed in one of his fine tempers. Damn a man who can’t keep his temper. I’ll race him, of course. And where are you bound now, Davy?”

“For Louisville, in Kentucky, at the Falls of the Ohio. It is a growing place, and a promising one for a young man in the legal profession to begin life.”

“When do you leave?” said he.

“To-morrow morning, Nick,” said I. “You wanted once to go to Kentucky; why not come with me?”

His face clouded.

“I do not budge from this town,” said he, “I do not budge until I hear that Jack Sevier is safe. Damn Cozby! If he had given me my way, we should have been forty miles from

here by this. I'll tell you. Cozby is even now picking five men to go to Morganton and steal Sevier, and he puts me off with a kind word. He'll not have me, he says."

"He thinks you too hot. It needs discretion and an old head," said I.

"Egad, then, I'll commend you to him," said Nick.

"Now," I said, "it's time for you to tell me something of yourself, and how you chanced to come into this country."

"'Twas Darnley's fault," said Nick.

"Darnley!" I exclaimed; "he whom you got into the duel with—" I stopped abruptly, with a sharp twinge of remembrance that was like a pain in my side. 'Twas Nick took up the name.

"With Harry Riddle." He spoke quietly, that was the terrifying part of it. "David, I've looked for that man in Italy and France, I've scoured London for him, and, by God, I'll find him before he dies. And when I do find him I swear to you that there will be no such thing as time wasted, or mercy."

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I shuddered. In all my life I had never known such a moment of indecision. Should I tell him? My conscience would give me no definite reply. The question had haunted me all the night, and I had lost my way in consequence, nor had the morning's ride from the Widow Brown's sufficed to bring me to a decision. Of what use to tell him? Would Riddle's death mend matters? The woman loved him, that had been clear to me; yet, by telling Nick what I knew I might induce him to desist from his search, and if I did not tell, Nick might some day run across the trail, follow it up, take Riddle's life, and lose his own. The moment, made for confession as it was, passed.

"They have ruined my life," said Nick. "I curse him, and I curse her."

"Hold!" I cried; "she is your mother."

"And therefore I curse her the more," he said. "You know what she is, you've tasted of her charity, and you are my father's nephew. If you have been without experience, I will tell you what she is. A common—" I reached out and put my hand across his mouth.

"Silence!" I cried; "you shall say no such thing. And have you not manhood enough to make your own life for yourself?"

"Manhood!" he repeated, and laughed. It was a laugh that I did not like. "They made a man of me, my parents. My father played false with the Rebels and fled to England for his reward. A year after he went I was left alone at Temple Bow to the tender mercies of the niggers. Mr. Mason came back and snatched what was left of me. He was a good man; he saved me an annuity out of the estate, he took me abroad after the war on a grand tour, and died of a fever in Rome. I made my way back to Charlestown, and there I learned to gamble, to hold liquor like a gentleman, to run horses and fight like a gentleman. We were speaking of Darnley," he said.

"Yes, of Darnley," I repeated.

"The devil of a man," said Nick; "do you remember him, with the cracked voice and fat calves?"

At any other time I should have laughed at the recollection.

"Darnley turned Whig, became a Continental colonel, and got a grant out here in the Cumberland country of three thousand acres. And now I own it."

"You own it!" I exclaimed.

"Rattle-and-snap," said Nick; "I played him for the land at the ordinary one night, and won it. It is out here near a place called Nashboro, where this wild, long-faced Mr. Jackson says he is going soon. I crossed the mountains to have a look at it, fell in with Nollichucky Jack, and went off with him for a summer campaign. There's a man for you,

Davy," he cried, "a man to follow through hell-fire. If they touch a hair of his head we'll sack the State of North Carolina from Morganton to the sea."

"But the land?" I asked.

"Oh, a fig for the land," answered Nick; "as soon as Nollichucky Jack is safe I'll follow you into Kentucky." He slapped me on the knee. "Egad, Davy, it seems like a fairy tale. We always said we were going to Kentucky, didn't we? What is the name of the place you are to startle with your learning and calm by your example?"

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“Louisville,” I answered, laughing, “by the Falls of the Ohio.”

“I shall turn up there when Jack Sevier is safe and I have won some more land from Mr. Jackson. We’ll have a rare old time together, though I have no doubt you can drink me under the table. Beware of these sober men. Egad, Davy, you need only a woolsack to become a full-fledged judge. And now tell me how fortune has buffeted you.”

It was my second night without sleep, for we sat burning candles in Mr. Wright’s house until the dawn, making up the time which we had lost away from each other.

CHAPTER VII

I MEET A HERO

When left to myself, I was wont to slide into the commonplace; and where my own dull life intrudes to clog the action I cut it down here and pare it away there until I am merely explanatory, and not too much in evidence. I rode out the Wilderness Trail, fell in with other travellers, was welcomed by certain old familiar faces at Harrodstown, and pressed on. I have a vivid recollection of a beloved, vigorous figure swooping out of a cabin door and scattering a brood of children right and left. “Polly Ann!” I said, and she halted, trembling.

“Tom,” she cried, “Tom, it’s Davy come back,” and Tom himself flew out of the door, ramrod in one hand and rifle in the other. Never shall I forget them as they stood there, he grinning with sheer joy as of yore, and she, with her hair flying and her blue gown snapping in the wind, in a tremor between tears and laughter. I leaped to the ground, and she hugged me in her arms as though I had been a child, calling my name again and again, and little Tom pulling at the skirts of my coat. I caught the youngster by the collar.

“Polly Ann,” said I, “he’s grown to what I was when you picked me up, a foundling.”

“And now it’s little Davy no more,” she answered, swept me a courtesy, and added, with a little quiver in her voice, “ye are a gentleman now.”

“My heart is still where it was,” said I.

“Ay, ay,” said Tom, “I’m sure o’ that, Davy.”

I was with them a fortnight in the familiar cabin, and then I took up my journey northward, heavy at leaving again, but promising to see them from time to time. For Tom was often at the Falls when he went a-scouting into the Illinois country. It was, as of old, Polly Ann who ran the mill and was the real bread-winner of the family.

Louisville was even then bursting with importance, and as I rode into it, one bright November day, I remembered the wilderness I had seen here not ten years gone when I had marched hither with Captain Harrod's company to join Clark on the island. It was even then a thriving little town of log and clapboard houses and schools and churches, and wise men were saying of it—what Colonel Clark had long ago predicted—that it would become the first city of commercial importance in the district of Kentucky.

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I do not mean to give you an account of my struggles that winter to obtain a foothold in the law. The time was a heyday for young barristers, and troubles in those early days grew as plentifully in Kentucky as corn. In short, I got a practice, for Colonel Clark was here to help me, and, thanks to the men who had gone to Kaskaskia and Vincennes, I had a fairly large acquaintance in Kentucky. I hired rooms behind Mr. Crede's store, which was famed for the glass windows which had been fetched all the way from Philadelphia. Mr. Crede was the embodiment of the enterprising spirit of the place, and often of an evening he called me in to see the new fashionable things his barges had brought down the Ohio. The next day certain young sparks would drop into my room to waylay the belles as they came to pick a costume to be worn at Mr. Nickle's dancing school, or at the ball at Fort Finney.

The winter slipped away, and one cool evening in May there came a negro to my room with a note from Colonel Clark, bidding me sup with him at the tavern and meet a celebrity.

I put on my best blue clothes that I had brought with me from Richmond, and repaired expectantly to the tavern about eight of the clock, pushed through the curious crowd outside, and entered the big room where the company was fast assembling. Against the red blaze in the great chimney-place I spied the figure of Colonel Clark, more portly than of yore, and beside him stood a gentleman who could be no other than General Wilkinson.

He was a man to fill the eye, handsome of face, symmetrical of figure, easy of manner, and he wore a suit of bottle-green that became him admirably. In short, so fascinated and absorbed was I in watching him as he greeted this man and the other that I started as though something had pricked me when I heard my name called by Colonel Clark.

"Come here, Davy," he cried across the room, and I came and stood abashed before the hero. "General, allow me to present to you the drummer boy of Kaskaskia and Vincennes, Mr. David Ritchie."

"I hear that you drummed them to victory through a very hell of torture, Mr. Ritchie," said the General. "It is an honor to grasp the hand of one who did such service at such a tender age."

General Wilkinson availed himself of that honor, and encompassed me with a smile so benignant, so winning in its candor, that I could only mutter my acknowledgment, and Colonel Clark must needs apologize, laughing, for my youth and timidity.

"Mr. Ritchie is not good at speeches, General," said he, "but I make no doubt he will drink a bumper to your health before we sit down. Gentlemen," he cried, filling his glass from a bottle on the table, "a toast to General Wilkinson, emancipator and saviour of Kentucky!"

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The company responded with a shout, tossed off the toast, and sat down at the long table. Chance placed me between a young dandy from Lexington—one of several the General had brought in his train—and Mr. Wharton, a prominent planter of the neighborhood with whom I had a speaking acquaintance. This was a backwoods feast, though served in something better than the old backwoods style, and we had venison and bear's meat and prairie fowl as well as pork and beef, and breads that came stinging hot from the Dutch ovens. Toasts to this and that were flung back and forth, and jests and gibes, and the butt of many of these was that poor Federal government which (as one gentleman avowed) was like a bantam hen trying to cover a nestful of turkey's eggs, and clucking with importance all the time. This picture brought on gusts of laughter.

"And what say you of the Jay?" cried one; "what will he hatch?"

Hisses greeted the name, for Mr. Jay wished to enter into a treaty with Spain, agreeing to close the river for five and twenty years. Colonel Clark stood up, and rapped on the table.

"Gentlemen," said he, "Louisville has as her guest of honor to-night a man of whom Kentucky may well be proud [loud cheering]. Five years ago he favored Lexington by making it his home, and he came to us with the laurel of former achievements still clinging to his brow. He fought and suffered for his country, and attained the honorable rank of Major in the Continental line. He was chosen by the people of Pennsylvania to represent them in the august body of their legislature, and now he has got new honor in a new field [renewed cheering]. He has come to Kentucky to show her the way to prosperity and glory. Kentucky had a grievance [loud cries of "Yes, yes!"]. Her hogs and cattle had no market, her tobacco and agricultural products of all kinds were rotting because the Spaniards had closed the Mississippi to our traffic. Could the Federal government open the river? [shouts of "No, no!" and hisses]. Who opened it? [cries of "Wilkinson, Wilkinson!"]. He said to the Kentucky planters, 'Give your tobacco to me, and I will sell it.' He put it in barges, he floated down the river, and, as became a man of such distinction, he was met by Governor-general Miro on the levee at New Orleans. Where is that tobacco now, gentlemen?" Colonel Clark was here interrupted by such roars and stamping that he paused a moment, and during this interval Mr. Wharton leaned over and whispered quietly in my ear:—

"Ay, where is it?"

I stared at Mr. Wharton blankly. He was a man nearing the middle age, with a lacing of red in his cheeks, a pleasant gray eye, and a singularly quiet manner.

"Thanks to the genius of General Wilkinson," Colonel Clark continued, waving his hand towards the smilingly placid hero, "that tobacco has been deposited in the King's store at ten dollars per hundred,—a privilege heretofore confined to Spanish subjects. Well

might Wilkinson return from New Orleans in a chariot and four to a grateful Kentucky! This year we have tripled, nay, quadrupled, our crop of tobacco, and we are here to-night to give thanks to the author of this prosperity." Alas, Colonel Clark's hand was not as steady as of yore, and he spilled the liquor on the table as he raised his glass. "Gentlemen, a health to our benefactor."

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They drank it willingly, and withal so lengthily and noisily that Mr. Wilkinson stood smiling and bowing for full three minutes before he could be heard. He was a very paragon of modesty, was the General, and a man whose attitudes and expressions spoke as eloquently as his words. None looked at him now but knew before he opened his mouth that he was deprecating such an ovation.

“Gentlemen,—my friends and fellow-Kentuckians,” he said, “I thank you from the bottom of my heart for your kindness, but I assure you that I have done nothing worthy of it [loud protests]. I am a simple, practical man, who loves Kentucky better than he loves himself. This is no virtue, for we all have it. We have the misfortune to be governed by a set of worthy gentlemen who know little about Kentucky and her wants, and think less [cries of “Ay, ay!"]. I am not decrying General Washington and his cabinet; it is but natural that the wants of the seaboard and the welfare and opulence of the Eastern cities should be uppermost in their minds [another interruption]. Kentucky, if she would prosper, must look to her own welfare. And if any credit is due to me, gentlemen, it is because I reserved my decision of his Excellency, Governor-general Miro, and his people until I saw them for myself. A little calm reason, a plain statement of the case, will often remove what seems an insuperable difficulty, and I assure you that Governor-general Miro is a most reasonable and courteous gentleman, who looks with all kindliness and neighborliness on the people of Kentucky. Let us drink a toast to him. To him your gratitude is due, for he sends you word that your tobacco will be received.”

“In General Wilkinson’s barges,” said Mr. Wharton leaning over and subsiding again at once.

The General was the first to drink the toast, and he sat down very modestly amidst a thunder of applause.

The young man on the other side of me, somewhat flushed, leaped to his feet.

“Down with the Federal government!” he cried; “what have they done for us, indeed? Before General Wilkinson went to New Orleans the Spaniards seized our flat boats and cargoes and flung our traders into prison, ay, and sent them to the mines of Brazil. The Federal government takes sides with the Indians against us. And what has that government done for you, Colonel?” he demanded, turning to Clark, “you who have won for them half of their territory? They have cast you off like an old moccasin. The Continental officers who fought in the East have half-pay for life or five years’ full pay. And what have you?”

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There was a breathless hush. A swift vision came to me of a man, young, alert, commanding, stern under necessity, self-repressed at all times—a man who by the very dominance of his character had awed into submission the fierce Northern tribes of a continent, who had compelled men to follow him until the life had all but ebbed from their bodies, who had led them to victory in the end. And I remembered a boy who had stood awe-struck before this man in the commandant's house at Fort Sackville. Ay, and I heard again his words as though he had just spoken them, "Promise me that you will not forget me if I am—unfortunate." I did not understand then. And now because of a certain blinding of my eyes, I did not see him clearly as he got slowly to his feet. He clutched the table. He looked around him—I dare not say—vacantly. And then, suddenly, he spoke with a supreme anger and a supreme bitterness.

"Not a shilling has this government given me," he cried. "Virginia was more grateful; from her I have some acres of wild land and—a sword." He laughed. "A sword, gentlemen, and not new at that. Oh, a grateful government we serve, one careful of the honor of her captains. Gentlemen, I stand to-day a discredited man because the honest debts I incurred in the service of that government are repudiated, because my friends who helped it, Father Gibault, Vigo, and Gratiot, and others have never been repaid. One of them is ruined."

A dozen men had sprung clamoring to their feet before he sat down. One, more excited than the rest, got the ear of the company.

"Do we lack leaders?" he cried. "We have them here with us to-night, in this room. Who will stop us? Not the contemptible enemies in Kentucky who call themselves Federalists. Shall we be supine forever? We have fought once for our liberties, let us fight again. Let us make a common cause with our real friends on the far side of the Mississippi."

I rose, sick at heart, but every man was standing. And then a strange thing happened. I saw General Wilkinson at the far end of the room; his hand was raised, and there was that on his handsome face which might have been taken for a smile, and yet was not a smile. Others saw him too, I know not by what exertion of magnetism. They looked at him and they held their tongues.

"I fear that we are losing our heads, gentlemen," he said; "and I propose to you the health of the first citizen of Kentucky, Colonel George Rogers Clark."

I found myself out of the tavern and alone in the cool May night. And as I walked slowly down the deserted street, my head in a whirl, a hand was laid on my shoulder. I turned, startled, to face Mr. Wharton, the planter.

"I would speak a word with you, Mr. Ritchie," he said. "May I come to your room for a moment?"

“Certainly, sir,” I answered.

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After that we walked along together in silence, my own mind heavily occupied with what I had seen and heard. We came to Mr. Crede's store, went in at the picket gate beside it and down the path to my own door, which I unlocked. I felt for the candle on the table, lighted it, and turned in surprise to discover that Mr. Wharton was poking up the fire and pitching on a log of wood. He flung off his greatcoat and sat down with his feet to the blaze. I sat down beside him and waited, thinking him a sufficiently peculiar man.

"You are not famous, Mr. Ritchie," said he, presently.

"No, sir," I answered.

"Nor particularly handsome," he continued, "nor conspicuous in any way."

I agreed to this, perforce.

"You may thank God for it," said Mr. Wharton.

"That would be a strange outpouring, sir," said I.

He looked at me and smiled.

"What think you of this paragon, General Wilkinson?" he demanded suddenly.

"I have Federal leanings, sir," I answered

"Egad," said he, "we'll add caution to your lack of negative accomplishments. I have had an eye on you this winter, though you did not know it. I have made inquiries about you, and hence I am not here to-night entirely through impulse. You have not made a fortune at the law, but you have worked hard, steered wide of sensation, kept your mouth shut. Is it not so?"

Astonished, I merely nodded in reply.

"I am not here to waste your time or steal your sleep," he went on, giving the log a push with his foot, "and I will come to the point. When I first laid eyes on this fine gentleman, General Wilkinson, I too fell a victim to his charms. It was on the eve of this epoch-making trip of which we heard so glowing an account to-night, and I made up my mind that no Spaniard, however wily, could resist his persuasion. He said to me, 'Wharton, give me your crop of tobacco and I promise you to sell it in spite of all the royal mandates that go out of Madrid.' He went, he saw, he conquered the obdurate Miro as he has apparently conquered the rest of the world, and he actually came back in a chariot and four as befitted him. A heavy crop of tobacco was raised in Kentucky that year. I helped to raise it," added Mr. Wharton, dryly. "I gave the General my second crop, and he sent it down. Mr. Ritchie, I have to this day never received a piastre for my

merchandise, nor am I the only planter in this situation. Yet General Wilkinson is prosperous."

My astonishment somewhat prevented me from replying to this, too. Was it possible that Mr. Wharton meant to sue the General? I reflected while he paused. I remembered how inconspicuous he had named me, and hope died. Mr. Wharton did not look at me, but stared into the fire, for he was plainly not a man to rail and rant.

"Mr. Ritchie, you are young, but mark my words, that man Wilkinson will bring Kentucky to ruin if he is not found out. The whole district from Crab Orchard to Bear Grass is mad about him. Even Clark makes a fool of himself—"

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“Colonel Clark, sir!” I cried.

He put up a hand.

“So you have some hot blood,” he said. “I know you love him. So do I, or I should not have been there tonight. Do I blame his bitterness? Do I blame—anything he does? The treatment he has had would bring a blush of shame to the cheek of any nation save a republic. Republics are wasteful, sir. In George Rogers Clark they have thrown away a general who might some day have decided the fate of this country, they have left to stagnate a man fit to lead a nation to war. And now he is ready to intrigue against the government with any adventurer who may have convincing ways and a smooth tongue.”

“Mr. Wharton,” I said, rising, “did you come here to tell me this?”

But Mr. Wharton continued to stare into the fire.

“I like you the better for it, my dear sir,” said he, “and I assure you that I mean no offence. Colonel Clark is enshrined in our hearts, Democrats and Federalists alike. Whatever he may do, we shall love him always. But this other man,—pooh!” he exclaimed, which was as near a vigorous expression as he got. “Now, sir, to the point. I, too, am a Federalist, a friend of Mr. Humphrey Marshall, and, as you know, we are sadly in the minority in Kentucky now. I came here to-night to ask you to undertake a mission in behalf of myself and certain other gentlemen, and I assure you that my motives are not wholly mercenary.” He paused, smiled, and put the tips of his fingers together. “I would willingly lose every crop for the next ten years to convict this Wilkinson of treason against the Federal government.”

“Treason!” I repeated involuntarily.

“Mr. Ritchie,” answered the planter, “I gave you credit for some shrewdness. Do you suppose the Federal government does not realize the danger of this situation in Kentucky. They have tried in vain to open the Mississippi, and are too weak to do it. This man Wilkinson goes down to see Miro, and Miro straightway opens the river to us through him. How do you suppose Wilkinson did it? By his charming personality?”

I said something, I know not what, as the light began to dawn on me. And then I added, “I had not thought about the General.”

“Ah,” replied Mr. Wharton, “just so. And now you may easily imagine that General Wilkinson has come to a very pretty arrangement with Miro. For a certain stipulated sum best known to Wilkinson and Miro, General Wilkinson agrees gradually to detach Kentucky from the Union and join it to his Catholic Majesty’s dominion of Louisiana. The bribe—the opening of the river. What the government could not do Wilkinson did by the lifting of his finger.”

Still Mr. Wharton spoke without heat.

“Mind you,” he said, “we have no proof of this, and that is my reason for coming here to-night, Mr. Ritchie. I want you to get proof of it if you can.”

“You want me—” I said, bewildered.

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“I repeat that you are not handsome,”—I think he emphasized this unduly,—“that you are self-effacing, inconspicuous; in short, you are not a man to draw suspicion. You might travel anywhere and scarcely be noticed,—I have observed that about you. In addition to this you are wary, you are discreet, you are painstaking. I ask you to go first to St. Louis, in Louisiana territory, and this for two reasons. First, because it will draw any chance suspicion from your real objective, New Orleans; and second, because it is necessary to get letters to New Orleans from such leading citizens of St. Louis as Colonel Chouteau and Monsieur Gratiot, and I will give you introductions to them. You are then to take passage to New Orleans in a barge of furs which Monsieur Gratiot is sending down. Mind, we do not expect that you will obtain proof that Miro is paying Wilkinson money. If you do, so much the better; but we believe that both are too sharp to leave any tracks. You will make a report, however, upon the conditions under which our tobacco is being received, and of all other matters which you may think germane to the business in hand. Will you go?”

I had made up my mind.

“Yes, I will go,” I answered.

“Good,” said Mr. Wharton, but with no more enthusiasm than he had previously shown; “I thought I had not misjudged you. Is your law business so onerous that you could not go to-morrow?”

I laughed.

“I think I could settle what affairs I have by noon, Mr. Wharton,” I replied.

“Egad, Mr. Ritchie, I like your manner,” said he; “and now for a few details, and you may go to bed.”

He sat with me half an hour longer, carefully reviewing his instructions, and then he left me to a night of contemplation.

CHAPTER VIII

TO ST. LOUIS

By eleven o’clock the next morning I had wound up my affairs, having arranged with a young lawyer of my acquaintance to take over such cases as I had, and I was busy in my room packing my saddle-bags for the journey. The warm scents of spring were wafted through the open door and window, smells of the damp earth giving forth the green things, and tender shades greeted my eyes when I paused and raised my head to think. Purple buds littered the black ground before my door-step, and against the living green of the grass I saw the red stain of a robin’s breast as he hopped spasmodically

hither and thither, now pausing immovable with his head raised, now tossing triumphantly a wriggling worm from the sod. Suddenly he flew away, and I heard a voice from the street side that brought me stark upright.

“Hold there, neighbor; can you direct me to the mansion of that celebrated barrister, Mr. Ritchie?”

There was no mistaking that voice—it was Nicholas Temple’s. I heard a laugh and an answer, the gate slammed, and Mr. Temple himself in a long gray riding-coat, booted and spurred, stood before me.

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“Davy,” he cried, “come out here and hug me. Why, you look as if I were your grandmother’s ghost.”

“And if you were,” I answered, “you could not have surprised me more. Where have you been?”

“At Jonesboro, acting the gallant with the widow, winning and losing skins and cow-bells and land at rattle-and-snap, horse-racing with that wild Mr. Jackson. Faith, he near shot the top of my head off because I beat him at Greasy Cove.”

I laughed, despite my anxiety.

“And Sevier?” I demanded.

“You have not heard how Sevier got off?” exclaimed Nick. “Egad, that was a crowning stroke of genius! Cozby and Evans, Captains Greene and Gibson, and Sevier’s two boys whom you met on the Nollichucky rode over the mountains to Morganton. Greene and Gibson and Sevier’s boys hid themselves with the horses in a clump outside the town, while Cozby and Evans, disguised as bumpkins in hunting shirts, jogged into the town with Sevier’s racing mare between them. They jogged into the town, I say, through the crowds of white trash, and rode up to the court-house where Sevier was being tried for his life. Evans stood at the open door and held the mare and gaped, while Cozby stalked in and shouldered his way to the front within four feet of the bar, like a big, awkward countryman. Jack Sevier saw him, and he saw Evans with the mare outside. Then, by thunder, Cozby takes a step right up to the bar and cries out, ’Judge, aren’t you about done with that man?’ Faith, it was like judgment day, such a mix-up as there was after that, and Nollichucky Jack made three leaps and got on the mare, and in the confusion Cozby and Evans were off too, and the whole State of North Carolina couldn’t catch ’em then.” Nick sighed. “I’d have given my soul to have been there,” he said.

“Come in,” said I, for lack of something better.

“Cursed if you haven’t given me a sweet reception, Davy,” said he. “Have you lost your practice, or is there a lady here, you rogue,” and he poked into the cupboard with his stick. “Hullo, where are you going now?” he added, his eye falling on the saddle-bags.

I had it on my lips to say, and then I remembered Mr. Wharton’s injunction.

“I’m going on a journey,” said I.

“When?” said Nick.

“I leave in about an hour,” said I.

He sat down. “Then I leave too,” he said.

“What do you mean, Nick?” I demanded.

“I mean that I will go with you,” said he.

“But I shall be gone three months or more,” I protested.

“I have nothing to do,” said Nick, placidly.

A vague trouble had been working in my mind, but now the full horror of it dawned upon me. I was going to St. Louis. Mrs. Temple and Harry Riddle were gone there, so Polly Ann had avowed, and Nick could not help meeting Riddle. Sorely beset, I bent over to roll up a shirt, and refrained from answering.

He came and laid a hand on my shoulder.

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“What the devil ails you, Davy?” he cried. “If it is an elopement, of course I won’t press you. I’m hanged if I’ll make a third.”

“It is no elopement,” I retorted, my face growing hot in spite of myself.

“Then I go with you,” said he, “for I vow you need taking care of. You can’t put me off, I say. But never in my life have I had such a reception, and from my own first cousin, too.”

I was in a quandary, so totally unforeseen was this situation. And then a glimmer of hope came to me that perhaps his mother and Riddle might not be in St. Louis after all. I recalled the conversation in the cabin, and reflected that this wayward pair had stranded on so many beaches, had drifted off again on so many tides, that one place could scarce hold them long. Perchance they had sunk,—who could tell? I turned to Nick, who stood watching me.

“It was not that I did not want you,” I said, “you must believe that. I have wanted you ever since that night long ago when I slipped out of your bed and ran away. I am going first to St. Louis and then to New Orleans on a mission of much delicacy, a mission that requires discretion and secrecy. You may come, with all my heart, with one condition only—that you do not ask my business.”

“Done!” cried Nick. “Davy, I was always sure of you; you are the one fixed quantity in my life. To St. Louis, eh, and to New Orleans? Egad, what havoc we’ll make among the Creole girls. May I bring my nigger? He’ll do things for you too.”

“By all means,” said I, laughing, “only hurry.”

“I’ll run to the inn,” said Nick, “and be back in ten minutes.” He got as far as the door, slapped his thigh, and looked back. “Davy, we may run across—”

“Who?” I asked, with a catch of my breath.

“Harry Riddle,” he answered; “and if so, may God have mercy on his soul!”

He ran down the path, the gate clicked, and I heard him whistling in the street on his way to the inn.

After dinner we rode down to the ferry, Nick on the thoroughbred which had beat Mr. Jackson’s horse, and his man, Benjy, on a scraggly pony behind. Benjy was a small, black negro with a very squat nose, alert and talkative save when Nick turned on him. Benjy had been born at Temple Bow; he worshipped his master and all that pertained to him, and he showered upon me all the respect and attention that was due to a member of the Temple family. For this I was very grateful. It would have been an easier journey had we taken a boat down to Fort Massac, but such a proceeding might have drawn too

much attention to our expedition. I have no space to describe that trip overland, which reminded me at every stage of the march against Kaskaskia, the woods, the chocolate streams, the coffee-colored swamps flecked with dead leaves,—and at length the prairies, the grass not waist-high now, but young and tender, giving forth the acrid smell of spring. Nick was delighted. He made me recount every detail of my trials as a drummer boy, or kept me in continuous spells of laughter over his own escapades. In short, I began to realize that we were as near to each other as though we had never been parted.

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We looked down upon Kaskaskia from the self-same spot where I had stood on the bluff with Colonel Clark, and the sounds were even then the same,—the sweet tones of the church bell and the lowing of the cattle. We found a few Virginians and Pennsylvanians scattered in amongst the French, the forerunners of that change which was to come over this country. And we spent the night with my old friend, Father Gibault, still the faithful pastor of his flock; cheerful, though the savings of his lifetime had never been repaid by that country to which he had given his allegiance so freely. Travelling by easy stages, on the afternoon of the second day after leaving Kaskaskia we picked our way down the high bluff that rises above the American bottom, and saw below us that yellow monster among the rivers, the Mississippi. A blind monster he seemed, searching with troubled arms among the islands for his bed, swept onward by an inexorable force, and on his heaving shoulders he carried great trees pilfered from the unknown forests of the North.

Down in the moist and shady bottom we came upon the log hut of a half-breed trapper, and he agreed to ferry us across. As for our horses, a keel boat must be sent after these, and Monsieur Gratiot would no doubt easily arrange for this. And so we found ourselves, about five o'clock on that Saturday evening, embarked in a wide pirogue on the current, dodging the driftwood, avoiding the eddies, and drawing near to a village set on a low bluff on the Spanish side and gleaming white among the trees. And as I looked, the thought came again like a twinge of pain that Mrs. Temple and Riddle might be there, thinking themselves secure in this spot, so removed from the world and its doings.

"How now, my man of mysterious affairs?" cried Nick, from the bottom of the boat; "you are as puckered as a sour persimmon. Have you a treaty with Spain in your pocket or a declaration of war? What can trouble you?"

"Nothing, if you do not," I answered, smiling.

"Lord send we don't admire the same lady, then," said Nick. "Pierrot," he cried, turning to one of the boatmen, "il y a des belles demoiselles la, n'est-ce pas?"

The man missed a stroke in his astonishment, and the boat swung lengthwise in the swift current.

"Dame, Monsieur, il y en a," he answered.

"Where did you learn French, Nick?" I demanded.

"Mr. Mason had it hammered into me," he answered carelessly, his eyes on the line of keel boats moored along the shore. Our guides shot the canoe deftly between two of these, the prow grounded in the yellow mud, and we landed on Spanish territory.

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We looked about us while our packs were being unloaded, and the place had a strange flavor in that year of our Lord, 1789. A swarthy boatman in a tow shirt with a bright handkerchief on his head stared at us over the gunwale of one of the keel boats, and spat into the still, yellow water; three high-cheeked Indians, with smudgy faces and dirty red blankets, regarded us in silent contempt; and by the water-side above us was a sled loaded with a huge water cask, a bony mustang pony between the shafts, and a chanting negro dipping gourdfuls from the river. A road slanted up the little limestone bluff, and above and below us stone houses could be seen nestling into the hill, houses higher on the river side, and with galleries there. We climbed the bluff, Benjy at our heels with the saddle-bags, and found ourselves on a yellow-clay street lined with grass and wild flowers. A great peace hung over the village, an air of a different race, a restfulness strange to a Kentuckian. Clematis and honeysuckle climbed the high palings, and behind the privacy of these, low, big-chimneyed houses of limestone, weathered gray, could be seen, their roofs sloping in gentle curves to the shaded porches in front; or again, houses of posts set upright in the ground and these filled between with plaster, and so immaculately whitewashed that they gleamed against the green of the trees which shaded them. Behind the houses was often a kind of pink-and-cream paradise of flowering fruit trees, so dear to the French settlers. There were vineyards, too, and thrifty patches of vegetables, and lines of flowers set in the carefully raked mould.

We walked on, enraptured by the sights around us, by the heavy scent of the roses and the blossoms. Here was a quaint stone horse-mill, a stable, or a barn set uncouthly on the street; a baker's shop, with a glimpse of the white-capped baker through the shaded doorway, and an appetizing smell of hot bread in the air. A little farther on we heard the tinkle of the blacksmith's hammer, and the man himself looked up from where the hoof rested on his leather apron to give us a kindly "Bon soir, Messieurs," as we passed. And here was a cabaret, with the inevitable porch, from whence came the sharp click of billiard balls.

We walked on, stopping now and again to peer between the palings, when we heard, amidst the rattling of a cart and the jingling of bells, a chorus of voices:—

"A cheval, a cheval, pour aller voir ma mie,
Lon, lon, la!"

A shaggy Indian pony came ambling around the corner between the long shafts of a charette. A bareheaded young man in tow shirt and trousers was driving, and three laughing girls were seated on the stools in the cart behind him. Suddenly, before I quite realized what had happened, the young man pulled up the pony, the girls fell silent, and Nick was standing in the middle of the road, with his hat in his hand, bowing elaborately.

"Je vous salue, Mesdemoiselles," he cried, "mes anges a char-a-banc. Pouvez-vous me diriger chez Monsieur Gratiot?"

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“Sapristi!” exclaimed the young man, but he laughed. The young women stood up, giggling, and peered at Nick over the young man’s shoulder. One of them wore a fresh red-and-white calamanco gown. She had a complexion of ivory tinged with red, raven hair, and dusky, long-lashed, mischievous eyes brimming with merriment.

“Volontiers, Monsieur,” she answered, before the others could catch their breath, “premiere droite et premiere gauche. Allons, Gaspard!” she cried, tapping the young man sharply on the shoulder, “es tu fou?”

Gaspard came to himself, flicked the pony, and they went off down the road with shouts of laughter, while Nick stood waving his hat until they turned the corner.

“Egad,” said he, “I’d take to the highway if I could be sure of holding up such a cargo every time. Off with you, Benjy, and find out where she lives,” he cried, and the obedient Benjy dropped the saddle-bags as though such commands were not uncommon.

“Pick up those bags, Benjy,” said I, laughing.

Benjy glanced uncertainly at his master.

“Do as I tell you, you black scalawag,” said Nick, “or I’ll tan you. What are you waiting for?”

“Marse Dave—” began Benjy, rolling his eyes in discomfiture.

“Look you, Nick Temple,” said I, “when you shipped with me you promised that I should command. I can’t afford to have the town about our ears.”

“Oh, very well, if you put it that way,” said Nick. “A little honest diversion—Pick up the bags, Benjy, and follow the parson.”

Obeying Mademoiselle’s directions, we trudged on until we came to a comfortable stone house surrounded by trees and set in a half-block bordered by a seven-foot paling. Hardly had we opened the gate when a tall gentleman of grave demeanor and sober dress rose from his seat on the porch, and I recognized my friend of Cahokia days, Monsieur Gratiot. He was a little more portly, his hair was dressed now in an eelskin, and he looked every inch the man of affairs that he was. He greeted us kindly and bade us come up on the porch, where he read my letter of introduction.

“Why,” he exclaimed immediately, giving me a cordial grasp of the hand, “of course. The strategist, the John Law, the reader of character of Colonel Clark’s army. Yes, and worse, the prophet, Mr. Ritchie.”

“And why worse, sir?” I asked.

“You predicted that Congress would never repay me for the little loan I advanced to your Colonel.”

“It was not such a little loan, Monsieur,” I said.

“N’importe,” said he; “I went to Richmond with my box of scrip and promissory notes, but I was not ill repaid. If I did not get my money, I acquired, at least, a host of distinguished acquaintances. But, Mr. Ritchie, you must introduce me to your friend.”

“My cousin. Mr. Nicholas Temple,” I said.

Monsieur Gratiot looked at him fixedly.

“Of the Charlestown Temples?” he asked, and a sudden vague fear seized me.

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“Yes,” said Nick, “there was once a family of that name.”

“And now?” said Monsieur Gratiot, puzzled.

“Now,” said Nick, “now they are become a worthless lot of refugees and outlaws, who by good fortune have escaped the gallows.”

Before Monsieur Gratiot could answer, a child came running around the corner of the house and stood, surprised, staring at us. Nick made a face, stooped down, and twirled his finger. Shouting with a terrified glee, the boy fled to the garden path, Nick after him.

“I like Mr. Temple,” said Monsieur Gratiot, smiling. “He is young, but he seems to have had a history.”

“The Revolution ruined many families—his was one,” I answered, with what firmness of tone I could muster. And then Nick came back, carrying the shouting youngster on his shoulders. At that instant a lady appeared in the doorway, leading another child, and we were introduced to Madame Gratiot.

“Gentlemen,” said Monsieur Gratiot, “you must make my house your home. I fear your visit will not be as long as I could wish, Mr. Ritchie,” he added, turning to me, “if Mr. Wharton correctly states your business. I have an engagement to have my furs in New Orleans by a certain time. I am late in loading, and as there is a moon I am sending off my boats to-morrow night. The men will have to work on Sunday.”

“We were fortunate to come in such good season,” I answered.

After a delicious supper of gumbo, a Creole dish, of fricassee, of creme brule, of red wine and fresh wild strawberries, we sat on the porch. The crickets chirped in the garden, the moon cast fantastic shadows from the pecan tree on the grass, while Nick, struggling with his French, talked to Madame Gratiot; and now and then their gay laughter made Monsieur Gratiot pause and smile as he talked to me of my errand. It seemed strange to me that a man who had lost so much by his espousal of our cause should still be faithful to the American republic. Although he lived in Louisiana, he had never renounced the American allegiance which he had taken at Cahokia. He regarded with no favor the pretensions of Spain toward Kentucky. And (remarkably enough) he looked forward even then to the day when Louisiana would belong to the republic. I exclaimed at this.

“Mr. Ritchie,” said he, “the most casual student of your race must come to the same conclusion. You have seen for yourself how they have overrun and conquered Kentucky and the Cumberland districts, despite a hideous warfare waged by all the tribes. Your people will not be denied, and when they get to Louisiana, they will take it, as they take everything else.”

He was a man strong in argument, was Monsieur Gratiot, for he loved it. And he beat me fairly.

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“Nay,” he said finally, “Spain might as well try to dam the Mississippi as to dam your commerce on it. As for France, I love her, though my people were exiled to Switzerland by the Edict of Nantes. But France is rotten through the prodigality of her kings and nobles, and she cannot hold Louisiana. The kingdom is sunk in debt.” He cleared his throat. “As for this Wilkinson of whom you speak, I know something of him. I have no doubt that Miro pensions him, but I know Miro likewise, and you will obtain no proof of that. You will, however, discover in New Orleans many things of interest to your government and to the Federal party in Kentucky. Colonel Chouteau and I will give you letters to certain French gentlemen in New Orleans who can be trusted. There is Saint-Gre, for instance, who puts a French Louisiana into his prayers. He has never forgiven O’Reilly and his Spaniards for the murder of his father in sixty-nine. Saint-Gre is a good fellow,—a cousin of the present Marquis in France,—and his ancestors held many positions of trust in the colony under the French regime. He entertains lavishly at Les Iles, his plantation on the Mississippi. He has the gossip of New Orleans at his tongue’s tip, and you will be suspected of nothing save a desire to amuse yourselves if you go there.” He paused interrupted by the laughter of the others. “When strangers of note or of position drift here and pass on to New Orleans, I always give them letters to Saint-Gre. He has a charming daughter and a worthless son.”

Monsieur Gratiot produced his tabatiere and took a pinch of snuff. I summoned my courage for the topic which had trembled all the evening on my lips.

“Some years ago, Monsieur Gratiot, a lady and a gentleman were rescued on the Wilderness Trail in Kentucky. They left us for St. Louis. Did they come here?”

Monsieur Gratiot leaned forward quickly.

“They were people of quality?” he demanded.

“Yes.”

“And their name?”

“They—they did not say.”

“It must have been the Clives,” he cried “it can have been no other. Tell me—a woman still beautiful, commanding, of perhaps eight and thirty? A woman who had a sorrow? —a great sorrow, though we have never learned it. And Mr. Clive, a man of fashion, ill content too, and pining for the life of a capital?”

“Yes,” I said eagerly, my voice sinking near to a whisper, “yes—it is they. And are they here?”

Monsieur Gratiot took another pinch of snuff. It seemed an age before he answered:—

“It is curious that you should mention them, for I gave them letters to New Orleans,—-amongst others, to Saint-Gre. Mrs. Clive was—what shall I say?—haunted. Monsieur Clive talked of nothing but Paris, where they had lived once. And at last she gave in. They have gone there.”

“To Paris?” I said, taking breath.

“Yes. It is more than a year ago,” he continued, seeming not to notice my emotion; “they went by way of New Orleans, in one of Chouteau’s boats. Mrs. Clive seemed a woman with a great sorrow.”

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CHAPTER IX

"CHERCHEZ *la femme*"

Sunday came with the soft haziness of a June morning, and the dew sucked a fresh fragrance from the blossoms and the grass. I looked out of our window at the orchard, all pink and white in the early sun, and across a patch of clover to the stone kitchen. A pearly, feathery smoke was wafted from the chimney, a delicious aroma of Creole coffee pervaded the odor of the blossoms, and a cotton-clad negro a pieds nus came down the path with two steaming cups and knocked at our door. He who has tasted Creole coffee will never forget it. The effect of it was lost upon Nick, for he laid down the cup, sighed, and promptly went to sleep again, while I dressed and went forth to make his excuses to the family. I found Monsieur and Madame with their children walking among the flowers. Madame laughed.

"He is charming, your cousin," said she. "Let him sleep, by all means, until after Mass. Then you must come with us to Madame Chouteau's, my mother's. Her children and grandchildren dine with her every Sunday."

"Madame Chouteau, my mother-in-law, is the queen regent of St. Louis, Mr. Ritchie," said Monsieur Gratiot, gayly. "We are all afraid of her, and I warn you that she is a very determined and formidable personage. She is the widow of the founder of St. Louis, the Sieur Laclede, although she prefers her own name. She rules us with a strong hand, dispenses justice, settles disputes, and—sometimes indulges in them herself. It is her right."

"You will see a very pretty French custom of submission to parents," said Madame Gratiot. "And afterwards there is a ball."

"A ball!" I exclaimed involuntarily.

"It may seem very strange to you, Mr. Ritchie, but we believe that Sunday was made to enjoy. They will have time to attend the ball before you send them down the river?" she added mischievously, turning to her husband.

"Certainly," said he, "the loading will not be finished before eight o'clock."

Presently Madame Gratiot went off to Mass, while I walked with Monsieur Gratiot to a storehouse near the river's bank, whence the skins, neatly packed and numbered, were being carried to the boats on the sweating shoulders of the negroes, the half-breeds, and the Canadian boatmen,—bulky bales of yellow elk, from the upper plains of the Missouri, of buffalo and deer and bear, and priceless little packages of the otter and the beaver trapped in the green shade of the endless Northern forests, and brought hither in pirogues down the swift river by the red tribesmen and Canadian adventurers.

Afterwards I strolled about the silent village. Even the cabarets were deserted. A private of the Spanish Louisiana Regiment in a dirty uniform slouched behind the palings in front of the commandant's quarters,—a quaint stone house set against the hill, with dormer windows in its curving roof, with a wide porch held by eight sturdy hewn pillars; here and there the muffled figure of a prowling Indian loitered, or a barefooted negress shuffled along by the fence crooning a folk-song. All the world had obeyed the call of the church bell save these—and Nick. I bethought myself of Nick, and made my way back to Monsieur Gratiot's.

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I found my cousin railing at Benjy, who had extracted from the saddle-bags a wondrous gray suit of London cut in which to array his master. Clothes became Nick's slim figure remarkably. This coat was cut away smartly, like a uniform, towards the tails, and was brought in at the waist with an infinite art.

"Whither now, my conquistador?" I said.

"To Mass," said he.

"To Mass!" I exclaimed; "but you have slept through the greater part of it."

"The best part is to come," said Nick, giving a final touch to his neck-band. Followed by Benjy's adoring eyes, he started out of the door, and I followed him perforce. We came to the little church, of upright logs and plaster, with its crudely shingled, peaked roof, with its tiny belfry crowned by a cross, with its porches on each side shading the line of windows there. Beside the church, a little at the back, was the cure's modest house of stone, and at the other hand, under spreading trees, the graveyard with its rough wooden crosses. And behind these graves rose the wooded hill that stretched away towards the wilderness.

What a span of life had been theirs who rested here! Their youth, perchance, had been spent amongst the crooked streets of some French village, streets lined by red-tiled houses and crossing limpid streams by quaint bridges. Death had overtaken them beside a monster tawny river of which their imaginations had not conceived, a river which draws tribute from the remote places of an unknown land,—a river, indeed, which, mixing all the waters, seemed to symbolize a coming race which was to conquer the land by its resistless flow, even as the Mississippi bore relentlessly towards the sea.

These were my own thoughts as I listened to the tones of the priest as they came, droningly, out of the door, while Nick was exchanging jokes in doubtful French with some half-breeds leaning against the palings. Then we heard benches scraping on the floor, and the congregation began to file out.

Those who reached the steps gave back, respectfully, and there came an elderly lady in a sober turban, a black mantilla wrapped tightly about her shoulders, and I made no doubt that she was Monsieur Gratiot's mother-in-law, Madame Chouteau, she whom he had jestingly called the queen regent. I was sure of this when I saw Madame Gratiot behind her. Madame Chouteau indeed had the face of authority, a high-bridged nose, a determined chin, a mouth that shut tightly. Madame Gratiot presented us to her mother, and as she passed on to the gate Madame Chouteau reminded us that we were to dine with her at two.

After her the congregation, the well-to-do and the poor alike, poured out of the church and spread in merry groups over the grass: keel boatmen in tow shirts and party-

colored worsted belts, the blacksmith, the shoemaker, the farmer of a small plot in the common fields in large cotton pantaloons and light-wove camlet coat, the more favored in skull-caps, linen small-clothes, cotton stockings, and silver-buckled shoes,—every man pausing, dipping into his tabatiere, for a word with his neighbor. The women, too, made a picture strange to our eyes, the matrons in jacket and petticoat, a Madras handkerchief flung about their shoulders, the girls in fresh cottonade or calamanco.

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All at once cries of "'Polyte! 'Polyte!" were heard, and a nimble young man with a jester-like face hopped around the corner of the church, trundling a barrel. Behind 'Polyte came two rotund little men perspiring freely, and laden down with various articles,—a bird-cage with two yellow birds, a hat-trunk, an inlaid card box, a roll of scarlet cloth, and I know not what else. They deposited these on the grass beside the barrel, which 'Polyte had set on end and proceeded to mount, encouraged by the shouts of his friends, who pressed around the barrel.

"It's an auction," I said.

But Nick did not hear me. I followed his glance to the far side of the circle, and my eye was caught by a red ribbon, a blush that matched it. A glance shot from underneath long lashes,—but not for me. Beside the girl, and palpably uneasy, stood the young man who had been called Gaspard.

"Ah," said I, "your angel of the tumbrel."

But Nick had pulled off his hat and was sweeping her a bow. The girl looked down, smoothing her ribbon, Gaspard took a step forward, and other young women near us tittered with delight. The voice of Hippolyte rolling his r's called out in a French dialect:—

"M'ssieurs et Mesdames, ce sont des effets d'un pauvre officier qui est mort. Who will buy?" He opened the hat-trunk, produced an antiquated beaver with a gold cord, and surveyed it with a covetousness that was admirably feigned. For 'Polyte was an actor. "M'ssieurs, to own such a hat were a patent of nobility. Am I bid twenty livres?"

There was a loud laughter, and he was bid four.

"Gaspard," cried the auctioneer, addressing the young man of the tumbrel, "Suzanne would no longer hesitate if she saw you in such a hat. And with the trunk, too. Ah, mon Dieu, can you afford to miss it?"

The crowd howled, Suzanne simpered, and Gaspard turned as pink as clover. But he was not to be bullied. The hat was sold to an elderly person, the red cloth likewise; a pot of grease went to a housewife, and there was a veritable scramble for the box of playing cards; and at last Hippolyte held up the wooden cage with the fluttering yellow birds.

"Ha!" he cried, his eyes on Gaspard once more, "a gentle present—a present to make a heart relent. And Monsieur Leon, perchance you will make a bid, although they are not gamecocks."

Instantly, from somewhere under the barrel, a cock crew. Even the yellow birds looked surprised, and as for 'Polyte, he nearly dropped the cage. One elderly person crossed

himself. I looked at Nick. His face was impassive, but suddenly I remembered his boyhood gift, how he had imitated the monkeys, and I began to shake with inward laughter. There was an uncomfortable silence.

“Peste, c’est la magie!” said an old man at last, searching with an uncertain hand for his snuff.

“Monsieur,” cried Nick to the auctioneer, “I will make a bid. But first you must tell me whether they are cocks or yellow birds.”

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“Parbleu,” answered the puzzled Hippolyte, “that I do not know, Monsieur.”

Everybody looked at Nick, including Suzanne.

“Very well,” said he, “I will make a bid. And if they turn out to be gamecocks, I will fight them with Monsieur Leon behind the cabaret. Two livres!”

There was a laugh, as of relief.

“Three!” cried Gaspard, and his voice broke.

Hippolyte looked insulted.

“M’ssieurs,” he shouted, “they are from the Canaries. Diable, un berger doit etre genereux.”

Another laugh, and Gaspard wiped the perspiration from his face.

“Five!” said he.

“Six!” said Nick, and the villagers turned to him in wonderment. What could such a fine Monsieur want with two yellow birds?

“En avant, Gaspard,” said Hippolyte, and Suzanne shot another barbed glance in our direction.

“Seven,” muttered Gaspard.

“Eight!” said Nick, immediately.

“Nine,” said Gaspard.

“Ten,” said Nick.

“Ten,” cried Hippolyte, “I am offered ten livres for the yellow birds.
Une bagatelle! Onze, Gaspard! Onze! onze livres, pour l’amour de
Suzanne!”

But Gaspard was silent. No appeals, entreaties, or taunts could persuade him to bid more. And at length Hippolyte, with a gesture of disdain, handed Nick the cage, as though he were giving it away.

“Monsieur,” he said, “the birds are yours, since there are no more lovers who are worthy of the name. They do not exist.”

“Monsieur,” answered Nick, “it is to disprove that statement that I have bought the birds. Mademoiselle,” he added, turning to the flushing Suzanne, “I pray that you will accept this present with every assurance of my humble regard.”

Mademoiselle took the cage, and amidst the laughter of the village at the discomfiture of poor Gaspard, swept Nick a frightened courtesy,—one that nevertheless was full of coquetry. And at that instant, to cap the situation, a rotund little man with a round face under a linen biretta grasped Nick by the hand, and cried in painful but sincere English:—

“Monsieur, you mek my daughter ver’ happy. She want those bird ever sence Captain Lopez he die. Monsieur, I am Jean Baptiste Lenoir, Colonel Chouteau’s miller, and we ver’ happy to see you at the pon’.”

“If Monsieur will lead the way,” said Nick, instantly, taking the little man by the arm.

“But you are to dine at Madame Chouteau’s,” I expostulated.

“To be sure,” said he. “Au revoir, Monsieur. Au revoir, Mademoiselle. Plus tard, Mademoiselle; nous danserons plus tard.”

“What devil inhabits you?” I said, when I had got him started on the way to Madame Chouteau’s.

“Your own, at present, Davy,” he answered, laying a hand on my shoulder, “else I should be on the way to the pon’ with Lenoir. But the ball is to come,” and he executed several steps in anticipation. “Davy, I am sorry for you.”

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“Why?” I demanded, though feeling a little self-commiseration also.

“You will never know how to enjoy yourself,” said he, with conviction.

Madame Chouteau lived in a stone house, wide and low, surrounded by trees and gardens. It was a pretty tribute of respect her children and grandchildren paid her that day, in accordance with the old French usage of honoring the parent. I should like to linger on the scene, and tell how Nick made them all laugh over the story of Suzanne Lenoir and the yellow birds, and how the children pressed around him and made him imitate all the denizens of wood and field, amid deafening shrieks of delight.

“You have probably delayed Gaspard’s wooing another year, Mr. Temple. Suzanne is a sad coquette,” said Colonel Auguste Chouteau, laughing, as we set out for the ball.

The sun was hanging low over the western hills as we approached the barracks, and out of the open windows came the merry, mad sounds of violin, guitar, and flageolet, the tinkle of a triangle now and then, the shouts of laughter, the shuffle of many feet over the puncheons. Within the door, smiling and benignant, unmindful of the stifling atmosphere, sat the black-robed village priest talking volubly to an elderly man in a scarlet cap, and several stout ladies ranged along the wall: beyond them, on a platform, Zeron, the baker, fiddled as though his life depended on it, the perspiration dripping from his brow, frowning, gesticulating at them with the flageolet and the triangle. And in a dim, noisy, heated whirl the whole village went round and round and round under the low ceiling in the valse, young and old, rich and poor, high and low, the sound of their laughter and the scraping of their feet cut now and again by an agonized squeak from Zeron’s fiddle. From time to time a staggering, panting couple would fling themselves out, help themselves liberally to pink sirop from the bowl on the side table, and then fling themselves in once more, until Zeron stopped from sheer exhaustion, to tune up for a pas de deux.

Across the room, by the sirop bowl, a pair of red ribbons flaunted, a pair of eyes sent a swift challenge, Zeron and his assistants struck up again, and there in a corner was Nick Temple, with characteristic effrontery attempting a pas de deux with Suzanne. Though Nick was ignorant, he was not ungraceful, and the village laughed and admired. And when Zeron drifted back into a valse he seized Suzanne’s plump figure in his arms and bore her, unresisting, like a prize among the dancers, avoiding alike the fat and unwieldy, the clumsy and the spiteful. For a while the tune held its mad pace, and ended with a shriek and a snap on a high note, for Zeron had broken a string. Amid a burst of laughter from the far end of the room I saw Nick stop before an open window in which a prying Indian was framed, swing Suzanne at arm’s length, and bow abruptly at the brave with a grunt that startled him into life.

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“Va-t’en, mechant!” shrieked Suzanne, excitedly.

Poor Gaspard! Poor Hippolyte! They would gain Suzanne for a dance only to have her snatched away at the next by the slim and reckless young gentleman in the gray court clothes. Little Nick cared that the affair soon became the amusement of the company. From time to time, as he glided past with Suzanne on his shoulder, he nodded gayly to Colonel Chouteau or made a long face at me, and to save our souls we could not help laughing.

“The girl has met her match, for she has played shuttle-cock with all the hearts in the village,” said Monsieur Chouteau. “But perhaps it is just as well that Mr. Temple is leaving to-night. I have signed a bond, Mr. Ritchie, by which you can obtain money at New Orleans. And do not forget to present our letter to Monsieur de Saint Gre. He has a daughter, by the way, who will be more of a match for your friend’s fascinations than Suzanne.”

The evening faded into twilight, with no signs of weariness from the dancers. And presently there stood beside us Jean Baptiste Lenoir, the Colonel’s miller.

“B’soir, Monsieur le Colonel,” he said, touching his skull-cap, “the water is very low. You fren’,” he added, turning to me, “he stay long time in St. Louis?”

“He is going away to-night,—in an hour or so,” I answered, with thanksgiving in my heart.

“I am sorry,” said Monsieur Lenoir, politely, but his looks belied his words. “He is ver’ fond Suzanne. Peut etre he marry her, but I think not. I come away from France to escape the fine gentlemen; long time ago they want to run off with my wife. She was like Suzanne.”

“How long ago did you come from France, Monsieur?” I asked, to get away from an uncomfortable subject.

“It is twenty years,” said he, dreamily, in French. “I was born in the Quartier Saint Jean, on the harbor of the city of Marseilles near Notre Dame de la Nativite.” And he told of a tall, uneven house of four stories, with a high pitched roof, and a little barred door and window at the bottom giving out upon the rough cobbles. He spoke of the smell of the sea, of the rollicking sailors who surged through the narrow street to embark on his Majesty’s men-of-war, and of the King’s white soldiers in ranks of four going to foreign lands. And how he had become a farmer, the tenant of a country family. Excitement grew on him, and he mopped his brow with his blue rumal handkerchief.

“They desire all, the nobles,” he cried, “I make the land good, and they seize it. I marry a pretty wife, and Monsieur le Comte he want her. L’bon Dieu,” he added bitterly,

relapsing into French. “France is for the King and the nobility, Monsieur. The poor have but little chance there. In the country I have seen the peasants eat roots, and in the city the poor devour the refuse from the houses of the rich. It was we who paid for their luxuries, and with mine own eyes I have seen their gilded coaches ride down weak men and women in the streets. But it cannot last. They will murder Louis and burn the great chateaux. I, who speak to you, am of the people, Monsieur, I know it.”

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The sun had long set, and with flint and tow they were touching the flame to the candles, which flickered transparent yellow in the deepening twilight. So absorbed had I become in listening to Lenoir's description that I had forgotten Nick. Now I searched for him among the promenading figures, and missed him. In vain did I seek for a glimpse of Suzanne's red ribbons, and I grew less and less attentive to the miller's reminiscences and arraignments of the nobility. Had Nick indeed run away with his daughter?

The dancing went on with unabated zeal, and through the open door in the fainting azure of the sky the summer moon hung above the hills like a great yellow orange. Striving to hide my uneasiness, I made my farewells to Madame Chouteau's sons and daughters and their friends, and with Colonel Chouteau I left the hall and began to walk towards Monsieur Gratiot's, hoping against hope that Nick had gone there to change. But we had scarce reached the road before we could see two figures in the distance, hazily outlined in the mid-light of the departed sun and the coming moon. The first was Monsieur Gratiot himself, the second Benjy. Monsieur Gratiot took me by the hand.

"I regret to inform you, Mr. Ritchie," said he, politely, "that my keel boats are loaded and ready to leave. Were you on any other errand I should implore you to stay with us."

"Is Temple at your house?" I asked faintly.

"Why, no," said Monsieur Gratiot; "I thought he was with you at the ball."

"Where is your master?" I demanded sternly of Benjy.

"I ain't seed him, Marse Dave, sence I put him inter dem fine clothes 'at he w'ars a-cou'tin'."

"He has gone off with the girl," put in Colonel Chouteau, laughing.

"But where?" I said, with growing anger at this lack of consideration on Nick's part.

"I'll warrant that Gaspard or Hippolyte Beaujais will know, if they can be found," said the Colonel. "Neither of them willingly lets the girl out of his sight."

As we hurried back towards the throbbing sounds of Zeron's fiddle I apologized as best I might to Monsieur Gratiot, declaring that if Nick were not found within the half-hour I would leave without him. My host protested that an hour or so would make no difference. We were about to pass through the group of loungers that loitered by the gate when the sound of rapid footsteps arrested us, and we turned to confront two panting and perspiring young men who halted beside us. One was Hippolyte Beaujais, more fantastic than ever as he faced the moon, and the other was Gaspard. They had plainly made a common cause, but it was Hippolyte who spoke.

“Monsieur,” he cried, “you seek your friend? Ha, we have found him,—we will lead you to him.”

“Where is he?” said Colonel Chouteau, repressing another laugh.

“On the pond, Monsieur,—in a boat, Monsieur, with Suzanne, Monsieur le Colonel! And, moreover, he will come ashore for no one.”

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“Parbleu,” said the Colonel, “I should think not for any arguments that you two could muster. But we will go there.”

“How far is it?” I asked, thinking of Monsieur Gratiot.

“About a mile,” said Colonel Chouteau, “a pleasant walk.”

We stepped out, Hippolyte and Gaspard running in front, the Colonel and Monsieur Gratiot and myself following; and a snicker which burst out now and then told us that Benjy was in the rear. On any other errand I should have thought the way beautiful, for the country road, rutted by wooden wheels, wound in and out through pleasant vales and over gentle rises, whence we caught glimpses from time to time of the Mississippi gleaming like molten gold to the eastward. Here and there, nestling against the gentle slopes of the hillside clearing, was a low-thatched farmhouse among its orchards. As we walked, Nick’s escapade, instead of angering Monsieur Gratiot, seemed to present itself to him in a more and more ridiculous aspect, and twice he nudged me to call my attention to the two vengefully triumphant figures silhouetted against the moon ahead of us. From time to time also I saw Colonel Chouteau shaking with laughter. As for me, it was impossible to be angry at Nick for any space. Nobody else would have carried off a girl in the face of her rivals for a moonlight row on a pond a mile away.

At length we began to go down into the valley where Chouteau’s pond was, and we caught glimpses of the shimmering of its waters through the trees, ay, and presently heard them tumbling lightly over the mill-dam. The spot was made for romance,—a sequestered vale, clad with forest trees, cleared a little by the water-side, where Monsieur Lenoir raised his maize and his vegetables. Below the mill, so Monsieur Gratiot told me, where the creek lay in pools on its limestone bed, the village washing was done; and every Monday morning bare-legged negresses strode up this road, the bundles of clothes balanced on their heads, the paddles in their hands, followed by a stream of black urchins who tempted Providence to drown them.

Down in the valley we came to a path that branched from the road and led under the oaks and hickories towards the pond, and we had not taken twenty paces in it before the notes of a guitar and the sound of a voice reached our ears. And then, when the six of us stood huddled in the rank growth at the water’s edge, we saw a boat floating idly in the forest shadow on the far side.

I put my hand to my mouth.

“Nick!” I shouted.

There came for an answer, with the careless and unskilful thrumming of the guitar, the end of the verse:—

> “Thine eyes are bright as the stars at night,
> Thy cheeks like the rose of the dawning, oh!”

“Helas!” exclaimed Hippolyte, sadly, “there is no other boat.”

“Nick!” I shouted again, reenforced vociferously by the others.

The music ceased, there came feminine laughter across the water, then Nick’s voice, in French that dared everything:—

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“Go away and amuse yourselves at the dance. Peste, it is scarce an hour ago I threatened to row ashore and break your heads. Allez vous en, jaloux!”

A scream of delight from Suzanne followed this sally, which was received by Gaspard and Hippolyte with a rattle of sacres, and—despite our irritation—the Colonel, Monsieur Gratiot, and myself with a burst of involuntary laughter.

“Parbleu,” said the Colonel, choking, “it is a pity to disturb such a one. Gratiot, if it was my boat, I’d delay the departure till morning.”

“Indeed, I shall have had no small entertainment as a solace,” said Monsieur Gratiot. “Listen!”

The tinkle of the guitar was heard again, and Nick’s voice, strong and full and undisturbed:—

> “S’posin’ I was to go to N’ O’leans an’ take sick an’ die,
> Like a bird into the country my spirit would fly.
> Go ’way, old man, and leave me alone,
> For I am a stranger and a long way from home.”

There was a murmur of voices in the boat, the sound of a paddle gurgling as it dipped, and the dugout shot out towards the middle of the pond and drifted again.

I shouted once more at the top of my lungs:—

“Come in here, Nick, instantly!”

There was a moment’s silence.

“By gad, it’s Parson Davy!” I heard Nick exclaim. “Halloo, Davy, how the deuce did you get there?”

“No thanks to you,” I retorted hotly. “Come in.”

“Lord,” said he, “is it time to go to New Orleans?”

“One might think New Orleans was across the street,” said Monsieur Gratiot. “What an attitude of mind!”

The dugout was coming towards us now, propelled by easy strokes, and Nick could be heard the while talking in low tones to Suzanne. We could only guess at the tenor of his conversation, which ceased entirely as they drew near. At length the prow slid in among the rushes, was seized vigorously by Gaspard and Hippolyte, and the boat hauled ashore.

“Thank you very much, Messieurs; you are most obliging,” said Nick. And taking Suzanne by the hand, he helped her gallantly over the gunwale. “Monsieur,” he added, turning in his most irresistible manner to Monsieur Gratiot, “if I have delayed the departure of your boat, I am exceedingly sorry. But I appeal to you if I have not the best of excuses.”

And he bowed to Suzanne, who stood beside him coyly, looking down. As for ’Polyte and Gaspard, they were quite breathless between rage and astonishment. But Colonel Chouteau began to laugh.

“Diable, Monsieur, you are right,” he cried, “and rather than have missed this entertainment I would pay Gratiot for his cargo.”

“Au revoir, Mademoiselle,” said Nick, “I will return when I am released from bondage. When this terrible mentor relaxes vigilance, I will escape and make my way back to you through the forests.”

“Oh!” cried Mademoiselle to me, “you will let him come back, Monsieur.”

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“Assuredly, Mademoiselle,” I said, “but I have known him longer than you, and I tell you that in a month he will not wish to come back.”

Hippolyte gave a grunt of approval to this plain speech. Suzanne exclaimed, but before Nick could answer footsteps were heard in the path and Lenoir himself, perspiring, panting, exhausted, appeared in the midst of us.

“Suzanne!” he cried, “Suzanne!” And turning to Nick, he added quite simply, “So, Monsieur, you did not run off with her, after all?”

“There was no place to run, Monsieur,” answered Nick.

“Praise be to God for that!” said the miller, heartily, “there is some advantage in living in the wilderness, when everything is said.”

“I shall come back and try, Monsieur,” said Nick.

The miller raised his hands.

“I assure you that he will not, Monsieur,” I put in.

He thanked me profusely, and suddenly an idea seemed to strike him.

“There is the priest,” he cried; “Monsieur le cure retires late. There is the priest, Monsieur.”

There was an awkward silence, broken at length by an exclamation from Gaspard. Colonel Chouteau turned his back, and I saw his shoulders heave. All eyes were on Nick, but the rascal did not seem at all perturbed.

“Monsieur,” he said, bowing, “marriage is a serious thing, and not to be entered into lightly. I thank you from my heart, but I am bound now with Mr. Ritchie on an errand of such importance that I must make a sacrifice of my own interests and affairs to his.”

“If Mr. Temple wishes—” I began, with malicious delight. But Nick took me by the shoulder.

“My dear Davy,” he said, giving me a vicious kick, “I could not think of it. I will go with you at once. Adieu, Mademoiselle,” said he, bending over Suzanne’s unresisting hand. “Adieu, Messieurs, and I thank you for your great interest in me.” (This to Gaspard and Hippolyte.)

“And now, Monsieur Gratiot, I have already presumed too much on your patience. I will follow you, Monsieur.”

We left them, Lenoir, Suzanne, and her two suitors, standing at the pond, and made our way through the path in the forest. It was not until we reached the road and had begun to climb out of the valley that the silence was broken between us.

“Monsieur,” said Colonel Chouteau, slyly, “do you have many such escapes?”

“It might have been closer,” said Nick.

“Closer?” ejaculated the Colonel.

“Assuredly,” said Nick, “to the extent of abducting Monsieur le cure. As for you, Davy,” he added, between his teeth, “I mean to get even with you.”

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It was well for us that the Colonel and Monsieur Gratiot took the escapade with such good nature. And so we walked along through the summer night, talking gayly, until at length the lights of the village twinkled ahead of us, and in the streets we met many parties making merry on their homeward way. We came to Monsieur Gratiot's, bade our farewells to Madame, picked up our saddle-bags, the two gentlemen escorting us down to the river bank where the keel boat was tugging at the ropes that held her, impatient to be off. Her captain, a picturesque Canadian by the name of Xavier Paret, was presented to us; we bade our friends farewell, and stepped across the plank to the deck. As we were casting off, Monsieur Gratiot called to us that he would take the first occasion to send our horses back to Kentucky. The oars were manned, the heavy hulk moved, and we were shot out into the mighty current of the river on our way to New Orleans.

Nick and I stood for a long time on the deck, and the windows of the little village gleamed like stars among the trees. We passed the last of its houses that nestled against the hill, and below that the forest lay like velvet under the moon. The song of our boatmen broke the silence of the night:—

> "Voici le temps et la saison,
> Voici le temps et la saison,
> Ah! vrai, que les journees sont longues,
> Ah! vrai, que les journees sont longues!"

CHAPTER X

THE KEEL BOAT

We were embarked on a strange river, in a strange boat, and bound for a strange city. To us Westerners a halo of romance, of unreality, hung over New Orleans. To us it had an Old World, almost Oriental flavor of mystery and luxury and pleasure, and we imagined it swathed in the moisture of the Delta, built of quaint houses, with courts of shining orange trees and magnolias, and surrounded by flowering plantations of unimagined beauty. It was most fitting that such a place should be the seat of dark intrigues against material progress, and this notion lent added zest to my errand thither. As for Nick, it took no great sagacity on my part to predict that he would forget Suzanne and begin to look forward to the Creole beauties of the Mysterious City.

First, there was the fur-laden keel boat in which we travelled, gone forever now from Western navigation. It had its rude square sail to take advantage of the river winds, its mast strongly braced to hold the long tow-ropes. But tow-ropes were for the endless up-river journey, when a numerous crew strained day after day along the bank, chanting the voyageurs' songs. Now we were light-manned, two half-breeds and two Canadians to handle the oars in time of peril, and Captain Xavier, who stood aft on the cabin roof,

leaning against the heavy beam of the long, curved tiller, watching hawklike for snag and eddy and bar. Within the cabin was a great fireplace of stones, where our cooking was done, and bunks set round for the men in cold weather and rainy. But in these fair nights we chose to sleep on deck.

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Far into the night we sat, Nick and I, our feet dangling over the forward edge of the cabin, looking at the glory of the moon on the vast river, at the endless forest crown, at the haze which hung like silver dust under the high bluffs on the American side. We slept. We awoke again as the moon was shrinking abashed before the light that glowed above these cliffs, and the river was turned from brown to gold and then to burnished copper, the forest to a thousand shades of green from crest to the banks where the river was licking the twisted roots to nakedness. The south wind wafted the sharp wood-smoke from the chimney across our faces. In the stern Xavier stood immovable against the tiller, his short pipe clutched between his teeth, the colors of his new worsted belt made gorgeous by the rising sun.

“B’jour, Michie,” he said, and added in the English he had picked up from the British traders, “the breakfas’ he is ready, and Jean make him good. Will you have the grace to descen’?”

We went down the ladder into the cabin, where the odor of the furs mingled with the smell of the cooking. There was a fricassee steaming on the crane, some of Zeron’s bread, brought from St. Louis, and coffee that Monsieur Gratiot had provided for our use. We took our bowls and cups on deck and sat on the edge of the cabin.

“By gad,” cried Nick, “it lacks but the one element to make it a paradise.”

“And what is that?” I demanded.

“A woman,” said he.

Xavier, who overheard, gave a delighted laugh.

“Parbleu, Michie, you have right,” he said, “but Michie Gratiot, he say no. In Nouvelle Orleans we find some.”

Nick got to his feet, and if anything he did could have surprised me, I should have been surprised when he put his arm coaxingly about Xavier’s neck. Xavier himself was surprised and correspondingly delighted.

“Tell me, Xavier,” he said, with a look not to be resisted, “do you think I shall find some beauties there?”

“Beauties!” exclaimed Xavier, “La Nouvelle Orleans—it is the home of beauty, Michie. They promenade themselves on the levee, they look down from ze gallerie, mais—”

“But what, Xavier?”

“But, mon Dieu, Michie, they are vair’ difficile. They are not like Englis’ beauties, there is the father and the mother, and—the convent.” And Xavier, who had a wen under his eye, laid his finger on it.

“For shame, Xavier,” cried Nick; “and you are balked by such things?”

Xavier thought this an exceedingly good joke, and he took his pipe out of his mouth to laugh the better.

“Me? Mais non, Michie. And yet ze Alcalde, he mek me afraid. Once he put me in ze calaboose when I tried to climb ze balcon’.”

Nick roared.

“I will show you how, Xavier,” he said; “as to climbing the balconies, there is a convenance in it, as in all else. For instance, one must be daring, and discreet, and nimble, and ready to give the law a presentable answer, and lacking that, a piastre. And then the fair one must be a fair one indeed.”

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“Diable, Michie,” cried Xavier, “you are ze mischief.”

“Nay,” said Nick, “I learned it all and much more from my cousin, Mr. Ritchie.”

Xavier stared at me for an instant, and considering that he knew nothing of my character, I thought it extremely impolite of him to laugh. Indeed, he tried to control himself, for some reason standing in awe of my appearance, and then he burst out into such loud haw-haws that the crew poked their heads above the cabin hatch.

“Michie Reetchie,” said Xavier, and again he burst into laughter that choked further speech. He controlled himself and laid his finger on his wen.

“You don’t believe it,” said Nick, offended.

“Michie Reetchie a gallant!” said Xavier.

“An incurable,” said Nick, “an amazingly clever rogue at device when there is a petticoat in it. Davy, do I do you justice?”

Xavier roared again.

“Quel maitre!” he said.

“Xavier,” said Nick, gently taking the tiller out of his hand, “I will teach you how to steer a keel boat.”

“Mon Dieu,” said Xavier, “and who is to pay Michie Gratiot for his fur? The river, she is full of things.”

“Yes, I know, Xavier, but you will teach me to steer.”

“Volontiers, Michie, as we go now. But there come a time when I, even I, who am twenty year on her, do not know whether it is right or left. Ze rock—he vair’ hard. Ze snag, he grip you like dat,” and Xavier twined his strong arms around Nick until he was helpless. “Ze bar—he hol’ you by ze leg. An’ who is to tell you how far he run under ze yellow water, Michie? I, who speak to you, know. But I know not how I know. Ze water, sometime she tell, sometime she say not’ing.”

“A bas, Xavier!” said Nick, pushing him away, “I will teach you the river.”

Xavier laughed, and sat down on the edge of the cabin. Nick took easily to accomplishments, and he handled the clumsy tiller with a certainty and distinction that made the boatmen swear in two languages and a patois. A great water-logged giant of the Northern forests loomed ahead of us. Xavier sprang to his feet, but Nick had swung his boat swiftly, smoothly, into the deeper water on the outer side.

“Saint Jacques, Michie,” cried Xavier, “you mek him better zan I thought.”

Fascinated by a new accomplishment, Nick held to the tiller, while Xavier with a trained eye scanned the troubled, yellow-glistening surface of the river ahead. The wind died, the sun beat down with a moist and venomous sting, and northeastward above the edge of the bluff a bank of cloud like sulphur smoke was lifted. Gradually Xavier ceased his jesting and became quiet.

“Looks like a hurricane,” said Nick.

“Mon Dieu,” said Xavier, “you have right, Michie,” and he called in his rapid patois to the crew, who lounged forward in the cabin’s shade. There came to my mind the memory of that hurricane at Temple Bow long ago, a storm that seemed to have brought so much sorrow into my life. I glanced at Nick, but his face was serene.

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The cloud-bank came on in black and yellow masses, and the saffron light I recalled so well turned the living green of the forest to a sickly pallor and the yellow river to a tinge scarce to be matched on earth. Xavier had the tiller now, and the men were straining at the oars to send the boat across the current towards the nearer western shore. And as my glance took in the scale of things, the miles of bluff frowning above the bottom, the river that seemed now like a lake of lava gently boiling, and the wilderness of the western shore that reached beyond the ken of man, I could not but shudder to think of the conflict of nature's forces in such a place. A grim stillness reigned over all, broken only now and again by a sharp command from Xavier. The men were rowing for their lives, the sweat glistening on their red faces.

"She come," said Xavier.

I looked, not to the northeast whence the banks of cloud had risen, but to the southwest, and it seemed as though a little speck was there against the hurrying film of cloud. We were drawing near the forest line, where a little creek made an indentation. I listened, and from afar came a sound like the strumming of low notes on a guitar, and sad. The terrified scream of a panther broke the silence of the forest, and then the other distant note grew stronger, and stronger yet, and rose to a high hum like unto no sound on this earth, and mingled with it now was a lashing like water falling from a great height. We grounded, and Xavier, seizing a great tow-rope, leaped into the shallow water and passed the bight around a trunk. I cried out to Nick, but my voice was drowned. He seized me and flung me under the cabin's lee, and then above the fearful note of the storm came cracklings like gunshots of great trees snapping at their trunk. We saw the forest wall burst out—how far away I know not—and the air was filled as with a flock of giant birds, and boughs crashed on the roof of the cabin and tore the water in the darkness. How long we lay clutching each other in terror on the rocking boat I may not say, but when the veil first lifted there was the river like an angry sea, and limitless, the wind in its fury whipping the foam from the crests and bearing it off into space. And presently, as we stared, the note lowered and the wind was gone again, and there was the water tossing foolishly, and we lay safe amidst the green wreckage of the forest as by a miracle.

It was Nick who moved first. With white face he climbed to the roof of the cabin and idly seizing the great limb that lay there tried to move it. Xavier, who lay on his face on the bank, rose to a sitting posture and crossed himself. Beyond me crowded the four members of the crew, unhurt. Then we heard Xavier's voice, in French, thanking the Blessed Virgin for our escape.

Further speech was gone from us, for men do not talk after such a matter. We laid hold of the tree across the cabin and, straining, flung it over into the water. A great drop of rain hit me on the forehead, and there came a silver-gray downpour that blotted out the scene and drove us down below. And then, from somewhere in the depths of the dark cabin, came a sound to make a man's blood run cold.

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“What’s that?” I said, clutching Nick.

“Benjy,” said he; “thank God he did not die of fright.” We lighted a candle, and poking around, found the negro where he had crept into the farthest corner of a bunk with his face to the wall. And when we touched him he gave vent to a yell that was blood-curdling.

“I’se a bad nigger, Lo’d, yes, I is,” he moaned. “I ain’t fit fo’ jedgment, Lo’d.”

Nick shook him and laughed.

“Come out of that, Benjy,” he said; “you’ve got another chance.”

Benjy turned, perforce, the whites of his eyes gleaming in the candle-light, and stared at us.

“You ain’t gone yit, Marse,” he said.

“Gone where?” said Nick.

“I’se done been tole de quality ’ll be jedged fust, Marse.”

Nick hauled him out on the floor. Climbing to the deck, we found that the boat was already under way, running southward in the current through the misty rain. And gazing shoreward, a sight met my eyes which I shall never forget. A wide vista, carpeted with wreckage, was cut through the forest to the river’s edge, and the yellow water was strewn for miles with green boughs. We stared down it, overwhelmed, until we had passed beyond its line.

“It is as straight,” said Nick, “as straight as one of her Majesty’s alleys I saw cut through the forest at Saint-Cloud.”

* * * * * * *

Had I space and time to give a faithful account of this journey it would be chiefly a tribute to Xavier’s skill, for they who have not put themselves at the mercy of the Mississippi in a small craft can have no idea of the dangers of such a voyage. Infinite experience, a keen eye, a steady hand, and a nerve of iron are required. Now, when the current swirled almost to a rapid, we grazed a rock by the width of a ripple; and again, despite the effort of Xavier and the crew, we would tear the limbs from a huge tree, which, had we hit it fair, would have ripped us from bow to stern. Once, indeed, we were fast on a sand-bar, whence (as Nick said) Xavier fairly cursed us off. We took care to moor at night, where we could be seen as little as possible from the river, and divided the watches lest we should be surprised by Indians. And, as we went southward, our hands and faces became blotched all over by the bites of mosquitoes and flies, and we

smothered ourselves under blankets to get rid of them. At times we fished, and one evening, after we had passed the expanse of water at the mouth of the Ohio, Nick pulled a hideous thing from the inscrutable yellow depths,—a slimy, scaleless catfish. He came up like a log, and must have weighed seventy pounds. Xavier and his men and myself made two good meals of him, but Nick would not touch the meat.

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The great river teemed with life. There were flocks of herons and cranes and water pelicans, and I know not what other birds, and as we slipped under the banks we often heard the paroquets chattering in the forests. And once, as we drifted into an inlet at sunset, we caught sight of the shaggy head of a bear above the brown water, and leaping down into the cabin I primed the rifle that stood there and shot him. It took the seven of us to drag him on board, and then I cleaned and skinned him as Tom had taught me, and showed Jean how to put the caul fat and liver in rows on a skewer and wrap it in the bear's handkerchief and roast it before the fire. Nick found no difficulty in eating this—it was a dish fit for any gourmand.

We passed the great, red Chickasaw Bluff, which sits facing westward looking over the limitless Louisiana forests, where new and wondrous vines and flowers grew, and came to the beautiful Walnut Hills crowned by a Spanish fort. We did not stop there to exchange courtesies, but pressed on to the Grand Gulf, the grave of many a keel boat before and since. This was by far the most dangerous place on the Mississippi, and Xavier was never weary of recounting many perilous escapes there, or telling how such and such a priceless cargo had sunk in the mud by reason of the lack of skill of particular boatmen he knew of. And indeed, the Canadian's face assumed a graver mien after the Walnut Hills were behind us.

"You laugh, Michie," he said to Nick, a little resentfully. "I who speak to you say that there is four foot on each side of ze bateau. Too much tafia, a little too much excite—" and he made a gesture with his hand expressive of total destruction; "ze tornado, I would sooner have him—"

"Bah!" said Nick, stroking Xavier's black beard, "give me the tiller. I will see you through safely, and we will not spare the tafia either." And he began to sing a song of Xavier's own:—

> "'Marianson, dame jolie,
> Ou est alle votre mari?'"

"Ah, toujours les dames!" said Xavier. "But I tell you, Michie, le diable,—he is at ze bottom of ze Grand Gulf and his mouth open—so." And he suited the action to the word.

At night we tied up under the shore within earshot of the mutter of the place, and twice that night I awoke with clinched hands from a dream of being spun fiercely against the rock of which Xavier had told, and sucked into the devil's mouth under the water. Dawn came as I was fighting the mosquitoes,—a still, sultry dawn with thunder muttering in the distance.

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We breakfasted in silence, and with the crew standing ready at the oars and Xavier scanning the wide expanse of waters ahead, seeking for that unmarked point whence to embark on this perilous journey, we floated down the stream. The prospect was sufficiently disquieting on that murky day. Below us, on the one hand, a rocky bluff reached out into the river, and on the far side was a timber-clad point round which the Mississippi doubled and flowed back on itself. It needed no trained eye to guess at the perils of the place. On the one side the mighty current charged against the bluff and, furious at the obstacle, lashed itself into a hundred sucks and whirls, their course marked by the flotsam plundered from the forests above. Woe betide the boat that got into this devil's caldron! And on the other side, near the timbered point, ran a counter current marked by forest wreckage flowing up-stream. To venture too far on this side was to be grounded or at least to be sent back to embark once more on the trial.

But where was the channel? We watched Xavier with bated breath. Not once did he take his eyes from the swirling water ahead, but gave the tiller a touch from time to time, now right, now left, and called in a monotone for the port or starboard oars. Nearer and nearer we sped, dodging the snags, until the water boiled around us, and suddenly the boat shot forward as in a mill-race, and we clutched the cabin's roof. A triumphant gleam was in Xavier's eyes, for he had hit the channel squarely. And then, like a monster out of the deep, the scaly, black back of a great northern pine was flung up beside us and sheered us across the channel until we were at the very edge of the foam-specked, spinning water. But Xavier saw it, and quick as lightning brought his helm over and laughed as he heard it crunching along our keel. And so we came swiftly around the bend and into safety once more. The next day there was the Petite Gulf, which bothered Xavier very little, and the day after that we came in sight of Natchez on her heights and guided our boat in amongst the others that lined the shore, scowled at by lounging Indians there, and eyed suspiciously by a hatchet-faced Spaniard in a tawdry uniform who represented his Majesty's customs. Here we stopped for a day and a night that Xavier and his crew might get properly drunk on tafia, while Nick and I walked about the town and waited until his Excellency, the commandant, had finished dinner that we might present our letters and obtain his passport. Natchez at that date was a sufficiently unkempt and evil place of dirty, ramshackle houses and gambling dens, where men of the four nations gamed and quarrelled and fought. We were glad enough to get away the following morning, Xavier somewhat saddened by the loss of thirty livres of which he had no memory, and Nick and myself relieved at having the passports in our pockets. I have mine yet among my papers.

"Natchez, 29 de Junio, de 1789.

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“Concedo libre y seguro paeaporte a Don David Ritchie para que pase a la Nueva Orleans por Agna. Pido y encargo no se le ponga embarazo.”

A few days more and we were running between low shores which seemed to hold a dark enchantment. The rivers now flowed out of, and not into the Mississippi, and Xavier called them bayous, and often it took much skill and foresight on his part not to be shot into the lane they made in the dark forest of an evening. And the forest,—it seemed an impenetrable mystery, a strange tangle of fantastic growths: the live-oak (chene vert), its wide-spreading limbs hung funereally with Spanish moss and twined in the mistletoe’s death embrace; the dark cypress swamp with the conelike knees above the yellow back-waters; and here and there grew the bridelike magnolia which we had known in Kentucky, wafting its perfume over the waters, and wondrous flowers and vines and trees with French names that bring back the scene to me even now with a whiff of romance, bois d’arc, lilac, grande volaille (water-lily). Birds flew hither and thither (the names of every one of which Xavier knew),—the whistling papabot, the mournful bittern (garde-soleil), and the night-heron (grosbeck), who stood like a sentinel on the points.

One night I awoke with the sweat starting from my brow, trying to collect my senses, and I lay on my blanket listening to such plaintive and heart-rending cries as I had never known. Human cries they were, cries as of children in distress, and I rose to a sitting posture on the deck with my hair standing up straight, to discover Nick beside me in the same position.

“God have mercy on us,” I heard him mutter, “what’s that? It sounds like the wail of all the babies since the world began.”

We listened together, and I can give no notion of the hideous mournfulness of the sound. We lay in a swampy little inlet, and the forest wall made a dark blur against the star-studded sky. There was a splash near the boat that made me clutch my legs, the wails ceased and began again with redoubled intensity. Nick and I leaped to our feet and stood staring, horrified, over the gunwale into the black water. Presently there was a laugh behind us, and we saw Xavier resting on his elbow.

“What devil-haunted place is this?” demanded Nick.

“Ha, ha,” said Xavier, shaking with unseemly mirth, “you have never heard ze alligator sing, Michie?”

“Alligator!” cried Nick; “there are babies in the water, I tell you.”

“Ha, ha,” laughed Xavier, flinging off his blanket and searching for his flint and tinder. He lighted a pine knot, and in the red pulsing flare we saw what seemed to be a dozen black logs floating on the surface. And then Xavier flung the cresset at them, fire and

all. There was a lashing, a frightful howl from one of the logs, and the night's silence once more.

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Often after that our slumbers were disturbed, and we would rise with maledictions in our mouths to fling the handiest thing at the serenaders. When we arose in the morning we would often see them by the dozens, basking in the shallows, with their wide mouths flapped open waiting for their prey. Sometimes we ran upon them in the water, where they looked like the rough-bark pine logs from the North, and Nick would have a shot at them. When he hit one fairly there would be a leviathan-like roar and a churning of the river into suds.

At length there were signs that we were drifting out of the wilderness, and one morning we came in sight of a rich plantation with its dark orange trees and fields of indigo, with its wide-galleried manor-house in a grove. And as we drifted we heard the negroes chanting at their work, the plaintive cadence of the strange song adding to the mystery of the scene. Here in truth was a new world, a land of peaceful customs, green and moist. The soft-toned bells of it seemed an expression of its life,—so far removed from our own striving and fighting existence in Kentucky. Here and there, between plantations, a belfry could be seen above the cluster of the little white village planted in the green; and when we went ashore amongst these simple French people they treated us with such gentle civility and kindness that we would fain have lingered there. The river had become a vast yellow lake, and often as we drifted of an evening the wail of a slave dance and monotonous beating of a tom-tom would float to us over the water.

At last, late one afternoon, we came in sight of that strange city which had filled our thoughts for many days.

CHAPTER XI

THE STRANGE CITY

Nick and I stood by the mast on the forward part of the cabin, staring at the distant, low-lying city, while Xavier sought for the entrance to the eddy which here runs along the shore. If you did not gain this entrance, —so he explained,—you were carried by a swift current below New Orleans and might by no means get back save by the hiring of a crew. Xavier, however, was not to be caught thus, and presently we were gliding quietly along the eastern bank, or levee, which held back the river from the lowlands. Then, as we looked, the levee became an esplanade shaded by rows of willows, and through them we caught sight of the upper galleries and low, curving roofs of the city itself. There, cried Xavier, was the Governor’s house on the corner, where the great Miro lived, and beyond it the house of the Intendant; and then, gliding into an open space between the keel boats along the bank, stared at by a score of boatmen and idlers from above, we came to the end of our long journey. No sooner had we made fast than we were boarded by a shabby customs officer who, when he had seen our passports, bowed politely and invited us to land. We leaped ashore, gained the gravelled walk on the levee, and looked about us.

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Squalidity first met our eyes. Below us, crowded between the levee and the row of houses, were dozens of squalid market-stalls tended by cotton-clad negroes. Beyond, across the bare Place d'Armes, a blackened gap in the line of houses bore witness to the devastation of the year gone by, while here and there a roof, struck by the setting sun, gleamed fiery red with its new tiles. The levee was deserted save for the negroes and the river men.

"Time for siesta, Michie," said Xavier, joining us; "I will show you ze inn of which I spik. She is kep' by my fren', Madame Bouvet."

"Xavier," said Nick, looking at the rolling flood of the river, "suppose this levee should break?"

"Ah," said Xavier, "then some Spaniard who never have a bath—he feel what water is lak."

Followed by Benjy with the saddle-bags, we went down the steps set in the levee into this strange, foreign city. It was like unto nothing we had ever seen, nor can I give an adequate notion of how it affected us,—such a mixture it seemed of dirt and poverty and wealth and romance. The narrow, muddy streets ran with filth, and on each side along the houses was a sun-baked walk held up by the curved sides of broken flatboats, where two men might scarcely pass. The houses, too, had an odd and foreign look, some of wood, some of upright logs and plaster, and newer ones, Spanish in style, of adobe, with curving roofs of red tiles and strong eaves spreading over the banquette (as the sidewalk was called), casting shadows on lemon-colored walls. Since New Orleans was in a swamp, the older houses for the most part were lifted some seven feet above the ground, and many of these houses had wide galleries on the street side. Here and there a shop was set in the wall; a watchmaker was to be seen poring over his work at a tiny window, a shoemaker cross-legged on the floor. Again, at an open wicket, we caught a glimpse through a cool archway into a flowering court-yard. Stalwart negresses with bright kerchiefs made way for us on the banquette. Hands on hips, they swung along erect, with baskets of cakes and sweetmeats on their heads, musically crying their wares.

At length, turning a corner, we came to a white wooden house on the Rue Royale, with a flight of steps leading up to the entrance. In place of a door a flimsy curtain hung in the doorway, and, pushing this aside, we followed Xavier through a darkened hall to a wide gallery that overlooked a court-yard. This court-yard was shaded by several great trees which grew there, the house and gallery ran down one other side of it; and the two remaining sides were made up of a series of low cabins, these forming the various outhouses and the kitchen. At the far end of this gallery a sallow, buxom lady sat sewing at a table, and Xavier saluted her very respectfully.

“Madame,” he said, “I have brought you from St. Louis with Michie Gratiot’s compliments two young American gentlemen, who are travelling to amuse themselves.”

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The lady rose and beamed upon us.

“From Monsieur Gratiot,” she said; “you are very welcome, gentlemen, to such poor accommodations as I have. It is not unusual to have American gentlemen in New Orleans, for many come here first and last. And I am happy to say that two of my best rooms are vacant. Zoey!”

There was a shrill answer from the court below, and a negro girl in a yellow turban came running up, while Madame Bouvet bustled along the gallery and opened the doors of two darkened rooms. Within I could dimly see a walnut dresser, a chair, and a walnut bed on which was spread a mosquito bar.

“Voila! Messieurs,” cried Madame Bouvet, “there is still a little time for a siesta. No siesta!” cried Madame, eying us aghast; “ah, the Americans they never rest—never.”

We bade farewell to the good Xavier, promising to see him soon; and Nick, shouting to Benjy to open the saddle-bags, proceeded to array himself in the clothes which had made so much havoc at St. Louis. I boded no good from this proceeding, but I reflected, as I watched him dress, that I might as well try to turn the Mississippi from its course as to attempt to keep my cousin from the search for gallant adventure. And I reflected that his indulgence in pleasure-seeking would serve the more to divert any suspicions which might fall upon my own head. At last, when the setting sun was flooding the court-yard, he stood arrayed upon the gallery, ready to venture forth to conquest.

Madame Bouvet’s tavern, or hotel, or whatever she was pleased to call it, was not immaculately clean. Before passing into the street we stood for a moment looking into the public room on the left of the hallway, a long saloon, evidently used in the early afternoon for a dining room, and at the back of it a wide, many-paned window, capped by a Spanish arch, looked out on the gallery. Near this window was a gay party of young men engaged at cards, waited on by the yellow-turbaned Zoey, and drinking what evidently was claret punch. The sounds of their jests and laughter pursued us out of the house.

The town was waking from its siesta, the streets filling, and people stopped to stare at Nick as we passed. But Nick, who was plainly in search of something he did not find, hurried on. We soon came to the quarter which had suffered most from the fire, where new houses had gone up or were in the building beside the blackened logs of many of Bienville’s time. Then we came to a high white wall that surrounded a large garden, and within it was a long, massive building of some beauty and pretension, with a high, latticed belfry and heavy walls and with arched dormers in the sloping roof. As we stood staring at it through the iron grille set in the archway of the lodge, Nick declared that it put him in mind of some of the chateaux he had seen in France, and he crossed the

street to get a better view of the premises. An old man in coarse blue linen came out of the lodge and spoke to me.

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“It is the convent of the good nuns, the Ursulines, Monsieur,” he said in French, “and it was built long ago in the Sieur de Bienville’s time, when the colony was young. For forty-five years, Monsieur, the young ladies of the city have come here to be educated.”

“What does he say?” demanded Nick, pricking up his ears as he came across the street.

“That young men have been sent to the mines of Brazil for climbing the walls,” I answered.

“Who wants to climb the walls?” said Nick, disgusted.

“The young ladies of the town go to school here,” I answered; “it is a convent.”

“It might serve to pass the time,” said Nick, gazing with a new interest at the latticed windows. “How much would you take, my friend, to let us in at the back way this evening?” he demanded of the porter in French.

The good man gasped, lifted his hands in horror, and straightway let loose upon Nick a torrent of French invectives that had not the least effect except to cause a blacksmith’s apprentice and two negroes to stop and stare at us.

“Pooh!” exclaimed Nick, when the man had paused for want of breath, “it is no trick to get over that wall.”

“Bon Dieu!” cried the porter, “you are Kentuckians, yes? I might have known that you were Kentuckians, and I shall advise the good sisters to put glass on the wall and keep a watch.”

“The young ladies are beautiful, you say?” said Nick.

At this juncture, with the negroes grinning and the porter near bursting with rage, there came out of the lodge the fattest woman I have ever seen for her size. She seized her husband by the back of his loose frock and pulled him away, crying out that he was losing time by talking to vagabonds, besides disturbing the good sisters. Then we went away, Nick following the convent wall down to the river. Turning southward under the bank past the huddle of market-stalls, we came suddenly upon a sight that made us pause and wonder.

New Orleans was awake. A gay and laughing throng paced the esplanade on the levee under the willows, with here and there a cavalier on horseback on the Royal Road below. Across the Place d’Armes the spire of the parish church stood against the fading sky, and to the westward the mighty river stretched away like a gilded floor. It was a strange throng. There were grave Spaniards in long cloaks and feathered beavers; jolly merchants and artisans in short linen jackets, each with his tabatiere, the wives with bits

of finery, the children laughing and shouting and dodging in and out between fathers and mothers beaming with quiet pride and contentment; swarthy boat-men with their worsted belts, gaudy negresses chanting in the soft patois, and here and there a blanketed Indian. Nor was this all. Some occasion (so Madame Bouvet had told us) had brought a sprinkling of fashion to town that day, and it was a fashion to astonish me. There were fine gentlemen with swords and silk waistcoats and silver shoe-buckles, and ladies in filmy summer gowns. Greuze ruled the mode in France then, but New Orleans had not got beyond Watteau. As for Nick and me, we knew nothing of Greuze and Watteau then, and we could only stare in astonishment. And for once we saw an officer of the Louisiana Regiment resplendent in a uniform that might have served at court.

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Ay, and there was yet another sort. Every flatboatman who returned to Kentucky was full of tales of the marvellous beauty of the quadroons and octoroons, stories which I had taken with a grain of salt; but they had not indeed been greatly overdrawn. For here were these ladies in the flesh, their great, opaque, almond eyes consuming us with a swift glance, and each walking with a languid grace beside her duenna. Their faces were like old ivory, their dress the stern Miro himself could scarce repress. In former times they had been lavish in their finery, and even now earrings still gleamed and color broke out irrepressibly.

Nick was delighted, but he had not dragged me twice the length of the esplanade ere his eye was caught by a young lady in pink who sauntered between an elderly gentleman in black silk and a young man more gayly dressed.

“Egad,” said Nick, “there is my divinity, and I need not look a step farther.”

I laughed.

“You have but to choose, I suppose, and all falls your way,” I answered.

“But look!” he cried, halting me to stare after the girl, “what a face, and what a form! And what a carriage, by Jove! There is breeding for you! And Davy, did you mark the gentle, rounded arm? Thank heaven these short sleeves are the fashion.”

“You are mad, Nick,” I answered, pulling him on, “these people are not to be stared at so. And once I present our letters to Monsieur de Saint-Gre, it will not be difficult to know any of them.”

“Look!” said he, “that young man, lover or husband, is a brute. On my soul, they are quarrelling.”

The three had stopped by a bench under a tree. The young man, who wore claret silk and a sword, had one of those thin faces of dirty complexion which show the ravages of dissipation, and he was talking with a rapidity and vehemence of which only a Latin tongue will admit. We could see, likewise, that the girl was answering with spirit,—-indeed, I should write a stronger word than spirit,—while the elderly gentleman, who had a good-humored, fleshy face and figure, was plainly doing his best to calm them both. People who were passing stared curiously at the three.

“Your divinity evidently has a temper,” I remarked.

“For that scoundel—certainly,” said Nick; “but come, they are moving on.”

“You mean to follow them?” I exclaimed.

“Why not?” said he. “We will find out where they live and who they are, at least.”

“And you have taken a fancy to this girl?”

“I have looked them all over, and she’s by far the best I’ve seen. I can say so much honestly.”

“But she may be married,” I said weakly.

“Tut, Davy,” he answered, “it’s more than likely, from the violence of their quarrel. But if so, we will try again.”

“We!” I exclaimed.

“Oh, come on!” he cried, dragging me by the sleeve, “or we shall lose them.”

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I resisted no longer, but followed him down the levee, in my heart thanking heaven that he had not taken a fancy to an octoroon. Twilight had set in strongly, the gay crowd was beginning to disperse, and in the distance the three figures could be seen making their way across the Place d'Armes, the girl hanging on the elderly gentleman's arm, and the young man following with seeming sullenness behind. They turned into one of the narrower streets, and we quickened our steps. Lights gleamed in the houses; voices and laughter, and once the tinkle of a guitar came to us from court-yard and gallery. But Nick, hurrying on, came near to bowling more than one respectable citizen we met on the banquette, into the ditch. We reached a corner, and the three were nowhere to be seen.

"Curse the luck!" cried Nick, "we have lost them. The next time I'll stop for no explanations."

There was no particular reason why I should have been penitent, but I ventured to say that the house they had entered could not be far off.

"And how the devil are we to know it?" demanded Nick.

This puzzled me for a moment, but presently I began to think that the two might begin quarrelling again, and said so. Nick laughed and put his arm around my neck.

"You have no mean ability for intrigue when you put your mind to it, Davy," he said; "I vow I believe you are in love with the girl yourself."

I disclaimed this with some vehemence. Indeed, I had scarcely seen her.

"They can't be far off," said Nick; "we'll pitch on a likely house and camp in front of it until bedtime."

"And be flung into a filthy calaboose by a constable," said I. "No, thank you."

We walked on, and halfway down the block we came upon a new house with more pretensions than its neighbors. It was set back a little from the street, and there was a high adobe wall into which a pair of gates were set, and a wicket opening in one of them. Over the wall hung a dark fringe of magnolia and orange boughs. On each of the gate-posts a crouching lion was outlined dimly against the fainting light, and, by crossing the street, we could see the upper line of a latticed gallery under the low roof. We took our stand within the empty doorway of a blackened house, nearly opposite, and there we waited, Nick murmuring all sorts of ridiculous things in my ear. But presently I began to reflect upon the consequences of being taken in such a situation by a constable and dragged into the light of a public examination. I put this to Nick as plainly as I could, and was declaring my intention of going back to Madame Bouvet's, when the sound of voices arrested me. The voices came from the latticed gallery, and

they were low at first, but soon rose to such an angry pitch that I made no doubt we had hit on the right house after all. What they said was lost to us, but I could distinguish the woman's voice, low-pitched and vibrant as though insisting upon a refusal, and the

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man's scarce adult tones, now high as though with balked passion, now shaken and imploring. I was for leaving the place at once, but Nick clutched my arm tightly; and suddenly, as I stood undecided, the voices ceased entirely, there were the sounds of a scuffle, and the lattice of the gallery was flung open. In the all but darkness we saw a figure climb over the railing, hang suspended for an instant, and drop lightly to the ground. Then came the light relief of a woman's gown in the opening of the lattice, the cry "Auguste, Auguste!" the wicket in the gate opened and slammed, and a man ran at top speed along the banquette towards the levee.

Instinctively I seized Nick by the arm as he started out of the doorway.

"Let me go," he cried angrily, "let me go, Davy."

But I held on.

"Are you mad?" I said.

He did not answer, but twisted and struggled, and before I knew what he was doing he had pushed me off the stone step into a tangle of blackened beams behind. I dropped his arm to save myself, and it was mere good fortune that I did not break an ankle in the fall. When I had gained the step again he was gone after the man, and a portly citizen stood in front of me, looking into the doorway.

"Qu'est-ce-qu'il-y-a la dedans?" he demanded sharply.

It was a sufficiently embarrassing situation. I put on a bold front, however, and not deigning to answer, pushed past him and walked with as much leisure as possible along the banquette in the direction which Nick had taken. As I turned the corner I glanced over my shoulder, and in the darkness I could just make out the man standing where I had left him. In great uneasiness I pursued my way, my imagination summing up for Nick all kinds of adventures with disagreeable consequences. I walked for some time—it may have been half an hour—aimlessly, and finally decided it would be best to go back to Madame Bouvet's and await the issue with as much calmness as possible. He might not, after all, have caught the fellow.

There were few people in the dark streets, but at length I met a man who gave me directions, and presently found my way back to my lodging place. Talk and laughter floated through the latticed windows into the street, and when I had pushed back the curtain and looked into the saloon I found the same gaming party at the end of it, sitting in their shirt-sleeves amidst the moths and insects that hovered around the candles.

"Ah, Monsieur," said Madame Bouvet's voice behind me, "you must excuse them. They will come here and play, the young gentlemen, and I cannot find it in my heart to drive

them away, though sometimes I lose a respectable lodger by their noise. But, after all, what would you?" she added with a shrug; "I love them, the young men. But, Monsieur," she cried, "you have had no supper! And where is Monsieur your companion? Comme il est beau garcon!"

"He will be in presently," I answered with unwarranted assumption.

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Madame shot at me the swiftest of glances and laughed, and I suspected that she divined Nick's propensity for adventure. However, she said nothing more than to bid me sit down at the table, and presently Zoey came in with lights and strange, highly seasoned dishes, which I ate with avidity, notwithstanding my uneasiness of mind, watching the while the party at the far end of the room. There were five young gentlemen playing a game I knew not, with intervals of intense silence, and boisterous laughter and execrations while the cards were being shuffled and the money rang on the board and glasses were being filled from a stand at one side. Presently Madame Bouvet returned, and placing before me a cup of wondrous coffee, advanced down the room towards them.

"Ah, Messieurs," she cried, "you will ruin my poor house."

The five rose and bowed with marked profundity. One of them, with a puffy, weak, good-natured face, answered her briskly, and after a little raillery she came back to me. I had a question not over discreet on my tongue's tip.

"There are some fine residences going up here, Madame," I said.

"Since the fire, Monsieur, the dreadful fire of Good Friday a year ago. You admire them?"

"I saw one," I answered with indifference, "with a wall and lions on the gate-posts—"

"Mon Dieu, that is a house," exclaimed Madame; "it belongs to Monsieur de Saint-Gre."

"To Monsieur de Saint-Gre!" I repeated.

She shot a look at me. She had bright little eyes like a bird's, that shone in the candlelight.

"You know him, Monsieur?"

"I heard of him in St. Louis," I answered.

"You will meet him, no doubt," she continued. "He is a very fine gentleman. His grandfather was Commissary-general of the colony, and he himself is a cousin of the Marquis de Saint-Gre, who has two chateaux, a house in Paris, and is a favorite of the King." She paused, as if to let this impress itself upon me, and added archly, "Tenez, Monsieur, there is a daughter—"

She stopped abruptly.

I followed her glance, and my first impression—of claret-color—gave me a shock. My second confirmed it, for in the semi-darkness beyond the rays of the candle was a thin,

eager face, prematurely lined, with coal-black, lustrous eyes that spoke eloquently of indulgence. In an instant I knew it to be that of the young man whom I had seen on the levee.

“Monsieur Auguste?” stammered Madame.

“Bon soir, Madame,” he cried gayly, with a bow; “diable, they are already at it, I see, and the punch in the bowl. I will win back to-night what I have lost by a week of accursed luck.”

“Monsieur your father has relented, perhaps,” said Madame, deferentially.

“Relented!” cried the young man, “not a sou. C’est egal! I have the means here,” and he tapped his pocket, “I have the means here to set me on my feet again, Madame.”

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He spoke with a note of triumph, and Madame took a curious step towards him.

“Qu’est-ce-que c’est, Monsieur Auguste?” she inquired.

He drew something that glittered from his pocket and beckoned to her to follow him down the room, which she did with alacrity.

“Ha, Adolphe,” he cried to the young man of the puffy face, “I will have my revenge to-night. Voila!!” and he held up the shining thing, “this goes to the highest bidder, and you will agree that it is worth a pretty sum.”

They rose from their chairs and clustered around him at the table, Madame in their midst, staring with bent heads at the trinket which he held to the light. It was Madame’s voice I heard first, in a kind of frightened cry.

“Mon Dieu, Monsieur Auguste, you will not part with that!” she exclaimed.

“Why not?” demanded the young man, indifferently. “It was painted by Boze, the back is solid gold, and the Jew in the Rue Toulouse will give me four hundred livres for it to-morrow morning.”

There followed immediately such a chorus of questions, exclamations, and shrill protests from Madame Bouvet, that I (being such a laborious French scholar) could distinguish but little of what they said. I looked in wonderment at the gesticulating figures grouped against the light, Madame imploring, the youthful profile of the newcomer marked with a cynical and scornful refusal. More than once I was for rising out of my chair to go over and see for myself what the object was, and then, suddenly, I perceived Madame Bouvet coming towards me in evident agitation. She sank into the chair beside me.

“If I had four hundred livres,” she said, “if I had four hundred livres!”

“And what then?” I asked.

“Monsieur,” she said, “a terrible thing has happened. Auguste de Saint-Gre—”

“Auguste de Saint-Gre!” I exclaimed.

“He is the son of that Monsieur de Saint-Gre of whom we spoke,” she answered, “a wild lad, a spendthrift, a gambler, if you like. And yet he is a Saint-Gre, Monsieur, and I cannot refuse him. It is the miniature of Mademoiselle Helene de Saint-Gre, the daughter of the Marquis, sent to Mamselle ’Toinette, his sister, from France. How he has obtained it I know not.”

“Ah!” I exclaimed sharply, the explanation of the scene of which I had been a witness coming to me swiftly. The rascal had wrenched it from her in the gallery and fled.

“Monsieur,” continued Madame, too excited to notice my interruption, “if I had four hundred livres I would buy it of him, and Monsieur de Saint-Gre pere would willingly pay it back in the morning.”

I reflected. I had a letter in my pocket to Monsieur de Saint-Gre, the sum was not large, and the act of Monsieur Auguste de Saint-Gre in every light was detestable. A rising anger decided me, and I took a wallet from my pocket.

“I will buy the miniature, Madame,” I said.

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She looked at me in astonishment.

“God bless you, Monsieur,” she cried; “if you could see Mamselle ’Toinette you would pay twice the sum. The whole town loves her. Monsieur Auguste, Monsieur Auguste!” she shouted, “here is a gentleman who will buy your miniature.”

The six young men stopped talking and stared at me With one accord. Madame arose, and I followed her down the room towards them, and, had it not been for my indignation, I should have felt sufficiently ridiculous. Young Monsieur de Saint-Gre came forward with the good-natured, easy insolence to which he had been born, and looked me over.

“Monsieur is an American,” he said.

“I understand that you have offered this miniature for four hundred livres,” I said.

“It is the Jew’s price,” he answered; “mais pardieu, what will you?” he added with a shrug, “I must have the money. Regardez, Monsieur, you have a bargain. Here is Mademoiselle Helene de Saint-Gre, daughter of my lord the Marquis of whom I have the honor to be a cousin,” and he made a bow. “It is by the famous court painter, Joseph Boze, and Mademoiselle de Saint-Gre herself is a favorite of her Majesty.” He held the portrait close to the candle and regarded it critically. “Mademoiselle Helene Victoire Marie de Saint-Gre, painted in a costume of Henry the Second’s time, with a ruff, you notice, which she wore at a ball given by his Highness the Prince of Conde at Chantilly. A trifle haughty, if you like, Monsieur, but I venture to say you will be hopelessly in love with her within the hour.”

At this there was a general titter from the young gentlemen at the table.

“All of which is neither here nor there, Monsieur,” I answered sharply. “The question is purely a commercial one, and has nothing to do with the lady’s character or position.”

“It is well said, Monsieur,” Madame Bouvet put in.

Monsieur Auguste de Saint-Gre shrugged his slim shoulders and laid down the portrait on the walnut table.

“Four hundred livres, Monsieur,” he said.

I counted out the money, scrutinized by the curious eyes of his companions, and pushed it over to him. He bowed carelessly, sat him down, and began to shuffle the cards, while I picked up the miniature and walked out of the room. Before I had gone twenty paces I heard them laughing at their game and shouting out the stakes. Suddenly I bethought myself of Nick. What if he should come in and discover the party at the table? I stopped short in the hallway, and there Madame Bouvet overtook me.

“How can I thank you, Monsieur?” she said. And then, “You will return the portrait to Monsieur de Saint-Gre?”

“I have a letter from Monsieur Gratiot to that gentleman, which I shall deliver in the morning,” I answered. “And now, Madame, I have a favor to ask of you.”

“I am at Monsieur’s service,” she answered simply.

“When Mr. Temple comes in, he is not to go into that room,” I said, pointing to the door of the saloon; “I have my reasons for requesting it.”

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For answer Madame went to the door, closed it, and turned the key. Then she sat down beside a little table with a candlestick and took up her knitting.

“It will be as Monsieur says,” she answered.

I smiled.

“And when Mr. Temple comes in will you kindly say that I am waiting for him in his room?” I asked.

“As Monsieur says,” she answered. “I wish Monsieur a good-night and pleasant dreams.”

She took a candlestick from the table, lighted the candle, and handed it me with a courtesy. I bowed, and made my way along the gallery above the deserted court-yard. Entering my room and closing the door after me, I drew the miniature from my pocket and stood gazing at it for I know not how long.

CHAPTER XII

LES ILES

I stood staring at the portrait, I say, with a kind of fascination that astonished me, seeing that it had come to me in such a way. It was no French face of my imagination, and as I looked it seemed to me that I knew Mademoiselle Helene de Saint-Gre. And yet I smile as I write this, realizing full well that my strange and foreign surroundings and my unforeseen adventure had much to do with my state of mind. The lady in the miniature might have been eighteen, or thirty-five. Her features were of the clearest cut, the nose the least trifle aquiline, and by a blurred outline the painter had given to the black hair piled high upon the head a suggestion of waviness. The eyebrows were straight, the brown eyes looked at the world with an almost scornful sense of humor, and I marked that there was determination in the chin. Here was a face that could be infinitely haughty or infinitely tender, a mouth of witty—nay, perhaps cutting—repartee of brevity and force. A lady who spoke quickly, moved quickly, or reposed absolutely. A person who commanded by nature and yet (dare I venture the thought?) was capable of a supreme surrender. I was aroused from this odd revery by footsteps on the gallery, and Nick burst into the room. Without pausing to look about him, he flung himself lengthwise on the bed on top of the mosquito bar.

“A thousand curses on such a place,” he cried; “it is full of rat holes and rabbit warrens.”

“Did you catch your man?” I asked innocently.

“Catch him!” said Nick, with a little excusable profanity; “he went in at one end of such a warren and came out at another. I waited for him in two streets until an officious person chanced along and threatened to take me before the Alcalde. What the devil is that you have got in your hand, Davy?” he demanded, raising his head.

“A miniature that took my fancy, and which I bought.”

He rose from the bed, yawned, and taking it in his hand, held it to the light. I watched him curiously.

“Lord,” he said, “it is such a passion as I might have suspected of you, Davy.”

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“There was nothing said about passion,” I answered

“Then why the deuce did you buy it?” he said with some pertinence.

This staggered me.

“A man may fancy a thing, without indulging in a passion, I suppose,” I replied.

Nick held the picture at arm’s length in the palm of his hand and regarded it critically.

“Faith,” said he, “you may thank heaven it is only a picture. If such a one ever got hold of you, Davy, she would general you even as you general me. Egad,” he added with a laugh, “there would be no more walking the streets at night in search of adventure for you. Consider carefully the masterful features of that lady and thank God you haven’t got her.”

I was inclined to be angry, but ended by laughing.

“There will be no rivalry between us, at least,” I said.

“Rivalry!” exclaimed Nick. “Heaven forbid that I should aspire to such abject slavery. When I marry, it will be to command.”

“All the more honor in such a conquest,” I suggested.

“Davy,” said he, “I have long been looking for some such flaw in your insuperable wisdom. But I vow I can keep my eyes open no longer. Benjy!”

A smothered response came from the other side of the wall, and Benjy duly appeared in the doorway, blinking at the candlelight, to put his master to bed.

We slept that night with no bed covering save the mosquito bar, as was the custom in New Orleans. Indeed, the heat was most oppressive, but we had become to some extent inured to it on the boat, and we were both in such sound health that our slumbers were not disturbed. Early in the morning, however, I was awakened by a negro song from the court-yard, and I lay pleasantly for some minutes listening to the early sounds, breathing in the aroma of coffee which mingled with the odor of the flowers of the court, until Zoey herself appeared in the doorway, holding a cup in her hand. I arose, and taking the miniature from the table, gazed at it in the yellow morning light; and then, having dressed myself, I put it carefully in my pocket and sat down at my portfolio to compose a letter to Polly Ann, knowing that a description of what I had seen in New Orleans would amuse her. This done, I went out into the gallery, where Madame was already seated at her knitting, in the shade of the great tree that stood in the corner of the court and spread its branches over the eaves. She arose and courtesied, with a questioning smile.

“Madame,” I asked, “is it too early to present myself to Monsieur de Saint-Gre?”

“Pardieu, no, Monsieur, we are early risers in the South for we have our siesta. You are going to return the portrait, Monsieur?”

I nodded.

“God bless you for the deed,” said she. “Tenez, Monsieur,” she added, stepping closer to me, “you will tell his father that you bought it from Monsieur Auguste?”

I saw that she had a soft spot in her heart for the rogue.

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“I will make no promises, Madame,” I answered.

She looked at me timidly, appealingly, but I bowed and departed. The sun was riding up into the sky, the walls already glowing with his heat, and a midsummer languor seemed to pervade the streets as I walked along. The shadows now were sharply defined, the checkered foliage of the trees was flung in black against the yellow-white wall of the house with the lions, and the green-latticed gallery which we had watched the night before seemed silent and deserted. I knocked at the gate, and presently a bright-turbaned gardienne opened it.

Was Monsieur de Saint-Gre at home. The gardienne looked me over, and evidently finding me respectable, replied with many protestations of sorrow that he was not, that he had gone with Mamselle very early that morning to his country place at Les Iles. This information I extracted with difficulty, for I was not by any means versed in the negro patois.

As I walked back to Madame Bouvet’s I made up my mind that there was but the one thing to do, to go at once to Monsieur de Saint-Gre’s plantation. Finding Madame still waiting in the gallery, I asked her to direct me thither.

“You have but to follow the road that runs southward along the levee, and some three leagues will bring you to it, Monsieur. You will inquire for Monsieur de Saint-Gre.”

“Can you direct me to Mr. Daniel Clark’s?” I asked.

“The American merchant and banker, the friend and associate of the great General Wilkinson whom you sent down to us last year? Certainly, Monsieur. He will no doubt give you better advice than I on this matter.”

I found Mr. Clark in his counting-room, and I had not talked with him five minutes before I began to suspect that, if a treasonable understanding existed between Wilkinson and the Spanish government, Mr. Clark was innocent of it. He being the only prominent American in the place, it was natural that Wilkinson should have formed with him a business arrangement to care for the cargoes he sent down. Indeed, after we had sat for some time chatting together, Mr. Clark began himself to make guarded inquiries on this very subject. Did I know Wilkinson? How was his enterprise of selling Kentucky products regarded at home? But I do not intend to burden this story with accounts of a matter which, though it has never been wholly clear, has been long since fairly settled in the public mind. Mr. Clark was most amiable, accepted my statement that I was travelling for pleasure, and honored Monsieur Chouteau’s bon (for my purchase of the miniature had deprived me of nearly all my ready money), and said that Mr. Temple and I would need horses to get to Les Iles.

“And unless you purpose going back to Kentucky by keel boat, or round by sea to Philadelphia or New York, and cross the mountains,” he said, “you will need good horses for your journey through Natchez and the Cumberland country. There is a consignment of Spanish horses from the westward just arrived in town,” he added, “and I shall be pleased to go with you to the place where they are sold. I shall not presume to advise a Kentuckian on such a purchase.”

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The horses were crowded together under a dirty shed near the levee, and the vessel from which they had been landed rode at anchor in the river. They were the scrawny, tough ponies of the plains, reasonably cheap, and it took no great discernment on my part to choose three of the strongest and most intelligent looking. We went next to a saddler's, where I selected three saddles and bridles of Spanish workmanship, and Mr. Clark agreed to have two of his servants meet us with the horses before Madame Bouvet's within the hour. He begged that we would dine with him when we returned from Les Iles.

"You will not find an island, Mr. Ritchie," he said; "Saint-Gre's plantation is a huge block of land between the river and a cypress swamp behind. Saint-Gre is a man with a wonderful quality of mind, who might, like his ancestors, have made his mark if necessity had probed him or opportunity offered. He never forgave the Spanish government for the murder of his father, nor do I blame him. He has his troubles. His son is an incurable rake and degenerate, as you may have heard."

I went back to Madame Bouvet's, to find Nick emerging from his toilet.

"What deviltry have you been up to, Davy?" he demanded.

"I have been to the House of the Lions to see your divinity," I answered, "and in a very little while horses will be here to carry us to her."

"What do you mean?" he asked, grasping me by both shoulders.

"I mean that we are going to her father's plantation, some way down the river."

"On my honor, Davy, I did not suspect you of so much enterprise," he cried. "And her husband—?"

"Does not exist," I replied. "Perhaps, after all, I might be able to give you instruction in the conduct of an adventure. The man you chased with such futility was her brother, and he stole from her the miniature of which I am now the fortunate possessor."

He stared at me for a moment in rueful amazement.

"And her name?" he demanded.

"Antoinette de Saint-Gre," I answered; "our letter is to her father."

He made me a rueful bow.

"I fear that I have undervalued you, Mr. Ritchie," he said. "You have no peer. I am unworthy to accompany you, and furthermore, it would be useless."

“And why useless!” I inquired, laughing.

“You have doubtless seen the lady, and she is yours, said he.

“You forget that I am in love with a miniature,” I said.

In half an hour we were packed and ready, the horses had arrived, we bade good-by to Madame Bouvet and rode down the miry street until we reached the road behind the levee. Turning southward, we soon left behind the shaded esplanade and the city’s roofs below us, and came to the first of the plantation houses set back amidst the dark foliage. No tremor shook the fringe of moss that hung from the heavy boughs, so still was the day, and an indefinable,

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milky haze stretched between us and the cloudless sky above. The sun's rays pierced it and gathered fire; the mighty river beside us rolled listless and sullen, flinging back the heat defiantly. And on our left was a tropical forest in all its bewildering luxuriance, the live-oak, the hackberry, the myrtle, the Spanish bayonet in bristling groups, and the shaded places gave out a scented moisture like an orangery; anon we passed fields of corn and cotton, swamps of rice, stretches of poverty-stricken indigo plants, gnawed to the stem by the pest. Our ponies ambled on, unmindful; but Nick vowed that no woman under heaven would induce him to undertake such a journey again.

Some three miles out of the city we descried two figures on horseback coming towards us, and quickly perceived that one was a gentleman, the other his black servant. They were riding at a more rapid pace than the day warranted, but the gentleman reined in his sweating horse as he drew near to us, eyed us with a curiosity tempered by courtesy, bowed gravely, and put his horse to a canter again.

"Phew!" said Nick, twisting in his saddle, "I thought that all Creoles were lazy."

"We have met the exception, perhaps," I answered. "Did you take in that man?"

"His looks were a little remarkable, come to think of it," answered Nick, settling down into his saddle again.

Indeed, the man's face had struck me so forcibly that I was surprised out of an inquiry which I had meant to make of him, namely, how far we were from the Saint-Gre plantation. We pursued our way slowly, from time to time catching a glimpse of a dwelling almost hid in the distant foliage, until at length we came to a place a little more pretentious than those which we had seen. From the road a graceful flight of wooden steps climbed the levee and descended on the far side to a boat landing, and a straight vista cut through the grove, lined by wild orange trees, disclosed the white pillars and galleries of a far-away plantation house. The grassy path leading through the vista was trimly kept, and on either side of it in the moist, green shade of the great trees flowers bloomed in a profusion of startling colors,—in splotches of scarlet and white and royal purple.

Nick slipped from his horse.

"Behold the mansion of Mademoiselle de Saint-Gre," said he, waving his hand up the vista.

"How do you know?" I asked.

“I am told by a part of me that never lies, Davy,” he answered, laying his hand upon his heart; “and besides,” he added, “I should dislike devilishly to go too far on such a day and have to come back again.”

“We will rest here,” I said, laughing, “and send in Benjy to find out.”

“Davy,” he answered, with withering contempt, “you have no more romance in you than a turnip. We will go ourselves and see what befalls.”

“Very well, then,” I answered, falling in with his humor, “we will go ourselves.”

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He brushed his face with his handkerchief, gave himself a pull here and a pat there, and led the way down the alley. But we had not gone far before he turned into a path that entered the grove on the right, and to this likewise I made no protest. We soon found ourselves in a heavenly spot,—sheltered from the sun's rays by a dense verdure,—and no one who has not visited these Southern country places can know the teeming fragrance there. One shrub (how well I recall it!) was like unto the perfume of all the flowers and all the fruits, the very essence of the delicious languor of the place that made our steps to falter. A bird shot a bright flame of color through the checkered light ahead of us. Suddenly a sound brought us to a halt, and we stood in a tense and wondering silence. The words of a song, sung carelessly in a clear, girlish voice, came to us from beyond.

"Je voudrais bien me marier,
Je voudrais bien me marier,
Mais j'ai qrand' peur de me tromper:
Mais j'ai grand' peur de me tromper:
Ils sont si malhonnetes!
Ma luron, ma lurette,
Ils sont si malhonnetes!
Ma luron, ma lure."

"We have come at the very zenith of opportunity," I whispered.

"Hush!" he said.

"Je ne veux pas d'un avocat,
Je ne veux pas d'un avocat,
Car ils aiment trop les ducats,
Car ils aiment trop les ducats,
Ils trompent les fillettes,
Ma luron, ma lurette,
Ils trompent les fillettes,
Ma luron, ma lure."

"Eliminating Mr. Ritchie, I believe," said Nick, turning on me with a grimace. "But hark again!"

"Je voudrais bien d'un officier:
Je voudrais bien d'un officier:
Je marcherais a pas carres,
Je marcherais a pas carres,
Dans ma joli' chambrette,
Ma luron, ma lurette

Dans ma joli' chambrette,
Ma luron, ma lure."

The song ceased with a sound that was half laughter, half sigh. Before I realized what he was doing, Nick, instead of retracing his steps towards the house, started forward. The path led through a dense thicket which became a casino hedge, and suddenly I found myself peering over his shoulder into a little garden bewildering in color. In the centre of the garden a great live-oak spread its sheltering branches. Around the gnarled trunk was a seat. And on the seat,—her sewing fallen into her lap, her lips parted, her eyes staring wide, sat the young lady whom we had seen on the levee the evening before. And Nick was making a bow in his grandest manner.

"Helas, Mademoiselle," he said, "je ne suis pas officier, mais on peut arranger tout cela, sans doute."

My breath was taken away by this unheard-of audacity, and I braced myself against screams, flight, and other feminine demonstrations of terror. The young lady did nothing of the kind. She turned her back to us, leaned against the tree, and to my astonishment I saw her slim shoulders shaken with laughter. At length, very slowly, she looked around, and in her face struggled curiosity and fear and merriment. Nick made another bow, worthy of Versailles, and she gave a frightened little laugh.

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“You are English, Messieurs—yes?” she ventured.

“We were once!” cried Nick, “but we have changed, Mademoiselle.”

“Et quoi donc?” relapsing into her own language.

“Americans,” said he. “Allow me to introduce to you the Honorable David Ritchie, whom you rejected a few moments ago.”

“Whom I rejected?” she exclaimed.

“Alas,” said Nick, with a commiserating glance at me, “he has the misfortune to be a lawyer.”

Mademoiselle shot at me the swiftest and shyest of glances, and turned to us once more her quivering shoulders. There was a brief silence.

“Mademoiselle?” said Nick, taking a step on the garden path.

“Monsieur?” she answered, without so much as looking around.

“What, now, would you take this gentleman to be?” he asked with an insistence not to be denied.

Again she was shaken with laughter, and suddenly to my surprise she turned and looked full at me.

“In English, Monsieur, you call it—a gallant?”

My face fairly tingled, and I heard Nick laughing with unseemly merriment.

“Ah, Mademoiselle,” he cried, “you are a judge of character, and you have read him perfectly.”

“Then I must leave you, Messieurs,” she answered, with her eyes in her lap. But she made no move to go.

“You need have no fear of Mr. Ritchie, Mademoiselle,” answered Nick, instantly. “I am here to protect you against his gallantry.”

This time Nick received the glance, and quailed before it.

“And who—par exemple—is to protect me against—you, Monsieur?” she asked in the lowest of voices.

“You forget that I, too, am unprotected—and vulnerable, Mademoiselle,” he answered.

Her face was hidden again, but not for long.

“How did you come?” she demanded presently.

“On air,” he answered, “for we saw you in New Orleans yesterday.”

“And—why?”

“Need you ask, Mademoiselle?” said the rogue, and then, with more effrontery than ever, he began to sing:—

> “’Je voudrais bien me marier,
> Je voudrais bien me marier,
> Mais j’ai grand’ peur de me tromper.’”

She rose, her sewing falling to the ground, and took a few startled steps towards us.

“Monsieur! you will be heard,” she cried.

“And put out of the Garden of Eden,” said Nick.

“I must leave you,” she said, with the quaintest of English pronunciation.

Yet she stood irresolute in the garden path, a picture against the dark green leaves and the flowers. Her age might have been seventeen. Her gown was of some soft and light material printed in buds of delicate color, her slim arms bare above the elbow. She had the ivory complexion of the province, more delicate than I had yet seen, and beyond that I shall not attempt to describe her, save to add that she was such a strange mixture of innocence and ingenuousness and coquetry as I had not imagined. Presently her gaze was fixed seriously on me.

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“Do you think it very wrong, Monsieur?” she asked.

I was more than taken aback by this tribute.

“Oh,” cried Nick, “the arbiter of etiquette!”

“Since I am here, Mademoiselle,” I answered, with anything but readiness, “I am not a proper judge.”

Her next question staggered me.

“You are well-born?” she asked.

“Mr. Ritchie’s grandfather was a Scottish earl,” said Nick, immediately, a piece of news that startled me into protest. “It is true, Davy, though you may not know it,” he added.

“And you, Monsieur?” she said to Nick.

“I am his cousin,—is it not honor enough?” said he.

“Yet you do not resemble one another.”

“Mr. Ritchie has all the good looks in the family,” said Nick.

“Oh!” cried the young lady, and this time she gave us her profile.

“Come, Mademoiselle,” said Nick, “since the fates have cast the die, let us all sit down in the shade. The place was made for us.”

“Monsieur!” she cried, giving back, “I have never in my life been alone with gentlemen.”

“But Mr. Ritchie is a duenna to satisfy the most exacting,” said Nick; “when you know him better you will believe me.”

She laughed softly and glanced at me. By this time we were all three under the branches.

“Monsieur, you do not understand the French customs. Mon Dieu, if the good Sister Lorette could see me now—”

“But she is safe in the convent,” said Nick. “Are they going to put glass on the walls?”

“And why?” asked Mademoiselle, innocently.

“Because,” said Nick, “because a very bad man has come to New Orleans,—one who is given to climbing walls.”

“You?”

“Yes. But when I found that a certain demoiselle had left the convent, I was no longer anxious to climb them.”

“And how did you know that I had left it?”

I was at a loss to know whether this were coquetry or innocence.

“Because I saw you on the levee,” said Nick.

“You saw me on the levee?” she repeated, giving back.

“And I had a great fear,” the rogue persisted.

“A fear of what?”

“A fear that you were married,” he said, with a boldness that made me blush. As for Mademoiselle, a color that vied with the June roses charged through her cheeks. She stooped to pick up her sewing, but Nick was before her.

“And why did you think me married?” she asked in a voice so low that we scarcely heard.

“Faith,” said Nick, “because you seemed to be quarrelling with a man.”

She turned to him with an irresistible seriousness.

“And is that your idea of marriage, Monsieur?”

This time it was I who laughed, for he had been hit very fairly.

“Mademoiselle,” said he, “I did not for a moment think it could have been a love match.”

Mademoiselle turned away and laughed.

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“You are the very strangest man I have ever seen,” she said.

“Shall I give you my notion of a love match, Mademoiselle?” said Nick.

“I should think you might be well versed in the subject, Monsieur,” she answered, speaking to the tree, “but here is scarcely the time and place.” She wound up her sewing, and faced him. “I must really leave you,” she said.

He took a step towards her and stood looking down into her face. Her eyes dropped.

“And am I never to see you again?” he asked.

“Monsieur!” she cried softly, “I do not know who you are.” She made him a courtesy, took a few steps in the opposite path, and turned. “That depends upon your ingenuity,” she added; “you seem to have no lack of it, Monsieur.”

Nick was transported.

“You must not go,” he cried.

“Must not? How dare you speak to me thus, Monsieur?” Then she tempered it. “There is a lady here whom I love, and who is ill. I must not be long from her bedside.”

“She is very ill?” said Nick, probably for want of something better.

“She is not really ill, Monsieur, but depressed—is not that the word? She is a very dear friend, and she has had trouble—so much, Monsieur,—and my mother brought her here. We love her as one of the family.”

This was certainly ingenuous, and it was plain that the girl gave us this story through a certain nervousness, for she twisted her sewing in her fingers as she spoke.

“Mademoiselle,” said Nick, “I would not keep you from such an errand of mercy.”

She gave him a grateful look, more dangerous than any which had gone before.

“And besides,” he went on, “we have come to stay awhile with you, Mr. Ritchie and myself.”

“You have come to stay awhile?” she said.

I thought it time that the farce were ended.

“We have come with letters to your father, Monsieur de Saint-Gre, Mademoiselle,” I said, “and I should like very much to see him, if he is at leisure.”

Mademoiselle stared at me in unfeigned astonishment.

“But did you not meet him, Monsieur?” she demanded. “He left an hour ago for New Orleans. You must have met a gentleman riding very fast.”

It was my turn to be astonished.

“But that was not your father!” I exclaimed.

“Et pourquoi non?” she said.

“Is not your father the stout gentleman whom I saw with you on the levee last evening?” I asked.

She laughed.

“You have been observing, Monsieur,” she said. “That was my uncle, Monsieur de Beausejour. You saw me quarrelling with my brother, Auguste,” she went on a little excitedly. “Oh, I am very much ashamed of it. I was so angry. My cousin, Mademoiselle Helene de Saint-Gre, has just sent me from France such a beautiful miniature, and Auguste fell in love with it.”

“Fell in love with it!” I exclaimed involuntarily.

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“You should see it, Monsieur, and I think you also would fall in love with it.”

“I have not a doubt of it,” said Nick.

Mademoiselle made the faintest of moues.

“Auguste is very wild, as you say,” she continued, addressing me, “he is a great care to my father. He intrigues, you know, he wishes Louisiane to become French once more, —as we all do. But I should not say this, Monsieur,” she added in a startled tone. “You will not tell? No, I know you will not. We do not like the Spaniards. They killed my grandfather when they came to take the province. And once, the Governor-general Miro sent for my father and declared he would put Auguste in prison if he did not behave himself. But I have forgotten the miniature. When Auguste saw that he fell in love with it, and now he wishes to go to France and obtain a commission through our cousin, the Marquis of Saint-Gre, and marry Mademoiselle Helene.”

“A comprehensive programme, indeed,” said Nick.

“My father has gone back to New Orleans,” she said, “to get the miniature from Auguste. He took it from me, Monsieur.” She raised her head a little proudly. “If my brother had asked it, I might have given it to him, though I treasured it. But Auguste is so—impulsive. My uncle told my father, who is very angry. He will punish Auguste severely, and—I do not like to have him punished. Oh, I wish I had the miniature.”

“Your wish is granted, Mademoiselle,” I answered, drawing the case from my pocket and handing it to her.

She took it, staring at me with eyes wide with wonder, and then she opened it mechanically.

“Monsieur,” she said with great dignity, “do you mind telling me where you obtained this?”

“I found it, Mademoiselle,” I answered; and as I spoke I felt Nick’s fingers on my arm.

“You found it? Where? How, Monsieur?”

“At Madame Bouvet’s, the house where we stayed.”

“Oh,” she said with a sigh of relief, “he must have dropped it. It is there where he meets his associates, where they talk of the French Louisiane.”

Again I felt Nick pinching me, and I gave a sigh of relief. Mademoiselle was about to continue, but I interrupted her.

“How long will your father be in New Orleans, Mademoiselle?” I asked.

“Until he finds Auguste,” she answered. “It may be days, but he will stay, for he is very angry. But will you not come into the house, Messieurs, and be presented to my mother?” she asked. “I have been very—inhospitable,” she added with a glance at Nick.

We followed her through winding paths bordered by shrubs and flowers, and presently came to a low house surrounded by a wide, cool gallery, and shaded by spreading trees. Behind it were clustered the kitchens and quarters of the house servants. Mademoiselle, picking up her dress, ran up the steps ahead of us and turned to the left in the hall into a darkened parlor. The floor was bare, save for a few mats, and in the corner was a massive escritoire of mahogany with carved feet, and there were tables and chairs of a like pattern. It was a room of more distinction than I had seen since I had been in Charlestown, and reflected the solidity of its owners.

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“If you will be so kind as to wait here, Messieurs,” said Mademoiselle, “I will call my mother.”

And she left us.

I sat down, rather uncomfortably, but Nick took a stand and stood staring down at me with folded arms.

“How I have undervalued you, Davy,” he said.

“I am not proud of it,” I answered shortly.

“What the deuce is to do now!” he asked.

“I cannot linger here,” I answered; “I have business with Monsieur de Saint-Gre, and I must go back to New Orleans at once.”

“Then I will wait for you,” said Nick. “Davy, I have met my fate.”

I laughed in spite of myself.

“It seems to me that I have heard that remark before,” I answered.

He had not time to protest, for we heard footsteps in the hall, and Mademoiselle entered, leading an older lady by the hand. In the light of the doorway I saw that she was thin and small and yellow, but her features had a regularity and her mien a dignity which made her impressing, which would have convinced a stranger that she was a person of birth and breeding. Her hair, tinged with gray, was crowned by a lace cap.

“Madame,” I said, bowing and coming forward, “I am David Ritchie, from Kentucky, and this is my cousin, Mr. Temple, of Charlestown. Monsieur Gratiot and Colonel Chouteau, of St. Louis, have been kind enough to give us letters to Monsieur de Saint-Gre.” And I handed her one of the letters which I had ready.

“You are very welcome, Messieurs,” she answered, with the same delightful accent which her daughter had used, “and you are especially welcome from such a source. The friends of Colonel Chouteau and of Monsieur Gratiot are our friends. You will remain with us, I hope, Messieurs,” she continued. “Monsieur de Saint-Gre will return in a few days at best.”

“By your leave, Madame, I will go to New Orleans at once and try to find Monsieur,” I said, “for I have business with him.”

“You will return with him, I hope,” said Madame.

I bowed.

“And Mr. Temple will remain?” she asked, with a questioning look at Nick.

“With the greatest pleasure in the world, Madame,” he answered, and there was no mistaking his sincerity. As he spoke, Mademoiselle turned her back on him.

I would not wait for dinner, but pausing only for a sip of cool Madeira and some other refreshment, I made my farewells to the ladies. As I started out of the door to find Benjy, who had been waiting for more than an hour, Mademoiselle gave me a neatly folded note.

“You will be so kind as to present that to my father, Monsieur,” she said.

CHAPTER XIII

MONSIEUR AUGUSTE ENTRAPPED

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It may be well to declare here and now that I do not intend to burden this story with the business which had brought me to New Orleans. While in the city during the next few days I met a young gentleman named Daniel Clark, a nephew of that Mr. Clark of whom I have spoken. Many years after the time of which I write this Mr. Daniel Clark the younger, who became a rich merchant and an able man of affairs, published a book which sets forth with great clearness proofs of General Wilkinson's duplicity and treason, and these may be read by any who would satisfy himself further on the subject. Mr. Wharton had not believed, nor had I flattered myself that I should be able to bring such a fox as General Wilkinson to earth. Abundant circumstantial evidence I obtained: Wilkinson's intimacy with Miro was well known, and I likewise learned that a cipher existed between them. The permit to trade given by Miro to Wilkinson was made no secret of. In brief, I may say that I discovered as much as could be discovered by any one without arousing suspicion, and that the information with which I returned to Kentucky was of some material value to my employers.

I have to thank Monsieur Philippe de St. Gre for a great deal. And I take this opportunity to set down the fact that I have rarely met a more remarkable man.

As I rode back to town alone a whitish film was spread before the sun, and ere I had come in sight of the fortifications the low forest on the western bank was a dark green blur against the sky. The esplanade on the levee was deserted, the willow trees had a mournful look, while the bright tiles of yesterday seemed to have faded to a sombre tone. I spied Xavier on a bench smoking with some friends of his.

"He make much rain soon, Michie," he cried. "You hev good time, I hope, Michie."

I waved my hand and rode on, past the Place d'Armes with its white diagonal bands strapping its green like a soldiers front, and as I drew up before the gate of the House of the Lions the warning taps of the storm were drumming on the magnolia leaves. The same gardienne came to my knock, and in answer to her shrill cry a negro lad appeared to hold my horse. I was ushered into a brick-paved archway that ran under the latticed gallery toward a flower-filled court-yard, but ere we reached this the gardienne turned to the left up a flight of steps with a delicate balustrade which led to an open gallery above. And there stood the gentleman whom we had met hurrying to town in the morning. A gentleman he was, every inch of him. He was dressed in black silk, his hair in a cue, and drawn away from a face of remarkable features. He had a high-bridged nose, a black eye that held an inquiring sternness, a chin indented, and a receding forehead. His stature was indeterminable. In brief, he might have stood for one of those persons of birth and ability who become prime ministers of France.

"Monsieur de St. Gre?" I said.

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He bowed gracefully, but with a tinge of condescension. I was awed, and considering the relations which I had already had with his family, I must admit that I was somewhat frightened.

“Monsieur,” I said, “I bring letters to you from Monsieur Gratiot and Colonel Chouteau of St. Louis. One of these I had the honor to deliver to Madame de St. Gre, and here is the other.”

“Ah,” he said, with another keen glance, “I met you this morning, did I not?”

“You did, Monsieur.”

He broke the seal, and, going to the edge of the gallery, held the letter to the light. As he read a peal of thunder broke distantly, the rain came down in a flood. Then he folded the paper carefully and turned to me again.

“You will make my house your home, Mr. Ritchie,” he said; “recommended from such a source, I will do all I can to serve you. But where is this Mr. Temple of whom the letter speaks? His family in Charlestown is known to me by repute.”

“By Madame de St. Gre’s invitation he remained at Les Iles,” I answered, speaking above the roar of the rain.

“I was just going to the table,” said Monsieur de St. Gre; “we will talk as we eat.”

He led the way into the dining room, and as I stood on the threshold a bolt of great brilliancy lighted its yellow-washed floor and walnut furniture of a staid pattern. A deafening crash followed as we took our seats, while Monsieur de St. Gre’s man lighted four candles of green myrtle-berry wax.

“Monsieur Gratiot’s letter speaks vaguely of politics, Mr. Ritchie,” began Monsieur de St. Gre. He spoke English perfectly, save for an occasional harsh aspiration which I cannot imitate.

Directing his man to fetch a certain kind of Madeira, he turned to me with a look of polite inquiry which was scarcely reassuring. And I reflected, the caution with which I had been endowed coming uppermost, that the man might have changed since Monsieur Gratiot had seen him. He had, moreover, the air of a man who gives a forced attention, which seemed to me the natural consequences of the recent actions of his son.

“I fear that I am intruding upon your affairs, Monsieur,” I answered.

“Not at all, sir,” he said politely. “I have met that charming gentleman, Mr. Wilkinson, who came here to brush away the causes of dissension, and cement a friendship between Kentucky and Louisiana.”

It was most fortunate that the note of irony did not escape me.

“Where governments failed, General Wilkinson succeeded,” I answered dryly.

Monsieur de St. Gre glanced at me, and an enigmatical smile spread over his face. I knew then that the ice was cracked between us. Yet he was too much a man of the world not to make one more tentative remark.

“A union between Kentucky and Louisiana would be a resistless force in the world, Mr. Ritchie,” he said.

“It was Nebuchadnezzar who dreamed of a composite image, Monsieur,” I answered; “and Mr. Wilkinson forgets one thing,—that Kentucky is a part of the United States.”

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At that Monsieur St. Gre laughed outright. He became a different man, though he lost none of his dignity.

“I should have had more faith in my old friend Gratiot,” he said; “but you will pardon me if I did not recognize at once the statesman he had sent me, Mr. Ritchie.”

It was my turn to laugh.

“Monsieur,” he went on, returning to that dignity of mien which marked him, “my political opinions are too well known that I should make a mystery of them to you. I was born a Frenchman, I shall die a Frenchman, and I shall never be happy until Louisiana is French once more. My great-grandfather, a brother of the Marquis de St. Gre of that time, and a wild blade enough, came out with D’Iberville. His son, my grandfather, was the Commissary-general of the colony under the Marquis de Vaudreuil. He sent me to France for my education, where I was introduced at court by my kinsman, the old Marquis, who took a fancy to me and begged me to remain. It was my father’s wish that I should return, and I did not disobey him. I had scarcely come back, Monsieur, when that abominable secret bargain of Louis the Fifteenth became known, ceding Louisiana to Spain. You may have heard of the revolution which followed here. It was a mild affair, and the remembrance of it makes me smile to this day, though with bitterness. I was five and twenty, hot-headed, and French. Que voulez-vous?” and Monsieur de St. Gre shrugged his shoulders. “O’Reilly, the famous Spanish general, came with his men-of-war. Well I remember the days we waited with leaden hearts for the men-of-war to come up from the English turn; and I can see now the cannon frowning from the ports, the grim spars, the high poops crowded with officers, the great anchors splashing the yellow water. I can hear the chains running. The ships were in line of battle before the town, their flying bridges swung to the levee, and they loomed above us like towering fortresses. It was dark, Monsieur, such as this afternoon, and we poor French colonists stood huddled in the open space below, waiting for we knew not what.”

He paused, and I started, for the picture he drew had carried me out of myself.

“On the 18th of August, 1769,—well I remember the day,” Monsieur de St. Gre continued, “the Spanish troops landed late in the afternoon, twenty-six hundred strong, the artillery rumbling over the bridges, the horses wheeling and rearing. And they drew up as in line of battle in the Place d’Armes,—dragoons, fusileros de montanas, light and heavy infantry. Where were our white cockades then? Fifty guns shook the town, the great O’Reilly limped ashore through the smoke, and Louisiana was lost to France. We had a cowardly governor, Monsieur, whose name is written in the annals of the province in letters of shame. He betrayed Monsieur de St. Gre and others into O’Reilly’s hands, and when my father was cast into prison he was seized with such a fit of anger that he died.”

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Monsieur de St. Gre was silent. Without, under the eaves of the gallery, a white rain fell, and a steaming moisture arose from the court-yard.

“What I have told you, Monsieur, is common knowledge. Louisiana has been Spanish for twenty years. I no longer wear the white cockade, for I am older now.” He smiled. “Strange things are happening in France, and the old order to which I belong” (he straightened perceptibly) “seems to be tottering. I have ceased to intrigue, but thank God I have not ceased to pray. Perhaps—who knows?—perhaps I may live to see again the lily of France stirred by the river breeze.”

He fell into a revery, his fine head bent a little, but presently aroused himself and eyed me curiously. I need not say that I felt a strange liking for Monsieur de St. Gre.

“And now, Mr. Ritchie,” he said, “will you tell me who you are, and how I can serve you?”

The servant had put the coffee on the table and left the room. Monsieur de St. Gre himself poured me a cup from the dainty, quaintly wrought Louis Quinze coffeepot, graven with the coat of arms of his family. As we sat talking, my admiration for my host increased, for I found that he was familiar not only with the situation in Kentucky, but that he also knew far more than I of the principles and personnel of the new government of which General Washington was President. That he had little sympathy with government by the people was natural, for he was a Creole, and behind that a member of an order which detested republics. When we were got beyond these topics the rain had ceased, the night had fallen, the green candles had burned low. And suddenly, as he spoke of Les Isles, I remembered the note Mademoiselle had given me for him, and I apologized for my forgetfulness. He read it, and dropped it with an exclamation.

“My daughter tells me that you have returned to her a miniature which she lost, Monsieur,” he said.

“I had that pleasure,” I answered.

“And that—you found this miniature at Madame Bouvet’s. Was this the case?” And he stared hard at me.

I nodded, but for the life of me I could not speak. It seemed an outrage to lie to such a man. He did not answer, but sat lost in thought, drumming with his fingers on the tables until the noise of the slamming of a door aroused him to a listening posture. The sound of subdued voices came from the archway below us, and one of these, from an occasional excited and feminine note, I thought to be the gardienne’s. Monsieur de St. Gre thrust back his chair, and in three strides was at the edge of the gallery.

“Auguste!” he cried.

Silence.

“Auguste, come up to me at once,” he said in French.

Another silence, then something that sounded like “Sapristi!” a groan from the gardienne, and a step was heard on the stairway. My own discomfort increased, and I would have given much to be in any other place in the world. Auguste had arrived at the head of the steps but was apparently unable to get any farther.

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“Bon soir, mon pere,” he said.

“Like a dutiful son,” said Monsieur de St. Gre, “you heard I was in town, and called to pay your respects, I am sure. I am delighted to find you. In fact, I came to town for that purpose.”

“Lisette—” began Auguste.

“Thought that I did not wish to be disturbed, no doubt,” said his father. “Walk in, Auguste.”

Monsieur Auguste’s slim figure appeared in the doorway. He caught sight of me, halted, backed, and stood staring with widened eyes. The candles threw their light across his shoulder on the face of the elder Monsieur de St. Gre. Auguste was a replica of his father, with the features minimized to regularity and the brow narrowed. The complexion of the one was a clear saffron, while the boy’s skin was mottled, and he was not twenty.

“What is the matter?” said Monsieur de St. Gre.

“You—you have a visitor!” stammered Auguste, with a tact that savored of practice. Yet there was a sorry difference between this and the haughty young patrician who had sold me the miniature.

“Who brings me good news,” said Monsieur de St. Gre, in English. “Mr. Ritchie, allow me to introduce my son, Auguste.”

I felt Monsieur de St. Gre’s eyes on me as I bowed, and I began to think I was in near as great a predicament as Auguste. Monsieur de St. Gre was managing the matter with infinite wisdom.

“Sit down, my son,” he said; “you have no doubt been staying with your uncle.” Auguste sat down, still staring.

“Does your aunt’s health mend?”

“She is better to-night, father,” said the son, in English which might have been improved.

“I am glad of it,” said Monsieur de St. Gre, taking a chair. “Andre, fill the glasses.”

The silent, linen-clad mulatto poured out the Madeira, shot a look at Auguste, and retired softly.

“There has been a heavy rain, Monsieur,” said Monsieur de St. Gre to me, “but I think the air is not yet cleared. I was about to say, Mr. Ritchie, when my son called to pay his

respects, that the miniature of which we were speaking is one of the most remarkable paintings I have ever seen." Auguste's thin fingers were clutching the chair. "I have never beheld Mademoiselle Helene de St. Gre, for my cousin, the Marquis, was not married when I left France. He was a captain in a regiment of his Majesty's Mousquetaires, since abolished. But I am sure that the likeness of Mademoiselle must be a true one, for it has the stamp of a remarkable personality, though Helene can be only eighteen. Women, with us, mature quickly, Monsieur. And this portrait tallies with what I have heard of her character. You no doubt observed the face, Monsieur,—that of a true aristocrat. But I was speaking of her character. When she was twelve, she said something to a cardinal for which her mother made her keep her room a whole day. For Mademoiselle would not retract, and, pardieu, I believe his Eminence was wrong.

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The Marquise is afraid of her. And when first Helene was presented formally she made such a witty retort to the Queen's sally that her Majesty insisted upon her coming to court. On every New Year's day I have always sent a present of coffee and perique to my cousin the Marquis, and it is Mademoiselle who writes to thank us. Parole d'honneur, her letters make me see again the people amongst whom she moves,—the dukes and duchesses, the cardinals, bishops, and generals. She draws them to the life, Monsieur, with a touch that makes them all ridiculous. His Majesty does not escape. God forgive him, he is indeed an amiable, weak person for calling a States General. And the Queen, a frivolous lady, but true to those whom she loves, and beginning now to realize the perils of the situation." He paused. "Is it any wonder that Auguste has fallen in love with his cousin, Monsieur? That he loses his head, forgets that he is a gentleman, and steals her portrait from his sister!"

Had I not been so occupied with my own fate in the outcome of this inquisition, I should have been sorry for Auguste. And yet this feeling could not have lasted, for the young gentleman sprang to his feet, cast a glance at me which was not without malignance, and faced his father, his lips twitching with anger and fear. Monsieur de St. Gre sat undisturbed.

"He is so much in love with the portrait, Monsieur, that he loses it."

"Loses it!" cried Auguste.

"Precisely," said his father, dryly, "for Mr. Ritchie tells me he found it—at Madame Bouvet's, was it not, Monsieur?"

Auguste looked at me.

"Mille diables!" he said, and sat down again heavily.

"Mr. Ritchie has returned it to your sister, a service which puts him heavily in our debt," said Monsieur de St. Gre. "Now, sir," he added to me, rising, "you have had a tiresome day. I will show you to your room, and in the morning we will begin our—investigations."

He clapped his hands, the silent mulatto appeared with a new candle, and I followed my host down the gallery to a room which he flung open at the far end. A great four-poster bedstead was in one corner, and a polished mahogany dresser in the other.

"We have saved some of our family furniture from the fire, Mr. Ritchie," said Monsieur de St. Gre; "that bed was brought from Paris by my father forty years ago. I hope you will rest well."

He set the candle on the table, and as he bowed there was a trace of an enigmatical smile about his mouth. How much he knew of Auguste's transaction I could not fathom, but the matter and the scarcely creditable part I had played in it kept me awake far into the night. I was just falling into a troubled sleep when a footstep on the gallery startled me back to consciousness. It was followed by a light tap on the door.

"Monsieur Reetchie," said a voice.

It was Monsieur Auguste. He was not an imposing figure in his nightrail, and by the light of the carefully shaded candle he held in his hand I saw that he had hitherto deceived me in the matter of his calves. He stood peering at me as I lay under the mosquito bar.

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“How is it I can thank you, Monsieur!” he exclaimed in a whisper.

“By saying nothing, Monsieur,” I answered.

“You are noble, you are generous, and—and one day I will give you the money back,” he added with a burst of magniloquence. “You have behave very well, Monsieur, and I mek you my friend. Behol’ Auguste de St. Gre, entirely at your service, Monsieur.” He made a sweeping bow that might have been impressive save for the nightrail, and sought my hand, which he grasped in a fold of the mosquito bar.

“I am overcome, Monsieur,” I said.

“Monsieur Reetchie, you are my friend, my intimate” (he put an aspirate on the word). “I go to tell you one leetle secret. I find that I can repose confidence in you. My father does not understan’ me, you saw, Monsieur, he does not appreciate—that is the Engleesh. Mon Dieu, you saw it this night. I, who spik to you, am made for a courtier, a noble. I have the gift. La Louisiane—she is not so big enough for me.” He lowered his voice still further, and bent nearer to me. “Monsieur, I run away to France. My cousin the Marquis will help me. You will hear of Auguste de St. Gre at Versailles, at Trianon, at Chantilly, and peut-etre—”

“It is a worthy campaign, Monsieur,” I interrupted.

A distant sound broke the stillness, and Auguste was near to dropping the candle on me.

“Adieu, Monsieur,” he whispered; “milles tonneres, I have done one extraordinaire foolish thing when I am come to this house to-night.”

And he disappeared, shading his candle, as he had come.

CHAPTER XIV

RETRIBUTION

During the next two days I had more evidence of Monsieur de St. Gre’s ability, and, thanks to his conduct of my campaign, not the least suspicion of my mission to New Orleans got abroad. Certain gentlemen were asked to dine, we called on others, and met still others casually in their haunts of business or pleasure. I was troubled because of the inconvenience and discomfort to which my host put himself, for New Orleans in the dog-days may be likened in climate to the under side of the lid of a steam kettle. But at length, on the second evening, after we had supped on jambalaya and rice cakes and other dainties, and the last guest had gone, my host turned to me.

“The rest of the burrow is the same, Mr. Ritchie, until it comes to the light again.”

“And the fox has crawled out of the other end,” I said.

“Precisely,” he answered, laughing; “in short, if you were to remain in New Orleans until New Year’s, you would not learn a whit more. To-morrow morning I have a little business of my own to transact, and we shall get to Les Iles in time for dinner. No, don’t thank me,” he protested; “there’s a certain rough honesty and earnestness ingrained in you which I like. And besides,” he added, smiling, “you are poor indeed at thanking, Mr. Ritchie. You could never do it gracefully. But if ever I were in trouble, I believe that I might safely call on you.”

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The next day was a rare one, for a wind from somewhere had blown the moisture away a little, the shadows were clearer cut, and by noon Monsieur de St. Gre and I were walking our horses in the shady road behind the levee. We were followed at a respectful distance by Andre, Monsieur's mulatto body-servant, and as we rode my companion gave me stories of the owners of the different plantations we passed, and spoke of many events of interest in the history of the colony. Presently he ceased to talk, and rode in silence for many minutes. And then he turned upon me suddenly.

"Mr. Ritchie," he said, "you have seen my son. It may be that in him I am paying the price of my sins. I have done everything to set him straight, but in vain. Monsieur, every son of the St. Gre's has awakened sooner or later to a sense of what becomes him. But Auguste is a fool," he cried bitterly,—a statement which I could not deny; "were it not for my daughter, Antoinette, I should be a miserable man indeed."

Inasmuch as he was not a person of confidences, I felt the more flattered that he should speak so plainly to me, and I had a great sympathy for this strong man who could not help himself.

"You have observed Antoinette, Mr. Ritchie," he continued; "she is a strange mixture of wilfulness and caprice and self-sacrifice, and she has at times a bit of that wit which has made our house for generations the intimates—I may say—of sovereigns."

This peculiar pride of race would have amused me in another man. I found myself listening to Monsieur de St. Gre with gravity, and I did not dare to reply that I had had evidence of Mademoiselle's aptness of retort.

"She has been my companion since she was a child, Monsieur. She has disobeyed me, flaunted me, nursed me in illness, championed me behind my back. I have a little book which I have kept of her sayings and doings, which may interest you, Monsieur. I will show it you."

This indeed was a new side of Monsieur de St. Gre, and I reflected rather ruefully upon the unvarnished truth of what Mr. Wharton had told me,—ay, and what Colonel Clark had emphasized long before. It was my fate never to be treated as a young man. It struck me that Monsieur de St. Gre had never even considered me in the light of a possible suitor for his daughter's hand.

"I should be delighted to see them, Monsieur," I answered.

"Would you?" he exclaimed, his face lighting up as he glanced at me. "Alas, Madame de St. Gre and I have promised to go to our neighbors', Monsieur and Madame Bertrand's, for to-night. But, to-morrow, if you have leisure, we shall look at it together. And not a word of this to my daughter, Monsieur," he added apprehensively; "she would never forgive me. She dislikes my talking of her, but at times I cannot help it. It was

only last year that she was very angry with me, and would not speak to me for days, because I boasted of her having watched at the bedside of a poor gentleman who came here and got the fever. You will not tell her?”

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“Indeed I shall not, Monsieur,” I answered.

“It is strange,” he said abruptly, “it is strange that this gentleman and his wife should likewise have had letters to us from Monsieur Gratiot. They came from St. Louis, and they were on their way to Paris.”

“To Paris?” I cried; “what was their name?”

He looked at me in surprise.

“Clive,” he said.

“Clive!” I cried, leaning towards him in my saddle. “Clive! And what became of them?”

This time he gave me one of his searching looks, and it was not unmixed with astonishment.

“Why do you ask. Monsieur?” he demanded. “Did you know them?”

I must have shown that I was strangely agitated. For the moment I could not answer.

“Monsieur Gratiot himself spoke of them to me,” I said, after a little; “he said they were an interesting couple.”

“Pardieu!” exclaimed Monsieur de St. Gre, “he put it mildly.” He gave me another look. “There was something about them, Monsieur, which I could not fathom. Why were they drifting? They were people of quality who had seen the world, who were by no means paupers, who had no cause to travel save a certain restlessness. And while they were awaiting the sailing of the packet for France they came to our house—the old one in the Rue Bourbon that was burned. I would not speak ill of the dead, but Mr. Clive I did not like. He fell sick of the fever in my house, and it was there that Antoinette and Madame de St. Gre took turns with his wife in watching at his bedside. I could do nothing with Antoinette, Monsieur, and she would not listen to my entreaties, my prayers, my commands. We buried the poor fellow in the alien ground, for he did not die in the Church, and after that my daughter clung to Mrs. Clive. She would not let her go, and the packet sailed without her. I have never seen such affection. I may say,” he added quickly, “that Madame de St. Gre and I share in it, for Mrs. Clive is a lovable woman and a strong character. And into the great sorrow that lies behind her life, we have never probed.”

“And she is with you now, Monsieur?” I asked.

“She lives with us, Monsieur,” he answered simply, “and I hope for always. No,” he said quickly, “it is not charity,—she has something of her own. We love her, and she is the

best of companions for my daughter. For the rest, Monsieur, she seems benumbed, with no desire to go back or to go farther."

An entrance drive to the plantation of Les Iles, unknown to Nick and me, led off from the main road like a green tunnel arched out of the forest. My feelings as we entered this may be imagined, for I was suddenly confronted with the situation which I had dreaded since my meeting with Nick at Jonesboro. I could scarcely allow myself even the faint hope that Mrs. Clive might not prove to be Mrs. Temple after all. Whilst I was in this agony of doubt and indecision, the drive

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suddenly came out on a shaded lawn dotted with flowering bushes. There was the house with its gallery, its curved dormer roof and its belvedere; and a white, girlish figure flitted down the steps. It was Mademoiselle Antoinette, and no sooner had her father dismounted than she threw herself into his arms. Forgetful of my presence, he stood murmuring in her ear like a lover; and as I watched them my trouble slipped from my mind, and gave place to a vaguer regret that I had been a wanderer throughout my life. Presently she turned up to him a face on which was written something which he could not understand. His own stronger features reflected a vague disquiet.

“What is it, ma cherie?”

What was it indeed? Something was in her eyes which bore a message and presentiment to me. She dropped them, fastening in the lapel of his coat a flaunting red flower set against a shining leaf, and there was a gentle, joyous subterfuge in her answer.

“Thou pardoned Auguste, as I commanded?” she said. They were speaking in the familiar French.

“Ha, diable! is it that which disquiets thee?” said her father. “We will not speak of Auguste. Dost thou know Monsieur Ritchie, ’Toinette?”

She disengaged herself and dropped me a courtesy, her eyes seeking the ground. But she said not a word. At that instant Madame de St. Gre herself appeared on the gallery, followed by Nick, who came down the steps with a careless self-confidence to greet the master. Indeed, a stranger might have thought that Mr. Temple was the host, and I saw Antoinette watching him furtively with a gleam of amusement in her eyes.

“I am delighted to see you at last, Monsieur,” said my cousin. “I am Nicholas Temple, and I have been your guest for three days.”

Had Monsieur de St. Gre been other than the soul of hospitality, it would have been impossible not to welcome such a guest. Our host had, in common with his daughter, a sense of humor. There was a quizzical expression on his fine face as he replied, with the barest glance at Mademoiselle Antoinette:—

“I trust you have been—well entertained, Mr. Temple. My daughter has been accustomed only to the society of her brother and cousins.”

“Faith, I should not have supposed it,” said Nick, instantly, a remark which caused the color to flush deeply into Mademoiselle’s face. I looked to see Monsieur de St. Gre angry. He tried, indeed, to be grave, but smiled irresistibly as he mounted the steps to greet his wife, who stood demurely awaiting his caress. And in this interval

Mademoiselle shot at Nick a swift and withering look as she passed him. He returned a grimace.

“Messieurs,” said Monsieur de St. Gre, turning to us, “dinner will soon be ready—if you will be so good as to pardon me until then.”

Nick followed Mademoiselle with his eyes until she had disappeared beyond the hall. She did not so much as turn. Then he took me by the arm and led me to a bench under a magnolia a little distance away, where he seated himself, and looked up at me despairingly.

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“Behold,” said he, “what was once your friend and cousin, your counsellor, sage, and guardian. Behold the clay which conducted you hither, with the heart neatly but painfully extracted. Look upon a woman’s work, Davy, and shun the sex. I tell you it is better to go blindfold through life, to have—pardon me—your own blunt features, than to be reduced to such a pitiable state. Was ever such a refinement of cruelty practised before? Never! Was there ever such beauty, such archness, such coquetry,—such damned elusiveness? Never! If there is a cargo going up the river, let me be salted and lie at the bottom of it. I’ll warrant you I’ll not come to life.”

“You appear to have suffered somewhat,” I said, forgetting for the moment in my laughter the thing that weighed upon my mind.

“Suffered!” he cried; “I have been tossed high in the azure that I might sink the farther into the depths. I have been put in a grave, the earth stamped down, resurrected, and flung into the dust-heap. I have been taken up to the gate of heaven and dropped a hundred and fifty years through darkness. Since I have seen you I have been the round of all the bright places and all the bottomless pits in the firmament.”

“It seems to have made you literary,” I remarked judicially.

“I burn up twenty times a day,” he continued, with a wave of the hand to express the completeness of the process; “there is nothing left. I see her, I speak to her, and I burn up.”

“Have you had many tete-a-tetes?” I asked.

“Not one,” he retorted fiercely; “do you think there is any sense in the damnable French custom? I am an honorable man, and, besides, I am not equipped for an elopement. No priest in Louisiana would marry us. I see her at dinner, at supper. Sometimes we sew on the gallery,” he went on, “but I give you my oath that I have not had one word with her alone.”

“An oath is not necessary,” I said. “But you seem to have made some progress nevertheless.”

“Do you call that progress?” he demanded.

“It is surely not retrogression.”

“God knows what it is,” said Nick, helplessly, “but it’s got to stop. I have sent her an ultimatum.”

“A what?”

“A summons. Her father and mother are going to the Bertrands’ to-night, and I have written her a note to meet me in the garden. And you,” he cried, rising and slapping me between the shoulders, “you are to keep watch, like the dear, careful, canny, sly rascal you are.”

“And—and has she accepted?” I inquired.

“That’s the deuce of it,” said he; “she has not. But I think she’ll come.”

I stood for a moment regarding him.

“And you really love Mademoiselle Antoinette?” I asked.

“Have I not exhausted the language?” he answered. “If what I have been through is not love, then may the Lord shield me from the real disease.”

“It may have been merely a light case of—tropical enthusiasm, let us say. I have seen others, a little milder because the air was more temperate.”

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“Tropical—balderdash,” he exploded. “If you are not the most exasperating, unfeeling man alive—”

“I merely wanted to know if you wished to marry Mademoiselle de St. Gre,” I interrupted.

He gave me a look of infinite tolerance.

“Have I not made it plain that I cannot live without her?” he said; “if not, I will go over it all again.”

“That will not be necessary,” I said hastily.

“The trouble may be,” he continued, “that they have already made one of their matrimonial contracts with a Granpre, a Beausejour, a Bernard.”

“Monsieur de St. Gre is a very sensible man,” I answered. “He loves his daughter, and I doubt if he would force her to marry against her will. Tell me, Nick,” I asked, laying my hand upon his shoulder, “do you love this girl so much that you would let nothing come between you and her?”

“I tell you, I do; and again I tell you, I do,” he replied. He paused, suddenly glancing at my face, and added, “Why do you ask, Davy?”

I stood irresolute, now that the time had come not daring to give voice to my suspicions. He had not spoken to me of his mother save that once, and I had no means of knowing whether his feeling for the girl might not soften his anger against her. I have never lacked the courage to come to the point, but there was still the chance that I might be mistaken in this after all. Would it not be best to wait until I had ascertained in some way the identity of Mrs. Clive? And while I stood debating, Nick regarding me with a puzzled expression, Monsieur de St. Gre appeared on the gallery.

“Come, gentlemen,” he cried; “dinner awaits us.”

The dining room at Les Iles was at the corner of the house, and its windows looked out on the gallery, which was shaded at that place by dense foliage. The room, like others in the house, seemed to reflect the decorous character of its owner. Two St. Gre’s, indifferently painted, but rigorous and respectable, relieved the whiteness of the wall. They were the Commissary-general and his wife. The lattices were closed on one side, and in the deep amber light the family silver shone but dimly. The dignity of our host, the evident ceremony of the meal,—which was attended by three servants,—would have awed into a modified silence at least a less irrepressible person than Nicholas Temple. But Nick was one to carry by storm a position which another might wait to reconnoitre. The first sensation of our host was no doubt astonishment, but he was soon laughing over a vivid account of our adventures on the keel boat. Nick’s imitation of Xavier, and his description of Benjy’s terrors after the storm, were so perfect that I

laughed quite as heartily; and Madame de St. Gre wiped her eyes and repeated continually, “Quel drole monsieur! it is thus he has entertained us since thou departed, Philippe.”

As for Mademoiselle, I began to think that Nick was not far wrong in his diagnosis. Training may have had something to do with it. She would not laugh, not she, but once or twice she raised her napkin to her face and coughed slightly. For the rest, she sat demurely, with her eyes on her plate, a model of propriety. Nick’s sufferings became more comprehensible.

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To give the devil his due, Nick had an innate tact which told him when to stop, and perhaps at this time Mademoiselle's superciliousness made him subside the more quickly. After Monsieur de St. Gre had explained to me the horrors of the indigo pest and the futility of sugar raising, he turned to his daughter.

"'Toinette, where is Madame Clive?" he asked. The girl looked up, startled into life and interest at once.

"Oh, papa," she cried in French, "we are so worried about her, mamma and I. It was the day you went away, the day these gentlemen came, that we thought she would take an airing. And suddenly she became worse."

Monsieur de St. Gre turned with concern to his wife.

"I do not know what it is, Philippe," said that lady; "it seems to be mental. The loss of her husband weighs upon her, poor lady. But this is worse than ever, and she will lie for hours with her face turned to the wall, and not even Antoinette can arouse her."

"I have always been able to comfort her before," said Antoinette, with a catch in her voice.

I took little account of what was said after that, my only notion being to think the problem out for myself, and alone. As I was going to my room Nick stopped me.

"Come into the garden, Davy," he said.

"When I have had my siesta," I answered.

"When you have had your siesta!" he cried; "since when did you begin to indulge in siestas?"

"To-day," I replied, and left him staring after me.

I reached my room, bolted the door, and lay down on my back to think. Little was needed to convince me now that Mrs. Clive was Mrs. Temple, and thus the lady's relapse when she heard that her son was in the house was accounted for. Instead of forming a plan, my thoughts drifted from that into pity for her, and my memory ran back many years to the text of good Mr. Mason's sermon, "I have refined thee, but not with silver, I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction." What must Sarah Temple have suffered since those days! I remembered her in her prime, in her beauty, in her selfishness, in her cruelty to those whom she might have helped, and I wondered the more at the change which must have come over the woman that she had won the affections of this family, that she had gained the untiring devotion of Mademoiselle Antoinette. Her wit might not account for it, for that had been cruel. And something of

the agony of the woman's soul as she lay in torment, facing the wall, thinking of her son under the same roof, of a life misspent and irrevocable, I pictured.

A stillness crept into the afternoon like the stillness of night. The wide house was darkened and silent, and without a sunlight washed with gold filtered through the leaves. There was a drowsy hum of bees, and in the distance the occasional languishing note of a bird singing what must have been a cradle-song. My mind wandered, and shirked the task that was set to it.

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Could anything be gained by meddling? I had begun to convince myself that nothing could, when suddenly I came face to face with the consequences of a possible marriage between Nick and Mademoiselle Antoinette. In that event the disclosure of his mother's identity would be inevitable. Not only his happiness was involved, but Mademoiselle's, her father's and her mother's, and lastly that of this poor hunted woman herself, who thought at last to have found a refuge.

An hour passed, and it became more and more evident to me that I must see and talk with Mrs. Temple. But how was I to communicate with her? At last I took out my portfolio and wrote these words on a sheet:—

"If Mrs. Clive will consent to a meeting with Mr. David Ritchie, he will deem it a favor. Mr. Ritchie assures Mrs. Clive that he makes this request in all friendliness."

I lighted a candle, folded the note and sealed it, addressed it to Mrs. Clive, and opening the latticed door I stepped out. Walking along the gallery until I came to the rear part of the house which faced towards the out-buildings, I spied three figures prone on the grass under a pecan tree that shaded the kitchen roof. One of these figures was Benjy, and he was taking his siesta. I descended quietly from the gallery, and making my way to him, touched him on the shoulder. He awoke and stared at me with white eyes.

"Marse Dave!" he cried.

"Hush," I answered, "and follow me."

He came after me, wondering, a little way into the grove, where I stopped.

"Benjy," I said, "do you know any of the servants here?"

"Lawsy, Marse Dave, I reckon I knows 'em,—some of 'em," he answered with a grin.

"You talk to them?"

"Shucks, no, Marse Dave," he replied with a fine scorn, "I ain't no hand at dat ar nigger French. But I knows some on 'em, and right well too."

"How?" I demanded curiously.

Benjy looked down sheepishly at his feet. He was standing pigeon-toed.

"I done c'ressed some on 'em, Marse Dave," he said at length, and there was a note of triumph in his voice.

"You did what?" I asked.

“I done kissed one of dem yaller gals, Marse Dave. Yass’r, I done kissed M’lisse.”

“Do you think Melisse would do something for you if you asked her?” I inquired.

Benjy seemed hurt.

“Marse Dave—” he began reproachfully.

“Very well, then,” I interrupted, taking the letter from my pocket, “there is a lady who is ill here, Mrs. Clive—”

I paused, for a new look had come into Benjy’s eyes. He began that peculiar, sympathetic laugh of the negro, which catches and doubles on itself, and I imagined that a new admiration for me dawned on his face.

“Yass’r, yass, Marse Dave, I reckon M’lisse ’ll git it to her ’thout any one tekin’ notice.”

I bit my lips.

“If Mrs. Clive receives this within an hour, Melisse shall have one piastre, and you another. There is an answer.”

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Benjy took the note, and departed nimbly to find Melisse, while I paced up and down in my uneasiness as to the outcome of the experiment. A quarter of an hour passed, half an hour, and then I saw Benjy coming through the trees. He stood before me, chuckling, and drew from his pocket a folded piece of paper. I gave him the two piastres, warned him if his master or any one inquired for me that I was taking a walk, and bade him begone. Then I opened the note.

“I will meet you at the bayou, at seven this evening. Take the path that leads through the garden.”

I read it with a catch of the breath, with a certainty that the happiness of many people depended upon what I should say at that meeting. And to think of this and to compose myself a little, I made my way to the garden in search of the path, that I might know it when the time came. Entering a gap in the hedge, I caught sight of the shaded seat under the tree which had been the scene of our first meeting with Antoinette, and I hurried past it as I crossed the garden. There were two openings in the opposite hedge, the one through which Nick and I had come, and another. I took the second, and with little difficulty found the path of which the note had spoken. It led through a dense, semi-tropical forest in the direction of the swamp beyond, the way being well beaten, but here and there jealously crowded by an undergrowth of brambles and the prickly Spanish bayonet. I know not how far I had walked, my head bent in thought, before I felt the ground teetering under my feet, and there was the bayou. It was a narrow lane of murky, impenetrable water, shaded now by the forest wall. Imaged on its amber surface were the twisted boughs of the cypresses of the swamp beyond,—boughs funereally draped, as though to proclaim a warning of unknown perils in the dark places. On that side where I stood ancient oaks thrust their gnarled roots into the water, and these knees were bridged by treacherous platforms of moss. As I sought for a safe resting-place a dull splash startled me, the pink-and-white water lilies danced on the ripples, and a long, black snout pushed its way to the centre of the bayou and floated there motionless.

I sat down on a wide knee that seemed to be fashioned for the purpose, and reflected. It may have been about half-past five, and I made up my mind that, rather than return and risk explanations, I would wait where I was until Mrs. Temple appeared. I had much to think of, and for the rest the weird beauty of the place, with its changing colors as the sun fell, held me in fascination. When the blue vapor stole through the cypress swamp, my trained ear caught the faintest of warning sounds. Mrs. Temple was coming.

I could not repress the exclamation that rose to my lips when she stood before me.

“I have changed somewhat,” she began quite calmly; “I have changed since you were at Temple Bow.”

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I stood staring at her, at a loss to know whether by these words she sought to gain an advantage. I knew not whether to pity or to be angry, such a strange blending she seemed of former pride and arrogance and later suffering. There were the features of the beauty still, the eyes defiant, the lips scornful. Sorrow had set its brand upon this protesting face in deep, violet marks under the eyes, in lines which no human power could erase: sorrow had flecked with white the gold of the hair, had proclaimed her a woman with a history. For she had a new and remarkable beauty which puzzled and astonished me,—a beauty in which maternity had no place. The figure, gowned with an innate taste in black, still kept the rounded lines of the young woman, while about the shoulders and across the open throat a lace mantilla was thrown. She stood facing me, undaunted, and I knew that she had come to fight for what was left her. I knew further that she was no mean antagonist.

“Will you kindly tell me to what circumstance I owe the honor of this—summons, Mr. Ritchie?” she asked. “You are a travelled person for one so young. I might almost say,” she added with an indifferent laugh, “that there is some method and purpose in your travels.”

“Indeed, you do me wrong, Madame,” I replied; “I am here by the merest chance.”

Again she laughed lightly, and stepping past me took her seat on the oak from which I had risen. I marvelled that this woman, with all her self-possession, could be the same as she who had held her room, cowering, these four days past. Admiration for her courage mingled with my other feelings, and for the life of me I knew not where to begin. My experience with women of the world was, after all, distinctly limited. Mrs. Temple knew, apparently by intuition, the advantage she had gained, and she smiled.

“The Ritchies were always skilled in dealing with sinners,” she began; “the first earl had the habit of hunting them like foxes, so it is said. I take it for granted that, before my sentence is pronounced, I shall have the pleasure of hearing my wrong-doings in detail. I could not ask you to forego that satisfaction.”

“You seem to know the characteristics of my family, Mrs. Temple,” I answered. “There is one trait of the Ritchies concerning which I ask your honest opinion.”

“And what is that?” she said carelessly.

“I have always understood that they have spoken the truth. Is it not so?”

She glanced at me curiously.

“I never knew your father to lie,” she answered; “but after all he had few chances. He so seldom spoke.”

“Your intercourse with me at Temple Bow was quite as limited,” I said.

“Ah,” she interrupted quickly, “you bear me that grudge. It is another trait of the Ritchies.”

“I bear you no grudge, Madame,” I replied. “I asked you a question concerning the veracity of my family, and I beg that you will believe what I say.”

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“And what is this momentous statement?” she asked.

I had hard work to keep my temper, but I knew that I must not lose it.

“I declare to you on my honor that my business in New Orleans in no way concerns you, and that I had not the slightest notion of finding you here. Will you believe that?”

“And what then?” she asked.

“I also declare to you that, since meeting your son, my chief anxiety has been lest he should run across you.”

“You are very considerate of others,” she said. “Let us admit for the sake of argument that you come here by accident.”

It was the opening I had sought for, but despaired of getting.

“Then put yourself for a moment in my place, Madame, and give me credit for a little kindliness of feeling, and a sincere affection for your son.”

There was a new expression on her face, and the light of a supreme effort in her eyes.

“I give you credit at least for a logical mind,” she answered. “In spite of myself you have put me at the bar and seem to be conducting my trial.”

“I do not see why there should be any rancor between us,” I answered. “It is true that I hated you at Temple Bow. When my father was killed and I was left a homeless orphan you had no pity for me, though your husband was my mother’s brother. But you did me a good turn after all, for you drove me out into a world where I learned to rely upon myself. Furthermore, it was not in your nature to treat me well.”

“Not in my nature?” she repeated.

“You were seeking happiness, as every one must in their own way. That happiness lay, apparently, with Mr. Riddle.”

“Ah,” she cried, with a catch of her breath, “I thought you would be judging me.”

“I am stating facts. Your son was a sufficient embarrassment in this matter, and I should have been an additional one. I blame you not, Mrs. Temple, for anything you have done to me, but I blame you for embittering Nick’s life.”

“And he?” she said. It seemed to me that I detected a faltering in her voice.

“I will hide nothing from you. He blames you, with what justice I leave you to decide.”

She did not answer this, but turned her head away towards the bayou. Nor could I determine what was in her mind.

“And now I ask you whether I have acted as your friend in begging you to meet me.”

She turned to me swiftly at that.

“I am at a loss to see how there can be friendship between us, Mr. Ritchie,” she said.

“Very good then, Madame; I am sorry,” I answered. “I have done all that is in my power, and now events will have to take their course.”

I had not gone two steps into the wood before I heard her voice calling my name. She had risen, and leaned with her hand against the oak.

“Does Nick—know that you are here?” she cried.

“No,” I answered shortly. Then I realized suddenly what I had failed to grasp before,—-she feared that I would pity her.

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“David!”

I started violently at the sound of my name, at the new note in her voice, at the change in the woman as I turned. And then before I realized what she had done she had come to me swiftly and laid her hand upon my arm.

“David, does he hate me?”

All the hope remaining in her life was in that question, was in her face as she searched mine with a terrible scrutiny. And never had I known such an ordeal. It seemed as if I could not answer, and as I stood staring back at her a smile was forced to her lips.

“I will pay you one tribute, my friend,” she said; “you are honest.”

But even as she spoke I saw her sway, and though I could not be sure it were not a dizziness in me, I caught her. I shall always marvel at the courage there was in her, for she straightened and drew away from me a little proudly, albeit gently, and sat down on the knee of the oak, looking across the bayou towards the mist of the swamp. There was the infinite calmness of resignation in her next speech.

“Tell me about him,” she said.

She was changed indeed. Were it not so I should have heard of her own sufferings, of her poor, hunted life from place to place, of countless nights made sleepless by the past. Pride indeed was left, but the fire had burned away the last vestige of selfishness.

I sat down beside her, knowing full well that I should be judged by what I said. She listened, motionless, though something of what that narrative cost her I knew by the current of sympathy that ran now between us. Unmarked, the day faded, a new light was spread over the waters, the mist was spangled with silver points, the Spanish moss took on the whiteness of lace against the black forest swamp, and on the yellow face of the moon the star-shaped leaves of a gum were printed.

At length I paused. She neither spoke, nor moved—save for the rising and falling of her shoulders. The hardest thing I had to say I saved for the last, and I was near lacking the courage to continue.

“There is Mademoiselle Antoinette—” I began, and stopped,—she turned on me so quickly and laid a hand on mine.

“Nick loves her!” she cried.

“You know it!” I exclaimed, wondering.

“Ah, David,” she answered brokenly, “I foresaw it from the first. I, too, love the girl. No human being has ever given me such care and such affection. She—she is all that I have left. Must I give her up? Have I not paid the price of my sins?”

I did not answer, knowing that she saw the full cruelty of the predicament. What happiness remained to her now of a battered life stood squarely in the way of her son’s happiness. That was the issue, and no advice or aid of mine could change it. There was another silence that seemed to me an eternity as I watched, a helpless witness, the struggle going on within her. At last she got to her feet, her face turned to the shadow.

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“I will go, David,” she said. Her voice was low and she spoke with a steadiness that alarmed me. “I will go.”

Torn with pity, I thought again, but I could see no alternative. And then, suddenly, she was clinging to me, her courage gone, her breast shaken with sobs. “Where shall I go?” she cried. “God help me! Are there no remote places where He will not seek me out? I have tried them all, David.” And quite as suddenly she disengaged herself, and looked at me strangely. “You are well revenged for Temple Bow,” she said.

“Hush,” I answered, and held her, fearing I knew not what, “you have not lacked courage. It is not so bad as you believe. I will devise a plan and help you. Have you money?”

“Yes,” she answered, with a remnant of her former pride; “and I have an annuity paid now to Mr. Clark.”

“Then listen to what I say,” I answered. “To-night I will take you to New Orleans and hide you safely. And I swear to you, whether it be right or wrong, that I will use every endeavor to change Nick’s feelings towards you. Come,” I continued, leading her gently into the path, “let us go while there is yet time.”

“Stop,” she said, and I halted fearfully. “David Ritchie, you are a good man. I can make no amends to you,”—she did not finish.

Feeling for the path in the blackness of the wood, I led her by the hand, and she followed me as trustfully as a child. At last, after an age of groping, the heavy scents of shrubs and flowers stole to us on the night air, and we came out at the hedge into what seemed a blaze of light that flooded the rows of color. Here we paused, breathless, and looked. The bench under the great tree was vacant, and the garden was empty.

It was she who led the way through the hedge, who halted in the garden path at the sound of voices. She turned, but there was no time to flee, for the tall figure of a man came through the opposite hedge, followed by a lady. One was Nicholas Temple, the other, Mademoiselle de St. Gre. Mrs. Temple’s face alone was in the shadow, and as I felt her hand trembling on my arm I summoned all my resources. It was Nick who spoke first.

“It is Davy!” he cried. “Oh, the sly rascal! And this is the promenade of which he left us word, the solitary meditation! Speak up, man; you are forgiven for deserting us.”

He turned, laughing, to Mademoiselle. But she stood with her lips parted and her hands dropped, staring at my companion. Then she took two steps forward and stopped with a cry.

“Mrs. Clive!”

The woman beside me turned, and with a supreme courage raised her head and faced the girl.

“Yes, Antoinette, it is I,” she answered.

And then my eyes sought Nick, for Mrs. Temple had faced her son with a movement that was a challenge, yet with a look that questioned, yearned, appealed. He, too, stared, the laughter fading from his eyes, first astonishment, and then anger, growing in them, slowly, surely. I shall never forget him as he stood there (for what seemed an age) recalling one by one the wrongs this woman had done him. She herself had taught him to brook no restraint, to follow impetuously his loves and hates, and endurance in these things was moulded in every line of his finely cut features. And when he spoke it was not to her, but to the girl at his side.

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“Do you know who this is?” he said. “Tell me, do you know this woman?”

Mademoiselle de St. Gre did not answer him. She drew near, gently, to Mrs. Temple, whose head was bowed, whose agony I could only guess.

“Mrs. Clive,” she said softly, though her voice was shaken by a prescience, “won’t you tell me what has happened? Won’t you speak to me—Antoinette?”

The poor lady lifted up her arms, as though to embrace the girl, dropped them despairingly, and turned away.

“Antoinette,” she murmured, “Antoinette!”

For Nick had seized Antoinette by the hand, restraining her.

“You do not know what you are doing?” he cried angrily. “Listen!”

I had stood bereft of speech, watching the scene breathlessly. And now I would have spoken had not Mademoiselle astonished me by taking the lead. I have thought since that I might have pieced together this much of her character. Her glance at Nick surprised him momentarily into silence.

“I know that she is my dearest friend,” she said, “that she came to us in misfortune, and that we love her and trust her. I do not know why she is here with Mr. Ritchie, but I am sure it is for some good reason.” She laid a hand on Mrs. Temple’s shoulder. “Mrs. Clive, won’t you speak to me?”

“My God, Antoinette, listen!” cried Nick; “Mrs. Clive is not her name. I know her, David knows her. She is an—adventuress!”

Mrs. Temple gave a cry, and the girl shot at him a frightened, bewildered glance, in which a new-born love struggled with an older affection.

“An adventuress!” she repeated, her hand dropping, “oh, I do not believe it. I cannot believe it.”

“You shall believe it,” said Nick, fiercely. “Her name is not Clive. Ask David what her name is.”

Antoinette’s lips moved, but she shirked the question. And Nick seized me roughly.

“Tell her,” he said, “tell her! My God, how can I do it? Tell her, David.”

For the life of me I could not frame the speech at once, my pity and a new-found and surprising respect for her making it doubly hard to pronounce her sentence. Suddenly

she raised her head, not proudly, but with a dignity seemingly conferred by years of sorrow and of suffering. Her tones were even, bereft of every vestige of hope.

“Antoinette, I have deceived you, though as God is my witness, I thought no harm could come of it. I deluded myself into believing that I had found friends and a refuge at last. I am Mrs. Temple.”

“Mrs. Temple!” The girl repeated the name sorrowfully, but perplexedly, not grasping its full significance.

“She is my mother,” said Nick, with a bitterness I had not thought in him, “she is my mother, or I would curse her. For she has ruined my life and brought shame on a good name.”

He paused, his breath catching for very anger. Mrs. Temple hid her face in her hands, while the girl shrank back in terror. I grasped him by the arm.

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“Have you no compassion?” I cried. But Mrs. Temple interrupted me.

“He has the right,” she faltered; “it is my just punishment.”

He tore himself away, and took a step to her.

“Where is Riddle?” he cried. “As God lives, I will kill him without mercy!”

His mother lifted her head again.

“God has judged him,” she said quietly; “he is beyond your vengeance—he is dead.” A sob shook her, but she conquered it with a marvellous courage. “Harry Riddle loved me, he was kind to me, and he was a better man than John Temple.”

Nick recoiled. The fierceness of his anger seemed to go, leaving a more dangerous humor.

“Then I have been blessed with parents,” he said.

At that she swayed, but when I would have caught her she motioned me away and turned to Antoinette. Twice Mrs. Temple tried to speak.

“I was going away to-night,” she said at length, “and you would never have seen or heard of me more. My nephew David—Mr. Ritchie—whom I treated cruelly as a boy, had pity on me. He is a good man, and he was to have taken me away—I do not attempt to defend myself, my dear, but I pray that you, who have so much charity, will some day think a little kindly of one who has sinned deeply, of one who will love and bless you and yours to her dying day.”

She faltered, and Nick would have spoken had not Antoinette herself stayed him with a gesture.

“I wish—my son to know the little there is on my side. It is not much. Yet God may not spare him the sorrow that brings pity. I—I loved Harry Riddle as a girl. My father was ruined, and I was forced into marriage with John Temple for his possessions. He was selfish, overbearing, cruel—unfaithful. During the years I lived with him he never once spoke kindly to me. I, too, grew wicked and selfish and heedless. My head was turned by admiration. Mr. Temple escaped to England in a man-of-war; he left me without a line of warning, of farewell. I—I have wandered over the earth, haunted by remorse, and I knew no moment of peace, of happiness, until you brought me here and sheltered and loved me. And even here I have had many sleepless hours. A hundred times I have summoned my courage to tell you,—I could not. I am justly punished, Antoinette.” She moved a little, timidly, towards the girl, who stood motionless, dazed by what she heard. She held out a hand, appealingly, and dropped it. “Good-by, my dear; God will bless you for your kindness to an unfortunate outcast.”

She glanced with a kind of terror in her eyes from the girl to Nick, and what she meant to say concerning their love I know not, for the flood, held back so long, burst upon her. She wept as I have never seen a woman weep. And then, before Nick or I knew what had happened, Antoinette had taken her swiftly in her arms and was murmuring in her ear:—

“You shall not go. You shall not. You will live with me always.”

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Presently the sobs ceased, and Mrs. Temple raised her face, slowly, wonderingly, as if she had not heard aright. And she tried gently to push the girl away.

“No, Antoinette,” she said, “I have done you harm enough.”

But the girl clung to her strongly, passionately. “I do not care what you have done,” she cried, “you are good now. I know that you are good now. I will not cast you out. I will not.”

I stood looking at them, bewildered and astonished by Mademoiselle’s loyalty. She seemed to have forgotten Nick, as had I, and then as I turned to him he came towards them. Almost roughly he took Antoinette by the arm.

“You do not know what you are saying,” he cried. “Come away, Antoinette, you do not know what she has done—you cannot realize what she is.”

Antoinette shrank away from him, still clinging to Mrs. Temple. There was a fearless directness in her look which might have warned him.

“She is your mother,” she said quietly.

“My mother!” he repeated; “yes, I will tell you what a mother she has been to me—”

“Nick!”

It passes my power to write down the pity of that appeal, the hopelessness of it, the yearning in it. Freeing herself from the girl, Mrs. Temple took one step towards him, her arms held up. I had not thought that his hatred of her was deep enough to resist it. It was Antoinette whose intuition divined this ere he had turned away.

“You have chosen between me and her,” he said; and before we could get the poor lady to the seat under the oak, he had left the garden. In my perturbation I glanced at Antoinette, but there was no other sign in her face save of tenderness for Mrs. Temple.

Mrs. Temple had mercifully fainted. As I crossed the lawn I saw two figures in the deep shadow beside the gallery, and I heard Nick’s voice giving orders to Benjy to pack and saddle. When I reached the garden again the girl had loosed Mrs. Temple’s gown, and was bending over her, murmuring in her ear.

* * * * * * *

Many hours later, when the moon was waning towards the horizon, fearful of surprise by the coming day, I was riding slowly under the trees on the road to New Orleans. Beside me, veiled in black, her head bowed, was Mrs. Temple, and no word had escaped her since she had withdrawn herself gently from the arms of Antoinette on the gallery at Les

Iles. Nick had gone long before. The hardest task had been to convince the girl that Mrs. Temple might not stay. After that Antoinette had busied herself, with a silent fortitude I had not thought was in her, making ready for the lady's departure. I shall never forget her as she stood, a slender figure of sorrow, looking down at us, the tears glistening on her cheeks. And I could not resist the impulse to mount the steps once more.

"You were right, Antoinette," I whispered; "whatever happens, you will remember that I am your friend. And I will bring him back to you if I can."

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She pressed my hand, and turned and went slowly into the house.

BOOK III

LOUISIANA

CHAPTER I

THE RIGHTS OF MAN

Were these things which follow to my thinking not extraordinary, I should not write them down here, nor should I have presumed to skip nearly five years of time. For indeed almost five years had gone by since the warm summer night when I rode into New Orleans with Mrs. Temple. And in all that time I had not so much as laid eyes on my cousin and dearest friend, her son. I searched New Orleans for him in vain, and learned too late that he had taken passage on a packet which had dropped down the river the next morning, bound for Charleston and New York.

I have an instinct that this is not the place to relate in detail what occurred to me before leaving New Orleans. Suffice it to say that I made my way back through the swamps, the forests, the cane-brakes of the Indian country, along the Natchez trail to Nashville, across the barrens to Harrodstown in Kentucky, where I spent a week in that cabin which had so long been for me a haven of refuge. Dear Polly Ann! She hugged me as though I were still the waif whom she had mothered, and wept over the little presents which I had brought the children. Harrodstown was changed, new cabins and new faces met me at every turn, and Tom, more disgruntled than ever, had gone a-hunting with Mr. Boone far into the wilderness.

I went back to Louisville to take up once more the struggle for practice, and I do not intend to charge so much as a page with what may be called the even tenor of my life. I was not a man to get into trouble on my own account. Louisville grew amazingly; white frame houses were built, and even brick ones. And ere Kentucky became a State, in 1792, I had gone as delegate to more than one of the Danville Conventions.

Among the nations, as you know, a storm raged, and the great swells from that conflict threatened to set adrift and wreck the little republic but newly launched. The noise of the tramping of great armies across the Old World shook the New, and men in whom the love of fierce fighting was born were stirred to quarrel among themselves. The Rights of Man! How many wrongs have been done under that clause! The Bastille stormed; the Swiss Guard slaughtered; the Reign of Terror, with its daily procession of tumbrels through the streets of Paris; the murder of that amiable and well-meaning gentleman who did his best to atone for the sins of his ancestors; the fearful months of

waiting suffered by his Queen before she, too, went to her death. Often as I lighted my candle of an evening in my little room to read of these things so far away, I would drop my Kentucky Gazette to think of a woman whose face I remembered, to wonder sadly whether Helene de St. Gre were among the lists. In her, I was sure, was personified that courage for which her order will go down eternally through the pages of history, and in my darker moments I pictured her standing beside the guillotine with a smile that haunted me.

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The hideous image of that strife was reflected amongst our own people. Budget after budget was hurried by the winds across the sea. And swift couriers carried the news over the Blue Wall by the Wilderness Trail (widened now), and thundered through the little villages of the Blue Grass country to the Falls. What interest, you will say, could the pioneer lawyers and storekeepers and planters have in the French Revolution? The Rights of Man! Down with kings! General Washington and Mr. Adams and Mr. Hamilton might sigh for them, but they were not for the free-born pioneers of the West. Citizen was the proper term now,—Citizen General Wilkinson when that magnate came to town, resplendent in his brigadier's uniform. It was thought that Mr. Wilkinson would plot less were he in the army under the watchful eye of his superiors. Little they knew him! Thus the Republic had a reward for adroitness, for treachery, and treason. But what reward had it for the lonely, embittered, stricken man whose genius and courage had gained for it the great Northwest territory? What reward had the Republic for him who sat brooding in his house above the Falls—for Citizen General Clark?

In those days you were not a Federalist or a Democrat, you were an Aristocrat or a Jacobin. The French parties were our parties; the French issue, our issue. Under the patronage of that saint of American Jacobinism, Thomas Jefferson, a Jacobin society was organized in Philadelphia,—special guardians of Liberty. And flying on the March winds over the mountains the seed fell on the black soil of Kentucky: Lexington had its Jacobin society, Danville and Louisville likewise their patrons and protectors of the Rights of Mankind. Federalists were not guillotined in Kentucky in the summer of 1793, but I might mention more than one who was shot.

In spite of the Federalists, Louisville prospered, and incidentally I prospered in a mild way. Mr. Crede, behind whose store I still lived, was getting rich, and happened to have an affair of some importance in Philadelphia. Mr. Wharton was kind enough to recommend a young lawyer who had the following virtues: he was neither handsome nor brilliant, and he wore snuff-colored clothes. Mr. Wharton also did me the honor to say that I was cautious and painstaking, and had a habit of tiring out my adversary. Therefore, in the early summer of 1793, I went to Philadelphia. At that time, travellers embarking on such a journey were prayed over as though they were going to Tartary. I was absent from Louisville near a year, and there is a diary of what I saw and felt and heard on this trip for the omission of which I will be thanked. The great news of that day which concerns the world—and incidentally this story—was that Citizen Genet had landed at Charleston.

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Citizen Genet, Ambassador of the great Republic of France to the little Republic of America, landed at Charleston, acclaimed by thousands, and lost no time. Scarcely had he left that city ere American privateers had slipped out of Charleston harbor to prey upon the commerce of the hated Mistress of the Sea. Was there ever such a march of triumph as that of the Citizen Ambassador northward to the capital? Everywhere toasted and feasted, Monsieur Genet did not neglect the Rights of Man, for without doubt the United States was to declare war on Britain within a fortnight. Nay, the Citizen Ambassador would go into the halls of Congress and declare war himself if that faltering Mr. Washington refused his duty. Citizen Genet organized his legions as he went along, and threw tricolored cockades from the windows of his carriage. And at his glorious entry into Philadelphia (where I afterwards saw the great man with my own eyes), Mr. Washington and his Federal-Aristocrats trembled in their boots.

It was late in April, 1794, when I reached Pittsburg on my homeward journey and took passage down the Ohio with a certain Captain Wendell of the army, in a Kentucky boat. I had known the Captain in Louisville, for he had been stationed at Fort Finney, the army post across the Ohio from that town, and he had come to Pittsburg with a sergeant to fetch down the river some dozen recruits. This was a most fortunate circumstance for me, and in more ways than one. Although the Captain was a gruff and blunt man, grizzled and weather-beaten, a woman-hater, he could be a delightful companion when once his confidence was gained; and as we drifted in the mild spring weather through the long reaches between the passes he talked of Trenton and Brandywine and Yorktown. There was more than one bond of sympathy between us, for he worshipped Washington, detested the French party, and had a hatred for “filthy Democrats” second to none I have ever encountered.

We stopped for a few days at Fort Harmar, where the Muskingum pays its tribute to the Ohio, built by the Federal government to hold the territory which Clark had won. And leaving that hospitable place we took up our journey once more in the very miracle-time of the spring. The sunlight was like amber-crystal, the tall cottonwoods growing by the water-side flaunted a proud glory of green, the hills behind them that formed the first great swells of the sea of the wilderness were clothed in a thousand sheens and shaded by the purple budding of the oaks and walnuts on the northern slopes. On the yellow sandbars flocks of geese sat pluming in the sun, or rose at our approach to cast fleeting shadows on the water, their *honk-honks* echoing from the hills. Here and there a hawk swooped down from the azure to break the surface and bear off a wriggling fish that gleamed like silver, and at eventide we would see at the brink an elk or doe, with head poised, watching us as we drifted. We passed here and there a lonely cabin, to set my thoughts wandering backwards to my youth, and here and there in the dimples of the hills little clusters of white and brown houses, one day to become marts of the Republic.

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My joy at coming back at this golden season to a country I loved was tempered by news I had heard from Captain Wendell, and which I had discussed with the officers at Fort Harmar. The Captain himself had broached the subject one cool evening, early in the journey, as we sat over the fire in our little cabin. He had been telling me about Brandywine, but suddenly he turned to me with a kind of fierce gesture that was natural to the man.

“Ritchie,” he said, “you were in the Revolution yourself. You helped Clark to capture that country,” and he waved his hand towards the northern shore; “why the devil don’t you tell me about it?”

“You never asked me,” I answered.

He looked at me curiously.

“Well,” he said, “I ask you now.”

I began lamely enough, but presently my remembrance of the young man who conquered all obstacles, who compelled all men he met to follow and obey him, carried me strongly into the narrative. I remembered him, quiet, self-contained, resourceful, a natural leader, at twenty-five a bulwark for the sorely harried settlers of Kentucky; the man whose clear vision alone had perceived the value of the country north of the Ohio to the Republic, who had compelled the governor and council of Virginia to see it likewise. Who had guarded his secret from all men, who in the face of fierce opposition and intrigue had raised a little army to follow him—they knew not where. Who had surprised Kaskaskia, cowed the tribes of the North in his own person, and by sheer force of will drew after him and kept alive a motley crowd of men across the floods and through the ice to Vincennes.

We sat far into the night, the Captain listening as I had never seen a man listen. And when at length I had finished he was for a long time silent, and then he sprang to his feet with an oath that woke the sleeping soldiers forward and glared at me.

“My God!” he cried, “it is enough to make a man curse his uniform to think that such a man as Wilkinson wears it, while Clark is left to rot, to drink himself under the table from disappointment, to plot with the damned Jacobins—”

“To plot!” I cried, starting violently in my turn.

The Captain looked at me in astonishment.

“How long have you been away from Louisville?” he asked.

“It will be a year,” I answered.

“Ah,” said the Captain, “I will tell you. It is more than a year since Clark wrote Genet, since the Ambassador bestowed on him a general’s commission in the army of the French Republic.”

“A general’s commission!” I exclaimed. “And he is going to France?” The nation which had driven John Paul Jones from its service was now to lose George Rogers Clark!

“To France!” laughed the Captain. “No, this is become France enough. He is raising in Kentucky and in the Cumberland country an army with a cursed, high-sounding name. Some of his old Illinois scouts—McChesney, whom you mentioned, for one—have been collecting bear’s meat and venison hams all winter. They are going to march on Louisiana and conquer it for the French Republic, for Liberty, Equality—the Rights of Man, anything you like.”

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“On Louisiana!” I repeated; “what has the Federal government been doing?”

The Captain winked at me and sat down.

“The Federal government is supine, a laughing-stock—so our friends the Jacobins say, who have been shouting at Mr. Easton’s tavern all winter. Nay, they declare that all this country west of the mountains, too, will be broken off and set up into a republic, and allied with that most glorious of all republics, France. Believe me, the Jacobins have not been idle, and there have been strange-looking birds of French plumage dodging between the General’s house at Clarksville and the Bear Grass.”

I was silent, the tears almost forcing themselves to my eyes at the pathetic sordidness of what I had heard.

“It can come to nothing,” continued the Captain, in a changed voice. “General Clark’s mind is unhinged by—disappointment. Mad Anthony[1] is not a man to be caught sleeping, and he has already attended to a little expedition from the Cumberland. Mad Anthony loves the General, as we all do, and the Federal government is wiser than the Jacobins think. It may not be necessary to do anything.” Captain Wendell paused, and looked at me fixedly. “Ritchie, General Clark likes you, and you have never offended him. Why not go to his little house in Clarksville when you get to Louisville and talk to him plainly, as I know you can? Perhaps you might have some influence.”

[1] General Wayne of Revolutionary fame was then in command of that district.

I shook my head sadly.

“I intend to go,” I answered, “but I will have no influence.”

CHAPTER II

THE HOUSE ABOVE THE FALLS

It was May-day, and shortly after dawn we slipped into the quiet water which is banked up for many miles above the Falls. The Captain and I sat forward on the deck, breathing deeply the sharp odor which comes from the wet forest in the early morning, listening to the soft splash of the oars, and watching the green form of Eighteen Mile Island as it gently drew nearer and nearer. And ere the sun had risen greatly we had passed Twelve Mile Island, and emerging from the narrow channel which divides Six Mile Island from the northern shore, we beheld, on its terrace above the Bear Grass, Louisville shining white in the morning sun. Majestic in its mile of width, calm, as though gathering courage, the river seemed to straighten for the ordeal to come, and the sound of its waters crying over the rocks far below came faintly to my ear and awoke memories of a day gone by. Fearful of the suck, we crept along the Indian shore until

we counted the boats moored in the Bear Grass, and presently above the trees on our right we saw the Stars and Stripes floating from the log bastion of Fort Finney. And below the fort, on the gentle sunny slope to the river's brink, was spread the green garden of the garrison, with its sprouting vegetables and fruit trees blooming pink and white.

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We were greeted by a company of buff and blue officers at the landing, and I was bidden to breakfast at their mess, Captain Wendell promising to take me over to Louisville afterwards. He had business in the town, and about eight of the clock we crossed the wide river in one of the barges of the fort and made fast at the landing in the Bear Grass. But no sooner had we entered the town than we met a number of country people on horseback, with their wives and daughters—ay, and sweethearts—perched up behind them: the men mostly in butternut linsey hunting shirts and trousers, slouch hats, and red handkerchiefs stuck into their bosoms; the women marvellously pretty and fresh in stiff cotton gowns and Quaker hats, and some in crimped caps with ribbons neatly tied under the chin. Before Mr. Easton's tavern Joe Handy, the fiddler, was reeling off a few bars of "Hey, Betty Martin" to the familiar crowd of loungers under the big poplar.

"It's Davy Ritchie!" shouted Joe, breaking off in the middle of the tune; "welcome home, Davy. Ye're jest in time for the barbecue on the island."

"And Cap Wendell! Howdy, Cap!" drawled another, a huge, long-haired, sallow, dirty fellow. But the Captain only glared.

"Damn him!" he said, after I had spoken to Joe and we had passed on, "*He* ought to be barbecued; he nearly bit off Ensign Barry's nose a couple of months ago. Barry tried to stop the beast in a gouging fight."

The bright morning, the shady streets, the homelike frame and log houses, the old-time fragrant odor of cornpone wafted out of the open doorways, the warm greetings,—all made me happy to be back again. Mr. Crede rushed out and escorted us into his cool store, and while he waited on his country customers bade his negro brew a bowl of toddy, at the mention of which Mr. Bill Whalen, chief habitue, roused himself from a stupor on a tobacco barrel. Presently the customers, having indulged in the toddy, departed for the barbecue, the Captain went to the fort, and Mr. Crede and myself were left alone to talk over the business which had sent me to Philadelphia.

At four o'clock, having finished my report and dined with my client, I set out for Clarksville, for Mr. Crede had told me, among other things, that the General was there. Louisville was deserted, the tavern porch vacant; but tacked on the logs beside the door was a printed bill which drew my curiosity. I stopped, caught by a familiar name in large type at the head of it.

"*George* R. *Clark*, *esquire*, *major-general in the armies of France and commander-in-chief of the French revolutionary legion on the Mississippi river*.

"*Proposals*

“For raising volunteers for the reduction of the Spanish posts on the Mississippi, for opening the trade of the said river and giving freedom to all its inhabitants—”

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I had got so far when I heard a noise of footsteps within, and Mr. Easton himself came out, in his shirt-sleeves.

“By cricky, Davy,” said he, “I’m right glad ter see ye ag’in. Readin’ the General’s bill, are ye? Tarnation, I reckon Washington and all his European fellers east of the mountains won’t be able ter hold us back this time. I reckon we’ll gallop over Louisiany in the face of all the Spaniards ever created. I’ve got some new whiskey I ’low will sink tallow. Come in, Davy.”

As he took me by the arm, a laughter and shouting came from the back room.

“It’s some of them Frenchy fellers come over from Knob Licks. They’re in it,” and he pointed his thumb over his shoulder to the proclamation, “and thar’s one young American among ’em who’s a t’arer. Come in.”

I drank a glass of Mr. Easton’s whiskey, and asked about the General.

“He stays over thar to Clarksville pretty much,” said Mr. Easton. “Thar ain’t quite so much walkin’ araound ter do,” he added significantly.

I made my way down to the water-side, where Jake Landrasse sat alone on the gunwale of a Kentucky boat, smoking a clay pipe as he fished. I had to exercise persuasion to induce Jake to paddle me across, which he finally agreed to do on the score of old friendship, and he declared that the only reason he was not at the barbecue was because he was waiting to take a few gentlemen to see General Clark. I agreed to pay the damages if he were late in returning for these gentlemen, and soon he was shooting me with pulsing strokes across the lake-like expanse towards the landing at Fort Finney. Louisville and the fort were just above the head of the Falls, and the little town of Clarksville, which Clark had founded, at the foot of them. I landed, took the road that led parallel with the river through the tender green of the woods, and as I walked the mighty song which the Falls had sung for ages to the Wilderness rose higher and higher, and the faint spray seemed to be wafted through the forest and to hang in the air like the odor of a summer rain.

It was May-day. The sweet, caressing note of the thrush mingled with the music of the water, the dogwood and the wild plum were in festal array; but my heart was heavy with thinking of a great man who had cheapened himself. At length I came out upon a clearing where fifteen log houses marked the grant of the Federal government to Clark’s regiment. Perched on a tree-dotted knoll above the last spasm of the waters in their two-mile race for peace, was a two-storied log house with a little, square porch in front of the door. As I rounded the corner of the house and came in sight of the porch I halted —by no will of my own—at the sight of a figure sunken in a wooden chair. It was that of my old Colonel. His hands were folded in front of him, his eyes were fixed but dimly on the forests of the Kentucky shore across the water; his hair, uncared for, fell on the

shoulders of his faded blue coat, and the stained buff waistcoat was unbuttoned. For he still wore unconsciously the colors of the army of the American Republic.

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“General!” I said.

He started, got to his feet, and stared at me.

“Oh, it’s—it’s Davy,” he said. “I—I was expecting—some friends—Davy. What—what’s the matter, Davy?”

“I have been away. I am glad to see you again, General.

“Citizen General, sir, Major-general in the army of the French Republic and Commander-in-chief of the French Revolutionary Legion on the Mississippi.”

“You will always be Colonel Clark to me, sir,” I answered.

“You—you were the drummer boy, I remember, and strutted in front of the regiment as if you were the colonel. Egad, I remember how you fooled the Kaskaskians when you told them we were going away.” He looked at me, but his eyes were still fixed on the point beyond. “You were always older than I, Davy. Are you married?”

In spite of myself, I laughed as I answered this question.

“You are as canny as ever,” he said, putting his hand on my shoulder. “Liberty, Equality, Fraternity,—they are only possible for the bachelor.” Hearing a noise, he glanced nervously in the direction of the woods, only to perceive his negro carrying a pail of water. “I—I was expecting some friends,” he said. “Sit down, Davy.”

“I hope I am not intruding, General,” I said, not daring to look at him.

“No, no, my son,” he answered, “you are always welcome. Did we not campaign together? Did we not—shoot these very falls together on our way to Kaskaskia?” He had to raise his voice above the roar of the water. “Faith, well I remember the day. And you saved it, Davy,—you, a little gamecock, a little worldly-wise hop-o’-my-thumb, eh? Hamilton’s scalp hanging by a lock, egad—and they frightened out of their five wits because it was growing dark.” He laughed, and suddenly became solemn again. “There comes a time in every man’s life when it grows dark, Davy, and then the cowards are afraid. They have no friends whose hands they can reach out and feel. But you are my friend. You remember that you said you would always be my friend? It—it was in the fort at Vincennes.”

“I remember, General.”

He rose from the steps, buttoned his waistcoat, and straightened himself with an effort. He looked at me impressively.

“You have been a good friend indeed, Davy, a faithful friend,” he said. “You came to me when I was sick, you lent me money,”—he waved aside my protest. “I am happy to say that I shall soon be in a position to repay you, to reward you. My evil days are over, and I spurn that government which spurned me, for the honor and glory of which I founded that city,”—he pointed in the direction of Louisville,—“for the power and wealth of which I conquered this Northwest territory. Listen! I am now in the service of a republic where the people have rights, I am Commander-in-chief of the French Revolutionary Legion on the Mississippi. Despite the supineness of Washington, the American nation will soon be at war with Spain. But my friends—and thank God they are many—will follow me—-they will follow me to Natchez and New Orleans,—ay, even to Santa Fe and Mexico if I give the word. The West is with me, and for the West I shall win the freedom of the Mississippi. For France and Liberty I shall win back again Louisiana, and then I shall be a Marechal de Camp.”

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I could not help thinking of a man who had not been wont to speak of his intentions, who had kept his counsel for a year before Kaskaskia.

“I need my drummer boy, Davy,” he said, his face lighting up, “but he will not be a drummer boy now. He will be a trusted officer of high rank, mind you. Come,” he cried, seizing me by the arm, “I will write the commission this instant. But hold! you read French,—I remember the day Father Gibault gave you your first lesson.” He fumbled in his pocket, drew out a letter, and handed it to me. “This is from Citizen Michaux, the famous naturalist, the political agent of the French Republic. Read what he has written me.”

I read, I fear in a faltering voice:—

“Citoyen General:

“Un homme qui a donne des preuves de son amour pour la Liberte et de sa haine pour le despotisme ne devait pas s’adresser en vain au ministre de la Republique francaise. General, il est temps que les Americains libres de l’Ouest soient debarasses d’un ennemie aussi injuste que meprisable.”

When I had finished I glanced at the General, but he seemed not to be heeding me. The sun was setting above the ragged line of forest, and a blue veil was spreading over the tumbling waters. He took me by the arm and led me into the house, into a bare room that was all awry. Maps hung on the wall, beside them the General’s new commission, rudely framed. Among the littered papers on the table were two whiskey bottles and several glasses, and strewn about were a number of chairs, the arms of which had been whittled by the General’s guests. Across the rough mantel-shelf was draped the French tricolor, and before the fireplace on the puncheons lay a huge bearskin which undoubtedly had not been shaken for a year. Picking up a bottle, the General poured out generous helpings in two of the glasses, and handed one to me.

“The mists are bad, Davy,” said he “I—I cannot afford to get the fever now. Let us drink success to the army of the glorious Republic, France.”

“Let us drink first, General,” I said, “to the old friendship between us.”

“Good!” he cried. Tossing off his liquor, he set down the glass and began what seemed a fruitless search among the thousand papers on the table. But at length, with a grunt of satisfaction, he produced a form and held it under my eyes. At the top of the sheet was that much-abused and calumniated lady, the Goddess of Liberty.

“Now,” he said, drawing up a chair and dipping his quill into an almost depleted ink-pot, “I have decided to make you, David Ritchie, with full confidence in your ability and loyalty to the rights of liberty and mankind, a captain in the Legion on the Mississippi.”

I crossed the room swiftly, and as he put his pen to paper I laid my hand on his arm.

“General, I cannot,” I said. I had seen from the first the futility of trying to dissuade him from the expedition, and I knew now that it would never come off. I was willing to make almost any sacrifice rather than offend him, but this I could not allow. The General drew himself up in his chair and stared at me with a flash of his old look.

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“You cannot?” he repeated; “you have affairs to attend to, I take it.”

I tried to speak, but he rode me down.

“There is money to be made in that prosperous town of Louisville.” He did not understand the pain which his words caused me. He rose and laid his hands affectionately on my shoulders. “Ah, Davy, commerce makes a man timid. Do you forget the old days when I was the father and you the son? Come! I will make you a fortune undreamed of, and you shall be my fianancier once more.”

“I had not thought of the money, General,” I answered, “and I have always been ready to leave my business to serve a friend.”

“There, there,” said the General, soothingly, “I know it. I would not offend you. You shall have the commission, and you may come when it pleases you.”

He sat down again to write, but I restrained him.

“I cannot go, General,” I said.

“Thunder and fury,” cried the General, “a man might think you were a weak-kneed Federalist.” He stared at me, and stared again, and rose and recoiled a step. “My God,” he said, “you cannot be a Federalist, you can’t have marched to Kaskaskia and Vincennes, you can’t have been a friend of mine and have seen how the government of the United States has treated me, and be a Federalist!”

It was an argument and an appeal which I had foreseen, yet which I knew not how to answer. Suddenly there came, unbidden, his own counsel which he had given me long ago, “Serve the people, as all true men should in a Republic, but do not rely upon their gratitude.” This man had bidden me remember that.

“General,” I said, trying to speak steadily, “it was you who gave me my first love for the Republic. I remember you as you stood on the heights above Kaskaskia waiting for the sun to go down, and you reminded me that it was the nation’s birthday. And you said that our nation was to be a refuge of the oppressed of this earth, a nation made of all peoples, out of all time. And you said that the lands beyond,” and I pointed to the West as he had done, “should belong to it until the sun sets on the sea again.”

I glanced at him, for he was silent, and in my life I can recall no sadder moment than this. The General heard, but the man who had spoken these words was gone forever. The eyes of this man before me were fixed, as it were, upon space. He heard, but he did not respond; for the spirit was gone. What I looked upon was the tortured body from which the genius—the spirit I had worshipped—had fled. I turned away, only to turn back in anger.

“What do you know of this France for which you are to fight?” I cried. “Have you heard of the thousands of innocents who are slaughtered, of the women and children who are butchered in the streets in the name of Liberty? What have those blood-stained adventurers to do with Liberty, what have the fish-wives who love the sight of blood to do with you that would fight for them? You warned me that this people and this government to which you have given so much would be ungrateful,—will the butchers and fish-wives be more grateful?”

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He caught only the word *grateful*, and he rose to his feet with something of the old straightness and of the old power. And by evil chance his eye, and mine, fell upon a sword hanging on the farther wall. Well I remembered when he had received it, well I knew the inscription on its blade, “Presented by the State of Virginia to her beloved son, George Rogers Clark, who by the conquest of Illinois and St. Vincennes extended her empire and aided in the defence of her liberties.” By evil chance, I say, his eye lighted on that sword. In three steps he crossed the room to where it hung, snatched it from its scabbard, and ere I could prevent him he had snapped it across his knee and flung the pieces in a corner.

“So much for the gratitude of my country,” he said.

* * * * * * *

I had gone out on the little porch and stood gazing over the expanse of forest and waters lighted by the afterglow. Then I felt a hand upon my shoulder, I heard a familiar voice calling me by an old name.

“Yes, General!” I turned wonderingly.

“You are a good lad, Davy. I trust you,” he said. “I—I was expecting some friends.”

He lifted a hand that was not too steady to his brow and scanned the road leading to the fort. Even as he spoke four figures emerged from the woods,—undoubtedly the gentlemen who had held the council at the inn that afternoon. We watched them in silence as they drew nearer, and then something in the walk and appearance of the foremost began to bother me. He wore a long, double-breasted, claret-colored redingote that fitted his slim figure to perfection, and his gait was the easy gait of a man who goes through the world careless of its pitfalls. So intently did I stare that I gave no thought to those who followed him. Suddenly, when he was within fifty paces, a cry escaped me,—I should have known that smiling, sallow, weakly handsome face anywhere in the world.

The gentleman was none other than Monsieur Auguste de St. Gre. At the foot of the steps he halted and swept his hand to his hat with a military salute.

“Citizen General,” he said gracefully, “we come and pay our respec’s to you and mek our report, and ver’ happy to see you look well. Citoyens, Vive la Republique!—Hail to the Citizen General!”

“Vive la Republique! Vive le General!” cried the three citizens behind him.

“Citizens, you are very welcome,” answered the General, gravely, as he descended the steps and took each of them by the hand. “Citizens, allow me to introduce to you my old friend, Citizen David Ritchie—”

“Milles diables!” cried the Citizen St. Gre, seizing me by the hand, “c’est mon cher ami, Monsieur Reetchie. Ver’ happy you have this honor, Monsieur;” and snatching his wide-brimmed military cocked hat from his head he made me a smiling, sweeping bow.

“What!” cried the General to me, “you know the Sieur de St. Gre, Davy?”

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“He is my guest once in Louisiane, mon general,” Monsieur Auguste explained; “my family knows him.”

“You know the Sieur de St. Gre, Davy?” said the General again.

“Yes, I know him,” I answered, I fear with some brevity.

“Podden me,” said Auguste, “I am now Citizen Captain de St. Gre. And you are also embark in the glorious cause—Ah, I am happy,” he added, embracing me with a winning glance.

I was relieved from the embarrassment of denying the impeachment by reason of being introduced to the other notables, to Citizen Captain Sullivan, who wore an undress uniform consisting of a cotton butternut hunting shirt. He had charge on the Bear Grass of building the boats for the expedition, and was likewise a prominent member of that august body, the Jacobin Society of Lexington. Next came Citizen Quartermaster Depeau, now of Knob Licks, Kentucky, sometime of New Orleans. The Citizen Quartermaster wore his hair long in the backwoods fashion; he had a keen, pale face and sunken eyes.

“Ver’ glad mek you known to me, Citizen Reetchie.”

The fourth gentleman was likewise French, and called Gignoux. The Citizen Gignoux made some sort of an impression on me which I did not stop to analyze. He was a small man, with a little round hand that wriggled out of my grasp; he had a big French nose, bright eyes that popped a little and gave him the habit of looking sidewise, and grizzled, chestnut eyebrows over them. He had a thin-lipped mouth and a round chin.

“Citizen Reetchie, is it? I laik to know citizen’s name glorified by gran’ cause. Reetchie?”

“Will you enter, citizens?” said the General.

I do not know why I followed them unless it were to satisfy a devil-prompted curiosity as to how Auguste de St. Gre had got there. We went into the room, where the General’s slovenly negro was already lighting the candles and the General proceeded to collect and fill six of the glasses on the table. It was Citizen Captain Sullivan who gave the toast.

“Citizens,” he cried, “I give you the health of the foremost apostle of Liberty in the Western world, the General who tamed the savage tribes, who braved the elements, who brought to their knees the minions of a despot king.” A slight suspicion of a hiccough filled this gap. “Cast aside by an ungrateful government, he is still unfaltering in his allegiance to the people. May he lead our Legion victorious through the Spanish dominions.

“Vive la Republique!” they shouted, draining their glasses. “Vive le citoyen general Clark!”

“Louisiana!” shouted Citizen Sullivan, warming, “Louisiana, groaning under oppression and tyranny, is imploring us with uplifted hands. To those remaining veteran patriots whose footsteps we followed to this distant desert, and who by their blood and toil have converted it into a smiling country, we now look. Under your guidance, Citizen General, we fought, we bled—”

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How far the Citizen Captain would have gone is problematical. I had noticed a look of disgust slowly creeping into the Citizen Quartermaster's eyes, and at this juncture he seized the Citizen Captain and thrust him into a chair.

"Sacre vent!" he exclaimed, "it is the proclamation—he recites the proclamation! I see he have participate in those handbill. Poof, the world is to conquer,—let us not spik so much."

"I give you one toast," said the little Citizen Gignoux, slyly, "we all bring back one wife from Nouvelle Orleans!

"Ha," exclaimed the Sieur de St. Gre, laughing, "the Citizen Captain Depeau—he has already one wife in Nouvelle Orleans."[1]

[1] It is unnecessary for the editor to remind the reader that these are not Mr. Ritchie's words, but those of an adventurer. Mr. Depeau was an honest and worthy gentleman, earnest enough in a cause which was more to his credit than to an American's. According to contemporary evidence, Madame Depeau was in New Orleans.

The Citizen Quartermaster was angry at this, and it did not require any great perspicacity on my part to discover that he did not love the Citizen de St. Gre.

"He is call in his country, Gumbo de St. Gre," said Citizen Depeau. "It is a deesh in that country. But to beesness, citizens,—we embark on glorious enterprise. The King and Queen of France, she pay for her treason with their haids, and we must be prepare' for do the sem."

"Ha," exclaimed the Sieur de St. Gre, "the Citizen Quartermaster will lose his provision before his haid."

The inference was plain, and the Citizen Quartermaster was quick to take it up.

"We are all among frien's," said he. "Why I call you Gumbo de St. Gre? When I come first settle in Louisiane you was wild man—yes. Drink tafia, fight duel, spend family money. Aristocrat then. No, I not hold my tongue. You go France and Monsieur le Marquis de St. Gre he get you in gardes du corps of the King. Yes, I tell him. You tell the Citizen General how come you Jacobin now, and we see if he mek you Captain."

A murmur of surprise escaped from several of the company, and they all stared at the Sieur de St. Gre. But General Clark brought down his fist on the table with something of his old-time vigor, and the glasses rattled.

"Gentlemen, I will have no quarrelling in my presence," he cried; "and I beg to inform Citizen Depeau that I bestow my commissions where it pleases me."

Auguste de St. Gre rose, flushing, to his feet. “Citizens,” he said, with a fluency that was easy for him, “I never mek secret of my history—no. It is true my relation, Monsieur le Marquis de St. Gre, bought me a pair of colors in the King’s gardes du corps.”

“And is it not truth you tremple the coackade, what I hear from Philadelphe?” cried Depeau.

Monsieur Auguste smiled with a patient tolerance.

“If you hev pains to mek inquiry,” said he, “you must learn that I join le Marquis de La Fayette and the National Guard. That I have since fight for the Revolution. That I am come now home to fight for Louisiane, as Monsieur Genet will tell you whom I saw in Philadelphe.”

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“The Citizen Capitaine—he spiks true.”

All eyes were turned towards Gignoux, who had been sitting back in his chair, very quiet.

“It is true what he say,” he repeated, “I have it by Monsieur Genet himself.”

“Gentlemen,” said General Clark, “this is beside the question, and I will not have these petty quarrels. I may as well say to you now that I have chosen the Citizen Captain to go at once to New Orleans and organize a regiment among the citizens there faithful to France. On account of his family and supposed Royalist tendencies he will not be suspected. I fear that a month at least has yet to elapse before our expedition can move.”

“It is one wise choice,” put in Monsieur Gignoux.

“Monsieur le general and gentlemen,” said the Sieur de St. Gre, gracefully, “I thank you ver’ much for the confidence. I leave by first flatboat and will have all things stir up when you come. The citizens of Louisiane await you. If necessair, we have hole in levee ready to cut.”

“Citizens,” interrupted General Clark, sitting down before the ink-pot, “let us hear the Quartermaster’s report of the supplies at Knob Licks, and Citizen Sullivan’s account of the boats. But hold,” he cried, glancing around him, “where is Captain Temple? I heard that he had come to Louisville from the Cumberland to-day. Is he not going with you to New Orleans, St. Gre?”

I took up the name involuntarily.

“Captain Temple,” I repeated, while they stared at me. “Nicholas Temple?”

It was Auguste de St. Gre who replied.

“The sem,” he said. “I recall he was along with you in Nouvelle Orleans. He is at ze tavern, and he has had one gran’ fight, and he is ver’—I am sorry—intoxicate—”

I know not how I made my way through the black woods to Fort Finney, where I discovered Jake Landrasse and his canoe. The road was long, and yet short, for my brain whirled with the expectation of seeing Nick again, and the thought of this poor, pathetic, ludicrous expedition compared to the sublime one I had known.

George Rogers Clark had come to this!

CHAPTER III

LOUISVILLE CELEBRATES

“They have gran’ time in Louisville to-night, Davy,” said Jake Landrasse, as he paddled me towards the Kentucky shore; “you hear?”

“I should be stone deaf if I didn’t,” I answered, for the shouting which came from the town filled me with forebodings.

“They come back from the barbecue full of whiskey,” said Jake, “and a young man at the tavern come out on the porch and he say, ’Get ready you all to go to Louisiana! You been hole back long enough by tyranny.’ Sam Barker come along and say he a Federalist. They done have a gran’ fight, he and the young feller, and Sam got licked. He went at Sam just like a harricane.”

“And then?” I demanded.

“Them four wanted to leave,” said Jake, taking no trouble to disguise his disgust, “and I had to fetch ’em over. I’ve got to go back and wait for ’em now,” and he swore with sincere disappointment. “I reckon there ain’t been such a jamboree in town for years.”

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Jake had not exaggerated. Gentlemen from Moore's Settlement, from Sullivan's Station on the Bear Grass,—to be brief, the entire male population of the county seemed to have moved upon Louisville after the barbecue, and I paused involuntarily at the sight which met my eyes as I came into the street. A score of sputtering, smoking pine-knots threw a lurid light on as many hilarious groups, and revealed, fantastically enough, the boles and lower branches of the big shade trees above them. Navigation for the individual, difficult enough lower down, in front of the tavern became positively dangerous. There was a human eddy,—nay, a maelstrom would better describe it. Fights began, but ended abortively by reason of the inability of the combatants to keep their feet; one man whose face I knew passed me with his hat afire, followed by several companions in gusts of laughter, for the torch-bearers were careless and burned the ears of their friends in their enthusiasm. Another person whom I recognized lacked a large portion of the front of his attire, and seemed sublimely unconscious of the fact. His face was badly scratched. Several other friends of mine were indulging in brief intervals of rest on the ground, and I barely avoided stepping on them. Still other gentlemen were delivering themselves of the first impressive periods of orations, only to be drowned by the cheers of their auditors. These were the snatches which I heard as I picked my way onward with exaggerated fear:—

"Gentlemen, the Mississippi is ours, let the tyrants who forbid its use beware!" "To hell with the Federal government!" "I tell you, sirs, this land is ours. We have conquered it with our blood, and I reckon no Spaniard is goin' to stop us. We ain't come this far to stand still. We settled Kaintuck, fit off the redskins, and we'll march across the Mississippi and on and on—" "To Louisiany!" they shouted, and the whole crowd would take it up, "To Louisiany! Open the river!"

So absorbed was I in my own safety and progress that I did not pause to think (as I have often thought since) of the full meaning of this, though I had marked it for many years. The support given to Wilkinson's plots, to Clark's expedition, was merely the outward and visible sign of the onward sweep of a resistless race. In spite of untold privations and hardships, of cruel warfare and massacre, these people had toiled over the mountains into this land, and impatient of check or hindrance would, even as Clark had predicted, when their numbers were sufficient leap the Mississippi. Night or day, drunk or sober, they spoke of this thing with an ever increasing vehemence, and no man of reflection who had read their history could say that they would be thwarted. One day Louisiana would be theirs and their children's for the generations to come. One day Louisiana would be American.

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That I was alive and unscratched when I got as far as the tavern is a marvel. Amongst all the passion-lit faces which surrounded me I could get no sight of Nick's, and I managed to make my way to a momentarily quiet corner of the porch. As I leaned against the wall there, trying to think what I should do, there came a great cheering from a little way up the street, and then I straightened in astonishment. Above the cheering came the sound of a drum beaten in marching time, and above that there burst upon the night what purported to be the "Marseillaise," taken up and bawled by a hundred drunken throats and without words. Those around me who were sufficiently nimble began to run towards the noise, and I ran after them. And there, marching down the middle of the street at the head of a ragged and most indecorous column of twos, in the centre of a circle of light cast by a pine-knot which Joe Handy held, was Mr. Nicholas Temple. His bearing, if a trifle unsteady, was proud, and—if I could believe my eyes—-around his neck was slung the thing which I prized above all my possessions,—the drum which I had carried to Kaskaskia and Vincennes! He had taken it from the peg in my room.

I shrink from putting on paper the sentimental side of my nature, and indeed I could give no adequate idea of my affection for that drum. And then there was Nick, who had been lost to me for five years! My impulse was to charge the procession, seize Nick and the drum together, and drag them back to my room; but the futility and danger of such a course were apparent, and the caution for which I am noted prevented my undertaking it. The procession, augmented by all those to whom sufficient power of motion remained, cheered by the helpless but willing ones on the ground, swept on down the street and through the town. Even at this late day I shame to write it! Behold me, David Ritchie, Federalist, execrably sober, at the head of the column behind the leader. Was it twenty minutes, or an hour, that we paraded? This I know, that we slighted no street in the little town of Louisville. What was my bearing,—whether proud or angry or carelessly indifferent,—I know not. The glare of Joe Handy's torch fell on my face, Joe Handy's arm and that of another gentleman, the worse for liquor, were linked in mine, and they saw fit to applaud at every step my conversion to the cause of Liberty. We passed time and time again the respectable door-yards of my Federalist friends, and I felt their eyes upon me with that look which the angels have for the fallen. Once, in front of Mr. Wharton's house, Mr. Handy burned my hair, apologized, staggered, and I took the torch! And I used it to good advantage in saving the drum from capture. For Mr. Temple, with all the will in the world, had begun to stagger. At length, after marching seemingly half the night, they halted by common consent before the house of a prominent Democrat who shall be nameless, and, after some minutes of vain importuning, Nick, with a tattoo

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on the drum, marched boldly up to the gate and into the yard. A desperate cunning came to my aid. I flung away the torch, leaving the head of the column in darkness, broke from Mr. Handy's embrace, and, seizing Nick by the arm, led him onward through the premises, he drumming with great docility. Followed by a few stragglers only (some of whom went down in contact with the trees of the orchard), we came to a gate at the back which I knew well, which led directly into the little yard that fronted my own rooms behind Mr. Crede's store. Pulling Nick through the gate, I slammed it, and he was only beginning to protest when I had him safe within my door, and the bolt slipped behind him. As I struck a light something fell to the floor with a crash, an odor of alcohol filled the air, and as the candle caught the flame I saw a shattered whiskey bottle at my feet and a room which had been given over to carousing. In spite of my feelings I could not but laugh at the perfectly irresistible figure my cousin made, as he stood before me with the drum slung in front of him. His hat was gone, his dust-covered clothes awry, but he smiled at me benignly and without a trace of surprise.

"Sho you've come back at lasht, Davy," he said. "You're—you're very—irregular. You'll lose—law bishness. Y-you're worse'n Andy Jackson—he's always fightin'."

I relieved him, unprotesting, of the drum, thanking my stars there was so much as a stick left of it. He watched me with a silent and exaggerated interest as I laid it on the table. From a distance without came the shouts of the survivors making for the tavern.

"'Sfortunate you had the drum, Davy," he said gravely, "'rwe'd had no procession."

"It is fortunate I have it now," I answered, looking ruefully at the battered rim where Nick had missed the skin in his ardor.

"Davy," said he, "funny thing—I didn't know you wash a Jacobite. Sh'ou hear," he added relevantly, "th' Andy Jackson was married?"

"No," I answered, having no great interest in Mr. Jackson. "Where have you been seeing him again?"

"Nashville on Cumberland. Jackson'sh county sholicitor,—devil of a man. I'll tell you, Davy," he continued, laying an uncertain hand on my shoulder and speaking with great earnestness, "I had Chicashaw horse—Jackson'd Virginia thoroughbred—had a race—-'n' Jackson wanted to shoot me 'n' I wanted to shoot Jackson. 'N' then we all went to the Red Heifer—"

"What the deuce is the Red Heifer?" I asked.

"'N'dishtillery over a shpring, 'n' they blow a horn when the liquor runsh. 'N' then we had supper in Major Lewish's tavern. Major Lewis came in with roast pig on platter. You

know roast pig, Davy? . . . ‘N’ Jackson pulls out’s hunting knife n’waves it very mashestic. . . . You know how mashestic Jackson is when he—wantshtobe?” He let go my shoulder, brushed back his hair in a fiery manner, and, seizing a knife which unhappily lay on the table, gave me a graphic illustration of Mr. Jackson about to carve the pig, I retreating, and he coming on. “N’ when he stuck the pig, Davy,—”

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He poised the knife for an instant in the air, and then, before I could interpose, he brought it down deftly through the head of my precious drum, and such a frightful, agonized squeal filled the room that even I shivered involuntarily, and for an instant I had a vivid vision of a pig struggling in the hands of a butcher. I laughed in spite of myself. But Nick regarded me soberly.

“Funny thing, Davy,” he said, “they all left the room.” For a moment he appeared to be ruminating on this singular phenomenon. Then he continued: “‘N’ Jackson was back firsht, ‘n’ he was damned impolite.... ‘n’ he shook his fist in my face” (here Nick illustrated Mr. Jackson’s gesture), “‘n’ he said, ‘Great God, sir, y’ have a fine talent but if y’ ever do that again, I’ll—I’ll kill you.’ . . . That’sh what he said, Davy.”

“How long have you been in Nashville, Nick?” I asked.

“A year,” he said, “lookin’ after property I won rattle-an’-shnap—you remember?”

“And why didn’t you let me know you were in Nashville?” I asked, though I realized the futility of the question.

“Thought you was—mad at me,” he answered, “but you ain’t, Davy. You’ve been very good-natured t’ let me have your drum.” He straightened. “I am ver’ much obliged.”

“And where were you before you went to Nashville?” I said.

“Charleston, ’Napolis . . . Philadelphia . . . everywhere,” he answered.

“Now,” said he, “‘mgoin’ t’ bed.”

I applauded this determination, but doubted whether he meant to carry it out. However, I conducted him to the back room, where he sat himself down on the edge of my four-poster, and after conversing a little longer on the subject of Mr. Jackson (who seemed to have gotten upon his brain), he toppled over and instantly fell asleep with his clothes on. For a while I stood over him, the old affection welling up so strongly within me that my eyes were dimmed as I looked upon his face. Spare and handsome it was, and boyish still, the weaker lines emphasized in its relaxation. Would that relentless spirit with which he had been born make him, too, a wanderer forever? And was it not the strangest of fates which had impelled him to join this madcap expedition of this other man I loved, George Rogers Clark?

I went out, closed the door, and lighting another candle took from my portfolio a packet of letters. Two of them I had not read, having found them only on my return from Philadelphia that morning. They were all signed simply “Sarah Temple,” they were dated at a certain number in the Rue Bourbon, New Orleans, and each was a tragedy in that which it had left unsaid. There was no suspicion of heroics, there was no railing at fate; the letters breathed but the one hope,—that her son might come again to that

happiness of which she had robbed him. There were in all but twelve, and they were brief, for some affliction had nearly deprived the lady of the use of her right hand. I read them twice over, and then, despite the lateness of the hour, I sat staring at the candles, reflecting upon my own helplessness. I was startled from this revery by a knock. Rising hastily, I closed the door of my bedroom, thinking I had to do with some drunken reveller who might be noisy. The knock was repeated. I slipped back the bolt and peered out into the night.

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“I saw dat light,” said a voice which I recognized; “I think I come in to say good night.”

I opened the door, and he walked in.

“You are one night owl, Monsieur Reetchie,” he said.

“And you seem to prefer the small hours for your visits, Monsieur de St. Gre,” I could not refrain from replying.

He swept the room with a glance, and I thought a shade of disappointment passed over his face. I wondered whether he were looking for Nick. He sat himself down in my chair, stretched out his legs, and regarded me with something less than his usual complacency.

“I have much laik for you, Monsieur Reetchie,” he began, and waved aside my bow of acknowledgment “Before I go away from Louisville I want to spik with you,—this is a risson why I am here. You listen to what dat Depeau he say,—dat is not truth. My family knows you, I laik to have you hear de truth.”

He paused, and while I wondered what revelations he was about to make, I could not repress my impatience at the preamble.

“You are my frien’, you have prove it,” he continued. “You remember las’ time we meet?” (I smiled involuntarily.) “You was in bed, but you not need be ashame’ for me. Two days after I went to France, and I not in New Orleans since.”

“Two days after you saw me?” I repeated.

“Yaas, I run away. That was the mont’ of August, 1789, and we have not then heard in New Orleans that the Bastille is attack. I lan’ at La Havre,—it is the en’ of Septembre. I go to the Chateau de St. Gre—great iron gates, long avenue of poplar,—big house all ’round a court, and Monsieur le Marquis is at Versailles. I borrow three louis from the concierge, and I go to Versailles to the hotel of Monsieur le Marquis. There is all dat trouble what you read about going on, and Monsieur le Marquis he not so glad to see me for dat risson. ’Mon cher Auguste,’ he cry, ’you want to be of officier in gardes de corps? You are not afred?’” (Auguste stiffened.) “’I am a St. Gre, Monsieur le Marquis. I am afred of nothings,’ I answered. He tek me to the King, I am made lieutenant, the mob come and the King and Queen are carry off to Paris. The King is prisoner, Monsieur le Marquis goes back to the Chateau de St. Gre. France is a republic. Monsieur—que voulez-vous?” (The Sieur de St. Gre shrugged his shoulders.) “I, too, become Republican. I become officier in the National Guard,—one must move with the time. Is it not so, Monsieur? I deman’ of you if you ever expec’ to see a St. Gre a Republican.”

I expressed my astonishment.

“I give up my right, my principle, my family. I come to America—I go to New Orleans where I have influence and I stir up revolution for France, for Liberty. Is it not noble cause?”

I had it on the tip of my tongue to ask Monsieur Auguste why he left France, but the uselessness of it was apparent.

“You see, Monsieur, I am justify before you, before my frien’s,—that is all I care,” and he gave another shrug in defiance of the world at large. “What I have done, I have done for principle. If I remain Royalist, I might have marry my cousin, Mademoiselle de St. Gre. Ha, Monsieur, you remember—the miniature you were so kin’ as to borrow me four hundred livres?”

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“I remember,” I said.

“It is because I have much confidence in you, Monsieur,” he said, “it is because I go—-peut-etre—to dangere, to death, that I come here and ask you to do me a favor.”

“You honor me too much, Monsieur,” I answered, though I could scarce refrain from smiling.

“It is because of your charactair,” Monsieur Auguste was good enough to say. “You are to be repose’ in, you are to be rely on. Sometime I think you ver’ ole man. And this is why, and sence you laik objects of art, that I bring this and ask you keep it while I am in dangere.”

I was mystified. He thrust his hand into his coat and drew forth an oval object wrapped in dirty paper, and then disclosed to my astonished eyes the miniature of Mademoiselle de St. Gre,—the miniature, I say, for the gold back and setting were lacking. Auguste had retained only the ivory,—whether from sentiment or necessity I will not venture. The sight of it gave me a strange sensation, and I can scarcely write of the anger and disgust which surged over me, of the longing to snatch it from his trembling fingers. Suddenly I forgot Auguste in the lady herself. There was something emblematical in the misfortune which had bereft the picture of its setting. Even so the Revolution had taken from her a brilliant life, a king and queen, home and friends. Yet the spirit remained unquenchable, set above its mean surroundings,—ay, and untouched by them. I was filled with a painful curiosity to know what had become of her, which I repressed. Auguste’s voice aroused me.

“Ah, Monsieur, is it not a face to love, to adore?”

“It is a face to obey,” I answered, with some heat, and with more truth than I knew.

“Mon Dieu, Monsieur, it is so. It is that mek me love—you know not how. You know not what love is, Monsieur Reetchie, you never love laik me. You have not sem risson. Monsieur,” he continued, leaning forward and putting his hand on my knee, “I think she love me—I am not sure. I should not be surprise’. But Monsieur le Marquis, her father, he trit me ver’ bad. Monsieur le Marquis is guillotine’ now, I mus’ not spik evil of him, but he marry her to one ol’ garcon, Le Vicomte d’Ivry-le-Tour.”

“So Mademoiselle is married,” I said after a pause.

“Oui, she is Madame la Vicomtesse now; I fall at her feet jus’ the sem. I hear of her once at Bel Oeil, the chateau of Monsieur le Prince de Ligne in Flander’. After that they go I know not where. They are exile’,—los’ to me.” He sighed, and held out the miniature to me. “Monsieur, I esk you favor. Will you be as kin’ and keep it for me again?”

I have wondered many times since why I did not refuse. Suffice it to say that I took it. And Auguste's face lighted up.

"I am a thousan' times gret'ful," he cried; and added, as though with an afterthought, "Monsieur, would you be so kin' as to borrow me fif' dollars?"

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CHAPTER IV

OF A SUDDEN RESOLUTION

It was nearly morning when I fell asleep in my chair, from sheer exhaustion, for the day before had been a hard one, even for me. I awoke with a start, and sat for some minutes trying to collect my scattered senses. The sun streamed in at my open door, the birds hopped on the lawn, and the various sounds of the bustling life of the little town came to me from beyond. Suddenly, with a glimmering of the mad events of the night, I stood up, walked uncertainly into the back room, and stared at the bed.

It was empty. I went back into the outer room; my eye wandered from the shattered whiskey bottle, which was still on the floor, to the table littered with Mrs. Temple's letters. And there, in the midst of them, lay a note addressed with my name in a big, unformed hand. I opened it mechanically.

> "Dear Davy,"—so it ran,—"I have gone away, I cannot tell you where.
> Some day I will come back and you will forgive me. God bless you!
> *Nick*."

He had gone away! To New Orleans? I had long ceased trying to account for Nick's actions, but the more I reflected, the more incredible it seemed to me that he should have gone there, of all places. And yet I had had it from Clark's own lips (indiscreet enough now!) that Nick and St. Gre were to prepare the way for an insurrection there. My thoughts ran on to other possibilities; would he see his mother? But he had no reason to know that Mrs. Temple was still in New Orleans. Then my glance fell on her letters, lying open on the table. Had he read them? I put this down as improbable, for he was a man who held strictly to a point of honor.

And then there was Antoinette de St. Gre! I ceased to conjecture here, dashed some water in my eyes, pulled myself together, and, seizing my hat, hurried out into the street. I made a sufficiently indecorous figure as I ran towards the water-side, barely nodding to my acquaintances on the way. It was a fresh morning, a river breeze stirred the waters of the Bear Grass, and as I stood, scanning the line of boats there, I heard footsteps behind me. I turned to confront a little man with grizzled, chestnut eyebrows. He was none other than the Citizen Gignoux.

"You tek ze air, Monsieur Reetchie?" said he. "You look for some one, yes? You git up too late see him off."

I made a swift resolve never to quibble with this man.

"So Mr. Temple has gone to New Orleans with the Sieur de St. Gre," I said.

Citizen Gignoux laid a fat finger on one side of his great nose. The nose was red and shiny, I remember, and glistened in the sunlight.

“Ah,” said he, “‘tis no use tryin’ hide from you. However, Monsieur Reetchie, you are the ver’ soul of honor. And then your frien’! I know you not betray the Sieur de St. Gre. He is ver’ fon’ of you.”

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“Betray!” I exclaimed; “there is no question of betrayal. As far as I can see, your plans are carried on openly, with a fine contempt for the Federal government.”

He shrugged his shoulders.

“’Tis not my doin’,” he said, “but I am—what you call it?—a cipher. Sicrecy is what I believe. But drink too much, talk too much—is it not so, Monsieur? And if Monsieur le Baron de Carondelet, ze governor, hear they are in New Orleans, I think they go to Havana or Brazil.” He smiled, but perhaps the expression of my face caused him to sober abruptly. “It is necessair for the cause. We must have good Revolution in Louisiane.”

A suspicion of this man came over me, for a childlike simplicity characterized the other ringleaders in this expedition. Clark had had acumen once, and lost it; St. Gre was a fool; Nick Temple was leading purposely a reckless life; the Citizens Sullivan and Depeau had, to say the least, a limited knowledge of affairs. All of these were responding more or less sincerely to the cry of the people of Kentucky (every day more passionate) that something be done about Louisiana. But Gignoux seemed of a different feather. Moreover, he had been too shrewd to deny what Colonel Clark would have denied in a soberer moment,—that St. Gre and Nick had gone to New Orleans.

“You not spik, Monsieur. You not think they have success. You are not Federalist, no, for I hear you march las night with your frien’,—I hear you wave torch.”

“You make it your business to hear a great deal, Monsieur Gignoux,” I retorted, my temper slipping a little.

He hastened to apologize.

“Mille pardons, Monsieur,” he said; “I see you are Federalist—but drunk. Is it not so? Monsieur, you tink this ver’ silly thing—this expedition.”

“Whatever I think, Monsieur,” I answered, “I am a friend of General Clark’s.”

“An enemy of ze cause?” he put in.

“Monsieur,” I said, “if President Washington and General Wayne do not think it worth while to interfere with your plans, neither do I.”

I left him abruptly, and went back to my long-delayed affairs with a heavy heart. The more I thought, the more criminally foolish Nick’s journey seemed to me. However puerile the undertaking, De Lemos at Natchez and Carondelet at New Orleans had not the reputation of sleeping at their posts, and their hatred for Americans was well known. I sought General Clark, but he had gone to Knob Licks, and in my anxiety I lay awake at nights tossing in my bed.

One evening, perhaps four days after Nick's departure, I went into the common room of the tavern, and there I was surprised to see an old friend. His square, saffron face was just the same, his little jet eyes snapped as brightly as ever, his hair—which was swept high above his forehead and tied in an eelskin behind—was as black as when I had seen it at Kaskaskia. I had met Monsieur Vigo many times since, for he was a familiar figure amongst the towns of the Ohio and the Mississippi, and from Vincennes to Anse a la Graisse, and even to New Orleans. His reputation as a financier was greater than ever. He was talking to my friend, Mr. Marshall, but he rose when he saw me, with a beaming smile.

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“Ha, it is Davy,” he cried, “but not the sem lil drummer boy who would not come into my store. Reech lawyer now,—I hear you make much money now, Davy.”

“Congress money?” I said.

Monsieur Vigo threw out his hands, and laughed exactly as he had done in his log store at Kaskaskia.

“Congress have never repay me one sou,” said Monsieur Vigo, making a face. “I have try—I have talk—I have represent—it is no good. Davy, it is your fault. You tell me tek dat money. You call dat finance?”

“David,” said Mr. Marshall, sharply, “what the devil is this I hear of your carrying a torch in a Jacobin procession?”

“You may put it down to liquor, Mr. Marshall,” I answered.

“Then you must have had a cask, egad,” said Mr. Marshall, “for I never saw you drunk.”

I laughed.

“I shall not attempt to explain it, sir,” I answered.

“You must not allow your drum to drag you into bad company again,” said he, and resumed his conversation. As I suspected, it was a vigorous condemnation of General Clark and his new expedition. I expressed my belief that the government did not regard it seriously, and would forbid the enterprise at the proper time.

“You are right, sir,” said Mr. Marshall, bringing down his fist on the table. “I have private advices from Philadelphia that the President’s consideration for Governor Shelby is worn out, and that he will issue a proclamation within the next few days warning all citizens at their peril from any connection with the pirates.”

I laughed.

“As a matter of fact, Mr. Marshall,” said I, “Citizen Genet has been liberal with nothing except commissions, and they have neither money nor men.”

“The rascals have all left town,” said Mr. Marshall. “Citizen Quartermaster Depeau, their local financier, has gone back to his store at Knob Licks. The Sieur de St. Gre and a Mr. Temple, as doubtless you know, have gone to New Orleans. And the most mysterious and therefore the most dangerous of the lot, Citizen Gignoux, has vanished like an evil spirit. It is commonly supposed that he, too, has gone down the river. You may see him, Vigo,” said Mr. Marshall, turning to the trader; “he is a little man with a big nose and grizzled chestnut eyebrows.”

“Ah, I know a lil ’bout him,” said Monsieur Vigo; “he was on my boat two days ago, asking me questions.”

“The devil he was!” said Mr. Marshall.

I had another disquieting night, and by the morning I had made up my mind. The sun was glinting on the placid waters of the river when I made my way down to the bank, to a great ten-oared keel boat that lay on the Bear Grass, with its square sail furled. An awning was stretched over the deck, and at a walnut table covered with papers sat Monsieur Vigo, smoking his morning pipe.

“Davy,” said he, “you have come a la bonne heure. At ten I depart for New Orleans.” He sighed. “It is so long voyage,” he added, “and so lonely one. Sometime I have the good fortune to pick up a companion, but not to-day.”

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“Do you want me to go with you?” I said.

He looked at me incredulously.

“I should be delighted,” he said, “but you mek a jest.”

“I was never more serious in my life,” I answered, “for I have business in New Orleans. I shall be ready.”

“Ha,” cried Monsieur Vigo, hospitably, “I shall be enchant. We will talk philosophe, Beaumarchais, Voltaire, Rousseau.”

For Monsieur Vigo was a great reader, and we had often indulged in conversation which (we flattered ourselves) had a literary turn.

I spent the remaining hours arranging with a young lawyer of my acquaintance to look after my business, and at ten o’clock I was aboard the keel boat with my small baggage. At eleven, Monsieur Vigo and I were talking “philosophe” over a wonderful breakfast under the awning, as we dropped down between the forest-lined shores of the Ohio. My host travelled in luxury, and we ate the Creole dishes, which his cook prepared, with silver forks which he kept in a great chest in the cabin.

You who read this may feel something of my impatience to get to New Orleans, and hence I shall not give a long account of the journey. What a contrast it was to that which Nick and I had taken five years before in Monsieur Gratiot’s fur boat! Like all successful Creole traders, Monsieur Vigo had a wonderful knack of getting on with the Indians, and often when we tied up of a night the chief men of a tribe would come down to greet him. We slipped southward on the great, yellow river which parted the wilderness, with its sucks and eddies and green islands, every one of which Monsieur knew, and I saw again the flocks of water-fowl and herons in procession, and hawks and vultures wheeling in their search. Sometimes a favorable wind sprang up, and we hoisted the sail. We passed the Walnut Hills, the Nogales, the moans of the alligators broke our sleep by night, and at length we came to Natchez, ruled over now by that watch-dog of the Spanish King, Gayoso de Lemos. Thanks to Monsieur Vigo, his manners were charming and his hospitality gracious, and there was no trouble whatever about my passport.

Our progress was slow when we came at last to the belvedered plantation houses amongst the orange groves; and as we sat on the wide galleries in the summer nights, we heard all the latest gossip of the capital of Louisiana. The river was low; there was an ominous quality in the heat which had its effect, indeed, upon me, and made the old Creoles shake their heads and mutter a word with a terrible meaning. New Orleans was a cesspool, said the enlightened. The Baron de Carondelet, indefatigable man, aimed at digging a canal to relieve the city of its filth, but this would be the year when it was

most needed, and it was not dug. Yes, Monsieur le Baron was energy itself. That other fever—the political one—he had scotched. “Ca Ira” and “La Marseillaise” had been sung in the theatres, but not often, for the Baron had sent the alcaldes to shut them up. Certain gentlemen of French ancestry had gone to languish in the Morro at Havana. Yes, Monsieur de Carondelet, though fat, was on horseback before dawn, New Orleans was fortified as it never had been before, the militia organized, real cannon were on the ramparts which could shoot at a pinch.

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Sub rosa, I found much sympathy among the planters with the Rights of Man. What had become, they asked, of the expedition of Citizen General Clark preparing in the North? They may have sighed secretly when I painted it in its true colors, but they loved peace, these planters. Strangely enough, the name of Auguste de St. Gre never crossed their lips, and I got no trace of him or Nick at any of these places. Was it possible that they might not have come to New Orleans after all?

Through the days, when the sun beat upon the awning with a tropical fierceness, when Monsieur Vigo abandoned himself to his siestas, I thought. It was perhaps characteristic of me that I waited nearly three weeks to confide in my old friend the purpose of my journey to New Orleans. It was not because I could not trust him that I held my tongue, but because I sought some way of separating the more intimate story of Nick's mother and his affair with Antoinette de St. Gre from the rest of the story. But Monsieur Vigo was a man of importance in Louisiana, and I reflected that a time might come when I should need his help. One evening, when we were tied up under the oaks of a bayou, I told him. There emanated from Monsieur Vigo a sympathy which few men possess, and this I felt strongly as he listened, breaking his silence only at long intervals to ask a question. It was a still night, I remember, of great beauty, with a wisp of a moon hanging over the forest line, the air heavy with odors and vibrant with a thousand insect tones.

"And what you do, Davy?" he said at length.

"I must find my cousin and St. Gre before they have a chance to get into much mischief," I answered. "If they have already made a noise, I thought of going to the Baron de Carondelet and telling him what I know of the expedition. He will understand what St. Gre is, and I will explain that Mr. Temple's reckless love of adventure is at the bottom of his share in the matter."

"Bon, Davy," said my host, "if you go, I go with you. But I believe ze Baron think Morro good place for them jus' the sem. Ze Baron has been make miserable with Jacobins. But I go with you if you go."

He discoursed for some time upon the quality of the St. Gre's, their public services, and before he went to sleep he made the very just remark that there was a flaw in every string of beads. As for me, I went down into the cabin, surreptitiously lighted a candle, and drew from my pocket that piece of ivory which had so strangely come into my possession once more. The face upon it had haunted me since I had first beheld it. The miniature was wrapped now in a silk handkerchief which Polly Ann had bought for me in Lexington. Shall I confess it?—I had carefully rubbed off the discolorations on the ivory at the back, and the picture lacked now only the gold setting. As for the face, I had a kind of consolation from it. I seemed to draw of its strength when I was tired, of its courage when I faltered. And, during those four days of indecision in Louisville, it seemed to say to me in words that I could not evade or forget, "Go to New Orleans." It

was a sentiment—foolish, if you please—which could not resist. Nay, which I did not try to resist, for I had little enough of it in my life. What did it matter? I should never see Madame la Vicomtesse d'Ivry-le-Tour.

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She was Helene to me; and the artist had caught the strength of her soul in her clear-cut face, in the eyes that flashed with wit and courage,—eyes that seemed to look with scorn upon what was mean in the world and untrue, with pity on the weak. Here was one who might have governed a province and still have been a woman, one who had taken into exile the best of safeguards against misfortune,—humor and an indomitable spirit.

CHAPTER V

THE HOUSE OF THE HONEYCOMBED TILES

As long as I live I shall never forget that Sunday morning of my second arrival at New Orleans. A saffron heat-haze hung over the river and the city, robbed alike from the yellow waters of the one and the pestilent moisture of the other. It would have been strange indeed if this capital of Louisiana, brought hither to a swamp from the sands of Biloxi many years ago by the energetic Bienville, were not visited from time to time by the scourge!

Again I saw the green villas on the outskirts, the verdure-dotted expanse of roofs of the city behind the levee bank, the line of Kentucky boats, keel boats and barges which brought our own resistless commerce hither in the teeth of royal mandates. Farther out, and tugging fretfully in the yellow current, were the aliens of the blue seas, high-hulled, their tracery of masts and spars shimmering in the heat: a full-rigged ocean packet from Spain, a barque and brigantine from the West Indies, a rakish slaver from Africa with her water-line dry, discharged but yesterday of a teeming horror of freight. I looked again upon the familiar rows of trees which shaded the gravelled promenades where Nick had first seen Antoinette. Then we were under it, for the river was low, and the dingy-uniformed officer was bowing over our passports beneath the awning. We walked ashore, Monsieur Vigo and I, and we joined a staring group of keel boatmen and river-men under the willows.

Below us, the white shell walks of the Place d'Armes were thronged with gayly dressed people. Over their heads rose the fine new Cathedral, built by the munificence of Don Andreas Almonaster, and beside that the many-windowed, heavy-arched Cabildo, nearly finished, which will stand for all time a monument to Spanish builders.

"It is Corpus Christi day," said Monsieur Vigo; "let us go and see the procession."

Here once more were the bright-turbaned negresses, the gay Creole gowns and scarfs, the linen-jacketed, broad-hatted merchants, with those of soberer and more conventional dress, laughing and chatting, the children playing despite the heat. Many of these people greeted Monsieur Vigo. There were the saturnine, long-cloaked Spaniards, too, and a greater number than I had believed of my own keen-faced

countrymen lounging about, mildly amused by the scene. We crossed the square, and with the courtesy of their race the people made way for us in the press; and we

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were no sooner placed ere the procession came out of the church. Flaming soldiers of the Governor's guard, two by two; sober, sandalled friars in brown, priests in their robes,—another batch of color; crosses shimmering, tapers emerging from the cool darkness within to pale by the light of day. Then down on their knees to Him who sits high above the yellow haze fell the thousands in the Place d'Armes. For here was the Host itself, flower-decked in white and crimson, its gold-tasselled canopy upheld by four tonsured priests, a sheen of purple under it,—the Bishop of Louisiana in his robes.

"The Governor!" whispered Monsieur Vigo, and the word was passed from mouth to mouth as the people rose from their knees. Francois Louis Hector, Baron de Carondelet, resplendent in his uniform of colonel in the royal army of Spain, his orders glittering on his breast,—pillar of royalty and enemy to the Rights of Man! His eye was stern, his carriage erect, but I seemed to read in his careworn face the trials of three years in this moist capital. After the Governor, one by one, the waiting Associations fell in line, each with its own distinguishing sash. So the procession moved off into the narrow streets of the city, the people in the Place dispersed to new vantage points, and Monsieur Vigo signed me to follow him.

"I have a frien', la veuve Gravois, who lives ver' quiet. She have one room, and I ask her tek you in, Davy." He led the way through the empty Rue Chartres, turned to the right at the Rue Bienville, and stopped before an unpretentious house some three doors from the corner. Madame Gravois, elderly, wizened, primp in a starched cotton gown, opened the door herself, fell upon Monsieur Vigo in the Creole fashion; and within a quarter of an hour I was installed in her best room, which gave out on a little court behind. Monsieur Vigo promised to send his servant with my baggage, told me his address, bade me call on him for what I wanted, and took his leave.

First, there was Madame Gravois' story to listen to as she bustled about giving orders to a kinky-haired negro girl concerning my dinner. Then came the dinner, excellent—if I could have eaten it. The virtues of the former Monsieur Gravois were legion. He had come to Louisiana from Toulon, planted indigo, fought a duel, and Madame was a widow. So I condense two hours into two lines. Happily, Madame was not proof against the habits of the climate, and she retired for her siesta. I sought my room, almost suffocated by a heat which defies my pen to describe, a heat reeking with moisture sucked from the foul kennels of the city. I had felt nothing like it in my former visit to New Orleans. It seemed to bear down upon my brain, to clog the power of thought, to make me vacillating. Hitherto my reasoning had led me to seek Monsieur de St. Gre, to count upon that gentleman's common sense and his former friendship. But now that the time had come for it, I shrank from such a meeting. I remembered his passionate affection for Antoinette, I imagined that he would not listen calmly to one who was in some sort connected with her unhappiness. So a kind of cowardice drove me first to

Mrs. Temple. She might know much that would save me useless trouble and blundering.

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The shadows of tree-top, thatch, and wall were lengthening as I walked along the Rue Bourbon. Heedless of what the morrow might bring forth, the street was given over to festivity. Merry groups were gathered on the corners, songs and laughter mingled in the court-yards, billiard balls clicked in the cabarets. A fat, jolly little Frenchman, surrounded by tripping children, sat in his doorway on the edge of the banquette, fiddling with all his might, pausing only to wipe the beads of perspiration from his face.

“Madame Clive, mais oui, Monsieur, l’ petite maison en face.” Smiling benignly at the children, he began to fiddle once more.

The little house opposite! Mrs. Temple, mistress of Temple Bow, had come to this! It was a strange little home indeed, Spanish, one-story, its dormers hidden by a honeycombed screen of terra-cotta tiles. This screen was set on the extreme edge of the roof which overhung the banquette and shaded the yellow adobe wall of the house. Low, unpretentious, the latticed shutters of its two windows giving it but a scant air of privacy,—indeed, they were scarred by the raps of careless passers-by on the sidewalk. The two little battened doors, one step up, were closed. I rapped, waited, and rapped again. The musician across the street stopped his fiddling, glanced at me, smiled knowingly at the children; and they paused in their dance to stare. Then one of the doors was pushed open a scant four inches, a scarlet madras handkerchief appeared in the crack above a yellow face. There was a long moment of silence, during which I felt the scrutiny of a pair of sharp, black eyes.

“What yo’ want, Marse?”

The woman’s voice astonished me, for she spoke the dialect of the American tide-water.

“I should like to see Mrs. Clive,” I answered.

The door closed a shade.

“Mistis sick, she ain’t see nobody,” said the woman. She closed the door a little more, and I felt tempted to put my foot in the crack.

“Tell her that Mr. David Ritchie is here,” I said.

There was an instant’s silence, then an exclamation.

“Lan’ sakes, is you Marse Dave?” She opened the door—furtively, I thought—just wide enough for me to pass through. I found myself in a low-ceiled, darkened room, opposite a trim negress who stood with her arms akimbo and stared at me.

“Marse Dave, you doan rec’lect me. I’se Lindy, I’se Breed’s daughter. I rec’lect you when you was at Temple Bow. Marse Dave, how you’se done growed! Yassir, when I heerd from Miss Sally I done comed here to tek cyar ob her.”

“How is your mistress?” I asked.

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“She po’ly, Marse Dave,” said Lindy, and paused for adequate words. I took note of this darky who, faithful to a family, had come hither to share her mistress’s exile and obscurity. Lindy was spare, energetic, forceful—and, I imagined, a discreet guardian indeed for the unfortunate. “She po’ly, Marse Dave, an’ she ain’ nebber leabe dis year house. Marse Dave,” said Lindy earnestly, lowering her voice and taking a step closer to me, “I done reckon de Mistis gwine ter die ob lonesomeness. She des sit dar an’ brood, an’ brood—an’ she use’ ter de bes’ company, to de quality. No, sirree, Marse Dave, she ain’ nebber sesso, but she tink ‘bout de young Marsa night an’ day. Marse Dave?”

“Yes?” I said.

“Marse Dave, she have a lil pink frock dat Marsa Nick had when he was a bebby. I done cotch Mistis lookin’ at it, an’ she hid it when she see me an’ blush like ’twas a sin. Marse Dave?”

“Yes?” I said again.

“Where am de young Marsa?”

“I don’t know, Lindy,” I answered.

Lindy sighed.

“She done talk ‘bout you, Marse Dave, an’ how good you is—”

“And Mrs. Temple sees no one,” I asked.

“Dar’s one lady come hyar ebery week, er French lady, but she speak English jes’ like the Mistis. Dat’s my fault,” said Lindy, showing a line of white teeth.

“Your fault,” I exclaimed.

“Yassir. When I comed here from Caroliny de Mistis done tole me not ter let er soul in hyah. One day erbout three mont’s ergo, dis yer lady come en she des wheedled me ter let her in. She was de quality, Marse Dave, and I was des’ afeard not ter. I declar’ I hatter. Hush,” said Lindy, putting her fingers to her lips, “dar’s de Mistis!”

The door into the back room opened, and Mrs. Temple stood on the threshold, staring with uncertain eyes into the semi-darkness.

“Lindy,” she said, “what have you done?”

“Miss Sally—” Lindy began, and looked at me. But I could not speak for looking at the lady in the doorway.

“Who is it?” she said again, and her hand sought the door-post tremblingly. “Who is it?”

Then I went to her. At my first step she gave a little cry and swayed, and had I not taken her in my arms I believe she would have fallen.

“David!” she said, “David, is it you? I—I cannot see very well. Why did you not speak?” She looked at Lindy and smiled. “It is because I am an old woman, Lindy,” and she lifted her hand to her forehead. “See, my hair is white—I shock you, David.”

Leaning on my shoulder, she led me through a little bedroom in the rear into a tiny garden court beyond, a court teeming with lavish colors and redolent with the scent of flowers. A white shell walk divided the garden and ended at the door of a low outbuilding, from the chimney of which blue smoke curled upward in the evening air. Mrs. Temple drew me almost fiercely towards a bench against the adobe wall.

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“Where is he?” she said. “Where is he, David?”

The suddenness of the question staggered me; I hesitated.

“I do not know,” I answered.

I could not look into her face and say it. The years of torment and suffering were written there in characters not to be mistaken. Sarah Temple, the beauty, was dead indeed. The hope which threatened to light again the dead fires in the woman’s eyes frightened me.

“Ah,” she said sharply, “you are deceiving me. It is not like you, David. You are deceiving me. Tell me, tell me, for the love of God, who has brought me to bear chastisement.” And she gripped my arm with a strength I had not thought in her.

“Listen,” I said, trying to calm myself as well as her. “Listen, Mrs. Temple.” I could not bring myself to call her otherwise.

“You are keeping him away from me,” she cried. “Why are you keeping him away? Have I not suffered enough? David, I cannot live long. I do not dare to die—until he has forgiven me.”

I forced her, gently as I might, to sit on the bench, and I seated myself beside her.

“Listen,” I said, with a sternness that hid my feelings, and perforce her expression changed again to a sad yearning, “you must hear me. And you must trust me, for I have never pretended. You shall see him if it is in my power.”

She looked at me so piteously that I was near to being unmanned.

“I will trust you,” she whispered.

“I have seen him,” I said. She started violently, but I laid my hand on hers, and by some self-mastery that was still in her she was silent. “I saw him in Louisville a month ago, when I returned from a year’s visit to Philadelphia.”

I could not equivocate with this woman, I could no more lie to her sorrow than to the Judgment. Why had I not foreseen her question?

“And he hates me?” She spoke with a calmness now that frightened me more than her agitation had done.

“I do not know,” I answered; “when I would have spoken to him he was gone.”

“He was drunk,” she said. I stared at her in frightened wonderment. “He was drunk—it is better than if he had cursed me. He did not mention me? Or any one?”

“He did not,” I answered.

She turned her face away.

“Go on, I will listen to you,” she said, and sat immovable through the whole of my story, though her hand trembled in mine. And while I live I hope never to have such a thing to go through with again. Truth held me to the full, ludicrous tragedy of the tale, to the cheap character of my old Colonel’s undertaking, to the incident of the drum, to the conversation in my room. Likewise, truth forbade me to rekindle her hope. I did not tell her that Nick had come with St. Gre to New Orleans, for of this my own knowledge was as yet not positive. For a long time after I had finished she was silent.

“And you think the expedition will not get here?” she asked finally, in a dead voice.

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“I am positive of it,” I answered, “and for the sake of those who are engaged in it, it is mercifully best that it should not. The day may come,” I added, for the sake of leading her away, “when Kentucky will be strong enough to overrun Louisiana. But not now.”

She turned to me with a trace of her former fierceness.

“Why are you in New Orleans?” she demanded.

A sudden resolution came to me then.

“To bring you back with me to Kentucky,” I answered. She shook her head sadly, but I continued: “I have more to say. I am convinced that neither Nick nor you will be happy until you are mother and son again. You have both been wanderers long enough.”

Once more she turned away and fell into a revery. Over the housetop, from across the street, came the gay music of the fiddler. Mrs. Temple laid her hand gently on my shoulder.

“My dear,” she said, smiling, “I could not live for the journey.”

“You must live for it,” I answered. “You have the will. You must live for it, for his sake.”

She shook her head, and smiled at me with a courage which was the crown of her sufferings.

“You are talking nonsense, David,” she said; “it is not like you. Come,” she said, rising with something of her old manner, “I must show you what I have been doing all these years. You must admire my garden.”

I followed her, marvelling, along the shell path, and there came unbidden to my mind the garden at Temple Bow, where she had once been wont to sit, tormenting Mr. Mason or bending to the tale of Harry Riddle’s love. Little she cared for flowers in those days, and now they had become her life. With such thoughts in my mind, I listened unheeding to her talk. The place was formerly occupied by a shiftless fellow, a tailor; and the court, now a paradise, had been a rubbish heap. That orange tree which shaded the uneven doorway of the kitchen she had found here. Figs, pomegranates, magnolias; the camellias dazzling in their purity; the blood-red oleanders; the pink roses that hid the crumbling adobe and climbed even to the sloping tiles,—all these had been set out and cared for with her own hands. Ay, and the fragrant bed of yellow jasmine over which she lingered,—Antoinette’s favorite flower.

Antoinette’s flowers that she wore in her hair! In her letters Mrs. Temple had never mentioned Antoinette, and now she read the question (perchance purposely put there) in my eyes. Her voice faltered sadly. Scarce a week had she been in the house before Antoinette had found her.

“I—I sent the girl away, David. She came without Monsieur de St. Gre’s knowledge, without his consent. It is natural that he thinks me—I will not say what. I sent Antoinette away. She clung to me, she would not go, and I had to be—cruel. It is one of the things which make the nights long—so long. My sins have made her life unhappy.”

“And you hear of her? She is not married?” I asked.

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“No, she is not married,” said Mrs. Temple, stooping over the jasmines. Then she straightened and faced me, her voice shaken with earnestness. “David, do you think that Nick still loves her?”

Alas, I could not answer that. She bent over the jasmines again.

“There were five years that I knew nothing,” she continued. “I did not dare ask Mr. Clark, who comes to me on business, as you know. It was Mr. Clark who brought back Lindy on one of his trips to Charleston. And then, one day in March of this year, Madame de Montmery came.”

“Madame de Montmery?” I repeated.

“It is a strange story,” said Mrs. Temple. “Lindy had never admitted any one, save Mr. Clark. One day early in the spring, when I was trimming my roses by the wall there, the girl ran to me and said that a lady wished to see me. Why had she let her in? Lindy did not know, she could not refuse her. Had the lady demanded admittance? Lindy thought that I would like to see her. David, it was a providential weakness, or curiosity, that prompted me to go into the front room, and then I saw why Lindy had opened the door to her. Who she is or what she is I do not know to this day. Who am I now that I should inquire? I know that she is a lady, that she has exquisite manners, that I feel now that I cannot live without her. She comes every week, sometimes twice, she brings me little delicacies, new seeds for my garden. But, best of all, she brings me herself, and I am always counting the days until she comes again. Yes, and I always fear that she, too, will be taken away from me.”

I had not heard the sound of voices, but Mrs. Temple turned, startled, and looked towards the house. I followed her glance, and suddenly I knew that my heart was beating.

CHAPTER VI

MADAME LA VICOMTESSE

Hesitating on the step, a lady stood in the vine-covered doorway, a study in black and white in a frame of pink roses. The sash at her waist, the lace mantilla that clung about her throat, the deftly coiled hair with its sheen of the night waters—these in black. The simple gown—a tribute to the art of her countrywomen—in white.

Mrs. Temple had gone forward to meet her, but I stood staring, marvelling, forgetful, in the path. They were talking, they were coming towards me, and I heard Mrs. Temple pronounce my name and hers—Madame de Montmery. I bowed, she courtesied. There was a baffling light in the lady’s brown eyes when I dared to glance at them, and

a smile playing around her mouth. Was there no word in the two languages to find its way to my lips? Mrs. Temple laid her hand on my arm.

“David is not what one might call a ladies’ man, Madame,” she said.

The lady laughed.

“Isn’t he?” she said.

“I am sure you will frighten him with your wit,” answered Mrs. Temple, smiling. “He is worth sparing.”

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“He is worth frightening, then,” said the lady, in exquisite English, and she looked at me again.

“You and David should like each other,” said Mrs. Temple; “you are both capable persons, friends of the friendless and towers of strength to the weak.”

The lady’s face became serious, but still there was the expression I could not make out. In an instant she seemed to have scrutinized me with a precision from which there could be no appeal.

“I seem to know Mr. Ritchie,” she said, and added quickly: “Mrs. Clive has talked a great deal about you. She has made you out a very wonderful person.”

“My dear,” said Mrs. Temple, “the wonderful people of this world are those who find time to comfort and help the unfortunate. That is why you and David are wonderful. No one knows better than I how easy it is to be selfish.”

“I have brought you an English novel,” said Madame de Montomery, turning abruptly to Mrs. Temple. “But you must not read it at night. Lindy is not to let you have it until to-morrow.”

“There,” said Mrs. Temple, gayly, to me, “Madame is not happy unless she is controlling some one, and I am a rebellious subject.”

“You have not been taking care of yourself,” said Madame. She glanced at me, and bit her lips, as though guessing the emotion which my visit had caused. “Listen,” she said, “the vesper bells! You must go into the house, and Mr. Ritchie and I must leave you.”

She took Mrs. Temple by the arm and led her, unresisting, along the path. I followed, a thousand thoughts and conjectures spinning in my brain. They reached the bench under the little tree beside the door, and stood talking for a moment of the routine of Mrs. Temple’s life. Madame, it seemed, had prescribed a regimen, and meant to have it followed. Suddenly I saw Mrs. Temple take the lady’s arm, and sink down upon the bench. Then we were both beside her, bending over her, she sitting upright and smiling at us.

“It is nothing,” she said; “I am so easily tired.”

Her lips were ashen, and her breath came quickly. Madame acted with that instant promptness which I expected of her.

“You must carry her in, Mr. Ritchie,” she said quietly.

“No, it is only momentary, David,” said Mrs. Temple. I remember how pitifully frail and light she was as I picked her up and followed Madame through the doorway into the little bedroom. I laid Mrs. Temple on the bed.

“Send Lindy here,” said Madame.

Lindy was in the front room with the negress whom Madame had brought with her. They were not talking. I supposed then this was because Lindy did not speak French. I did not know that Madame de Montmery’s maid was a mute. Both of them went into the bedroom, and I was left alone. The door and windows were closed, and a green myrtle-berry candle was burning on the table. I looked about me with astonishment. But for the low ceiling and the wide cypress puncheons

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of the floor the room might have been a boudoir in a manor-house. On the slender-legged, polished mahogany table lay books in tasteful bindings; a diamond-paned bookcase stood in the corner; a fauteuil and various other chairs which might have come from the hands of an Adam were ranged about. Tall silver candlesticks graced each end of the little mantel-shelf, and between them were two Lowestoft vases having the Temple coat of arms.

It might have been half an hour that I waited, now pacing the floor, now throwing myself into the arm-chair by the fireplace. Anxiety for Mrs. Temple, problems that lost themselves in a dozen conjectures, all idle— these agitated me almost beyond my power of self-control. Once I felt for the miniature, took it out, and put it back without looking at it. At last I was startled to my feet by the opening of the door, and Madame de Montmery came in. She closed the door softly behind her, with the deft quickness and decision of movement which a sixth sense had told me she possessed, crossed the room swiftly, and stood confronting me.

“She is easy again, now,” she said simply. “It is one of her attacks. I wish you might have seen me before you told her what you had to say to her.”

“I wish indeed that I had known you were here.”

She ignored this, whether intentionally, I know not.

“It is her heart, poor lady! I am afraid she cannot live long.” She seated herself in one of the straight chairs. “Sit down, Mr. Ritchie,” she said; “I am glad you waited. I wanted to talk with you.”

“I thought that you might, Madame la Vicomtesse,” I answered.

She made no gesture, either of surprise or displeasure.

“So you knew,” she said quietly.

“I knew you the moment you appeared in the doorway,” I replied. It was not just what I meant to say.

There flashed over her face that expression of the miniature, the mouth repressing the laughter in the brown eyes.

“Montmery is one of my husband’s places,” she said. “When Antoinette asked me to come here and watch over Mrs. Temple, I chose the name.”

“And Mrs. Temple has never suspected you?”

“I think not. She thinks I came at Mr. Clark’s request. And being a lady, she does not ask questions. She accepts me for what I appear to be.”

It seemed so strange to me to be talking here in New Orleans, in this little Spanish house, with a French vicomtesse brought up near the court of the unfortunate Marie Antoinette; nay, with Helene de St. Gre, whose portrait had twice come into my life by a kind of strange fatality (and was at that moment in my pocket), that I could scarce maintain my self-possession in her presence. I had given the portrait, too, attributes and a character, and I found myself watching the lady with a breathless interest lest she should fail in any of these. In the intimacy of the little room I felt as if I had known her always, and again, that

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she was as distant from me and my life as the court from which she had come. I found myself glancing continually at her face, on which the candle-light shone. The Vicomtesse might have been four and twenty. Save for the soberer gown she wore, she seemed scarce older than the young girl in the miniature who had the presence of a woman of the world. Suddenly I discovered with a flush that she was looking at me intently, without embarrassment, but with an expression that seemed to hint of humor in the situation. To my astonishment, she laughed a little.

“You are a very odd person, Mr. Ritchie,” she said. “I have heard so much of you from Mrs. Temple, from Antoinette, that I know something of your strange life. After all,” she added with a trace of sadness, “it has been no stranger than my own. First I will answer your questions, and then I shall ask some.”

“But I have asked no questions, Madame la Vicomtesse,” I said.

“And you are a very simple person, Mr. Ritchie,” continued Madame la Vicomtesse, smiling; “it is what I had been led to suppose. A serious person. As the friend of Mr. Nicholas Temple, as the relation and (may I say?) benefactor of this poor lady here, it is fitting that you should know certain things. I will not weary you with the reasons and events which led to my coming from Europe to New Orleans, except to say that I, like all of my class who have escaped the horrors of the Revolution, am a wanderer, and grateful to Monsieur de St. Gre for the shelter he gives me. His letter reached me in England, and I arrived three months ago.”

She hesitated—nay, I should rather say paused, for there was little hesitation in what she did. She paused, as though weighing what she was to say next.

“When I came to Les Iles I saw that there was a sorrow weighing upon the family; and it took no great astuteness on my part, Mr. Ritchie, to discover that Antoinette was the cause of it. One has only to see Antoinette to love her. I wondered why she had not married. And yet I saw that there had been an affair. It seemed very strange to me, Mr. Ritchie, for with us, you understand, marriages are arranged. Antoinette really has beauty, she is the daughter of a man of importance in the colony, her strength of character saves her from being listless. I found a girl with originality of expression, with a sense of the fitness of things, devoted to charitable works, who had not taken the veil. That was on her father’s account. As you know, they are inseparable. Monsieur Philippe de St. Gre is a remarkable man, with certain vigorous ideas not in accordance with the customs of his neighbors. It was he who first confided in me that he would not force Antoinette to marry; it was she, at length, who told me the story of Nicholas Temple and his mother.” She paused again, and, reading between the lines, I perceived that Madame la Vicomtesse had become essential to the household at Les Iles. Philippe de St. Gre was not a man to misplace a confidence.

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“It was then that I first heard of you, Mr. Ritchie, and of the part which you played in that affair. It was then I had my first real insight into Antoinette’s character. Her affection for Mrs. Temple astonished me, bewildered me. The woman had deceived her and her family, and yet Antoinette gave up her lover because he would not take his mother back. Had Mrs. Temple been willing to return to Les Iles after you had providentially taken her away, they would have received her. Philippe de St. Gre is not a man to listen to criticism. As it was, Antoinette did not rest until she found where Mrs. Temple had hidden herself, and then she came here to her. It is not for us to judge any of them. In sending Antoinette away the poor lady denied herself the only consolation that was left to her. Antoinette understood. Every week she has had news of Mrs. Temple from Mr. Clark. And when I came and learned her trouble, Antoinette begged me to come here and be Mrs. Temple’s friend. Mr. Ritchie, she is a very ill woman and a very sad woman,—the saddest woman I have ever known, and I have seen many.”

“And Mademoiselle de St. Gre?” I asked.

“Tell me about this man for whom Antoinette has ruined her life,” said Madame la Vicomtesse, brusquely. “Is he worth it? No, no man is worth what she has suffered. What has become of him? Where is he? Did you not tell her that you would bring him back?”

“I said that I would bring him back if I could,” I answered, “and I meant it, Madame.”

Madame la Vicomtesse bit her lip. Had she known me better, she might have smiled. As for me, I was wholly puzzled to account for these fleeting changes in her humor.

“You have taken a great deal upon your shoulders, Mr. Ritchie,” she said. “They are from all accounts broad ones. There, I was wrong to be indignant in your presence,—-you who seem to have spent your life in trying to get others out of difficulties. Mercy,” she said, with a quick gesture at my protest, “there are few men with whom one might talk thus in so short an acquaintance. I love the girl, and I cannot help being angry with Mr. Temple. I suppose there is something to be said on his side. Let us hear it—I dare say he could not have a better advocate,” she finished, with an indefinable smile.

I began at the wrong end of my narrative, and it was some time before I had my facts arranged in proper sequence. I could not forget that Madame la Vicomtesse was looking at me fixedly. I reviewed Nick’s neglected childhood; painted as well as I might his temperament and character—his generosity and fearlessness, his recklessness and improvidence. His loyalty to those he loved, his detestation of those he hated. I told how, under these conditions, the sins and vagaries of his parents had gone far to wreck his life at the beginning of it. I told how I had found him again with Sevier, how he had come to New Orleans with me the first time, how he had loved Antoinette, and how he had disappeared after the dreadful scene in the garden at Les Iles, how I had not seen him again for five years. Here I hesitated, little knowing how to tell the Vicomtesse of

that affair in Louisville. Though I had a sense that I could not keep the truth from so discerning a person, I was startled to find this to be so.

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“Yes, yes, I understand,” she said quickly. “And in the morning he had flown with that most worthy of my relatives, Auguste de St. Gre.”

I looked at her, finding no words to express my astonishment at this perspicacity.

“And now what do you intend to do?” she asked. “Find him in New Orleans, if you can, of course. But how?” She rose quickly, went to the fireplace, and stood for a moment with her back to me. Suddenly she turned. “It ought not to be difficult, after all. Auguste de St. Gre is a fool, and he confirms what you say of the expedition. He is, indeed, a pretty person to choose for an intrigue of this kind. And your cousin,—what shall we call him?”

“To say the least, secrecy is not Nick’s forte,” I answered, catching her mood.

She was silent awhile.

“It would be a blessing if Monsieur le Baron could hang Auguste privately. As for your cousin, he may be worth saving, after all. I know Monsieur de Carondelet, and he has no patience with conspirators of this sort. I think he would not hesitate to make examples of them. However, we will try to save them.”

“We!” I repeated unwittingly.

Madame la Vicomtesse looked at me and laughed out right.

“Yes,” she said, “you will do some things, I others. There are the gaming clubs with their ridiculous names, L’Amour, La Mignonne, La Desiree” (she counted them reflectively on her fingers). “Both of our gentlemen might be tempted into one of these. You will drop into them, Mr. Ritchie. Then there is Madame Bouvet’s.”

“Auguste would scarcely go there,” I objected.

“Ah,” said Madame la Vicomtesse, “but Madame Bouvet will know the names of some of Auguste’s intimates. This Bouvet is evidently a good person, perhaps she will do more for you. I understand that she has a weak spot in her heart for Auguste.”

Madame la Vicomtesse turned her back again. Had she heard how Madame Bouvet had begged me to buy the miniature?

“Have you any other suggestions to make?” she said, putting a foot on the fender.

“They have all been yours, so far,” I answered.

“And yet you are a man of action, of expedients,” she murmured, without turning. “Where are your wits, Mr. Ritchie? Have you any plan?”

“I have been so used to rely on myself, Madame,” I replied.

“That you do not like to have your affairs meddled with by a woman,” she said, into the fireplace.

“I give you the credit to believe that you are too clever to misunderstand me, Madame,” I said. “You must know that your help is most welcome.”

At that she swung around and regarded me strangely, mirth lurking in her eyes. She seemed about to retort, and then to conquer the impulse. The effect of this was to make me anything but self-complacent. She sat down in the chair and for a little while she was silent.

“Suppose we do find them,” she said suddenly. “What shall we do with them?” She looked up at me questioningly, seriously. “Is it likely that your Mr. Temple will be reconciled with his mother? Is it likely that he is still in love with Antoinette?”

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“I think it is likely that he is still in love with Mademoiselle de St. Gre,” I answered, “though I have no reason for saying so.”

“You are very honest, Mr. Ritchie. We must look at this problem from all sides. If he is not reconciled with his mother, Antoinette will not receive him. And if he is, we have the question to consider whether he is still worthy of her. The agents of Providence must not be heedless,” she added with a smile.

“I am sure that Nick would alter his life if it became worth living,” I said. “I will answer for that much.”

“Then he must be reconciled with his mother,” she replied with decision. “Mrs. Temple has suffered enough. And he must be found before he gets sufficiently into the bad graces of the Baron de Carondelet,—these two things are clear.” She rose. “Come here to-morrow evening at the same time.”

She started quickly for the bedroom door, but something troubled me still.

“Madame—” I said.

“Yes,” she answered, turning quickly.

I did not know how to begin. There were many things I wished to say, to know, but she was a woman whose mind seemed to leap the chasms, whose words touched only upon those points which might not be understood. She regarded me with seeming patience.

“I should think that Mrs. Temple might have recognized you,” I said, for want of a better opening.

“From the miniature?” she said.

I flushed furiously, and it seemed to burn me through the lining of my pocket.

“That was my salvation,” she said. “Mrs. Temple has never seen the miniature. I have heard how you rescued it, Mr. Ritchie,” she added, with a curious smile. “Monsieur Philippe de St. Gre told me.”

“Then he knew?” I stammered.

She laughed.

“I have told you that you are a very simple person,” she said. “Even you are not given to intrigues. I thank you for rescuing me.”

I flushed more hotly than before.

“I never expected to see you,” I said.

“It must have been a shock,” she said.

I was dumb. I had my hand in my coat; I fully intended to give her the miniature. It was my plain duty. And suddenly, overwhelmed, I remembered that it was wrapped in Polly Ann’s silk handkerchief.

Madame la Vicomtesse remained for a moment where she was.

“Do not do anything until the morning,” she said. “You must go back to your lodgings at once.”

“That would be to lose time,” I answered.

“You must think of yourself a little,” she said. “Do as I say. I have heard that two cases of the yellow fever have broken out this afternoon. And you, who are not used to the climate, must not be out after dark.”

“And you?” I said.

“I am used to it,” she replied; “I have been here three months. Lest anything should happen, it might be well for you to give me your address.”

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“I am with Madame Gravois, in the Rue Bienville.”

“Madame Gravois, in the Rue Bienville,” she repeated. “I shall remember. A demain, Monsieur.” She courtesied and went swiftly into Mrs. Temple’s room. Seizing my hat, I opened the door and found myself in the dark street.

CHAPTER VII

THE DISPOSAL OF THE SIEUR DE ST. GRE

I had met Helene de St. Gre at last. And what a fool she must think me! As I hurried along the dark banquettes this thought filled my brain for a time to the exclusion of all others, so strongly is vanity ingrained in us. After all, what did it matter what she thought,—Madame la Vicomtesse d’Ivry-le-Tour? I had never shone, and it was rather late to begin. But I possessed, at least, average common sense, and I had given no proof even of this.

I wandered on, not heeding the command which she had given me,—to go home. The scent of camellias and magnolias floated on the heavy air of the night from the court-yards, reminding me of her. Laughter and soft voices came from the galleries. Despite the Terror, despite the Faubourg Saint-Antoine, despite the Rights of Man and the wars and suffering arising therefrom, despite the scourge which might come to-morrow, life went gayly on. The cabarets echoed, and behind the tight blinds lines of light showed where the Creole gentry gamed at their tables, perchance in the very clubs Madame la Vicomtesse had mentioned.

The moon, in her first quarter, floated in a haze. Washed by her light, the quaintly wrought balconies and heavy-tiled roofs of the Spanish buildings, risen from the charred embers, took on a touch of romance. I paused once with a twinge of remembrance before the long line of the Ursuline convent, with its latticed belfry against the sky. There was the lodge, with its iron gates shut, and the wall which Nick had threatened to climb. As I passed the great square of the new barracks, a sereno (so the night watchmen were called) was crying the hour. I came to the rambling market-stalls, casting black shadows on the river road,—empty now, to be filled in the morning with shouting marchands. The promenade under the willows was deserted, the great river stretched away under the moon towards the forest line of the farther shore, filmy and indistinct. A black wisp of smoke rose from the gunwale of a flatboat, and I stopped to listen to the weird song of a negro, which I have heard many times since.

Caroline.

In, de, tois, Ca-ro-line, Qui ci ca ye, comme ca ma chere? In, de tois, Ca-ro-line, Quo fair t'-apes cri—e ma chere? Mo l'-aime toe con-ne ca, C'est to m'ou—le, c'est to mo prend, Mo l'-aime toe, to con-ne ca—a c'est to m'oule c'est to mo prend.

Gaining the promenade, I came presently to the new hotel which had been built for the Governor, with its balconied windows looking across the river—the mansion of Monsieur le Baron de Carondelet. Even as I sat on the bench in the shadow of the willows, watching the sentry who paced before the arched entrance, I caught sight of a man stealing along the banquette on the other side of the road. Twice he paused to look behind him, and when he reached the corner of the street he stopped for some time to survey the Governor's house opposite.

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Suddenly I was on my feet, every sense alert, staring. In the moonlight, made milky by the haze, he was indistinct. And yet I could have taken oath that the square, diminutive figure, with the head set forward on the shoulders, was Gignoux's. If this man were not Gignoux, then the Lord had cast two in a strange mould.

And what was Gignoux doing in New Orleans? As if in answer to the question two men emerged from the dark archway of the Governor's house, passed the sentry, and stood for an instant on the edge of the shadow. One wore a long Spanish cloak, and the other a uniform that I could not make out. A word was spoken, and then my man was ambling across to meet them, and the three walked away up Toulouse Street.

I was in a fire of conjecture. I did not dare to pass the sentry and follow them, so I made round as fast as I could by the Rue St. Pierre, which borders the Place d'Armes, and then crossed to Toulouse again by Chartres. The three were nowhere to be seen. I paused on the corner for thought, and at length came to a reluctant but prudent conclusion that I had best go back to my lodging and seek Monsieur early in the morning.

Madame Gravois was awaiting me. Was Monsieur mad to remain out at night? Had Monsieur not heard of the yellow fever? Madame Gravois even had prepared some concoction which she poured out of a bottle, and which I took with the docility of a child. Monsieur Vigo had called, and there was a note. A note? It was a small note. I glanced stupidly at the seal, recognized the swan of the St. Gre crest, broke it, and read:—

"Mr. Ritchie will confer a favor upon la Vicomtesse d'Ivry-le-Tour if he will come to Monsieur de St. Gre's house at eight to-morrow morning."

I bade the reluctant Madame Gravois good night, gained my room, threw off my clothes, and covered myself with the mosquito bar. There was no question of sleep, for the events of the day and surmises for the morrow tortured me as I tossed in the heat. Had the man been Gignoux? If so, he was in league with Carondelet's police. I believed him fully capable of this. And if he knew Nick's whereabouts and St. Gre's, they would both be behind the iron gateway of the calabozo in the morning. Monsieur Vigo had pointed out to me that day the gloomy, heavy-walled prison in the rear of the Cabildo,—-ay, and he had spoken of its instruments of torture.

What could the Vicomtesse want? Truly (I thought with remorse) she had been more industrious than I.

I fell at length into a fevered sleep, and awoke, athirst, with the light trickling through my lattices. Contrary to Madame Gravois's orders, I had opened the glass of my window. Glancing at my watch,—which I had bought in Philadelphia,—I saw that the hands pointed to half after seven. I had scarcely finished my toilet before there was a knock at

the door, and Madame Gravois entered with a steaming cup of coffee in one hand and her bottle of medicine in the other.

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“I did not wake Monsieur,” she said, “for he was tired.”

She gave me another dose of the medicine, made me drink two cups of coffee, and then I started out with all despatch for the House of the Lions. As I turned into the Rue Chartres I saw ahead of me four horses, with their bridles bunched and held by a negro lad, waiting in the street. Yes, they were in front of the house. There it was, with its solid green gates between the lions, its yellow walls with the fringe of peeping magnolias and oranges, with its green-latticed gallery from which Monsieur Auguste had let himself down after stealing the miniature. I knocked at the wicket, the same gardienne answered the call, smiled, led me through the cool, paved archway which held in its frame the green of the court beyond, and up the stairs with the quaint balustrade which I had mounted five years before to meet Philippe de St. Gre. As I reached the gallery Madame la Vicomtesse, gowned in brown linen for riding, rose quickly from her chair and came forward to meet me.

“You have news?” I asked, as I took her hand.

“I have the kind of news I expected,” she answered, a smile tempering the gravity of her face; “Auguste is, as usual, in need of money.”

“Then you have found them,” I answered, my voice betraying my admiration for the feat.

Madame la Vicomtesse shrugged her shoulders slightly.

“I did nothing,” she said. “From what you told me, I suspected that as soon as Auguste reached Louisiana he would have a strong desire to go away again. This is undoubtedly what has happened. In any event, I knew that he would want money, and that he would apply to a source which has hitherto never failed him.”

“Mademoiselle Antoinette!” I said.

“Precisely,” answered Madame la Vicomtesse. “When I reached home last night I questioned Antoinette, and I discovered that by a singular chance a message from Auguste had already reached her.”

“Where is he?” I demanded.

“I do not know,” she replied. “But he will be behind the hedge of the garden at Les Iles at eleven o’clock—unless he has lost before then his love of money.”

“Which is to say—”

“He will be there unless he is dead. That is why I sent for you, Monsieur.” She glanced at me. “Sometimes it is convenient to have a man.”

I was astounded. Then I smiled, the affair was so ridiculously simple.

“And Monsieur de St. Gre?” I asked.

“Has been gone for a week with Madame to visit the estimable Monsieur Poydras at Pointe Coupee.” Madame la Vicomtesse, who had better use for her words than to waste them at such a time, left me, went to the balcony, and began to give the gardienne in the court below swift directions in French. Then she turned to me again.

“Are you prepared to ride with Antoinette and me to Les Iles, Monsieur?” she asked.

“I am,” I answered.

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It must have been my readiness that made her smile. Then her eyes rested on mine.

“You look tired, Mr. Ritchie,” she said. “You did not obey me and go home last night.”

“How did you know that?” I asked, with a thrill at her interest.

“Because Madame Gravois told my messenger that you were out.”

I was silent.

“You must take care of yourself,” she said briefly. “Come, there are some things which I wish to say to you before Antoinette is ready.”

She led me toward the end of the gallery, where a bright screen of morning-glories shaded us from the sun. But we had scarce reached the place ere the sound of steps made us turn, and there was Mademoiselle Antoinette herself facing us. I went forward a few steps, hesitated, and bowed. She courtesied, my name faltering on her lips. Yes, it was Antoinette, not the light-hearted girl whom we had heard singing “Ma luron” in the garden, but a woman now with a strange beauty that astonished me. Hers was the dignity that comes from unselfish service, the calm that is far from resignation, though the black veil caught up on her chapeau de paille gave her the air of a Sister of Mercy. Antoinette had inherited the energies as well as the features of the St. Gre’s, yet there was a painful moment as she stood there, striving to put down the agitation the sight of me gave her. As for me, I was bereft of speech, not knowing what to say or how far to go. My last thought was of the remarkable quality in this woman before me which had held her true to Mrs. Temple, and which sent her so courageously to her duty now.

Madame la Vicomtesse, as I had hoped, relieved the situation. She knew how to broach a dreaded subject.

“Mr. Ritchie is going with us, Antoinette,” she said.

“It is perhaps best to explain everything to him before we start. I was about to tell you, Mr. Ritchie,” she continued, turning to me, “that Auguste has given no hint in his note of Mr. Temple’s presence in Louisiana. And yet you told me that they were to have come here together.”

“Yes,” I answered, “and I have no reason to think they have separated.”

“I was merely going to suggest,” said the Vicomtesse, firmly, “I was merely going to suggest the possibility of our meeting Mr. Temple with Auguste.”

It was Antoinette who answered, with a force that revealed a new side of her character.

“Mr. Temple will not be there,” she said, flashing a glance upon us. “Do you think he would come to me—?”

Helene laid her hand upon the girl’s arm.

“My dear, I think nothing,” she said quietly; “but it is best for us to be prepared against any surprise. Remember that I do not know Mr. Temple, and that you have not seen him for five years.”

“It is not like him, you know it is not like him,” exclaimed Antoinette, looking at me.

“I know it is not like him, Mademoiselle,” I replied.

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Madame la Vicomtesse, from behind the girl, gave me a significant look.

“This occurred to me,” she went on in an undisturbed tone, “that Mr. Temple might come with Auguste to protest against the proceeding,—or even to defend himself against the imputation that he was to make use of this money in any way. I wish you to realize, Antoinette, before you decide to go, that you may meet Mr. Temple. Would it not be better to let Mr. Ritchie go alone? I am sure that we could find no better emissary.”

“Auguste is here,” said Antoinette. “I must see him.” Her voice caught. “I may never see him again. He may be ill, he may be starving—and I know that he is in trouble. Whether” (her voice caught) “whether Mr. Temple is with him or not, I mean to go.”

“Then it would be well to start,” said the Vicomtesse.

Deftly dropping her veil, she picked up a riding whip that lay on the railing and descended the stairs to the courtyard. Antoinette and I followed. As we came through the archway I saw Andre, Monsieur de St. Gre’s mulatto, holding open the wicket for us to pass. He helped the ladies to mount the ponies, lengthened my own stirrups for me, swung into the saddle himself, and then the four of us were picking our way down the Rue Chartres at an easy amble. Turning to the right beyond the cool garden of the Ursulines, past the yellow barracks, we came to the river front beside the fortifications. A score of negroes were sweating there in the sun, swinging into position the long logs for the palisades, nearly completed. They were like those of Kaskaskia and our own frontier forts in Kentucky, with a forty-foot ditch in front of them. Seated on a horse talking to the overseer was a fat little man in white linen who pulled off his hat and bowed profoundly to the ladies. His face gave me a start, and then I remembered that I had seen him only the day before, resplendent, coming out of church. He was the Baron de Carondelet.

There was a sentry standing under a crape-myrtle where the Royal Road ran through the gateway. Behind him was a diminutive five-sided brick fort with a dozen little cannon on top of it. The sentry came forward, brought his musket to a salute, and halted before my horse.

“You will have to show your passport,” murmured Madame la Vicomtesse.

I drew the document from my pocket. It was signed by De Lemos, and duly countersigned by the officer of the port. The man bowed, and I passed on.

It was a strange, silent ride through the stinging heat to Les Iles, the brown dust hanging behind us like a cloud, to settle slowly on the wayside shrubbery. Across the levee bank the river was low, listless, giving off hot breath like a monster in distress. The forest pools were cracked and dry, the Spanish moss was a haggard gray, and under the sun

was the haze which covered the land like a saffron mantle. At times a listlessness came over me such as I had

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never known, to make me forget the presence of the women at my side, the very errand on which we rode. From time to time I was roused into admiration of the horsemanship of Madame la Vicomtesse, for the restive Texas pony which she rode was stung to madness by the flies. As for Antoinette, she glanced neither right nor left through her veil, but rode unmindful of the way, heedless of heat and discomfort, erect, motionless save for the easy gait of her horse. At length we turned into the avenue through the forest, lined by wild orange trees, came in sight of the low, belvedered plantation house, and drew rein at the foot of the steps. Antoinette was the first to dismount, and passed in silence through the group of surprised house servants gathering at the door. I assisted the Vicomtesse, who paused to bid the negroes disperse, and we lingered for a moment on the gallery together.

"Poor Antoinette!" she said, "I wish we might have saved her this." She looked up at me. "How she defended him!" she exclaimed.

"She loves him," I answered.

Madame la Vicomtesse sighed.

"I suppose there is no help for it," she said. "But it is very difficult not to be angry with Mr. Temple. The girl cared for his mother, gave her a home, clung to her when he and the world would have cast her off, sacrificed her happiness for them both. If I see him, I believe I shall shake him. And if he doesn't fall down on his knees to her, I shall ask the Baron to hang him. We must bring him to his senses, Mr. Ritchie. He must not leave Louisiana until he sees her. Then he will marry her." She paused, scrutinized me in her quick way, and added: "You see that I take your estimation of his character. You ought to be flattered."

"I am flattered by any confidence you repose in me, Madame la Vicomtesse."

She laughed. I was not flattered then, but cursed myself for the quaint awkwardness in my speech that amused her. And she was astonishingly quick to perceive my moods.

"There, don't be angry. You will never be a courtier, my honest friend, and you may thank God for it. How sweet the shrubs are! Your chief business in life seems to be getting people out of trouble, and I am going to help you with this case."

It was my turn to laugh.

"You are going to help!" I exclaimed. "My services have been heavy, so far."

"You should not walk around at night," she replied irrelevantly.

Suddenly I remembered Gignoux, but even as I was about to tell her of the incident Antoinette appeared in the doorway. She was very pale, but her lips were set with excitement and her eyes shone strangely. She was still in her riding gown, in her hand she carried a leather bag, and behind her stood Andre with a bundle.

“Quick!” she said; “we are wasting time, and he may be gone.”

Checking an exclamation which could hardly have been complimentary to Auguste, the Vicomtesse crossed quickly to her and put her arm about her.

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“We will follow you, mignonne,” she said in French.

“Must you come?” said Antoinette, appealingly. “He may not appear if he sees any one.”

“We shall have to risk that,” said the Vicomtesse, dryly, with a glance at me. “You shall not go alone, but we will wait a few moments at the hedge.”

We took the well-remembered way through the golden green light under the trees, Antoinette leading, and the sight of the garden brought back to me poignantly the scene in the moonlight with Mrs. Temple. There was no sound save the languid morning notes of the birds and the humming of the bees among the flowers as Antoinette went tremblingly down the path and paused, listening, under the branches of that oak where I had first beheld her. Then, with a little cry, we saw her run forward—into the arms of Auguste de St. Gre. It was a pitiful thing to look upon.

Antoinette had led her brother to the seat under the oak. How long we waited I know not, but at length we heard their voices raised, and without more ado Madame la Vicomtesse, beckoning me, passed quickly through the gap in the hedge and went towards them. I followed with Andre. Auguste rose with an oath, and then stood facing his cousin like a man struck dumb, his hands dropped. He was a sorry sight indeed, unshaven, unkempt, dark circles under his eyes, clothes torn.

“Helene! You here—in America!” he cried in French, staring at her.

“Yes, Auguste,” she replied quite simply, “I am here.” He would have come towards her, but there was a note in her voice which arrested him.

“And Monsieur le Vicomte—Henri?” he said. I found myself listening tensely for the answer.

“Henri is in Austria, fighting for his King, I hope,” said Madame la Vicomtesse.

“So Madame la Vicomtesse is a refugee,” he said with a bow and a smile that made me very angry.

“And Monsieur de St. Gre!” I asked.

At the sound of my voice he started and gave back, for he had not perceived me. He recovered his balance, such as it was, instantly.

“Monsieur seems to take an extraordinary interest in my affairs,” he said jauntily.

“Only when they are to the detriment of other persons who are my friends,” I said.

“Monsieur has intruded in a family matter,” said Auguste, grandly, still in French.

“By invitation of those most concerned, Monsieur,” I answered, for I could have throttled him.

Auguste had developed. He had learned well that effrontery is often the best weapon of an adventurer. He turned from me disdainfully, petulantly, and addressed the Vicomtesse once more.

“I wish to be alone with Antoinette,” he said.

“No doubt,” said the Vicomtesse.

“I demand it,” said Auguste.

“The demand is not granted,” said the Vicomtesse; “that is why we have come. Your sister has already made enough sacrifices for you. I know you, Monsieur Auguste de St. Gre,” she continued with quiet contempt. “It is not for love of Antoinette that you have sought this meeting. It is because,” she said, riding down a torrent of words which began to escape from him, “it is because you are in a predicament, as usual, and you need money.”

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It was Antoinette who spoke. She had risen, and was standing behind Auguste. She still held the leather bag in her hand.

“Perhaps the sum is not enough,” she said; “he has to get to France. Perhaps we could borrow more until my father comes home.” She looked questioningly at us.

Madame la Vicomtesse was truly a woman of decision. Without more ado she took the bag from Antoinette’s unresisting hands and put it into mine. I was no less astonished than the rest of them.

“Mr. Ritchie will keep this until the negotiations are finished,” said the Vicomtesse.

“Negotiations!” cried Auguste, beside himself. “This is insolence, Madame.”

“Be careful, sir,” I said.

“Auguste!” cried Antoinette, putting her hand on his arm.

“Why did you tell them?” he demanded, turning on her.

“Because I trust them, Auguste,” Antoinette answered. She spoke without anger, as one whose sorrow has put her beyond it. Her speech had a dignity and force which might have awed a worthier man. His disappointment and chagrin brought him beyond bounds.

“You trust them!” he cried, “you trust them when they tell you to give your brother, who is starving and in peril of his life, eight hundred livres? Eight hundred livres, pardieu, and your brother!”

“It is all I have, Auguste,” said his sister, sadly.

“Ha!” he said dramatically, “I see, they seek my destruction. This man”—pointing at me—“is a Federalist, and Madame la Vicomtesse”—he bowed ironically—“is a Royalist.”

“Pish!” said the Vicomtesse, impatiently, “it would be an easy matter to have you sent to the Morro—a word to Monsieur de Carondelet, Auguste. Do you believe for a moment that, in your father’s absence, I would have allowed Antoinette to come here alone? And it was a happy circumstance that I could call on such a man as Mr. Ritchie to come with us.”

“It seems to me that Mr. Ritchie and his friends have already brought sufficient misfortune on the family.”

It was a villanous speech. Antoinette turned away, her shoulders quivering, and I took a step towards him; but Madame la Vicomtesse made a swift gesture, and I stopped, I

know not why. She gave an exclamation so sharp that he flinched physically, as though he had been struck. But it was characteristic of her that when she began to speak, her words cut rather than lashed.

“Auguste de St. Gre,” she said, “I know you. The Tribunal is merciful compared to you. There is no one on earth whom you would not torture for your selfish ends, no one whom you would not sell without compunction for your pleasure. There are things that a woman should not mention, and yet I would tell them without shame to your face were it not for your sister. If it were not for her, I would not have you in my presence. Shall I speak of your career in France? There is Valenciennes, for example—”

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She stopped abruptly. The man was gray, but not on his account did the Vicomtesse stay her speech. She forgot him as though he did not exist, and by one of those swift transitions which thrilled me had gone to the sobbing Antoinette and taken her in her arms, murmuring endearments of which our language is not capable. I, too, forgot Auguste. But no rebuke, however stinging, could make him forget himself, and before we realized it he was talking again. He had changed his tactics.

“This is my home,” he said, “where I might expect shelter and comfort. You make me an outcast.”

Antoinette disengaged herself from Helene with a cry, but he turned away from her and shrugged.

“A stranger would have fared better. Perhaps you will have more consideration for a stranger. There is a French ship at the Terre aux Boeufs in the English Turn, which sails to-night. I appeal to you, Mr. Ritchie,”—he was still talking in French—“I appeal to you, who are a man of affairs,”—and he swept me a bow,—“if a captain would risk taking a fugitive to France for eight hundred livres? Pardieu, I could get no farther than the Balize for that. Monsieur,” he added meaningly, “you have an interest in this. There are two of us to go.”

The amazing effrontery of this move made me gasp. Yet it was neither the Vicomtesse nor myself who answered him. We turned by common impulse to Antoinette, and she was changed. Her breath came quickly, her eyes flashed, her anger made her magnificent.

“It is not true,” she cried, “you know it is not true.”

He lifted his shoulders and smiled.

“You are my brother, and I am ashamed to acknowledge you. I was willing to give my last sou, to sell my belongings, to take from the poor to help you—until you defamed a good man. You cannot make me believe,” she cried, unheeding the color that surged into her cheeks, “you cannot make me believe that he would use this money. You cannot make me believe it.”

“Let us do him the credit of thinking that he means to repay it,” said Auguste.

Antoinette’s eyes filled with tears,—tears of pride, of humiliation, ay, and of an anger of which I had not thought her capable. She was indeed a superb creature then, a personage I had not imagined. Gathering up her gown, she passed Auguste and turned on him swiftly.

“If you were to bring that to him,” she said, pointing to the bag in my hand, “he would not so much as touch it. To-morrow I shall go to the Ursulines, and I thank God I shall

never see you again. I thank God I shall no longer be your sister. Give Monsieur the bundle," she said to the frightened Andre, who still stood by the hedge; "he may need food and clothes for his journey."

She left us. We stood watching her until her gown had disappeared amongst the foliage. Andre came forward and held out the bundle to Auguste, who took it mechanically. Then Madame La Vicomtesse motioned to Andre to leave, and gave me a glance, and it was part of the deep understanding of her I had that I took its meaning. I had my forebodings at what this last conversation with Auguste might bring forth, and I wished heartily that we were rid of him.

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“Monsieur de St. Gre,” I said, “I understood you to say that a ship is lying at the English Turn some five leagues below us, on which you are to take passage at once.”

He turned and glared at me, some devilish retort on his lips which he held back. Suddenly he became suave.

“I shall want two thousand livres Monsieur; it was the sum I asked for.”

“It is not a question of what you asked for,” I answered.

“Since when did Monsieur assume this intimate position in my family?” he said, glancing at the Vicomtesse.

“Monsieur de St. Gre,” I replied with difficulty, “you will confine yourself to the matter in hand. You are in no situation to demand terms; you must take or leave what is offered you. Last night the man called Gignoux, who was of your party, was at the Governor’s house.”

At this he started perceptibly.

“Ha, I thought he was a traitor,” he cried. Strangely enough, he did not doubt my word in this.

“I am surprised that your Father’s house has not been searched this morning,” I continued, astonished at my own moderation. “The sentiments of the Baron de Carondelet are no doubt known to you, and you are aware that your family or your friends cannot save you if you are arrested. You may have this money on two conditions. The first is that you leave the province immediately. The second, that you reveal the whereabouts of Mr. Nicholas Temple.”

“Monsieur is very kind,” he replied, and added the taunt, “and well versed in the conduct of affairs of money.”

“Does Monsieur de St. Gre accept?” I asked.

He threw out his hands with a gesture of resignation.

“Who am I to accept?” he said, “a fugitive, an outcast. And I should like to remind Monsieur that time passes.”

“It is a sensible observation,” said I, meaning that it was the first. His sudden docility made me suspicious. “What preparations have you made to go?”

“They are not elaborate, Monsieur, but they are complete. When I leave you I step into a pirogue which is tied to the river bank.”

“Ah,” I replied. “And Mr. Temple?”

Madame la Vicomtesse smiled, for Auguste was fairly caught. He had not the astuteness to be a rogue; oddly he had the sense to know that he could fool us no longer.

“Temple is at Lamarque’s,” he answered sullenly.

I glanced questioningly at the Vicomtesse.

“Lamarque is an old pensioner of Monsieur de St. Gre’s,” said she; “he has a house and an arpent of land not far below here.”

“Exactly,” said Auguste, “and if Mr. Ritchie believes that he will save money by keeping Mr. Temple in Louisiana instead of giving him this opportunity to escape, it is no concern of mine.”

I reflected a moment on this, for it was another sensible remark.

“It is indeed no concern of yours,” said Madame la Vicomtesse.

He shrugged his shoulders.

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“And now,” he said, “I take it that there are no further conscientious scruples against my receiving this paltry sum.”

“I will go with you to your pirogue,” I answered, “when you embark you shall have it.”

“I, too, will go,” said Madame la Vicomtesse.

“You overwhelm me with civility, Madame,” said the Sieur de St. Gre, bowing low.

“Lead the way, Monsieur,” I said.

He took his bundle, and started off down the garden path with a grand air. I looked at the Vicomtesse inquiringly, and there was laughter in her eyes.

“I must show you the way to Lamarque’s.” And then she whispered, “You have done well, Mr. Ritchie.”

I did not return her look, but waited until she took the path ahead of me. In silence we followed Auguste through the depths of the woods, turning here and there to avoid a fallen tree or a sink-hole where the water still remained. At length we came out in the glare of the sun and crossed the dusty road to the levee bank. Some forty yards below us was the canoe, and we walked to it, still in silence. Auguste flung in his bundle, and turned to us.

“Perhaps Monsieur is satisfied,” he said.

I handed him the bag, and he took it with an elaborate air of thankfulness. Nay, the rascal opened it as if to assure himself that he was not tricked at the last. At the sight of the gold and silver which Antoinette had hastily collected, he turned to Madame la Vicomtesse.

“Should I have the good fortune to meet Monsieur le Vicomte in France, I shall assure him that Madame is in good hands” (he swept an exultant look at me) “and enjoying herself.”

I could have flung him into the river, money-bag and all. But Madame la Vicomtesse made him a courtesy there on the levee bank, and said sweetly:—

“That is very good of you, Auguste.”

“As for you, Monsieur,” he said, and now his voice shook with uncontrolled rage, “I am in no condition to repay your kindnesses. But I have no doubt that you will not object to keeping the miniature a while longer.”

I was speechless with anger and shame, and though I felt the eyes of the Vicomtesse upon me, I dared not look at her. I heard Auguste but indistinctly as he continued:—

“Should you need the frame, Monsieur, you will doubtless find it still with Monsieur Isadore, the Jew, in the Rue Toulouse.” With that he leaped into his boat, seized the paddle, and laughed as he headed into the current. How long I stood watching him as he drifted lazily in the sun I know not, but at length the voice of Madame la Vicomtesse aroused me.

“He is a pleasant person,” she said.

CHAPTER VIII

AT LAMARQUE’S

Until then it seemed as if the sun had gotten into my brain and set it on fire. Her words had the strange effect of clearing my head, though I was still in as sad a predicament as ever I found myself. There was the thing in my pocket, still wrapped in Polly Ann’s handkerchief. I glanced at the Vicomtesse shyly, and turned away again. Her face was all repressed laughter, the expression I knew so well.

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“I think we should feel better in the shade, Mr. Ritchie,” she said in English, and, leaping lightly down from the bank, crossed the road again. I followed her, perforce.

“I will show you the way to Lamarque’s,” she said.

“Madame la Vicomtesse!” I cried.

Had she no curiosity? Was she going to let pass what Auguste had hinted? Lifting up her skirts, she swung round and faced me. In her eyes was a calmness more baffling than the light I had seen there but a moment since. How to begin I knew not, and yet I was launched.

“Madame la Vicomtesse, there was once a certain miniature painted of you.”

“By Boze, Monsieur,” she answered, readily enough. The embarrassment was all on my side. “We spoke of it last evening. I remember well when it was taken. It was the costume I wore at Chantilly, and Monsieur le Prince complimented me, and the next day the painter himself came to our hotel in the Rue de Bretagne and asked the honor of painting me.” She sighed. “Ah, those were happy days! Her Majesty was very angry with me.”

“And why?” I asked, forgetful of my predicament.

“For sending it to Louisiana, to Antoinette.”

“And why did you send it?”

“A whim,” said the Vicomtesse. “I had always written twice a year either to Monsieur de St. Gre or Antoinette, and although I had never seen them, I loved them. Perhaps it was because they had the patience to read my letters and the manners to say they liked them.”

“Surely not, Madame,” I said. “Monsieur de St. Gre spoke often to me of the wonderful pictures you drew of the personages at court.”

Madame la Vicomtesse had an answer on the tip of her tongue. I know now that she spared me.

“And what of this miniature, Monsieur?” she asked. “What became of it after you restored it to its rightful owner?”

I flushed furiously and fumbled in my pocket.

“I obtained it again, Madame,” I said.

“You obtained it!” she cried, I am not sure to this day whether in consternation or jest. In passing, it was not just what I wanted to say.

“I meant to give it you last night,” I said.

“And why did you not?” she demanded severely.

I felt her eyes on me, and it seemed to me as if she were looking into my very soul. Even had it been otherwise, I could not have told her how I had lived with this picture night and day, how I had dreamed of it, how it had been my inspiration and counsel. I drew it from my pocket, wrapped as it was in the handkerchief, and uncovered it with a reverence which she must have marked, for she turned away to pick a yellow flower by the roadside. I thank Heaven that she did not laugh. Indeed, she seemed to be far from laughter.

“You have taken good care of it, Monsieur,” she said. “I thank you.”

“It was not mine, Madame,” I answered.

“And if it had been?” she asked.

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It was a strange prompting.

“If it had been, I could have taken no better care of it,” I answered, and I held it towards her.

She took it simply.

“And the handkerchief?” she said.

“The handkerchief was Polly Ann’s,” I answered.

She stopped to pick a second flower that had grown by the first.

“Who is Polly Ann?” she said.

“When I was eleven years of age and ran away from Temple Bow after my father died, Polly Ann found me in the hills. When she married Tom McChesney they took me across the mountains into Kentucky with them. Polly Ann has been more than a mother to me.”

“Oh!” said Madame la Vicomtesse. Then she looked at me with a stranger expression than I had yet seen in her face. She thrust the miniature in her gown, turned, and walked in silence awhile. Then she said:—

“So Auguste sold it again?”

“Yes,” I said.

“He seems to have found a ready market only in you,” said the Vicomtesse, without turning her head. “Here we are at Lamarque’s.”

What I saw was a low, weather-beaten cabin on the edge of a clearing, and behind it stretched away in prim rows the vegetables which the old Frenchman had planted. There was a little flower garden, too, and an orchard. A path of beaten earth led to the door, which was open. There we paused. Seated at a rude table was Lamarque himself, his hoary head bent over the cards he held in his hand. Opposite him was Mr. Nicholas Temple, in the act of playing the ace of spades. I think that it was the laughter of Madame la Vicomtesse that first disturbed them, and even then she had time to turn to me.

“I like your cousin,” she whispered.

“Is that you, St. Gre?” said Nick. “I wish to the devil you would learn not to sneak. You frighten me. Where the deuce did you go to?”

But Lamarque had seen the lady, stared at her wildly for a moment, and rose, dropping his cards on the floor. He bowed humbly, not without trepidation.

“Madame la Vicomtesse!” he said.

By this time Nick had risen, and he, too, was staring at her. How he managed to appear so well dressed was a puzzle to me.

“Madame,” he said, bowing, “I beg your pardon. I thought you were that—I beg your pardon.”

“I understand your feelings, sir,” answered the Vicomtesse as she courtesied.

“Egad,” said Nick, and looked at her again. “Egad, I’ll be hanged if it’s not—”

It was the first time I had seen the Vicomtesse in confusion. And indeed if it were confusion she recovered instantly.

“You will probably be hanged, sir, if you do not mend your company,” she said. “Do you not think so, Mr. Ritchie?”

“Davy!” he cried. And catching sight of me in the doorway, over her shoulder, “Has he followed me here too?” Running past the Vicomtesse, he seized me in his impulsive way and searched my face. “So you have followed me here, old faithful! Madame,” he added, turning to the Vicomtesse, “there is some excuse for my getting into trouble.”

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“What excuse, Monsieur?” she asked. She was smiling, yet looking at us with shining eyes.

“The pleasure of having Mr. Ritchie get me out,” he answered. “He has never failed me.”

“You are far from being out of this,” I said. “If the Baron de Carondelet does not hang you or put you in the Morro, you will not have me to thank. It will be Madame la Vicomtesse d’Ivry-le-Tour.”

“Madame la Vicomtesse!” exclaimed Nick, puzzled.

“May I present to you, Madame, Mr. Nicholas Temple?” I asked.

Nick bowed, and she courtesied again.

“So Monsieur le Baron is really after us,” said Nick. He opened his eyes, slapped his knee, and laughed. “That may account for the Citizen Captain de St. Gre’s absence,” he said. “By the way, Davy, you haven’t happened by any chance to meet him?”

The Vicomtesse and I exchanged a look of understanding. Relief was plain on her face. It was she who answered.

“We have met him—by chance, Monsieur. He has just left for Terre aux Boeufs.”

“Terre aux Boeufs! What the dev—I beg your pardon, Madame la Vicomtesse, but you give me something of a surprise. Is there another conspiracy at Terre aux Boeufs, or—-does somebody live there who has never before lent Auguste money?”

Madame la Vicomtesse laughed. Then she grew serious again.

“You did not know where he had gone?” she said.

“I did not even know he had gone,” said Nick. “Citizen Lamarque and I were having a little game of piquet—for vegetables. Eh, citizen?”

Madame la Vicomtesse laughed again, and once more the shade of sadness came into her eyes.

“They are the same the world over,” she said,—not to me, nor yet to any one there. And I knew that she was thinking of her own kind in France, who faced the guillotine without sense of danger. She turned to Nick. “You may be interested to know, Mr. Temple,” she added, “that Auguste is on his way to the English Turn to take ship for France.”

Nick regarded her for a moment, and then his face lighted up with that smile which won every one he met, which inevitably made them smile back at him.

“The news is certainly unexpected, Madame,” he said. “But then, after one has travelled much with Auguste it is difficult to take a great deal of interest in him. Am I to be sent to France, too?” he asked.

“Not if it can be helped,” replied the Vicomtesse, seriously. “Mr. Ritchie will tell you, however, that you are in no small danger. Doubtless you know it. Monsieur le Baron de Carondelet considers that the intrigues of the French Revolutionists in Louisiana have already robbed him of several years of his life. He is not disposed to be lenient towards persons connected with that cause.”

“What have you been doing since you arrived here on this ridiculous mission?” I demanded impatiently.

“My cousin is a narrow man, Madame la Vicomtesse,” said Nick. “We enjoy ourselves in different ways. I thought there might be some excitement in this matter, and I was sadly mistaken.”

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“It is not over yet,” said the Vicomtesse.

“And Davy,” continued Nick, bowing to me, “gets his pleasures and excitement by extracting me from my various entanglements. Well, there is not much to tell. St. Gre and I were joined above Natchez by that little pig, Citizen Gignoux, and we shot past De Lemos in the night. Since then we have been permitted to sleep—no more—at various plantations. We have been waked up at barbarous hours in the morning and handed on, as it were. They were all fond of us, but likewise they were all afraid of the Baron. What day is to-day? Monday? Then it was on Saturday that we lost Gignoux.”

“I have reason to think that he has already sold out to the Baron,” I put in.

“Eh?”

“I saw him in communication with the police at the Governor’s hotel last night,” I answered.

Nick was silent for a moment.

“Well,” he said, “that may make some excitement.” Then he laughed. “I wonder why Auguste didn’t think of doing that,” he said. “And now, what?”

“How did you get to this house?” I said.

“We came down on Saturday night, after we had lost Gignoux above the city.”

“Do you know where you are?” I asked.

“Not I,” said Nick. “I have been playing piquet with Lamarque most of the time since I arrived. He is one of the pleasantest men I have met in Louisiana, although a little taciturn, as you perceive, and more than a little deaf. I think he does not like Auguste. He seems to have known him in his youth.”

Madame la Vicomtesse looked at him with interest.

“You are at Les Iles, Nick,” I said; “you are on Monsieur de St. Gre’s plantation, and within a quarter of a mile of his house.”

His face became grave all at once. He seized me by both shoulders, and looked into my face.

“You say that we are at Les Iles?” he repeated slowly.

I nodded, seeing the deception which Auguste had evidently practised in order to get him here. Then Nick dropped his arms, went to the door, and stood for a long time with

his back turned to us, looking out over the fields. When finally he spoke it was in the tone he used in anger.

“If I had him now, I think I would kill him,” he said.

Auguste had deluded him in other things, had run away and deserted him in a strange land. But this matter of bringing him to Les Iles was past pardon. It was another face he turned to the Vicomtesse, a stronger face, a face ennobled by a just anger.

“Madame la Vicomtesse,” he said, “I have a vague notion that you are related to Monsieur de St. Gre. I give you my word of honor as a gentleman that I had no thought of trespassing upon him in any way.”

“Mr. Temple, we were so sure of that—Mr. Ritchie and I—that we should not have sought for you here otherwise,” she replied quickly. Then she glanced at me as though seeking my approval for her next move. It was characteristic of her that she did not now shirk a task imposed by her sense of duty. “We have little time, Mr. Temple, and much to say. Perhaps you will excuse us, Lamarque,” she added graciously, in French.

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“Madame la Vicomtesse!” said the old man. And, with the tact of his race, he bowed and retired. The Vicomtesse seated herself on one of the rude chairs, and looked at Nick curiously. There was no such thing as embarrassment in her manner, no trace of misgiving that she would not move properly in the affair. Knowing Nick as I did, the difficulty of the task appalled me, for no man was likelier than he to fly off at a misplaced word.

Her beginning was so bold that I held my breath, knowing full well as I did that she had chosen the very note.

“Sit down, Mr. Temple,” she said. “I wish to speak to you about your mother.”

He stopped like a man who had been struck, straightened, and stared at her as though he had not taken her meaning. Then he swung on me.

“Your mother is in New Orleans,” I said. “I would have told you in Louisville had you given me the chance.”

“It is an interesting piece of news, David,” he answered, “which you might have spared me. Mrs. Temple did not think herself necessary to my welfare when I was young, and now I have learned to live without her.”

“Is there no such thing as expiation, Monsieur?” said the Vicomtesse.

“Madame,” he said, “she made me what I am, and when I might have redeemed myself she came between me and happiness.”

“Monsieur,” said the Vicomtesse, “have you ever considered her sufferings?”

He looked at the Vicomtesse with a new interest. She was not so far beyond his experience as mine.

“Her sufferings?” he repeated, and smiled.

“Madame la Vicomtesse should know them,” I interrupted; and without heeding her glance of protest I continued, “It is she who has cared for Mrs. Temple.”

“You, Madame!” he exclaimed.

“Do not deny your own share in it, Mr. Ritchie,” she answered. “As for me, Monsieur,” she went on, turning to Nick, “I have done nothing that was not selfish. I have been in the world, I have lived my life, misfortunes have come upon me too. My visits to your mother have been to me a comfort, a pleasure,—for she is a rare person.”

“I have never found her so, Madame,” he said briefly.

“I am sure it is your misfortune rather than your fault, Mr. Temple. It is because you do not know her now.”

Again he looked at me, puzzled, uneasy, like a man who would run if he could. But by a kind of fascination his eyes went back to this woman who dared a subject sore to the touch—who pressed it gently, but with determination, never doubting her powers, yet with a kindness and sympathy of tone which few women of the world possess. The Vicomtesse began to speak again, evenly, gently.

“Mr. Temple,” said she, “I am merely going to tell you some things which I am sure you do not know, and when I have finished I shall not appeal to you. It would be useless for me to try to influence you, and from what Mr. Ritchie and others have told me of your character I am sure that no influence will be necessary. And,” she added, with a smile, “it would be much more comfortable for us both if you sat down.”

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He obeyed her without a word. No wonder Madame la Vicomtesse had had an influence at court.

“There!” she said. “If any reference I am about to make gives you pain, I am sorry.” She paused briefly. “After Mr. Ritchie took your mother from here to New Orleans, some five years ago, she rented a little house in the Rue Bourbon with a screen of yellow and red tiles at the edge of the roof. It is on the south side, next to the corner of the Rue St. Philippe. There she lives absolutely alone, except for a servant. Mr. Clark, who has charge of her affairs, was the only person she allowed to visit her. For her pride, however misplaced, and for her spirit we must all admire her. The friend who discovered where she was, who went to her and implored Mrs. Temple to let her stay, she refused.”

“The friend?” he repeated in a low tone. I scarcely dared to glance at the Vicomtesse.

“Yes, it was Antoinette,” she answered. He did not reply, but his eyes fell. “Antoinette went to her, would have comforted her, would have cared for her, but your mother sent her away. For five years she has lived there, Mr. Temple, alone with her past, alone with her sorrow and remorse. You must draw the picture for yourself. If the world has a more terrible punishment, I have not heard of it. And when, some months ago, I came, and Antoinette sent me to her—”

“Sent you to her!” he said, raising his head quickly.

“Under another name than my own,” Helene continued, apparently taking no notice of his interruption. She leaned toward him and her voice faltered. “I found your mother dying.”

He said nothing, but got to his feet and walked slowly to the door, where he stood looking out again. I felt for him, I would have gone to him then had it not been for the sense in me that Helene did not wish it. As for Helene, she sat waiting for him to turn back to her, and at length he did.

“Yes?” he said.

“It is her heart, Mr. Temple, that we fear the most. Last night I thought the end had come. It cannot be very far away now. Sorrow and remorse have killed her, Monsieur. The one thing that she has prayed for through the long nights is that she might see you once again and obtain your forgiveness. God Himself does not withhold forgiveness, Mr. Temple,” said the Vicomtesse, gently. “Shall any of us presume to?”

A spasm of pain crossed his face, and then his expression hardened.

“I might have been a useful man,” he said; “she ruined my life—”

“And you will allow her to ruin the rest of it?” asked the Vicomtesse.

He stared at her.

“If you do not go to her and forgive her, you will remember it until you die,” she said.

He sank down on the chair opposite to her, his head bowed into his hands, his elbows on the table among the cards. At length I went and laid my hands upon his shoulder, and at my touch he started. Then he did a singular thing, an impulsive thing, characteristic of the old Nick I had known. He reached across the table and seized the hand of Madame la Vicomtesse. She did not resist, and her smile I shall always remember. It was the smile of a woman who has suffered, and understands.

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“I will go to her, Madame!” he said, springing to his feet. “I will go to her. I—I was wrong.”

She rose, too, he still clinging to her hand, she still unresisting. His eye fell upon me.

“Where is my hat, Davy?” he asked.

The Vicomtesse withdrew her hand and looked at me.

“Alas, it is not quite so simple as that, Mr. Temple,” she said; “Monsieur de Carondelet has first to be reckoned with.”

“She is dying, you say? then I will go to her. After that Monsieur de Carondelet may throw me into prison, may hang me, may do anything he chooses. But I will go to her.”

I glanced anxiously at the Vicomtesse, well knowing how wilful he was when aroused. Admiration was in her eyes, seeing that he was heedless of his own danger.

“You would not get through the gates of the city. Monsieur le Baron requires passports now,” she said.

At that he began to pace the little room, his hands clenched.

“I could use your passport, Davy,” he cried. “Let me have it.”

“Pardon me, Mr. Temple, I do not think you could,” said the Vicomtesse. I flushed. I suppose the remark was not to be resisted.

“Then I will go to-night,” he said, with determination. “It will be no trouble to steal into the city. You say the house has yellow and red tiles, and is near the Rue St. Philippe?”

Helene laid her fingers on his arm.

“Listen, Monsieur, there is a better way,” she said. “Monsieur le Baron is doubtless very angry with you, and I am sure that this is chiefly because he does not know you. For instance, if some one were to tell him that you are a straightforward, courageous young man, a gentleman with an unquenchable taste for danger, that you are not a low-born adventurer and intriguer, that you have nothing in particular against his government, he might not be quite so angry. Pardon me if I say that he is not disposed to take your expedition any more seriously than is your own Federal government. The little Baron is irascible, choleric, stern, or else good-natured, good-hearted, and charitable, just as one happens to take him. As we say in France, it is not well to strike flint and steel in his presence. He might blow up and destroy one. Suppose some one were to go to Monsieur de Carondelet and tell him what a really estimable person you are, and assure him that you will go quietly out of his province at the first opportunity, and be good, so

far as he is concerned, forever after? Mark me, I merely say *suppose*. I do not know how far things have gone, or what he may have heard. But suppose a person whom I have reason to believe he likes and trusts and respects, a person who understands his vagaries, should go to him on such an errand."

"And where is such a person to be found," said Nick, amused in spite of himself.

Madame la Vicomtesse courtesied.

"Monsieur, she is before you," she said.

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“Egad,” he cried, “do you mean to say, Madame, that you will go to the Baron on my behalf?”

“As soon as I ever get to town,” she said. “He will have to be waked from his siesta, and he does not like that.”

“But he will forgive you,” said Nick, quick as a flash.

“I have reason to believe he will,” said Madame la Vicomtesse.

“Faith,” cried Nick, “he would not be flesh and blood if he didn’t.”

At that the Vicomtesse laughed, and her eye rested judicially on me. I was standing rather glumly, I fear, in the corner.

“Are you going to take him with you?” said Nick.

“I was thinking of it,” said the Vicomtesse. “Mr. Ritchie knows you, and he is such a reliable and reputable person.”

Nick bowed.

“You should have seen him marching in a Jacobin procession, Madame,” he said.

“He follows his friends into strange places,” she retorted.

“And now, Mr. Temple,” she added, “may we trust you to stay here with Lamarque until you have word from us?”

“You know I cannot stay here,” he cried.

“And why not, Monsieur?”

“If I were captured here, I should get Monsieur de St. Gre into trouble; and besides,” he said, with a touch of coldness, “I cannot be beholden to Monsieur de St. Gre. I cannot remain on his land.”

“As for getting Monsieur de St. Gre into trouble, his own son could not involve him with the Baron,” answered Madame la Vicomtesse. “And it seems to me, Monsieur, that you are already so far beholden to Monsieur de St. Gre that you cannot quibble about going a little more into his debt. Come, Mr. Temple, how has Monsieur de St. Gre ever offended you?”

“Madame—” he began.

“Monsieur,” she said, with an air not to be denied, “I believe I can discern a point of honor as well as you. I fail to see that you have a case.”

He was indeed no match for her. He turned to me appealingly, his brows bent, but I had no mind to meddle. He swung back to her.

“But Madame—!” he cried.

She was arranging the cards neatly on the table.

“Monsieur, you are tiresome,” she said. “What is it now?”

He took a step toward her, speaking in a low tone, his voice shaking. But, true to himself, he spoke plainly. As for me, I looked on frightened,—as though watching a contest,—almost agape to see what a clever woman could do.

“There is—Mademoiselle de St. Gre—”

“Yes, there is Mademoiselle de St. Gre,” repeated the Vicomtesse, toying with the cards.

His face lighted, though his lips twitched with pain.

“She is still—”

“She is still Mademoiselle de St. Gre, Monsieur, if that is what you mean.”

“And what will she think if I stay here?”

“Ah, do you care what she thinks, Mr. Temple?” said the Vicomtesse, raising her head quickly. “From what I have heard, I should not have thought you could.”

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“God help me,” he answered simply, “I do care.”

Helene’s eyes softened as she looked at him, and my pride in him was never greater than at that moment.

“Mr. Temple,” she said gently, “remain where you are and have faith in us. I begin to see now why you are so fortunate in your friends.” Her glance rested for a brief instant on me. “Mr. Ritchie and I will go to New Orleans, talk to the Baron, and send Andre at once with a message. If it is in our power, you shall see your mother very soon.”

She held out her hand to him, and he bent and kissed it reverently, with an ease I envied. He followed us to the door. And when the Vicomtesse had gone a little way down the path she looked at him over her shoulder.

“Do not despair, Mr. Temple,” she said.

It was an answer to a yearning in his face. He gripped me by the shoulders.

“God bless you, Davy,” he whispered, and added, “God bless you both.”

I overtook her where the path ran into the forest’s shade, and for a long while I walked after her, not breaking her silence, my eyes upon her, a strange throbbing in my forehead which I did not heed. At last, when the perfumes of the flowers told us we were nearing the garden, she turned to me.

“I like Mr. Temple,” she said, again.

“He is an honest gentleman,” I answered.

“One meets very few of them,” she said, speaking in a low voice. “You and I will go to the Governor. And after that, have you any idea where you will go?”

“No,” I replied, troubled by her regard.

“Then I will tell you. I intend to send you to Madame Gravois’s, and she will compel you to go to bed and rest. I do not mean to allow you to kill yourself.”

CHAPTER IX

MONSIEUR LE BARON

The sun beat down mercilessly on thatch and terrace, the yellow walls flung back the quivering heat, as Madame la Vicomtesse and I walked through the empty streets towards the Governor’s house. We were followed by Andre and Madame’s maid. The

sleepy orderly started up from under the archway at our approach, bowed profoundly to Madame, looked askance at me, and declared, with a thousand regrets, that Monsieur le Baron was having his siesta.

“Then you will wake him,” said Madame la Vicomtesse.

Wake Monsieur le Baron! Bueno Dios, did Madame understand what it meant to wake his Excellency? His Excellency would at first be angry, no doubt. Angry? As an Andalusian bull, Madame. Once, when his Excellency had first come to the province, he, the orderly, had presumed to awake him.

“Assez!” said Madame, so suddenly that the man straightened and looked at her again. “You will wake Monsieur le Baron, and tell him that Madame la Vicomtesse d’Ivry-le-Tour has something of importance to say to him.”

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Madame had the air, and a title carried with a Spanish soldier in New Orleans in those days. The orderly fairly swept the ground and led us through a court where the sun drew bewildering hot odors from the fruits and flowers, into a darkened room which was the Baron's cabinet. I remember it vaguely, for my head was hot and throbbing from my exertions in such a climate. It was a new room,—the hotel being newly built,—with white walls, a picture of his Catholic Majesty and the royal arms of Spain, a map of Louisiana, another of New Orleans fortified, some walnut chairs, a desk with ink and sand and a seal, and a window, the closed lattice shutters of which showed streaks of light green light. These doubtless opened on the Royal Road and looked across the levee esplanade on the waters of the Mississippi. Madame la Vicomtesse seated herself, and with a gesture which was an order bade me do likewise.

"He will be angry, the dear Baron," she said. "He is harassed to death with republics. No offence, Mr. Ritchie. He is up at dawn looking to the forts and palisades to guard against such foolish enterprises as this of Mr. Temple's. And to be waked out of a well-earned siesta—to save a gentleman who has come here to make things unpleasant for him—is carrying a joke a little far. Mais—que voulez-vous?"

She gave a little shrug to her slim shoulders as she smiled at me, and she seemed not a whit disturbed concerning the conversation with his Excellency. I wondered whether this were birth, or training, or both, or a natural ability to cope with affairs. The women of her order had long been used to intercede with sovereigns, to play a part in matters of state. Suddenly I became aware that she was looking at me.

"What are you thinking of?" she demanded, and continued without waiting for a reply, "you strange man."

"I was thinking how odd it was," I replied, "that I should have known you all these years by a portrait, that we should finally be thrown together, and that you should be so exactly like the person I had supposed you to be."

She lowered her eyes, but she did not seem to take offence. I meant none.

"And you," she answered, "are continually reminding me of an Englishman I knew when I was a girl. He was a very queer person to be attached to the Embassy,—not a courtier, but a serious, literal person like you, Mr. Ritchie, and he resembled you very much. I was very fond of him."

"And—what became of him?" I asked. Other questions rose to my lips, but I put them down.

"I will tell you," she answered, bending forward a little. "He did something which I believe you might have done. A certain Marquis spoke lightly of a lady, an

Englishwoman at our court, and my Englishman ran him through one morning at Versailles."

She paused, and I saw that her breath was coming more quickly at the remembrance.

"And then?"

"He fled to England. He was a younger son, and poor. But his King heard of the affair, had it investigated, and restored him to the service. I have never seen him since," she said, "but I have often thought of him. There," she added, after a silence, with a lightness which seemed assumed, "I have given you a romance. How long the Baron takes to dress!"

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At that moment there were footsteps in the court-yard, and the orderly appeared at the door, saluting, and speaking in Spanish.

“His Excellency the Governor!”

We rose, and Madame was courtesying and I was bowing to the little man. He was in uniform, his face perspiring in the creases, his plump calves stretching his white stockings to the full. Madame extended her hand and he kissed it, albeit he did not bend easily. He spoke in French, and his voice betrayed the fact that his temper was near slipping its leash. The Baron was a native of Flanders.

“To what happy circumstance do I owe the honor of this visit, Madame la Vicomtesse?” he asked.

“To a woman’s whim, Monsieur le Baron,” she answered, “for a man would not have dared to disturb you. May I present to your Excellency, Mr. David Ritchie of Kentucky?”

His Excellency bowed stiffly, looked at me with no pretence of pleasure, and I had had sufficient dealings with men to divine that, in the coming conversation, the overflow of his temper would be poured upon me. His first sensation was surprise.

“An American!” he said, in a tone that implied reproach to Madame la Vicomtesse for having fallen into such company. “Ah,” he cried, breathing hard in the manner of stout people, “I remember you came down with Monsieur Vigo, Monsieur, did you not?”

It was my turn to be surprised. If the Baron took a like cognizance of all my countrymen who came to New Orleans, he was a busy man indeed.

“Yes, your Excellency,” I answered.

“And you are a Federalist?” he said, though petulantly.

“I am, your Excellency.”

“Is your nation to overrun the earth?” said the Baron. “Every morning when I ride through the streets it seems to me that more Americans have come. Pardieu, I declare every day that, if it were not for the Americans, I should have ten years more of life ahead of me.” I could not resist the temptation to glance at Madame la Vicomtesse. Her eyes, half closed, betrayed an amusement that was scarce repressed.

“Come, Monsieur le Baron,” she said, “you and I have like beliefs upon most matters. We have both suffered at the hands of people who have mistaken a fiend for a Lady.”

“You would have me believe, Madame,” the Baron put in, with a wit I had not thought in him, “that Mr. Ritchie knows a lady when he sees one. I can readily believe it.”

Madame laughed.

“He at least has a negative knowledge,” she replied. “And he has brought into New Orleans no coins, boxes, or clocks against your Excellency’s orders with the image and superscription of the Goddess in whose name all things are done. He has not sung ‘Ca Ira’ at the theatres, and he detests the tricolored cockades as much as you do.”

The Baron laughed in spite of himself, and began to thaw. There was a little more friendliness in his next glance at me.

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“What images have you brought in, Mr. Ritchie?” he asked. “We all worship the sex in some form, however misplaced our notions of it.”

There is not the least doubt that, for the sake of the Vicomtesse, he was trying to be genial, and that his remark was a purely random one. But the roots of my hair seemed to have taken fire. I saw the Baron as in a glass, darkly. But I kept my head, principally because the situation had elements of danger.

“The image of Madame la Vicomtesse, Monsieur,” I said.

“Dame!” exclaimed his Excellency, eying me with a new interest, “I did not suspect you of being a courtier.”

“No more he is, Monsieur le Baron,” said the Vicomtesse, “for he speaks the truth.”

His Excellency looked blank. As for me, I held my breath, wondering what coup Madame was meditating.

“Mr. Ritchie brought down from Kentucky a miniature of me by Boze, that was painted in a costume I once wore at Chantilly.”

“Comment! diable,” exclaimed the Baron. “And how did such a thing get into Kentucky, Madame?”

“You have brought me to the point,” she replied, “which is no small triumph for your Excellency. Mr. Ritchie bought the miniature from that most estimable of my relations, Monsieur Auguste de St. Gre.”

The Baron sat down and began to fan himself. He even grew a little purple. He looked at Madame, sputtered, and I began to think that, if he didn’t relieve himself, his head might blow off. As for the Vicomtesse, she wore an ingenuous air of detachment, and seemed supremely unconscious of the volcano by her side.

“So, Madame,” cried the Governor at length, after I know not what repressions, “you have come here in behalf of that—of Auguste de St. Gre!”

“So far as I am concerned, Monsieur,” answered the Vicomtesse, calmly, “you may hang Auguste, put him in prison, drown him, or do anything you like with him.”

“God help me,” said the poor man, searching for his handkerchief, and utterly confounded, “why is it you have come to me, then? Why did you wake me up?” he added, so far forgetting himself.

“I came in behalf of the gentleman who had the indiscretion to accompany Auguste to Louisiana,” she continued, “in behalf of Mr. Nicholas Temple, who is a cousin of Mr. Ritchie.”

The Baron started abruptly from his chair.

“I have heard of him,” he cried; “Madame knows where he is?”

“I know where he is. It is that which I came to tell your Excellency.”

“Hein!” said his Excellency, again nonplussed. “You came to tell me where he is? And where the—the other one is?”

“Parfaitement,” said Madame. “But before I tell you where they are, I wish to tell you something about Mr. Temple.”

“Madame, I know something of him already,” said the Baron, impatiently.

“Ah,” said she, “from Gignoux. And what do you hear from Gignoux?”

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This was another shock, under which the Baron fairly staggered.

“Diable! is Madame la Vicomtesse in the plot?” he cried. “What does Madame know of Gignoux?”

Madame’s manner suddenly froze.

“I am likely to be in the plot, Monsieur,” she said. “I am likely to be in a plot which has for its furtherance that abominable anarchy which deprived me of my home and estates, of my relatives and friends and my sovereign.”

“A thousand pardons, Madame la Vicomtesse,” said the Baron, more at sea than ever. “I have had much to do these last years, and the heat and the Republicans have got on my temper. Will Madame la Vicomtesse pray explain?”

“I was about to do so when your Excellency interrupted,” said Madame. “You see before you Mr. Ritchie, barrister, of Louisville, Kentucky, whose character of sobriety, dependence, and ability” (there was a little gleam in her eye as she gave me this array of virtues) “can be perfectly established. When he came to New Orleans some years ago he brought letters to Monsieur de St. Gre from Monsieur Gratiot and Colonel Chouteau of St. Louis, and he is known to Mr. Clark and to Monsieur Vigo. He is a Federalist, as you know, and has no sympathy with the Jacobins.”

“Eh bien, Mr. Ritchie,” said the Baron, getting his breath, “you are fortunate in your advocate. Madame la Vicomtesse neglected to say that she was your friend, the greatest of all recommendations in my eyes.”

“You are delightful, Monsieur le Baron,” said the Vicomtesse.

“Perhaps Mr. Ritchie can tell me something of this expedition,” said the Baron, his eyes growing smaller as he looked at me.

“Willingly,” I answered. “Although I know that your Excellency is well informed, and that Monsieur Vigo has doubtless given you many of the details that I know.”

He interrupted me with a grunt.

“You Americans are clever people, Monsieur,” he said; “you contrive to combine shrewdness with frankness.”

“If I had anything to hide from your Excellency, I should not be here,” I answered. “The expedition, as you know, has been as much of a farce as Citizen Genet’s commissions. But it has been a sad farce to me, inasmuch as it involves the honor of my old friend and Colonel, General Clark, and the safety of my cousin, Mr. Temple.”

“So you were with Clark in Illinois?” said the Baron, craftily. “Pardon me, Mr. Ritchie, but I should have said that you are too young.”

“Monsieur Vigo will tell you that I was the drummer boy of the regiment, and a sort of ward of the Colonel’s. I used to clean his guns and cook his food.”

“And you did not see fit to follow your Colonel to Louisiana?” said his Excellency, for he had been trained in a service of suspicion.

“General Clark is not what he was,” I replied, chafing a little at his manner; “your Excellency knows that, and I put loyalty to my government before friendship. And I might remind your Excellency that I am neither an adventurer nor a fool.”

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The little Baron surprised me by laughing. His irritability and his good nature ran in streaks.

“There is no occasion to, Mr. Ritchie,” he answered. “I have seen something of men in my time. In which category do you place your cousin, Mr. Temple?”

“If a love of travel and excitement and danger constitutes an adventurer, Mr. Temple is such,” I said. “Fortunately the main spur of the adventurer’s character is lacking in his case. I refer to the desire for money. Mr. Temple has an annuity from his father’s estate in Charleston which puts him beyond the pale of the fortune-seeker, and I firmly believe that if your Excellency sees fit to allow him to leave the province, and if certain disquieting elements can be removed from his life” (I glanced at the Vicomtesse), “he will settle down and become a useful citizen of the United States. As much as I dislike to submit to a stranger private details in the life of a member of my family, I feel that I must tell your Excellency something of Mr. Temple’s career, in order that you may know that restlessness and the thirst for adventure were the only motives that led him into this foolish undertaking.”

“Pray proceed, Mr. Ritchie,” said the Baron.

I was surprised not to find him more restless, and in addition the glance of approbation which the Vicomtesse gave me spurred me on. However distasteful, I had the sense to see that I must hold nothing back of which his Excellency might at any time become cognizant, and therefore I told him as briefly as possible Nick’s story, leaving out only the episode with Antoinette. When I came to the relation of the affairs which occurred at Les Iles five years before and told his Excellency that Mrs. Temple had since been living in the Rue Bourbon as Mrs. Clive, unknown to her son, the Baron broke in upon me.

“So the mystery of that woman is cleared at last,” he said, and turned to the Vicomtesse. “I have learned that you have been a frequent visitor, Madame.”

“Not a sparrow falls to the ground in Louisiana that your Excellency does not hear of it,” she answered.

“And Gignoux?” he said, speaking to me again.

“As I told you, Monsieur le Baron,” I answered, “I have come to New Orleans at a personal sacrifice to induce my cousin to abandon this matter, and I went out last evening to try to get word of him.” This was not strictly true. “I saw Monsieur Gignoux in conference with some of your officers who came out of this hotel.”

“You have sharp eyes, Monsieur,” he remarked.

“I suspected the man when I met him in Kentucky,” I continued, not heeding this. “Monsieur Vigo himself distrusted him. To say that Gignoux were deep in the councils of

the expedition, that he held a commission from Citizen Genet, I realize will have no weight with your Excellency,—provided the man is in the secret service of his Majesty the King of Spain."

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“Mr. Ritchie,” said the Baron, “you are a young man and I an old one. If I tell you that I have a great respect for your astuteness and ability, do not put it down to flattery. I wish that your countrymen, who are coming down the river like driftwood, more resembled you. As for Citizen Gignoux,” he went on, smiling, and wiping his face, “let not your heart be troubled. His Majesty’s minister at Philadelphia has written me letters on the subject. I am contemplating for Monsieur Gignoux a sea voyage to Havana, and he is at present partaking of my hospitality in the calabozo.”

“In the calabozo!” I cried, overwhelmed at this example of Spanish justice and omniscience.

“Precisely,” said the Baron, drumming with his fingers on his fat knee. “And now,” he added, “perhaps Madame la Vicomtesse is ready to tell me of the whereabouts of Mr. Temple and her estimable cousin, Auguste. It may interest her to know why I have allowed them their liberty so long.”

“A point on which I have been consumed with curiosity—since I have begun to tremble at the amazing thoroughness of your Excellency’s system,” said the Vicomtesse.

His Excellency scarcely looked the tyrant as he sat before us, with his calves crossed and his hands folded on his waistcoat and his little black eyes twinkling.

“It is because,” he said, “there are many French planters in the province bitten with the three horrors” (he meant Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity), “I sent six to Havana; and if Monsieur Etienne de Bore had not, in the nick of time for him, discovered how to make sugar he would have gone, too. I had an idea that the Sieur de St. Gre and Mr. Temple might act as a bait to reveal the disease in some others. Ha, I am cleverer than you thought, Mr. Ritchie. You are surprised?”

I was surprised, and showed it.

“Come,” he said, “you are astute. Why did you think I left them at liberty?”

“I thought your Excellency believed them to be harmless, as they are,” I replied.

He turned again to the Vicomtesse. “You have picked up a diplomat, Madame. I must confess that I misjudged him when you introduced him to me. And again, where are Mr. Temple and your estimable cousin? Shall I tell you? They are at old Lamarque’s, on the plantation of Philippe de St. Gre.”

“They were, your Excellency,” said the Vicomtesse.

“Eh?” exclaimed the Baron, jumping.

“Mademoiselle de St. Gre has given her brother eight hundred livres, and he is probably by this time on board a French ship at the English Turn. He is very badly frightened. I will give your Excellency one more surprise.”

“Madame la Vicomtesse,” said the Baron, “I have heard that, but for your coolness and adroitness, Monsieur le Vicomte, your husband, and several other noblemen and their ladies and some of her Majesty’s letters and jewels would never have gotten out of France. I take this opportunity of saying that I have the greatest respect for your intelligence. Now what is the surprise?”

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“That your Excellency intended that both Mr. Temple and Auguste de St. Gre were to escape on that ship.”

“Mille tonneres,” exclaimed the Baron, staring at her, and straightway he fell into a fit of laughter that left him coughing and choking and perspiring as only a man in his condition of flesh can perspire. To say that I was bewildered by this last evidence of the insight of the woman beside me would be to put it mildly. The Vicomtesse sat quietly watching him, the wonted look of repressed laughter on her face, and by degrees his Excellency grew calm again.

“Mon dieu,” said he, “I always like to cross swords with you, Madame la Vicomtesse, yet this encounter has been more pleasurable than any I have had since I came to Louisiana. But, diable,” he cried, “just as I was congratulating myself that I was to have one American the less, you come and tell me that he has refused to flee. Out of consideration for the character and services of Monsieur Philippe de St. Gre I was willing to let them both escape. But now?”

“Mr. Temple is not known in New Orleans except to the St. Gre family,” said the Vicomtesse. “He is a man of honor. Suppose Mr. Ritchie were to bring him to your Excellency, and he were to give you his word that he would leave the province at the first opportunity? He now wishes to see his mother before she dies, and it was as much as we could do this morning to persuade him from going to her openly in the face of arrest.”

But the Baron was old in a service which did not do things hastily.

“He is well enough where he is for to-day,” said his Excellency, resuming his official manner. “To-night after dark I will send down an officer and have him brought before me. He will not then be seen in custody by any one, and provided I am satisfied with him he may go to the Rue Bourbon.”

The little Baron rose and bowed to the Vicomtesse to signify that the audience was ended, and he added, as he kissed her hand, “Madame la Vicomtesse, it is a pleasure to be able to serve such a woman as you.”

CHAPTER X

THE SCOURGE

As we went through the court I felt as though I had been tied to a string, suspended in the air, and spun. This was undoubtedly due to the heat. And after the astonishing conversation from which we had come, my admiration for the lady beside me was magnified to a veritable awe. We reached the archway. Madame la Vicomtesse held me lightly by the edge of my coat, and I stood looking down at her.

“Wait a minute, Mr. Ritchie,” she said, glancing at the few figures hurrying across the Place d’Armes; “those are only Americans, and they are too busy to see us standing here. What do you propose to do now?”

“We must get word to Nick as we promised, that he may know what to expect,” I replied. “Suppose we go to Monsieur de St. Gre’s house and write him a letter?”

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“No,” said the Vicomtesse, with decision, “I am going to Mrs. Temple’s. I shall write the letter from there and send it by Andre, and you will go direct to Madame Gravois’s.”

Her glance rested anxiously upon my face, and there came an expression in her eyes which disturbed me strangely. I had not known it since the days when Polly Ann used to mother me. But I did not mean to give up.

“I am not tired, Madame la Vicomtesse,” I answered, “and I will go with you to Mrs. Temple’s.”

“Give me your hand,” she said, and smiled. “Andre and my maid are used to my vagaries, and your own countrymen will not mind. Give me your hand, Mr. Ritchie.”

I gave it willingly enough, with a thrill as she took it between her own. The same anxious look was in her eyes, and not the least embarrassment.

“There, it is hot and dry, as I feared,” she said, “and you seem flushed.” She dropped my hand, and there was a touch of irritation in her voice as she continued: “You seemed fairly sensible when I first met you last night, Mr. Ritchie. Are you losing your sanity? Do you not realize that you cannot take liberties with this climate? Do as I say, and go to Madame Gravois’s at once.”

“It is my pleasure to obey you, Madame la Vicomtesse,” I answered, “but I mean to go with you as far as Mrs. Temple’s, to see how she fares. She may be—worse.”

“That is no reason why you should kill yourself,” said Madame, coldly. “Will you not do as I say?”

“I think that I should go to Mrs. Temple’s,” I answered.

She did not reply to that, letting down her veil impatiently, with a deftness that characterized all her movements. Without so much as asking me to come after her, she reached the banquette, and I walked by her side through the streets, silent and troubled by her displeasure. My pride forbade me to do as she wished. It was the hottest part of a burning day, and the dome of the sky was like a brazen bell above us. We passed the calabozo with its iron gates and tiny grilled windows pierced in the massive walls, behind which Gignoux languished, and I could not repress a smile as I thought of him. Even the Spaniards sometimes happened upon justice. In the Rue Bourbon the little shops were empty, the doorstep where my merry fiddler had played vacant, and the very air seemed to simmer above the honeycombed tiles. I knocked at the door, once, twice. There was no answer. I looked at Madame la Vicomtesse, and knocked again so loudly that the little tailor across the street, his shirt opened at the neck, flung out his shutter. Suddenly there was a noise within, the door was opened, and Lindy stood before us, in the darkened room, with terror in her eyes.

“Oh, Marse Dave,” she cried, as we entered, “oh, Madame, I’se so glad you’se come, I’se so glad you’se come.”

She burst into a flood of tears. And Madame la Vicomtesse, raising her veil, seized the girl by the arm.

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“What is it?” she said. “What is the matter, Lindy?”

Madame’s touch seemed to steady her.

“Miss Sally,” she moaned, “Miss Sally done got de yaller fever.”

There was a moment’s silence, for we were both too appalled by the news to speak.

“Lindy, are you sure?” said the Vicomtesse.

“Yass’m, yass’m,” Lindy sobbed, “I reckon I’se done seed ’nuf of it, Mistis.” And she went into a hysterical fit of weeping.

The Vicomtesse turned to her own frightened servants in the doorway, bade Andre in French to run for Dr. Perrin, and herself closed the battened doors. There was a moment when her face as I saw it was graven on my memory, reflecting a knowledge of the evils of this world, a spirit above and untouched by them, a power to accept what life may bring with no outward sign of pleasure or dismay. Doubtless thus she had made King and Cardinal laugh, doubtless thus, ministering to those who crossed her path, she had met her own calamities. Strangest of all was the effect she had upon Lindy, for the girl ceased crying as she watched her.

Madame la Vicomtesse turned to me.

“You must go at once,” she said. “When you get to Madame Gravois’s, write to Mr. Temple. I will send Andre to you there.”

She started for the bedroom door, Lindy making way for her. I scarcely knew what I did as I sprang forward and took the Vicomtesse by the arm.

“Where are you going?” I cried. “You cannot go in there! You cannot go in there!”

It did not seem strange that she turned to me without anger, that she did not seek to release her arm. It did not seem strange that her look had in it a gentleness as she spoke.

“I must,” she said.

“I cannot let you risk your life,” I cried, wholly forgetting myself; “there are others who will do this.”

“Others?” she said.

“I will go. I—I have nursed people before this. And there is Lindy.”

A smile quivered on her lips,—or was it a smile?

“You will do as I say and go to Madame Gravois’s—at once,” she murmured, striving for the first time to free herself.

“If you stay, I stay,” I answered; “and if you die, I die.”

She looked up into my eyes for a fleeting instant.

“Write to Mr. Temple,” she said.

Dazed, I watched her open the bedroom doors, motion to Lindy to pass through, and then she had closed them again and I was alone in the darkened parlor.

The throbbing in my head was gone, and a great clearness had come with a great fear. I stood, I know not how long, listening to the groans that came through the wall, for Mrs. Temple was in agony. At intervals I heard Helene’s voice, and then the groans seemed to stop. Ten times I went to the bedroom door, and as many times drew away again, my heart leaping within me at the peril which she faced. If I had had the right, I believe I would have carried her away by force.

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But I had not the right. I sat down heavily, by the table, to think and it might have been a cry of agony sharper than the rest that reminded me once more of the tragedy of the poor lady in torture. My eye fell upon the table, and there, as though prepared for what I was to do, lay pen and paper, ink and sand. My hand shook as I took the quill and tried to compose a letter to my cousin. I scarcely saw the words which I put on the sheet, and I may be forgiven for the unwisdom of that which I wrote.

“The Baron de Carondelet will send an officer for you to-night so that you may escape observation in custody. His Excellency knew of your hiding-place, but is inclined to be lenient, will allow you to-morrow to go to the Rue Bourbon, and will without doubt permit you to leave the province. Your mother is ill, and Madame la Vicomtesse and myself are with her. “*David*.”

In the state I was it took me a long time to compose this much, and I had barely finished it when there was a knock at the outer door. There was Andre. He had the immobility of face which sometimes goes with the mulatto, and always with the trained servant, as he informed me that Monsieur le Medecin was not at home, but that he had left word. There was an epidemic, Monsieur, so Andre feared. I gave him the note and his directions, and ten minutes after he had gone I would have given much to have called him back. How about Antoinette, alone at Les Iles? Why had I not thought of her? We had told her nothing that morning, Madame la Vicomtesse and I, after our conference with Nick. For the girl had shut herself in her room, and Madame had thought it best not to disturb her at such a stage. But would she not be alarmed when Helene failed to return that night? Had circumstances been different, I myself would have ridden to Les Iles, but no inducement now could make me desert the post I had chosen. After many years I dislike to recall to memory that long afternoon which I spent, helpless, in the Rue Bourbon. Now I was on my feet, pacing restlessly the short breadth of the room, trying to shut out from my mind the horrors of which my ears gave testimony. Again, in the intervals of quiet, I sat with my elbows on the table and my head in my hands, striving to allay the throbbing in my temples. Pains came and went, and at times I felt like a fagot flung into the fire,—I, who had never known a sick day. At times my throat pained me, an odd symptom in a warm climate. Troubled as I was in mind and body, the thought of Helene’s quiet heroism upheld me through it all. More than once I had my hand raised to knock at the bedroom door and ask if I could help, but I dared not; at length, the sun having done its worst and spent its fury, I began to hear steps along the banquette and voices almost at my elbow beyond the little window. At every noise I peered out, hoping for the doctor. But he did not come. And then, as I fell back into the fauteuil, there was borne on my consciousness a sound I had heard before. It was the music of the fiddler, it was a tune I knew, and the voices of the children were singing the refrain:—

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> "Ne sait quand reviendra,
> Ne sait quand reviendra."

I rose, opened the door, and slipped out of it, and I must have made a strange, hatless figure as I came upon the fiddler and his children from across the street.

"Stop that noise," I cried in French, angered beyond all reason at the thought of music at such a time. "Idiots, there is yellow fever there."

The little man stopped with his bow raised; for a moment they all stared at me, transfixed. It was a little elf in blue indienne who jumped first and ran down the street, crying the news in a shrill voice, the others following, the fiddler gazing stupidly after them. Suddenly he scrambled up, moaning, as if the scourge itself had fastened on him, backed into the house, and slammed the door in my face. I returned with slow steps to shut myself in the darkened room again, and I recall feeling something of triumph over the consternation I had caused. No sounds came from the bedroom, and after that the street was quiet as death save for an occasional frightened, hurrying footfall. I was tired.

All at once the bedroom door opened softly, and Helene was standing there, looking at me. At first I saw her dimly, as in a vision, then clearly. I leaped to my feet and went and stood beside her.

"The doctor has not come," I said. "Where does he live? I will go for him."

She shook her head.

"He can do no good. Lindy has procured all the remedies, such as they are. They can only serve to alleviate," she answered. "She cannot withstand this, poor lady." There were tears on Helene's lashes. "Her sufferings have been frightful—frightful."

"Cannot I help?" I said thickly. "Cannot I do something?"

She shook her head. She raised her hand timidly to the lapel of my coat, and suddenly I felt her palm, cool and firm, upon my forehead. It rested there but an instant.

"You ought not to be here," she said, her voice vibrant with earnestness and concern. "You ought not to be here. Will you not go—if I ask it?"

"I cannot," I said; "you know I cannot if you stay."

She did not answer that. Our eyes met, and in that instant for me there was neither joy nor sorrow, sickness nor death, nor time nor space nor universe. It was she who turned away.

“Have you written him?” she asked in a low voice.

“Yes,” I answered.

“She would not have known him,” said Helene; “after all these years of waiting she would not have known him. Her punishment has been great.”

A sound came from the bedroom, and Helene was gone, silently, as she had come.

* * * * * * *

I must have been dozing in the fauteuil, for suddenly I found myself sitting up, listening to an unwonted noise. I knew from the count of the hoof-beats which came from down the street that a horse was galloping in long strides—a spent horse, for the timing was irregular. Then he was pulled up into a trot, then to a walk as I ran to the door and opened it and beheld Nicholas Temple flinging himself from a pony white with lather. And he was alone! He caught sight of me as soon as his foot touched the banquette.

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“What are you doing here?” I cried. “What are you doing here?”

He halted on the edge of the banquette as a hurrying man runs into a wall. He had been all excitement, all fury, as he jumped from his horse; and now, as he looked at me, he seemed to lose his bearings, to be all bewilderment. He cried out my name and stood looking at me like a fool.

“What the devil do you mean by coming here?” I cried. “Did I not write you to stay where you were? How did you get here?” I stepped down on the banquette and seized him by the shoulders. “Did you receive my letter?”

“Yes,” he said, “yes.” For a moment that was as far as he got, and he glanced down the street and then at the heaving beast he had ridden, which stood with head drooping to the kennel. Then he laid hold of me. “Davy, is it true that she has yellow fever? Is it true?”

“Who told you?” I demanded angrily.

“Andre,” he answered. “Andre said that the lady here had yellow fever. Is it true?”

“Yes,” I said almost inaudibly.

He let his hand fall from my shoulder, and he shivered.

“May God forgive me for what I have done!” he said. “Where is she?”

“For what you have done?” I cried; “you have done an insensate thing to come here.” Suddenly I remembered the sentry at the gate of Fort St. Charles. “How did you get into the city?” I said; “were you mad to defy the Baron and his police?”

“Damn the Baron and his police,” he answered, striving to pass me. “Let me in! Let me see her.”

Even as he spoke I caught sight of men coming into the street, perhaps at the corner of the Rue St. Pierre, and then more men, and as we went into the house I saw that they were running. I closed the doors. There were cries in the street now, but he did not seem to heed them. He stood listening, heart-stricken, to the sounds that came through the bedroom wall, and a spasm crossed his face. Then he turned like a man not to be denied, to the bedroom door. I was before him, but Madame la Vicomtesse opened it. And I remember feeling astonishment that she did not show surprise or alarm.

“What are you doing here, Mr. Temple?” she said.

“My mother, Madame! My mother! I must go to her.”

He pushed past her into the bedroom, and I followed perforce. I shall never forget the scene, though I had but the one glimpse of it,—the raving, yellowed woman in the bed, not a spectre nor yet even a semblance of the beauty of Temple Bow. But she was his mother, upon whom God had brought such a retribution as He alone can bestow. Lindy, faithful servant to the end, held the wasted hands of her mistress against the violence they would have done. Lindy held them, her own body rocking with grief, her lips murmuring endearments, prayers, supplications.

“Miss Sally, honey, doan you know Lindy? Gawd’ll let you git well, Miss Sally, Gawd’ll let you git well, honey, ter see Marse Nick—ter see—Marse—Nick—”

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The words died on Lindy's lips, the ravings of the frenzied woman ceased. The yellowed hands fell limply to the sheet, the shrunken form stiffened. The eyes of the mother looked upon the son, and in them at first was the terror of one who sees the infinite. Then they softened until they became again the only feature that was left of Sarah Temple. Now, as she looked at him who was her pride, her honor, for one sight of whom she had prayed,—ay, and even blasphemed,—her eyes were all tenderness. Then she spoke.

"Harry," she said softly, "be good to me, dear. You are all I have now."

She spoke of Harry Riddle!

But the long years of penance had not been in vain. Nick had forgiven her. We saw him kneeling at the bedside, we saw him with her hand in his, and Helene was drawing me gently out of the room and closing the door behind her. She did not look at me, nor I at her.

We stood for a moment close together, and suddenly the cries in the street brought us back from the drama in the low-ceiled, reeking room we had left.

"Ici! Ici! Voici le cheval!"

There was a loud rapping at the outer door, and a voice demanding admittance in Spanish in the name of his Excellency the Governor.

"Open it," said Helene. There was neither excitement in her voice, nor yet resignation. In those two words was told the philosophy of her life.

I opened the door. There, on the step, was an officer, perspiring, uniformed and plumed, and behind him a crowd of eager faces, white and black, that seemed to fill the street. He took a step into the room, his hand on the hilt of his sword, and poured out at me a torrent of Spanish of which I understood nothing. All at once his eye fell upon Helene, who was standing behind me, and he stopped in the middle of his speech and pulled off his hat and bowed profoundly.

"Madame la Vicomtesse!" he stammered. I was no little surprised that she should be so well known.

"You will please to speak French, Monsieur," she said; "this gentleman does not understand Spanish. What is it you desire?"

"A thousand pardons, Madame la Vicomtesse," he said. "I am the Alcalde de Barrio, and a wild Americano has passed the sentry at St. Charles's gate without heeding his Excellency's authority and command. I saw the man with my own eyes. I should know him again in a hundred. We have traced him here to this house, Madame la

Vicomtesse. Behold the horse which he rode!" The Alcalde turned and pointed at the beast. "Behold the horse which he rode, Madame la Vicomtesse. The animal will die."

"Probably," answered the Vicomtesse, in an even tone.

"But the man," cried the Alcalde, "the man is here, Madame la Vicomtesse, here, in this house!"

"Yes," she said, "he is here."

"Sancta Maria! Madame," he exclaimed, "I—I who speak to you have come to get him. He has defied his Excellency's commands. Where is he?"

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“He is in that room,” said the Vicomtesse, pointing at the bedroom door.

The Alcalde took a step forward. She stopped him by a quick gesture.

“He is in that room with his mother,” she said, “and his mother has the yellow fever. Come, we will go to him.” And she put her hand upon the door.

“Yellow fever!” cried the Alcalde, and his voice was thick with terror. There was a moment’s silence as he stood rooted to the floor. I did not wonder then, but I have since thought it remarkable that the words spoken low by both of them should have been caught up on the banquette and passed into the street. Impassive, I heard it echoed from a score of throats, I saw men and women stampeding like frightened sheep, I heard their footfalls and their cries as they ran. A tawdry constable, who held with a trembling hand the bridle of the tired horse, alone remained.

“Yellow fever!” the Alcalde repeated

The Vicomtesse inclined her head.

He was silent again for a while, uncertain, and then, without comprehending, I saw the man’s eyes grow smaller and a smile play about his mouth. He looked at the Vicomtesse with a new admiration to which she paid no heed.

“I am sorry, Madame la Vicomtesse,” he began, “but—”

“But you do not believe that I speak the truth,” she replied quietly.

He winced.

“Will you follow me?” she said, turning again.

He had started, plainly in an agony of fear, when a sound came from beyond the wall that brought a cry to his lips.

Her manner changed to one of stinging scorn.

“You are a coward,” she said. “I will bring the gentleman to you if he can be got to leave the bedside.”

“No,” said the Alcalde, “no. I—I will go to him, Madame la Vicomtesse.”

But she did not open the door.

“Listen,” she said in a tone of authority, “I myself have been to his Excellency to-day concerning this gentleman—”

“You, Madame la Vicomtesse?”

“I will open the door,” she continued, impatient at the interruption, “and you will see him. Then I shall write a letter which you will take to the Governor. The gentleman will not try to escape, for his mother is dying. Besides, he could not get out of the city. You may leave your constable where he is, or the man may come in and stand at this door in sight of the gentleman while you are gone—if he pleases.”

“And then?” said the Alcalde.

“It is my belief that his Excellency will allow the gentleman to remain here, and that you will be relieved from the necessity of running any further risk.”

As she spoke she opened the door, softly. The room was still now, still as death, and the Alcalde went forward on tiptoe. I saw him peering in, I saw him backing away again like a man in mortal fear.

“Yes, it is he—it is the man,” he stammered. He put his hand to his brow.

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The Vicomtesse closed the door, and without a glance at him went quickly to the table and began to write. She had no thought of consulting the man again, of asking his permission. Although she wrote rapidly, five minutes must have gone by before the note was finished and folded and sealed. She held it out to him.

“Take this to his Excellency,” she said, “and bring me his answer.” The Alcalde bowed, murmured her title, and went lamely out of the house. He was plainly in an agony of uncertainty as to his duty, but he glanced at the Vicomtesse—and went, flipping the note nervously with his finger nail. He paused for a few low-spoken words with the tawdry constable, who sat down on the banquette after his chief had gone, still clinging to the bridle. The Vicomtesse went to the doorway, looked at him, and closed the battened doors. The constable did not protest. The day was fading without, and the room was almost in darkness as she crossed over to the little mantel and stood with her head laid upon her arm.

I did not disturb her. The minutes passed, the light waned until I could see her no longer, and yet I knew that she had not moved. The strange sympathy between us kept me silent until I heard her voice calling my name.

“Yes,” I answered.

“The candle!”

I drew out my tinder-box and lighted the wick. She had turned, and was facing me even as she had faced me the night before. The night before! The greatest part of my life seemed to have passed since then. I remember wondering that she did not look tired. Her face was sad, her voice was sad, and it had an ineffable, sweet quality at such times that was all its own.

“The Alcalde should be coming back,” she said.

“Yes,” I answered.

These were our words, yet we scarce heeded their meaning. Between us was drawn a subtler communion than speech, and we dared—neither of us—to risk speech. She searched my face, but her lips were closed. She did not take my hand again as in the afternoon. She turned away. I knew what she would have said.

There was a knock at the door. We went together to open it, and the Alcalde stood on the step. He held in his hand a long letter on which the red seal caught the light, and he gave the letter to the Vicomtesse, with a bow.

“From his Excellency, Madame la Vicomtesse.”

She broke the seal, went to the table, and read. Then she looked up at me.

“It is the Governor’s permit for Mr. Temple to remain in this house. Thank you,” she said to the Alcalde; “you may go.”

“With my respectful wishes for the continued good health of Madame la Vicomtesse,” said the Alcalde.

CHAPTER XI

“*In the midst of life*”

The Alcalde had stopped on the step with an exclamation at something in the darkness outside, and he backed, bowing, into the room again to make way for some one. A lady, slim, gowned and veiled in black and followed by a negress, swept past him. The lady lifted her veil and stood before us.

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“Antoinette!” exclaimed the Vicomtesse, going to her.

The girl did not answer at once. Her suffering seemed to have brought upon her a certain acceptance of misfortune as inevitable. Her face, framed in the black veil, was never more beautiful than on that night.

“What is the Alcalde doing here?” she said.

The officer himself answered the question.

“I am leaving, Mademoiselle,” said he. He reached out his hands toward her, appealingly. “Do you not remember me, Mademoiselle? You brought the good sister to see my wife.”

“I remember you,” said Antoinette.

“Do not stay here, Mademoiselle!” he cried. “There is—there is yellow fever.”

“So that is it,” said Antoinette, unheeding him and looking at her cousin. “She has yellow fever, then?”

“I beg you to come away, Mademoiselle!” the man entreated.

“Please go,” she said to him. He looked at her, and went out silently, closing the doors after him. “Why was he here?” she asked again.

“He came to get Mr. Temple, my dear,” said the Vicomtesse. The girl’s lips framed his name, but did not speak it.

“Where is he?” she asked slowly.

The Vicomtesse pointed towards the bedroom.

“In there,” she answered, “with his mother.”

“He came to her?” Antoinette asked quite simply.

The Vicomtesse glanced at me, and drew the veil gently from the girl’s shoulders. She led her, unresisting, to a chair. I looked at them. The difference in their ages was not so great. Both had suffered cruelly; one had seen the world, the other had not, and yet the contrast lay not here. Both had followed the gospel of helpfulness to others, but one as a religieuse, innocent of the sin around her, though poignant of the sorrow it caused. The other, knowing evil with an insight that went far beyond intuition, fought with that, too.

“I will tell you, Antoinette,” began the Vicomtesse; “it was as you said. Mr. Ritchie and I found him at Lamarque’s. He had not taken your money; he did not even know that Auguste had gone to see you. He did not even know,” she said, bending over the girl, “that he was on your father’s plantation. When we told him that, he would have left it at once.”

“Yes,” she said.

“He did not know that his mother was still in New Orleans. And when we told him how ill she was he would have come to her then. It was as much as we could do to persuade him to wait until we had seen Monsieur de Carondelet. Mr. Ritchie and I came directly to town and saw his Excellency.”

It was characteristic of the Vicomtesse that she told this almost with a man’s brevity, that she omitted the stress and trouble and pain of it all. These things were done; the tact and skill and character of her who had accomplished them were not spoken of. The girl listened immovable, her lips parted and her eyes far away. Suddenly, with an awakening, she turned to Helene.

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“You did this!” she cried.

“Mr. Ritchie and I together,” said the Vicomtesse.

Her next exclamation was an odd one, showing how the mind works at such a time.

“But his Excellency was having his siesta!” said Antoinette.

Again Helene glanced at me, but I cannot be sure that she smiled.

“We thought the matter of sufficient importance to awake his Excellency,” said Helene.

“And his Excellency?” asked Antoinette. In that moment all three of us seemed to have forgotten the tragedy behind the wall.

“His Excellency thought so, too, when we had explained it sufficiently,” Helene answered.

The girl seemed suddenly to throw off the weight of her grief. She seized the hand of the Vicomtesse in both of her own.

“The Baron pardoned him?” she cried. “Tell me what his Excellency said. Why are you keeping it from me?”

“Hush, my dear,” said the Vicomtesse. “Yes, he pardoned him. Mr. Temple was to have come to the city to-night with an officer. Mr. Ritchie and I came to this house together, and we found—”

“Yes, yes,” said Antoinette.

“Mr. Ritchie wrote to Mr. Temple that his Excellency was to send for him to-night, but Andre told him of the fever, and he came here in the face of danger to see her before she died. He galloped past the sentry at the gate, and the Alcalde followed him from there.”

“And came here to arrest him?” cried Antoinette. Before the Vicomtesse could prevent her she sprang from her chair, ran to the door, and was peering out into the darkness. “Is the Alcalde waiting?”

“No, no,” said the Vicomtesse, gently bringing her back. “I wrote to his Excellency and we have his permission for Mr. Temple to remain here.”

Suddenly Antoinette stopped in the middle of the floor, facing the candle, her hands clasped, her eyes wide with fear. We started, Helene and I, as we looked at her.

“What is it, my dear?” said the Vicomtesse, laying a hand on her arm.

“He will take it,” she said, “he will take the fever.”

A strange thing happened. Many, many times have I thought of it since, and I did not know its meaning then. I had looked to see the Vicomtesse comfort her. But Helene took a step towards me, my eyes met hers, and in them reflected was the terror I had seen in Antoinette’s. At that instant I, too, forgot the girl, and we turned to see that she had sunk down, weeping, in the chair. Then we both went to her, I through some instinct I did not fathom.

Helene’s hand, resting on Antoinette’s shoulder, trembled there. It may well have been my own weakness which made me think her body swayed, which made me reach out as if to catch her. However marvellous her strength and fortitude, these could not last forever. And—Heaven help me—my own were fast failing. Once the room had seemed to me all in darkness. Then I saw the Vicomtesse leaning tenderly over her cousin and whispering in her ear, and Antoinette rising, clinging to her.

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“I will go,” she faltered, “I will go. He must not know I have been here. You—you will not tell him?”

“No, I shall not tell him,” answered the Vicomtesse.

“And—you will send word to me, Helene?”

“Yes, dear.”

Antoinette kissed her, and began to adjust her veil mechanically. I looked on, bewildered by the workings of the feminine mind. Why was she going? The Vicomtesse gave me no hint. But suddenly the girl’s arms fell to her sides, and she stood staring, not so much as a cry escaping her. The bedroom doors had been opened, and between them was the tall figure of Nicholas Temple. So they met again after many years, and she who had parted them had brought them together once more. He came a step into the room, as though her eyes had drawn him so far. Even then he did not speak her name.

“Go,” he said. “Go, you must not stay here. Go!”

She bowed her head.

“I was going,” she answered. “I—I am going.”

“But you must go at once,” he cried excitedly. “Do you know what is in there?” and he pointed towards the bedroom.

“Yes, yes, I know,” she said, “I know.”

“Then go,” he cried. “As it is you have risked too much.”

She lifted up her head and looked at him. There was a new-born note in her voice, a tremulous note of joy in the midst of sorrow. It was of her he was thinking!

“And you?” she said. “You have come and remained.”

“She is my mother,” he answered. “God knows it was the least I could have done.”

Twice she had changed before our eyes, and now we beheld a new and yet more startling transformation. When she spoke there was no reproach in her voice, but triumph. Antoinette undid her veil.

“Yes, she is your mother,” she answered; “but for many years she has been my friend. I will go to her. She cannot forbid me now. Helene has been with her,” she said, turning

to where the Vicomtesse stood watching her intently. “Helene has been with her. And shall I, who have longed to see her these many years, leave her now?”

“But you were going!” he cried, beside himself with apprehension at this new turning. “You told me that you were going.”

Truly, man is born without perception.

“Yes, I told you that,” she replied almost defiantly.

“And why were you going?” he demanded. Then I had a sudden desire to shake him.

Antoinette was mute.

“You yourself must find the answer to that question, Mr. Temple,” said the Vicomtesse, quietly.

He turned and stared at Helene, and she seemed to smile. Then as his eyes went back, irresistibly, to the other, a light that was wonderful to see dawned and grew in them. I shall never forget him as he stood, handsome and fearless, a gentleman still, despite his years of wandering and adventure, and in this supreme moment unselfish. The wilful, masterful boy had become a man at last.

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He started forward, stopped, trembling with a shock of remembrance, and gave back again.

“You cannot come,” he said; “I cannot let you take this risk. Tell her she cannot come, Madame,” he said to Helene. “For the love of God send her home again.”

But there were forces which even Helene could not stem. He had turned to go back, he had seized the door, but Antoinette was before him. Custom does not weigh at such a time. Had she not read his avowal? She had his hand in hers, heedless of us who watched. At first he sought to free himself, but she clung to it with all the strength of her love,—yet she did not look up at him.

“I will come with you,” she said in a low voice, “I will come with you, Nick.”

How quaintly she spoke his name, and gently, and timidly—ay, and with a supreme courage. True to him through all those numb years of waiting, this was a little thing—-that they should face death together. A little thing, and yet the greatest joy that God can bestow upon a good woman. He looked down at her with a great tenderness, he spoke her name, and I knew that he had taken her at last into his arms.

“Come,” he said.

They went in together, and the doors closed behind them.

* * * * * * *

Antoinette’s maid was on the step, and the Vicomtesse and I were alone once more in the little parlor. I remember well the sense of unreality I had, and how it troubled me. I remember how what I had seen and heard was turning, turning in my mind. Nick had come back to Antoinette. They were together in that room, and Mrs. Temple was dying—dying. No, it could not be so. Again, I was in the garden at Les Iles on a night that was all perfume, and I saw the flowers all ghostly white under the moon. And then, suddenly, I was watching the green candle sputter, and out of the stillness came a cry—the sereno calling the hour of the night. How my head throbbed! It was keeping time to some rhythm, I knew not what. Yes, it was the song my father used to sing:—

> “I’ve faught on land? I’ve faught at sea,
> At hume I’ve faught my aunty, O!”

But New Orleans was hot, burning hot, and this could not be cold I felt. Ah, I had it, the water was cold going to Vincennes, so cold!

A voice called me. No matter where I had gone, I think I would have come back at the sound of it. I listened intently, that I might lose no word of what it said. I knew the

voice. Had it not called to me many times in my life before? But now there was fear in it, and fear gave it a vibrant sweetness, fear gave it a quality that made it mine—mine.

“You are shivering.”

That was all it said, and it called from across the sea. And the sea was cold,—cold and green under the gray light. If she who called to me would only come with the warmth of her love! The sea faded, the light fell, and I was in the eternal cold of space between the whirling worlds. If she could but find me! Was not that her hand in mine? Did I not feel her near me, touching me? I wondered that I should hear myself as I answered her.

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“I am not ill,” I said. “Speak to me again.”

She was pressing my hand now, I saw her bending over me, I felt her hair as it brushed my face. She spoke again. There was a tremor in her voice, and to that alone I listened. The words were decisive, of command, and with them some sense as of a haven near came to me. Another voice answered in a strange tongue, saying seemingly:—

“Oui, Madame—male couri—bon dje—male couri!”

I heard the doors close, and the sound of footsteps running and dying along the banquette, and after that my shoulders were raised and something wrapped about them. Then stillness again, the stillness that comes between waking and sleeping, between pain and calm. And at times when I felt her hand fall into mine or press against my brow, the pain seemed more endurable. After that I recall being lifted, being borne along. I opened my eyes once and saw, above a tile-crowned wall, the moon all yellow and distorted in the sky. Then a gate clicked, dungeon blackness, half-light again, ascent, oblivion.

CHAPTER XII

VISIONS, AND AN AWAKENING

I have still sharp memories of the tortures of that illness, though it befell so long ago. At times, when my mind was gone from me, I cried out I know not what of jargon, of sentiment, of the horrors I had beheld in my life. I lived again the pleasant scenes, warped and burlesqued almost beyond cognizance, and the tragedies were magnified a hundred fold. Thus it would be: on the low, white ceiling five cracks came together, and that was a device. And the device would take on color, red-bronze like the sumach in the autumn and streaks of vermilion, and two glowing coals that were eyes, and above them eagles’ feathers, and the cracks became bramble bushes. I was behind the log, and at times I started and knew that it was a hideous dream, and again Polly Ann was clutching me and praying me to hold back, and I broke from her and splashed over the slippery limestone bed of the creek to fight single-handed. Through all the fearful struggle I heard her calling me piteously to come back to her. When the brute got me under water I could not hear her, but her voice came back suddenly (as when a door opens) and it was like the wind singing in the poplars. Was it Polly Ann’s voice?

Again, I sat with Nick under the trees on the lawn at Temple Bow, and the world was dark with the coming storm. I knew and he knew that the storm was brewing that I might be thrust out into it. And then in the blackness, when the air was filled with all the fair things of the earth torn asunder, a beautiful woman came through the noise and the fury, and we ran to her and clung to her skirts, thinking we had found safety. But she

thrust us forth into the blackness with a smile, as though she were flinging papers out of the window. She, too, grew out of the design in the cracks of the ceiling, and a greater fear seized me at sight of her features than when the red face came out of the brambles.

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My constant torment was thirst. I was in the prairie, and it was scorched and brown to the horizon. I searched and prayed pitifully for water,—for only a sip of the brown water with the specks in it that was in the swamp. There were no swamps. I was on the bed in the cabin looking at the shifts and hunting shirts on the pegs, and Polly Ann would bring a gourdful of clear water from the spring as far as the door. Nay, once I got it to my lips, and it was gone. Sometimes a young man in a hunting shirt, square-shouldered, clear-eyed, his face tanned and his fair hair bleached by the sun, would bring the water. He was the hero of my boyhood, and part of him indeed was in me. And I would have followed him again to Vincennes despite the tortures of the damned. But when I spoke his name he grew stouter before me, and his eyes lost their lustre and his hair turned gray; and his hand shook as he held out the gourd and spilled its contents ere I could reach them.

Sometimes another brought the water, and at sight of her I would tremble and grow faint, and I had not the strength to reach for it. She would look at me with eyes that laughed despite the resolution of the mouth. Then the eyes would grow pitiful at my helplessness, and she would murmur my name. There was some reason which I never fathomed why she could not give me the water, and her own suffering seemed greater than mine because of it. So great did it seem that I forgot my own and sought to comfort her. Then she would go away, very slowly, and I would hear her calling to me in the wind, from the stars to which I looked up from the prairie. It was she, I thought, who ordered the world. Who, when women were lost and men cried out in distress, came to them calmly, ministered to them deftly.

Once—perhaps a score of times, I cannot tell—was limned on the ceiling, where the cracks were, her miniature, and I knew what was coming and shuddered and cried aloud because I could not stop it. I saw the narrow street of a strange city deep down between high houses,—houses with gratings on the lowest windows, with studded, evil-looking doors, with upper stories that toppled over to shut out the light of the sky, with slated roofs that slanted and twisted this way and that and dormers peeping from them. Down in the street, instead of the King's white soldiers, was a foul, unkempt rabble, creeping out of its damp places, jesting, cursing, singing. And in the midst of the rabble a lady sat in a cart high above it unmoved. She was the lady of the miniature. A window in one of the jutting houses was flung open, a little man leaned out excitedly, and I knew him too. He was Jean Baptiste Lenoir, and he cried out in a shrill voice:—

"You must take off her ruff, citizens. You must take off her ruff!"

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There came a blessed day when my thirst was gone, when I looked up at the cracks in the ceiling and wondered why they did not change into horrors. I watched them a long, long time, and it seemed incredible that they should still remain cracks. Beyond that I would not go, into speculation I dared not venture. They remained cracks, and I went to sleep thanking God. When I awoke a breeze came in cool, fitful gusts, and on it the scent of camellias. I thought of turning my head, and I remember wondering for a long time over the expediency of this move. What would happen if I did! Perhaps the visions would come back, perhaps my head would come off. Finally I decided to risk it, and the first thing that I beheld was a palm-leaf fan, moving slowly. That fact gave me food for thought, and contented me for a while. Then I hit upon the idea that there must be something behind the fan. I was distinctly pleased by this astuteness, and I spent more time in speculation. Whatever it was, it had a tantalizing elusiveness, keeping the fan between it and me. This was not fair.

I had an inspiration. If I feigned to be asleep, perhaps the thing behind the fan would come out. I shut my eyes. The breeze continued steadily. Surely no human being could fan as long as that without being tired! I opened my eyes twice, but the thing was inscrutable. Then I heard a sound that I knew to be a footstep upon boards. A voice whispered:—

“The delirium has left him.”

Another voice, a man’s voice, answered:—

“Thank God! Let me fan him. You are tired.”

“I am not tired,” answered the first voice.

“I do not see how you have stood it,” said the man’s voice. “You will kill yourself, Madame la Vicomtesse. The danger is past now.”

“I hope so, Mr. Temple,” said the first voice. “Please go away. You may come back in half an hour.”

I heard the footsteps retreating. Then I said: “I am not asleep.”

The fan stopped for a brief instant and then went on vibrating inexorably. I was entranced at the thought of what I had done. I had spoken, though indeed it seemed to have had no effect. Could it be that I hadn’t spoken? I began to be frightened at this, when gradually something crept into my mind and drove the fear out. I did not grasp what this was at first, it was like the first staining of wine on the eastern sky to one who sees a sunrise. And then the thought grew even as the light grows, tinged by prismatic colors, until at length a memory struck into my soul like a shaft of light. I spoke her name, unblushingly, aloud.

“Helene!”

The fan stopped. There was a silence that seemed an eternity as the palm leaf trembled in her hand, there was an answer that strove tenderly to command.

“Hush, you must not talk,” she said.

Never, I believe, came such supreme happiness with obedience. I felt her hand upon my brow, and the fan moved again. I fell asleep once more from sheer weariness of joy. She was there, beside me. She had been there, beside me, through it all, and it was her touch which had brought me back to life.

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I dreamed of her. When I awoke again her image was in my mind, and I let it rest there in contemplation. But presently I thought of the fan, turned my head, and it was not there. A great fear seized me. I looked out of the open door where the morning sun threw the checkered shadows of the honeysuckle on the floor of the gallery, and over the railing to the tree-tops in the court-yard. The place struck a chord in my memory. Then my eyes wandered back into the room. There was a polished dresser, a crucifix and a prie-dieu in the corner, a fauteuil, and another chair at my bed. The floor was rubbed to an immaculate cleanliness, stained yellow, and on it lay clean woven mats. The room was empty!

I cried out, a yellow and red turban shot across the window, and I beheld in the door the spare countenance of the faithful Lindy.

“Marse Dave,” she cried, “is you feelin’ well, honey?”

“Where am I, Lindy?” I asked.

Lindy, like many of her race, knew well how to assume airs of importance. Lindy had me down, and she knew it.

“Marse Dave,” she said, “doan yo’ know better’n dat? Yo’ know yo’ ain’t ter talk. Lawsy, I reckon I wouldn’t be wuth pizen if she was to hear I let yo’ talk.”

Lindy implied that there was tyranny somewhere.

“She?” I asked, “who’s she?”

“Now yo’ hush, Marse Dave,” said Lindy, in a shrill whisper, “I ain’t er-gwine ter git mixed up in no disputation. Ef she was ter hear me er-disputin’ wid yo’, Marse Dave, I reckon I’d done git such er tongue-lashin’—” Lindy looked at me suspiciously. “Yo’-er allus was powe’rful cute, Marse Dave.”

Lindy set her lips with a mighty resolve to be silent. I heard some one coming along the gallery, and then I saw Nick’s tall figure looming up behind her.

“Davy,” he cried.

Lindy braced herself up doggedly.

“Yo’ ain’t er-gwine to git in thar nohow, Marse Nick,” she said.

“Nonsense, Lindy,” he answered, “I’ve been in there as much as you have.” And he took hold of her thin arm and pulled her back.

“Marse Nick!” she cried, terror-stricken, “she’ll done fin’ out dat you’ve been er-talkin’.”

“Pish!” said Nick with a fine air, “who’s afraid of her?”

Lindy’s face took on an expression of intense amusement.

“Yo’ is, for one, Marse Nick,” she answered, with the familiarity of an old servant. “I done seed yo’ skedaddle when she comed.”

“Tut,” said Nick, grandly, “I run from no woman. Eh, Davy?” He pushed past the protesting Lindy into the room and took my hand.

“Egad, you have been near the devil’s precipice, my son. A three-bottle man would have gone over.” In his eyes was all the strange affection he had had for me ever since ave had been boys at Temple Bow together. “Davy, I reckon life wouldn’t have been worth much if you’d gone.”

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I did not answer. I could only stare at him, mutely grateful for such an affection. In all his wild life he had been true to me, and he had clung to me stanchly in this, my greatest peril. Thankful that he was here, I searched his handsome person with my eyes. He was dressed as usual, with care and fashion, in linen breeches and a light gray coat and a filmy ruffle at his neck. But I thought there had come a change into his face. The reckless quality seemed to have gone out of it, yet the spirit and daring remained, and with these all the sweetness that was once in his smile. There were lines under his eyes that spoke of vigils.

“You have been sitting up with me,” I said.

“Of course,” he answered patting my shoulder. “Of course I have. What did you think I would be doing?”

“What was the matter with me?” I asked.

“Nothing much,” he said lightly, “a touch of the sun, and a great deal of overwork in behalf of your friends. Now keep still, or I will be getting peppered.”

I was silent for a while, turning over this answer in my mind. Then I said:—

“I had yellow fever.”

He started.

“It is no use to lie to you,” he replied; “you’re too shrewd.”

I was silent again for a while.

“Nick,” I said, “you had no right to stay here. You have—other responsibilities now.”

He laughed. It was the old buoyant, boyish laugh of sheer happiness, and I felt the better for hearing it.

“If you begin to preach, parson, I’ll go; I vow I’ll have no more sermonizing. Davy,” he cried, “isn’t she just the dearest, sweetest, most beautiful person in the world?”

“Where is she?” I asked, temporizing. Nick was not a subtle person, and I was ready to follow him at great length in the praise of Antoinette. “I hope she is not here.”

“We made her go to Les Iles,” said he.

“And you risked your life and stayed here without her?” I said.

“As for risking life, that kind of criticism doesn’t come well from you. And as for Antoinette,” he added with a smile, “I expect to see something of her later on.”

“Well,” I answered with a sigh of supreme content, “you have been a fool all your life, and I hope that she will make you sensible.”

“You never could make me so,” said Nick, “and besides, I don’t think you’ve been so damned sensible yourself.”

We were silent again for a space.

“Davy,” he asked, “do you remember what I said when you had that miniature here?”

“You said a great many things, I believe.”

“I told you to consider carefully the masterful features of that lady, and to thank God you hadn’t married her. I vow I never thought she’d turn up. Upon my oath I never thought I should be such a blind slave as I have been for the last fortnight. Faith, Monsieur de St. Gre is a strong man, but he was no more than a puppet in his own house when he came back here for a day. That lady could govern a province,—no, a kingdom. But I warrant you there would be no climbing of balconies in her dominions. I have never been so generalled in my life.”

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I had no answer for these comments.

“The deuce of it is the way she does it,” he continued, plainly bent on relieving himself. “There’s no noise, no fuss; but you must obey, you don’t know why. And yet you may flay me if I don’t love her.”

“Love her!” I repeated.

“She saved your life,” said Nick; “I don’t believe any other woman could have done it. She hadn’t any thought of her own. She has been here, in this room, almost constantly night and day, and she never let you go. The little French doctor gave you up—not she. She held on. Cursed if I see why she did it.”

“Nor I,” I answered.

“Well,” he said apologetically, “of course I would have done it, but you weren’t anything to her. Yes, egad, you were something to be saved,—that was all that was necessary. She had you brought back here—we are in Monsieur de St. Gre’s house, by the way—-in a litter, and she took command as though she had nursed yellow fever cases all her life. No flurry. I said that you were in love with her once, Davy, when I saw you looking at the portrait. I take it back. Of course a man could be very fond of her,” he said, “but a king ought to have married her. As for that poor Vicomte she’s tied up to, I reckon I know the reason why he didn’t come to America. An ordinary man would have no chance at all. God bless her!” he cried, with a sudden burst of feeling, “I would die for her myself. She got me out of a barrel of trouble with his Excellency. She cared for my mother, a lonely outcast, and braved death herself to go to her when she was dying of the fever. God bless her!”

Lindy was standing in the doorway.

“Lan’ sakes, Marse Nick, yo’ gotter go,” she said.

He rose and pressed my fingers. “I’ll go,” he said, and left me. Lindy seated herself in the chair. She held in her hand a bowl of beef broth. From this she fed me in silence, and when she left she commanded me to sleep informing me that she would be on the gallery within call.

But I did not sleep at once. Nick’s words had brought back a fact which my returning consciousness had hitherto ignored. The birds sang in the court-yard, and when the breeze stirred it was ever laden with a new scent. I had been snatched from the jaws of death, my life was before me, but the happiness which had thrilled me was gone, and in my weakness the weight of the sadness which had come upon me was almost unbearable. If I had had the strength, I would have risen then and there from my bed, I would have fled from the city at the first opportunity. As it was, I lay in a torture of

thought, living over again every part of my life which she had touched. I remembered the first long, yearning look I had given the miniature at Madame Bouvet's. I had not loved her then. My feeling rather had been a mysterious sympathy with and admiration for this brilliant lady whose sphere was so far removed from mine. This was sufficiently strange. Again,

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in the years of my struggle for livelihood which followed, I dreamed of her; I pictured her often in the midst of the darkness of the Revolution. Then I had the miniature again, which had travelled to her, as it were, and come back to me. Even then it was not love I felt but an unnamed sentiment for one whom I clothed with gifts and attributes I admired: constancy, an ability to suffer and to hide, decision, wit, refuge for the weak, scorn for the false. So I named them at random and cherished them, knowing that these things were not what other men longed for in women. Nay, there was another quality which I believed was there—which I knew was there—a supreme tenderness that was hidden like a treasure too sacred to be seen.

I did not seek to explain the mystery which had brought her across the sea into that little garden of Mrs. Temple's and into my heart. There she was now enthroned, deified; that she would always be there I accepted. That I would never say or do anything not in consonance with her standards I knew. That I would suffer much I was sure, but the lees of that suffering I should hoard because they came from her.

What might have been I tried to put away. There was the moment, I thought, when our souls had met in the little parlor in the Rue Bourbon. I should never know. This I knew—that we had labored together to bring happiness into other lives.

Then came another thought to appall me. Unmindful of her own safety, she had nursed me back to life through all the horrors of the fever. The doctor had despaired, and I knew that by the very force that was in her she had saved me. She was here now, in this house, and presently she would be coming back to my bedside. Painfully I turned my face to the wall in a torment of humiliation—I had called her by her name. I would see her again, but I knew not whence the strength for that ordeal was to come.

CHAPTER XIII

A MYSTERY

I knew by the light that it was evening when I awoke. So prisoners mark the passing of the days by a bar of sun light. And as I looked at the green trees in the courtyard, vaguely troubled by I knew not what, some one came and stood in the doorway. It was Nick.

"You don't seem very cheerful," said he; "a man ought to be who has been snatched out of the fire."

"You seem to be rather too sure of my future," I said, trying to smile.

“That’s more like you,” said Nick. “Egad, you ought to be happy—we all ought to be happy—she’s gone.”

“She!” I cried. “Who’s gone?”

“Madame la Vicomtesse,” he replied, rubbing his hands as he stood over me. “But she’s left instructions with me for Lindy as long as Monsieur de Carondelet’s Bando de Buen Gobierno. You are not to do this, and you are not to do that, you are to eat such and such things, you are to be made to sleep at such and such times. She came in here about an hour ago and took a long look at you before she left.”

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“She was not ill?” I said faintly.

“Faith, I don’t know why she was not,” he said. “She has done enough to tire out an army. But she seems well and fairly happy. She had her joke at my expense as she went through the court-yard, and she reminded me that we were to send a report by Andre every day.”

Chagrin, depression, relief, bewilderment, all were struggling within me.

“Where did she go?” I asked at last.

“To Les Iles,” he said. “You are to be brought there as soon as you are strong enough.”

“Do you happen to know why she went?” I said.

“Now how the deuce should I know?” he answered. “I’ve done everything with blind servility since I came into this house. I never asked for any reason—it never would have done any good. I suppose she thought that you were well on the road to recovery, and she knew that Lindy was an old hand. And then the doctor is to come in.”

“Why didn’t you go?” I demanded, with a sudden remembrance that he was staying away from happiness.

“It was because I longed for another taste of liberty, Davy,” he laughed. “You and I will have an old-fashioned time here together,—a deal of talk, and perhaps a little piquet,—-who knows?”

My strength came back, bit by bit, and listening to his happiness did much to ease the soreness of my heart—while the light lasted. It was in the night watches that my struggles came—though often some unwitting speech of his would bring back the pain. He took delight in telling me, for example, how for hours at a time I had been in a fearful delirium.

“The Lord knows what foolishness you talked, Davy,” said he. “It would have done me good to hear you had you been in your right mind.”

“But you did hear me,” I said, full of apprehensions.

“Some of it,” said he. “You were after Wilkinson once, in a burrow, I believe, and you swore dreadfully because he got out of the other end. I can’t remember all the things you said. Oh, yes, once you were talking to Auguste de St. Gre about money.”

“Money?” I repeated in a sinking voice.

“Oh, a lot of jargon.” The Vicomtesse pushed me out of the room, and after that I was never allowed to be there when you had those flights. Curse the mosquitoes! He seized a fan and began to ply it vigorously. “I remember. You were giving Auguste a lecture. Then I had to go.”

These and other reminiscences gave me sufficient food for reflection, and many a shudder over the possibilities of my ravings. She had put him out! No wonder.

After a while I was carried to the gallery, and there I would talk to the little doctor about the yellow fever which had swept the city. Monsieur Perrin was not much of a doctor, to be sure, and he had a heartier dread of the American invasion than of the scourge. He worshipped the Vicomtesse, and was so devoid of professional pride as to give her freely all credit for my recovery. He too, clothed her with the qualities of statesmanship.

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“Ha, Monsieur,” he said, “if that lady had been King of France, do you think there would have been any States General, any red bonnets, any Jacobins or Cordeliers? Parbleu, she would have swept the vicemongers and traitors out of the Palais Royal itself. There would have been a house-cleaning there. I, who speak to you, know it.”

Every day Nick wrote a bulletin to be sent to the Vicomtesse, and he took a fiendish delight in the composition of these. He would come out on the gallery with ink and a blank sheet of paper and try to enlist my help. He would insert the most ridiculous statements, as for instance, “Davy is worse to-day, having bribed Lindy to give him a pint of Madeira against my orders.” Or, “Davy feigns to be sinking rapidly because he wishes to have you back.” Indeed, I was always in a torture of doubt to know what the rascal had sent.

His company was most agreeable when he was recounting the many adventures he had had during the five years after he had left New Orleans and been lost to me. These would fill a book, and a most readable book it would be if written in his own speech. His love for the excitement of the frontier had finally drawn him back to the Cumberland country near Nashville, and he had actually gone so far as to raise a house and till some of the land which he had won from Darnley. It was perhaps characteristic of him that he had named the place “Rattle-and-Snap” in honor of the game which had put him in possession of it, and “Rattle-and-Snap” it remains to this day. He was going back there with Antoinette, so he said, to build a brick mansion and to live a respectable life the rest of his days.

There was one question which had been in my mind to ask him, concerning the attitude of Monsieur de St. Gre. That gentleman, with Madame, had hurried back from Pointe Coupee at a message from the Vicomtesse, and had gone first to Les Iles to see Antoinette. Then he had come, in spite of the fever, to his own house in New Orleans to see Nick himself. What their talk had been I never knew, for the subject was too painful to be dwelt upon, and the conversation had been marked by frankness on both sides. Monsieur de St. Gre was a just man, his love for his daughter was his chief passion, and despite all that had happened he liked Nick. I believe he could not wholly blame the younger man, and he forgave him.

Mrs. Temple, poor lady, had died on that first night of my illness, and it was her punishment that she had not known her son or her son’s happiness. Whatever sins she had committed in her wayward life were atoned for, and by her death I firmly believe that she redeemed him. She lies now among the Temples in Charleston, and on the stone which marks her grave is cut no line that hints of the story of these pages.

One bright morning, when Nick and I were playing cards, we heard some one mounting the stairs, and to my surprise and embarrassment I beheld Monsieur de St. Gre emerging on the gallery. He was in white linen and wore a broad hat, which he took from his head as he advanced. He had aged somewhat, his hair was a little gray, but

otherwise he was the firm, dignified personage I had admired on this same gallery five years before.

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“Good morning, gentlemen,” he said in English; “ha, do not rise, sir” (to me). He patted Nick’s shoulder kindly, but not familiarly, as he passed him, and extended his hand.

“Mr. Ritchie, it gives me more pleasure than I can express to see you so much recovered.”

“I am again thrown on your hospitality, sir,” I said, flushing with pleasure at this friendliness. For I admired and respected the man greatly. “And I fear I have been a burden and trouble to you and your family.”

He took my hand and pressed it. Characteristically, he did not answer this, and I remembered he was always careful not to say anything which might smack of insincerity.

“I had a glimpse of you some weeks ago,” he said, thus making light of the risk he had run. “You are a different man now. You may thank your Scotch blood and your strong constitution.”

“His good habits have done him some good, after all,” put in my irrepressible cousin.

Monsieur de St. Gre smiled.

“Nick,” he said (he pronounced the name quaintly, like Antoinette), “his good habits have turned out to be some advantage to you. Mr. Ritchie, you have a faithful friend at least.” He patted Nick’s shoulder again. “And he has promised me to settle down.”

“I have every inducement, sir,” said Nick.

Monsieur de St. Gre became grave.

“You have indeed, Monsieur,” he answered.

“I have just come from Dr. Perrin’s, David,”—he added, “May I call you so? Well, then, I have just come from Dr. Perrin’s, and he says you may be moved to Les Iles this very afternoon. Why, upon my word,” he exclaimed, staring at me, “you don’t look pleased. One would think you were going to the calabozo.”

“Ah,” said Nick, slyly, “I know. He has tasted freedom, Monsieur, and Madame la Vicomtesse will be in command again.”

I flushed. Nick could be very exasperating.

“You must not mind him, Monsieur,” I said.

“I do not mind him,” answered Monsieur de St. Gre, laughing in spite of himself. “He is a sad rogue. As for Helene—”

“I shall not know how to thank the Vicomtesse,” I said. “She has done me the greatest service one person can do another.”

“Helene is a good woman,” answered Monsieur de St. Gre, simply. “She is more than that, she is a wonderful woman. I remember telling you of her once. I little thought then that she would ever come to us.”

He turned to me. “Dr. Perrin will be here this afternoon, David, and he will have you dressed. Between five and six if all goes well, we shall start for Les Iles. And in the meantime, gentlemen,” he added with a stateliness that was natural to him, “I have business which takes me to-day to my brother-in-law’s, Monsieur de Beausejour’s.”

Nick leaned over the gallery and watched meditatively his prospective father-in-law leaving the court-yard.

“He got me out of a devilish bad scrape,” he said.

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“How was that?” I asked listlessly.

“That fat little Baron, the Governor, was for deporting me for running past the sentry and giving him all the trouble I did. It seems that the Vicomtesse promised to explain matters in a note which she wrote, and never did explain. She was here with you, and a lot she cared about anything else. Lucky that Monsieur de St. Gre came back. Now his Excellency graciously allows me to stay here, if I behave myself, until I get married.”

I do not know how I spent the rest of the day. It passed, somehow. If I had had the strength then, I believe I should have fled. I was to see her again, to feel her near me, to hear her voice. During the weeks that had gone by I had schooled myself, in a sense, to the inevitable. I had not let my mind dwell upon my visit to Les Iles, and now I was face to face with the struggle for which I felt I had not the strength. I had fought one battle,—I knew that a fiercer battle was to come.

In due time the doctor arrived, and while he prepared me for my departure, the little man sought, with misplaced kindness, to raise my spirits. Was not Monsieur going to the country, to a paradise? Monsieur—so Dr. Perrin had noticed—had a turn for philosophy. Could two more able and brilliant conversationalists be found than Philippe de St. Gre and Madame la Vicomtesse? And there was the happiness of that strange but lovable young man, Monsieur Temple, to contemplate. He was in luck, ce beau garcon, for he was getting an angel for his wife. Did Monsieur know that Mademoiselle Antoinette was an angel?

At last I was ready, arrayed in my best, on the gallery, when Monsieur de St. Gre came. Andre and another servant carried me down into the court, and there stood a painted sedan-chair with the St. Gre arms on the panels.

“My father imported it, David,” said Monsieur de St. Gre. “It has not been used for many years. You are to be carried in it to the levee, and there I have a boat for you.”

Overwhelmed by this kindness, I could not find words to thank him as I got into the chair. My legs were too long for it, I remember. I had a quaint feeling of unreality as I sank back on the red satin cushions and was borne out of the gate between the lions. Monsieur de St. Gre and Nick walked in front, the faithful Lindy followed, and people paused to stare at us as we passed. We crossed the Place d’Armes, the Royal Road, gained the willow-bordered promenade on the levee’s crown, and a wide barge was waiting, manned by six negro oarsmen. They lifted me into its stern under the awning, the barge was cast off, the oars dipped, and we were gliding silently past the line of keel boats on the swift current of the Mississippi. The spars of the shipping were inky black, and the setting sun had struck a red band across the waters. For a while the three of us sat gazing at the green shore, each wrapped in his own reflections,—Philippe de St. Gre thinking, perchance, of the wayward son he had lost; Nick of the woman who

awaited him; and I of one whom fate had set beyond me. It was Monsieur de St. Gre who broke the silence at last.

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“You feel no ill effects from your moving, David?” he asked, with an anxious glance at me.

“None, sir,” I said.

“The country air will do you good,” he said kindly.

“And Madame la Vicomtesse will put him on a diet,” added Nick, rousing himself.

“Helene will take care of him,” answered Monsieur de St. Gre.

He fell to musing again. “Madame la Vicomtesse has seen more in seven years than most of us see in a lifetime,” he said. “She has beheld the glory of France, and the dishonor and pollution of her country. Had the old order lasted her salon would have been famous, and she would have been a power in politics.”

“I have thought that the Vicomtesse must have had a queer marriage,” Nick remarked.

Monsieur de St. Gre smiled.

“Such marriages were the rule amongst our nobility,” he said. “It was arranged while Helene was still in the convent, though it was not celebrated until three years after she had been in the world. There was a romantic affair, I believe, with a young gentleman of the English embassy, though I do not know the details. He is said to be the only man she ever cared for. He was a younger son of an impoverished earl.”

I started, remembering what the Vicomtesse had said. But Monsieur de St. Gre did not appear to see my perturbation.

“Be that as it may, if Helene suffered, she never gave a sign of it. The marriage was celebrated with great pomp, and the world could only conjecture what she thought of the Vicomte. It was deemed on both sides a brilliant match. He had inherited vast estates, Ivry-le-Tour, Montmery, Les Saillantes, I know not what else. She was heiress to the Chateau de St. Gre with its wide lands, to the chateau and lands of the Cote Rouge in Normandy, to the hotel St. Gre in Paris. Monsieur le Vicomte was between forty and fifty at his marriage, and from what I have heard of him he had many of the virtues and many of the faults of his order. He was a bachelor, which does not mean that he had lacked consolations. He was reserved with his equals, and distant with others. He had served in the Guards, and did not lack courage. He dressed exquisitely, was inclined to the Polignac party, took his ease everywhere, had a knowledge of cards and courts, and little else. He was cheated by his stewards, refused to believe that the Revolution was serious, and would undoubtedly have been guillotined had the Vicomtesse not contrived to get him out of France in spite of himself. They went first to the Duke de Ligne, at Bel Oeil, and thence to Coblentz. He accepted a commission in the Austrian service, which is much to his credit, and Helene went with some friends to England. There my letter

reached her, and rather than be beholden to strangers or accept my money there, she came to us. That is her story in brief, Messieurs. As for Monsieur le Vicomte, he admired his wife, as well he might, respected her for the way she served the gallants, but he made no pretence of loving her. One affair—a girl in the village of Montmery—-had lasted. Helene was destined for higher things than may be found in Louisiana," said Monsieur de St. Gre, turning to Nick, "but now that you are to carry away my treasure, Monsieur, I do not know what I should have done without her."

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“And has there been any news of the Vicomte of late?”

It was Nick who asked the question, after a little. Monsieur de St. Gre looked at him in surprise.

“Eh, mon Dieu, have you not heard?” he said. “C’est vrai, you have been with David. Did not the Vicomtesse mention it? But why should she? Monsieur le Vicomte died in Vienna. He had lived too well.”

“The Vicomte is dead?” I said.

They both looked at me. Indeed, I should not have recognized my own voice. What my face betrayed, what my feelings were, I cannot say. My heart beat no faster, there was no tumult in my brain, and yet—my breath caught strangely. Something grew within me which is beyond the measure of speech, and so it was meant to be.

“I did not know this myself until Helene returned to Les Iles,” Monsieur de St. Gre was saying to me. “The letter came to her the day after you were taken ill. It was from the Baron von Seckenbruck, at whose house the Vicomte died. She took it very calmly, for Helene is not a woman to pretend. How much better, after all, if she had married her Englishman for love! And she is much troubled now because, as she declares, she is dependent upon my bounty. That is my happiness, my consolation,” the good man added simply, “and her father, the Marquis, was kind to me when I was a young provincial and a stranger. God rest his soul!”

We were drawing near to Les Iles. The rains had come during my illness, and in the level evening light the forest of the shore was the tender green of spring. At length we saw the white wooden steps in the levee at the landing, and near them were three figures waiting. We glided nearer. One was Madame de St. Gre, another was Antoinette,—these I saw indeed. The other was Helene, and it seemed to me that her eyes met mine across the waters and drew them. Then we were at the landing. I heard Madame de St. Gre’s voice, and Antoinette’s in welcome—I listened for another. I saw Nick running up the steps; in the impetuosity of his love he had seized Antoinette’s hand in his, and she was the color of a red rose. Creole decorum forbade further advances. Andre and another lifted me out, and they gathered around me,—these kind people and devoted friends,—Antoinette calling me, with exquisite shyness, by name; Madame de St. Gre giving me a grave but gentle welcome, and asking anxiously how I stood the journey. Another took my hand, held it for the briefest space that has been marked out of time, and for that instant I looked into her eyes. Life flowed back into me, and strength, and a joy not to be fathomed. I could have walked; but they bore me through the well-remembered vista, and the white gallery at the end of it was like the sight of home. The evening air was laden with the scent of the sweetest of all shrubs and flowers.

CHAPTER XIV

"*To* UNPATHED *waters*, *undreamed shores*"

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Monsieur and Madame de St. Gre themselves came with me to my chamber off the gallery, where everything was prepared for my arrival with the most loving care,—-Monsieur de St. Gre supplying many things from his wardrobe which I lacked. And when I tried to thank them for their kindness he laid his hand upon my shoulder.

“Tenez, mon ami,” he said, “you got your illness by doing things for other people. It is time other people did something for you.”

Lindy brought me the daintiest of suppers, and I was left to my meditations. Nick looked in at the door, and hinted darkly that I had to thank a certain tyrant for my abandonment. I called to him, but he paid no heed, and I heard him chuckling as he retreated along the gallery. The journey, the excitement into which I had been plunged by the news I had heard, brought on a languor, and I was between sleeping and waking half the night. I slept to dream of her, of the Vicomte, her husband, walking in his park or playing cards amidst a brilliant company in a great candle-lit room like the drawing-room at Temple Bow. Doubt grew, and sleep left me. She was free now, indeed, but was she any nearer to me? Hope grew again,—why had she left me in New Orleans? She had received a letter, and if she had cared she would not have remained. But there was a detestable argument to fit that likewise, and in the light of this argument it was most natural that she should return to Les Iles. And who was I, David Ritchie, a lawyer of the little town of Louisville, to aspire to the love of such a creature? Was it likely that Helene, Vicomtesse d’Ivry-le-Tour, would think twice of me? The powers of the world were making ready to crush the presumptuous France of the Jacobins, and the France of King and Aristocracy would be restored. Chateaux and lands would be hers again, and she would go back again to that brilliant life among the great to which she was born, for which nature had fitted her. Last of all was the thought of the Englishman whom I resembled. She would go back to him.

Nick was the first in my room the next morning. He had risen early (so he ingenuously informed me) because Antoinette had a habit of getting up with the birds, and as I drank my coffee he was emphatic in his denunciations of the customs of the country.

“It is a wonderful day, Davy,” he cried; “you must hurry and get out. Monsieur de St. Gre sends his compliments, and wishes to know if you will pardon his absence this morning. He is going to escort Antoinette and me over to see some of my prospective cousins, the Bertrands.” He made a face, and bent nearer to my ear. “I swear to you I have not had one moment alone with her. We have been for a walk, but Madame la Vicomtesse must needs intrude herself upon us. Egad, I told her plainly what I thought of her tyranny.”

“And what did she say?” I asked, trying to smile.

“She laughed, and said that I belonged to a young nation which had done much harm in the world to everybody but themselves. Faith, if I wasn’t in love with Antoinette, I believe I’d be in love with her.”

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“I have no doubt of it,” I answered.

“The Vicomtesse is as handsome as a queen this morning,” he continued, paying no heed to this remark. “She has on a linen dress that puzzles me. It was made to walk among the trees and flowers, it is as simple as you please; and yet it has a distinction that makes you stare.”

“You seem to have stared,” I answered. “Since when did you take such interest in gowns?”

“Bless you, it was Antoinette. I never should have known,” said he. “Antoinette had never before seen the gown, and she asked the Vicomtesse where she got the pattern. The Vicomtesse said that the gown had been made by Leonard, a court dressmaker, and it was of the fashion the Queen had set to wear in the gardens of the Trianon when simplicity became the craze. Antoinette is to have it copied, so she says.”

Which proved that Antoinette was human, after all, and happy once more.

“Hang it,” said Nick, “she paid more attention to that gown than to me. Good-by, Davy. Obey the—the Colonel.”

“Is—is not the Vicomtesse going with you?” I asked

“No, I’m sorry for you,” he called back from the gallery.

He had need to be, for I fell into as great a fright as ever I had had in my life. Monsieur de St. Gre knocked at the door and startled me out of my wits. Hearing that I was awake, he had come in person to make his excuses for leaving me that morning.

“Bon Dieu!” he said, looking at me, “the country has done you good already. Behold a marvel! Au revoir, David.”

I heard the horses being brought around, and laughter and voices. How easily I distinguished hers! Then I heard the hoof-beats on the soft dirt of the drive. Then silence,—the silence of a summer morning which is all myriad sweet sounds. Then Lindy appeared, starched and turbaned.

“Marse Dave, how you feel dis mawnin’? Yo’ ’pears mighty peart, sholy. Marse Dave, yo’ chair is sot on de gallery. Is you ready? I’ll fotch dat yaller nigger, Andre.”

“You needn’t fetch Andre,” I said; “I can walk.”

“Lan sakes, Marse Dave, but you is bumptious.”

I rose and walked out on the gallery with surprising steadiness. A great cushioned chair had been placed there and beside it a table with books, and another chair. I sat down. Lindy looked at me sharply, but I did not heed her, and presently she retired. The day, still in its early golden glory, seemed big with prescience. Above, the saffron haze was lifted, and there was the blue sky. The breeze held its breath; the fragrance of grass and fruit and flowers, of the shrub that vied with all, languished on the air. Out of these things she came.

I knew that she was coming, but I saw her first at the gallery's end, the roses she held red against the white linen of her gown. Then I felt a great yearning and a great dread. I have seen many of her kind since, and none reflected so truly as she the life of the old regime. Her dress, her carriage, her air, all suggested it; and she might, as Nick said, have been walking in the gardens of the Trianon. Titles I cared nothing for. Hers alone seemed real, to put her far above me. Had all who bore them been as worthy, titles would have meant much to mankind.

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She was coming swiftly. I rose to my feet before her. I believe I should have risen in death. And then she was standing beside me, looking up into my face.

“You must not do that,” she said, “or I will go away.”

I sat down again. She went to the door and called, I following her with my eyes. Lindy came with a bowl of water.

“Put it on the table,” said the Vicomtesse.

Lindy put the bowl on the table, gave us a glance, and departed silently. The Vicomtesse began to arrange the flowers in the bowl, and I watched her, fascinated by her movements. She did everything quickly, deftly, but this matter took an unconscionable time. She did not so much as glance at me. She seemed to have forgotten my presence.

“There,” she said at last, giving them a final touch. “You are less talkative, if anything, than usual this morning, Mr. Ritchie. You have not said good morning, you have not told me how you were—you have not even thanked me for the roses. One might almost believe that you are sorry to come to Les Iles.”

“One might believe anything who didn’t know, Madame la Vicomtesse.”

She put her hand to the flowers again.

“It seems a pity to pick them, even in a good cause,” she said.

She was so near me that I could have touched her. A weakness seized me, and speech was farther away than ever. She moved, she sat down and looked at me, and the kind of mocking smile came into her eyes that I knew was the forerunner of raillery.

“There is a statue in the gardens of Versailles which seems always about to speak, and then to think better of it. You remind me of that statue, Mr. Ritchie. It is the statue of Wisdom.”

What did she mean?

“Wisdom knows the limitations of its own worth, Madame,” I replied.

“It is the one particular in which I should have thought wisdom was lacking,” she said. “You have a tongue, if you will deign to use it. Or shall I read to you?” she added quickly, picking up a book. “I have read to the Queen, when Madame Campan was tired. Her Majesty poor dear lady, did me the honor to say she liked my English.”

“You have done everything, Madame,” I said.

“I have read to a Queen, to a King’s sister, but never yet—to a King,” she said, opening the book and giving me the briefest of glances. “You are all kings in America are you not? What shall I read?”

“I would rather have you talk to me.”

“Very well, I will tell you how the Queen spoke English. No, I will not do that,” she said, a swift expression of sadness passing over her face. “I will never mock her again. She was a good sovereign and a brave woman and I loved her.” She was silent a moment, and I thought there was a great weariness in her voice when she spoke again. “I have every reason to thank God when I think of the terrors I escaped, of the friends I have found. And yet I am an unhappy woman, Mr. Ritchie.”

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“You are unhappy when you are not doing things for others, Madame,” I suggested.

“I am a discontented woman,” she said; “I always have been. And I am unhappy when I think of all those who were dear to me and whom I loved. Many are dead, and many are scattered and homeless.”

“I have often thought of your sorrows, Madame,” I said.

“Which reminds me that I should not burden you with them, my good friend, when you are recovering. Do you know that you have been very near to death?”

“I know, Madame,” I faltered. “I know that had it not been for you I should not be alive to-day. I know that you risked your life to save my own.”

She did not answer at once, and when I looked at her she was gazing out over the flowers on the lawn.

“My life did not matter,” she said. “Let us not talk of that.”

I might have answered, but I dared not speak for fear of saying what was in my heart. And while I trembled with the repression of it, she was changed. She turned her face towards me and smiled a little.

“If you had obeyed me you would not have been so ill,” she said.

“Then I am glad that I did not obey you.”

“Your cousin, the irrepressible Mr. Temple, says I am a tyrant. Come now, do you think me a tyrant?”

“He has also said other things of you.”

“What other things?”

I blushed at my own boldness.

“He said that if he were not in love with Antoinette, he would be in love with you.”

“A very safe compliment,” said the Vicomtesse. “Indeed, it sounds too cautious for Mr. Temple. You must have tampered with it, Mr. Ritchie,” she flashed. “Mr. Temple is a boy. He needs discipline. He will have too easy a time with Antoinette.”

“He is not the sort of man you should marry,” I said, and sat amazed at it.

She looked at me strangely.

“No, he is not,” she answered. “He is more or less the sort of man I have been thrown with all my life. They toil not, neither do they spin. I know you will not misunderstand me, for I am very fond of him. Mr. Temple is honest, fearless, lovable, and of good instincts. One cannot say as much for the rest of his type. They go through life fighting, gaming, horse-racing, riding to hounds,—I have often thought that it was no wonder our privileges came to an end. So many of us were steeped in selfishness and vice, were a burden on the world. The early nobles, with all their crimes, were men who carved their way. Of such were the lords of the Marches. We toyed with politics, with simplicity, we wasted the land, we played cards as our coaches passed through famine-stricken villages. The reckoning came. Our punishment was not given into the hands of the bourgeois, who would have dealt justly, but to the scum, the canaille, the demons of the earth. Had our King, had our nobility, been men with the old fire, they would not have stood it. They were worn out with centuries of catering to themselves. Give me a man who will shape his life and live it with all his strength. I am tired of sham and pretence, of cynical wit, of mocking at the real things of life, of pride, vain-glory, and hypocrisy. Give me a man whose existence means something.”

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Was she thinking of the Englishman of whom she had spoken? Delicacy forbade my asking the question. He had been a man, according to her own testimony. Where was he now? Her voice had a ring of earnestness in it I had never heard before, and this arraignment of her own life and of her old friends surprised me. Now she seemed lost in a revery, from which I forebore to arouse her.

“I have often tried to picture your life,” I said at last.

“You?” she answered, turning her head quickly.

“Ever since I first saw the miniature,” I said. “Monsieur de St. Gre told me some things, and afterwards I read ‘Le Mariage de Figaro,’ and some novels, and some memoirs of the old courts which I got in Philadelphia last winter. I used to think of you as I rode over the mountains, as I sat reading in my room of an evening. I used to picture you in the palaces amusing the Queen and making the Cardinals laugh. And then I used to wonder—what became of you—and whether—” I hesitated, overwhelmed by a sudden confusion, for she was gazing at me fixedly with a look I did not understand.

“You used to think of that?” she said.

“I never thought to see you,” I answered.

Laughter came into her eyes, and I knew that I had not vexed her. But I had spoken stupidly, and I reddened.

“I had a quick tongue,” she said, as though to cover my confusion. “I have it yet. In those days misfortune had not curbed it. I had not learned to be charitable. When I was a child I used to ride with my father to the hunts at St. Gre, and I was too ready to pick out the weaknesses of his guests. If one of the company had a trick or a mannerism, I never failed to catch it. People used to ask me what I thought of such and such a person, and that was bad for me. I saw their failings and pretensions, but I ignored my own. It was the same at Abbaye aux Bois, the convent where I was taught. When I was presented to her Majesty I saw why people hated her. They did not understand her. She was a woman with a large heart, with charity. Some did not suspect this, others forgot it because they beheld a brilliant personage with keen perceptions who would not submit to being bored. Her Majesty made many enemies at court of persons who believed she was making fun of them. There was a dress-maker at the French court called Mademoiselle Bertin, who became ridiculously pretentious because the Queen allowed the woman to dress her hair in private. Bertin used to put on airs with the nobility when they came to order gowns, and she was very rude to me when I went for my court dress. There was a ball at Versailles the day I was presented, and my father told me that her Majesty wished to speak with me. I was very much frightened. The Queen was standing with her back to the mirror, the Duchesse de

Polignac and some other ladies beside her, when my father brought me up, and her Majesty was smiling.

“‘What did you say to Bertin, Mademoiselle?’ she asked.

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“I was more frightened than ever, but the remembrance of the woman’s impudence got the better of me.

“’I told her that in dressing your Majesty’s hair she had acquired all the court accomplishments but one.’

“’I’ll warrant that Bertin was curious,’ said the Queen.

“’She was, your Majesty.’

“’What is the accomplishment she lacks?’ the Queen demanded; ’I should like to know it myself.’

“It is discrimination, your Majesty. I told the woman there were some people she could be rude to with impunity. I was not one of them.’

“’She’ll never be rude to you again, Mademoiselle,’ said the Queen.

“’I am sure of it, your Majesty,’ I said.

“The Queen laughed, and bade the Duchesse de Polignac invite me to supper that evening. My father was delighted,—I was more frightened than ever. But the party was small, her Majesty was very gracious and spoke to me often, and I saw that above all things she liked to be amused. Poor lady! It was a year after that terrible affair of the necklace, and she wished to be distracted from thinking of the calumnies which were being heaped upon her. She used to send for me often during the years that followed, and I might have had a place at court near her person. But my father was sensible enough to advise me not to accept,—if I could refuse without offending her Majesty. The Queen was not offended; she was good enough to say that I was wise in my request. She had, indeed, abolished most of the ridiculous etiquette of the court. She would not eat in public, she would not be followed around the palace by ladies in court gowns, she would not have her ladies in the room when she was dressing. If she wished a mirror, she would not wait for it to be passed through half a dozen hands and handed her by a Princess of the Blood. Sometimes she used to summon me to amuse her and walk with me by the water in the beautiful gardens of the Petit Triano. I used to imitate the people she disliked. I disliked them, too. I have seen her laugh until the tears came into her eyes when I talked of Monsieur Necker. As the dark days drew nearer I loved more and more to be in the seclusion of the country at Montmery, at the St. Gre of my girlhood. I can see St. Gre now,” said the Vicomtesse, “the thatched houses of the little village on either side of the high-road, the honest, red-faced peasants courtesying in their doorways at our berline, the brick wall of the park, the iron gates beside the lodge, the long avenue of poplars, the deer feeding in the beechwood, the bridge over the shining stream and the long, weather-beaten chateau beyond it. Paris and the muttering of the storm were far away. The mornings on the sunny terrace

looking across the valley to the blue hills, the walks in the village, grew very dear to me. We do not know the value of things, Mr. Ritchie, until we are about to lose them."

"You did not go back to court?" I asked.

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She sighed.

“Yes, I went back. I thought it my duty. I was at Versailles that terrible summer when the States General met, when the National Assembly grew out of it, when the Bastille was stormed, when the King was throwing away his prerogatives like confetti. Never did the gardens of the Trianon seem more beautiful, or more sad. Sometimes the Queen would laugh even then when I mimicked Bailly, Des Moulins, Mirabeau. I was with her Majesty in the gardens on that dark, rainy day when the fishwomen came to Versailles. The memory of that night will haunt me as long as I live. The wind howled, the rain lashed with fury against the windows, the mob tore through the streets of the town, sacked the wine-shops, built great fires at the corners. Before the day dawned again the furies had broken into the palace and murdered what was left of the Guard. You have heard how they carried off the King and Queen to Paris—how they bore the heads of the soldiers on their pikes. I saw it from a window, and I shall never forget it.”

Her voice faltered, and there were tears on her lashes. Some quality in her narration brought before me so vividly the scenes of which she spoke that I started when she had finished. There was much more I would have known, but I could not press her to speak longer on a subject that gave her pain. At that moment she seemed more distant to me than ever before. She rose, went into the house, and left me thinking of the presumptions of the hopes I had dared to entertain, left me picturing sadly the existence of which she had spoken. Why had she told me of it? Perchance she had thought to do me a kindness!

She came back to me—I had not thought she would. She sat down with her embroidery in her lap, and for some moments busied herself with it in silence. Then she said, without looking up:—

“I do not know why I have tired you with this, why I have saddened myself. It is past and gone.”

“I was not tired, Madame. It is very difficult to live in the present when the past has been so brilliant,” I answered.

“So brilliant!” She sighed. “So thoughtless,—I think that is the sharpest regret.” I watched her fingers as they stitched, wondering how they could work so rapidly. At last she said in a low voice, “Antoinette and Mr. Temple have told me something of your life, Mr. Ritchie.”

I laughed.

“It has been very humble,” I replied.

“What I heard was—interesting to me,” she said, turning over her frame. “Will you not tell me something of it?”

“Gladly, Madame, if that is the case,” I answered.

“Well, then,” she said, “why don’t you?”

“I do not know which part you would like, Madame. Shall I tell you about Colonel Clark? I do not know when to begin—”

She dropped her sewing in her lap and looked up at me quickly.

“I told you that you were a strange man,” she said. “I almost lose patience with you. No, don’t tell me about Colonel Clark—at least not until you come to him. Begin at the beginning, at the cabin in the mountains.”

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“You want the whole of it!” I exclaimed.

She picked up her embroidery again and bent over it with a smile.

“Yes, I want the whole of it.”

So I began at the cabin in the mountains. I cannot say that I ever forgot she was listening, but I lost myself in the narrative. It presented to me, for the first time, many aspects that I had not thought of. For instance, that I should be here now in Louisiana telling it to one who had been the companion and friend of the Queen of France. Once in a while the Vicomtesse would look up at me swiftly, when I paused, and then go on with her work again. I told her of Temple Bow, and how I had run away; of Polly Ann and Tom, of the Wilderness Trail and how I shot Cutcheon, of the fight at Crab Orchard, of the life in Kentucky, of Clark and his campaign. Of my doings since; how I had found Nick and how he had come to New Orleans with me; of my life as a lawyer in Louisville, of the conventions I had been to. The morning wore on to midday, and I told her more than I believed it possible to tell any one. When at last I had finished a fear grew upon me that I had told her too much. Her fingers still stitched, her head was bent and I could not see her face,—only the knot of her hair coiled with an art that struck me suddenly. Then she spoke, and her voice was very low.

“I love Polly Ann,” she said; “I should like to know her.”

“I wish that you could know her,” I answered, quickening.

She raised her head, and looked at me with an expression that was not a smile. I could not say what it was, or what it meant.

“I do not think you are stupid,” she said, in the same tone, “but I do not believe you know how remarkable your life has been. I can scarcely realize that you have seen all this, have done all this, have felt all this. You are a lawyer, a man of affairs, and yet you could guide me over the hidden paths of half a continent. You know the mountain ranges, the passes, the rivers, the fords, the forest trails, the towns and the men who made them!” She picked up her sewing and bent over it once more. “And yet you did not think that this would interest me.”

Perchance it was a subtle summons in her voice I heard that bade me open the flood-gates of my heart,—I know not. I know only that no power on earth could have held me silent then.

“Helene!” I said, and stopped. My heart beat so wildly that I could hear it. “I do not know why I should dare to think of you, to look up to you—Helene, I love you, I shall love you till I die. I love you with all the strength that is in me, with all my soul. You know it, and if you did not I could hide it no more. As long as I live there will never be

another woman in the world for me. I love you. You will forgive me because of the torture I have suffered, because of the pain I shall suffer when I think of you in the years to come."

Her sewing dropped to her lap—to the floor. She looked at me, and the light which I saw in her eyes flooded my soul with a joy beyond my belief. I trembled with a wonder that benumbed me. I would have got to my feet had she not come to me swiftly, that I might not rise. She stood above me, I lifted up my arms; she bent to me with a movement that conferred a priceless thing.

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“David,” she said, “could you not tell that I loved you, that you were he who has been in my mind for so many years, and in my heart since I saw you?”

“I could not tell,” I said. “I dared not think it. I—I thought there was another.”

She was seated on the arm of my chair. She drew back her head with a smile trembling on her lips, with a lustre burning in her eyes like a vigil—a vigil for me.

“He reminded me of you,” she answered.

I was lost in sheer, bewildering happiness. And she who created it, who herself was that happiness, roused me from it.

“What are you thinking?” she asked.

“I was thinking that a star has fallen,—that I may have a jewel beyond other men,” I said.

“And a star has risen for me,” she said, “that I may have a guide beyond other women.”

“Then it is you who have raised it, Helene.” I was silent a moment, trying again to bring the matter within my grasp. “Do you mean that you love me, that you will marry me, that you will come back to Kentucky with me and will be content,—you, who have been the companion of a Queen?”

There came an archness into her look that inflamed me the more.

“I, who have been the companion of a Queen, love you, will marry you, will go back to Kentucky with you and be content,” she repeated. “And yet not I, David, but another woman—a happy woman. You shall be my refuge, my strength, my guide. You will lead me over the mountains and through the wilderness by the paths you know. You will bring me to Polly Ann that I may thank her for the gift of you,—above all other gifts in the world.”

I was silent again.

“Helene,” I said at last, “will you give me the miniature?”

“On one condition,” she replied.

“Yes,” I said, “yes. And again yes. What is it?”

“That you will obey me—sometimes.”

“It is a privilege I long for,” I answered.

“You did not begin with promise,” she said.

I released her hand, and she drew the ivory from her gown and gave it me.
I kissed it.

“I will go to Monsieur Isadore’s and get the frame,” I said.

“When I give you permission,” said Helene, gently.

I have written this story for her eyes.

CHAPTER XV

AN EPISODE IN THE LIFE OF A MAN

Out of the blood and ashes of France a Man had arisen who moved real kings and queens on his chess-board—which was a large part of the world. The Man was Napoleon Buonaparte, at present, for lack of a better name, First Consul of the French Republic. The Man’s eye, sweeping the world for a new plaything, had rested upon one which had excited the fancy of lesser adventurers, of one John Law, for instance. It was a large, unwieldy plaything indeed, and remote. It was nothing less than that vast and mysterious country which lay beyond the monster yellow River of the Wilderness, the country bordered on the south by the Gulf swamps, on the north by no man knew what forests,—as dark as those the Romans found in Gaul,—on the west by a line which other generations might be left to settle.

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This land was Louisiana.

A future king of France, while an emigre, had been to Louisiana. This is merely an interesting fact worth noting. It was not interesting to Napoleon.

Napoleon, by dint of certain screws which he tightened on his Catholic Majesty, King Charles of Spain, in the Treaty of San Ildefonso on the 1st of October, 1800, got his plaything. Louisiana was French again,—whatever French was in those days. The treaty was a profound secret. But secrets leak out, even the profoundest; and this was wafted across the English Channel to the ears of Mr. Rufus King, American Minister at London, who wrote of it to one Thomas Jefferson, President of the United States. Mr. Jefferson was interested, not to say alarmed.

Mr. Robert Livingston was about to depart on his mission from the little Republic of America to the great Republic of France. Mr. Livingston was told not to make himself disagreeable, but to protest. If Spain was to give up the plaything, the Youngest Child among the Nations ought to have it. It lay at her doors, it was necessary for her growth.

Mr. Livingston arrived in France to find that Louisiana was a mere pawn on the chess-board, the Republic he represented little more. He protested, and the great Talleyrand shrugged his shoulders. What was Monsieur talking about? A treaty. What treaty? A treaty with Spain ceding back Louisiana to France after forty years. Who said there was such a treaty? Did Monsieur take snuff? Would Monsieur call again when the Minister was less busy?

Monsieur did call again, taking care not to make himself disagreeable. He was offered snuff. He called again, pleasantly. He was offered snuff. He called again. The great Talleyrand laughed. He was always so happy to see Monsieur when he (Talleyrand) was not busy. He would give Monsieur a certificate of importunity. He had quite forgotten what Monsieur was talking about on former occasions. Oh, yes, a treaty. Well, suppose there was such a treaty, what then?

What then? Mr. Livingston, the agreeable but importunate, went home and wrote a memorial, and was presently assured that the inaccessible Man who was called First Consul had read it with interest—great interest. Mr. Livingston did not cease to indulge in his enjoyable visits to Talleyrand—not he. But in the intervals he sat down to think.

What did the inaccessible Man himself have in his mind?

The Man had been considering the Anglo-Saxon race, and in particular that portion of it which inhabited the Western Hemisphere. He perceived that they were a quarrelsome people, which possessed the lust for land and conquest like the rest of their blood. He saw with astonishment something that had happened, something that they had done. Unperceived by the world, in five and twenty years they had swept across a thousand

miles of mountain and forest wilderness in ever increasing thousands, had beaten the fiercest of savage tribes before them, stolidly unmindful of their dead. They had come at length to the great yellow River, and finding it closed had cried aloud in their anger. What was beyond it to stop them? Spain, with a handful of subjects inherited from the France of Louis the Fifteenth.

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Could Spain stop them? No. But he, the Man, would stop them. He would raise up in Louisiana as a monument to himself a daughter of France to curb their ambition. America should not be all Anglo-Saxon.

Already the Americans had compelled Spain to open the River. How long before they would overrun Louisiana itself, until a Frenchman or a Spaniard could scarce be found in the land?

Sadly, in accordance with the treaty which Monsieur Talleyrand had known nothing about, his Catholic Majesty instructed his Intendant at New Orleans to make ready to deliver Louisiana to the French Commission. That was in July, 1802. This was not exactly an order to close the River again—in fact, his Majesty said nothing about closing the River. Mark the reasoning of the Spanish mind. The Intendant closed the River as his plain duty. And Kentucky and Tennessee, wayward, belligerent infants who had outgrown their swaddling clothes, were heard from again. The Nation had learned to listen to them. The Nation was very angry. Mr. Hamilton and the Federalists and many others would have gone to war and seized the Floridas.

Mr. Jefferson said, “Wait and see what his Catholic Majesty has to say.” Mr. Jefferson was a man of great wisdom, albeit he had mistaken Jacobinism for something else when he was younger. And he knew that Napoleon could not play chess in the wind. The wind was rising.

Mr. Livingston was a patriot, able, importunate, but getting on in years and a little hard of hearing. Importunity without an Army and a Navy behind it is not effective—-especially when there is no wind. But Mr. Jefferson heard the wind rising, and he sent Mr. Monroe to Mr. Livingston’s aid. Mr. Monroe was young, witty, lively, popular with people he met. He, too, heard the wind rising, and so now did Mr. Livingston.

The ships containing the advance guard of the colonists destined for the new Louisiana lay in the roads at Dunkirk, their anchors ready to weigh,—three thousand men, three thousand horses, for the Man did things on a large scale. The anchors were not weighed.

His Catholic Majesty sent word from Spain to Mr. Jefferson that he was sorry his Intendant had been so foolish. The River was opened again.

The Treaty of Amiens was a poor wind-shield. It blew down, and the chessmen began to totter. One George of England, noted for his frugal table and his quarrelsome disposition, who had previously fought with France, began to call the Man names. The Man called George names, and sat down to think quickly. George could not be said to be on the best of terms with his American relations, but the Anglo-Saxon is unsentimental, phlegmatic, setting money and trade and lands above ideals. George meant to go to war again. Napoleon also meant to go to war again. But George meant

to go to war again right away, which was inconvenient and inconsiderate, for Napoleon had not finished his game of chess. The obvious outcome of the situation was that George with his Navy would get Louisiana, or else help his relations to get it. In either case Louisiana would become Anglo-Saxon.

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This was the wind which Mr. Jefferson had heard.

The Man, being a genius who let go gracefully when he had to, decided between two bad bargains. He would sell Louisiana to the Americans as a favor; they would be very, very grateful, and they would go on hating George. Moreover, he would have all the more money with which to fight George.

The inaccessible Man suddenly became accessible. Nay, he became gracious, smiling, full of loving-kindness, charitable. Certain dickerings followed by a bargain passed between the American Minister and Monsieur Barbe-Marbois. Then Mr. Livingston and Mr. Monroe dined with the hitherto inaccessible. And the Man, after the manner of Continental Personages, asked questions. Frederick the Great has started this fashion, and many have imitated it.

Louisiana became American at last. Whether by destiny or chance, whether by the wisdom of Jefferson or the necessity of Napoleon, who can say? It seems to me, David Ritchie, writing many years after the closing words of the last chapter were penned, that it was ours inevitably. For I have seen and known and loved the people with all their crudities and faults, whose inheritance it was by right of toil and suffering and blood.

And I, David Ritchie, saw the flags of three nations waving over it in the space of two days. And it came to pass in this wise.

Rumors of these things which I have told above had filled Kentucky from time to time, and in November of 1803 there came across the mountains the news that the Senate of the United States had ratified the treaty between our ministers and Napoleon.

I will not mention here what my life had become, what my fortune, save to say that both had been far beyond my expectations. In worldly goods and honors, in the respect and esteem of my fellow-men, I had been happy indeed. But I had been blessed above other men by one whose power it was to lift me above the mean and sordid things of this world.

Many times in the pursuit of my affairs I journeyed over that country which I had known when it belonged to the Indian and the deer and the elk and the wolf and the buffalo. Often did she ride by my side, making light of the hardships which, indeed, were no hardships to her, wondering at the settlements which had sprung up like magic in the wilderness, which were the heralds of the greatness of the Republic,—her country now.

So, in the bright and boisterous March weather of the year 1804, we found ourselves riding together along the way made memorable by the footsteps of Clark and his backwoodsmen. For I had an errand in St. Louis with Colonel Chouteau. A subtle change had come upon Kaskaskia with the new blood which was flowing into it: we passed Cahokia, full of memories to the drummer boy whom she loved. There was the

church, the garrison, the stream, and the little house where my Colonel and I had lived together. She must see them all, she must hear the story from my lips again; and the telling of it to her gave it a new fire and a new life.

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At evening, when the March wind had torn the cotton clouds to shreds, we stood on the Mississippi's bank, gazing at the western shore, at Louisiana. The low, forest-clad hills made a black band against the sky, and above the band hung the sun, a red ball. He was setting, and man might look upon his face without fear. The sight of the waters of that river stirred me to think of many things. What had God in store for the vast land out of which the waters flowed? Had He, indeed, saved it for a People, a People to be drawn from all nations, from all classes? Was the principle of the Republic to prevail and spread and change the complexion of the world? Or were the lusts of greed and power to increase until in the end they had swallowed the leaven? Who could say? What man of those who, soberly, had put his hand to the Paper which declared the opportunities of generations to come, could measure the Force which he had helped to set in motion.

We crossed the river to the village where I had been so kindly received many years ago—to St. Louis. The place was little changed. The wind was stilled, the blue wood smoke curled lazily from the wide stone chimneys of the houses nestling against the hill. The afterglow was fading into night; lights twinkled in the windows. Followed by our servants we climbed the bank, Helene and I, and walked the quiet streets bordered by palings. The evening was chill. We passed a bright cabaret from which came the sound of many voices; in the blacksmith's shop another group was gathered, and we saw faces eager in the red light. They were talking of the Cession.

We passed that place where Nick had stopped Suzanne in the cart, and laughed at the remembrance. We came to Monsieur Gratiot's, for he had bidden us to stay with him. And with Madame he gave us a welcome to warm our hearts after our journey.

"David," he said, "I have seen many strange things happen in my life, but the strangest of all is that Clark's drummer boy should have married a Vicomtesse of the old regime."

And she was ever Madame la Vicomtesse to our good friends in St. Louis, for she was a woman to whom a title came as by nature's right.

"And you are about to behold another strange thing David," Monsieur Gratiot continued. "To-day you are on French territory."

"French territory!" I exclaimed.

"To-day Upper Louisiana is French," he answered. "To-morrow it will be American forever. This morning Captain Stoddard of the United States Army, empowered to act as a Commissioner of the French Republic, arrived with Captain Lewis and a guard of American troops. Today, at noon, the flag of Spain was lowered from the staff at the headquarters. To-night a guard of honor watches with the French Tricolor, and we are French for the last time. To-morrow we shall be Americans."

I saw that simple ceremony. The little company of soldiers was drawn up before the low stone headquarters, the villagers with heads uncovered gathered round about. I saw the Stars and Stripes rising, the Tricolor setting. They met midway on the staff, hung together for a space, and a salute to the two nations echoed among the hills across the waters of the great River that rolled impassive by.

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AFTERWORD

This book has been named “The Crossing” because I have tried to express in it the beginnings of that great movement across the mountains which swept resistless over the Continent until at last it saw the Pacific itself. The Crossing was the first instinctive reaching out of an infant nation which was one day to become a giant. No annals in the world’s history are more wonderful than the story of the conquest of Kentucky and Tennessee by the pioneers.

This name, “The Crossing,” is likewise typical in another sense. The political faith of our forefathers, of which the Constitution is the creed, was made to fit a more or less homogeneous body of people who proved that they knew the meaning of the word “Liberty.” By Liberty, our forefathers meant the Duty as well as the Right of man to govern himself. The Constitution amply attests the greatness of its authors, but it was a compromise. It was an attempt to satisfy thirteen colonies, each of which clung tenaciously to its identity. It suited the eighteenth-century conditions of a little English-speaking confederacy along the seaboard, far removed from the world’s strife and jealousy. It scarcely contemplated that the harassed millions of Europe would flock to its fold, and it did not foresee that, in less than a hundred years, its own citizens would sweep across the three thousand miles of forest and plain and mountain to the Western Ocean, absorb French and Spanish Louisiana, Spanish Texas, Mexico, and California, fill this land with broad farmsteads and populous cities, cover it with a network of railroads.

Would the Constitution, made to meet the needs of the little confederacy of the seaboard, stretch over a Continent and an Empire?

We are fighting out that question to-day. But The Crossing was in Daniel Boone’s time, in George Rogers Clark’s. Would the Constitution stand the strain? And will it stand the strain now that the once remote haven of the oppressed has become a world-power?

It was a difficult task in a novel to gather the elements necessary to picture this movement: the territory was vast, the types bewildering. The lonely mountain cabin; the seigniorial life of the tide-water; the foothills and mountains which the Scotch-Irish have marked for their own to this day; the Wilderness Trail; the wonderland of Kentucky, and the cruel fighting in the border forts there against the most relentless of foes; George Rogers Clark and his momentous campaign which gave to the Republic Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois; the transition period—the coming of the settler after the pioneer; Louisiana, St. Louis, and New Orleans,—to cover this ground, to picture the passions and politics of the time, to bring the counter influence of the French Revolution as near as possible to reality, has been a three years’ task. The autobiography of David Ritchie is as near as I can get to its solution, and I have a great sense of its incompleteness.

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I had hoped when I planned the series to bring down this novel through the stirring period which ended, by a chance, when a steamboat brought supplies to Jackson's army in New Orleans—the beginning of the era of steam commerce on our Western waters. This work will have to be reserved for a future time.

I have tried to give a true history of Clark's campaign as seen by an eyewitness, trammelled as little as possible by romance. Elsewhere, as I look back through these pages, I feel as though the soil had only been scraped. What principality in the world has the story to rival that of John Sevier and the State of Franklin? I have tried to tell the truth as I went along. General Jackson was a boy at the Waxhaws and dug his toes in the red mud. He was a man at Jonesboro, and tradition says that he fought with a fence-rail. Sevier was captured as narrated. Monsieur Gratiot, Monsieur Vigo, and Father Gibault lost the money which they gave to Clark and their country. Monsieur Vigo actually travelled in the state which Davy describes when he went down the river with him. Monsieur Gratiot and Colonel Auguste Chouteau and Madame Chouteau are names so well known in St. Louis that it is superfluous to say that such persons existed and were the foremost citizens of the community.

Among the many to whom my apologies and thanks are due is Mr. Pierre Chouteau of St. Louis, whose unremitting labors have preserved and perpetuated the history and traditions of the country of his ancestors. I would that I had been better able to picture the character, the courage, the ability, and patriotism of the French who settled Louisiana. The Republic owes them much, and their descendants are to-day among the stanchest preservers of her ideals.

Winston Churchill.

THE DWELLING-PLACE OF LIGHT

By *Winston Churchill*

1917

CHAPTER I

In this modern industrial civilization of which we are sometimes wont to boast, a certain glacier-like process may be observed. The bewildered, the helpless—and there are many—are torn from the parent rock, crushed, rolled smooth, and left stranded in strange places. Thus was Edward Bumpus severed and rolled from the ancestral ledge, from the firm granite of seemingly stable and lasting things, into shifting shale; surrounded by fragments of cliffs from distant lands he had never seen. Thus, at five

and fifty, he found himself gate-keeper of the leviathan Chippering Mill in the city of Hampton.

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That the polyglot, smoky settlement sprawling on both sides of an historic river should be a part of his native New England seemed at times to be a hideous dream; nor could he comprehend what had happened to him, and to the world of order and standards and religious sanctions into which he had been born. His had been a life of relinquishments. For a long time he had clung to the institution he had been taught to believe was the rock of ages, the Congregational Church, finally to abandon it; even that assuming a form fantastic and unreal, as embodied in the edifice three blocks distant from Fillmore Street which he had attended for a brief time, some ten years before, after his arrival in Hampton. The building, indeed, was symbolic of a decadent and bewildered Puritanism in its pathetic attempt to keep abreast with the age, to compromise with anarchy, merely achieving a nondescript medley of rounded, knob-like towers covered with mulberry-stained shingles. And the minister was sensational and dramatic. He looked like an actor, he aroused in Edward Bumpus an inherent prejudice that condemned the stage. Half a block from this tabernacle stood a Roman Catholic Church, prosperous, brazen, serene, flaunting an eternal permanence amidst the chaos which had succeeded permanence!

There were, to be sure, other Protestant churches where Edward Bumpus and his wife might have gone. One in particular, which he passed on his way to the mill, with its terraced steeple and classic facade, preserved all the outward semblance of the old Order that once had seemed so enduring and secure. He hesitated to join the decorous and dwindling congregation,—the remains of a social stratum from which he had been pried loose; and—more irony—this street, called Warren, of arching elms and white-gabled houses, was now the abiding place of those prosperous Irish who had moved thither from the tenements and ruled the city.

On just such a street in the once thriving New England village of Dolton had Edward been born. In Dolton Bumpus was once a name of names, rooted there since the seventeenth century, and if you had cared to listen he would have told you, in a dialect precise but colloquial, the history of a family that by right of priority and service should have been destined to inherit the land, but whose descendants were preserved to see it delivered to the alien. The God of Cotton Mather and Jonathan Edwards had been tried in the balance and found wanting. Edward could never understand this; or why the Universe, so long static and immutable, had suddenly begun to move. He had always been prudent, but in spite of youthful “advantages,” of an education, so called, from a sectarian college on a hill, he had never been taught that, while prudence may prosper in a static world, it is a futile virtue in a dynamic one. Experience even had been powerless to impress this upon him. For more than twenty years after leaving college he had clung to a clerkship

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in a Dolton mercantile establishment before he felt justified in marrying Hannah, the daughter of Elmer Wench, when the mercantile establishment amalgamated with a rival—and Edward's services were no longer required. During the succession of precarious places with decreasing salaries he had subsequently held a terrified sense of economic pressure had gradually crept over him, presently growing strong enough, after two girls had arrived, to compel the abridgment of the family ....It would be painful to record in detail the cracking-off process, the slipping into shale, the rolling, the ending up in Hampton, where Edward had now for some dozen years been keeper of one of the gates in the frowning brick wall bordering the canal,—a position obtained for him by a compassionate but not too prudent childhood friend who had risen in life and knew the agent of the Chippering Mill, Mr. Claude Ditmar. Thus had virtue failed to hold its own.

One might have thought in all these years he had sat within the gates staring at the brick row of the company's boarding houses on the opposite bank of the canal that reflection might have brought a certain degree of enlightenment. It was not so. The fog of Edward's bewilderment never cleared, and the unformed question was ever clamouring for an answer—how had it happened? Job's cry. How had it happened to an honest and virtuous man, the days of whose forebears had been long in the land which the Lord their God had given them? Inherently American, though lacking the saving quality of push that had been the making of men like Ditmar, he never ceased to regard with resentment and distrust the hordes of foreigners trooping between the pillars, though he refrained from expressing these sentiments in public; a bent, broad shouldered, silent man of that unmistakable physiognomy which, in the seventeenth century, almost wholly deserted the old England for the new. The ancestral features were there, the lips—covered by a grizzled moustache moulded for the precise formation that emphasizes such syllables as el, the hooked nose and sallow cheeks, the grizzled brows and grey eyes drawn down at the corners. But for all its ancestral strength of feature, it was a face from which will had been extracted, and lacked the fire and fanaticism, the indomitable hardness it should have proclaimed, and which have been so characteristically embodied in Mr. St. Gaudens's statue of the Puritan. His clothes were slightly shabby, but always neat.

Little as one might have guessed it, however, what may be called a certain transmuted enthusiasm was alive in him. He had a hobby almost amounting to an obsession, not uncommon amongst Americans who have slipped downward in the social scale. It was the Bumpus Family in America. He collected documents about his ancestors and relations, he wrote letters with a fine, painful penmanship on a ruled block he bought at Hartshorne's drug store to distant Bumpuses in Kansas and Illinois and Michigan, common descendants of Ebenezer, the original immigrant, of Dolton. Many of these western kinsmen answered: not so the magisterial Bumpus who lived in Boston on the water side of Beacon, whom likewise he had ventured to address,—to the indignation and disgust of his elder daughter, Janet.

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“Why are you so proud of Ebenezer?” she demanded once, scornfully.

“Why? Aren’t we descended from him?”

“How many generations?”

“Seven,” said Edward, promptly, emphasizing the last syllable.

Janet was quick at figures. She made a mental calculation.

“Well, you’ve got one hundred and twenty-seven other ancestors of Ebenezer’s time, haven’t you?”

Edward was a little surprised. He had never thought of this, but his ardour for Ebenezer remained undampened. Genealogy—his own—had become his religion, and instead of going to church he spent his Sunday mornings poring over papers of various degrees of discolouration, making careful notes on the ruled block.

This consciousness of his descent from good American stock that had somehow been deprived of its heritage, while a grievance to him, was also a comfort. It had a compensating side, in spite of the lack of sympathy of his daughters and his wife. Hannah Bumpus took the situation more grimly: she was a logical projection in a new environment of the religious fatalism of ancestors whose God was a God of vengeance. She did not concern herself as to what all this vengeance was about; life was a trap into which all mortals walked sooner or later, and her particular trap had a treadmill,—a round of household duties she kept whirling with an energy that might have made their fortunes if she had been the head of the family. It is bad to be a fatalist unless one has an incontrovertible belief in one’s destiny,—which Hannah had not. But she kept the little flat with its worn furniture,—which had known so many journeys—as clean as a merchant ship of old Salem, and when it was scoured and dusted to her satisfaction she would sally forth to Bonnaccossi’s grocery and provision store on the corner to do her bargaining in competition with the Italian housewives of the neighborhood. She was wont, indeed, to pause outside for a moment, her quick eye encompassing the coloured prints of red and yellow jellies cast in rounded moulds, decked with slices of orange, the gaudy boxes of cereals and buckwheat flour, the “Brookfield” eggs in packages. Significant, this modern package system, of an era of flats with little storage space. She took in at a glance the blue lettered placard announcing the current price of butterine, and walked around to the other side of the store, on Holmes Street, where the beef and bacon hung, where the sidewalk stands were filled, in the autumn, with cranberries, apples, cabbages, and spinach.

With little outer complaint she had adapted herself to the constantly lowering levels to which her husband had dropped, and if she hoped that in Fillmore Street they had reached bottom, she did not say so. Her unbetrayed regret was for the loss of what she

would have called “respectability”; and the giving up, long ago, in the little city which had been their home, of the servant girl had been the first

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wrench. Until they came to Hampton they had always lived in houses, and her adaptation to a flat had been hard—a flat without a parlour. Hannah Bumpus regarded a parlour as necessary to a respectable family as a wedding ring to a virtuous woman. Janet and Lise would be growing up, there would be young men, and no place to see them save the sidewalks. The fear that haunted her came true, and she never was reconciled. The two girls went to the public schools, and afterwards, inevitably, to work, and it seemed to be a part of her punishment for the sins of her forefathers that she had no more control over them than if they had been boarders; while she looked on helplessly, they did what they pleased; Janet, whom she never understood, was almost as much a source of apprehension as Lise, who became part and parcel of all Hannah deemed reprehensible in this new America which she refused to recognize and acknowledge as her own country.

To send them through the public schools had been a struggle. Hannah used to lie awake nights wondering what would happen if Edward became sick. It worried her that they never saved any money: try as she would to cut the expenses down, there was a limit of decency; New England thrift, hitherto justly celebrated, was put to shame by that which the foreigners displayed, and which would have delighted the souls of gentlemen of the Manchester school. Every once in a while there rose up before her fabulous instances of this thrift, of Italians and Jews who, ignorant emigrants, had entered the mills only a few years before they, the Bumpuses, had come to Hampton, and were now independent property owners. Still rankling in Hannah's memory was a day when Lise had returned from school, dark and mutinous, with a tale of such a family. One of the younger children was a classmate.

"They live on Jordan Street in a house, and Laura has roller skates. I don't see why I can't."

This was one of the occasions on which Hannah had given vent to her indignation. Lise was fourteen. Her open rebellion was less annoying than Janet's silent reproach, but at least she had something to take hold of.

"Well, Lise," she said, shifting the saucepan to another part of the stove, "I guess if your father and I had put both you girls in the mills and crowded into one room and cooked in a corner, and lived on onions and macaroni, and put four boarders each in the other rooms, I guess we could have had a house, too. We can start in right now, if you're willing."

But Lise had only looked darker.

"I don't see why father can't make money—other men do."

“Isn’t he working as hard as he can to send you to school, and give you a chance?”

“I don’t want that kind of a chance. There’s Sadie Howard at school—she don’t have to work. She liked me before she found out where I lived...”

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There was an element of selfishness in Hannah's mania for keeping busy, for doing all their housework and cooking herself. She could not bear to have her daughters interfere; perhaps she did not want to give herself time to think. Her affection for Edward, such as it was, her loyalty to him, was the logical result of a conviction ingrained in early youth that marriage was an indissoluble bond; a point of views once having a religious sanction, no less powerful now that—all unconsciously—it had deteriorated into a superstition. Hannah, being a fatalist, was not religious. The beliefs of other days, when she had donned her best dress and gone to church on Sundays, had simply lapsed and left—habits. No new beliefs had taken their place....

Even after Janet and Lise had gone to work the household never seemed to gain that margin of safety for which Hannah yearned. Always, when they were on the verge of putting something by, some untoward need or accident seemed to arise on purpose to swallow it up: Edward, for instance, had been forced to buy a new overcoat, the linoleum on the dining-room floor must be renewed, and Lise had had a spell of sickness, losing her position in a flower shop. Afterwards, when she became a saleslady in the Bagatelle, that flamboyant department store in Faber Street, she earned four dollars and a half a week. Two of these were supposed to go into the common fund, but there were clothes to buy; Lise loved finery, and Hannah had not every week the heart to insist. Even when, on an occasional Saturday night the girl somewhat consciously and defiantly flung down the money on the dining-room table she pretended not to notice it. But Janet, who was earning six dollars as a stenographer in the office of the Chippering Mill, regularly gave half of hers.

The girls could have made more money as operatives, but strangely enough in the Bumpus family social hopes were not yet extinct.

Sharply, rudely, the cold stillness of the winter mornings was broken by agitating waves of sound, penetrating the souls of sleepers. Janet would stir, her mind still lingering on some dream, soon to fade into the inexpressible, in which she had been near to the fulfilment of a heart's desire. Each morning, as the clamour grew louder, there was an interval of bewilderment, of revulsion, until the realization came of mill bells swinging in high cupolas above the river,—one rousing another. She could even distinguish the bells: the deep-toned, penetrating one belonged to the Patuxent Mill, over on the west side, while the Arundel had a high, ominous reverberation like a fire bell. When at last the clangings had ceased she would lie listening to the overtones throbbing in the air, high and low, high and low; lie shrinking, awaiting the second summons that never failed to terrify, the siren of the Chippering Mill,—to her the cry of an insistent, hungry monster demanding its daily food, the symbol of a stern, ugly, and unrelenting necessity.

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Beside her in the bed she could feel the soft body of her younger sister cuddling up to her in fright. In such rare moments as this her heart melted towards Lise, and she would fling a protecting arm about her. A sense of Lise's need of protection invaded her, a sharp conviction, like a pang, that Lise was destined to wander: Janet was never so conscious of the feeling as in this dark hour, though it came to her at other times, when they were not quarreling. Quarreling seemed to be the normal reaction between them.

It was Janet, presently, who would get up, shivering, close the window, and light the gas, revealing the room which the two girls shared together. Against the middle of one wall was the bed, opposite this a travel-dented walnut bureau with a marble top, with an oval mirror into which were stuck numerous magazine portraits of the masculine and feminine talent adorning the American stage, a preponderance of the music hall variety. There were pictures of other artists whom the recondite would have recognized as "movie" stars, amazing yet veridic stories of whose wealth Lise read in the daily press: all possessed limousines—an infallible proof, to Lise, of the measure of artistic greatness. Between one of these movie millionaires and an ex-legitimate lady who now found vaudeville profitable was wedged the likeness of a popular idol whose connection with the footlights would doubtless be contingent upon a triumphant acquittal at the hands of a jury of her countrymen, and whose trial for murder, in Chicago, was chronicled daily in thousands of newspapers and followed by Lise with breathless interest and sympathy. She was wont to stare at this lady while dressing and exclaim: —"Say, I hope they put it all over that district attorney!"

To such sentiments, though deeply felt by her sister, Janet remained cold, though she was, as will be seen, capable of enthusiasms. Lise was a truer daughter of her time and country in that she had the national contempt for law, was imbued with the American hero-worship of criminals that caused the bombardment of Cora Wellman's jail with candy, fruit and flowers and impassioned letters. Janet recalled there had been others before Mrs. Wellman, caught within the meshes of the law, who had incited in her sister a similar partisanship.

It was Lise who had given the note of ornamentation to the bedroom. Against the cheap faded lilac and gold wall-paper were tacked photo-engravings that had taken the younger sister's fancy: a young man and woman, clad in scanty bathing suits, seated side by side in a careening sail boat,—the work of a popular illustrator whose manly and womanly "types" had become national ideals.

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There were other drawings, if not all by the same hand, at least by the same school; one, sketched in bold strokes, of a dinner party in a stately neo-classic dining-room, the table laden with flowers and silver, the bare-throated women with jewels. A more critical eye than Lise's, gazing upon this portrayal of the Valhalla of success, might have detected in the young men, immaculate in evening dress, a certain effort to feel at home, to converse naturally, which their square jaws and square shoulders belied. This was no doubt the fault of the artist's models, who had failed to live up to the part. At any rate, the sight of these young gods of leisure, the contemplation of the stolid butler and plush footmen in the background never failed to make Lise's heart beat faster.

On the marble of the bureau amidst a litter of toilet articles, and bought by Lise for a quarter at the Bagatelle bargain counter, was an oval photograph frame from which the silver wash had begun to rub off, and the band of purple velvet inside the metal had whitened. The frame always contained the current object of Lise's affections, though the exhibits—as Janet said—were subject to change without notice. The Adonis who now reigned had black hair cut in the prevailing Hampton fashion, very long in front and hanging down over his eyes like a Scottish terrier's; very long behind, too, but ending suddenly, shaved in a careful curve at the neck and around the ears. It had almost the appearance of a Japanese wig. The manly beauty of Mr. Max Wylie was of the lantern-jawed order, and in his photograph he conveyed the astonished and pained air of one who has been suddenly seized by an invisible officer of the law from behind. This effect, one presently perceived, was due to the high, stiff collar, the "Torture Brand," Janet called it, when she and her sister were engaged in one of their frequent controversies about life in general: the obvious retort to this remark, which Lise never failed to make, was that Janet could boast of no beaux at all.

It is only fair to add that the photograph scarcely did Mr. Wylie justice. In real life he did not wear the collar, he was free and easy in his manners, sure of his powers of conquest. As Lise observed, he had made a home-run with her at Slattery's Riverside Park. "Sadie Hartmann was sure sore when I tangoed off with him," she would observe reminiscently....

It was Lise's habit to slight her morning toilet, to linger until the last minute in bed, which she left in reluctant haste to stand before the bureau frantically combing out kinks of the brown hair falling over her shoulders before jamming it down across her forehead in the latest mode. Thus occupied, she revealed a certain petulant beauty. Like the majority of shop-girls, she was small, but her figure was good, her skin white; her discontented mouth gave her the touch of piquancy apt to play havoc with the work of the world. In winter breakfast was eaten by

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the light of a rococo metal lamp set in the centre of the table. This was to save gas. There was usually a rump steak and potatoes, bread and “creamery” butterine, and the inevitable New England doughnuts. At six thirty the whistles screeched again,—a warning note, the signal for Edward’s departure; and presently, after a brief respite, the heavy bells once more began their clamour, not to die down until ten minutes of seven, when the last of the stragglers had hurried through the mill gates.

The Bumpus flat included the second floor of a small wooden house whose owner had once been evilly inspired to paint it a livid clay-yellow—as though insisting that ugliness were an essential attribute of domesticity. A bay ran up the two stories, and at the left were two narrow doorways, one for each flat. On the right the house was separated from its neighbour by a narrow interval, giving but a precarious light to the two middle rooms, the diningroom and kitchen. The very unattractiveness of such a home, however, had certain compensations for Janet, after the effort of early rising had been surmounted, felt a real relief in leaving it; a relief, too, in leaving Fillmore Street, every feature of which was indelibly fixed in her mind, opposite was the blind brick face of a warehouse, and next to that the converted dwelling house that held the shop of A. Bauer, with the familiar replica of a green ten-cent trading stamp painted above it and the somewhat ironical announcement—when boar frost whitened the pavement—that ice-cold soda was to be had within, as well as cigars and tobacco, fruit and candy. Then came a tenement, under which two enterprising Greeks by the name of Pappas—-spelled Papas lower down—conducted a business called “The Gentleman,” a tailoring, pressing, and dyeing establishment. Janet could see the brilliantined black heads of the two proprietors bending over their boards, and sometimes they would be lifted to smile at her as she passed. The Pappas Brothers were evidently as happy in this drab environment as they had ever been on the sunny mountain slopes of Hellas, and Janet sometimes wondered at this, for she had gathered from her education in the Charming public school that Greece was beautiful.

She was one of the unfortunate who love beauty, who are condemned to dwell in exile, unacquainted with what they love. Desire was incandescent within her breast. Desire for what? It would have been some relief to know. She could not, like Lise, find joy and forgetfulness at dance halls, at the “movies,” at Slattery’s Riverside Park in summer, in “joy rides” with the Max Wylies of Hampton. And beside, the Max Wylies were afraid of her. If at times she wished for wealth, it was because wealth held the magic of emancipation from surroundings against which her soul revolted. Vividly idealized but unconfided was the memory of a seaside village, the scene of one of the brief sojourns of her childhood, where the air was fragrant with the breath of salt marshes, where she recalled, through the vines of a porch, a shining glimpse of the sea at the end of a little street....

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Next to Pappas Brothers was the grey wooden building of Mule Spinners' Hall, that elite organization of skilled labour, and underneath it the store of Johnny Tiernan, its windows piled up with stoves and stovepipes, sheet iron and cooking utensils. Mr. Tiernan, like the Greeks, was happy, too: unlike the Greeks, he never appeared to be busy, and yet he throve. He was very proud of the business in which he had invested his savings, but he seemed to have other affairs lying blithely on his mind, affairs of moment to the community, as the frequent presence of the huge policemen, aldermen, and other important looking persons bore witness. He hailed by name Italians, Greeks, Belgians, Syrians, and "French"; he hailed Janet, too, with respectful cheerfulness, taking off his hat. He possessed the rare, warm vitality that is irresistible. A native of Hampton, still in his thirties, his sharp little nose and twinkling blue eyes proclaimed the wisdom that is born and not made; his stiff hair had a twist like the bristles in the cleaning rod of a gun.

He gave Janet the odd impression that he understood her. And she did not understand herself!

By the time she reached the Common the winter sun, as though red from exertion, had begun to dispel the smoke and heavy morning mists. She disliked winter, the lumpy brown turf mildewed by the frost, but one day she was moved by a quality, hitherto unsuspected, in the delicate tracery against the sky made by the slender branches of the great elms and maples. She halted on the pavement, her eyes raised, heedless of passers-by, feeling within her a throb of the longing that could be so oddly and unexpectedly aroused.

Her way lay along Faber Street, the main artery of Hampton, a wide strip of asphalt threaded with car tracks, lined on both sides with incongruous edifices indicative of a rapid, undiscriminating, and artless prosperity. There were long stretches of "ten foot" buildings, so called on account of the single story, their height deceptively enhanced by the superimposition of huge and gaudy signs, one on top of another, announcing the merits of "Stewart's Amberine Ale," of "Cooley's Oats, the Digestible Breakfast Food," of graphophones and "spring heeled" shoes, tobacco, and naphtha soaps. "No, We don't give Trading Stamps, Our Products are Worth all You Pay." These "ten foot" stores were the repositories of pianos, automobiles, hardware, and millinery, and interspersed amongst them were buildings of various heights; The Bagatelle, where Lise worked, the Wilmot Hotel, office buildings, and an occasional relic of old Hampton, like that housing the Banner. Here, during those months when the sun made the asphalt soft, on a scaffolding spanning the window of the store, might be seen a perspiring young man in his shirt sleeves chalking up baseball scores for the benefit of a crowd below. Then came the funereal, liver-coloured, long-windowed Hinckley Block (1872), and on the corner

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a modern, glorified drugstore thrusting forth plate glass bays—two on Faber Street and three on Stanley—filled with cameras and candy, hot water bags, throat sprays, catarrh and kidney cures, calendars, fountain pens, stationery, and handy alcohol lamps. Flanking the sidewalks, symbolizing and completing the heterogeneous and bewildering effect of the street were long rows of heavy hemlock trunks, unpainted and stripped of bark, with crosstrees bearing webs of wires. Trolley cars rattled along, banging their gongs, trucks rumbled across the tracks, automobiles uttered frenzied screeches behind startled pedestrians. Janet was always galvanized into alertness here, Faber Street being no place to dream. By night an endless procession moved up one sidewalk and down another, staring hypnotically at the flash-in and flash-out electric, signs that kept the breakfast foods and ales, the safety razors, soaps, and soups incessantly in the minds of a fickle public.

Two blocks from Faber Street was the North Canal, with a granite-paved roadway between it and the monotonous row of company boarding houses. Even in bright weather Janet felt a sense of oppression here; on dark, misty mornings the stern, huge battlements of the mills lining the farther bank were menacing indeed, bristling with projections, towers, and chimneys, flanked by heavy walls. Had her experience included Europe, her imagination might have seized the medieval parallel,—the arched bridges flung at intervals across the water, lacking only chains to raise them in case of siege. The place was always ominously suggestive of impending strife. Janet's soul was a sensitive instrument, but she suffered from an inability to find parallels, and thus to translate her impressions intellectually. Her feeling about the mills was that they were at once fortress and prison, and she a slave driven thither day after day by an all-compelling power; as much a slave as those who trooped in through the gates in the winter dawn, and wore down, four times a day, the oak treads of the circular tower stairs.

The sound of the looms was like heavy rain hissing on the waters of the canal.

The administrative offices of a giant mill such as the Chippering in Hampton are labyrinthine. Janet did not enter by the great gates her father kept, but walked through an open courtyard into a vestibule where, day and night, a watchman stood; she climbed iron-shod stairs, passed the doorway leading to the paymaster's suite, to catch a glimpse, behind the grill, of numerous young men settling down at those mysterious and complicated machines that kept so unerring a record, in dollars and cents, of the human labour of the operatives. There were other suites for the superintendents, for the purchasing agent; and at the end of the corridor, on the south side of the mill, she entered the outer of the two rooms reserved for Mr. Claude Ditmar, the Agent and general-in-chief himself of this vast establishment.

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In this outer office, behind the rail that ran the length of it, Janet worked; from the window where her typewriter stood was a sheer drop of eighty feet or so to the river, which ran here swiftly through a wide canon whose sides were formed by miles and miles of mills, built on buttressed stone walls to retain the banks. The prison-like buildings on the farther shore were also of colossal size, casting their shadows far out into the waters; while in the distance, up and down the stream, could be seen the delicate web of the Stanley and Warren Street bridges, with trolley cars like toys gliding over them, with insect pedestrians creeping along the footpaths.

Mr. Ditmar's immediate staff consisted of Mr. Price, an elderly bachelor of tried efficiency whose peculiar genius lay in computation, of a young Mr. Caldwell who, during the four years since he had left Harvard, had been learning the textile industry, of Miss Ottway, and Janet. Miss Ottway was the agent's private stenographer, a strongly built, capable woman with immense reserves seemingly inexhaustible. She had a deep, masculine voice, not unmusical, the hint of a masculine moustache, a masculine manner of taking to any job that came to hand. Nerves were things unknown to her: she was granite, Janet tempered steel. Janet was the second stenographer, and performed, besides, any odd tasks that might be assigned.

There were, in the various offices of the superintendents, the paymaster and purchasing agent, other young women stenographers whose companionship Janet, had she been differently organized, might have found congenial, but something in her refused to dissolve to their proffered friendship. She had but one friend,—if Eda Rawle, who worked in a bank, and whom she had met at a lunch counter by accident, may be called so. As has been admirably said in another language, one kisses, the other offers a cheek: Janet offered the cheek. All unconsciously she sought a relationship rarely to be found in banks and business offices; would yield herself to none other. The young women stenographers in the Chippering Mill, respectable, industrious girls, were attracted by a certain indefinable quality, but finding they made no progress in their advances, presently desisted they were somewhat afraid of her; as one of them remarked, "You always knew she was there." Miss Lottie Meyers, who worked in the office of Mr. Orcutt, the superintendent across the hall, experienced a brief infatuation that turned to hate. She chewed gum incessantly, Janet found her cheap perfume insupportable; Miss Meyers, for her part, declared that Janet was "queer" and "stuck up," thought herself better than the rest of them. Lottie Meyers was the leader of a group of four or five which gathered in the hallway at the end of the noon hour to enter animatedly into a discussion of waists, hats, and lingerie, to ogle and exchange persiflages with the young men of the paymaster's corps, to giggle, to relate,

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sotto voce, certain stories that ended invariably in hysterical laughter. Janet detested these conversations. And the sex question, subtly suggested if not openly dealt with, to her was a mystery over which she did not dare to ponder, terrible, yet too sacred to be degraded. Her feelings, concealed under an exterior of self-possession, deceptive to the casual observer, sometimes became molten, and she was frightened by a passion that made her tremble—a passion by no means always consciously identified with men, embodying all the fierce unexpressed and unsatisfied desires of her life.

These emotions, often suggested by some hint of beauty, as of the sun glinting on the river on a bright blue day, had a sudden way of possessing her, and the longing they induced was pain. Longing for what? For some unimagined existence where beauty dwelt, and light, where the ecstasy induced by these was neither moiled nor degraded; where shame, as now, might not assail her. Why should she feel her body hot with shame, her cheeks afire? At such moments she would turn to the typewriter, her fingers striking the keys with amazing rapidity, with extraordinary accuracy and force,—force vaguely disturbing to Mr. Claude Ditmar as he entered the office one morning and involuntarily paused to watch her. She was unaware of his gaze, but her colour was like a crimson signal that flashed to him and was gone. Why had he never noticed her before? All these months, for more than a year, perhaps,—she had been in his office, and he had not so much as looked at her twice. The unguessed answer was that he had never surprised her in a vivid moment. He had a flair for women, though he had never encountered any possessing the higher values, and it was characteristic of the plane of his mental processes that this one should remind him now of a dark, lithe panther, tensely strung, capable of fierceness. The pain of having her scratch him would be delectable.

When he measured her it was to discover that she was not so little, and the shoulder-curve of her uplifted arms, as her fingers played over the keys, seemed to belie that apparent slimness. And had he not been unacquainted with the subtleties of the French mind and language, he might have classed her as a fausse maigre. Her head was small, her hair like a dark, blurred shadow clinging round it. He wanted to examine her hair, to see whether it would not betray, at closer range, an imperceptible wave,—but not daring to linger he went into his office, closed the door, and sat down with a sensation akin to weakness, somewhat appalled by his discovery, considerably amazed at his previous stupidity. He had thought of Janet—when she had entered his mind at all—as unobtrusive, demure; now he recognized this demureness as repression. Her qualities needed illumination, and he, Claude Ditmar, had seen them struck with fire. He wondered whether any other man had been as fortunate.

Later in the morning, quite casually, he made inquiries of Miss Ottway, who liked Janet and was willing to do her a good turn.

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“Why, she’s a clever girl, Mr. Ditmar, a good stenographer, and conscientious in her work. She’s very quick, too.

“Yes, I’ve noticed that,” Ditmar replied, who was quite willing to have it thought that his inquiry was concerned with Janet’s aptitude for business.

“She keeps to herself and minds her own affairs. You can see she comes of good stock.” Miss Ottway herself was proud of her New England blood. “Her father, you know, is the gatekeeper down there. He’s been unfortunate.”

“You don’t say—I didn’t connect her with him. Fine looking old man. A friend of mine who recommended him told me he’d seen better days ....”

CHAPTER II

In spite of the surprising discovery in his office of a young woman of such a disquieting, galvanic quality, it must not be supposed that Mr. Claude Ditmar intended to infringe upon a fixed principle. He had principles. For him, as for the patriarchs and householders of Israel, the seventh commandment was only relative, yet hitherto he had held rigidly to that relativity, laying down the sound doctrine that women and business would not mix: or, as he put it to his intimates, no sensible man would fool with a girl in his office. Hence it may be implied that Mr. Ditmar’s experiences with the opposite sex had been on a property basis. He was one of those busy and successful persons who had never appreciated or acquired the art of quasi-platonic amenities, whose idea of a good time was limited to discreet excursions with cronies, likewise busy and successful persons who, by reason of having married early and unwisely, are strangers to the delights of that higher social intercourse chronicled in novels and the public prints. If one may conveniently overlook the joys of a companionship of the soul, it is quite as possible to have a taste in women as in champagne or cigars. Mr. Ditmar preferred blondes, and he liked them rather stout, a predilection that had led him into matrimony with a lady of this description: a somewhat sticky, candy-eating lady with a mania for card parties, who undoubtedly would have dyed her hair if she had lived. He was not inconsolable, but he had had enough of marriage to learn that it demands a somewhat exorbitant price for joys otherwise more reasonably to be obtained.

He was left a widower with two children, a girl of thirteen and a boy of twelve, both somewhat large for their ages. Amy attended the only private institution for the instruction of her sex of which Hampton could boast; George continued at a public school. The late Mrs. Ditmar for some years before her demise had begun to give evidence of certain restless aspirations to which American ladies of her type and situation seem peculiarly liable, and with a view to their ultimate realization she had inaugurated a Jericho-like campaign. Death had released Ditmar from its increasing pressure. For his wife had

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possessed that admirable substitute for character, persistence, had been expert in the use of importunity, often an efficient weapon in the hands of the female economically dependent. The daughter of a defunct cashier of the Hampton National Bank, when she had married Ditmar, then one of the superintendents of the Chippering and already a marked man, she had deemed herself fortunate among women, looking forward to a life of ease and idleness and candy in great abundance,—a dream temporarily shattered by the unforeseen discomfort of bringing two children into the world, with an interval of scarcely a year between them. Her parents from an excess of native modesty having failed to enlighten her on this subject, her feelings were those of outraged astonishment, and she was quite determined not to repeat the experience a third time. Knowledge thus belatedly acquired, for a while she abandoned herself to the satisfaction afforded by the ability to take a commanding position in Hampton society, gradually to become aware of the need of a more commodious residence. In a certain kind of intuition she was rich. Her husband had meanwhile become Agent of the Chippering Mill, and she strongly suspected that his prudent reticence on the state of his finances was the best indication of an increasing prosperity. He had indeed made money, been given many opportunities for profitable investments; but the argument for social pre-eminence did not appeal to him: tears and reproaches, recriminations, when frequently applied, succeeded better; like many married men, what he most desired was to be let alone; but in some unaccountable way she had come to suspect that his preference for blondes was of a more liberal nature than at first, in her innocence, she had realized. She was jealous, too, of his cronies, in spite of the fact that these gentlemen, when they met her, treated her with an elaborate politeness; and she accused him with entire justice of being more intimate with them than with her, with whom he was united in holy bonds. The inevitable result of these tactics was the modern mansion in the upper part of Warren Street, known as the “residential” district. Built on a wide lot, with a garage on one side to the rear, with a cement driveway divided into squares, and a wall of democratic height separating its lawn from the sidewalk, the house may for the present be better imagined than described.

A pious chronicler of a more orthodox age would doubtless have deemed it a judgment that Cora Ditmar survived but two years to enjoy the glories of the Warren Street house. For a while her husband indulged in a foolish optimism, only to learn that the habit of matrimonial blackmail, once acquired, is not easily shed. Scarcely had he settled down to the belief that by the gratification of her supreme desire he had achieved comparative peace, than he began to suspect her native self-confidence of cherishing visions of a career contemplating nothing less than the eventual abandonment

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of Hampton itself as a field too limited for her social talents and his business ability and bank account—at which she was pleased to hint. Hampton suited Ditmar, his passion was the Chippering Mill; and he was in process of steeling himself to resist, whatever the costs, this preposterous plan when he was mercifully released by death. Her intention of sending the children away to acquire a culture and finish Hampton did not afford,—George to Silliston Academy, Amy to a fashionable boarding school,—he had not opposed, yet he did not take the idea with sufficient seriousness to carry it out. The children remained at home, more or less—increasingly less—in the charge of an elderly woman who acted as housekeeper.

Ditmar had miraculously regained his freedom. And now, when he made trips to New York and Boston, combining business with pleasure, there were no questions asked, no troublesome fictions to be composed. More frequently he was in Boston, where he belonged to a large and comfortable club, not too exacting in regard to membership, and here he met his cronies and sometimes planned excursions with them, automobile trips in summer to the White Mountains or choice little resorts to spend Sundays and holidays, generally taking with them a case of champagne and several bags of golf sticks. He was fond of shooting, and belonged to a duck club on the Cape, where poker and bridge were not tabooed. To his intimates he was known as “Dit.” Nor is it surprising that his attitude toward women had become in general one of resentment; matrimony he now regarded as unmitigated folly. At five and forty he was a vital, dominating, dust-coloured man six feet and half an inch in height, weighing a hundred and ninety pounds, and thus a trifle fleshy. When relaxed, and in congenial company, he looked rather boyish, an aspect characteristic of many American business men of to-day.

His head was large, he wore his hair short, his features also proclaimed him as belonging to a modern American type in that they were not clear-cut, but rather indefinable; a bristling, short-cropped moustache gave him a certain efficient, military look which, when introduced to strangers as “Colonel,” was apt to deceive them into thinking him an army officer. The title he had once received as a member of the staff of the governor of the state, and was a tribute to a gregariousness and political influence rather than to a genius for the art of war. Ex officio, as the agent of the Chippering Mill and a man of substance to boot, he was “in” politics, hail fellow well met with and an individual to be taken into account by politicians from the governor and member of congress down. He was efficient, of course; he had efficient hands and shrewd, efficient eyes, and the military impression was deepened by his manner of dealing with people, his conversation being yea, yea and nay, nay,—save with his cronies and those of the other sex from whom he had something to gain. His clothes always looked new, of pronounced patterns and light colours set aside for him by an obsequious tailor in Boston.

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If a human being in such an enviable position as that of agent of the Chippering Mill can be regarded as property, it might be said that Mr. Claude Ditmar belonged to the Chipperings of Boston, a family still owning a controlling interest in the company. His loyalty to them and to the mill he so ably conducted was the great loyalty of his life. For Ditmar, a Chippering could do no wrong. It had been the keen eye of Mr. Stephen Chippering that first had marked him, questioned him, recognized his ability, and from the moment of that encounter his advance had been rapid. When old Stephen had been called to his fathers, Ditmar's allegiance was automatically, as it were, transferred to the two sons, George and Worthington, already members of the board of directors. Sometimes Ditmar called on them at their homes, which stood overlooking the waters of the Charles River Basin. The attitude toward him of the Chipperings and their wives was one of an interesting adjustment of feudalism to democracy. They were fond of him, grateful to him, treating him with a frank camaraderie that had in it not the slightest touch of condescension, but Ditmar would have been the first to recognize that there were limits to the intimacy. They did not, for instance—no doubt out of consideration—-invite him to their dinner parties or take him to their club, which was not the same as that to which he himself belonged. He felt no animus. Nor would he, surprising though it may seem, have changed places with the Chipperings. At an early age, and quite unconsciously, he had accepted property as the ruling power of the universe, and when family was added thereto the combination was nothing less than divine.

There were times, especially during the long winters, when life became almost unbearable for Janet, and she was seized by a desire to run away from Fillmore Street, from the mills, from Hampton itself. Only she did not know where to go, or how to get away. She was convinced of the existence in the world of delightful spots where might be found congenial people with whom it would be a joy to talk. Fillmore Street, certainly, did not contain any such. The office was not so bad. It is true that in the mornings, as she entered West Street, the sight of the dark facade of the fortress-like structure, emblematic of the captivity in which she passed her days, rarely failed to arouse in her sensations of oppression and revolt; but here, at least, she discovered an outlet for her energies; she was often too busy to reflect, and at odd moments she could find a certain solace and companionship in the river, so intent, so purposeful, so beautiful, so undisturbed by the inconcinnity, the clatter and confusion of Hampton as it flowed serenely under the bridges and between the mills toward the sea. Toward the sea!

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It was when, at night, she went back to Fillmore Street—when she thought of the monotony, yes, and the sordidness of home, when she let herself in at the door and climbed the dark and narrow stairway, that her feet grew leaden. In spite of the fact that Hannah was a good housekeeper and prided herself on cleanliness, the tiny flat reeked with the smell of cooking, and Janet, from the upper hall, had a glimpse of a thin, angular woman with a scrawny neck, with scant grey hair tightly drawn into a knot, in a gingham apron covering an old dress bending over the kitchen stove. And occasionally, despite a resentment that fate should have dealt thus inconsiderately with the family, Janet felt pity welling within her. After supper, when Lise had departed with her best young man, Hannah would occasionally, though grudgingly, permit Janet to help her with the dishes.

“You work all day, you have a right to rest.”

“But I don’t want to rest,” Janet would declare, and rub the dishes the harder. With the spirit underlying this protest, Hannah sympathized. Mother and daughter were alike in that both were inarticulate, but Janet had a secret contempt for Hannah’s uncomplaining stoicism. She loved her mother, in a way, especially at certain times,—though she often wondered why she was unable to realize more fully the filial affection of tradition; but in moments of softening, such as these, she was filled with rage at the thought of any woman endowed with energy permitting herself to be overtaken and overwhelmed by such a fate as Hannah’s: divorce, desertion, anything, she thought, would have been better—anything but to be cheated out of life. Feeling the fires of rebellion burning hotly within her,—rebellion against environment and driving necessity she would glance at her mother and ask herself whether it were possible that Hannah had ever known longings, had ever been wrung by inexpressible desires,—desires in which the undiscovered spiritual was so alarmingly compounded with the undiscovered physical. She would have died rather than speak to Hannah of these unfulfilled experiences, and the mere thought of confiding them to any person appalled her. Even if there existed some wonderful, understanding being to whom she might be able thus to empty her soul, the thought of the ecstasy of that kenosis was too troubling to be dwelt upon.

She had tried reading, with unfortunate results,—perhaps because no Virgil had as yet appeared to guide her through the mysteries of that realm. Her schooling had failed to instil into her a discriminating taste for literature; and when, on occasions, she had entered the Public Library opposite the Common it had been to stare hopelessly at rows of books whose authors and titles offered no clue to their contents. Her few choices had not been happy, they had failed to interest and thrill...

Of the Bumpus family Lise alone found refuge, distraction, and excitement in the vulgar modern world by which they were surrounded, and of whose heedlessness and remorselessness they were the victims. Lise went out into it, became a part of it, returning only to sleep and eat,—a tendency Hannah found unaccountable, and against

which even her stoicism was not wholly proof. Scarce an evening went by without an expression of uneasiness from Hannah.

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“She didn’t happen to mention where she was going, did she, Janet?” Hannah would query, when she had finished her work and put on her spectacles to read the Banner.

“To the movies, I suppose,” Janet would reply. Although well aware that her sister indulged in other distractions, she thought it useless to add to Hannah’s disquietude. And if she had little patience with Lise, she had less with the helpless attitude of her parents.

“Well,” Hannah would add, “I never can get used to her going out nights the way she does, and with young men and women I don’t know anything about. I wasn’t brought up that way. But as long as she’s got to work for a living I guess there’s no help for it.”

And she would glance at Edward. It was obviously due to his inability adequately to cope with modern conditions that his daughters were forced to toil, but this was the nearest she ever came to reproaching him. If he heard, he acquiesced humbly, and in silence: more often than not he was oblivious, buried in the mazes of the Bumpus family history, his papers spread out on the red cloth of the dining-room table, under the lamp. Sometimes in his simplicity and with the enthusiasm that demands listeners he would read aloud to them a letter, recently received from a distant kinsman, an Alpheus Bumpus, let us say, who had migrated to California in search of wealth and fame, and who had found neither. In spite of age and misfortunes, the liberal attitude of these western members of the family was always a matter of perplexity to Edward.

“He tells me they’re going to give women the ballot,—doesn’t appear to be much concerned about his own womenfolks going to the polls.”

“Why shouldn’t they, if they want to?” Janet would exclaim, though she had given little thought to the question.

Edward would mildly ignore this challenge.

“He has a house on what they call Russian Hill, and he can watch the vessels as they come in from Japan,” he would continue in his precise voice, emphasizing admirably the last syllables of the words “Russian,” “vessels,” and “Japan.” “Wouldn’t you like to see the letter?”

To do Hannah justice, although she was quite incapable of sharing his passion, she frequently feigned an interest, took the letter, presently handing it on to Janet who, in deciphering Alpheus’s trembling calligraphy, pondered over his manifold woes. Alpheus’s son, who had had a good position in a sporting goods establishment on Market Street, was sick and in danger of losing it, the son’s wife expecting an addition to the family, the house on Russian Hill mortgaged. Alpheus, a veteran of the Civil War, had been for many years preparing his reminiscences, but the newspapers nowadays seemed to care nothing for matters of solid worth, and so far had refused to publish

them.... Janet, as she read, reflected that these letters invariably had to relate tales of failures, of disappointed hopes; she wondered at her father's perennial interest in failures,—provided they were those of his family; and the next evening, as he wrote painfully on his ruled paper, she knew that he in turn was pouring out his soul to Alpheus, recounting, with an emotion by no means unpleasurable, to this sympathetic but remote relative the story of his own failure!

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If the city of Hampton was emblematic of our modern world in which haphazardness has replaced order, Fillmore Street may be likened to a back eddy of the muddy and troubled waters, in which all sorts of flotsam and jetsam had collected. Or, to find perhaps an even more striking illustration of the process that made Hampton in general and Fillmore Street in particular, one had only to take the trolley to Glendale, the Italian settlement on the road leading to the old New England village of Shrewsbury. Janet sometimes walked there, alone or with her friend Eda Rawle. Disintegration itself—in a paradoxically pathetic attempt at reconstruction—had built Glendale. Human hands, Italian hands. Nor, surprising though it may seem, were these descendants of the people of the Renaissance in the least offended by their handiwork. When the southern European migration had begun and real estate became valuable, one by one the more decorous edifices of the old American order had been torn down and carried piecemeal by sons of Italy to the bare hills of Glendale, there to enter into new combinations representing, to an eye craving harmony, the last word of a chaos, of a mental indigestion, of a colour scheme crying aloud to heaven for retribution. Standing alone and bare amidst its truck gardens, hideous, extreme, though typical of the entire settlement, composed of fragments ripped from once-appropriate settings, is a house with a tiny body painted strawberry-red, with scroll-work shutters a tender green; surmounting the structure and almost equalling it in size is a sky-blue cupola, once the white crown of the Sutter mansion, the pride of old Hampton. The walls of this dwelling were wrested from the sides of Mackey's Tavern, while the shutters for many years adorned the parsonage of the old First Church. Similarly, in Hampton and in Fillmore Street, lived in enforced neighbourliness human fragments once having their places in crystallized communities where existence had been regarded as solved. Here there was but one order,—if such it may be called,—one relationship, direct, or indirect, one necessity claiming them all—the mills.

Like the boards forming the walls of the shacks at Glendale, these human planks torn from an earlier social structure were likewise warped, which is to say they were dominated by obsessions. Edward's was the Bumpus family; and Chris Auermann, who lived in the flat below, was convinced that the history of mankind is a deplorable record of havoc caused by women. Perhaps he was right, but the conviction was none the less an obsession. He came from a little village near Wittenburg that has scarcely changed since Luther's time. Like most residents of Hampton who did not work in the mills, he ministered to those who did, or to those who sold merchandise to the workers, cutting their hair in his barber shop on Faber Street.

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The Bumpuses, save Lise, clinging to a native individualism and pride, preferred isolation to companionship with the other pieces of driftwood by which they were surrounded, and with which the summer season compelled a certain enforced contact. When the heat in the little dining-room grew unbearable, they were driven to take refuge on the front steps shared in common with the household of the barber. It is true that the barber's wife was a mild hausfrau who had little to say, and that their lodgers, two young Germans who worked in the mills, spent most of their evenings at a bowling club; but Auermann himself, exhaling a strong odour of bay rum, would arrive promptly at quarter past eight, take off his coat, and thus, as it were stripped for action, would turn upon the defenceless Edward.

"Vill you mention one great man—yoost one—who is not greater if the vimmen leave him alone?" he would demand. "Is it Anthony, the conqueror of Egypt and the East? I vill show you Cleopatra. Und Burns, and Napoleon, the greatest man what ever lived—-vimmen again. I tell you there is no Elba, no St. Helena if it is not for the vimmen. Und vat vill you say of Goethe?"

Poor Edward could think of nothing to say of Goethe.

"He is great, I grant you," Chris would admit, "but vat is he if the vimmen leave him alone? Divine yoost that." And he would proceed to cite endless examples of generals and statesmen whose wives or mistresses had been their bane. Futile Edward's attempts to shift the conversation to the subject of his own obsession; the German was by far the more aggressive, he would have none of it. Perhaps if Edward had been willing to concede that the Bumpuses had been brought to their present lowly estate by the sinister agency of the fair sex Chris might conditionally have accepted the theme. Hannah, contemptuously waving a tattered palm leaf fan, was silent; but on one occasion Janet took away the barber's breath by suddenly observing:—"You never seem to think of the women whose lives are ruined by men, Mr. Auermann."

It was unheard-of, this invasion of a man's argument by a woman, and by a young woman at that. He glared at her through his spectacles, took them off, wiped them, replaced them, and glared at her again. He did not like Janet; she was capable of what may be called a speaking silence, and he had never been wholly unaware of her disapproval and ridicule. Perhaps he recognized in her, instinctively, the potential qualities of that emerging modern woman who to him was anathema.

"It is somethings I don't think about," he said.

He was a wizened little man with faience-blue eyes, and sat habitually hunched up with his hands folded across his shins.

"Nam fuit ante Helenam"—as Darwin quotes. Toward all the masculine residents of Fillmore Street, save one, the barber's attitude was one of unconcealed scorn for an

inability to recognize female perfidy. With Johnny Tiernan alone he refused to enter the lists. When the popular proprietor of the tin shop came sauntering along the sidewalk with nose uptilted, waving genial greetings to the various groups on the steps, Chris Auermann's expression would suddenly change to one of fatuous playfulness.

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“What’s this I hear about giving the girls the vote, Chris?” Johnny would innocently inquire, winking at Janet, invariably running his hand through the wiry red hair that resumed its corkscrew twist as soon as he released it. And Chris would as invariably reply:—“You have the dandruffs—yes? You come to my shop, I give you somethings....”

Sometimes the barber, in search of a more aggressive adversary than Edward, would pay visits, when as likely as not another neighbour with profound convictions and a craving for proselytes would swoop down on the defenceless Bumpuses: Joe Shivers, for instance, who lived in one of the tenements above the cleaning and dyeing establishment kept by the Pappas Bros., and known as “The Gentleman.” In the daytime Mr. Shivers was a model of acquiescence in a system he would have designated as one of industrial feudalism, his duty being to examine the rolls of cloth as they came from the looms of the Arundel Mill, in case of imperfections handing them over to the women menders: at night, to borrow a vivid expression from Lise, he was “batty in the belfry” on the subject of socialism. Unlike the barber, whom he could not abide, for him the cleavage of the world was between labour and capital instead of man and woman; his philosophy was stern and naturalistic; the universe—the origin of which he did not discuss—just an accidental assemblage of capricious forces over which human intelligence was one day to triumph. Squatting on the lowest step, his face upturned, by the light of the arc sputtering above the street he looked like a yellow frog, his eager eyes directed toward Janet, whom he suspected of intelligence.

“If there was a God, a nice, kind, all-powerful God, would he permit what happened in one of the loom-rooms last week? A Polak girl gets her hair caught in the belt pfff!” He had a marvellously realistic gift when it came to horrors: Janet felt her hair coming out by the roots. Although she never went to church, she did not like to think that no God existed. Of this Mr. Shivers was very positive. Edward, too, listened uneasily, hemmed and hawed, making ineffectual attempts to combat Mr. Shivers’s socialism with a deeply-rooted native individualism that Shivers declared as defunct as Christianity.

“If it is possible for the workingman to rise under a capitalistic system, why do you not rise, then? Why do I not rise? I’m as good as Ditmar, I’m better educated, but we’re all slaves. What right has a man to make you and me work for him just because he has capital?”

“Why, the right of capital,” Edward would reply.

Mr. Shivers, with the manner of one dealing with an incurable romanticism and sentimentality, would lift his hands in despair. And in spite of the fact that Janet detested him, he sometimes exercised over her a paradoxical fascination, suggesting as he did unexplored intellectual realms. She despised her father for not being able to crush the little man. Edward would make pathetic attempts to capture the role Shivers had appropriated, to be the practical party himself, to convict Shivers of idealism. Socialism scandalized him, outraged, even more than atheism, something within him he

held sacred, and he was greatly annoyed because he was unable adequately to express this feeling.

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“You can’t change human nature, Mr. Shivers,” Edward would insist in his precise but ineffectual manner. “We all want property, you would accept a fortune if it was offered to you, and so should I. Americans will never become socialists.”

“But look at me, wasn’t I born in Meriden, Connecticut? Ain’t that Yankee enough for you?” Thus Mr. Shivers sought blandly to confound him.

A Yankee Shades of the Pilgrim fathers, of seven, generations of Bumpuses! A Yankee who used his hands in that way, a Yankee with a nose like that, a Yankee with a bald swathe down the middle of his crown and bunches of black, moth-eaten hair on either side! But Edward, too polite to descend to personalities, was silent....

In brief, this very politeness of Edward’s, which his ancestors would have scorned, this consideration and lack of self-assertion made him the favourite prey of the many “characters” in Fillmore Street whose sanity had been disturbed by pressure from above, in whose systems had lodged the germs of those exotic social doctrines floating so freely in the air of our modern industrial communities .... Chester Glenn remains for a passing mention. A Yankee of Yankees, this, born on a New Hampshire farm, and to the ordinary traveller on the Wigmore branch of the railroad just a good-natured, round-faced, tobacco-chewing brakeman who would take a seat beside ladies of his acquaintance aid make himself agreeable until it was time to rise and bawl out, in the approved manner of his profession, the name of the next station. Fillmore Street knew that the flat visored cap which his corporation compelled him to wear covered a brain into which had penetrated the maggot of the Single Tax. When he encountered Mr. Shivers or Auermann the talk became coruscating..

Eda Rawle, Janet’s solitary friend of these days, must also be mentioned, though the friendship was merely an episode in Janet’s life. Their first meeting was at Grady’s quick-lunch counter in Faber Street, which they both frequented at one time, and the fact that each had ordered a ham sandwich, a cup of coffee, and a confection—new to Grady’s—known as a Napoleon had led to conversation.

Eda, of course, was the aggressor; she was irresistibly drawn, she would not be repulsed. A stenographer in the Wessex National Bank, she boarded with a Welsh family in Spruce Street; matter-of-fact, plodding, commonplace, resembling—as Janet thought—a horse, possessing, indeed many of the noble qualities of that animal, she might have been thought the last person in the world to discern and appreciate in Janet the hidden elements of a mysterious fire. In appearance Miss Rawle was of a type not infrequent in Anglo-Saxon lands, strikingly blonde, with high malar bones, white eyelashes, and eyes of a metallic blue, cheeks of an amazing elasticity that worked rather painfully as she talked or smiled, drawing back inadequate lips, revealing long, white teeth and vivid gums. It was the craving in her for romance Janet assuaged; Eda’s was the love content to pour out, that demands little. She was capable of immolation. Janet was by no means ungrateful for the warmth of such affection, though

in moments conscious of a certain perplexity and sadness because she was able to give such a meagre return for the wealth of its offering.

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In other moments, when the world seemed all disorder and chaos,—as Mr. Shivers described it,—or when she felt within her, like demons, those inexpressible longings and desires, leaping and straining, pulling her, almost irresistibly, she knew not whither, Eda shone forth like a light in the darkness, like the beacon of a refuge and a shelter. Eda had faith in her, even when Janet had lost faith in herself: she went to Eda in the same spirit that Marguerite went to church; though she, Janet, more resembled Faust, being—save in these hours of lowered vitality—of the forth-faring kind .... Unable to confess the need that drove her, she arrived in Eda's little bedroom to be taken into Eda's arms. Janet was immeasurably the stronger of the two, but Eda possessed the masculine trait of protectiveness, the universe never bothered her, she was one of those persons—-called fortunate—to whom the orthodox Christian virtues come as naturally as sun or air. Passion, when sanctified by matrimony, was her ideal, and now it was always in terms of Janet she dreamed of it, having read about it in volumes her friend would not touch, and never having experienced deeply its discomforts. Sanctified or unsanctified, Janet regarded it with terror, and whenever Eda innocently broached the subject she recoiled. Once Eda exclaimed:—"When you do fall in love, Janet, you must tell me all about it, every word!"

Janet blushed hotly, and was silent. In Eda's mind such an affair was a kind of glorified fireworks ending in a cluster of stars, in Janet's a volcanic eruption to turn the world red. Such was the difference between them.

Their dissipations together consisted of "sundaes" at a drug-store, or sometimes of movie shows at the Star or the Alhambra. Stereotyped on Eda's face during the legitimately tender passages of these dramas was an expression of rapture, a smile made peculiarly infatuate by that vertical line in her cheeks, that inadequacy of lip and preponderance of white teeth and red gums. It irritated, almost infuriated Janet, to whom it appeared as the logical reflection of what was passing on the screen; she averted her glance from both, staring into her lap, filled with shame that the relation between the sexes should be thus exposed to public gaze, parodied, sentimentalized, degraded.... There were, however, marvels to stir her, strange landscapes, cities, seas, and ships,—once a fire in the forest of a western reserve with gigantic tongues of orange flame leaping from tree to tree. The movies brought the world to Hampton, the great world into which she longed to fare, brought the world to her! Remote mountain hamlets from Japan, minarets and muezzins from the Orient, pyramids from Egypt, domes from Moscow resembling gilded beets turned upside down; grey houses of parliament by the Thames, the Tower of London, the Palaces of Potsdam, the Tai Mahal. Strange lands indeed, and stranger peoples! booted Russians in blouses, naked Equatorial savages tattooed

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and amazingly adorned, soldiers and sailors, presidents, princes and emperors brought into such startling proximity one could easily imagine one's self exchanging the time of day! Incredible to Janet how the audiences, how even Eda accepted with American complacency what were to her never-ending miracles; the yearning to see more, to know more, became acute, like a pain, but even as she sought to devour these scenes, to drink in every detail, with tantalizing swiftness they were whisked away. They were peepholes in the walls of her prison; and at night she often charmed herself to sleep with remembered visions of wide, empty, treeshaded terraces reserved for kings.

But Eda, however complacent her interest in the scenes themselves, was thrilled to the marrow by their effect on Janet, who was her medium. Emerging from the vestibule of the theatre, Janet seemed not to see the slushy street, her eyes shone with a silver light like that of a mountain lake in a stormy sunset. And they walked in silence until Janet would exclaim:

"Oh Eda, wouldn't you love to travel!"

Thus Eda Rawle was brought in contact with values she herself was powerless to detect, and which did not become values until they had passed through Janet. One "educative" reel they had seen had begun with scenes in a lumber camp high in the mountains of Galicia, where grow forests of the priceless pine that becomes, after years of drying and seasoning, the sounding board of the Stradivarius and the harp. Even then it must respond to a Player. Eda, though failing to apply this poetic parallel, when alone in her little room in the Welsh boarding-house often indulged in an ecstasy of speculation as to that man, hidden in the mists of the future, whose destiny it would be to awaken her friend. Hampton did not contain him,—of this she was sure; and in her efforts to visualize him she had recourse to the movies, seeking him amongst that brilliant company of personages who stood so haughtily or walked so indifferently across the ephemeral brightness of the screen.

By virtue of these marvels of the movies: Hampton ugly and sordid Hampton!—actually began for Janet to take on a romantic tinge. Were not the strange peoples of the earth flocking to Hampton? She saw them arriving at the station, straight from Ellis Island, bewildered, ticketed like dumb animals, the women draped in the soft, exotic colours many of them were presently to exchange for the cheap and gaudy apparel of Faber Street. She sought to summon up in her mind the glimpses she had had of the wonderful lands from which they had come, to imagine their lives in that earlier environment. Sometimes she wandered, alone or with Eda, through the various quarters of the city. Each quarter had a flavour of its own, a synthetic flavour belonging neither to the old nor to the new, yet partaking of both: a difference in atmosphere to which Janet was keenly sensitive. In the German quarter, to the north, one felt a sort

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of ornamental bleakness—if the expression may be permitted: the tenements here were clean and not too crowded, the scroll-work on their superimposed porches, like that decorating the Turnverein and the stem Lutheran Church, was eloquent of a Teutonic inheritance: The Belgians were to the west, beyond the base-ball park and the car barns, their grey houses scattered among new streets beside the scarred and frowning face of Torrey's hill. Almost under the hill itself, which threatened to roll down on it, and facing a bottomless, muddy street, was the quaint little building giving the note of foreign thrift, of socialism and shrewdness, of joie de vivre to the settlement, the Franco-Belgian co-operative store, with its salle de reunion above and a stage for amateur theatricals. Standing in the mud outside, Janet would gaze through the tiny windows in the stucco wall at the baskets prepared for each household laid in neat rows beside the counter; at the old man with the watery blue eyes and lacing of red in his withered cheeks who spoke no English, whose duty it was to distribute the baskets to the women and children as they called.

Turning eastward again, one came to Dey Street, in the heart of Hampton, where Hibernian Hall stood alone and grim, sole testimony of the departed Hibernian glories of a district where the present Irish rulers of the city had once lived and gossiped and fought in the days when the mill bells had roused the boarding-house keepers at half past four of a winter morning. Beside the hall was a corner lot, heaped high with hills of ashes and rubbish like the vomitings of some filthy volcano; the unsightliness of which was half concealed by huge signs announcing the merits of chewing gums, tobaccos, and cereals. But why had the departure of the Irish, the coming of the Syrians made Dey Street dark, narrow, mysterious, oriental? changed the very aspect of its architecture? Was it the coffee-houses? One of these, in front of which Janet liked to linger, was set weirdly into an old New England cottage, and had, apparently, fathomless depths. In summer the whole front of it lay open to the street, and here all day long, beside the table where the charcoal squares were set to dry, could be seen saffron-coloured Armenians absorbed in a Turkish game played on a backgammon board, their gentleness and that of the loiterers looking on in strange contrast with their hawk-like profiles and burning eyes. Behind this group, in the half light of the middle interior, could be discerned an American soda-water fountain of a bygone fashion, on its marble counter oddly shaped bottles containing rose and violet syrups; there was a bottle-shaped stove, and on the walls, in gilt frames, pictures evidently dating from the period in American art that flourished when Franklin Pierce was President; and there was an array of marble topped tables extending far back into the shadows. Behind the fountain was a sort of cupboard—suggestive of the Arabian Nights, which Janet had never read—from which, occasionally, the fat proprietor emerged bearing Turkish coffee or long Turkish pipes.

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When not thus occupied the proprietor carried a baby. The street swarmed with babies, and mothers nursed them on the door-steps. And in this teeming, prolific street one could scarcely move without stepping on a fat, almond eyed child, though some, indeed, were wheeled; wheeled in all sorts of queer contrivances by one another, by fathers with ragged black moustaches and eagle noses who, to the despair of mill superintendents, had decided in the morning that three days' wages would since to support their families for the week .... In the midst of the throng might be seen occasionally the stout and comfortable and not too immaculate figure of a shovel bearded Syrian priest, in a frock coat and square-topped "Derby" hat, sailing along serenely, heedless of the children who scattered out of his path.

Nearby was the quarter of the Canadian French, scarcely now to be called foreigners, though still somewhat reminiscent of the cramped little towns in the northern wilderness of water and forest. On one corner stood almost invariably a "Pharmacie Francaise"; the signs were in French, and the elders spoke the patois. These, despite the mill pallor, retained in their faces, in their eyes, a suggestion of the outdoor look of their ancestors, the coureurs des bois, but the children spoke English, and the young men, as they played baseball in the street or in the corner lots might be heard shouting out derisively the cry of the section hands so familiar in mill cities, "Doff, you beggars you, doff!"

Occasionally the two girls strayed into that wide thoroughfare not far from the canal, known by the classic name of Hawthorne, which the Italians had appropriated to themselves. This street, too, in spite of the telegraph poles flaunting crude arms in front of its windows, in spite of the trolley running down its middle, had acquired a character, a unity all its own, a warmth and picturesqueness that in the lingering light of summer evenings assumed an indefinable significance. It was not Italy, but it was something—-something proclaimed in the ornate, leaning lines of the pillared balconies of the yellow tenement on the second block, in the stone-vaulted entrance of the low house next door, in fantastically coloured walls, in curtained windows out of which leaned swarthy, earringed women. Blocking the end of the street, in stern contrast, was the huge Clarendon Mill with its sinister brick pillars running up the six stories between the glass. Here likewise the sidewalks overflowed with children, large-headed, with great, lustrous eyes, mute, appealing, the eyes of cattle. Unlike American children, they never seemed to be playing. Among the groups of elders gathered for gossip were piratical Calabrians in sombre clothes, descended from Greek ancestors, once the terrors of the Adriatic Sea. The women, lingering in the doorways, hemmed in by more children, were for the most part squat and plump, but once in a while Janet's glance was caught and held by a strange, sharp beauty worthy of a cameo.

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Opposite the Clarendon Mill on the corner of East Street was a provision store with stands of fruit and vegetables encroaching on the pavement. Janet's eye was attracted by a box of olives.

"Oh Eda," she cried, "do you remember, we saw them being picked—in the movies? All those old trees on the side of a hill?"

"Why, that's so," said Eda. "You never would have thought anything'd grow on those trees."

The young Italian who kept the store gave them a friendly grin.

"You lika the olives?" he asked, putting some of the shining black fruit into their hands. Eda bit one dubiously with her long, white teeth, and giggled.

"Don't they taste funny!" she exclaimed.

"Good—very good," he asserted gravely, and it was to Janet he turned, as though recognizing a discrimination not to be found in her companion. She nodded affirmatively. The strange taste of the fruit enhanced her sense of adventure, she tried to imagine herself among the gatherers in the grove; she glanced at the young man to perceive that he was tall and well formed, with remarkably expressive eyes almost the colour of the olives themselves. It surprised her that she liked him, though he was an Italian and a foreigner: a certain debonnair dignity in him appealed to her—a quality lacking in many of her own countrymen.

And she wanted to talk to him about Italy,—only she did not know how to begin,—when a customer appeared, an Italian woman who conversed with him in soft, liquid tones that moved her ....

Sometimes on these walks—especially if the day were grey and sombre—Janet's sense of romance and adventure deepened, became more poignant, charged with presage. These feelings, vague and unaccountable, she was utterly unable to confide to Eda, yet the very fear they inspired was fascinating; a fear and a hope that some day, in all this Babel of peoples, something would happen! It was as though the conflicting soul of the city and her own soul were one....

CHAPTER III

Lise was the only member of the Bumpus family who did not find uncongenial such distractions and companionships as were offered by the civilization that surrounded them. The Bagatelle she despised; that was slavery—but slavery out of which she might any day be snatched, like Leila Hawtrey, by a prince charming who had made a success in life. Success to Lise meant money. Although what some sentimental

sociologists might call a victim of our civilization, Lise would not have changed it, since it produced not only Lise herself, but also those fabulous financiers with yachts and motors and town and country houses she read about in the supplements of the Sunday newspapers. It contained her purgatory, which she regarded in good conventional fashion as a mere temporary place of detention, and likewise the heaven toward which she strained, the dwelling-place of light. In short,

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her philosophy was that of the modern, orthodox American, tinged by a somewhat commercialized Sunday school tradition of an earlier day, and highly approved by the censors of the movies. The peculiar kind of abstinence once euphemistically known as "virtue," particularly if it were combined with beauty, never failed of its reward. Lise, in this sense, was indeed virtuous, and her mirror told her she was beautiful. Almost anything could happen to such a lady: any day she might be carried up into heaven by that modern chariot of fire, the motor car, driven by a celestial chauffeur.

One man's meat being another's poison, Lise absorbed from the movies an element by which her sister Janet was repelled. A popular production known as "Leila of Hawtrey's" contained her creed,—Hawtrey's being a glittering metropolitan restaurant where men of the world are wont to gather and discuss the stock market, and Leila a beautiful, blonde and orphaned waitress upon whom several of the fashionable frequenters had exercised seductive powers in vain. They lay in wait for her at the side entrance, followed her, while one dissipated and desperate person, married, and said to move in the most exclusive circles, sent her an offer of a yearly income in five figures, the note being reproduced on the screen, and Leila pictured reading it in her frigid hall-bedroom. There are complications; she is in debt, and the proprietor of Hawtrey's has threatened to discharge her and in order that the magnitude of the temptation may be most effectively realized the vision appears of Leila herself, wrapped in furs, stepping out of a limousine and into an elevator lifting her to an apartment containing silk curtains, a Canet bed, a French maid, and a Pomeranian. Virtue totters, but triumphs, being reinforced by two more visions the first of these portrays Leila, prematurely old, dragging herself along pavements under the metallic Broadway lights accosting gentlemen in evening dress; and the second reveals her in the country, kneeling beside a dying mother's bed, giving her promise to remain true to the Christian teachings of her childhood.

And virtue is rewarded, lavishly, as virtue should be, in dollars and cents, in stocks and bonds, in pearls and diamonds. Popular fancy takes kindly to rough but honest westerners who have begun life in flannel shirts, who have struck gold and come to New York with a fortune but despising effeteness; such a one, tanned by the mountain sun, embarrassed in raiment supplied by a Fifth Avenue tailor, takes a table one evening at Hawtrey's and of course falls desperately in love. He means marriage from the first, and his faith in Leila is great enough to survive what appears to be an almost total eclipse of her virtue. Through the machinations of the influential villain, and lured by the false pretence that one of her girl friends is ill, she is enticed into a mysterious house of a sinister elegance, and apparently irretrievably compromised. The westerner

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follows, forces his way through the portals, engages the villain, and vanquishes him. Leila becomes a Bride. We behold her, at the end, mistress of one of those magnificent stone mansions with grilled vestibules and negro butlers into whose sacred precincts we are occasionally, in the movies, somewhat breathlessly ushered—a long way from Hawtrey's restaurant and a hall-bedroom. A long way, too, from the Bagatelle and Fillmore Street—but to Lise a way not impossible, nor even improbable.

This work of art, conveying the moral that virtue is an economic asset, made a great impression on Lise. Good Old Testament doctrine, set forth in the Book of Job itself. And Leila, pictured as holding out for a higher price and getting it, encouraged Lise to hold out also. Mr. Wiley, in whose company she had seen this play, and whose likeness filled the plush and silver-plated frame on her bureau, remained ironically ignorant of the fact that he had paid out his money to make definite an ambition, an ideal hitherto nebulous in the mind of the lady whom he adored. Nor did Lise enlighten him, being gifted with a certain inscrutableness. As a matter of fact it had never been her intention to accept him, but now that she was able concretely to visualize her Lochinvar of the future, Mr. Whey's lack of qualifications became the more apparent. In the first place, he had been born in Lowell and had never been west of Worcester; in the second, his salary was sixteen dollars a week: it is true she had once fancied the Scottish terrier style of hair-cut abruptly ending in the rounded line of the shaven neck, but Lochinvar had been close-cropped. Mr. Wiley, close-cropped, would have resembled a convict.

Mr. Wiley was in love, there could be no doubt about that, and if he had not always meant marriage, he meant it now, having reached a state where no folly seems preposterous. The manner of their meeting had had just the adventurous and romantic touch that Lise liked, one of her favourite amusements in the intervals between "steadies" being to walk up and down Faber Street of an evening after supper, arm in arm with two or three other young ladies, all chewing gum, wheeling into store windows and wheeling out again, pretending the utmost indifference to melting glances cast in their direction. An exciting sport, though incomprehensible to masculine intelligence. It was a principle with Lise to pay no attention to any young man who was not "presented," those venturing to approach her with the ready formula "Haven't we met before?" being instantly congealed. She was strict as to etiquette. But Mr. Wiley, it seemed, could claim acquaintance with Miss Schuler, one of the ladies to whose arm Lise's was linked, and he had the further advantage of appearing in a large and seductive touring car, painted green, with an eagle poised above the hood and its name, Wizard, in a handwriting rounded and bold, written in nickel across the radiator. He greeted Miss Schuler effusively, but his eye was

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on Lise from the first, and it was she he took with, him in the front seat, indifferent to the giggling behind. Ever since then Lise had had a motor at her disposal, and on Sundays they took long “joy rides” beyond the borders of the state. But it must not be imagined that Mr. Whey was the proprietor of the vehicle; nor was he a chauffeur,—her American pride would not have permitted her to keep company with a chauffeur: he was the demonstrator for the Wizard, something of a wizard himself, as Lise had to admit when they whizzed over the tarvia of the Riverside Boulevard at fifty or sixty miles an hour with the miner cut out—a favourite diversion of Mr. Whey’s, who did not feel he was going unless he was accompanied by a noise like that of a mitrailleuse in action. Lise, experiencing a ravishing terror, hung on to her hat with one hand and to Mr. Wiley with the other, her code permitting this; permitting him also, occasionally, when they found themselves in tenebrous portions of Slattery’s Riverside Park, to put his arm around her waist and kiss her. So much did Lise’s virtue allow, and no more, the result being that he existed in a tantalizing state of hope and excitement most detrimental to the nerves.

He never lost, however,—in public at least, or before Lise’s family,—the fine careless, jaunty air of the demonstrator, of the free-lance for whom seventy miles an hour has no terrors; the automobile, apparently, like the ship, sets a stamp upon its votaries. No Elizabethan buccaneer swooping down on defenceless coasts ever exceeded in audacity Mr. Wiley’s invasion of quiet Fillmore Street. He would draw up with an ear-splitting screaming of brakes in front of the clay-yellow house, and sometimes the muffler, as though unable to repress its approval of the performance, would let out a belated pop that never failed to jar the innermost being of Auermann, who had been shot at, or rather shot past, by an Italian, and knew what it was. He hated automobiles, he hated Mr. Wiley.

“Vat you do?” he would demand, glaring.

And Mr. Wiley would laugh insolently.

“You think I done it, do you, Dutchie—huh!”

He would saunter past, up the stairs, and into the Bumpus dining-room, often before the family had finished their evening meal. Lise alone made him welcome, albeit demurely; but Mr. Wiley, not having sensibilities, was proof against Hannah’s coldness and Janet’s hostility. With unerring instinct he singled out Edward as his victim.

“How’s Mr. Bumpus this evening?” he would genially inquire.

Edward invariably assured Mr. Wiley that he was well, invariably took a drink of coffee to emphasize the fact, as though the act of lifting his cup had in it some magic to ward off the contempt of his wife and elder daughter.

“Well, I’ve got it pretty straight that the Arundel’s going to run nights, starting next week,” Lise’s suitor would continue.

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And to save his soul Edward could not refrain from answering, “You don’t say so!” He feigned interest in the information that the Hampton Ball Team, owing to an unsatisfactory season, was to change managers next year. Mr. Wiley possessed the gift of gathering recondite bits of news, he had confidence in his topics and in his manner of dealing with them; and Edward, pretending to be entertained, went so far in his politeness as to ask Mr. Wiley if he had had supper.

“I don’t care if I sample one of Mis’ Bumpus’s doughnuts,” Mr. Wiley would reply politely, reaching out a large hand that gave evidence, in spite of Sapolio, of an intimacy with grease cups and splash pans. “I guess there’s nobody in this burg can make doughnuts to beat yours, Miss Bumpus.”

If she had only known which doughnut he would take; Hannah sometimes thought she might have been capable of putting arsenic in it. Her icy silence did not detract from the delights of his gestation.

Occasionally, somewhat to Edward’s alarm, Hannah demanded: “Where are you taking Lise this evening?”

Mr. Wiley’s wisdom led him to be vague.

“Oh, just for a little spin up the boulevard. Maybe we’ll pick up Ella Schuler and one or two other young ladies.”

Hannah and Janet knew very well he had no intention of doing this, and Hannah did not attempt to conceal her incredulity. As a matter of fact, Lise sometimes did insist on a “party.”

“I want you should bring her back by ten o’clock. That’s late enough for a girl who works to be out. It’s late enough for any girl.”

“Sure, Mis’ Bumpus,” Wiley would respond easily.

Hannah chafed because she had no power to enforce this, because Mr. Wiley and Lise understood she had no power. Lise went to put on her hat; if she skimped her toilet in the morning, she made up for it in the evening when she came home from the store, and was often late for supper. In the meantime, while Lise was in the bedroom adding these last touches, Edward would contemptibly continue the conversation, fingering the Evening Banner as it lay in his lap, while Mr. Wiley helped himself boldly to another doughnut, taking—as Janet observed—elaborate precautions to spill none of the crumbs on a brown suit, supposed to be the last creation in male attire. Behind a plate glass window in Faber Street, belonging to a firm of “custom” tailors whose stores had invaded every important city in the country, and who made clothes for “college” men, only the week before Mr. Wiley had seen this same suit artistically folded, combined

with a coloured shirt, brown socks, and tie and “torture” collar—lures for the discriminating. Owing to certain expenses connected with Lise, he had been unable to acquire the shirt and the tie, but he had bought the suit in the hope and belief that she would find him irresistible therein. It pleased him, too, to be taken for a “college” man, and on beholding in the mirror his broadened shoulders and diminished waist he was quite convinced his money had not been spent in vain; that strange young ladies—to whom, despite his infatuation for the younger Miss Bumpus, he was not wholly indifferent—would mistake him for an undergraduate of Harvard,—an imposition concerning which he had no scruples. But Lise, though shaken, had not capitulated.....

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When she returned to the dining-room, arrayed in her own finery, demure, triumphant, and had carried off Mr. Whey there would ensue an interval of silence broken only by the clattering together of the dishes Hannah snatched up.

“I guess he’s the kind of son-in-law would suit you,” she threw over her shoulder once to Edward.

“Why?” he inquired, letting down his newspaper nervously.

“Well, you seem to favour him, to make things as pleasant for him as you can.”

Edward would grow warm with a sense of injustice, the inference being that he was to blame for Mr. Wiley; if he had been a different kind of father another sort of suitor would be courting Lise.

“I have to be civil,” he protested. He pronounced that, word “civil” exquisitely, giving equal value to both syllables.

“Civil!” Hannah scoffed, as she left the room; and to Janet, who had followed her into the kitchen, she added: “That’s the trouble with your father, he’s always be’n a little too civil. Edward Bumpus is just as simple as a child, he’s afraid of offending folks’ feelings .... Think of being polite to that Whey!” In those two words Hannah announced eloquently her utter condemnation of the demonstrator of the Wizard. It was characteristic of her, however, when she went back for another load of dishes and perceived that Edward was only pretending to read his Banner, to attempt to ease her husband’s feelings. She thought it queer because she was still fond of Edward Bumpus, after all he had “brought on her.”

“It’s Lise,” she said, as though speaking to Janet, “she attracts ’em. Sometimes I just can’t get used to it that she’s my daughter. I don’t know who she takes after. She’s not like any of my kin, nor any of the Bumpuses.”

“What can you do?” asked Edward. “You can’t order him out of the house. It’s better for him to come here. And you can’t stop Lise from going with him—she’s earning her own money....”

They had talked over the predicament before, and always came to the same impasse. In the privacy of the kitchen Hannah paused suddenly in her energetic rubbing of a plate and with supreme courage uttered a question.

“Janet, do you calculate he means anything wrong?”

“I don’t know what he means,” Janet replied, unwilling to give Mr. Wiley credit for anything, “but I know this, that Lise is too smart to let him take advantage of her.”

Hannah ruminated. Cleverness as the modern substitute for feminine virtue did not appeal to her, but she let it pass. She was in no mood to quarrel with any quality that would ward off disgrace.

“I don’t know what to make of Lise—she don’t appear to have any principles....”

If the Wiley affair lasted longer than those preceding it, this was because former suitors had not commanded automobiles. When Mr. Wiley lost his automobile he lost his luck—if it may be called such. One April evening, after a stroll with Eda, Janet reached home about nine o’clock to find Lise already in their room, to remark upon the absence of Mr. Wiley’s picture from the frame.

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“I’m through with him,” Lise declared briefly, tugging at her hair.

“Through with him?” Janet repeated.

Lise paused in her labours and looked at her sister steadily. “I handed him the mit—do you get me?”

“But why?”

“Why? I was sick of him—ain’t that enough? And then he got mixed up with a Glendale trolley and smashed his radiator, and the Wizard people sacked him. I always told him he was too fly. It’s lucky for him I wasn’t in the car.”

“It’s lucky for you,” said Janet. Presently she inquired curiously: “Aren’t you sorry?”

“Nix.” Lise shook her head, which was now bowed, her face hidden by hair. “Didn’t I tell you I was sick of him? But he sure was some spender,” she added, as though in justice bound to give him his due.

Janet was shocked by the ruthlessness of it, for Lise appeared relieved, almost gay. She handed Janet a box containing five peppermint creams—all that remained of Mr. Wiley’s last gift.

One morning in the late spring Janet crossed the Warren Street bridge, the upper of the two spider-like structures to be seen from her office window, spanning the river beside the great Hampton dam. The day, dedicated to the memory of heroes fallen in the Civil War, the thirtieth of May, was a legal holiday. Gradually Janet had acquired a dread of holidays as opportunities never realized, as intervals that should have been filled with unmitigated joys, and yet were invariably wasted, usually in walks with Eda Rawle. To-day, feeling an irresistible longing for freedom, for beauty, for adventure, for quest and discovery of she knew not what, she avoided Eda, and after gazing awhile at the sunlight dancing in the white mist below the falls, she walked on, southward, until she had left behind her the last straggling houses of the city and found herself on a wide, tarvia road that led, ultimately, to Boston. So read the sign.

Great maples, heavy with leaves, stood out against the soft blue of the sky, and the sunlight poured over everything, bathing the stone walls, the thatches of the farmhouses, extracting from the copses of stunted pine a pungent, reviving perfume. Sometimes she stopped to rest on the pine needles, and walked on again, aimlessly, following the road because it was the easiest way. There were spring flowers in the farmhouse yards, masses of lilacs whose purple she drank in eagerly; the air, which had just a tang of New England sharpness, was filled with tender sounds, the clucking of hens, snatches of the songs of birds, the rustling of maple leaves in the fitful breeze. A chipmunk ran down an elm and stood staring at her with beady, inquisitive eyes,

motionless save for his quivering tail, and she put forth her hand, shyly, beseechingly, as though he held the secret of life she craved. But he darted away.

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She looked around her unceasingly, at the sky, at the trees, at the flowers and ferns and fields, at the vireos and thrushes, the robins and tanagers gashing in and out amidst the foliage, and she was filled with a strange yearning to expand and expand until she should become a part of all nature, be absorbed into it, cease to be herself. Never before had she known just that feeling, that degree of ecstasy mingled with divine discontent .... Occasionally, intruding faintly upon the countryside peace, she was aware of a distant humming sound that grew louder and louder until there shot roaring past her an automobile filled with noisy folk, leaving behind it a suffocating cloud of dust. Even these intrusions, reminders of the city she had left, were powerless to destroy her mood, and she began to skip, like a schoolgirl, pausing once in a while to look around her fearfully, lest she was observed; and it pleased her to think that she had escaped forever, that she would never go back: she cried aloud, as she skipped, “I won’t go back, I won’t go back,” keeping time with her feet until she was out of breath and almost intoxicated, delirious, casting herself down, her heart beating wildly, on a bank of ferns, burying her face in them. She had really stopped because a pebble had got into her shoe, and as she took it out she looked at her bare heel and remarked ruefully:—“Those twenty-five cent stockings aren’t worth buying!”

Economic problems, however, were powerless to worry her to-day, when the sun shone and the wind blew and the ferns, washed by the rill running through the culvert under the road, gave forth a delicious moist odour reminding her of the flower store where her sister Lise had once been employed. But at length she arose, and after an hour or more of sauntering the farming landscape was left behind, the crumbling stone fences were replaced by a well-kept retaining wall capped by a privet hedge, through which, between stone pillars, a driveway entered and mounted the shaded slope, turning and twisting until lost to view. But afar, standing on the distant crest, through the tree trunks and foliage Janet saw one end of the mansion to which it led, and ventured timidly but eagerly in among the trees in the hope of satisfying her new-born curiosity. Try as she would, she never could get any but disappointing and partial glimpses of a house which, because of the mystery of its setting, fired her imagination, started her to wondering why it was that some were permitted to live in the midst of such beauty while she was condemned to spend her days in Fillmore Street and the prison of the mill. She was not even allowed to look at it! The thought was like a cloud across the sun.

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However, when she had regained the tarvia road and walked a little way the shadow suddenly passed, and she stood surprised. The sight of a long common with its ancient trees in the fullness of glory, dense maples, sturdy oaks, strong, graceful elms that cast flickering, lacy shadows across the road filled her with satisfaction, with a sense of peace deepened by the awareness, in the background, ranged along the common on either side, of stately, dignified buildings, each in an appropriate frame of foliage. With the essence rather than the detail of all this her consciousness became steeped; she was naturally ignorant of the great good fortune of Silliston Academy of having been spared with one or two exceptions—donations during those artistically lean years of the nineteenth century when American architecture affected the Gothic, the Mansard, and the subsequent hybrid. She knew this must be Silliston, the seat of that famous academy of which she had heard.

The older school buildings and instructors' houses, most of them white or creamy yellow, were native Colonial, with tall, graceful chimneys and classic pillars and delicate balustrades, eloquent at once of the racial inheritance of the Republic and of a bygone individuality, dignity, and pride. And the modern architect, of whose work there was an abundance, had graciously and intuitively held this earlier note and developed it. He was an American, but an American who had been trained. The result was harmony, life as it should proceed, the new growing out of the old. And no greater tribute can be paid to Janet Bumpus than that it pleased her, struck and set exquisitely vibrating within her responsive chords. For the first time in her adult life she stood in the presence of tradition, of a tradition inherently if unconsciously the innermost reality of her being a tradition that miraculously was not dead, since after all the years it had begun to put forth these vigorous shoots....

What Janet chiefly realized was the delicious, contented sense of having come, visually at least, to the home for which she had longed. But her humour was that of a child who has strayed, to find its true dwelling place in a region of beauty hitherto unexplored and unexperienced, tinged, therefore, with unreality, with mystery,—an effect enhanced by the chance stillness and emptiness of the place. She wandered up and down the Common, whose vivid green was starred with golden dandelions; and then, spying the arched and shady vista of a lane, entered it, bent on new discoveries. It led past one of the newer buildings, the library—as she read in a carved inscription over the door—-plunged into shade again presently to emerge at a square farmhouse, ancient and weathered, with a great square chimney thrust out of the very middle of the ridge-pole,—a landmark left by one of the earliest of Silliston's settlers. Presiding over it, embracing and protecting it, was a splendid tree. The place was evidently

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in process of reconstruction and repair, the roof had been newly shingled, new frames, with old-fashioned, tiny panes had been put in the windows; a little garden was being laid out under the sheltering branches of the tree, and between the lane and the garden, half finished, was a fence of an original and pleasing design, consisting of pillars placed at intervals with upright pickets between, the pickets sawed in curves, making a line that drooped in the middle. Janet did not perceive the workman engaged in building this fence until the sound of his hammer attracted her attention. His back was bent, he was absorbed in his task.

“Are there any stores near here?” she inquired.

He straightened up. “Why yes,” he replied, “come to think of it, I have seen stores, I’m sure I have.”

Janet laughed; his expression, his manner of speech were so delightfully whimsical, so in keeping with the spirit of her day, and he seemed to accept her sudden appearance in the precise make-believe humour she could have wished. And yet she stood a little struck with timidity, puzzled by the contradictions he presented of youth and age, of shrewdness, experience and candour, of gentility and manual toil. He must have been about thirty-five; he was hatless, and his hair, uncombed but not unkempt, was greying at the temples; his eyes—which she noticed particularly—were keen yet kindly, the irises delicately stencilled in a remarkable blue; his speech was colloquial yet cultivated, his workman’s clothes belied his bearing.

“Yes, there are stores, in the village,” he went on, “but isn’t it a holiday, or Sunday—-perhaps—or something of the kind?”

“It’s Decoration Day,” she reminded him, with deepening surprise.

“So it is! And all the storekeepers have gone on picnics in their automobiles, or else they’re playing golf. Nobody’s working today.”

“But you—aren’t you working?” she inquired.

“Working?” he repeated. “I suppose some people would call it work. I—I hadn’t thought of it in that way.”

“You mean—you like it,” Janet was inspired to say.

“Well, yes,” he confessed. “I suppose I do.”

Her cheeks dimpled. If her wonder had increased, her embarrassment had flown, and he seemed suddenly an old acquaintance. She had, however, profound doubts now of his being a carpenter.

“Were you thinking of going shopping?” he asked, and at the very ludicrousness of the notion she laughed again. She discovered a keen relish for this kind of humour, but it was new to her experience, and she could not cope with it.

“Only to buy some crackers, or a sandwich,” she replied, and blushed.

“Oh,” he said. “Down in the village, on the corner where the cars stop, is a restaurant. It’s not as good as the Parker House in Boston, I believe, but they do have sandwiches, yes, and coffee. At least they call it coffee.”

“Oh, thank you,” she said.

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“You’d better wait till you try it,” he warned her.

“Oh, I don’t mind, I don’t want much.” And she was impelled to add: “It’s such a beautiful day.”

“It’s absurd to get hungry on such a day—absurd,” he agreed.

“Yes, it is,” she laughed. “I’m not really hungry, but I haven’t time to get back to Hampton for dinner.” Suddenly she grew hot at the thought that he might suspect her of hinting. “You see, I live in Hampton,” she went on hurriedly, “I’m a stenographer there, in the Chippering Mill, and I was just out for a walk, and—I came farther than I intended.” She had made it worse.

But he said, “Oh, you came from Hampton!” with an intonation of surprise, of incredulity even, that soothed and even amused while it did not deceive her. Not that the superior intelligence of which she had begun to suspect him had been put to any real test by the discovery of her home, and she was quite sure her modest suit of blue serge and her $2.99 pongee blouse proclaimed her as a working girl of the mill city. “I’ve been to Hampton,” he declared, just as though it were four thousand miles away instead of four.

“But I’ve never been here before, to Silliston,” she responded in the same spirit: and she added wistfully, “it must be nice to live in such a beautiful place as this!”

“Yes, it is nice,” he agreed. “We have our troubles, too,—but it’s nice.”

She ventured a second, appraising glance. His head, which he carried a little flung back, his voice, his easy and confident bearing—all these contradicted the saw and the hammer, the flannel shirt, open at the neck, the khaki trousers still bearing the price tag. And curiosity beginning to get the better of her, she was emboldened to pay a compliment to the fence. If one had to work, it must be a pleasure to work on things pleasing to the eye—such was her inference.

“Why, I’m glad you like it,” he said heartily. “I was just hoping some one would come along here and admire it. Now—what colour would you paint it?”

“Are you a painter, too?”

“After a fashion. I’m a sort of man of all work—I thought of painting it white, with the pillars green.”

“I think that would be pretty,” she answered, judicially, after a moment’s thought. “What else can you do?”

He appeared to be pondering his accomplishments.

“Well, I can doctor trees,” he said, pointing an efficient finger at the magnificent maple sheltering, like a guardian deity, the old farmhouse. “I put in those patches.”

“They’re cement,” she exclaimed. “I never heard of putting cement in trees.”

“They don’t seem to mind.”

“Are the holes very deep?”

“Pretty deep.”

“But I should think the tree would be dead.”

“Well, you see the life of a tree is right under the bark. If you can keep the outer covering intact, the tree will live.”

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“Why did you let the holes get so deep?”

“I’ve just come here. The house was like the tree the shingles all rotten, but the beams were sound. Those beams were hewn out of the forest two hundred and fifty years ago.”

“Gracious!” said Janet. “And how old is the tree?”

“I should say about a hundred. I suppose it wouldn’t care to admit it.”

“How do you know?” she inquired.

“Oh, I’m very intimate with trees. I find out their secrets.”

“It’s your house!” she exclaimed, somewhat appalled by the discovery.

“Yes—yes it is,” he answered, looking around at it and then in an indescribably comical manner down at his clothes. His gesture, his expression implied that her mistake was a most natural one.

“Excuse me, I thought—” she began, blushing hotly, yet wanting to laugh again.

“I don’t blame you—why shouldn’t you?” he interrupted her. “I haven’t got used to it yet, and there is something amusing about—my owning a house. When the parlour’s finished I’ll have to wear a stiff collar, I suppose, in order to live up to it.”

Her laughter broke forth, and she tried to imagine him in a stiff collar.... But she was more perplexed than ever. She stood balancing on one foot, poised for departure.

“I ought to be going,” she said, as though she had been paying him a formal visit.

“Don’t hurry,” he protested cordially. “Why hurry back to Hampton?”

“I never want to go back!” she cried with a vehemence that caused him to contemplate her anew, suddenly revealing the intense, passionate quality which had so disturbed Mr. Ditmar. She stood transformed. “I hate it!” she declared. “It’s so ugly, I never want to see it again.”

“Yes, it is ugly,” he confessed. “Since you admit it, I don’t mind saying so. But it’s interesting, in a way.” Though his humorous moods had delighted her, she felt subtly flattered because he had grown more serious.

“It is interesting,” she agreed. She was almost impelled to tell him why, in her excursions to the various quarters, she had found Hampton interesting, but a shyness born of respect for the store of knowledge she divined in him restrained her. She was

curious to know what this man saw in Hampton. His opinion would be worth something. Unlike her neighbours in Fillmore Street, he was not what her sister Lise would call “nutty”; he had an air of fine sanity, of freedom, of detachment,—though the word did not occur to her; he betrayed no bitter sense of injustice, and his beliefs were uncoloured by the obsession of a single panacea. “Why do you think it’s interesting?” she demanded.

“Well, I’m always expecting to hear that it’s blown up. It reminds me of nitro-glycerine,” he added, smiling.

She repeated the word.

“An explosive, you know—they put it in dynamite. They say a man once made it by accident, and locked up his laboratory and ran home—and never went back.”

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“I know what you mean!” she cried, her eyes alight with excitement. “All those foreigners! I’ve felt it that something would happen, some day, it frightened me, and yet I wished that something would happen. Only, I never would have thought of—nitro-glycerine.”

She was unaware of the added interest in his regard. But he answered lightly enough: —“Oh, not only the foreigners. Human chemicals—you can’t play with human chemicals any more than you can play with real ones—you’ve got to know something about chemistry.”

This remark was beyond her depth.

“Who is playing with them?” she asked.

“Everybody—no one in particular. Nobody seems to know much about them, yet,” he replied, and seemed disinclined to pursue the subject. A robin with a worm in its bill was hopping across the grass; he whistled softly, the bird stopped, cocking its head and regarding them. Suddenly, in conflict with her desire to remain indefinitely talking with this strange man, Janet felt an intense impulse to leave. She could bear the conversation no longer, she might burst into tears—such was the extraordinary effect he had produced on her.

“I must go,—I’m ever so much obliged to you,” she said.

“Drop in again,” he said, as he took her trembling hand .... When she had walked a little way she looked back over her shoulder to see him leaning idly against the post, gazing after her, and waving his hammer in friendly fashion.

For a while her feet fairly flew, and her heart beat tumultuously, keeping time with her racing thoughts. She walked about the Common, seeing nothing, paying no attention to the passers-by, who glanced at her curiously. But at length as she grew calmer the needs of a youthful and vigorous body became imperative, and realizing suddenly that she was tired and hungry, sought and found the little restaurant in the village below. She journeyed back to Hampton pondering what this man had said to her; speculating, rather breathlessly, whether he had been impelled to conversation by a natural kindness and courtesy, or whether he really had discovered something in her worthy of addressing, as he implied. Resentment burned in her breast, she became suddenly blinded by tears: she might never see him again, and if only she were “educated” she might know him, become his friend. Even in this desire she was not conventional, and in the few moments of their contact he had developed rather than transformed what she meant by “education.” She thought of it not as knowledge reeking of books and schools, but as the acquirement of the freemasonry which he so evidently possessed, existence on terms of understanding, confidence, and freedom with nature; as having the world open up to one like a flower filled with colour and life. She thought of the

robin, of the tree whose secrets he had learned, of a mental range including even that medley of human beings amongst whom she lived. And the fact that something of his meaning had eluded her grasp made her rebel all the more bitterly against the lack of a greater knowledge ....

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Often during the weeks that followed he dwelt in her mind as she sat at her desk and stared out across the river, and several times that summer she started to walk to Silliston. But always she turned back. Perhaps she feared to break the charm of that memory....

CHAPTER IV

Our American climate is notoriously capricious. Even as Janet trudged homeward on that Memorial Day afternoon from her Cinderella-like adventure in Silliston the sun grew hot, the air lost its tonic, becoming moist and tepid, white clouds with dark edges were piled up in the western sky. The automobiles of the holiday makers swarmed ceaselessly over the tarvia. Valiantly as she strove to cling to her dream, remorseless reality was at work dragging her back, reclaiming her; excitement and physical exercise drained her vitality, her feet were sore, sadness invaded her as she came in view of the ragged outline of the city she had left so joyfully in the morning. Summer, that most depressing of seasons in an environment of drab houses and grey pavements, was at hand, listless householders and their families were already, seeking refuge on front steps she passed on her way to Fillmore Street.

It was about half past five when she arrived. Lise, her waist removed, was seated in a rocking chair at the window overlooking the littered yards and the backs of the tenements on Rutger Street. And Lise, despite the heaviness of the air, was dreaming. Of such delicate texture was the fabric of Janet's dreams that not only sordid reality, but contact with other dreams of a different nature, such as her sister's, often sufficed to dissolve them. She resented, for instance, the presence in the plush oval of Mr. Eustace Arlington; the movie star whose likeness had replaced Mr. Wiley's, and who had played the part of the western hero in "Leila of Hawtrey's." With his burning eyes and sensual face betraying the puffiness that comes from over-indulgence, he was not Janet's ideal of a hero, western or otherwise. And now Lise was holding a newspaper: not the Banner, whose provinciality she scorned, but a popular Boston sheet to be had for a cent, printed at ten in the morning and labelled "Three O'clock Edition," with huge red headlines stretched across the top of the page:—

> "*Juryfinds in miss* NEALY'S *favor*."

As Janet entered Lise looked up and exclaimed:—"Say, that Nealy girl's won out!"

"Who is she?" Janet inquired listlessly.

"You are from the country, all right," was her sister's rejoinder. "I would have bet there wasn't a Reub in the state that wasn't wise to the Ferris breach of promise case, and here you blow in after the show's over and want to know who Nelly Nealy is. If that doesn't beat the band!"

“This woman sued a man named Ferris—is that it?”

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“A man named Ferris!” Lise repeated, with the air of being appalled by her sister’s ignorance. “I guess you never heard of Ferris, either—the biggest copper man in Boston. He could buy Hampton, and never feel it, and they say his house in Brighton cost half a million dollars. Nelly Nealy put her damages at one hundred and fifty thousand and stung him for seventy five. I wish I’d been in court when that jury came back! There’s her picture.”

To Janet, especially in the mood of reaction in which she found herself that evening, Lise’s intense excitement, passionate partisanship and approval of Miss Nealy were incomprehensible, repellent. However, she took the sheet, gazing at the image of the lady who, recently an obscure stenographer, had suddenly leaped into fame and become a “headliner,” the envied of thousands of working girls all over New England. Miss Nealy, in spite of the “glare of publicity” she deplored, had borne up admirably under the strain, and evidently had been able to consume three meals a day and give some thought to her costumes. Her smile under the picture hat was coquettish, if not bold. The special article, signed by a lady reporter whose sympathies were by no means concealed and whose talents were given free rein, related how the white-haired mother had wept tears of joy; how Miss Nealy herself had been awhile too overcome to speak, and then had recovered sufficiently to express her gratitude to the twelve gentlemen who had vindicated the honour of American womanhood. Mr. Ferris, she reiterated, was a brute; never as long as she lived would she be able to forget how she had loved and believed in him, and how, when at length she unwillingly became convinces of his perfidy, she had been “prostrated,” unable to support her old mother. She had not, naturally, yet decided how she would invest her fortune; as for going on the stage, that had been suggested, but she had made no plans. “Scores of women sympathizers” had escorted her to a waiting automobile....

Janet, impelled by the fascination akin to disgust, read thus far, and flinging the newspaper on the floor, began to tidy herself for supper. But presently, when she heard Lise sigh, she could contain herself no longer.

“I don’t see how you can read such stuff as that,” she exclaimed. “It’s—it’s horrible.”

“Horrible?” Lise repeated.

Janet swung round from the washbasin, her hands dripping.

“Instead of getting seventy five thousand dollars she ought to be tarred and feathered. She’s nothing but a blackmailer.”

Lise, aroused from her visions, demanded vehemently “Ain’t he a millionaire?”

“What difference does that make?” Janet retorted. “And you can’t tell me she didn’t know what she was up to all along—with that face.”

“I’d have sued him, all right,” declared Lise, defiantly.

“Then you’d be a blackmailer, too. I’d sooner scrub floors, I’d sooner starve than do such a thing—take money for my affections. In the first place, I’d have more pride, and in the second place, if I really loved a man, seventy five thousand or seventy five million dollars wouldn’t help me any. Where do you get such ideas? Decent people don’t have them.”

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Janet turned to the basin again and began rubbing her face vigorously—ceasing for an instance to make sure of the identity of a sound reaching her ears despite the splashing of water. Lise was sobbing. Janet dried her face and hands, arranged her hair, and sat down on the windowsill; the scorn and anger, which had been so intense as completely to possess her, melting into a pity and contempt not unmixed with bewilderment. Ordinarily Lise was hard, impervious to such reproaches, holding her own in the passionate quarrels that occasionally took place between them yet there were times, such as this, when her resistance broke down unexpectedly, and she lost all self control. She rocked to and fro in the chair, her shoulders bowed, her face hidden in her hands. Janet reached out and touched her.

“Don’t be silly,” she began, rather sharply, “just because I said it was a disgrace to have such ideas. Well, it is.”

“I’m not silly,” said Lise. “I’m sick of that job at the Bagatelle” —sob—“there’s nothing in it—I’m going to quit—I wish to God I was dead! Standing on your feet all day till you’re wore out for six dollars a week—what’s there in it?”—sob—“With that guy Walters who walks the floor never lettin’ up on you. He come up to me yesterday and says, `I didn’t know you was near sighted, Miss Bumpus’ just because there was a customer Annie Hatch was too lazy to wait on”—sob—“That’s his line of dope—thinks he’s sarcastic—-and he’s sweet on Annie. Tomorrow I’m going to tell him to go to hell. I’m through I’m sick of it, I tell you”—sob—“I’d rather be dead than slave like that for six dollars.”

“Where are you going?” asked Janet.

“I don’t know—I don’t care. What’s the difference? any place’d be better than this.” For awhile she continued to cry on a ridiculously high, though subdued, whining note, her breath catching at intervals. A feeling of helplessness, of utter desolation crept over Janet; powerless to comfort herself, how could she comfort her sister? She glanced around the familiar, sordid room, at the magazine pages against the faded wall-paper, at the littered bureau and the littered bed, over which Lise’s clothes were flung. It was hot and close even now, in summer it would be stifling. Suddenly a flash of sympathy revealed to her a glimpse of the truth that Lise, too, after her own nature, sought beauty and freedom! Never did she come as near comprehending Lise as in such moments as this, and when, on dark winter mornings, her sister clung to her, terrified by the siren. Lise was a child, and the thought that she, Janet, was powerless to change her was a part of the tragic tenderness. What would become of Lise? And what would become of her, Janet?... So she clung, desperately, to her sister’s hand until at last Lise roused herself, her hair awry, her face puckered and wet with tears and perspiration.

“I can’t stand it any more—I’ve just got to go away anywhere,” she said, and the cry found an echo in Janet’s heart....

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But the next morning Lise went back to the Bagatelle, and Janet to the mill....

The fact that Lise's love affairs had not been prospering undoubtedly had something to do with the fit of depression into which she had fallen that evening. A month or so before she had acquired another beau. It was understood by Lise's friends and Lise's family, though not by the gentleman himself, that his position was only temporary or at most probationary; he had not even succeeded to the rights, title, and privileges of the late Mr. Wiley, though occupying a higher position in the social scale—being the agent of a patent lawn sprinkler with an office in Faber Street.

"Stick to him and you'll wear diamonds—that's what he tries to put across," was Lise's comment on Mr. Frear's method, and thus Janet gained the impression that her sister's feelings were not deeply involved. "If I thought he'd make good with the sprinkler I might talk business. But say, he's one of those ginks that's always tryin' to beat the bank. He's never done a day's work in his life. Last year he was passing around Foley's magazine, and before that he was with the race track that went out of business because the ministers got nutty over it. Well, he may win out," she added reflectively, "those guys sometimes do put the game on the blink. He sure is a good spender when the orders come in, with a line of talk to make you holler for mercy."

Mr. Frear's "line of talk" came wholly, astonishingly, from one side of his mouth—the left side. As a muscular feat it was a triumph. A deaf person on his right side would not have known he was speaking. The effect was secretive, extraordinarily confidential; enabling him to sell sprinklers, it ought to have helped him to make love, so distinctly personal was it, implying as it did that the individual addressed was alone of all the world worthy of consideration. Among his friends it was regarded as an accomplishment, but Lise was critical, especially since he did not look into one's eyes, but gazed off into space, as though he weren't talking at all.

She had once inquired if the right side of his face was paralyzed.

She permitted him to take her, however, to Gruber's Cafe, to the movies, and one or two select dance halls, and to Slattery's Riverside Park, where one evening she had encountered the rejected Mr. Wiley.

"Say, he was sore!" she told Janet the next morning, relating the incident with relish, "for two cents he would have knocked Charlie over the ropes. I guess he could do it, too, all right."

Janet found it curious that Lise should display such vindictiveness toward Mr. Wiley, who was more sinned against than sinning. She was moved to inquire after his welfare.

"He's got one of them red motorcycles," said Lise. "He was gay with it too—when we was waiting for the boulevard trolley he opened her up and went right between Charlie

and me. I had to laugh. He's got a job over in Haverhill you can't hold that guy under water long."

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Apparently Lise had no regrets. But her premonitions concerning Mr. Frear proved to be justified. He did not “make good.” One morning the little office on Faber Street where the sprinklers were displayed was closed, Hampton knew him no more, and the police alone were sincerely regretful. It seemed that of late he had been keeping all the money for the sprinklers, and spending a good deal of it on Lise. At the time she accepted the affair with stoical pessimism, as one who has learned what to expect of the world, though her moral sense was not profoundly disturbed by the reflection that she had indulged in the delights of Slattery’s and Gruber’s and a Sunday at “the Beach” at the expense of the Cascade Sprinkler Company of Boston. Mr. Frear inconsiderately neglected to prepare her for his departure, the news of which was conveyed to her in a singular manner, and by none other than Mr. Johnny Tiernan of the tin shop,—their conversation throwing some light, not only on Lise’s sophistication, but on the admirable and intricate operation of Hampton’s city government. About five o’clock Lise was coming home along Fillmore Street after an uneventful, tedious and manless holiday spent in the company of Miss Schuler and other friends when she perceived Mr. Tiernan seated on his steps, grinning and waving a tattered palm-leaf fan.

“The mercury is sure on the jump,” he observed. “You’d think it was July.”

And Lise agreed.

“I suppose you’ll be going to Tim Slattery’s place tonight,” he went on. “It’s the coolest spot this side of the Atlantic Ocean.”

There was, apparently, nothing cryptic in this remark, yet it is worth noting that Lise instantly became suspicious.

“Why would I be going out there?” she inquired innocently, darting at him a dark, coquettish glance.

Mr. Tiernan regarded her guilelessly, but there was admiration in his soul; not because of her unquestioned feminine attractions,—he being somewhat amazingly proof against such things,—but because it was conveyed to him in some unaccountable way that her suspicions were aroused. The brain beneath that corkscrew hair was worthy of a Richelieu. Mr. Tiernan’s estimate of Miss Lise Bumpus, if he could have been induced to reveal it, would have been worth listening to.

“And why wouldn’t you?” he replied heartily. “Don’t I see all the pretty young ladies out there, including yourself, and you dancing with the Cascade man. Why is it you’ll never give me a dance?”

“Why is it you never ask me?” demanded Lise.

“What chance have I got, against him?”

“He don’t own me,” said Lise.

Mr. Tiernan threw back his head, and laughed.

“Well, if you’re there to-night, tangoin’ with him and I come up and says, `Miss Bumpus, the pleasure is mine,’ I’m wondering what would happen.”

“I’m not going to Slattery’s to-night,” she declared having that instant arrived at this conclusion.

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“And where then? I’ll come along, if there’s a chance for me.”

“Quit your kidding,” Lise reproved him.

Mr. Tiernan suddenly looked very solemn:

“Kidding, is it? Me kiddin’ you? Give me a chance, that’s all I’m asking. Where will you be, now?”

“Is Frear wanted?” she demanded.

Mr. Tiernan’s expression changed. His nose seemed to become more pointed, his eyes to twinkle more merrily than ever. He didn’t take the trouble, now, to conceal his admiration.

“Sure, Miss Bumpus,” he said, “if you was a man, we’d have you on the force to-morrow.”

“What’s he wanted for?”

“Well,” said Johnny, “a little matter of sprinklin’. He’s been sprinklin’ his company’s water without a license.”

She was silent a moment before she exclaimed:—“I ought to have been wise that he was a crook!”

“Well,” said Johnny consolingly, “there’s others that ought to have been wise, too. The Cascade people had no business takin’ on a man that couldn’t use but half of his mouth.”

This seemed to Lise a reflection on her judgment. She proceeded to clear herself.

“He was nothing to me. He never gave me no rest. He used to come ’round and pester me to go out with him—”

“Sure!” interrupted Mr. Tiernan. “Don’t I know how it is with the likes of him! A good time’s a good time, and no harm in it. But the point is” and here he cocked his nose—-“the point is, where is he? Where will he be tonight?”

All at once Lise grew vehement, almost tearful.

“I don’t know—honest to God, I don’t. If I did I’d tell you. Last night he said he might be out of town. He didn’t say where he was going.” She fumbled in her bag, drawing out an imitation lace handkerchief and pressing it to her eyes.

“There now!” exclaimed Mr. Tiernan, soothingly. “How would you know? And he deceivin’ you like he did the company—”

“He didn’t deceive me,” cried Lise.

“Listen,” said Mr. Tiernan, who had risen and laid his hand on her arm. “It’s not young ladies like you that works and are self-respecting that any one would be troublin’, and you the daughter of such a fine man as your father. Run along, now, I won’t be detaining you, Miss Bumpus, and you’ll accept my apology. I guess we’ll never see him in Hampton again....”

Some twenty minutes later he sauntered down the street, saluting acquaintances, and threading his way across the Common entered a grimy brick building where a huge policeman with an insignia on his arm was seated behind a desk. Mr. Tiernan leaned on the desk, and reflectively lighted a Thomas-Jefferson-Five-Cent Cigar, Union Label, the excellencies of which were set forth on large signs above the “ten foot” buildings on Faber Street.

“She don’t know nothing, Mike,” he remarked. “I guess he got wise this morning.”

The sergeant nodded....

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CHAPTER V

To feel potential within one's self the capacity to live and yet to have no means of realizing this capacity is doubtless one of the least comfortable and agreeable of human experiences. Such, as summer came on, was Janet's case. The memory of that visit to Silliston lingered in her mind, sometimes to flare up so vividly as to make her existence seem unbearable. How wonderful, she thought, to be able to dwell in such a beautiful place, to have as friends and companions such amusing and intelligent people as the stranger with whom she had talked! Were all the inhabitants of Silliston like him? They must be, since it was a seat of learning. Lise's cry, "I've just got to go away, anywhere," found an echo in Janet's soul. Why shouldn't she go away? She was capable of taking care of herself, she was a good stenographer, her salary had been raised twice in two years,—why should she allow consideration for her family to stand in the way of what she felt would be self realization? Unconsciously she was a true modern in that the virtues known as duty and self sacrifice did not appeal to her,—she got from them neither benefit nor satisfaction, she understood instinctively that they were impeding to growth. Unlike Lise, she was able to see life as it is, she did not expect of it miracles, economic or matrimonial. Nothing would happen unless she made it happen. She was twenty-one, earning nine dollars a week, of which she now contributed five to the household,—her father, with characteristic incompetence, having taken out a larger insurance policy than he could reasonably carry. Of the remaining four dollars she spent more than one on lunches, there were dresses and underclothing, shoes and stockings to buy, in spite of darning and mending; little treats with Eda that mounted up; and occasionally the dentist—for Janet would not neglect her teeth as Lise neglected hers. She managed to save something, but it was very little. And she was desperately unhappy when she contemplated the grey and monotonous vista of the years ahead, saw herself growing older and older, driven always by the stern necessity of accumulating a margin against possible disasters; little by little drying up, losing, by withering disuse, those rich faculties of enjoyment with which she was endowed, and which at once fascinated and frightened her. Marriage, in such an environment, offered no solution; marriage meant dependence, from which her very nature revolted: and in her existence, drab and necessitous though it were, was still a remnant of freedom that marriage would compel her to surrender....

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One warm evening, oppressed by such reflections, she had started home when she remembered having left her bag in the office, and retraced her steps. As she turned the corner of West Street, she saw, beside the canal and directly in front of the bridge, a new and smart-looking automobile, painted crimson and black, of the type known as a runabout, which she recognized as belonging to Mr. Ditmar. Indeed, at that moment Mr. Ditmar himself was stepping off the end of the bridge and about to start the engine when, dropping the crank, he walked to the dashboard and apparently became absorbed in some mechanisms there. Was it the glance cast in her direction that had caused him to delay his departure? Janet was seized by a sudden and rather absurd desire to retreat, but Canal Street being empty, such an action would appear eccentric, and she came slowly forward, pretending not to see her employer, ridiculing to herself the idea that he had noticed her. Much to her annoyance, however, her embarrassment persisted, and she knew it was due to the memory of certain incidents, each in itself almost negligible, but cumulatively amounting to a suspicion that for some months he had been aware of her: many times when he had passed through the outer office she had felt his eyes upon her, had been impelled to look up from her work to surprise in them a certain glow to make her bow her head again in warm confusion. Now, as she approached him, she was pleasantly but rather guiltily conscious of the more rapid beating of the blood that precedes an adventure, yet sufficiently self-possessed to note the becoming nature of the light flannel suit axed rather rakish Panama he had pushed back from his forehead. It was not until she had almost passed him that he straightened up, lifted the Panama, tentatively, and not too far, startling her.

“Good afternoon, Miss Bumpus,” he said. “I thought you had gone.”

“I left my bag in the office,” she replied, with the outward calmness that rarely deserted her—the calmness, indeed, that had piqued him and was leading him on to rashness.

“Oh,” he said. “Simmons will get it for you.” Simmons was the watchman who stood in the vestibule of the office entrance.

“Thanks. I can get it myself,” she told him, and would have gone on had he not addressed her again. “I was just starting out for a spin. What do you think of the car? It’s good looking, isn’t it?” He stood off and surveyed it, laughing a little, and in his laugh she detected a note apologetic, at variance with the conception she had formed of his character, though not alien, indeed, to the dust-coloured vigour of the man. She scarcely recognized Ditmar as he stood there, yet he excited her, she felt from him an undercurrent of something that caused her inwardly to tremble. “See how the lines are carried through.” He indicated this by a wave of his hand, but his eyes were now on her.

“It is pretty,” she agreed.

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In contrast to the defensive tactics which other ladies of his acquaintance had adopted, tactics of a patently coy and coquettish nature, this self-collected manner was new and spicy, challenging to powers never as yet fully exerted while beneath her manner he felt throbbing that rare and dangerous thing in women, a temperament, for which men have given their souls. This conviction of her possession of a temperament,—he could not have defined the word, emotional rather than intellectual, produced the apologetic attitude she was quick to sense. He had never been, at least during his maturity, at a loss with the other sex, and he found the experience delicious.

“You like pretty things, I’m sure of that,” he hazarded. But she did not ask him how he knew, she simply assented. He raised the hood, revealing the engine. “Isn’t that pretty? See how nicely everything is adjusted in that little space to do the particular work for which it is designed.”

Thus appealed to, she came forward and stopped, still standing off a little way, but near enough to see, gazing at the shining copper caps on the cylinders, at the bright rods and gears.

“It looks intricate,” said Mr. Ditmar, “but really it’s very simple. The gasoline comes in here from the tank behind—this is called the carburetor, it has a jet to vaporize the gasoline, and the vapour is sucked into each of these cylinders in turn when the piston moves—like this.” He sought to explain the action of the piston. “That compresses it, and then a tiny electric spark comes just at the right moment to explode it, and the explosion sends the piston down again, and turns the shaft. Well, all four cylinders have an explosion one right after another, and that keeps the shaft going.” Whereupon the most important personage in Hampton, the head of the great Chippering Mill proceeded, for the benefit of a humble assistant stenographer, to remove the floor boards behind the dash. “There’s the shaft, come here and look at it.” She obeyed, standing beside him, almost touching him, his arm, indeed, brushing her sleeve, and into his voice crept a tremor. “The shaft turns the rear wheels by means of a gear at right angles on the axle, and the rear wheels drive the car. Do you see?”

“Yes,” she answered faintly, honesty compelling her to add: “a little.”

He was looking, now, not at the machinery, but intently at her, and she could feel the blood flooding into her cheeks and temples. She was even compelled for an instant to return his glance, and from his eyes into hers leaped a flame that ran scorching through her body. Then she knew with conviction that the explanation of the automobile had been an excuse; she had comprehended almost nothing of it, but she had been impressed by the facility with which he described it, by his evident mastery over it. She had noticed his hands, how thick his fingers were and close together; yet how deftly he had used them, without smearing the cuffs of his silk shirt or the sleeves of his coat with the oil that glistened everywhere.

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“I like machinery,” he told her as he replaced the boards. “I like to take care of it myself.”

“It must be interesting,” she assented, aware of the inadequacy of the remark, and resenting in herself an inarticulateness seemingly imposed by inhibition connected with his nearness. Fascination and antagonism were struggling within her. Her desire to get away grew desperate.

“Thank you for showing it to me.” With an effort of will she moved toward the bridge, but was impelled by a consciousness of the abruptness of her departure to look back at him once—and smile, to experience again the thrill of the current he sped after her. By lifting his hat, a little higher, a little more confidently than in the first instance, he made her leaving seem more gracious, the act somehow conveying an acknowledgment on his part that their relationship had changed.

Once across the bridge and in the mill, she fairly ran up the stairs and into the empty office, to perceive her bag lying on the desk where she had left it, and sat down for a few minutes beside the window, her heart pounding in her breast as though she had barely escaped an accident threatening her with physical annihilation. Something had happened to her at last! But what did it mean? Where would it lead? Her fear, her antagonism, of which she was still conscious, her resentment that Ditmar had thus surreptitiously chosen to approach her in a moment when they were unobserved were mingled with a throbbing exultation in that he had noticed her, that there was something in her to attract him in that way, to make his voice thicker and his smile apologetic when he spoke to her. Of that “something-in-her” she had been aware before, but never had it been so unmistakably recognized and beckoned to from without. She was at once terrified, excited—and flattered.

At length, growing calmer, she made her way out of the building. When she reached the vestibule she had a moment of sharp apprehension, of paradoxical hope, that Ditmar might still be there, awaiting her. But he had gone....

In spite of her efforts to dismiss the matter from her mind, to persuade herself there had been no significance in the encounter, when she was seated at her typewriter the next morning she experienced a renewal of the palpitation of the evening before, and at the sound of every step in the corridor she started. Of this tendency she was profoundly ashamed. And when at last Ditmar arrived, though the blood rose to her temples, she kept her eyes fixed on the keys. He went quickly into his room: she was convinced he had not so much as glanced at her.... As the days went by, however, she was annoyed by the discovery that his continued ignoring of her presence brought more resentment than relief, she detected in it a deliberation implying between them a guilty secret: she hated secrecy, though secrecy contained a thrill. Then, one morning when she was alone in the office with young Caldwell, who was absorbed in some reports, Ditmar entered unexpectedly and looked her full in the eyes, surprising her into answering his

glance before she could turn away, hating herself and hating him. Hate, she determined, was her prevailing sentiment in regard to Mr. Ditmar.

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The following Monday Miss Ottway overtook her, at noon, on the stairs.

“Janet, I wanted to speak to you, to tell you I’m leaving,” she said.

“Leaving!” repeated Janet, who had regarded Miss Ottway as a fixture.

“I’m going to Boston,” Miss Ottway explained, in her deep, musical voice. “I’ve always wanted to go, I have an unmarried sister there of whom I’m very fond, and Mr. Ditmar knows that. He’s got me a place with the Treasurer, Mr. Semple.”

“Oh, I’m sorry you’re going, though of course I’m glad for you,” Janet said sincerely, for she liked and respected Miss Ottway, and was conscious in the older woman of a certain kindly interest.

“Janet, I’ve recommended you to Mr. Ditmar for my place.”

“Oh!” cried Janet, faintly.

“It was he who asked about you, he thinks you are reliable and quick and clever, and I was very glad to say a good word for you, my dear, since I could honestly do so.” Miss Ottway drew Janet’s arm through hers and patted it affectionately. “Of course you’ll have to expect some jealousy, there are older women in the other offices who will think they ought to have the place, but if you attend to your own affairs, as you always have done, there won’t be any trouble.”

“Oh, I won’t take the place, I can’t!” Janet cried, so passionately that Miss Ottway looked at her in surprise. “I’m awfully grateful to you,” she added, flushing crimson, “I—I’m afraid I’m not equal to it.”

“Nonsense,” said the other with decision. “You’d be very foolish not to try it. You won’t get as much as I do, at first, at any rate, but a little more money won’t be unwelcome, I guess. Mr. Ditmar will speak to you this afternoon. I leave on Saturday. I’m real glad to do you a good turn, Janet, and I know you’ll get along,” Miss Ottway added impulsively as they parted at the corner of Faber Street. “I’ve always thought a good deal of you.”

For awhile Janet stood still, staring after the sturdy figure of her friend, heedless of the noonday crowd that bumped her. Then she went to Grady’s Quick Lunch Counter and ordered a sandwich and a glass of milk, which she consumed slowly, profoundly sunk in thought. Presently Eda Rawle arrived, and noticing her preoccupation, inquired what was the matter.

“Nothing,” said Janet....

At two o’clock, when Ditmar returned to the office, he called Miss Ottway, who presently came out to summon Janet to his presence. Fresh, immaculate, yet virile in his light suit

and silk shirt with red stripes, he was seated at his desk engaged in turning over some papers in a drawer. He kept her waiting a moment, and then said, with apparent casualness:—“Is that you, Miss Bumpus? Would you mind closing the door?”

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Janet obeyed, and again stood before him. He looked up. A suggestion of tenseness in her pose betraying an inner attitude of alertness, of defiance, conveyed to him sharply and deliciously once more the panther-like impression he had received when first, as a woman, she had come to his notice. The renewed and heightened perception of this feral quality in her aroused a sense of danger by no means unpleasurable, though warning him that he was about to take an unprecedented step, being drawn beyond the limits of caution he had previously set for himself in divorcing business and sex. Though he was by no means self-convinced of an intention to push the adventure, preferring to leave its possibilities open, he strove in voice and manner to be business-like; and instinct, perhaps, whispered that she might take alarm.

“Sit down, Miss Bumpus,” he said pleasantly, as he closed the drawer.

She seated herself on an office chair.

“Do you like your work here?” he inquired.

“No,” said Janet.

“Why not?” he demanded, staring at her.

“Why should I?” she retorted.

“Well—what’s the trouble with it? It isn’t as hard as it would be in some other places, is it?”

“I’m not saying anything against the place.”

“What, then?”

“You asked me if I liked my work. I don’t.”

“Then why do you do it?” he demanded.

“To live,” she replied.

He smiled, but his gesture as he stroked his moustache implied a slight annoyance at her composure. He found it difficult with this dark, self-contained young woman to sustain the role of benefactor.

“What kind of work would you like to do?” he demanded.

“I don’t know. I haven’t got the choice, anyway,” she said.

He observed that she did her work well, to which she made no answer. She refused to help him, although Miss Ottway must have warned her. She acted as though she were conferring the favour. And yet, clearing his throat, he was impelled to say:—"Miss Ottway's leaving me, she's going into the Boston office with Mr. Semple, the treasurer of the corporation. I shall miss her, she's an able and reliable woman, and she knows my ways." He paused, fingering his paper knife. "The fact is, Miss Bumpus, she's spoken highly of you, she tells me you're quick and accurate and painstaking—I've noticed that for myself. She seems to think you could do her work, and recommends that I give you a trial. You understand, of course, that the position is in a way confidential, and that you could not expect at first, at any rate, the salary Miss Ottway has had, but I'm willing to offer you fourteen dollars a week to begin with, and afterwards, if we get along together, to give you more. What do you say?"

"I'd like to try it, Mr. Ditmar," Janet said, and added nothing, no word of gratitude or of appreciation to that consent.

"Very well then," he replied, "that's settled. Miss Ottway will explain things to you, and tell you about my peculiarities. And when she goes you can take her desk, by the window nearest my door."

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Ditmar sat idle for some minutes after she had gone, staring through the open doorway into the outer office....

To Ditmar she had given no evidence of the storm his offer had created in her breast, and it was characteristic also that she waited until supper was nearly over to inform her family, making the announcement in a matter-of-fact tone, just as though it were not the unique piece of good fortune that had come to the Bumpuses since Edward had been eliminated from the mercantile establishment at Dolton. The news was received with something like consternation. For the moment Hannah was incapable of speech, and her hand trembled as she resumed the cutting of the pie: but hope surged within her despite her effort to keep it down, her determination to remain true to the fatalism from which she had paradoxically derived so much comfort. The effect on Edward, while somewhat less violent, was temporarily to take away his appetite. Hope, to flower in him, needed but little watering. Great was his faith in the Bumpus blood, and secretly he had always regarded his eldest daughter as the chosen vessel for their redemption.

“Well, I swan!” he exclaimed, staring at her in admiration and neglecting his pie, “I’ve always thought you had it in you to get on, Janet. I guess I’ve told you you’ve always put me in mind of Eliza Bumpus—the one that held out against the Indians till her husband came back with the neighbours. I was just reading about her again the other night.”

“Yes, you’ve told us, Edward,” said Hannah.

“She had gumption,” he went on, undismayed. “And from what I can gather of her looks I calculate you favour her—she was dark and not so very tall—not so tall as you, I guess. So you’re goin’” (he pronounced it very slowly) “you’re goin’ to be Mr. Ditmar’s private stenographer! He’s a smart man, Mr. Ditmar, he’s a good man, too. All you’ve got to do is to behave right by him. He always speaks to me when he passes by the gate. I was sorry for him when his wife died—a young woman, too. And he’s never married again! Well, I swan!”

“You’d better quit swanning,” exclaimed Hannah. “And what’s Mr. Ditmar’s goodness got to do with it? He’s found-out Janet has sense, she’s willing and hard working, he won’t” (pronounced want) “he won’t be the loser by it, and he’s not giving her what he gave Miss Ottway. It’s just like you, thinking he’s doing her a good turn.”

“I’m not saying Janet isn’t smart,” he protested, “but I know it’s hard to get work with so many folks after every job.”

“Maybe it ain’t so hard when you’ve got some get-up and go,” Hannah retorted rather cruelly. It was thus characteristically and with unintentional sharpness she expressed her maternal pride by a reflection not only upon Edward, but Lise also. Janet had grown warm at the mention of Ditmar’s name.

“It was Miss Ottway who recommended me,” she said, glancing at her sister, who during this conversation had sat in silence. Lise’s expression, normally suggestive of a discontent not unbecoming to her type, had grown almost sullen. Hannah’s brisk gathering up of the dishes was suddenly arrested.

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“Lise, why don’t you say something to your sister? Ain’t you glad she’s got the place?”

“Sure, I’m glad,” said Lise, and began to unscrew the top of the salt shaker. “I don’t see why I couldn’t get a raise, too. I work just as hard as she does.”

Edward, who had never got a “raise” in his life, was smitten with compunction and sympathy.

“Give ’em time, Lise,” he said consolingly. “You ain’t so old as Janet.”

“Time!” she cried, flaring up and suddenly losing her control. “I’ve got a picture of Waiters giving me a raise I know the girls that get raises from him.”

“You ought to be ashamed of yourself,” Hannah declared. “There—you’ve spilled the salt!”

But Lise, suddenly bursting into tears, got up and left the room. Edward picked up the Banner and pretended to read it, while Janet collected the salt and put it back into the shaker. Hannah, gathering up the rest of the dishes, disappeared into the kitchen, but presently returned, as though she had forgotten something.

“Hadn’t you better go after her?” she said to Janet.

“I’m afraid it won’t be any use. She’s got sort of queer, lately—she thinks they’re down on her.”

“I’m sorry I spoke so sharp. But then—” Hannah shook her head, and her sentence remained unfinished.

Janet sought her sister, but returned after a brief interval, with the news that Lise had gone out.

One of the delights of friendship, as is well known, is the exchange of confidences of joy or sorrow, but there was, in Janet’s promotion, something intensely personal to increase her natural reserve. Her feelings toward Ditmar were so mingled as to defy analysis, and several days went by before she could bring herself to inform Eda Rawle of the new business relationship in which she stood to the agent of the Chippering Mill. The sky was still bright as they walked out Warren Street after supper, Eda bewailing the trials of the day just ended: Mr. Frye, the cashier of the bank, had had one of his cantankerous fits, had found fault with her punctuation, nothing she had done had pleased him. But presently, when they had come to what the Banner called the “residential district,” she was cheered by the sight of the green lawns, the flowerbeds and shrubbery, the mansions of those inhabitants of Hampton unfamiliar with boardinghouses and tenements. Before one of these she paused, retaining Janet by the arm, exclaiming wistfully:

“Wouldn’t you like to live there? That belongs to your boss.”

Janet, who had been dreaming as she gazed at the facade of rough stucco that once had sufficed to fill the ambitions of the late Mrs. Ditmar, recognized it as soon as Eda spoke, and dragged her friend hastily, almost roughly along the sidewalk until they had reached the end of the block. Janet was red.

“What’s the matter?” demanded Eda, as soon as she had recovered from her surprise.

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“Nothing,” said Janet. “Only—I’m in his office.”

“But what of it? You’ve got a right to look at his house, haven’t you?”

“Why yes,—a right,” Janet assented. Knowing Eda’s ambitions for her were not those of a business career, she was in terror lest her friend should scent a romance, and for this reason she had never spoken of the symptoms Ditmar had betrayed. She attempted to convey to Eda the doubtful taste of staring point-blank at the house of one’s employer, especially when he might be concealed behind a curtain.

“You see,” she added, “Miss Ottway’s recommended me for her place—she’s going away.”

“Janet!” cried Eda. “Why didn’t you tell me?”

“Well,” said Janet guiltily, “it’s only a trial. I don’t know whether he’ll keep me or not.”

“Of course he’ll keep you,” said Eda, warmly. “If that isn’t just like you, not saying a word about it. Gee, if I’d had a raise like that I just couldn’t wait to tell you. But then, I’m not smart like you.”

“Don’t be silly,” said Janet, out of humour with herself, and annoyed because she could not then appreciate Eda’s generosity.

“We’ve just got to celebrate!” declared Eda, who had the gift, which Janet lacked, of taking her joys vicariously; and her romantic and somewhat medieval proclivities would permit no such momentous occasion to pass without an appropriate festal symbol. “We’ll have a spree on Saturday—the circus is coming then.”

“It’ll be my spree,” insisted Janet, her heart warming. “I’ve got the raise....”

On Saturday, accordingly, they met at Grady’s for lunch, Eda attired in her best blouse of pale blue, and when they emerged from the restaurant, despite the torrid heat, she beheld Faber Street as in holiday garb as they made their way to the cool recesses of Winterhalter’s to complete the feast. That glorified drug-store with the five bays included in its manifold functions a department rivalling Delmonico’s, with electric fans and marble-topped tables and white-clad waiters who took one’s order and filled it at the soda fountain. It mattered little to Eda that the young man awaiting their commands had pimples and long hair and grinned affectionately as he greeted them.

“Hello, girls!” he said. “What strikes you to-day?”

“Me for a raspberry nut sundae,” announced Eda, and Janet, being unable to imagine any more delectable confection, assented. The penetrating odour peculiar to

drugstores, dominated by menthol and some unnamable but ancient remedy for catarrh, was powerless to interfere with their enjoyment.

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The circus began at two. Rather than cling to the straps of a crowded car they chose to walk, following the familiar route of the trolley past the car barns and the base-ball park to the bare field under the seared face of Torrey's Hill, where circuses were wont to settle. A sirocco-like breeze from the southwest whirled into eddies the clouds of germ-laden dust stirred up by the automobiles, blowing their skirts against their legs, and sometimes they were forced to turn, clinging to their hats, confused and giggling, conscious of male glances. The crowd, increasing as they proceeded, was in holiday mood; young men with a newly-washed aspect, in Faber Street suits, chaffed boisterously groups of girls, who retorted with shrill cries and shrieks of laughter; amorous couples strolled, arm in arm, oblivious, as though the place were as empty as Eden; lady-killers with exaggerated square shoulders, wearing bright neckties, their predatory instincts alert, hovered about in eager search of adventure. There were men-killers, too, usually to be found in pairs, in startling costumes they had been persuaded were the latest Paris models,—imitations of French cocottes in Hampton, proof of the smallness of our modern world. Eda regarded them superciliously.

"They'd like you to think they'd never been near a loom or a bobbin!" she exclaimed.

In addition to these more conspicuous elements, the crowd contained sober operatives of the skilled sort possessed of sufficient means to bring hither their families, including the baby; there were section-hands and foremen, slashers, mule spinners, beamers, French-Canadians, Irish, Scotch, Welsh and English, Germans, with only an occasional Italian, Lithuanian, or Jew. Peanut and popcorn men, venders of tamales and Chile-con-carne hoarsely shouted their wares, while from afar could be heard the muffled booming of a band. Janet's heart beat faster. She regarded with a tinge of awe the vast expanse of tent that rose before her eyes, the wind sending ripples along the heavy canvas from circumference to tent pole. She bought the tickets; they entered the circular enclosure where the animals were kept; where the strong beams of the sun, in trying to force their way through the canvas roof, created an unnatural, jaundiced twilight, the weirdness of which was somehow enhanced by the hoarse, amazingly penetrating growls of beasts. Suddenly a lion near them raised a shaggy head, emitting a series of undulating, soul-shaking roars.

"Ah, what's eatin' you?" demanded a thick-necked youth, pretending not to be awestricken by this demonstration.

"Suppose he'd get out!" cried Eda, drawing Janet away.

"I wouldn't let him hurt you, dearie," the young man assured her.

"You!" she retorted contemptuously, but grinned in spite of herself, showing her gums.

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The vague feeling of terror inspired by this tent was a part of its fascination, for it seemed pregnant with potential tragedies suggested by the juxtaposition of helpless babies and wild beasts, the babies crying or staring in blank amazement at padding tigers whose phosphorescent eyes never left these morsels beyond the bars. The two girls wandered about, their arms closely locked, but the strange atmosphere, the roars of the beasts, the ineffable, pungent odour of the circus, of sawdust mingled with the effluvia of animals, had aroused an excitement that was slow in subsiding. Some time elapsed before they were capable of taking a normal interest in the various exhibits.

"`Adjutant Bird,'" Janet read presently from a legend on one of the compartments of a cage devoted to birds, and surveying the somewhat dissolute occupant. "Why, he's just like one of those tall mashers who stay at the Wilmot and stand on the sidewalk,—-travelling men, you know."

"Say-isn't he?" Eda agreed. "Isn't he pleased with himself, and his feet crossed!"

"And see this one, Eda—he's a 'Harpy Eagle.' There's somebody we know looks just like that. Wait a minute—I'll tell you—it's the woman who sits in the cashier's cage at Grady's."

"If it sure isn't!" said Eda.

"She has the same fluffy, light hair—hairpins can't keep it down, and she looks at you in that same sort of surprised way with her head on one side when you hand in your check."

"Why, it's true to the life!" cried Eda enthusiastically. "She thinks she's got all the men cinched,—she does and she's forty if she's a day."

These comparisons brought them to a pitch of risible enjoyment amply sustained by the spectacle in the monkey cage, to which presently they turned. A chimpanzee, with a solicitation more than human, was solemnly searching a friend for fleas in the midst of a pandemonium of chattering and screeching and chasing, of rattling of bars and trapezes carried on by their companions.

"Well, young ladies," said a voice, "come to pay a call on your relations—have ye?"

Eda giggled hysterically. An elderly man was standing beside them. He was shabbily dressed, his own features were wizened, almost simian, and by his friendly and fatuous smile Janet recognized one of the harmless obsessed in which Hampton abounded.

"Relations!" Eda exclaimed.

“You and me, yes, and her,” he answered, looking at Janet, though at first he had apparently entertained some doubt as to this inclusion, “we’re all descended from them.” His gesture triumphantly indicated the denizens of the cage.

“What are you giving us?” said Eda.

“Ain’t you never read Darwin?” he demanded. “If you had, you’d know they’re our ancestors, you’d know we came from them instead of Adam and Eve. That there’s a fable.”

“I’ll never believe I came from them,” cried Eda, vehement in her disgust.

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But Janet laughed. “What’s the difference? Some of us aren’t any better than monkeys, anyway.”

“That’s so,” said the man approvingly. “That’s so.” He wanted to continue the conversation, but they left him rather ruthlessly. And when, from the entrance to the performance tent, they glanced back over their shoulders, he was still gazing at his cousins behind the bars, seemingly deriving an acute pleasure from his consciousness of the connection....

CHAPTER VI

Modern business, by reason of the mingling of the sexes it involves, for the playwright and the novelist and the sociologist is full of interesting and dramatic situations, and in it may be studied, undoubtedly, one phase of the evolution tending to transform if not disintegrate certain institutions hitherto the corner-stones of society. Our stage is set. A young woman, conscious of ability, owes her promotion primarily to certain dynamic feminine qualities with which she is endowed. And though she may make an elaborate pretense of ignoring the fact, in her heart she knows and resents it, while at the same time, paradoxically, she gets a thrill from it,—a sustaining and inspiring thrill of power! On its face it is a business arrangement; secretly,—attempt to repudiate this as one may,—it is tinged with the colours of high adventure. When Janet entered into the intimate relationship with Mr. Claude Ditmar necessitated by her new duties as his private stenographer her attitude, slightly defiant, was the irreproachable one of a strict attention to duty. All unconsciously she was a true daughter of the twentieth century, and probably a feminist at heart, which is to say that her conduct was determined by no preconceived or handed-down notions of what was proper and lady-like. For feminism, in a sense, is a return to atavism, and sex antagonism and sex attraction are functions of the same thing. There were moments when she believed herself to hate Mr. Ditmar, when she treated him with an aloofness, an impersonality unsurpassed; moments when he paused in his dictation to stare at her in astonishment. He, who flattered himself that he understood women!

She would show him!—such was her dominating determination. Her promotion assumed the guise of a challenge, of a gauntlet flung down at the feet of her sex. In a certain way, an insult, though incredibly stimulating. If he flattered himself that he had done her a favour, if he entertained the notion that he could presently take advantage of the contact with her now achieved to make unbusinesslike advances—well, he would find out. He had proclaimed his desire for an able assistant in Miss Ottway’s place—he would get one, and nothing more. She watched narrowly, a l’affut, as the French say, for any signs of sentiment, and indeed this awareness of her being on guard may have had some influence on Mr. Ditmar’s own attitude, likewise irreproachable.... A rather anaemic young woman, a Miss Annie James, was hired for Janet’s old place.

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In spite of this aloofness and alertness, for the first time in her life Janet felt the exuberance of being in touch with affairs of import. Hitherto the mill had been merely a greedy monster claiming her freedom and draining her energies in tasks routine, such as the copying of meaningless documents and rows of figures; now, supplied with stimulus and a motive, the Corporation began to take on significance, and she flung herself into the work with an ardour hitherto unknown, determined to make herself so valuable to Ditmar that the time would come when he could not do without her. She strove to memorize certain names and addresses, lest time be lost in looking them up, to familiarize herself with the ordinary run of his correspondence, to recall what letters were to be marked "personal," to anticipate matters of routine, in order that he might not have the tedium of repeating instructions; she acquired the faculty of keeping his engagements in her head; she came early to the office, remaining after hours, going through the files, becoming familiar with his system; and she learned to sort out his correspondence, sifting the important from the unimportant, to protect him, more and more, from numerous visitors who called only to waste his time. Her instinct for the detection of book-agents, no matter how brisk and businesslike they might appear, was unerring—she remembered faces and the names belonging to them: an individual once observed to be persona non grata never succeeded in passing her twice. On one occasion Ditmar came out of his office to see the back of one of these visitors disappearing into the corridor.

"Who was that?" he asked.

"His name is McCalla," she said. "I thought you didn't want to be bothered."

"But how in thunder did you get rid of him?" he demanded.

"Oh, I just wouldn't let him in," she replied demurely.

And Ditmar went away, wondering.... Thus she studied him, without permitting him to suspect it, learning his idiosyncrasies, his attitude toward all those with whom daily he came in contact, only to find herself approving. She was forced to admit that he was a judge of men, compelled to admire his adroitness in dealing with them. He could be democratic or autocratic as occasion demanded; he knew when to yield, and when to remain inflexible. One morning, for instance, there arrived from New York a dapper salesman whose jauntily tied bow, whose thin hair—carefully parted to conceal an incipient baldness—whose wary and slightly weary eyes all impressively suggested the metropolitan atmosphere of high pressure and sophistication from which he had emerged. He had a machine to sell; an amazing machine, endowed with human intelligence and more than human infallibility; for when it made a mistake it stopped. It was designed for the express purpose of eliminating from the payroll the skilled and sharp-eyed women who are known as "drawers-in," who sit all day long under a north light patiently threading the ends of the warp through the heddles of the loom harness. Janet's imagination was gradually fired as she listened to the visitor's eloquence; and

the textile industry, which hitherto had seemed to her uninteresting and sordid, took on the colours of romance.

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“Now I’ve made up my mind we’ll place one with you, Mr. Ditmar,” the salesman concluded. “I don’t object to telling you we’d rather have one in the Chippering than in any mill in New England.”

Janet was surprised, almost shocked to see Ditmar shake his head, yet she felt a certain reluctant admiration because he had not been swayed by blandishments. At such moments, when he was bent on refusing a request, he seemed physically to acquire massiveness,—and he had a dogged way of chewing his cigar.

“I don’t want it, yet,” he replied, “not until you improve it.” And she was impressed by the fact that he seemed to know as much about the machine as the salesman himself. In spite of protests, denials, appeals, he remained firm. “When you get rid of the defects I’ve mentioned come back, Mr. Hicks—but don’t come back until then.”

And Mr. Hicks departed, discomfited....

Ditmar knew what he wanted. Of the mill he was the absolute master, familiar with every process, carrying constantly in his mind how many spindles, how many looms were at work; and if anything untoward happened, becoming aware of it by what seemed to Janet a subconscious process, sending for the superintendent of the department: for Mr. Orcutt, perhaps, whose office was across the hall—a tall, lean, spectacled man of fifty who looked like a schoolmaster.

“Orcutt, what’s the matter with the opener in Cooney’s room?”

“Why, the blower’s out of order.”

“Well, whose fault is it?"....

He knew every watchman and foreman in the mill, and many of the second hands. The old workers, men and women who had been in the Chippering employ through good and bad times for years, had a place in his affections, but toward the labour force in general his attitude was impersonal. The mill had to be run, and people to be got to run it. With him, first and last and always it was the mill, and little by little what had been for Janet a heterogeneous mass of machinery and human beings became unified and personified in Claude Ditmar. It was odd how the essence and quality of that great building had changed for her; how the very roaring of the looms, as she drew near the canal in the mornings, had ceased to be sinister and depressing, but bore now a burden like a great battle song to excite and inspire, to remind her that she had been snatched as by a miracle from the commonplace. And all this was a function of Ditmar.

Life had become portentous. And she was troubled by no qualms of logic, but gloried, womanlike, in her lack of it. She did not ask herself why she had deliberately enlarged upon Miss Ottway’s duties, invaded debatable ground in part inevitably personal, flung

herself with such abandon into the enterprise of his life's passion, at the same time maintaining a deceptive attitude of detachment, half deceiving herself that it was zeal for the work by which she was actuated. In her soul she knew

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better. She was really pouring fuel on the flames. She read him, up to a certain point —as far as was necessary; and beneath his attempts at self-control she was conscious of a dynamic desire that betrayed itself in many acts and signs,—as when he brushed against her; and occasionally when he gave evidence with his subordinates of a certain shortness of temper unusual with him she experienced a vaguely alarming but delicious thrill of power. And this, of all men, was the great Mr. Ditmar! Was she in love with him? That question did not trouble her either. She continued to experience in his presence waves of antagonism and attraction, revealing to her depths and possibilities of her nature that frightened while they fascinated. It never occurred to her to desist. That craving in her for high adventure was not to be denied.

On summer evenings it had been Ditmar's habit when in Hampton to stroll about his lawn, from time to time changing the position of the sprinkler, smoking a cigar, and reflecting pleasantly upon his existence. His house, as he gazed at it against the whitening sky, was an eminently satisfactory abode, his wife was dead, his children gave him no trouble; he felt a glow of paternal pride in his son as the boy raced up and down the sidewalk on a bicycle; George was manly, large and strong for his age, and had a domineering way with other boys that gave Ditmar secret pleasure. Of Amy, who was showing a tendency to stoutness, and who had inherited her mother's liking for candy and romances, Ditmar thought scarcely at all: he would glance at her as she lounged, reading, in a chair on the porch, but she did not come within his range of problems. He had, in short, everything to make a reasonable man content, a life nicely compounded of sustenance, pleasure, and business,—business naturally being the greatest of these. He was—though he did not know it—ethically and philosophically right in squaring his morals with his occupation, and his had been the good fortune to live in a world whose codes and conventions had been carefully adjusted to the pursuit of that particular brand of happiness he had made his own. Why, then, in the name of that happiness, of the peace and sanity and pleasurable effort it had brought him, had he allowed and even encouraged the advent of a new element that threatened to destroy the equilibrium achieved? an element refusing to be classified under the head of property, since it involved something he desired and could not buy? A woman who was not property, who resisted the attempt to be turned into property, was an anomaly in Ditmar's universe. He had not, of course, existed for more than forty years without having heard and read of and even encountered in an acquaintance or two the species of sex attraction sentimentally called love that sometimes made fools of men and played havoc with more important affairs, but in his experience it had never interfered with his sanity or his appetite

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or the Chippering Mill: it had never made his cigars taste bitter; it had never caused a deterioration in the appreciation of what he had achieved and held. But now he was experiencing strange symptoms of an intensity out of all proportion to that of former relations with the other sex. What was most unusual for him, he was alarmed and depressed, at moments irritable. He regretted the capricious and apparently accidental impulse that had made him pretend to tinker with his automobile that day by the canal, that had led him to the incomparable idiocy of getting rid of Miss Ottway and installing the disturber of his peace as his private stenographer.

What the devil was it in her that made him so uncomfortable? When in his office he had difficulty in keeping his mind on matters of import; he would watch her furtively as she went about the room with the lithe and noiseless movements that excited him the more because he suspected beneath her outward and restrained demeanour a fierceness he craved yet feared. He thought of her continually as a panther, a panther he had caught and could not tame; he hadn't even caught her, since she might escape at any time. He took precautions not to alarm her. When she brushed against him he trembled. Continually she baffled and puzzled him, and he never could tell of what she was thinking. She represented a whole set of new and undetermined values for which he had no precedents, and unlike every woman he had known—including his wife—she had an integrity of her own, seemingly beyond the reach of all influences economic and social. All the more exasperating, therefore, was a propinquity creating an intimacy without substance, or without the substance he craved for she had magically become for him a sort of enveloping, protecting atmosphere. In an astonishingly brief time he had fallen into the habit of talking things over with her; naturally not affairs of the first importance, but matters such as the economy of his time: when, for instance, it was most convenient for him to go to Boston; and he would find that she had telephoned, without being told, to the office there when to expect him, to his chauffeur to be on hand. He never had to tell her a thing twice, nor did she interrupt—as Miss Ottway sometimes had done—the processes of his thought. Without realizing it he fell into the habit of listening for the inflections of her voice, and though he had never lacked the power of making decisions, she somehow made these easier for him especially if, a human equation were involved.

He had, at least, the consolation—if it were one—of reflecting that his reputation was safe, that there would be no scandal, since two are necessary to make the kind of scandal he had always feared, and Miss Bumpus, apparently, had no intention of being the second party. Yet she was not virtuous, as he had hitherto defined the word. Of this he was sure. No woman who moved about as she did, who had such an effect on him, who had on occasions,

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though inadvertently, returned the lightning of his glances, whose rare laughter resembled grace notes, and in whose hair was that almost imperceptible kink, could be virtuous. This instinctive conviction inflamed him. For the first time in his life he began to doubt the universal conquering quality of his own charms,—and when such a thing happens to a man like Ditmar he is in danger of hell-fire. He indulged less and less in the convivial meetings and excursions that hitherto had given him relaxation and enjoyment, and if his cronies inquired as to the reasons for his neglect of them he failed to answer with his usual geniality.

“Everything going all right up at the mills, Colonel?” he was asked one day by Mr. Madden, the treasurer of a large shoe company, when they met on the marble tiles of the hall in their Boston club.

“All right. Why?”

“Well,” replied Madden, conciliatingly, “you seem kind of preoccupied, that’s all. I didn’t know but what the fifty-four hour bill the legislature’s just put through might be worrying you.”

“We’ll handle that situation when the time comes,” said Ditmar. He accepted a gin rickey, but declined rather curtly the suggestion of a little spree over Sunday to a resort on the Cape which formerly he would have found enticing. On another occasion he encountered in the lobby of the Parker House a more intimate friend, Chester Sprole, sallow, self-made, somewhat corpulent, one of those lawyers hail fellows well met in business circles and looked upon askance by the Brahmins of their profession; more than half politician, he had been in Congress, and from time to time was retained by large business interests because of his persuasive gifts with committees of the legislature—though these had been powerless to avert the recent calamity of the women and children’s fifty-four hour bill. Mr. Sprole’s hair was prematurely white, and the crow’s-feet at the corners of his eyes were not the result of legal worries.

“Hullo, Dit,” he said jovially.

“Hullo, Ches,” said Ditmar.

“Now you’re the very chap I wanted to see. Where have you been keeping yourself lately? Come out to the farm to-night,—same of the boys’ll be there.” Mr. Sprole, like many a self-made man, was proud of his farm, though he did not lead a wholly bucolic existence.

“I can’t, Ches,” answered Ditmar. “I’ve got to go back to Hampton.”

This statement Mr. Sprole unwisely accepted as a fiction. He took hold of Ditmar’s arm.

“A lady—eh—what?”

“I’ve got to go back to Hampton,” repeated Ditmar, with a suggestion of truculence that took his friend aback. Not for worlds would Mr. Sprole have offended the agent of the Chippering Mill.

“I was only joking, Claude,” he hastened to explain. Ditmar, somewhat mollified but still dejected, sought the dining-room when the lawyer had gone.

“All alone to-night, Colonel?” asked the coloured head waiter, obsequiously.

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Ditmar demanded a table in the corner, and consumed a solitary meal.

Very naturally Janet was aware of the change in Ditmar, and knew the cause of it. Her feelings were complicated. He, the most important man in Hampton, the self-sufficient, the powerful, the hitherto distant and unattainable head of the vast organization known as the Chippering Mill, of which she was an insignificant unit, at times became for her just a man—a man for whom she had achieved a delicious contempt. And the knowledge that she, if she chose, could sway and dominate him by the mere exercise of that strange feminine force within her was intoxicating and terrifying. She read this in a thousand signs; in his glances; in his movements revealing a desire to touch her; in little things he said, apparently insignificant, yet fraught with meaning; in a constant recurrence of the apologetic attitude—so alien to the Ditmar formerly conceived—of which he had given evidence that day by the canal: and from this attitude emanated, paradoxically, a virile and galvanic current profoundly disturbing. Sometimes when he bent over her she experienced a commingled ecstasy and fear that he would seize her in his arms. Yet the tension was not constant, rising and falling with his moods and struggles, all of which she read—unguessed by him—as easily as a printed page by the gift that dispenses with laborious processes of the intellect. On the other hand, a resentment boiled within her his masculine mind failed to fathom. Stevenson said of John Knox that many women had come to learn from him, but he had never condescended to become a learner in return—a remark more or less applicable to Ditmar. She was, perforce, thrilled that he was virile and wanted her, but because he wanted her clandestinely her pride revolted, divining his fear of scandal and hating him for it like a thoroughbred. To do her justice, marriage never occurred to her. She was not so commonplace.

There were times, however, when the tension between them would relax, when some incident occurred to focus Ditmar's interest on the enterprise that had absorbed and unified his life, the Chippering Mill. One day in September, for instance, after an absence in New York, he returned to the office late in the afternoon, and she was quick to sense his elation, to recognize in him the restored presence of the quality of elan, of command, of singleness of purpose that had characterized him before she had become his stenographer. At first, as he read his mail, he seemed scarcely conscious of her presence. She stood by the window, awaiting his pleasure, watching the white mist as it rolled over the floor of the river, catching glimpses in vivid, saffron blurs of the lights of the Arundel Mill on the farther shore. Autumn was at hand. Suddenly she heard Ditmar speaking.

"Would you mind staying a little while longer this evening, Miss Bumpus?"

"Not at all," she replied, turning.

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On his face was a smile, almost boyish.

“The fact is, I think I’ve got hold of the biggest single order that ever came into any mill in New England,” he declared.

“Oh, I’m glad,” she said quickly.

“The cotton cards—?” he demanded.

She knew he referred to the schedules, based on the current prices of cotton, made out in the agent’s office and sent in duplicate to the selling house, in Boston. She got them from the shelf; and as he went over them she heard him repeating the names of various goods now become familiar, pongees, poplins, percales and voiles, garbardines and galateas, lawns, organdies, crepes, and Madras shirtings, while he wrote down figures on a sheet of paper. So complete was his absorption in this task that Janet, although she had resented the insinuating pressure of his former attitude toward her, felt a paradoxical sensation of jealousy. Presently, without looking up, he told her to call up the Boston office and ask for Mr. Fraile, the cotton buyer; and she learned from the talk over the telephone though it was mostly about “futures”—that Ditmar had lingered for a conference in Boston on his way back from New York. Afterwards, having dictated two telegrams which she wrote out on her machine, he leaned back in his chair; and though the business for the day was ended, showed a desire to detain her. His mood became communicative.

“I’ve been on the trail of that order for a month,” he declared. “Of course it isn’t my business to get orders, but to manage this mill, and that’s enough for one man, God knows. But I heard the Bradlaughs were in the market for these goods, and I told the selling house to lie low, that I’d go after it. I knew I could get away with it, if anybody could. I went to the Bradlaughs and sat down on ’em, I lived with ’em, ate with ’em, brought ’em home at night. I didn’t let ’em alone a minute until they handed it over. I wasn’t going to give any other mill in New England or any of those southern concerns a chance to walk off with it—not on your life! Why, we have the facilities. There isn’t another mill in the country can turn it out in the time they ask, and even we will have to go some to do it. But we’ll do it, by George, unless I’m struck by lightning.”

He leaned forward, hitting the desk with his fist, and Janet, standing beside him, smiled. She had the tempting gift of silence. Forgetting her twinge of jealousy, she was drawn toward him now, and in this mood of boyish exuberance, of self-confidence and pride in his powers and success she liked him better than ever before. She had, for the first time, the curious feeling of being years older than he, yet this did not detract from a new-born admiration.

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“I made this mill, and I’m proud of it,” he went on. “When old Stephen Chippering put me in charge he was losing money, he’d had three agents in four years. The old man knew I had it in me, and I knew it, if I do say it myself. All this union labour talk about shorter hours makes me sick—why, there was a time when I worked ten and twelve hours a day, and I’m man enough to do it yet, if I have to. When the last agent—that was Cort—was sacked I went to Boston on my own hook and tackled the old gentleman—that’s the only way to get anywhere. I couldn’t bear to see the mill going to scrap, and I told him a thing or two,—I had the facts and the figures. Stephen Chippering was a big man, but he had a streak of obstinacy in him, he was conservative, you bet. I had to get it across to him there was a lot of dead wood in this plant, I had to wake him up to the fact that the twentieth century was here. He had to be shown—he was from Boston, you know—” Ditmar laughed—“but he was all wool and a yard wide, and he liked me and trusted me.

“That was in nineteen hundred. I can remember the interview as well as if it had happened last night—we sat up until two o’clock in the morning in that library of his with the marble busts and the leather-bound books and the double windows looking out over the Charles, where the wind was blowing a gale. And at last he said, `All right, Claude, go ahead. I’ll put you in as agent, and stand behind you.’ And by thunder, he did stand behind me. He was quiet, the finest looking old man I ever saw in my life, straight as a ramrod, with a little white goatee and a red, weathered face full of creases, and a skin that looked as if it had been pricked all over with needles—the old Boston sort. They don’t seem to turn ’em out any more. Why, I have a picture of him here.”

He opened a drawer in his desk and drew out a photograph. Janet gazed at it sympathetically.

“It doesn’t give you any notion of those eyes of his,” Ditmar said, reminiscently. “They looked right through a man’s skull, no matter how thick it was. If anything went wrong, I never wasted any time in telling him about it, and I guess it was one reason he liked me. Some of the people up here didn’t understand him, kow-towed to him, they were scared of him, and if he thought they had something up their sleeves he looked as if he were going to eat ’em alive. Regular fighting eyes, the kind that get inside of a man and turn the light on. And he sat so still—made you ashamed of yourself. Well, he was a born fighter, went from Harvard into the Rebellion and was left for dead at Seven Oaks, where one of the company found him and saved him. He set that may up for life, and never talked about it, either. See what he wrote on the bottom—’To my friend, Claude Ditmar, Stephen Chippering.’ And believe me, when he once called a man a friend he never took it back. I know one thing, I’ll never get another friend like him.”

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With a gesture that gave her a new insight into Ditmar, reverently he took the picture from her hand and placed it back in the drawer. She was stirred, almost to tears, and moved away from him a little, as though to lessen by distance the sudden attraction he had begun to exert: yet she lingered, half leaning, half sitting on the corner of the big desk, her head bent toward him, her eyes filled with light. She was wondering whether he could ever love a woman as he loved this man of whom he had spoken, whether he could be as true to a woman. His own attitude seemed never to have been more impersonal, but she had ceased to resent it; something within her whispered that she was the conductor, the inspirer..

“I wish Stephen Chippering could have lived to see this order,” he exclaimed, “to see the Chippering Mill to-day! I guess he’d be proud of it, I guess he wouldn’t regret having put me in as agent.”

Janet did not reply. She could not. She sat regarding him intently, and when he raised his eyes and caught her luminous glance, his expression changed, she knew Stephen Chippering had passed from his mind.

“I hope you like it here,” he said. His voice had become vibrant, ingratiating, he had changed from the master to the suppliant—and yet she was not displeased. Power had suddenly flowed back into her, and with it an exhilarating self-command.

“I do like it,” she answered.

“But you said, when I asked you to be my stenographer, that you didn’t care for your work.”

“Oh, this is different.”

“How?”

“I’m interested, the mill means something to me now you see, I’m not just copying things I don’t know anything about.”

“I’m glad you’re interested,” he said, in the same odd, awkward tone. “I’ve never had any one in the office who did my work as well. Now Miss Ottway was a good stenographer, she was capable, and a fine woman, but she never got the idea, the spirit of the mill in her as you’ve got it, and she wasn’t able to save me trouble, as you do. It’s remarkable how you’ve come to understand, and in such a short time.”

Janet coloured. She did not look at him, but had risen and begun to straighten out the papers beside her.

“There are lots of other things I’d like to understand,” she said.

“What?” he demanded.

“Well—about the mill. I never thought much about it before, I always hated it,” she cried, dropping the papers and suddenly facing him. “It was just drudgery. But now I want to learn everything, all I can, I’d like to see the machinery.”

“I’ll take you through myself—to-morrow,” he declared.

His evident agitation made her pause. They were alone, the outer office deserted, and the Ditmar she saw now, whom she had summoned up with ridiculous ease by virtue of that mysterious power within her, was no longer the agent of the Chippering Mill, a boy filled with enthusiasm by a business achievement, but a man, the incarnation and expression of masculine desire desire for her. She knew she could compel him, if she chose, to throw caution to the winds.

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“Oh no!” she exclaimed. She was afraid of him, she shrank from such a conspicuous sign of his favour.

“Why not?” he asked.

“Because I don’t want you to,” she said, and realized, as soon as she had spoken, that her words might imply the existence of a something between them never before hinted at by her. “I’ll get Mr. Caldwell to take me through.” She moved toward the door, and turned; though still on fire within, her manner had become demure, repressed. “Did you wish anything more this evening?” she inquired.

“That’s all,” he said, and she saw that he was gripping the arms of his chair....

CHAPTER VII

Autumn was at hand. All day it had rained, but now, as night fell and Janet went homeward, the white mist from the river was creeping stealthily over the city, disguising the familiar and sordid landmarks. These had become beautiful, mysterious, somehow appealing. The electric arcs, splotches in the veil, revealed on the Common phantom trees; and in the distance, against the blurred lights from the Warren Street stores skirting the park could be seen phantom vehicles, phantom people moving to and fro. Thus, it seemed to Janet, invaded by a pearly mist was her own soul, in which she walked in wonder,—a mist shot through and through with soft, exhilarating lights half disclosing yet transforming and etherealizing certain landmark’s there on which, formerly, she had not cared to gaze. She was thinking of Ditmar as she had left him gripping his chair, as he had dismissed her for the day, curtly, almost savagely. She had wounded and repelled him, and lingering in her was that exquisite touch of fear—a fear now not so much inspired by Ditmar as by the semi-acknowledged recognition of certain tendencies and capacities within herself. Yet she rejoiced in them, she was glad she had hurt Ditmar, she would hurt him again. Still palpitating, she reached the house in Fillmore Street, halting a moment with her hand on the door, knowing her face was flushed, anxious lest her mother or Lise might notice something unusual in her manner. But, when she had slowly mounted the stairs and lighted the gas in the bedroom the sight of her sister’s clothes cast over the chairs was proof that Lise had already donned her evening finery and departed. The room was filled with the stale smell of clothes, which Janet detested. She flung open the windows. She took off her hat and swiftly tidied herself, yet the relief she felt at Lise’s absence was modified by a sudden, vehement protest against sordidness. Why should she not live by herself amidst clean and tidy surroundings? She had begun to earn enough, and somehow a vista had been opened up—a vista whose end she could not see, alluring, enticing.... In the dining-room, by the cleared table, her father was reading the Banner; her mother appeared in the kitchen door.

“What in the world happened to you, Janet?” she exclaimed.

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“Nothing,” said Janet. “Mr. Ditmar asked me to stay—that was all. He’d been away.”

“I was worried, I was going to make your father go down to the mill. I’ve saved you some supper.”

“I don’t want much,” Janet told her, “I’m not hungry.”

“I guess you have to work too hard in that new place,” said Hannah, as she brought in the filled plate from the oven.

“Well, it seems to agree with her, mother,” declared Edward, who could always be counted on to say the wrong thing with the best of intentions. “I never saw her looking as well—why, I swan, she’s getting real pretty!”

Hannah darted at him a glance, but restrained herself, and Janet reddened as she tried to eat the beans placed before her. The pork had browned and hardened at the edges, the gravy had spread, a crust covered the potatoes. When her father resumed his reading of the Banner and her mother went back into the kitchen she began to speculate rather resentfully and yet excitedly why it was that this adventure with a man, with Ditmar, made her look better, feel better,—more alive. She was too honest to disguise from herself that it was an adventure, a high one, fraught with all sorts of possibilities, dangers, and delights. Her promotion had been merely incidental. Both her mother and father, did they know the true circumstances,—that Mr. Ditmar desired her, was perhaps in love with her—would be disturbed. Undoubtedly they would have believed that she could “take care” of herself. She knew that matters could not go on as they were, that she would either have to leave Mr. Ditmar or—and here she baulked at being logical. She had no intention of leaving him: to remain, according to the notions of her parents, would be wrong. Why was it that doing wrong agreed with her, energized her, made her more alert, cleverer, keying up her faculties? turned life from a dull affair into a momentous one? To abandon Ditmar would be to slump back into the humdrum, into something from which she had magically been emancipated, symbolized by the home in which she sat; by the red-checked tablecloth, the ugly metal lamp, the cherry chairs with the frayed seats, the horsehair sofa from which the stuffing protruded, the tawdry pillow with its colours, once gay, that Lise had bought at a bargain at the Bagatelle.... The wooden clock with the round face and quaint landscape below—the family’s most cherished heirloom—though long familiar, was not so bad; but the two yellowed engravings on the wall offended her. They had been wedding presents to Edward’s father. One represented a stupid German peasant woman holding a baby, and standing in front of a thatched cottage; its companion was a sylvan scene in which certain wooden rustics were supposed to be enjoying themselves. Between the two, and dotted with flyspecks, hung an insurance calendar on which was a huge head of a lady, florid, fluffy-haired, flirtatious. Lise thought her beautiful.

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The room was ugly. She had long known that, but tonight the realization came to her that what she chiefly resented in it was the note it proclaimed—the note of a mute acquiescence, without protest or struggle, in what life might send. It reflected accurately the attitude of her parents, particularly of her father. With an odd sense of detachment, of critical remoteness and contempt she glanced at him as he sat stupidly absorbed in his newspaper, his face puckered, his lips pursed, and Ditmar rose before her—Ditmar, the embodiment of an indomitableness that refused to be beaten and crushed. She thought of the story he had told her, how by self-assertion and persistence he had become agent of the Chippering Mill, how he had convinced Mr. Stephen Chippering of his ability. She could not think of the mill as belonging to the Chipperings and the other stockholders, but to Ditmar, who had shaped it into an expression of himself, since it was his ideal. And now it seemed that he had made it hers also. She regretted having repulsed him, pushed her plate away from her, and rose.

“You haven’t eaten anything,” said Hannah, who had come into the room. “Where are you going?”

“Out—to Eda’s,” Janet answered....

“It’s late,” Hannah objected. But Janet departed. Instead of going to Eda’s she walked alone, seeking the quieter streets that her thoughts might flow undisturbed. At ten o’clock, when she returned, the light was out in the diningroom, her sister had not come in, and she began slowly to undress, pausing every now and then to sit on the bed and dream; once she surprised herself gazing into the glass with a rapt expression that was almost a smile. What was it about her that had attracted Ditmar? No other man had ever noticed it. She had never thought herself good looking, and now—it was astonishing!—she seemed to have changed, and she saw with pride that her arms and neck were shapely, that her dark hair fell down in a cascade over her white shoulders to her waist. She caressed it; it was fine. When she looked again, a radiancy seemed to envelop her. She braided her hair slowly, in two long plaits, looking shyly in the mirror and always seeing that radiancy....

Suddenly it occurred to her with a shock that she was doing exactly what she had despised Lise for doing, and leaving the mirror she hurried her toilet, put out the light, and got into bed. For a long time, however, she remained wakeful, turning first on one side and then on the other, trying to banish from her mind the episode that had excited her. But always it came back again. She saw Ditmar before her, virile, vital, electric with desire. At last she fell asleep.

Gradually she was awakened by something penetrating her consciousness, something insistent, pervasive, unescapable, which in drowsiness she could not define. The gas was burning, Lise had come in, and was moving peculiarly about the room. Janet watched her. She stood in front of the bureau, just as Janet herself had done, her hands at her throat. At last she let them fall, her head turning slowly, as though drawn,

by some irresistible, hypnotic power, and their eyes met. Lise's were filmed, like those of a dog whose head is being stroked, expressing a luxuriant dreaminess uncomprehending, passionate.

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“Say, did I wake you?” she asked. “I did my best not to make any noise—honest to God.”

“It wasn’t the noise that woke me up,” said Janet.

“It couldn’t have been.”

“You’ve been drinking!” said Janet, slowly.

Lise giggled.

“What’s it to you, angel face!” she inquired. “Quiet down, now, and go bye-bye.”

Janet sprang from the bed, seized her by the shoulders, and shook her. She was limp. She began to whimper.

“Cut it out—leave me go. It ain’t nothing to you what I do—I just had a highball.”

Janet released her and drew back.

“I just had a highball—honest to God!”

“Don’t say that again!” whispered Janet, fiercely.

“Oh, very well. For God’s sake, go to bed and leave me alone—I can take care of myself, I guess—I ain’t nutty enough to hit the booze. But I ain’t like you—I’ve got to have a little fun to keep alive.”

“A little fun!” Janet exclaimed. The phrase struck her sharply. A little fun to keep alive!

With that same peculiar, cautious movement she had observed, Lise approached a chair, and sank into it,—jerking her head in the direction of the room where Hannah and Edward slept.

“D’you want to wake ’em up? Is that your game?” she asked, and began to fumble at her belt. Overcoming with an effort a disgust amounting to nausea, Janet approached her sister again, little by little undressing her, and finally getting her into bed, when she immediately fell into a profound slumber. Janet, too, got into bed, but sleep was impossible: the odour lurked like a foul spirit in the darkness, mingling with the stagnant, damp air that came in at the open window, fairly saturating her with horror: it seemed the very essence of degradation. But as she lay on the edge of the bed, shrinking from contamination, in the throes of excitement inspired by an unnamed fear, she grew hot, she could feel and almost hear the pounding of her heart. She rose, felt around in the clammy darkness for her wrapper and slippers, gained the door, crept through the dark hall to the dining-room, where she stealthily lit the lamp; darkness had

become a terror. A cockroach scurried across the linoleum. The room was warm and close, it reeked with the smell of stale food, but at least she found relief from that other odour. She sank down on the sofa.

Her sister was drunk. That in itself was terrible enough, yet it was not the drunkenness alone that had sickened Janet, but the suggestion of something else. Where had Lise been? In whose company had she become drunk? Of late, in contrast to a former communicativeness, Lise had been singularly secretive as to her companions, and the manner in which her evenings were spent; and she, Janet, had grown too self-absorbed to be curious. Lise, with her shopgirl's cynical knowledge of life and its pitfalls and the high valuation at which she held her

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charms, had seemed secure from danger; but Janet recalled her discouragement, her threat to leave the Bagatelle. Since then there had been something furtive about her. Now, because that odour of alcohol Lise exhaled had destroyed in Janet the sense of exhilaration, of life on a higher plane she had begun to feel, and filled her with degradation, she hated Lise, felt for her sister no strain of pity. A proof, had she recognized it, that immorality is not a matter of laws and decrees, but of individual emotions. A few hours before she had seen nothing wrong in her relationship with Ditmar: now she beheld him selfish, ruthless, pursuing her for one end, his own gratification. As a man, he had become an enemy. Ditmar was like all other men who exploited her sex without compunction, but the thought that she was like Lise, asleep in a drunken stupor, that their cases differed only in degree, was insupportable.

At last she fell asleep from sheer weariness, to dream she was with Ditmar at some place in the country under spreading trees, Silliston, perhaps—Silliston Common, cleverly disguised: nor was she quite sure, always, that the man was Ditmar; he had a way of changing, of resembling the man she had met in Silliston whom she had mistaken for a carpenter. He was pleading with her, in his voice was the peculiar vibrancy that thrilled her, that summoned some answering thing out of the depths of her, and she felt herself yielding with a strange ecstasy in which were mingled joy and terror. The terror was conquering the joy, and suddenly he stood transformed before her eyes, caricatured, become a shrieking monster from whom she sought in agony to escape.... In this paralysis of fear she awoke, staring with wide eyes at the flickering flame of the lamp, to a world filled with excruciating sound—the siren of the Chippering Mill! She lay trembling with the horror of the dream-spell upon her, still more than half convinced that the siren was Ditmar's voice, his true expression. He was waiting to devour her. Would the sound never end?...

Then, remembering where she was, alarmed lest her mother might come in and find her there, she left the sofa, turned out the sputtering lamp, and ran into the bedroom. Rain was splashing on the bricks of the passage-way outside, the shadows of the night still lurked in the corners; by the grey light she gazed at Lise, who breathed loudly and stirred uneasily, her mouth open, her lips parched. Janet touched her.

"Lise—get up!" she said. "It's time to get up." She shook her.

"Leave me alone—can't you?"

"It's time to get up. The whistle has sounded."

Lise heavily opened her eyes. They were bloodshot.

"I don't want to get up. I won't get up."

“But you must,” insisted Janet, tightening her hold. “You’ve got to—you’ve got to eat breakfast and go to work.”

“I don’t want any breakfast, I ain’t going to work any more.”

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A gust of wind blew inward the cheap lace curtains, and the physical effect of it emphasized the chill that struck Janet's heart. She got up and closed the window, lit the gas, and returning to the bed, shook Lise again.

"Listen," she said, "if you don't get up I'll tell mother what happened last night."

"Say, you wouldn't—!" exclaimed Lise, angrily.

"Get up!" Janet commanded, and watched her rather anxiously, uncertain as to the after effects of drunkenness. But Lise got up. She sat on the edge of the bed and yawned, putting her hand to her forehead.

"I've sure got a head on me," she remarked.

Janet was silent, angrier than ever, shocked that tragedy, degradation, could be accepted thus circumstantially. Lise proceeded to put up her hair. She seemed to be mistress of herself; only tired, gaping frequently. Once she remarked:—"I don't see the good of getting nutty over a highball."

Seeing that Janet was not to be led into controversy, she grew morose.

Breakfast in Fillmore Street, never a lively meal, was more dismal than usual that morning, eaten to the accompaniment of slopping water from the roofs on the pavement of the passage. The indisposition of Lise passed unobserved by both Hannah and Edward; and at twenty minutes to eight the two girls, with rubbers and umbrellas, left the house together, though it was Janet's custom to depart earlier, since she had farther to go. Lise, suspicious, maintained an obstinate silence, keeping close to the curb. They reached the corner by the provision shop with the pink and orange chromos of jellies in the window.

"Lise, has anything happened to you?" demanded Janet suddenly. "I want you to tell me."

"Anything happened—what do you mean? Anything happened?"

"You know very well what I mean."

"Well, suppose something has happened?" Lise's reply was pert, defiant. "What's it to you? If anything's happened, it's happened to me—hasn't it?"

Janet approached her.

"What are you trying to do?" said Lise. "Push me into the gutter?"

"I guess you're there already," said Janet.

Lise was roused to a sudden pitch of fury. She turned on Janet and thrust her back.

“Well, if I am who’s going to blame me?” she cried. “If you had to work all day in that hole, standing on your feet, picked on by yaps for six a week, I guess you wouldn’t talk virtuous, either. It’s easy for you to shoot off your mouth, you’ve got a soft snap with Ditmar.”

Janet was outraged. She could not restrain her anger.

“How dare you say that?” she demanded.

Lise was cowed.

“Well, you drove me to it—you make me mad enough to say anything. Just because I went to Gruber’s with Neva Lorrie and a couple of gentlemen—they were gentlemen all right, as much gentlemen as Ditmar—you come at me and tell me I’m all to the bad.” She began to sob. “I’m as straight as you are. How was I to know the highball was stiff? Maybe I was tired—anyhow, it put me on the queer, and everything in the joint began to tango ’round me—and Neva came home with me.”

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Janet felt a surge of relief, in which were mingled anxiety and resentment: relief because she was convinced that Lise was telling the truth, anxiety because she feared for Lise's future, resentment because Ditmar had been mentioned. Still, what she had feared most had not come to pass. Lise left her abruptly, darting down a street that led to a back entrance of the Bagatelle, and Janet pursued her way. Where, she wondered, would it all end? Lise had escaped so far, but drunkenness was an ominous sign. And "gentlemen"? What kind of gentlemen had taken her sister to Gruber's? Would Ditmar do that sort of thing if he had a chance?

The pavement in front of the company boarding-houses by the canal was plastered with sodden leaves whipped from the maples by the driving rain in the night. The sky above the mills was sepia. White lights were burning in the loom rooms. When she reached the vestibule Simmons, the watchman, informed her that Mr. Ditmar had already been there, and left for Boston.

Janet did not like to acknowledge to herself her disappointment on learning that Ditmar had gone to Boston. She knew he had had no such intention the night before; an accumulated mail and many matters demanding decisions were awaiting him; and his sudden departure seemed an act directed personally against her, in the nature of a retaliation, since she had offended and repulsed him. Through Lise's degrading act she had arrived at the conclusion that all adventure and consequent suffering had to do with Man—a conviction peculiarly maddening to such temperaments as Janet's. Therefore she interpreted her suffering in terms of Ditmar, she had looked forward to tormenting him again, and by departing he had deliberately balked and cheated her. The rain fell ceaselessly out of black skies, night seemed ever ready to descend on the river, a darkness—according to young Mr. Caldwell—due not to the clouds alone, but to forest fires many hundreds of miles away, in Canada. As the day wore on, however, her anger gradually gave place to an extreme weariness and depression, and yet she dreaded going home, inventing things for herself to do; arranging and rearranging Ditmar's papers that he might have less trouble in sorting them, putting those uppermost which she thought he would deem the most important. Perhaps he would come in, late! In a world of impending chaos the brilliantly lighted office was a tiny refuge to which she clung. At last she put on her coat and rubbers, faring forth reluctantly into the wet.

At first when she entered the bedroom she thought it empty, though the gas was burning, and them she saw Lise lying face downward on the bed. For a moment she stood still, then closed the door softly.

"Lise," she said.

"What?"

Janet sat down on the bed, putting out her hand. Unconsciously she began to stroke Lise's hand, and presently it turned and tightened on her own.

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“Lise,” she said, “I understand why you—” she could not bring herself to pronounce the words “got drunk,”—“I understand why you did it. I oughtn’t to have talked to you that way. But it was terrible to wake up and see you.”

For awhile Lise did not reply. Then she raised herself, feeling her hair with an involuntary gesture, regarding her sister with a bewildered look, her face puckered. Her eyes burned, and under them were black shadows.

“How do you mean—you understand?” she asked slowly. “You never hit the booze.”

Even Lise’s language, which ordinarily offended her, failed to change her sudden impassioned and repentant mood. She was astonished at herself for this sudden softening, since she did not really love Lise, and all day she had hated her, wished never to see her again.

“No, but I can understand how it would be to want to,” Janet said. “Lise, I guess we’re searching—both of us for something we’ll never find.”

Lise stared at her with a contracted, puzzled expression, as of a person awaking from sleep, all of whose faculties are being strained toward comprehension.

“What do you mean?” she demanded. “You and me? You’re all right—you’ve got no kick coming.”

“Life is hard, it’s hard on girls like us—we want things we can’t have.” Janet was at a loss to express herself.

“Well, it ain’t any pipe dream,” Lise agreed. Her glance turned involuntarily toward the picture of the Olympian dinner party pinned on the wall. “Swells have a good time,” she added.

“Maybe they pay for it, too,” said Janet.

“I wouldn’t holler about paying—it’s paying and not getting the goods,” declared Lise.

“You’ll pay, and you won’t get it. That kind of life is—hell,” Janet cried.

Self-centered as Lise was, absorbed in her own trouble and present physical discomfort, this unaccustomed word from her sister and the vehemence with which it was spoken surprised and frightened her, brought home to her some hint of the terror in Janet’s soul.

“Me for the water wagon,” she said.

Janet was not convinced. She had hoped to discover the identity of the man who had taken Lise to Gruber's, but she did not attempt to continue the conversation. She rose and took off her hat.

"Why don't you go to bed?" she asked. "I'll tell mother you have a headache and bring in your supper."

"Well, I don't care if I do," replied Lise, gratefully.

Perhaps the most disconcerting characteristic of that complex affair, the human organism, is the lack of continuity of its moods. The soul, so called, is as sensitive to physical conditions as a barometer: affected by lack of sleep, by smells and sounds, by food, by the weather—whether a day be sapphire or obsidian. And the resolutions arising from one mood are thwarted by the actions of the next. Janet had observed this phenomenon, and sometimes,

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when it troubled her, she thought herself the most inconsistent and vacillating of creatures. She had resolved, far instance, before she fell asleep, to leave the Chippering Mill, to banish Ditmar from her life, to get a position in Boston, whence she could send some of her wages home: and in the morning, as she made her way to the office, the determination gave her a sense of peace and unity. But the northwest wind was blowing. It had chased away the mist and the clouds, the smoke from Canada. The sun shone with a high brilliancy, the elms of the Common cast sharp, black shadow-patterns on the pavements, and when she reached the office and looked out of his window she saw the blue river covered with quicksilver waves chasing one another across the current. Ditmar had not yet returned to Hampton. About ten o'clock, as she was copying out some figures for Mr. Price, young Mr. Caldwell approached her. He had a Boston newspaper in his hand.

"Have you seen this article about Mr. Ditmar?" he asked.

"About Mr. Ditmar? No."

"It's quite a send-off for the Colonel," said Caldwell, who was wont at times to use the title facetiously. "Listen; `One of the most notable figures in the Textile industry of the United States, Claude Ditmar, Agent of the Chippering Mill.'" Caldwell spread out the page and pointed to a picture. "There he is, as large as life."

A little larger than life, Janet thought. Ditmar was one of those men who, as the expression goes, "take" well, a valuable asset in semi-public careers; and as he stood in the sunlight on the steps of the building where they had "snap-shotted" him he appeared even more massive, forceful, and preponderant than she had known him. Beholding him thus set forth and praised in a public print, he seemed suddenly to have been distantly removed from her, to have reacquired at a bound the dizzy importance he had possessed for her before she became his stenographer. She found it impossible to realize that this was the Ditmar who had pursued and desired her; at times supplicating, apologetic, abject; and again revealed by the light in his eyes and the trembling of his hand as the sinister and ruthless predatory male from whom—since the revelation in her sister Lise she had determined to flee, and whom she had persuaded herself she despised. He was a bigger man than she had thought, and as she read rapidly down the column the fascination that crept over her was mingled with disquieting doubt of her own powers: it was now difficult to believe she had dominated or could ever dominate this self-sufficient, successful person, the list of whose achievements and qualities was so alluringly set forth by an interviewer who himself had fallen a victim.

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The article carried the implication that the modern, practical, American business man was the highest type as yet evolved by civilization: and Ditmar, referred to as “a wizard of the textile industry,” was emphatically one who had earned the gratitude of the grand old Commonwealth. By the efforts of such sons she continued to maintain her commanding position among her sister states. Prominent among the qualities contributing to his success was open-mindedness, “a willingness to be shown,” to scrap machinery when his competitors still clung to older methods. The Chippering Mill had never had a serious strike, —indication of an ability to deal with labour; and Mr. Ditmar’s views on labour followed: if his people had a grievance, let them come to him, and settle it between them. No unions. He had consistently refused to recognize them. There was mention of the Bradlaugh order as being the largest commission ever given to a single mill, a reference to the excitement and speculation it had aroused in trade circles. Claude Ditmar’s ability to put it through was unquestioned; one had only to look at him,—tenacity, forcefulness, executiveness were written all over him.... In addition, the article contained much material of an autobiographical nature that must—Janet thought—have been supplied by Ditmar himself, whose modesty had evidently shrunk from the cruder self-eulogy of an interview. But she recognized several characteristic phrases.

Caldwell, watching her as she read, was suddenly fascinated. During a trip abroad, while still an undergraduate, he had once seen the face of an actress, a really good Parisian actress, light up in that way; and it had revealed to him, in a flash, the meaning of enthusiasm. Now Janet became vivid for him. There must be something unusual in a person whose feelings could be so intense, whose emotions rang so true. He was not unsophisticated. He had sometimes wondered why Ditmar had promoted her, though acknowledging her ability. He admired Ditmar, but had no illusions about him. Harvard, and birth in a social stratum where emphasis is superfluous, enabled him to smile at the reporter’s exuberance; and he was the more drawn toward her to see on Janet’s flushed face the hint of a smile as she looked up at him when she had finished.

“The Colonel hypnotized that reporter,” he said, as he took the paper; and her laugh, despite its little tremor, betrayed in her an unsuspected, humorous sense of proportion. “Well, I’ll take off my hat to him,” Caldwell went on. “He is a wonder, he’s got the mill right up to capacity in a week. He’s agreed to deliver those goods to the Bradlaughs by the first of April, you know, and Holster, of the Clarendon, swears it can’t be done, he says Ditmar’s crazy. Well, I stand to lose twenty-five dollars on him.”

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This loyalty pleased Janet, it had the strange effect of reviving loyalty in her. She liked this evidence of Dick Caldwell's confidence. He was a self-contained and industrious young man, with crisp curly hair, cordial and friendly yet never intimate with the other employer; liked by them—but it was tacitly understood his footing differed from theirs. He was a cousin of the Chipperings, and destined for rapid promotion. He went away every Saturday, it was known that he spent Sundays and holidays in delightful places, to return reddened and tanned; and though he never spoke about these excursions, and put on no airs of superiority, there was that in his manner and even in the cut of his well-worn suits proclaiming him as belonging to a sphere not theirs, to a category of fortunate beings whose stumbles are not fatal, who are sustained from above. Even Ditmar was not of these.

"I've just been showing a lot of highbrows through the mill," he told Janet. "They asked questions enough to swamp a professor of economics."

And Janet was suddenly impelled to ask:—"Will you take me through sometime, Mr. Caldwell?"

"You've never been through?" he exclaimed. "Why, we'll go now, if you can spare the time."

Her face had become scarlet.

"Don't tell Mr. Ditmar," she begged. "You see—he wanted to take me himself."

"Not a word," Caldwell promised as they left the office together and went downstairs to the strong iron doors that led to the Cotton Department. The showing through of occasional visitors had grown rather tiresome; but now his curiosity and interest were aroused, he was conscious of a keen stimulation when he glanced at Janet's face. Its illumination perplexed him. The effect was that of a picture obscurely hung and hitherto scarcely noticed on which the light had suddenly been turned. It glowed with a strange and disturbing radiance....

As for Janet, she was as one brought suddenly to the realization of a miracle in whose presence she had lived for many years and never before suspected; the miracle of machinery, of the triumph of man over nature. In the brief space of an hour she beheld the dirty bales flung off the freight cars on the sidings transformed into delicate fabrics wound from the looms; cotton that only last summer, perhaps, while she sat typewriting at her window, had been growing in the fields of the South. She had seen it torn by the bale-breakers, blown into the openers, loosened, cleansed, and dried; taken up by the lappers, pressed into batting, and passed on to the carding machines, to emerge like a wisp of white smoke in a sliver and coil automatically in a can. Once more it was flattened into a lap, given to a comber that felt out its fibres, removing with superhuman precision those for the finer fabric too short, thrusting it forth again in another filmy sliver

ready for the drawing frames. Six of these gossamer ropes were taken up, and again six. Then came the Blubbers and the roving frames, twisting and winding, the while maintaining the most delicate of tensions lest the rope break, running the strands together into a thread constantly growing stronger and finer, until it was ready for spinning.

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Caldwell stood close to her, shouting his explanations in her ear, while she strained to follow them. But she was bewildered and entranced by the marvellous swiftness, accuracy and ease with which each of the complex machines, fed by human hands, performed its function. These human hands were swift, too, as when they thrust the bobbins of roving on the ring-spinning frames to be twisted into yarn. She saw a woman, in the space of an instant, mend a broken thread. Women and boys were here, doffer boys to lift off the full bobbins of yarn with one hand and set on the empty bobbins with the other: while skilled workmen, alert for the first sign of trouble, followed up and down in its travels the long frame of the mule-spinner. After the spinning, the heavy spools of yarn were carried to a beam-warper, standing alone like a huge spider's web, where hundreds of threads were stretched symmetrically and wound evenly, side by side, on a large cylinder, forming the warp of the fabric to be woven on the loom. First, however, this warp must be stiffened or "slashed" in starch and tallow, dried over heated drums, and finally wound around one great beam from which the multitude of threads are taken up, one by one, and slipped through the eyes of the loom harnesses by women who sit all day under the north windows overlooking the canal—the "drawers-in" of whom Ditmar had spoken. Then the harnesses are put on the loom, the threads attached to the cylinder on which the cloth is to be wound. The looms absorbed and fascinated Janet above all else. It seemed as if she would never tire of watching the rhythmic rise and fall of the harnesses,—each rapid movement making a V in the warp, within the angle of which the tiny shuttles darted to and fro, to and fro, carrying the thread that filled the cloth with a swiftness so great the eye could scarcely follow it; to be caught on the other side when the angle closed, and flung back, and back again! And in the elaborate patterns not one, but several harnesses were used, each awaiting its turn for the impulse bidding it rise and fall!... Abruptly, as she gazed, one of the machines halted, a weaver hurried up, searched the warp for the broken thread, tied it, and started the loom again.

"That's intelligent of it," said Caldwell, in her ear. But she could only nod in reply.

The noise in the weaving rooms was deafening, the heat oppressive. She began to wonder how these men and women, boys and girls bore the strain all day long. She had never thought much about them before save to compare vaguely their drudgery with that from which now she had been emancipated; but she began to feel a new respect, a new concern, a new curiosity and interest as she watched them passing from place to place with indifference between the whirling belts, up and down the narrow aisles, flanked on either side by that bewildering, clattering machinery whose polished surfaces continually caught and flung back the light of the electric bulbs on the ceiling.

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How was it possible to live for hours at a time in this bedlam without losing presence of mind and thrusting hand or body in the wrong place, or becoming deaf? She had never before realized what mill work meant, though she had read of the accidents. But these people—even the children—seemed oblivious to the din and the danger, intent on their tasks, unconscious of the presence of a visitor, save occasionally when she caught a swift glance from a woman or girl a glance, perhaps, of envy or even of hostility. The dark, foreign faces glowed, and instantly grew dull again, and then she was aware of lurking terrors, despite her exaltation, her sense now of belonging to another world, a world somehow associated with Ditmar. Was it not he who had lifted her farther above all this? Was it not by grace of her association with him she was there, a spectator of the toil beneath? Yet the terror persisted. She, presently, would step out of the noise, the oppressive moist heat of the drawing and spinning rooms, the constant, remorseless menace of whirling wheels and cogs and belts. But they?... She drew closer to Caldwell's side.

"I never knew—" she said. "It must be hard to work here."

He smiled at her, reassuringly.

"Oh, they don't mind it," he replied. "It's like a health resort compared to the conditions most of them live in at home. Why, there's plenty of ventilation here, and you've got to have a certain amount of heat and moisture, because when cotton is cold and dry it can't be drawn or spin, and when it's hot and dry the electricity is troublesome. If you think this moisture is bad you ought to see a mill with the old vapour-pot system with the steam shooting out into the room. Look here!" He led Janet to the apparatus in which the pure air is forced through wet cloths, removing the dust, explaining how the ventilation and humidity were regulated automatically, how the temperature of the room was controlled by a thermostat.

"There isn't an agent in the country who's more concerned about the welfare of his operatives than Mr. Ditmar. He's made a study of it, he's spent thousands of dollars, and as soon as these machines became practical he put 'em in. The other day when I was going through the room one of these shuttles flew off, as they sometimes do when the looms are running at high speed. A woman was pretty badly hurt. Ditmar came right down."

"He really cares about them," said Janet. She liked Caldwell's praise of Ditmar, yet she spoke a little doubtfully.

"Of course he cares. But it's common sense to make 'em as comfortable and happy as possible—isn't it? He won't stand for being held up, and he'd be stiff enough if it came to a strike. I don't blame him for that. Do you?"

Janet was wondering how ruthless Ditmar could be if his will were crossed.... They had left the room with its noise and heat behind them and were descending the worn, oaken treads of the spiral stairway of a neighbouring tower. Janet shivered a little, and her face seemed almost feverish as she turned to Caldwell and thanked him.

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“Oh, it was a pleasure, Miss Bumpus,” he declared. “And sometime, when you want to see the Print Works or the Worsted Department, let me know—I’m your man. And—I won’t mention it.”

She did not answer. As they made their way back to the office he glanced at her covertly, astonished at the emotional effect in her their tour had produced. Though not of an inflammable temperament, he himself was stirred, and it was she who, unaccountably, had stirred him: suggested, in these processes he saw every day, and in which he was indeed interested, something deeper, more significant and human than he had guessed, and which he was unable to define....

Janet herself did not know why this intimate view of the mills, of the people who worked in them had so greatly moved her. All day she thought of them. And the distant throb of the machinery she felt when her typewriter was silent meant something to her now—she could not say what. When she found herself listening for it, her heart beat faster. She had lived and worked beside it, and it had not existed for her, it had had no meaning, the mills might have been empty. She had, indeed, many, many times seen these men and women, boys and girls trooping away from work, she had strolled through the quarters in which they lived, speculated on the lands from which they had come; but she had never really thought of them as human beings, individuals, with problems and joys and sorrows and hopes and fears like her own. Some such discovery was borne in upon her. And always an essential function of this revelation, looming larger than ever in her consciousness, was Ditmar. It was for Ditmar they toiled, in Ditmar’s hands were their very existences, his was the stupendous responsibility and power.

As the afternoon wore, desire to see these toilers once more took possession of her. From the white cupola perched above the huge mass of the Clarendon Mill across the water sounded the single stroke of a bell, and suddenly the air was pulsing with sounds flung back and forth by the walls lining the river. Seizing her hat and coat, she ran down the stairs and through the vestibule and along the track by the canal to the great gates, which her father was in the act of unbarring. She took a stand beside him, by the gatehouse. Edward showed a mild surprise.

“There ain’t anything troubling you—is there, Janet?” he asked.

She shook her head.

“I wanted to see the hands come out,” she said.

Sometimes, as at present, he found Janet’s whims unaccountable.

“Well, I should have presumed you’d know what they look like by this time. You’d better stay right close to me, they’re a rough lot, with no respect or consideration for decent folks—these foreigners. I never could see why the government lets ’em all come over

here." He put on the word "foreigners" an emphasis of contempt and indignation, pathetic because of its peculiar note of futility. Janet paid no attention

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to him. Her ears were strained to catch the rumble of feet descending the tower stairs, her eyes to see the vanguard as it came from the doorway—the first tricklings of a flood that instantly filled the yard and swept onward and outward, irresistibly, through the narrow gorge of the gates. Impossible to realize this as the force which, when distributed over the great spaces of the mills, performed an orderly and useful task! for it was now a turbid and lawless torrent unconscious of its swollen powers, menacing, breathlessly exciting to behold. It seemed to Janet indeed a torrent as she clung to the side of the gatehouse as one might cling to the steep bank of a mountain brook after a cloud-burst. And suddenly she had plunged into it. The desire was absurd, perhaps, but not to be denied,—the desire to mix with it, feel it, be submerged and swept away by it, losing all sense of identity. She heard her father call after her, faintly—the thought crossed her mind that his appeals were always faint,—and then she was being carried along the canal, eastward, the pressure relaxing somewhat when the draining of the side streets began.

She remembered, oddly, the Stanley Street bridge where the many streams met and mingled, streams from the Arundel, the Patuxent, the Arlington and the Clarendon; and, eager to prolong and intensify her sensations, hurried thither, reaching it at last and thrusting her way outward until she had gained the middle, where she stood grasping the rail. The great structure was a-tremble from the assault, its footpaths and its roadway overrun with workers, dodging between trolleys and trucks,—some darting nimbly, dinner pails in hand, along the steel girders. Doffer boys romped and whistled, young girls in jaunty, Faber Street clothes and flowered hats, linked to one another for protection, chewed gum and joked, but for the most part these workers were silent, the apathy of their faces making a strange contrast with the hurry, hurry of their feet and set intentness of their bodies as they sped homeward to the tenements. And the clothes of these were drab, save when the occasional colour of a hooded peasant's shawl, like the slightly faded tints of an old master, lit up a group of women. Here, going home to their children, were Italian mothers bred through centuries to endurance and patience; sallow Jewesses, gaunt, bearded Jews with shadowy, half-closed eyes and wrinkled brows, broad-faced Lithuanians, flat-headed Russians; swarthy Italian men and pale, blond Germans mingled with muddy Syrians and nondescript Canadians. And suddenly the bridge was empty, the army vanished as swiftly as it came!

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Janet turned. Through the haze of smoke she saw the sun drop like a ball of fire cooled to redness, whose course is spent. The delicate lines of the upper bridge were drawn in sepia against crimson-gilt; for an instant the cupola of the Clarendon became jasper, and far, far above floated in the azure a cloud of pink jeweller's cotton. Even as she strove to fix these colours in her mind they vanished, the western sky faded to magenta, to purple-mauve; the corridor of the river darkened, on either side pale lights sparkled from the windows of the mills, while down the deepened blue of the waters came floating iridescent suds from the washing of the wools. It was given to her to know that which an artist of living memory has called the incommunicable thrill of things....

CHAPTER VIII

The after-effects of this experience of Janet's were not what ordinarily are called "spiritual," though we may some day arrive at a saner meaning of the term, include within it the impulses and needs of the entire organism. It left her with a renewed sense of energy and restlessness, brought her nearer to high discoveries of mysterious joys which a voice out of the past called upon her to forego, a voice somehow identified with her father! It was faint, ineffectual. In obeying it, would she not lose all life had to give? When she came in to supper her father was concerned about her because, instead of walking home with him she had left him without explanation to plunge into the crowd of workers. Her evident state of excitement had worried him, her caprice was beyond his comprehension. And how could she explain the motives that led to it? She was sure he had never felt like that; and as she evaded his questions the something within her demanding life and expression grew stronger and more rebellious, more contemptuous of the fear-precepts congenial to a nature timorous and less vitalized.

After supper, unable to sit still, she went out, and, filled with the spirit of adventure, hurried toward Faber Street, which was already thronging with people. It was bright here and gay, the shops glittered, and she wandered from window to window until she found herself staring at a suit of blue cloth hung on a form, beneath which was a card that read, "Marked down to $20." And suddenly the suggestion flashed into her mind, why shouldn't she buy it? She had the money, she needed a new suit for the winter, the one she possessed was getting shabby...but behind the excuse of necessity was the real reason triumphantly proclaiming itself—she would look pretty in it, she would be transformed, she would be buying a new character to which she would have to live up. The old Janet would be cast off with the old raiment; the new suit would announce to herself and to the world a Janet in whom were released all those longings hitherto disguised and suppressed, and now become insupportable! This was what the

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purchase meant, a change of existence as complete as that between the moth and the butterfly; and the realization of this fact, of the audacity she was resolved to commit made her hot as she gazed at the suit. It was modest enough, yet it had a certain distinction of cut, it looked expensive: twenty dollars was not cheap, to be sure, but as the placard announced, it had the air of being much more costly—even more costly than thirty dollars, which seemed fabulous. Though she strove to remain outwardly calm, her heart beat rapidly as she entered the store and asked for the costume, and was somewhat reassured by the comportment of the saleswoman, who did not appear to think the request preposterous, to regard her as a spendthrift and a profligate. She took down the suit from the form and led Janet to a cabinet in the back of the shop, where it was tried on.

"It's worth every bit of thirty dollars," she heard the woman say, "but we've had it here for some time, and it's no use for our trade. You can't sell anything like that in Hampton, there's no taste here, it's too good, it ain't showy enough. My, it fits you like it was made for you, and it's just your style—and you can see it wants a lady to wear it. Your old suit is too tight—I guess you've filled out some since you bought it."

She turned Janet around and around, patting the skirt here and there, and then stood off a little way, with clasped hands, her expression almost rapturous. Janet's breath came fast as she gazed into the mirror and buttoned up the coat. Was the woman's admiration cleverly feigned? this image she beheld an illusion? or did she really look different, distinguished? and if not beautiful—alluring? She had had a momentary apprehension, almost sickening, that she would be too conspicuous, but the saleswoman had anticipated that objection with the magical word "lady."

"I'll take it," she announced.

"Well, you couldn't have done better if you'd gone to Boston," declared the woman. "It's one chance in a thousand. Will you wear it?"

"Yes," said Janet faintly.... "Just put my old suit in a box, and I'll call for it in an hour."

The woman's sympathetic smile followed her as she left the shop. She had an instant of hesitation, of an almost panicky desire to go back and repair her folly, ere it was too late. Why had she taken her money with her that evening, if not with some deliberate though undefined purpose? But she was ashamed to face the saleswoman again, and her elation was not to be repressed—an elation optically presented by a huge electric sign on the farther side of the street that flashed through all the colours of the spectrum, surrounded by running fire like the running fire in her soul. Deliciously self-conscious, her gaze fixed ahead, she pressed through the Wednesday night crowds, young mill

men and women in their best clothes, housewives and fathers of families with children and bundles. In front of the Banner office a

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group blocked the pavement staring up at the news bulletin, which she paused to read. “Five Millionaire Directors Indicted in New York,” “State Treasurer Accused of Graft,” “Murdock Fortune Contested by Heirs.” The phrases seemed meaningless, and she hurried on again.... She was being noticed! A man looked at her, twice, the first glance accidental, the second arresting, appealing, subtly flattering, agitating—she was sure he had turned and was following her. She hastened her steps. It was wicked, what she was doing, but she gloried in it; and even the sight, in burning red letters, of Gruber’s Cafe failed to bring on a revulsion by its association with her sister Lise. The fact that Lise had got drunk there meant nothing to her now. She gazed curiously at the illuminated, orange-coloured panes separated by curving leads, at the design of a harp in green, at the sign “Ladies’ Entrance”; listened eagerly to the sounds of voices and laughter that came from within. She looked cautiously over her shoulder, a shadow appeared, she heard a voice, low, insinuating....

Four blocks farther down she stopped. The man was no longer following her. She had been almost self-convinced of an intention to go to Eda’s—not quite. Of late her conscience had reproached her about Eda, Janet had neglected her. She told herself she was afraid of Eda’s uncanny and somewhat nauseating flair for romance; and to show Eda the new suit, though she would relish her friend’s praise, would be the equivalent of announcing an affair of the heart which she, Janet, would have indignantly to deny. She was not going to Eda’s. She knew now where she was going. A prepared but hitherto undisclosed decree of fate had bade her put money in her bag that evening, directed her to the shop to buy the dress, and would presently impel her to go to West Street—nay, was even now so impelling her. Ahead of her were the lights of the Chippering Mill, in her ears was the rhythmic sound of the looms working of nights on the Bradlaugh order. She reached the canal. The white arc above the end of the bridge cast sharp, black shadows of the branches of the trees on the granite, the thousand windows of the mill shone yellow, reflected in the black water. Twice she started to go, twice she paused, held by the presage of a coming event, a presage that robbed her of complete surprise when she heard footsteps on the bridge, saw the figure of a man halting at the crown of the arch to look back at the building he had left, his shoulders squared, his hand firmly clasping the rail. Her heart was throbbing with the looms, and yet she stood motionless, until he turned and came rapidly down the slope of the arch and stopped in front of her. Under the arc lamp it was almost as bright as day.

“Miss Bumpus!” he exclaimed.

“Mr. Ditmar” she said.

“Were you—were you coming to the office?”

“I was just out walking,” she told him. “I thought you were in Boston.”

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“I came home,” he informed her, somewhat superfluously, his eyes never leaving her, wandering hungrily from her face to her new suit, and back again to her face. “I got here on the seven o’clock train, I wanted to see about those new Blubbers.”

“They finished setting them up this afternoon,” she said.

“How did you know?”

“I asked Mr. Orcutt about it—I thought you might telephone.”

“You’re a wonder,” was his comment. “Well, we’ve got a running start on that order,” and he threw a glance over his shoulder at the mill. “Everything going full speed ahead. When we put it through I guess I’ll have to give you some of the credit.”

“Oh, I haven’t done anything,” she protested.

“More than you think. You’ve taken so much off my shoulders I couldn’t get along without you.” His voice vibrated, reminding her of the voices of those who made sentimental recitations for the graphophone. It sounded absurd, yet it did not repel her: something within her responded to it. “Which way were you going?” he inquired.

“Home,” she said.

“Where do you live?”

“In Fillmore Street.” And she added with a touch of defiance: “It’s a little street, three blocks above Hawthorne, off East Street.”

“Oh yes,” he said vaguely, as though he had not understood. “I’ll come with you as far as the bridge—along the canal. I’ve got so much to say to you.”

“Can’t you say it to-morrow?”

“No, I can’t; there are so many people in the office—so many interruptions, I mean. And then, you never give me a chance.”

She stood hesitating, a struggle going on within her. He had proposed the route along the canal because nobody would be likely to recognize them, and her pride resented this. On the other hand, there was the sweet allurement of the adventure she craved, which indeed she had come out to seek and by a strange fatality found—since he had appeared on the bridge almost as soon as she reached it. The sense of fate was strong upon her. Curiosity urged her, and, thanks to the eulogy she had read of him that day, to the added impression of his power conveyed by the trip through the mills, Ditmar loomed larger than ever in her consciousness.

“What do you want to say?” she asked.

“Oh, lots of things.”

She felt his hand slipping under her arm, his fingers pressing gently but firmly into her flesh, and the experience of being impelled by a power stronger than herself, a masculine power, was delicious. Her arm seemed to burn where he touched her.

“Have I done something to offend you?” she heard him say. “Or is it because you don’t like me?”

“I’m not sure whether I like you or not,” she told him. “I don’t like seeing you—this way. And why should you want to know me and see me outside of the office? I’m only your stenographer.”

“Because you’re you—because you’re different from any woman I ever met. You don’t understand what you are—you don’t see yourself.”

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“I made up my mind last night I wouldn’t stay in your office any longer,” she informed him.

“For God’s sake, why?” he exclaimed. “I’ve been afraid of that. Don’t go—I don’t know what I’d do. I’ll be careful—I won’t get you talked about.”

“Talked about!” She tore herself away from him. “Why should you get me talked about?” she cried.

He was frightened. “No, no,” he stammered, “I didn’t mean—”

“What did you mean?”

“Well—as you say, you’re my stenographer, but that’s no reason why we shouldn’t be friends. I only meant—I wouldn’t do anything to make our friendship the subject of gossip.”

Suddenly she began to find a certain amusement in his confusion and penitence, she achieved a pleasurable sense of advantage, of power over him.

“Why should you want me? I don’t know anything, I’ve never had any advantages—and you have so much. I read an article in the newspaper about you today—Mr. Caldwell gave it to me—”

“Did you like it?” he interrupted, naively.

“Well, in some places it was rather funny.”

“Funny? How?”

“Oh, I don’t know.” She had been quick to grasp in it the journalistic lack of restraint hinted at by Caldwell. “I liked it, but I thought it praised you too much, it didn’t criticize you enough.”

He laughed. In spite of his discomfort, he found her candour refreshing. From the women to whom he had hitherto made love he had never got anything but flattery.

“I want you to criticize me,” he said.

But she went on relentlessly:—“When I read in that article how successful you were, and how you’d got everything you’d started out to get, and how some day you might be treasurer and president of the Chippering Mill, well—” Despairing of giving adequate expression to her meaning, she added, “I didn’t see how we could be friends.”

“You wanted me for a friend?” he interrupted eagerly.

“I couldn’t help knowing you wanted me—you’ve shown it so plainly. But I didn’t see how it could be. You asked me where I lived—in a little flat that’s no better than a tenement. I suppose you would call it a tenement. It’s dark and ugly, it only has four rooms, and it smells of cooking. You couldn’t come there—don’t you see how impossible it is? And you wouldn’t care to be talked about yourself, either,” she added vehemently.

This defiant sincerity took him aback. He groped for words.

“Listen!” he urged. “I don’t want to do anything you wouldn’t like, and honestly I don’t know what I’d do if you left me. I’ve come to depend on you. And you may not believe it, but when I got that Bradlaugh order I thought of you, I said to myself ’She’ll be pleased, she’ll help me to put it over.’”

She thrilled at this, she even suffered him, for some reason unknown to herself, to take her arm again.

“How could I help you?”

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“Oh, in a thousand ways—you ought to know, you do a good deal of thinking for me, and you can help me by just being there. I can’t explain it, but I feel somehow that things will go right. I’ve come to depend on you.”

He was a little surprised to find himself saying these things he had not intended to say, and the lighter touch he had always possessed in dealing with the other sex, making him the envied of his friends, had apparently abandoned him. He was appalled at the possibility of losing her.

“I’ve never met a woman like you,” he went on, as she remained silent. “You’re different—I don’t know what it is about you, but you are.” His voice was low, caressing, his head was bent down to her, his shoulder pressed against her shoulder. “I’ve never had a woman friend before, I’ve never wanted one until now.”

She wondered about his wife.

“You’ve got brains—I’ve never met a woman with brains.”

“Oh, is that why?” she exclaimed.

“You’re beautiful,” he whispered. “It’s queer, but I didn’t know it at first. You’re more beautiful to-night than I’ve ever seen you.”

They had come almost to Warren Street. Suddenly realizing that they were standing in the light, that people were passing to and fro over the end of the bridge, she drew away from him once more, this time more gently.

“Let’s walk back a little way,” he proposed.

“I must go home—it’s late.”

“It’s only nine o’clock.”

“I have an errand to do, and they’ll expect me. Good night.”

“Just one more turn!” he pleaded.

But she shook her head, backing away from him.

“You’ll see me to-morrow,” she told him. She didn’t know why she said that. She hurried along Warren Street without once looking over her shoulder; her feet seemed scarcely to touch the ground, the sound of music was in her ears, the lights sparkled. She had had an adventure, at last, an adventure that magically had transformed her life! She was beautiful! No one had ever told her that before. And he had said that he

needed her. She smiled as, with an access of tenderness, in spite of his experience and power she suddenly felt years older than Ditmar. She could help him!...

She was breathless when she reached the shop in Faber Street.

“I hope I haven’t kept you waiting,” she said.

“Oh no, we don’t close until ten,” answered the saleswoman. She was seated quietly sewing under the lamp.

“I wonder whether you’d mind if I put on my old suit again, and carried this?” Janet asked.

The expression of sympathy and understanding in the woman’s eyes, as she rose, brought the blood swiftly to Janet’s face. She felt that her secret had been guessed. The change effected, Janet went homeward swiftly, to encounter, on the corner of Faber Street, her sister Lise, whose attention was immediately attracted by the bundle.

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“What have you got there, angel face?” she demanded.

“A new suit,” said Janet.

“You don’t tell me—where’d you get it? at the Paris?”

“No, at Dowling’s.”

“Say, I’ll bet it was that plain blue thing marked down to twenty!”

“Well, what if it was?”

Lise, when surprised or scornful, had a peculiarly irritating way of whistling through her teeth.

“Twenty bucks! Gee, you’ll be getting your clothes in Boston next. Well, as sure as I live when I went by that window the other day when they first knocked it down I said to Sadie, `those are the rags Janet would buy if she had the ready.’ Have you got another raise out of Ditmar?”

“If I have, it isn’t any business of yours,” Janet retorted. “I’ve got a right to do as I please with my own money.”

“Oh sure,” said Lise, and added darkly: “I guess Ditmar likes to see you look well.”

After this Janet refused obstinately to speak to Lise, to answer, when they reached home, her pleadings and complaints to their mother that Janet had bought a new suit and refused to exhibit it. And finally, when they had got to bed, Janet lay long awake in passionate revolt against this new expression of the sordidness and lack of privacy in which she was forced to live, made the more intolerable by the close, sultry darkness of the room and the snoring of Lise.

In the morning, however, after a groping period of semiconsciousness during the ringing of the bells, the siren startled her into awareness and alertness. It had not wholly lost its note of terror, but the note had somehow become exhilarating, an invitation to adventure and to life; and Lise’s sarcastic comments as to the probable reasons why she did not put on the new suit had host their power of exasperation. Janet compromised, wearing a blouse of china silk hitherto reserved for “best.” The day was bright, and she went rapidly toward the mill, glorying in the sunshine and the autumn sharpness of the air; and her thoughts were not so much of Ditmar as of something beyond him, of which he was the medium. She was going, not to meet him, but to meet that. When she reached the office she felt weak, her fingers trembled as she took off her hat and jacket and began to sort out the mail. And she had to calm herself with the assurance that her relationship with Ditmar had undergone no change. She had merely met him by the canal, and he had talked to her. That was all. He had, of course, taken her arm: it

tingled when she remembered it. But when he suddenly entered the room her heart gave a bound. He closed the door, he took off his hat, and stood gazing at her—while she continued arranging letters. Presently she was forced to glance at him. His bearing, his look, his confident smile all proclaimed that he, at least, believed things to be changed. He glowed with health and vigour, with an aggressiveness from which she shrank, yet found delicious.

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“How are you this morning?” he said at last—this morning as distinguished from all other mornings.

“I’m well, as usual,” she answered. She herself was sometimes surprised by her ability to remain outwardly calm.

“Why did you run away from me last night?”

“I didn’t run away, I had to go home,” she said, still arranging the letters.

“We could have had a little walk. I don’t believe you had to go home at all. You just wanted an excuse to get away from me.”

“I didn’t need an excuse,” she told him. He moved toward her, but she took a paper from the desk and carried it to a file across the room.

“I thought we were going to be friends,” he said.

“Being friends doesn’t mean being foolish,” she retorted. “And Mr. Orcutt’s waiting to see you.”

“Let him wait.”

He sat down at his desk, but his blood was warm, and he read the typewritten words of the topmost letter of the pile without so much as grasping the meaning of them. From time to time he glanced up at Janet as she flitted about the room. By George, she was more desirable than he had ever dared to imagine! He felt temporarily balked, but hopeful. On his way to the mill he had dwelt with Epicurean indulgence on this sight of her, and he had not been disappointed. He had also thought that he might venture upon more than the mere feasting of his eyes, yet found an inspiring alleviation in the fact that she by no means absolutely repulsed him. Her attitude toward him had undergone a subtle transformation. There could be no doubt of that. She was almost coquettish. His eyes lingered. The china silk blouse was slightly open at the neck, suggesting the fullness of her throat; it clung to the outline of her shoulders. Overcome by an impulse he could not control, he got up and went toward her, but she avoided him.

“I’ll tell Mr. Orcutt you’ve come,” she said, rather breathlessly, as she reached the door and opened it. Ditmar halted in his steps at the sight of the tall, spectacled figure of the superintendent on the threshold.

Orcutt hesitated, looking from one to the other.

“I’ve been waiting for you,” he said, after a moment, “the rest of that lot didn’t come in this morning. I’ve telephoned to the freight agent.”

Ditmar stared at him uncomprehendingly. Orcutt repeated the information.

“Oh well, keep after him, get him to trace them.”

“I’m doing that,” replied the conscientious Orcutt.

“How’s everything else going?” Ditmar demanded, with unlooked-for geniality. “You mustn’t take things too hard, Orcutt, don’t wear yourself out.”

Mr. Orcutt was relieved. He had expected an outburst of the exasperation that lately had characterized his superior. They began to chat. Janet had escaped.

“Miss Bumpus told me you wanted to see me. I was just going to ring you up,” Ditmar informed him.

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“She’s a clever young woman, seems to take such an interest in things,” Orcutt observed. “And she’s always on the job. Only yesterday I saw her going through the mill with young Caldwell.”

Ditmar dropped the paper-weight he held.

“Oh, she went through, did she?”

After Orcutt departed he sat for awhile whistling a tune, from a popular musical play, keeping time by drumming with his fingers on the desk.

That Mr. Semple, the mill treasurer, came down from Boston that morning to confer with Ditmar was for Janet in the nature of a reprieve. She sat by her window, and as her fingers flew over the typewriter keys she was swept by surges of heat in which ecstasy and shame and terror were strangely commingled. A voice within her said, “This can’t go on, this can’t go on! It’s too terrible! Everyone in the office will notice it—there will be a scandal. I ought to go away while there is yet time—to-day.” Though the instinct of flight was strong within her, she was filled with rebellion at the thought of leaving when Adventure was flooding her drab world with light, even as the mill across the waters was transfigured by the heavy golden wash of the autumn sun. She had made at length the discovery that Adventure had to do with Man, was inconceivable without him.

Racked by these conflicting impulses of self-preservation on the one hand and what seemed self-realization on the other, she started when, toward the middle of the afternoon, she heard Ditmar’s voice summoning her to take his letters; and went palpitating, leaving the door open behind her, seating herself on the far side of the desk, her head bent over her book. Her neck, where her hair grew in wisps behind her ear, seemed to burn: Ditmar’s glance was focussed there. Her hands were cold as she wrote.... Then, like a deliverer, she saw young Caldwell coming in from the outer office, holding a card in his hand which he gave to Ditmar, who sat staring at it.

“Siddons?” he said. “Who’s Siddons?”

Janet, who had risen, spoke up.

“Why, he’s been making the Hampton `survey.’ You wrote him you’d see him—don’t you remember, Mr. Ditmar?”

“Don’t go!” exclaimed Ditmar. “You can’t tell what those confounded reformers will accuse you of if you don’t have a witness.”

Janet sat down again. The sharpness of Ditmar’s tone was an exhilarating reminder of the fact that, in dealing with strangers, he had come more or less to rely on her instinctive judgment; while the implied appeal of his manner on such occasions emphasized the pleasurable sense of his dependence, of her own usefulness. Besides,

she had been curious about the `survey' at the time it was first mentioned, she wished to hear Ditmar's views concerning it. Mr. Siddons proved to be a small and sallow young man with a pointed nose and bright, bulbous brown eyes like a chipmunk's. Indeed, he reminded one of a chipmunk. As he whisked himself in and seized Ditmar's hand he gave a confused impression of polite self-effacement as well as of dignity and self-assertion; he had the air of one who expects opposition, and though by no means desiring it, is prepared to deal with it. Janet smiled. She had a sudden impulse to drop the heavy book that lay on the corner of the desk to see if he would jump.

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“How do you do, Mr. Ditmar?” he said. “I’ve been hoping to have this pleasure.”

“My secretary, Miss Bumpus,” said Ditmar.

Mr. Siddons quivered and bowed. Ditmar, sinking ponderously into his chair, seemed suddenly, ironically amused, grinning at Janet as he opened a drawer of his desk and offered the visitor a cigar.

“Thanks, I don’t smoke,” said Mr. Siddons.

Ditmar lit one for himself.

“Now, what can I do for you?” he asked.

“Well, as I wrote you in my letter, I was engaged to make as thorough an examination as possible of the living conditions and housing of the operatives in the city of Hampton. I’m sure you’d be interested in hearing something of the situation we found.”

“I suppose you’ve been through our mills,” said Ditmar.

“No, the fact is—”

“You ought to go through. I think it might interest you,” Ditmar put a slight emphasis on the pronoun. “We rather pride ourselves on making things comfortable and healthy for our people.”

“I’ve no doubt of it—in fact, I’ve been so informed. It’s because of your concern for the welfare of your workers in the mills that I ventured to come and talk to you of how most of them live when they’re at home,” replied Siddons, as Janet thought, rather neatly. “Perhaps, though living in Hampton, you don’t quite realize what the conditions are. I know a man who has lived in Boston ten years and who hasn’t ever seen the Bunker Hill monument.”

“The Bunker Hill monument’s a public affair,” retorted Ditmar, “anybody can go there who has enough curiosity and interest. But I don’t see how you can expect me to follow these people home and make them clean up their garbage and wash their babies. I shouldn’t want anybody to interfere with my private affairs.”

“But when you get to a point where private affairs become a public menace?” Siddons objected. “Mr. Ditmar, I’ve seen block after block of tenements ready to crumble. There are no provisions for foundations, thickness of walls, size of timbers and columns, and if these houses had been deliberately erected to make a bonfire they couldn’t have answered the purpose better. If it were not for the danger to life and the pity of making thousands of families homeless, a conflagration would be a blessing, although I believe the entire north or south side of the city would go under certain conditions. The best

thing you could do would be to burn whole rows of these tenements, they are ideal breeding grounds for disease. In the older sections of the city you've got hundreds of rear houses here, houses moved back on the lots, in some extreme cases with only four-foot courts littered with refuse,—houses without light, without ventilation, and many of the rooms where these people are cooking and eating and sleeping are so damp and foul they're not fit to put dogs in. You've got some blocks with a density of over five hundred to the acre, and your average density is considerably over a hundred."

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“Are things any worse than in any other manufacturing city?” asked Ditmar.

“That isn’t the point,” said Siddons. “The point is that they’re bad, they’re dangerous, they’re inhuman. If you could go into these tenements as I have done and see the way some of these people live, it would make you sick the Poles and Lithuanians and Italians especially. You wouldn’t treat cattle that way. In some households of five rooms, including the kitchen, I found as many as fourteen, fifteen, and once seventeen people living. You’ve got an alarming infant death-rate.”

“Isn’t it because these people want to live that way?” Ditmar inquired. “They actually like it, they wouldn’t be happy in anything but a pig-sty—they had ’em in Europe. And what do you expect us to do? Buy land and build flats for them? Inside of a month they’d have all the woodwork stripped off for kindling, the drainage stopped up, the bathtubs filled with ashes. I know, because it’s been tried.”

Tilted back in his chair, he blew a cloud of smoke toward the ceiling, and his eyes sought Janet’s. She avoided them, resenting a little the assumption of approval she read in them. Her mind, sensitive to new ideas, had been keenly stimulated as she listened to Siddons, who began patiently to dwell once more on the ill effect of the conditions he had discovered on the welfare of the entire community. She had never thought of this. She was surprised that Ditmar should seem to belittle it. Siddons was a new type in her experience. She could understand and to a certain extent maliciously enjoy Ditmar’s growing exasperation with him; he had a formal, precise manner of talking, as though he spent most of his time presenting cases in committees: and in warding off Ditmar’s objections he was forever indulging in such maddening phrases as, “Before we come to that, let me say a word just here.” Ditmar hated words. His outbursts, his efforts to stop the flow of them were not unlike the futile charges of a large and powerful animal harassed by a smaller and more agile one. With nimble politeness, with an exasperating air of deference to Ditmar’s opinions, Mr. Siddons gave ground, only to return to the charge; yet, despite a manner and method which, when contrasted to Ditmar’s, verged on the ludicrous, Mr. Siddons had a force and fire of his own, nervous, almost fanatical: when he dwelt on the misery he had seen, and his voice trembled from the intensity of his feeling, Janet began to be moved. It was odd, considering the struggle for existence of her own family, that these foreigners had remained outside the range of her sympathy.

“I guess you’ll find,” Ditmar had interrupted peremptorily, “I guess you’ll find, if you look up the savings banks statistics, these people have got millions tucked away. And they send a lot of it to the other side, they go back themselves, and though they live like cattle, they manage to buy land. Ask the real estate men. Why, I could show you a dozen who worked in the mills a few years ago and are capitalists to-day.”

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“I don’t doubt it, Mr. Ditmar,” Siddons gracefully conceded. “But what does it prove? Merely the cruelty of an economic system based on ruthless competition. The great majority who are unable to survive the test pay the price. And the community also pays the price, the state and nation pay it. And we have this misery on our consciences. I’ve no doubt you could show me some who have grown rich, but if you would let me I could take you to families in desperate want, living in rooms too dark to read in at midday in clear weather, where the husband doesn’t get more than seven dollars a week when the mills are running full time, where the woman has to look out for the children and work for the lodgers, and even with lodgers they get into debt, and the woman has to go into the mills to earn money for winter clothing. I’ve seen enough instances of this kind to offset the savings bank argument. And even then, when you have a family where the wife and older children work, where the babies are put out to board, where there are three and four lodgers in a room, why do you suppose they live that way? Isn’t it in the hope of freeing themselves ultimately from these very conditions? And aren’t these conditions a disgrace to Hampton and America?”

“Well, what am I to do about it?” Ditmar demanded.

“I see that these operatives have comfortable and healthful surroundings in the mill, I’ve spent money to put in the latest appliances. That’s more than a good many mills I could mention attempt.”

“You are a person of influence, Mr. Ditmar, you have more influence than any man in Hampton. You can bring pressure to bear on the city council to enforce and improve the building ordinances, you can organize a campaign of public opinion against certain property owners.”

“Yes,” retorted Ditmar, “and what then? You raise the rents, and you won’t get anybody to live in the houses. They’ll move out to settlements like Glendale full of dirt and vermin and disease and live as they’re accustomed to. What you reformers are actually driving at is that we should raise wages—isn’t it? If we raised wages they’d live like rats anyway. I give you credit for sincerity, Mr. Siddons, but I don’t want you to think I’m not as much interested in the welfare of these people as you and the men behind you. The trouble is, you only see one side of this question. When you’re in my position, you’re up against hard facts. We can’t pay a dubber or a drawing tender any more than he’s worth, whether he has a wife or children in the mills or whether he hasn’t. We’re in competition with other mills, we’re in competition with the South. We can’t regulate the cost of living. We do our best to make things right in the mills, and that’s all we can do. We can’t afford to be sentimental about life. Competition’s got to be the rule, the world’s made that way. Some are efficient and some aren’t. Good God, any man who’s had anything to do with hiring

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labour and running a plant has that drummed into him hard. You talk about ordinances, laws—there are enough laws and ordinances in this city and in this state right now. If we have any more the mills will have to shut down, and these people will starve—all of 'em." Ditmar's chair came down on its four legs, and he flung his cigar away. "Send me a copy of your survey when it's published. I'll look it over."

"Well, what do you think of the nerve of a man like that?" Ditmar exploded, when Mr. Siddons had bowed himself out. "Comes in here to advise me that it's my business to look out for the whole city of Hampton. I'd like to see him up against this low-class European labour trying to run a mill with them. They're here one day and there the next, they don't know what loyalty is. You've got to drive 'em—if you give 'em an inch they'll jump at your throat, dynamite your property. Why, there's nothing I wouldn't do for them if I could depend on them, I'd build 'em houses, I'd have automobiles to take 'em home. As it is, I do my best, though they don't deserve it,—in slack seasons I run half time when I oughtn't to be running at all."

His tone betrayed an effort of self-justification, and his irritation had been increased by the suspicion in Janet of a certain lack of the sympathy on which he had counted. She sat silent, gazing searchingly at his face.

"What's the matter?" he demanded. "You don't mean to say you agree with that kind of talk?"

"I was wondering—" she began.

"What?"

"If you were—if you could really understand those who are driven to work in order to keep alive?"

"Understand them! Why not?" he asked.

"Because—because you're on top, you've always been successful, you're pretty much your own master—and that makes it different. I'm not blaming you—in your place I'd be the same, I'm sure. But this man, Siddons, made me think. I've lived like that, you see, I know what it is, in a way."

"Not like these foreigners!" he protested.

"Oh, almost as bad," she cried with vehemence, and Ditmar, stopped suddenly in his pacing as by a physical force, looked at her with the startled air of the male who has inadvertently touched off one of the many hidden springs in the feminine emotional mechanism. "How do you know what it is to live in a squalid, ugly street, in dark little

rooms that smell of cooking, and not be able to have any of the finer, beautiful things in life? Unless you'd wanted these things as I've wanted them, you couldn't know. Oh, I can understand what it would feel like to strike, to wish to dynamite men like you!"

"You can!" he exclaimed in amazement. "You!"

"Yes, me. You don't understand these people, you couldn't feel sorry for them any more than you could feel sorry for me. You want them to run your mills for you, you don't want to know how they feel or how they live, and you just want me—for your pleasure."

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He was indeed momentarily taken aback by this taunt, which no woman in his experience had had the wit and spirit to fling at him, but he was not the type of man to be shocked by it. On the contrary, it swept away his irritation, and as a revelation of her inner moltenness stirred him to a fever heat as he approached and stood over her.

“You little—panther!” he whispered. “You want beautiful things, do you? Well, I’ll give ’em to you. I’ll take care of you.”

“Do you think I want them from you?” she retorted, almost in tears. “Do you think I want anybody to take care of me? That shows how little you know me. I want to be independent, to do my work and pay for what I get.”

Janet herself was far from comprehending the complexity of her feelings. Ditmar had not apologized or feigned an altruism for which she would indeed have despised him. The ruthlessness of his laugh—the laugh of the red-blooded man who makes laws that he himself may be lawless shook her with a wild appeal. “What do I care about any others—I want you!” such was its message. And against this paradoxical wish to be conquered, intensified by the magnetic field of his passion, battled her self-assertion, her pride, her innate desire to be free, to escape now from a domination the thought of which filled her with terror. She felt his cheek brushing against her hair, his fingers straying along her arm; for the moment she was hideously yet deliciously powerless. Then the emotion of terror conquered—terror of the unknown—and she sprang away, dropping her note-book and running to the window, where she stood swaying.

“Janet, you’re killing me,” she heard him say. “For God’s sake, why can’t you trust me?”

She did not answer, but gazed out at the primrose lights beginning to twinkle fantastically in the distant mills. Presently she turned. Ditmar was in his chair. She crossed the room to the electric switch, turning on the flood of light, picked up her tote-book and sat down again.

“Don’t you intend to answer your letters?” she asked.

He reached out gropingly toward the pile of his correspondence, seized the topmost letter, and began to dictate, savagely. She experienced a certain exultation, a renewed and pleasurable sense of power as she took down his words.

THE DWELLING-PLACE OF LIGHT

By *Winston Churchill*
volume 2

CHAPTER IX

At certain moments during the days that followed the degree of tension her relationship with Ditmar had achieved tested the limits of Janet's ingenuity and powers of resistance. Yet the sense of mastery at being able to hold such a man in leash was by no means unpleasurable to a young woman of her vitality and spirit. There was always the excitement that the leash might break—and then what? Here was a situation, she knew instinctively, that

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could not last, one fraught with all sorts of possibilities, intoxicating or abhorrent to contemplate; and for that very reason fascinating. When she was away from Ditmar and tried to think about it she fell into an abject perplexity, so full was it of anomalies and contradictions, of conflicting impulses; so far beyond her knowledge and experience. For Janet had been born in an age which is rapidly discarding blanket morality and taboos, which has as yet to achieve the morality of scientific knowledge, of the individual instance. Tradition, convention, the awful examples portrayed for gain in the movies, even her mother's pessimistic attitude in regard to the freedom with which the sexes mingle to-day were powerless to influence her. The thought, however, that she might fundamentally resemble her sister Lise, despite a fancied superiority, did occasionally shake her and bring about a revulsion against Ditmar. Janet's problem was in truth, though she failed so to specialize it, the supreme problem of our time: what is the path to self-realization? how achieve emancipation from the commonplace?

Was she in love with Ditmar? The question was distasteful, she avoided it, for enough of the tatters of orthodox Christianity clung to her to cause her to feel shame when she contemplated the feelings he aroused in her. It was when she asked herself what his intentions were that her resentment burned, pride and a sense of her own value convinced her that he had deeply insulted her in not offering marriage. Plainly, he did not intend to offer marriage; on the other hand, if he had done so, a profound, self-respecting and moral instinct in her would, in her present mood, have led her to refuse. She felt a fine scorn for the woman who, under the circumstances, would insist upon a bond and all a man's worldly goods in return for that which it was her privilege to give freely; while the notion of servility, of economic dependence—though she did not so phrase it—repelled her far more than the possibility of social ruin.

This she did not contemplate at all; her impulse to leave Hampton and Ditmar had nothing to do with that....

Away from Ditmar, this war of inclinations possessed her waking mind, invaded her dreams. When she likened herself to the other exploited beings he drove to run his mills and fill his orders,—of whom Mr. Siddons had spoken—her resolution to leave Hampton gained such definite ascendancy that her departure seemed only a matter of hours.

In this perspective Ditmar appeared so ruthless, his purpose to use her and fling her away so palpable, that she despised herself for having hesitated. A longing for retaliation consumed her; she wished to hurt him before she left. At such times, however, unforeseen events invariably intruded to complicate her feelings and alter her plans. One evening at supper, for instance, when she seemed at last to have achieved the comparative peace of mind that follows a decision after struggle, she gradually became aware of an outburst from Hannah concerning the stove, the condition of which

for many months had been a menace to the welfare of the family. Edward, it appeared, had remarked mildly on the absence of beans.

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“Beans!” Hannah cried. “You’re lucky to have any supper at all. I just wish I could get you to take a look at that oven—there’s a hole you can put your hand through, if you’ve a mind to. I’ve done my best, I’ve made out to patch it from time to time, and to-day I had Mr. Tiernan in. He says it’s a miracle I’ve been able to bake anything. A new one’ll cost thirty dollars, and I don’t know where the money’s coming from to buy it. And the fire-box is most worn through.”

“Well, mother, we’ll see what we can do,” said Edward.

“You’re always seeing what you can do, but I notice you never do anything,” retorted Hannah; and Edward had the wisdom not to reply. Beside his place lay a lengthy, close-written letter, and from time to time, as he ate his canned pears, his hand turned over one of its many sheets.

“It’s from Eben Wheeler, says he’s been considerably troubled with asthma,” he observed presently. “His mother was a Bumpus, a daughter of Caleb-descended from Robert, who went from Dolton to Tewksbury in 1816, and fought in the war of 1812. I’ve told you about him. This Caleb was born in ’53, and he’s living now with his daughter’s family in Detroit.... Son-in-law’s named Nott, doing well with a construction company. Now I never could find out before what became of Robert’s descendants. He married Sarah Styles” (reading painfully) “`and they had issue, John, Robert, Anne, Susan, Eliphalet. John went to Middlebury, Vermont, and married ’”

Hannah, gathering up the plates, clattered them together noisily.

“A lot of good it does us to have all that information about Eben Wheeler’s asthma!” she complained. “It’ll buy us a new stove, I guess. Him and his old Bumpus papers! If the house burned down over our heads that’s all he’d think of.”

As she passed to and fro from the dining-room to the kitchen Hannah’s lamentations continued, grew more and more querulous. Accustomed as Janet was to these frequent arraignments of her father’s inefficiency, it was gradually borne in upon her now—-despite a preoccupation with her own fate—that the affair thus plaintively voiced by her mother was in effect a family crisis of the first magnitude. She was stirred anew to anger and revolt against a life so precarious and sordid as to be threatened in its continuity by the absurd failure of a stove, when, glancing at her sister, she felt a sharp pang of self-conviction, of self-disgust. Was she, also, like that, indifferent and self-absorbed? Lise, in her evening finery, looking occasionally at the clock, was awaiting the hour set for a rendezvous, whiling away the time with the Boston evening sheet whose glaring red headlines stretched across the page. When the newspaper fell to her lap a dreamy expression clouded Lise’s eyes. She was thinking of some man! Quickly Janet looked away, at her father, only to be repelled anew by the expression, almost of fatuity, she discovered on his face as he bent over the letter once more.

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Suddenly she experienced an overwhelming realization of the desperation of Hannah's plight,—the destiny of spending one's days, without sympathy, toiling in the confinement of these rooms to supply their bodily needs. Never had a destiny seemed so appalling. And yet Janet resented that pity. The effect of it was to fetter and inhibit; from the moment of its intrusion she was no longer a free agent, to leave Hampton and Ditmar when she chose. Without her, this family was helpless. She rose, and picked up some of the dishes. Hannah snatched them from her hands.

"Leave 'em alone, Janet!" she said with unaccustomed sharpness. "I guess I ain't too feeble to handle 'em yet."

And a flash of new understanding came to Janet. The dishes were vicarious, a substitute for that greater destiny out of which Hannah had been cheated by fate. A substitute, yes, and perhaps become something of a mania, like her father's Bumpus papers.... Janet left the room swiftly, entered the bedroom, put on her coat and hat, and went out. Across the street the light in Mr. Tiernan's shop was still burning, and through the window she perceived Mr. Tiernan himself tilted back in his chair, his feet on the table, the tip of his nose pointed straight at the ceiling. When the bell betrayed the opening of the door he let down his chair on the floor with a bang.

"Why, it's Miss Janet!" he exclaimed. "How are you this evening, now? I was just hoping some one would pay me a call."

Twinkling at her, he managed, somewhat magically, to dispel her temper of pessimism, and she was moved to reply:—"You know you were having a beautiful time, all by yourself."

"A beautiful time, is it? Maybe it's because I was dreaming of some young lady a-coming to pay me a visit."

"Well, dreams never come up to expectations, do they?"

"Then it's dreaming I am, still," retorted Mr. Tiernan, quickly.

Janet laughed. His tone, though bantering, was respectful. One of the secrets of Mr. Tiernan's very human success was due to his ability to estimate his fellow creatures. His manner of treating Janet, for instance, was quite different from that he employed in dealing with Lise. In the course of one interview he had conveyed to Lise, without arousing her antagonism, the conviction that it was wiser to trust him than to attempt to pull wool over his eyes. Janet had the intelligence to trust him; and to-night, as she faced him, the fact was brought home to her with peculiar force that this wiry-haired little man was the person above all others of her immediate acquaintance to seek in time of

trouble. It was his great quality. Moreover, Mr. Tiernan, even in his morning greetings as she passed, always contrived to convey to her, in some unaccountable fashion, the admiration and regard in which he held her, and the effect of her contact with him was invariably to give her a certain objective image of herself, an increased self-confidence and self-respect. For instance, by the light dancing in Mr. Tiernan's eyes as he regarded her, she saw herself now as the mainstay of the helpless family in the clay-yellow flat across the street. And there was nothing, she was convinced, Mr. Tiernan did not know about that family. So she said:—"I've come to see about the stove."

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“Sure,” he replied, as much as to say that the visit was not unexpected. “Well, I’ve been thinking about it, Miss Janet. I’ve got a stove here I know’ll suit your mother. It’s a Reading, it’s almost new. Ye’d better be having a look at it yourself.”

He led her into a chaos of stoves, grates, and pipes at the back of the store.

“It’s in need of a little polish,” he added, as he turned on a light, “but it’s sound, and a good baker, and economical with coal.” He opened the oven and took off the lids.

“I’m afraid I don’t know much about stoves,” she told him. “But I’ll trust your judgment. How much is it?” she inquired hesitatingly.

He ran his hand through his corkscrewed hair, his familiar gesture.

“Well, I’m willing to let ye have it for twenty-five dollars. If that’s too much—mebbe we can find another.”

“Can you put it in to-morrow morning?” she asked.

“I can that,” he said. She drew out her purse. “Ye needn’t be paying for it all at once,” he protested, laying a hand on her arm. “You won’t be running away.”

“Oh, I’d rather—I have the money,” she declared hurriedly; and she turned her back that he might not perceive, when she had extracted the bills, how little was left in her purse.

“I’ll wager ye won’t be wanting another soon,” he said, as he escorted her to the door. And he held it open, politely, looking after her, until she had crossed the street, calling out a cheerful “Goodnight” that had in it something of a benediction. She avoided the dining-room and went straight to bed, in a strange medley of feelings. The self-sacrifice had brought a certain self-satisfaction not wholly unpleasant. She had been equal to the situation, and a part of her being approved of this,—a part which had been suppressed in another mood wherein she had become convinced that self-realization lay elsewhere. Life was indeed a bewildering thing....

The next morning, at breakfast, though her mother’s complaints continued, Janet was silent as to her purchase, and she lingered on her return home in the evening because she now felt a reluctance to appear in the role of protector and preserver of the family. She would have preferred, if possible, to give the stove anonymously. Not that the expression of Hannah’s gratitude was maudlin; she glared at Janet when she entered the dining-room and exclaimed: “You hadn’t ought to have gone and done it!”

And Janet retorted, with almost equal vehemence:—“Somebody had to do it—didn’t they? Who else was there?”

“It’s a shame for you to spend your money on such things. You’d ought to save it you’ll need it,” Hannah continued illogically.

“It’s lucky I had the money,” said Janet.

Both Janet and Hannah knew that these recriminations, from the other, were the explosive expressions of deep feeling. Janet knew that her mother was profoundly moved by her sacrifice. She herself was moved by Hannah’s plight, but tenderness and pity were complicated by a renewed sense of rebellion against an existence that exacted such a situation.

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“I hope the stove’s all right, mother,” she said. “Mr. Tiernan seemed to think it was a good one.”

“It’s a different thing,” declared Hannah. “I was just wondering this evening, before you came in, how I ever made out to cook anything on the other. Come and see how nice it looks.”

Janet followed her into the kitchen. As they stood close together gazing at the new purchase Janet was uncomfortably aware of drops that ran a little way in the furrows of Hannah’s cheeks, stopped, and ran on again. She seized her apron and clapped it to her face.

“You hadn’t ought to be made to do it!” she sobbed.

And Janet was suddenly impelled to commit an act rare in their intercourse. She kissed her, swiftly, on the cheek, and fled from the room....

Supper was an ordeal. Janet did not relish her enthronement as a heroine, she deplored and even resented her mother’s attitude toward her father, which puzzled her; for the studied cruelty of it seemed to belie her affection for him. Every act and gesture and speech of Hannah’s took on the complexion of an invidious reference to her reliability as compared with Edward’s worthlessness as a provider; and she contrived in some sort to make the meal a sacrament in commemoration of her elder daughter’s act.

“I guess you notice the difference in that pork,” she would exclaim, and when he praised it and attributed its excellence to Janet’s gift Hannah observed: “As long as you ain’t got a son, you’re lucky to have a daughter like her!”

Janet squirmed. Her father’s acceptance of his comparative worthlessness was so abject that her pity was transferred to him, though she scorned him, as on former occasions, for the self-depreciation that made him powerless before her mother’s reproaches. After the meal was over he sat listlessly on the sofa, like a visitor whose presence is endured, pathetically refraining from that occupation in which his soul found refreshment and peace, the compilation of the Bumpus genealogy. That evening the papers remained under the lid of the desk in the corner, untouched.

What troubled Janet above all, however, was the attitude of Lise, who also came in for her share of implied reproach. Of late Lise had become an increased source of anxiety to Hannah, who was unwisely resolved to make this occasion an object lesson. And though parental tenderness had often moved her to excuse and defend Lise for an increasing remissness in failing to contribute to the household expenses, she was now quite relentless in her efforts to wring from Lise an acknowledgment of the nobility of her sister’s act, of qualities in Janet that she, Lise, might do well to cultivate. Lise was equally determined to withhold any such acknowledgment; in her face grew that familiar

mutinous look that Hannah invariably failed to recognize as a danger signal; and with it another —the sophisticated expression of one who knows life and ridicules the lack of such knowledge in others. Its implication was made certain when the two girls were alone in their bedroom after supper. Lise, feverishly occupied with her toilet, on her departure broke the silence there by inquiring:—“Say, if I had your easy money, I might buy a stove, too. How much does Ditmar give you, sweetheart?”

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Janet, infuriated, flew at her sister. Lise struggled to escape.

“Leave me go” she whimpered in genuine alarm, and when at length she was released she went to the mirror and began straightening her hat, which had flopped to one side of her head. “I didn’t mean nothin’, I was only kiddie’ you—what’s the use of gettin’ nutty over a jest?”

“I’m not like-you,” said Janet.

“I was only kiddin’, I tell you,” insisted Lise, with a hat pin in her mouth. “Forget it.”

When Lise had gone out Janet sat down in the rocking-chair and began to rock agitatedly. What had really made her angry, she began to perceive, was the realization of a certain amount of truth in her sister’s intimation concerning Ditmar. Why should she have, in Lise, continually before her eyes a degraded caricature of her own aspirations and ideals? or was Lise a mirror—somewhat tarnished, indeed—in which she read the truth about herself? For some time Janet had more than suspected that her sister possessed a new lover—a lover whom she refrained from discussing; an ominous sign, since it had been her habit to dangle her conquests before Janet’s eyes, to discuss their merits and demerits with an engaging though cynical freedom. Although the existence of this gentleman was based on evidence purely circumstantial, Janet was inclined to believe him of a type wholly different from his predecessors; and the fact that his attentions were curiously intermittent and irregular inclined her to the theory that he was not a resident of Hampton. What was he like? It revolted her to reflect that he might in some ways possibly resemble Ditmar. Thus he became the object of a morbid speculation, especially at such times as this, when Lise attired herself in her new winter finery and went forth to meet him. Janet, also, had recently been self-convicted of sharing with Lise the same questionable tendency toward self-adornment to please the eye of man. The very next Saturday night after she had indulged in that mad extravagance of the blue suit, Lise had brought home from the window of The Paris in Faber Street a hat that had excited the cupidity and admiration of Miss Schuler and herself, and in front of which they had stood languishing on three successive evenings. In its acquisition Lise had expended almost the whole of a week’s salary. Its colour was purple, on three sides were massed drooping lilac feathers, but over the left ear the wide brim was caught up and held by a crescent of brilliant paste stones. Shortly after this purchase—the next week, in fact,—The Paris had alluringly and craftily displayed, for the tempting sum of $6.29, the very cloak ordained by providence to “go” with the hat. Miss Schuler declared it would be a crime to fail to take advantage of such an opportunity but the trouble was that Lise had had to wait for two more pay-days and endure the suspense arising from the possibility that some young lady of taste and means might meanwhile become its happy proprietor.

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Had not the saleslady been obdurate, Lise would have had it on credit; but she did succeed, by an initial payment the ensuing Saturday, in having it withdrawn from public gaze. The second Saturday Lise triumphantly brought the cloak home; a velvet cloak, —if the eyes could be believed,—velvet bordering on plush, with a dark purple ground delicately and artistically spotted with a lilac to match the hat feathers, and edged with a material which—if not too impudently examined and no questions asked—might be mistaken, by the uninitiated male, for the fur of a white fox. Both investments had been made, needless to say, on the strength of Janet's increased salary; and Lise, when Janet had surprised her before the bureau rapturously surveying the combination, justified herself with a defiant apology.

"I just had to have something—what with winter coming on," she declared, seizing the hand mirror in order to view the back. "You might as well get your clothes chick, while you're about it—and I didn't have to dig up twenty bones, neither—nor anything like it—" a reflection on Janet's most blue suit and her abnormal extravagance. For it was Lise's habit to carry the war into the enemy's country. "Sadie's dippy about it—says it puts her in mind of one of the swells snapshotted in last Sunday's supplement. Well, dearie, how does the effect get you?" and she wheeled around for her sister's inspection.

"If you take my advice, you'll be careful not to be caught out in the rain."

"What's chewin' you now?" demanded Lise. She was not lacking in imagination of a certain sort, and Janet's remark did not fail in its purpose of summoning up a somewhat abject image of herself in wet velvet and bedraggled feathers—an image suggestive of a certain hunted type of woman Lise and her kind held in peculiar horror. And she was the more resentful because she felt, instinctively, that the memory of this suggestion would never be completely eradicated: it would persist, like a canker, to mar the completeness of her enjoyment of these clothes. She swung on Janet furiously.

"I get you, all right!" she cried. "I guess I know what's eatin' you! You've got money to burn and you're sore because I spend mine to buy what I need. You don't know how to dress yourself any more than one of them Polak girls in the mills, and you don't want anybody else to look nice."

And Janet was impelled to make a retort of almost equal crudity:—"If I were a man and saw you in those clothes I wouldn't wait for an introduction. You asked me what I thought. I don't care about the money!" she exclaimed passionately. "I've often told you you were pretty enough without having to wear that kind of thing—to make men stare at you."

"I want to know if I don't always look like a lady! And there's no man living would try to pick me up more than once." The nasal note in Lise's voice had grown higher and

shriller, she was almost weeping with anger. “You want me to go ‘round lookin’ like a floorwasher.”

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“I’d rather look like a floorwasher than—than another kind of woman,” Janet declared.

“Well, you’ve got your wish, sweetheart,” said Lise. “You needn’t be scared anybody will pick you up.”

“I’m not,” said Janet....

This quarrel had taken place a week or so before Janet’s purchase of the stove. Hannah, too, was outraged by Lise’s costume, and had also been moved to protest; futile protest. Its only effect on Lise was to convince her of the existence of a prearranged plan of persecution, to make her more secretive and sullen than ever before.

“Sometimes I just can’t believe she’s my daughter,” Hannah said dejectedly to Janet when they were alone together in the kitchen after Lise had gone out. “I’m fond of her because she’s my own flesh and blood—I’m ashamed of it, but I can’t help it. I guess it’s what the minister in Dolton used to call a visitation. I suppose I deserve it, but sometimes I think maybe if your father had been different he might have been able to put a stop to the way she’s going on. She ain’t like any of the Wenches, nor any of the Bumpuses, so far’s I’m able to find out. She just don’t seem to have any notion about right and wrong. Well, the world has got all jumbled up—it beats me.”

Hannah wrung out the mop viciously and hung it over the sink.

“I used to hope some respectable man would come along, but I’ve quit hopin’. I don’t know as any respectable man would want Lise, or that I could honestly wish him to have her.”

“Mother!” protested Janet. Sometimes, in those conversations, she was somewhat paradoxically impelled to defend her sister.

“Well, I don’t,” insisted Hannah, “that’s a fact. I’ll tell you what she looks like in that hat and cloak—a bad woman. I don’t say she is—I don’t know what I’d do if I thought she was, but I never expected my daughter to look like one.”

“Oh, Lise can take care of herself,” Janet said, in spite of certain recent misgivings.

“This town’s Sodom and Gomorrah rolled into one,” declared Hannah who, from early habit, was occasionally prone to use scriptural parallels. And after a moment’s silence she inquired: “Who’s this man that’s payin’ her attention now?”

“I don’t know,” replied Janet, “I don’t know that there’s anybody.”

“I guess there is,” said Hannah. “I used to think that that Wiley was low enough, but I could see him. It was some satisfaction. I could know the worst, anyhow.... I guess it’s about time for another flood.”

This talk had left Janet in one of these introspective states so frequent in her recent experience. Her mother had used the words “right” and “wrong.” But what was “right,” or “wrong?” There was no use asking Hannah, who—she perceived—was as confused and bewildered as herself. Did she refuse to encourage Mr. Ditmar because it was wrong? because, if she acceded to his desires, and what were often

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her own, she would be punished in an after life? She was not at all sure whether she believed in an after life,—a lack of faith that had, of late, sorely troubled her friend Eda Rawle, who had “got religion” from an itinerant evangelist and was now working off, in a “live” church, some of the emotional idealism which is the result of a balked sex instinct in young unmarried women of a certain mentality and unendowed with good looks. This was not, of course, Janet’s explanation of the change in her friend, of whom she now saw less and less. They had had arguments, in which neither gained any ground. For the first time in their intercourse, ideas had come between them, Eda having developed a surprising self-assertion when her new convictions were attacked, a dogged loyalty to a scheme of salvation that Janet found neither inspiring nor convincing. She resented being prayed for, and an Eda fervent in good works bored her more than ever. Eda was deeply pained by Janet’s increasing avoidance of her company, yet her heroine-worship persisted. Her continued regard for her friend might possibly be compared to the attitude of an orthodox Baptist who has developed a hobby, let us say, for Napoleon Bonaparte.

Janet was not wholly without remorse. She valued Eda’s devotion, she sincerely regretted the fact, on Eda’s account as well as her own, that it was a devotion of no use to her in the present crisis nor indeed in any crisis likely to confront her in life: she had felt instinctively from the first that the friendship was not founded on, mental harmony, and now it was brought home to her that Eda’s solution could never be hers. Eda would have been thrilled on learning of Ditmar’s attentions, would have advocated the adoption of a campaign leading up to matrimony. In matrimony, for Eda, the soul was safe. Eda would have been horrified that Janet should have dallied with any other relationship; God would punish her. Janet, in her conflict between alternate longing and repugnance, was not concerned with the laws and retributions of God. She felt, indeed, the need of counsel, and knew not where to turn for it, —the modern need for other than supernatural sanctions. She did not resist her desire for Ditmar because she believed, in the orthodox sense, that it was wrong, but because it involved a loss of self-respect, a surrender of the personality from the very contemplation of which she shrank. She was a true daughter of her time.

On Friday afternoon, shortly after Ditmar had begun to dictate his correspondence, Mr. Holster, the agent of the Clarendon Mill, arrived and interrupted him. Janet had taken advantage of the opportunity to file away some answered letters when her attention was distracted from her work by the conversation, which had gradually grown louder. The two men were standing by the window, facing one another, in an attitude that struck her as dramatic. Both were vital figures, dominant types which had survived and prevailed in that upper

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world of unrelenting struggle for supremacy into which, through her relation to Ditmar, she had been projected, and the significance of which she had now begun to realize. She surveyed Holster critically. He was short, heavily built, with an almost grotesque width of shoulder, a muddy complexion, thick lips, and kinky, greasy black hair that glistened in the sun. His nasal voice was complaining, yet distinctly aggressive, and he emphasized his words by gestures. The veins stood out on his forehead. She wondered what his history had been. She compared him to Ditmar, on whose dust-grey face she was quick to detect a look she had seen before—a contraction of the eyes, a tightening of the muscles of the jaw. That look, and the peculiarly set attitude of the body accompanying it, aroused in her a responsive sense of championship.

“All right, Ditmar,” she heard the other exclaim. “I tell you again you’ll never be able to pull it off.”

Ditmar’s laugh was short, defiant.

“Why not?” he asked.

“Why not! Because the fifty-four hour law goes into effect in January.”

“What’s that got to do with it?” Ditmar demanded.

“You’ll see—you’ll remember what I told you fellows at the conference after that bill went through and that damned demagogue of a governor insisted on signing it. I said, if we tried to cut wages down to a fifty-four hour basis we’d have a strike on our hands in every mill in Hampton,—didn’t I? I said it would cost us millions of dollars, and make all the other strikes we’ve had here look like fifty cents. Didn’t I say that? Hammond, our president, backed me up, and Rogers of the wool people. You remember? You were the man who stood out against it, and they listened to you, they voted to cut down the pay and say nothing about it. Wait until those first pay envelopes are opened after that law goes into effect. You’ll see what’ll happen! You’ll never be able to fill that Bradlaugh order in God’s world.”

“Oh hell,” retorted Ditmar, contemptuously. “You’re always for lying down, Holster. Why don’t you hand over your mill to the unions and go to work on a farm? You might as well, if you’re going to let the unions run the state. Why not have socialism right now, and cut out the agony? When they got the politicians to make the last cut from fifty-six to fifty-four and we kept on payin’ ’em for fifty-six, against my advice, what happened? Did they thank us? I guess not. Were they contented? Not on your life. They went right on agitating, throwing scares into the party conventions and into the House and Senate Committees,—and now it’s fifty-four hours. It’ll be fifty in a couple of years, and

then we'll have to scrap our machinery and turn over the trade to the South and donate our mills to the state for insane asylums."

"No, if we handle this thing right, we'll have the public on our side. They're getting sick of the unions now."

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Ditmar went to the desk for a cigar, bit it off, and lighted it.

“The public!” he exclaimed contemptuously. “A whole lot of good they’ll do us.”

Holster approached him, menacingly, until the two men stood almost touching, and for a moment it seemed to Janet as if the agent of the Clarendon were ready to strike Ditmar. She held her breath, her blood ran faster,—the conflict between these two made an elemental appeal.

“All right—remember what I say—wait and see where you come out with that order.” Holster’s voice trembled with anger. He hesitated, and left the office abruptly. Ditmar stood gazing after him for a moment and then, taking his cigar from his mouth, turned and smiled at Janet and seated himself in his chair. His eyes, still narrowed, had in them a gleam of triumph that thrilled her. Combat seemed to stimulate and energize him.

“He thought he could bluff me into splitting that Bradlaugh order with the Clarendon,” Ditmar exclaimed. “Well, he’ll have to guess again. I’ve got his number.” He began to turn over his letters. “Let’s see, where were we? Tell Caldwell not to let in any more idiots, and shut the door.”

Janet obeyed, and when she returned Ditmar was making notes with a pencil on a pad. The conversation with Holter had given her a new idea of Ditmar’s daring in attempting to fill the Bradlaugh order with the Chippering Mills alone, had aroused in her more strongly than ever that hot loyalty to the mills with which he had inspired her; and that strange surge of sympathy, of fellow-feeling for the operatives she had experienced after the interview with Mr. Siddons, of rebellion against him, the conviction that she also was one of the slaves he exploited, had wholly disappeared. Ditmar was the Chippering Mills, and she, somehow, enlisted once again on his side.

“By the way,” he said abruptly, “you won’t mention this—I know.”

“Won’t mention what?” she asked.

“This matter about the pay envelopes—that we don’t intend to continue giving the operatives fifty-six hours’ pay for fifty-four when this law goes into effect. They’re like animals, most of ’em, they don’t reason, and it might make trouble if it got out now. You understand. They’d have time to brood over it, to get the agitators started. When the time comes they may kick a little, but they’ll quiet down. And it’ll teach ’em a lesson.”

“I never mention anything I hear in this office,” she told him.

“I know you don’t,” he assured her, apologetically. “I oughtn’t to have said that—it was only to put you on your guard, in case you heard it spoken of. You see how important it

is, how much trouble an agitator might make by getting them stirred up? You can see what it means to me, with this order on my hands. I've staked everything on it."

"But—when the law goes into effect? when the operatives find out that they are not receiving their full wages—as Mr. Holster said?" Janet inquired.

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“Why, they may grumble a little—but I’ll be on the lookout for any move. I’ll see to that. I’ll teach ’em a lesson as to how far they can push this business of shorter hours and equal pay. It’s the unskilled workers who are mostly affected, you understand, and they’re not organized. If we can keep out the agitators, we’re all right. Even then, I’ll show ’em they can’t come in here and exploit my operatives.”

In the mood in which she found herself his self-confidence, his aggressiveness continued to inspire and even to agitate her, to compel her to accept his point of view.

“Why,” he continued, “I trust you as I never trusted anybody else. I’ve told you that before. Ever since you’ve been here you’ve made life a different thing for me—just by your being here. I don’t know what I’d do without you. You’ve got so much sense about things—about people,—and I sometimes think you’ve got almost the same feeling about these mills that I have. You didn’t tell me you went through the mills with Caldwell the other day,” he added, accusingly.

“I—I forgot,” said Janet. “Why should I tell—you?” She knew that all thought of Holster had already slipped from his mind. She did not look up. “If you’re not going to finish your letters,” she said, a little faintly, “I’ve got some copying to do.”

“You’re a deep one,” he said. And as he turned to the pile of correspondence she heard him sigh. He began to dictate. She took down his sentences automatically, scarcely knowing what she was writing; he was making love to her as intensely as though his words had been the absolute expression of his desire instead of the commonplace mediums of commercial intercourse. Presently he stopped and began fumbling in one of the drawers of his desk.

“Where is the memorandum I made last week for Percy and Company?”

“Isn’t it there?” she asked.

But he continued to fumble, running through the papers and disarranging them until she could stand it no longer.

“You never know where to find anything,” she declared, rising and darting around the desk and bending over the drawer, her deft fingers rapidly separating the papers. She drew forth the memorandum triumphantly.

“There!” she exclaimed. “It was right before your eyes.”

As she thrust it at him his hand closed over hers. She felt him drawing her, irresistibly.

“Janet!” he said. “For God’s sake—you’re killing me—don’t you know it? I can’t stand it any longer!”

“Don’t!” she whispered, terror-stricken, straining away from him. “Mr. Ditmar—let me go!”

A silent struggle ensued, she resisting him with all the aroused strength and fierceness of her nature. He kissed her hair, her neck,—she had never imagined such a force as this, she felt herself weakening, welcoming the annihilation of his embrace.

“Mr. Ditmar!” she cried. “Somebody will come in.”

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Her fingers sank into his neck, she tried to hurt him and by a final effort flung herself free and fled to the other side of the room.

“You little—wildcat!” she heard him exclaim, saw him put his handkerchief to his neck where her fingers had been, saw a red stain on it. “I’ll have you yet!”

But even then, as she stood leaning against the wall, motionless save for the surging of her breast, there was about her the same strange, feral inscrutableness. He was baffled, he could not tell what she was thinking. She seemed, unconquered, to triumph over her disarray and the agitation of her body. Then, with an involuntary gesture she raised her hands to her hair, smoothing it, and without seeming haste left the room, not so much as glancing at him, closing the door behind her.

She reached her table in the outer office and sat down, gazing out of the window. The face of the world—the river, the mills, and the bridge—was changed, tinged with a new and unreal quality. She, too, must be changed. She wasn’t, couldn’t be the same person who had entered that room of Ditmar’s earlier in the afternoon! Mr. Caldwell made a commonplace remark, she heard herself answer him. Her mind was numb, only her body seemed swept by fire, by emotions—emotions of fear, of anger, of desire so intense as to make her helpless. And when at length she reached out for a sheet of carbon paper her hand trembled so she could scarcely hold it. Only by degrees was she able to get sufficient control of herself to begin her copying, when she found a certain relief in action—her hands flying over the keys, tearing off the finished sheets, and replacing them with others. She did not want to think, to decide, and yet she knew—something was trying to tell her that the moment for decision had come. She must leave, now. If she stayed on, this tremendous adventure she longed for and dreaded was inevitable. Fear and fascination battled within her. To run away was to deny life; to remain, to taste and savour it. She had tasted it—was it sweet?—that sense of being swept away, engulfed by an elemental power beyond them both, yet in them both? She felt him drawing her to him, and she struggling yet inwardly longing to yield. And the scarlet stain on his handkerchief—when she thought of that her blood throbbed, her face burned.

At last the door of the inner office opened, and Ditmar came out and stood by the rail. His voice was queer, scarcely recognizable.

“Miss Bumpus—would you mind coming into my room a moment, before you leave?” he said.

She rose instantly and followed him, closing the door behind her, but standing at bay against it, her hand on the knob.

“I’m not going to touch you—you needn’t be afraid,” he said. Reassured by the unsteadiness of his voice she raised her eyes to perceive that his face was ashy, his

manner nervous, apprehensive, conciliatory,—a Ditmar she had difficulty in recognizing. “I didn’t mean to frighten, to offend you,” he went on. “Something got hold of me. I was crazy, I couldn’t help it—I won’t do it again, if you’ll stay. I give you my word.”

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She did not reply. After a pause he began again, repeating himself.

“I didn’t mean to do it. I was carried away—it all happened before I knew. I—I wouldn’t frighten you that way for anything in the world.”

Still she was silent.

“For God’s sake, speak to me!” he cried. “Say you forgive me—give me another chance!”

But she continued to gaze at him with widened, enigmatic eyes—whether of reproach or contempt or anger he could not say. The situation transcended his experience. He took an uncertain step toward her, as though half expecting her to flee, and stopped.

“Listen!” he pleaded. “I can’t talk to you here. Won’t you give me a chance to explain —to put myself right? You know what I think of you, how I respect and—admire you. If you’ll only let me see you somewhere —anywhere, outside of the office, for a little while, I can’t tell you how much I’d appreciate it. I’m sure you don’t understand how I feel—I couldn’t bear to lose you. I’ll be down by the canal—near the bridge —at eight o’clock to-night. I’ll wait for you. You’ll come? Say you’ll come, and give me another chance!”

“Aren’t you going to finish your letters?” she asked.

He stared at her in sheer perplexity. “Letters!” he exclaimed. “Damn the letters! Do you think I could write any letters now?”

As a faint ray in dark waters, a gleam seemed to dance in the shadows of her eyes, yet was gone so swiftly that he could not be sure of having seen it. Had she smiled?

“I’ll be there,” he cried. “I’ll wait for you.”

She turned from him, opened the door, and went out.

That evening, as Janet was wiping the dishes handed her by her mother, she was repeating to herself “Shall I go—or shan’t I?”—just as if the matter were in doubt. But in her heart she was convinced of its predetermination by some power other than her own volition. With this feeling, that she really had no choice, that she was being guided and impelled, she went to her bedroom after finishing her task. The hands of the old dining-room clock pointed to quarter of eight, and Lise had already made her toilet and departed. Janet opened the wardrobe, looked at the new blue suit hanging so neatly on its wire holder, hesitated, and closed the door again. Here, at any rate, seemed a choice. She would not wear that, to-night. She tidied her hair, put on her hat and coat, and went out; but once in the street she did not hurry, though she knew the calmness she apparently experienced to be false: the calmness of fatality, because she was obeying a complicated impulse stronger than herself—an impulse that at times seemed

mere curiosity. Somewhere, removed from her immediate consciousness, a storm was raging; she was aware of a disturbance that reached her faintly, like the distant throbbing of the looms she heard when she turned from Faber into West Street She had not been able to eat

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any supper. That throbbing of the looms in the night! As it grew louder and louder the tension within her increased, broke its bounds, set her heart to throbbing too—throbbing wildly. She halted, and went on again, precipitately, but once more slowed her steps as she came to West Street and the glare of light at the end of the bridge; at a little distance, under the chequered shadows of the bare branches, she saw something move—a man, Ditmar. She stood motionless as he hurried toward her.

“You’ve come! You’ve forgiven me?” he asked.

“Why were you—down there?” she asked.

“Why? Because I thought—I thought you wouldn’t want anybody to know—”

It was quite natural that he should not wish to be seen; although she had no feeling of guilt, she herself did not wish their meeting known. She resented the subterfuge in him, but she made no comment because his perplexity, his embarrassment were gratifying to her resentment, were restoring her self-possession, giving her a sense of power.

“We can’t stay here,” he went on, after a moment. “Let’s take a little walk—I’ve got a lot to say to you. I want to put myself right.” He tried to take her arm, but she avoided him. They started along the canal in the direction of the Stanley Street bridge. “Don’t you care for me a little?” he demanded.

“Why should I?” she parried.

“Then—why did you come?”

“To hear what you had to say.”

“You mean—about this afternoon?”

“Partly,” said Janet.

“Well—we’ll talk it all over. I wanted to explain about this afternoon, especially. I’m sorry—”

“Sorry!” she exclaimed.

The vehemence of her rebuke—for he recognized it as such—took him completely aback. Thus she was wont, at the most unexpected moments, to betray the passion within her, the passion that made him sick with desire. How was he to conquer a woman of this type, who never took refuge in the conventional tactics of her sex, as he had known them?

“I didn’t mean that,” he explained desperately. “My God—to feel you, to have you in my arms—! I was sorry because I frightened you. But when you came near me that way I just couldn’t help it. You drove me to it.”

“Drove you to it!”

“You don’t understand, you don’t know how—how wonderful you are. You make me crazy. I love you, I want you as I’ve never wanted any woman before—in a different way. I can’t explain it. I’ve got so that I can’t live without you.” He flung his arm toward the lights of the mills. “That—that used to be everything to me, I lived for it. I don’t say I’ve been a saint—but I never really cared anything about any woman until I knew you, until that day I went through the office and saw you what you were. You don’t understand, I tell you. I’m sorry for what I did to-day because it offended you—but you drove me to it. Most of the time you seem cold, you’re like an iceberg, you make me think you hate me, and then all of a sudden you’ll be kind, as you were the other night, as you seemed this afternoon—you make me think I’ve got a chance, and then, when you came near me, when you touched my hand—why, I didn’t know what I was doing. I just had to have you. A man like me can’t stand it.”

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“Then I’d better go away,” she said. “I ought to have gone long ago.”

“Why?” he cried. “Why? What’s your reason? Why do you want to ruin my life? You’ve—you’ve woven yourself into it—you’re a part of it. I never knew what it was to care for a woman before, I tell you. There’s that mill,” he repeated, naively. “I’ve made it the best mill in the country, I’ve got the biggest order that ever came to any mill—if you went away I wouldn’t care a continental about it. If you went away I wouldn’t have any ambition left. Because you’re a part of it, don’t you see? You—you sort of stand for it now, in my mind. I’m not literary, I can’t express what I’d like to say, but sometimes I used to think of that mill as a woman—and now you’ve come along—” Ditmar stopped, for lack of adequate eloquence.

She smiled in the darkness at his boyish fervour,—one of the aspects of the successful Ditmar, the Ditmar of great affairs, that appealed to her most strongly. She was softened, touched; she felt, too, a responsive thrill to such a desire as his. Yet she did not reply. She could not. She was learning that emotion is never simple. And some inhibition, the identity of which was temporarily obscured still persisted, pervading her consciousness....

They were crossing the bridge at Stanley Street, now deserted, and by common consent they paused in the middle of it, leaning on the rail. The hideous chocolate factory on the point was concealed by the night,—only the lights were there, trembling on the surface of the river. Against the flushed sky above the city were silhouetted the high chimneys of the power plant. Ditmar’s shoulder touched hers. He was still pleading, but she seemed rather to be listening to the symphony of the unseen waters falling over the dam. His words were like that, suggestive of a torrent into which she longed to fling herself, yet refrained, without knowing why. Her hands tightened on the rail; suddenly she let it go, and led the way toward the unfrequented district of the south side. It was the road to Silliston, but she had forgotten that. Ditmar, regaining her side, continued his pleading. He spoke of his loneliness, which he had never realized. He needed her. And she experienced an answering pang. It still seemed incredible that he, too, who had so much, should feel that gnawing need for human sympathy and understanding that had so often made her unhappy. And because of the response his need aroused in her she did not reflect whether he could fulfil her own need, whether he could ever understand her; whether, at any time, she could unreservedly pour herself out to him.

“I don’t see why you want me,” she interrupted him at last. “I’ve never had any advantages, I don’t know anything. I’ve never had a chance to learn. I’ve told you that before.”

“What difference does that make? You’ve got more sense than any woman I ever saw,” he declared.

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“It makes a great deal of difference to me,” she insisted—and the sound of these words on her own lips was like a summons arousing her from a dream. The sordidness of her life, its cruel lack of opportunity in contrast with the gifts she felt to be hers, and on which he had dwelt, was swept back into her mind. Self-pity, dignity, and inherent self-respect struggled against her woman’s desire to give; an inherited racial pride whispered that she was worthy of the best, but because she had lacked the chance, he refrained from offering her what he would have laid at the feet of another woman.

“I’ll give you advantages—there’s nothing I wouldn’t give you. Why won’t you come to me? I’ll take care of you.”

“Do you think I want to be taken care of?” She wheeled on him so swiftly that he started back. “Is that what you think I want?”

“No, no,” he protested, when he recovered his speech.

“Do you think I’m after—what you can give me?” she shot at him. “What you can buy for me?”

To tell the truth, he had not thought anything about it, that was the trouble. And her question, instead of enlightening him, only added to his confusion and bewilderment.

“I’m always getting in wrong with you,” he told her, pathetically. “There isn’t anything I’d stop at to make you happy, Janet, that’s what I’m trying to say. I’d go the limit.”

“Your limit!” she exclaimed.

“What do you mean?” he demanded. But she had become inarticulate —cryptic, to him. He could get nothing more out of her.

“You don’t understand me—you never will!” she cried, and burst into tears—tears of rage she tried in vain to control. The world was black with his ignorance. She hated herself, she hated him. Her sobs shook her convulsively, and she scarcely heard him as he walked beside her along the empty road, pleading and clumsily seeking to comfort her. Once or twice she felt his hand on her shoulders.... And then, unlooked for and unbidden, pity began to invade her. Absurd to pity him! She fought against it, but the thought of Ditmar reduced to abjectness gained ground. After all, he had tried to be generous, he had done his best, he loved her, he needed her—the words rang in her heart. After all, he did not realize how could she expect him to realize? and her imagination conjured up the situation in a new perspective. Her sobs gradually ceased, and presently she stopped in the middle of the road and regarded him. He seemed utterly miserable, like a hurt child whom she longed to comfort. But what she said was: —“I ought to be going home.”

“Not yet!” he begged. “It’s early. You say I don’t understand you, Janet—my God, I wish I did! It breaks me all up to see you cry like that.”

“I’m sorry,” she said, after a moment. “I—I can’t make you understand. I guess I’m not like anybody else I’m queer—I can’t help it. You must let me go, I only make you unhappy.”

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“Let you go!” he cried—and then in utter self-forgetfulness she yielded her lips to his. A sound penetrated the night, she drew back from his arms and stood silhouetted against the glare of the approaching headlight of a trolley car, and as it came roaring down on them she hailed it. Ditmar seized her arm.

“You’re not going—now?” he said hoarsely.

“I must,” she whispered. “I want to be alone—I want to think. You must let me.”

“I’ll see you to-morrow?”

“I don’t know—I want to think. I’m—I’m tired.”

The brakes screamed as the car came joltingly to a stop. She flew up the steps, glancing around to see whether Ditmar had followed her, and saw him still standing in the road. The car was empty of passengers, but the conductor must have seen her leaving a man in this lonely spot. She glanced at his face, white and pinched and apathetic—he must have seen hundreds of similar episodes in the course of his nightly duties. He was unmoved as he took her fare. Nevertheless, at the thought that these other episodes might resemble hers, her face flamed—she grew hot all over. What should she do now? She could not think. Confused with her shame was the memory of a delirious joy, yet no sooner would she give herself up, trembling, to this memory when in turn it was penetrated by qualms of resentment, defiling its purity. Was Ditmar ashamed of her?... When she reached home and had got into bed she wept a little, but her tears were neither of joy nor sorrow. Her capacity for both was exhausted. In this strange mood she fell asleep nor did she waken when, at midnight, Lise stealthily crept in beside her.

CHAPTER X

Ditmar stood staring after the trolley car that bore Janet away until it became a tiny speck of light in the distance. Then he started to walk toward Hampton; in the unwonted exercise was an outlet for the pent-up energy her departure had thwarted; and presently his body was warm with a physical heat that found its counterpart in a delicious, emotional glow of anticipation, of exultant satisfaction. After all, he could not expect to travel too fast with her. Had he not at least gained a signal victory? When he remembered her lips—which she had indubitably given him!—he increased his stride, and in what seemed an incredibly brief time he had recrossed the bridge, covered the long residential blocks of Warren Street, and gained his own door.

The house was quiet, the children having gone to bed, and he groped his way through the dark parlour to his den, turning on the electric switch, sinking into an armchair, and lighting a cigar. He liked this room of his, which still retained something of that flavour of

a refuge and sanctuary it had so eminently possessed in the now forgotten days of matrimonial conflict. One of the few elements of agreement he had held in common with the late Mrs. Ditmar was

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a similarity of taste in household decoration, and they had gone together to a great emporium in Boston to choose the furniture and fittings. The lamp in the centre of the table was a bronze column supporting a hemisphere of heavy red and emerald glass, the colours woven into an intricate and bizarre design, after the manner of the art nouveau—so the zealous salesman had informed them. Cora Ditmar, when exhibiting this lamp to admiring visitors, had remembered the phrase, though her pronunciation of it, according to the standard of the Sorbonne, left something to be desired. The table and chairs, of heavy, shiny oak marvellously and precisely carved by machines, matched the big panels of the wainscot. The windows were high in the wall, thus preventing any intrusion from the clothes-yard on which they looked. The bookcases, protected by leaded panes, held countless volumes of the fiction from which Cora Ditmar had derived her knowledge of the great world outside of Hampton, together with certain sets she had bought, not only as ornaments, but with a praiseworthy view to future culture,—such as Whitmarsh's Library of the Best Literature. These volumes, alas, were still uncut; but some of the pages of the novels—if one cared to open them—were stained with chocolate. The steam radiator was a decoration in itself, the fireplace set in the red and yellow tiles that made the hearth. Above the oak mantel, in a gold frame, was a large coloured print of a Magdalen, doubled up in grief, with a glory of loose, Titian hair, chosen by Ditmar himself as expressing the nearest possible artistic representation of his ideal of the female form. Cora Ditmar's objections on the score of voluptuousness and of insufficient clothing had been vain. She had recognized no immorality of sentimentality in the art itself; what she felt, and with some justice, was that this particular Magdalen was unrepentant, and that Ditmar knew it. And the picture remained an offence to her as long as she lived. Formerly he had enjoyed the contemplation of this figure, reminding him, as it did, of mellowed moments in conquests of the past; suggesting also possibilities of the future. For he had been quick to discount the attitude of bowed despair, the sop flung by a sensuous artist to Christian orthodoxy. He had been sceptical about despair—feminine despair, which could always be cured by gifts and baubles. But to-night, as he raised his eyes, he felt a queer sensation marring the ecstatic perfection of his mood. That quality in the picture which so long had satisfied and entranced him had now become repellent, an ugly significant reflection of something —something in himself he was suddenly eager to repudiate and deny. It was with a certain amazement that he found himself on his feet with the picture in his hand, gazing at the empty space where it had hung. For he had had no apparent intention of obeying that impulse. What should he do with it? Light the fire and burn it—frame and all? The frame was

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an integral part of it. What would his housekeeper say? But now that he had actually removed it from the wall he could not replace it, so he opened the closet door and thrust it into a corner among relics which had found refuge there. He had put his past in the closet; yet the relief he felt was mingled with the peculiar qualm that follows the discovery of symptoms never before remarked. Why should this woman have this extraordinary effect of making him dissatisfied with himself? He sat down again and tried to review the affair from that first day when he had surprised in her eyes the flame dwelling in her. She had completely upset his life, increasingly distracted his mind until now he could imagine no peace unless he possessed her. Hitherto he had recognized in his feeling for her nothing but that same desire he had had for other women, intensified to a degree never before experienced. But this sudden access of morality—-he did not actually define it as such—was disquieting. And in the feverish, semi-objective survey he was now making of his emotional tract he was discovering the presence of other disturbing symptoms such as an unwonted tenderness, a consideration almost amounting to pity which at times he had vaguely sensed yet never sought imaginatively to grasp. It bewildered him by hampering a ruthlessness hitherto absolute. The fierceness of her inflamed his passion, yet he recognized dimly behind this fierceness an instinct of self-protection—and he thought of her in this moment as a struggling bird that fluttered out of his hands when they were ready to close over her. So it had been to-night. He might have kept her, prevented her from taking the car. Yet he had let her go! There came again, utterly to blot this out, the memory of her lips.

Even then, there had been something sorrowful in that kiss, a quality he resented as troubling, a flavour that came to him after the wildness was spent. What was she struggling against? What was behind her resistance? She loved him! It had never before occurred to him to enter into the nature of her feelings, having been so preoccupied with and tortured by his own. This realization, that she loved him, as it persisted, began to make him uneasy, though it should, according to all experience, have been a reason for sheer exultation. He began to see that with her it involved complications, responsibilities, disclosures, perhaps all of those things he had formerly avoided and resented in woman. He thought of certain friends of his who had become tangled up—of one in particular whose bank account had been powerless to extricate him.... And he was ashamed of himself.

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In view of the nature of his sex experience, of his habit of applying his imagination solely to matters of business rather than to affairs of the heart,—if his previous episodes may be so designated,—his failure to surmise that a wish for marriage might be at the back of her resistance is not so surprising as it may seem; he laid down, half smoked, his third cigar. The suspicion followed swiftly on his recalling to mind her vehement repudiation of his proffered gifts did he think she wanted what he could buy for her! She was not purchasable—that way. He ought to have known it, he hadn't realized what he was saying. But marriage! Literally it had never occurred to him to image her in a relation he himself associated with shackles. One of the unconscious causes of his fascination was just her emancipation from and innocence of that herd-convention to which most women—even those who lack wedding rings—are slaves. The force of such an appeal to a man of Ditmar's type must not be underestimated. And the idea that she, too, might prefer the sanction of the law, the gilded cage as a popular song which once had taken his fancy illuminatingly expressed it—seemed utterly incongruous with the freedom and daring of her spirit, was a sobering shock. Was he prepared to marry her, if he could obtain her in no other way? The question demanded a survey of his actual position of which he was at the moment incapable. There were his children! He had never sought to arrive at even an approximate estimate of the boy and girl as factors in his life, to consider his feelings toward them; but now, though he believed himself a man who gave no weight to social considerations—he had scorned this tendency in his wife—he was to realize the presence of ambitions for them. He was young, he was astonishingly successful; he had reason to think, with his opportunities and the investments he already had made, that he might some day be moderately rich; and he had at times even imagined himself in later life as the possessor of one of those elaborate country places to be glimpsed from the high roads in certain localities, which the sophisticated are able to recognize as the seats of the socially ineligible, but which to Ditmar were outward and visible emblems of success. He liked to think of George as the inheritor of such a place, as the son of a millionaire, as a "college graduate," as an influential man of affairs; he liked to imagine Amy as the wife of such another. In short, Ditmar's wife had left him, as an unconscious legacy, her aspirations for their children's social prestige....

The polished oak grandfather's clock in the hall had struck one before he went to bed, mentally wearied by an unwonted problem involving, in addition to self-interest, an element of ethics, of affection not wholly compounded of desire.

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He slept soundly, however. He was one of those fortunate beings who come into the world with digestive organs and thyroid glands in that condition which—so physiologists tell us—makes for a sanguine temperament. And his course of action, though not decided upon, no longer appeared as a problem; it differed from a business matter in that it could wait. As sufficient proof of his liver having rescued him from doubts and qualms he was able to whistle, as he dressed, and without a tremor of agitation, the forgotten tune suggested to his consciousness during the unpleasant reverie of the night before,—"Only a Bird in a Gilded Cage!" It was Saturday. He ate a hearty breakfast, joked with George and Amy, and refreshed, glowing with an expectation mingled with just the right amount of delightful uncertainty that made the great affairs of life a gamble, yet with the confidence of the conqueror, he walked in sunlight to the mill. In view of this firm and hopeful tone of his being he found it all the more surprising, as he reached the canal, to be seized by a trepidation strong enough to bring perspiration to his forehead. What if she had gone! He had never thought of that, and he had to admit it would be just like her. You never could tell what she would do.

Nodding at Simmons, the watchman, he hurried up the iron-shod stairs, gained the outer once, and instantly perceived that her chair beside the window was empty! Caldwell and Mr. Price stood with their heads together bending over a sheet on which Mr. Price was making calculations.

"Hasn't Miss Bumpus come yet?" Ditmar demanded. He tried to speak naturally, casually, but his own voice sounded strange, seemed to strike the exact note of sickening apprehension that suddenly possessed him. Both men turned and looked at him in some surprise.

"Good-morning, Mr. Ditmar," Caldwell said. "Why, yes, she's in your room."

"Oh!" said Ditmar.

"The Boston office has just been calling you—they want to know if you can't take the nine twenty-two," Caldwell went on. "It's about that lawsuit. It comes into court Monday morning, and Mr. Sprole is there, and they say they have to see you. Miss Bumpus has the memorandum."

Ditmar looked at his watch.

"Damn it, why didn't they let me know yesterday?" he exclaimed. "I won't see anybody, Caldwell—not even Orcutt—just now. You understand. I've got to have a little time to do some letters. I won't be disturbed—by any one—for half an hour."

Caldwell nodded.

"All right, Mr. Ditmar."

Ditmar went into his office, closing the door behind him. She was occupied as usual, cutting open the letters and laying them in a pile with the deftness and rapidity that characterized all she did.

“Janet!” he exclaimed.

“There’s a message for you from Boston. I’ve made a note of it,” she replied.

“I know—Caldwell told me. But I wanted to see you before I went—I had to see you. I sat up half the night thinking of you, I woke up thinking of you. Aren’t you glad to see me?”

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She dropped the letter opener and stood silent, motionless, awaiting his approach—a pose so eloquent of the sense of fatality strong in her as to strike him with apprehension, unused though he was to the appraisal of inner values. He read, darkly, something of this mystery in her eyes as they were slowly raised to his, he felt afraid; he was swept again by those unwonted emotions of pity and tenderness—but when she turned away her head and he saw the bright spot of colour growing in her cheek, spreading to her temple, suffusing her throat, when he touched the soft contour of her arm, his passion conquered.... Still he was acutely conscious of a resistance within her—not as before, physically directed against him, but repudiating her own desire. She became limp in his arms, though making no attempt to escape, and he knew that the essential self of her he craved still evaded and defied him. And he clung to her the more desperately—as though by crushing her peradventure he might capture it.

“You’re hurting me,” she said at last, and he let her go, standing by helplessly while she went through the movements of readjustment instinctive to women. Even in these he read the existence of the reservation he was loth to acknowledge.

“Don’t you love me?” he said.

“I don’t know.”

“You do!” he said. “You—you proved it—I know it.”

She went a little away from him, picking up the paper cutter, but it lay idle in her hand.

“For God’s sake, tell me what’s the matter!” he exclaimed. “I can’t stand this. Janet, aren’t you happy?”

She shook her head.

“Why not? I love you. I—I’ve never been so happy in my life as I was this morning. Why aren’t you happy—when we love each other?”

“Because I’m not.”

“Why not? There’s nothing I wouldn’t do to make you happy—you know that. Tell me!”

“You wouldn’t understand. I couldn’t make you understand.”

“Is it something I’ve done?”

“You don’t love me,” she said. “You only want me. I’m not made that way, I’m not generous enough, I guess. I’ve got to have work to do.”

“Work to do! But you’ll share my work—it’s nothing without you.”

She shook her head. “I knew you couldn’t understand. You don’t realize how impossible it is. I don’t blame you—I suppose a man can’t.”

She was not upbraiding him, she spoke quietly, in a tone almost lifeless, yet the emotional effect of it was tremendous.

“But,” he began, and stopped, and was swept on again by an impulse that drowned all caution, all reason. “But you can help me—when we are married.”

“Married!” she repeated. “You want to marry me?”

“Yes, yes—I need you.” He took her hands, he felt them tremble in his, her breath came quickly, but her gaze was so intent as seemingly to penetrate to the depths of him. And despite his man’s amazement at her hesitation now that he had offered her his all, he was moved, disturbed, ashamed as he had never been in his life. At length, when he could stand no longer the suspense of this inquisition, he stammered out: “I want you to be my wife.”

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“You’ve wanted to marry me all along?” she asked.

“I didn’t think, Janet. I was mad about you. I didn’t know you.”

“Do you know me now?”

“That’s just it,” he cried, with a flash of clairvoyance, “I never will know you—it’s what makes you different from any woman I’ve ever seen. You’ll marry me?”

“I’m afraid,” she said. “Oh, I’ve thought over it, and you haven’t. A woman has to think, a man doesn’t, so much. And now you’re willing to marry me, if you can’t get me any other way.” Her hand touched his coat, checking his protest. “It isn’t that I want marriage—what you can give me—I’m not like that, I’ve told you so before. But I couldn’t live as your—mistress.”

The word on her lips shocked him a little—but her courage and candour thrilled him.

“If I stayed here, it would be found out. I wouldn’t let you keep me. I’d have to have work, you see, or I’d lose my self-respect—it’s all I’ve got—I’d kill myself.” She spoke as calmly as though she were reviewing the situation objectively. “And then, I’ve thought that you might come to believe you really wanted to marry me—you wouldn’t realize what you were doing, or what might happen if we were married. I’ve tried to tell you that, too, only you didn’t seem to understand what I was saying. My father’s only a gatekeeper, we’re poor—poorer than some of the operatives in the mill, and the people you know here in Hampton wouldn’t understand. Perhaps you think you wouldn’t care, but—” she spoke with more effort, “there are your children. When I’ve thought of them, it all seems impossible. I’d make you unhappy—I couldn’t bear it, I wouldn’t stay with you. You see, I ought to have gone away long ago.”

Believing, as he did, that marriage was the goal of all women, even of the best, the immediate capitulation he had expected would have made matters far less difficult. But these scruples of hers, so startlingly his own, her disquieting insight into his entire mental process had a momentary checking effect, summoned up the vague presage of a future that might become extremely troublesome and complicated. His very reluctance to discuss with her the problem she had raised warned him that he had been swept into deep waters. On the other hand, her splendid resistance appealed to him, enhanced her value. And accustomed as he had been to a lifelong self-gratification, the thought of being balked in this supreme desire was not to be borne. Such were the shades of his feeling as he listened to her.

“That’s nonsense!” he exclaimed, when she had finished. “You’re a lady —I know all about your family, I remember hearing about it when your father came here—it’s as good as any in New England. What do you suppose I care, Janet? We love each other —I’ve got to have you. We’ll be married in the spring, when the rush is over.”

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He drew her to him once more, and suddenly, in the ardour of that embrace, he felt her tenseness suddenly relax—as though, against her will—and her passion, as she gave her lips, vied with his own. Her lithe body trembled convulsively, her cheeks were wet as she clung to him and hid her face in his shoulder. His sensations in the presence of this thing he had summoned up in her were incomprehensible, surpassing any he had ever known. It was no longer a woman he held in his arms, the woman he craved, but something greater, more fearful, the mystery of sorrow and suffering, of creation and life—of the universe itself.

“Janet—aren’t you happy?” he said again.

She released herself and smiled at him wistfully through her tears.

“I don’t know. What I feel doesn’t seem like happiness. I can’t believe in it, somehow.”

“You must believe in it,” he said.

“I can’t,—perhaps I may, later. You’d better go now,” she begged. “You’ll miss your train.”

He glanced at the office clock. “Confound it, I have to. Listen! I’ll be back this evening, and I’ll get that little car of mine—”

“No, not to-night—I don’t want to go—to-night.”

“Why not?”

“Not to-night,” she repeated.

“Well then, to-morrow. To-morrow’s Sunday. Do you know where the Boat Club is on the River Boulevard? I’ll be there, to-morrow morning at ten. I’d come for you, to your house,” he added quickly, “but we don’t want any one to know, yet—do we?”

She shook her head.

“We must keep it secret for a while,” he said. “Wear your new dress—the blue one. Good-bye—sweetheart.”

He kissed her again and hurried out of the office.... Boarding the train just as it was about to start, he settled himself in the back seat of the smoker, lit a cigar, inhaling deep breaths of the smoke and scarcely noticing an acquaintance who greeted him from the aisle. Well, he had done it! He was amazed. He had not intended to propose marriage, and when he tried to review the circumstances that had led to this he became confused. But when he asked himself whether indeed he were willing to pay such a price, to face the revolution marriage—and this marriage in particular—would mean in

his life, the tumult in his blood beat down his incipient anxieties. Besides, he possessed the kind of mind able to throw off the consideration of possible consequences, and by the time the train had slowed down in the darkness of the North Station in Boston all traces of worry had disappeared. The future would take care of itself.

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For the Bumpus family, supper that evening was an unusually harmonious meal. Hannah's satisfaction over the new stove had by no means subsided, and Edward ventured, without reproof, to praise the restored quality of the pie crust. And in contrast to her usual moroseness and self-absorption, even Lise was gay—largely because her pet aversion, the dignified and allegedly amorous Mr. Waiters, floor-walker at the Bagatelle, had fallen down the length of the narrow stairway leading from the cashier's cage. She became almost hysterical with glee as she pictured him lying prone beneath the counter dedicated to lingerie, draped with various garments from the pile that toppled over on him. "Ruby Nash picked a brassiere off his whiskers!" Lise shrieked. "She gave the pile a shove when he landed. He's got her number all right. But say, it was worth the price of admission to see that old mutt when he got up, he looked like Santa Claus. All the girls in the floor were there we nearly split trying to keep from giving him the ha-ha. And Ruby says, sympathetic, as she brushed him off, `I hope you ain't hurt, Mr. Waiters.' He was sore! He went around all afternoon with a bunch on his coco as big as a potato." So vivid was Lise's account of this affair which apparently she regarded as compensation for many days of drudgery-that even Hannah laughed, though deploring a choice of language symbolic of a world she feared and detested.

"If I talked like you," said Lise, "they wouldn't understand me."

Janet, too, was momentarily amused, drawn out of that reverie in which she had dwelt all day, ever since Ditmar had left for Boston. Now she began to wonder what would happen if she were suddenly to announce "I'm going to marry Mr. Ditmar." After the first shock of amazement, she could imagine her father's complete and complacent acceptance of the news as a vindication of an inherent quality in the Bumpus blood. He would begin to talk about the family. For, despite what might have been deemed a somewhat disillusionizing experience, in the depths of his being he still believed in the Providence who had presided over the perilous voyage of the Mayflower and the birth of Peregrine White, whose omniscient mind was peculiarly concerned with the family trees of Puritans. And what could be a more striking proof of the existence of this Providence, or a more fitting acknowledgment on his part of the Bumpus virtues, than that Janet should become the wife of the agent of the Chippering Mills? Janet smiled. She was amused, too, by the thought that Lise's envy would be modified by the prospect of a heightened social status; since Lise, it will be remembered, had her Providence likewise. Hannah's god was not a Providence, but one deeply skilled in persecution, in ingenious methods of torture; one who would not hesitate to dangle baubles before the eyes of his children—only to snatch them away again. Hannah's pessimism would persist as far as the altar, and beyond!

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On the whole, such was Janet's notion of the Deity, though deep within her there may have existed a hope that he might be outwitted; that, by dint of energy and brains, the fair things of life might be obtained despite a malicious opposition. And she loved Ditmar. This must be love she felt, this impatience to see him again, this desire to be with him, this agitation possessing her so utterly that all day long she had dwelt in an unwonted state like a somnambulism: it must be love, though not resembling in the least the generally accepted, virginal ideal. She saw him as he was, crude, powerful, relentless in his desire; his very faults appealed. His passion had overcome his prudence, he had not intended to propose, but any shame she felt on this score was put to flight by a fierce exultation over the fact that she had brought him to her feet, that he wanted her enough to marry her. It was wonderful to be wanted like that! But she could not achieve the mental picture of herself as Ditmar's wife—especially when, later in the evening, she walked up Warren Street and stood gazing at his house from the opposite pavement. She simply could not imagine herself living in that house as its mistress. Notwithstanding the testimony of the movies, such a Cinderella-like transition was not within the realm of probable facts; things just didn't happen that way.

She recalled the awed exclamation of Eda when they had walked together along Warren Street on that evening in summer: "How would you like to live there!"—and hot with sudden embarrassment and resentment she had dragged her friend onward, to the corner. In spite of its size, of the spaciousness of existence it suggested, the house had not appealed to her then. Janet did not herself realize or estimate the innate if undeveloped sense of form she possessed, the artist-instinct that made her breathless on first beholding Silliston Common. And then the vision of Silliston had still been bright; but now the light of a slender moon was as a gossamer silver veil through which she beheld the house, as in a stage setting, softening and obscuring its lines, lending it qualities of dignity and glamour that made it seem remote, unreal, unattainable. And she felt a sudden, overwhelming longing, as though her breast would burst....

Through the drawn blinds the lights in the second storey gleamed yellow. A dim lamp burned in the deep vestibule, as in a sanctuary. And then, as though some supernaturally penetrating ray had pierced a square hole in the lower walls, a glimpse of the interior was revealed to her, of the living room at the north end of the house. Two figures chased one another around the centre table—Ditmar's children! Was Ditmar there? Impelled irresistibly by a curiosity overcoming repugnance and fear, she went forward slowly across the street, gained the farther pavement, stepped over the concrete coping, and stood, shivering violently, on the lawn, feeling

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like an interloper and a thief, yet held by morbid fascination. The children continued to romp. The boy was strong and swift, the girl stout and ungainly in her movements, not mistress of her body; he caught her and twisted her arm, roughly—Janet could hear her cries through the window-=when an elderly woman entered, seized him, struggling with him. He put out his tongue at her, but presently released his sister, who stood rubbing her arm, her lips moving in evident recrimination and complaint. The faces of the two were plain now; the boy resembled Ditmar, but the features of the girl, heavy and stamped with self-indulgence, were evidently reminiscent of the woman who had been his wife. Then the shade was pulled down, abruptly; and Janet, overcome by a sense of horror at her position, took to flight....

When, after covering the space of a block she slowed down and tried to imagine herself as established in that house, the stepmother of those children, she found it impossible. Despite the fact that her attention had been focussed so strongly on them, the fringe of her vision had included their surroundings, the costly furniture, the piano against the farther wall, the music rack. Evidently the girl was learning to play. She felt a renewed, intenser bitterness against her own lot: she was aware of something within her better and finer than the girl, than the woman who had been her mother had possessed—that in her, Janet, had lacked the advantages of development. Could it—could it ever be developed now? Had this love which had come to her brought her any nearer to the unknown realm of light she craved?...

CHAPTER XI

Though December had come, Sunday was like an April day before whose sunlight the night-mists of scruples and morbid fears were scattered and dispersed. And Janet, as she fared forth from the Fillmore Street flat, felt resurging in her the divine recklessness that is the very sap of life. The future, save of the immediate hours to come, lost its power over her. The blue and white beauty of the sky proclaimed all things possible for the strong; and the air was vibrant with the sweet music of bells, calling her to happiness. She was going to meet happiness, to meet love—to meet Ditmar! The trolley which she took in Faber Street, though lagging in its mission, seemed an agent of that happiness as it left the city behind it and wound along the heights beside the tarvia roadway above the river, bright glimpses of which she caught through the openings in the woods. And when she looked out of the window on her right she beheld on a little forested rise a succession of tiny “camps” built by residents of Hampton whose modest incomes could not afford more elaborate summer places; camps of all descriptions and colours, with queer names that made her smile: “The Cranny,” “The Nook,” “Snug Harbour,” “Buena Vista,”—of course,—which she thought pretty, though she did not know its meaning; and another, in German, equally perplexing, “Klein aber Mein.” Though the windows of these places were now boarded up, though the mosquito netting

still clung rather dismally to the porches, they were mutely suggestive of contentment and domestic joy.

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Scarcely had she alighted from the car at the rendezvous he had mentioned, beside the now deserted boathouse where in the warm weather the members of the Hampton Rowing Club disported themselves, when she saw an automobile approaching—and recognized it as the gay "roadster" Ditmar had exhibited to her that summer afternoon by the canal; and immediately Ditmar himself, bringing it to a stop and leaping from it, stood before her in the sunlight, radiating, as it seemed, more sunlight still. With his clipped, blond moustache and his straw-coloured hair—as yet but slightly grey at the temples—he looked a veritable conquering berserker in his huge coat of golden fur. Never had he appeared to better advantage.

"I was waiting for you," he said, "I saw you in the car." Turning to the automobile, he stripped the tissue paper from a cluster of dark red roses with the priceless long stems of which Lise used to rave when she worked in the flower store. And he held the flowers against her suit her new suit she had worn for this meeting.

"Oh," she cried, taking a deep, intoxicating breath of their fragrance. "You brought these —for me?"

"From Boston—my beauty!"

"But I can't wear all of them!"

"Why not?" he demanded. "Haven't you a pin?"

She produced one, attaching them with a gesture that seemed habitual, though the thought of their value-revealing in some degree her own worth in his eyes-unnerved her. She was warmly conscious of his gaze. Then he turned, and opening a compartment at the back of the car drew from it a bright tweed motor coat warmly lined.

"Oh, no!" she protested, drawing back. "I'll—I'll be warm enough." But laughingly, triumphantly, he seized her and thrust her arms in the sleeves, his fingers pressing against her. Overcome by shyness, she drew away from him.

"I made a pretty good guess at the size—didn't I, Janet?" he cried, delightedly surveying her. "I couldn't forget it!" His glance grew more concentrated, warmer, penetrating.

"You mustn't look at me like that!" she pleaded with lowered eyes.

"Why not—you're mine—aren't you? You're mine, now."

"I don't know. There are lots of things I want to talk about," she replied, but her protest sounded feeble, unconvincing, even to herself. He fairly lifted her into the automobile —it was a caress, only tempered by the semi-publicity of the place. He was giving her no time to think —but she did not want to, think. Starting the engine, he got in and leaned toward her.

“Not here!” she exclaimed.

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“All right—I’ll wait,” he agreed, tucking the robe about her deftly, solicitously, and she sank back against the seat, surrendering herself to the luxury, the wonder of being cherished, the caressing and sheltering warmth she felt of security and love, the sense of emancipation from discontent and sordidness and struggle. For a moment she closed her eyes, but opened them again to behold the transformed image of herself reflected in the windshield to confirm the illusion—if indeed it were one! The tweed coat seemed startlingly white in the sunlight, and the woman she saw, yet recognized as herself, was one of the fortunately placed of the earth with power and beauty at her command! And she could no longer imagine herself as the same person who the night before had stood in front of the house in Warren Street. The car was speeding over the smooth surface of the boulevard; the swift motion, which seemed to her like that of flying, the sparkling air, the brightness of the day, the pressure of Ditmar’s shoulder against hers, thrilled her. She marvelled at his sure command over the machine, that responded like a live thing to his touch. On the wide, straight stretches it went at a mad pace that took her breath, and again, in turning a corner or passing another car, it slowed down, purring in meek obedience. Once she gasped: “Not so fast! I can’t stand it.”

He laughed and obeyed her. They glided between river and sky across the delicate fabric of a bridge which but a moment before she had seen in the distance. Running through the little village on the farther bank, they left the river.

“Where are you going?” she asked.

“Oh, for a little spin,” he answered indulgently, turning into a side road that wound through the woods and suddenly stopping. “Janet, we’ve got this day—this whole day to ourselves.” He seized and drew her to him, and she yielded dizzily, repaying the passion of his kiss, forgetful of past and future while he held her, whispering brokenly endearing phrases.

“You’ll ruin my roses,” she protested breathlessly, at last, when it seemed that she could no longer bear this embrace, nor the pressure of his lips. “There! you see you’re crushing them!” She undid them, and buttoning the coat, held them to her face. Their odour made her faint: her eyes were clouded.

“Listen, Claude!” she said at last,—it was the first time she had called him so—getting free. “You must be sensible! some one might come along.”

“I’ll never get enough of you!” he said. “I can’t believe it yet.” And added irrelevantly: “Pin the roses outside.”

She shook her head. Something in her protested against this too public advertisement of their love.

“I’d rather hold them,” she answered. “Let’s go on.” He started the car again. “Listen, I want to talk to you, seriously. I’ve been thinking.”

“Don’t I know you’ve been thinking!” he told her exuberantly. “If I could only find out what’s always going on in that little head of yours! If you keep on thinking you’ll dry up, like a New England school-marm. And now do you know what you are? One of those dusky red roses just ready to bloom. Some day I’ll buy enough to smother you in ’em.”

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“Listen!” she repeated, making a great effort to calm herself, to regain something of that frame of mind in which their love had assumed the proportions of folly and madness, to summon up the scruples which, before she had left home that morning, she had resolved to lay before him, which she knew would return when she could be alone again. “I have to think —you won’t,” she exclaimed, with a fleeting smile.

“Well, what is it?” he assented. “You might as well get it off now.”

And it took all her strength to say: “I don’t see how I can marry you. I’ve told you the reasons. You’re rich, and you have friends who wouldn’t understand—and your children —they wouldn’t understand. I—I’m nothing, I know it isn’t right, I know you wouldn’t be happy. I’ve never lived—in the kind of house you live in and known the kind of people you know, I shouldn’t know what to do.”

He took his eyes off the road and glanced down at her curiously. His smile was self-confident, exultant.

“Now do you feel better—you little Puritan?” he said.

And perforce she smiled in return, a pucker appearing between her eyebrows.

“I mean it,” she said. “I came out to tell you so. I know—it just isn’t possible.”

“I’d marry you to-day if I could get a license,” he declared. “Why, you’re worth any woman in America, I don’t care who she is, or how much money she has.”

In spite of herself she was absurdly pleased.

“Now that is over, we won’t discuss it again, do you understand? I’ve got you,” he said, “and I mean to hold on to you.”

She sighed. He was driving slowly now along the sandy road, and with his hand on hers she simply could not think. The spell of his nearness, of his touch, which all nature that morning conspired to deepen, was too powerful to be broken, and something was calling to her, “Take this day, take this day,” drowning out the other voice demanding an accounting. She was living—what did it all matter? She yielded herself to the witchery of the hour, the sheer delight of forthfaring into the unknown.

They turned away from the river, crossing the hills of a rolling country now open, now wooded, passing white farmhouses and red barns, and ancient, weather-beaten dwellings with hipped roofs and “lean-tos” which had been there in colonial days when the road was a bridle-path. Cows and horses stood gazing at them from warm paddocks, where the rich, black mud glistened, melted by the sun; chickens scratched and clucked in the barnyards or flew frantically across the road, sometimes within an ace of destruction. Janet flinched, but Ditmar would laugh, gleefully, boyishly.

“We nearly got that one!” he would exclaim. And then he had to assure her that he wouldn’t run over them.

“I haven’t run over one yet,—have I?” he would demand.

“No, but you will, it’s only luck.”

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“Luck!” he cried derisively. “Skill! I wish I had a dollar for every one I got when I was learning to drive. There was a farmer over here in Chester—” and he proceeded to relate how he had had to pay for two turkeys. “He got my number, the old hayseed, he was laying for me, and the next time I went back that way he held me up for five dollars. I can remember the time when a man in a motor was an easy mark for every reuben in the county. They got rich on us.”

She responded to his mood, which was wholly irresponsible, exuberant, and they laughed together like children, every little incident assuming an aspect irresistibly humorous. Once he stopped to ask an old man standing in his dooryard how far it was to Kingsbury.

“Wal, mebbe it’s two mile, they mostly call it two,” said the patriarch, after due reflection, gathering his beard in his band. “Mebbe it’s more.” His upper lip was blue, shaven, prehensile.

“What did you ask him for, when you know?” said Janet, mirthfully, when they had gone on, and Ditmar was imitating him. Ditmar’s reply was to wink at her. Presently they saw another figure on the road.

“Let’s see what he’ll say,” Ditmar proposed. This man was young, the colour of mahogany, with glistening black hair and glistening black eyes that regarded the too palpable joyousness of their holiday humour in mute surprise.

“I no know—stranger,” he said.

“No speaka Portugueso?” inquired Ditmar, gravely.

“The country is getting filthy with foreigners,” he observed, when he had started the car. “I went down to Plymouth last summer to see the old rock, and by George, it seemed as if there wasn’t anybody could speak American on the whole cape. All the Portuguese islands are dumped there —cranberry pickers, you know.”

“I didn’t know that,” said Janet.

“Sure thing!” he exclaimed. “And when I got there, what do you think? there was hardly enough of the old stone left to stand on, and that had a fence around it like an exhibit in an exposition. It had all been chipped away by souvenir hunters.”

She gazed at him incredulously.

“You don’t believe me! I’ll take you down there sometime. And another thing, the rock’s high and dry—up on the land. I said to Charlie Crane, who was with me, that it must have been a peach of a jump for old Miles Standish and Priscilla what’s her name.”

“How I’d love to see the ocean again!” Janet exclaimed.

“Why, I’ll take you—as often as you like,” he promised. “We’ll go out on it in summer, up to Maine, or down to the Cape.”

Her enchantment was now so great that nothing seemed impossible.

“And we’ll go down to Plymouth, too, some Sunday soon, if this weather keeps up. If we start early enough we can get there for lunch, easy. We’ll see the rock. I guess some of your ancestors must have come over with that Mayflower outfit—first cabin, eh? You look like it.”

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Janet laughed. “It’s a joke on them, if they did. I wonder what they’d think of Hampton, if they could see it now. I counted up once, just to tease father—he’s the seventh generation from Ebenezer Bumpus, who came to Dolton. Well, I proved to him he might have one hundred and twenty-six other ancestors besides Ebenezer and his wife.”

“That must have jarred him some,” was Ditmar’s comment. “Great old man, your father. I’ve talked to him—he’s a regular historical society all by himself. Well, there must be something in it, this family business. Now, you can tell he comes from fine old American stock-he looks it.”

Janet flushed. “A lot of good it does!” she exclaimed.

“I don’t know,” said Ditmar. “It’s something to fall back on—a good deal. And he hasn’t got any of that nonsense in his head about labour unions—he’s a straight American. And you look the part,” he added. “You remind me—I never thought of it until now—you remind me of a picture of Priscilla I saw once in a book of poems Longfellow’s, you know. I’m not much on literature, but I remember that, and I remember thinking she could have me. Funny isn’t it, that you should have come along? But you’ve got more ginger than the woman in that picture. I’m the only man that ever guessed it isn’t that so?” he asked jealously.

“You’re wonderful!” retorted Janet, daringly.

“You just bet I am, or I couldn’t have landed you,” he asserted. “You’re chock full of ginger, but it’s been all corked up. You’re so prim-so Priscilla.” He was immensely pleased with the adjective he had coined, repeating it. “It’s a great combination. When I think of it, I want to shake you, to squeeze you until you scream.”

“Then please don’t think of it,” she said.

“That’s easy!” he exclaimed, mockingly.

At a quarter to one they entered a sleepy village reminiscent of a New England of other days. The long street, deeply shaded in summer, was bordered by decorous homes, some of which had stood there for a century and a half; others were of the Mansard period. The high school, of strawberry-coloured brick, had been the pride and glory of the Kingsbury of the ’70s: there were many churches, some graceful and some hideous. At the end of the street they came upon a common, surrounded by stone posts and a railing, with a monument in the middle of it, and facing the common on the north side was a rambling edifice with many white gables, in front of which, from an iron arm on a post, swung a quaint sign, “Kingsbury Tavern.” In revolutionary and coaching days the place bad been a famous inn; and now, thanks to the enterprise of a man who had foreseen the possibilities of an era of automobiles, it had become even more famous. A score of these modern vehicles were drawn up before it under the bare,

ancient elms; there was a scene of animation on the long porch, where guests strolled up and down or sat in groups in the rocking-chairs which the mild weather had brought forth again. Ditmar drew up in line with the other motors, and stopped.

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“Well, here we are!” he exclaimed, as he pulled off his gauntlets. “I guess I could get along with something to eat. How about you? They treat you as well here as any place I know of in New England.”

He assumed their lunching together at a public place as a matter of course to which there could not possibly be an objection, springing out of the car, removing the laprobe from her knees, and helping her to alight. She laid the roses on the seat.

“Aren’t you going to bring them along?” he demanded.

“I’d rather not,” she said. “Don’t you think they’ll be safe here?”

“Oh, I guess so,” he replied. She was always surprising him; but her solicitation concerning them was a balm, and he found all such instinctive acts refreshing.

“Afraid of putting up too much of a front, are you?” he asked smilingly.

“I’d rather leave them here,” she replied. As she walked beside Ditmar to the door she was excited, unwontedly self-conscious, painfully aware of inspection by the groups on the porch. She had seen such people as these hurrying in automobiles through the ugliness of Faber Street in Hampton toward just such delectable spots as this village of Kingsbury—people of that world of freedom and privilege from which she was excluded; Ditmar’s world. He was at home here. But she? The delusion that she somehow had been miraculously snatched up into it was marred by their glances. What were they thinking of her? Her face was hot as she passed them and entered the hall, where more people were gathered. But Ditmar’s complacency, his ease and self-confidence, his manner of owning the place, as it were, somewhat reassured her. He went up to the desk, behind which, stood a burly, red-complexioned man who greeted him effusively, yet with the air of respect accorded the powerful.

“Hullo, Eddie,” said Ditmar. “You’ve got a good crowd here to-day. Any room for me?”

“Sure, Mr. Ditmar, we can always make room for you. Well, I haven’t laid eyes on you for a dog’s age. Only last Sunday Mr. Crane was here, and I was asking him where you’d been keeping yourself.”

“Why, I’ve been busy, Eddie. I’ve landed the biggest order ever heard of in Hampton. Some of us have to work, you know; all you’ve got to do is to loaf around this place and smoke cigars and rake in the money.”

The proprietor of the Kingsbury Tavern smiled indulgently at this persiflage.

“Let me present you to Miss Bumpus,” said Ditmar. “This is my friend, Eddie Hale,” he added, for Janet’s benefit. “And when you’ve eaten his dinner you’ll believe me when I say he’s got all the other hotel men beaten a mile.”

Janet smiled and flushed. She had been aware of Mr. Hale's discreet glance.

"Pleased to meet you, Miss Bumpus," he said, with a somewhat elaborate bow.

"Eddie," said Ditmar, "have you got a nice little table for us?"

"It's a pity I didn't know you was coming, but I'll do my best," declared Mr. Hale, opening the door in the counter.

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“Oh, I guess you can fix us all right, if you want to, Eddie.”

“Mr. Ditmar’s a great josher,” Mr. Hale told Janet confidentially as he escorted them into the dining-room. And Ditmar, gazing around over the heads of the diners, spied in an alcove by a window a little table with tilted chairs.

“That one’ll do,” he said.

“I’m sorry, but it’s engaged,” apologized Mr. Hale.

“Forget it, Eddie—tell ’em they’re late,” said Ditmar, making his way toward it.

The proprietor pulled out Janet’s chair.

“Say,” he remarked, “it’s no wonder you get along in business.”

“Well, this is cosy, isn’t it?” said Ditmar to Janet when they were alone. He handed her the menu, and snapped his fingers for a waitress.

“Why didn’t you tell me you were coming to this place?” she asked.

“I wanted to surprise you. Don’t you like it?”

“Yes,” she replied. “Only—”

“Only, what?”

“I wish you wouldn’t look at me like that—here.”

“All right. I’ll try to be good until we get into the car again. You watch me! I’ll behave as if we’d been married ten years.”

He snapped his fingers again, and the waitress hurried up to take their orders.

“Kingsbury’s still dry, I guess,” he said to the girl, who smiled sympathetically, somewhat ruefully. When she had gone he began to talk to Janet about the folly, in general, of prohibition, the fuse oil distributed on the sly. “I’ll bet I could go out and find half a dozen rum shops within a mile of here!” he declared.

Janet did not doubt it. Ditmar’s aplomb, his faculty of getting what he wanted, had amused and distracted her. She was growing calmer, able to scrutinize, at first covertly and then more boldly the people at the other tables, only to discover that she and Ditmar were not the objects of the universal curiosity she had feared. Once in a while, indeed, she encountered and then avoided the glance of some man, felt the admiration in it, was thrilled a little, and her sense of exhilaration returned as she regained her

poise. She must be nice looking—more than that—in her new suit. On entering the tavern she had taken off the tweed coat, which Ditmar had carried and laid on a chair. This new and amazing adventure began to go to her head like wine....

When luncheon was over they sat in a sunny corner of the porch while Ditmar smoked his cigar. His digestion was good, his spirits high, his love-making—on account of the public nature of the place—surreptitious yet fervent. The glamour to which Janet had yielded herself was on occasions slightly troubled by some new and enigmatic element to be detected in his voice and glances suggestive of intentions vaguely disquieting. At last she said:

“Oughtn’t we to be going home?”

“Home!” he ridiculed the notion. “I’m going to take you to the prettiest road you ever saw—around by French’s Lower Falls. I only wish it was summer.”

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“I must be home before dark,” she told him. “You see, the family don’t know where I am. I haven’t said anything to them about—about this.”

“That’s right,” he said, after a moment’s hesitation:

“I didn’t think you would. There’s plenty of time for that—after things get settled a little—isn’t there?”

She thought his look a little odd, but the impression passed as they walked to the motor. He insisted now on her pinning the roses on the tweed coat, and she humoured him. The winter sun had already begun to drop, and with the levelling rays the bare hillsides, yellow and brown in the higher light, were suffused with pink; little by little, as the sun fell lower, imperceptible clouds whitened the blue cambric of the sky, distant copses were stained lilac. And Janet, as she gazed, wondered at a world that held at once so much beauty, so much joy and sorrow,—such strange sorrow as began to invade her now, not personal, but cosmic. At times it seemed almost to suffocate her; she drew in deep breaths of air: it was the essence of all things—of the man by her side, of herself, of the beauty so poignantly revealed to her.

Gradually Ditmar became conscious of this detachment, this new evidence of an extraordinary faculty of escaping him that seemed unimpaired. Constantly he tried by leaning closer to her, by reaching out his hand, to reassure himself that she was at least physically present. And though she did not resent these tokens, submitting passively, he grew perplexed and troubled; his optimistic atheism concerning things unseen was actually shaken by the impression she conveyed of beholding realities hidden from him. Shadows had begun to gather in the forest, filmy mists to creep over the waters. He asked if she were cold, and she shook her head and sighed as one coming out of a trance, smiling at him.

“It’s been a wonderful day!” she said.

“The greatest ever!” he agreed. And his ardour, mounting again, swept away the unwonted mood of tenderness and awe she had inspired in him, made him bold to suggest the plan which had been the subject of an ecstatic contemplation.

“I’ll tell you what we’ll do,” he said, “we’ll take a little run down to Boston and have dinner together. We’ll be there in an hour, and back by ten o’clock.”

“To Boston!” she repeated. “Now?”

“Why not?” he said, stopping the car. “Here’s the road—it’s a boulevard all the way.”

It was not so much the proposal as the passion in his voice, in his touch, the passion to which she felt herself responding that filled her with apprehension and dismay, and yet aroused her pride and anger.

“I told you I had to be home,” she said.

“I’ll have you home by ten o’clock; I promise. We’re going to be married, Janet,” he whispered.

“Oh, if you meant to marry me you wouldn’t ask me to do this!” she cried. “I want to go back to Hampton. If you won’t take me, I’ll walk.”

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She had drawn away from him, and her hand was on the door. He seized her arm.

“For God’s sake, don’t take it that way!” he cried, in genuine alarm. “All I meant was—-that we’d have a nice little dinner. I couldn’t bear to leave you, it’ll be a whole week before we get another day. Do you suppose I’d—I’d do anything to insult you, Janet?”

With her fingers still tightened over the door-catch she turned and looked at him.

“I don’t know,” she said slowly. “Sometimes I think you would. Why shouldn’t you? Why should you marry me? Why shouldn’t you try to do with me what you’ve done with other women? I don’t know anything about the world, about life. I’m nobody. Why shouldn’t you?”

“Because you’re not like the other women—that’s why. I love you—won’t you believe it?” He was beside himself with anxiety. “Listen—I’ll take you home if you want to go. You don’t know how it hurts me to have you think such things!”

“Well, then, take me home,” she said. It was but gradually that she became pacified. A struggle was going on within her between these doubts of him he had stirred up again and other feelings aroused by his pleadings. Night fell, and when they reached the Silliston road the lights of Hampton shone below them in the darkness.

“You’d better let me out here,” she said. “You can’t drive me home.”

He brought the car to a halt beside one of the small wooden shelters built for the convenience of passengers.

“You forgive me—you understand, Janet?” he asked.

“Sometimes I don’t know what to think,” she said, and suddenly clung to him. “I—I forgive you. I oughtn’t to suspect such things, but I’m like that. I’m horrid and I can’t help it.” She began to unbutton the coat he had bought for her.

“Aren’t you going to take it?” he said. “It’s yours.”

“And what do you suppose my family would say if I told them Mr. Ditmar had given it to me?”

“Come on, I’ll drive you home, I’ll tell them I gave it to you, that we’re going to be married,” he announced recklessly.

“Oh, no!” she exclaimed in consternation. “You couldn’t. You said so yourself—that you didn’t want, any one to know, now. I’ll get on the trolley.”

“And the roses?” he asked.

She pressed them to her face, and chose one. “I’ll take this,” she said, laying the rest on the seat....

He waited until he saw her safely on the trolley car, and then drove slowly homeward in a state of amazement. He had been on the verge of announcing himself to the family in Fillmore Street as her prospective husband! He tried to imagine what that household was like; and again he found himself wondering why she had not consented to his proposal. And the ever-recurring question presented itself—was he prepared to go that length? He didn’t know. She was beyond him, he had no clew to her, she was to him as mysterious as a symphony. Certain strains of her moved him intensely—the rest was beyond his grasp.... At supper, while his children talked and laughed boisterously, he sat silent, restless, and in spite of their presence the house seemed appallingly empty.

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When Janet returned home she ran to her bedroom, and taking from the wardrobe the tissue paper that had come with her new dress, and which she had carefully folded, she wrapped the rose in it, and put it away in the back of a drawer. Thus smothered, its fragrance stifled, it seemed emblematic, somehow, of the clandestine nature of her love....

The weeks that immediately followed were strange ones. All the elements of life that previously had been realities, trivial yet fundamental, her work, her home, her intercourse with the family, became fantastic. There was the mill to which she went every day: she recognized it, yet it was not the same mill, nor was Fillmore Street the Fillmore Street of old. Nor did the new and feverish existence over whose borderland she had been transported seem real, save in certain hours she spent in Ditmar's company, when he made her forget—hers being a temperament to feel the weight of an unnatural secrecy. She was aware, for instance, that her mother and even her father thought her conduct odd, were anxious as to her absences on certain nights and on Sundays. She offered no explanation. It was impossible. She understood that the reason why they refrained from questioning her was due to a faith in her integrity as well as to a respect for her as a breadwinner who lead earned a right to independence. And while her suspicion of Hannah's anxiety troubled her, on the occasions when she thought of it, Lise's attitude disturbed her even more. From Lise she had been prepared for suspicion, arraignment, ridicule. What a vindication if it were disclosed that she, Janet, had a lover—and that lover Ditmar! But Lise said nothing. She was remote, self-absorbed. Hannah spoke about it on the evenings Janet stayed at home.

She would not consent to meet Ditmar every evening. Yet, as the days succeeded one another, Janet was often astonished by the fact that their love remained apparently unsuspected by Mr. Price and Caldwell and others in the office. They must have noticed, on some occasions, the manner in which Ditmar looked at her; and in business hours she had continually to caution him, to keep him in check. Again, on the evening excursions to which she consented, though they were careful to meet in unfrequented spots, someone might easily have recognized him; and she did not like to ponder over the number of young women in the other offices who knew her by sight. These reflections weighed upon her, particularly when she seemed conscious of curious glances. But what caused her the most concern was the constantly recurring pressure to which Ditmar himself subjected her, and which, as time went on, she found increasingly difficult to resist. He tried to take her by storm, and when this method failed, resorted to pleadings and supplications even harder to deny because of the innate feminine pity she felt for him. To recount these affairs would be a mere repetition of identical occurrences.

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On their second Sunday excursion he had actually driven her, despite her opposition, several miles on the Boston road; and her resistance only served to inflame him the more. It seemed, afterwards, as she sat unnerved, a miracle that she had stopped him. Then came reproaches: she would not trust him; they could not be married at once; she must understand that!—an argument so repugnant as to cause her to shake with sobs of inarticulate anger. After this he would grow bewildered, then repentant, then contrite. In contrition—had he known it—he was nearest to victory.

As has been said, she did not intellectualize her reasons, but the core of her resistance was the very essence of an individuality having its roots in a self-respecting and self-controlling inheritance—an element wanting in her sister Lise. It must have been largely the thought of Lise, the spectacle of Lise—often perhaps unconsciously present that dominated her conduct; yet reinforcing such an ancestral sentiment was another, environmental and more complicated, the result in our modern atmosphere of an undefined feminism apt to reveal itself in many undesirable ways, but which in reality is a logical projection of the American tradition of liberty. To submit was not only to lose her liberty, to become a dependent, but also and inevitably, she thought, to lose Ditmar's love....

No experience, however, is emotionally continuous, nor was their intimacy by any means wholly on this plane of conflict. There were hours when, Ditmar's passion leaving spent itself, they achieved comradeship, in the office and out of it; revelations for Janet when he talked of himself, relating the little incidents she found most illuminating. And thus by degrees she was able to build up a new and truer estimate of him. For example, she began to perceive that his life outside of his interest in the mills, instead of being the romance of privileged joys she had once imagined, had been almost as empty as her own, without either unity or direction. Her perception was none the less keen because definite terms were wanting for its expression. The idea of him that first had captivated her was that of an energized and focussed character controlling with a sure hand the fortunes of a great organization; of a power in the city and state, of a being who, in his leisure moments, dwelt in a delectable realm from which she was excluded. She was still acutely conscious of his force, but what she now felt was its lack of direction—save for the portion that drove the Chippering Mills. The rest of it, like the river, flowed away on the line of least resistance to the sea.

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As was quite natural, this gradual discovery of what he was—or of what he wasn't—this truer estimate, this partial disillusionment, merely served to deepen and intensify the feeling he had aroused in her; to heighten, likewise, the sense of her own value by confirming a belief in her possession of certain qualities, of a kind of fibre he needed in a helpmate. She dwelt with a woman's fascination upon the prospect of exercising a creative influence—even while she acknowledged the fearful possibility of his power in unguarded moments to overwhelm and destroy her. Here was another incentive to resist the gusts of his passion. She could guide and develop him by helping and improving herself. Hope and ambition throbbed within her, she felt a contempt for his wife, for the women who had been her predecessors. He had not spoken of these, save once or twice by implication, but with what may seem a surprising leniency she regarded them as consequences of a life lacking in content. If only she could keep her head, she might supply that content, and bring him happiness! The thought of his children troubled her most, but she was quick to perceive that he got nothing from them; and even though it were partly his own fault, she was inclined to lay the heavier blame on the woman who had been their mother. The triviality, the emptiness of his existence outside of the walls of the mill made her heart beat with pure pity. For she could understand it.

One of the many, and often humorous, incidents that served to bring about this realization of a former aimlessness happened on their second Sunday excursion. This time he had not chosen the Kingsbury Tavern, but another automobilists' haunt, an enlightening indication of established habits involving a wide choice of resorts. While he was paying for luncheon and chatting with the proprietor, Ditmar snatched from the change he had flung down on the counter a five dollar gold coin.

"Now how in thunder did that get into my right-hand pocket? I always keep it in my vest," he exclaimed; and the matter continued to disturb him after they were in the automobile. "It's my lucky piece. I guess I was so excited at the prospect of seeing you when I dressed this morning I put it into my change. Just see what you do to me!"

"Does it bring you luck?" she inquired smilingly.

"How about you! I call you the biggest piece of luck I ever had."

"You'd better not be too sure," she warned him.

"Oh, I'm not worrying. I has that piece in my pocket the day I went down to see old Stephen Chippering, when he made me agent, and I've kept it ever since. And I'll tell you a funny thing—it's enough to make any man believe in luck. Do you remember that day last summer I was tinkering with the car by the canal and you came along?"

"The day you pretended to be tinkering," she corrected him.

He laughed. “So you were on to me?” he said. “You’re a foxy one!”

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“Anyone could see you were only pretending. It made me angry, when I thought of it afterwards.”

“I just had to do it—I wanted to talk to you. But listen to what I’m going to tell you! It’s a miracle, all right,—happening just at that time—that very morning. I was coming back to Boston from New York on the midnight, and when the train ran into Back Bay and I was putting on my trousers the piece rolled out among the bed clothes. I didn’t know I’d lost it until I sat down in the Parker House to eat my breakfast, and I suddenly felt in my pocket. It made me sick to think it was gone. Well, I started to telephone the Pullman office, and then I made up my mind I’d take a taxi and go down to the South Station myself, and just as I got out of the cab there was the nigger porter, all dressed up in his glad rags, coming out of the station! I knew him, I’d been on his car lots of times. `Say, George,’ I said, `I didn’t forget you this morning, did I?’

“`No, suh,’ said George, ‘you done give me a quarter.’

“`I guess you’re mistaken, George,’ says I, and I fished out a ten dollar bill. You ought to have seen that nigger’s eyes.”

“`What’s this for, Mister Ditmar?’ says he.

“`For that lucky gold piece you found in lower seven,’ I told him. `We’ll trade.’

“‘Was you in lower seven?—so you was!’ says George. Well, he had it all right—you bet he had it. Now wasn’t that queer? The very day you and I began to know each other!”

“Wonderful!” Janet agreed. “Why don’t you put it on your watch chain?”

“Well, I’ve thought of that,” he replied, with the air of having considered all sides of the matter. “But I’ve got that charm of the secret order I belong to—that’s on my chain. I guess I’ll keep it in my vest pocket.”

“I didn’t know you were so superstitious,” she mocked.

“Pretty nearly everybody’s superstitious,” he declared. And she thought of Lise.

“I’m not. I believe if things are going to happen well, they’re going to happen. Nothing can prevent it.”

“By thunder” he exclaimed, struck by her remark. “You are like that You’re different from any person I ever knew....”

From such anecdotes she pieced together her new Ditmar. He spoke of a large world she had never seen, of New York and Washington and Chicago, where he intended to take her. In the future he would never travel alone. And he told her of his having been

a delegate to the last National Republican Convention, explaining what a delegate was. He gloried in her innocence, and it was pleasant to dazzle her with impressions of his cosmopolitanism. In this, perhaps, he was not quite so successful as he imagined, but her eyes shone. She had never even been in a sleeping car! For her delectation he launched into an enthusiastic description of these vehicles, of palatial compartment cars, of limited, transcontinental trains, where one had a stenographer and a barber at one's disposal.

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“Neither of them would do me any good,” she complained.

“You could go to the manicure,” he said.

There had been in Ditmar’s life certain events which, in his anecdotal moods, were magnified into matters of climacteric importance; high, festal occasions on which it was sweet to reminisce, such as his visit as Delegate at Large to that Chicago Convention. He had travelled on a special train stocked with cigars and White Seal champagne, in the company of senators and congressmen and ex-governors, state treasurers, collectors of the port, mill owners, and bankers to whom he referred, as the French say, in terms of their “little” names. He dwelt on the magnificence of the huge hotel set on the borders of a lake like an inland sea, and related such portions of the festivities incidental to “the seeing of Chicago” as would bear repetition. No women belonged to this realm; no women, at least, who were to be regarded as persons. Ditmar did not mention them, but no doubt they existed, along with the cigars and the White Seal champagne, contributing to the amenities. And the excursion, to Janet, took on the complexion of a sort of glorified picnic in the course of which, incidentally, a President of the United States had been chosen. In her innocence she had believed the voters to perform this function. Ditmar laughed.

“Do you suppose we’re going to let the mob run this country?” he inquired. “Once in a while we can’t get away with it as we’d like, we have to take the best we can.”

Thus was brought home to her more and more clearly that what men strove and fought for were the joys of prominence, privilege, and power. Everywhere, in the great world, they demanded and received consideration. It was Ditmar’s boast that if nobody else could get a room in a crowded New York hotel, he could always obtain one. And she was fain to concede —she who had never known privilege—a certain intoxicating quality to this eminence. If you could get the power, and refused to take it, the more fool you! A topsy-turvy world, in which the stupid toiled day by day, week by week, exhausting their energies and craving joy, while others adroitly carried off the prize; and virtue had apparently as little to do with the matter as fair hair or a club foot. If Janet had ever read Darwin, she would have recognized in her lover a creature rather wonderfully adapted to his environment; and what puzzled her, perhaps, was the riddle that presents itself to many better informed than herself—the utter absence in this environment of the sign of any being who might be called God. Her perplexities—for she did have them—took the form of an instinctive sense of inadequacy, of persistently recurring though inarticulate convictions of the existence of elements not included in Ditmar’s categories—of things that money could not buy; of things, too, alas! that poverty was as powerless to grasp. Stored within her, sometimes rising to the level of consciousness,

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was that experience at Silliston in the May weather when she had had a glimpse—just a glimpse! of a garden where strange and precious flowers were in bloom. On the other hand, this mysterious perception by her of things unseen and hitherto unguessed, of rays of delight in the spectrum of values to which his senses were unattuned, was for Ditmar the supreme essence of her fascination. At moments he was at once bewildered and inebriated by the rare delicacy of fabric of the woman whom he had somehow stumbled upon and possessed.

Then there were the hours when they worked together in the office. Here she beheld Ditmar at his best. It cannot be said that his infatuation for her was ever absent from his consciousness: he knew she was there beside him, he betrayed it continually. But here she was in the presence of what had been and what remained his ideal, the Chippering Mill; here he acquired unity. All his energies were bent toward the successful execution of the Bradlaugh order, which had to be completed on the first of February. And as day after day went by her realization of the magnitude of the task he had undertaken became keener. Excitement was in the air. Ditmar seemed somehow to have managed to infuse not only Orcutt, the superintendent, but the foremen and second hands and even the workers with a common spirit of pride and loyalty, of interest, of determination to carry off this matter triumphantly. The mill seemed fairly to hum with effort. Janet's increasing knowledge of its organization and processes only served to heighten her admiration for the confidence Ditmar had shown from the beginning. It was superb. And now, as the probability of the successful execution of the task tended more and more toward certainty, he sometimes gave vent to his boyish, exuberant spirits.

"I told Holster, I told all those croakers I'd do it, and by thunder I will do it, with three days' margin, too! I'll get the last shipment off on the twenty-eighth of January. Why, even George Chippering was afraid I couldn't handle it. If the old man was alive he wouldn't have had cold feet." Then Ditmar added, half jocularly, half seriously, looking down on her as she sat with her note-book, waiting for him to go on with his dictation: "I guess you've had your share in it, too. You've been a wonder, the way you've caught on and taken things off my shoulders. If Orcutt died I believe you could step right into his shoes."

"I'm sure I could step into his shoes," she replied. "Only I hope he won't die."

"I hope he won't, either," said Ditmar. "And as for you—"

"Never mind me, now," she said.

He bent over her.

"Janet, you're the greatest girl in the world."

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Yes, she was happiest when she felt she was helping him, it gave her confidence that she could do more, lead him into paths beyond which they might explore together. She was useful. Sometimes, however, he seemed to her oversanguine; though he had worked hard, his success had come too easily, had been too uniform. His temper was quick, the prospect of opposition often made him overbearing, yet on occasions he listened with surprising patience to his subordinates when they ventured to differ from his opinions. At other times Janet had seen him overrule them ruthlessly; humiliate them. There were days when things went wrong, when there were delays, complications, more matters to attend to than usual. On one such day, after the dinner hour, Mr. Orcutt entered the office. His long, lean face wore a certain expression Janet had come to know, an expression that always irritated Ditmar—the conscientious superintendent having the unfortunate faculty of exaggerating annoyances by his very bearing. Ditmar stopped in the midst of dictating a peculiarly difficult letter, and looked up sharply.

“Well,” he asked, “what’s the trouble now?”

Orcutt seemed incapable of reading storm signals. When anything happened, he had the air of declaring, “I told you so.”

“You may remember I spoke to you once or twice, Mr. Ditmar, of the talk over the fifty-four hour law that goes into effect in January.”

“Yes, what of it?” Ditmar cut in. “The notices have been posted, as the law requires.”

“The hands have been grumbling, there are trouble makers among them. A delegation came to me this noon and wanted to know whether we intended to cut the pay to correspond to the shorter working hours.”

“Of course it’s going to be cut,” said Ditmar. “What do they suppose? That we’re going to pay ’em for work they don’t do? The hands not paid by the piece are paid practically by the hour, not by the day. And there’s got to be some limit to this thing. If these damned demagogues in the legislature keep on cutting down the hours of women and children every three years or so—and we can’t run the mill without the women and children—we might as well shut down right now. Three years ago, when they made it fifty-six hours, we were fools to keep up the pay. I said so then, at the conference, but they wouldn’t listen to me. They listened this time. Holster and one or two others croaked, but we shut ’em up. No, they won’t get any more pay, not a damned cent.”

Orcutt had listened patiently, lugubriously.

“I told them that.”

“What did they say?”

“They said they thought there’d be a strike.”

“Pooh! Strike!” exclaimed Ditmar with contemptuous violence. “Do you believe that? You’re always borrowing trouble, you are. They may have a strike at one mill, the Clarendon. I hope they do, I hope Holster gets it in the neck—he don’t know how to run a mill anyway. We won’t have any strike, our people understand when they’re well off, they’ve got all the work they can do, they’re sending fortunes back to the old country or piling them up in the banks. It’s all bluff.”

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“There was a meeting of the English branch of the I. W. W. last night. A committee was appointed,” said Orcutt, who as usual took a gloomy satisfaction in the prospect of disaster.

“The I. W. W.! My God, Orcutt, don’t you know enough not to come in here wasting my time talking about the I. W. W.? Those anarchists haven’t got any organization. Can’t you get that through your head?”

“All right,” replied Orcutt, and marched off. Janet felt rather sorry for him, though she had to admit that his manner was exasperating. But Ditmar’s anger, instead of cooling, increased: it all seemed directed against the unfortunate superintendent.

“Would you believe that a man who’s been in this mill twenty-five years could be such a fool?” he demanded. “The I. W. W.! Why not the Ku Klux? He must think I haven’t anything to do but chin. I don’t know why I keep him here, sometimes I think he’ll drive me crazy.”

His eyes seemed to have grown small and red, as was always the case when his temper got the better of him. Janet did not reply, but sat with her pencil poised over her book.

“Let’s see, where was I?” he asked. “I can’t finish that letter now. Go out and do the others.”

Mundane experience, like a badly mixed cake, has a tendency to run in streaks, and on the day following the incident related above Janet’s heart was heavy. Ditmar betrayed an increased shortness of temper and preoccupation; and the consciousness that her love had lent her a clairvoyant power to trace the source of his humours though these were often hidden from or unacknowledged by himself—was in this instance small consolation. She saw clearly enough that the apprehensions expressed by Mr. Orcutt, whom he had since denounced as an idiotic old woman, had made an impression, aroused in him the ever-abiding concern for the mill which was his life’s passion and which had been but temporarily displaced by his infatuation with her. That other passion was paramount. What was she beside it? Would he hesitate for a moment to sacrifice her if it came to a choice between them? The tempestuousness of these thoughts, when they took possession of her, hinting as they did of possibilities in her nature hitherto unguessed and unrevealed, astonished and frightened her; she sought to thrust them away, to reassure herself that his concern for the successful delivery of the Bradlaugh order was natural. During the morning, in the intervals between interviews with the superintendents, he was self-absorbed, and she found herself inconsistently resenting the absence of those expressions of endearment—the glances and stolen caresses—for indulgence in which she had hitherto rebuked him: and though pride came to her rescue, fuel was added to her feeling by the fact that he did not seem to notice her coolness. Since he failed to appear after lunch, she knew he

must be investigating the suspicions Orcutt had voiced; but at six o'clock, when he had not returned, she closed up her desk and left the office. An odour of cheap perfume pervading the corridor made her aware of the presence of Miss Lottie Myers.

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“Oh, it’s you!” said that young woman, looking up from the landing of the stairs. “I might have known it you never make a get-away until after six, do you?”

“Oh, sometimes,” said Janet.

“I stayed as a special favour to-night,” Miss Myers declared. “But I’m not so stuck on my job that I can’t tear myself away from it.”

“I don’t suppose you are,” said Janet.

For a moment Miss Myers looked as if she was about to be still more impudent, but her eye met Janet’s, and wavered. They crossed the bridge in silence. “Well, ta-ta,” she said. “If you like it, it’s up to you. Five o’clock for mine,”—and walked away, up the canal, swinging her hips defiantly. And Janet, gazing after her, grew hot with indignation and apprehension. Her relations with Ditmar were suspected, after all, made the subject of the kind of comment indulged in, sotto voce, by Lottie Myers and her friends at the luncheon hour. She felt a mad, primitive desire to run after the girl, to spring upon and strangle her and compel her to speak what was in her mind and then retract it; and the motor impulse, inhibited, caused a sensation of sickness, of unhappiness and degradation as she turned her steps slowly homeward. Was it a misinterpretation, after all—what Lottie Myers had implied and feared to say?...

In Fillmore Street supper was over, and Lise, her face contorted, her body strained, was standing in front of the bureau “doing” her hair, her glance now seeking the mirror, now falling again to consult a model in one of those periodicals of froth and fashion that cause such numberless heart burnings in every quarter of our democracy, and which are filled with photographs of “prominent” persons at race meetings, horse shows, and resorts, and with actresses, dancers,—and mannequins. Janet’s eyes fell on the open page to perceive that the coiffure her sister so painfully imitated was worn by a young woman with an insolent, vapid face and hard eyes, whose knees were crossed, revealing considerably more than an ankle. The picture was labelled, “A dance at Palm Beach—A flashlight of Mrs. ‘Trudy’ Gascoigne-Schell,”—one of those mysterious, hybrid names which, in connection with the thoughts of New York and the visible rakish image of the lady herself, cause involuntary shudders down the spine of the reflecting American provincial. Some such responsive quiver, akin to disgust, Janet herself experienced.

“It’s the very last scream,” Lise was saying. “And say, if I owned a ball dress like that I’d be somebody’s Lulu all right! Can I have the pleasure of the next maxixe, Miss Bumpus?” With deft and rapid fingers she lead parted her hair far on the right side and pulled it down over the left eyebrow, twisted it over her ear and tightly around her head, inserting here and there a hairpin, seizing the hand mirror with the cracked back, and holding it up behind her. Finally, when the operation was finished to her satisfaction

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she exclaimed, evidently to the paragon in the picture, “I get you!” Whereupon, from the wardrobe, she produced a hat. “You sure had my number when you guessed the feathers on that other would get draggled,” she observed in high good humour, generously ignoring their former unpleasantness on the subject. When she had pinned it on she bent mockingly over her sister, who sat on the bed. “How d’you like my new toque? Peekaboo! That’s the way the guys rubberneck to see if you’re good lookin’.”

Lise was exalted, feverish, apparently possessed by some high secret; her eyes shone, and when she crossed the room she whistled bars of ragtime and executed mincing steps of the maxixe. Fumbling in the upper drawer for a pair of white gloves (also new), she knocked off the corner of the bureau her velvet bag; it opened as it struck the floor, and out of it rolled a lilac vanity case and a yellow coin. Casting a suspicious, lightning glance at Janet, she snatched up the vanity case and covered the coin with her foot.

“Lock the doors!” she cried, with an hysteric giggle. Then removing her foot she picked up the coin surreptitiously. To her amazement her sister made no comment, did not seem to have taken in the significance of the episode. Lise had expected a tempest of indignant, searching questions, a “third degree,” as she would have put it. She snapped the bag together, drew on her gloves, and, when she was ready to leave, with characteristic audacity crossed the room, taking her sister’s face between her hands and kissing her.

“Tell me your troubles, sweetheart!” she said—and did not wait to hear them.

Janet was incapable of speech—nor could she have brought herself to ask Lise whether or not the money had been earned at the Bagatelle, and remained miraculously unspent. It was possible, but highly incredible. And then, the vanity case and the new hat were to be accounted for! The sight of the gold piece, indeed, had suddenly revived in Janet the queer feeling of faintness, almost of nausea she had experienced after parting with Lottie Myers. And by some untoward association she was reminded of a conversation she had had with Ditmar on the Saturday afternoon following their first Sunday excursion, when, on opening her pay envelope, she had found twenty dollars.

“Are you sure I’m worth it?” she had demanded—and he had been quite sure. He had added that she was worth more, much more, but that he could not give her as yet, without the risk of comment, a sum commensurate with the value of her services.... But now she asked herself again, was she worth it? or was it merely—part of her price? Going to the wardrobe and opening a drawer at the bottom she searched among her clothes until she discovered the piece of tissue paper in which she had wrapped the rose rescued from the cluster he had given her. The petals were dry, yet they gave forth, still, a faint, reminiscent fragrance as she pressed them to her face. Janet wept....

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The following morning as she was kneeling in a corner of the room by the letter files, one of which she had placed on the floor, she recognized his step in the outer office, heard him pause to joke with young Caldwell, and needed not the visual proof—when after a moment he halted on the threshold—of the fact that his usual, buoyant spirits were restored. He held a cigar in his hand, and in his eyes was the eager look with which she had become familiar, which indeed she had learned to anticipate as they swept the room in search of her. And when they fell on her he closed the door and came forward impetuously. But her exclamation caused him to halt in bewilderment.

“Don’t touch me!” she said.

And he stammered out, as he stood over her:—“What’s the matter?”

“Everything. You don’t love me—I was a fool to believe you did.”

“Don’t love you!” he repeated. “My God, what’s the trouble now? What have I done?”

“Oh, it’s nothing you’ve done, it’s what you haven’t done, it’s what you can’t do. You don’t really care for me—all you care for is this mill —when anything happens here you don’t know I’m alive.”

He stared at her, and then an expression of comprehension, of intense desire grew in his eyes; and his laugh, as he flung his cigar out of the open window and bent down to seize her, was almost brutal. She fought him, she tried to hurt him, and suddenly, convulsively pressed herself to him.

“You little tigress!” he said, as he held her. “You were jealous—were you—jealous of the mill?” And he laughed again. “I’d like to see you with something really to be jealous about. So you love me like that, do you?”

She could feel his heart beating against her.

“I won’t be neglected,” she told him tensely. “I want all of you—if I can’t have all of you, I don’t want any. Do you understand?”

“Do I understand? Well, I guess I do.”

“You didn’t yesterday,” she reproached him, somewhat dazed by the swiftness of her submission, and feeling still the traces of a lingering resentment. She had not intended to surrender. “You forgot all about me, you didn’t know I was here, much less that I was hurt. Oh, I was hurt! And you—I can tell at once when anything’s wrong with you—I know without your saying it.”

He was amazed, he might indeed have been troubled and even alarmed by this passion he had aroused had his own passion not been at the flood. And as he wiped away her

tears with his handkerchief he could scarcely believe his senses that this was the woman whose resistance had demanded all his force to overcome. Indeed, although he recognized the symptoms she betrayed as feminine, as having been registered—though feebly compared to this! by incidents in his past, precisely his difficulty seemed to be in identifying this complex and galvanic being as a woman, not as something almost fearful in her significance, outside the bounds of experience....

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Presently she ceased to tremble, and he drew her to the window. The day was as mild as autumn, the winter sun like honey in its mellowness; a soft haze blurred the outline of the upper bridge.

“Only two more days until Sunday,” he whispered, caressingly, exultantly....

CHAPTER XII

It had been a strange year in Hampton, unfortunate for coal merchants, welcome to the poor. But Sunday lacked the transforming touch of sunshine. The weather was damp and cold as Janet set out from Fillmore Street. Ditmar, she knew, would be waiting for her, he counted on her, and she could not bear to disappoint him, to disappoint herself. And all the doubts and fears that from time to time had assailed her were banished by this impulse to go to him, to be with him. He loved her! The words, as she sat in the trolley car, ran in her head like the lilt of a song. What did the weather matter?

When she alighted at the lonely cross-roads snow had already begun to fall. But she spied the automobile, with its top raised, some distance down the lane, and in a moment she was in it, beside him, wrapped in the coat she had now come to regard as her own. He buttoned down the curtains and took her in his arms.

“What shall we do to-day,” she asked, “if it snows?”

“Don’t let that worry you, sweetheart,” he said. “I have the chains on, I can get through anything in this car.”

He was in high, almost turbulent spirits as he turned the car and drove it out of the rutty lane into the state road. The snow grew thicker and thicker still, the world was blotted out by swiftly whirling, feathery flakes that melted on the windshield, and through the wet glass Janet caught distorted glimpses of black pines and cedars beside the highway.

The ground was spread with fleece. Occasionally, and with startling suddenness, other automobiles shot like dark phantoms out of the whiteness, and like phantoms disappeared. Presently, through the veil, she recognized Silliston—a very different Silliston from that she had visited on the fragrant day in springtime, when the green on the common had been embroidered with dandelions, and the great elms whose bare branches were now fantastically traced against the flowing veil of white —heavy with leaf. Vignettes emerged—only to fade!—of the old-world houses whose quaint beauty had fascinated and moved her. And she found herself wondering what had become of the strange man she had mistaken for a carpenter. All that seemed to have taken place in a past life. She asked Ditmar where he was going.

“Boston,” he told her. “There’s no other place to go.”

“But you’ll never get back if it goes on snowing like this.”

“Well, the trains are still running,” he assured her, with a quizzical smile. “How about it, little girl?” It was a term of endearment derived, undoubtedly, from a theatrical source, in which he sometimes indulged.

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She did not answer. Surprisingly, to-day, she did not care. All she could think of, all she wanted was to go on and on beside him with the world shut out—on and on forever. She was his—what did it matter? They were on their way to Boston! She began, dreamily, to think about Boston, to try to restore it in her imagination to the exalted place it had held before she met Ditmar; to reconstruct it from vague memories of childhood when, in two of the family peregrinations, she had crossed it. Traces remained of emotionally-toned impressions acquired when she had walked about the city holding Edward's hand—of a long row of stately houses with forbidding fronts, set on a hillside, of a wide, tree-covered space where children were playing. And her childish verdict, persisting to-day, was one of inaccessibility, impenetrability, of jealously guarded wealth and beauty. Those houses, and the treasures she was convinced they must contain, were not for her! Some of the panes of glass in their windows were purple—she remembered a little thing like that, and asking her father the reason! He hadn't known. This purple quality had somehow steeped itself into her memory of Boston, and even now the colour stood for the word, impenetrable. That was extraordinary. Even now! Well, they were going to Boston; if Ditmar had said they were going to Bagdad it would have been quite as credible—and incredible. Wherever they were going, it was into the larger, larger life, and walls were to crumble before them, walls through which they would pass, even as they rent the white veil of the storm, into regions of beauty....

And now the world seemed abandoned to them alone, so empty, so still were the white villages flitting by; so empty, so still the great parkway of the Fells stretching away and away like an enchanted forest under the snow, like the domain of some sleeping king. And the flakes melted silently into the black waters. And the wide avenue to which they came led to a sleeping palace! No, it was a city, Somerville, Ditmar told her, as they twisted in and out of streets, past stores, churches and fire-engine houses, breasted the heights, descended steeply on the far side into Cambridge, and crossed the long bridge over the Charles. And here at last was Boston—Beacon Street, the heart or funnel of it, as one chose. Ditmar, removing one of the side curtains that she might see, with just a hint in his voice of a reverence she was too excited to notice, pointed out the stern and respectable facades of the twin Chippering mansions standing side by side. Save for these shrines—for such in some sort they were to him—the Back Bay in his eyes was nothing more than a collection of houses inhabited by people whom money and social position made unassailable. But to-day he, too, was excited. Never had he been more keenly aware of her sensitiveness to experience; and he to whom it had not occurred to wonder at Boston wondered at her, who seemed able to summon forth a presiding,

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brooding spirit of the place from out of the snow. Deep in her eyes, though they sparkled, was the reflection of some mystic vision; her cheeks were flushed. And in her delight, vicariously his own, he rejoiced; in his trembling hope of more delight to come, which this mentorship would enhance,—despite the fast deepening snow he drove her up one side of Commonwealth Avenue and down the other, encircling the Common and the Public Garden; stopping at the top of Park Street that she might gaze up at the State House, whose golden dome, seen through the veil, was tinged with blue. Boston! Why not Russia? Janet was speechless for sheer lack of words to describe what she felt....

At length he brought the car to a halt opposite an imposing doorway in front of which a glass roof extended over the pavement, and Janet demanded where they were.

“Well, we’ve got to eat, haven’t we?” Ditmar replied. She noticed that he was shivering.

“Are you cold?” she inquired with concern.

“I guess I am, a little,” he replied. “I don’t know why I should be, in a fur coat. But I’ll be warm soon enough, now.”

A man in blue livery hurried toward them across the sidewalk, helping them to alight. And Ditmar, after driving the car a few paces beyond the entrance, led her through the revolving doors into a long corridor, paved with marble and lighted by bulbs glowing from the ceiling, where benches were set against the wall, overspread by the leaves of potted plants set in the intervals between them.

“Sit down a moment,” he said to her. “I must telephone to have somebody take that car, or it’ll stay there the rest of the winter.”

She sat down on one of the benches. The soft light, the warmth, the exotic odour of the plants, the well-dressed people who trod softly the strip of carpet set on the marble with the air of being at home—all contributed to an excitement, intense yet benumbing. She could not think. She didn’t want to think—only to feel, to enjoy, to wring the utmost flavour of enchantment from these new surroundings; and her face wore the expression of one in a dream. Presently she saw Ditmar returning followed by a boy in a blue uniform.

“All right,” he said. At the end of the corridor was an elevator in which they were shot to one of the upper floors; and the boy, inserting a key in a heavy mahogany door, revealed a sitting-room. Between its windows was a table covered with a long, white cloth reaching to the floor, on which, amidst the silverware and glass, was set a tall vase filled with dusky roses. Janet, drawing in a deep breath of their fragrance, glanced around the room. The hangings, the wall-paper, the carpet, the velvet upholstery of the

mahogany chairs, of the wide lounge in the corner were of a deep and restful green; the marble mantelpiece, with its English coal grate, was copied—had she known it—from a mansion of the Georgian period. The hands of a delicate Georgian clock pointed to one. And in the large mirror behind the clock she beheld an image she supposed, dreamily, to be herself. The bell boy was taking off her coat, which he hung, with Ditmar's, on a rack in a corner.

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“Shall I light the fire, sir?” he asked.

“Sure,” said Ditmar. “And tell them to hurry up with lunch.”

The boy withdrew, closing the door silently behind him.

“We’re going to have lunch here!” Janet exclaimed.

“Why not? I thought it would be nicer than a public dining-room, and when I got up this morning and saw what the weather was I telephoned.” He placed two chairs before the fire, which had begun to blaze. “Isn’t it cosy?” he said, taking her hands and pulling her toward him. His own hands trembled, the tips of his fingers were cold.

“You are cold!” she said.

“Not now—not now,” he replied. The queer vibrations were in his voice that she had heard before. “Sweetheart! This is the best yet, isn’t it? And after that trip in the storm!”

“It’s beautiful!” she murmured, gently drawing away from him and looking around her once more. “I never was in a room like this.”

“Well, you’ll be in plenty more of them,” he exulted. “Sit down beside the fire, and get warm yourself.”

She obeyed, and he took the chair at her side, his eyes on her face. As usual, she was beyond him; and despite her exclamations of surprise, of appreciation and pleasure she maintained the outward poise, the inscrutability that summed up for him her uniqueness in the world of woman. She sat as easily upright in the delicate Chippendale chair as though she had been born to it. He made wild surmises as to what she might be thinking. Was she, as she seemed, taking all this as a matter of course? She imposed on him an impelling necessity to speak, to say anything—it did not matter what—and he began to dwell on the excellences of the hotel. She did not appear to hear him, her eyes lingering on the room, until presently she asked:—“What’s the name of this hotel?”

He told her.

“I thought they only allowed married people to come, like this, in a private room.”

“Oh!” he began—and the sudden perception that she had made this statement impartially added to his perplexity. “Well,” he was able to answer, “we’re as good as married, aren’t we, Janet?” He leaned toward her, he put his hand on hers. “The manager here is an old friend of mine. He knows we’re as good as married.”

“Another old friend!” she queried. And the touch of humour, in spite of his taut nerves, delighted him.

“Yes, yes,” he laughed, rather uproariously. “I’ve got ’em everywhere, as thick as landmarks.”

“You seem to,” she said.

“I hope you’re hungry,” he said.

“Not very,” she replied. “It’s all so strange—this day, Claude. It’s like a fairy story, coming here to Boston in the snow, and this place, and—and being with you.”

“You still love me?” he cried, getting up.

“You must know that I do,” she answered simply, raising her face to his. And he stood gazing down into it, with an odd expression she had never seen before.... “What’s the matter?” she asked.

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“Nothing—nothing,” he assured her, but continued to look at her. “You’re so—so wonderful,” he whispered, “I just can’t believe it.”

“And if it’s hard for you,” she answered, “think what it must be for me!” And she smiled up at him.

Ditmar had known a moment of awe.... Suddenly he took her face between his hands and pressed his rough cheek against it, blindly. His hands trembled, his body was shaken, as by a spasm.

“Why, you’re still cold, Claude!” she cried anxiously.

And he stammered out: “I’m not—it’s you—it’s having you!”

Before she could reply to this strange exclamation, to which, nevertheless, some fire in her leaped in response, there came a knock at the door, and he drew away from her as he answered it. Two waiters entered obsequiously, one bearing a serving table, the other holding above his head a large tray containing covered dishes and glasses.

“I could do with a cocktail!” Ditmar exclaimed, and the waiter smiled as he served them. “Here’s how!” he said, giving her a glass containing a yellow liquid.

She tasted it, made a grimace, and set it down hastily.

“What’s the trouble?” he asked, laughing, as she hurried to the table and took a drink of water.

“It’s horrid!” she cried.

“Oh, you’ll get over that idea,” he told her. “You’ll be crazy about ’em.”

“I never want to taste another,” she declared.

He laughed again. He had taken his at a swallow, but almost nullifying its effect was this confirmation—if indeed he had needed it—of the extent of her inexperience. She was, in truth, untouched by the world —the world in which he had lived. He pulled out her chair for her and she sat down, confronted by a series of knives, forks, and spoons on either side of a plate of oysters. Oysters served in this fashion, needless to say, had never formed part of the menu in Fillmore Street, or in any Hampton restaurant where she had lunched. But she saw that Ditmar had chosen a little fork with three prongs, and she followed his example.

“You mustn’t tell me you don’t like Cotuits!” he exclaimed.

She touched one, delicately, with her fork.

“They’re alive!” she exclaimed, though the custom of consuming them thus was by no means unknown to her. Lise had often boasted of a taste for oysters on the shell, though really preferring them smothered with red catsup in a “cocktail.”

“They’re alive, but they don’t know it. They won’t eat you,” Ditmar replied gleefully. “Squeeze a little lemon on one.” Another sort of woman, he reflected, would have feigned a familiarity with the dish.

She obeyed him, put one in her mouth, gave a little shiver, and swallowed it quickly.

“Well?” he said. “It isn’t bad, is it?”

“It seems so queer to eat anything alive, and enjoy it,” she said, as she ate the rest of them.

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“If you think they’re good here you ought to taste them on the Cape, right out of the water,” he declared, and went on to relate how he had once eaten a fabulous number in a contest with a friend of his, and won a bet. He was fond of talking about wagers he had won. Betting had lent a zest to his life. “We’ll roll down there together some day next summer, little girl. It’s a great place. You can go in swimming three times a day and never feel it. And talk about eating oysters, you can’t swallow ’em as fast as a fellow I know down there, Joe Pusey, can open ’em. It’s some trick to open ’em.”

He described the process, but she—scarcely listened. She was striving to adjust herself to the elements of a new and revolutionary experience; to the waiters who came and went, softly, deferentially putting hot plates before her, helping her to strange and delicious things; a creamy soup, a fish with a yellow sauce whose ingredients were artfully disguised, a breast of guinea fowl, a salad, an ice, and a small cup of coffee. Instincts and tastes hitherto unsuspected and ungratified were aroused in her. What would it be like always to be daintily served, to eat one’s meals in this leisurely and luxurious manner? As her physical hunger was satisfied by the dainty food, even as her starved senses drank in the caressing warmth and harmony of the room, the gleaming fire, the heavy scent of the flowers, the rose glow of the lights in contrast to the storm without,—so the storm flinging itself against the windows, powerless to reach her, seemed to typify a former existence of cold, black mornings and factory bells and harsh sirens, of toil and limitations. Had her existence been like that? or was it a dream, a nightmare from which she had awakened at last? From time to time, deep within her, she felt persisting a conviction that that was reality, this illusion, but she fought it down. She wanted—oh, how she wanted to believe in the illusion!

Facing her was the agent, the genius, the Man who had snatched her from that existence, who had at his command these delights to bestow. She loved him, she belonged to him, he was to be her husband—yet there were moments when the glamour of this oddly tended to dissolve, when an objective vision intruded and she beheld herself, as though removed from the body, lunching with a strange man in a strange place. And once it crossed her mind—what would she think of another woman who did this? What would she think if it were Lise? She could not then achieve a sense of identity; it was as though she had partaken of some philtre lulling her, inhibiting her power to grasp the fact in its enormity. And little by little grew on her the realization of what all along she had known, that the spell of these surroundings to which she had surrendered was an expression of the man himself. He was the source of it. More and more, as he talked, his eyes troubled and stirred her; the touch of his hand, as he reached across the table and laid it on hers, burned her. When the waiters had left them alone she could stand the strain no longer, and she rose and strayed about the room, examining the furniture, the curtains, the crystal pendants, faintly pink, that softened and diffused the light; and she paused before the grand piano in the corner.

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“I’d like to be able to play!” she said.

“You can learn,” he told her.

“I’m too old!”

He laughed. And as he sat smoking his eyes followed her ceaselessly.

Above the sofa hung a large print of the Circus Maximus, with crowded tiers mounting toward the sky, and awninged boxes where sat the Vestal Virgins and the Emperor high above a motley, serried group on the sand. At the mouth of a tunnel a lion stood motionless, menacing, regarding them. The picture fascinated Janet.

“It’s meant to be Rome, isn’t it?” she asked.

“What? That? I guess so.” He got up and came over to her. “Sure,” he said. “I’m not very strong on history, but I read a book once, a novel, which told how those old fellows used to like to see Christians thrown to the lions just as we like to see football games. I’ll get the book again—we’ll read it together.”

Janet shivered.... “Here’s another picture,” he said, turning to the other side of the room. It was, apparently, an engraved copy of a modern portrait, of a woman in evening dress with shapely arms and throat and a small, aristocratic head. Around her neck was hung a heavy rope of pearls.

“Isn’t she beautiful!” Janet sighed.

“Beautiful!” He led her to the mirror. “Look!” he said. “I’ll buy you pearls, Janet, I want to see them gleaming against your skin. She can’t compare to you. I’ll—I’ll drape you with pearls.”

“No, no,” she cried. “I don’t want them, Claude. I don’t want them. Please!” She scarcely knew what she was saying. And as she drew away from him her hands went out, were pressed together with an imploring, supplicating gesture. He seized them. His nearness was suffocating her, she flung herself into his arms, and their lips met in a long, swooning kiss. She began instinctively but vainly to struggle, not against him —-but against a primal thing stronger than herself, stronger than he, stronger than codes and conventions and institutions, which yet she craved fiercely as her being’s fulfilment. It was sweeping them dizzily —whither? The sheer sweetness and terror of it!

“Don’t, don’t!” she murmured desperately. “You mustn’t!”

“Janet—we’re going to be married, sweetheart,—just as soon as we can. Won’t you trust me? For God’s sake, don’t be cruel. You’re my wife, now—”

His voice seemed to come from a great distance. And from a great distance, too, her own in reply, drowned as by falling waters.

“Do you love me?—will you love me always—always?”

And he answered hoarsely, “Yes—always—I swear it, Janet.” He had found her lips again, he was pulling her toward a door on the far side of the room, and suddenly, as he opened it, her resistance ceased....

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The snow made automobiling impossible, and at half past nine that evening Ditmar had escorted Janet to the station in a cab, and she had taken the train for Hampton. For a while she sat as in a trance. She knew that something had happened, something portentous, cataclysmic, which had irrevocably changed her from the Janet Bumpus who had left Hampton that same morning—an age ago. But she was unable to realize the metamorphosis. In the course of a single day she had lived a lifetime, exhausted the range of human experience, until now she was powerless to feel any more. The car was filled with all sorts and conditions of people returning to homes scattered through the suburbs and smaller cities north of Boston—a mixed, Sunday-night crowd; and presently she began, in a detached way, to observe them. Their aspects, their speech and manners had the queer effect of penetrating her consciousness without arousing the emotional judgments of approval or disapproval which normally should have followed. Ordinarily she might have felt a certain sympathy for the fragile young man on the seat beside her who sat moodily staring through his glasses at the floor: and the group across the aisle would surely have moved her to disgust. Two couples were seated vis-a-vis, the men apparently making fun of a “pony” coat one of the girls was wearing. In spite of her shrieks, which drew general attention, they pulled it from her back—an operation regarded by the conductor himself with tolerant amusement. Whereupon her companion, a big, blond Teuton with an inane guffaw, boldly thrust an arm about her waist and held her while he presented the tickets. Janet beheld all this as one sees dancers through a glass, without hearing the music.

Behind her two men fell into conversation.

“I guess there’s well over a foot of snow. I thought we’d have an open winter, too.”

“Look out for them when they start in mild!”

“I was afraid this darned road would be tied up if I waited until morning. I’m in real estate, and there’s a deal on in my town I’ve got to watch every minute....”

Even the talk between two slouch-hatted millhands, foreigners, failed at the time to strike Janet as having any significance. They were discussing with some heat the prospect of having their pay reduced by the fifty-four hour law which was to come into effect on Monday. They denounced the mill owners.

“They speed up the machine and make work harder,” said one. “I think we goin’ to have a strike sure.”

“Bad sisson too to have strike,” replied the second pessimistically. “It will be cold winter, now.”

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Across the black square of the window drifted the stray lights of the countryside, and from time to time, when the train stopped, she gazed out, unheeding, at the figures moving along the dim station platforms. Suddenly, without premeditation or effort, she began to live over again the day, beginning with the wonders, half revealed, half hidden, of that journey through the whiteness to Boston.... Awakened, listening, she heard beating louder and louder on the shores of consciousness the waves of the storm which had swept her away—waves like crashing chords of music. She breathed deeply, she turned her face to the window, seeming to behold reflected there, as in a crystal, all her experiences, little and great, great and little. She was seated once more leaning back in the corner of the carriage on her way to the station, she felt Ditmar's hand working in her own, and she heard his voice pleading forgiveness—for her silence alarmed him. And she heard herself saying:—"It was my fault as much as yours."

And his vehement reply:—"It wasn't anybody's fault—it was natural, it was wonderful, Janet. I can't bear to see you sad."

To see her sad! Twice, during the afternoon and evening, he had spoken those words—or was it three times? Was there a time she had forgotten? And each time she had answered: "I'm not sad." What she had felt indeed was not sadness,—but how could she describe it to him when she herself was amazed and dwarfed by it? Could he not feel it, too? Were men so different?... In the cab his solicitation, his tenderness were only to be compared with his bewilderment, his apparent awe of the feeling he himself had raised up in her, and which awed her, likewise. She had actually felt that bewilderment of his when, just before they had reached the station, she had responded passionately to his last embrace. Even as he returned her caresses, it had been conveyed to her amazingly by the quality of his touch. Was it a lack all women felt in men? and were these, even in supreme moments, merely the perplexed transmitters of life?—not life itself? Her thoughts did not gain this clarity, though she divined the secret. And yet she loved him—loved him with a fierceness that frightened her, with a tenderness that unnerved her....

At the Hampton station she took the trolley, alighting at the Common, following the narrow path made by pedestrians in the heavy snow to Fillmore Street. She climbed the dark stairs, opened the dining-room door, and paused on the threshold. Hannah and Edward sat there under the lamp, Hannah scanning through her spectacles the pages of a Sunday newspaper. On perceiving Janet she dropped it hastily in her lap.

"Well, I was concerned about you, in all this storm!" she exclaimed. "Thank goodness you're home, anyway. You haven't seen Lise, have you?"

"Lise?" Janet repeated. "Hasn't she been home?"

“Your father and I have been alone all day long. Not that it is so uncommon for Lise to be gone. I wish it wasn’t! But you! When you didn’t come home for supper I was considerably worried.”

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Janet sat down between her mother and father and began to draw off her gloves.

“I’m going to marry Mr. Ditmar,” she announced.

For a few moments the silence was broken only by the ticking of the old-fashioned clock.

“Mr. Ditmar!” said Hannah, at length. “You’re going to marry Mr. Ditmar!”

Edward was still inarticulate. His face twitched, his eyes watered as he stared at her.

“Not right away,” said Janet.

“Well, I must say you take it rather cool,” declared Hannah, almost resentfully. “You come in and tell us you’re going to marry Mr. Ditmar just like you were talking about the weather.”

Hannah’s eyes filled with tears. There had been indeed an unconscious lack of consideration in Janet’s abrupt announcement, which had fallen like a spark on the dry tinder of Hannah’s hope. The result was a suffocating flame. Janet, whom love had quickened, had a swift perception of this. She rose quickly and took Hannah in her arms and kissed her. It was as though the relation between them were reversed, and the daughter had now become the mother and the comforter.

“I always knew something like this would happen!” said Edward. His words incited Hannah to protest.

“You didn’t anything of the kind, Edward Bumpus,” she exclaimed.

“Just to think of Janet livin’ in that big house up in Warren Street!” he went on, unheeding, jubilant. “You’ll drop in and see the old people once in a while, Janet, you won’t forget us?”

“I wish you wouldn’t talk like that, father,” said Janet.

“Well, he’s a fine man, Claude Ditmar, I always said that. The way he stops and talks to me when he passes the gate—”

“That doesn’t make him a good man,” Hannah declared, and added: “If he wasn’t a good man, Janet wouldn’t be marrying him.”

“I don’t know whether he’s good or not,” said Janet.

“That’s so, too,” observed Hannah, approvingly. “We can’t any of us tell till we’ve tried ’em, and then it’s too late to change. I’d like to see him, but I guess he wouldn’t care to

come down here to Fillmore Street." The difference between Ditmar's social and economic standing and their own suggested appalling complications to her mind. "I suppose I won't get a sight of him till after you're married, and not much then."

"There's plenty of time to think about that, mother," answered Janet.

"I'd want to have everything decent and regular," Hannah insisted. "We may be poor, but we come of good stock, as your father says."

"It'll be all right—Mr. Ditmar will behave like a gentleman," Edward assured her.

"I thought I ought to tell you about it," Janet said, "but you mustn't mention it, yet, not even to Lise. Lise will talk. Mr. Ditmar's very busy now,—he hasn't made any plans."

"I wish Lise could get married!" exclaimed Hannah, irrelevantly. "She's been acting so queer lately, she's not been herself at all."

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“Now there you go, borrowing trouble, mother,” Edward exclaimed. He could not take his eyes from Janet, but continued to regard her with benevolence. “Lise’ll get married some day. I don’t suppose we can expect another Mr. Ditmar....”

“Well,” said Hannah, presently, “there’s no use sitting up all night.” She rose and kissed Janet again. “I just can’t believe it,” she declared, “but I guess it’s so if you say it is.”

“Of course it’s so,” said Edward.

“I so want you should be happy, Janet,” said Hannah....

Was it so? Her mother and father, the dwarfed and ugly surroundings of Fillmore Street made it seem incredible once more. And—what would they say if they knew what had happened to her this day? When she had reached her room, Janet began to wonder why she had told her parents. Had it not been in order to relieve their anxiety—-especially her mother’s—on the score of her recent absences from home? Yes, that was it, and because the news would make them happy. And then the mere assertion to them that she was to marry Ditmar helped to make it more real to herself. But, now that reality was fading again, she was unable to bring it within the scope of her imagination, her mind refused to hold one remembered circumstance long enough to coordinate it with another: she realized that she was tired—too tired to think any more. But despite her exhaustion there remained within her, possessing her, as it were overshadowing her, unrelated to future or past, the presence of the man who had awakened her to an intensity of life hitherto unconceived. When her head touched the pillow she fell asleep....

When the bells and the undulating scream of the siren awoke her, she lay awhile groping in the darkness. Where was she? Who was she? The discovery of the fact that the nail of the middle finger on her right hand was broken, gave her a clew. She had broken that nail in reaching out to save something—a vase of roses—that was it!—-a vase of roses on a table with a white cloth. Ditmar had tipped it over. The sudden flaring up of this trivial incident served to re-establish her identity, to light a fuse along which her mind began to run like fire, illuminating redly all the events of the day before. It was sweet to lie thus, to possess, as her very own, these precious, passionate memories of life lived at last to fulness, to feel that she had irrevocably given herself and taken—all. A longing to see Ditmar again invaded her: he would take an early train, he would be at the office by nine. How could she wait until then?

With a movement that had become habitual, subconscious, she reached out her hand to arouse her sister. The coldness of the sheets on the right side of the bed sent a shiver through her—a shiver of fear.

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“Lise!” she called. But there was no answer from the darkness. And Janet, trembling, her heart beating wildly, sprang from the bed, searched for the matches, and lit the gas. There was no sign of Lise; her clothes, which she had the habit of flinging across the chairs, were nowhere to be seen. Janet’s eyes fell on the bureau, marked the absence of several knick-knacks, including a comb and brush, and with a sudden sickness of apprehension she darted to the wardrobe and flung open the doors. In the bottom were a few odd garments, above was the hat with the purple feather, now shabby and discarded, on the hooks a skirt and jacket Lise wore to work at the Bagatelle in bad weather. That was all.... Janet sank down in the rocking-chair, her hands clasped together, overwhelmed by the sudden apprehension of the tragedy that had lurked, all unsuspected, in the darkness: a tragedy, not of Lise alone, but in which she herself was somehow involved. Just why this was so, she could not for the moment declare. The room was cold, she was clad only in a nightdress, but surges of heat ran through her body. What should she do? She must think. But thought was impossible. She got up and closed the window and began to dress with feverish rapidity, pausing now and again to stand motionless. In one such moment there entered her mind an incident that oddly had made little impression at the time of its occurrence because she, Janet, had been blinded by the prospect of her own happiness—that happiness which, a few minutes ago, had seemed so real and vital a thing! And it was the memory of this incident that suddenly threw a glaring, evil light on all of Lise’s conduct during the past months—her accidental dropping of the vanity case and the gold coin! Now she knew for a certainty what had happened to her sister.

Having dressed herself, she entered the kitchen, which was warm, filled with the smell of frying meat. Streaks of grease smoke floated fantastically beneath the low ceiling, and Hannah, with the frying-pan in one hand and a fork in the other, was bending over the stove. Wisps of her scant, whitening hair escaped from the ridiculous, tightly drawn knot at the back of her head; in the light of the flickering gas-jet she looked so old and worn that a sudden pity smote Janet and made her dumb —pity for her mother, pity for herself, pity for Lise; pity that lent a staggering insight into life itself. Hannah had once been young, desirable, perhaps, swayed by those forces which had swayed her. Janet wondered why she had never guessed this before, and why she had guessed it now. But it was Hannah who, looking up and catching sight of Janet’s face, was quick to divine the presage in it and gave voice to the foreboding that had weighed on her for many weeks.

“Where’s Lise?”

And Janet could not answer. She shook her head. Hannah dropped the fork, the handle of the frying pan and crossed the room swiftly, seizing Janet by the shoulders.

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“Is she gone? I knew it, I felt it all along. I thought she’d done something she was afraid to tell about—I tried to ask her, but I couldn’t—I couldn’t! And now she’s gone. Oh, my God, I’ll never forgive myself!”

The unaccustomed sight of her mother’s grief was terrible. For an instant only she clung to Janet, then becoming mute, she sat down in the kitchen chair and stared with dry, unseeing eyes at the wall. Her face twitched. Janet could not bear to look at it, to see the torture in her mother’s eyes. She, Janet, seemed suddenly to have grown old herself, to have lived through ages of misery and tragedy.... She was aware of a pungent odour, went to the stove, picked up the fork, and turned the steak. Now and then she glanced at Hannah. Grief seemed to have frozen her. Then, from the dining-room she heard footsteps, and Edward stood in the doorway.

“Well, what’s the matter with breakfast?” he asked. From where he stood he could not see Hannah’s face, but gradually his eyes were drawn to her figure. His intuition was not quick, and some moments passed before the rigidity of the pose impressed itself upon him.

“Is mother sick?” he asked falteringly.

Janet went to him. But it was Hannah who spoke.

“Lise has gone,” she said.

“Lise—gone,” Edward repeated. “Gone where?”

“She’s run away—she’s disgraced us,” Hannah replied, in a monotonous, dulled voice.

Edward did not seem to understand, and presently Janet felt impelled to break the silence.

“She didn’t come home last night, father.”

“Didn’t come home? Mebbe she spent the night with a friend,” he said.

It seemed incredible, at such a moment, that he could still be hopeful.

“No, she’s gone, I tell you, she’s lost, we’ll never lay eyes on her again. My God, I never thought she’d come to this, but I might have guessed it. Lise! Lise! To think it’s my Lise!”

Hannah’s voice echoed pitifully through the silence of the flat. So appealing, so heartbroken was the cry one might have thought that Lise, wherever she was, would have heard it. Edward was dazed by the shock, his lower lip quivered and fell. He walked over to Hannah’s chair and put his hand on her shoulder.

“There, there, mother,” he pleaded. “If she’s gone, we’ll find her, we’ll bring her back to you.”

Hannah shook her head. She pushed back her chair abruptly and going over to the stove took the fork from Janet’s hand and put the steak on the dish.

“Go in there and set down, Edward,” she said. “I guess we’ve got to have breakfast just the same, whether she’s gone or not.”

It was terrible to see Hannah, with that look on her face, going about her tasks automatically. And Edward, too, seemed suddenly to have become aged and broken; his trust in the world, so amazingly preserved through many vicissitudes, shattered at last. He spilled his coffee when he tried to drink, and presently he got up and wandered about the room, searching for his overcoat. It was Janet who found it and helped him on with it. He tried to say something, but failing, departed heavily for the mill. Janet began to remove the dishes from the table.

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“You’ve got to eat something, too, before you go to work,” said Hannah.

“I’ve had all I want,” Janet replied.

Hannah followed her into the kitchen. The scarcely touched food was laid aside, the coffee-pot emptied, Hannah put the cups in the basin in the sink and let the water run. She turned to Janet and seized her hands convulsively.

“Let me do this, mother,” said Janet. She knew her mother was thinking of the newly-found joy that Lise’s disgrace had marred, but she released her hands, gently, and took the mop from the nail on which it hung.

“You sit down, mother,” she said.

Hannah would not. They finished the dishes together in silence while the light of the new day stole in through the windows. Janet went into her room, set it in order, made up the bed, put on her coat and hat and rubbers. Then she returned to Hannah, who seized her.

“It ain’t going to spoil your happiness?”

But Janet could not answer. She kissed her mother, and went out, down the stairs into the street. The day was sharp and cold and bracing, and out of an azure sky the sun shone with dazzling brightness on the snow, which the west wind was whirling into little eddies of white smoke, leaving on the drifts delicate scalloped designs like those printed by waves on the sands of the sea. They seemed to Janet that morning hatefully beautiful. In front of his tin shop, whistling cheerfully and labouring energetically with a shovel to clean his sidewalk, was Johnny Tiernan, the tip of his pointed nose made very red by the wind.

“Good morning, Miss Bumpus,” he said. “Now, if you’d only waited awhile, I’d have had it as clean as a parlour. It’s fine weather for coal bills.”

She halted.

“Can I see you a moment, Mr. Tiernan?”

Johnny looked at her.

“Why sure,” he said. Leaning his shovel against the wall, he gallantly opened the door that she might pass in before him and then led the way to the back of the shop where the stove was glowing hospitably. He placed a chair for her. “Now what can I be doing to serve you?” he asked.

“It’s about my sister,” said Janet.

“Miss Lise?”

“I thought you might know what man she’s been going with lately,” said Janet.

Mr. Tiernan had often wondered how much Janet knew about her sister. In spite of a momentary embarrassment most unusual in him, the courage of her question made a strong appeal, and his quick sympathies suspected the tragedy behind her apparent calmness. He met her magnificently.

“Why,” he said, “I have seen Miss Lise with a fellow named Duval—Howard Duval—-when he’s been in town. He travels for a Boston shoe house, Humphrey and Gillmount.”

“I’m afraid Lise has gone away with him,” said Janet. “I thought you might be able to find out something about him, and—whether any one had seen them. She left home yesterday morning.”

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For an instant Mr. Tiernan stood silent before her, his legs apart, his fingers running through his bristly hair.

“Well, ye did right to come straight to me, Miss Janet. It’s me that can find out, if anybody can, and it’s glad I am to help you. Just you stay here—make yourself at home while I run down and see some of the boys. I’ll not be long—and don’t be afraid I’ll let on about it.”

He seized his overcoat and departed. Presently the sun, glinting on the sheets of tin, started Janet’s glance straying around the shop, noting its disorderly details, the heaped-up stovepipes, the littered work-bench with the shears lying across the vise. Once she thought of Ditmar arriving at the office and wondering what had happened to her.... The sound of a bell made her jump. Mr. Tiernan had returned.

“She’s gone with him,” said Janet, not as a question, but as one stating a fact.

Mr. Tiernan nodded.

“They took the nine-thirty-six for Boston yesterday morning. Eddy Colahan was at the depot.”

Janet rose. “Thank you,” she said simply.

“What are you going to do?” he asked.

“I’m going to Boston,” she answered. “I’m going to find out where she is.”

“Then it’s me that’s going with you,” he announced.

“Oh no, Mr. Tiernan!” she protested. “I couldn’t let you do that.”

“And why not?” he demanded. “I’ve got a little business there myself. I’m proud to go with you. It’s your sister you want, isn’t it?”

“Yes.”

“Well, what would you be doing by yourself—a young lady? How will you find your sister?”

“Do you think you can find her?”

“Sure I can find her,” he proclaimed, confidently. He had evidently made up his mind that casual treatment was what the affair demanded. “Haven’t I good friends in Boston?” By friendship he swayed his world: nor was he completely unknown—though he did not say so—to certain influential members of his race of the Boston police

department. Pulling out a large nickel watch and observing that they had just time to catch the train, he locked up his shop, and they set out together for the station. Mr. Tiernan led the way, for the path was narrow. The dry snow squeaked under his feet.

After escorting her to a seat on the train, he tactfully retired to the smoking car, not to rejoin her until they were on the trestle spanning the Charles River by the North Station. All the way to Boston she had sat gazing out of the window at the blinding whiteness of the fields, incapable of rousing herself to the necessity of thought, to a degree of feeling commensurate with the situation. She did not know what she would say to Lise if she should find her; and in spite of Mr. Tiernan's expressed confidence, the chances of success seemed remote. When the train began to thread the crowded suburbs, the city, spreading out over its hills, instead of thrilling her, as yesterday,

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with a sense of dignity and power, of opportunity and emancipation, seemed a labyrinth with many warrens where vice and crime and sorrow could hide. In front of the station the traffic was already crushing the snow into filth. They passed the spot where, the night before, the carriage had stopped, where Ditmar had bidden her good-bye. Something stirred within her, became a shooting pain.... She asked Mr. Tiernan what he intended to do.

"I'm going right after the man, if he's here in the city," he told her. And they boarded a street car, which almost immediately shot into the darkness of the subway. Emerging at Scollay Square, and walking a few blocks, they came to a window where guns, revolvers, and fishing tackle were displayed, and on which was painted the name, "Timothy Mulally." Mr. Tiernan entered.

"Is Tim in?" he inquired of one of the clerks, who nodded his head towards the rear of the store, where a middle-aged, grey-haired Irishman was seated at a desk under a drop light.

"Is it you, Johnny?" he exclaimed, looking up.

"It's meself," said Mr. Tiernan. "And this is Miss Bumpus, a young lady friend of mine from Hampton."

Mr. Mulally rose and bowed.

"How do ye do, ma'am," he said.

"I've got a little business to do for her," Mr. Tiernan continued. "I thought you might offer her a chair and let her stay here, quiet, while I was gone."

"With pleasure, ma'am," Mr. Mulally replied, pulling forward a chair with alacrity. "Just sit there comfortable—no one will disturb ye."

When, in the course of half an hour, Mr. Tiernan returned, there was a grim yet triumphant look in his little blue eyes, but it was not until Janet had thanked Mr. Mulally for his hospitality and they had reached the sidewalk that he announced the result of his quest.

"Well, I caught him. It's lucky we came when we did—he was just going out on the road again, up to Maine. I know where Miss Lise is."

"He told you!" exclaimed Janet.

“He told me indeed, but it wasn’t any joy to him. He was all for bluffing at first. It’s easy to scare the likes of him. He was as white as his collar before I was done with him. He knows who I am, all right he’s heard of me in Hampton,” Mr. Tiernan added, with a pardonable touch of pride.

“What did you say?” inquired Janet, curiously.

“Say?” repeated Mr. Tiernan. “It’s not much I had to say, Miss Janet. I was all ready to go to Mr. Gillmount, his boss. I’m guessing he won’t take much pleasure on this trip.”

She asked for no more details.

CHAPTER XIII

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Once more Janet and Mr. Tiernan descended into the subway, taking a car going to the south and west, which finally came out of the tunnel into a broad avenue lined with shabby shops, hotels and saloons, and long rows of boarding—and rooming-houses. They alighted at a certain corner, walked a little way along a street unkempt and dreary, Mr. Tiernan scrutinizing the numbers until he paused in front of a house with a basement kitchen and snow-covered, sandstone steps. Climbing these, he pulled the bell, and they stood waiting in the twilight of a half-closed vestibule until presently shuffling steps were heard within; the door was cautiously opened, not more than a foot, but enough to reveal a woman in a loose wrapper, with an untidy mass of bleached hair and a puffy face like a fungus grown in darkness.

“I want to see Miss Lise Bumpus,” Mr. Tiernan demanded.

“You’ve got the wrong place. There ain’t no one of that name here,” said the woman.

“There ain’t! All right,” he insisted aggressively, pushing open the door in spite of her. “If you don’t let this young lady see her quick, there’s trouble coming to you.”

“Who are you?” asked the woman, impudently, yet showing signs of fear.

“Never mind who I am,” Mr. Tiernan declared. “I know all about you, and I know all about Duval. If you don’t want any trouble you won’t make any, and you’ll take this young lady to her sister. I’ll wait here for you, Miss Janet,” he added.

“I don’t know nothing about her—she rented my room that’s all I know,” the woman replied sullenly. “If you mean that couple that came here yesterday—”

She turned and led the way upstairs, mounting slowly, and Janet followed, nauseated and almost overcome by the foul odours of dead cigarette smoke which, mingling with the smell of cooking cabbage rising from below, seemed the very essence and reek of hitherto unimagined evil. A terror seized her such as she had never known before, an almost overwhelming impulse to turn and regain the air and sunlight of the day. In the dark hallway of the second story the woman knocked at the door of a front room.

“She’s in there, unless she’s gone out.” And indeed a voice was heard petulantly demanding what was wanted—Lise’s voice! Janet hesitated, her hand on the knob, her body fallen against the panels. Then, as she pushed open the door, the smell of cigarette smoke grew stronger, and she found herself in a large bedroom, the details of which were instantly photographed on her mind—the dingy claret-red walls, the crayon over the mantel of a buxom lady in a decollete costume of the ’90’s, the outspread fan concealing the fireplace, the soiled lace curtains. The bed was unmade, and on the table beside two empty beer bottles and glasses and the remains of a box of candy—-suggestive of a Sunday purchase at a drug store—she recognized Lise’s vanity case. The effect of all this, integrated at a glance, was a paralyzing horror. Janet could not

speak. She remained gazing at Lise, who paid no attention to her entrance, but stood with her back turned before an old-fashioned bureau with a marble top and raised sides. She was dressed, and engaged in adjusting her hat. It was not until Janet pronounced her name that she turned swiftly.

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“You!” she exclaimed. “What the—what brought you here?”

“Oh, Lise!” Janet repeated.

“How did you get here?” Lise demanded, coming toward her. “Who told you where I was? What business have you got sleuthing ’round after me like this?”

For a moment Janet was speechless once more, astounded that Lise could preserve her effrontery in such an atmosphere, could be insensible to the evils lurking in this house—evils so real to Janet that she seemed actually to feel them brushing against her.

“Lise, come away from here,” she pleaded, “come home with me!”

“Home!” said Lise, defiantly, and laughed. “What do you take me for? Why would I be going home when I’ve been trying to break away for two years? I ain’t so dippy as that—not me! Go home like a good little girl and march back to the Bagatelle and ask ’em to give me another show standing behind a counter all day. Nix! No home sweet home for me! I’m all for easy street when it comes to a home like that.”

Heartless, terrific as the repudiation was, it struck a self-convicting, almost sympathetic note in Janet. She herself had revolted against the monotony and sordidness of that existence She herself! She dared not complete the thought, now.

“But this!” she exclaimed.

“What’s the matter with it?” Lise demanded. “It ain’t Commonwealth Avenue, but it’s got Fillmore Street beat a mile. There ain’t no whistles hereto get you out of bed at six a.m., for one thing. There ain’t no geezers, like Walters, to nag you ’round all day long. What’s the matter with it?”

Something in Lise’s voice roused Janet’s spirit to battle.

“What’s the matter with it?” she cried. “It’s hell—that’s the matter with it. Can’t you see it? Can’t you feel it? You don’t know what it means, or you’d come home with me.”

“I guess I know what it means as well as you do,” said Lise, sullenly. “We’ve all got to croak sometime, and I’d rather croak this way than be smothered up in Hampton. I’ll get a run for my money, anyway.”

“No, you don’t know what it means,” Janet repeated, “or you wouldn’t talk like that. Do you think this man will support you, stick to you? He won’t, he’ll desert you, and you’ll have to go on the streets.”

A dangerous light grew in Lise’s eyes.

“He’s as good as any other man, he’s as good as Ditmar,” she said. “They’re all the same, to girls like us.”

Janet’s heart caught, it seemed to stop beating. Was this a hazard on Lise’s part, or did she speak from knowledge? And yet what did it matter whether Lise knew or only suspected, if her words were true, if men were all alike? Had she been a dupe as well as Lise? and was the only difference between them now the fact that Lise was able, without illusion, to see things as they were, to accept the consequences, while she, Janet, had beheld visions and dreamed dreams? was there any real choice between the luxurious hotel

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to which Ditmar had taken her and this detestable house? Suddenly, seemingly by chance, her eyes fell on the box of drug-store candy from which the cheap red ribbon had been torn, and by some odd association of ideas it suggested and epitomized Lise's Sunday excursion with a mama hideous travesty on the journey of wonders she herself had taken. Had that been heaven, and this of Lise's, hell?... And was. Lise's ambition to be supported in idleness and luxury to be condemned because she had believed her own to be higher? Did not both lead to destruction? The weight that had lain on her breast since the siren had awakened her that morning and she had reached out and touched the chilled, empty sheets now grew almost unsupportable.

"It's true," said Janet, "all men are the same."

Lise was staring at her.

"My God!" she exclaimed. "You?"

"Yes-me," cried Janet.—"And what are you going to do about it? Stay here with him in this filthy place until he gets tired of you and throws you out on the street? Before I'd let any man do that to me I'd kill him."

Lise began to whimper, and suddenly buried her face in the pillow. But a new emotion had begun to take possession of Janet—an emotion so strong as to give her an unlookedfor sense of detachment. And the words Lise had spoken between her sobs at first conveyed no meaning.

"I'm going to have a baby...."

Lise was going to have a child! Why hadn't she guessed it? A child! Perhaps she, Janet, would have a child! This enlightenment as to Lise's condition and the possibility it suggested in regard to herself brought with it an overwhelming sympathy which at first she fiercely resented then yielded to. The bond between them, instead of snapping, had inexplicably strengthened. And Lise, despite her degradation, was more than ever her sister! Forgetting her repugnance to the bed, Janet sat down beside Lise and put an arm around her.

"He said he'd marry me, he swore he was rich—and he was a spender all right. And then some guy came up to me one night at Gruber's and told me he was married already."

"What?" Janet exclaimed.

"Sure! He's got a wife and two kids here in Boston. That was a twenty-one round knockout! Maybe I didn't have something to tell him when he blew into Hampton last

Friday! But he said he couldn't help it—he loved me." Lise sat up, seemingly finding relief in the relation of her wrongs, dabbing her eyes with a cheap lace handkerchief. "Well, while he'd been away—this thing came. I didn't know what was the matter at first, and when I found out I was scared to death, I was ready to kill myself. When I told him he was scared too, and then he said he'd fix it. Say, I was a goat to think he'd marry me!" Lise laughed hysterically.

"And then—" Janet spoke with difficulty, "and then you came down here?"

"I told him he'd have to see me through, I'd start something if he didn't. Say, he almost got down on his knees, right there in Gruber's! But he came back inside of ten seconds—he's a jollier, for sure, he was right there with the goods, it was because he loved me, he couldn't help himself, I was his cutie, and all that kind of baby talk."

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Lise's objective manner of speaking about her seducer amazed Janet.

"Do you love him?" she asked.

"Say, what is love?" Lise demanded. "Do you ever run into it outside of the movies? Do I love him? Well, he's a good looker and a fancy dresser, he ain't a tight wad, and he can start a laugh every minute. If he hadn't put it over on me I wouldn't have been so sore. I don't know he ain't so bad. He's weak, that's the trouble with him."

This was the climax! Lise's mental processes, her tendency to pass from wild despair to impersonal comment, her inability, her courtesan's temperament that prevented her from realizing tragedy for more than a moment at a time—even though the tragedy were her own—were incomprehensible to Janet.

"Get on to this," Lise adjured her. "When I first was acquainted with him he handed me a fairy tale that he was taking five thousand a year from Humphrey and Gillmount, he was going into the firm. He had me razzle-dazzled. He's some hypnotizes as a salesman, too, they say. Nothing was too good for me; I saw myself with a house on the avenue shopping in a limousine. Well, he blew up, but I can't help liking him."

"Liking him!" cried Janet passionately. "I'd kill him that's what I'd do."

Lise regarded her with unwilling admiration.

"That's where you and me is different," she declared. "I wish I was like that, but I ain't. And where would I come in? Now you're wise why I can't go back to Hampton. Even if I was stuck on the burg and cryin' my eyes out for the Bagatelle I couldn't go back."

"What are you going to do?" Janet demanded.

"Well," said Lise, "he's come across—I'll say that for him. Maybe it's because he's scared, but he's stuck on me, too. When you dropped in I was just going down town to get a pair of patent leathers, these are all wore out," she explained, twisting her foot, "they ain't fit for Boston. And I thought of lookin' at blouses—there's a sale on I was reading about in the paper. Say, it's great to be on easy street, to be able to stay in bed until you're good and ready to get up and go shopping, to gaze at the girls behind the counter and ask the price of things. I'm going to Walling's and give the salesladies the ha-ha—that's what I'm going to do."

"But—?" Janet found words inadequate.

Lise understood her.

"Oh, I'm due at the doctor's this afternoon."

“Where?”

“The doctor’s. Don’t you get me?—it’s a private hospital.” Lise gave a slight shudder at the word, but instantly recovered her sang-froid. “Howard fixed it up yesterday—and they say it ain’t very bad if you take it early.”

For a space Janet was too profoundly shocked to reply.

“Lise! That’s a crime!” she cried.

“Crime, nothing!” retorted Lise, and immediately became indignant. “Say, I sometimes wonder how you could have lived all these years without catching on to a few things! What do you take me for! What’d I do with a baby?”

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What indeed! The thought came like an avalanche, stripping away the veneer of beauty from the face of the world, revealing the scarred rock and crushed soil beneath. This was reality! What right had society to compel a child to be born to degradation and prostitution? to beget, perhaps, other children of suffering? Were not she and Lise of the exploited, of those duped and tempted by the fair things the more fortunate enjoyed unscathed? And now, for their natural cravings, their family must be disgraced, they must pay the penalty of outcasts! Neither Lise nor she had had a chance. She saw that, now. The scorching revelation of life's injustice lighted within her the fires of anarchy and revenge. Lise, other women might submit tamely to be crushed, might be lulled and drugged by bribes: she would not. A wild desire seized her to get back to Hampton.

"Give me the address of the hospital," she said.

"Come off!" cried Lise, in angry bravado. "Do you think I'm going to let you butt into this? I guess you've got enough to do to look out for your own business."

Janet produced a pencil from her bag, and going to the table tore off a piece of the paper in which had been wrapped the candy box.

"Give me the address," she insisted.

"Say, what are you going to do?"

"I want to know where you are, in case anything happens to you."

"Anything happens! What do you mean?" Janet's words had frightened Lise, the withdrawal of Janet's opposition bewildered her. But above all, she was cowed by the sudden change in Janet herself, by the attitude of steely determination eloquent of an animus persons of Lise's type are incapable of feeling, and which to them is therefore incomprehensible. "Nothing's going to happen to me," she whined. "The place is all right —he'd be scared to send me there if it wasn't. It costs something, too. Say, you ain't going to tell 'em at home?" she cried with a fresh access of alarm.

"If you do as I say, I won't tell anybody," Janet replied, in that odd, impersonal tone her voice had acquired. "You must write me as soon—as soon as it is over. Do you understand?"

"Honest to God I will," Lise assured her.

"And you mustn't come back to a house like this."

"Where'll I go?" Lise asked.

"I don't know. We'll find out when the time comes," said Janet, significantly.

“You’ve seen him!” Lise exclaimed.

“No,” said Janet, “and I don’t want to see him unless I have to. Mr. Tiernan has seen him. Mr. Tiernan is downstairs now, waiting for me.”

“Johnny Tiernan! Is Johnny Tiernan downstairs?”

Janet wrote the address, and thrust the slip of paper in her bag.

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“Good-bye, Lise,” she said. “I’ll come down again I’ll come down whenever you want me.” Lise suddenly seized her and clung to her, sobbing. For a while Janet submitted, and then, kissing her, gently detached herself. She felt, indeed, pity for Lise, but something within her seemed to have hardened—something that pity could not melt, possessing her and thrusting heron to action. She knew not what action. So strong was this thing that it overcame and drove off the evil spirits of that darkened house as she descended the stairs to join Mr. Tiernan, who opened the door for her to pass out. Once in the street, she breathed deeply of the sunlit air. Nor did she observe Mr. Tiernan’s glance of comprehension.... When they arrived at the North Station he said: —“You’ll be wanting a bite of dinner, Miss Janet,” and as she shook her head he did not press her to eat. He told her that a train for Hampton left in ten minutes. “I think I’ll stay in Boston the rest of the day, as long as I’m here,” he added.

She remembered that she had not thanked him, she took his hand, but he cut her short.

“It’s glad I was to help you,” he assured her. “And if there’s anything more I can do, Miss Janet, you’ll be letting me know—you’ll call on Johnny Tiernan, won’t you?”

He left her at the gate. He had intruded with no advice, he had offered no comment that she had come downstairs alone, without Lise. His confidence in her seemed never to have wavered. He had respected, perhaps partly imagined her feelings, and in spite of these now a sense of gratitude to him stole over her, mitigating the intensity of their bitterness. Mr. Tiernan alone seemed stable in a chaotic world. He was a man.

No sooner was she in the train, however, than she forgot Mr. Tiernan utterly. Up to the present the mental process of dwelling upon her own experience of the last three months had been unbearable, but now she was able to take a fearful satisfaction in the evolving of parallels between her case and Lise’s. Despite the fact that the memories she had cherished were now become hideous things, she sought to drag them forth and compare them, ruthlessly, with what must have been the treasures of Lise. Were her own any less tawdry? Only she, Janet, had been the greater fool of the two, the greater dupe because she had allowed herself to dream, to believe that what she had done had been for love, for light! because she had not listened to the warning voice within her! It had always been on the little, unpremeditated acts of Ditmar that she had loved to linger, and now, in the light of Lise’s testimony, of Lise’s experience, she saw them all as false. It seemed incredible, now, that she had ever deceived herself into thinking that Ditmar meant to marry her, that he loved her enough to make her his wife. Nor was it necessary to summon and marshal incidents to support this view, they came of themselves, crowding one another, a cumulative and appalling array of evidence,

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before which she stood bitterly amazed at her former stupidity. And in the events of yesterday, which she pitilessly reviewed, she beheld a deliberate and prearranged plan for her betrayal. Had he not telephoned to Boston for the rooms, rehearsed in his own mind every detail of what had subsequently happened? Was there any essential difference between the methods of Ditmar and Duval? Both were skilled in the same art, and Ditmar was the cleverer of the two. It had only needed her meeting with Lise, in that house, to reveal how he had betrayed her faith and her love, sullied and besmirched them. And then came the odd reflection,—how strange that that same Sunday had been so fateful for herself and Lise!

The agony of these thoughts was mitigated by the scorching hatred that had replaced her love, the desire for retaliation, revenge. Occasionally, however, that stream of consciousness was broken by the recollection of what she had permitted and even advised her sister to do; and though the idea of the place to which Lise was going sickened her, though she achieved a certain objective amazement at the transformation in herself enabling her to endorse such a course, she was glad of having endorsed it, she rejoiced that Lise's child would not be born into a world that had seemed—so falsely—fair and sweet, and in reality was black and detestable. Her acceptance of the act—for Lise—was a function of the hatred consuming her, a hatred which, growing in bigness, had made Ditmar merely the personification of that world. From time to time her hands clenched, her brow furrowed, powerful waves of heat ran through her, the craving for action became so intense she could scarcely refrain from rising in her seat.

By some odd whim of the weather the wind had backed around into the east, gathering the clouds once more. The brilliancy of the morning had given place to greyness, the high slits of windows seemed dirtier than ever as the train pulled into the station at Hampton, shrouded in Gothic gloom. As she left the car Janet was aware of the presence on the platform of an unusual number of people; she wondered vaguely, as she pushed her way through them, why they were there, what they were talking about? One determination possessed her, to go to the Chippering Mill, to Ditmar. Emerging from the street, she began to walk rapidly, the change from inaction to exercise bringing a certain relief, starting the working of her mind, arousing in her a realization of the necessity of being prepared for the meeting. Therefore, instead of turning at Faber Street, she crossed it. But at the corner of the Common she halted, her glance drawn by a dark mass of people filling the end of Hawthorne Street, where it was blocked by the brick-coloured facade of the Clarendon Mill. In the middle distance men and boys were running to join this crowd. A girl, evidently an Irish-American mill hand of the higher paid sort, hurried toward her from the direction of the mill itself. Janet accosted her.

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“It’s the strike,” she explained excitedly, evidently surprised at the question. “The Polaks and the Dagoes and a lot of other foreigners quit when they got their envelopes—-stopped their looms and started through the mill, and when they came into our room I left. I didn’t want no trouble with ’em. It’s the fifty-four hour law—their pay’s cut two hours. You’ve heard about it, I guess.”

Janet nodded.

“They had a big mass meeting last night in Maxwell Hall,” the girl continued, “the foreigners—not the skilled workers. And they voted to strike. They tell me they’re walking out over at the Patuxent, too.”

“And the Chippering?” asked Janet, eagerly.

“I don’t know—I guess it’ll spread to all of ’em, the way these foreigners are going on—-they’re crazy. But say,” the girl added, “it ain’t right to cut our pay, either, is it? They never done it two years ago when the law came down to fifty-six.”

Janet did not wait to reply. While listening to this explanation, excitement had been growing in her again, and some fearful, overpowering force of attraction emanating from that swarm in the distance drew her until she yielded, fairly running past the rows of Italian tenements in their strange setting of snow, not to pause until she reached the fruit shop where she and Eda had eaten the olives. Now she was on the outskirts of the crowd that packed itself against the gates of the Clarendon. It spread over the width of East Street, growing larger every minute, until presently she was hemmed in. Here and there hoarse shouts of approval and cheers arose in response to invisible orators haranging their audiences in weird, foreign tongues; tiny American flags were waved; and suddenly, in one of those unforeseen and incomprehensible movements to which mobs are subject, a trolley car standing at the end of the Hawthorne Street track was surrounded, the desperate clanging of its bell keeping pace with the beating of Janet’s heart. A dark Sicilian, holding aloft the green, red, and white flag of Italy, leaped on the rear platform and began to speak, the Slav conductor regarding him stupidly, pulling the bellcord the while. Three or four policemen fought their way to the spot, striving to clear the tracks, bewildered and impotent in the face of the alien horde momentarily growing more and more conscious of power.

Janet pushed her way deeper and deeper into the crowd. She wanted to savour to the full its wrath and danger, to surrender herself to be played upon by these sallow, stubby-bearded exhorters, whose menacing tones and passionate gestures made a grateful appeal, whose wild, musical words, just because they were uncomprehended, aroused in her dim suggestions of a race-experience not her own, but in which she was now somehow summoned to share. That these were the intruders whom she, as a native American, had once resented and despised did not occur to her. The racial sense so strong

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in her was drowned in a sense of fellowship. Their anger seemed to embody and express, as nothing else could have done, the revolt that had been rising, rising within her soul; and the babel to which she listened was not a confusion of tongues, but one voice lifted up to proclaim the wrongs of all the duped, of all the exploited and oppressed. She was fused with them, their cause was her cause, their betrayers her betrayers.

Suddenly was heard the cry for which she had been tensely but unconsciously awaiting. Another cry like that had rung out in another mob across the seas more than a century before. “Ala Bastille!” became “To the Chippering!” Some man shouted it out in shrill English, hundreds repeated it; the Sicilian leaped from the trolley car, and his path could be followed by the agitated progress of the alien banner he bore. “To the Chippering!” It rang in Janet’s ears like a call to battle. Was she shouting it, too? A galvanic thrill ran through the crowd, an impulse that turned their faces and started their steps down East Street toward the canal, and Janet was irresistibly carried along. Nay, it seemed as if the force that second by second gained momentum was in her, that she herself had released and was guiding it! Her feet were wet as she ploughed through the trampled snow, but she gave no thought to that. The odour of humanity was in her nostrils. On the left a gaunt Jew pressed against her, on the right a solid Ruthenian woman, one hand clasping her shawl, the other holding aloft a miniature emblem of New World liberty. Her eyes were fixed on the grey skies, and from time to time her lips were parted in some strange, ancestral chant that could be heard above the shouting. All about Janet were dark, awakening faces....

It chanced that an American, a college graduate, stood gazing down from a point of vantage upon this scene. He was ignorant of anthropology, psychology, and the phenomena of environment; but bits of “knowledge” —which he embodied in a newspaper article composed that evening stuck wax-like in his brain. Not thus, he deplored, was the Anglo-Saxon wont to conduct his rebellions. These Czechs and Slavs, Hebrews and Latins and Huns might have appropriately been clad in the skins worn by the hordes of Attila. Had they not been drawn hither by the renown of the Republic’s wealth? And how essentially did they differ from those other barbarians before whose bewildered, lustful gaze had risen the glittering palaces on the hills of the Tiber? The spoils of Rome! The spoils of America! They appeared to him ferocious, atavistic beasts as they broke into the lumberyard beneath his window to tear the cord-wood from the piles and rush out again, armed with billets....

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Janet, in the main stream sweeping irresistibly down the middle of the street, was carried beyond the lumberyard into the narrow roadway beside the canal—presently to find herself packed in the congested mass in front of the bridge that led to the gates of the Chippering Mill. Across the water, above the angry hum of human voices could be heard the whirring of the looms, rousing the mob to a higher pitch of fury. The halt was for a moment only. The bridge rocked beneath the weight of their charge, they battered at the great gates, they ran along the snow-filled tracks by the wall of the mill. Some, in a frenzy of passion, hurled their logs against the windows; others paused, seemingly to measure the distance and force of the stroke, thus lending to their act a more terrible and deliberate significance. A shout of triumph announced that the gates, like a broken dam, had given way, and the torrent poured in between the posts, flooding the yard, pressing up the towered stairways and spreading through the compartments of the mill. More ominous than the tumult seemed the comparative silence that followed this absorption of the angry spirits of the mob. Little by little, as the power was shut off, the antiphonal throbbing of the looms was stilled. Pinioned against the parapet above the canal—almost on that very spot where, the first evening, she had met Ditmar—Janet awaited her chance to cross. Every crashing window, every resounding blow on the panels gave her a fierce throb of joy. She had not expected the gates to yield—her father must have insecurely fastened them. Gaining the farther side of the canal, she perceived him flattened against the wall of the gatehouse shaking his fist in the faces of the intruders, who rushed past him unheeding. His look arrested her. His face was livid, his eyes were red with anger, he stood transformed by a passion she had not believed him to possess. She had indeed heard him give vent to a mitigated indignation against foreigners in general, but now the old-school Americanism in which he had been bred, the Americanism of individual rights, of respect for the convention of property, had suddenly sprung into flame. He was ready to fight for it, to die for it. The curses he hurled at these people sounded blasphemous in Janet's ears.

"Father!" she cried. "Father!"

He looked at her uncomprehendingly, seemingly failing to recognize her.

"What are you doing here?" he demanded, seizing her and attempting to draw her to the wall beside him. But she resisted. There sprang from her lips an unpremeditated question: "Where is Mr. Ditmar?" She was, indeed, amazed at having spoken it.

"I don't know," Edward replied distractedly. "We've been looking for him everywhere. My God, to think that this should happen with me at the gates!" he lamented. "Go home, Janet. You can't tell what'll happen, what these fiends will do, you may get hurt. You've got no business here." Catching sight of a belated and breathless policeman, he turned from her in desperation. "Get 'em out! Far God's sake, can't you get 'em out before they ruin the machines?"

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But Janet waited no longer. Pushing her way frantically through the people filling the yard she climbed the tower stairs and made her way into one of the spinning rooms. The frames were stilled, the overseer and second hands, thrust aside, looked on helplessly while the intruders harangued, cajoled or threatened the operatives, some of whom were cowed and already departing; others, sullen and resentful, remained standing in the aisles; and still others seemed to have caught the contagion of the strike. Suddenly, with reverberating strokes, the mill bells rang out, the electric gongs chattered, the siren screeched, drowning the voices. Janet did not pause, but hurried from room to room until, in passing through an open doorway in the weaving department she ran into Mr. Caldwell. He halted a moment, in surprise at finding her there, calling her by name. She clung to his sleeve, and again she asked the question:—

"Where's Mr. Ditmar?"

Caldwell shook his head. His answer was the same as Edward's. "I don't know," he shouted excitedly above the noise. "We've got to get this mob out before they do any damage."

He tore himself away, she saw him expostulating with the overseer, and then she went on. These tower stairs, she remembered, led to a yard communicating by a little gate with the office entrance. The door of the vestibule was closed, but the watchman, Simmons, recognizing her, permitted her to enter. The offices were deserted, silent, for the bells and the siren had ceased their clamour; the stenographers and clerks had gone. The short day was drawing to a close, shadows were gathering in the corners of Ditmar's room as she reached the threshold and gazed about her at the objects there so poignantly familiar. She took off her coat. His desk was littered with books and papers, and she started, mechanically, to set it in order, replacing the schedule books on the shelves, sorting out the letters and putting them in the basket. She could not herself have told why she should take up again these trivial tasks as though no cataclysmic events had intervened to divide forever the world of yesterday from that of to-morrow. With a movement suggestive of tenderness she was picking up Ditmar's pen to set it in the glass rack when her ear caught the sound of voices, and she stood transfixed, listening intently. There were footsteps in the corridor, the voices came nearer; one, loud and angered, she detected above the others. It was Ditmar's! Nothing had happened to him! Dropping the pen, she went over to the window, staring out over the grey waters, trembling so violently that she could scarcely stand.

She did not look around when they entered the room Ditmar, Caldwell, Orcutt, and evidently a few watchmen and overseers. Some one turned on the electric switch, darkening the scene without. Ditmar continued to speak in vehement tones of uncontrolled rage.

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“Why in hell weren’t those gates bolted tight?” he demanded. “That’s what I want to know! There was plenty of time after they turned the corner of East Street. You might have guessed what they would do. But instead of that you let ’em into the mill to shut off the power and intimidate our own people.” He called the strikers an unprintable name, and though Janet stood, with her back turned, directly before him, he gave no sign of being aware of her presence.

“It wasn’t the gatekeeper’s fault,” she heard Orcutt reply in a tone quivering with excitement and apprehension. “They really didn’t give us a chance—that’s the truth. They were down Canal Street and over the bridge before we knew it.”

“It’s just as I’ve said a hundred times,” Ditmar retorted. “I can’t afford to leave this mill a minute, I can’t trust anybody—” and he broke out in another tirade against the intruders. “By God, I’ll fix ’em for this—I’ll crush ’em. And if any operatives try to walkout here I’ll see that they starve before they get back—after all I’ve done for ’em, kept the mill going in slack times just to give ’em work. If they desert me now, when I’ve got this Bradlaugh order on my hands—” Speech became an inadequate expression of his feelings, and suddenly his eye fell on Janet. She had turned, but her look made no impression on him. “Call up the Chief of Police,” he said.

Automatically she obeyed, getting the connection and handing him the receiver, standing by while he denounced the incompetence of the department for permitting the mob to gather in East Street and demanded deputies. The veins of his forehead were swollen as he cut short the explanations of the official and asked for the City Hall. In making an appointment with the Mayor he reflected on the management of the city government. And when Janet by his command obtained the Boston office, he gave the mill treasurer a heated account of the afternoon’s occurrences, explaining circumstantially how, in his absence at a conference in the Patuxent Mill, the mob had gathered in East Street and attacked the Chippering; and he urged the treasurer to waste no time in obtaining a force of detectives, in securing in Boston and New York all the operatives that could be hired, in order to break the impending strike. Save for this untimely and unreasonable revolt he was bent on stamping out, for Ditmar the world to-day was precisely the same world it had been the day before. It seemed incredible to Janet that he could so regard it, could still be blind to the fact that these workers whom he was determined to starve and crush if they dared to upset his plans and oppose his will were human beings with wills and passions and grievances of their own. Until to-day her eyes had been sealed. In agony they had been opened to the panorama of sorrow and suffering, of passion and evil; and what she beheld now as life was a vast and terrible cruelty. She had needed only this final proof to be convinced that

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in his eyes she also was but one of those brought into the world to minister to his pleasure and profit. He had taken from her, as his weed, the most precious thing a woman has to give, and now that she was here again at his side, by some impulse incomprehensible to herself—in spite of the wrong he had done her!—had sought him out in danger, he had no thought of her, no word for her, no use save a menial one: he cared nothing for any help she might be able to give, he had no perception of the new light which had broken within her soul.... The telephoning seemed interminable, yet she waited with a strange patience while he talked with Mr. George Chippering and two of the most influential directors. These conversations had covered the space of an hour or more. And perhaps as a result of self-suggestion, of his repeated assurances to Mr. Semple, to Mr. Chippering, and the directors of his ability to control the situation, Ditmar's habitual self-confidence was gradually restored. And when at last he hung up the instrument and turned to her, though still furious against the strikers, his voice betrayed the joy of battle, the assurance of victory.

"They can't bluff me, they'll have to guess again. It's that damned Holster—he hasn't any guts—he'd give in to 'em right now if I'd let him. It's the limit the way he turned the Clarendon over to them. I'll show him how to put a crimp in 'em if they don't turn up here to-morrow morning."

He was so magnificently sure of her sympathy! She did, not reply, but picked up her coat from the chair where she had laid it.

"Where are you going?" he demanded. And she replied laconically, "Home."

"Wait a minute," he said, rising and taking a step toward her.

"You have an appointment with the Mayor," she reminded him.

"I know," he said, glancing at the clock over the door. "Where have you been?—where were you this morning? I was worried about you, I—I was afraid you might be sick."

"Were you?" she said. "I'm all right. I had business in Boston."

"Why didn't you telephone me? In Boston?" he repeated.

She nodded. He started forward again, but she avoided him.

"What's the matter?" he cried. "I've been worried about you all day —until this damned strike broke loose. I was afraid something had happened."

"You might have asked my father," she said.

“For God’s sake, tell me what’s the matter!”

His desire for her mounted as his conviction grew more acute that something had happened to disturb a relationship which, he had congratulated himself, after many vicissitudes and anxieties had at last been established. He was conscious, however, of irritation because this whimsical and unanticipated grievance of hers should have developed at the moment when the caprice of his operatives threatened to interfere with his cherished plans—for Ditmar measured the inconsistencies of humanity by the yardstick of his desires. Her question as to why he had not made inquiries of her father added a new element to his disquietude. As he stood thus, worried, exasperated, and perplexed, the fact that there was in her attitude something ominous, dangerous, was slow to dawn on him. His faculties were wholly unprepared for the blow she struck him.

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“I hate you!” she said. She did not raise her voice, but the deliberate, concentrated conviction she put into the sentence gave it the dynamic quality of a bullet. And save for the impact of it—before which he physically recoiled—its import was momentarily without meaning.

“What?” he exclaimed, stupidly.

“I might have known you never meant to marry me,” she went on. Her hands were busy with the buttons of her coat.

“All you want is to use me, to enjoy me and turn me out when you get tired of me—the way you’ve done with other women. It’s just the same with these mill hands, they’re not human beings to you, they’re—they’re cattle. If they don’t do as you like, you turn them out; you say they can starve for all you care.”

“For God’s sake, what do you mean?” he demanded. “What have I done to you, Janet? I love you, I need you!”

“Love me!” she repeated. “I know how men of your sort love—I’ve seen it—I know. As long as I give you what you want and don’t bother you, you love me. And I know how these workers feel,” she cried, with sudden, passionate vehemence. “I never knew before, but I know now. I’ve been with them, I marched up here with them from the Clarendon when they battered in the gates and smashed your windows—and I wanted to smash your windows, too, to blow up your mill.”

“What are you saying? You came here with the strikers? you were with that mob?” asked Ditmar, astoundedly.

“Yes, I was in that mob. I belong there, with them, I tell you—I don’t belong here, with you. But I was a fool even then, I was afraid they’d hurt you, I came into the mill to find you, and you—and you you acted as if you’d never seen me before. I was a fool, but I’m glad I came—I’m glad I had a chance to tell you this.”

“My God—won’t you trust me?” he begged, with a tremendous effort to collect himself. “You trusted me yesterday. What’s happened to change you? Won’t you tell me? It’s nothing I’ve done—I swear. And what do you mean when you say you were in that mob? I was almost crazy when I came back and found they’d been here in this mill—-can’t you understand? It wasn’t that I didn’t think of you. I’d been worrying about you all day. Look at this thing sensibly. I love you, I can’t get along without you—I’ll marry you. I said I would, I meant it I’ll marry you just as soon as I can clean up this mess of a strike. It won’t take long.”

“Don’t touch me!” she commanded, and he recoiled again. “I’ll tell you where I’ve been, if you want to know,—I’ve been to see my sister in—in a house, in Boston. I guess you

know what kind of a house I mean, you've been in them, you've brought women to them,—just like the man that brought her there. Would you marry me now—with my sister there? And am I any different from her? You you've made me just like her." Her voice had broken, now, into furious, uncontrolled weeping—to which she paid no heed.

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Ditmar was stunned; he could only stare at her.

“If I have a child,” she said, “I’ll—I’ll kill you—I’ll kill myself.”

And before he could reply—if indeed he had been able to reply—she had left the office and was running down the stairs....

CHAPTER XIV

What was happening to Hampton? Some hundreds of ignorant foreigners, dissatisfied with the money in their pay envelopes, had marched out of the Clarendon Mill and attacked the Chippering and behold, the revered structure of American Government had quivered and tumbled down like a pack of cards! Despite the feverish assurances in the Banner “extra” that the disturbance was merely local and temporary, solid citizens became panicky, vaguely apprehending the release of elemental forces hitherto unrecognized and unknown. Who was to tell these solid, educated business men that the crazy industrial Babel they had helped to rear, and in which they unconsciously dwelt, was no longer the simple edifice they thought it? that Authority, spelled with a capital, was a thing of the past? that human instincts suppressed become explosives to displace the strata of civilization and change the face of the world? that conventions and institutions, laws and decrees crumble before the whirlwind of human passions? that their city was not of special, but of universal significance? And how were these, who still believed themselves to be dwelling under the old dispensation, to comprehend that environments change, and changing demand new and terrible Philosophies? When night fell on that fateful Tuesday the voice of Syndicalism had been raised in a temple dedicated to ordered, Anglo-Saxon liberty—the Hampton City Hall.

Only for a night and a day did the rebellion lack both a leader and a philosophy. Meanwhile, in obedience to the unerring instinct for drama peculiar to great metropolitan dailies, newspaper correspondents were alighting from every train, interviewing officials and members of labour unions and mill agents: interviewing Claude Ditmar, the strongest man in Hampton that day. He at least knew what ought to be done, and even before his siren broke the silence of the morning hours in vigorous and emphatic terms he had informed the Mayor and Council of their obvious duty. These strikers were helots, unorganized scum; the regular unions—by comparison respectable—held aloof from them. Here, in effect, was his argument: a strong show of force was imperative; if the police and deputies were inadequate, request the Governor to call out the local militia; but above all, waste no time, arrest the ringleaders, the plotters, break up all gatherings, keep the streets clear. He demanded from the law protection of his property, protection for those whose right to continue at work was inalienable. He was listened to with sympathy and respect—but nothing was done! The world had turned upside down indeed if the City Government of Hampton refused to take the advice of the agent of the Chippering Mill! American institutions were a failure! But such was the

fact. Some unnamed fear, outweighing their dread of the retributions of Capital, possessed these men, made them supine, derelict in the face of their obvious duty.

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By the faint grey light of that bitter January morning Ditmar made his way to the mill. In Faber Street dark figures flitted silently across the ghostly whiteness of the snow, and gathered in groups on the corners; seeking to avoid these, other figures hurried along the sidewalks close to the buildings, to be halted, accosted, pleaded with—threatened, perhaps. Picketing had already begun! The effect of this pantomime of the eternal struggle for survivals which he at first beheld from a distance, was to exaggerate appallingly the emptiness of the wide street, to emphasize the absence of shoppers and vehicles; and a bluish darkness lurked in the stores, whose plate glass windows were frosted in quaint designs. Where were the police? It was not fear that Ditmar felt, he was galvanized and dominated by anger, by an overwhelming desire for action; physical combat would have brought him relief, and as he quickened his steps he itched to seize with his own hands these foreigners who had dared to interfere with his cherished plans, who had had the audacity to challenge the principles of his government which welcomed them to its shores. He would have liked to wring their necks. His philosophy, too, was environmental. And beneath this wrath, stimulating and energizing it the more, was the ache in his soul from the loss for which he held these enemies responsible. Two days ago happiness and achievement had both been within his grasp. The only woman—so now it seemed—he had ever really wanted! What had become of her? What obscure and passionate impulse had led her suddenly to defy and desert him, to cast in her lot with these insensate aliens? A hundred times during the restless, inactive hours of a sleepless night this question had intruded itself in the midst of his scheming to break the strike, as he reviewed, word by word, act by act, that almost incomprehensible revolt of hers which had followed so swiftly—a final, vindictive blow of fate—on that other revolt of the workers. At moments he became confused, unable to separate the two. He saw her fire in that other.... Her sister, she had said, had been disgraced; she had defied him to marry her in the face of that degradation—and this suddenly had sickened him. He had let her go. What a fool he had been to let her go! Had she herself been—! He did not finish this thought. Throughout the long night he had known, for a certainty, that this woman was a vital part of him, flame of his flame. Had he never seen her he would have fought these strikers to their knees, but now the force of this incentive was doubled. He would never yield until he had crushed them, until he had reconquered her.

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He was approaching one of the groups of strikers, and unconsciously he slowed his steps. The whites of his eyes reddened. The great coat of golden fur he wore gave to his aspect an added quality of formidableness. There were some who scattered as he drew near, and of the less timorous spirits that remained only a few raised dark, sullen glances to encounter his, which was unflinching, passionately contemptuous. Throughout the countless generations that lay behind them the instinct of submission had played its dominant, phylogenetic role. He was the Master. The journey across the seas had not changed that. A few shivered—not alone because they were thinly clad. He walked on, slowly, past other groups, turned the corner of West Street, where the groups were more numerous, while the number of those running the gantlet had increased. And he heard, twice or thrice, the word "Scab!" cried out menacingly. His eyes grew redder still as he spied a policeman standing idly in a doorway.

"Why in hell don't you do your duty?" he demanded. "What do you mean by letting them interfere with these workers?"

The man flinched. He was apologetic. "So long as they're peaceable, Mr. Ditmar—-those are my orders. I do try to keep 'em movin'."

"Your orders? You're a lot of damned cowards," Ditmar replied, and went on. There were mutterings here; herded together, these slaves were bolder; and hunger and cold, discouragement at not being able to stop the flow toward the mills were having their effect. By the frozen canal, the scene of the onslaught of yesterday, the crowd had grown comparatively thick, and at the corner of the lodging-house row Ditmar halted a moment, unnoticed save by a few who nudged one another and murmured. He gave them no attention, he was trying to form an estimate of the effect of the picketing on his own operatives. Some came with timid steps; others, mostly women, fairly ran; still others were self-possessed, almost defiant—and such he marked. There were those who, when the picketers held them by the sleeve, broke precipitately from their annoyers, and those who hesitated, listening with troubled faces, with feelings torn between dread of hunger for themselves and their children and sympathy with the revolt. A small number joined the ranks of the picketers. Ditmar towered above these foreigners, who were mostly undersized: a student of human nature and civilization, free from industrial complexes, would from that point of vantage have had much to gather from the expressions coming within his view, but to Ditmar humanity was a means to an end. Suddenly, from the cupolas above the battlement of the mill, the bells shattered the early morning air, the remnant of the workers hastened across the canal and through the guarded gates, which were instantly closed. Ditmar was left alone among the strikers. As he moved toward the bridge they made a lane for him to pass; one or two he thrust out of his way. But there were mutterings, and from the sidewalk he heard a man curse him.

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Perhaps we shall understand some day that the social body, also, is subject to the operation of cause and effect. It was not what an ingenuous orthodoxy, keeping alive the fate of the ancient city from which Lot fled, would call the wrath of heaven that visited Hampton, although a sermon on these lines was delivered from more than one of her pulpits on the following Sunday. Let us surmise, rather, that a decrepit social system in a moment of lowered vitality becomes an easy prey to certain diseases which respectable communities are not supposed to have. The germ of a philosophy evolved in decadent Europe flies across the sea to prey upon a youthful and vigorous America, lodging as host wherever industrial strife has made congenial soil. In four and twenty hours Hampton had “caught” Syndicalism. All day Tuesday, before the true nature of the affection was developed, prominent citizens were outraged and appalled by the supineness of their municipal phagocytes. Property, that sacred fabric of government, had been attacked and destroyed, law had been defied, and yet the City Hall, the sanctuary of American tradition, was turned over to the alien mob for a continuous series of mass meetings. All day long that edifice, hitherto chastely familiar with American doctrine alone, with patriotic oratory, with perorations that dwelt upon the wrongs and woes of Ireland—part of our national propaganda—all day long that edifice rang with strange, exotic speech, sometimes guttural, often musical, but always impassioned, weirdly cadenced and intoned. From the raised platform, in place of the shrewd, matter-of-fact New England politician alive to the vote—getting powers of Fourth of July patriotism, in place of the vehement but fun-loving son of Erin, men with wild, dark faces, with burning black eyes and unkempt hair, unshaven, flannel skirted—-made more alien, paradoxically, by their conventional, ready-made American clothes—-gave tongue to the inarticulate aspirations of the peasant drudge of Europe. From lands long steeped in blood they came, from low countries by misty northern seas, from fair and ancient plains of Lombardy, from Guelph and Ghibelline hamlets in the Apennines, from vine-covered slopes in Sicily and Greece; from the Balkans, from Caucasus and Carpathia, from the mountains of Lebanon, whose cedars lined the palaces of kings; and from villages beside swollen rivers that cross the dreary steppes. Each peasant listened to a recital in his own tongue—the tongue in which the folklore, the cradle sayings of his race had been preserved—of the common wrongs of all, of misery still present, of happiness still unachieved in this land of liberty and opportunity they had found a mockery; to appeals to endure and suffer for a common cause. But who was to weld together this medley of races and traditions, to give them the creed for which their passions were prepared, to lead into battle these ignorant and unskilled from whom organized labour held aloof? Even as dusk was falling, even as the Mayor, the Hon. Michael McGrath, was making from the platform an eloquent plea for order and peace, promising a Committee of Arbitration and thinking about soldiers, the leader and the philosophy were landing in Hampton.

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The “five o’clock” edition of the Banner announced him, Antonio Antonelli, of the Industrial Workers of the World! An ominous name, an ominous title,—compared by a well-known publicist to the sound of a fire-bell in the night. The Industrial Workers, not of America, but of the World! No wonder it sent shivers down the spine of Hampton! The writer of the article in the Banner was unfamiliar with the words “syndicalism” and “sabotage,” or the phrase “direct action,” he was too young to know the history of the Knights, he had never heard of a philosophy of labour, or of Sorel or Pouget, but the West he had heard of,—the home of lawlessness, of bloodshed, rape, and murder. For obvious reasons he did not betray this opinion, but for him the I.W.W. was born in the West, where it had ravaged and wrecked communities. His article was guardedly respectful, but he ventured to remind his readers that Mr. Antonelli had been a leader in some of these titanic struggles between crude labour and capital—catastrophes that hitherto had seemed to the citizens of Hampton as remote as Kansas cyclones....

Some of the less timorous of the older inhabitants, curious to learn what doctrine this interloper had to proclaim, thrust their way that evening into the City Hall, which was crowded, as the papers said, “to suffocation.” Not prepossessing, this modern Robespierre; younger than he looked, for life had put its mark on him; once, in the days of severe work in the mines, his body had been hard, and now had grown stout. In the eyes of a complacent, arm-chair historian he must have appeared one of the, strange and terrifying creatures which, in times of upheaval, are thrust from the depths of democracies to the surface, with gifts to voice the longings and passions of those below. He did not blink in the light; he was sure of himself, he had a creed and believed in it; he gazed around him with the leonine stare of the conqueror, and a hush came over the hall as he arose. His speech was taken down verbatim, to be submitted to the sharpest of legal eyes, when was discovered the possession of a power—rare among agitators—to pour forth in torrents apparently unpremeditated appeals, to skirt the border of sedition and never transgress it, to weigh his phrases before he gave them birth, and to remember them. If he said an incendiary thing one moment he qualified it the next; he justified violence only to deprecate it; and months later, when on trial for his life and certain remarks were quoted against him, he confounded his prosecutors by demanding the contexts. Skilfully, always within the limits of their intelligence, he outlined to his hearers his philosophy and proclaimed it as that of the world’s oppressed. Their cause was his—the cause of human progress; he universalized, it. The world belonged to the “producer,” if only he had the courage to take possession of his own....

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Suddenly the inspirer was transformed into the man of affairs who calmly proposed the organization of a strike committee, three members of which were to be chosen by each nationality. And the resolution, translated into many tongues, was adopted amidst an uproar of enthusiasm. Until that moment the revolt had been personal, local, founded on a particular grievance which had to do with wages and the material struggle for existence. Now all was changed; now they were convinced that the deprivation and suffering to which they had pledged themselves were not for selfish ends alone, but also vicarious, dedicated to the liberation of all the downtrodden of the earth. Antonelli became a saviour; they reached out to touch him as he passed; they trooped into the snowy street, young men and old, and girls, and women holding children in their arms, their faces alight with something never known or felt before.

Such was Antonelli to the strikers. But to those staid residents of Hampton who had thought themselves still to be living in the old New England tradition, he was the genius of an evil dream. Hard on his heels came a nightmare troop, whose coming brought to the remembrance of the imaginative the old nursery rhyme:—"Hark! Hark! The dogs do bark, The beggars are come to town."

It has, indeed, a knell-like ring. Do philosophies tend also to cast those who adopt them into a mould? These were of the self-same breed, indubitably the followers of Antonelli. The men wore their hair long, affected, like their leader, soft felt hats and loose black ties that fell over the lapels of their coats. Loose morals and loose ties! The projection of these against a Puritan background ties symbolical of everything the Anglo-Saxon shudders at and abhors; of anarchy and mob rule, of bohemia and vagabondia, of sedition and murder, of Latin revolutions and reigns of terror; of sex irregularity—not of the clandestine sort to be found in decent communities—but of free love that flaunts itself in the face of an outraged public. For there were women in the band. All this, and more, the invaders suggested—atheism, unfamiliarity with soap and water, and, more vaguely, an exotic poetry and art that to the virile of American descent is saturated with something indefinable yet abhorrent. Such things are felt. Few of the older citizens of Hampton were able to explain why something rose in their gorges, why they experienced a new and clammy quality of fear and repulsion when, on the day following Antonelli's advent, these strangers arrived from nowhere to install themselves—with no baggage to speak of —in Hampton's more modest but hitherto respectable hostelries. And no sooner had the city been rudely awakened to the perilous presence, in overwhelming numbers, of ignorant and inflammable foreigners than these turned up and presumed to lead the revolt, to make capital out of it, to interpret it in terms of an exotic and degenerate creed. Hampton would take care of

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itself—or else the sovereign state within whose borders it was would take care of it. And his Honour the Mayor, who had proclaimed his faith in the reasonableness of the strikers, who had scorned the suggestions of indignant inhabitants that the Governor be asked for soldiers, twenty-four hours too late arranged for the assembly of three companies of local militia in the armory, and swore in a hundred extra police.

The hideous stillness of Fillmore Street was driving Janet mad. What she burned to do was to go to Boston and take a train for somewhere in the West, to lose herself, never to see Hampton again. But—there was her mother. She could not leave Hannah in these empty rooms, alone; and Edward was to remain at the mill, to eat and sleep there, until the danger of the strike had passed. A messenger had come to fetch his clothes. After leaving Ditmar in the office of the mill, Janet crept up the dark stairs to the flat and halted in the hallway. Through the open doorway of the dining-room she saw Hannah seated on the horsehair sofa —for the first time within memory idle at this hour of the day. Nothing else could have brought home to her like this the sheer tragedy of their plight. Until then Janet had been sustained by anger and excitement, by physical action. She thought Hannah was staring at her; after a moment it seemed that the widened pupils were fixed in fascination on something beyond, on the Thing that had come to dwell here with them forever.

Janet entered the room. She sat down on the sofa and took her mother's hand in hers. And Hannah submitted passively. Janet could not speak. A minute might have passed, and the silence, which neither had broken, acquired an intensity that to Janet became unbearable. Never had the room been so still! Her glance, raised instinctively to the face of the picture-clock, saw the hands pointing to ten. Every Monday morning, as far back as she could recall, her father had wound it before going to work—and to-day he had forgotten. Getting up, she opened the glass door, and stood trying to estimate the hour: it must be, she thought, about six. She set the hands, took the key from the nail above the shelf, wound up the weight, and started the pendulum. And the sound of familiar ticking was a relief, releasing at last her inhibited powers of speech.

"Mother," she said, "I'll get some supper for you."

On Hannah, these simple words had a seemingly magical effect. Habit reasserted itself. She started, and rose almost briskly.

"No you won't," she said, "I'll get it. I'd ought to have thought of it before. You must be tired and hungry."

Her voice was odd and thin. Janet hesitated a moment, and ceded.

"Well, I'll set the dishes on the table, anyway."

Janet had sought refuge, wistfully, in the commonplace. And when the meal was ready she strove to eat, though food had become repulsive.

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“You must take something, mother,” she said.

“I don’t feel as if I ever wanted to eat anything again,” she replied.

“I know,” said Janet, “but you’ve got to.” And she put some of the cold meat, left over from Sunday’s dinner, on Hannah’s plate. Hannah took up a fork, and laid it down again. Suddenly she said:—“You saw Lise?”

“Yes,” said Janet.

“Where is she?”

“In a house—in Boston.”

“One of—those houses?”

“I—I don’t know,” said Janet. “I think so.”

“You went there?”

“Mr. Tiernan went with me.”

“She wouldn’t come home?”

“Not—not just now, mother.”

“You left her there, in that place? You didn’t make her come home?”

The sudden vehemence of this question, the shrill note of reproach in Hannah’s voice that revealed, even more than the terrible inertia from which she had emerged, the extent of her suffering, for the instant left Janet utterly dismayed. “Oh mother!” she exclaimed. “I tried—I—I couldn’t.”

Hannah pushed back her chair.

“I’ll go to her, I’ll make her come. She’s disgraced us, but I’ll make her. Where is she? Where is the house?”

Janet, terrified, seized her mother’s arm. Then she said:—“Lise isn’t there any more—-she’s gone away.”

“Away and you let her go away? You let your sister go away and be a—a woman of the town? You never loved her—you never had any pity for her.”

Tears sprang into Janet’s eyes—tears of pity mingled with anger. The situation had grown intolerable! Yet how could she tell Hannah where Lise was!

“You haven’t any right to say that, mother!” she cried. “I did my best. She wouldn’t come. I—I can’t tell you where she’s gone, but she promised to write, to send me her address.”

“Lise” Hannah’s cry seemed like the uncomprehending whimper of a stricken child, and then a hidden cadence made itself felt, a cadence revealing to Janet with an eloquence never before achieved the mystery of mother love, and by some magic of tone was evoked a new image of Lise—of Lise as she must be to Hannah. No waywardness, no degradation or disgrace could efface it. The infant whom Hannah had clutched to her breast, the woman, her sister, whom Janet had seen that day were one—immutably one. This, then, was what it meant to be a mother! All the years of deadening hope had not availed to kill the craving—even in this withered body it was still alive and quick. The agony of that revelation was scarcely to be borne. And it seemed that Lise, even in the place where she was, must have heard that cry and heeded it. And yet—the revelation of Lise’s whereabouts, of Lise’s contemplated act Janet had nearly been goaded into making, died on her lips. She could not tell Hannah! And Lise’s child must not come into a world like this. Even now the conviction remained, fierce, exultant, final. But if Janet had spoken

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now Hannah would not have heard her. Under the storm she had begun to rock, weeping convulsively.... But gradually her weeping ceased. And to Janet, helplessly watching, this process of congealment was more terrible even than the release that only an unmitigated violence of grief had been able to produce. In silence Hannah resumed her shrunken duties, and when these were finished sat awhile, before going to bed, her hands lying listless in her lap. She seemed to have lived for centuries, to have exhausted the gamut of suffering which, save for that one wild outburst, had been the fruit of commonplace, passive, sordid tragedy that knows no touch of fire....

The next morning Janet was awakened by the siren. Never, even in the days when life had been routine and commonplace, had that sound failed to arouse in her a certain tremor of fear; with its first penetrating shriek, terror invaded her: then, by degrees, overcoming her numbness, came an agonizing realization of tragedy to be faced. The siren blew and blew insistently, as though it never meant to stop; and now for the first time she seemed to detect in it a note of futility. There were those who would dare to defy it. She, for one, would defy it. In that reflection she found a certain fierce joy. And she might lie in bed if she wished —how often had she longed to! But she could not. The room was cold, appallingly empty and silent as she hurried into her clothes. The dining-room lamp was lighted, the table set, her mother was bending over the stove when she reached the kitchen. After the pretence of breakfast was gone through Janet sought relief in housework, making her bed, tidying her room. It was odd, this morning, how her notice of little, familiar things had the power to add to her pain, brought to mind memories become excruciating as she filled the water pitcher from the kitchen tap she found herself staring at the nick broken out of it when Lise had upset it. She recalled Lise's characteristically flippant remark. And there was the streak in the wall-paper caused one night by the rain leaking through the roof. After the bed was made and the room swept she stood a moment, motionless, and then, opening the drawer in the wardrobe took from it the rose which she had wrapped in tissue paper and hidden there, and with a perverse desire as it were to increase the bitterness consuming her, to steep herself in pain, she undid the parcel and held the withered flower to her face. Even now a fragrance, faint yet poignant, clung to it.... She wrapped it up again, walked to the window, hesitated, and then with a sudden determination to destroy this sole relic of her happiness went to the kitchen and flung it into the stove. Hannah, lingering over her morning task of cleaning, did not seem to notice the act. Janet turned to her.

"I think I'll go out for a while, mother," she said.

"You'd ought to," Hannah replied. "There's no use settin' around here."

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The silence of the flat was no longer to be endured. And Janet, putting on her coat and hat, descended the stairs. Not once that morning had her mother mentioned Lise; nor had she asked about her own plans—about Ditmar. This at least was a relief; it was the question she had feared most. In the street she met the postman.

“I have a letter for you, Miss Janet,” he said. And on the pink envelope he handed her, in purple ink, she recognized the unformed, childish handwriting of Lise. “There’s great doings down at the City Hall,” the postman added “the foreigners are holding mass meetings there.” Janet scarcely heard him as she tore open the envelope. “Dear Janet,” the letter ran. “The doctor told me I had a false alarm, there was nothing to it. Wouldn’t that jar you? Boston’s a slow burg, and there’s no use of my staying here now. I’m going to New York, and maybe I’ll come back when I’ve had a look at the great white way. I’ve got the coin, and I gave him the mit to-night. If you haven’t anything better to do, drop in at the Bagatelle and give Walters my love, and tell them not to worry at home. There’s no use trying to trail me. Your affectionate sister Lise.”

Janet thrust the letter in her pocket. Then she walked rapidly westward until she came to the liver-coloured facade of the City Hall, opposite the Common. Pushing through the crowd of operatives lingering on the pavement in front of it, she entered the building....

THE DWELLING-PLACE OF LIGHT

By *Winston Churchill*
volume 3.

CHAPTER XV

Occasionally the art of narrative may be improved by borrowing the method of the movies. Another night has passed, and we are called upon to imagine the watery sunlight of a mild winter afternoon filtering through bare trees on the heads of a multitude. A large portion of Hampton Common is black with the people of sixteen nationalities who have gathered there, trampling down the snow, to listen wistfully and eagerly to a new doctrine of salvation. In the centre of this throng on the bandstand—-reminiscent of concerts on sultry, summer nights—are the itinerant apostles of the cult called Syndicalism, exhorting by turns in divers tongues. Antonelli had spoken, and many others, when Janet, impelled by a craving not to be denied, had managed to push her way little by little from the outskirts of the crowd until now she stood almost beneath the orator who poured forth passionate words in a language she recognized as Italian. Her curiosity was aroused, she was unable to classify this tall man whose long and narrow face was accentuated by a pointed brown beard, whose lips gleamed red as he spoke, whose slim hands were eloquent. The artist as propagandist—the unsuccessful

artist with more facility than will. The nose was classic, and wanted strength; the restless

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eyes that at times seemed fixed on her were smouldering windows of a burning house: the fire that stirred her was also consuming him. Though he could have been little more than five and thirty, his hair was thinned and greying at the temples. And somehow emblematic of this physiognomy and physique, summing it up and expressing it in terms of apparel, were the soft collar and black scarf tied in a flowing bow. Janet longed to know what he was saying. His phrases, like music, played on her emotions, and at last, when his voice rose in crescendo at the climax of his speech, she felt like weeping.

“Un poeta!” a woman beside her exclaimed.

“Who is he?” Janet asked.

“Rolfe,” said the woman.

“But he’s an Italian?”

The woman shrugged her shoulders. “It is his name that is all I know.” He had begun to speak again, and now in English, with an enunciation, a distinctive manner of turning his phrases new to such gatherings in America, where labour intellectuals are little known; surprising to Janet, diverting her attention, at first, from the meaning of his words. “Labour,” she heard, “labour is the creator of all wealth, and wealth belongs to the creator. The wage system must be abolished. You, the creators, must do battle against these self-imposed masters until you shall come into your own. You who toil miserably for nine hours and produce, let us say, nine dollars of wealth—do you receive it? No, what is given you is barely enough to keep the slave and the slave’s family alive! The master, the capitalist, seizes the rightful reward of your labour and spends it on luxuries, on automobiles and fine houses and women, on food he can’t eat, while you are hungry. Yes, you are slaves,” he cried, “because you submit like slaves.”

He waited, motionless and scornful, for the noise to die down. “Since I have come here to Hampton, I have heard some speak of the state, others of the unions. Yet the state is your enemy, it will not help you to gain your freedom. The legislature has shortened your hours,—but why? Because the politicians are afraid of you, and because they think you will be content with a little. And now that the masters have cut your wages, the state sends its soldiers to crush you. Only fifty cents, they say—only fifty cents most of you miss from your envelopes. What is fifty cents to them? But I who speak to you have been hungry, I know that fifty cents will buy ten loaves of bread, or three pounds of the neck of pork, or six quarts of milk for the babies. Fifty cents will help pay the rent of the rat-holes where you live.” Once more he was interrupted by angry shouts of approval. “And the labour unions, have they aided you? Why not? I will tell you why—-because they are the servile instruments of the masters. The unions say that capital

has rights, bargain with it, but for us there can be only one bargain, complete surrender of the tools to the workers. For the

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capitalists are parasites who suck your blood and your children's blood. From now on there can be no compromise, no truce, no peace until they are exterminated. It is war." War! In Janet's soul the word resounded like a tocsin. And again, as when swept along East Street with the mob, that sense of identity with these people and their wrongs, of submergence with them in their cause possessed her. Despite her ancestry, her lot was cast with them. She, too, had been precariously close to poverty, had known the sordidness of life; she, too, and Lise and Hannah had been duped and cheated of the fairer things. Eagerly she had drunk in the vocabulary of that new and terrible philosophy. The master class must be exterminated! Was it not true, if she had been of that class, that Ditmar would not have dared to use and deceive her? Why had she never thought of these things before?... The light was beginning to fade, the great meeting was breaking up, and yet she lingered. At the foot of the bandstand steps, conversing with a small group of operatives that surrounded him, she perceived the man who had just spoken. And as she stood hesitating, gazing at him, a desire to hear more, to hear all of this creed he preached, that fed the fires in her soul, urged her forward. Her need, had she known it, was even greater than that of these toilers whom she now called comrades. Despite some qualifying reserve she felt, and which had had to do with the redness of his lips, he attracted her. He had a mind, an intellect, he must possess stores of the knowledge for which she thirsted; he appeared to her as one who had studied and travelled, who had ascended heights and gained the wider view denied her. A cynical cosmopolitanism would have left her cold, but here, apparently, was a cultivated man burning with a sense of the world's wrongs. Ditmar, who was to have led her out of captivity, had only thrust her the deeper into bondage.... She joined the group, halting on the edge of it, listening. Rolfe was arguing with a man about the labour unions, but almost at once she knew she had fixed his attention. From time to time, as he talked, his eyes sought hers boldly, and in their dark pupils were tiny points of light that stirred and confused her, made her wonder what was behind them, in his soul. When he had finished his argument, he singled her out.

"You do not work in the mills?" he asked.

"No, I'm a stenographer—or I was one."

"And now?"

"I've given up my place."

"You want to join us?"

"I was interested in what you said. I never heard anything like it before."

He looked at her intently.

“Come, let us walk a little way,” he said. And she went along by his side, through the Common, feeling a neophyte’s excitement in the freemasonry, the contempt for petty conventions of this newly achieved doctrine of brotherhood. “I will give you things to read, you shall be one of us.”

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“I’m afraid I shouldn’t understand them,” Janet replied. “I’ve read so little.”

“Oh, you will understand,” he assured her, easily. “There is too much learning, too much reason and intelligence in the world, too little impulse and feeling, intuition. Where do reason and intelligence lead us? To selfishness, to thirst for power-straight into the master class. They separate us from the mass of humanity. No, our fight is against those who claim more enlightenment than their fellowmen, who control the public schools and impose reason on our children, because reason leads to submission, makes us content with our station in life. The true syndicalist is an artist, a revolutionist!” he cried.

Janet found this bewildering and yet through it seemed to shine for her a gleam of light. Her excitement grew. Never before had she been in the presence of one who talked like this, with such assurance and ease. And the fact that he despised knowledge, yet possessed it, lent him glamour.

“But you have studied!” she exclaimed.

“Oh yes, I have studied,” he replied, with a touch of weariness, “only to learn that life is simple, after all, and that what is needed for the social order is simple. We have only to take what belongs to us, we who work, to follow our feelings, our inclinations.”

“You would take possession of the mills?” she asked.

“Yes,” he said quickly, “of all wealth, and of the government. There would be no government—we should not need it. A little courage is all that is necessary, and we come into our own. You are a stenographer, you say. But you—you are not content, I can see it in your face, in your eyes. You have cause to hate them, too, these masters, or you would not have been herein this place, to-day. Is it not so?”

She shivered, but was silent.

“Is it not so?” he repeated. “They have wronged you, too, perhaps,—they have wronged us all, but some are too stupid, too cowardly to fight and crush them. Christians and slaves submit. The old religion teaches that the world is cruel for most of us, but if we are obedient and humble we shall be rewarded in heaven.” Rolfe laughed. “The masters approve of that teaching. They would not have it changed. But for us it is war. We’ll strike and keep on striking, we’ll break their machinery, spoil their mills and factories, and drive them out. And even if we do not win at once, it is better to suffer and die fighting than to have the life ground out of us—is it not?”

“Yes, it is better!” she agreed. The passion in her voice did not escape him.

“Some day, perhaps sooner than we think, we shall have the true Armageddon, the general strike, when the last sleeping toiler shall have aroused himself from his lethargy

to rise up and come into his inheritance." He seemed to detach himself from her, his eyes became more luminous.

"`Like unseen music in the night,'—so Sorel writes about it.  They may scoff at it, the wise ones, but it will come. `Like music in the night!' You respond to that!"

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Again she was silent. They had walked on, through familiar streets that now seemed strange.

“You respond—I can tell,” he said. “And yet, you are not like these others, like me, even. You are an American. And yet you are not like most of your countrywomen.”

“Why do you say that?”

“I will tell you. Because they are cold, most of them, and trivial, they do not feel. But you—you can feel, you can love and hate. You look calm and cold, but you are not—I knew it when I looked at you, when you came up to me.”

She did not know whether to resent or welcome his clairvoyance, his assumption of intimacy, his air of appropriation. But her curiosity was tingling.

“And you?” she asked. “Your name is Rolfe, isn’t it?”

He assented. “And yours?”

She told him.

“You have been in America long—your family?”

“Very long,” she said. “But you speak Italian, and Rolfe isn’t an Italian name.”

“My father was an Englishman, an artist, who lived in Italy—my mother a peasant woman from Lombardy, such as these who come to work in the mills. When she was young she was beautiful—like a Madonna by an old master.”

“An old master?”

“The old masters are the great painters who lived in Italy four hundred years ago. I was named after one of them—the greatest. I am called Leonard. He was Leonardo da Vinci.”

The name, as Rolfe pronounced it, stirred her. And art, painting! It was a realm unknown to her, and yet the very suggestion of it evoked yearnings. And she recalled a picture in the window of Hartmann’s book-store, a coloured print before which she used to stop on her way to and from the office, the copy of a landscape by a California artist. The steep hillside in the foreground was spread with the misty green of olive trees, and beyond—far beyond—a snow-covered peak, like some high altar, flamed red in the sunset. She had not been able to express her feeling for this picture, it had filled her with joy and sadness. Once she had ventured to enter and ask its price—ten dollars. And then came a morning when she had looked for it, and it was gone.

“And your father—did he paint beautiful pictures, too?”

“Ah, he was too much of a socialist. He was always away whey I was a child, and after my mother’s death he used to take me with him. When I was seventeen we went to Milan to take part in the great strike, and there I saw the soldiers shooting down the workers by the hundreds, putting them in prison by the thousands. Then I went to live in England, among the socialists there, and I learned the printer’s trade. When I first came to this country I was on a labour paper in New York, I set up type, I wrote articles, and once in a while I addressed meetings on the East Side. But even before I left London I had read a book on Syndicalism by one of the great Frenchmen, and after a while I began to realize that the proletariat would never get anywhere through socialism.”

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“The proletariat?” The word was new to Janet’s ear.

“The great mass of the workers, the oppressed, the people you saw here to-day. Socialism is not for them. Socialism—political socialism —betrays them into the hands of the master class. Direct action is the thing, the general strike, war,—the new creed, the new religion that will bring salvation. I joined the Industrial Workers of the World that is the American organization of Syndicalism. I went west, to Colorado and California and Oregon, I preached to the workers wherever there was an uprising, I met the leaders, Ritter and Borkum and Antonelli and Jastro and Nellie Bond, I was useful to them, I understand Syndicalism as they do not. And now we are here, to sow the seed in the East. Come,” he said, slipping his arm through hers, “I will take you to Headquarters, I will enlist you, you shall be my recruit. I will give you the cause, the religion you need.”

She longed to go, and yet she drew back, puzzled. The man fired and fascinated her, but there were reservations, apprehensions concerning him, felt rather than reasoned. Because of her state of rebellion, of her intense desire to satisfy in action the emotion aroused by a sense of wrong, his creed had made a violent appeal, but in his voice, in his eyes, in his manner she had been quick to detect a personal, sexual note that disturbed and alarmed her, that implied in him a lack of unity.

“I can’t, to-night,” she said. “I must go home—my mother is all alone. But I want to help, I want to do something.”

They were standing on a corner, under a street lamp. And she averted her eyes from his glance.

“Then come to-morrow,” he said eagerly. “You know where Headquarters is, in the Franco-Belgian Hall?”

“What could I do?” she asked.

“You? You could help in many ways—among the women. Do you know what picketing is?”

“You mean keeping the operatives out of the mills?”

“Yes, in the morning, when they go to work. And out of the Chippering Mill, especially. Ditmar, the agent of that mill, is the ablest of the lot, I’m told. He’s the man we want to cripple.”

“Cripple!” exclaimed Janet.

“Oh, I don’t mean to harm him personally.” Rolfe did not seem to notice her tone. “But he intends to crush the strike, and I understand he’s importing scabs here to finish out

an order—a big order. If it weren't for him, we'd have an easier fight; he stiffens up the others. There's always one man like that, in every place. And what we want to do is to make him shut down, especially."

"I see," said Janet.

"You'll come to Headquarters?" Rolfe repeated.

"Yes, I'll come, to-morrow," she promised.

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After she had left him she walked rapidly through several streets, not heeding her direction—such was the driving power of the new ideas he had given her. Certain words and phrases he had spoken rang in her head, and like martial music kept pace with her steps. She strove to remember all that he had said, to grasp its purport; and because it seemed recondite, cosmic, it appealed to her and excited her the more. And he, the man himself, had exerted a kind of hypnotic force that partially had paralyzed her faculties and aroused her fears while still in his presence: her first feeling in escaping had been one of relief—and then she began to regret not having gone to Headquarters. Hadn't she been foolish? In the retrospect, the elements in him that had disturbed her were less disquieting, his intellectual fascination was enhanced: and in that very emancipation from cant and convention, characteristic of the Order to which he belonged, had lain much of his charm. She had attracted him as a woman, there was no denying that. He, who had studied and travelled and known life in many lands, had discerned in her, Janet Bumpus, some quality to make him desire her, acknowledge her as a comrade! Tremblingly she exulted in the possession of that quality —whatever it might be. Ditmar, too, had perceived it! He had not known how to value it. With this thought came a flaming suggestion—Ditmar should see her with this man Rolfe, she would make him scorch with the fires of jealousy. Ditmar should know that she had joined his enemies, the Industrial Workers of the World. Of the world! Her shackles had been cast off at last!... And then, suddenly, she felt tired. The prospect of returning to Fillmore Street, to the silent flat—made the more silent by her mother's tragic presence —overwhelmed her. The ache in her heart began to throb again. How could she wait until the dawn of another day?...

In the black hours of the morning, with the siren dinning in her ears a hoarse call to war, Janet leaped from her bed and began to dress. There is a degree of cold so sharp that it seems actually to smell, and as she stole down the stairs and out of the door she shivered, assailed by a sense of loneliness and fear. Yet an insistent voice urged her on, whispering that to remain at home, inactive, was to go mad; salvation and relief lay in plunging into the struggle, in contributing her share toward retribution and victory. Victory! In Faber Street the light of the electric arcs tinged the snow with blue, and the flamboyant advertisements of breakfast foods, cigarettes and ales seemed but the mockery of an activity now unrealizable. The groups and figures scattered here and there farther down the street served only to exaggerate its wide emptiness. What could these do, what could she accomplish against the mighty power of the mills? Gradually, as she stood gazing, she became aware of a beating of feet upon the snow; over her shoulder she caught the gleam of steel. A squad of soldiers

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muffled in heavy capes and woolen caps was marching along the car-tracks. She followed them. At the corner of West Street, in obedience to a sharp command she saw them halt, turn, and advance toward a small crowd gathered there. It scattered, only to collect again when the soldiers had passed on. Janet joined them. She heard men cursing the soldiers. The women stood a little aside; some were stamping to keep warm, and one, with a bundle in her arms which Janet presently perceived to be a child, sank down on a stone step and remained there, crouching, resigned.

“We gotta right to stay here, in the street. We gotta right to live, I guess.” The girl’s teeth were chattering, but she spoke with such vehemence and spirit as to attract Janet’s attention. “You worked in the Chippering, like me—yes?” she asked.

Janet nodded. The faded, lemon-coloured shawl the girl had wrapped about her head emphasized the dark beauty of her oval face. She smiled, and her white teeth were fairly dazzling. Impulsively she thrust her arm through Janet’s.

“You American—you comrade, you come to help?” she asked.

“I’ve never done any picketing.”

“I showa you.”

The dawn had begun to break, revealing little by little the outlines of cruel, ugly buildings, the great mill looming darkly at the end of the street, and Janet found it scarcely believable that only a little while ago she had hurried thither in the mornings with anticipation and joy in her heart, eager to see Ditmar, to be near him! The sight of two policemen hurrying toward them from the direction of the canal aroused her. With sullen murmurs the group started to disperse, but the woman with the baby, numb with cold, was slow in rising, and one of the policemen thrust out his club threateningly.

“Move on, you can’t sit here,” he said.

With a lithe movement like the spring of a cat the Italian girl flung herself between them—a remarkable exhibition of spontaneous inflammability; her eyes glittered like the points of daggers, and, as though they had been dagger points, the policeman recoiled a little. The act, which was absolutely natural, superb, electrified Janet, restored in an instant her own fierceness of spirit. The girl said something swiftly, in Italian, and helped the woman to rise, paying no more attention to the policeman. Janet walked on, but she had not covered half the block before she was overtaken by the girl; her anger had come and gone in a flash, her vivacity had returned, her vitality again found expression in an abundant good nature and good will. She asked Janet’s name, volunteering the information that her own was Gemma, that she was a “fine speeder” in the Chippering

Mill, where she had received nearly seven dollars a week. She had been among the first to walk out.

“Why did you walk out?” asked Janet curiously.

“Why? I get mad when I know that my wages is cut. I want the money—I get married.”

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“Is that why you are striking?” asked Janet curiously.

“That is why—of course.”

“Then you haven’t heard any of the speakers? They say it is for a cause —the workers are striking for freedom, some day they will own the mills. I heard a man named Rolfe yesterday—”

The girl gave her a radiant smile.

“Rolfe! It is beautiful, what Rolfe said. You think so? I think so. I am for the cause, I hate the capitalist. We will win, and get more money, until we have all the money. We will be rich. And you, why do you strike?”

“I was mad, too,” Janet replied simply.

“Revenge!” exclaimed the girl, glittering again. “I understan’. Here come the scabs! Now I show you.”

The light had grown, but the stores were still closed and barred. Along Faber Street, singly or in little groups, anxiously glancing around them, behind them, came the workers who still clung desperately to their jobs. Gemma fairly darted at two girls who sought the edge of the sidewalk, seizing them by the sleeves, and with piteous expressions they listened while she poured forth on them a stream of Italian. After a moment one tore herself away, but the other remained and began to ask questions. Presently she turned and walked slowly away in the direction from which she had come.

“I get her,” exclaimed Gemma, triumphantly.

“What did you say?” asked Janet.

“Listen—that she take the bread from our mouths, she is traditore—scab. We strike for them, too, is it not so?”

“It is no use for them to work for wages that starve. We win the strike, we get good wages for all. Here comes another—she is a Jewess—you try, you spik.”

Janet failed with the Jewess, who obstinately refused to listen or reply as the two walked along with her, one on either side. Near West Street they spied a policeman, and desisted. Up and down Faber Street, everywhere, the game went on: but the police were watchful, and once a detachment of militia passed. The picketing had to be done quickly, in the few minutes that were to elapse before the gates should close. Janet’s blood ran faster, she grew excited, absorbed, bolder as she perceived the apologetic attitude of the “scabs” and she began to despise them with Gemma’s heartiness; and soon she had lost all sense of surprise at finding herself arguing,

pleading, appealing to several women in turn, fluently, in the language of the industrial revolution. Some—because she was an American—examined her with furtive curiosity; others pretended not to understand, accelerating their pace. She gained no converts that morning, but one girl, pale, anemic with high cheek bones evidently a Slav—-listened to her intently.

“I gotta right to work,” she said.

“Not if others will starve because you work,” objected Janet.

“If I don’t work I starve,” said the girl.

“No, the Committee will take care of you—there will be food for all. How much do you get now?”

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“Four dollar and a half.”

“You starve now,” Janet declared contemptuously. “The quicker you join us, the sooner you’ll get a living wage.”

The girl was not quite convinced. She stood for a while undecided, and then ran abruptly off in the direction of West Street. Janet sought for others, but they had ceased coming; only the scattered, prowling picketers remained.

Over the black rim of the Clarendon Mill to the eastward the sky had caught fire. The sun had risen, the bells were ringing riotously, resonantly in the clear, cold air. Another working day had begun.

Janet, benumbed with cold, yet agitated and trembling because of her unwonted experience of the morning, made her way back to Fillmore Street. She was prepared to answer any questions her mother might ask; as they ate their dismal breakfast, and Hannah asked no questions, she longed to blurt out where she had been, to announce that she had cast her lot with the strikers, the foreigners, to defend them and declare that these were not to blame for the misfortunes of the family, but men like Ditmar and the owners of the mills, the capitalists. Her mother, she reflected bitterly, had never once betrayed any concern as to her shattered happiness. But gradually, as from time to time she glanced covertly at Hannah’s face, her resentment gave way to apprehension. Hannah did not seem now even to be aware of her presence; this persistent apathy filled her with a dread she did not dare to acknowledge.

“Mother!” she cried at last.

Hannah started. “Have you finished?” she asked.

“Yes.”

“You’ve b’en out in the cold, and you haven’t eaten much.” Janet fought back her tears. “Oh yes, I have,” she managed to reply, convinced of the futility of speech, of all attempts to arouse her mother to a realization of the situation. Perhaps—though her heart contracted at the thought perhaps it was a merciful thing! But to live, day after day, in the presence of that comfortless apathy!... Later in the morning she went out, to walk the streets, and again in the afternoon; and twice she turned her face eastward, in the direction of the Franco-Belgian Hall. Her courage failed her. How would these foreigners and the strange leaders who had come to organize them receive her, Ditmar’s stenographer? She would have to tell them she was Ditmar’s stenographer; they would find it out. And now she was filled with doubts about Rolfe. Had he really thought she could be of use to them! Around the Common, in front of the City Hall men went about their affairs alertly, or stopped one another to talk about the strike. In Faber Street, indeed, an air of suppressed excitement prevailed, newsboys were shouting out

extras; but business went on as though nothing had happened to disturb it. There was, however, the spectacle, unusual at this time of day, of operatives mingling with the crowd, while policemen stood watchfully at

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the corners; a company of soldiers marched by, drawing the people in silence to the curb. Janet scanned the faces of these idle operatives; they seemed for the most part either calm or sullen, wanting the fire and passion of the enthusiasts who had come out to picket in the early hours of the day; she sought vainly for the Italian girl with whom she had made friends. Despondency grew in her, a sense of isolation, of lacking any one, now, to whom she might turn, and these feelings were intensified by the air of confidence prevailing here. The strike was crushed, injustice and wrong had triumphed—would always triumph. In front of the Banner office she heard a man say to an acquaintance who had evidently just arrived in town:—"The Chippering? Sure, that's running. By to-morrow Ditmar'll have a full force there. Now that the militia has come, I guess we've got this thing scotched..."

Just how and when that order and confidence of Faber Street began to be permeated by disquietude and alarm, Janet could not have said. Something was happening, somewhere—or about to happen. An obscure, apparently telepathic process was at work. People began to hurry westward, a few had abandoned the sidewalk and were running; while other pedestrians, more timid, were equally concerned to turn and hasten in the opposite direction. At the corner of West Street was gathering a crowd that each moment grew larger and larger, despite the efforts of the police to disperse it. These were strikers, angry strikers. They blocked the traffic, halted the clanging trolleys, surged into the mouth of West Street, booing and cursing at the soldiers whose threatening line of bayonets stretched across that thoroughfare half-way down toward the canal, guarding the detested Chippering Mill. Bordering West Street, behind the company's lodging-houses on the canal, were certain low buildings, warehouses, and on their roofs tense figures could be seen standing out against the sky. The vanguard of the mob, thrust on by increasing pressure from behind, tumbled backward the thin cordon of police, drew nearer and nearer the bayonets, while the soldiers grimly held their ground. A voice was heard on the roof, a woman in the front rank of the mob gave a warning shriek, and two swift streams of icy water burst forth from the warehouse parapet, tearing the snow from the cobbles, flying in heavy, stinging spray as it advanced and mowed the strikers down and drove them like flies toward Faber Street. Screams of fright, curses of defiance and hate mingled with the hissing of the water and the noise of its impact with the ground—like the tearing of heavy sail-cloth. Then, from somewhere near the edge of the mob, came a single, sharp detonation, quickly followed by another—below the watchmen on the roof a window crashed. The nozzles on the roof were raised, their streams, sweeping around in a great semi-circle, bowled down the rioters below the tell-tale wisps of smoke, and no sooner had

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the avalanche of water passed than the policemen who, forewarned, had sought refuge along the walls, rushed forward and seized a man who lay gasping on the snow. Dazed, half drowned, he had dropped his pistol. They handcuffed him and dragged him away through the ranks of the soldiers, which opened for him to pass. The mob, including those who had been flung down, bruised and drenched, and who had painfully got to their feet again, had backed beyond the reach of the water, and for a while held that ground, until above its hoarse, defiant curses was heard, from behind, the throbbing of drums.

“Cossacks! More Cossacks!”

The cry was taken up by Canadians, Italians, Belgians, Poles, Slovaks, Jews, and Syrians. The drums grew louder, the pressure from the rear was relaxed, the throng in Faber Street began a retreat in the direction of the power plant. Down that street, now in double time, came three companies of Boston militia, newly arrived in Hampton, blue-taped, gaitered, slouch-hatted. From columns of fours they wheeled into line, and with bayonets at charge slowly advanced. Then the boldest of the mob, who still lingered, sullenly gave way, West Street was cleared, and on the wider thoroughfare the long line of traffic, the imprisoned trolleys began to move again....

Janet had wedged herself into the press far enough to gain a view down West Street of the warehouse roofs, to see the water turned on, to hear the screams and the curses and then the shots. Once more she caught the contagious rage of the mob; the spectacle had aroused her to fury; it seemed ignominious, revolting that human beings, already sufficiently miserable, should be used thus. As she retreated reluctantly across the car tracks her attention was drawn to a man at her side, a Slovak. His face was white and pinched, his clothes were wet. Suddenly he stopped, turned and shook his fist at the line of soldiers.

“The Cossack, the politzman belong to the boss, the capitalist!” he cried. “We ain’t got no right to live. I say, kill the capitalist—kill Ditmar!”

A man with a deputy’s shield ran toward them.

“Move on!” he said brutally. “Move on, or I’ll roil you in.” And Janet, once clear of the people, fled westward, the words the foreigner had spoken ringing in her ears. She found herself repeating them aloud, “Kill Ditmar!” as she hurried through the gathering dusk past the power house with its bottle-shaped chimneys, and crossed the little bridge over the stream beside the chocolate factory. She gained the avenue she had trod with Eda on that summer day of the circus. Here was the ragpicker’s shop, the fence covered with bedraggled posters, the deserted grand-stand of the base-ball park spread with a milky-blue mantle of snow; and beyond, the monotonous frame cottages all built

from one model. Now she descried looming above her the outline of Torrey's Hill blurred and melting into a darkening sky, and turned into

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the bleak lane where stood the Franco-Belgian Hall—Hampton Headquarters of the Industrial Workers of the World. She halted a moment at sight of the crowd of strikers loitering in front of it, then went on again, mingling with them excitedly beside the little building. Its lines were simple and unpretentious, and yet it had an exotic character all its own, differing strongly from the surrounding houses: it might have been transported from a foreign country and set down here. As the home of that odd, cooperative society of thrifty and gregarious Belgians it had stimulated her imagination, and once before she had gazed, as now, through the yellowed, lantern-like windows of the little store at the women and children waiting to fill their baskets with the day's provisions. In the middle of the building was an entrance leading up to the second floor. Presently she gathered the courage to enter. Her heart was pounding as she climbed the dark stairs and thrust open the door, and she stood a moment on the threshold almost choked by the fumes of tobacco, bewildered by the scene within, confused by the noise. Through a haze of smoke she beheld groups of swarthy foreigners fiercely disputing among themselves—-apparently on the verge of actual combat, while a sprinkling of silent spectators of both sexes stood at the back of the hall. At the far end was a stage, still set with painted, sylvan scenery, and seated there, alone, above the confusion and the strife, with a calmness, a detachment almost disconcerting, was a stout man with long hair and a loose black tie. He was smoking a cigar and reading a newspaper which he presently flung down, taking up another from a pile on the table beside him. Suddenly one of the groups, shouting and gesticulating, surged toward him and made an appeal through their interpreter. He did not appear to be listening; without so much as lowering his newspaper he spoke a few words in reply, and the group retired, satisfied. By some incomprehensible power he dominated. Panting, fascinated, loath to leave yet fearful, Janet watched him, breathing now deeply this atmosphere of smoke, of strife, and turmoil. She found it grateful, for the strike, the battle was in her own soul as well. Momentarily she had forgotten Rolfe, who had been in her mind as she had come hither, and then she caught sight of him in a group in the centre of the hall. He saw her, he was making his way toward her, he was holding her hands, looking down into her face with that air of appropriation, of possession she remembered. But she felt no resentment now, only a fierce exultation at having dared.

"You've come to join us!" he exclaimed. "I thought I'd lost you."

He bent closer to her that she might hear.

"We are having a meeting of the Committee," he said, and she smiled. Despite her agitation, this struck her as humorous. And Rolfe smiled back at her. "You wouldn't think so, but Antonelli knows how to manage them. He is a general. Come, I will enlist you, you shall be my recruit."

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“But what can I do?” she asked.

“I have been thinking. You said you were a stenographer—we need stenographers, clerks. You will not be wasted. Come in here.”

Behind her two box-like rooms occupying the width of the building had been turned into offices, and into one of these Rolfe led her. Men and women were passing in and out, while in a corner a man behind a desk sat opening envelopes, deftly extracting bills and post-office orders and laying them in a drawer. On the wall of this same room was a bookcase half filled with nondescript volumes.

“The Bibliotheque—that’s French for the library of the Franco-Belgian Cooperative Association,” explained Rolfe. “And this is Comrade Sanders. Sanders is easier to say than Czernowitz. Here is the young lady I told you about, who wishes to help us—Miss Bumpus.”

Mr. Sanders stopped counting his money long enough to grin at her.

“You will be welcome,” he said, in good English. “Stenographers are scarce here. When can you come?”

“To-morrow morning,” answered Janet.

“Good,” he said. “I’ll have a machine for you. What kind do you use?”

She told him. Instinctively she took a fancy to this little man, whose flannel shirt and faded purple necktie, whose blue, unshaven face and tousled black hair seemed incongruous with an alert, business-like, and efficient manner. His nose, though not markedly Jewish, betrayed in him the blood of that vital race which has triumphantly survived so many centuries of bondage and oppression.

“He was a find, Czernowitz—he calls himself Sanders,” Rolfe explained, as they entered the hall once more. “An Operative in the Patuxent, educated himself, went to night school—might have been a capitalist like so many of his tribe if he hadn’t loved humanity. You’ll get along with him.”

“I’m sure I shall,” she replied.

Rolfe took from his pocket a little red button with the letters I.W.W. printed across it. He pinned it, caressingly, on her coat.

“Now you are one of us!” he exclaimed. “You’ll come to-morrow?”

“I’ll come to-morrow,” she repeated, drawing away from him a little.

“And—we shall be friends?”

She nodded. “I must go now, I think.”

“Addio!” he said. “I shall look for you. For the present I must remain here, with the Committee.”

When Janet reached Faber Street she halted on the corner of Stanley to stare into the window of the glorified drugstore. But she gave no heed to the stationery, the cameras and candy displayed there, being in the emotional state that reduces to unreality objects of the commonplace, everyday world. Presently, however, she became aware of a man standing beside her.

“Haven’t we met before?” he asked. “Or—can I be mistaken?”

Some oddly familiar quizzical note in his voice stirred, as she turned to him, a lapsed memory. The hawklike yet benevolent and illuminating look he gave her recalled the man at Silliston whom she had thought a carpenter though he was dressed now in a warm suit of gray wool, and wore a white, low collar.

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“In Silliston!” she exclaimed. “Why—what are you doing here?”

“Well—this instant I was just looking at those notepapers, wondering which I should choose if I really had good taste. But it’s very puzzling—isn’t it?—when one comes from the country. Now that saffron with the rough edges is very—artistic. Don’t you think so?”

She looked at him and smiled, though his face was serious.

“You don’t really like it, yourself,” she informed him.

“Now you’re reflecting on my taste,” he declared.

“Oh no—it’s because I saw the fence you were making. Is it finished yet?”

“I put the last pineapple in place the day before Christmas. Do you remember the pineapples?”

She nodded. “And the house? and the garden?”

“Oh, those will never be finished. I shouldn’t have anything more to do.”

“Is that—all you do?” she asked.

“It’s more important than anything else. But you have you been back to Silliston since I saw you? I’ve been waiting for another call.”

“You haven’t even thought of me since,” she was moved to reply in the same spirit.

“Haven’t I?” he exclaimed. “I wondered, when I came up here to Hampton, whether I mightn’t meet you—and here you are! Doesn’t that prove it?”

She laughed, somewhat surprised at the ease with which he had diverted her, drawn her out of the tense, emotional mood in which he had discovered her. As before, he puzzled her, but the absence of any flirtatious suggestion in his talk gave her confidence. He was just friendly.

“Sometimes I hoped I might see you in Hampton,” she ventured.

“Well, here I am. I heard the explosion, and came.”

“The explosion! The strike!” she exclaimed; suddenly enlightened. “Now I remember! You said something about Hampton being nitro-glycerine—human nitro-glycerine. You predicted this strike.”

“Did I? perhaps I did,” he assented. “Maybe you suggested the idea.”

“I suggested it! Oh no, I didn’t—it was new to me, it frightened me at the time, but it started me thinking about a lot of things that had never occurred to me.”

“You might have suggested the idea without intending to, you know. There are certain people who inspire prophecies—perhaps you are one.”

His tone was playful, but she was quick to grasp at an inference—since his glance was fixed on the red button she wore.

“You meant that I would explode, too!”

“Oh no—nothing so terrible as that,” he disclaimed. “And yet most of us have explosives stored away inside of us—instincts, impulses and all that sort of thing that won’t stand too much bottling-up.”

“Yes, I’ve joined the strike.” She spoke somewhat challengingly, though she had an uneasy feeling that defiance was somewhat out of place with him. “I suppose you think it strange, since I’m not a foreigner and haven’t worked in the mills. But I don’t see why that should make any difference if you believe that the workers haven’t had a chance.”

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“No difference,” he agreed, pleasantly, “no difference at all.”

“Don’t you sympathize with the strikers?” she insisted. “Or—are you on the other side, the side of the capitalists?”

“I? I’m a spectator—an innocent bystander.”

“You don’t sympathize with the workers?” she cried.

“Indeed I do. I sympathize with everybody.”

“With the capitalists?”

“Why not?”

“Why not? Because they’ve had everything their own way, they’ve exploited the workers, deceived and oppressed them, taken all the profits.” She was using glibly her newly acquired labour terminology.

“Isn’t that a pretty good reason for sympathizing with them?” he inquired.

“What do you mean?”

“Well, I should think it might be difficult to be happy and have done all that. At any rate, it isn’t my notion of happiness. Is it yours?”

For a moment she considered this.

“No—not exactly,” she admitted. “But they seem happy,” she insisted vehemently, “they have everything they want and they do exactly as they please without considering anybody except themselves. What do they care how many they starve and make miserable? You—you don’t know, you can’t know what it is to be driven and used and flung away!”

Almost in tears, she did not notice his puzzled yet sympathetic glance.

“The operatives, the workers create all the wealth, and the capitalists take it from them, from their wives and children.”

“Now I know what you’ve been doing,” he said accusingly. “You’ve been studying economics.”

Her brow puckered.

“Studying what?”

“Economics—the distribution of wealth. It’s enough to upset anybody.”

“But I’m not upset,” she insisted, smiling in spite of herself at his comical concern.

“It’s very exciting. I remember reading a book once on economics and such things, and I couldn’t sleep for a week. It was called `The Organization of Happiness,’ I believe, and it described just how the world ought to be arranged—and isn’t. I thought seriously of going to Washington and telling the President and Congress about it.”

“It wouldn’t have done any good,” said Janet.

“No, I realized that.”

“The only thing that will do any good is to strike and keep on striking until the workers own the mills—take everything away from the capitalists.”

“It’s very simple,” he agreed, “much simpler than the book I read. That’s what they call syndicalism, isn’t it?”

“Yes.” She was conscious of his friendliness, of the fact that his skepticism was not cynical, yet she felt a strong desire to convince him, to vindicate her new creed. “There’s a man named Rolfe, an educated man who’s lived in Italy and England, who explains it wonderfully. He’s one of the I.W.W. leaders—you ought to hear him.”

“Rolfe converted you? I’ll go to hear him.”

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“Yes—but you have to feel it, you have to know what it is to be kept down and crushed. If you’d only stay here awhile.”

“Oh, I intend to,” he replied.

She could not have said why, but she felt a certain relief on hearing this.

“Then you’ll see for yourself!” she cried. “I guess that’s what you’ve come for, isn’t it?”

“Well, partly. To tell the truth, I’ve come to open a restaurant.”

“To open a restaurant!” Somehow she was unable to imagine him as the proprietor of a restaurant. “But isn’t it rather a bad time?” she gasped.

“I don’t look as if I had an eye for business—do I? But I have. No, it’s a good time—so many people will be hungry, especially children. I’m going to open a restaurant for children. Oh, it will be very modest, of course—I suppose I ought to call it a soup kitchen.”

“Oh!” she exclaimed, staring at him. “Then you really—” the sentence remained unfinished. “I’m sorry,” she said simply. “You made me think—”

“Oh, you mustn’t pay any attention to what I say. Come ’round and see my establishment, Number 77 Dey Street, one flight up, no elevator. Will you?”

She laughed tremulously as he took her hand.

“Yes indeed, I will,” she promised. And she stood awhile staring after him. She was glad he had come to Hampton, and yet she did not even know his name.

CHAPTER XVI

She had got another place—such was the explanation of her new activities Janet gave to Hannah, who received it passively. And the question dreaded about Ditmar was never asked. Hannah had become as a child, performing her tasks by the momentum of habituation, occasionally talking simply of trivial, every-day affairs, as though the old life were going on continuously. At times, indeed, she betrayed concern about Edward, wondering whether he were comfortable at the mill, and she washed and darned the clothes he sent home by messenger. She hoped he would not catch cold. Her suffering seemed to have relaxed. It was as though the tortured portion of her brain had at length been seared. To Janet, her mother’s condition when she had time to think of it—was at once a relief and a new and terrible source of anxiety.

Mercifully, however, she had little leisure to reflect on that tragedy, else her own sanity might have been endangered. As soon as breakfast was over she hurried across the city to the Franco-Belgian Hall, and often did not return until nine o'clock at night, usually so tired that she sank into bed and fell asleep. For she threw herself into her new labours with the desperate energy that seeks forgetfulness, not daring to pause to think about herself, to reflect upon what the future might hold for her when the strike should be over. Nor did she confine herself to typewriting, but, as with Ditmar, constantly assumed a greater burden of duty, helping Czernowitz—who

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had the work of five men—with his accounts, with the distribution of the funds to the ever-increasing number of the needy who were facing starvation. The money was paid out to them in proportion to the size of their families; as the strike became more and more effective their number increased until many mills had closed; other mills, including the Chippering, were still making a desperate attempt to operate their looms, and sixteen thousand operatives were idle. She grew to know these operatives who poured all day long in a steady stream through Headquarters; she heard their stories, she entered into their lives, she made decisions. Some, even in those early days of the strike, were frauds; were hiding their savings; but for the most part investigation revealed an appalling destitution, a resolution to suffer for the worker's cause. A few complained, the majority were resigned; some indeed showed exaltation and fire, were undaunted by the task of picketing in the cold mornings, by the presence of the soldiery. In this work of dealing with the operatives Janet had the advice and help of Anna Mower, a young woman who herself had been a skilled operative in the Clarendon Mill, and who was giving evidence of unusual qualities of organization and leadership. Anna, with no previous practise in oratory, had suddenly developed the gift of making speeches, the more effective with her fellow workers because unstudied, because they flowed directly out of an experience she was learning to interpret and universalize. Janet, who heard her once or twice, admired and envied her. They became friends.

The atmosphere of excitement in which Janet now found herself was cumulative. Day by day one strange event followed another, and at times it seemed as if this extraordinary existence into which she had been plunged were all a feverish dream. Hither, to the absurd little solle de reunion of the Franco-Belgian Hall came notables from the great world, emissaries from an uneasy Governor, delegations from the Legislature, Members of the Congress of the United States and even Senators; students, investigators, men and women of prominence in the universities, magazine writers to consult with uncouth leaders of a rebellion that defied and upset the powers which hitherto had so serenely ruled, unchallenged. Rolfe identified these visitors, and one morning called her attention to one who he said was the nation's foremost authority on social science. Janet possessed all unconsciously the New England reverence for learning, she was stirred by the sight of this distinguished-looking person who sat on the painted stage, fingering his glasses and talking to Antonelli. The two men made a curious contrast. But her days were full of contrasts of which her mood exultingly approved. The politicians were received cavalierly. Toward these, who sought to act as go-betweens in the conflict, Antonelli was contemptuous; he behaved like the general of a conquering army, and his audacity was reflected in the other leaders, in Rolfe, in the Committee itself.

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That Committee, a never-ending source of wonder to Janet, with its nine or ten nationalities and interpreters, was indeed a triumph over the obstacles of race and language, a Babel made successful; in a community of Anglo-Saxon traditions, an amazing anomaly. The habiliments of the west, the sack coats and sweaters, the slouch hats and caps, the so-called Derbies pulled down over dark brows and flashing eyes lent to these peasant types an incongruity that had the air of ferocity. The faces of most of them were covered with a blue-black stubble of beard. Some slouched in their chairs, others stood and talked in groups, gesticulating with cigars and pipes; yet a keen spectator, after watching them awhile through the smoke, might have been able to pick out striking personalities among them. He would surely have noticed Froment, the stout, limping man under whose white eyebrows flashed a pair of livid blue and peculiarly Gallic eyes; he held the Belgians in his hand: Lindtzki, the Pole, with his zealot's face; Radeau, the big Canadian in the checked Mackinaw; and Findley, the young American-less by any arresting quality of feature than by an expression suggestive of practical wisdom.

Imagine then, on an afternoon in the middle phase of the strike, some half dozen of the law-makers of a sovereign state, top-hatted and conventionally garbed in black, accustomed to authority, to conferring favours instead of requesting them, climbing the steep stairs and pausing on the threshold of that hall, fingering their watch chains, awaiting recognition by the representatives of the new and bewildering force that had arisen in an historic commonwealth. A "debate" was in progress. Some of the debaters, indeed, looked over their shoulders, but the leader, who sat above them framed in the sylvan setting of the stage, never so much as deigned to glance up from his newspaper. A half-burned cigar rolled between his mobile lips, he sat on the back of his neck, and yet he had an air Napoleonic; Nietzschean, it might better be said—although it is safe to assert that these moulders of American institutions knew little about that terrible philosopher who had raised his voice against the "slave morals of Christianity." It was their first experience with the superman.... It remained for the Canadian, Radeau, when a lull arrived in the turmoil, to suggest that the gentlemen be given chairs.

"Sure, give them chairs," assented Antonelli in a voice hoarse from speech-making. Breath-taking audacity to certain spectators who had followed the delegation hither, some of whom could not refrain from speculating whether it heralded the final scrapping of the machinery of the state; amusing to cynical metropolitan reporters, who grinned at one another as they prepared to take down the proceedings; evoking a fierce approval in the breasts of all rebels among whom was Janet. The Legislative Chairman, a stout and suave gentleman of Irish birth, proceeded to explain how greatly concerned was the Legislature that the deplorable warfare within the state should cease; they had come, he declared, to aid in bringing about justice between labour and capital.

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“We’ll get justice without the help of the state,” remarked Antonelli curtly, while a murmur of approval ran through the back of the hall.

That was scarcely the attitude, said the Chairman, he had expected. He knew that such a strike as this had engendered bitterness, there had been much suffering, sacrifice undoubtedly on both sides, but he was sure, if Mr. Antonelli and the Committee would accept their services here he was interrupted.

Had the mill owners accepted their services?

The Chairman cleared his throat.

The fact was that the mill owners were more difficult to get together in a body. A meeting would be arranged—“When you arrange a meeting, let me know,” said Antonelli.

A laugh went around the room. It was undoubtedly very difficult to keep one’s temper under such treatment. The Chairman looked it.

“A meeting would be arranged,” he declared, with a long-suffering expression. He even smiled a little. “In the meantime—”

“What can your committee do?” demanded one of the strike leaders, passionately—it was Findley. “If you find one party wrong, can your state force it to do right? Can you legislators be impartial when you have not lived the bitter life of the workers? Would you arbitrate a question of life and death? And are the worst wages paid in these mills anything short of death? Do you investigate because conditions are bad? or because the workers broke loose and struck? Why did you not come before the strike?”

This drew more approval from the rear. Why, indeed? The Chairman was adroit, he had pulled himself out of many tight places in the Assembly Chamber, but now he began to perspire, to fumble in his coat tails for a handkerchief. The Legislature, he maintained, could not undertake to investigate such matters until called to its attention....

Later on a tall gentleman, whom heaven had not blessed with tact, saw fit to deplore the violence that had occurred; he had no doubt the leaders of the strike regretted it as much as he, he was confident it would be stopped, when public opinion would be wholly and unreservedly on the side of the strikers.

“Public opinion!” savagely cried Lindtzki, who spoke English with only a slight accent. “If your little boy, if your little girl come to you and ask for shoes, for bread, and you say, `I have no shoes, I have no bread, but public opinion is with us,’ would that satisfy you?”

This drew so much applause that the tall law-maker sat down again with a look of disgust on his face.... The Committee withdrew, and for many weeks thereafter the state they represented continued to pay some four thousand dollars daily to keep its soldiers on the streets of Hampton....

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In the meanwhile Janet saw much of Rolfe. Owing to his facile command of language he was peculiarly fitted to draft those proclamations, bombastically worded in the French style, issued and circulated by the Strike Committee—appeals to the polyglot army to withstand the pangs of hunger, to hold out for the terms laid down, assurances that victory was at hand. Walking up and down the bibliotheque, his hands behind his back, his red lips gleaming as he spoke, he dictated these documents to Janet. In the ecstasy of this composition he had a way of shaking his head slowly from side to side, and when she looked up she saw his eyes burning, down at her. A dozen times a day, while she was at her other work, he would come in and talk to her. He excited her, she was divided between attraction and fear of him, and often she resented his easy assumption that a tie existed between them—the more so because this seemed to be taken for granted among certain of his associates. In their eyes, apparently, she was Rolfe's recruit in more senses than one. It was indeed a strange society in which she found herself, and Rolfe typified it. He lived on the plane of the impulses and intellect, discarded as inhibiting factors what are called moral standards, decried individual discipline and restraint. And while she had never considered these things, the spectacle of a philosophy—embodied in him—that frankly and cynically threw them overboard was disconcerting. He regarded her as his proselyte, he called her a Puritan, and he seemed more concerned that she should shed these relics of an ancestral code than acquire the doctrines of Sorel and Pouget. And yet association with him presented the allurement of a dangerous adventure. Intellectually he fascinated her; and still another motive—which she partially disguised from herself—prevented her from repelling him. That motive had to do with Ditmar. She tried to put Ditmar from her mind; she sought in desperation, not only to keep busy, but to steep and lose herself in this fierce creed as an antidote to the insistent, throbbing pain that lay ambushed against her moments of idleness. The second evening of her installation at Headquarters she had worked beyond the supper hour, helping Sanders with his accounts. She was loath to go home. And when at last she put on her hat and coat and entered the hall Rolfe, who had been talking to Jastro, immediately approached her. His liquid eyes regarded her solicitously.

"You must be hungry," he said. "Come out with me and have some supper."

But she was not hungry; what she needed was air. Then he would walk a little way with her—he wanted to talk to her. She hesitated, and then consented. A fierce hope had again taken possession of her, and when they came to Warren Street she turned into it.

"Where are you going?" Rolfe demanded.

"For a walk," she said. "Aren't you coming?"

"Will you have supper afterwards?"

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“Perhaps.”

He followed her, puzzled, yet piqued and excited by her manner, as with rapid steps she hurried along the pavement. He tried to tell her what her friendship meant to him; they were, he declared, kindred spirits—from the first time he had seen her, on the Common, he had known this. She scarcely heard him, she was thinking of Ditmar; and this was why she had led Rolfe into Warren Street they might meet Ditmar! It was possible that he would be going to the mill at this time, after his dinner! She scrutinized every distant figure, and when they reached the block in which he lived she walked more slowly. From within the house came to her, faintly, the notes of a piano—his daughter Amy was practising. It was the music, a hackneyed theme of Schubert’s played heavily, that seemed to arouse the composite emotion of anger and hatred, yet of sustained attraction and wild regret she had felt before, but never so poignantly as now. And she lingered, perversely resolved to steep herself in the agony.

“Who lives here” Rolfe asked.

“Mr. Ditmar,” she answered.

“The agent of the Chippering Mill?”

She nodded.

“He’s the worst of the lot,” Rolfe said angrily. “If it weren’t for him, we’d have this strike won to-day. He owns this town, he’s run it to suit himself, He stiffens up the owners and holds the other mills in line. He’s a type, a driver, the kind of man we must get rid of. Look at him —he lives in luxury while his people are starving.”

“Get rid of!” repeated Janet, in an odd voice.

“Oh, I don’t mean to shoot him,” Rolfe declared. “But he may get shot, for all I know, by some of these slaves he’s made desperate.”

“They wouldn’t dare shoot him,” Janet said. “And whatever he is, he isn’t a coward. He’s stronger than the others, he’s more of a man.”

Rolfe looked at her curiously.

“What do you know about him?” he asked.

“I—I know all about him. I was his stenographer.”

“You! His stenographer! Then why are you herewith us?”

“Because I hate him!” she cried vehemently. “Because I’ve learned that it’s true—what you say about the masters—they only think of themselves and their kind, and not of us. They use us.”

“He tried to use you! You loved him!”

“How dare you say that!”

He fell back before her anger.

“I didn’t mean to offend you,” he exclaimed. “I was jealous—I’m jealous of every man you’ve known. I want you. I’ve never met a woman like you.”

They were the very words Ditmar had used! She did not answer, and for a while they walked along in silence, leaving Warren Street and cutting across the city until they canoe in sight of the Common. Rolfe drew nearer to her.

“Forgive me!” he pleaded. “You know I would not offend you. Come, we’ll have supper together, and I will teach you more of what you have to know.”

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“Where?” she asked.

“At the Hampton—it is a little cafe where we all go. Perhaps you’ve been there.”

“No,” said Janet.

“It doesn’t compare with the cafes of Europe—or of New York. Perhaps we shall go to them sometime, together. But it is cosy, and warm, and all the leaders will be there. You’ll come—yes?”

“Yes, I’ll come,” she said....

The Hampton was one of the city’s second-class hotels, but sufficiently pretentious to have, in its basement, a “cafe” furnished in the “mission” style of brass tacks and dull red leather. In the warm, food-scented air fantastic wisps of smoke hung over the groups; among them Janet made out several of the itinerant leaders of Syndicalism, loose-tied, debonnair, giving a tremendous impression of freedom as they laughed and chatted with the women. For there were women, ranging from the redoubtable Nellie Bond herself down to those who may be designated as camp-followers. Rolfe, as he led Janet to a table in a corner of the room, greeted his associates with easy camaraderie. From Miss Bond he received an illuminating smile. Janet wondered at her striking good looks, at the boldness and abandon with which she talked to Jastro or exchanged sallies across the room. The atmosphere of this tawdry resort, formerly frequented by shop girls and travelling salesmen, was magically transformed by the presence of this company, made bohemian, cosmopolitan, exhilarating. And Janet, her face flushed, sat gazing at the scene, while Rolfe consulted the bill of fare and chose a beefsteak and French fried potatoes. The apathetic waiter in the soiled linen jacket he addressed as “comrade.” Janet protested when he ordered cocktails.

“You must learn to live, to relax, to enjoy yourself,” he declared.

But a horror of liquor held her firm in her refusal. Rolfe drank his, and while they awaited the beefsteak she was silent, the prey of certain misgivings that suddenly assailed her. Lise, she remembered, had sometimes mentioned this place, though preferring Gruber’s: and she was struck by the contrast between this spectacle and the grimness of the strike these people had come to encourage and sustain, the conflict in the streets, the suffering in the tenements. She glanced at Rolfe, noting the manner in which he smoked cigarettes, sensually, as though seeking to wring out of each all there was to be got before flinging it down and lighting another. Again she was struck by the anomaly of a religion that had indeed enthusiasms, sacrifices perhaps, but no disciplines. He threw it out in snatches, this religion, while relating the histories of certain persons in the room: of Jastro, for instance, letting fall a hint to the effect that this evangelist and bliss Bond were dwelling together in more than amity.

“Then you don’t believe in marriage?” she demanded, suddenly.

Rolfe laughed.

“What is it,” he exclaimed, “but the survival of the system of property? It’s slavery, taboo, a device upheld by the master class to keep women in bondage, in superstition, by inducing them to accept it as a decree of God.”

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“Did the masters themselves ever respect it, or any other decrees of God they preached to the slaves? Read history, and you will see. They had their loves, their mistresses. Read the newspapers, and you will find out whether they respect it to-day. But they are very anxious to have you and me respect it and all the other Christian commandments, because they will prevent us from being discontented. They say that we must be satisfied with the situation in this world in which God has placed us, and we shall have our reward in the next.”

She shivered slightly, not only at the ideas thus abruptly enunciated, but because it occurred to her that those others must be taking for granted a certain relationship between herself and Rolfe.... But presently, when the supper arrived, these feelings changed. She was very hungry, and the effect of the food, of the hot coffee was to dispel her doubt and repugnance, to throw a glamour over the adventure, to restore to Rolfe’s arguments an exciting and alluring appeal. And with renewed physical energy she began to experience once more a sense of fellowship with these free and daring spirits who sought to avenge her wrongs and theirs.

“For us who create there are no rules of conduct, no conventions,” Rolfe was saying, “we do not care for the opinions of the middle class, of the bourgeois. With us men and women are on an equality. It is fear that has kept the workers down, and now we have cast that off—we know our strength. As they say in Italy, il mondo e a chi se lo piglia, the world belongs to him who is bold.”

“Italian is a beautiful language,” she exclaimed.

“I will teach you Italian,” he said.

“I want to learn—so much!” she sighed.

“Your soul is parched,” he said, in a commiserating tone. “I will water it, I will teach you everything.” His words aroused a faint, derisive echo: Ditmar had wish to teach her, too! But now she was strongly under the spell of the new ideas hovering like shining, gossamer spirits just beyond her reach, that she sought to grasp and correlate. Unlike the code which Rolfe condemned, they seemed not to be separate from life, opposed to it, but entered even into that most important of its elements, sex. In deference to that other code Ditmar had made her his mistress, and because he was concerned for his position and the security of the ruling class had sought to hide the fact.... Rolfe, with a cigarette between his red lips, sat back in his chair, regarding with sensuous enjoyment the evident effect of his arguments.

“But love?” she interrupted, when presently he had begun to talk again. She strove inarticulately to express an innate feminine objection to relationships that were made and broken at pleasure.

“Love is nothing but attraction between the sexes, the life-force working in us. And when that attraction ceases, what is left? Bondage. The hideous bondage of Christian marriage, in which women promise to love and obey forever.”

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“But women—women are not like men. When once they give themselves they do not so easily cease to love. They—they suffer.”

He did not seem to observe the bitterness in her voice.

“Ah, that is sentiment,” he declared, “something that will not trouble women when they have work to do, inspiring work. It takes time to change our ideas, to learn to see things as they are.” He leaned forward eagerly. “But you will learn, you are like some of those rare women in history who have had the courage to cast off traditions. You were not made to be a drudge....”

But now her own words, not his, were ringing in her head—women do not so easily cease to love, they suffer. In spite of the new creed she had so eagerly and fiercely embraced, in which she had sought deliverance and retribution, did she still love Ditmar, and suffer because of him? She repudiated the suggestion, yet it persisted as she glanced at Rolfe’s red lips and compared him with Ditmar. Love! Rolfe might call it what he would—the life-force, attraction between the sexes, but it was proving stronger than causes and beliefs. He too was making love to her; like Ditmar, he wanted her to use and fling away when he should grow weary. Was he not pleading for himself rather than for the human cause he professed? taking advantage of her ignorance and desperation, of her craving for new experience and knowledge? The suspicion sickened her. Were all men like that? Suddenly, without apparent premeditation or connection, the thought of the stranger from Silliston entered her mind. Was he like that?... Rolfe was bending toward her across the table, solicitously. “What’s the matter?” he asked.

Her reply was listless.

“Nothing—except that I’m tired. I want to go home.”

“Not now,” he begged. “It’s early yet.”

But she insisted....

CHAPTER XVII

The next day at the noon hour Janet entered Dey Street. Cheek by jowl there with the tall tenements whose spindled-pillared porches overhung the darkened pavements were smaller houses of all ages and descriptions, their lower floors altered to accommodate shops; while in the very midst of the block stood a queer wooden building with two rows of dormer windows let into its high-pitched roof. It bore a curious resemblance to a town hall in the low countries. In front of it the street was filled with children gazing up at the doorway where a man stood surveying them —the stranger from Silliston. There was a rush toward him, a rush that drove Janet against the wall almost at his side, and he held

up his hands in mock despair, gently impeding the little bodies that strove to enter. He bent over them to examine the numerals, printed on pasteboard, they wore on their breasts. His voice was cheerful, yet compassionate.

“It’s hard to wait, I know. I’m hungry myself,” he said. “But we can’t all go up at once. The building would fall down! One to one hundred now, and the second hundred will be first for supper. That’s fair, isn’t it?”

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Dozens of hands were raised.

“I’m twenty-nine!”

“I’m three, mister!”

“I’m forty-one!”

He let them in, one by one, and they clattered up the stairs, as he seized a tiny girl bundled in a dark red muffler and set her on the steps above him. He smiled at Janet.

“This is my restaurant,” he said.

But she could not answer. She watched him as he continued to bend over the children, and when the smaller ones wept because they had to wait, he whispered in their ears, astonishing one or two into laughter. Some ceased crying and clung to him with dumb faith. And after the chosen hundred had been admitted he turned to her again.

“You allow visitors?”

“Oh dear, yes. They’d come anyway. There’s one up there now, a very swell lady from New York—so swell I don’t know what to say to her. Talk to her for me.”

“But I shouldn’t know what to say, either,” replied Janet. She smiled, but she had an odd desire to cry. “What is she doing here?”

“Oh, thrashing ’round, trying to connect with life—she’s one of the unfortunate unemployed.”

“Unemployed?”

“The idle rich,” he explained. “Perhaps you can give her a job—enlist her in the I.W.W.”

“We don’t want that kind,” Janet declared.

“Have pity on her,” he begged. “Nobody wants them—that’s why they’re so pathetic.”

She accompanied him up the narrow stairway to a great loft, the bareness of which had been tempered by draped American flags. From the trusses of the roof hung improvised electric lights, and the children were already seated at the four long tables, where half a dozen ladies were supplying them with enamelled bowls filled with steaming soup. They attacked it ravenously, and the absence of the talk and laughter that ordinarily accompany children’s feasts touched her, impressed upon her, as nothing else had done, the destitution of the homes from which these little ones had come. The supplies that came to Hampton, the money that poured into Headquarters were not

enough to allay the suffering even now. And what if the strike should last for months! Would they be able to hold out, to win? In this mood of pity, of anxiety mingled with appreciation and gratitude for what this man was doing, she turned to speak to him, to perceive on the platform at the end of the room a lady seated. So complete was the curve of her back that her pose resembled a letter u set sidewise, the gap from her crossed knee to her face being closed by a slender forearm and hand that held a lorgnette, through which she was gazing at the children with an apparently absorbed interest. This impression of willowy flexibility was somehow heightened by large, pear-shaped pendants hanging from her ears, by a certain filminess in her black costume and hat. Flung across the table beside her was a long coat of grey fur. She struck an odd note here, presented a strange contrast to Janet's friend from Silliston, with his rough suit and fine but rugged features.

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“I’m sorry I haven’t a table for you just at present,” he was saying. “But perhaps you’ll let me take your order,”—and he imitated the obsequious attitude of a waiter. “A little fresh caviar and a clear soup, and then a fish—?”

The lady took down her lorgnette and raised an appealing face.

“You’re always joking, Brooks,” she chided him, “even when you’re doing things like this! I can’t get you to talk seriously even when I come all the way from New York to find out what’s going on here.”

“How hungry children eat, for instance?” he queried.

“Dear little things, it’s heartrending!” she exclaimed. “Especially when I think of my own children, who have to be made to eat. Tell me the nationality of that adorable tot at the end.”

“Perhaps Miss Bumpus can tell you,” he ventured. And Janet, though distinctly uncomfortable and hostile to the lady, was surprised and pleased that he should have remembered her name. “Brooks,” she had called him. That was his first name. This strange and sumptuous person seemed intimate with him. Could it be possible that he belonged to her class? “Mrs. Brocklehurst, Miss Bumpus.”

Mrs. Brocklehurst focussed her attention on Janet, through the lorgnette, but let it fall immediately, smiling on her brightly, persuasively.

“How d’ye do?” she said, stretching forth a slender arm and taking the girl’s somewhat reluctant hand. “Do come and sit down beside me and tell me about everything here. I’m sure you know—you look so intelligent.”

Her friend from Silliston shot at Janet an amused but fortifying glance and left them, going down to the tables. Somehow that look of his helped to restore in her a sense of humour and proportion, and her feeling became one of curiosity concerning this exquisitely soigneed being of an order she had read about, but never encountered—an order which her newly acquired views declared to be usurpers and parasites. But despite her palpable effort to be gracious perhaps because of it—Mrs. Brocklehurst had an air about her that was disconcerting! Janet, however, seemed composed as she sat down.

“I’m afraid I don’t know very much. Maybe you will tell me something, first.”

“Why, certainly,” said Mrs. Brocklehurst, sweetly when she had got her breath.

“Who is that man?” Janet asked.

“Whom do you mean—Mr. Insall?”

“Is that his name? I didn’t know. I’ve seen him twice, but he never told me.”

“Why, my dear, do you mean to say you haven’t heard of Brooks Insall?”

“Brooks Insall.” Janet repeated the name, as her eyes sought his figure between the tables. “No.”

“I’m sure I don’t know why I should have expected you to hear of him,” declared the lady, repentantly. “He’s a writer—an author.” And at this Janet gave a slight exclamation of pleasure and surprise. “You admire writers? He’s done some delightful things.”

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“What does he write about?” Janet asked.

“Oh, wild flowers and trees and mountains and streams, and birds and humans—he has a wonderful insight into people.”

Janet was silent. She was experiencing a swift twinge of jealousy, of that familiar rebellion against her limitations.

“You must read them, my dear,” Mrs. Brocklehurst continued softly, in musical tones. “They are wonderful, they have such distinction. He’s walked, I’m told, over every foot of New England, talking to the farmers and their wives and—all sorts of people.” She, too, paused to let her gaze linger upon Insall laughing and chatting with the children as they ate. “He has such a splendid, `out-door’ look don’t you think? And he’s clever with his hands he bought an old abandoned farmhouse in Silliston and made it all over himself until it looks as if one of our great-great-grandfathers had just stepped out of it to shoot an Indian only much prettier. And his garden is a dream. It’s the most unique place I’ve ever known.”

Janet blushed deeply as she recalled how she had mistaken him for a carpenter: she was confused, overwhelmed, she had a sudden longing to leave the place, to be alone, to think about this discovery. Yet she wished to know more.

“But how did he happen to come here to Hampton—to be doing this?” she asked.

“Well, that’s just what makes him interesting, one never can tell what he’ll do. He took it into his head to collect the money to feed these children; I suppose he gave much of it himself. He has an income of his own, though he likes to live so simply.”

“This place—it’s not connected with any organization?” Janet ejaculated.

“That’s the trouble, he doesn’t like organizations, and he doesn’t seem to take any interest in the questions or movements of the day,” Mrs. Brocklehurst complained. “Or at least he refuses to talk about them, though I’ve known him for many years, and his people and mine were friends. Now there are lots of things I want to learn, that I came up from New York to find out. I thought of course he’d introduce me to the strike leaders, and he tells me he doesn’t know one of them. Perhaps you know them,” she added, with sudden inspiration.

“I’m only an employee at Strike Headquarters,” Janet replied, stiffening a little despite the lady’s importuning look—which evidently was usually effective.

“You mean the I.W.W.?”

“Yes.”

Meanwhile Insall had come up and seated himself below them on the edge of the platform.

“Oh, Brooks, your friend Miss Bumpus is employed in the Strike Headquarters!” Mrs. Brocklehurst cried, and turning to Janet she went on. “I didn’t realize you were a factory girl, I must say you don’t look it.”

Once more a gleam of amusement from Insall saved Janet, had the effect of compelling her to meet the affair somewhat after his own manner. He seemed to be putting the words into her mouth, and she even smiled a little, as she spoke.

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“You never can tell what factory girls do look like in these days,” she observed mischievously.

“That’s so,” Mrs. Brocklehurst agreed, “we are living in such extraordinary times, everything topsy turvy. I ought to have realized —it was stupid of me—I know several factory girls in New York, I’ve been to their meetings, I’ve had them at my house—-shirtwaist strikers.”

She assumed again the willowy, a position, her fingers clasped across her knee, her eyes supplicatingly raised to Janet. Then she reached out her hand and touched the I.W.W. button. “Do tell me all about the Industrial Workers, and what they believe,” she pleaded.

“Well,” said Janet, after a slight pause, “I’m afraid you won’t like it much. Why do you want to know?”

“Because I’m so interested—especially in the women of the movement. I feel for them so, I want to help—to do something, too. Of course you’re a suffragist.”

“You mean, do I believe in votes for women? Yes, I suppose I do.”

“But you must,” declared Mrs. Brocklehurst, still sweetly, but with emphasis. “You wouldn’t be working, you wouldn’t be striking unless you did.”

“I’ve never thought about it,” said Janet.

“But how are you working girls ever going to raise wages unless you get the vote? It’s the only way men ever get anywhere—the politicians listen to them.” She produced from her bag a gold pencil and a tablet. “Mrs. Ned Carfax is here from Boston—I saw her for a moment at the hotel she’s been here investigating for nearly three days, she tells me. I’ll have her send you suffrage literature at once, if you’ll give me your address.”

“You want a vote?” asked Janet, curiously, gazing at the pearl earrings.

“Certainly I want one.”

“Why?”

“Why?” repeated Mrs. Brocklehurst.

“Yes. You must have everything you want.”

Even then the lady’s sweet reasonableness did not desert her. She smiled winningly, displaying two small and even rows of teeth.

“On principle, my dear. For one reason, because I have such sympathy with women who toil, and for another, I believe the time has come when women must no longer be slaves, they must assert themselves, become individuals, independent.”

“But you?” exclaimed Janet.

Mrs. Brocklehurst continued to smile encouragingly, and murmured “Yes?”

“You are not a slave.”

A delicate pink, like the inside of a conch shell, spread over Mrs. Brocklehurst’s cheeks.

“We’re all slaves,” she declared with a touch of passion. “It’s hard for you to realize, I know, about those of us who seem more fortunate than our sisters. But it’s true. The men give us jewels and automobiles and clothes, but they refuse to give us what every real woman craves —liberty.”

Janet had become genuinely interested.

“But what kind of liberty?”

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“Liberty to have a voice, to take part in the government of our country, to help make the laws, especially those concerning working-women and children, what they ought to be.”

Here was altruism, truly! Here were words that should have inspired Janet, yet she was silent. Mrs. Brocklehurst gazed at her solicitously.

“What are you thinking?” she urged—and it was Janet’s turn to flush.

“I was just thinking that you seemed to have everything life has to give, and yet—and yet you’re not happy.”

“Oh, I’m not unhappy,” protested the lady. “Why do you say that?”

“I don’t know. You, too, seem to be wanting something.”

“I want to be of use, to count,” said Mrs. Brocklehurst,—and Janet was startled to hear from this woman’s lips the very echo of her own desires.

Mrs. Brocklehurst’s feelings had become slightly complicated. It is perhaps too much to say that her complacency was shaken. She was, withal, a person of resolution—of resolution taking the form of unswerving faith in herself, a faith persisting even when she was being carried beyond her depth. She had the kind of pertinacity that sever admits being out of depth, the happy buoyancy that does not require to feel the bottom under one’s feet. She floated in swift currents. When life became uncomfortable, she evaded it easily; and she evaded it now, as she gazed at the calm but intent face of the girl in front of her, by a characteristic inner refusal to admit that she had accidentally come in contact with something baking. Therefore she broke the silence.

“Isn’t that what you want—you who are striking?” she asked.

“I think we want the things that you’ve got,” said Janet. A phrase one of the orators had used came into her mind, “Enough money to live up to American standards”—but she did not repeat it. “Enough money to be free, to enjoy life, to have some leisure and amusement and luxury.” The last three she took from the orator’s mouth.

“But surely,” exclaimed Mrs. Brocklehurst, “surely you want more than that!”

Janet shook her head.

“You asked me what we believed, the I.W.W., the syndicalists, and I told you you wouldn’t like it. Well, we believe in doing away with you, the rich, and taking all you have for ourselves, the workers, the producers. We believe you haven’t any right to what you’ve got, that you’ve fooled and cheated us out of it. That’s why we women don’t care much about the vote, I suppose, though I never thought of it. We mean to go on striking until we’ve got all that you’ve got.”

“But what will become of us?” said Mrs. Brocklehurst. “You wouldn’t do away with all of us! I admit there are many who don’t—but some do sympathize with you, will help you get what you want, help you, perhaps, to see things more clearly, to go about it less—-ruthlessly.”

“I’ve told you what we believe,” repeated Janet.

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“I’m so glad I came,” cried Mrs. Brocklehurst. “It’s most interesting! I never knew what the syndicalists believed. Why, it’s like the French Revolution—only worse. How are you going to get rid of us? cut our heads off?”

Janet could not refrain from smiling.

“Let you starve, I suppose.”

“Really!” said Mrs. Brocklehurst, and appeared to be trying to visualize the process. She was a true Athenian, she had discovered some new thing, she valued discoveries more than all else in life, she collected them, though she never used them save to discuss them with intellectuals at her dinner parties. “Now you must let me come to Headquarters and get a glimpse of some of the leaders—of Antonelli, and I’m told there’s a fascinating man named Rowe.”

“Rolfe,” Janet corrected.

“Rolfe—that’s it.” She glanced down at the diminutive watch, set with diamonds, on her wrist, rose and addressed Insall. “Oh dear, I must be going, I’m to lunch with Nina Carfax at one, and she’s promised to tell me a lot of things. She’s writing an article for Craven’s Weekly all about the strike and the suffering and injustice—she says it’s been horribly misrepresented to the public, the mill owners have had it all their own way. I think what you’re doing is splendid, Brooks, only—” here she gave him an appealing, rather commiserating look—“only I do wish you would take more interest in—in underlying principles.”

Insall smiled.

“It’s a question of brains. You have to have brains to be a sociologist,” he answered, as he held up for her the fur coat. With a gesture of gentle reproof she slipped into it, and turned to Janet.

“You must let me see more of you, my dear,” she said. “I’m at the best hotel, I can’t remember the name, they’re all so horrible—but I’ll be here until to-morrow afternoon. I want to find out everything. Come and call on me. You’re quite the most interesting person I’ve met for a long time—I don’t think you realize how interesting you are. Au revoir!” She did not seem to expect any reply, taking acquiescence for granted. Glancing once more at the rows of children, who had devoured their meal in an almost uncanny silence, she exclaimed, “The dears! I’m going to send you a cheque, Brooks, even if you have been horrid to me—you always are.”

“Horrid!” repeated Insall, “put it down to ignorance.”

He accompanied her down the stairs. From her willowy walk a sophisticated observer would have hazarded the guess that her search for an occupation had included a course of lessons in fancy dancing.

Somewhat dazed by this interview which had been so suddenly forced upon her, Janet remained seated on the platform. She had the perception to recognize that in Mrs. Brocklehurst and Insall she had come in contact with a social stratum hitherto beyond the bounds of her experience; those who belonged to that stratum were not characterized by the possession of independent incomes alone, but by an attitude toward life, a manner of not appearing to take its issues desperately. Ditmar was not like that. She felt convicted of enthusiasms, she was puzzled, rather annoyed and ashamed. Insall and Mrs. Brocklehurst, different though they were, had this attitude in common.... Insall, when he returned, regarded her amusedly.

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“So you’d like to exterminate Mrs. Brocklehurst?” he asked.

And Janet flushed. “Well, she forced me to say it.”

“Oh, it didn’t hurt her,” he said.

“And it didn’t help her,” Janet responded quickly.

“No, it didn’t help her,” Insall agreed, and laughed.

“But I’m not sure it isn’t true,” she went on, “that we want what she’s got.” The remark, on her own lips, surprised Janet a little. She had not really meant to make it. Insall seemed to have the quality of forcing one to think out loud.

“And what she wants, you’ve got,” he told her.

“What have I got?”

“Perhaps you’ll find out, some day.”

“It may be too late,” she exclaimed. “If you’d only tell me, it might help.”

“I think it’s something you’ll have to discover for yourself,” he replied, more gravely than was his wont.

She was silent a moment, and then she demanded: “Why didn’t you tell me who you were? You let me think, when I met you in Silliston that day, that you were a carpenter. I didn’t know you’d written books.”

“You can’t expect writers to wear uniforms, like policemen—though perhaps we ought to, it might be a little fairer to the public,” he said. “Besides, I am a carpenter, a better carpenter than a writer..”

“I’d give anything to be an author!” she cried.

“It’s a hard life,” he assured her. “We have to go about seeking inspiration from others.”

“Is that why you came to Hampton?”

“Well, not exactly. It’s a queer thing about inspiration, you only find it when you’re not looking for it.”

She missed the point of this remark, though his eyes were on her. They were not like Rolfe’s eyes, insinuating, possessive; they had the anomalistic quality, of being at once personal and impersonal, friendly, alight, evoking curiosity yet compelling trust.

“And you didn’t tell me,” he reproached her, “that you were at I.W.W. Headquarters.”

A desire for self-justification impelled her to exclaim: “You don’t believe in Syndicalism —and yet you’ve come here to feed these children!”

“Oh, I think I understand the strike,” he said.

“How? Have you seen it? Have you heard the arguments?”

“No. I’ve seen you. You’ve explained it.”

“To Mrs. Brocklehurst?”

“It wasn’t necessary,” he replied—and immediately added, in semi-serious apology: “I thought it was admirable, what you said. If she’d talked to a dozen syndicalist leaders, she couldn’t have had it put more clearly. Only I’m afraid she doesn’t know the truth when she hears it.”

“Now you’re making fun of me!”

“Indeed I’m not,” he protested.

“But I didn’t give any of the arguments, any of the—philosophy,” she pronounced the word hesitatingly. “I don’t understand it yet as well as I should.”

“You are it,” he said. “It’s not always easy to understand what we are —it’s generally after we’ve become something else that we comprehend what we have been.”

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And while she was pondering over this one of the ladies who had been waiting on the table came toward Insall.

“The children have finished, Brooks,” she informed him. “It’s time to let in the others.”

Insall turned to Janet. “This is Miss Bumpus—and this is Mrs. Maturin,” he said. “Mrs. Maturin lives in Silliston.”

The greeting of this lady differed from that of Mrs. Brocklehurst. She, too, took Janet’s hand.

“Have you come to help us?” she asked.

And Janet said: “Oh, I’d like to, but I have other work.”

“Come in and see us again,” said Insall, and Janet, promising, took her leave....

“Who is she, Brooks?” Mrs. Maturin asked, when Janet had gone.

“Well,” he answered, “I don’t know. What does it matter?”

Mrs. Maturin smiled.

“I should say that it did matter,” she replied. “But there’s something unusual about her—where did you find her?”

“She found me.” And Insall explained. “She was a stenographer, it seems, but now she’s enlisted heart and soul with the syndicalists,” he added.

“A history?” Mrs. Maturin queried. “Well, I needn’t ask—it’s written on her face.”

“That’s all I know,” said Insall.

“I’d like to know,” said Mrs. Maturin. “You say she’s in the strike?”

“I should rather put it that the strike is in her.”

“What do you mean, Brooks?”

But Insall did not reply.

Janet came away from Dey Street in a state of mental and emotional confusion. The encounter with Mrs. Brocklehurst had been upsetting; she had an uneasy feeling of having made a fool of herself in Insall’s eyes; she desired his approval, even on that occasion when she had first met him and mistaken him for a workman she had been conscious of a compelling faculty in him, of a pressure he exerted demanding

justification of herself; and to-day, because she was now pledged to Syndicalism, because she had made the startling discovery that he was a writer of some renown, she had been more than ever anxious to vindicate her cause. She found herself, indeed, wondering uneasily whether there were a higher truth of which he was in possession. And the fact that his attitude toward her had been one of sympathy and friendliness rather than of disapproval, that his insight seemed to have fathomed her case, apprehended it in all but the details, was even more disturbing—yet vaguely consoling. The consolatory element in the situation was somehow connected with the lady, his friend from Silliston, to whom he had introduced her and whose image now came before her the more vividly, perhaps, in contrast with that of Mrs. Brocklehurst. Mrs. Maturin—-could Janet have so expressed her thought! had appeared as an extension of Insall's own personality. She was a strong, tall, vital woman with a sweet irregularity of feature, with a heavy crown of chestnut hair turning slightly grey, quaintly braided, becomingly framing

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her face. Her colour was high. The impression she conveyed of having suffered was emphasized by the simple mourning gown she wore, but the dominant note she had struck was one of dependability. It was, after all, Insall's dominant, too. Insall had asked her to call again; and the reflection that she might do so was curiously comforting. The soup kitchen in the loft, with these two presiding over it, took on something of the aspect of a sanctuary....

Insall, in some odd manner, and through the medium of that frivolous lady, had managed to reenforce certain doubts that had been stirring in Janet—doubts of Rolfe, of the verity of the doctrine which with such abandon she had embraced. It was Insall who, though remaining silent, just by being there seemed to have suggested her manner of dealing with Mrs. Brocklehurst. It had, indeed, been his manner of dealing with Mrs. Brocklehurst. Janet had somehow been using his words, his method, and thus for the first time had been compelled to look objectively on what she had deemed a part of herself. We never know what we are, he had said, until we become something else! He had forced her to use an argument that failed to harmonize, somehow, with Rolfe's poetical apologetics. Stripped of the glamour of these, was not Rolfe's doctrine just one of taking, taking? And when the workers were in possession of all, would not they be as badly off as Mrs. Brocklehurst or Ditmar? Rolfe, despite the inspiring intellectual creed he professed, lacked the poise and unity that go with happiness. He wanted things, for himself: whereas she beheld in Insall one who seemed emancipated from possessions, whose life was so organized as to make them secondary affairs. And she began to wonder what Insall would think of Ditmar.

These sudden flashes of tenderness for Ditmar startled and angered her. She had experienced them before, and always had failed to account for their intrusion into a hatred she cherished. Often, at her desk in the bibliotheque, she had surprised herself speculating upon what Ditmar might be doing at that moment; and it seemed curious, living in the same city with him, that she had not caught a glimpse of him during the strike. More than once, moved by a perverse impulse, she had ventured of an evening down West Street toward the guard of soldiers in the hope of catching sight of him. He had possessed her, and the memory of the wild joy of that possession, of that surrender to great strength, refused to perish. Why, at such moments, should she glory in a strength that had destroyed her and why, when she heard him cursed as the man who stood, more than any other, in the way of the strikers victory, should she paradoxically and fiercely rejoice? why should she feel pride when she was told of the fearlessness with which he went about the streets, and her heart stop beating when she thought of the possibility of his being shot? For these unwelcome phenomena within herself Janet could not account. When they disturbed and frightened her, she plunged into her work with the greater zeal....

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As the weeks went by, the strain of the strike began to tell on the weak, the unprepared, on those who had many mouths to feed. Shivering with the cold of that hardest of winters, these unfortunates flocked to the Franco-Belgian Hall, where a little food or money in proportion to the size of their families was doled out to them. In spite of the contributions received by mail, of the soup kitchens and relief stations set up by various organizations in various parts of the city, the supply little more than sufficed to keep alive the more needy portion of the five and twenty thousand who now lacked all other means of support. Janet's heart was wrung as she gazed at the gaunt, bewildered faces growing daily more tragic, more bewildered and gaunt; she marvelled at the animal-like patience of these Europeans, at the dumb submission of most of them to privations that struck her as appalling. Some indeed complained, but the majority recited in monotonous, unimpassioned tones their stories of suffering, or of ill treatment by the "Cossacks" or the police. The stipends were doled out by Czernowitz, but all through the week there were special appeals. Once it was a Polish woman, wan and white, who carried her baby wrapped in a frayed shawl.

"Wahna littel money for milk," she said, when at length their attention was drawn to her.

"But you get your money, every Saturday," the secretary informed her kindly.

She shook her head.

"Baby die, 'less I have littel milk—I show you."

Janet drew back before the sight of the child with its sunken cheeks and ghastly blue lips .... And she herself went out with the woman to buy the milk, and afterwards to the dive in Kendall Street which she called home—in one of those "rear" tenements separated from the front buildings by a narrow court reeking with refuse. The place was dank and cold, malodorous. The man of the family, the lodgers who lived in the other room of the kennel, were out on the streets. But when her eyes grew used to the darkness she perceived three silent children huddled in the bed in the corner....

On another occasion a man came running up the stairs of the Hall and thrust his way into a meeting of the Committee—one of those normally happy, irresponsible Syrians who, because of a love for holidays, are the despair of mill overseers. Now he was dazed, breathless, his great eyes grief-stricken like a wounded animal's.

"She is killidd, my wife—de polees, dey killidd her!"

It was Anna Mower who investigated the case. "The girl wasn't doing nothing but walk along Hudson Street when one of those hirelings set on her and beat her. She put out her hand because she thought he'd hit her —and he gave her three or four with his billy and left her in the gutter. If you'd see her you'd know she wouldn't hurt a fly, she's that gentle looking, like all the Syrian women. She had a `Don't be a scab' ribbon on—that's

all she done! Somebody'll shoot that guy, and I wouldn't blame 'em." Anna stood beside Janet's typewriter, her face red with anger as she told the story.

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“And how is the woman now?” asked Janet.

“In bed, with two ribs broken and a bruise on her back and a cut on her head. I got a doctor. He could hardly see her in that black place they live."...

Such were the incidents that fanned the hatred into hotter and hotter flame. Daily reports were brought in of arrests, of fines and imprisonments for picketing, or sometimes merely for booing at the remnant of those who still clung to their employment. One magistrate in particular, a Judge Hennessy, was hated above all others for giving the extreme penalty of the law, and even stretching it. “Minions, slaves of the capitalists, of the masters,” the courts were called, and Janet subscribed to these epithets, beheld the judges as willing agents of a tyranny from which she, too, had suffered. There arrived at Headquarters frenzied bearers of rumours such as that of the reported intention of landlords to remove the windows from the tenements if the rents were not paid. Antonelli himself calmed these. “Let the landlords try it!” he said phlegmatically....

After a while, as the deadlock showed no signs of breaking, the siege of privation began to tell, ominous signs of discontent became apparent. Chief among the waverers were those who had come to America with visions of a fortune, who had practised a repulsive thrift in order to acquire real estate, who carried in their pockets dog-eared bank books recording payments already made. These had consented to the strike reluctantly, through fear, or had been carried away by the eloquence and enthusiasm of the leaders, by the expectation that the mill owners would yield at once. Some went back to work, only to be “seen” by the militant, watchful pickets—generally in their rooms, at night. One evening, as Janet was walking home, she chanced to overhear a conversation taking place in the dark vestibule of a tenement.

“Working to-day?”

“Yah.”

“Work to-morrow?”

Hesitation. “I d’no.”

“You work, I cut your throat.” A significant noise. “Naw, I no work.”

“Shake!”

She hurried on trembling, not with fear, but exultingly. Nor did she reflect that only a month ago such an occurrence would have shocked and terrified her. This was war.... On her way to Fillmore Street she passed, at every street corner in this district, a pacing sentry, muffled in greatcoat and woollen cap, alert and watchful, the ugly knife on the end of his gun gleaming in the blue light of the arc. It did not occur to her, despite the

uniform, that the souls of many of these men were divided also, that their voices and actions, when she saw them threatening with their bayonets, were often inspired by that inner desperation characteristic of men who find themselves unexpectedly in false situations. Once she heard a woman shriek as the sharp knife grazed her skirt: at another time a man whose steps had been considerably hurried turned, at a safe distance, and shouted defiantly:

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“Say, who are you working for? Me or the Wool Trust?”

“Aw, get along,” retorted the soldier, “or I’ll give you yours.”

The man caught sight of Janet’s button as she overtook him. He was walking backward.

“That feller has a job in a machine shop over in Barrington, I seen him there when I was in the mills. And here he is tryin’ to put us out —ain’t that the limit?”

The thud of horses’ feet in the snow prevented her reply. The silhouettes of the approaching squad of cavalry were seen down the street, and the man fled precipitately into an alleyway....

There were ludicrous incidents, too, though never lacking in a certain pathos. The wife of a Russian striker had her husband arrested because he had burned her clothes in order to prevent her returning to the mill. From the police station he sent a compatriot with a message to Headquarters. “Oye, he fix her! She no get her jawb now—she gotta stay in bed!” this one cried triumphantly.

“She was like to tear me in pieces when I brought her the clothes,” said Anna Mower, who related her experience with mingled feelings. “I couldn’t blame her. You see, it was the kids crying with cold and starvation, and she got so she just couldn’t stand it. I couldn’t stand it, neither.”

Day by day the element who wished to compromise and end the strike grew stronger, brought more and more pressure on the leaders. These people were subsidized, Antonelli declared, by the capitalists....

CHAPTER XVIII

A more serious atmosphere pervaded Headquarters, where it was realized that the issue hung in the balance. And more proclamations, a la Napoleon, were issued to sustain and hearten those who were finding bread and onions meagre fare, to shame the hesitating, the wavering. As has been said, it was Rolfe who, because of his popular literary gift, composed these appeals for the consideration of the Committee, dictating them to Janet as he paced up and down the bibliotheque, inhaling innumerable cigarettes and flinging down the ends on the floor. A famous one was headed “Shall Wool and Cotton Kings Rule the Nation?” “We are winning” it declared. “The World is with us! Forced by the unshaken solidarity of tens of thousands, the manufacturers offer bribes to end the reign of terror they have inaugurated.... Inhuman treatment and oppressive toil have brought all nationalities together into one great army to fight against a brutal system of exploitation. In years and years of excessive labour we have produced millions for a class of idle parasites, who enjoy all the luxuries of life while our

wives have to leave their firesides and our children their schools to eke out a miserable existence." And this for the militia: "The lowest aim of life is to be a soldier! The `good' soldier never tries to distinguish right from wrong, he never thinks, he never reasons, he only obeys—"

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“But,” Janet was tempted to say, “your syndicalism declares that none of us should think or reason. We should only feel.” She was beginning to detect Rolfe’s inconsistencies, yet she refrained from interrupting the inspirational flow.

“The soldier is a blind, heartless, soulless, murderous machine.” Rolfe was fond of adjectives. “All that is human in him, all that is divine has been sworn away when he took the enlistment oath. No man can fall lower than a soldier. It is a depth beyond which we cannot go.”

“All that is human, all that is divine,” wrote Janet, and thrilled a little at the words. Why was it that mere words, and their arrangement in certain sequences, gave one a delicious, creepy feeling up and down the spine? Her attitude toward him had become more and more critical, she had avoided him when she could, but when he was in this ecstatic mood she responded, forgot his red lips, his contradictions, lost herself in a medium she did not comprehend. Perhaps it was because, in his absorption in the task, he forgot her, forgot himself. She, too, despised the soldiers, fervently believed they had sold themselves to the oppressors of mankind. And Rolfe, when in the throes of creation, had the manner of speaking to the soldiers themselves, as though these were present in the lane just below the window; as though he were on the tribune. At such times he spoke with such rapidity that, quick though she was, she could scarcely keep up with him. “Most of you, Soldiers, are workingmen!” he cried. “Yesterday you were slaving in the mills yourselves. You will profit by our victory. Why should you wish to crush us? Be human!”

Pale, excited, he sank down into the chair by her side and lit another cigarette.

“They ought to listen to that!” he exclaimed. “It’s the best one I’ve done yet.”

Night had come. Czernowitz sat in the other room, talking to Jastro, a buzz of voices came from the hall through the thin pine panels of the door. All day long a sixty-mile gale had twisted the snow of the lane into whirling, fantastic columns and rattled the windows of Franco-Belgian Hall. But now the wind had fallen.... Presently, as his self-made music ceased to vibrate within him, Rolfe began to watch the girl as she sat motionless, with parted lips and eyes alight, staring at the reflection of the lamp in the blue-black window.

“Is that the end?” she asked, at length.

“Yes,” he replied sensitively. “Can’t you see it’s a climax? Don’t you think it’s a good one?”

She looked at him, puzzled.

“Why, yes,” she said, “I think it’s fine. You see, I have to take it down so fast I can’t always follow it as I’d like to.”

“When you feel, you can do anything,” he exclaimed. “It is necessary to feel.”

“It is necessary to know,” she told him.

“I do not understand you,” he cried, leaning toward her. “Sometimes you are a flame—a wonderful, scarlet flame I can express it in no other way. Or again, you are like the Madonna of our new faith, and I wish I were a del Sarto to paint you. And then again you seem as cold as your New England snow, you have no feeling, you are an Anglo-Saxon—a Puritan.”

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She smiled, though she felt a pang of reminiscence at the word. Ditmar had called her so, too.

“I can’t help what I am,” she said.

“It is that which inhibits you,” he declared. “That Puritanism. It must be eradicated before you can develop, and then—and then you will be completely wonderful. When this strike is over, when we have time, I will teach you many things—develop you. We will read Sorel together he is beautiful, like poetry—and the great poets, Dante and Petrarch and Tasso—yes, and d’Annunzio. We shall live.”

“We are living, now,” she answered. The look with which she surveyed him he found enigmatic. And then, abruptly, she rose and went to her typewriter.

“You don’t believe what I say!” he reproached her.

But she was cool. “I’m not sure that I believe all of it. I want to think it out for myself—to talk to others, too.”

“What others?”

“Nobody in particular—everybody,” she replied, as she set her notebook on the rack.

“There is some one else!” he exclaimed, rising.

“There is every one else,” she said.

As was his habit when agitated, he began to smoke feverishly, glancing at her from time to time as she fingered the keys. Experience had led him to believe that he who finds a woman in revolt and gives her a religion inevitably becomes her possessor. But more than a month had passed, he had not become her possessor—and now for the first time there entered his mind a doubt as to having given her a religion! The obvious inference was that of another man, of another influence in opposition to his own; characteristically, however, he shrank from accepting this, since he was of those who believe what they wish to believe. The sudden fear of losing her—intruding itself immediately upon an ecstatic, creative mood—unnerved him, yet he strove to appear confident as he stood over her.

“When you’ve finished typewriting that, we’ll go out to supper,” he told her.

But she shook her head.

“Why not?”

“I don’t want to,” she replied—and then, to soften her refusal, she added, “I can’t, to-night.”

“But you never will come with me anymore. Why is it?”

“I’m very tired at night. I don’t feel like going out.” She sought to temporize.

“You’ve changed!” he accused her. “You’re not the same as you were at first—you avoid me.”

The swift gesture with which she flung over the carriage of her machine might have warned him.

“I don’t like that Hampton Hotel,” she flashed back. “I’m—I’m not a vagabond—yet.”

“A vagabond!” he repeated.

She went on savagely with her work..

“You have two natures,” he exclaimed. “You are still a bourgeoise, a Puritan. You will not be yourself, you will not be free until you get over that.”

“I’m not sure I want to get over it.”

He leaned nearer to her.

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“But now that I have found you, Janet, I will not let you go.”

“You’ve no rights over me,” she cried, in sudden alarm and anger. “I’m not doing this work, I’m not wearing myself out here for you.”

“Then—why are you doing it?” His suspicions rose again, and made him reckless.

“To help the strikers,” she said.... He could get no more out of her, and presently, when Anna Mower entered the room, he left it....

More than once since her first visit to the soup kitchen in Dey Street Janet had returned to it. The universe rocked, but here was equilibrium. The streets were filled with soldiers, with marching strikers, terrible things were constantly happening; the tension at Headquarters never seemed to relax. Out in the world and within her own soul were strife and suffering, and sometimes fear; the work in which she sought to lose herself no longer sufficed to keep her from thinking, and the spectacle —when she returned home —of her mother’s increasing apathy grew more and more appalling. But in Dey Street she gained calmness, was able to renew something of that sense of proportion the lack of which, in the chaos in which she was engulfed, often brought her to the verge of madness. At first she had had a certain hesitation about going back, and on the occasion of her second visit had walked twice around the block before venturing to enter. She had no claim on this man. He was merely a chance acquaintance, a stranger—and yet he seemed nearer to her, to understand her better than any one else she knew in the world. This was queer, because she had not explained herself; nor had he asked her for any confidences. She would have liked to confide in him—some things: he gave her the impression of comprehending life; of having, as his specialty, humanity itself; he should, she reflected, have been a minister, and smiled at the thought: ministers, at any rate, ought to be like him, and then one might embrace Christianity—the religion of her forefathers that Rolfe ridiculed. But there was about Insall nothing of religion as she had grown up to apprehend the term.

Now that she had taken her courage in her hands and renewed her visits, they seemed to be the most natural proceedings in the world. On that second occasion, when she had opened the door and palpitatingly climbed to the loft, the second batch of children were finishing their midday meal,—rather more joyously, she thought, than before,—and Insall himself was stooping over a small boy whom he had taken away from the table. He did not notice her at once, and Janet watched them. The child had a cough, his extreme thinness was emphasized by the coat he wore, several sizes too large for him.

“You come along with me, Marcus, I guess I can fit you out,” Insall was saying, when he looked up and saw Janet.

“Why, if it isn’t Miss Bumpus! I thought you’d forgotten us.”

“Oh no,” she protested. “I wanted to come.”

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“Then why didn’t you?”

“Well, I have come,” she said, with a little sigh, and he did not press her further. And she refrained from offering any conventional excuse, such as that of being interested in the children. She had come to see him, and such was the faith with which he inspired her—now that she was once more in his presence—that she made no attempt to hide the fact.

“You’ve never seen my clothing store, have you?” he asked. And with the child’s hand in his he led the way into a room at the rear of the loft. A kit of carpenter’s tools was on the floor, and one wall was lined with box-like compartments made of new wood, each with its label in neat lettering indicating the articles contained therein. “Shoes?” he repeated, as he ran his eye down the labels and suddenly opened a drawer. “Here we are, Marcus. Sit down there on the bench, and take off the shoes you have on.”

The boy had one of those long faces of the higher Jewish type, intelligent, wistful. He seemed dazed by Insall’s kindness. The shoes he wore were those of an adult, but cracked and split, revealing the cotton stocking and here and there the skin. His little blue hands fumbled with the knotted strings that served for facings until Insall, producing a pocket knife, deftly cut the strings.

“Those are summer shoes, Marcus—well ventilated.”

“They’re by me since August,” said the boy.

“And now the stockings,” prompted Insall. The old ones, wet, discoloured, and torn, were stripped off, and thick, woollen ones substituted. Insall, casting his eye over the open drawer, chose a pair of shoes that had been worn, but which were stout and serviceable, and taking one in his hand knelt down before the child. “Let’s see how good a guesser I am,” he said, loosening the strings and turning back the tongue, imitating good-humouredly the deferential manner of a salesman of footwear as he slipped on the shoe. “Why, it fits as if it were made for you! Now for the other one. Yes, your feet are mates—I know a man who wears a whole size larger on his left foot.” The dazed expression remained on the boy’s face. The experience was beyond him. “That’s better,” said Insall, as he finished the lacing. “Keep out of the snow, Marcus, all you can. Wet feet aren’t good for a cough, you know. And when you come in to supper a nice doctor will be here, and we’ll see if we can’t get rid of the cough.”

The boy nodded. He got to his feet, stared down at the shoes, and walked slowly toward the door, where he turned.

“Thank you, Mister Insall,” he said.

And Insall, still sitting on his heels, waved his hand.

“It is not to mention it,” he replied. “Perhaps you may have a clothing store of your own some day—who knows!” He looked up at Janet amusedly and then, with a spring, stood upright, his easy, unconscious pose betokening command of soul and body. “I ought to have kept a store,” he observed. “I missed my vocation.”

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“It seems to me that you missed a great many vocations,” she replied. Commonplaces alone seemed possible, adequate. “I suppose you made all those drawers yourself.”

He bowed in acknowledgment of her implied tribute. With his fine nose and keen eyes —set at a slightly downward angle, creased at the corners —with his thick, greying hair, despite his comparative youth he had the look one associates with portraits of earlier, patriarchal Americans.... These calls of Janet’s were never of long duration. She had fallen into the habit of taking her lunch between one and two, and usually arrived when the last installment of youngsters were finishing their meal; sometimes they were filing out, stopping to form a group around Insall, who always managed to say something amusing—something pertinent and good-naturedly personal. For he knew most of them by name, and had acquired a knowledge of certain individual propensities and idiosyncrasies that delighted their companions.

“What’s the trouble, Stepan—swallowed your spoon?” Stepan was known to be greedy. Or he would suddenly seize an unusually solemn boy from behind and tickle him until the child screamed with laughter. It was, indeed, something of an achievement to get on terms of confidence with these alien children of the tenements and the streets who from their earliest years had been forced to shift for themselves, and many of whom had acquired a precocious suspicion of Greeks bearing gifts. Insall himself had used the phrase, and explained it to Janet. That sense of caveat donor was perhaps their most pathetic characteristic. But he broke it down; broke down, too, the shyness accompanying it, the shyness and solemnity emphasized in them by contact with hardship and poverty, with the stark side of life they faced at home. He had made them —Mrs. Maturin once illuminatingly remarked—more like children. Sometimes he went to see their parents,—as in the case of Marcus—to suggest certain hygienic precautions in his humorous way; and his accounts of these visits, too, were always humorous. Yet through that humour ran a strain of pathos that clutched—despite her smile—at Janet’s heartstrings. This gift of emphasizing and heightening tragedy while apparently dealing in comedy she never ceased to wonder at. She, too, knew that tragedy of the tenements, of the poor, its sordidness and cruelty. All her days she had lived precariously near it, and lately she had visited these people, had been torn by the sight of what they endured. But Insall’s jokes, while they stripped it of sentimentality of which she had an instinctive dislike—made it for her even more poignant. One would have thought, to have such an insight into it, that he too must have lived it, must have been brought up in some dirty alley of a street. That gift, of course, must be a writer’s gift.

When she saw the waifs trooping after him down the stairs, Mrs. Maturin called him the Pied Piper of Hampton.

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As time went on, Janet sometimes wondered over the quiet manner in which these two people, Insall and Mrs. Maturin, took her visits as though they were matters of course, and gave her their friendship. There was, really, no obvious excuse for her coming, not even that of the waifs for food—and yet she came to be fed. The sustenance they gave her would have been hard to define; it flowed not so much from what they said, as from what they were; it was in the atmosphere surrounding them. Sometimes she looked at Mrs. Maturin to ask herself what this lady would say if she knew her history, her relationship with Ditmar—which had been her real reason for entering the ranks of the strikers. And was it fair for her, Janet, to permit Mrs. Maturin to bestow her friendship without revealing this? She could not make up her mind as to what this lady would say. Janet had had no difficulty in placing Ditmar; not much trouble, after her first surprise was over, in classifying Rolfe and the itinerant band of syndicalists who had descended upon her restricted world. But Insall and Mrs. Maturin were not to be ticketed. What chiefly surprised her, in addition to their kindliness, to their taking her on faith without the formality of any recommendation or introduction, was their lack of intellectual narrowness. She did not, of course, so express it. But she sensed, in their presence, from references casually let fall in their conversation, a wider culture of which they were in possession, a culture at once puzzling and exciting, one that she despaired of acquiring for herself. Though it came from reading, it did not seem "literary," according to the notion she had conceived of the term. Her speculations concerning it must be focussed and interpreted. It was a culture, in the first place, not harnessed to an obvious Cause: something like that struck her. It was a culture that contained tolerance and charity, that did not label a portion of mankind as its enemy, but seemed, by understanding all, to forgive all. It had no prejudices; nor did it boast, as the Syndicalists boasted, of its absence of convention. And little by little Janet connected it with Silliston.

"It must be wonderful to live in such a place as that," she exclaimed, when the Academy was mentioned. On this occasion Insall had left for a moment, and she was in the little room he called his "store," alone with Mrs. Maturin, helping to sort out a batch of garments just received.

"It was there you first met Brooks, wasn't it?" She always spoke of him as Brooks. "He told me about it, how you walked out there and asked him about a place to lunch." Mrs. Maturin laughed. "You didn't know what to make of him, did you?"

"I thought he was a carpenter!" said Janet. "I—I never should have taken him for an author. But of course I don't know any other authors."

"Well, he's not like any of them, he's just like himself. You can't put a tag on people who are really big."

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Janet considered this. “I never thought of that. I suppose not,” she agreed.

Mrs. Maturin glanced at her. “So you liked Sflliston,” she said.

“I liked it better than any place I ever saw. I haven’t seen many places, but I’m sure that few can be nicer.”

“What did you like about it, Janet?” Mrs. Maturin was interested.

“It’s hard to say,” Janet replied, after a moment. “It gave me such a feeling of peace—of having come home, although I lived in Hampton. I can’t express it.”

“I think you’re expressing it rather well,” said Mrs. Maturin.

“It was so beautiful in the spring,” Janet continued, dropping the coat she held into the drawer. “And it wasn’t just the trees and the grass with the yellow dandelions, it was the houses, too—I’ve often wondered why those houses pleased me so much. I wanted to live in every one of them. Do you know that feeling?” Mrs. Maturin nodded. “They didn’t hurt your eyes when you looked at them, and they seemed to be so much at home there, even the new ones. The new ones were like the children of the old.”

“I’ll tell the architect. He’ll be pleased,” said Mrs. Maturin.

Janet flushed.

“Am I being silly?” she asked.

“No; my dear,” Mrs. Maturin replied. “You’ve expressed what I feel about Silliston. What do you intend to do when the strike is over?”

“I hadn’t thought.” Janet started at the question, but Mrs. Maturin did not seem to notice the dismay in her tone. “You don’t intend to—to travel around with the I. W. W. people, do you?”

“I—I hadn’t thought,” Janet faltered. It was the first time Mrs. Maturin had spoken of her connection with Syndicalism. And she surprised herself by adding: “I don’t see how I could. They can get stenographers anywhere, and that’s all I’m good for.” And the question occurred to her—did she really wish to?

“What I was going to suggest,” continued Mrs. Maturin, quietly, “was that you might try Silliston. There’s a chance for a good stenographer there, and I’m sure you are a good one. So many of the professors send to Boston.”

Janet stood stock still. Then she said: “But you don’t know anything about me, Mrs. Maturin.”

Kindliness burned in the lady's eyes as she replied: "I know more now —since you've told me I know nothing. Of course there's much I don't know, how you, a stenographer, became involved in this strike and joined the I. W. W. But you shall tell me or not, as you wish, when we become better friends."

Janet felt the blood beating in her throat, and an impulse to confess everything almost mastered her. From the first she had felt drawn toward Mrs. Maturin, who seemed to hold out to her the promise of a woman's friendship—for which she had felt a life-long need: a woman friend who would understand the insatiate yearning in her that gave her no rest in her search for a glittering essence never found, that had led her only to new depths of bitterness and despair. It would destroy her, if indeed it had not already done so. Mrs. Maturin, Insall, seemed to possess the secret that would bring her peace—and yet, in spite of something urging her to speak, she feared the risk of losing them. Perhaps, after all, they would not understand! perhaps it was too late!

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“You do not believe in the Industrial Workers of the World,” was what she said.

Mrs. Maturin herself, who had been moved and excited as she gazed at Janet, was taken by surprise. A few moments elapsed before she could gather herself to reply, and then she managed to smile.

“I do not believe that wisdom will die with them, my dear. Their—their doctrine is too simple, it does not seem as if life, the social order is to be so easily solved.”

“But you must sympathize with them, with the strikers.” Janet’s gesture implied that the soup kitchen was proof of this.

“Ah,” replied Mrs. Maturin, gently, “that is different to understand them. There is one philosophy for the lamb, and another for the wolf.”

“You mean,” said Janet, trembling, “that what happens to us makes us inclined to believe certain things?”

“Precisely,” agreed Mrs. Maturin, in admiration. “But I must be honest with you, it was Brooks who made me see it.”

“But—he never said that to me. And I asked him once, almost the same question.”

“He never said it to me, either,” Mrs. Maturin confessed. “He doesn’t tell you what he believes; I simply gathered that this is his idea. And apparently the workers can only improve their condition by strikes, by suffering—it seems to be the only manner in which they can convince the employers that the conditions are bad. It isn’t the employers’ fault.”

“Not their fault!” Janet repeated.

“Not in a large sense,” said Mrs. Maturin. “When people grow up to look at life in a certain way, from a certain viewpoint, it is difficult, almost impossible to change them. It’s—it’s their religion. They are convinced that if the world doesn’t go on in their way, according to their principles, everything will be destroyed. They aren’t inhuman. Within limits everybody is more than willing to help the world along, if only they can be convinced that what they are asked to do will help.”

Janet breathed deeply. She was thinking of Ditmar.

And Mrs. Maturin, regarding her, tactfully changed the subject.

“I didn’t intend to give you a lecture on sociology or psychology, my dear,” she said. “I know nothing about them, although we have a professor who does. Think over what I’ve said about coming to Silliston. It will do you good—you are working too hard here.

I know you would enjoy Silliston. And Brooks takes such an interest in you," she added impulsively. "It is quite a compliment."

"But why?" Janet demanded, bewildered.

"Perhaps it's because you have—possibilities. You may be typewriting his manuscripts. And then, I am a widow, and often rather lonely—you could come in and read to me occasionally."

"But—I've never read anything."

"How fortunate!" said Insall, who had entered the doorway in time to hear Janet's exclamation. "More than half of modern culture depends on what one shouldn't read."

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Mrs. Maturin laughed. But Insall waved his hand deprecatingly.

“That isn’t my own,” he confessed. “I cribbed it from a clever Englishman. But I believe it’s true.”

“I think I’ll adopt her,” said Mrs. Maturin to Insall, when she had repeated to him the conversation. “I know you are always convicting me of enthusiasms, Brooks, and I suppose I do get enthusiastic.”

“Well, you adopt her—and I’ll marry her,” replied Insall, with a smile, as he cut the string from the last bundle of clothing.

“You might do worse. It would be a joke if you did—!”

His friend paused to consider this preposterous possibility. “One never can tell whom a man like you, an artist, will marry.”

“We’ve no business to marry at all,” said Insall, laughing. “I often wonder where that romantic streak will land you, Augusta. But you do have a delightful time!”

“Don’t begrudge it me, it makes life so much more interesting,” Mrs. Maturin begged, returning his smile. “I haven’t the faintest idea that you will marry her or any one else. But I insist on saying she’s your type—she’s the kind of a person artists do dig up and marry—only better than most of them, far better.”

“Dig up?” said Insall.

“Well, you know I’m not a snob—I only mean that she seems to be one of the surprising anomalies that sometimes occur in—what shall I say?—in the working-classes. I do feel like a snob when I say that. But what is it? Where does that spark come from? Is it in our modern air, that discontent, that desire, that thrusting forth toward a new light—something as yet unformulated, but which we all feel, even at small institutions of learning like Silliston?”

“Now you’re getting beyond me.”

“Oh no, I’m not,” Mrs. Maturin retorted confidently. “If you won’t talk about it, I will, I have no shame. And this girl has it—this thing I’m trying to express. She’s modern to her finger tips, and yet she’s extraordinarily American—in spite of her modernity, she embodies in some queer way our tradition. She loves our old houses at Silliston—they make her feel at home—that’s her own expression.”

“Did she say that?”

“Exactly. And I know she’s of New England ancestry, she told me so. What I can’t make out is, why she joined the I.W.W. That seems so contradictory.”

“Perhaps she was searching for light there,” Insall hazarded. “Why don’t you ask her?”

“I don’t know,” replied Mrs. Maturin, thoughtfully. “I want to, my curiosity almost burns me alive, and yet I don’t. She isn’t the kind you can ask personal questions of—that’s part of her charm, part of her individuality. One is a little afraid to intrude. And yet she keeps coming here—of course you are a sufficient attraction, Brooks. But I must give her the credit of not flirting with you.”

“I’ve noticed that, too,” said Insall, comically.

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“She’s searching for light,” Mrs. Maturin went on, struck by the phrase. “She has an instinct we can give it to her, because we come from an institution of learning. I felt something of the kind when I suggested her establishing herself in Silliston. Well, she’s more than worth while experimenting on, she must have lived and breathed what you call the `movie atmosphere’ all her life, and yet she never seems to have read and absorbed any sentimental literature or cheap religion. She doesn’t suggest the tawdry. That part of her, the intellectual part, is a clear page to be written upon.”

“There’s my chance,” said Insall.

“No, it’s my chance—since you’re so cynical.”

“I’m not cynical,” he protested.

“I don’t believe you really are. And if you are, there may be a judgment upon you,” she added playfully. “I tell you she’s the kind of woman artists go mad about. She has what sentimentalists call temperament, and after all we haven’t any better word to express dynamic desires. She’d keep you stirred up, stimulated, and you could educate her.”

“No, thanks, I’ll leave that to you. He who educates a woman is lost. But how about Syndicalism and all the mysticism that goes with it? There’s an intellectual over at Headquarters who’s been talking to her about Bergson, the life-force, and the World-We-Ourselves-Create.”

Mrs. Maturin laughed.

“Well, we go wrong when we don’t go right. That’s just it, we must go some way. And I’m sure, from what I gather, that she isn’t wholly satisfied with Syndicalism.”

“What is right?” demanded Insall.

“Oh, I don’t intend to turn her over to Mr. Worrall and make a sociologist and a militant suffragette out of her. She isn’t that kind, anyhow. But I could give her good literature to read—yours, for instance,” she added maliciously.

“You’re preposterous, Augusta,” Insall exclaimed.

“I may be, but you’ve got to indulge me. I’ve taken this fancy to her —of course I mean to see more of her. But—you know how hard it is for me, sometimes, since I’ve been left alone.”

Insall laid his hand affectionately on her shoulder.

“I remember what you said the first day I saw her, that the strike was in her,” Mrs. Maturin continued. “Well, I see now that she does express and typify it—and I don’t

mean the `labour movement' alone, or this strike in Rampton, which is symptomatic, but crude. I mean something bigger —and I suppose you do—the protest, the revolt, the struggle for self-realization that is beginning to be felt all over the nation, all over the world today, that is not yet focussed and self-conscious, but groping its way, clothing itself in any philosophy that seems to fit it. I can imagine myself how such a strike as this might appeal to a girl with a sense of rebellion against sordidness and lack of opportunity—especially if she has had a tragic experience. And sometimes I suspect she has had one."

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“Well, it’s an interesting theory,” Insall admitted indulgently.

“I’m merely amplifying your suggestions, only you won’t admit that they are yours. And she was your protegee.” “And you are going to take her off my hands.” “I’m not so sure,” said Mrs. Maturin.

CHAPTER XIX

The Hampton strike had reached the state of grim deadlock characteristic of all stubborn wars. There were aggressions, retaliations on both sides, the antagonism grew more intense. The older labour unions were accused by the strikers of playing the employers’ game, and thus grew to be hated even more than the “capitalists.” These organizations of the skilled had entered but half-heartedly into a struggle that now began to threaten, indeed, their very existence, and when it was charged that the Textile Workers had been attempting to secure recruits from the ranks of the strikers, and had secretly offered the millowners a scale of demands in the hope that a sufficient number of operatives would return to work, and so break the strike; a serious riot was barely averted. “Scab-hunting agencies,” the unions were called. One morning when it was learned that the loom-fixers, almost to a man, had gone back to the mills, a streetcar was stopped near the power house at the end of Faber Street, and in a twinkling, before the militia or police could interfere, motorman, conductor, and passengers were dragged from it and the trolley pole removed. This and a number of similar aggressive acts aroused the mill-owners and their agents to appeal with renewed vigour to the public through the newspapers, which it was claimed they owned or subsidized. Then followed a series of arraignments of the strike leaders calculated to stir the wildest prejudices and fears of the citizens of Hampton. Antonelli and Jastro—so rumour had it—in various nightly speeches had advised their followers to “sleep in the daytime and prowl like wild animals at night”; urged the power house employees to desert and leave the city in darkness; made the declaration, “We will win if we raise scaffolds on every street!” insisted that the strikers, too, should have “gun permits,” since the police hirelings carried arms. And the fact that the mill-owners replied with pamphlets whose object was proclaimed to be one of discrediting their leaders in the eyes of the public still further infuriated the strikers. Such charges, of course, had to be vehemently refuted, the motives behind them made clear, and counter-accusations laid at the door of the mill-owners.

The atmosphere at Headquarters daily grew more tense. At any moment the spark might be supplied to precipitate an explosion that would shake the earth. The hungry, made more desperate by their own sufferings or the spectacle of starving families, were increasingly difficult to control: many wished to return to work, others clamoured for violence, nor were these wholly discouraged by a portion of the leaders. A riot seemed imminent—a riot Antonelli feared and firmly opposed, since it would alienate the sympathy of that wider public in the country on which the success of the strike

depended. Watchful, yet apparently unconcerned, unmoved by the quarrels, the fierce demands for “action,” he sat on the little stage, smoking his cigars and reading his newspapers.

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Janet's nerves were taut. There had been times during the past weeks when she had been aware of new and vaguely disquieting portents. Inexperience had led her to belittle them, and the absorbing nature of her work, the excitement due to the strange life of conflict, of new ideas, into which she had so unreservedly flung herself, the resentment that galvanized her—all these had diverted her from worry. At night, hers had been the oblivious slumber of the weary.... And then, as a desperate wayfarer, pressing on, feels a heavy drop of rain and glances up to perceive the clouds that have long been gathering, she awoke in the black morning hours, and fear descended upon her. Suddenly her brain became hideously active as she lay, dry-upped, staring into the darkness, striving to convince herself that it could not be. But the thing had its advocate, also, to summon ingeniously, in cumulative array, those omens she had ignored: to cause her to piece together, in this moment of torture, portions of the knowledge of sexual facts that prudery banishes from education, a smattering of which reaches the ears of such young women as Janet in devious, roundabout ways. Several times, in the month just past, she had had unwonted attacks of dizziness, of faintness, and on one occasion Anna Mower, alarmed, had opened the window of the bibliotheque and thrust her into the cold air. Now, with a pang of fear she recalled what Anna had said:—"You're working too hard—you hadn't ought to stay here nights. If it was some girls I've met, I'd know what to think."

Strange that the significance of this sentence had failed to penetrate her consciousness until now! "If it was some girls I've met, I'd know what to think!" It had come into her mind abruptly; and always, when she sought to reassure herself, to declare her terror absurd, it returned to confront her. Heat waves pulsed through her, she grew intolerably warm, perspiration started from her pores, and she flung off the blankets. The rain from the roofs was splashing on the bricks of the passage.... What would Mr. Insall say, if he knew? and Mrs. Maturin? She could never see them again. Now there was no one to whom to turn, she was cut off, utterly, from humanity, an outcast. Like Lise! And only a little while ago she and Lise had lain in that bed together! Was there not somebody —-God? Other people believed in God, prayed to him. She tried to say, "Oh God, deliver me from this thing!" but the words seemed a mockery. After all, it was mechanical, it had either happened or it hadn't happened. A life-long experience in an environment where only unpleasant things occurred, where miracles were unknown, had effaced a fleeting, childhood belief in miracles. Cause and effect were the rule. And if there were a God who did interfere, why hadn't he interfered before this thing happened? Then would have been the logical time. Why hadn't he informed her that in attempting to escape from the treadmill in which he had placed her, in seeking happiness, she had been courting destruction? Why had he destroyed Lise? And if there were a God, would he comfort her now, convey to her some message of his sympathy and love? No such message, alas, seemed to come to her through the darkness.

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After a while—a seemingly interminable while—the siren shrieked, the bells jangled loudly in the wet air, another day had come. Could she face it—even the murky grey light of this that revealed the ashes and litter of the back yard under the downpour? The act of dressing brought a slight relief; and then, at breakfast, a numbness stole over her—suggested and conveyed, perchance, by the apathy of her mother. Something had killed suffering in Hannah; perhaps she herself would mercifully lose the power to suffer! But the thought made her shudder. She could not, like her mother, find a silly refuge in shining dishes, in cleaning pots and pans, or sit idle, vacant-minded, for long hours in a spotless kitchen. What would happen to her?... Howbeit, the ache that had tortured her became a dull, leaden pain, like that she had known at another time—how long ago—when the suffering caused by Ditmar's deception had dulled, when she had sat in the train on her way back to Hampton from Boston, after seeing Lise. The pain would throb again, unsupportably, and she would wake, and this time it would drive her—she knew not where.

She was certain, now, that the presage of the night was true....

She reached Franco-Belgian Hall to find it in an uproar. Anna Mower ran up to her with the news that dynamite had been discovered by the police in certain tenements of the Syrian quarter, that the tenants had been arrested and taken to the police station where, bewildered and terrified, they had denied any knowledge of the explosive. Dynamite had also been found under the power house, and in the mills—the sources of Hampton's prosperity. And Hampton believed, of course, that this was the inevitable result of the anarchistic preaching of such enemies of society as Jastro and Antonelli if these, indeed, had not incited the Syrians to the deed. But it was a plot of the mill-owners, Anna insisted—they themselves had planted the explosive, adroitly started the rumours, told the police where the dynamite was to be found. Such was the view that prevailed at Headquarters, pervaded the angrily buzzing crowd that stood outside—-heedless of the rain—and animated the stormy conferences in the Salle de Reunion.

The day wore on. In the middle of the afternoon, as she was staring out of the window, Anna Mower returned with more news. Dynamite had been discovered in Hawthorne Street, and it was rumoured that Antonelli and Jastro were to be arrested.

"You ought to go home and rest, Janet," she said kindly.

Janet shook her head.

"Rolfe's back," Anna informed her, after a moment. "He's talking to Antonelli about another proclamation to let people know who's to blame for this dynamite business. I guess he'll be in here in a minute to dictate the draft. Say, hadn't you better let Minnie take it, and go home?"

"I'm not sick," Janet repeated, and Anna reluctantly left her.

Rolfe had been absent for a week, in New York, consulting with some of the I.W.W. leaders; with Lockhart, the chief protagonist of Syndicalism in America, just returned from Colorado, to whom he had given a detailed account of the Hampton strike. And Lockhart, next week, was coming to Hampton to make a great speech and look over the ground for himself. All this Rolfe told Janet eagerly when he entered the bibliotheque. He was glad to get back; he had missed her.

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“But you are pale!” he exclaimed, as he seized her hand, “and how your eyes burn! You do not take care of yourself when I am not here to watch you.” His air of solicitude, his assumption of a peculiar right to ask, might formerly have troubled and offended her. Now she was scarcely aware of his presence. “You feel too much—that is it you are like a torch that consumes itself in burning. But this will soon be over, we shall have them on their knees, the capitalists, before very long, when it is known what they have done to-day. It is too much—they have overreached themselves with this plot of the dynamite.”

“You have missed me, a little?”

“I have been busy,” she said, releasing her hand and sitting down at her desk and taking up her notebook.

“You are not well,” he insisted.

“I’m all right,” she replied.

He lit a cigarette and began to pace the room—his customary manner of preparing himself for the creative mood. After a while he began to dictate—but haltingly. He had come here from Antonelli all primed with fervour and indignation, but it was evident that this feeling had ebbed, that his mind refused to concentrate on what he was saying. Despite the magnificent opportunity to flay the capitalists which their most recent tactics afforded him, he paused, repeated himself, and began again, glancing from time to time reproachfully, almost resentfully at Janet. Usually, on these occasions, he was transported, almost inebriated by his own eloquence; but now he chafed at her listlessness, he was at a loss to account for the withdrawal of the enthusiasm he had formerly been able to arouse. Lacking the feminine stimulus, his genius limped. For Rolfe there had been a woman in every strike—sometimes two. What had happened, during his absence, to alienate the most promising of all neophytes he had ever encountered?

“The eyes of the world are fixed on the workers of Hampton! They must be true to the trust their fellows have placed in them! To-day the mill-owners, the masters, are at the end of their tether. Always unscrupulous, they have descended to the most despicable of tactics in order to deceive the public. But truth will prevail!...” Rolfe lit another cigarette, began a new sentence and broke it off. Suddenly he stood over her. “It’s you!” he said. “You don’t feel it, you don’t help me, you’re not in sympathy.”

He bent over her, his red lips gleaming through his beard, a terrible hunger in his lustrous eyes—the eyes of a soul to which self-denial was unknown. His voice was thick with uncontrolled passion, his hand was cold.

“Janet, what has happened? I love you, you must love me—I cannot believe that you do not. Come with me. We shall work together for the workers—it is all nothing without you.”

For a moment she sat still, and then a pain shot through her, a pain as sharp as a dagger thrust. She drew her hand away.

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“I can’t love—I can only hate,” she said.

“But you do not hate me!” Rolfe repudiated so gross a fact. His voice caught as in a sob. “I, who love you, who have taught you!”

She dismissed this—what he had taught her—with a gesture which, though slight, was all-expressive. He drew back from her.

“Shall I tell you who has planned and carried out this plot?” he cried. “It is Ditmar. He is the one, and he used Janes, the livery stable keeper, the politician who brought the dynamite to Hampton, as his tool. Half an hour before Janes got to the station in Boston he was seen by a friend of ours talking to Ditmar in front of the Chippering offices, and Janes had the satchel with him then. Ditmar walked to the corner with him.”

Janet, too, had risen.

“I don’t believe it,” she said.

“Ah, I thought you wouldn’t! But we have the proof that dynamite was in the satchel, we’ve found the contractor from whom it was bought. I was a fool—I might have known that you loved Ditmar.”

“I hate him!” said Janet.

“It is the same thing,” said Rolfe.

She did not answer.... He watched her in silence as she put on her hat and coat and left the room.

The early dusk was gathering when she left the hall and made her way toward the city. The huge bottle-shaped chimneys of the power plant injected heavy black smoke into the wet air. In Faber Street the once brilliant signs above the “ten-foot” buildings seemed dulled, the telegraph poles starker, nakeder than ever, their wires scarcely discernible against the smeared sky. The pedestrians were sombrely garbed, and went about in “rubbers”—the most depressing of all articles worn by man. Sodden piles of snow still hid the curb and gutters, but the pavements were trailed with mud that gleamed in the light from the shop windows. And Janet, lingering unconsciously in front of that very emporium where Lisehad been incarcerated, the Bagatelle, stared at the finery displayed there, at the blue tulle dress that might be purchased, she read, for $22.99. She found herself repeating, in meaningless, subdued tones, the words, “twenty-two ninety-nine.” She even tried—just to see if it were possible—to concentrate her mind on that dress, on the fur muffs and tippets in the next window; to act as if this were just an ordinary, sad February afternoon, and she herself once more just an ordinary stenographer leading a monotonous, uneventful existence. But she knew that this was not true, because, later on, she was going to do something—to commit some

act. She didn't know what this act would be. Her head was hot, her temples throbbed....

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Night had fallen, the electric arcs burned blue overhead, she was in another street—-was it Stanley? Sounds of music reached her, the rumble of marching feet; dark, massed figures were in the distance swimming toward her along the glistening line of the car tracks, and she heard the shrill whistling of the doffer boys, who acted as a sort of fife corps in these parades—which by this time had become familiar to the citizens of Hampton. And Janet remembered when the little red book that contained the songs had arrived at Headquarters from the west and had been distributed by thousands among the strikers. She recalled the words of this song, though the procession was as yet too far away for her to distinguish them:—

> "The People's flag is deepest red,
> It shrouded oft our martyred dead,
> And ere their limbs grew stiff and cold,
> Their life-blood dyed its every fold."

The song ceased, and she stood still, waiting for the procession to reach her. A group of heavy Belgian women were marching together. Suddenly, as by a simultaneous impulse, their voices rang out in the Internationale—the terrible Marseillaise of the workers:—

> "Arise, ye prisoners of starvation!
> Arise, ye wretched of the earth!"

And the refrain was taken up by hundreds of throats:—

> "'Tis the final conflict,
> Let each stand in his place!"

The walls of the street flung it back. On the sidewalk, pressed against the houses, men and women heard it with white faces. But Janet was carried on.... The scene changed, now she was gazing at a mass of human beings hemmed in by a line of soldiers. Behind the crowd was a row of old-fashioned brick houses, on the walls of which were patterned, by the cold electric light, the branches of the bare elms ranged along the sidewalk. People leaned out of the windows, like theatregoers at a play. The light illuminated the red and white bars of the ensign, upheld by the standard bearer of the regiment, the smaller flags flaunted by the strikers—each side clinging hardily to the emblem of human liberty. The light fell, too, harshly and brilliantly, on the workers in the front rank confronting the bayonets, and these seemed strangely indifferent, as though waiting for the flash of a photograph. A little farther on a group of boys, hands in pockets, stared at the soldiers with bravado. From the rear came that indescribable "booing" which those who have heard never forget, mingled with curses and cries:—-"Vive la greve!"

"To hell with the Cossacks!"

“Kahm on—shoot!”

The backs of the soldiers, determined, unyielding, were covered with heavy brown capes that fell below the waist. As Janet’s glance wandered down the line it was arrested by the face of a man in a visored woollen cap—a face that was almost sepia, in which large white eyeballs struck a note of hatred. And what she seemed to see in it, confronting her, were the hatred and despair of her own soul! The man might have been a Hungarian or a Pole; the breadth of his chin was accentuated by a wide, black moustache, his attitude was tense,—that of a maddened beast ready to spring at the soldier in front of him. He was plainly one of those who had reached the mental limit of endurance.

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In contrast with this foreigner, confronting him, a young lieutenant stood motionless, his head cocked on one side, his hand grasping the club held a little behind him, his glance meeting the other's squarely, but with a different quality of defiance. All his faculties were on the alert. He wore no overcoat, and the uniform fitting close to his figure, the broad-brimmed campaign hat of felt served to bring into relief the physical characteristics of the American Anglo-Saxon, of the individualist who became the fighting pioneer. But Janet, save to register the presence of the intense antagonism between the two, scarcely noticed her fellow countryman.... Every moment she expected to see the black man spring,—and yet movement would have marred the drama of that consuming hatred....

Then, by one of those bewildering, kaleidoscopic shifts to which crowds are subject, the scene changed, more troops arrived, little by little the people were dispersed to drift together again by chance—in smaller numbers—several blocks away. Perhaps a hundred and fifty were scattered over the space formed by the intersection of two streets, where three or four special policemen with night sticks urged them on. Not a riot, or anything approaching it. The police were jeered, but the groups, apparently, had already begun to scatter, when from the triangular vestibule of a saloon on the corner darted a flame followed by an echoing report, a woman bundled up in a shawl screamed and sank on the snow. For an instant the little French-Canadian policeman whom the shot had missed gazed stupidly down at her....

As Janet ran along the dark pavements the sound of the shot and of the woman's shriek continued to ring in her ears. At last she stopped in front of the warehouse beyond Mr. Tiernan's shop, staring at the darkened windows of the flat—of the front room in which her mother now slept alone. For a minute she stood looking at these windows, as though hypnotized by some message they conveyed—the answer to a question suggested by the incident that had aroused and terrified her. They drew her, as in a trance, across the street, she opened the glass-panelled door, remembering mechanically the trick it had of not quite closing, turned and pushed it to and climbed the stairs. In the diningroom the metal lamp, brightly polished, was burning as usual, its light falling on the chequered red table-cloth, on her father's empty chair, on that somewhat battered heirloom, the horsehair sofa. All was so familiar, and yet so amazingly unfamiliar, so silent! At this time Edward should be reading the Banner, her mother bustling in and out, setting the table for supper. But not a dish was set. The ticking of the ancient clock only served to intensify the silence. Janet entered, almost on tiptoe, made her way to the kitchen door, and looked in. The stove was polished, the pans bright upon the wall, and Hannah was seated in a corner, her hands folded across a spotless apron. Her scant hair was now pure white, her dress seemed to have fallen away from her wasted neck, which was like a trefoil column.

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“Is that you, Janet? You hain’t seen anything of your father?”

The night before Janet had heard this question, and she had been puzzled as to its meaning—whether in the course of the day she had seen her father, or whether Hannah thought he was coming home.

“He’s at the mill, mother. You know he has to stay there.”

“I know,” replied Hannah, in a tone faintly reminiscent of the old aspersion. “But I’ve got everything ready for him in case he should come—any time—if the strikers hain’t killed him.”

“But he’s safe where he is.”

“I presume they will try to kill him, before they get through,” Hannah continued evenly. “But in case he should come at any time, and I’m not here, you tell him all those Bumpus papers are put away in the drawer of that old chest, in the corner. I can’t think what he’d do without those papers. That is,” she added, “if you’re here yourself.”

“Why shouldn’t you be here?” asked Janet, rather sharply.

“I dunno, I seem to have got through.” She glanced helplessly around the kitchen. “There don’t seem to be much left to keep me alive.... I guess you’ll be wanting your supper, won’t you? You hain’t often home these days—whatever it is you’re doing. I didn’t expect you.”

Janet did not answer at once.

“I—I have to go out again, mother,” she said.

Hannah accepted the answer as she had accepted every other negative in life, great and small.

“Well, I guessed you would.”

Janet made a step toward her.

“Mother!” she said, but Hannah gazed at her uncomprehendingly. Janet stooped convulsively, and kissed her. Straightening up, she stood looking down at her mother for a few moments, and went out of the room, pausing in the dining-room, to listen, but Hannah apparently had not stirred. She took the box of matches from its accustomed place on the shelf beside the clock, entered the dark bedroom in the front of the flat, closing the door softly behind her. The ghostly blue light from a distant arc came slanting in at the window, glinting on the brass knobs of the chest of drawers-another Bumpus heirloom. She remembered that chest from early childhood; it was one of the

few pieces that, following them in all their changes of residence, had been faithful to the end: she knew everything in it, and the place for everything. Drawing a match from the box, she was about to turn on the gas—but the light from the arc would suffice. As she made her way around the walnut bed she had a premonition of poignant anguish as yet unrealized, of anguish being held at bay by a stronger, fiercer, more imperative emotion now demanding expression, refusing at last to be denied. She opened the top drawer of the chest, the drawer in which Hannah, breaking tradition, had put the Bumpus genealogy. Edward had never kept it there. Would the other things be in place? Groping with her hands in the left-hand corner, her

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fingers clasped exultantly something heavy, something wrapped carefully in layers of flannel. She had feared her father might have taken it to the mill! She drew it out, unwound the flannel, and held to the light an old-fashioned revolver, the grease glistening along its barrel. She remembered, too, that the cartridges had lain beside it, and thrusting her hand once more into the drawer found the box, extracting several, and replacing the rest, closed the drawer, and crept through the dining-room to her bedroom, where she lit the gas in order to examine the weapon —finally contriving, more by accident than skill, to break it. The cartridges, of course, fitted into the empty cylinder. But before inserting them she closed the pistol once more, cocked it, and held it out. Her arm trembled violently as she pulled the trigger. Could she do it? As though to refute this doubt of her ability to carry out an act determined upon, she broke the weapon once more, loaded and closed it, and thrust it in the pocket of her coat. Then, washing the grease from her hands, she put on her gloves, and was about to turn out the light when she saw reflected in the glass the red button of the I.W.W. still pinned on her coat. This she tore off, and flung on the bureau.

When she had kissed her mother, when she had stood hesitatingly in the darkness of the familiar front bedroom in the presence of unsummoned memories of a home she had believed herself to resent and despise, she had nearly faltered. But once in the street, this weakness suddenly vanished, was replaced by a sense of wrong that now took complete and furious possession of her, driving her like a gale at her back. She scarcely felt on her face the fine rain that had begun to fall once more. Her feet were accustomed to the way. When she had turned down West Street and almost gained the canal, it was with a shock of surprise that she found herself confronted by a man in a long cape who held a rifle and barred her path. She stared at him as at an apparition.

“You can’t get by here,” he said. “Don’t you know that?”

She did not reply. He continued to look at her, and presently asked, in a gentler tone: —“Where did you wish to go, lady?”

“Into the mill,” she replied, “to the offices.”

“But there can’t anybody go through here unless they have a pass. I’m sorry, but that’s the order.”

Her answer came so readily as to surprise her.

“I was Mr. Ditmar’s private stenographer. I have to see him.”

The sentry hesitated, and then addressed another soldier, who was near the bridge.

“Hi, sergeant!” he called. The sergeant came up—a conscientious Boston clerk who had joined the militia from a sense of duty and a need for exercise. While the sentry explained the matter he gazed at Janet. Then he said politely:—“I’m sorry, Miss, but I can’t disobey orders.”

“But can’t you send word to Mr. Ditmar, and tell him I want to see him?” she asked.

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“Why, I guess so,” he answered, after a moment. “What name shall I say?”

“Miss Bumpus.”

“Bumpus,” he repeated. “That’s the gatekeeper’s name.”

“I’m his daughter—but I want to see Mr. Ditmar.”

“Well,” said the sergeant, “I’m sure it’s all right, but I’ll have to send in anyway. Orders are orders. You understand?”

She nodded as he departed. She saw him cross the bridge like a ghost through the white mist rising from the canal. And through the mist she could make out the fortress-like mass of the mill itself, and the blurred, distorted lights in the paymaster’s offices smeared on the white curtain of the vapour.

“Nasty weather,” the sentry remarked, in friendly fashion. He appeared now, despite his uniform, as a good-natured, ungainly youth.

Janet nodded.

“You’d ought to have brought an umbrella,” he said. “I guess it’ll rain harder, before it gets through. But it’s better than ten below zero, anyhow.”

She nodded again, but he did not seem to resent her silence. He talked about the hardship of patrolling in winter, until the sergeant came back.

“It’s all right, Miss Bumpus,” he said, and touched his hat as he escorted her to the bridge. She crossed the canal and went through the vestibule without replying to the greeting of the night-watchman, or noticing his curious glance; she climbed the steel-clad stairway, passed the paymaster’s offices and Mr. Orcutt’s, and gained the outer office where she had worked as a stenographer. It was dark, but sufficient light came through Ditmar’s open door to guide her beside the rail. He had heard her step, and as she entered his room he had put his hands heavily on his desk, in the act of rising from his chair.

“Janet!” he said, and started toward her, but got no farther than the corner of the desk. The sight of her heaving breast, of the peculiar light that flashed from beneath her lashes stopped him suddenly. Her hands were in her pockets. “What is it?” he demanded stupidly.

But she continued to stand there, breathing so heavily that she could not speak. It was then that he became aware of an acute danger. He did not flinch.

“What is it?” he repeated.

Still she was silent. One hand was thrust deeper into its pocket, he saw a shudder run through her, and suddenly she burst into hysterical weeping, sinking into a chair. He stood for some moments helplessly regarding her before he gained the presence of mind to go to the door and lock it, returning to bend over her.

“Don’t touch me!” she said, shrinking from him.

“For God’s sake tell me what’s the matter,” he begged.

She looked up at him and tried to speak, struggling against the sobs that shook her.

“I—I came here to—to kill you—only I can’t do it.”

“To kill me!” he said, after a pause. In spite of the fact that he had half divined her intention, the words shocked him. Whatever else may be said of him, he did not lack courage, his alarm was not of a physical nature. Mingled with it were emotions he himself did not understand, caused by the unwonted sight of her loss of self-control, of her anger, and despair. “Why did you want to kill me?”

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And again he had to wait for an answer.

“Because you’ve spoiled my life—because I’m going to have a child!”

“What do you mean? Are you?... it can’t be possible.”

“It is possible, it’s true—it’s true. I’ve waited and waited, I’ve suffered, I’ve almost gone crazy—and now I know. And I said I’d kill you if it were so, I’d kill myself—only I can’t. I’m a coward.” Her voice was drowned again by weeping.

A child! He had never imagined such a contingency! And as he leaned back against the desk, his emotions became chaotic. The sight of her, even as she appeared crazed by anger, had set his passion aflame—for the intensity and fierceness of her nature had always made a strong appeal to dominant qualities in Ditmar’s nature. And then—this announcement! Momentarily it turned his heart to water. Now that he was confronted by an exigency that had once vicariously yet deeply disturbed him in a similar affair of a friend of his, the code and habit of a lifetime gained an immediate ascendency—since then he had insisted that this particular situation was to be avoided above all others. And his mind leaped to possibilities. She had wished to kill him—would she remain desperate enough to ruin him? Even though he were not at a crisis in his affairs, a scandal of this kind would be fatal.

“I didn’t know,” he said desperately, “I couldn’t guess. Do you think I would have had this thing happen to you? I was carried away—we were both carried away—”

“You planned it!” she replied vehemently, without looking up. “You didn’t care for me, you only—wanted me.”

“That isn’t so—I swear that isn’t so. I loved you I love you.”

“Oh, do you think I believe that?” she exclaimed.

“I swear it—I’ll prove it!” he protested. Still under the influence of an acute anxiety, he was finding it difficult to gather his wits, to present his case. “When you left me that day the strike began—when you left me without giving me a chance—you’ll never know how that hurt me.”

“You’ll never know how it hurt me!” she interrupted.

“Then why, in God’s name, did you do it? I wasn’t myself, then, you ought to have seen that. And when I heard from Caldwell here that you’d joined those anarchists—”

“They’re no worse than you are—they only want what you’ve got,” she said.

He waved this aside. “I couldn’t believe it—I wouldn’t believe it until somebody saw you walking with one of them to their Headquarters. Why did you do it?”

“Because I know how they feel, I sympathize with the strikers, I want them to win—-against you!” She lifted her head and looked at him, and in spite of the state of his feelings he felt a twinge of admiration at her defiance.

“Because you love me!” he said.

“Because I hate you,” she answered.

And yet a spark of exultation leaped within him at the thought that love had caused this apostasy. He had had that suspicion before, though it was a poor consolation when he could not reach her. Now she had made it vivid. A woman’s logic, or lack of logic—her logic.

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“Listen!” he pleaded. “I tried to forget you—I tried to keep myself going all the time that I mightn’t think of you, but I couldn’t help thinking of you, wanting you, longing for you. I never knew why you left me, except that you seemed to believe I was unkind to you, and that something had happened. It wasn’t my fault—” he pulled himself up abruptly.

“I found out what men were like,” she said. “A man made my sister a woman of the streets—that’s what you’ve done to me.”

He winced. And the calmness she had regained, which was so characteristic of her, struck him with a new fear.

“I’m not that kind of a man,” he said.

But she did not answer. His predicament became more trying.

“I’ll take care of you,” he assured her, after a moment. “If you’ll only trust me, if you’ll only come to me I’ll see that no harm comes to you.”

She regarded him with a sort of wonder—a look that put a fine edge of dignity and scorn to her words when they came.

“I told you I didn’t want to be taken care of—I wanted to kill you, and kill myself. I don’t know why I can’t what prevents me.” She rose. “But I’m not going to trouble you any more—you’ll never hear of me again.”

She would not trouble him, she was going away, he would never hear of her again! Suddenly, with the surge of relief he experienced, came a pang. He could not let her go—it was impossible. It seemed that he had never understood his need of her, his love for her, until now that he had brought her to this supreme test of self-revelation. She had wanted to kill him, yes, to kill herself—but how could he ever have believed that she would stoop to another method of retaliation? As she stood before him the light in her eyes still wet with tears—transfigured her.

“I love you, Janet,” he said. “I want you to marry me.”

“You don’t understand,” she answered. “You never did. If I had married you, I’d feel just the same—but it isn’t really as bad as if we had been married.”

“Not as bad!” he exclaimed.

“If we were married, you’d think you had rights over me,” she explained, slowly. “Now you haven’t any, I can go away. I couldn’t live with you. I know what happened to me, I’ve thought it all out, I wanted to get away from the life I was leading—I hated it so, I was crazy to have a chance, to see the world, to get nearer some of the beautiful things I knew were there, but couldn’t reach.... And you came along. I did love you, I would

have done anything for you—it was only when I saw that you didn't really love me that I began to hate you, that I wanted to get away from you, when I saw that you only wanted me until you should get tired of me. That's your nature, you can't help it. And it would have been the same if we were married, only worse, I couldn't have stood it any more than I can now—I'd have left you. You say you'll marry me now, but that's because you're sorry for me—since I've said I'm not going to trouble you any more. You'll be glad I've gone. You may—want me now, but that isn't love. When you say you love me, I can't believe you."

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“You must believe me! And the child, Janet,—our child—”

“If the world was right,” she said, “I could have this child and nobody would say anything. I could support it—I guess I can anyway. And when I’m not half crazy I want it. Maybe that’s the reason I couldn’t do what I tried to do just now. It’s natural for a woman to want a child —especially a woman like me, who hasn’t anybody or anything.”

Ditmar’s state of mind was too complicated to be wholly described. As the fact had been gradually brought home to him that she had not come as a supplicant, that even in her misery she was free, and he helpless, there revived in him wild memories of her body, of the kisses he had wrung from her—and yet this physical desire was accompanied by a realization of her personality never before achieved. And because he had hitherto failed to achieve it, she had escaped him. This belated, surpassing glimpse of what she essentially was, and the thought of the child their child—-permeating his passion, transformed it into a feeling hitherto unexperienced and unimagined. He hovered over her, pitifully, his hands feeling for her, yet not daring to touch her.

“Can’t you see that I love you?” he cried, “that I’m ready to marry you now, to-night. You must love me, I won’t believe that you don’t after —after all we have been to each other.”

But even then she could not believe. Something in her, made hard by the intensity of her suffering, refused to melt. And her head was throbbing, and she scarcely heard him.

“I can’t stay any longer,” she said, getting to her feet. “I can’t bear it.”

“Janet, I swear I’ll care for you as no woman was ever cared for. For God’s sake listen to me, give me a chance, forgive me!” He seized her arm; she struggled, gently but persistently, to free herself from his hold.

“Let me go, please.” All the passionate anger had gone out of her, and she spoke in a monotone, as one under hypnosis, dominated by a resolution which, for the present at least, he was powerless to shake.

“But to-morrow?” he pleaded. “You’ll let me see you to-morrow, when you’ve had time to think it over, when you realize that I love you and want you, that I haven’t meant to be cruel—that you’ve misjudged me —thought I was a different kind of a man. I don’t blame you for that, I guess something happened to make you believe it. I’ve got enemies. For the sake of the child, Janet, if for nothing else, you’ll come back to me! You’re—you’re tired tonight, you’re not yourself. I don’t wonder, after all you’ve been through. If you’d only come to me before! God knows what I’ve suffered, too!”

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“Let me go, please,” she repeated, and this time, despairingly, he obeyed her, a conviction of her incommunicability overwhelming him. He turned and, fumbling with the key, unlocked the door and opened it. “I’ll see you to-morrow,” he faltered once more, and watched her as she went through the darkened outer room until she gained the lighted hallway beyond and disappeared. Her footsteps died away into silence. He was trembling. For several minutes he stood where she had left him, tortured by a sense of his inability to act, to cope with this, the great crisis of his life, when suddenly the real significance of that strange last look in her eyes was borne home to him. And he had allowed her to go out into the streets alone! Seizing his hat and coat, he fairly ran out of the office and down the stairs and across the bridge.

“Which way did that young lady go?” he demanders of the sergeant.

“Why—uh, West Street, Mr. Ditmar.”

He remembered where Fillmore Street was; he had, indeed, sought it out one evening in the hope of meeting her. He hurried toward it now, his glance strained ahead to catch sight of her figure under a lamp. But he reached Fillmore Street without overtaking her, and in the rain he stood gazing at the mean houses there, wondering in which of them she lived, and whether she had as yet come home....

After leaving Ditmar Janet, probably from force of habit, had indeed gone through West Street, and after that she walked on aimlessly. It was better to walk than to sit alone in torment, to be gnawed by that Thing from which she had so desperately attempted to escape, and failed. She tried to think why she had failed.... Though the rain fell on her cheeks, her mouth was parched; and this dryness of her palate, this physical sense of lightness, almost of dizziness, were intimately yet incomprehensibly part and parcel of the fantastic moods into which she floated. It was as though, in trying to solve a problem, she caught herself from time to time falling off to sleep. In her waking moments she was terror-stricken. Scarce an hour had passed since, in a terrible exaltation at having found a solution, she had gone to Ditmar’s office in the mill. What had happened to stay her? It was when she tried to find the cause of the weakness that so abruptly had overtaken her, or to cast about for a plan to fit the new predicament to which her failure had sentenced her, that the fantasies intruded. She heard Ditmar speaking, the arguments were curiously familiar—but they were not Ditmar’s! They were her father’s, and now it was Edward’s voice to which she listened, he was telling her how eminently proper it was that she should marry Ditmar, because of her Bumpus blood. And this made her laugh.... Again, Ditmar was kissing her hair. He had often praised it. She had taken it down and combed it out for him; it was like a cloud, he said—so fine; its odour made him faint—and then the odour changed, became that of the detested perfume of Miss Lottie Myers! Even that made Janet smile! But Ditmar was strong, he was powerful, he was a Fact, why not go back to him and let him absorb and destroy her? That annihilation would be joy....

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It could not have been much later than seven o'clock when she found herself opposite the familiar, mulberry-shingled Protestant church. The light from its vestibule made a gleaming square on the wet sidewalk, and into this area, from the surrounding darkness, came silhouetted figures of men and women holding up umbrellas; some paused for a moment's chat, their voices subdued by an awareness of the tabernacle. At the sight of this tiny congregation something stirred within her. She experienced a twinge of surprise at the discovery that other people in the world, in Hampton, were still leading tranquil, untormented existences. They were contented, prosperous, stupid, beyond any need of help from God, and yet they were going to prayer-meeting to ask something! He refused to find her in the dark streets. Would she find Him if she went in there? and would He help her?

The bell in the tower began to clang, with heavy, relentless strokes —like physical blows from which she flinched—each stirring her reluctant, drowsy soul to a quicker agony. From the outer blackness through which she fled she gazed into bright rooms of homes whose blinds were left undrawn, as though to taunt and mock the wanderer. She was an outcast! Who henceforth would receive her save those, unconformed and unconformable, sentenced to sin in this realm of blackness? Henceforth from all warmth and love she was banished.... In the middle of the Stanley Street bridge she stopped to lean against the wet rail; the mill lights were scattered, dancing points of fire over the invisible swift waters, and she raised her eyes presently to the lights themselves, seeking one unconsciously—Ditmar's! Yes, it was his she sought; though it was so distant, sometimes it seemed to burn like a red star, and then to flicker and disappear. She could not be sure.... Something chill and steely was in the pocket of her coat—it made a heavy splash in the water when she dropped it. The river could not be so very cold! She wished she could go down like that into forgetfulness. But she couldn't.... Where was Lise now?... It would be so easy just to drop over that parapet and be whirled away, and down and down. Why couldn't she? Well, it was because—-because—she was going to have a child. Well, if she had a child to take care of, she would not be so lonely—she would have something to love. She loved it now, as though she felt it quickening within her, she wanted it, to lavish on it all of a starved affection. She seemed actually to feel in her arms its soft little body pressed against her. Claude Ditmar's child! And she suddenly recalled, as an incident of the remote past, that she had told him she wanted it!

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This tense craving for it she felt now was somehow the answer to an expressed wish which had astonished her. Perhaps that was the reason why she had failed to do what she had tried to do, to shoot Ditmar and herself! It was Ditmar's child, Ditmar's and hers! He had loved her, long ago, and just now—was it just now?—he had said he loved her still, he had wanted to marry her. Then why had she run away from him? Why had she taken the child into outer darkness, to be born without a father,—when she loved Ditmar? Wasn't that one reason why she wanted the child? why, even in her moments of passionate hatred she recalled having been surprised by some such yearning as now came over her? And for an interval, a brief interval, she viewed him with startling clarity. Not because he embodied any ideal did she love him, but because he was what he was, because he had overcome her will, dominated and possessed her, left his mark upon her indelibly. He had been cruel to her, willing to sacrifice her to his way of life, to his own desires, but he loved her, for she had seen, if not heeded in his eyes the look that a woman never mistakes! She remembered it now, and the light in his window glowed again, like a star to guide her back to him. It was drawing her, irresistibly....

The sentry recognized her as she came along the canal.

"Mr. Ditmar's gone," he told her.

"Gone!" she repeated. "Gone!"

"Why, yes, about five minutes after you left he was looking for you—he asked the sergeant about you."

"And—he won't be back?"

"I guess not," answered the man, sympathetically. "He said good-night."

She turned away dully. The strength and hope with which she had been so unexpectedly infused while gazing from the bridge at his window had suddenly ebbed; her legs ached, her feet were wet, and she shivered, though her forehead burned. The world became distorted, people flitted past her like weird figures of a dream, the myriad lights of Faber Street were blurred and whirled in company with the electric signs. Seeking to escape from their confusion she entered a side street leading north, only to be forcibly seized by some one who darted after her from the sidewalk.

"Excuse me, but you didn't see that automobile," he said, as he released her.

Shaken, she went on through several streets to find herself at length confronted by a pair of shabby doors that looked familiar, and pushing one of them open, baited at the bottom of a stairway to listen. The sound of cheerful voices camp to her from above; she started to climb—even with the help of the rail it seemed as if she would never

reach the top of that stairway. But at last she stood in a loft where long tables were set, and at the end of one of these, sorting out spoons and dishes, three women and a man were chatting and laughing together. Janet was troubled because she could not remember who the man was, although she recognized his bold profile, his voice and gestures.... At length one of the women said something in a low tone, and he looked around quickly and crossed the room.

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“Why, it’s you!” he said, and suddenly she recalled his name.

“Mr. Insall!”

But his swift glance had noticed the expression in her eyes, the sagged condition of her clothes, the attitude that proclaimed exhaustion. He took her by the arm and led her to the little storeroom, turning on the light and placing her in a chair. Darkness descended on her....

Mrs. Maturin, returning from an errand, paused for an instant in the doorway, and ran forward and bent over Janet.

“Oh, Brooks, what is it—what’s happened to her?”

“I don’t know,” he replied, “I didn’t have a chance to ask her. I’m going for a doctor.”

“Leave her to me, and call Miss Hay.” Mrs. Maturin was instantly competent .... And when Insall came back from the drug store where he had telephoned she met him at the head of the stairs. “We’ve done everything we can, Edith Hay has given her brandy, and gone off for dry clothes, and we’ve taken all the children’s things out of the drawers and laid her on the floor, but she hasn’t come to. Poor child,—what can have happened to her? Is the doctor coming?”

“Right away,” said Insall, and Mrs. Maturin went back into the storeroom. Miss Hay brought the dry clothes before the physician arrived.

“It’s probably pneumonia,” he explained to Insall a little later. “She must go to the hospital—but the trouble is all our hospitals are pretty full, owing to the sickness caused by the strike.” He hesitated. “Of course, if she has friends, she could have better care in a private institution just now.”

“Oh, she has friends,” said Mrs. Maturin. “Couldn’t we take her to our little hospital at Silliston, doctor? It’s only four miles—that isn’t much in an automobile, and the roads are good now.”

“Well, the risk isn’t much greater, if you have a closed car, and she would, of course, be better looked after,” the physician consented.

“I’ll see to it at once,” said Insall....

CHAPTER XX

The Martha Wootton Memorial Hospital was the hobby of an angel alumnus of Silliston. It was situated in Hovey’s Lane, but from the window of the white-enameled room in

which she lay Janet could see the bare branches of the Common elms quivering to the spring gusts, could watch, day by day, the grass changing from yellow-brown to vivid green in the white sunlight. In the morning, when the nurse opened the blinds, that sunlight swept radiantly into the room, lavish with its caresses; always spending, always giving, the symbol of a loving care that had been poured out on her, unasked and unsought. It was sweet to rest, to sleep. And instead of the stringent monster-cry of the siren, of the discordant clamour of the mill bells, it was sweet yet strange to be awakened by silvertoned chimes proclaiming peaceful hours. At first she surrendered to the spell, and had no thought of the future. For a little

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while every day, Mrs. Maturin read aloud, usually from books of poetry. And knowing many of the verses by heart, she would watch Janet's face, framed in the soft dark hair that fell in two long plaits over her shoulders. For Janet little guessed the thought that went into the choosing of these books, nor could she know of the hours spent by this lady pondering over library shelves or consulting eagerly with Brooks Insall. Sometimes Augusta Maturin thought of Janet as a wildflower—one of the rare, shy ones, hiding under its leaves; sprung up in Hampton, of all places, crushed by a heedless foot, yet miraculously not destroyed, and already pushing forth new and eager tendrils. And she had transplanted it. To find the proper nourishment, to give it a chance to grow in a native, congenial soil, such was her breathless task. And so she had selected "The Child's Garden of Verses."

> "I should like to rise and go
> Where the golden apples grow"...

When she laid down her book it was to talk, perhaps, of Silliston. Established here before the birth of the Republic, its roots were bedded in the soil of a racial empire, to a larger vision of which Augusta Maturin clung: an empire of Anglo-Saxon tradition which, despite disagreements and conflicts—nay, through them—developed imperceptibly toward a sublimer union, founded not on dominion, but on justice and right. She spoke of the England she had visited on her wedding journey, of the landmarks and literature that also through generations have been American birthrights; and of that righteous self-assertion and independence which, by protest and even by war, America had contributed to the democracy of the future. Silliston, indifferent to cults and cataclysms, undisturbed by the dark tides flung westward to gather in deposits in other parts of the land, had held fast to the old tradition, stood ready to do her share to transform it into something even nobler when the time should come. Simplicity and worth and beauty—-these elements at least of the older Republic should not perish, but in the end prevail.

She spoke simply of these things, connecting them with a Silliston whose spirit appealed to all that was inherent and abiding in the girl. All was not chaos: here at least, a beacon burned with a bright and steady flame. And she spoke of Andrew Silliston, the sturdy colonial prototype of the American culture, who had fought against his King, who had spent his modest fortune to found this seat of learning, believing as he did that education is the cornerstone of republics; divining that lasting unity is possible alone by the transformation of the individual into the citizen through voluntary bestowal of service and the fruits of labour. Samuel Wootton, the Boston merchant who had given the hospital, was Andrew's true descendant, imbued with the same half-conscious intuition that builds even better that it reeks. And Andrew, could he have returns to earth in his laced coat and long silk waistcoat, would still recognize his own soul in Silliston Academy, the soul of his creed and race.

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"Away down the river,
A hundred miles or more,
Other little children
Shall bring my boats ashore."...

Janet drew in a great breath, involuntarily. These were moments when it seemed that she could scarcely contain what she felt of beauty and significance, when the ecstasy and pain were not to be borne. And sometimes, as she listened to Mrs. Maturin's voice, she wept in silence. Again a strange peace descended on her, the peace of an exile come home; if not to remain, at least to know her own land and people before faring forth. She would not think of that faring yet awhile, but strive to live and taste the present—and yet as life flowed back into her veins that past arose to haunt her, she yearned to pour it out to her new friend, to confess all that had happened to her. Why couldn't she? But she was grateful because Mrs. Maturin betrayed no curiosity. Janet often lay watching her, puzzled, under the spell of a frankness, an ingenuousness, a simplicity she had least expected to find in one who belonged to such a learned place as that of Silliston. But even learning, she was discovering, could be amazingly simple. Freely and naturally Mrs. Maturin dwelt on her own past, on the little girl of six taken from her the year after her husband died, on her husband himself, once a professor here, and who, just before his last illness, had published a brilliant book on Russian literature which resulted in his being called to Harvard. They had gone to Switzerland instead, and Augusta Maturin had come back to Silliston. She told Janet of the loon-haunted lake, hemmed in by the Laurentian hills, besieged by forests, where she had spent her girlhood summers with her father, Professor Wishart, of the University of Toronto. There, in search of health, Gifford Maturin had come at her father's suggestion to camp.

Janet, of course, could not know all of that romance, though she tried to picture it from what her friend told her. Augusta Wishart, at six and twenty, had been one of those magnificent Canadian women who are most at home in the open; she could have carried Gifford Maturinout of the wilderness on her back. She was five feet seven, modelled in proportion, endowed by some Celtic ancestor with that dark chestnut hair which, because of its abundance, she wore braided and caught up in a heavy knot behind her head. Tanned by the northern sun, kneeling upright in a canoe, she might at a little distance have been mistaken for one of the race to which the forests and waters had once belonged. The instinct of mothering was strong in her, and from the beginning she had taken the shy and delicate student under her wing, recognizing in him one of the physically helpless dedicated to a supreme function. He was forever catching colds, his food disagreed with him, and on her own initiative she discharged his habitant cook and supplied him with one of her own choosing. When overtaken by one of his indispositions she paddled him about

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the lake with lusty strokes, first placing a blanket over his knees, and he submitted: he had no pride of that sort, he was utterly indifferent to the figure he cut beside his Amazon. His gentleness of disposition, his brilliant conversations with those whom, like her father, he knew and trusted, captivated Augusta. At this period of her life she was awakening to the glories of literature and taking a special course in that branch. He talked to her of Gogol, Turgenief, and Dostoievsky, and seated on the log piazza read in excellent French “Dead Souls,” “Peres et Enfants,” and “The Brothers Karamazoff.” At the end of August he went homeward almost gaily, quite ignorant of the arrow in his heart, until he began to miss Augusta Wishart’s ministrations—and Augusta Wishart herself.... Then had followed that too brief period of intensive happiness....

The idea of remarriage had never occurred to her. At eight and thirty, though tragedy had left its mark, it had been powerless to destroy the sweetness of a nature of such vitality as hers. The innate necessity of loving remained, and as time went on had grown more wistful and insistent. Insall and her Silliston neighbours were wont, indeed, gently to rally her on her enthusiasms, while understanding and sympathizing with this need in her. A creature of intuition, Janet had appealed to her from the beginning, arousing first her curiosity, and then the maternal instinct that craved a mind to mould, a soul to respond to her touch....

Mrs. Maturin often talked to Janet of Insall, who had, in a way, long been connected with Silliston. In his early wandering days, when tramping over New England, he used unexpectedly to turn up at Dr. Ledyard’s, the principal’s, remain for several weeks and disappear again. Even then he, had been a sort of institution, a professor emeritus in botany, bird lore, and woodcraft, taking the boys on long walks through the neighbouring hills; and suddenly he had surprised everybody by fancying the tumble-down farmhouse in Judith’s Lane, which he had restored with his own hands into the quaintest of old world dwellings. Behind it he had made a dam in the brook, and put in a water wheel that ran his workshop. In play hours the place was usually overrun by boys.... But sometimes the old craving for tramping would overtake him, one day his friends would find the house shut up, and he would be absent for a fortnight, perhaps for a month—-one never knew when he was going, or when he would return. He went, like his hero, Silas Simpkins, through the byways of New England, stopping at night at the farm-houses, or often sleeping out under the stars. And then, perhaps, he would write another book. He wrote only when he felt like writing.

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It was this book of Insall's, "The Travels of Silas Simpkins", rather than his "Epworth Green" or "The Hermit of Blue Mountain," that Mrs. Maturin chose to read to Janet. Unlike the sage of Walden, than whom he was more gregarious, instead of a log house for his castle Silas Simpkins chose a cart, which he drove in a most leisurely manner from the sea to the mountains, penetrating even to hamlets beside the silent lakes on the Canadian border, and then went back to the sea again. Two chunky grey horses with wide foreheads and sagacious eyes propelled him at the rate of three miles an hour; for these, as their master, had learned the lesson that if life is to be fully savoured it is not to be bolted. Silas cooked and ate, and sometimes read under the maples beside the stone walls: usually he slept in the cart in the midst of the assortment of goods that proclaimed him, to the astute, an expert in applied psychology. At first you might have thought Silos merely a peddler, but if you knew your Thoreau you would presently begin to perceive that peddling was the paltry price he paid for liberty. Silos was in a way a sage—but such a human sage! He never intruded with theories, he never even hinted at the folly of the mortals who bought or despised his goods, or with whom he chatted by the wayside, though he may have had his ideas on the subject: it is certain that presently one began to have one's own: nor did he exclaim with George Sand, "Il n'y a rien de plus betement mechant que l'habitant des petites villes!" Somehow the meannesses and jealousies were accounted for, if not excused. To understand is to pardon.

It was so like Insall, this book, in its whimsicality, in its feeling of space and freedom, in its hidden wisdom that gradually revealed itself as one thought it over before falling off to sleep! New England in the early summer! Here, beside the tender greens of the Ipswich downs was the sparkling cobalt of the sea, and she could almost smell its cool salt breath mingling with the warm odours of hay and the pungent scents of roadside flowers. Weathered grey cottages were scattered over the landscape, and dark copses of cedars, while oceanward the eye was caught by the gleam of a lighthouse or a lonely sail.

Even in that sandy plain, covered with sickly, stunted pines and burned patches, stretching westward from the Merrimac, Silas saw beauty and colour, life in the once prosperous houses not yet abandoned.... Presently, the hills, all hyacinth blue, rise up against the sunset, and the horses' feet are on the "Boston Road"—or rud, according to the authorized pronunciation of that land. Hardly, indeed, in many places, a "rud" to-day, reverting picturesquely into the forest trail over which the early inland settlers rode their horses or drove their oxen with upcountry produce to the sea. They were not a people who sought the easiest way, and the Boston Road reflects their characters: few valleys are deep enough to turn it aside; few

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mountains can appal it: railroads have given it a wide berth. Here and there the forest opens out to reveal, on a knoll or “flat,” a forgotten village or tavern-stand. Over the high shelf of Washington Town it runs where the air is keen and the lakes are blue, where long-stemmed wild flowers nod on its sunny banks, to reach at length the rounded, classic hills and sentinel mountain that mark the sheep country of the Connecticut....

It was before Janet’s convalescence began that Mrs. Maturin had consulted Insall concerning her proposed experiment in literature. Afterwards he had left Silliston for a lumber camp on a remote river in northern Maine, abruptly to reappear, on a mild afternoon late in April, in Augusta Maturin’s garden. The crocuses and tulips were in bloom, and his friend, in a gardening apron, was on her knees, trowel in hand, assisting a hired man to set out marigolds and snapdragons.

“Well, it’s time you were home again,” she exclaimed, as she rose to greet him and led him to a chair on the little flagged terrace beside the windows of her library. “I’ve got so much to tell you about our invalid.”

“Our invalid!” Insall retorted.

“Of course. I look to you to divide the responsibility with me, and you’ve shirked by running off to Maine. You found her, you know—and she’s really remarkable.”

“Now see here, Augusta, you can’t expect me to share the guardianship of an attractive and—well, a dynamic young woman. If she affects you this way, what will she do to me? I’m much too susceptible.”

“Susceptible” she scoffed. “But you can’t get out of it. I need you. I’ve never been so interested and so perplexed in my life.”

“How is she?” Insall asked.

“Frankly, I’m worried,” said Mrs. Maturin. “At first she seemed to be getting along beautifully. I read to her, a little every day, and it was wonderful how she responded to it. I’ll tell you about that I’ve got so much to tell you! Young Dr. Trent is puzzled, too, it seems there are symptoms in the case for which he cannot account. Some three weeks ago he asked me what I made out of her, and I can’t make anything—that’s the trouble, except that she seems pathetically grateful, and that I’ve grown absurdly fond of her. But she isn’t improving as fast as she should, and Dr. Trent doesn’t know whether or not to suspect functional complications. Her constitution seems excellent, her vitality unusual. Trent’s impressed by her, he inclines to the theory that she has something on her mind, and if this is so she should get rid of it, tell it to somebody—in short, tell it to

me. I know she's fond of me, but she's so maddeningly self-contained, and at moments when I look at her she baffles me, she makes me feel like an atom. Twenty times at least I've almost screwed up my courage to ask her, but when it comes to the point, I simply can't do it."

"You ought to be able to get at it, if any one can," said Insall.

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“I’ve a notion it may be connected with the strike,” Augusta Maturin continued. “I never could account for her being mixed up in that, plunging into Syndicalism. It seemed so foreign to her nature. I wish I’d waited a little longer before telling her about the strike, but one day she asked me how it had come out—and she seemed to be getting along so nicely I didn’t see any reason for not telling her. I said that the strike was over, that the millowners had accepted the I.W.W. terms, but that Antonelli and Jastro had been sent to jail and were awaiting trial because they had been accused of instigating the murder of a woman who was shot by a striker aiming at a policeman. It seems that she had seen that! She told me so quite casually. But she was interested, and I went on to mention how greatly the strikers were stirred by the arrests, how they paraded in front of the jail, singing, and how the feeling was mostly directed against Mr. Ditmar, because he was accused of instigating the placing of dynamite in the tenements.”

“And you spoke of Mr. Ditmar’s death?” Insall inquired.

“Why yes, I told her how he had been shot in Dover Street by a demented Italian, and if it hadn’t been proved that the Italian was insane and not a mill worker, the result of the strike might have been different.”

“How did she take it?”

“Well, she was shocked, of course. She sat up in bed, staring at me, and then leaned back on the pillows again. I pretended not to notice it—but I was sorry I’d said anything about it.”

“She didn’t say anything?”

“Not a word.”

“Didn’t you know that, before the strike, she was Ditmar’s private stenographer?”

“No!” Augusta Maturin exclaimed. “Why didn’t you tell me?”

“It never occurred to me to tell you,” Insall replied.

“That must have something to do with it!” said Mrs. Maturin.

Insall got up and walked to the end of the terrace, gazing at a bluebird on the edge of the lawn.

“Well, not necessarily,” he said, after a while. “Did you ever find out anything about her family?”

“Oh, yes, I met the father once, he’s been out two or three times, on Sunday, and came over here to thank me for what I’d done. The mother doesn’t come—she has some

trouble, I don't know exactly what. Brooks, I wish you could see the father, he's so typically unique—if one may use the expression. A gatekeeper at the Chippering Mills!"

"A gatekeeper?"

"Yes, and I'm quite sure he doesn't understand to this day how he became one, or why. He's delightfully naive on the subject of genealogy, and I had the Bumpus family by heart before he left. That's the form his remnant of the intellectual curiosity of his ancestors takes. He was born in Dolton, which was settled by the original Bumpus, back in the Plymouth Colony days, and if he were rich he'd have a library stuffed with gritty, yellow-backed

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books and be a leading light in the Historical Society. He speaks with that nicety of pronunciation of the old New Englander, never slurring his syllables, and he has a really fine face, the kind of face one doesn't often see nowadays. I kept looking at it, wondering what was the matter with it, and at last I realized what it lacked—will, desire, ambition,—it was what a second-rate sculptor might have made of Bradford, for instance. But there is a remnant of fire in him. Once, when he spoke of the strike, of the foreigners, he grew quite indignant."

"He didn't tell you why his daughter had joined the strikers?" Insall asked.

"He was just as much at sea about that as you and I are. Of course I didn't ask him—he asked me if I knew. It's only another proof of her amazing reticence. And I can imagine an utter absence of sympathy between them. He accounts for her, of course; he's probably the unconscious transmitter of qualities the Puritans possessed and tried to smother. Certainly the fires are alight in her, and yet it's almost incredible that he should have conveyed them. Of course I haven't seen the mother."

"It's curious he didn't mention her having been Ditmar's stenographer," Insall put in. "Was that reticence?"

"I hardly think so," Augusta Maturin replied. "It may have been, but the impression I got was of an incapacity to feel the present. All his emotions are in the past, most of his conversation was about Bumpuses who are dead and buried, and his pride in Janet—-for he has a pride—seems to exist because she is their representative. It's extraordinary, but he sees her present situation, her future, with extraordinary optimism; he apparently regards her coming to Silliston, even in the condition in which we found her, as a piece of deserved fortune for which she has to thank some virtue inherited from her ancestors! Well, perhaps he's right. If she were not unique, I shouldn't want to keep her here. It's pure selfishness. I told Mr. Bumpus I expected to find work for her."

Mrs. Maturin returned Insall's smile. "I suppose you're too polite to say that I'm carried away by my enthusiasms. But you will at least do me the justice to admit that they are rare and—discriminating, as a connoisseur's should be. I think even you will approve of her."

"Oh, I have approved of her—that's the trouble."

Mrs. Maturin regarded him for a moment in silence.

"I wish you could have seen her when I began to read those verses of Stevenson's. It was an inspirations your thinking of them."

"Did I think of them?"

“You know you did. You can’t escape your responsibility. Well, I felt like—like a gambler, as though I were staking everything on a throw. And, after I began, as if I were playing on some rare instrument. She lay there, listening, without uttering a word, but somehow she seemed to be interpreting them for me, giving them a meaning and a beauty I hadn’t imagined. Another time I told her about Silliston, and how this little community for over a century and a half had tried to keep its standard flying, to carry on the work begun by old Andrew, and I thought of those lines,

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"Other little children
Shall bring my boats ashore."

That particular application just suddenly, occurred to me, but she inspired it."

"You're a born schoolma'am," Insall laughed.

"I'm much too radical for a schoolmam," she declared. "No board of trustees would put up with me—not even Silliston's! We've kept the faith, but we do move slowly, Brooks. Even tradition grows, and sometimes our blindness here to changes, to modern, scientific facts, fairly maddens me. I read her that poem of Moody's—you know it:—

'Here, where the moors stretch free
In the high blue afternoon,
Are the marching sun and the talking sea.'

and those last lines:—

'But thou, vast outbound ship of souls,
What harbour town for thee?
What shapes, when thy arriving tolls,
Shall crowd the banks to see?
Shall all the happy shipmates then
Stand singing brotherly?
Or shall a haggard, ruthless few
Warp her over and bring her to,
While the many broken souls of me
Fester down in the slaver's pen,
And nothing to say or do?'"

"I was sorry afterwards, I could see that she was tremendously excited. And she made me feel as if I, too, had been battened down in that hold and bruised and almost strangled. I often wonder whether she has got out of it into the light—whether we can rescue her." Mrs. Maturin paused.

"What do you mean?" Insall asked.

"Well, it's difficult to describe, what I feel—she's such a perplexing mixture of old New England and modernity, of a fatalism, and an aliveness that fairly vibrates. At first, when she began to recover, I was conscious only of the vitality—but lately I feel the other quality. It isn't exactly the old Puritan fatalism, or even the Greek, it's oddly modern, too, almost agnostic, I should say,—a calm acceptance of the hazards of life, of nature, of sun and rain and storm alike—very different from the cheap optimism one finds everywhere now. She isn't exactly resigned—I don't say that—I know she can be

rebellious. And she's grateful for the sun, yet she seems to have a conviction that the clouds will gather again.... The doctor says she may leave the hospital on Monday, and I'm going to bring her over here for awhile. Then," she added insinuatingly, "we can collaborate."

"I think I'll go back to Maine," Insall exclaimed.

"If you desert me, I shall never speak to you again," said Mrs. Maturin.

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“Janet,” said Mrs. Maturin the next day, as she laid down the book from which she was reading, “do you remember that I spoke to you once in Hampton of coming here to Silliston? Well, now we’ve got you here, we don’t want to lose you. I’ve been making inquiries; quite a number of the professors have typewriting to be done, and they will be glad to give their manuscripts to you instead of sending them to Boston. And there’s Brooks Insall too—if he ever takes it into his head to write another book. You wouldn’t have any trouble reading his manuscript, it’s like script. Of course it has to be copied. You can board with Mrs. Case —I’ve arranged that, too. But on Monday I’m going to take you to my house, and keep you until you’re strong enough to walk.”

Janet’s eyes were suddenly bright with tears.

“You’ll stay?”

“I can’t,” answered Janet. “I couldn’t.”

“But why not? Have you any other plans?”

“No, I haven’t any plans, but—I haven’t the right to stay here.” Presently she raised her face to her friend. “Oh Mrs. Maturin, I’m so sorry! I didn’t want to bring any sadness here—it’s all so bright and beautiful! And now I’ve made you sad!”

It was a moment before Augusta Maturin could answer her.

“What are friends for, Janet,” she asked, “if not to share sorrow with? And do you suppose there’s any place, however bright, where sorrow has not come? Do you think I’ve not known it, too? And Janet, I haven’t sat here all these days with you without guessing that something worries you. I’ve been waiting, all this time, for you to tell me, in order that I might help you.”

“I wanted to,” said Janet, “every day I wanted to, but I couldn’t. I couldn’t bear to trouble you with it, I didn’t mean ever to tell you. And then—it’s so terrible, I don’t know what you’ll think.”

“I think I know you, Janet,” answered Mrs. Maturin. “Nothing human, nothing natural is terrible, in the sense you mean. At least I’m one of those who believe so.”

Presently Janet said, “I’m going to have a child.”

Mrs. Maturin sat very still. Something closed in her throat, preventing her immediate reply.

“I, too, had a child, my dear,” she answered. “I lost her.” She felt the girl’s clasp tighten on her fingers.

“But you—you had a right to it—you were married. Children are sacred things,” said Augusta Maturin.

“Sacred! Could it be that a woman like Mrs. Maturity thought that this child which was coming to her was sacred, too?

“However they come?” asked Janet. “Oh, I tried to believe that, too! At first—at first I didn’t want it, and when I knew it was coming I was driven almost crazy. And then, all at once, when I was walking in the rain, I knew I wanted it to have—to keep all to myself. You understand?”

Augusta Maturity inclined her head.

“But the father?” she managed to ask, after a moment. “I don’t wish to pry, my dear, but does he—does he realize? Can’t he help you?”

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“It was Mr. Ditmar.”

“Perhaps it will help you to tell me about it, Janet.”

“I’d—I’d like to. I’ve been so unhappy since you told me he was dead —and I felt like a cheat. You see, he promised to marry me, and I know now that he loved me, that he really wanted to marry me, but something happened to make me believe he wasn’t going to, I saw—another girl who’d got into trouble, and then I thought he’d only been playing with me, and I couldn’t stand it. I joined the strikers—I just had to do something.”

Augusta Maturity nodded, and waited.

“I was only a stenographer, and we were very poor, and he was rich and lived in a big house, the most important man in Hampton. It seemed too good to be true—I suppose I never really thought it could happen. Please don’t think I’m putting all the blame on him, Mrs. Maturity—it was my fault just as much as his. I ought to have gone away from Hampton, but I didn’t have the strength. And I shouldn’t have—” Janet stopped.

“But—you loved him?”

“Yes, I did. For a long time, after I left him, I thought I didn’t, I thought I hated him, and when I found out what had happened to me—that night I came to you—I got my father’s pistol and went to the mill to shoot him. I was going to shoot myself, too.”

“Oh!” Mrs. Maturity gasped. She gave a quick glance of sheer amazement at Janet, who did not seem to notice it; who was speaking objectively, apparently with no sense of the drama in her announcement.

“But I couldn’t,” she went on. “At the time I didn’t know why I couldn’t, but when I went out I understood it was because I wanted the child, because it was his child. And though he was almost out of his head, he seemed so glad because I’d come back to him, and said he’d marry me right away.”

“And you refused!” exclaimed Mrs. Maturity.

“Well, you see, I was out of my head, too, I still thought I hated him —but I’d loved him all the time. It was funny! He had lots of faults, and he didn’t seem to understand or care much about how poor people feel, though he was kind to them in the mills. He might have come to understand—I don’t know—it wasn’t because he didn’t want to, but because he was so separated from them, I guess, and he was so interested in what he was doing. He had ambition, he thought everything of that mill, he’d made it. I don’t know why I loved him, it wasn’t because he was fine, like Mr. Insall, but he was strong and brave, and he needed me and just took me.”

“One never knows!” Augusta Maturity murmured.

“I went back that night to tell him I’d marry him—and he’d gone. Then I came to you, to the soup kitchen. I didn’t mean to bother you, I’ve never quite understood how I got there. I don’t care so much what happens to me, now that I’ve told you,” Janet added. “It was mean, not to tell you, but I’d never had anything like this—what you were giving me—and I wanted all I could get.”

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“I’m thankful you did come to us!” Augusta Maturin managed to reply.

“You mean—?” Janet exclaimed.

“I mean, that we who have been more—fortunate don’t look at these things quite as we used to, that the world is less censorious, is growing to understand situations it formerly condemned. And—I don’t know what kind of a monster you supposed me to be, Janet.”

“Oh, Mrs. Maturin!”

“I mean that I’m a woman, too, my dear, although my life has been sheltered. Otherwise, what has happened to you might have happened to me. And besides, I am what is called unconventional, I have little theories of my own about life, and now that you have told me everything I understand you and love you even more than I did before.”

Save that her breath came fast, Janet lay still against the cushions of the armchair. She was striving to grasp the momentous and unlooked-for fact of her friend’s unchanged attitude. Then she asked:—“Mrs. Maturin, do you believe in God?”

Augusta Maturin was startled by the question. “I like to think of Him as light, Janet, and that we are plants seeking to grow toward Him—no matter from what dark crevice we may spring. Even in our mistakes and sins we are seeking Him, for these are ignorances, and as the world learns more, we shall know Him better and better. It is natural to long for happiness, and happiness is self-realization, and self-realization is knowledge and light.”

“That is beautiful,” said Janet at length.

“It is all we can know about God,” said Mrs. Maturin, “but it is enough.” She had been thinking rapidly. “And now,” she went on, “we shall have to consider what is to be done. I don’t pretend that the future will be easy, but it will not be nearly as hard for you as it might have been, since I am your friend, and I do not intend to desert you. I’m sure you will not let it crush you. In the first place, you will have something to go on with—mental resources, I mean, for which you have a natural craving, books and art and nature, the best thoughts and the best interpretations. We can give you these. And you will have your child, and work to do, for I’m sure you’re industrious. And of course I’ll keep your secret, my dear.”

“But—how?” Janet exclaimed.

“I’ve arranged it all. You’ll stay here this spring, you’ll come to my house on Monday, just as we planned, and later on you may go to Mrs. Case’s, if it will make you feel more independent, and do typewriting until the spring term is over. I’ve told you about my little camp away up in Canada, in the heart of the wilderness, where I go in summer.

We'll stay there until the autumn, until your baby comes, and, after that, I know it won't be difficult to get you a position in the west, where you can gain your living and have your child. I have a good friend in California who I'm sure will help you. And even if your secret should eventually be discovered—which

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is not probable—you will have earned respect, and society is not as stern as it used to be. And you will always have me for a friend. There, that's the bright side of it. Of course it isn't a bed of roses, but I've lived long enough to observe that the people who lie on roses don't always have the happiest lives. Whenever you want help and advice, I shall always be here, and from time to time I'll be seeing you. Isn't that sensible?"

"Oh, Mrs. Maturin—if you really want me—still?"

"I do want you, Janet, even more than I did—before, because you need me more," Mrs. Maturin replied, with a sincerity that could not fail to bring conviction....

CHAPTER XXI

As the spring progressed, Janet grew stronger, became well again, and through the kindness of Dr. Ledyard, the principal, was presently installed with a typewriter in a little room in an old building belonging to the Academy in what was called Bramble Street, and not far from the Common. Here, during the day, she industriously copied manuscripts' or, from her notebook, letters dictated by various members of the faculty. And she was pleased when they exclaimed delightedly at the flawless copies and failed to suspect her of frequent pilgrimages to the dictionary in the library in order to familiarize herself with the meaning and manner of spelling various academic words. At first it was almost bewildering to find herself in some degree thus sharing the Silliston community life; and an unpremeditated attitude toward these learned ones, high priests of the muses she had so long ignorantly worshipped, accounted perhaps for a great deal in their attitude toward her. Her fervour, repressed yet palpable, was like a flame burning before their altars—a flattery to which the learned, being human, are quick to respond. Besides, something of her history was known, and she was of a type to incite a certain amount of interest amongst these discerning ones. Often, after she had taken their dictation, or brought their manuscripts home, they detained her in conversation. In short, Silliston gave its approval to this particular experiment of Augusta Maturin. As for Mrs. Maturin herself, her feeling was one of controlled pride not unmixed with concern, always conscious as she was of the hidden element of tragedy in the play she had so lovingly staged. Not that she had any compunction in keeping Janet's secret, even from Insall; but sometimes as she contemplated it the strings of her heart grew tight. Silliston was so obviously where Janet belonged, she could not bear the thought of the girl going out again from this sheltered spot into a chaotic world of smoke and struggle.

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Janet's own feelings were a medley. It was not, of course, contentment she knew continually, nor even peace, although there were moments when these stole over her. There were moments, despite her incredible good fortune, of apprehension when she shrank from the future, when fear assailed her; moments of intense sadness at the thought of leaving her friends, of leaving this enchanted place now that miraculously she had found it; moments of stimulation, of exaltation, when she forgot. Her prevailing sense, as she found herself again, was of thankfulness and gratitude, of determination to take advantage of, to drink in all of this wonderful experience, lest any precious memory be lost.

Like a jewel gleaming with many facets, each sunny day was stored and treasured. As she went from Mrs. Case's boarding-house forth to her work, the sweet, sharp air of these spring mornings was filled with delicious smells of new things, of new flowers and new grass and tender, new leaves of myriad shades, bronze and crimson, fuzzy white, primrose, and emerald green. And sometimes it seemed as though the pink and white clouds of the little orchards were wafted into swooning scents. She loved best the moment when the Common came in view, when through the rows of elms the lineaments of those old houses rose before her, lineaments seemingly long familiar, as of old and trusted friends, and yet ever stirring new harmonies and new visions. Here, in their midst, she belonged, and here, had the world been otherwise ordained, she might have lived on in one continuous, shining spring. At the corner of the Common, foursquare, ample, painted a straw colour trimmed with white, with its high chimneys and fan-shaped stairway window, its balustraded terrace porch open to the sky, was the eighteenth century mansion occupied by Dr. Ledyard. What was the secret of its flavour? And how account for the sense of harmony inspired by another dwelling, built during the term of the second Adams, set in a frame of maples and shining white in the morning sun? Its curved portico was capped by a wrought-iron railing, its long windows were touched with purple, and its low garret—set like a deckhouse on the wide roof—-suggested hidden secrets of the past. Here a Motley or a Longfellow might have dwelt, a Bryant penned his "Thanatopsis." Farther on, chequered by shade, stood the quaint brick row of professors' houses, with sloping eaves and recessed entrances of granite—a subject for an old English print.... Along the border of the Common were interspersed among the ancient dormitories and halls the new and dignified buildings of plum-coloured brick that still preserved the soul of Silliston. And to it the soul of Janet responded.

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In the late afternoon, when her tasks were finished, Janet would cross the Common to Mrs. Maturin's—a dwelling typical of the New England of the past, with the dimensions of a cottage and something of the dignity of a mansion. Fluted white pilasters adorned the corners, the windows were protected by tiny eaves, the roof was guarded by a rail; the classically porched entrance was approached by a path between high clipped hedges of hemlock; and through the library, on the right, you reached the flagged terrace beside a garden, rioting in the carnival colours of spring. By September it would have changed. For there is one glory of the hyacinth, of the tulip and narcissus and the jonquil, and another of the Michaelmas daisy and the aster.

Insall was often there, and on Saturdays and Sundays he took Mrs. Maturin and Janet on long walks into the country. There were afternoons when the world was flooded with silver light, when the fields were lucent in the sun; and afternoons stained with blue,—-the landscape like a tapestry woven in delicate grins on a ground of indigo. The arbutus, all aglow and fragrant beneath its leaves, the purple fringed polygala were past, but they found the pale gold lily of the bellwort, the rust-red bloom of the ginger. In the open spaces under the sky were clouds of bluets, wild violets, and white strawberry flowers clustering beside the star moss all a-shimmer with new green. The Canada Mayflower spread a carpet under the pines; and in the hollows where the mists settled, where the brooks flowed, where the air was heavy with the damp, ineffable odour of growing things, they gathered drooping adder's-tongues, white-starred bloodroots and foam-flowers. From Insall's quick eye nothing seemed to escape. He would point out to them the humming-bird that hovered, a bright blur, above the columbine, the woodpecker glued to the trunk of a maple high above their heads, the red gleam of a tanager flashing through sunlit foliage, the oriole and vireo where they hid. And his was the ear that first caught the exquisite, distant note of the hermit. Once he stopped them, startled, to listen to the cock partridge drumming to its mate....

Sometimes, of an evening, when Janet was helping Mrs. Maturin in her planting or weeding, Insall would join them, rolling up the sleeves of his flannel shirt and kneeling beside them in the garden paths. Mrs. Maturin was forever asking his advice, though she did not always follow it.

"Now, Brooks," she would say, "you've just got to suggest something to put in that border to replace the hyacinths."

"I had larkspur last year—you remember—and it looked like a chromo in a railroad folder."

"Let me see—did I advise larkspur?" he would ask.

"Oh, I'm sure you must have—I always do what you tell me. It seems to me I've thought of every possible flower in the catalogue. You know, too, only you're so afraid of committing yourself."

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Insall's comic spirit, betrayed by his expressions, by the quizzical intonations of his voice, never failed to fill Janet with joy, while it was somehow suggestive, too, of the vast fund of his resource. Mrs. Maturin was right, he could have solved many of her questions offhand if he had so wished, but he had his own method of dealing with appeals. His head tilted on one side, apparently in deep thought over the problem, he never answered outright, but by some process of suggestion unfathomable to Janet, and by eliminating, not too deprecatingly, Mrs. Maturin's impatient proposals, brought her to a point where she blurted out the solution herself.

"Oriental poppies! How stupid of me not to think of them!"

"How stupid of me!" Insall echoed—and Janet, bending over her weeding, made sure they had been in his mind all the while.

Augusta Maturin's chief extravagance was books; she could not bear to await her turn at the library, and if she liked a book she wished to own it. Subscribing to several reviews, three English and one American, she scanned them eagerly every week and sent in orders to her Boston bookseller. As a consequence the carved walnut racks on her library table were constantly being strained. A good book, she declared, ought to be read aloud, and discussed even during its perusal. And thus Janet, after an elementary and decidedly unique introduction to worth-while literature in the hospital, was suddenly plunged into the vortex of modern thought. The dictum Insall quoted, that modern culture depended largely upon what one had not read, was applied to her; a child of the new environment fallen into skilful hands, she was spared the boredom of wading through the so-called classics which, though useful as milestones, as landmarks for future reference, are largely mere reminders of an absolute universe now vanished. The arrival of a novel, play, or treatise by one of that small but growing nucleus of twentieth century seers was an event, and often a volume begun in the afternoon was taken up again after supper. While Mrs. Maturin sat sewing on the other side of the lamp, Janet had her turn at reading. From the first she had been quick to note Mrs. Maturin's inflections, and the relics of a high-school manner were rapidly eliminated. The essence of latter-day realism and pragmatism, its courageous determination to tear away a veil of which she had always been dimly aware, to look the facts of human nature in the face, refreshed her: an increasing portion of it she understood; and she was constantly under the spell of the excitement that partially grasps, that hovers on the verge of inspiring discoveries. This excitement, whenever Insall chanced to be present, was intensified, as she sat a silent but often quivering listener to his amusing and pungent comments on these new ideas. His method of discussion never failed to illuminate and delight her, and often, when she sat at her typewriter the next day, she would recall one of his quaint remarks that suddenly threw a bright light on some matter hitherto obscure.... Occasionally a novel or a play was the subject of their talk, and then they took a delight in drawing her out, in appealing to a spontaneous judgment unhampered by pedagogically implanted preconceptions. Janet would grow hot from shyness.

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“Say what you think, my dear,” Mrs. Maturin would urge her. “And remember that your own opinion is worth more than Shakespeare’s or Napoleon’s!”

Insall would escort her home to Mrs. Case’s boarding house....

One afternoon early in June Janet sat in her little room working at her letters when Brooks Insall came in. “I don’t mean to intrude in business hours, but I wanted to ask if you would do a little copying for me,” he said, and he laid on her desk a parcel bound with characteristic neatness.

“Something you’ve written?” she exclaimed, blushing with pleasure and surprise. He was actually confiding to her one of his manuscripts!

“Well—yes,” he replied comically, eyeing her.

“I’ll be very careful with it. I’ll do it right away.”

“There’s no particular hurry,” he assured her. “The editor’s waited six months for it—-another month or so won’t matter.”

“Another month or so!” she ejaculated,—but he was gone. Of course she couldn’t have expected him to remain and talk about it; but this unexpected exhibition of shyness concerning his work—so admired by the world’s choicer spirits—thrilled yet amused her, and made her glow with a new understanding. With eager fingers she undid the string and sat staring at the regular script without taking in, at first, the meaning of a single sentence. It was a comparatively short sketch entitled “The Exile,” in which shining, winged truths and elusive beauties flitted continually against a dark-background of Puritan oppression; the story of one Basil Grelott, a dreamer of Milton’s day, Oxford nurtured, who, casting off the shackles of dogma and man-made decrees, sailed with his books to the New England wilderness across the sea. There he lived, among the savages, in peace and freedom until the arrival of Winthrop and his devotees, to encounter persecution from those who themselves had fled from it. The Lord’s Brethren, he averred, were worse than the Lord’s Bishops—Blackstone’s phrase. Janet, of course, had never heard of Blackstone, some of whose experiences Insall had evidently used. And the Puritans dealt with Grelott even as they would have served the author of “Paradise Lost” himself, especially if he had voiced among them the opinions set forth in his pamphlet on divorce. A portrait of a stern divine with his infallible Book gave Janet a vivid conception of the character of her ancestors; and early Boston, with yellow candlelight gleaming from the lantern-like windows of the wooden, Elizabethan houses, was unforgettably etched. There was an inquisition in a freezing barn of a church, and Basil Grelott banished to perish amid the forest in his renewed quest for freedom.... After reading the manuscript, Janet sat typewriting into the night, taking it home with her and placing it besides her bed, lest it be lost to posterity. By five the next evening she had finished the copy.

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A gentle rain had fallen during the day, but had ceased as she made her way toward Insall's house. The place was familiar now: she had been there to supper with Mrs. Maturin, a supper cooked and served by Martha Vesey, an elderly, efficient and appallingly neat widow, whom Insall had discovered somewhere in his travels and installed as his housekeeper. Janet paused with her hand on the gate latch to gaze around her, at the picket fence on which he had been working when she had walked hither the year before. It was primly painted now, its posts crowned with the carved pineapples; behind the fence old-fashioned flowers were in bloom, lupins and false indigo; and the retaining wall of blue-grey slaty stone, which he had laid that spring, was finished. A wind stirred the maple, releasing a shower of heavy drops, and she opened the gate and went up the path and knocked at the door. There was no response—even Martha must be absent, in the village! Janet was disappointed, she had looked forward to seeing him, to telling him how great had been her pleasure in the story he had written, at the same time doubting her courage to do so. She had never been able to speak to him about his work and what did her opinion matter to him? As she turned away the stillness was broken by a humming sound gradually rising to a crescendo, so she ventured slowly around the house and into the orchard of gnarled apple trees on the slope until she came insight of a little white building beside the brook. The weathervane perched on the gable, and veering in the wet breeze, seemed like a live fish swimming in its own element; and through the open window she saw Insall bending over a lathe, from which the chips were flying. She hesitated. Then he looked up, and seeing her, reached above his head to pull the lever that shut off the power.

"Come in," he called out, and met her at the doorway. He was dressed in a white duck shirt, open at the neck, and a pair of faded corduroy trousers. "I wasn't looking for this honour," he told her, with a gesture of self-deprecation, "or I'd have put on a dinner coat."

And, despite her eagerness and excitement, she laughed.

"I didn't dare to leave this in the house," she explained. Mrs. Vesey wasn't home. And I thought you might be here."

"You haven't made the copy already!"

"Oh, I loved doing it!" she replied, and paused, flushing. She might have known that it would be simply impossible to talk to him about it! So she laid it down on the workbench, and, overcome by a sudden shyness, retreated toward the door.

"You're not going!" he exclaimed.

"I must—and you're busy."

“Not at all,” he declared, “not at all, I was just killing time until supper. Sit down!” And he waved her to a magisterial-looking chair of Jacobean design, with turned legs, sandpapered and immaculate, that stood in the middle of the shop.

“Oh, not in that!” Janet protested. “And besides, I’d spoil it—I’m sure my skirt is wet.”

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But he insisted, thrusting it under her. “You’ve come along just in time, I wanted a woman to test it—men are no judges of chairs. There’s a vacuum behind the small of your back, isn’t there? Augusta will have to put a cushion in it.”

“Did you make it for Mrs. Maturin? She will be Pleased!” exclaimed Janet, as she sat down. “I don’t think it’s uncomfortable.”

“I copied it from an old one in the Boston Art Museum. Augusta saw it there, and said she wouldn’t be happy until she had one like it. But don’t tell her.”

“Not for anything!” Janet got to her feet again. “I really must be going.”

“Going where?”

“I told Mrs. Maturin I’d read that new book to her. I couldn’t go yesterday—I didn’t want to go,” she added, fearing he might think his work had kept her.

“Well, I’ll walk over with you. She asked me to make a little design for a fountain, you know, and I’ll have to get some measurements.”

As they emerged from the shop and climbed the slope Janet tried to fight off the sadness that began to invade her. Soon she would have to be leaving all this! Her glance lingered wistfully on the old farmhouse with its great centre chimney from which the smoke was curling, with its diamond-paned casements Insall had put into the tiny frames.

“What queer windows!” she said. “But they seem to go with the house, beautifully.”

“You think so?” His tone surprised her; it had a touch more of earnestness than she had ever before detected. “They belong to that type of house the old settlers brought the leaded glass with them. Some people think they’re cold, but I’ve arranged to make them fairly tight. You see, I’ve tried to restore it as it must have been when it was built.”

“And these?” she asked, pointing to the millstones of different diameters that made the steps leading down to the garden.

“Oh, that’s an old custom, but they are nice,” he agreed. “I’ll just put this precious manuscript inside and get my foot rule,” he added, opening the door, and she stood awaiting him on the threshold, confronted by the steep little staircase that disappeared into the wall half way up. At her left was the room where he worked, and which once had been the farmhouse kitchen. She took a few steps into it, and while he was searching in the table drawer she halted before the great chimney over which, against the panel, an old bell-mouthed musket hung. Insall came over beside her.

“Those were trees!” he said. “That panel’s over four feet across, I measured it once. I dare say the pine it was cut from grew right where we are standing, before the land was cleared to build the house.”

“But the gun?” she questioned. “You didn’t have it the night we came to supper.”

“No, I ran across it at a sale in Boston. The old settler must have owned one like that. I like to think of him, away off here in the wilderness in those early days.”

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She thought of how Insall had made those early days live for her, in his story of Basil Grelott. But to save her soul, when with such an opening, she could not speak of it.

“He had to work pretty hard, of course,” Insall continued, “but I dare say he had a fairly happy life, no movies, no Sunday supplements, no automobiles or gypsy moths. His only excitement was to trudge ten miles to Dorset and listen to a three hour sermon on everlasting fire and brimstone by a man who was supposed to know. No wonder he slept soundly and lived to be over ninety!”

Insall was standing with his head thrown back, his eyes stilt seemingly fixed on the musket that had suggested his remark—a pose eloquent, she thought, of the mental and physical balance of the man. She wondered what belief gave him the free mastery of soul and body he possessed. Some firm conviction, she was sure, must energise him yet she respected him the more for concealing it.

“It’s hard to understand such a terrible religion!” she cried. “I don’t see how those old settlers could believe in it, when there are such beautiful things in the world, if we only open our eyes and look for them. Oh Mr. Insall, I wish I could tell you how I felt when I read your story, and when Mrs. Maturin read me those other books of yours.”

She stopped breathlessly, aghast at her boldness—and then, suddenly, a barrier between them seemed to break down, and for the first time since she had known him she felt near to him. He could not doubt the sincerity of her tribute.

“You like them as much as that, Janet?” he said, looking at her.

“I can’t tell you how much, I can’t express myself. And I want to tell you something else, Mr. Insall, while I have the chance—how just being with you and Mrs. Maturin has changed me. I can face life now, you have shown me so much in it I never saw before.”

“While you have the chance?” he repeated.

“Yes.” She strove to go on cheerfully, “Now I’ve said it, I feel better, I promise not to mention it again. I knew—you didn’t think me ungrateful. It’s funny,” she added, “the more people have done for you-when they’ve given you everything, life and hope,—the harder it is to thank them.” She turned her face away, lest he might see that her eyes were wet. “Mrs. Maturin will be expecting us.”

“Not yet,” she heard him say, and felt his hand on her arm. “You haven’t thought of what you’re doing for me.”

“What I’m doing for you!” she echoed. “What hurts me most, when I think about it, is that I’ll never be able to do anything.”

“Why do you say that?” he asked.

“If I only could believe that some day I might be able to help you—just a little—I should be happier. All I have, all I am I owe to you and Mrs. Maturin.”

“No, Janet,” he answered. “What you are is you, and it’s more real than anything we could have put into you. What you have to give is —yourself.” His fingers trembled on her arm, but she saw him smile a little before he spoke again. “Augusta Maturin was right when she said that you were the woman I needed. I didn’t realize it then perhaps she didn’t—but now I’m sure of it. Will you come to me?”

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She stood staring at him, as in terror, suddenly penetrated by a dismay that sapped her strength, and she leaned heavily against the fireplace, clutching the mantel-shelf.

“Don’t!” she pleaded. “Please don’t—I can’t.”

“You can’t!... Perhaps, after a while, you may come to feel differently —I didn’t mean to startle you,” she heard him reply gently. This humility, in him, was unbearable.

“Oh, it isn’t that—it isn’t that! If I could, I’d be willing to serve you all my life—I wouldn’t ask for anything more. I never thought that this would happen. I oughtn’t to have stayed in Silliston.”

“You didn’t suspect that I loved you?”

“How could I? Oh, I might have loved you, if I’d been fortunate—if I’d deserved it. But I never thought, I always looked up to you—you are so far above me!” She lifted her face to him in agony. “I’m sorry—I’m sorry for you—I’ll never forgive myself!”

“It’s—some one else?” he asked.

“I was—going to be married to—to Mr. Ditmar,” she said slowly, despairingly.

“But even then—” Insall began.

“You don’t understand!” she cried. “What will you think of me?—Mrs. Maturin was to have told you, after I’d gone. It’s—it’s the same as if I were married to him—only worse.”

“Worse!” Insall repeated uncomprehendingly.... And then she was aware that he had left her side. He was standing by the window.

A thrush began to sing in the maple. She stole silently toward the door, and paused to look back at him, once to meet his glance. He had turned.

“I can’t—I can’t let you go like this!” she heard him say, but she fled from him, out of the gate and toward the Common....

When Janet appeared, Augusta Maturin was in her garden. With an instant perception that something was wrong, she went to the girl and led her to the sofa in the library. There the confession was made.

“I never guessed it,” Janet sobbed. “Oh, Mrs. Maturin, you’ll believe me—won’t you?”

“Of course I believe you, Janet,” Augusta Maturity replied, trying to hide her pity, her own profound concern and perplexity. “I didn’t suspect it either. If I had—”

“You wouldn’t have brought me here, you wouldn’t have asked me to stay with you. But I was to blame, I oughtn’t to have stayed, I knew all along that something would happen—something terrible that I hadn’t any right to stay.”

“Who could have foreseen it!” her friend exclaimed helplessly. “Brooks isn’t like any other man I’ve ever known—one can never tell what he has in mind. Not that I’m surprised as I look back upon it all!”

“I’ve hurt him!”

Augusta Maturity was silent awhile. “Remember, my dear,” she begged, “you haven’t only yourself to think about, from now on.”

But comfort was out of the question, the task of calming the girl impossible. Finally the doctor was sent for, and she was put to bed....

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Augusta Maturity spent an agonized, sleepless night, a prey of many emotions; of self-reproach, seeing now that she had been wrong in not telling Brooks Insall of the girl's secret; of sorrow and sympathy for him; of tenderness toward the girl, despite the suffering she had brought; of unwonted rebellion against a world that cheated her of this cherished human tie for which she had longed the first that had come into her life since her husband and child had gone. And there was her own responsibility for Insall's unhappiness—when she recalled with a pang her innocent sayings that Janet was the kind of woman he, an artist, should marry! And it was true—if he must marry. He himself had seen it. Did Janet love him? or did she still remember Ditmar? Again and again, during the summer that followed, this query was on her lips, but remained unspoken....

The next day Insall disappeared. No one knew where he had gone, but his friends in Silliston believed he had been seized by one of his sudden, capricious fancies for wandering. For many months his name was not mentioned between Augusta Maturity and Janet. By the middle of June they had gone to Canada....

In order to reach the camp on Lac du Sablier from the tiny railroad station at Saint Hubert, a trip of some eight miles up the decharge was necessary. The day had been when Augusta Maturity had done her share of paddling and poling, with an habitant guide in the bow. She had foreseen all the needs of this occasion, warm clothes for Janet, who was wrapped in blankets and placed on cushions in the middle of a canoe, while she herself followed in a second, from time to time exclaiming, in a reassuring voice, that one had nothing to fear in the hands of Delphin and Herve, whom she had known intimately for more than twenty years. It was indeed a wonderful, exciting, and at moments seemingly perilous journey up the forested aisle of the river: at sight of the first roaring reach of rapids Janet held her breath—so incredible did it appear that any human power could impel and guide a boat up the white stairway between the boulders! Was it not courting destruction? Yet she felt a strange, wild delight in the sense of danger, of amazement at the woodsman's eye that found and followed the crystal paths through the waste of foam.... There were long, quiet stretches, hemmed in by alders, where the canoes, dodging the fallen trees, glided through the still water... No such silent, exhilarating motion Janet had ever known. Even the dipping paddles made no noise, though sometimes there was a gurgle, as though a fish had broken the water behind them; sometimes, in the shining pools ahead, she saw the trout leap out. At every startling flop Delphin would exclaim: "Un gros!" From an upper branch of a spruce a kingfisher darted like an arrow into the water, making a splash like a falling stone. Once, after they had passed through the breach of a beaver dam, Herve nodded his head toward a mound of twigs by the bank and muttered something. Augusta Maturin laughed.

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“Cabane de castor, he says—a beaver cabin. And the beavers made the dam we just passed. Did you notice, Janet, how beautifully clean those logs had been cut by their sharp teeth?”

At moments she conversed rapidly with Delphin in the same patois Janet had heard on the streets of Hampton. How long ago that seemed!

On two occasions, when the falls were sheer, they had to disembark and walk along little portages through the green raspberry bushes. The prints of great hooves in the black silt betrayed where wild animals had paused to drink. They stopped for lunch on a warm rock beside a singing waterfall, and at last they turned an elbow in the stream and with suddenly widened vision beheld the lake’s sapphire expanse and the distant circle of hills. “Les montagnes,” Herve called them as he flung out his pipe, and this Janet could translate for herself. Eastward they lay lucent in the afternoon light; westward, behind the generous log camp standing on a natural terrace above the landing, they were in shadow. Here indeed seemed peace, if remoteness, if nature herself might bestow it.

Janet little suspected that special preparations had been made for her comfort. Early in April, while the wilderness was still in the grip of winter, Delphin had been summoned from a far-away lumber camp to Saint Hubert, where several packing-cases and two rolls of lead pipe from Montreal lay in a shed beside the railroad siding. He had superintended the transportation of these, on dog sledges, up the frozen decharge, accompanied on his last trip by a plumber of sorts from Beaupre, thirty miles down the line; and between them they had improvised a bathroom, and attached a boiler to the range! Only a week before the arrival of Madame the spring on the hillside above the camp had been tapped, and the pipe laid securely underground. Besides this unheard-of luxury for the Lac du Sablier there were iron beds and mattresses and little wood stoves to go in the four bedrooms, which were more securely chinked with moss. The traditions of that camp had been hospitable. In Professor Wishart’s day many guests had come and gone, or pitched their tents nearby; and Augusta Maturin, until this summer, had rarely been here alone, although she had no fears of the wilderness, and Delphin brought his daughter Delphine to do the housework and cooking. The land for miles round about was owned by a Toronto capitalist who had been a friend of her father, and who could afford as a hobby the sparing of the forest. By his permission a few sportsmen came to fish or shoot, and occasionally their campfires could be seen across the water, starlike glows in the darkness of the night, at morning and evening little blue threads of smoke that rose against the forest; “bocane,” Delphin called it, and Janet found a sweet, strange magic in these words of the pioneer.

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The lake was a large one, shaped like an hourglass, as its name implied, and Augusta Maturin sometimes paddled Janet through the wide, shallow channel to the northern end, even as she had once paddled Gifford. Her genius was for the helpless. One day, when the waters were high, and the portages could be dispensed with, they made an excursion through the Riviere des Peres to the lake of that name, the next in the chain above. For luncheon they ate the trout Augusta caught; and in the afternoon, when they returned to the mouth of the outlet, Herve, softly checking the canoe with his paddle, whispered the word "Arignal!" Thigh deep in the lush grasses of the swamp was an animal with a huge grey head, like a donkey's, staring foolishly in their direction—a cow moose. With a tremendous commotion that awoke echoes in the forest she tore herself from the mud and disappeared, followed by her panic-stricken offspring, a caricature of herself....

By September the purple fireweed that springs up beside old camps, and in the bois brute, had bloomed and scattered its myriad, impalpable thistledowns over crystal floors. Autumn came to the Laurentians. In the morning the lake lay like a quicksilver pool under the rising mists, through which the sun struck blinding flashes of light. A little later, when the veil had lifted, it became a mirror for the hills and crags, the blue reaches of the sky. The stinging air was spiced with balsam. Revealed was the incredible brilliance of another day,—the arsenic-green of the spruce, the red and gold of the maples, the yellow of the alders bathing in the shallows, of the birches, whose white limbs could be seen gleaming in the twilight of the thickets. Early, too early, the sun fell down behind the serrated forest-edge of the western hill, a ball of orange fire.... One evening Delphin and Herve, followed by two other canoes, paddled up to the landing. New visitors had arrived, Dr. McLeod, who had long been an intimate of the Wishart family, and with him a buxom, fresh-complexioned Canadian woman, a trained nurse whom he had brought from Toronto.

There, in nature's wilderness, Janet knew the supreme experience of women, the agony, the renewal and joy symbolic of nature herself. When the child was bathed and dressed in the clothes Augusta Maturin herself had made for it, she brought it into the room to the mother.

"It's a daughter," she announced.

Janet regarded the child wistfully. "I hoped it would be a boy," she said. "He would have had—a better chance." But she raised her arms, and the child was laid in the bed beside her.

"We'll see that she has a chance, my dear," Augusta Maturin replied, as she kissed her.

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Ten days went by, Dr. McLeod lingered at Lac du Sablier, and Janet was still in bed. Even in this life-giving air she did not seem to grow stronger. Sometimes, when the child was sleeping in its basket on the sunny porch, Mrs. Maturin read to her; but often when she was supposed to rest, she lay gazing out of the open window into silver space listening to the mocking laughter of the loons, watching the ducks flying across the sky; or, as evening drew on, marking in the waters a steely angle that grew and grew—the wake of a beaver swimming homeward in the twilight. In the cold nights the timbers cracked to the frost, she heard the owls calling to one another from the fastnesses of the forest, and thought of life's inscrutable mystery. Then the child would be brought to her. It was a strange, unimagined happiness she knew when she felt it clutching at her breasts, at her heart, a happiness not unmixed with yearning, with sadness as she pressed it to her. Why could it not remain there always, to comfort her, to be nearer her than any living thing? Reluctantly she gave it back to the nurse, wistfully her eyes followed it....

Twice a week, now, Delphin and Herve made the journey to Saint Hubert, and one evening, after Janet had watched them paddling across the little bay that separated the camp from the outlet's mouth, Mrs. Maturin appeared, with an envelope in her hand.

"I've got a letter from Brooks Insall, Janet," she said, with a well-disguised effort to speak naturally. "It's not the first one he's sent me, but I haven't mentioned the others. He's in Silliston—and I wrote him about the daughter."

"Yes," said Janet.

"Well—he wants to come up here, to see you, before we go away. He asks me to telegraph your permission."

"Oh no, he mustn't, Mrs. Maturin!"

"You don't care to see him?"

"It isn't that. I'd like to see him if things had been different. But now that I've disappointed him—hurt him, I couldn't stand it. I know it's only his kindness."

After a moment Augusta Maturin handed Janet a sealed envelope she held in her hand.

"He asked me to give you this," she said, and left the room. Janet read it, and let it fall on the bedspread, where it was still lying when her friend returned and began tidying the room. From the direction of the guide's cabin, on the point, came the sounds of talk and laughter, broken by snatches of habitant songs. Augusta Maturin smiled. She pretended not to notice the tears in Janet's eyes, and strove to keep back her own.

"Delphin and Herve saw a moose in the decharge," she explained. "Of course it was a big one, it always is! They're telling the doctor about it."

“Mrs. Maturin,” said Janet, “I’d like to talk to you. I think I ought to tell you what Mr. Insall says.”

“Yes, my dear,” her friend replied, a little faintly, sitting down on the bed.

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“He asks me to believe what—I’ve done makes no difference to him. Of course he doesn’t put it in so many words, but he says he doesn’t care anything about conventions,” Janet continued slowly. “What I told him when he asked me to marry him in Silliston was a shock to him, it was so —so unexpected. He went away, to Maine, but as soon as he began to think it all over he wanted to come and tell me that he loved me in spite of it, but he felt he couldn’t, under the circumstances, that he had to wait until—-now. Although I didn’t give him any explanation, he wants me to know that he trusts me, he understands—it’s because, he says, I am what I am. He still wishes to marry me, to take care of me and the child. We could live in California, at first—he’s always been anxious to go there, he says.”

“Well, my dear?” Augusta Maturin forced herself to say at last.

“It’s so generous—so like him!” Janet exclaimed. “But of course I couldn’t accept such a sacrifice, even if—” She paused. “Oh, it’s made me so sad all summer to think that he’s unhappy because of me!”

“I know, Janet, but you should realize, as I told you in Silliston, that it isn’t by any deliberate act of your own, it’s just one of those things that occur in this world and that can’t be foreseen or avoided.” Augusta Maturin spoke with an effort. In spite of Janet’s apparent calm, she had never been more acutely aware of the girl’s inner suffering.

“I know,” said Janet. “But it’s terrible to think that those things we unintentionally do, perhaps because of faults we have previously committed, should have the same effect as acts that are intentional.”

“The world is very stupid. All suffering, I think, is brought about by stupidity. If we only could learn to look at ourselves as we are! It’s a stupid, unenlightened society that metes out most of our punishments and usually demands a senseless expiation.” Augusta Maturin waited, and presently Janet spoke again.

“I’ve been thinking all summer, Mrs. Maturin. There was so much I wanted to talk about with you, but I wanted to be sure of myself first. And now, since the baby came, and I know I’m not going to get well, I seem to see things much more clearly.”

“Why do you say you’re not going to get well, Janet? In this air, and with the child to live for!”

“I know it. Dr. McLeod knows it, or he wouldn’t be staying here, and you’ve both been too kind to tell me. You’ve been so kind, Mrs. Maturin —I can’t talk about it. But I’m sure I’m going to die, I’ve really known it ever since we left Silliston. Something’s gone out of me, the thing that drove me, that made me want to live—I can’t express what I mean any other way. Perhaps it’s this child, the new life—perhaps I’ve just been

broken, I don't know. You did your best to mend me, and that's one thing that makes me sad. And the thought of Mr. Insall's another. In some ways it would

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have been worse to live—I couldn't have ruined his life. And even if things had been different, I hadn't come to love him, in that way—it's queer, because he's such a wonderful person. I'd like to live for the child, if only I had the strength, the will left in me—but that's gone. And maybe I could save her from—what I've been through."

Augusta Maturin took Janet's hand in hers.

"Janet," she said, "I've been a lonely woman, as you know, with nothing to look forward to. I've always wanted a child since my little Edith went. I wanted you, my dear, I want your child, your daughter—as I want nothing else in the world. I will take her, I will try to bring her up in the light, and Brooks Insall will help me...."

PG EDITOR'S BOOKMARKS:

Anger and revolt against a life so precarious and sordid
But when you get to a point where private affairs become a public menace
Exorbitant price for joys otherwise more reasonably to be obtained
Foreigners. I never could see why the government lets 'em all come
Hitherto he had held rigidly to that relativity
Janet resented that pity
Love is nothing but attraction between the sexes
Mercifully, however, she had little leisure to reflect
Perhaps she feared to break the charm of that memory
She resented being prayed for
Struggled against her woman's desire to give
Tested the limits of Janet's ingenuity and powers of resistance
The seventh commandment was only relative
There had been something sorrowful in that kiss
Too much reason in the world, too little impulse and feeling

MR. CREWE'S CAREER, Complete

By *Winston Churchill*

BOOK 1.

CHAPTER I

THE HONOURABLE HILARY VANE SITS FOR HIS PORTRAIT

I may as well begin this story with Mr. Hilary Vane, more frequently addressed as the Honourable Hilary Vane, although it was the gentleman's proud boast that he had never held an office in his life. He belonged to the Vanes of Camden Street,—a beautiful village in the hills near Ripton,—and was, in common with some other great men who had made a noise in New York and the nation, a graduate of Camden Wentworth Academy. But Mr. Vane, when he was at home, lived on a wide, maple-shaded street in the city of Ripton, cared for by an elderly housekeeper who had more edges than a new-fangled mowing machine. The house was a porticoed one which had belonged to the Austens for a hundred years or more, for Hilary Vane had married, towards middle age, Miss Sarah Austen. In two years he was a widower, and he never tried it again; he had the Austens' house, and that many-edged woman, Euphrasia Cotton, the Austens' housekeeper.

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The house was of wood, and was painted white as regularly as leap year. From the street front to the vegetable garden in the extreme rear it was exceedingly long, and perhaps for propriety's sake—Hilary Vane lived at one end of it and Euphrasia at the other. Hilary was sixty-five, Euphrasia seventy, which is not old for frugal people, though it is just as well to add that there had never been a breath of scandal about either of them, in Ripton or elsewhere. For the Honourable Hilary's modest needs one room sufficed, and the front parlour had not been used since poor Sarah Austen's demise, thirty years before this story opens.

In those thirty years, by a sane and steady growth, Hilary Vane had achieved his present eminent position in the State. He was trustee for I know not how many people and institutions, a deacon in the first church, a lawyer of such ability that he sometimes was accorded the courtesy-title of "Judge." His only vice—if it could be called such—-was in occasionally placing a piece, the size of a pea, of a particular kind of plug tobacco under his tongue,—and this was not known to many people. Euphrasia could not be called a wasteful person, and Hilary had accumulated no small portion of this world's goods, and placed them as propriety demanded, where they were not visible to the naked eye: and be it added in his favour that he gave as secretly, to institutions and hospitals the finances and methods of which were known to him.

As concrete evidence of the Honourable Hilary Vane's importance, when he travelled he had only to withdraw from his hip-pocket a book in which many coloured cards were neatly inserted, an open-sesame which permitted him to sit without payment even in those wheeled palaces of luxury known as Pullman cars. Within the limits of the State he did not even have to open the book, but merely say, with a twinkle of his eyes to the conductor, "Good morning, John," and John would reply with a bow and a genial and usually witty remark, and point him out to a nobody who sat in the back of the car. So far had Mr. Hilary Vane's talents carried him.

The beginning of this eminence dated back to the days before the Empire, when there were many little principalities of railroads fighting among themselves. For we are come to a changed America. There was a time, in the days of the sixth Edward of England, when the great landowners found it more profitable to consolidate the farms, seize the common lands, and acquire riches hitherto undreamed of. Hence the rising of tailor Ket and others, and the leveling of fences and barriers, and the eating of many sheep. It may have been that Mr. Vane had come across this passage in English history, but he drew no parallels. His first position of trust had been as counsel for that principality known in the old days as the Central Railroad, of which a certain Mr. Duncan had been president, and Hilary Vane had fought the Central's battles

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with such telling effect that when it was merged into the one Imperial Railroad, its stockholders —to the admiration of financiers—were guaranteed ten per cent. It was, indeed, rumoured that Hilary drew the Act of Consolidation itself. At any rate, he was too valuable an opponent to neglect, and after a certain interval of time Mr. Vane became chief counsel in the State for the Imperial Railroad, on which dizzy height we now behold him. And he found, by degrees, that he had no longer time for private practice.

It is perhaps gratuitous to add that the Honourable Hilary Vane was a man of convictions. In politics he would have told you—with some vehemence, if you seemed to doubt—that he was a Republican. Treason to party he regarded with a deep-seated abhorrence, as an act for which a man should be justly outlawed. If he were in a mellow mood, with the right quantity of Honey Dew tobacco under his tongue, he would perhaps tell you why he was a Republican, if he thought you worthy of his confidence. He believed in the gold standard, for one thing; in the tariff (left unimpaired in its glory) for another, and with a wave of his hand would indicate the prosperity of the nation which surrounded him,—a prosperity too sacred to tamper with.

One article of his belief, and in reality the chief article, Mr. Vane would not mention to you. It was perhaps because he had never formulated the article for himself. It might be called a faith in the divine right of Imperial Railroads to rule, but it was left out of the verbal creed. This is far from implying hypocrisy to Mr. Vane. It was his foundation-rock and too sacred for light conversation. When he allowed himself to be bitter against various “young men with missions” who had sprung up in various States of the Union, so-called purifiers of politics, he would call them the unsuccessful with a grievance, and recommend to them the practice of charity, forbearance, and other Christian virtues. Thank God, his State was not troubled with such.

In person Mr. Hilary Vane was tall, with a slight stoop to his shoulders, and he wore the conventional double-breasted black coat, which reached to his knees, and square-toed congress boots. He had a Puritan beard, the hawk-like Vane nose, and a twinkling eye that spoke of a sense of humour and a knowledge of the world. In short, he was no man’s fool, and on occasions had been more than a match for certain New York lawyers with national reputations.

It is rare, in this world of trouble, that such an apparently ideal and happy state of existence is without a canker. And I have left the revelation of the canker to the last. Ripton knew it was there, Camden Street knew it, and Mr. Vane’s acquaintances throughout the State; but nobody ever spoke of it. Euphrasia shed over it the only tears she had known since Sarah Austen died, and some of these blotted the only letters she wrote. Hilary Vane did not shed tears, but his friends suspected that his heart-strings were torn, and pitied him. Hilary Vane fiercely resented pity, and that was why they did

not speak of it. This trouble of his was the common point on which he and Euphrasia touched, and they touched only to quarrel. Let us out with it—Hilary Vane had a wild son, whose name was Austen.

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Euphrasia knew that in his secret soul Mr. Vane attributed this wildness, and what he was pleased to designate as profligacy, to the Austen blood. And Euphrasia resented it bitterly. Sarah Austen had been a young, elfish thing when he married her,—a dryad, the elderly and learned Mrs. Tredway had called her. Mr Vane had understood her about as well as he would have understood Mary, Queen of Scots, if he had been married to that lady. Sarah Austen had a wild, shy beauty, startled, alert eyes like an animal, and rebellious black hair that curled about her ears and gave her a faun-like appearance. With a pipe and the costume of Rosalind she would have been perfect. She had had a habit of running off for the day into the hills with her son, and the conventions of Ripton had been to her as so many defunct blue laws. During her brief married life there had been periods of defiance from her lasting a week, when she would not speak to Hilary or look at him, and these periods would be followed by violent spells of weeping in Euphrasia's arms, when the house was no place for Hilary. He possessed by matrimony and intricate mechanism of which his really admirable brain could not grasp the first principles; he felt for her a real if uncomfortable affection, but when she died he heaved a sigh of relief, at which he was immediately horrified.

Austen he understood little better, but his affection for the child may be likened to the force of a great river rushing through a narrow gorge, and he vied with Euphrasia in spoiling him. Neither knew what they were doing, and the spoiling process was interspersed with occasional and (to Austen) unmeaning intervals of severe discipline. The boy loved the streets and the woods and his fellow-beings; his punishments were a series of afternoons in the house, during one of which he wrecked the bedroom where he was confined, and was soundly whaled with an old slipper that broke under the process. Euphrasia kept the slipper, and once showed it to Hilary during a quarrel they had when the boy was grown up and gone and the house was silent, and Hilary had turned away, choking, and left the room. Such was his cross.

To make it worse, the boy had love his father. Nay, still loved him. As a little fellow, after a scolding for some wayward prank, he would throw himself into Hilary's arms and cling to him, and would never know how near he came to unmanning him. As Austen grew up, they saw the world in different colours: blue to Hilary was red to Austen, and white, black; essentials to one were non-essentials to the other; boys and girls, men and women, abhorred by one were boon companions to the other.

Austen made fun of the minister, and was compelled to go church twice on Sundays and to prayer-meeting on Wednesdays. Then he went to Camden Street, to live with his grandparents in the old Vane house and attend Camden Wentworth Academy. His letters, such as they were, were inimitable if crude, but contained not the kind of humour Hilary Vane knew. Camden Wentworth, principal and teachers, was painted to the life; and the lad could hardly wait for vacation time to see his father, only to begin quarreling with him again.

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I pass over escapades in Ripton that shocked one half of the population and convulsed the other half. Austen went to the college which his father had attended,—a college of splendid American traditions,—and his career there might well have puzzled a father of far greater tolerance and catholicity. Hilary Vane was a trustee, and journeyed more than once to talk the matter over with the president, who had been his classmate there.

“I love that boy, Hilary,” the president had said at length, when pressed for a frank opinion,—“there isn’t a soul in the place, I believe, that doesn’t,—undergraduates and faculty,—but he has given me more anxious thought than any scholar I have ever had.”

“Trouble,” corrected Mr. Vane, sententiously.

“Well, yes, trouble,” answered the president, smiling, “but upon my soul, I think it is all animal spirits.”

“A euphemism for the devil,” said Hilary, grimly; “he is the animal part of us, I have been brought up to believe.”

The president was a wise man, and took another tack.

“He has a really remarkable mind, when he chooses to use it. Every once in a while he takes your breath away—but he has to become interested. A few weeks ago Hays came to me direct from his lecture room to tell me about a discussion of Austen’s in constitutional law. Hays, you know, is not easily enthused, but he declares your son has as fine a legal brain as he has come across in his experience. But since then, I am bound to admit,” added the president, sadly, “Austen seems not to have looked at a lesson.”

“‘Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel,’” replied Hilary.

“He’ll sober down,” said the president, stretching his conviction a little, “he has two great handicaps: he learns too easily, and he is too popular.” The president looked out of his study window across the common, surrounded by the great elms which had been planted when Indian lads played among the stumps and the red flag of England had flown from the tall pine staff. The green was covered now with students of a conquering race, skylarking to and fro as they looked on at a desultory baseball game. “I verily believe,” said the president, “at a word from your son, most of them would put on their coats and follow him on any mad expedition that came into his mind.”

Hilary Vane groaned more than once in the train back to Ripton. It meant nothing to him to be the father of the most popular man in college.

“The mad expedition” came at length in the shape of a fight with the townspeople, in which Austen, of course, was the ringleader. If he had inherited his mother’s eccentricities, he had height and physique from the Vanes, and one result was a week

in bed for the son of the local plumber and a damage suit against the Honourable Hilary. Another result was that Austen and a Tom Gaylord came back to Ripton on a long suspension, which, rumour said, would have been expulsion if Hilary were not a trustee. Tom Gaylord was proud of suspension in such company. More of him later. He was the son of old Tom Gaylord, who owned more lumber than any man in the State, and whom Hilary Vane believed to be the receptacle of all the vices.

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Eventually Austen went back and graduated—not summa cum laude, honesty compels me to add. Then came the inevitable discussion, and to please his father he went to the Harvard Law School for two years. At the end of that time, instead of returning to Ripton, a letter had come from him with the postmark of a Western State, where he had fled with a classmate who owned ranch. Evidently the worldly consideration to be derived from conformity counted little with Austen Vane. Money was a medium only—-not an end. He was in the saddle all day, with nothing but the horizon to limit him; he loved his father, and did not doubt his father's love for him, and he loved Euphrasia. He could support himself, but he must see life. The succeeding years brought letters and quaint, useless presents to both the occupants of the lonely house,—Navajo blankets and Indian jeweler and basket-work,—and Austen little knew how carefully these were packed away and surreptitiously gazed at from time to time. But to Hilary the Western career was a disgrace, and such meagre reports of it as came from other sources than Austen tended only to confirm him in this opinion.

It was commonly said of Mr. Paul Pardriff that not a newspaper fell from the press that he did not have a knowledge of its contents. Certain it was that Mr. Pardriff made a specialty of many kinds of knowledge, political and otherwise, and, the information he could give—if he chose —about State and national affairs was of a recondite and cynical nature that made one wish to forget about the American flag. Mr. Pardriff was under forty, and with these gifts many innocent citizens of Ripton naturally wondered why the columns of his newspaper, the Ripton Record, did not more closely resemble the spiciness of his talk in the office of Gales' Hotel. The columns contained, instead, such efforts as essays on a national flower and the abnormal size of the hats of certain great men, notably Andrew Jackson; yes, and the gold standard; and in times of political stress they were devoted to a somewhat fulsome praise of regular and orthodox Republican candidates,—and praise of any one was not in character with the editor. Ill-natured people said that the matter in his paper might possibly be accounted for by the gratitude of the candidates, and the fact that Mr. Pardriff and his wife and his maid-servant and his hired man travelled on pink mileage books, which could only be had for love—not money. On the other hand, reputable witnesses had had it often from Mr. Pardriff that he was a reformer, and not at all in sympathy with certain practices which undoubtedly existed.

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Some years before—to be exact, the year Austen Vane left the law school —Mr. Pardriff had proposed to exchange the Ripton Record with the editor of the Pepper County Plainsman in afar Western State. The exchange was effected, and Mr. Pardriff glanced over the Plainsman regularly once a week, though I doubt whether the Western editor ever read the Record after the first copy. One day in June Mr. Pardriff was seated in his sanctum above Merrill's drug store when his keen green eyes fell upon the following:—- "The Plainsman considers it safe to say that the sympathy of the people of Pepper County at large is with Mr. Austen Vane, whose personal difficulty with Jim Blodgett resulted so disastrously for Mr. Blodgett. The latter gentleman has long made himself obnoxious to local ranch owners by his persistent disregard of property lines and property, and it will be recalled that he is at present in hot water with the energetic Secretary of the Interior for fencing government lands. Vane, who was recently made manager of Ready Money Ranch, is one of the most popular young men in the county. He was unwillingly assisted over the State line by his friends. Although he has never been a citizen of the State, the Plainsman trusts that he may soon be back and become one of us. At last report Mr. Blodgett was resting easily."

This article obtained circulation in Ripton, although it was not copied into the Record out of deference to the feelings of the Honourable Hilary Vane. In addition to the personal regard Mr. Pardriff professed to have for the Honourable Hilary, it maybe well to remember that Austen's father was, among other, things, chairman of the State Committee. Mr. Tredway (largest railroad stockholder in Ripton) pursed his lips that were already pursed. Tom Gaylord roared with laughter. Two or three days later the Honourable Hilary, still in blissful ignorance, received a letter that agitated him sorely.

"*Dear father*: I hope you don't object to receiving a little visit from a prodigal, wayward son. To tell the truth, I have found it convenient to leave the Ready Money Ranch for a while, although Bob Tyner is good enough to say I may have the place when I come back. You know I often think of you and Phrasie back in Ripton, and I long to see the dear old town again. Expect me when you see me.

"Your aff. son,
"*Austen*."

CHAPTER II

ON THE TREATMENT OF PRODIGALS

While Euphrasia, in a frenzy of anticipation, garnished and swept the room which held for her so many memories of Austen's boyhood, even beating the carpet with her own hands, Hilary Vane went about his business with no apparent lack of diligence. But he was meditating. He had many times listened to the Reverend Mr. Weightman read the parable from the pulpit, but he had never reflected how it would be to be the father of a

real prodigal. What was to be done about the calf? Was there to be a calf, or was there not? To tell the truth, Hilary wanted a calf, and yet to have one (in spite of Holy Writ) would seem to set a premium on disobedience and riotous living.

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Again, Austen had reached thirty, an age when it was not likely he would settle down and live an orderly and godly life among civilized beings, and therefore a fatted calf was likely to be the first of many follies which he (Hilary) would live to regret. No, he would deal with justice. How he dealt will be seen presently, but when he finally reached this conclusion, the clipping from the Pepper County Plainsman had not yet come before his eyes.

It is worth relating how the clipping did come before his eyes, for no one in Ripton had the temerity to speak of it. Primarily, it was because Miss Victoria Flint had lost a terrier, and secondarily, because she was a person of strong likes and dislikes. In pursuit of the terrier she drove madly through Leith, which, as everybody knows, is a famous colony of rich summer residents. Victoria probably stopped at every house in Leith, and searched them with characteristic vigour and lack of ceremony, sometimes entering by the side door, and sometimes by the front, and caring very little whether the owners were at home or not. Mr. Humphrey Crewe discovered her in a boa-stall at Wedderburn,—as his place was called,—for it made little difference to Victoria that Mr. Crewe was a bachelor of marriageable age and millions. Full, as ever, of practical suggestions, Mr. Crewe proposed to telephone to Ripton and put an advertisement in the Record, which—as he happened to know—went to press the next day. Victoria would not trust to the telephone, whereupon Mr. Crewe offered to drive down with her.

“You’d bore me, Humphrey,” said she, as she climbed into her runabout with the father and grandfather of the absentee. Mr. Crewe laughed as she drove away. He had a chemical quality of turning invidious remarks into compliments, and he took this one as Victoria’s manner of saying that she did not wish to disturb so important a man.

Arriving in the hot main street of Ripton, her sharp eyes descried the Record sign over the drug store, and in an astonishingly short time she was in the empty office. Mr. Pardriff was at dinner. She sat down in the editorial chair and read a great deal of uninteresting matter, but at last found something on the floor (where the wind had blown it) which made her laugh. It was the account of Austen Vane’s difficulty with Mr. Blodgett. Victoria did not know Austen, but she knew that the Honourable Hilary had a son of that name who had gone West, and this was what tickled her. She thrust the clipping in the pocket of her linen coat just as Mr. Pardriff came in.

Her conversation with the editor of the Record proved so entertaining that she forgot all about the clipping until she had reached Fairview, and had satisfied a somewhat imperious appetite by a combination of lunch and afternoon tea. Fairview was the “summer place” of Mr. Augustus P. Flint, her father, on a shelf of the hills in the town of Tunbridge, equidistant from Leith and Ripton: and Mr. Flint was the president of the Imperial Railroad, no less.

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Yes, he had once been plain Gus Flint, many years ago, when he used to fetch the pocket-handkerchiefs of Mr. Isaac D. Worthington of Brampton, and he was still “Gus” to his friends. Mr. Flint’s had been the brain which had largely conceived and executed the consolidation of principalities of which the Imperial Railroad was the result and, as surely as tough metal prevails, Mr. Flint, after many other trials and errors of weaker stuff, had been elected to the place for which he was so supremely fitted. We are so used in America to these tremendous rises that a paragraph will suffice to place Mr. Flint in his Aladdin’s palace. To do him justice, he cared not a fig for the palace, and he would have been content with the farmhouse under the hill where his gardener lived. You could not fool Mr. Flint on a horse or a farm, and he knew to a dot what a railroad was worth by travelling over it. Like his governor-general and dependent, Mr. Hilary Vane, he had married a wife who had upset all his calculations. The lady discovered Mr. Flint’s balance in the bank, and had proceeded to use it for her own glorification, and the irony of it all was that he could defend it from everybody else. Mrs. Flint spent, and Mr. Flint paid the bills; for the first ten years protestingly, and after that he gave it up and let her go her own gait.

She had come from the town of Sharon, in another State, through which Mr. Flint’s railroad also ran, and she had been known as the Rose of that place. She had begun to rise immediately, with the kite-like adaptability of the American woman for high altitudes, and the leaden weight of the husband at the end of the tail was as nothing to her. She had begun it all by the study of people in hotels while Mr. Flint was closeted with officials and directors. By dint of minute observation and reasoning powers and unflagging determination she passed rapidly through several strata, and had made a country place out of her husband’s farm in Tunbridge, so happily and conveniently situated near Leith. In winter they lived on Fifth Avenue.

One daughter alone had halted, for a minute period, this progress, and this daughter was Victoria—named by her mother. Victoria was now twenty-one, and was not only of another generation, but might almost have been judged of another race than her parents. The things for which her mother had striven she took for granted, and thought of them not at all, and she had by nature that simplicity and astonishing frankness of manner and speech which was once believed to be an exclusive privilege of duchesses.

To return to Fairview. Victoria, after sharing her five o’clock luncheon with her dogs, went to seek her father, for the purpose (if it must be told) of asking him for a cheque. Mr. Flint was at Fairview on the average of two days out of the week during the summer, and then he was nearly always closeted with a secretary and two stenographers and a long-distance telephone in two plain little rooms at the back of the house. And Mr. Hilary Vane was often in consultation with him, as he was on the present occasion when Victoria flung open the door. At sight of Mr. Vane she halted suddenly on the threshold, and a gleam of mischief came into her eye as she thrust her hand into her coat pocket. The two regarded her with the detached air of men whose thread of thought has been broken.

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“Well, Victoria,” said her father, kindly if resignedly, “what is it now?”

“Money,” replied Victoria, promptly; “I went to Avalon this morning and bought that horse you said I might have.”

“What horse?” asked Mr. Flint, vaguely. “But never mind. Tell Mr. Freeman to make out the cheque.”

Mr. Vane glanced at Mr. Flint, and his eyes twinkled. Victoria, who had long ago discovered the secret of the Honey Dew, knew that he was rolling it under his tongue and thinking her father a fool for his indulgence.

“How do you do, Mr. Vane?” she said; “Austen’s coming home, isn’t he?” She had got this by feminine arts out of Mr. Paul Pardriff, to whom she had not confided the fact of her possession of the clipping.

The Honourable Hilary gave a grunt, as he always did when he was surprised and displeased, as though some one had prodded him with a stick in a sensitive spot.

“Your son? Why, Vane, you never told me that,” said Mr. Flint. “I didn’t know that you knew him, Victoria.”

“I don’t,” answered Victoria, “but I’d like to. What did he do to Mr. Blodgett?” she demanded of Hilary.

“Mr. Blodgett!” exclaimed that gentleman. “I never heard of him. What’s happened to him?”

“He will probably recover,” she assured him.

The Honourable Hilary, trying in vain to suppress his agitation, rose to his feet.

“I don’t know what you’re talking about, Victoria,” he said, but his glance was fixed on the clipping in her hand.

“Haven’t you seen it?” she asked, giving it to him.

He read it in silence, groaned, and handed it to Mr. Flint, who had been drumming on the table and glancing at Victoria with vague disapproval. Mr. Flint read it and gave it back to the Honourable Hilary, who groaned again and looked out of the window.

“Why do you feel badly about it?” asked Victoria. “I’d be proud of him, if I were you.”

“Proud of him” echoed Mr. Vane, grimly. “Proud of him!”

“Victoria, what do you mean?” said Mr. Flint.

“Why not?” said Victoria. “He’s done nothing to make you ashamed. According to that clipping, he’s punished a man who richly deserved to be punished, and he has the sympathy of an entire county.”

Hilary Vane was not a man to discuss his domestic affliction with anybody, so he merely grunted and gazed persistently out of the window, and was not aware of the fact that Victoria made a little face at him as she left the room. The young are not always impartial judges of the old, and Victoria had never forgiven him for carrying to her father the news of an escapade of hers in Ripton.

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As he drove through the silent forest roads on his way homeward that afternoon, the Honourable Hilary revolved the new and intensely disagreeable fact in his mind as to how he should treat a prodigal who had attempted manslaughter and was a fugitive from justice. In the meantime a tall and spare young man of a red-bronze colour alighted from the five o'clock express at Ripton and grinned delightedly at the gentlemen who made the station their headquarters about train time. They were privately disappointed that the gray felt hat, although broad-brimmed, was not a sombrero, and the respectable, loose-fitting suit of clothes was not of buckskin with tassels on the trousers; and likewise that he came without the cartridge belt and holster which they had pictured in anticipatory sessions on the baggage-trucks. There could be no doubt of the warmth of their greeting as they sidled up and seized a hand somewhat larger than theirs, but the welcome had in it an ingredient of awe that puzzled the newcomer, who did not hesitate to inquire:—"What's the matter, Ed? Why so ceremonious, Perley?"

But his eagerness did not permit him to wait for explanations. Grasping his bag, the only baggage he possessed, he started off at a swinging stride for Hanover Street, pausing only to shake the hands of the few who recognized him, unconscious of the wild-fire at his back. Hanover Street was empty that drowsy summer afternoon, and he stopped under the well-remembered maples before the house and gazed at it long and tenderly; even at the windows of that room—open now for the first time in years—where he had served so many sentences of imprisonment. Then he went cautiously around by the side and looked in at the kitchen door. To other eyes than his Euphrasia might not have seemed a safe person to embrace, but in a moment he had her locked in his arms and weeping. She knew nothing as yet of Mr. Blodgett's misfortunes, but if Austen Vane had depopulated a county it would have made no difference in her affection.

"My, but you're a man," exclaimed Euphrasia, backing away at last and staring at him with the only complete approval she had ever accorded to any human being save one.

"What did you expect, Phrasie?"

"Come, and I'll show you your room," she said, in a gutter she could not hide; "it's got all the same pictures in, your mother's pictures, and the chair you broke that time when Hilary locked you in. It's mended."

"Hold on, Phrasie," said Austen, seizing her by the apron-strings, "how about the Judge?" It was by this title he usually designated his father.

"What about him?" demanded Euphrasia, sharply.

"Well, it's his house, for one thing," answered Austen, "and he may prefer to have that room—empty."

“Empty! Turn you out? I’d like to see him,” cried Euphrasia. “It wouldn’t take me long to leave him high and dry.”

She paused at the sound of wheels, and there was the Honourable Hilary, across the garden patch, in the act of slipping out of his buggy at the stable door. In the absence of Luke, the hired man, the chief counsel for the railroad was wont to put up the horse himself, and he already had the reins festooned from the bit rings when he felt a heavy, hand on his shoulder and heard a voice say:—“How are you, Judge?”

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If the truth be told, that voice and that touch threw the Honourable Hilary's heart out of beat. Many days he had been schooling himself for this occasion: this very afternoon he had determined his course of action, which emphatically did not include a fatted calf. And now surged up a dryad-like memory which had troubled him many a wakeful night, of startled, appealing eyes that sought his in vain, and of the son she had left him flinging himself into his arms in the face of chastisement. For the moment Hilary Vane, under this traitorous influence, was unable to speak. But he let the hand rest on his shoulder, and at length was able to pronounce, in a shamefully shaky voice, the name of his son. Whereupon Austen seized him by the other shoulder and turned him round and looked into his face.

"The same old Judge," he said.

But Hilary was startled, even as Euphrasia had been. Was this strange, bronzed, quietly humorous young man his son? Hilary even had to raise his eyes a little; he had forgotten how tall Austen was. Strange emotions, unbidden and unwelcome, ran riot in his breast; and Hilary Vane, who made no slips before legislative committees or supreme courts, actually found himself saying:—"Euphrasia's got your room ready."

"It's good of you to take me in, Judge," said Austen, patting his shoulder. And then he began, quite naturally to unbuckle the breechings and loose the traces, which he did with such deftness and celerity that he had the horse unharnessed and in the stall in a twinkling, and had hauled the buggy through the stable door, the Honourable Hilary watching him the while. He was troubled, but for the life of him could find no adequate words, who usually had the dictionary at his disposal.

"Didn't write me why you came home," said the Honourable Hilary, as his son washed his hands at the spigot.

"Didn't I? Well, the truth was I wanted to see you again, Judge."

His father grunted, not with absolute displeasure, but suspiciously.

"How about Blodgett?" he asked.

"Blodgett? Have you heard about that? Who told you?"

"Never mind. You didn't. Nothing in your letter about it."

"It wasn't worth mentioning," replied Austen. "Tyner and the boys liked it pretty well, but I didn't think you'd be interested. It was a local affair."

"Not interested! Not worth mentioning!" exclaimed the Honourable Hilary, outraged to discover that his son was modestly deprecating an achievement instead of defending a crime. "Godfrey! murder ain't worth mentioning, I presume."

“Not when it isn’t successful,” said Austen. “If Blodgett had succeeded, I guess you’d have heard of it before you did.”

“Do you mean to say this Blodgett tried to kill you?” demanded the Honourable Hilary.

“Yes,” said his son, “and I’ve never understood why he didn’t. He’s a good deal better shot than I am.”

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The Honourable Hilary grunted, and sat down on a bucket and carefully prepared a piece of Honey Dew. He was surprised and agitated.

“Then why are you a fugitive from justice if you were acting in self-defence?” he inquired.

“Well, you see there were no witnesses, except a Mexican of Blodgett’s, and Blodgett runs the Pepper County machine for the railroad out there. I’d been wanting to come East and have a look at you for some time, and I thought I might as well come now.”

“How did this—this affair start?” asked Mr. Vane.

“Blodgett was driving in some of Tyner’s calves, and I caught him. I told him what I thought of him, and he shot at me through his pocket. That was all.”

“All! You shot him, didn’t you?”

“I was lucky enough to hit him first,” said Austen.

Extraordinary as it may seem, the Honourable Hilary experienced a sense of pride.

“Where did you hit him?” he asked.

It was Euphrasia who took matters in her own hands and killed the fatted calf, and the meal to which they presently sat down was very different from the frugal suppers Mr. Vane usually had. But he made no comment. It is perhaps not too much to say that he would have been distinctly disappointed had it been otherwise. There was Austen’s favourite pie, and Austen’s favourite cake, all inherited from the Austens, who had thought more of the fleshpots than people should. And the prodigal did full justice to the occasion.

CHAPTER III

CONCERNING THE PRACTICE OF LAW

So instinctively do we hark back to the primeval man that there was a tendency to lionize the prodigal in Ripton, which proves the finished civilization of the East not to be so far removed from that land of outlaws, Pepper County. Mr. Paul Pardriff, who had a guilty conscience about the clipping, and vividly bearing in mind Mr. Blodgett’s mishap, alone avoided young Mr. Vane; and escaped through the type-setting room and down an outside stairway in the rear when that gentleman called. It gave an ironical turn to the incident that Mr. Pardriff was at the moment engaged in a “Welcome Home” paragraph meant to be propitiatory.

Austen cared very little for lionizing. He spent most of his time with young Tom Gaylord, now his father's right-hand man in a tremendous lumber business. And Tom, albeit he had become so important, habitually fell once more under the domination of the hero of his youthful days. Together these two visited haunts of their boyhood, camping and fishing and scaling mountains, Tom with an eye to lumbering prospects the while.

After a matter of two or three months bad passed away in this pleasant though unprofitable manner, the Honourable Hilary requested the presence of his son one morning at his office. This office was in what had once been a large residence, and from its ample windows you could look out through the elms on to the square. Old-fashioned bookcases lined with musty books filled the walls, except where a steel engraving of a legal light or a railroad map of the State was hung, and the Honourable Hilary sat in a Windsor chair at a mahogany table in the middle.

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The anteroom next door, where the clerks sat, was also a waiting-room for various individuals from the different parts of the State who continually sought the counsel's presence.

"Haven't seen much of you since you've be'n home, Austen," his father remarked as an opening.

"Your—legal business compels you to travel a great deal," answered Austen, turning from the window and smiling.

"Somewhat," said the Honourable Hilary, on whom this pleasantry was not lost. "You've be'n travelling on the lumber business, I take it."

"I know more about it than I did," his son admitted.

The Honourable Hilary grunted.

"Caught a good many fish, haven't you?"

Austen crossed the room and sat on the edge of the desk beside his father's chair.

"See here, Judge," he said, "what are you driving at? Out with it."

"When are you—going back West?" asked Mr. Vane.

Austen did not answer at once, but looked down into his father's inscrutable face.

"Do you want to get rid of me?" he said.

"Sowed enough wild oats, haven't you?" inquired the father.

"I've sowed a good many," Austen admitted.

"Why not settle down?"

"I haven't yet met the lady, Judge," replied his son.

"Couldn't support her if you had," said Mr. Vane.

"Then it's fortunate," said Austen, resolved not to be the necessary second in a quarrel. He knew his father, and perceived that these preliminary and caustic openings of his were really olive branches.

"Sometimes I think you might as well be in that outlandish country, for all I see of you," said the Honourable Hilary.

“You ought to retire from business and try fishing,” his son suggested.

The Honourable Hilary sometimes smiled.

“You’ve got a good brain, Austen, and what’s the use of wasting it chasing cattle and practising with a pistol on your fellow-beings? You won’t have much trouble in getting admitted to the bar. Come into the office.”

Austen did not answer at once. He suspected that it had cost his father not a little to make these advances.

“Do you believe you and I could get along, Judge? How long do you think it would last?”

“I’ve considered that some,” answered the Honourable Hilary, “but I won’t last a great while longer myself.”

“You’re as sound as a bronco,” declared Austen, patting him.

“I never was what you might call dissipated,” agreed Mr. Vane, “but men don’t go on forever. I’ve worked hard all my life, and got where I am, and I’ve always thought I’d like to hand it on to you. It’s a position of honour and trust, Austen, and one of which any lawyer might be proud.”

“My ambition hasn’t run in exactly that channel,” said his son.

“Didn’t know as you had any precise ambition,” responded the Honourable Hilary, “but I never heard of a man refusing to be chief counsel for a great railroad. I don’t say you can be, mind, but I say with work and brains it’s as easy for the son of Hilary Vane as for anybody else.”

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“I don’t know much about the duties of such a position,” said Austen, laughing, “but at all events I shall have time to make up my mind how to answer Mr. Flint when he comes to me with the proposal. To speak frankly, Judge, I hadn’t thought of spending the whole of what might otherwise prove a brilliant life in Ripton.”

The Honourable Hilary smiled again, and then he grunted.

“I tell you what I’ll do,” he said; “you come in with me and agree to stay five years. If you’ve done well for yourself, and want to go to New York or some large place at the end of that time, I won’t hinder you. But I feel it my duty to say, if you don’t accept my offer, no son of mine shall inherit what I’ve laid up by hard labour. It’s against American doctrine, and it’s against my principles. You can go back to Pepper County and get put in jail, but you can’t say I haven’t warned you fairly.”

“You ought to leave your fortune to the railroad, Judge,” said Austen. “Generations to come would bless your name if you put up a new station in Ripton and built bridges over Bunker Hill grade crossing and the other one on Heath Street where Nic Adams was killed last month. I shouldn’t begrudge a cent of the money.”

“I suppose I was a fool to talk to you,” said the Honourable Hilary, getting up.

But his son pushed him down again into the Windsor chair.

“Hold on, Judge,” he said, “that was just my way of saying if I accepted your offer, it wouldn’t be because I yearned after the money. Thinking of it has never kept me awake nights. Now if you’ll allow me to take a few days once in a while to let off steam, I’ll make a counter proposal, in the nature of a compromise.”

“What’s that?” the Honourable Hilary demanded suspiciously.

“Provided I get admitted to the bar I will take a room in another part of this building and pick up what crumbs of practice I can by myself. Of course, sir, I realize that these, if they come at all, will be owing to the lustre of your name. But I should, before I become Mr. Flint’s right-hand man, like to learn to walk with my own legs.”

The speech pleased the Honourable Hilary, and he put out his hand.

“It’s a bargain, Austen,” he said.

“I don’t mind telling you now, Judge, that when I left the West I left it for good, provided you and I could live within a decent proximity. And I ought to add that I always intended going into the law after I’d had a fling. It isn’t fair to leave you with the impression that this is a sudden determination. Prodigals don’t become good as quick as all that.”

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Ripton caught its breath a second time the day Austen hired a law office, nor did the surprise wholly cease when, in one season, he was admitted to the bar, for the proceeding was not in keeping with the habits and customs of prodigals. Needless to say, the practice did not immediately begin to pour in, but the little office rarely lacked a visitor, and sometimes had as many as five or six. There was an irresistible attraction about that room, and apparently very little law read there, though sometimes its occupant arose and pushed the visitors into the hall and locked the door, and opened the window at the top to let the smoke out. Many of the Honourable Hilary's callers preferred the little room in the far corridor to the great man's own office.

These visitors of the elder Mr. Vane's, as has been before hinted, were not all clients. Without burdening the reader too early with a treatise on the fabric of a system, suffice it to say that something was continually going on that was not law; and gentlemen came and went—fat and thin, sharp-eyed and red-faced—who were neither clients nor lawyers. These were really secretive gentlemen, though most of them had a hail-fellow-well-met manner and a hearty greeting, but when they talked to the Honourable Hilary it was with doors shut, and even then they sat very close to his ear. Many of them preferred now to wait in Austen's office instead of the anteroom, and some of them were not so cautious with the son of Hilary Vane that they did not let drop certain observations to set him thinking. He had a fanciful if somewhat facetious way of calling them by feudal titles which made them grin.

"How is the Duke of Putnam this morning?" he would ask of the gentleman of whom the Ripton Record would frequently make the following announcement: "Among the prominent residents of Putnam County in town this week was the Honourable Brush Bascom."

The Honourable Brush and many of his associates, barons and earls, albeit the shrewdest of men, did not know exactly how to take the son of Hilary Vane. This was true also of the Honourable Hilary himself, who did not wholly appreciate the humour in Austen's parallel of the feudal system. Although Austen had set up for himself, there were many ways—not legal —in which the son might have been helpful to the father, but the Honourable Hilary hesitated, for some unformulated reason, to make use of him; and the consequence was that Mr. Hamilton Tooting and other young men of a hustling nature in the Honourable Hilary's office found that Austen's advent did not tend greatly to lighten a certain class of their labours. In fact, father and son were not much nearer in spirit than when ode had been in Pepper County and the other in Ripton. Caution and an instinct which senses obstacles are characteristics of gentlemen in Mr. Vane's business.

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So two years passed,—years liberally interspersed with expeditions into the mountains and elsewhere, and nights spent in the company of Tom Gaylord and others. During this period Austen was more than once assailed by the temptation to return to the free life of Pepper County, Mr. Blodgett having completely recovered now, and only desiring vengeance of a corporal nature. But a bargain was a bargain, and Austen Vane stuck to his end of it, although he had now begun to realize many aspects of a situation which he had not before suspected. He had long foreseen, however, that the time was coming when a serious disagreement with his father was inevitable. In addition to the difference in temperament, Hilary Vane belonged to one generation and Austen to another.

It happened, as do so many incidents which tend to shape a life, by a seeming chance. It was a Tune evening, and there had been a church sociable and basket picnic during the day in a grove in the town of Mercer, some ten miles south of Ripton. The grove was bounded on one side by the railroad track, and merged into a thick clump of second growth and alders where there was a diagonal grade crossing. The picnic was over and the people preparing to go home when they were startled by a crash, followed by the screaming of brakes as a big engine flew past the grove and brought a heavy train to a halt some distance down the grade. The women shrieked and dropped the dishes they were washing, and the men left their horses standing and ran to the crossing and then stood for the moment helpless, in horror at the scene which met their eyes. The wagon of one—of their own congregation was in splinters, a man (a farmer of the neighbourhood) lying among the alders with what seemed a mortal injury. Amid the lamentations and cries for some one to go to Mercer Village for the doctor a young man drove up rapidly and sprang out of a buggy, trusting to some one to catch his horse, pushed, through the ring of people, and bent over the wounded farmer. In an instant he had whipped out a knife, cut a stick from one of the alders, knotted his handkerchief around the man's leg, ran the stick through the knot, and twisted the handkerchief until the blood ceased to flow. They watched him, paralyzed, as the helpless in this world watch the capable, and before he had finished his task the train crew and some passengers began to arrive.

"Have you a doctor aboard, Charley?" the young man asked.

"No," answered the conductor, who had been addressed; "my God, not one, Austen."

"Back up your train," said Austen, "and stop your baggage car here. And go to the grove," he added to one of the picnickers, "and bring four or five carriage cushions. And you hold this."

The man beside him took the tourniquet, as he was bid. Austen Vane drew a note-book from his pocket.

"I want this man's name and address," he said, "and the names and addresses of every person here, quickly."

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He did not lift his voice, but the man who had taken charge of such a situation was not to be denied. They obeyed him, some eagerly, some reluctantly, and by that time the train had backed down and the cushions had arrived. They laid these on the floor of the baggage car and lifted the man on to them. His name was Zeb Meader, and he was still insensible. Austen Vane, with a peculiar set look upon his face, sat beside him all the way into Ripton. He spoke only once, and that was to tell the conductor to telegraph from Avalon to have the ambulance from St. Mary's Hospital meet the train at Ripton.

The next day Hilary Vane, returning from one of his periodical trips to the northern part of the State, invaded his son's office.

"What's this they tell me about your saving a man's life?" he asked, sinking into one of the vacant chairs and regarding Austen with his twinkling eyes.

"I don't know what they tell you," Austen answered. "I didn't do anything but get a tourniquet on his leg and have him put on the train."

The Honourable Hilary grunted, and continued to regard his son. Then he cut a piece of Honey Dew.

"Looks bad, does it?" he said.

"Well," replied Austen, "it might have been done better. It was bungled. In a death-trap as cleverly conceived as that crossing, with a down grade approaching it, they ought to have got the horse too."

The Honourable Hilary grunted again, and inserted the Honey Dew. He resolved to ignore the palpable challenge in this remark, which was in keeping with this new and serious mien in Austen.

"Get the names of witnesses?" was his next question.

"I took particular pains to do so."

"Hand 'em over to Tooting. What kind of man is this Meagre?"

"He is rather meagre now," said Austen, smiling a little. "His name's Meader."

"Is he likely to make a fuss?"

"I think he is," said Austen.

"Well," said the Honourable Hilary, "we must have Ham Tooting hurry 'round and fix it up with him as soon as he can talk, before one of these cormorant lawyers gets his claw in him."

Austen said nothing, and after some desultory conversation, in which he knew how to indulge when he wished to conceal the fact that he was baffled, the Honourable Hilary departed. That student of human nature, Mr. Hamilton Tooting, a young man of a sporting appearance and a free vocabulary, made the next attempt. It is a characteristic of Mr. Tooting's kind that, in their efforts to be genial, they often use an awkward diminutive of their friends' names.

"Hello, Aust," said Mr. Tooting, "I dropped in to get those witnesses in that Meagre accident, before I forget it."

"I think I'll keep 'em," said Austen, making a note out of the Revised Statutes.

"Oh, all right, all right," said Mr. Tooting, biting off a piece of his cigar. "Going to handle the case yourself, are you?"

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“I may.”

“I’m just as glad to have some of ’em off my hands, and this looks to me like a nasty one. I don’t like those Mercer people. The last farmer they ran over there raised hell.”

“I shouldn’t blame this one if he did, if he ever gets well enough,” said Austen. Young Mr. Tooting paused with a lighted match halfway to his cigar and looked at Austen shrewdly, and then sat down on the desk very close to him.

“Say, Aust, it sometimes sickens a man to have to buy these fellows off. What? Poor devils, they don’t get anything like what they ought to get, do they? Wait till you see how the Railroad Commission’ll whitewash that case. It makes a man want to be independent. What?”

“This sounds like virtue, Ham.”

“I’ve often thought, too,” said Mr. Tooting, “that a man could make more money if he didn’t wear the collar.”

“But not sleep as well, perhaps,” said Austen.

“Say, Aust, you’re not on the level with me.”

“I hope to reach that exalted plane some day, Ham.”

“What’s got into you?” demanded the usually clear-headed Mr. Tooting, now a little bewildered.

“Nothing, yet,” said Austen, “but I’m thinking seriously of having a sandwich and a piece of apple pie. Will you come along?”

They crossed the square together, Mr. Tooting racking a normally fertile brain for some excuse to reopen the subject. Despairing of that, he decided that any subject would do.

“That Humphrey Crewe up at Leith is smart—smart as paint,” he remarked. “Do you know him?”

“I’ve seen him,” said Austen. “He’s a young man, isn’t he?”

“And natty. He knows a thing or two for a millionaire that don’t have to work, and he runs that place of his right up to the handle. You ought to hear him talk about the tariff, and national politics. I was passing there the other day, and he was walking around among the flowerbeds. ‘Ain’t your name Tooting?’ he hollered. I almost fell out of the buggy.”

“What did he want?” asked Austen, curiously. Mr. Tooting winked.

“Say, those millionaires are queer, and no mistake. You’d think a fellow that only had to cut coupons wouldn’t be lookin’ for another job, wouldn’t you? He made me hitch my horse, and had me into his study, as he called it, and gave me a big glass of whiskey and soda. A fellow with buttons and a striped vest brought it on tiptoe. Then this Crewe gave me a long yellow cigar with a band on it and told me what the State needed, —-macadam roads, farmers’ institutes, forests, and God knows what. I told him all he had to do was to get permission from old man Flint, and he could have ’em.”

“What did he say to that?”

“He said Flint was an intimate friend of his. Then he asked me a whole raft of questions about fellows in the neighbourhood I didn’t know he’d ever heard of. Say, he wants to go from Leith to the Legislature.”

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“He can go for all I care,” said Austen, as he pushed open the door of the restaurant.

For a few days Mr. Meader hung between life and death. But he came of a stock which had for generations thrust its roots into the crevices of granite, and was not easily killed by steam-engines. Austen Vane called twice, and then made an arrangement with young Dr. Tredway (one of the numerous Ripton Tredways whose money had founded the hospital) that he was to see Mr. Meader as soon as he was able to sustain a conversation. Dr. Tredway, by the way, was a bachelor, and had been Austen’s companion on many a boisterous expedition.

When Austen, in response to the doctor’s telephone message, stood over the iron bed in the spick-and-span men’s ward of St. Mary’s, a wave of that intense feeling he had experienced at the accident swept over him. The farmer’s beard was overgrown, and the eyes looked up at him as from caverns of suffering below the bandage. They were shrewd eyes, however, and proved that Mr. Meader had possession of the five senses —nay, of the six. Austen sat down beside the bed.

“Dr. Tredway tells me you are getting along finely,” he said.

“No thanks to the railrud,” answered Mr. Meader; “they done their best.”

“Did you hear any whistle or any bell?” Austen asked.

“Not a sound,” said Mr. Meader; “they even shut off their steam on that grade.”

Austen Vane, like most men who are really capable of a deep sympathy, was not an adept at expressing it verbally. Moreover, he knew enough of his fellow-men to realize that a Puritan farmer would be suspicious of sympathy. The man had been near to death himself, was compelled to spend part of the summer, his bread-earning season, in a hospital, and yet no appeal or word of complaint had crossed his lips.

“Mr. Meader,” said Austen, “I came over here to tell you that in my opinion you are entitled to heavy damages from the railroad, and to advise you not to accept a compromise. They will send some one to you and offer you a sum far below that which you ought in justice to receive, You ought to fight this case.”

“How am I going to pay a lawyer, with a mortgage on my farm?” demanded Mr. Meader.

“I’m a lawyer,” said Austen, “and if you’ll take me, I’ll defend you without charge.”

“Ain’t you the son of Hilary Vane?”

“Yes.”

“I’ve heard of him a good many times,” said Mr. Meader, as if to ask what man had not. “You’re railroad, ain’t ye?”

Mr. Meader gazed long and thoughtfully into the young man’s face, and the suspicion gradually faded from the farmer’s blue eyes.

“I like your looks,” he said at last. “I guess you saved my life. I’m —I’m much obliged to you.”

When Mr. Tooting arrived later in the day, he found Mr. Meader willing to listen, but otherwise strangely non-committal. With native shrewdness, the farmer asked him what office he came from, but did not confide in Mr. Tooting the fact that Mr. Vane’s son had volunteered to wring more money from Mr. Vane’s client than Mr. Tooting offered him. Considerably bewildered, that gentleman left the hospital to report the affair to the Honourable Hilary, who, at intervals during the afternoon, found himself relapsing into speculation.

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Inside of a somewhat unpromising shell, Mr. Zeb Meader was a human being, and no mean judge of men and motives. As his convalescence progressed, Austen Vane fell into the habit of dropping in from time to time to chat with him, and gradually was rewarded by many vivid character sketches of Mr. Meader's neighbours in Mercer and its vicinity. One afternoon, when Austen came into the ward, he found at Mr. Meader's bedside a basket of fruit which looked too expensive and tempting to have come from any dealer's in Ripton.

"A lady came with that," Mr. Meader explained. "I never was popular before I was run over by the cars. She's be'n here twice. When she fetched it to-day, I kind of thought she was up to some, game, and I didn't want to take it."

"Up to some game?" repeated Austen.

"Well, I don't know," continued Mr. Meader, thoughtfully, "the woman here tells me she comes regular in the summer time to see sick folks, but from the way she made up to me I had an idea that she wanted something. But I don't know. Thought I'd ask you. You see, she's railrud."

"Railroad!"

"She's Flint's daughter."

Austen laughed.

"I shouldn't worry about that," he said. "If Mr. Flint sent his daughter with fruit to everybody his railroad injures, she wouldn't have time to do anything else. I doubt if Mr. Flint ever heard of your case."

Mr. Meader considered this, and calculated there was something in it.

"She was a nice, common young lady, and cussed if she didn't make me laugh, she has such a funny way of talkin'. She wanted to know all about you."

"What did she want to know?" Austen exclaimed, not unnaturally.

"Well, she wanted to know about the accident, and I told her how you druv up and screwed that thing around my leg and backed the train down. She was a good deal took with that."

"I think you are inclined to make too much of it," said Austen.

Three days later, as he was about to enter the ward, Mr. Meader being now the only invalid there, he heard a sound which made him pause in the doorway. The sound was feminine laughter of a musical quality that struck pleasantly on Austen's ear. Miss

Victoria Flint was sated beside Mr. Meader's bed, and qualified friendship had evidently been replaced by intimacy since Austen's last visit, for Mr. Meader was laughing, too.

"And now I'm quite sure you have missed your vocation, Mr. Meader," said Victoria. "You would have made a fortune on the stage."

"Me a play-actor!" exclaimed the invalid. "How much wages do they git?"

"Untold sums," she declared, "if they can talk like you."

"He kind of thought that story funny—same as you," Mr. Meader ruminated, and glanced up. "Drat me," he remarked, "if he ain't a-comin' now! I callated he'd run acrost you sometime."

Victoria raised her eyes, sparkling with humour, and they met Austen's.

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“We was just talkin’ about you,” cried Mr. Meader, cordially; “come right in.” He turned to Victoria. “I want to make you acquainted,” he said, “with Austen Vane.”

“And won’t you tell him who I am, Mr. Meader?” said Victoria.

“Well,” said Mr. Meader, apologetically, “that was stupid of me—wahn’t it? But I callated he’d know. She’s the daughter of the railrud president—the ‘one that was askin’ about you.”

There was an instant’s pause, and the colour stole into Victoria’s cheeks. Then she glanced at Austen and bit her lip-and laughed. Her laughter was contagious.

“I suppose I shall have to confess that you have inspired my curiosity, Mr. Vane,” she said.

Austen’s face was sunburned, but it flushed a more vivid red under the tan. It is needless to pretend that a man of his appearance and qualities had reached the age of thirty-two without having listened to feminine comments of which he was the exclusive subject. In this remark of Victoria’s, or rather in the manner in which she made it, he recognized a difference.

“It is a tribute, then, to the histrionic talents of Mr. Meader, of which you were speaking,” he replied laughingly.

Victoria glanced at him with interest as he looked down at Mr. Meader.

“And how is it to-day, Zeb?” he said.

“It ain’t so bad as it might be—with sech folks as her and you araound,” admitted Mr. Meader. “I’d almost agree to get run over again. She was askin’ about you, and that’s a fact, and I didn’t slander you, neither. But I never callated to comprehend wimmen-folks.”

“Now, Mr. Meader,” said Victoria, reprovingly, but there were little creases about her eyes, “don’t be a fraud.”

“It’s true as gospel,” declared the invalid; “they always got the better of me. I had one of ’em after me once, when I was young and prosperin’ some.”

“And yet you have survived triumphant,” she exclaimed.

“There wahn’t none of ’em like you,” said Mr. Meader, “or it might have be’n different.”

Again her eyes irresistibly sought Austen's,—as though to share with him the humour of this remark,—and they laughed together. Her colour, so sensitive, rose again, but less perceptibly this time. Then she got up.

"That's unfair, Mr. Meader!" she protested.

"I'll leave it to Austen," said Mr. Meader, "if it ain't probable. He'd ought to know."

In spite of a somewhat natural embarrassment, Austen could not but acknowledge to himself that Mr. Meader was right. With a womanly movement which he thought infinitely graceful, Victoria leaned over the bed.

"Mr. Meader," she said, "I'm beginning to think it's dangerous for me to come here twice a week to see you, if you talk this way. And I'm not a bit surprised that that woman didn't get the better of you."

"You hain't a-goin'!" he exclaimed. "Why, I callated—"

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“Good-by,” she said quickly; “I’m glad to see that you are doing so well.” She raised her head and looked at Austen in a curious, inscrutable way. “Good-by, Mr. Vane,” she said; “I—I hope Mr. Blodgett has recovered.”

Before he could reply she had vanished, and he was staring at the empty doorway. The reference to the unfortunate Mr. Blodgett, after taking his breath away, aroused in him an intense curiosity betraying, as it did, a certain knowledge of past events in his life in the hitherto unknown daughter of Augustus interest could she have in him? Such a Flint. What question, from similar sources, has heightened the pulse of young men from time immemorial.

CHAPTER IV

“*Timeo Danaos*”

The proverbial little birds that carry news and prophecies through the air were evidently responsible for an official-looking letter which Austen received a few mornings later. On the letter-head was printed “The United Northeastern Railroads,” and Mr. Austen Vane was informed that, by direction of the president, the enclosed was sent to him in an entirely complimentary sense. “The enclosed” was a ticket of red cardboard, and its face informed him that he might travel free for the rest of the year. Thoughtfully turning it over, he read on the back the following inscription:—“It is understood that this pass is accepted by its recipient as a retainer.”

Austen stared at it and whistled. Then he pushed back his chair, with the pass in his hand, and hesitated. He seized a pen and wrote a few lines: “Dear sir, I beg to return the annual pass over the Northeastern Railroads with which you have so kindly honoured me”—when he suddenly changed his mind again, rose, and made his way through the corridors to his father’s office. The Honourable Hilary was absorbed in his daily perusal of the Guardian.

“Judge,” he asked, “is Mr. Flint up at his place this week?”

The Honourable Hilary coughed.

“He arrived yesterday on the three. Er—why?”

“I wanted to go up and thank him for this,” his son answered, holding up the red piece of cardboard. “Mr. Flint is a very thoughtful man.”

The Honourable Hilary tried to look unconcerned, and succeeded.

“Sent you an annual, has he? Er—I don’t know as I’d bother him personally, Austen. Just a pleasant note of acknowledgment.”

“I don’t flatter myself that my achievements in the law can be responsible for it,” said Austen. “The favour must be due to my relationship with his eminent chief counsel.”

Hilary Vane’s keen eyes rested on his son for an instant. Austen was more than ever an enigma to him.

“I guess relationship hasn’t got much to do with business,” he replied. “You have be’n doing—er—better than I expected.”

“Thank you, Judge,” said Austen, quietly. “I don’t mind saying that I would rather have your approbation than—this more substantial recognition of merit.”

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The Honourable Hilary's business was to deal with men, and by reason of his ability in so doing he had made a success in life. He could judge motives more than passably well, and play upon weaknesses. But he left Austen's presence that morning vaguely uneasy, with a sense of having received from his own son an initial defeat at a game of which he was a master. Under the excuse of looking up some precedents, he locked his doors to all comers for two hours, and paced his room. At one moment he reproached himself for not having been frank; for not having told Austen roundly that this squeamishness about a pass was unworthy of a strong man of affairs; yes, for not having revealed to him the mysteries of railroad practice from the beginning. But frankness was not an ingredient of the Honourable Hilary's nature, and Austen was not the kind of man who would accept a hint and a wink. Hilary Vane had formless forebodings, and found himself for once in his life powerless to act.

The cost of living in Ripton was not so high that Austen Vane could not afford to keep a horse and buggy. The horse, which he tended himself, was appropriately called Pepper; Austen had found him in the hills, and he was easily the finest animal in Ripton: so good, in fact, that Mr. Humphrey Crewe (who believed he had an eye for horses) had peremptorily hailed Austen from a motorcar and demanded the price, as was Mr. Crewe's wont when he saw a thing he desired. He had been somewhat surprised and not inconsiderably offended by the brevity and force of the answer which he had received.

On the afternoon of the summer's day in which Austen had the conversation with his father just related, Pepper was trotting at a round clip through the soft and shady wood roads toward the town of Tunbridge; the word "town" being used in the New England sense, as a piece of territory about six miles by six. The fact that automobiles full of laughing people from Leith hummed by occasionally made no apparent difference to Pepper, who knew only the master hand on the reins; the reality that the wood roads were climbing great hills the horse did not seem to feel. Pepper knew every lane and by-path within twenty miles of Ripton, and exhibited such surprise as a well-bred horse may when he was slowed down at length and turned into a hard, blue-stone driveway under a strange granite arch with the word "Fairview" cut in Gothic letters above it, and two great lamps in wrought-iron brackets at the sides. It was Austen who made a note of the gratings over the drains, and of the acres of orderly forest in a mysterious and seemingly enchanted realm. Intimacy with domains was new to him, and he began to experience an involuntary feeling of restraint which was new to him likewise, and made him chafe in spite of himself. The estate seemed to be the visible semblance of a power which troubled him.

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Shortly after passing an avenue neatly labelled “Trade’s Drive” the road wound upwards through a ravine the sides of which were covered with a dense shrubbery which had the air of having always been there, and yet somehow looked expensive. At the top of the ravine was a sharp curve; and Austen, drawing breath, found himself swung, as it were, into space, looking off across miles of forest-covered lowlands to an ultramarine mountain in the hazy south,—Sawanec. As if in obedience to a telepathic command of his master, Pepper stopped.

Drinking his fill of this scene, Austen forgot an errand which was not only disagreeable, but required some fortitude for its accomplishment. The son had this in common with the Honourable Hilary—he hated heroics; and the fact that the thing smacked of heroics was Austen’s only deterrent. And then there was a woman in this paradise! These gradual insinuations into his revery at length made him turn. A straight avenue of pear-shaped, fifteen-year-old maples led to the house, a massive colonial structure of wood that stretched across the shelf; and he had tightened the reins and started courageously up the avenue when he perceived that it ended in a circle on which there was no sign of a hitching-post. And, worse than this, on the balconied, uncovered porch which he would have to traverse to reach the doorway he saw the sheen and glimmer of women’s gowns grouped about wicker tables, and became aware that his approach was the sole object of the scrutiny of an afternoon tea party.

As he reached the circle it was a slight relief to learn that Pepper was the attraction. No horse knew better than Pepper when he was being admired, and he arched his neck and lifted his feet and danced in the sheer exhilaration of it. A smooth-faced, red-cheeked gentleman in gray flannels leaned over the balustrade and made audible comments in a penetrating voice which betrayed the fact that he was Mr. Humphrey Crewe.

“Saw him on the street in Ripton last year. Good hock action, hasn’t he?—that’s rare in trotters around here. Tried to buy him. Feller wouldn’t sell. His name’s Vane—he’s drivin’ him now.”

A lady of a somewhat commanding presence was beside him. She was perhaps five and forty, her iron-gray hair was dressed to perfection, her figure all that Parisian art could make it, and she was regarding Austen with extreme deliberation through the glasses which she had raised to a high-bridged nose.

“Politics is certainly your career, Humphrey,” she remarked, “you have such a wonderful memory for faces. I don’t see how he does it, do you, Alice?” she demanded of a tall girl beside her, who was evidently her daughter, but lacked her personality.

“I don’t know,” said Alice.

“It’s because I’ve been here longer than anybody else, Mrs. Pomfret,” answered Mr. Crewe, not very graciously, “that’s all. Hello.” This last to Austen.

“Hello,” said Austen.

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“Who do you want to see?” inquired Mr. Crewe, with the admirable tact for which he was noted.

Austen looked at him for the first time.

“Anybody who will hold my horse,” he answered quietly.

By this time the conversation had drawn the attention of the others at the tables, and one or two smiled at Austen’s answer. Mrs. Flint, with a “Who is it?” arose to repel a social intrusion. She was an overdressed lady, inclining to embonpoint, but traces of the Rose of Sharon were still visible.

“Why don’t you drive ’round to the stables?” suggested Mr. Crewe, unaware of a smile.

Austen did not answer. He was, in fact, looking towards the doorway, and the group on the porch were surprised to see a gleam of mirthful understanding start in his eyes. An answering gleam was in Victoria’s, who had at that moment, by a singular coincidence, come out of the house. She came directly down the steps and out on the gravel, and held her hand to him in the buggy, and he flushed with pleasure as he grasped it.

“How do you do, Mr. Vane?” she said. “I am so glad you have called. Humphrey, just push the stable button, will you?”

Mr. Crewe obeyed with no very good grace, while the tea-party went back to their seats. Mrs. Flint supposed he had come to sell Victoria the horse; while Mrs. Pomfret, who had taken him in from crown to boots, remarked that he looked very much like a gentleman.

“I came to see your father for a few moments—on business,” Austen explained.

She lifted her face to his with a second searching look.

“I’ll take you to him,” she said.

By this time a nimble groom had appeared from out o a shrubbery path and seized Pepper’s head. Austen alighted and followed Victoria into a great, cool hallway, and through two darkened rooms, bewilderingly furnished and laden with the scent of flowers, into a narrow passage beyond. She led the way simply, not speaking, and her silence seemed to betoken the completeness of an understanding between them, as of a long acquaintance.

In a plain white-washed room, behind a plain oaken desk, sat Mr. Flint—a plain man. Austen thought he would have known him had he seen him on the street. The other things in the room were letter-files, a safe, a long-distance telephone, and a thin private secretary with a bend in his back. Mr. Flint looked up from his desk, and his face,

previously bereft of illumination, lighted when he saw his daughter. Austen liked that in him.

“Well, Vic, what is it now?” he asked.

“Mr. Austen Vane to see you,” said Victoria, and with a quick glance at Austen she left him standing on the threshold. Mr. Flint rose. His eyes were deep-set in a square, hard head, and he appeared to be taking Austen in without directly looking at him; likewise, one felt that Mr. Flint’s handshake was not an absolute gift of his soul.

“How do you do, Mr. Vane? I don’t remember ever to have had the pleasure of seeing you, although your father and I have been intimately connected for many years.”

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So the president's manner was hearty, but not the substance. It came, Austen thought, from a rarity of meeting with men on a disinterested footing; and he could not but wonder how Mr. Flint would treat the angels in heaven if he ever got there, where there were no franchises to be had. Would he suspect them of designs upon his hard won harp and halo? Austen did not dislike Mr. Flint; the man's rise, his achievements, his affection for his daughter, he remembered. But he was also well aware that Mr. Flint had thrown upon him the onus of the first move in a game which the railroad president was used to playing every day. The dragon was on his home ground and had the choice of weapons.

"I do not wish to bother you long," said Austen.

"No bother," answered Mr. Flint, "no bother to make the acquaintance of the son of my old friend, Hilary Vane. Sit down—sit down. And while I don't believe any man should depend upon his father to launch him in the world, yet it must be a great satisfaction to you, Mr. Vane, to have such a father. Hilary Vane and I have been intimately associated for many years, and my admiration for him has increased with every year. It is to men of his type that the prosperity, the greatness, of this nation is largely due,—conservative, upright, able, content to confine himself to the difficult work for which he is so eminently fitted, without spectacular meddling in things in which he can have no concern. Therefore I welcome the opportunity to know you, sir, for I understand that you have settled down to follow in his footsteps and that you will make a name for yourself. I know the independence of young men—I was young once myself. But after all, Mr. Vane, experience is the great teacher, and perhaps there is some little advice which an old man can give you that may be of service. As your father's son, it is always at your disposal. Have a cigar."

The thin secretary continued to flit about the room, between the letter-files and the desk. Austen had found it infinitely easier to shoot Mr. Blodgett than to engage in a duel with the president of the United Railroad.

"I smoke a pipe," he said.

"Too many young men smoke cigars—and those disgusting cigarettes," said Mr. Flint, with conviction. "There are a lot of worthless young men in these days, anyhow. They come to my house and loaf and drink and smoke, and talk a lot of nonsense about games and automobiles and clubs, and cumber the earth generally. There's a young man named Crewe over at Leith, for instance—you may have seen him. Not that he's dissipated —but he don't do anything but talk about railroads and the stock market to make you sick, and don't know any more about 'em than my farmer."

During this diatribe Austen saw his opening growing smaller and smaller. If he did not make a dash for it, it would soon be closed entirely.

“I received a letter this morning, Mr. Flint, enclosing me an annual pass—”

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“Did Upjohn send you one?” Mr. Flint cut in; “he ought to have done so long ago. It was probably an oversight that he did not, Mr. Vane. We try to extend the courtesies of the road to persons who are looked up to in their communities. The son of Hilary Vane is at all times welcome to one.”

Mr. Flint paused to light his cigar, and Austen summoned his resolution. Second by second it was becoming more and more difficult and seemingly more ungracious to return a gift so graciously given, a gift of no inconsiderable intrinsic value. Moreover, Mr. Flint had ingeniously contrived almost to make the act, in Austen’s eyes, that of a picayune upstart. Who was he to fling back an annual pass in the face of the president of the Northeastern Railroads?

“I had first thought of writing you a letter, Mr. Flint,” he said, “but it seemed to me that, considering your relations with my father, the proper thing to do was to come to you and tell you why I cannot take the pass.”

The thin secretary paused in his filing, and remained motionless with his body bent over the drawer.

“Why you cannot take it, Mr. Vane?” said the railroad president. “I’m afraid I don’t understand.”

“I appreciate the—the kindness,” said Austen, “and I will try to explain.” He drew the red cardboard from his pocket and turned it over. “On the back of this is printed, in small letters, ’It is understood that this pass is accepted by the recipient as a retainer.’”

“Well,” Mr. Flint interrupted, smiling somewhat blandly, “how much money do you think that pass would save an active young lawyer in a year? Is three hundred dollars too much? Three hundred dollars is not an insignificant sum to a young man on the threshold of his practice, is it?”

Austen looked at Mr. Flint.

“Any sum is insignificant when it restricts a lawyer from the acceptance of just causes, Mr. Flint. As I understand the matter, it is the custom of your railroad to send these passes to the young lawyers of the State the moment they begin to give signs of ability. This past would prevent me from serving clients who might have righteous claims against your railroads, and—permit me to speak frankly—in my opinion the practice tends to make it difficult for poor people who have been injured to get efficient lawyers.”

“Your own father is retained by the railroad,” said Mr. Flint.

“As their counsel,” answered Austen. “I have a pride in my profession, Mr. Flint, as no doubt you have in yours. If I should ever acquire sufficient eminence to be sought as counsel for a railroad, I should make my own terms with it. I should not allow its

management alone to decide upon the value of my retainer, and my services in its behalf would be confined strictly to professional ones."

Mr. Flint drummed on the table.

"What do you mean by that?" he demanded.

"I mean that I would not engage, for a fee or a pass, to fight the political battles of a railroad, or undertake any political manipulation in its behalf whatever."

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Mr. Flint leaned forward aggressively.

“How long do you think a railroad would pay dividends if it did not adopt some means of defending itself from the blackmail politician of the State legislatures, Mr. Vane? The railroads of which I have the honour to be president pay a heavy tag in this and other States. We would pay a much heavier one if we didn’t take precautions to protect ourselves. But I do not intend to quarrel with you, Mr. Vane,” he continued quickly, perceiving that Austen was about to answer him, “nor do I wish to leave you with the impression that the Northeastern Railroads meddle unduly in politics.”

Austen knew not how to answer. He had not gone there to discuss this last and really great question with Mr. Flint, but he wondered whether the president actually thought him the fledgling he proclaimed. Austen laid his pass on Mr. Flint’s desk, and rose.

“I assure you, Mr. Flint, that the spirit which prompted my visit was not a contentious one. I cannot accept the pass, simply because I do not wish to be retained.”

Mr. Flint eyed him. There was a mark of dignity, of silent power, on this tall scapegrace of a son of Hilary Vane that the railroad president had missed at first—probably because he had looked only for the scapegrace. Mr. Flint ardently desired to treat the matter in the trifling aspect in which he believed he saw it, to carry it off genially. But an instinct not yet formulated told the president that he was face to face with an enemy whose potential powers were not to be despised, and he bristled in spite of himself.

“There is no statute I know of by which a lawyer can be compelled to accept a retainer against his will, Mr. Vane,” he replied, and overcame himself with an effort. “But I hope that you will permit me,” he added in another tone, “as an old friend of your father’s and as a man of some little experience in the world, to remark that intolerance is a characteristic of youth. I had it in the days of Mr. Isaac D. Worthington, whom you do not remember. I am not addicted to flattery, but I hope and believe you have a career before you. Talk to your father. Study the question on both sides,—from the point of view of men who are honestly trying, in the face of tremendous difficulties, to protect innocent stockholders as well as to conduct a corporation in the interests of the people at large, and for their general prosperity. Be charitable, young man, and judge not hastily.”

Years before, when poor Sarah Austen had adorned the end of his table, Hilary Vane had raised his head after the pronouncement of grace to surprise a look in his wife’s eyes which strangely threw him into a white heat of anger. That look (and he at intervals had beheld it afterwards) was the true presentment of the soul of the woman whose body was his. It was not—as Hilary Vane thought it—a contempt for the practice of thanking one’s Maker for daily bread, but a contempt for cant of one who sees the humour in cant. A masculine version of that look Mr. Flint now beheld in the eyes of Austen Vane, and the enraging effect on the president of the United Railroads was

much the same as it had been on his chief counsel. Who was this young man of three and thirty to agitate him so? He trembled, though not visibly, yet took Austen's hand mechanically.

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“Good day, Mr. Vane,” he said; “Mr. Freeman will help you to find your horse.”

The thin secretary bowed, and before he reached the door into the passage Mr. Flint had opened another at the back of the room and stepped out on a close-cropped lawn flooded with afternoon sunlight. In the passage Austen perceived a chair, and in the chair was seated patiently none other than Mr. Brush Bascom—political Duke of Putnam. Mr. Bascom’s little agate eyes glittered in the dim light.

“Hello, Austen,” he said, “since when have you took to comin’ here?”

“It’s a longer trip from Putnam than from Ripton, Brush,” said Austen, and passed on, leaving Mr. Bascom with a puzzled mind. Something very like a smile passed over Mr. Freeman’s face as he led the way silently out of a side entrance and around the house. The circle of the drive was empty, the tea-party had gone—and Victoria. Austen assured himself that her disappearance relieved him: having virtually quarrelled with her father, conversation would have been awkward; and yet he looked for her.

They found the buggy and Pepper in the paved courtyard of the stables. As Austen took the reins the secretary looked up at him, his mild blue eyes burning with an unsuspected fire. He held out his hand.

“I want to congratulate you,” he said.

“What for?” asked Austen, taking the hand in some embarrassment.

“For speaking like a man,” said the secretary, and he turned on his heel and left him.

This strange action, capping, as it did, a stranger experience, gave Austen food for thought as he let Pepper take his own pace down the trade’s road. Presently he got back into the main drive where it clung to a steep, forest-covered side hill, when his attention was distracted by the sight of a straight figure in white descending amidst the foliage ahead. His instinctive action was to pull Pepper down to a walk, scarcely analyzing his motives; then he had time, before reaching the spot where their paths would cross, to consider and characteristically to enjoy the unpropitious elements arrayed against a friendship with Victoria Flint.

She halted on a flagstone of the descending path some six feet above the roadway, and stood expectant. The Rose of Sharon, five and twenty years before, would have been coy—would have made believe to have done it by accident. But the Rose of Sharon, with all her beauty, would have had no attraction for Austen Vane. Victoria had much of her mother’s good looks, the figure of a Diana, and her clothes were of a severity and correctness in keeping with her style; they merely added to the sum total of the effect upon Austen. Of course he stopped the buggy immediately beneath her, and her first

question left him without any breath. No woman he had ever known seized the essentials as she did.

“What have you been doing to my father?” she asked.

“Why?” exclaimed Austen.

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“Because he’s in such a bad temper,” said Victoria. “You must have put him in it. It can’t be possible that you came all the way up here to quarrel with him. Nobody ever dares to quarrel with him.”

“I didn’t come up to quarrel with him,” said Austen.

“What’s the trouble?” asked Victoria.

The humour of this question was too much for him, and he laughed. Victoria’s eyes laughed a little, but there was a pucker in her forehead.

“Won’t you tell me?” she demanded, “or must I get it out of him?”

“I am afraid,” said Austen, slowly, “that you must get it out of him—if he hasn’t forgotten it.”

“Forgotten it, dear old soul!” cried Victoria. “I met him just now and tried to make him look at the new Guernseys, and he must have been disturbed quite a good deal when he’s cross as a bear to me. He really oughtn’t to be upset like that, Mr. Vane, when he comes up here to rest. I am afraid that you are rather a terrible person, although you look so nice. Won’t you tell me what you did to him?”

Austen was non-plussed.

“Nothing intentional,” he answered earnestly, “but it wouldn’t be fair to your father if I gave you my version of a business conversation that passed between us, would it?”

“Perhaps not,” said Victoria. She sat down on the flagstone with her elbow on her knee and her chin in her hand, and looked at him thoughtfully. He knew well enough that a wise general would have retreated—horse, foot, and baggage; but Pepper did not stir.

“Do you know,” said Victoria, “I have an idea you came up here about Zeb Meader.”

“Zeb Meader!”

“Yes. I told my father about him,—how you rescued him, and how you went to see him in the hospital, and what a good man he is, and how poor.”

“Oh, did you!” exclaimed Austen.

“Yes. And I told him the accident wasn’t Zeb’s fault, that the train didn’t whistle or ring, and that the crossing was a blind one.”

“And what did he say?” asked Austen, curiously.

“He said that on a railroad as big as his something of the kind must happen occasionally. And he told me if Zeb didn’t make a fuss and act foolishly, he would have no cause to regret it.”

“And did you tell Zeb?” asked Austen.

“Yes,” Victoria admitted, “but I’m sorry I did, now.”

“What did Zeb say?”

Victoria laughed in spite of herself, and gave a more or less exact though kindly imitation of Mr. Meader’s manner.

“He said that wimmen-folks had better stick to the needle and the duster, and not go pokin’ about law business that didn’t concern ’em. But the worst of it was,” added Victoria, with some distress, “he won’t accept any more fruit. Isn’t he silly? He won’t get it into his head that I give him the fruit, and not my father. I suspect that he actually believes my father sent me down there to tell him that.”

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Austen was silent, for the true significance of this apparently obscure damage case to the Northeastern Railroads was beginning to dawn on him. The public was not in the best of humours towards railroads: there was trouble about grade crossings, and Mr. Meader's mishap and the manner of his rescue by the son of the corporation counsel had given the accident a deplorable publicity. Moreover, if it had dawned on Augustus Flint that the son of Hilary Vane might prosecute the suit, it was worth while taking a little pains with Mr. Meader and Mr. Austen Vane. Certain small fires have been known to light world-wide conflagrations.

"What are you thinking about?" asked Victoria. "It isn't at all polite to forget the person you are talking to."

"I haven't forgotten you," said Austen, with a smile. How could he —sitting under her in this manner?

"Besides," said Victoria, mollified, "you haven't an answered my question."

"Which question?"

She scrutinized him thoughtfully, and with feminine art made the kind of an attack that rarely fails.

"Why are you such an enigma, Mr. Vane?" she demanded. "Is it because you're a lawyer, or because you've been out West and seen so much of life and shot so many people?"

Austen laughed, yet he had tingling symptoms because she showed enough interest in him to pronounce him a riddle. But he instantly became serious as the purport of the last charge came home to him.

"I suppose I am looked upon as a sort of Jesse James," he said. "As it happens, I have never shot but one man, and I didn't care very much for that."

Victoria got up and came down a step and gave him her hand. He took it, nor was he the first to relinquish the hold; and a colour rose delicately in her face as she drew her fingers away.

"I didn't mean to offend you," she said.

"You didn't offend me," he replied quickly. "I merely wished you to know that I wasn't a brigand."

Victoria smiled.

“I really didn’t think so—you are much too solemn. I have to go now, and—you haven’t told me anything.”

She crossed the road and began to descend the path on the other side. Twice he glanced back, after he had started, and once surprised her poised lightly among the leaves, looking over her shoulder.

CHAPTER V

THE PARTING OF THE WAYS

The next time Austen visited the hospital Mr. Meader had a surprise in store for him. After passing the time of day, as was his custom, the patient freely discussed the motives which had led him to refuse any more of Victoria’s fruit.

“I hain’t got nothing against her,” he declared; “I tried to make that plain. She’s as nice and common a young lady as I ever see, and I don’t believe she had a thing to do with it. But I suspicioned they was up to somethin’ when she brought them baskets. And when she give me the message from old Flint, I was sure of it.”

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“Miss Flint was entirely innocent, I’m sure,” said Austen, emphatically.

“If I could see old Flint, I’d tell him what I thought of him usin’ wimmen-folks to save ’em money,” said Mr. Meader. “I knowed she wahn’t that kind. And then that other thing come right on top of it.”

“What other thing?”

“Say,” demanded Mr. Meader, “don’t you know?”

“I know nothing,” said Austen.

“Didn’t know Hilary Vane’s be’n here?”

“My father!” Austen ejaculated.

“Gittin’ after me pretty warm, so they be. Want to know what my price is now. But say, I didn’t suppose your faythe’r’d come here without lettin’ you know.”

Austen was silent. The truth was that for a few moments he could not command himself sufficiently to speak.

“He is the chief counsel for the road,” he said at length; “I am not connected with it.”

“I guess you’re on the right track. He’s a pretty smooth talker, your faythe’r. Just dropped in to see how I be, since his son was interested. Talked a sight of law gibberish I didn’t understand. Told me I didn’t have much of a case; said the policy of the railrud was to be liberal, and wanted to know what I thought I ought to have.”

“Well?” said Austen, shortly.

“Well,” said Mr. Mender, “he didn’t git a mite of satisfaction out of me. I’ve seen enough of his kind of folks to know how to deal with ’em, and I told him so. I asked him what they meant by sending that slick Mr. Tooting ‘raound to offer me five hundred dollars. I said I was willin’ to trust my case on that crossin’ to a jury.”

Austen smiled, in spite of his mingled emotions.

“What else did Mr. Vane say?” he asked.

Not a great sight more. Said a good many folks were foolish enough to spend money and go to law when they’d done better to trust to the liberality of the railrud. Liberality! Adams’ widow done well to trust their liberality, didn’t she? He wanted to know one more thing, but I didn’t give him any satisfaction.”

“What was that?”

“I couldn’t tell you how he got ’raound to it. Guess he never did, quite. He wanted to know what lawyer was to have my case. Wahn’t none of his affair, and I callated if you’d wanted him to know just yet, you’d have toad him.”

Austen laid his hand on the farmer’s, as he rose to go.

“Zeb,” he said, “I never expect to have a more exemplary client.”

Mr. Mender shot a glance at him.

“Mebbe I spoke a mite too free about your faythe r, Austen,” he said; “you and him seem kind of different.”

“The Judge and I understand each other,” answered Austen.

He had got as far as the door, when he stopped, swung on his heel, and came back to the bedside.

“It’s my duty to tell you, Zeb, that in order to hush this thing up they may offer you more than you can get from a jury. In that case I should have to advise you to accept.”

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He was aware that, while he made this statement, Zeb Meader's eyes were riveted on him, and he knew that the farmer was weighing him in the balance.

"Sell out?" exclaimed Mr. Meader. "You advise me to sell out?"

Austen did not get angry. He understood this man and the people from which he sprang.

"The question is for you to decide—whether you can get more money by a settlement."

"Money!" cried Zeb Meader, "I have found it pretty hard to git, but there's some things I won't do for it. There's a reason why they want this case hushed up, the way they've be'n actin'. I ain't lived in Mercer and Putnam County all my life for nothin'. Hain't I seen 'em run their dirty politics there under Brush Bascom for the last twenty-five years? There's no man has an office or a pass in that county but what Bascom gives it to him, and Bascom's the railrud tool." Suddenly Zeb raised himself in bed. "Hev' they be'n tamperin' with you?" he demanded.

"Yes," answered Austen, dispassionately. He had hardly heard what Zeb had said; his mind had been going onward. "Yes. They sent me an annual pass, and I took it back."

Zeb Meader did not speak for a few moments.

"I guess I was a little hasty, Austen," he said at length.

"I might have known you wouldn't sell out. If you're' willin' to take the risk, you tell 'em ten thousand dollars wouldn't tempt me."

"All right, Zeb," said Austen.

He left the hospital and struck out across the country towards the slopes of Sawanec, climbed them, and stood bareheaded in the evening light, gazing over the still, wide valley northward to the wooded ridges where Leith and Fairview lay hidden. He had come to the parting of the ways of life, and while he did not hesitate to choose his path, a Vane inheritance, though not dominant, could not fail at such a juncture to point out the pleasantness of conformity. Austen's affection for Hilary Vane was real; the loneliness of the elder man appealed to the son, who knew that his father loved him in his own way. He dreaded the wrench there.

And nature, persuasive in that quarter, was not to be stilled in a field more completely her own. The memory and suppliance of a minute will scarce suffice one of Austen's temperament for a lifetime; and his eyes, flying with the eagle high across the valley, searched the velvet folds of the ridges, as they lay in infinite shades of green in the level light, for the place where the enchanted realm might be. Just what the state of his feelings were at this time towards Victoria Flint is too vague—accurately to be painted,

but he was certainly not ready to give way to the attraction he felt for her. His sense of humour intervened if he allowed himself to dream; there was a certain folly in pursuing the acquaintance, all the greater now that he was choosing the path of opposition to the dragon. A young woman, surrounded as she was, could be expected to know little of the subtleties of business and political morality: let him take Zeb Meader's case, and her loyalty would naturally be with her father,—if she thought of Austen Vane at all.

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And yet the very contradiction of her name, Victoria joined with Flint, seemed to proclaim that she did not belong to her father or to the Rose of Sharon. Austen permitted himself to dwell, as he descended the mountain in the gathering darkness, upon the fancy of the springing of a generation of ideals from a generation of commerce which boded well for the Republic. And Austen Vane, in common with that younger and travelled generation, thought largely in terms of the Republic. Pepper County and Putnam County were all one to him—pieces of his native land. And as such, redeemable.

It was long past the supper hour when he reached the house in Hanover Street; but Euphrasia, who many a time in days gone by had fared forth into the woods to find Sarah Austen, had his supper hot for him. Afterwards he lighted his pipe and went out into the darkness, and presently perceived a black figure seated meditatively on the granite doorstep.

“Is that you, Judge?” said Austen.

The Honourable Hilary grunted in response.

“Be’n on another wild expedition, I suppose.”

“I went up Sawanec to stretch my legs a little,” Austen answered, sitting down beside his father.

“Funny,” remarked the Honourable Hilary, “I never had this mania for stretchin’ my legs after I was grown.”

“Well,” said Austen, “I like to go into the woods and climb the hills and get aired out once in a while.”

“I heard of your gettin’ aired out yesterday, up Tunbridge way,” said the Honourable Hilary.

“I supposed you would hear of it,” answered Austen.

“I was up there to-day. Gave Mr. Flint your pass did you?”

“Yes.”

“Didn’t see fit to mention it to me first—did you? Said you were going up to thank him for it.”

Austen considered this.

“You have put me in the wrong, Judge,” he replied after a little. “I made that remark ironically. I I am afraid we cannot agree on the motive which prompted me.”

“Your conscience a little finer than your father’s—is it?”

“No,” said Austen, “I don’t honestly think it is. I’ve thought a good deal in the last few years about the difference in our ways of looking at things. I believe that two men who try to be honest may conscientiously differ. But I also believe that certain customs have gradually grown up in railroad practice which are more or less to be deplored from the point of view of the honour of the profession. I think they are not perhaps —realized even by the eminent men in the law.”

“Humph!” said the Honourable Hilary. But he did not press his son for the enumeration of these customs. After all the years he had disapproved of Austen’s deeds it seemed strange indeed to be called to account by the prodigal for his own. Could it be that this boy whom he had so often chastised took a clearer view of practical morality than himself? It was preposterous. But why the uneasiness of the past few years? Why had he more than once during that period, for the first time in his life, questioned a hitherto absolute satisfaction in his position of chief counsel for the Northeastern Railroads? Why had he hesitated to initiate his son into many of the so-called duties of a railroad lawyer? Austen had never verbally arraigned those duties until to-night.

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Contradictory as it may seem, irritating as it was to the Honourable Hilary Vane, he experienced again the certain faint tingling of pride as when Austen had given him the dispassionate account of the shooting of Mr. Blodgett; and this tingling only served to stiffen Hilary Vane more than ever. A lifelong habit of admitting nothing and a lifelong pride made the acknowledgment of possible professional lapses for the benefit of his employer not to be thought of. He therefore assumed the same attitude as had Mr. Flint, and forced the burden of explanation upon Austen, relying surely on the disinclination of his son to be specific. And Austen, considering his relationship, could not be expected to fathom these mental processes.

“See here, Judge,” he said, greatly embarrassed by the real affection he felt, “I don’t want to seem like a prig and appear to be sitting in judgment upon a man of your experience and position especially since I have the honour to be your son, and have made a good deal of trouble by a not irreproachable existence. Since we have begun on the subject, however, I think I ought to tell you that I have taken the case of Zeb Meader against the Northeastern Railroads.”

“Wahn’t much need of telling me, was there?” remarked the Honourable Hilary, dryly. “I’d have found it out as soon as anybody else.”

“There was this need of telling you,” answered Austen, steadily, “although I am not in partnership with you, I bear your name. And in-as-much as I am to have a suit against your client, it has occurred to me that you would like me to move—elsewhere.”

The Honourable Hilary was silent for a long time.

“Want to move—do *you*? Is that it?”

“Only because my presence may embarrass you.”

“That wahn’t in the contract,” said the Honourable Hilary; “you’ve got a right to take any fool cases you’ve a mind to. Folks know pretty well I’m not mixed up in ’em.”

Austen did not smile; he could well understand his father’s animus in this matter. As he looked up at the gable of his old home against the stars, he did not find the next sentence any easier.

“And then,” he continued, “in taking, a course so obviously against your wishes and judgment it occurred to me—well, that I was eating at your table and sleeping in your house.”

To his son’s astonishment, Hilary Vane turned on him almost truculently.

“I thought the time’d come when you’d want to go off again,—gypsying,” he cried.

“I’d stay right here in Ripton, Judge. I believe my work is in this State.”

The Honour could see through a millstone with a hole in it. The effect of Austen’s assertion on him was a declaration that the mission of the one was to tear down what the other had so laboriously built up. And yet a growing dread of Hilary Vane’s had been the loneliness of declining years in that house should Austen leave it again, never to return.

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“I knew you had this Meader business in mind,” he said. “I knew you had fanciful notions about—some things. Never told you I didn’t want you here, did I?”

“No,” said Austen, “but—”

Would have told you if I hadn’t wanted you—wouldn’t I?”

“I hope so, Judge,” said Austen, who understood something of the feeling which underlay this brusqueness. That knowledge made matters all the harder for him.

“It was your mother’s house—you’re entitled to that, anyway,” said the Honourable Hilary, “but what I want to know is, why you didn’t advise that eternal fool of a Meader to accept what we offered him. You’ll never get a county jury to give as much.”

“I did advise him to accept it,” answered Austen.

“What’s the matter with him?” the Honourable Hilary demanded.

“Well, judge, if you really want my opinion, an honest farmer like Meader is suspicious of any corporation which has such zealous and loyal retainers as Ham Tooting and Brush Bascom.” And Austen thought with a return of the pang which had haunted him at intervals throughout the afternoon, that he might almost have added to these names that of Hilary Vane. Certainly Zeb Meader had not spared his father.

“Life,” observed the Honourable Hilary, unconsciously using a phrase from the ‘Book of Arguments,’ “is a survival of the fittest.”

“How do you define ‘the fittest?’” asked Austen. “Are they the men who have the not unusual and certainly not exalted gift of getting money from their fellow creatures by the use of any and all weapons that may be at hand? who believe the acquisition of wealth to be exempt from the practice of morality? Is Mr. Flint your example of the fittest type to exist and survive, or Gladstone or Wilberforce or Emerson or Lincoln?”

“Emerson!” cried the Honourable Hilary, the name standing out in red letters before his eyes. He had never read a line of the philosopher’s writings, not even the charge to “hitch your wagon to a star” (not in the “Book of Arguments"). Sarah Austen had read Emerson in the woods, and her son’s question sounded so like the unintelligible but unanswerable flashes with which the wife had on rare occasions opposed the husband’s authority that Hilary Vane found his temper getting the best of him—The name of Emerson was immutably fixed in his mind as the synonym for incomprehensible, foolish habits and beliefs. “Don’t talk Emerson to me,” he exclaimed. “And as for Brush Bascom, I’ve known him for thirty years, and he’s done as much for the Republican party as any man in this State.”

This vindication of Mr. Bascom naturally brought to a close a conversation which had already continued too long. The Honourable Hilary retired to rest; but—if Austen had known it—not to sleep until the small hours of the morning.

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It was not until the ensuing spring that the case of Mr. Zebulun Meader against the United Northeastern Railroads came up for trial in Bradford, the county-seat of Putnam County, and we do not wish to appear to give it too great a weight in the annals of the State. For one thing, the weekly newspapers did not mention it; and Mr. Paul Pardriff, when urged to give an account of the proceedings in the Ripton Record, said it was a matter of no importance, and spent the afternoon writing an editorial about the domestic habits of the Aztecs. Mr. Pardriff, however, had thought the matter of sufficient interest personally to attend the trial, and for the journey he made use of a piece of green cardboard which he habitually carried in his pocket. The editor of the Bradford Champion did not have to use his yellow cardboard, yet his columns may be searched in vain for the event.

Not that it was such a great event, one of hundreds of railroad accidents that come to court. The son of Hilary Vane was the plaintiff's counsel; and Mr. Meader, although he had not been able to work since his release from the hospital, had been able to talk, and the interest taken in the case by the average neglected citizen in Putnam proved that the weekly newspaper is not the only disseminator of news.

The railroad's side of the case was presented by that genial and able practitioner of Putnam County, Mr. Nathaniel Billings, who travelled from his home in Williamstown by the exhibition of a red ticket. Austen Vane had to pay his own way from Ripton, but as he handed back the mileage book, the conductor leaned over and whispered something in his ear that made him smile, and Austen thought he would rather have that little drop of encouragement than a pass. And as he left the car at Bradford, two grizzled and hard-handed individuals arose and wished him good luck.

He needed encouragement,—what young lawyer does not on his first important case? And he did not like to think of the future if he lost this. But in this matter he possessed a certain self-confidence which arose from a just and righteous anger against the forces opposing him and a knowledge of their tactics. To his mind his client was not Zeb Meader alone, but the host of victims who had been maimed and bought off because it was cheaper than to give the public a proper protection.

The court room was crowded. Mr. Zeb Meader, pale but determined, was surrounded by a knot of Mercer neighbours, many of whom were witnesses. The agate eyes of Mr. Brush Bascom flashed from the audience, and Mr. Nat Billings bustled forward to shake Austen's hand. Nat was one of those who called not infrequently upon the Honourable Hilary in Ripton, and had sat on Austen's little table.

"Glad to see you, Austen," he cried, so that the people might hear; and added, in a confidentially lower tone, "We lawyers understand that these little things make no difference, eh?"

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“I’m willing to agree to that if you are, Nat,” Austen answered. He looked at the lawyer’s fleshy face, blue-black where it was shaven, and at Mr. Billings’ shifty eyes and mouth, which its muscles could not quite keep in place. Mr. Billings also had nicked teeth. But he did his best to hide these obvious disadvantages by a Falstaffian bonhomie,—for Mr. Billings was growing stout.

“I tried it once or twice, my friend, when I was younger. It’s noble, but it don’t pay,” said Mr. Billings, still confidential. “Brush is sour—look at him. But I understand how you feel. I’m the kind of feller that speaks out, and what I can’t understand is, why the old man let you get into it.”

“He knew you were going to be on the other side, Nat, and wanted to teach me a lesson. I suppose it is folly to contest a case where the Railroad Commission has completely exonerated your client,” Austen added thoughtfully.

Mr. Billings’ answer was to wink, very slowly, with one eye; and shortly after these pleasantries were over, the case was called. A fragrant wind blew in at the open windows, and Nature outside was beginning to array herself in myriad hues of green. Austen studied the jury, and wondered how many points of his argument he could remember, but when he had got to his feet the words came to him. If we should seek an emblem for King David’s smooth, round stone which he flung at Goliath, we should call it the truth—for the truth never fails to reach the mark. Austen’s opening was not long, his words simple and not dramatic, but he seemed to charge them with something of the same magnetic force that compelled people to read and believe “Uncle Ton’s Cabin” and the “Song of the Shirt.” Spectators and jury listened intently.

Some twenty witnesses appeared for the plaintiff, all of whom declared that they had heard neither bell nor whistle. Most of these witnesses had been in the grove, two or three in the train; two, residents of the vicinity, testified that they had complained to the Railroad Commission about that crossing, and had received evasive answers to the effect that it was the duty of citizens to look out for themselves. On cross-examination they declared they had no objection to grade crossings which were properly safeguarded; this crossing was a death-trap. (Stricken out.) Mr. Billings made the mistake of trying to prove that one of these farmers—a clear-eyed, full-chested man with a deep voice—had an animus against the railroad dating from a controversy concerning the shipping of milk.

“I have an animus, your Honour,” said the witness, quietly. “When the railrud is represented by the kind of politicians we have in Putnam, it’s natural I should hain’t it?”

This answer, although stricken out, was gleefully received.

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In marked contrast to the earnestness of young Mr. Vane, who then rested, Mr. Billings treated the affair from the standpoint of a man of large practice who usually has more weighty matters to attend to. This was so comparatively trivial as not to be dignified by a serious mien. He quoted freely from the "Book of Arguments," reminding the jury of the debt of gratitude the State owed to the Northeastern Railroads for doing so much for its people; and if they were to eliminate all grade crossings, there would be no dividends for the stockholders. Besides, the law was that the State should pay half when a crossing was eliminated, and the State could not afford it. Austen had suggested, in his opening, that it was cheaper for the railroad as well as the State to kill citizens. He asked permission to inquire of the learned counsel for the defence by what authority he declared that the State could not afford to enter into a policy by which grade crossings would gradually be eliminated.

"Why," said Mr. Billings, "the fact that all bills introduced to this end never get out of committee."

"May I ask," said Austen, innocently, "who has been chairman of that particular committee in the lower House for the last five sessions?"

Mr. Billings was saved the embarrassment of answering this question by a loud voice in the rear calling out:—"Brush Bascom!"

A roar of laughter shook the court room, and all eyes were turned on Brush, who continued to sit unconcernedly with his legs crossed and his arm over the back of the seat. The offender was put out, order was restored, and Mr. Billings declared, with an injured air, that he failed to see why the counsel for the plaintiff saw fit to impugn Mr. Bascom.

"I merely asked a question," said Austere; "far be it from me to impugn any man who has held offices in the gift of the people for the last twenty years."

Another gale of laughter followed this, during which Mr. Billings wriggled his mouth and gave a strong impression that such tactics and such levity were to be deplored.

For the defence, the engineer and fireman both swore that the bell had been rung before the crossing was reached. Austen merely inquired whether this was not when they had left the station at North Mercer, two miles away. No, it was nearer. Pressed to name the exact spot, they could only conjecture, but near enough to be heard on the crossing. Other witnesses—among them several picnickers in the grove—swore that they had heard the bell. One of these Austen asked if he was not the member from Mercer in the last Legislature, and Mr. Billings, no longer genial, sprang to his feet with an objection.

“I merely wish to show, your Honour,” said Austen, “that this witness accepted a pass from the Northeastern Railroads when he went to the Legislature, and that he has had several trip passes for himself and his family since.”

The objection was not sustained, and Mr. Billings noted an exception.

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Another witness, upon whose appearance the audience tittered audibly, was Dave Skinner, boss of Mercer. He had lived, he said, in the town of Mercer all his life, and maintained that he was within a hundred yards of the track when the accident occurred, and heard the bell ring.

“Is it not a fact,” said Austen to this witness, “that Mr. Brush Bascom has a mortgage on your farm?”

“I can show, your Honour,” Austen continued, when Mr. Billings had finished his protest, “that this man was on his way to Riverside to pay his quarterly instalment.”

Mr. Bascom was not present at the afternoon session. Mr. Billings’ summing up was somewhat impassioned, and contained more quotations from the “Book of Arguments.” He regretted, he said, the obvious appeals to prejudice against a railroad corporation that was honestly trying to do its duty-yes, and more than its duty.

Misjudged, misused, even though friendless, it would continue to serve the people. So noble, indeed, was the picture which Mr. Billings’ eloquence raised up that his voice shook with emotion as he finished.

In the opinion of many of the spectators Austen Vane had yet to learn the art of oratory. He might with propriety have portrayed the suffering and loss of the poor farmer who was his client; he merely quoted from the doctor’s testimony to the effect that Mr. Meader would never again be able to do physical labour of the sort by which he had supported himself, and ended up by calling the attention of the jury to the photographs and plans of the crossing he had obtained two days after the accident, requesting them to note the facts that the public highway, approaching through a dense forest and underbrush at an angle of thirty-three degrees, climbed the railroad embankment at that point, and a train could not be seen until the horse was actually on the track.

The jury was out five minutes after the judge’s charge, and gave Mr. Zebulun Meader a verdict of six thousand dollars and costs,—a popular verdict, from the evident approval with which it was received in the court room. Quiet being restored, Mr. Billings requested, somewhat vehemently, that the case be transferred on the exceptions to the Supreme Court, that the stenographer write out the evidence, and that he might have three weeks in which to prepare a draft. This was granted.

Zeb Meader, true to his nature, was self-contained throughout the congratulations he received, but his joy was nevertheless intense.

“You shook ’em up good, Austen,” he said, making his way to where his counsel stood. “I suspicioned you’d do it. But how about this here appeal?”

“Billings is merely trying to save the face of his railroad,” Austen answered, smiling. “He hasn’t the least notion of allowing this case to come up again—take my word for it.”

“I guess your word’s good,” said Zeb. “And I want to tell you one thing, as an old man. I’ve been talkin’ to Putnam County folks some, and you hain’t lost nothin’ by this.”

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“How am I to get along without the friendship of Brush Bascom?” asked Austen, soberly.

Mr. Meader, who had become used to this mild sort of humour, relaxed sufficiently to laugh.

“Brush did seem a mite disgruntled,” he remarked.

Somewhat to Austen’s embarrassment, Mr. Mender’s friends were pushing forward. One grizzled veteran took him by the hand and looked thoughtfully into his face.

“I’ve lived a good many years,” he said, “but I never heerd ’em talked up to like that. You’re my candidate for governor.”

CHAPTER VI

ENTER THE LION

It is a fact, as Shakespeare has so tersely hinted, that fame sometimes comes in the line of duty. To be sure, if Austen Vane had been Timothy Smith, the Mender case might not have made quite so many ripples in the pond with which this story is concerned. Austen did what he thought was right. In the opinion of many of his father’s friends whom he met from time to time he had made a good-sized stride towards ruin, and they did not hesitate to tell him so—Mr. Chipman, president of the Ripton National Bank; Mr. Greene, secretary and treasurer of the Hawkeye Paper Company, who suggested with all kindness that, however noble it may be, it doesn’t pay to tilt at windmills.

“Not unless you wreck the windmill,” answered Austen. A new and very revolutionary point of view to Mr. Greene, who repeated it to Professor Brewer, urging that gentleman to take Austen in hand. But the professor burst out laughing, and put the saying into circulation.

Mr. Silas Tredway, whose list of directorships is too long to print, also undertook to remonstrate with the son of his old friend, Hilary Vane. The young lawyer heard him respectfully. The cashiers of some of these gentlemen, who were younger men, ventured to say—when out of hearing —that they admired the championship of Mr. Mender, but it would never do. To these, likewise, Austen listened good-naturedly enough, and did not attempt to contradict them. Changing the angle of the sun-dial does not affect the time of day.

It was not surprising that young Tom Gaylord, when he came back from New York and heard of Austen’s victory, should have rushed to his office and congratulated him in a rough but hearty fashion. Even though Austen had won a suit against the Gaylord Lumber Company, young Tom would have congratulated him. Old Tom was a different

matter. Old Tom, hobbling along under the maples, squinted at Austen and held up his stick.

“Damn you, you’re a lawyer, ain’t you?” cried the old man.

Austen, well used to this kind of greeting from Mr. Gaylord, replied that he didn’t think himself much of one.

“Damn it, I say you are. Some day I may have use for you,” said old Tom, and walked on.

“No,” said young Tom, afterwards, in explanation of this extraordinary attitude of his father, “it isn’t principle. He’s had a row with the Northeastern about lumber rates, and swears he’ll live till he gets even with ’em.”

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If Professor Brewer (Ripton's most clear-sighted citizen) had made the statement that Hilary Vane—away down in the bottom of his heart—was secretly proud of his son, the professor would probably have lost his place on the school board, the water board, and the library committee. The way the worldly-wise professor discovered the secret was this: he had gone to Bradford to hear the case, for he had been a dear friend of Sarah Austen. Two days later Hilary Vane saw the professor on his little porch, and lingered. Mr. Brewer suspected why, led carefully up to the subject, and not being discouraged—-except by numerous grunts—gave the father an account of the proceedings by no means unfavourable to the son. Some people like paregoric; the Honourable Hilary took his without undue squirming, with no visible effects to Austen.

Life in the office continued, with one or two exceptions, the even tenor of its way. Apparently, so far as the Honourable Hilary was concerned, his son had never been to Bradford. But the Honourable Brush Bascom, when he came on mysterious business to call on the chief counsel, no longer sat on Austen's table; this was true of other feudal lords and retainers: of Mr. Nat Billings, who, by the way, did not file his draft after all. Not that Mr. Billings wasn't polite, but he indulged no longer in slow winks at the expense of the honourable Railroad Commission.

Perhaps the most curious result of the Meader case to be remarked in passing, was upon Mr. Hamilton Tooting. Austen, except when he fled to the hills, was usually the last to leave the office, Mr. Tooting often the first. But one evening Mr. Tooting waited until the force had gone, and entered Austen's room with his hand outstretched.

"Put her there, Aust," he said.

Austen put her there.

"I've been exercisin' my thinker some the last few months," observed Mr. Tooting, seating himself on the desk.

"Aren't you afraid of nervous prostration, Ham?"

"Say," exclaimed Mr. Tooting, with a vexed laugh, "why are you always jollying me? You ain't any older than I am."

"I'm not as old, Ham. I don't begin to have your knowledge of the world."

"Come off," said Mr. Tooting, who didn't know exactly how to take this compliment. "I came in here to have a serious talk. I've been thinking it over, and I don't know but what you did right."

"Well, Ham, if you don't know, I don't know how I am to convince you."

“Hold on. Don’t go twistin’ around that way—you make me dizzy.” He lowered his voice confidentially, although there was no one within five walls of them. “I know the difference between a gold brick and a government bond, anyhow. I believe bucking the railroad’s going to pay in a year or so. I got on to it as soon as you did, I guess, but when a feller’s worn the collar as long as I have and has to live, it ain’t easy to cut loose—you understand.”

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“I understand,” answered Austen, gravely.

“I thought I’d let you know I didn’t take any too much trouble with Meader last summer to get the old bird to accept a compromise.”

“That was good of you, Ham.”

“I knew what you was up to,” said Mr. Tooting, giving Austen a friendly poke with his cigar.

“You showed your usual acumen, Mr. Tooting,” said Austen, as he rose to put on his coat. Mr. Tooting regarded him uneasily.

“You’re a deep one, Aust,” he declared; “some day you and, me must get together.”

Mr. Billings’ desire for ultimate justice not being any stronger than Austen suspected, in due time Mr. Meader got his money. His counsel would have none of it,—a decision not at all practical, and on the whole disappointing. There was, to be sure, an influx into Austen’s office of people who had been run over in the past, and it was Austen’s unhappy duty to point out to these that they had signed (at the request of various Mr. Tootings) little slips of paper which are technically known as releases. But the first hint of a really material advantage to be derived from his case against the railroad came from a wholly unexpected source, in the shape of a letter in the mail one August morning.

> “*Dear sir*: Having remarked with some interest the verdict for a client of yours against the United Northeastern Railroads, I wish you would call and see me at your earliest convenience.
>
> “Yours truly,
>
> “*Humphrey Crewe*.”

Although his curiosity was aroused, Austen was of two minds whether to answer this summons, the truth being that Mr. Crewe had not made, on the occasions on which they had had intercourse, the most favourable of impressions. However, it is not for the struggling lawyer to scorn any honourable brief, especially from a gentleman of stocks and bonds and varied interests like Mr. Crewe, with whom contentions of magnitude are inevitably associated. As he spun along behind Pepper on the Leith road that climbed Willow Brook on the afternoon he had made the appointment, Austen smiled to himself over his anticipations, and yet——being human-let his fancy play.

The broad acres of Wedderburn stretched across many highways, but the manor-house (as it had been called) stood on an eminence whence one could look for miles down the Yale of the Blue. It had once been a farmhouse, but gradually the tail had begun to wag

the dog, and the farmhouse became, like the original stone out of which the Irishman made the soup, difficult to find. Once the edifice had been on the road, but the road had long ago been removed to a respectful distance, and Austen entered between two massive pillars built of granite blocks on a musical gravel drive.

Humphrey Crewe was on the porch, his hands in his pockets, as Austen drove up.

“Hello,” he said, in a voice probably meant to be hospitable, but which had a peremptory ring, “don’t stand on ceremony. Hitch your beast and come along in.”

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Having, as it were, superintended the securing of Pepper, Mr. Crewe led the way through the house to the study, pausing once or twice to point out to Austen a carved ivory elephant procured at great expense in China, and a piece of tapestry equally difficult of purchase. The study itself was no mere lounging place of a man of pleasure, but sober and formidable books were scattered through the cases: "Turner's Evolution of the Railroad," "Graham's Practical Forestry," "Eldridge's Finance"; while whole shelves of modern husbandry proclaimed that Mr. Humphrey Crewe was no amateur farmer. There was likewise a shelf devoted to road building, several to knotty-looking pamphlets, and half a wall of neatly labelled pigeonholes. For decoration, there was an oar garnished with a ribbon, and several groups of college undergraduates, mostly either in puffed ties or scanty attire, and always prominent in these groups, and always unmistakable, was Mr. Humphrey Crewe himself.

Mr. Crewe was silent awhile, that this formidable array of things might make the proper impression upon his visitor.

"It was lucky you came to-day, Vane," he said at length. "I am due in New York to-morrow for a directors' meeting, and I have a conference in Chicago with a board of trustees of which I am a member on the third. Looking at my array of pamphlets, eh? I've been years in collecting them,—ever since I left college. Those on railroads ought especially to interest you—I'm somewhat of a railroad man myself."

"I didn't know that," said Austen.

"Had two or three blocks of stock in subsidiary lines that had to be looked after. It was a nuisance at first," said Mr. Crewe, "but I didn't shirk it. I made up my mind I'd get to the bottom of the railroad problem, and I did. It's no use doing a thing at all unless you do it well." Mr. Crewe, his hands still in his pockets, faced Austen smilingly. "Now I'll bet you didn't know I was a railroad man until you came in here. To tell the truth, it was about a railroad matter that I sent for you."

Mr. Crewe lit a cigar, but he did not offer one to Austen, as he had to Mr. Tooting. "I wanted to see what you were like," he continued, with refreshing frankness. "Of course, I'd seen you on the road. But you can get more of an idea of a man by talkin' to him, you know."

"You can if he'll talk," said Austen, who was beginning to enjoy his visit.

Mr. Crewe glanced at him keenly. Few men are fools at all points of the compass, and Mr. Crewe was far from this.

"You did well in that little case you had against the Northeastern. I heard about it."

"I did my best," answered Austen, and he smiled again.

“As some great man has remarked,” observed Mr. Crewe, “it isn’t what we do, it’s how we do it. Take pains over the smaller cases, and the larger cases will come of themselves, eh?”

“I live in hope,” said Austen, wondering how soon this larger case was going to unfold itself.

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“Let me see,” said Mr. Crewe, “isn’t your father the chief attorney in this State for the Northeastern? How do you happen to be on the other side?”

“By the happy accident of obtaining a client,” said Austen.

Mr. Crewe glanced at him again. In spite of himself, respect was growing in him. He had expected to find a certain amount of eagerness and subserviency—though veiled; here was a man of different calibre than he looked for in Ripton.

“The fact is,” he declared, “I have a grievance against the Northeastern Railroads, and I have made up my mind that you are the man for me.”

“You may have reason to regret your choice,” Austen suggested.

“I think not,” replied Mr. Crewe, promptly; “I believe I know a man when I see one, and you inspire me with confidence. This matter will have a double interest for you, as I understand you are fond of horses.”

“Horses?”

“Yes,” Mr. Crewe continued, gaining a little heat at the word, “I bought the finest-lookin’ pair you ever saw in New York this spring,—all-around action, manners, conformation, everything; I’ll show ’em to you. One of ‘em’s all right now; this confounded railroad injured the other gettin’ him up here. I’ve put in a claim. They say they didn’t, my man says they did. He tells me the horse was thrown violently against the sides of the car several times. He’s internally injured. I told ’em I’d sue ’em, and I’ve decided that you are the man to take the case—on conditions.”

Austen’s sense of humour saved him,—and Mr. Humphrey Crewe had begun to interest him. He rose and walked to the window and looked out for a few moments over the flower garden before he replied:—“On what conditions?”

“Well,” said Mr. Crewe, “frankly, I don’t want to pay more than the horse is worth, and it’s business to settle on the fee in case you win. I thought—”

“You thought,” said Austen, “that I might not charge as much as the next man.”

“Well,” said Mr. Crewe, “I knew that if you took the case, you’d fight it through, and I want to get even with ’em. Their claim agent had the impudence to suggest that the horse had been doctored by the dealer in New York. To tell me that I, who have been buying horses all my life, was fooled. The veterinary swears the animal is ruptured. I’m a citizen of Avalon County, though many people call me a summer resident; I’ve done business here and helped improve the neighbourhood for years. It will be my policy to employ home talent Avalon County lawyers, for instance. I may say, without

indiscretion, that I intend from now on to take even a greater interest in public affairs. The trouble is in this country that men in my position do not feel their responsibilities."

"Public spirit is a rare virtue," Austen remarked, seeing that he was expected to say something. "Avalon County appreciates the compliment, —if I may be permitted to answer for it."

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“I want to do the right thing,” said Mr. Crewe. “In fact, I have almost made up my mind to go to the Legislature this year. I know it would be a sacrifice of time, in a sense, and all that, but—” He paused, and looked at Austen.

“The Legislature needs leavening.”

“Precisely,” exclaimed Mr. Crewe, “and when I look around me and see the things crying to be done in this State, and no lawmaker with sense and foresight enough to propose them, it makes me sick. Now, for instance,” he continued, and rose with an evident attempt to assault the forestry shelves. But Austen rose too.

“I’d like to go over that with you, Mr. Crewe,” said he, “but I have to be back in Ripton.”

“How about my case?” his host demanded, with a return to his former abruptness.

“What about it?” asked Austen.

“Are you going to take it?”

“Struggling lawyers don’t refuse business.”

“Well,” said Mr. Crewe, “that’s sensible. But what are you going to charge?”

“Now,” said Austen, with entire good humour, “when you get on that ground, you are dealing no longer with one voracious unit, but with a whole profession,—a profession, you will allow me to add, which in dignity is second to none. In accordance with the practice of the best men in that profession, I will charge you what I believe is fair—not what I think you are able and willing to pay. Should you dispute the bill, I will not stoop to quarrel with you, but, try to live on bread and butter a while longer.”

Mr. Crewe was silent for a moment. It would not be exact to say uncomfortable, for it is to be doubted whether he ever got so. But he felt dimly that the relations of patron and patronized were becoming somewhat jumbled.

“All right,” said he, “I guess we can let it go at that. Hello! What the deuce are those women doing here again?”

This irrelevant exclamation was caused by the sight through the open French window —of three ladies in the flower garden, two of whom were bending over the beds. The third, upon whose figure Austen’s eyes were riveted, was seated on a stone bench set in a recess of pines, and looking off into the Yale of the Blue. With no great eagerness, but without apology to Austen, Mr. Crewe stepped out of the window and approached them; and as this was as good a way as any to his horse and buggy, Austen followed. One of the ladies straightened at their appearance, scrutinized them through the

glasses she held in her hand, and Austen immediately recognized her as the irreproachable Mrs. Pomfret.

“We didn’t mean to disturb you, Humphrey,” she said. “We knew you would be engaged in business, but I told Alice as we drove by I could not resist stopping for one more look at your Canterbury bells. I knew you wouldn’t mind, but you mustn’t leave your—affairs, —not for an instant.”

The word “affairs” was accompanied by a brief inspection of Austen Vane.

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“That’s all right,” answered Mr. Crewe; “it doesn’t cost anything to look at flowers, that’s what they’re for. Cost something to put ’em in. I got that little feller Ridley to lay ’em out—I believe I told you. He’s just beginning. Hello, Alice.”

“I think he did it very well, Humphrey,” said Miss Pomfret.

“Passably,” said Mr. Crewe. “I told him what I wanted and drew a rough sketch of the garden and the colour scheme.”

“Then you did it, and not Mr. Ridley. I rather suspected it,” said Mrs. Pomfret; “you have such clear and practical ideas about things, Humphrey.”

“It’s simple enough,” said Mr. Crewe, deprecatingly, “after you’ve seen a few hundred gardens and get the general underlying principle.”

“It’s very clever,” Alice murmured.

“Not at all. A little application will do wonders. A certain definite colour massed here, another definite colour there, and so forth.”

Mr. Crewe spoke as though Alice’s praise irritated him slightly. He waved his hand to indicate the scheme in general, and glanced at Victoria on the stone bench. From her (Austen thought) seemed to emanate a silent but mirthful criticism, although she continued to gaze persistently down the valley, apparently unaware of their voices. Mr. Crewe looked as if he would have liked to reach her, but the two ladies filled the narrow path, and Mrs. Pomfret put her fingers on his sleeve.

“Humphrey, you must explain it to us. I am so interested in gardens I’m going to have one if Electrics increase their dividend.”

Mr. Crewe began, with no great ardour, to descant on the theory of planting, and Austen resolved to remain pocketed and ignored no longer. He retraced his steps and made his way rapidly by another path towards Victoria, who turned her head at his approach, and rose. He acknowledged an inward agitation with the vision in his eye of the tall, white figure against the pines, clad with the art which, in mysterious simplicity, effaces itself.

“I was wondering,” she said, as she gave him her hand, “how long it would be before you spoke to me.”

“You gave me no chance,” said Austen, quickly.

“Do you deserve one?” she asked.

Before he could answer, Mr. Crewe's explanation of his theories had come lamely to a halt. Austen was aware of the renewed scrutiny of Mrs. Pomfret, and then Mr. Crewe, whom no social manacles could shackle, had broken past her and made his way to them. He continued to treat the ground on which Austen was standing as unoccupied.

"Hello, Victoria," he said, "you don't know anything about gardens, do you?"

"I don't believe you do either," was Victoria's surprising reply.

Mr. Crewe laughed at this pleasantry.

"How are you going to prove it?" he demanded.

"By comparing what you've done with Freddie Ridley's original plan," said Victoria.

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Mr. Crewe was nettled.

“Ridley has a lot to learn,” he retorted. “He had no conception of what was appropriate here.”

“Freddie was weak,” said Victoria, but he needed the money. Don’t you know Mr. Vane?”

“Yes,” said Mr. Crewe, shortly, “I’ve been talking to him—on business.”

“Oh,” said Victoria, “I had no means of knowing. Mrs. Pomfret, I want to introduce Mr. Vane, and Miss Pomfret, Mr. Vane.”

Mrs. Pomfret, who had been hovering on the outskirts of this duel, inclined her head the fraction of an inch, but Alice put out her hand with her sweetest manner.

“When did you arrive?” she asked.

“Well, the fact is, I haven’t arrived yet,” said Austen.

“Not arrived” exclaimed Alice, with a puzzled glance into Victoria’s laughing eyes.

“Perhaps Humphrey will help you along,” Victoria suggested, turning to him. “He might be induced to give you his celebrated grievance about his horses.”

“I have given it to him,” said Mr. Crewe, briefly.

“Cheer up, Mr. Vane, your fortune is made,” said Victoria.

“Victoria,” said Mrs. Pomfret, in her most imperial voice, “we ought to be going instantly, or we shan’t have time to drop you at the Hammonds’.”

“I’ll take you over in the new motor car,” said Mr. Crewe, with his air of conferring a special train.

“How much is gasoline by the gallon?” inquired Victoria.

“I did a favour once for the local manager, and get a special price,” said Mr. Crewe.

“Humphrey,” said Mrs. Pomfret, taking his hand, “don’t forget you are coming to dinner to-night. Four people gave out at the last minute, and there will be just Alice and myself. I’ve asked old Mr. Fitzhugh.”

“All right,” said Mr. Crewe, “I’ll have the motor car brought around.”

The latter part of this remark was, needless to say, addressed to Victoria.

“It’s awfully good of you, Humphrey,” she answered, “but the Hammonds are on the road to Ripton, and I am going to ask Mr. Vane to drive me down there behind that adorable horse of his.”

This announcement produced a varied effect upon those who heard it, although all experienced surprise. Mrs. Pomfret, in addition to an anger which she controlled only as the result of long practice, was horrified, and once more levelled her glasses at Austen.

“I think, Victoria, you had better come with us,” she said. “We shall have plenty of time, if we hurry.”

By this time Austen had recovered his breath.

“I’ll be ready in an instant,” he said, and made brief but polite adieus to the three others.

“Good-by,” said Alice, vaguely.

“Let me know when anything develops,” said Mr. Crewe, with his back to his attorney.

Austen found Victoria, her colour heightened a little, waiting for him by the driveway. The Pomfrets had just driven off, and Mr. Crewe was nowhere to be seen.

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“I do not know what you will think of me for taking this for granted, Mr. Vane,” she said as he took his seat beside her, “but I couldn’t resist the chance of driving behind your horse.”

“I realized,” he answered smilingly, “that Pepper was the attraction, and I have more reason than ever to be grateful to him.”

She glanced covertly at the Vane profile, at the sure, restraining hands on the reins which governed with so nice a touch the mettle of the horse. His silence gave her time to analyze again her interest in this man, which renewed itself at every meeting. In the garden she had been struck by the superiority of a nature which set at naught what had been, to some smaller spirits, a difficult situation. She recognized this quality as inborn, but, not knowing of Sarah Austen, she wondered where he got it. Now it was the fact that he refrained from comment that pleased her most.

“Did Humphrey actually send for you to take up the injured horse case?” she asked.

Austen flushed.

“I’m afraid he did. You seem to know all about it,” he added.

“Know all about it Every one within twenty miles of Leith knows about it. I’m sure the horse was doctored when he bought him.”

“Take care, you may be called as a witness.”

“What I want to know is, why you accepted such a silly case,” said Victoria.

Austen looked quizzically into her upturned face, and she dropped her eyes.

“That’s exactly what I should have asked myself,—after a while,” he said.

She laughed with a delicious understanding of “after a while.”

“I suppose you think me frightfully forward,” she said, in a lowered voice, “inviting myself to drive and asking you such a question when I scarcely know you. But I just couldn’t go on with Mrs. Pomfret,—she irritated me so,—and my front teeth are too valuable to drive with Humphrey Crewe.”

Austen smiled, and secretly agreed with her.

“I should have offered, if I had dared,” he said.

“Dared! I didn’t know that was your failing. I don’t believe you even thought of it.”

“Nevertheless, the idea occurred to me, and terrified me,” said Austen.

“Why?” she asked, turning upon him suddenly. “Why did it terrify you?”

“I should have been presuming upon an accidental acquaintance, which I had no means of knowing you wished to continue,” he replied, staring at his horse’s head.

“And I?” Victoria asked. “Presumption multiplies tenfold in a woman, doesn’t it?”

“A woman confers,” said Austen.

She smiled, but with a light in her eyes. This simple sentence seemed to reveal yet more of an inner man different from some of those with whom her life had been cast. It was an American point of view—this choosing to believe that the woman conferred. After offering herself as his passenger Victoria, too, had had a moment of terror: the action had been the result of an impulse which she did not care to attempt to define. She changed the subject.

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“You have been winning laurels since I saw you last summer,” she said. “I hear incidentally you have made our friend Zeb Meader a rich man.”

“As riches go, in the town of Mercer,” Austen laughed. “As for my laurels, they have not yet begun to chafe.”

Here was a topic he would have avoided, and yet he was curious to discover what her attitude would be. He had antagonized her father, and the fact that he was the son of Hilary Vane had given his antagonism prominence.

“I am glad you did it for Zeb.”

“I should have done it for anybody—much as I like Zeb,” he replied briefly.

She glanced at him.

“It was—courageous of you,” she said.

“I have never looked upon it in that light,” he answered. “May I ask you how you heard of it?”

She coloured, but faced the question.

“I heard it from my father, at first, and I took an interest—on Zeb Meader’s account,” she added hastily.

Austen was silent.

“Of course,” she continued, “I felt a little like boasting of an ‘accidental acquaintance’ with the man who saved Zeb Meader’s life.”

Austen laughed. Then he drew Pepper down to a walk, and turned to her.

“The power of making it more than an accidental acquaintance lies with you,” he said quietly.

“I have always had an idea that aggression was a man’s prerogative,” Victoria answered lightly. “And seeing that you have not appeared at Fairview for something over a year, I can only conclude that you do not choose to exercise it in this case.”

Austen was in a cruel quandary.

“I did wish to come,” he answered simply, “but—the fact that I have had a disagreement with your father has—made it difficult.” “Nonsense” exclaimed Victoria; “just because you have won a suit against his railroad. You don’t know my father, Mr. Vane. He isn’t

the kind of man with whom that would make any difference. You ought to talk it over with him. He thinks you were foolish to take Zeb Meader's side."

"And you?" Austen demanded quickly.

"You see, I'm a woman," said Victoria, "and I'm prejudiced—for Zeb Meader. Women are always prejudiced,—that's our trouble. It seemed to me that Zeb was old, and unfortunate, and ought to be compensated, since he is unable to work. But of course I suppose I can't be expected to understand."

It was true that she could not be expected to understand. He might not tell her that his difference with Mr. Flint was not a mere matter of taking a small damage suit against his railroad, but a fundamental one. And Austen recognized that the justification of his attitude meant an arraignment of Victoria's father.

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“I wish you might know my father better, Mr. Vane,” she went on, “I wish you might know him as I know him, if it were possible. You see, I have been his constant companion all my life, and I think very few people understand him as I do, and realize his fine qualities. He makes no attempt to show his best side to the world. His life has been spent in fighting, and I am afraid he is apt to meet the world on that footing. He is a man of such devotion to his duty that he rarely has a day to himself, and I have known him to sit up until the small hours of the morning to settle some little matter of justice. I do not think I am betraying his confidence when I say that he is impressed with your ability, and that he liked your manner the only time he ever talked to you. He believes that you have got, in some way, a wrong idea of what he is trying to do. Why don’t you come up and talk to him again?”

“I am afraid your kindness leads you to overrate my importance,” Austen replied, with mingled feelings. Victoria’s confidence in her father made the situation all the more hopeless.

“I’m sure I don’t,” she answered quickly; “ever since—ever since I first laid eyes upon you I have had a kind of belief in you.”

“Belief?” he echoed.

“Yes,” she said, “belief that—that you had a future. I can’t describe it,” she continued, the colour coming into her face again; “one feels that way about some people without being able to put the feeling into words. And have a feeling, too, that I should like you to be friends with my father.”

Neither of them, perhaps, realized the rapidity with which “accidental acquaintance” had melted into intimacy. Austen’s blood ran faster, but it was characteristic of him that he tried to steady himself, for he was a Vane. He had thought of her many times during the past year, but gradually the intensity of the impression had faded until it had been so unexpectedly and vividly renewed to-day. He was not a man to lose his head, and the difficulties of the situation made him pause and choose his words, while he dared not so much as glance at her as she sat in the sunlight beside him.

“I should like to be friends with your father,” he answered gravely,—the statement being so literally true as to have its pathetically humorous aspect.

“I’ll tell him so, Mr. Vane,” she said.

Austen turned, with a seriousness that dismayed her.

“I must ask you as a favour not to do that,” he said.

“Why?” she asked.

“In the first place,” he answered quietly, “I cannot afford to have Mr. Flint misunderstand my motives. And I ought not to mislead you,” he went on. “In periods of public controversy, such as we are passing through at present, sometimes men’s views differ so sharply as to make intercourse impossible. Your father and I might not agree—-politically, let us say. For instance,” he added, with evident hesitation, “my father and I disagree.”

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Victoria was silent. And presently they came to a wire fence overgrown with Virginia creeper, which divided the shaded road from a wide lawn.

“Here we are at the Hammonds’, and—thank you,” she said.

Any reply he might have made was forestalled. The insistent and intolerant horn of an automobile, followed now by the scream of the gears, broke the stillness of the country-side, and a familiar voice cried out—“Do you want the whole road?”

Austen turned into the Hammonds’ drive as the bulldog nose of a motor forged ahead, and Mr. Crewe swung in the driver’s seat.

“Hello, Victoria,” he shouted, “you people ought to have ear-trumpets.”

The car swerved, narrowly missed a watering fountain where the word “Peace” was inscribed, and shot down the hill.

“That manner,” said Victoria, as she jumped out of the buggy, “is a valuable political asset.”

“Does he really intend to go into politics?” Austen asked curiously.

“‘Intend’ is a mild word applied to Humphrey,” she answered; “‘determined’ would suit him better. According to him, there is no game that cannot be won by dynamics. ‘Get out of the way’ is his motto. Mrs. Pomfret will tell you how he means to cover the State with good roads next year, and take a house in Washington the year after.” She held out her hand. “Good-by,—and I am ever so much obliged to you for bringing me here.”

He drove away towards Ripton with many things to think about, with a last picture of her in his mind as she paused for an instant in the flickering shadows, stroking Pepper’s forehead.

CHAPTER VII

THE LEOPARD AND HIS SPOTS

It is difficult to overestimate the importance of Mr. Humphrey Crewe, of his value to the town of Leith, and to the State at large, and in these pages only a poor attempt at an appreciation of him may be expected. Mr. Crewe by no means underestimated this claim upon the community, and he had of late been declaring that he was no summer resident. Wedderburn was his home, and there he paid his taxes. Undoubtedly, they were less than city taxes.

Although a young man, Mr. Crewe was in all respects a model citizen, and a person of many activities. He had built a farmers' club, to which the farmers, in gross ingratitude, had never gone. Now it was a summer residence and distinctly rentable. He had a standing offer to erect a library in the village of Leith provided the town would furnish the ground, the books, and permit the name of Crewe to be carved in stone over the doorway. The indifference of the town pained him, and he was naturally not a little grieved at the lack of proper feeling of the country people of America towards those who would better their conditions. He had put a large memorial window in the chapel to his family.

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Mr. Crewe had another standing offer to be one of five men to start a farming experiment station—which might pay dividends. He, was a church warden; president of a society for turning over crops (which he had organized); a member of the State Grange; president of the embryo State Economic League (whatever that was); and chairman of the Local Improvement Board—also a creation of his own. By these tokens, and others too numerous to mention, it would seem that the inhabitants of Leith would have jumped at the chance to make such a man one of the five hundred in their State Legislature.

To Whitman is attributed the remark that genius is almost one hundred per cent directness, but whether or not this applied to Mr. Humphrey Crewe remains to be seen. “Dynamics” more surely expressed him. It would not seem to be a very difficult feat, to be sure, to get elected to a State Legislature of five hundred which met once a year: once in ten years, indeed, might have been more appropriate for the five hundred. The town of Leith with its thousand inhabitants had one representative, and Mr. Crewe had made up his mind he was to be that representative.

There was, needless to say, great excitement in Leith over Mr. Crewe’s proposed venture into the unknown seas of politics. I mean, of course, that portion of Leith which recognized in Mr. Crewe an eligible bachelor and a person of social importance, for these qualities were not particularly appealing to the three hundred odd farmers whose votes were expected to send him rejoicing to the State capital.

“It is so rare with us for a gentleman to go into politics, that we ought to do everything we can to elect him,” Mrs. Pomfret went about declaring. “Women do so much in England, I wonder they don’t do more here. I was staying at Aylestone Court last year when the Honourable Billy Aylestone was contesting the family seat with a horrid Radical, and I assure you, my dear, I got quite excited. We did nothing from morning till night but electioneer for the Honourable Billy, and kissed all the babies in the borough. The mothers were so grateful. Now, Edith, do tell Jack instead of playing tennis and canoeing all day he ought to help. It’s the duty of all young men to help. Noblesse oblige, you know. I can’t understand Victoria. She really has influence with these country people, but she says it’s all nonsense. Sometimes I think Victoria has a common streak in her—and no wonder. The other day she actually drove to the Hammonds’ in a buggy with an unknown lawyer from Ripton. But I told you about it. Tell your gardener and the people that do your haying, dear, and your chicken woman. My chicken woman is most apathetic, but do you wonder, with the life they lead?”

Mr. Humphrey Crewe might have had, with King Charles, the watchword “Thorough.” He sent to the town clerk for a check-list, and proceeded to honour each of the two hundred Republican voters with a personal visit. This is a fair example of what took place in the majority of cases.

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Out of a cloud of dust emerges an automobile, which halts, with protesting brakes, in front of a neat farmhouse, guarded by great maples. Persistent knocking by a chauffeur at last brings a woman to the door. Mrs. Jenney has a pleasant face and an ample figure.

“Mr. Jenney live here?” cries Mr. Crewe from the driver’s seat.

“Yes,” says Mrs. Jenney, smiling.

“Tell him I want to see him.”

“Guess you’ll find him in the apple orchard.”

“Where’s that?”

The chauffeur takes down the bars, Mr. Jenney pricks up his ears, and presently—to his amazement—perceives a Leviathan approaching him, careening over the ruts of his wood road. Not being an emotional person, he continues to pick apples until he is summarily hailed. Then he goes leisurely towards the Leviathan.

“Are you Mr. Jenney?”

“Callate to be,” says Mr. Jenney, pleasantly.

“I’m Humphrey Crewe.”

“How be you?” says Mr. Jenney, his eyes wandering over the Leviathan.

“How are the apples this year?” asks Mr. Crewe, graciously.

“Fair to middlin’,” says Mr. Jenney.

“Have you ever tasted my Pippins?” says Mr. Crewe. “A little science in cultivation helps along. I’m going to send you a United States government pamphlet on the fruit we can raise here.”

Mr. Jenney makes an awkward pause by keeping silent on the subject of the pamphlet until he shall see it.

“Do you take much interest in politics?”

“Not a great deal,” answers Mr. Jenney.

“That’s the trouble with Americans,” Mr. Crewe declares, “they don’t care who represents ’em, or whether their government’s good or bad.”

“Guess that’s so,” replies Mr. Jenney, politely.

“That sort of thing’s got to stop,” declares Mr. Crewe; “I’m a candidate for the Republican nomination for representative.”

“I want to know!” ejaculates Mr. Jenney, pulling his beard. One would never suspect that this has been one of Mr. Jenney’s chief topics of late.

“I’ll see that the interests of this town are cared for.”

“Let’s see,” says Mr. Jenney, “there’s five hundred in the House, ain’t there?”

“It’s a ridiculous number,” says Mr. Crewe, with truth.

“Gives everybody a chance to go,” says Mr. Jenney. “I was thar in ’78, and enjoyed it some.”

“Who are you for?” demanded Mr. Crewe, combating the tendency of the conversation to slip into a pocket.

“Little early yet, hain’t it? Hain’t made up my mind. Who’s the candidates?” asks Mr. Jenney, continuing to stroke his beard.

“I don’t know,” says Mr. Crewe, “but I do know I’ve done something for this town, and I hope you’ll take it into consideration. Come and see me when you go to the village. I’ll give you a good cigar, and that pamphlet, and we’ll talk matters over.”

“Never would have thought to see one of them things in my orchard,” says Mr. Jenney. “How much do they cost? Much as a locomotive, don’t they?”

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It would not be exact to say that, after some weeks of this sort of campaigning, Mr. Crewe was discouraged, for such writhe vitality with which nature had charged him that he did not know the meaning of the word. He was merely puzzled, as a June-bug is puzzled when it bumps up against a wire window-screen. He had pledged to him his own gardener, Mrs. Pomfret's, the hired men of three of his neighbours, a few modest souls who habitually took off their hats to him, and Mr. Ball, of the village, who sold groceries to Wedderburn and was a general handy man for the summer people. Mr. Ball was an agitator by temperament and a promoter by preference. If you were a summer resident of importance and needed anything from a sewing-machine to a Holstein heifer, Mr. Ball, the grocer, would accommodate you. When Mrs. Pomfret's cook became inebriate and refractory, Mr. Ball was sent for, and enticed her to the station and on board of a train; when the Chillinghams' tank overflowed, Mr. Ball found the proper valve and saved the house from being washed away. And it was he who, after Mrs. Pomfret, took the keenest interest in Mr. Crewe's campaign. At length came one day when Mr. Crewe pulled up in front of the grocery store and called, as his custom was, loudly for Mr. Ball. The fact that Mr. Ball was waiting on customers made no difference, and presently that gentleman appeared, rubbing his hands together.

"How do you do, Mr. Crewe?" he said, "automobile going all right?"

"What's the matter with these fellers?" said Mr. Crewe. "Haven't I done enough for the town? Didn't I get 'em rural free delivery? Didn't I subscribe to the meeting-house and library, and don't I pay more taxes than anybody else?"

"Certain," assented Mr. Ball, eagerly, "certain you do." It did not seem to occur to him that it was unfair to make him responsible for the scurvy ingratitude of his townsmen. He stepped gingerly down into the dust and climbed up on the tool box.

"Look out," said Mr. Crewe, "don't scratch the varnish. What is it?"

Mr. Ball shifted obediently to the rubber-covered step, and bent his face to his patron's ear.

"It's railrud," he said.

"Railroad!" shouted Mr. Crewe, in a voice that made the grocer clutch his arm in terror. "Don't pinch me like that. Railroad! This town ain't within ten miles of the railroad."

"For the love of David," said Mr. Ball, "don't talk so loud, Mr. Crewe."

"What's the railroad got to do with it?" Mr. Crewe demanded.

Mr. Ball glanced around him, to make sure that no one was within shouting distance.

"What's the railrud got to do with anything in this State?" inquired Mr. Ball, craftily.

“That’s different,” said Mr. Crewe, shortly, “I’m a corporation man myself. They’ve got to defend ’emselves.”

“Certain. I ain’t got anything again’ ’em,” Mr. Ball agreed quickly. “I guess they know what they’re about. By the bye, Mr. Crewe,” he added, coming dangerously near the varnish again, and drawing back, “you hain’t happened to have seen Job Braden, have you?”

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“Job Braden!” exclaimed Mr. Crewe, “Job Braden! What’s all this mystery about Job Braden? Somebody whispers that name in my ear every day. If you mean that smooth-faced cuss that stutters and lives on Braden’s Hill, I called on him, but he was out. If you see him, tell him to come up to Wedderburn, and I’ll talk with him.”

Mr. Ball made a gesture to indicate a feeling divided between respect for Mr. Crewe and despair at the hardihood of such a proposition.

“Lord bless you, sir, Job wouldn’t go.”

“Wouldn’t go?”

“He never pays visits,—folks go to him.”

“He’d come to see me, wouldn’t he?”

“I—I’m afraid riot, Mr. Crewe. Job holds his comb rather high.”

“Do you mean to say this two-for-a-cent town has a boss?”

“Silas Grantley was born here,” said Mr. Ball—for even the worm will turn. “This town’s got a noble history.”

“I don’t care anything about Silas Grantley. What I want to know is, how this rascal manages to make anything out of the political pickings of a town like Leith.”

“Well, Job ain’t exactly a rascal, Mr. Crewe. He’s got a good many of them hill farmers in a position of—of gratitude. Enough to control the Republican caucus.”

“Do you mean he buys their votes?” demanded Mr. Crewe.

“It’s like this,” explained Mr. Ball, “if one of ’em falls behind in his grocery bill, for example, he can always get money from Job. Job takes a mortgage, but he don’t often close down on ’m. And Job has been collectin’ credentials in Avalon County for upward of forty years.”

“Collecting credentials?”

“Yes. Gets a man nominated to State and county conventions that can’t go, and goes himself with a bunch of credentials. He’s in a position to negotiate. He was in all them railrud fights with Jethro Bass, and now he does business with Hilary Vane or Brush Bascom when anything especial’s goin’ on. You’d ought to see him, Mr. Crewe.”

“I guess I won’t waste my time with any picayune boss if the United Northeastern Railroads has any hand in this matter,” declared Mr. Crewe. “Wind her up.”

This latter remark was addressed to a long-suffering chauffeur who looked like a Sicilian brigand.

“I didn’t exactly like to suggest it,” said Mr. Ball, rubbing his hands and raising his voice above the whir of the machine, “but of course I knew Mr. Flint was an intimate friend. A word to him from you—”

But by this Mr. Crewe had got in his second speed and was sweeping around a corner lined with farmers’ teams, whose animals were behaving like circus horses. On his own driveway, where he arrived in incredibly brief time, he met his stenographer, farm superintendent, secretary, housekeeper, and general utility man, Mr. Raikes. Mr. Raikes was elderly, and showed signs of needing a vacation.

“Telephone Mr. Flint, Raikes, and tell him I would like an appointment at his earliest convenience, on important business.”

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Mr. Raikes, who was going for his daily stroll beside the river, wheeled and made for the telephone, and brought back the news that Mr. Flint would be happy to see Mr. Crewe the next afternoon at four o'clock.

This interview, about which there has been so much controversy in the newspapers, and denials and counter-denials from the press bureaus of both gentlemen,—this now historic interview began at four o'clock precisely the next day. At that hour Mr. Crewe was ushered into that little room in which Mr. Flint worked when at Fairview. Like Frederick the Great and other famous captains, Mr. Flint believed in an iron bedstead regime. The magnate was, as usual, fortified behind his oak desk; the secretary with a bend in his back was in modest evidence; and an elderly man of comfortable proportions, with a large gold watch-charm portraying the rising sun, and who gave, somehow, the polished impression of a marble, sat near the window smoking a cigar. Mr. Crewe approached the desk with that genial and brisk manner for which he was noted and held out his hand to the railroad president.

"We are both business men, and both punctual, Mr. Flint," he said, and sat down in the empty chair beside his host, eyeing without particular favour him of the watch-charm, whose cigar was not a very good one. "I wanted to have a little private conversation with you which might be of considerable interest to us both." And Mr. Crewe laid down on the desk a somewhat formidable roll of papers.

"I trust the presence of Senator Whitredge will not deter you," answered Mr. Flint. "He is an old friend of mine."

Mr. Crewe was on his feet again with surprising alacrity, and beside the senator's chair.

"How are you, Senator?" he said, "I have never had the pleasure of meeting you, but I know you by reputation."

The senator got to his feet. They shook hands, and exchanged cordial greetings; and during the exchange Mr. Crewe looked out of the window, and the senator's eyes were fixed on the telephone receiver on Mr. Flint's desk. As neither gentleman took hold of the other's fingers very hard, they fell apart quickly.

"I am very happy to meet you, Mr. Crewe," said the senator. Mr. Crewe sat down again, and not being hampered by those shrinking qualities so fatal to success he went on immediately:—"There is nothing which I have to say that the senator cannot hear. I made the appointment with you, Mr. Flint, to talk over a matter which may be of considerable importance to us both. I have made up my mind to go to the Legislature."

Mr. Crewe naturally expected to find visible effects of astonishment and joy on the faces of his hearers at such not inconsiderable news. Mr. Flint, however, looked serious enough, though the senator smiled as he blew his smoke out of the window.

“Have you seen Job Braden, Mr. Crewe?” he asked, with genial jocoseness. “They tell me that Job is still alive and kicking over in your parts.”

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“Thank you, Senator,” said Mr. Crewe, “that brings me to the very point I wish to emphasize. Everywhere in Leith I am met with the remark, ’Have you seen Job Braden?’ And I always answer, ’No, I haven’t seen Mr. Braden, and I don’t intend to see him.'”

Mr. Whitredge laughed, and blew out a ring of smoke. Mr. Flint’s face remained sober.

“Now, Mr. Flint,” Mr. Crewe went on, “you and I understand each other, and we’re on the same side of the fence. I have inherited some interests in corporations myself, and I have acquired an interest in others. I am a director in several. I believe that it is the duty of property to protect itself, and the duty of all good men in politics,—such as the senator here,”—(bow from Mr. Whitredge) to protect property. I am a practical man, and I think I can convince you, if you don’t see it already, that my determination to go to the Legislature is an advantageous thing for your railroad.”

“The advent of a reputable citizen into politics is always a good thing for the railroad, Mr. Crewe,” said Mr. Flint.

“Exactly,” Mr. Crewe agreed, ignoring the non-committal quality of this remark, “and if you get a citizen who is a not inconsiderable property holder, a gentleman, and a college graduate,—a man who, by study and predilection, is qualified to bring about improved conditions in the State, so much the better.”

“So much the better,” said Mr. Flint.

“I thought you would see it that way,” Mr. Crewe continued. “Now a man of your calibre must have studied to some extent the needs of the State, and it must have struck you that certain improvements go hand in hand with the prosperity of your railroad.”

“Have a cigar, Mr. Crewe. Have another, Senator?” said Mr. Flint. “I think that is safe as a general proposition, Mr. Crewe.”

“To specify,” said Mr. Crewe, laying his hand on the roll of papers he had brought, “I have here bills which I have carefully drawn up and which I will leave for your consideration. One is to issue bonds for ten millions to build State roads.”

“Ten millions!” said Mr. Flint, and the senator whistled mildly.

“Think about it,” said Mr. Crewe, “the perfection of the highways through the State, instead of decreasing your earnings, would increase them tremendously. Visitors by the tens of thousands would come in automobiles, and remain and buy summer places. The State would have its money back in taxes and business in no time at all. I wonder somebody hasn’t seen it before—the stupidity of the country legislator is colossal. And we want forestry laws, and laws for improving the condition of the farmers—all practical things. They are all there,” Mr. Crewe declared, slapping the bundle; “read them, Mr.

Flint. If you have any suggestions to make, kindly note them on the margin, and I shall be glad to go over them with you."

By this time the senator was in a rare posture for him—he was seated upright.

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“As you know, I am a very busy man, Mr. Crewe,” said the railroad president.

“No one appreciates that more fully than I do, Mr. Flint,” said Mr. Crewe; “I haven’t many idle hours myself. I think you will find the bills and my comments on them well worth your consideration from the point of view of advantage to your railroad. They are typewritten, and in concrete form. In fact, the Northeastern Railroads and myself must work together to our mutual advantage—that has become quite clear to me. I shall have need of your help in passing the measures.”

“I’m afraid I don’t quite understand you, Mr. Crewe,” said Mr. Flint, putting down the papers.

“That is,” said Mr. Crewe, “if you approve of the bills, and I am confident that I shall be able to convince you.”

“What do you want me to do?” asked the railroad president.

“Well, in the first place,” said Mr. Crewe, unabashed, “send word to your man Braden that you’ve seen me and it’s all right.”

“I assure you,” answered Mr. Flint, giving evidence for the first time of a loss of patience, “that neither the Northeastern Railroads nor myself, have any more to do with this Braden than you have.”

Mr. Crewe, being a man of the world, looked incredulous.

“Senator,” Mr. Flint continued, turning to Mr. Whitredge, “you know as much about politics in this State as any man of my acquaintance, have you ever heard of any connection between this Braden and the Northeastern Railroads?”

The senator had a laugh that was particularly disarming.

“Bless your soul, no,” he replied. “You will pardon me, Mr. Crewe, but you must have been listening to some farmer’s tale. The railroad is the bugaboo in all these country romances. I’ve seen old Job Braden at conventions ever since I was a lad. He’s a back number, one of the few remaining disciples and imitators of Jethro Bass: talks like him and acts like him. In the old days when there were a lot of little railroads, he and Bijah Bixby and a few others used to make something out of them, but since the consolidation, and Mr. Flint’s presidency, Job stays at home. They tell me he runs Leith yet. You’d better go over and fix it up with him.”

A somewhat sarcastic smile of satisfaction was playing over Mr. Flint’s face as he listened to the senator’s words. As a matter of fact, they were very nearly true as regarded Job Braden, but Mr. Crewe may be pardoned for thinking that Mr. Flint was not showing him quite the confidence due from one business and corporation man to

another. He was by no means abashed,—Mr. Crewe had too much spirit for that. He merely became—as a man whose watchword is “thorough” will—a little more combative.

“Well, read the bills anyway, Mr. Flint, and I’ll come and go over them with you. You can’t fail to see my arguments, and all I ask is that you throw the weight of your organization at the State capital for them when they come up.”

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Mr. Flint drummed on the table.

“The men who have held office in this State,” he said, “have always been willing to listen to any suggestion I may have thought proper to make to them. This is undoubtedly because I am at the head of the property which pays the largest taxes. Needless to say I am chary of making suggestions. But I am surprised that you should have jumped at a conclusion which is the result of a popular and unfortunately prevalent opinion that the Northeastern Railroads meddled in any way with the government or politics of this State. I am glad of this opportunity of assuring you that we do not,” he continued, leaning forward and holding up his hand to ward off interruption, “and I know that Senator Whitredge will bear me out in this statement, too.”

The senator nodded gravely. Mr. Crewe, who was anything but a fool, and just as assertive as Mr. Flint, cut in.

“Look here, Mr. Flint,” he said, “I know what a lobby is. I haven’t been a director in railroads myself for nothing. I have no objection to a lobby. You employ counsel before the Legislature, don’t you—”

“We do,” said Mr. Flint, interrupting, “the best and most honourable counsel we can find in the State. When necessary, they appear before the legislative committees. As a property holder in the State, and an admirer of its beauties, and as its well-wisher, it will give me great pleasure to look over your bills, and use whatever personal influence I may have as a citizen to forward them, should they meet my approval. And I am especially glad to do this as a neighbour, Mr. Crewe. As a neighbour,” he repeated, significantly.

The president of the Northeastern Railroads rose as he spoke these words, and held out his hand to Mr. Crewe. It was perhaps a coincidence that the senator rose also.

“All right,” said Mr. Crewe, “I’ll call around again in about two weeks. Come and see me sometime, Senator.” “Thank you,” said the senator, “I shall be happy. And if you are ever in your automobile near the town of Ramsey, stop at my little farm, Mr. Crewe. I trust to be able soon to congratulate you on a step which I am sure will be but the beginning of a long and brilliant political career.”

“Thanks,” said Mr. Crewe; “by the bye, if you could see your way to drop a hint to that feller Braden, I should be much obliged.”

The senator shook his head and laughed.

“Job is an independent cuss,” he said, “I’m afraid he’d regard that as an unwarranted trespass on his preserves.”

Mr. Crewe was ushered out by the stooping secretary, Mr. Freeman; who, instead of seizing Mr. Crewe's hand as he had Austen Vane's, said not a word. But Mr. Crewe would have been interested if he could have heard Mr. Flint's first remark to the senator after the door was closed on his back. It did not relate to Mr. Crewe, but to the subject under discussion which he had interrupted; namely, the Republican candidates for the twenty senatorial districts of the State.

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On its way back to Leith the red motor paused in front of Mr. Ball's store, and that gentleman was summoned in the usual manner.

"Do you see this Braden once in a while?" Mr. Crewe demanded.

Mr. Ball looked knowing.

"Tell him I want to have a talk with him," said Mr. Crewe. "I've been to see Mr. Flint, and I think matters can be arranged. And mind you, no word about this, Ball."

"I guess I understand a thing or two," said Mr. Ball. "Trust me to handle it."

Two days later, as Mr. Crewe was seated in his study, his man entered and stood respectfully waiting for the time when he should look up from his book.

"Well, what is it now, Waters?"

"If you please, sir," said the man, "a strange message has come over the telephone just now that you were to be in room number twelve of the Ripton House to-morrow at ten o'clock. They wouldn't give any name, sir," added the dignified Waters, who, to tell the truth, was somewhat outraged, nor tell where they telephoned from. But it was a man's voice, sir."

"All right," said Mr. Crewe.

He spent much of the afternoon and evening debating whether or not his dignity would permit him to go. But he ordered the motor at half-past nine, and at ten o'clock precisely the clerk at the Ripton House was bowing to him and handing him, deferentially, a dripping pen.

"Where's room number twelve?" said the direct Mr. Crewe.

"Oh," said the clerk, and possessing a full share of the worldly wisdom of his calling, he smiled broadly. "I guess you'll find him up there, Mr. Crewe. Front, show the gentleman to number twelve."

The hall boy knocked on the door of number twelve.

"C—come in," said a voice. "Come in."

Mr. Crewe entered, the hall boy closed the door, and he found himself face to face with a comfortable, smooth-faced man seated with great placidity on a rocking-chair in the centre of the room, between the bed and the marble-topped table: a man to whom, evidently, a rich abundance of thought was sufficient company, for he had neither

newspaper nor book. He rose in a leisurely fashion, and seemed the very essence of the benign as he stretched forth his hand.

“I’m Mr. Crewe,” the owner of that name proclaimed, accepting the hand with no exaggeration of cordiality. The situation jarred on him a trifle.

“I know. Seed you on the road once or twice. How be you?”

Mr. Crewe sat down.

“I suppose you are Mr. Braden,” he said.

Mr. Braden sank into the rocker and fingered a waistcoat pocket full of cigars that looked like a section of a cartridge-belt.

“T—try one of mine,” he said.

“I only smoke once after breakfast,” said Mr. Crewe.

“Abstemious, be you? Never could find that it did me any hurt.”

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This led to an awkward pause, Mr. Crewe not being a man who found profit in idle discussion. He glanced at Mr. Braden's philanthropic and beaming countenance, which would have made the fortune of a bishop. It was not usual for Mr. Crewe to find it difficult to begin a conversation, or to have a companion as self-sufficient as himself. This man Braden had all the fun, apparently, in sitting in a chair and looking into space that Stonewall Jackson had, or an ordinary man in watching a performance of "A Trip to Chinatown." Let it not be inferred, again, that Mr. Crewe was abashed; but he was puzzled.

"I had an engagement in Ripton this morning," he said, "to see about some business matters. And after I received your telephone I thought I'd drop in here."

"Didn't telephone," said Mr. Braden, placidly.

"What!" said Mr. Crewe, "I certainly got a telephone message."

"N—never telephone," said Mr. Braden.

"I certainly got a message from you," Mr. Crewe protested.

"Didn't say it was from me—didn't say so—did they—"

"No," said Mr. Crewe, "but—"

"Told Ball you wanted to have me see you, didn't you?"

Mr. Crewe, when he had unravelled this sentence, did not fancy the way it was put.

"I told Ball I was seeing everybody in Leith," he answered, "and that I had called on you, and you weren't at home. Ball inferred that you had a somewhat singular way of seeing people."

"You don't understand," was Mr. Braden's somewhat enigmatic reply.

"I understand pretty well," said Mr. Crewe. "I'm a candidate for the Republican nomination for representative from Leith, and I want your vote and influence. You probably know what I have done for the town, and that I'm the biggest taxpayer, and an all-the-year-round resident."

"S—some in Noo York—hain't you?"

"Well, you can't expect a man in my position and with my interests to stay at home all the time. I feel that I have a right to ask the town for this nomination. I have some bills here which I'll request you to read over, and you will see that I have ideas which are of

real value to the State. The State needs waking up-progressive measures. You're a farmer, ain't you?"

"Well, I have be'n."

"I can improve the condition of the farmer one hundred per cent, and if my road system is followed, he can get his goods to market for about a tenth of what it costs him now. We have infinitely valuable forests in the State which are being wasted by lumbermen, which ought to be preserved. You read those bills, and what I have written about them."

"You don't understand," said Mr. Braden, drawing a little closer and waving aside the manuscript with his cigar.

"Don't understand what?"

"Don't seem to understand," repeated Mr. Braden, confidingly laying his hand on Mr. Crewe's knee. "Candidate for representative, be you?"

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“Yes,” replied Mr. Crewe, who was beginning to resent the manner in which he deemed he was being played with, “I told you I was.”

“M—made all them bills out before you was chose?” said Mr. Braden.

Mr. Crewe grew red in the face.

“I am interested in these questions,” he said stiffly.

“Little mite hasty, wahn’t it?” Mr. Braden remarked equably, “but you’ve got plenty of time and money to fool with such things, if you’ve a mind to. Them don’t amount to a hill of beans in politics. Nobody pays any attention to that sort of fireworks down to the capital, and if they was to get into committee them Northeastern Railroads fellers’d bury ’em deeper than the bottom of Salem pond. They don’t want no such things as them to pass.”

“Pardon me,” said Mr. Crewe, “but you haven’t read ’em.”

“I know what they be,” said Mr. Braden, “I’ve be’n in politics more years than you’ve be’n livin’, I guess. I don’t want to read ’em,” he announced, his benign manner unchanged.

“I think you have made a mistake so far as the railroad is concerned, Mr. Braden,” said Mr. Crewe, “I’m a practical man myself, and I don’t indulge in moonshine. I am a director in one or two railroads. I have talked this matter over with Mr. Flint, and incidentally with Senator Whitredge.”

“Knowed Whitredge afore you had any teeth,” said Mr. Braden, who did not seem to be greatly impressed, “know him intimate. What’d you go to Flint for?”

“We have interests in common,” said Mr. Crewe, “and I am rather a close friend of his. My going to the Legislature will be, I think, to our mutual advantage.”

“O—ought to have come right to me,” said Mr. Braden, leaning over until his face was in close proximity to Mr. Crewe’s. “Whitredge told you to come to me, didn’t he?”

Mr. Crewe was a little taken aback.

“The senator mentioned your name,” he admitted.

“He knows. Said I was the man to see if you was a candidate, didn’t he? Told you to talk to Job Braden, didn’t he?”

Now Mr. Crewe had no means of knowing whether Senator Whitredge had been in conference with Mr. Braden or not.

“The senator mentioned your name casually, in some connection,” said Mr. Crewe.

“He knows,” Mr. Braden repeated, with a finality that spoke volumes for the senator’s judgment; and he bent over into Mr. Crewe’s ear, with the air of conveying a mild but well-merited reproof, “You’d ought to come right to me in the first place. I could have saved you all that unnecessary trouble of seein’ folks. There hasn’t be’n a representative left the town of Leith for thirty years that I hain’t agreed to. Whitredge knows that. If I say you kin go, you kin go. You understand,” said Mr. Braden, with his fingers on Mr. Crewe’s knee once more.

Five minutes later Mr. Crewe emerged into the dazzling sun of the Ripton square, climbed into his automobile, and turned its head towards Leith, strangely forgetting the main engagement which he said had brought him to town.

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CHAPTER VIII

THE TRIALS OF AN HONOURABLE

It was about this time that Mr. Humphrey Crewe was transformed, by one of those subtle and inexplicable changes which occur in American politics, into the Honourable Humphrey Crewe. And, as interesting bits of news about important people are bound to leak out, it became known in Leith that he had subscribed to what is known as a Clipping Bureau. Two weeks after the day he left Mr. Braden's presence in the Ripton House the principal newspapers of the country contained the startling announcement that the well-known summer colony of Leith was to be represented in the State Legislature by a millionaire. The Republican nomination, which Mr. Crewe had secured, was equivalent to an election.

For a little time after that Mr. Crewe, although naturally an important and busy man, scarcely had time to nod to his friends on the road.

"Poor dear Humphrey," said Mrs. Pomfret, "who was so used to dropping in to dinner, hasn't had a moment to write me a line to thank me for the statesman's diary I bought for him in London this spring. They're in that new red leather, and Aylestone says he finds his so useful. I dropped in at Wedderburn to-day to see if I could be of any help, and the poor man was buttonholed by two reporters who had come all the way from New York to see him. I hope he won't overdo it."

It was true. Mr. Crewe was to appear in the Sunday supplements. "Are our Millionaires entering Politics?" Mr. Crewe, with his usual gracious hospitality, showed the reporters over the place, and gave them suggestions as to the best vantage-points in which to plant their cameras. He himself was at length prevailed upon to be taken in a rough homespun suit, and with a walking-stick in his hand, appraising with a knowing eye a flock of his own sheep. Pressed a little, he consented to relate something of the systematic manner in which he had gone about to secure this nomination: how he had visited in person the homes of his fellow-townsmen. "I knew them all, anyway," he is quoted as saying; "we have had the pleasantest of relationships during the many years I have been a resident of Leith."

"Beloved of his townspeople," this part of the article was headed. No, these were not Mr. Crewe's words—he was too modest for that. When urged to give the name of one of his townsmen who might deal with this and other embarrassing topics, Mr. Ball was mentioned. "Beloved of his townspeople" was Mr. Ball's phrase. "Although a multi-millionaire, no man is more considerate of the feelings and the rights of his more humble neighbours. Send him to the Legislature! We'd send him to the United States Senate if we could. He'll land there, anyway." Such was a random estimate (Mr. Ball's) the reporters gathered on their way to Ripton. Mr. Crewe did not hesitate to say that the

prosperity of the farmers had risen as a result of his labours at Wedderburn where the most improved machinery and methods were adopted. His efforts to raise the agricultural, as well as the moral and intellectual, tone of the community had been unceasing.

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Then followed an intelligent abstract of the bills he was to introduce —the results of a progressive and statesmanlike brain. There was an account of him as a methodical and painstaking business man whose suggestions to the boards of directors of which he was a member had been invaluable. The article ended with a list of the clubs to which he belonged, of the societies which he had organized and of those of which he was a member,—and it might have been remarked by a discerning reader that most of these societies were State affairs. Finally there was a pen portrait of an Apollo Belvidere who wore the rough garb of a farmer (on the days when the press was present).

Mr. Crewe's incessant trials, which would have taxed a less rugged nature, did not end here. About five o'clock one afternoon a pleasant-appearing gentleman with a mellifluous voice turned up who introduced himself as ex (State) Senator Grady. The senator was from Newcastle, that city out of the mysterious depths of which so many political stars have arisen. Mr. Crewe cancelled a long-deferred engagement with Mrs. Pomfret, and invited the senator to stay to dinner; the senator hesitated, explained that he was just passing through Ripton, and, as it was a pleasant afternoon, had called to "pay his respects"; but Mr. Crewe's well-known hospitality would accept no excuses. Mr. Crewe opened a box of cigars which he had bought especially for the taste of State senators and a particular grade of Scotch whiskey.

They talked politics for four hours. Who would be governor? The senator thought Asa Gray would. The railroad was behind him, Mr. Crewe observed knowingly. The senator remarked that Mr. Crewe was no gosling. Mr. Crewe, as political-geniuses will, asked as many questions as the emperor of Germany—pertinent questions about State politics. Senator Grady was tremendously impressed with his host's programme of bills, and went over them so painstakingly that Mr. Crewe became more and more struck with Senator Grady's intelligence. The senator told Mr. Crewe that just such a man as he was needed to pull the State out of the rut into which she had fallen. Mr. Crewe said that he hoped to find such enlightened men in the Legislature as the senator. The senator let it be known that he had read the newspaper articles, and had remarked that Mr. Crewe was close to the president of the Northeastern Railroads.

"Such a man as you," said the senator, looking at the remainder of the Scotch whiskey, "will have the railroad behind you, sure."

"One more drink," said Mr. Crewe.

"I must go," said Mr. Grady, pouring it out, but that reminds me. It comes over me sudden-like, as I sit here, that you certainly ought to be in the new encyclopeedie of the prominent men of the State. But sure you have received an application."

"It is probable that my secretary has one," said Mr. Crewe, "but he hasn't called it to my attention."

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“You must get in that book, Mr. Crewe,” said the senator, with an intense earnestness which gave the impression of alarm; “after what you’ve told me to-night I’ll see to it myself that you get in. It may be that I’ve got some of the sample pages here, if I haven’t left them at home,” said Mr. Grady, fumbling in an ample inside pocket, and drawing forth a bundle. “Sure, here they are. Ain’t that luck for you? Listen! ’Asa P. Gray was born on the third of August, eighteen forty-seven, the seventh son of a farmer. See, there’s a space in the end they left to fill up when he’s elicted governor! Here’s another. The Honourable Hilary Vane comes from one of the oldest Puritan families in the State, the Vanes of Camden Street—’ Here’s another. ’The Honourable Brush Bascom of Putnam County is the son of poor but honourable parents—’ Look at the picture of him. Ain’t that a handsome steel-engravin’ of the gentleman?”

Mr. Crewe gazed contemplatively at the proof, but was too busy with his own thoughts to reflect that there was evidently not much poor or honourable about Mr. Bascom now.

“Who’s publishing this?” he asked.

“Fogarty and Company; sure they’re the best publishers in the State, as you know, Mr. Crewe. They have the State printing. Wasn’t it fortunate I had the proofs with me? Tim Fogarty slipped them into me pocket when I was leavin’ Newcastle. ‘The book is goin’ to press the day after eliction,’ says he, ‘John,’ says he, ’you know I always rely on your judgment, and if you happen to think of anybody between now and then who ought to go in, you’ll notify me,’ says he. When I read the bills to-night, and saw the scope of your work, it came over me in a flash that Humphrey Crewe was the man they left out. You’ll get a good man to write your life, and what you done for the town and State, and all them societies and bills, won’t you? ’Twould be a thousand pities not to have it right.”

“How much does it cost?” Mr. Crewe inquired.

“Sure I forgot to ask Tim Fogarty. Mebbe he has it here. I signed one myself, but I couldn’t afford the steelengravin’. Yes, he slipped one in. Two hundred dollars for a two-page biography, and, three hundred for the steelengravin’. Five hundred dollars. I didn’t know it was so cheap as that,” exclaimed the senator, “and everybody in the State havin’ to own one in self-protection. You don’t happen to have a pen about you?”

Mr. Crewe waved the senator towards his own desk, and Mr. Grady filled out the blank.

“It’s lucky we are that I didn’t drop in after eliction, and the book in press,” he remarked; “and I hope you’ll give him a good photograph. This’s for you, I’ll take this to Tim myself,” and he handed the pen for Mr. Crewe to sign with.

Mr. Crewe read over the agreement carefully, as a business man should, before putting his signature to it. And then the senator, with renewed invitations for Mr. Crewe to call on him when he came to Newcastle, took his departure. Afterwards Mr. Crewe

remained so long in reflection that his man Waters became alarmed, and sought him out and interrupted his revery.

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The next morning Mrs. Pomfret, who was merely “driving by” with her daughter Alice and Beatrice Chillingham, spied Mr. Crewe walking about among the young trees he was growing near the road, and occasionally tapping them with his stout stick. She poked her coachman in the back and cried:—“Humphrey, you’re such an important man now that I despair of ever seeing you again. What was the matter last night?”

“A politician from Newcastle,” answered Mr. Crewe, continuing to tap the trees, and without so much as a glance at Alice.

“Well, if you’re as important as this before you’re elected, I can’t think what it will be afterwards,” Mrs. Pomfret lamented. “Poor dear Humphrey is so conscientious. When can you come, Humphrey?”

“Don’t know,” said Mr. Crewe; “I’ll try to come tonight, but I may be stopped again. Here’s Waters now.”

The three people in Mrs. Pomfret’s victoria were considerably impressed to see the dignified Waters hurrying down the slope from the house towards them. Mr. Crewe continued to tap the trees, but drew a little nearer the carriage.

“If you please, sir,” said Waters, “there’s a telephone call for you from Newcastle. It’s urgent, sir.”

“Who is it?”

“They won’t give their names, sir.”

“All right,” said Mr. Crewe, and with a grin which spoke volumes for the manner in which he was harassed he started towards the house—in no great hurry, however. Reaching the instrument, and saying “Hello” in his usually gracious manner, he was greeted by a voice with a decided Hibernian-American accent.

“Am I talkin’ to Mr. Crewe?”

“Yes.”

“Mr. Humphrey Crewe?”

“Yes—yes, of course you are. Who are you?”

“I’m the president of the Paradise Benevolent and Military Association, Mr. Crewe. Boys that work in the mills, you know,” continued the voice, caressingly. “Sure you’ve heard of us. We’re five hundred strong, and all of us good Republicans as the president. We’re to have our annual fall outing the first of October in Finney Grove, and we’d like to have you come down.”

“The first of October?” said Mr. Crewe. “I’ll consult my engagement book.”

“We’d like to have a good picture of you in our programme, Mr. Crewe. We hope you’ll oblige us. You’re such an important figure in State politics now you’d ought to have a full page.”

There was a short silence.

“What does it cost?” Mr. Crewe demanded.

“Sure,” said the caressing voice of the president, “whatever you like.”

“I’ll send you a check for five dollars, and a picture,” said Mr. Crewe.

The answer to this was a hearty laugh, which the telephone reproduced admirably. The voice now lost a little of its caressing note and partook of a harder quality.

“You’re a splendid humorist, Mr. Crewe. Five dollars wouldn’t pay for the plate and the paper. A gentleman like you could give us twenty-five, and never know it was gone. You won’t be wanting to stop in the Legislature, Mr. Crewe, and we remember our friends in Newcastle.”

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“Very well, I’ll see what I can do. Good-by, I’ve got an engagement,” said Mr. Crewe, and slammed down the telephone. He seated himself in his chair, and the pensive mood so characteristic (we are told) of statesmen came over him once more.

While these and other conferences and duties too numerous to mention were absorbing Mr. Crewe, he was not too busy to bear in mind the pleasure of those around him who had not received such an abundance of the world’s blessings as he. The townspeople of Leith were about to bestow on him their greatest gift. What could he do to show his appreciation? Wrestling with this knotty problem, a brilliant idea occurred to him,—he would have a garden-party: invite everybody in town, and admit them to the sanctities of Wedderburn; yes, even of Wedderburn house, that they might behold with their own eyes the carved ivory elephants and other contents of glass cabinets which reeked of the Sunday afternoons of youth. Being a man of action, Mr. Pardriff was summoned at once from Leith and asked for his lowest price on eight hundred and fifty invitations and a notice of the party in the Ripton Record.

“Goin’ to invite Democrats, too?” demanded Mr. Pardriff, glancing at the check-list.

“Everybody,” said Mr. Crewe, with unparalleled generosity. “I won’t draw any distinction between friends and enemies. They’re all neighbours.”

“And some of ’em might, by accident, vote the Republican ticket,” Mr. Pardriff retorted, narrowing his eyes a little.

Mr. Crewe evidently thought this a negligible suggestion, for he did not reply to it, but presently asked for the political news in Ripton.

“Well,” said Mr. Pardriff, “you know they tried to get Austen Vane to run for State senator, don’t you?”

“Vane Why, he ain’t a full-fledged lawyer yet. I’ve hired him in an unimportant case. Who asked him to run?”

“Young Tom Gaylord and a delegation.”

“He couldn’t have got it,” said Mr. Crewe.

“I don’t know,” said Mr. Pardriff, “he might have given Billings a hustle for the nomination.”

“You supported Billings, I noticed,” said Mr. Crewe.

Mr. Pardriff winked an eye.

“I’m not ready to walk the ties when I go to Newcastle,” he remarked, “and Nat ain’t quite bankrupt yet. The Gaylords,” continued Mr. Pardriff, who always took the cynical view of a man of the world, “have had some row with the Northeastern over lumber shipments. I understand they’re goin’ to buck ’em for a franchise in the next Legislature, just to make it lively. The Gaylords ain’t exactly poverty-stricken, but they might as well try to move Sawanec Mountain as the Northeastern.”

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It was a fact that young Tom Gaylord had approached Austen Vane with a “delegation” to request him to be a candidate for the Republican nomination for the State senate in his district against the railroad candidate and Austen’s late opponent, the Honourable Nat Billings. It was a fact also that Austen had invited the delegation to sit down, although there were only two chairs, and that a wrestling match had ensued with young Tom, in the progress of which one chair had been broken. Young Tom thought it was time to fight the railroad, and perceived in Austen the elements of a rebel leader. Austen had undertaken to throw young Tom out of a front window, which was a large, old-fashioned one,—and after Herculean efforts had actually got him on the ledge, when something in the street caught his eye and made him desist abruptly. The something was the vision of a young woman in a brown linen suit seated in a runabout and driving a horse almost as handsome as Pepper.

When the delegation, after exhausting their mental and physical powers of persuasion, had at length taken their departure in disgust, Austen opened mechanically a letter which had very much the appearance of an advertisement, and bearing a one-cent stamp. It announced that a garden-party would take place at Wedderburn, the home of the Honourable Humphrey Crewe, at a not very distant date, and the honour of the bearer’s presence was requested. Refreshments would be served, and the Ripton Band would dispense music. Below, in small print, were minute directions where to enter, where to hitch your team, and where to go out.

Austen was at a loss to know what fairy godmother had prompted Mr. Crewe to send him an invitation, the case of the injured horse not having advanced with noticeable rapidity. Nevertheless, the prospect of the garden-party dawned radiantly for him above what had hitherto been a rather gloomy horizon. Since the afternoon he had driven Victoria to the Hammonds’ he had had daily debates with an imaginary man in his own likeness who, to the detriment of his reading of law, sat across his table and argued with him. The imaginary man was unprincipled, and had no dignity, but he had such influence over Austen Vane that he had induced him to drive twice within sight of Fairview gate, when Austen Vane had turned round again. The imaginary man was for going to call on her and letting subsequent events take care of themselves; Austen Vane, had an uncomfortable quality of reducing a matter first of all to its simplest terms. He knew that Mr. Flint’s views were as fixed, ineradicable, and unchangeable as an epitaph cut in a granite monument; he felt (as Mr. Flint had) that their first conversation had been but a forerunner of, a strife to come between them; and add to this the facts that Mr. Flint was very rich and Austen Vane poor, that Victoria’s friends were not his friends, and that he had grave doubts that the interest she had evinced in him sprang from any other incentive than a desire to have communication with various types of humanity, his hesitation as to entering Mr. Flint’s house was natural enough.

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It was of a piece with Mr. Crewe's good fortune of getting what he wanted that the day of the garden-party was the best that September could do in that country, which is to say that it was very beautiful. A pregnant stillness enwrapped the hills, a haze shot with gold dust, like the filmiest of veils, softened the distant purple and the blue-black shadows under the pines. Austen awoke from his dream in this enchanted borderland to find himself in a long line of wagons filled with people in their Sunday clothes,—the men in black, and the young women in white, with gay streamers, wending their way through the rear-entrance drive of Wedderburn, where one of Mr. Crewe's sprucest employees was taking up the invitation cards like tickets,—a precaution to prevent the rowdy element from Ripton coming and eating up the refreshments. Austen obediently tied Pepper in a field, as he was directed, and made his way by a path through the woods towards the house, where the Ripton Band could be heard playing the second air in the programme, "Don't you wish you'd Waited?"

For a really able account of that memorable entertainment see the Ripton Record of that week, for we cannot hope to vie with Mr. Pardriff when his heart is really in his work. How describe the noble figure of Mr. Crewe as it burst upon Austen when he rounded the corner of the house? Clad in a rough-and-ready manner, with a Gladstone collar to indicate the newly acquired statesmanship, and fairly radiating geniality, Mr. Crewe stood at the foot of the steps while the guests made the circuit of the driveway; and they carefully avoided, in obedience to a warning sign, the grass circle in the centre. As man and wife confronted him, Mr. Crewe greeted them in hospitable but stentorian tones that rose above the strains of "Don't you wish you'd Waited?" It was Mr. Ball who introduced his townspeople to the great man who was to represent them.

"How are you?" said Mr. Crewe, with his eyes on the geraniums. "Mr. and Mrs. Perley Wright, eh? Make yourselves at home. Everything's free —you'll find the refreshments on the back porch—just have an eye to the signs posted round, that's all." And Mr. and Mrs. Perley Wright, overwhelmed by such a welcome, would pass on into a back eddy of neighbours, where they would stick, staring at a sign requesting them please not to pick the flowers.

"Can't somebody stir 'em up?" Mr. Crewe shouted in an interval when the band had stopped to gather strength for a new effort. "Can't somebody move 'em round to see the cows and what's in the house and the automobile and the horses? Move around the driveway, please. It's so hot here you can't breathe. Some of you wanted to see what was in the house. Now's your chance."

This graceful appeal had some temporary effect, but the congestion soon returned, when a man of the hour appeared, a man whose genius scattered the groups and who did more to make the party a success than any single individual,—Mr. Hamilton Tooting, in a glorious white silk necktie with purple flowers.

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“I’ll handle ’em, Mr. Crewe,” he said; “a little brains’ll start ’em goin’. Come along here, Mr. Wright, and I’ll show you the best cows this side of the Hudson Riverall pedigreed prize winners. Hello, Aust, you take hold and get the wimmen-folks interested in the cabinets. You know where they are.”

“There’s a person with some sense,” remarked Mrs. Pomfret, who had been at a little distance among a group of summer-resident ladies and watching the affair with shining eyes. “I’ll help. Come, Edith; come, Victoria where’s Victoria?—and dear Mrs. Chillingham. We American women are so deplorably lacking in this kind of experience. Alice, take some of the women into the garden. I’m going to interest that dear, benevolent man who looks so helpless, and doing his best to have a good time.”

The dear, benevolent man chanced to be Mr. Job Braden, who was standing somewhat apart with his hands in his pockets. He did not move as Mrs. Pomfret approached him, holding her glasses to her eyes.

“How are you?” exclaimed that lady, extending a white-gloved hand with a cordiality that astonished her friends. “It is so pleasant to see you here, Mr.—Mr.—”

“How be you?” said Mr. Braden, taking her fingers in the gingerly manner he would have handled one of Mr. Crewe’s priceless curios. The giraffe Mr. Barnum had once brought to Ripton was not half as interesting as this immaculate and mysterious production of foreign dressmakers and French maids, but he refrained from betraying it. His eye rested on the lorgnette.

“Near-sighted, be you?” he inquired,—a remark so unexpected that for the moment Mrs. Pomfret was deprived of speech.

“I manage to see better with—with these,” she gasped, “when we get old —you know.”

“You hain’t old,” said Mr. Braden, gallantly. “If you be,” he added, his eye travelling up and down the Parisian curves, I wouldn’t have suspected it—not a mite.”

“I’m afraid you are given to flattery, Mr.—Mr.—” she replied hurriedly. “Whom have I the pleasure of speaking to?”

“Job Braden’s my name,” he answered, “but you have the advantage of me.”

“How?” demanded the thoroughly bewildered Mrs. Pomfret.

“I hain’t heard your name,” he said.

“Oh, I’m Mrs. Pomfret—a very old friend of Mr. Crewe’s. Whenever he has his friends with him, like this, I come over and help him. It is so difficult for a bachelor to entertain, Mr. Braden.”

“Well,” said Mr. Braden, bending alarmingly near her ear, “there’s one way out of it.”

“What’s that?” said Mrs. Pomfret.

“Git married,” declared Mr. Braden.

“How very clever you are, Mr. Braden! I wish poor dear Mr. Crewe would get married—-a wife could take so many burdens off his shoulders. You don’t know Mr. Crewe very well, do you?”

“Callate to—so so,” said Mr. Braden.

Mrs. Pomfret was at sea again.

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“I mean, do you see him often?”

“Seen him once,” said Mr. Braden. “G-guess that’s enough.”

“You’re a shrewd judge of human nature, Mr. Braden,” she replied, tapping him on the shoulder with the lorgnette, “but you can have no idea how good he is—how unceasingly he works for others. He is not a man who gives much expression to his feelings, as no doubt you have discovered, but if you knew him as I do, you would realize how much affection he has for his country neighbours and how much he has their welfare at heart.”

“Loves ’em—does he—loves ’em?”

“He is like an English gentleman in his sense of responsibility,” said Mrs. Pomfret; “over there, you know, it is a part of a country gentleman’s duty to improve the condition of his—his neighbours. And then Mr. Crewe is so fond of his townspeople that he couldn’t resist doing this for them,” and she indicated with a sweep of her eyeglasses the beatitude with which they were surrounded.

“Wahn’t no occasion to,” said Mr. Braden.

“What!” cried Mrs. Pomfret, who had been walking on ice for some time.

“This hain’t England—is it? Hain’t England?”

“No,” she admitted, “but—”

“Hain’t England,” said Mr. Braden, and leaned forward until he was within a very few inches of her pearl ear-ring. “He’ll be chose all right—d-don’t fret—he’ll be chose.”

“My dear Mr. Braden, I’ve no doubt of it—Mr. Crewe’s so popular,” she cried, removing her ear-ring abruptly from the danger zone. “Do make yourself at home,” she added, and retired from Mr. Braden’s company a trifle disconcerted,—a new experience for Mrs. Pomfret. She wondered whether all country people were like Mr. Braden, but decided, after another experiment or two, that he was an original. More than once during the afternoon she caught sight of him, beaming upon the festivities around him. But she did not renew the conversation.

To Austen Vane, wandering about the grounds, Mr. Crewe’s party presented a sociological problem of no small interest. Mr. Crewe himself interested him, and he found himself speculating how far a man would go who charged the fastnesses of the politicians with a determination not to be denied and a bank account to be reckoned with. Austen talked to many of the Leith farmers whom he had known from boyhood, thanks to his custom of roaming the hills; they were for the most part honest men whose occupation in life was the first thought, and they were content to leave politics to Mr.

Braden—that being his profession. To the most intelligent of these Mr. Crewe's garden-party was merely the wanton whim of a millionaire. It was an open secret to them that Job Braden for reasons of his own had chosen Mr. Crewe to represent them, and they were mildly amused at the efforts of Mrs. Pomfret and her assistants to secure votes which were as certain as the sun's rising on the morrow.

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It was some time before Austen came upon the object of his search—though scarce admitting to himself that it had an object. In greeting him, after inquiring about his railroad case, Mr. Crewe had indicated with a wave of his hand the general direction of the refreshments; but it was not until Austen had tried in all other quarters that he made his way towards the porch where the lemonade and cake and sandwiches were. It was, after all, the most popular place, though to his mind the refreshments had little to do with its popularity. From the outskirts of the crowd he perceived Victoria presiding over the punchbowl that held the lemonade. He liked to think of her as Victoria; the name had no familiarity for him, but seemed rather to enhance the unattainable quality of her.

Surrounding Victoria were several clean-looking, freckled, and tanned young men of undergraduate age wearing straw hats with coloured ribbons, who showed every eagerness to obey and even anticipate the orders she did not hesitate to give them. Her eye seemed continually on the alert for those of Mr. Crewe's guests who were too bashful to come forward, and discerning them she would send one of her lieutenants forward with supplies. Sometimes she would go herself to the older people; and once, perceiving a tired woman holding a baby (so many brought babies, being unable to leave them), Victoria impulsively left her post and seized the woman by the arm.

"Do come and sit down," she cried; "there's a chair beside me. And oh, what a nice baby! Won't you let me hold him?"

"Why, yes, ma'am," said the woman, looking up at Victoria with grateful, patient eyes, and then with awe at what seemed to her the priceless embroidery on Victoria's waist, "won't he spoil your dress?"

"Bless him, no," said Victoria, poking her finger into a dimple—for he was smiling at her. "What if he does?" and forthwith she seized him in her arms and bore him to the porch, amidst the laughter of those who beheld her, and sat him down on her knee in front of the lemonade bowl, the tired mother beside her. "Will a little lemonade hurt him? Just a very, very little, you know?"

"Why, no, ma'am," said the mother.

"And just a teeny bit of cake," begged Victoria, daintily breaking off a piece, while the baby gurgled and snatched for it. "Do tell me how old he is, and how many more you have."

"He's eleven months on the twenty-seventh," said the mother, "and I've got four more." She sighed, her eyes wandering back to the embroidery. "What between them and the housework and the butter makin', it hain't easy. Be you married?"

"No," said Victoria, laughing and blushing a little.

“You’ll make a good wife for somebody,” said the woman. “I hope you’ll get a good man.”

“I hope so, too,” said Victoria, blushing still deeper amidst the laughter, “but there doesn’t seem to be much chance of it, and good men are very scarce.”

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“I guess you’re right,” said the mother, soberly. “Not but what my man’s good enough, but he don’t seem to get along, somehow. The farm’s wore out, and the mortgage comes around so regular.”

“Where do you live?” asked Victoria, suddenly growing serious.

“Fitch’s place. ’Tain’t very far from the Four Corners, on the Avalon road.”

“And you are Mrs. Fitch?”

“Callate to be,” said the mother. “If it ain’t askin’ too much, I’d like to know your name.”

“I’m Victoria Flint. I live not very far from the Four Corners—that is, about eight miles. May I come over and see you sometime?”

Although Victoria said this very simply, the mother’s eyes widened until one might almost have said they expressed a kind of terror.

“Land sakes alive, be you Mr. Flint’s daughter? I might have knowed it from the lace—-that dress must have cost a fortune. But I didn’t think to find you so common.”

Victoria did not smile. She had heard the word “common” so used before, and knew that it was meant for a compliment, and she turned to the woman with a very expressive light in her eyes.

“I will come to see you—this very week,” she said. And just then her glance, seemingly drawn in a certain direction, met that of a tall young man which had been fixed upon her during the whole of this scene. She coloured again, abruptly handed the baby back to his mother, and rose.

“I’m neglecting all these people,” she said, “but do sit there and rest yourself and—have some more lemonade.”

She bowed to Austen, and smiled a little as she filled the glasses, but she did not beckon him. She gave no further sign of her knowledge of his presence until he stood beside her—and then she looked up at him.

“I have been looking for you, Miss Flint,” he said.

“I suppose a man would never think of trying the obvious places first,” she replied. “Hastings, don’t you see that poor old woman over there? She looks so thirsty—give her this.”

The boy addressed, with a glance at Austen, did as he was bid, and she sent off a second on another errand.

“Let me help,” said Austen, seizing the cake; and being seized at the same time, by an unusual and inexplicable tremor of shyness, thrust it at the baby.

“Oh, he can’t have anymore; do you want to kill him?” cried Victoria, seizing the plate, and adding mischievously, “I don’t believe you’re of very much use—after all!”

“Then it’s time I learned,” said Austen. “Here’s Mr. Jenney. I’m sure he’ll have a piece.”

“Well,” said Mr. Jenney, the same Mr. Jenney of the apple orchard, but holding out a horny hand with unmistakable warmth, “how be you, Austen?” Looking about him, Mr. Jenney put his hand to his mouth, and added, “Didn’t expect to see you trailin’ on to this here kite.” He took a piece of cake between his thumb and forefinger and glanced bashfully at Victoria.

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“Have some lemonade, Mr. Jenney? Do,” she urged.

“Well, I don’t care if I do,” he said, “just a little mite.” He did not attempt to stop her as she filled the glass to the brim, but continued to regard her with a mixture of curiosity and admiration. “Seen you nursin’ the baby and makin’ folks at home. Guess you have the knack of it better’n some I could mention.”

This was such a palpable stroke at their host that Victoria laughed, and made haste to turn the subject from herself.

“Mr. Vane seems to be an old friend of yours,” she said.

“Why,” said Mr. Jenney, laying his hand on Austen’s shoulder, “I callate he is. Austen’s broke in more’n one of my colts afore he went West and shot that feller. He’s as good a judge of horse-flesh as any man in this part of the State. Hear Tom Gaylord and the boys wanted him to be State senator.”

“Why didn’t you accept, Mr. Vane?”

“Because I don’t think the boys could have elected me,” answered Austen, laughing.

“He’s as popular a man as there is in the county,” declared Mr. Jenney. He was a mite wild as a boy, but sence he’s sobered down and won that case against the railrud, he could get any office he’d a mind to. He’s always adoin’ little things for folks, Austen is.”

“Did—did that case against the railroad make him so popular?” asked Victoria, glancing at Austen’s broad back—for he had made his escape with the cake.

“I guess it helped considerable,” Mr. Jenney admitted.

“Why?” asked Victoria.

“Well, it was a fearless thing to do—plumb against his own interests with old Hilary Vane. Austen’s a bright lawyer, and I have heard it said he was in line for his father’s place as counsel.”

“Do—do people dislike the railroad?”

Mr. Jenney rubbed his beard thoughtfully. He began to wonder who this young woman was, and a racial caution seized him.

“Well,” he said, “folks has an idea the railrud runs this State to suit themselves. I guess they hain’t far wrong. I’ve be’n to the Legislature and seen some signs of it. Why, Hilary Vane himself has charge of the most considerable part of the politics. Who be you?” Mr. Jenney demanded suddenly.

“I’m Victoria Flint,” said Victoria.

“Godfrey!” exclaimed Mr. Jenney, “you don’t say so! I might have known it—seen you on the rud more than once. But I don’t know all you rich folks apart. Wouldn’t have spoke so frank if I’d knowed who you was.”

“I’m glad you did, Mr. Jenney,” she answered. “I wanted to know what people think.”

“Well, it’s almighty complicated,” said Mr. Jenney, shaking his head. “I don’t know by rights what to think. As long as I’ve said what I have, I’ll say this: that the politicians is all for the railrud, and I hain’t got a mite of use for the politicians. I’ll vote for a feller like Austen Vane every time, if he’ll run, and I know other folks that will.”

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After Mr. Jenney had left her, Victoria stood motionless, gazing off into the haze, until she was startled by the voice of Hastings Weare beside her.

“Say, Victoria, who is that man?” he asked.

“What man?”

Hastings nodded towards Austen, who, with a cake basket in his hand, stood chatting with a group of country people on the edge of the porch.

“Oh, that man!” said Victoria. “His name’s Austen Vane, and he’s a lawyer in Ripton.”

“All I can say is,” replied Hastings, with a light in his face, “he’s one I’d like to tie to. I’ll bet he could whip any four men you could pick out.”

Considering that Hastings had himself proposed—although in a very mild form—more than once to Victoria, this was generous.

“I daresay he could,” she agreed absently.

“It isn’t only the way he’s built,” persisted Hastings, “he looks as if he were going to be somebody some day. Introduce me to him, will you?”

“Certainly,” said Victoria. “Mr. Vane,” she called, “I want to introduce an admirer, Mr. Hastings Weare.”

“I just wanted to know you,” said Hastings, reddening, “and Victoria—I mean Miss Flint—said she’d introduce me.”

“I’m much obliged to her,” said Austen, smiling.

“Are you in politics?” asked Hastings.

“I’m afraid not,” answered Austen, with a glance at Victoria.

“You’re not helping Humphrey Crewe, are you?”

“No,” said Austen, and added with an illuminating smile, “Mr. Crewe doesn’t need any help.”

“I’m glad you’re not,” exclaimed the downright Hastings, with palpable relief in his voice that an idol had not been shattered. “I think Humphrey’s a fakir, and all this sort of thing tommyrot. He wouldn’t get my vote by giving me lemonade and cake and letting me look at his cows. If you ever run for office, I’d like to cast it for you. My father is only a

summer resident, but since he has gone out of business he stays here till Christmas, and I'll be twenty-one in a year."

Austen had ceased to smile; he was looking into the boy's eyes with that serious expression which men and women found irresistible.

"Thank you, Mr. Weare," he said simply.

Hastings was suddenly overcome with the shyness of youth. He held out his hand, and said, "I'm awfully glad to have met you," and fled.

Victoria, who had looked on with a curious mixture of feelings, turned to Austen.

"That was a real tribute," she said. "Is this the way you affect everybody whom you meet?"

They were standing almost alone. The sun was nearing the western hills beyond the river, and people had for some time been wending their way towards the field where the horses were tied. He did not answer her question, but asked one instead.

"Will you let me drive you home?"

"Do you think you deserve to, after the shameful manner in which you have behaved?"

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“I’m quite sure that I don’t deserve to,” he answered, still looking down at her.

“If you did deserve to, being a woman, I probably shouldn’t let you,” said Victoria, flashing a look upwards; “as it is, you may.”

His face lighted, but she halted in the grass, with her hands behind her, and stared at him with a puzzled expression.

“I’m sure you’re a dangerous man,” she declared. “First you take in poor little Hastings, and now you’re trying to take me in.”

“Then I wish I were still more dangerous,” he laughed, “for apparently I haven’t succeeded.”

“I want to talk to you seriously,” said Victoria; “that is the only reason I’m permitting you to drive me home.”

“I am devoutly thankful for the reason then,” he said,—“my horse is tied in the field.”

“And aren’t you going to say good-by to your host and hostess?”

“Hostess?” he repeated, puzzled.

“Hostesses,” she corrected herself, “Mrs. Pomfret and Alice. I thought you had eyes in your head,” she added, with a fleeting glance at them.

“Is Crewe engaged to Miss Pomfret?” he asked.

“Are all men simpletons?” said Victoria. “He doesn’t know it yet, but he is.”

“I think I’d know it, if I were,” said Austen, with an emphasis that made her laugh.

“Sometimes fish don’t know they’re in a net until—until the morning after,” said Victoria. “That has a horribly dissipated sound—hasn’t it? I know to a moral certainty that Mr. Crewe will eventually lead Miss Pomfret away from the altar. At present,” she could not refrain from adding, “he thinks he’s in love with some one else.”

“Who?”

“It doesn’t matter,” she replied. “Humphrey’s perfectly happy, because he believes most women are in love with him, and he’s making up his mind in that magnificent, thorough way of his whether she is worthy to be endowed with his heart and hand, his cows, and all his stocks and bonds. He doesn’t know he’s going to marry Alice. It almost makes one a Calvinist, doesn’t it. He’s predestined, but perfectly happy.”

“Who is he in love with?” demanded Austen, ungrammatically.

“I’m going to say good-by to him. I’ll meet you in the field, if you don’t care to come. It’s only manners, after all, although the lemonade’s all gone and I haven’t had a drop.”

“I’ll go along too,” he said.

“Aren’t you afraid of Mrs. Pomfret?”

“Not a bit!”

“I am,” said Victoria, “but I think you’d better come just the same.”

Around the corner of the house they found them,—Mr. Crewe urging the departing guests to remain, and not to be bashful in the future about calling.

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“We don’t always have lemonade and cake,” he was saying, “but you can be sure of a welcome, just the same. Good-by, Vane, glad you came. Did they show you through the stables? Did you see the mate to the horse I lost? Beauty, isn’t he? Stir ’em up and get the money. I guess we won’t see much of each other politically. You’re anti-railroad. I don’t believe that tack’ll work—we can’t get along without corporations, you know. You ought to talk to Flint. I’ll give you a letter of introduction to him. I don’t know what I’d have done without that man Tooting in your father’s office. He’s a wasted genius in Ripton. What? Good-by, you’ll find your wagon, I guess. Well, Victoria, where have you been keeping yourself? I’ve been so busy I haven’t had time to look for you. You’re going to stay to dinner, and Hastings, and all the people who have helped.”

“No, I’m not,” answered Victoria, with a glance at Austen, before whom this announcement was so delicately made, “I’m going home.”

“But when am I to see you?” cried Mr. Crewe, as near genuine alarm as he ever got. You never let me see you. I was going to drive you home in the motor by moonlight.”

“We all know that you’re the most original person, Victoria,” said Mrs. Pomfret, “full of whims and strange fancies,” she added, with the only brief look at Austen she had deigned to bestow on him. “It never pays to count on you for twenty-four hours. I suppose you’re off on another wild expedition.”

“I think I’ve earned the right to it,” said Victoria;—I’ve poured lemonade for Humphrey’s constituents the whole afternoon. And besides, I never said I’d stay for dinner. I’m going home. Father’s leaving for California in the morning.”

“He’d better stay at home and look after her,” Mrs. Pomfret remarked, when Victoria was out of hearing.

Since Mrs. Harry Haynes ran off, one can never tell what a woman will do. It wouldn’t surprise me a bit if Victoria eloped with a handsome nobody like that. Of course he’s after her money, but he wouldn’t get it, not if I know Augustus Flint.”

“Is he handsome?” said Mr. Crewe, as though the idea were a new one. “Great Scott, I don’t believe she gives him a thought. She’s only going as far as the field with him. She insisted on leaving her horse there instead of putting him in the stable.”

“Catch Alice going as far as the field with him,” said Mrs. Pomfret, “but I’ve done my duty. It’s none of my affair.”

In the meantime Austen and Victoria had walked on some distance in silence.

“I have an idea with whom Mr. Crewe is in love,” he said at length.

“So have I,” replied Victoria, promptly. “Humphrey’s in love with himself. All he desires in a wife—if he desires one—is an inanimate and accommodating looking-glass, in whom he may see what he conceives to be his own image daily. James, you may take the mare home. I’m going to drive with Mr. Vane.”

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She stroked Pepper's nose while Austen undid the hitch-rope from around his neck.

"You and I are getting to be friends, aren't we, Pepper?" she asked, as the horse, with quivering nostrils, thrust his head into her hand. Then she sprang lightly into the buggy by Austen's side. The manner of these acts and the generous courage with which she defied opinion appealed to him so strongly that his heart was beating faster than Pepper's hoof-beats on the turf of the pasture.

"You are very good to come with me," he said gravely, when they had reached the road; "perhaps I ought not to have asked you."

"Why?" she asked, with one of her direct looks.

"It was undoubtedly selfish," he said, and added, more lightly, "I don't wish to put you into Mrs. Pomfret's bad graces."

Victoria laughed.

"She thought it her duty to tell father the time you drove me to the Hammonds'. She said I asked you to do it."

"What did he say?" Austen inquired, looking straight ahead of him.

"He didn't say much," she answered. "Father never does. I think he knows that I am to be trusted."

"Even with me?" he asked quizzically, but with a deeper significance.

"I don't think he realizes how dangerous you are," she replied, avoiding the issue. "The last time I saw you, you were actually trying to throw a fat man out of your window. What a violent life you lead, Mr. Vane. I hope you haven't shot any more people—"

"I saw you," he said.

"Is that the way you spend your time in office hours,—throwing people out of the windows?"

"It was only Tom Gaylord."

"He's the man Mr. Jenney said wanted you to be a senator, isn't he?" she asked.

"You have a good memory," he answered her. "Yes. That's the reason I tried to throw him out of the window."

“Why didn’t you be a senator?” she asked abruptly. “I always think of you in public life. Why waste your opportunities?”

“I’m not at all sure that was an opportunity. It was only some of Tom’s nonsense. I should have had all the politicians in the district against me.”

“But you aren’t the kind of man who would care about the politicians, surely. If Humphrey Crewe can get elected by the people, I should think you might.”

“I can’t afford to give garden-parties and buy lemonade,” said Austen, and they both laughed. He did not think it worth while mentioning Mr. Braden.

“Sometimes I think you haven’t a particle of ambition,” she said. “I like men with ambition.”

“I shall try to cultivate it,” said Austen.

“You seem to be popular enough.”

“Most worthless people are popular, because they don’t tread on anybody’s toes.”

“Worthless people don’t take up poor people’s suits, and win them,” she said. “I saw Zeb Meader the other day, and he said you could be President of the United States.”

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“Zeb meant that I was eligible—having been born in this country,” said Austen. “But where did you see him?”

“I—I went to see him.”

“All the way to Mercer?”

“It isn’t so far in an automobile,” she replied, as though in excuse, and added, still more lamely, “Zeb and I became great friends, you know, in the hospital.”

He did not answer, but wondered the more at the simplicity and kindness in one brought up as she had been which prompted her to take the trouble to see the humblest of her friends: nay, to take the trouble to have humble friends.

The road wound along a ridge, and at intervals was spread before them the full glory of the September sunset,—the mountains of the west in blue-black silhouette against the saffron sky, the myriad dappled clouds, the crimson fading from the still reaches of the river, and the wine-colour from the eastern hills. Both were silent under the spell, but a yearning arose within him when he glanced at the sunset glow on her face: would sunsets hereafter bring sadness?

His thoughts ran riot as the light faded in the west. Hers were not revealed. And the silence between them seemed gradually to grow into a pact, to become a subtler and more intimate element than speech. A faint tang of autumn smoke was in the air, a white mist crept along the running waters, a silver moon like a new-stamped coin rode triumphant in the sky, impatient to proclaim her glory; and the shadows under the ghost-like sentinel trees in the pastures grew blacker. At last Victoria looked at him.

“You are the only man I know who doesn’t insist on talking,” she said. There are times when—”

“When there is nothing to say,” he suggested.

She laughed softly. He tried to remember the sound of it afterwards, when he rehearsed this phase of the conversation, but couldn’t.

“It’s because you like the hills, isn’t it?” she asked. “You seem such an out-of-door person, and Mr. Jenney said you were always wandering about the country-side.”

“Mr. Jenney also made other reflections about my youth,” said Austen.

She laughed again, acquiescing in his humour, secretly thankful not to find him sentimental.

“Mr. Jenney said something else that—that I wanted to ask you about,” she went on, breathing more deeply. “It was about the railroad.”

“I am afraid you have not come to an authority,” he replied.

“You said the politicians would be against you if you tried to become a State senator. Do you believe that the politicians are owned by the railroad?”

“Has Jenney been putting such things into your head?”

“Not only Mr. Jenney, but—I have heard other people say that. And Humphrey Crewe said that you hadn’t a chance politically, because you had opposed the railroad and had gone against your own interests.”

Austen was amazed at this new exhibition of courage on her part, though he was sorely pressed.

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“Humphrey Crewe isn’t much of an authority, either,” he said briefly.

“Then you won’t tell me?” said Victoria. “Oh, Mr. Vane,” she cried, with sudden vehemence, “if such things are going on here, I’m sure my father doesn’t know about them. This is only one State, and the railroad runs through so many. He can’t know everything, and I have heard him say that he wasn’t responsible for what the politicians did in his name. If they are bad, why don’t you go to him and tell him so? I’m sure he’d listen to you.”

“I’m sure he’d think me a presumptuous idiot,” said Austen. “Politicians are not idealists anywhere—the very word has become a term of reproach. Undoubtedly your father desires to set things right as much as any one else—probably more than any one.”

“Oh, I know he does,” exclaimed Victoria.

“If politics are not all that they should be,” he went on, somewhat grimly, with an unpleasant feeling of hypocrisy, “we must remember that they are nobody’s fault in particular, and can’t be set right in an instant by any one man, no matter how powerful.”

She turned her face to him gratefully, but he did not meet her look. They were on the driveway of Fairview.

“I suppose you think me very silly for asking such questions,” she said.

“No,” he answered gravely, “but politics are so intricate a subject that they are often not understood by those who are in the midst of them. I admire—I think it is very fine in you to want to know.”

“You are not one of the men who would not wish a woman to know, are you?”

“No,” he said, “no, I’m not.”

The note of pain in his voice surprised and troubled her. They were almost in sight of the house.

“I asked you to come to Fairview,” she said, assuming a lightness of tone, “and you never appeared. I thought it was horrid of you to forget, after we’d been such friends.”

“I didn’t forget,” replied Austen.

“Then you didn’t want to come.”

He looked into her eyes, and she dropped them.

“You will have to be the best judge of that,” he said.

“But what am I to think?” she persisted.

“Think the best of me you can,” he answered, as they drew up on the gravel before the open door of Fairview house. A man was standing in the moonlight on the porch.

“Is that you, Victoria?”

“Yes, father.”

“I was getting worried,” said Mr. Flint, coming down on the driveway.

“I’m all right,” she said, leaping out of the buggy, “Mr. Vane brought me home.”

“How are you, Hilary?” said Mr. Flint.

“I’m Austen Vane, Mr. Flint,” said Austen.

“How are you?” said Mr. Flint, as curtly as the barest politeness allowed. “What was the matter with your own horse, Victoria?”

“Nothing,” she replied, after an instant’s pause. Austen wondered many times whether her lips had trembled. “Mr. Vane asked me to drive with him, and I came. Won’t—won’t you come in, Mr. Vane?”

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“No, thanks,” said Austen, “I’m afraid I have to go back to Ripton.”

“Good-by, and thank you,” she said, and gave him her hand. As he pressed it, he thought he felt the slightest pressure in return, and then she fled up the steps. As he drove away, he turned once to look at the great house, with its shades closely drawn, as it stood amidst its setting of shrubbery silent under the moon.

An hour later he sat in Hanover Street before the supper Euphrasia had saved for him. But though he tried nobly, his heart was not in the relation, for her benefit, of Mr. Crewe’s garden-party.

CHAPTER IX

Mr. *Crewe assaults the capital*

Those portions of the biographies of great men which deal with the small beginnings of careers are always eagerly devoured, and for this reason the humble entry of Mr. Crewe into politics may be of interest. Great revolutions have had their origins in back cellars; great builders of railroads have begun life with packs on their shoulders, trudging over the wilderness which they were to traverse in after years in private cars. The history of Napoleon Bonaparte has not a Sunday-school moral, but we can trace therein the results of industry after the future emperor got started. Industry, and the motto “nil desperandum” lived up to, and the watchword “thorough,” and a torch of unsuspected genius, and “l’audace, toujours l’audace,” and a man may go far in life.

Mr. Humphrey Crewe possessed, as may have been surmised, a dash of all these gifts. For a summary of his character one would not have used the phrase (as a contemporary of his remarked) of “a shrinking violet.” The phrase, after all, would have fitted very few great men; genius is sure of itself, and seeks its peers.

The State capital is an old and beautiful and somewhat conservative town. Life there has its joys and sorrows and passions, its ambitions, and heart-burnings, to be sure; a most absorbing novel could be written about it, and the author need not go beyond the city limits or approach the state-house or the Pelican Hotel. The casual visitor in that capital leaves it with a sense of peace, the echo of church bells in his ear, and (if in winter) the impression of dazzling snow. Comedies do not necessarily require a wide stage, nor tragedies an amphitheatre for their enactment.

No casual visitor, for instance, would have suspected from the faces or remarks of the inhabitants whom he chanced to meet that there was excitement in the capital over the prospective arrival of Mr. Humphrey Crewe for the legislative session that winter. Legislative sessions, be it known, no longer took place in the summer, a great relief to Mr. Crewe and to farmers in general, who wished to be at home in haying time.

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The capital abounded in comfortable homes and boasted not a dwellings of larger pretensions. Chief among these was the Duncan house—still so called, although Mr. Duncan, who built it, had been dead these fifteen years, and his daughter and heiress, Janet, had married an Italian Marquis and lived in a Roman palace, rehabilitated by the Duncan money. Mr. Duncan, it may be recalled by some readers of “Coniston,” had been a notable man in his day, who had married the heiress of the State, and was president of the Central Railroad, now absorbed in the United Northeastern. The house was a great square of brick, with a wide cornice, surrounded by a shaded lawn; solidly built, in the fashion of the days when rich people stayed at home, with a conservatory and a library that had once been Mr. Duncan’s pride. The Marchesa cared very little about the library, or about the house, for that matter; a great aunt and uncle, spinster and bachelor, were living in it that winter, and they vacated for Mr. Crewe. He travelled to the capital on the legislative pass the Northeastern Railroads had so kindly given him, and brought down his horses and his secretary and servants from Leith a few days before the first of January, when the session was to open, and laid out his bills for the betterment of the State on that library table where Mr. Duncan had lovingly thumbed his folios. Mr. Crewe, with characteristic promptitude, set his secretary to work to make a list of the persons of influence in the town, preparatory to a series of dinner-parties; he dropped into the office of Mr. Ridout, the counsel of the Northeastern and of the Winona Corporation in the capital, to pay his respects as a man of affairs, and incidentally to leave copies of his bills for the improvement of the State. Mr. Ridout was politely interested, and promised to read the bills, and agreed that they ought to pass.

Mr. Crewe also examined the Pelican Hotel, so soon to be a hive, and stood between the snow-banks in the capital park contemplating the statue of the great statesman there, and repeating to himself the quotation inscribed beneath. “The People’s Government, made for the People, made by the People, and answerable to the People.” And he wondered, idly,—for the day was not cold,—how he would look upon a pedestal with the Gladstone collar and the rough woollen coat that would lend themselves so readily to reproduction in marble. Stranger things had happened, and grateful States had been known to reward benefactors.

At length comes the gala night of nights,—the last of the old year,—and the assembling of the five hundred legislators and of the army that is wont to attend them. The afternoon trains, steaming hot, are crowded to the doors, the station a scene of animation, and Main Street, dazzling in snow, is alive with a stream of men, with eddies here and there at the curbs and in the entries. What handshaking, and looking over of new faces, and walking

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round and round! What sightseeing by the country members and their wives who have come to attend the inauguration of the new governor, the Honourable Asa P. Gray! There he is, with the whiskers and the tall hat and the comfortable face, which wears already a look of gubernatorial dignity and power. He stands for a moment in the lobby of the Pelican Hotel,—thronged now to suffocation,—to shake hands genially with new friends, who are led up by old friends with two fingers on the elbow. The old friends crack jokes and whisper in the ear of the governor-to-be, who presently goes upstairs, accompanied by the Honourable Hilary Vane, to the bridal suite, which is reserved for him, and which has fire-proof carpet on the floor. The Honourable Hilary has a room next door, connecting with the new governor's by folding doors, but this fact is not generally known to country members. Only old timers, like Bijah Bixby and Job Braden, know that the Honourable Hilary's room corresponds to one which in the old Pelican was called the Throne Room, Number Seven, where Jethro Bass sat in the old days and watched unceasingly the groups in the street from the window.

But Jethro Bass has been dead these twenty years, and his lieutenants shorn of power. An empire has arisen out of the ashes of the ancient kingdoms. Bijah and Job are old, all-powerful still in Clovelly and Leith—influential still in their own estimations; still kicking up their heels behind, still stuttering and whispering into ears, still "going along by when they are talking sly." But there are no guerrillas now, no condottieri who can be hired: the empire has a paid and standing army, as an empire should. The North Country chiefs, so powerful in the clan warfare of bygone days, are generals now,—-chiefs of staff. The captain-general, with a minute piece of Honey Dew under his tongue, sits in Number Seven. A new Number Seven,—with electric lights and a bathroom and a brass bed. Tempora mutantur. There is an empire and a feudal system, did one but know it. The clans are part of the empire, and each chief is responsible for his clan—did one but know it. One doesn't know it.

The Honourable Brush Bascom, Duke of Putnam, member of the House, has arrived unostentatiously—as is his custom—and is seated in his own headquarters, number ten (with a bathroom). Number nine belongs from year to year to Mr. Manning, division superintendent of that part of the Northeastern which was the old Central,—a thin gentleman with side-whiskers. He loves life in the capital so much that he takes his vacations there in the winter,—during the sessions of the Legislature, —presumably because it is gay. There are other rooms, higher up, of important men, to be sure, but to enter which it is not so much of an honour. The Honourable Bill Fleming, postmaster of Brampton in Truro (Ephraim Prescott being long since dead and Brampton a large place now), has his vacation during the session in room thirty-six (no bathroom); and the Honourable Elisha Jane, Earl of Haines County in the North Country, and United States consul somewhere, is home on his annual vacation in room fifty-nine (no bath). Senator Whitredge has a room, and Senator Green, and Congressmen Eldridge and Fairplay (no baths, and only temporary).

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The five hundred who during the next three months are to register the laws find quarters as best they can. Not all of them are as luxurious as Mr. Crewe in the Duncan house, or the Honourable Brush Bascom in number ten of the Pelican, the rent of either of which would swallow the legislative salary in no time. The Honourable Nat Billings, senator from the Putnam County district, is comfortably installed, to be sure. By gradual and unexplained degrees, the constitution of the State has been changed until there are only twenty senators. Noble five hundred! Steadfast twenty!

A careful perusal of the biographies of great men of the dynamic type leads one to the conclusion that much of their success is due to an assiduous improvement of every opportunity,—and Mr. Humphrey Crewe certainly possessed this quality, also. He is in the Pelican Hotel this evening, meeting the men that count. Mr. Job Braden, who had come down with the idea that he might be of use in introducing the new member from Leith to the notables, was met by this remark:—"You can't introduce me to any of 'em—-they all know who I am. Just point any of 'em out you think I ought to know, and I'll go up and talk to 'em. What? Come up to my house after a while and smoke a cigar. The Duncan house, you know—the big one with the conservatory."

Mr. Crewe was right—they all knew him. The Leith millionaire, the summer resident, was a new factor in politics, and the rumours of the size of his fortune had reached a high-water mark in the Pelican Hotel that evening. Pushing through the crowd in the corridor outside the bridal suite waiting to shake hands with the new governor, Mr. Crewe gained an entrance in no time, and did not hesitate to interrupt the somewhat protracted felicitations of an Irish member of the Newcastle delegation.

"How are you, Governor?" he said, with the bonhomie of a man of the world. "I'm Humphrey Crewe, from Leith. You got a letter from me, didn't you, congratulating you upon your election? We didn't do badly for you up there. What?"

"How do you do, Mr. Crewe?" said Mr. Gray, with dignified hospitality, while their fingers slid over each other's; "I'm glad to welcome you here. I've noticed the interest you've taken in the State, and the number of ahem—very useful societies to which you belong."

"Good," said Mr. Crewe, "I do what I can. I just dropped in to shake your hand, and to say that I hope we'll pull together."

The governor lifted his eyebrows a little.

"Why, I hope so, I'm sere, Mr. Crewe," said he.

"I've looked over the policy of the State for the last twenty years in regard to public improvements and the introduction of modern methods as concerns husbandry, and I find it deplorable. You and I, Governor, live in a progressive age, and we can't afford

not to see something done. What? It is my desire to do what I can to help make your administration a notable advance upon those of your predecessors."

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“Why—I greatly appreciate it, Mr. Crewe,” said Mr. Gray.

“I’m sure you do. I’ve looked over your record, and I find you’ve had experience in State affairs, and that you are a successful and conservative business man. That is the type we want—eh? Business men. You’ve read over the bills I sent you by registered mail?”

“Ahem,” said Mr. Gray, “I’ve been a good deal occupied since election day, Mr. Crewe.”

“Read ’em,” said Mr. Crewe, “and I’ll call in on you at the state-house day after to-morrow at five o’clock promptly. We’ll discuss ’em, Governor, and if, by the light of your legislative experience, you have any suggestions to make, I shall be glad to hear ’em. Before putting the bills in their final shape I’ve taken the trouble to go over them with my friend, Mr. Flint—our mutual friend, let us say.”

“I’ve had the pleasure of meeting Mr. Flint,” said Mr. Gray. “I—ahem —can’t say that I know him intimately.”

Mr. Crewe looked at Mr. Gray in a manner which plainly indicated that he was not an infant.

“My relations with Mr. Flint and the Northeastern have been very pleasant,” said Mr. Crewe. “I may say that I am somewhat of a practical railroad and business man myself.”

“We need such men,” said Mr. Gray. “Why, how do you do, Cary? How are the boys up in Wheeler?”

“Well, good-by, Governor. See you day after to-morrow at five precisely,” said Mr. Crewe.

The next official call of Mr. Crewe was on the Speaker-to-be, Mr. Doby of Hale (for such matters are cut and dried), but any amount of pounding on Mr. Doby’s door (number seventy-five) brought no response. Other rural members besides Mr. Crewe came and pounded on that door, and went away again; but Mr. Job Braden suddenly appeared from another part of the corridor, smiling benignly, and apparently not resenting the refusal of his previous offers of help.

“W—want the Speaker?” he inquired.

Mr. Crewe acknowledged that he did.

“Ed only sleeps there,” said Mr. Braden. “Guess you’ll find him in the Railroad-Room.”

“Railroad Room?”

“Hilary Vane’s, Number Seven.” Mr. Braden took hold of the lapel of his fellow-townsman’s coat. “Callated you didn’t know it all,” he said; “that’s the reason I come down—so’s to help you some.”

Mr. Crewe, although he was not wont to take a second place, followed Mr. Braden down the stairs to the door next to the governor’s, where he pushed ahead of his guide, through the group about the doorway,—none of whom, however, were attempting to enter. They stared in some surprise at Mr. Crewe as he flung open the door without knocking, and slammed it behind him in Mr. Braden’s face. But the bewilderment caused by this act of those without was as nothing to the astonishment of those within—had Mr. Crewe but known it. An oil painting of the prominent men gathered about the marble-topped table

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in the centre of the room, with an outline key beneath it, would have been an appropriate work of art to hang in the state-house, as emblematic of the statesmanship of the past twenty years. The Honourable Hilary Vane sat at one end in a padded chair; Mr. Manning, the division superintendent, startled out of a meditation, was upright on the end of the bed; Mr. Ridout, the Northeastern's capital lawyer, was figuring at the other end of the table; the Honourable Brush Bascom was bending over a wide, sad-faced gentleman of some two hundred and fifty pounds who sat at the centre in his shirt-sleeves, poring over numerous sheets in front of him which were covered with names of the five hundred. This gentleman was the Honourable Edward Doby of Hale, who, with the kind assistance of the other gentlemen above-named, was in this secluded spot making up a list of his committees, undisturbed by eager country members. At Mr. Crewe's entrance Mr. Bascom, with great presence of mind, laid down his hat over the principal list, while Mr. Ridout, taking the hint, put the Revised Statutes on the other. There was a short silence; and the Speaker-to-be, whose pencil had been knocked out of his hand; recovered himself sufficiently to relight an extremely frayed cigar.

Not that Mr. Crewe was in the least abashed. He chose this opportunity to make a survey of the situation, nodded to Mr. Ridout, and walked up to the padded armchair.

"How are you, Mr. Vane?" he said. "I thought I'd drop in to shake hands with you, especially as I have business with the Speaker, and heard he was here. But I'm glad to have met you for many reasons. I want you to be one of the vice-presidents of the State Economic League—it won't cost you anything. Ridout has agreed to let his name go on."

The Honourable Hilary, not being an emotional man, merely grunted as he started to rise to his feet. What he was about to say was interrupted by a timid knock, and there followed another brief period of silence.

"It ain't anybody," said Mr. Bascom, and crossing the room, turned the key in the lock. The timid knock was repeated.

"I suppose you're constantly interrupted here by unimportant people," Mr. Crewe remarked.

"Well," said Mr. Vane, slowly, boring into Mr. Crewe with his eye, "that statement isn't far out of the way."

"I don't believe you've ever met me, Mr. Vane. I'm Humphrey Crewe. We have a good friend in common in Mr. Flint."

The Honourable Hilary's hand passed over Mr. Crewe's lightly.

"Glad to meet you, Mr. Crewe," he said, and a faint twinkle appeared in his eye. "Job has told everybody you were coming down. Glad to welcome a man of your ahem—-stamp into politics."

"I'm a plain business man," answered Mr. Crewe, modestly; "and although I have considerable occupation, I believe that one in my position has duties to perform. I've certain bills—"

"Yes, yes," agreed the Honourable Hilary; "do you know Mr. Brush Bascom and Mr. Manning? Allow me to introduce you,—and General Doby."

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“How are you, General?” said Mr. Crewe to the Speaker-to-be, “I’m always glad to shake the hand of a veteran. Indeed, I have thought that a society—”

“I earned my title,” said General Doby, somewhat sheepishly, “fighting on Governor Brown’s staff. There were twenty of us, and we were resistless, weren’t we, Brush?”

“Twenty on a staff!” exclaimed Mr. Crewe.

“Oh, we furnished our own uniforms and paid our own way—except those of us who had passes,” declared the General, as though the memory of his military career did not give him unalloyed pleasure. “What’s the use of State sovereignty if you can’t have a glittering army to follow the governor round?”

Mr. Crewe had never considered this question, and he was not the man to waste time in speculation.

“Doubtless you got a letter from me, General Doby,” he said. “We did what we could up our way to put you in the Speaker’s chair.”

General Doby creased a little in the middle, to signify that he was bowing.

“I trust it will be in my power to reciprocate, Mr. Crewe,” he replied.

“We want to treat Mr. Crewe right,” Mr. Bascom put in.

“You have probably made a note of my requests,” Mr. Crewe continued. “I should like to be on the Judiciary Committee, for one thing. Although I am not a lawyer, I know something of the principles of law, and I understand that this and the Appropriations Committee are the most important. I may say with truth that I should be a useful member of that, as I am accustomed to sitting on financial boards. As my bills are of some considerable importance and deal with practical progressive measures, I have no hesitation in asking for the chairmanship of Public Improvements,—and of course a membership in the Agricultural is essential, as I have bills for them. Gentlemen,” he added to the room at large, “I have typewritten manifolds of those bills which I shall be happy to leave here—at headquarters.” And suiting the action to the word, he put down a packet on the table.

The Honourable Brush Bascom, accompanied by Mr. Ridout, walked to the window and stood staring at the glitter of the electric light on the snow. The Honourable Hilary gazed steadily at the table, while General Doby blew his nose with painful violence.

“I’ll do what I can for you, certainly, Mr. Crewe,” he said. “But—what is to become of the other four hundred and ninety-nine? The ways of a Speaker are hard, Mr. Crewe, and I have to do justice to all.”

“Well,” answered Mr. Crewe, of course I don’t want to be unreasonable, and I realize the pressure that’s put upon you. But when you consider the importance of the work I came down here to do—”

“I do consider it,” said the Speaker, politely. “It’s a little early to talk about the make-up of committees. I hope to be able to get at them by Sunday. You may be sure I’ll do my best for you.”

“We’d better make a note of it,” said Mr. Crewe; “give me some paper,” and he was reaching around behind General Doby for one of the precious sheets under Mr. Bascom’s hat, when the general, with great presence of mind, sat on it. We have it, from a malicious and untrustworthy source, that the Northeastern Railroads paid for a new one.

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“Here, here,” cried the Speaker, “make the memorandum here.”

At this critical juncture a fortunate diversion occurred. A rap—three times—of no uncertain quality was heard at the door, and Mr. Brush Bascom hastened to open it. A voice cried out:—“Is Manning here? The boys are hollering for those passes,” and a wiry, sallow gentleman burst in, none other than the Honourable Elisha Jane, who was taking his consular vacation. When his eyes fell upon Mr. Crewe he halted abruptly, looked a little foolish, and gave a questioning glance at the Honourable Hilary.

“Mountain passes, Lish? Sit down. Did I ever tell you that story about the slide in Rickets Gulch?” asked the Honourable Brush Bascom. But first let me make you acquainted with Mr. Humphrey Crewe of Leith. Mr. Crewe has come down here with the finest lot of bills you ever saw, and we’re all going to take hold and put ’em through. Here, Lish, I’ll give you a set.”

“Read ’em, Mr. Jane,” urged Mr. Crewe. “I don’t claim much for ’em, but perhaps they will help to set a few little matters right—I hope so.”

Mr. Jane opened the bills with deliberation, and cast his eyes over the headings.

“I’ll read ’em this very night, Mr. Crewe,” he said solemnly; “this meeting you is a particular pleasure, and I have heard in many quarters of these measures.”

“Well,” admitted Mr. Crewe, “they may help some. I have a few other matters to attend to this evening, so I must say good-night, gentlemen. Don’t let me interfere with those I mountain passes, Mr. Manning.”

With this parting remark, which proved him to be not merely an idealist in politics, but a practical man, Mr. Crewe took his leave. And he was too much occupied with his own thoughts to pay any attention to the click of the key as it turned in the lock, or to hear United States Senator Whitredge rap (three times) on the door after he had turned the corner, or to know that presently the sliding doors into the governor’s bridal suite—were to open a trifle, large enough for the admission of the body of the Honourable Asa P. Gray.

Number Seven still keeps up its reputation as the seat of benevolence, and great public benefactors still meet there to discuss the welfare of their fellow-men: the hallowed council chamber now of an empire, seat of the Governor-general of the State, the Honourable Hilary Vane, and his advisers. For years a benighted people, with a fond belief in their participation of Republican institutions, had elected the noble five hundred of the House and the stanch twenty of the Senate. Noble five hundreds (biggest Legislature in the world) have come and gone; debated, applauded, fought and on occasions denounced, kicked over the traces, and even wept—to no avail. Behold that

political institution of man, representative government There it is on the stage, curtain up, a sublime spectacle for all men to see, and thrill over speeches about

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the Rights of Man, and the Forefathers in the Revolution; about Constituents who do not constitute. The High Heavens allow it and smile, and it is well for the atoms that they think themselves free American representatives, that they do not feel the string of predestination around their ankles. The senatorial twenty, from their high carved seats, see the strings and smile, too; yes, and see their own strings, and smile. Wisdom does not wish for flight. "The people" having changed the constitution, the blackbirds are reduced from four and forty to a score. This is cheaper—for the people.

Democracy on the front of the stage before an applauding audience; performers absorbed in their parts, forgetting that the landlord has to be paid in money yet to be earned. Behind the stage, the real play, the absorbing interest, the high stakes—-occasional discreet laughter through the peep-hole when an actor makes an impassioned appeal to the gods. Democracy in front, the Feudal System, the Dukes and Earls behind—but in plain clothes; Democracy in stars and spangles and trappings and insignia. Or, a better figure, the Fates weaving the web in that mystic chamber, Number Seven, pausing now and again to smile as a new thread is put in. Proclamations, constitutions, and creeds crumble before conditions; the Law of Dividends is the high law, and the Forum an open vent through which the white steam may rise heavenward and be resolved again into water.

Mr. Crewe took his seat in the popular assemblage next day, although most of the five hundred gave up theirs to the ladies who had come to hear his Excellency deliver his inaugural. The Honourable Asa made a splendid figure, all agreed, and read his speech in a firm and manly voice. A large part of it was about the people; some of it about the sacred government they had inherited from their forefathers; still another concerned the high character and achievements of the inhabitants within the State lines; the name of Abraham Lincoln was mentioned, and, with even greater reverence and fervour, the Republican party which had ennobled and enriched the people—and incidentally elected the governor. There was a noble financial policy, a curtailment of expense. The forests should be protected, roads should be built, and, above all, corporations should be held to a strict accounting.

Needless to say, the speech gave great satisfaction to all, and many old friends left the hall exclaiming that they didn't believe Asa had it in him. As a matter of fact (known only to the initiated), Asa didn't have it in him until last night, before he squeezed through the crack in the folding doors from room number six to room Number Seven. The inspiration came to him then, when he was ennobled by the Governor-general, who represents the Empire. Perpetual Governor-general, who quickens into life puppet governors of his own choosing Asa has agreed, for the honour of the title of governor of his State,

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to act the part, open the fairs, lend his magnificent voice to those phrases which it rounds so well. It is fortunate, when we smoke a fine cigar from Havana, that we cannot look into the factory. The sight would disturb us. It was well for the applauding, deep-breathing audience in the state-house that first of January that they did not have a glimpse in room Number Seven the night before, under the sheets that contained the list of the Speaker's committees; it was well that they could not go back to Ripton into the offices on the square, earlier in December, where Mr. Hamilton Tooting was writing the noble part of that inaugural from memoranda given him by the Honourable Hilary Vane. Yes, the versatile Mr. Tooting, and none other, doomed forever to hide the light of his genius under a bushel! The financial part was written by the Governor-general himself—the Honourable Hilary Vane. And when it was all finished and revised, it was put into a long envelope which bore this printed address: Augustus P. Flint, Pres't United Northeastern Railroads, New York. And came back with certain annotations on the margin, which were duly incorporated into it. This is the private history (which must never be told) of the document which on January first became, as far as fame and posterity is concerned, the Honourable Asa P. Gray's—forever and forever.

Mr. Crewe liked the inaugural, and was one of the first to tell Mr. Gray so, and to express his pleasure and appreciation of the fact that his request (mailed in November) had been complied with, that the substance of his bills had been recommended in the governor's programme.

He did not pause to reflect on the maxim, that platforms are made to get in by and inaugurals to get started by.

Although annual efforts have been made by various public-spirited citizens to build a new state-house, economy—with assistance from room Number Seven has triumphed. It is the same state-house from the gallery of which poor William Wetherell witnessed the drama of the Woodchuck Session, although there are more members now, for the population of the State has increased to five hundred thousand. It is well for General Doby, with his two hundred and fifty pounds, that he is in the Speaker's chair; five hundred seats are a good many for that hall, and painful in a long session. The Honourable Brush Bascom can stretch his legs, because he is fortunate enough to have a front seat. Upon inquiry, it turns out that Mr. Bascom has had a front seat for the last twenty years—he has been uniformly lucky in drawing. The Honourable Jacob Botcher (ten years' service) is equally fortunate; the Honourable Jake is a man of large presence, and a voice that sounds as if it came, oracularly, from the caverns of the earth. He is easily heard by the members on the back seats, while Mr. Bascom is not. Mr. Ridout, the capital lawyer, is in the House this year, and singularly enough has a front seat likewise. It was Mr.

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Crewe's misfortune to draw number 415, in the extreme corner of the room, and next the steam radiator. But he was not of the metal to accept tamely such a ticketing from the hat of destiny (via the Clerk of the House). He complained, as any man of spirit would, and Mr. Utter, the polite clerk, is profoundly sorry,—and says it maybe managed. Curiously enough, the Honourable Brush Bascom and the Honourable Jacob Botcher join Mr. Crewe in his complaint, and reiterate that it is an outrage that a man of such ability and deserving prominence should be among the submerged four hundred and seventy. It is managed in a mysterious manner we don't pretend to fathom, and behold Mr. Crewe in the front of the Forum, in the seats of the mighty, where he can easily be pointed out from the gallery at the head of the five hundred, between those shining leaders and parliamentarians, the Honourables Brush Bascom and Jake Botcher.

For Mr. Crewe has not come to the Legislature, like the country members in the rear, to acquire a smattering of parliamentary procedure by the day the Speaker is presented with a gold watch, at the end of the session. Not he! Not the practical business man, the member of boards, the chairman and president of societies. He has studied the Rules of the House and parliamentary law, you may be sure. Genius does not come unprepared, and is rarely caught napping. After the Legislature adjourned that week the following telegram was sent over the wires:—

Augustus P. Flint, New York.

Kindly use your influence with Doby to secure my committee appointments. Important as per my conversation with you.

Humphrey Crewe.

Nor was Mr. Crewe idle from Saturday to Monday night, when the committees were to be announced. He sent to the State Tribune office for fifty copies of that valuable paper, which contained a two-column-and-a-half article on Mr. Crewe as a legislator and financier and citizen, with a summary of his bills and an argument as to how the State would benefit by their adoption; an accurate list of Mr. Crewe's societies was inserted, and an account of his life's history, and of those ancestors of his who had been born or lived within the State. Indeed, the accuracy of this article as a whole did great credit to the editor of the State Tribune, who must have spent a tremendous amount of painstaking research upon it; and the article was so good that Mr. Crewe regretted (undoubtedly for the editor's sake) that a request could not be appended to it such as is used upon marriage and funeral notices: "New York, Boston, and Philadelphia papers please copy."

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Mr. Crewe thought it his duty to remedy as much as possible the unfortunate limited circulation of the article, and he spent as much as a whole day making out a list of friends and acquaintances whom he thought worthy to receive a copy of the Tribune—-marked personal. Victoria Flint got one, and read it to her father at the breakfast table. (Mr. Flint did not open his.) Austen Vane wondered why any man in his obscure and helpless position should have been honoured, but honoured he was. He sent his to Victoria, too, and was surprised to find that she knew his handwriting and wrote him a letter to thank him for it: a letter which provoked on his part much laughter, and elements of other sensations which, according to Charles Reade, should form the ingredients of a good novel. But of this matter later.

Mrs. Pomfret and Alice each got one, and each wrote Mr. Crewe appropriate congratulations. (Alice's answer supervised.) Mrs. Chillingham got one; the Honourable Hilary Vane got one—marked in red ink, lest he should have skipped it in his daily perusal of the paper. Mr. Brush, Bascom got one likewise. But the list of Mr. Crewe's acquaintances is too long and too broad to dwell upon further in these pages.

The Monday-night session came at last, that sensational hour when the Speaker makes those decisions to which he is supposed to have given birth over Sunday in the seclusion of his country home at Hale. Monday-night sessions are, as a rule, confined in attendance to the Honourable Brush Bascom and Mr. Ridout and a few other conscientious members who do not believe in cheating the State, but to-night all is bustle and confusion, and at least four hundred members are pushing down the aisles and squeezing past each other into the narrow seats, and reading the State Tribune or the ringing words of the governor's inaugural which they find in the racks on the back of the seats before them. Speaker Doby, who has been apparently deep in conference with the most important members (among them Mr. Crewe, to whom he has whispered that a violent snow-storm is raging in Hale), raps for order; and after a few preliminaries hands to Mr. Utter, the clerk, amidst a breathless silence, the paper on which the parliamentary career of so many ambitious statesmen depends.

It is not a pleasure to record the perfidy of man, nor the lack of judgment which prevents him, in his circumscribed lights, from recognizing undoubted geniuses when he sees them. Perhaps it was jealousy on General Doby's part, and a selfish desire to occupy the centre of the stage himself, but at any rate we will pass hastily over the disagreeable portions of this narrative. Mr. Crewe settled himself with his feet extended, and with a complacency which he had rightly earned by leaving no stone unturned, to listen. He sat up a little when the Appropriations Committee, headed by the Honourable Jake Botcher, did not contain his name—but it might have been an oversight of Mr. Utters; when the Judiciary

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(Mr. Ridout's committee) was read it began to look like malice; committee after committee was revealed, and the name of Humphrey Crewe might not have been contained in the five hundred except as the twelfth member of forestry, until it appeared at the top of National Affairs. Here was a broad enough field, certainly,—the Trusts, the Tariff, the Gold Standard, the Foreign Possessions,—and Mr. Crewe's mind began to soar in spite of himself. Public Improvements was reached, and he straightened. Mr. Beck, a railroad lawyer from Belfast, led it. Mr. Crewe arose, as any man of spirit would, and walked with dignity up the aisle and out of the house. This deliberate attempt to crush genius would inevitably react on itself. The Honourable Hilary Vane and Mr. Flint should be informed of it at once.

CHAPTER X

"*For bills may come*, *and bills may go*"

A man with a sense of humour once went to the capital as a member of the five hundred from his town, and he never went back again. One reason for this was that he died the following year, literally, the doctors said, from laughing too much. I know that this statement will be received incredulously, and disputed by those who claim that laughter is a good thing; the honourable gentleman died from too much of a good thing. He was overpowered by having too much to laugh at, and the undiscerning thought him a fool, and the Empire had no need of a court jester. But many of his sayings have lived, nevertheless. He wrote a poem, said to be a plagiarism, which contains the quotation at the beginning of this chapter: "For bills may come, and bills may go, but I go on forever." The first person singular is supposed to relate to the United Northeastern Railroads. It was a poor joke at best.

It is needless to say that the gentleman referred to had a back seat among the submerged four hundred and seventy,—and that he kept it. No discerning and powerful well-wishers came forward and said to him, "Friend, go up higher." He sat, doubled up, in number, and the gods gave him compensation in laughter; he disturbed the Solons around him, who were interested in what was going on in front, and trying to do their duty to their constituents by learning parliamentary procedure before the Speaker got his gold watch and shed tears over it.

The gentleman who laughed and died is forgotten, as he deserves to be, and it never occurred to anybody that he might have been a philosopher, after all. There is something irresistibly funny about predestination; about men who are striving and learning and soberly voting upon measures with which they have as little to do as guinea-pigs. There were certain wise and cynical atheists who did not attend the sessions at all except when they received mysterious hints to do so. These were chiefly

from Newcastle. And there were others who played poker in the state-house cellar waiting for the Word to come to them, when they went up and voted (prudently counting their chips before they did so), and descended again. The man with a sense of humour laughed at these, too, and at the twenty blackbirds in the Senate,—but not so heartily. He laughed at their gravity, for no gravity can equal that of gentlemen who play with stacked cards.

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The risible gentleman laughed at the proposed legislation, about which he made the song, and he likened it to a stream that rises hopefully in the mountains, and takes its way singing at the prospect of reaching the ocean, but presently flows into a hole in the ground to fill the forgotten caverns of the earth, and is lost to the knowledge and sight of man. The caverns he labelled respectively Appropriations, Railroad, Judiciary, and their guardians were unmistakably the Honourables Messrs. Bascom, Botcher, and Ridout. The greatest cavern of all he called "The Senate."

If you listen, you can hear the music of the stream of bills as it is rising hopefully and flowing now: "Mr. Crewe of Leith gives notice that on to-morrow or some subsequent day he will introduce a bill entitled, 'An act for the Improvement of the State Highways.' Mr. Crewe of Leith gives notice, *etc*. 'An act for the Improvement of the Practice of Agriculture.' 'An act relating to the State Indebtedness.' 'An act to increase the State Forest Area.' 'An act to incorporate the State Economic League.' 'An act to incorporate the State Children's Charities Association.' 'An act in relation to Abandoned Farms.'" These were some of the most important, and they were duly introduced on the morrow, and gravely referred by the Speaker to various committees. As might be expected, a man whose watchword is, "thorough" immediately got a list of those committees, and lost no time in hunting up the chairmen and the various available members thereof.

As a man of spirit, also, Mr. Crewe wrote to Mr. Flint, protesting as to the manner in which he had been treated concerning committees. In the course of a week he received a kind but necessarily brief letter from the Northeastern's president to remind him that he persisted in a fallacy; as a neighbour, Mr. Flint would help him to the extent of his power, but the Northeastern Railroads could not interfere in legislative or political matters. Mr. Crewe was naturally pained by the lack of confidence of his friend; it seems useless to reiterate that he was far from being a fool, and no man could be in the capital a day during the session without being told of the existence of Number Seven, no matter how little the informant might know of what might be going on there. Mr. Crewe had been fortunate enough to see the inside of that mysterious room, and, being a sufficiently clever man to realize the importance and necessity of government by corporations, had been shocked at nothing he had seen or heard. However, had he had a glimpse of the Speaker's lists under the hopelessly crushed hat of Mr. Bascom, perhaps he might have been shocked, after all.

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It was about this time that a touching friendship began which ought, in justice, to be briefly chronicled. It was impossible for the Honourable Brush Bascom and the Honourable Jacob Botcher to have Mr. Crewe sitting between them and not conceive a strong affection for him. The Honourable Brush, though not given to expressing his feelings, betrayed some surprise at the volumes Mr. Crewe had contributed to the stream of bills; and Mr. Botcher, in a Delphic whisper, invited Mr. Crewe to visit him in room forty-eight of the Pelican that evening. To tell the truth, Mr. Crewe returned the feeling of his companions warmly, and he had even entertained the idea of asking them both to dine with him that evening.

Number forty-eight (the Honourable Jake's) was a free-and-easy democratic resort. No three knocks and a password before you turn the key here. Almost before your knuckles hit the panel you heard Mr. Botcher's hearty voice shouting "Come in," in spite of the closed transom. The Honourable Jake, being a tee-totaller, had no bathroom, and none but his intimate friends ever looked in the third from the top bureau drawer.

The proprietor of the Pelican, who in common with the rest of humanity had fallen a victim to the rough and honest charms and hearty good fellowship of the Honourable Jake, always placed a large padded arm-chair in number forty-eight before the sessions, knowing that the Honourable Jake's constituency would be uniformly kind to him. There Mr. Botcher was wont to sit (when he was not depressing one of the tiles in the rotunda), surrounded by his friends and their tobacco smoke, discussing in his frank and manly fashion the public questions of the day.

Mr. Crewe thought it a little strange that, whenever he entered a room in the Pelican, a silence should succeed the buzz of talk which he had heard through the closed transom; but he very naturally attributed this to the constraint which ordinary men would be likely to feel in his presence. In the mouth of one presumptuous member the word "railroad" was cut in two by an agate glance from the Honourable Brush, and Mr. Crewe noted with some surprise that the Democratic leader of the House, Mr. Painter, was seated on Mr. Botcher's mattress, with an expression that was in singular contrast to the look of bold defiance which he had swept over the House that afternoon in announcing his opposition policy. The vulgar political suggestion might have crept into a more trivial mind than Mr. Crewe's that Mr. Painter was being, "put to bed," the bed being very similar to that of Procrustes. Mr. Botcher extracted himself from the nooks and crannies of his armchair.

"How are you, Crewe?" he said hospitably; "we're all friends here—eh, Painter? We don't carry our quarrels outside the swinging doors. You know Mr. Crewe—by sight, of course. Do you know these other gentlemen, Crewe? I didn't expect you so early."

The "other gentlemen" said that they were happy to make the acquaintance of their fellow-member from Leith, and seemingly with one consent began to edge towards the door.

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“Don’t go, boys,” Mr. Bascom protested. “Let me finish that story.”

Some of “the boys” seemed to regard this statement as humorous,—more humorous, indeed, than the story itself. And when it was finished they took their departure, a trifle awkwardly, led by Mr. Painter.

“They’re a little mite bashful,” said Mr. Botcher, apologetically.

“How many more of those bills have you got?” demanded Mr. Bascom, from the steam radiator, with characteristic directness.

“I put ’em all in this morning,” said Mr. Crewe, “but I have thought since of two or three other conditions which might be benefited by legislation.”

“Well,” said Mr. Bascom, kindly, “if you have any more I was going to suggest that you distribute ’em round among the boys. That’s the way I do, and most folks don’t guess they’re your bills. See?”

“What harm is there in that?” demanded Mr. Crewe. “I’m not ashamed of ’em.”

“Brush was only lookin’ at it from the point of view of gettin’ ’em through,” honest Mr. Botcher put in, in stentorian tones. “It doesn’t do for a new member to be thought a hog about legislation.”

Now the Honourable Jacob only meant this in the kindest manner, as we know, and to give inexperience a hint from well-intentioned experience. On the other hand, Mr. Crewe had a dignity and a position to uphold. He was a personality. People who went too far with him were apt to be rebuked by a certain glassy quality in his eye, and this now caused the Honourable Jake to draw back perceptibly.

“I see no reason why a public-spirited man should be open to such an imputation,” said Mr. Crewe.

“Certainly not, certainly not,” said Mr. Botcher, in stentorian tones of apology, “I was only trying to give you a little friendly advice, but I may have put it too strong. Brush and I—I may as well be plain about it, Mr. Crewe—have taken a liking to you. Couldn’t help it, sir, sitting next to you as we do. We take an interest in your career, and we don’t want you to make any mistakes. Ain’t that about it, Brush?”

“That’s about it,” said Mr. Bascom.

Mr. Crewe was to big a man not to perceive and appreciate the sterling philanthropy which lay beneath the exteriors of his new friends, who scorned to flatter him.

“I understand the spirit in which your advice is given, gentlemen,” he replied magnanimously, “and I appreciate it. We are all working for the same things, and we all believe that they must be brought about in the same practical way. For instance, we know as practical men that the railroad pays a large tax in this State, and that property must take a hand—a very considerable hand—in legislation. You gentlemen, as important factors in the Republican organization, are loyal to—er—that property, and perhaps for wholly desirable reasons cannot bring forward too many bills under your own names. Whereas I—”

At this point in Mr. Crewe’s remarks the Honourable Jacob Botcher was seized by an appalling coughing fit which threatened to break his arm-chair, probably owing to the fact that he had swallowed something which he had in his mouth the wrong way. Mr. Bascom, assisted by Mr. Crewe, pounded him relentlessly on the back.

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“I read that article in the ‘Tribune’ about you with great interest,” said Mr. Bascom, when Mr. Botcher’s coughing had subsided. “I had no idea you were so—ahem—well equipped for a political career. But what we wanted to speak to you about was this,” he continued, as Mr. Crewe showed signs of breaking in, “those committee appointments you desired.”

“Yes,” said Mr. Crewe, with some pardonable heat, “the Speaker doesn’t seem to know which side his bread’s buttered on.”

“What I was going to say,” proceeded Mr. Bascom, “was that General Doby is a pretty good fellow. Personally, I happen to know that the general feels very badly that he couldn’t give you what you wanted. He took a shine to you that night you saw him.”

“Yes,” Mr. Botcher agreed, for he had quite recovered, the general felt bad—feels bad, I should say. He perceived that you were a man of ability, sir—”

“And that was just the reason,” said the Honourable Brush, “that he couldn’t make you more useful just now.”

“There’s a good deal of jealousy, my dear sir, against young members of ability,” said Mr. Botcher, in his most oracular and impressive tones. “The competition amongst those—er—who have served the party is very keen for the positions you desired. I personally happen to know that the general had you on the Judiciary and Appropriations, and that some of your—er—well-wishers persuaded him to take you off for your own good.”

“It wouldn’t do for the party leaders to make you too prominent all at once,” said Mr. Bascom. “You are bound to take an active part in what passes here. The general said, ’At all events I will give Mr. Crewe one chairmanship by which he can make a name for himself suited to his talents,’ and he insisted on giving you, in spite of some remonstrances from your friends, National Affairs. The general urged, rightly, that with your broad view and knowledge of national policy, it was his duty to put you in that place whatever people might say.”

Mr. Crewe listened to these explanations in some surprise; and being a rational man, had to confess that they were—more or less reasonable.

“Scarcely any bills come before that committee,” he objected.

“Ah,” replied Mr. Bascom, “that is true. But the chairman of that committee is generally supposed to be in line for—er—national honours. It has not always happened in the past, because the men have not proved worthy. But the opportunity is always given to that chairman to make a speech upon national affairs which is listened to with the deepest interest.

“Is that so?” said Mr. Crewe. He wanted to be of service, as we know. He was a man of ideas, and the opening sentences of the speech were already occurring to him.

“Let’s go upstairs and see the general now,” suggested Mr. Botcher, smiling that such a happy thought should have occurred to him.

“Why, I guess we couldn’t do any better,” Mr. Bascom agreed.

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“Well,” said Mr. Crewe, “I’m willing to hear what he’s got to say, anyway.”

Taking advantage of this generous concession, Mr. Botcher hastily locked the door, and led the way up the stairway to number seventy-five. After a knock or two here, the door opened a crack, disclosing, instead of General Doby’s cherubic countenance, a sallow face with an exceedingly pointed nose. The owner of these features, having only Mr. Botcher in his line of vision, made what was perhaps an unguarded remark.

“Hello, Jake, the general’s in number nine—Manning sent for him about half an hour ago.”

It was Mr. Botcher himself who almost closed the door on the gentleman’s sharp nose, and took Mr. Crewe’s arm confidingly.

“We’ll go up to the desk and see Doby in the morning,—he’s busy,” said the Honourable Jake.

“What’s the matter with seeing him now?” Mr. Crewe demanded. “I know Manning. He’s the division superintendent, isn’t he?”

Mr. Botcher and Mr. Bascom exchanged glances.

“Why, yes—” said Mr. Bascom, “yes, he is. He’s a great friend of General Doby’s, and their wives are great friends.”

“Intimate friends, sir,” said the Honourable Jake

“Well,” said Mr. Crewe, “we won’t bother ’em but a moment.”

It was he who led the way now, briskly, the Honourable Brush and the Honourable Jake pressing closely after him. It was Mr. Crewe who, without pausing to knock, pushed open the door of number nine, which was not quite closed; and it was Mr. Crewe who made the important discovery that the lugubrious division superintendent had a sense of humour. Mr. Manning was seated at a marble-topped table writing on a salmon-coloured card, in the act of pronouncing these words:—“For Mr. Speaker and Mrs. Speaker and all the little Speakers, to New York and return.”

Mr. Speaker Doby, standing before the marble-topped table with his hands in his pockets, heard the noise behind him and turned, and a mournful expression spread over his countenance.

“Don’t mind me,” said Mr. Crewe, waving a hand in the direction of the salmon-coloured tickets; “I hope you have a good time, General. When do you go?”

“Why,” exclaimed the Speaker, “how are you, Mr. Crewe, how are you? It’s only one of Manning’s little jokes.”

“That’s all right, General,” said Mr. Crewe, “I haven’t been a director in railroads for nothing. I’m not as green as he thinks. Am I, Mr. Manning?”

“It never struck me that green was your colour, Mr. Crewe,” answered the division superintendent, smiling a little as he tore the tickets into bits and put them in the waste-basket.

“Well,” said Mr. Crewe, “you needn’t have torn ’em up on my account. I travel on the pass which the Northeastern gives me as a legislator, and I’m thinking seriously of getting Mr. Flint to send me an annual, now that I’m in politics and have to cover the State.”

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“We thought you were a reformer, Mr. Crewe,” the Honourable Brush Bascom remarked.

“I am a practical man,” said Mr. Crewe; “a railroad man, a business mark and as such I try to see things as they are.”

“Well,” said General Doby, who by this time had regained his usual genial air of composure, I’m glad you said that, Mr. Crewe. As these gentlemen will tell you, if I’d had my wish I’d have had you on every important committee in the House.”

“Chairman of every important committee, General,” corrected the Honourable Jacob Botcher.

“Yes, chairman of ’em,” assented the general, after a glance at Mr. Crewe’s countenance to see how this statement fared. “But the fact is, the boys are all jealous of you—on the quiet. I suppose you suspected something of the kind.”

“I should have imagined there might be some little feeling,” Mr. Crewe assented modestly.

“Exactly,” cried the general, “and I had to combat that feeling when I insisted upon putting you at the head of National Affairs. It does not do for a new member, whatever his prominence in the financial world, to be pushed forward too quickly. And unless I am mighty mistaken, Mr. Crewe,” he added, with his hand on the new member’s shoulder, “you will make yourself felt without any boosting from me.”

“I did not come here to remain idle, General,” answered Mr. Crewe, considerably mollified.

“Certainly not,” said the general, “and I say to some of those men, ’Keep your eye on the gentleman who is Chairman of National Affairs.’”

After a little more of this desultory and pleasant talk, during which recourse was, had to the bathroom for several tall and thin glasses ranged on the shelf there, Mr. Crewe took his departure in a most equable frame of mind. And when the door was closed and locked behind him, Mr. Manning dipped his pen in the ink, once more produced from a drawer in the table the salmon-coloured tickets, and glanced again at the general with a smile.

“For Mr. Speaker and Mrs. Speaker and all the little Speakers, to New York and return.”

MR. CREWE'S CAREER

By Winston Churchill
book 2.

CHAPTER XI

THE HOPPER

It is certainly not the function of a romance to relate, with the exactness of a House journal, the proceedings of a Legislature. Somebody has likened the state-house to pioneer Kentucky, a dark and bloody ground over which the battles of selfish interests ebbed and flowed,—no place for an innocent and unselfish bystander like Mr. Crewe, who desired only to make of his State an Utopia; whose measures were for the public good —not his own. But if any politician were fatuous enough to believe that Humphrey Crewe was a man to introduce bills and calmly await their fate; a man who, like Senator Sanderson, only came down to the capital when he was notified by telegram, that politician was entirely mistaken.

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No sooner had his bills been assigned to the careful and just consideration of the committees in charge of the Honourable Brush Bascom, Mr. Botcher, and others than Mr. Crewe desired of each a day for a hearing. Every member of the five hundred was provided with a copy; nay, nearly every member was personally appealed to, to appear and speak for the measures. Foresters, road builders, and agriculturists (expenses paid) were sent for from other States; Mr. Ball and others came down from Leith, and gentlemen who for a generation had written letters to the newspapers turned up from other localities. In two cases the largest committee rooms proved too small for the gathering which was the result of Mr. Crewe's energy, and the legislative hall had to be lighted. The State Tribune gave column reports of the hearings, and little editorial pushes besides. And yet, when all was over, when it had been proved beyond a doubt that, if the State would consent to spend a little money, she would take the foremost rank among her forty odd sisters for progression, the bills were still under consideration by those hardheaded statesmen, Mr. Bascom and Mr. Botcher and their associates.

It could not be because these gentlemen did not know the arguments and see the necessity. Mr. Crewe had had them to dinner, and had spent so much time in their company presenting his case—to which they absolutely agreed—that they took to a forced seclusion. The member from Leith also wrote letters and telegrams, and sent long typewritten arguments and documents to Mr. Flint. Mr. Crewe, although far from discouraged, began to think there was something mysterious about all this seemingly unnecessary deliberation.

Mr. Crewe, though of great discernment, was only mortal, and while he was fighting his battle single-handed, how was he to know that the gods above him were taking sides and preparing for conflict? The gods do not give out their declarations of war for publication to the Associated Press; and old Tom Gaylord, who may be likened to Mars, had no intention of sending Jupiter notice until he got his cohorts into line. The strife, because it was to be internecine, was the more terrible. Hitherto the Gaylord Lumber Company, like the Winona Manufacturing Company of Newcastle (the mills of which extended for miles along the Tyne), had been a faithful ally of the Empire; and, on occasions when it was needed, had borrowed the Imperial army to obtain grants, extensions, and franchises.

The fact is that old Tom Gaylord, in the autumn previous, had quarreled with Mr. Flint about lumber rates, which had been steadily rising. Mr. Flint had been polite, but firm; and old Tom, who, with all his tremendous properties, could ship by no other railroad than the Northeastern, had left the New York office in a black rage. A more innocent citizen than old Tom would have put his case (which was without doubt a strong one) before the Railroad Commission of the State, but

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old Tom knew well enough that the Railroad Commission was in reality an economy board of the Northeastern system, as much under Mr. Flint's orders as the conductors and brakemen. Old Tom, in consulting the map, conceived an unheard-of effrontery, a high treason which took away the breath of his secretary and treasurer when it was pointed out to him. The plan contemplated a line of railroad from the heart of the lumber regions down the south side of the valley of the Pingsquit to Kingston, where the lumber could take to the sea. In short, it was a pernicious revival of an obsolete state of affairs, competition, and if persisted in, involved nothing less than a fight to a finish with the army, the lobby of the Northeastern. Other favoured beings stood aghast when they heard of it, and hastened to old Tom with timely counsel; but he had reached a frame of mind which they knew well. He would listen to no reason, and maintained stoutly that there were other lawyers in the world as able in political sagacity and lobby tactics as Hilary Vane; the Honourable Galusha Hammer, for instance, an old and independent and wary war-horse who had more than once wrung compromises out of the Honourable Hilary. The Honourable Galusha Hammer was sent for, and was now industriously, if quietly and unobtrusively, at work. The Honourable Hilary was likewise at work, equally quietly and unobtrusively. When the powers fall out, they do not open up at once with long-distance artillery. There is always a chance of a friendly settlement. The news was worth a good deal, for instance, to Mr. Peter Pardriff (brother of Paul, of Ripton), who refrained, with praiseworthy self-control, from publishing it in the State Tribune, although the temptation to do so must have been great. And most of the senatorial twenty saw the trouble coming and braced their backs against it, but in silence. The capital had seen no such war as this since the days of Jethro Bass.

In the meantime Mr. Crewe, blissfully ignorant of this impending conflict, was preparing a speech on national affairs and national issues which was to startle an unsuspecting State. Mrs. Pomfret, who had received many clippings and pamphlets, had written him weekly letters of a nature spurring to his ambition, which incidentally contained many references to Alice's interest in his career. And Mr. Crewe's mind, when not intent upon affairs of State, sometimes reverted pleasantly to thoughts of Victoria Flint; it occurred to him that the Duncan house was large enough for entertaining, and that he might invite Mrs. Pomfret to bring Victoria and the inevitable Alice to hear his oration, for which Mr. Speaker Doby had set a day.

In his desire to give other people pleasure, Mr. Crewe took the trouble to notify a great many of his friends and acquaintances as to the day of his speech, in case they might wish to travel to the State capital and hear him deliver it. Having unexpectedly received in the mail a cheque from Austen Vane in settlement of the case of the injured horse, Austen was likewise invited.

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Austen smiled when he opened the letter, and with its businesslike contents there seemed to be wafted from it the perfume and suppliance of a September day in the Vale of the Blue. From the window of his back office, looking across the railroad tracks, he could see Sawanec, pale in her winter garb against a pale winter sky, and there arose in him the old restless desire for the woods and fields which at times was almost irresistible. His thoughts at length descending from the azure above Sawanec, his eyes fell again on Mr. Crewe's typewritten words: "It may be of interest to you that I am to deliver, on the 15th instant, and as the Chairman of the House Committee on National Affairs, a speech upon national policies which is the result of much thought, and which touches upon such material needs of our State as can be supplied by the Federal Government."

Austen had a brief fancy, whimsical as it was, of going to hear him. Mr. Crewe, as a type absolutely new to him, interested him. He had followed the unusual and somewhat surprising career of the gentleman from Leith with some care, even to the extent of reading of Mr. Crewe's activities in the State Tribunes which had been sent him. Were such qualifications as Mr. Crewe possessed, he wondered, of a kind to sweep their possessor into high office? Were industry, persistency, and a capacity for taking advantage of a fair wind sufficient?

Since his return from Pepper County, Austen Vane had never been to the State capital during a session, although it was common for young lawyers to have cases before the Legislature. It would have been difficult to say why he did not take these cases, aside from the fact that they were not very remunerative. On occasions gentlemen from different parts of the State, and some from outside of it who had certain favours to ask at the hands of the lawmaking body, had visited his back office and closed the door after them, and in the course of the conversation had referred to the relationship of the young lawyer to Hilary Vane. At such times Austen would freely acknowledge the debt of gratitude he owed his father for being in the world—and refer them politely to Mr. Hilary Vane himself. In most cases they had followed his advice, wondering not a little at this isolated example of quixotism.

During the sessions, except for a day or two at week ends which were often occupied with conferences, the Honourable Hilary's office was deserted; or rather, as we have seen, his headquarters were removed to room Number Seven in the Pelican Hotel at the capital. Austen got many of the lay clients who came to see his father at such times; and—without giving an exaggerated idea of his income—it might be said that he was beginning to have what may be called a snug practice for a lawyer of his experience. In other words, according to Mr. Tooting, who took an intense interest in the matter, "not wearing the collar" had been more of a financial success

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for Austen than that gentleman had imagined. There proved to be many clients to whom the fact that young Mr. Vane did not carry a “retainer pass” actually appealed. These clients paid their bills, but they were neither large nor influential, as a rule, with the notable exception of the Gaylord Lumber Company, where the matters for trial were not large. If young Tom Gaylord had had his way, Austen would have been the chief counsel for the corporation.

To tell the truth, Austen Vane had a secret aversion to going to the capital during a session, a feeling that such a visit would cause him unhappiness. In spite of his efforts, and indeed in spite of Hilary’s, Austen and his father had grown steadily apart. They met in the office hallway, in the house in Hanover Street when Hilary came home to sleep, and the elder Mr. Vane was not a man to thrive on small talk. His world was the battlefield from which he directed the forces of the great corporation which he served, and the cherished vision of a son in whom he could confide his plans, upon whose aid and counsel he could lean, was gone forever. Hilary Vane had troublesome half-hours, but on the whole he had reached the conclusion that this son, like Sarah Austen, was one of those inexplicable products in which an extravagant and inscrutable nature sometimes indulged. On the rare evenings when the two were at home together, the Honourable Hilary sat under one side of the lamp with a pile of documents and newspapers, and Austen under the other with a book from the circulating library. No public questions could be broached upon which they were not as far apart as the poles, and the Honourable Hilary put literature in the same category as embroidery. Euphrasia, when she paused in her bodily activity to darn their stockings, used to glance at them covertly from time to time, and many a silent tear of which they knew nothing fell on her needle.

On the subject of his protracted weekly absences at the State capital, the Honourable Hilary was as uncommunicative as he would have been had he retired for those periods to a bar-room. He often grunted and cleared his throat and glanced at his son when their talk bordered upon these absences; and he was even conscious of an extreme irritation against himself as well as Austen because of the instinct that bade him keep silent. He told himself fiercely that he had nothing to be ashamed of, nor would he have acknowledged that it was a kind of shame that bade him refrain even from circumstantial accounts of what went on in room Number Seven of the Pelican. He had an idea that Austen knew and silently condemned; and how extremely maddening was this feeling to the Honourable Hilary may well be imagined. All his life long he had deemed himself morally invulnerable, and now to be judged and ethically found wanting by the son of Sarah Austen was, at times, almost insupportable. Were the standards of a long life to be suddenly reversed by a prodigal son?

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To get back to Austen. On St. Valentine's Day of that year when, to tell the truth, he was seated in his office scribbling certain descriptions of nature suggested by the valentines in Mr. Hayman's stationery store, the postman brought in a letter from young Tom Gaylord. Austen laughed as he read it. "The Honourable Galusha Hammer is well named," young Tom wrote, "but the conviction has been gaining ground with me that a hammer is about as much use as a shovel would be at the present time. It is not the proper instrument." "But the 'old man'" (it was thus young Tom was wont to designate his parent) "is pig-headed when he gets to fighting, and won't listen to reason. If he believes he can lick the Northeastern with a Hammer, he is durned badly mistaken, and I told him so. I have been giving him sage advice in little drops—after meals. I tell him there is only one man in the State who has sense enough even to shake the Northeastern, and that's you. He thinks this a pretty good joke. Of course I realize where your old man is planted, and that you might have some natural delicacy and wish to refrain from giving him a jar. But come down for an hour and let me talk to you, anyway. The new statesman from Leith is cutting a wide swath. Not a day passes but his voice is heard roaring in the Forum; he has visited all the State institutions, dined and wined the governor and his staff and all the ex-governors he can lay his hands on, and he has that hard-headed and caustic journalist, Mr. Peter Pardriff, of the State Tribune, hypnotized. He has some swells up at his house to hear his speech on national affairs, among them old Flint's daughter, who is a ripper to look at, although I never got nearer to her than across the street. As you may guess, it is something of a card for Crewe to have Flint's daughter here."

Austen sat for a long time after reading this letter, idly watching the snow-clouds gathering around Sawanec. Then he tore up the paper, on which he had been scribbling, into very small bits, consulted a time-table, and at noon, in a tumult of feelings, he found himself in a back seat of the express, bound for the capital.

Arriving at the station, amidst a hurry and bustle of legislators and politicians coming and going, many of whom nodded to him, he stood for a minute in the whirling snow reflecting. Now that he was here, where was he to stay? The idea of spending the night at the Pelican was repellent to him, and he was hesitating between two more modest hostelries when he was hailed by a giant with a flowing white beard, a weather-beaten face, and a clear eye that shone with a steady and kindly light. It was James Redbrook, the member from Mercer.

"Why, how be you, Austen?" he cried, extending a welcome hand; and, when Austen had told him his dilemma: "Come right along up to my lodgings. I live at the Widow Peasley's, and there's a vacant room next to mine."

Austen accepted gratefully, and as they trudged through the storm up the hill, he inquired how legislative matters were progressing. Whereupon Mr. Redbrook unburdened himself.

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“Say, I just warmed up all over when I see you, Austen. I’m so glad to run across an honest man. We ain’t forgot in Mercer what you did for Zeb Meader, and how you went against your interests. And I guess it ain’t done you any harm in the State. As many as thirty or forty members have spoke to me about it. And down here I’ve got so I just can’t hold in any more.”

“Is it as bad as that, Mr. Redbrook?” asked Austen, with a serious glance at the farmer’s face.

“It’s so bad I don’t know how to begin,” said the member from Mercer, and paused suddenly. “But I don’t want to hurt your feelings, Austen, seeing your father is—where he is.”

“Go on,” said Austen, “I understand.”

“Well,” said Mr. Redbrook, “it just makes me tremble as an American citizen. The railrud sends them slick cusses down here that sit in the front seats who know all this here parliamentary law and the tricks of the trade, and every time any of us gets up to speak our honest minds, they have us ruled out of order or get the thing laid on the table until some Friday morning when there ain’t nobody here, and send it along up to the Senate. They made that fat feller, Doby, Speaker, and he’s stuffed all the important committees so that you can’t get an honest measure considered. You can talk to the committees all you’ve a mind to, and they’ll just listen and never do anything. There’s five hundred in the House, and it ain’t any more of a Legislature than a camp-meetin’ is. What do you suppose they done last Friday morning, when there wahn’t but twenty men at the session? We had an anti-pass law, and all these fellers were breakin’ it. It forbid anybody riding on a pass except railroad presidents, directors, express messengers, and persons in misfortune, and they stuck in these words, ’and others to whom passes have been granted by the proper officers.’ Ain’t that a disgrace to the State? And those twenty senators passed it before we got back on Tuesday. You can’t get a bill through that Legislature unless you go up to the Pelican and get permission of Hilary—”

Here Mr. Redbrook stopped abruptly, and glanced contritely at his companion.

“I didn’t mean to get goin’ so,” he said, “but sometimes I wish this American government’d never been started.”

“I often feel that way myself, Mr. Redbrook,” said Austen.

“I knowed you did. I guess I can tell an honest man when I see one. It’s treason to say anything against this Northeastern louder than a whisper. They want an electric railrud bad up in Greenacre, and when some of us spoke for it and tried to get the committee to report it, those cheap fellers from Newcastle started such a catcall we had to set down.”

By this time they were at the Widow Peasley's, stamping the snow from off their boots.

"How general is this sentiment?" Austen asked, after he had set down his bag in the room he was to occupy.

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“Why,” said Mr. Redbrook, with conviction, “there’s enough feel as I do to turn that House upside down—if we only had a leader. If you was only in there, Austen.”

“I’m afraid I shouldn’t be of much use,” Austen answered. “They’d have given me a back seat, too.”

The Widow Peasley’s was a frame and gabled house of Revolutionary days with a little terrace in front of it and a retaining wall built up from the sidewalk. Austen, on the steps, stood gazing across at a square mansion with a wide cornice, half hidden by elms and maples and pines. It was set far back from the street, and a driveway entered the picket-fence and swept a wide semicircle to the front door and back again. Before the door was a sleigh of a pattern new to him, with a seat high above the backs of two long-bodied, deep-chested horses, their heads held with difficulty by a little footman with his arms above him. At that moment two figures in furs emerged from the house. The young woman gathered up the reins and leaped lightly to the box, the man followed; the little groom touched his fur helmet and scrambled aboard as the horses sprang forward to the music of the softest of bells. The sleigh swept around the curve, avoided by a clever turn a snow-pile at the entrance, the young woman raised her eyes from the horses, stared at Austen, and bowed. As for Austen, he grew warm as he took off his hat, and he realized that his hand was actually trembling. The sleigh flew on up the hill, but she turned once more to look behind her, and he still had his hat in his hand, the snowflakes falling on his bared head. Then he was aware that James Redbrook was gazing at him curiously.

“That’s Flint’s daughter, ain’t it?” inquired the member from Mercer. “Didn’t callate you’d know her.”

Austen flushed. He felt exceedingly foolish, but an answer came to him.

“I met her in the hospital. She used to go there to see Zeb Meader.”

“That’s so,” said Mr. Redbrook; “Zeb told me about it, and she used to come to Mercer to see him after he got out. She ain’t much like the old man, I callate.”

“I don’t think she is,” said Austen.

“I don’t know what she’s stayin’ with that feller Crewe for,” the farmer remarked; of all the etarnal darn idiots—why, Brush Bascom and that Botcher and the rest of ’em are trailin’ him along and usin’ him for the best thing that ever came down here. He sets up to be a practical man, and don’t know as much as some of us hayseeds in the back seats. Where be you goin’?”

“I was going to the Pelican.”

“Well, I’ve got a committee meetin’ of Agriculture,” said Mr. Redbrook. “Could you be up here at Mis’ Peasley’s about eight to-night?”

“Why, yes,” Austen replied, “if you want to see me.”

“I do want to see you,” said Mr. Redbrook, significantly, and waved a farewell.

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Austen took his way slowly across the state-house park, threading among the groups between the snow-banks towards the wide facade of the Pelican Hotel. Presently he paused, and then with a sudden determination crossed the park diagonally into Main Street, walking rapidly southward and scrutinizing the buildings on either side until at length these began to grow wide apart, and he spied a florist's sign with a greenhouse behind it. He halted again, irresolutely, in front of it, flung open the door, and entered a boxlike office filled with the heated scents of flowers. A little man eyed him with an obsequious interest which he must have accorded to other young men on similar errands. Austen may be spared a repetition of the very painful conversation that ensued; suffice it to say that, after mature deliberation, violets were chosen. He had a notion—not analyzed—that she would prefer violets to roses. The information that the flowers were for the daughter of the president of the Northeastern Railroads caused a visible quickening of the little florist's regard, an attitude which aroused a corresponding disgust and depression in Austen.

"Oh, yes," said the florist, "she's up at Crewe's." He glanced at Austen apologetically. "Excuse me," he said, "I ought to know you. Have you a card?"

"No," said Austen, with emphasis.

"And what name, please?"

"No name," said the donor, now heartily repenting of his rashness, and slamming the glass door in a manner that made the panes rattle behind him.

As he stood hesitating on the curb of the crossing, he began to wish that he had not left Ripton.

"Hello, Austen," said a voice, which he recognized as the Honourable Brush Bascom's, "didn't know you ever came down here in session time."

"What are you doing down here, Brush?" Austen asked.

Mr. Bascom grinned in appreciation of this pleasantry.

"I came for my health," he said; "I prefer it to Florida."

"I've heard that it agrees with some people," said Austen.

Mr. Bascom grinned again.

"Just arrived?" he inquired.

"Just," said Austen.

“I thought you’d get here sooner or later,” said Mr. Bascom. “Some folks try stayin’ away, but it ain’t much use. You’ll find the honourable Hilary doing business at the same old stand, next to the governor, in Number Seven up there.” And Mr. Bascom pointed to the well-known window on the second floor.

“Thanks, Brush,” said Austen, indifferently. “To tell the truth, I came down to hear that promising protege of yours speak on national affairs. I understand you’re pushing his bills along.”

Mr. Bascom, with great deliberation, shut one of his little eyes.

“So long,” he said, “come and see me when you get time.”

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Austen went slowly down the street and entered the smoke-clouded lobby of the Pelican. He was a man to draw attention, and he was stared at by many politicians there and spoken to by some before he reached the stairs. Mounting, he found the door with the numeral, and knocked. The medley of voices within ceased; there were sounds of rattling papers, and of closing of folding doors. The key turned in the lock, and State Senator Nathaniel Billings appeared in the doorway, with a look of polite inquiry on his convivial face. This expression, when he saw Austen, changed to something like consternation.

“Why, hello, hello,” said the senator. “Come in, come in. The Honourable Hilary’s here. Where’d you come down?”

“Hello, Nat,” said Austen, and went in.

The Honourable Hilary sat in his usual arm-chair; Mr. Botcher severely strained the tensile strength of the bedsprings; Mr. Hamilton Tooting stood before the still waving portieres in front of the folding doors; and Mr. Manning, the division superintendent, sat pensively, with his pen in his mouth, before the marble-topped table from which everything had been removed but a Bible. Two gentlemen, whom Austen recognized as colleagues of Mr. Billings in the State Senate, stood together in a window, pointing out things of interest in the street. Austen walked up to his father and laid a hand on his shoulder.

“How are you, Judge?” he said. “I only came into pay my respects. I hope I have not disturbed any—entertainment going on here,” he added, glancing in turn at the thoughtful occupants of the room, and then at the curtains which hid the folding doors to the apartment of his Excellency.

“Why, no,” answered the Honourable Hilary, his customary grunt being the only indication of surprise on his part; “didn’t know you were coming down.”

“I didn’t know it myself until this morning,” said Austen.

“Legislative case, I suppose,” remarked the Honourable Jacob Botcher, in his deep voice.

“No, merely a pleasure trip, Mr. Botcher.”

The Honourable Jacob rubbed his throat, the two State senators in the window giggled, and Mr. Hamilton Tooting laughed.

“I thought you took to the mountains in such cases, sir,” said Mr. Botcher.

“I came for intellectual pleasure this time,” said Austen. “I understand that Mr. Crewe is to deliver an epoch-making speech on the national situation to-morrow.”

This was too much even for the gravity of Mr. Manning; Mr. Tooting and Mr. Billings and his two colleagues roared, though the Honourable Jacob's laugh was not so spontaneous.

"Aust," said Mr. Tooting, admiringly, you're all right."

"Well, Judge," said Austen, patting his father's shoulder again, "I'm glad to see you so comfortably fixed. Good-by, and give my regards to the governor. I'm sorry to have missed him," he added, glancing at the portieres that hid the folding doors.

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“Are you stopping here?” asked the Honourable Hilary.

“No, I met Mr. Redbrook of Mercer, and he took me up to his lodgings. If I can do anything for you, a message will reach me there.”

“Humph,” said the Honourable Hilary, while the others exchanged significant glances.

Austen had not gone half the length of the hall when he was overtaken by Mr. Tooting.

“Say, Aust, what’s up between you and Redbrook?” he asked.

“Nothing. Why?” Austen asked, stopping abruptly.

“Well, I suppose you know there’s an anti-railroad feeling growing in that House, and that Redbrook has more influence with the farmers than any other man.”

“I didn’t know anything about Mr. Redbrook’s influence,” said Austen.

Mr. Tooting looked unconvinced.

“Say, Aust, if anything’s in the wind, I wish you’d let me know. I’ll keep it quiet.”

“I think I shall be safe in promising that, Ham,” said Austen. “When there’s anything in the wind, you generally find it out first.”

“There’s trouble coming for the railroad,” said Mr. Tooting. “I can see that. And I guess you saw it before I did.”

“They say a ship’s about to sink when the rats begin to leave it,” said Austen.

Although Austen spoke smilingly, Mr. Tooting looked pained.

“There’s no chance for young men in that system,” he said.

“Young men write the noble parts of the governor’s inaugurals,” said Austen.

“Yes,” said Mr. Tooting, bitterly, “but you never get to be governor and read ’em. You’ve got to be a ‘come on’ with thirty thousand dollars to be a Northeastern governor and live next door to the Honourable Hilary in the Pelican. Well, so long, Aust. If anything’s up, give me the tip, that’s all I ask.”

Reflecting on the singular character of Mr. Tooting, Austen sought the Gaylords’ headquarters, and found them at the furthermost end of the building from the Railroad Room. The door was opened by young Tom himself, whose face became wreathed in smiles when he saw who the visitor was.

“It’s Austen!” he cried. “I thought you’d come down when you got that appeal of mine.”

Austen did not admit the self-sacrifice as he shook Tom’s hand; but remembered, singularly enough, the closing sentences of Tom’s letter —which had nothing whatever to do with the Gaylord bill.

At this moment a commotion arose within the room, and a high, tremulous, but singularly fierce and compelling voice was heard crying out:—“Get out! Get out, d-n you, all of you, and don’t come back until you’ve got some notion of what you’re a-goin’ to do. Get out, I say!”

These last words were pronounced with such extraordinary vigour that four gentlemen seemed to be physically impelled from the room. Three of them Austen recognized as dismissed and disgruntled soldiers from the lobby army of the Northeastern; the fourth was the Honourable Galusha Hammer, whose mode of progress might be described as “stalking,” and whose lips were forming the word “intolerable.” In the corner old Tom himself could be seen, a wizened figure of wrath.

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“Who’s that?” he demanded of his son, “another d-d fool?”

“No,” replied young Tom, “it’s Austen Vane.”

“What’s he doin’ here?” old Tom demanded, with a profane qualification as to the region. But young Tom seemed to be the only being capable of serenity amongst the flames that played around him.

“I sent for him because he’s got more sense than Galusha and all the rest of ’em put together,” he said.

“I guess that’s so,” old Tom agreed unexpectedly, “but it ain’t sayin’ much. Bring him in—bring him in, and lock the door.”

In obedience to these summons, and a pull from young Tom, Austen entered and sat down.

“You’ve read the Pingsquit bill?” old Tom demanded.

“Yes,” said Austen.

“Just because you won a suit against the Northeastern, and nearly killed a man out West, Tom seems to think you can do anything. He wouldn’t, give me any peace until I let him send for you,” Mr. Gaylord remarked testily. “Now you’re down here, what have you got to propose?”

“I didn’t come here to propose anything, Mr. Gaylord,” said Austen.

“What!” cried Mr. Gaylord, with one of his customary and forceful exclamations. “What’d you come down for?”

“I’ve been asking myself that question ever since I came, Mr. Gaylord,” said Austen, “and I haven’t yet arrived at any conclusion.”

Young Tom looked at his friend and laughed, and Mr. Gaylord, who at first gave every indication of being about to explode with anger, suddenly emitted a dry cackle.

“You ain’t a d-n fool, anyway,” he declared.

“I’m beginning to think I am,” said Austen.

“Then you’ve got sense enough to know it,” retorted old Tom. “Most of ’em haven’t.” And his glance, as it fell upon the younger man, was almost approving. Young Tom’s was distinctly so.

“I told you Austen was the only lawyer who’d talk common sense to you,” he said.

“I haven’t heard much of it yet,” said old Tom.

“Perhaps I ought to tell you, Mr. Gaylord,” said Austen, smiling a little, “that I didn’t come down in any legal capacity. That’s only one of Tom’s jokes.”

“Then what in h—l did you bring him in here for?” demanded old Tom of his son.

“Just for a quiet little powwow,” said young Tom, “to make you laugh. He’s made you laugh before.”

“I don’t want to laugh,” said old Tom, pettishly. Nevertheless, he seemed to be visibly cooling. “If you ain’t in here to make money,” he added to Austen, “I don’t care how long you stay.”

“Say, Austen,” said young Tom, “do you remember the time we covered the old man with shavings at the mills in Avalon, and how he chased us with a two-by-four scantling?”

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“I’d made pulp out’n you if I’d got you,” remarked Mr. Gaylord, with a reminiscent chuckle that was almost pleasant. “But you were always a goldurned smart boy, Austen, and you’ve done well with them little suits.” He gazed at Austen a moment with his small, filmy-blue eye. “I don’t know but what you might take hold here and make it hot for those d-d rascals in the Northeastern, after all. You couldn’t botch it worsen Hammer has, and you might do some good. I said I’d make ’em dance, and by G-d, I’ll do it, if I have to pay that Teller Levering in New York, and it takes the rest of my life. Look the situation over, and come back to-morrow and tell me what you think of it.”

“I can tell you what I think of it now, Mr. Gaylord,” said Austen.

“What’s that?” old Tom demanded sharply.

“That you’ll never get the bill passed, this session or next, by lobbying.”

For the moment the elder Mr. Gaylord was speechless, but young Tom Gaylord clapped his hand heartily on his friend’s shoulder.

“That’s the reason I wanted to get you down here, Austen,” he cried; that’s what I’ve been telling the old man all along—perhaps he’ll believe you.”

“Then you won’t take hold?” said Mr. Gaylord, his voice trembling on the edge of another spasm. “You refuse business?”

“I refuse that kind of business, Mr. Gaylord,” Austen answered quietly, though there was a certain note in his voice that young Tom knew well, and which actually averted the imminent explosion from Mr. Gaylord, whose eyes glared and watered. “But aside from that, you must know that the Republican party leaders in this State are the heads of the lobby of the Northeastern Railroads.”

“I guess I know about Number Seven as well as you do,” old Tom interjected.

Austen’s eye flashed.

“Now hold on, father,” said young Tom, “that’s no way to talk to Austen.”

“Knowing Number Seven,” Austen continued, “you probably realize that the political and business future of nearly every one of the twenty State senators depends upon the favour of the Northeastern Railroads.”

“I know that the d-d fools won’t look at money,” said Mr. Gaylord; “Hammer’s tried ’em.”

“I told you that before you started in,” young Tom remarked, “but when you get mad, you won’t listen to sense. And then there’s the Honourable Asa Gray, who wants to represent the Northeastern some day in the United States Senate.”

“The bill ought to pass,” shrieked old Tom; “it’s a d-d outrage. There’s no reason why I shouldn’t be allowed to build a railroad if I’ve got the money to do it. What in blazes are we comin’ to in this country if we can’t git competition? If Flint stops that bill, I’ll buy a newspaper and go to the people with the issue and throw his d-d monopoly into bankruptcy.”

“It’s all very well to talk about competition and monopolies and lobbies,” said young Tom, “but how about the Gaylord Lumber Company? How about the time you used the lobby, with Flint’s permission? This kind of virtuous talk is beautiful to listen to when you and Flint get into a row.”

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At this remark of his son's, the intermittent geyser of old Tom's wrath spouted up again with scalding steam, and in a manner utterly impossible to reproduce upon paper. Young Tom waited patiently for the exhibition to cease, which it did at length in a coughing fit of sheer exhaustion that left his father speechless, if not expressionless, pointing a lean and trembling finger in the direction of a valise on the floor.

"You'll go off in a spell of that kind some day," said young Tom, opening the valise and extracting a bottle. Uncorking it, he pressed it to his father's lips, and with his own pocket-handkerchief (old Tom not possessing such an article) wiped the perspiration from Mr. Gaylord's brow and the drops from his shabby black coat. "There's no use gettin' mad at Austen. He's dead right—you can't lobby this thing through, and you knew it before you started. If you hadn't lost your temper, you wouldn't have tried."

"We'll see, by G-d, we'll see," said the indomitable old Tom, when he got his breath. "You young men think you know a sight, but you haven't got the stuff in you we old Tellers have. Where would I be if it wasn't for fightin'? You mark my words, before this session's ended I'll scare h-l out of Flint—see if I don't."

Young Tom winked at his friend.

"Let's go down to supper," he said.

The dining room of the Pelican Hotel during a midweek of a busy session was a scene of bustle and confusion not likely to be forgotten. Every seat was taken, and gentlemen waited their turn in the marble-flagged rotunda who had not the honour of being known to Mr. Giles, the head waiter. If Mr. Hamilton Tooting were present, and recognized you, he would take great pleasure in pointing out the celebrities, and especially that table over which the Honourable Hilary Vane presided, with the pretty, red-checked waitress hovering around it. At the Honourable Hilary's right hand was the division superintendent, and at his left, Mr. Speaker Doby—a most convenient and congenial arrangement; farther down the board were State Senator Nat Billings, Mr. Ridout (when he did not sup at home), the Honourables Brush Bascom and Elisha Jane, and the Honourable Jacob Botcher made a proper ballast for the foot. This table was known as the Railroad Table, and it was very difficult, at any distance away from it, to hear what was said, except when the Honourable Jacob Botcher made a joke. Next in importance and situation was the Governor's Table—now occupied by the Honourable Asa Gray. Mr. Tooting's description would not have stopped here.

Sensations are common in the Pelican Hotel, but when Austen Vane walked in that evening between the Gaylords, father and son, many a hungry guest laid down his knife and fork and stared. Was the younger Vane (known to be anti-railroad) to take up the Gaylords' war against his own father? All the indications were that way, and a rumour flew from table to table-leaping space, as rumours will—that the Gaylords had sent to Ripton for Austen. There was but one table in the room the occupants of which

appeared not to take any interest in the event, or even to grasp that an event had occurred. The Railroad Table was oblivious.

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After supper Mr. Tooting found Austen in the rotunda, and drew him mysteriously aside.

“Say, Aust, the Honourable Hilary wants to see you to-night,” he whispered.

“Did he send you with the message?” Austen demanded.

“That’s right,” said Mr. Tooting. “I guess you know what’s up.”

Austen did not answer. At the foot of the stairway was the tall form of Hilary Vane himself, and Austen crossed the rotunda.

“Do you want to see me, Judge?” he asked.

The Honourable Hilary faced about quickly.

“Yes, if you’ve got any spare time.”

“I’ll go to your room at half-past nine to-night, if that’s convenient.”

“All right,” said the Honourable Hilary, starting up the stairs.

Austen turned, and found Mr. Hamilton Tooting at his elbow.

CHAPTER XII

Mr. *Redbrook’s party*

The storm was over, and the bare trees, when the moon shone between the hurrying clouds, cast lacelike shadows on the white velvet surface of the snow as Austen forged his way up the hill to the Widow Peasley’s in keeping with his promise to Mr. Redbrook. Across the street he paused outside the picket-fence to gaze at the yellow bars of light between the slats of the windows of the Duncan house. It was hard to realize that she was there, within a stone’s throw of where he was to sleep; but the strange, half-startled expression in her eyes that afternoon and the smile—which had in it a curious quality he could not analyze—were so vivid in his consciousness as to give him pain. The incident, as he stood there ankle-deep in the snow, seemed to him another inexplicable and uselessly cruel caprice of fate.

As he pictured her in the dining room behind Mr. Crewe’s silver and cut glass and flowers, it was undoubtedly natural that he should wonder whether she were thinking of him in the Widow Peasley’s lamp-lit cottage, and he smiled at the contrast. After all, it was the contrast between his life and hers. As an American of good antecedents and education, with a Western experience thrown in, social gulfs, although awkward, might be crossed in spite of opposition from ladies like the Rose of Sharon,—who had crossed

them. Nevertheless, the life which Victoria led seemingly accentuated—to a man standing behind a picket-fence in the snow—the voids between.

A stamping of feet in the Widow Peasley's vestibule awoke in him that sense of the ridiculous which was never far from the surface, and he made his way thither in mingled amusement and pain. What happened there is of interest, but may be briefly chronicled. Austen was surprised, on entering, to find Mrs. Peasley's parlour filled with men; and a single glance at their faces in the lamplight assured him that they were of a type which he understood—countrymen of that rugged New England stock to which he himself belonged, whose sons for generations had made lawyers and statesmen and soldiers for the State and nation. Some were talking in low voices, and others sat silent on the chairs and sofa, not awkwardly or uncomfortably, but with a characteristic self-possession and repose. Mr. Redbrook, towering in front of the stove, came forward.

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“Here you be,” he said, taking Austen’s hand warmly and a little ceremoniously; “I asked ’em here to meet ye.”

“To meet me!” Austen repeated.

“Wanted they should know you,” said Mr. Redbrook.

“They’ve all heard of you and what you did for Zeb.”

Austen flushed. He was aware that he was undergoing a cool and critical examination by those present, and that they were men who used all their faculties in making up their minds.

“I’m very glad to meet any friends of yours, Mr. Redbrook,” he said. “What I did for Meader isn’t worth mentioning. It was an absolutely simple case.”

“Twahn’t so much what ye did as how ye did it,” said Mr. Redbrook. “It’s kind of rare in these days,” he added, with the manner of commenting to himself on the circumstance, “to find a young lawyer with brains that won’t sell ’em to the railrud. That’s what appeals to me, and to some other folks I know—especially when we take into account the situation you was in and the chances you had.”

Austen’s silence under this compliment seemed to create an indefinable though favourable impression, and the member from Mercer permitted himself to smile.

“These men are all friends of mine, and members of the House,” he said, “and there’s more would have come if they’d had a longer notice. Allow me to make you acquainted with Mr. Widgeon of Hull.”

“We kind of wanted to look you over,” said Mr. Widgeon, suiting the action to the word. “That’s natural ain’t it?”

“Kind of size you up,” added Mr. Jarley of Wye, raising his eyes. “Callate you’re sizable enough.”

“Wish you was in the House,” remarked Mr. Adams of Barren. “None of us is much on talk, but if we had you, I guess we could lay things wide open.”

“If you was thar, and give it to ’em as hot as you did when you was talkin’ for Zeb, them skunks in the front seats wouldn’t know whether they was afoot or hossback,” declared Mr. Williams of Devon, a town adjoining Mercer.

“I used to think railrud gov’ment wahn’t so bad until I come to the House this time,” remarked a stocky member from Oxford; “it’s sheer waste of money for the State to pay a Legislature. They might as well run things from the New York office—you know that.”

“We might as well wear so many Northeastern uniforms with brass buttons,” a sinewy hill farmer from Lee put in. He had a lean face that did not move a muscle, but a humorous gray eye that twinkled.

In the meantime Mr. Redbrook looked on with an expression of approval which was (to Austen) distinctly pleasant, but more or less mystifying.

“I guess you ain’t disappointed ’em much,” he declared, when the round was ended; “most of ’em knew me well enough to understand that cattle and live stock in general, includin’ humans, is about as I represent ’em to be.”

“We have some confidence in your judgment, Brother Redbrook,” answered Mr. Terry of Lee, “and now we’ve looked over the goods, it ain’t set back any, I callate.”

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This observation, which seemed to meet with a general assent, was to Austen more mystifying than ever. He laughed.

“Gentlemen,” he said, “I feel as though some expression of thanks were due you for this kind and most unexpected reception.” Here a sudden seriousness came into his eyes which served, somehow, only to enhance his charm of manner, and a certain determined ring into his voice. “You have all referred to a condition of affairs,” he added, “about which I have thought a great deal, and which I deplore as deeply as you do. There is no doubt that the Northeastern Railroads have seized the government of this State for three main reasons: to throttle competition; to control our railroad commission in order that we may not get the service and safety to which we are entitled, —so increasing dividends; and to make and maintain laws which enable them to bribe with passes, to pay less taxes than they should, and to manipulate political machinery.”

“That’s right,” said Mr. Jarley of Wye, with a decided emphasis.

“That’s the kind of talk I like to hear,” exclaimed Mr. Terry.

“And nobody’s had the gumption to fight ’em,” said Mr. Widgeon.

“It looks,” said Austen, “as though it must come to a fight in the end. I do not think they will listen to reason. I mean,” he added, with a flash of humour, “that they will listen to it, but not act upon it. Gentlemen, I regret to have to say, for obvious reasons, something which you all know, that my father is at the head of the Northeastern machine, which is the Republican party organization.”

There was a silence.

“You went again’ him, and we honour you for it, Austen,” said Mr. Redbrook, at length.

“I want to say,” Austen continued, “that I have tried to look at things as Mr. Vane sees them, and that I have a good deal of sympathy for his point of view. Conditions as they exist are the result of an evolution for which no one man is responsible. That does not alter the fact that the conditions are wrong. But the railroads, before they consolidated, found the political boss in power, and had to pay him for favours. The citizen was the culprit to start with, just as he is the culprit now, because he does not take sufficient interest in his government to make it honest. We mustn’t blame the railroads too severely, when they grew strong enough, for substituting their own political army to avoid being blackmailed. Long immunity has reenforced them in the belief that they have but one duty to pay dividends. I am afraid,” he added, “that they will have to be enlightened somewhat as Pharaoh was enlightened.”

“Well, that’s sense, too,” said Mr. Widgeon; “I guess you’re the man to enlighten ’em.”

“Moderate talk appeals to me,” declared Mr. Jarley.

“And when that fails,” said Mr. Terry, ‘hard, tellin’ blows.”

“Don’t lose track of the fact that we’ve got our eye on you,” said Mr. Emerson of Oxford, who had a blacksmith’s grip, and came back to renew it after he had put on his overshoes. He was the last to linger, and when the door had closed on him Austen turned to Mr. Redbrook.

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“Now what does all this mean?” he demanded.

“It means,” said Mr. Redbrook, “that when the time comes, we want you to run for governor.”

Austen went to the mantelpiece, and stood for a long time with his back turned, staring at a crayon portrait of Colonel Peasley, in the uniform in which he had fallen at the battle of Gettysburg. Then he swung about and seized the member from Mercer by both broad shoulders.

“James Redbrook,” he said, “until to-night I thought you were about as long-headed and sensible a man as there was in the State.”

“So I be,” replied Mr. Redbrook, with a grin. “You ask young Tom Gaylord.”

“So Tom put you up to this nonsense.”

“It ain’t nonsense,” retorted Mr. Redbrook, stoutly, “and Tom didn’t put me up to it. It’s the’ best notion that ever came into my mind.”

Austen, still clinging to Mr. Redbrook’s shoulders, shook his head slowly.

“James,” he said, “there are plenty of men who are better equipped than I for the place, and in a better situation to undertake it. I—I’m much obliged to you. But I’ll help. I’ve got to go,” he added; “the Honourable Hilary wants to see me.”

He went into the entry and put on his overshoes and his coat, while James Redbrook regarded him with a curious mingling of pain and benevolence on his rugged face.

“I won’t press you now, Austen,” he said, “but think on it. For God’s sake, think on it.”

Outside, Austen paused in the snow once more, his brain awhirl with a strange exaltation the like of which he had never felt before. Although eminently human, it was not the fact that honest men had asked him to be their governor which uplifted him,—-but that they believed him to be as honest as themselves. In that hour he had tasted life as he had never yet tasted it, he had lived as he might never live again. Not one of them, he remembered suddenly, had uttered a sentence of the political claptrap of which he had heard so much. They had spoken from the soul; not bitterly, not passionately, but their words had rung with the determination which had made their forefathers and his leave home, toil, and kindred to fight and die at Bunker Hill and Gettysburg for a principle. It had bean given him to look that eight into the heart of a nation, and he was awed.

As he stood there under the winter moon, he gradually became conscious of music, of an air that seemed the very expression of his mood. His eyes, irresistibly drawn

towards the Duncan house, were caught by the fluttering of lace curtains at an open window. The notes were those of a piano,—though the instrument mattered little,—that with which they were charged for him set the night wind quivering. It was not simple music, although it had in it a grand simplicity. At times it rose, vibrant with inexpressible feeling, and fell again into gentler, yearning cadences that wrung the soul with a longing that was world-old and world-wide, that reached out towards the unattainable stare—-and, reaching, became immortal. Thus was the end of it, fainting as it drifted heavenward.

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Then the window was closed.

Austen walked on; whither, he knew not. After a certain time of which he had no cognizance he found himself under the glaring arc-light that hung over Main Street before the Pelican Hotel, in front of what was known as the ladies' entrance. He slipped in there, avoiding the crowded lobby with its shifting groups and its haze of smoke,—-plainly to be seen behind the great plates of glass,—went upstairs, and gained room Number. Seven unnoticed. Then, after the briefest moment of hesitation, he knocked. A voice responded—the Honourable Hilary's. There was but one light burning in the room, and Mr. Vane sat in his accustomed chair in the corner, alone. He was not reading, nor was he drowsing, but his head was dropped forward a little on his breast. He raised it slowly at his son's entrance, and regarded Austen fixedly, though silently.

"You wanted to see me, Judge?" said Austen.

"Come at last, have you?" said Mr. Vane.

"I didn't intend to be late," said Austen.

"Seem to have a good deal of business on hand these days," the Honourable Hilary remarked.

Austen took a step forward, and stopped. Mr. Vane was preparing a piece of Honey Dew.

"If you would like to know what the business was, Judge, I am here to tell you."

The Honourable Hilary grunted.

"I ain't good enough to be confided in, I guess," he said; "I wouldn't understand motives from principle."

Austen looked at his father for a few moments in silence. To-night he seemed at a greater distance than ever before, and more lonely than ever. When Austen had entered the room and had seen him sitting with his head bowed forward, the hostility of months of misunderstanding had fallen away from the son, and he had longed to fly to him as he had as a child after punishment. Differences in after life, alas, are not always to be bridged thus.

"Judge," he said slowly, with an attempt to control his voice, wouldn't it have been fairer to wait awhile, before you made a remark like that? Whatever our dealings may have been, I have never lied to you. Anything you may want to know, I am here to tell you."

"So you're going to take up lobbying, are you? I had a notion you were above lobbying."

Austen was angered. But like all men of character, his face became stern under provocation, and he spoke more deliberately.

“Before we go any farther,” he said, “would you mind telling me who your informant is on this point?”

“I guess I don’t need an informant. My eyesight is as good as ever,” said the Honourable Hilary.

“Your deductions are usually more accurate. If any one has told you that I am about to engage in lobbying, they have lied to you.”

“Wouldn’t engage in lobbying, would you?” the Honourable Hilary asked, with the air of making a casual inquiry.

Austen flushed, but kept his temper.

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“I prefer the practice of law,” he replied.

“Saw you were associatin’ with saints,” his father remarked.

Austen bit his lip, and then laughed outright,—the canonization of old Tom Gaylord being too much for him.

“Now, Judge,” he said, “it isn’t like you to draw hasty conclusions. Because I sat down to supper with the Gaylords it isn’t fair to infer that they have retained me in a legislative case.”

The Honourable Hilary did not respond to his son’s humour, but shifted the Honey Dew to the left cheek.

“Old Tom going in for reform?”

“He may bring it about,” answered Austen, instantly becoming serious again, “whether he’s going in for it or not.”

For the first time the Honourable Hilary raised his eyes to his son’s face, and shot at him a penetrating look of characteristic shrewdness. But he followed in conversation the same rule as in examining a witness, rarely asking a direct question, except as a tactical surprise.

“Old Tom ought to have his railroad, oughtn’t he?”

“So far as I can see, it would be a benefit to the people of that part of the State,” said Austen.

“Building it for the people, is he?”

“His motive doesn’t count. The bill should be judged on its merits, and proper measures for the safeguarding of public interests should be put into it.”

“Don’t think the bill will be judged on its merits, do you?”

“No, I don’t,” replied Austen, “and neither do you.”

“Did you tell old Tom so?” asked Mr. Vane, after a pause. “Did you tell old Tom so when he sent for you to take hold?”

“He didn’t send for me,” answered Austen, quietly, “and I have no business dealings with him except small suits. What I did tell him was that he would never get the bill through this session or next by lobbying.”

The Honourable Hilary never showed surprise. He emitted a grunt which evinced at once impatience and amusement.

“Why not?” he asked.

“Well, Judge, I’ll tell you what I told him—although you both know. It’s because the Northeastern owns the Republican party machine, which is the lobby, and because most of the twenty State senators are dependent upon the Northeastern for future favours.”

“Did you tell Tom Gaylord that?” demanded Mr. Vane. “What did he say?”

Austen braced himself. He did not find the answer easy.

“He said he knew about Number Seven as well as I did.”

The Honourable Hilary rose abruptly—perhaps in some secret agitation —Austen could not discern. His father walked as far as the door, and turned slowly and faced him, but he did not speak. His mouth was tightly closed, almost as in pain, and Austen went towards him, appealingly.

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“Judge,” he said, “you sent for me. You have asked me questions which I felt obliged in honesty to answer. God knows I don’t wish to differ with you, but circumstances seem always against us. I will talk plainly, if you will let me. I try to look at things from your point of view. I know that you believe that a political system should go hand in hand with the great commercial system which you are engaged in building. I disagree with your beliefs, but I do not think that your pursuit of them has not been sincere, and justified by your conscience. I suppose that you sent for me to know whether Mr. Gaylord has employed me to lobby for his bill. He has not, because I refused that employment. But I will tell you that, in my opinion, if a man of any ability whatever should get up on the floor of the House and make an argument for the Pingsquit bill, the sentiment against the Northeastern and its political power is so great that the House would compel the committee to report the bill, and pass it. You probably know this already, but I mention it for your own good if you do not, in the hope that, through you, the Northeastern Railroads may be induced to relax their grip upon the government of this State.”

The Honourable Hilary advanced, until only the marble-topped table was between himself and his son. A slight noise in the adjoining room caused him to turn his head momentarily. Then he faced Austen again.

“Did you tell Gaylord this?” he asked.

Austen made a gesture of distaste, and turned away.

“No,” he said, “I reserved the opinion, whatever it is worth, for your ears alone.”

“I’ve heard that kind of calculation before,” said the Honourable Hilary. “My experience is that they never come to much. As for this nonsense about the Northeastern Railroads running things,” he added more vigorously, “I guess when it’s once in a man’s head there’s no getting it out. The railroad employs the best lawyers it can find to look after its interests. I’m one of ’em, and I’m proud of it. If I hadn’t been one of ’em, the chances are you’d never be where you are, that you’d never have gone to college and the law school. The Republican party realizes that the Northeastern is most vitally connected with the material interests of this State; that the prosperity of the road means the prosperity of the State. And the leaders of the party protect the road from vindictive assaults on it like Gaylord’s, and from scatterbrains and agitators like your friend Redbrook.”

Austen shook his head sadly as he gazed at his father. He had always recognized the futility of arguments, if argument on this point ever arose between them.

“It’s no use, Judge,” he said. “If material prosperity alone were to be considered, your contention would have some weight. The perpetuation of the principle of American

government has to be thought of. Government by a railroad will lead in the end to anarchy. You are courting destruction as it is."

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“If you came in here to quote your confounded Emerson—” the Honourable Hilary began, but Austen slipped around the table and took him by the arm and led him perforce to his chair.

“No, Judge, that isn’t Emerson,” he answered. “It’s just common sense, only it sounds to you like drivel. I’m going now,—unless you want to hear some more about the plots I’ve been getting into. But I want to say this. I ask you to remember that you’re my father, and that—I’m fond of you. And that, if you and I happen to be on opposite sides, it won’t make any difference as far as my feelings are concerned. I’m always ready to tell you frankly what I’m doing, if you wish to know. Good-by. I suppose I’ll see you in Ripton at the end of the week.” And he pressed his father’s shoulder.

Mr. Vane looked up at his son with a curious expression. Perhaps (as when Austen returned from the shooting of Mr. Blodgett in the West) there was a smattering of admiration and pride in that look, and something of an affection which had long ceased in its strivings for utterance. It was the unconscious tribute, too,—slight as was its exhibition,—of the man whose life has been spent in the conquest of material things to the man who has the audacity, insensate though it seem, to fling these to the winds in his search after ideals.

“Good-by, Austen,” said Mr. Vane.

Austen got as far as the door, cast another look back at his father,—who was sitting motionless, with head bowed, as when he came,—and went out. So Mr. Vane remained for a full minute after the door had closed, and then he raised his head sharply and gave a piercing glance at the curtains that separated Number Seven from the governor’s room. In three strides he had reached them, flung them open, and the folding doors behind them, already parted by four inches. The gas was turned low, but under the chandelier was the figure of a young man struggling with an overcoat. The Honourable Hilary did not hesitate, but came forward with a swiftness that paralyzed the young man, who turned upon him a face on which was meant to be written surprise and a just indignation, but in reality was a mixture of impudence and pallid fright. The Honourable Hilary, towering above him, and with that grip on his arm, was a formidable person.

“Listening, were you, Ham?” he demanded.

“No,” cried Mr. Tooting, with a vehemence he meant for force. “No, I wasn’t. Listening to who?”

“Humph!” said the Honourable Hilary, still retaining with one hand the grip on Mr. Tooting ’s arm, and with the other turning up the gas until it flared in Mr. Tooting’s face. “What are you doing in the governor’s room?”

“I left my overcoat in here this afternoon when you sent me to bring up the senator.”

“Ham,” said Mr. Vane, “it isn’t any use lying to me.”

“I ain’t lying to you,” said Mr. Tooting, “I never did. I often lied for you,” he added, “and you didn’t raise any objections that I remember.”

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Mr. Vane let go of the arm contemptuously.

“I’ve done dirty work for the Northeastern for a good many years,” cried Mr. Tooting, seemingly gaining confidence now that he was free; “I’ve slaved for ’em, and what have they done for me? They wouldn’t even back me for county solicitor when I wanted the job.”

“Turned reformer, Ham?”

“I guess I’ve got as much right to turn reformer as some folks I know.”

“I guess you have,” agreed the Honourable Hilary; unexpectedly. He seated himself on a chair, and proceeded to regard Mr. Tooting in a manner extremely disconcerting to that gentleman. This quality of impenetrability, of never being sure when he was angry, had baffled more able opponents of Hilary Vane than Mr. Hamilton Tooting.

“Good-night, Ham.”

“I want to say—” Mr. Tooting began.

“Good-night, Ham,” said Mr. Vane, once more.

Mr. Tooting looked at him, slowly buttoned up his overcoat, and departed.

CHAPTER XIII

THE REALM OF PEGASUS

The eventful day of Mr. Humphrey Crewe’s speech on national affairs dawned without a cloud in the sky. The snow was of a dazzling whiteness and sprinkled with diamond dust; and the air of such transcendent clearness that Austen could see—by leaning a little out of the Widow Peasley’s window—the powdered top of Holdfast Mountain some thirty miles away. For once, a glance at the mountain sufficed him; and he directed his gaze through the trees at the Duncan house, engaging in a pleasant game of conjecture as to which was her window. In such weather the heights of Helicon seemed as attainable as the peak of Holdfast; and he had but to beckon a shining Pegasus from out a sun-shaft in the sky. Obstacles were mere specks on the snow.

He forgot to close the window, and dressed in a temperature which would have meant, for many mortals, pneumonia. The events of yesterday; painful and agitating as they had been, had fallen away in the prospect that lay before him—he would see her to-day, and speak with her. These words, like a refrain; were humming in his head as honest Mr. Redbrook talked during breakfast, while Austen’s answers may have been both intelligent and humorous. Mr. Redbrook, at least; gave no sign that they were not. He

was aware that Mr. Redbrook was bringing arguments to bear on the matter of the meeting of the evening before, but he fended these lightly, while in spirit he flung a gem-studded bridle aver the neck of Pegasus.

And after breakfast—away from the haunts of men! Away from the bickerings, the subjection of mean spirits; material loss and gain and material passion! By eight o'clock (the Widow Peasley's household being an early and orderly one) he was swinging across the long hills, cleaving for himself a furrowed path in the untrodden snow, breathing deep as he gazed across the blue spaces from the crests. Bellerophon or Perseus, aided by immortals, felt no greater sense of achievements to come than he. Out here, on the wind-swept hills that rolled onward and upward to the mountains, the world was his.

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With the same speed he returned, still by untrodden paths until he reached the country road that ended in the city street. Some who saw him paused in their steps, caught unconsciously by the rhythmic perfection of his motion. Ahead of him he beheld the state-house, its dial aflame in the light, emblematic to him of the presence within it of a spirit which cleansed it of impurities. She would be there; nay, when he looked at the dial from a different angle, was there. As he drew nearer, there rose out of the void her presence beside him which he had daily tried to summon since that autumn afternoon—her voice and her eyes, and many of the infinite expressions of each and both. Sprites that they were, they had failed him until to-day, when he was to see her again!

And then, somehow, he had threaded the groups beside the battle-flags in the corridor, and mounted the stairway. The doorkeeper of the House looked into his face, and, with that rare knowledge of mankind which doorkeepers possess, let him in. There were many ladies on the floor (such being the chivalrous custom when a debate or a speech of the importance of Mr. Crewe's was going on), but Austen swept them with a glance of disappointment. Was it possible, after all, that she had not come, or—more agitating thought—had gone back to New York?

At this disturbing point in his reflections Austen became aware that the hall was ringing with a loud and compelling voice which originated in front of the Speaker's desk.

The Honourable Humphrey Crewe was delivering his long-heralded speech on national affairs, and was arrayed for the occasion in a manner befitting the American statesman, with the conventional frock coat, which he wore unbuttoned. But the Gladstone collar and a tie gave the touch of individuality to his dress which was needed to set him aside as a marked man. Austen suddenly remembered, with an irresistible smile, that one of the reasons which he had assigned for his visit to the capital was to hear this very speech, to see how Mr. Crewe would carry off what appeared to be a somewhat difficult situation. Whether or not this motive had drawn others,—for the millionaire's speech had not lacked advertisement,—it is impossible to say, but there was standing room only on the floor of the House that day.

The fact that Mr. Crewe was gratified could not be wholly concealed. The thing that fascinated Austen Vane and others who listened was the aplomb with which the speech was delivered. The member from Leith showed no trace of the nervousness naturally to be expected in a maiden effort, but spoke with the deliberation of an old campaigner, of the man of weight and influence that he was. He leaned, part of the time, with his elbow on the clerk's desk, with his feet crossed; again, when he wished to emphasize a point, he came forward and seized with both hands the back of his chair. Sometimes he thrust his thumb in his waistcoat pocket, and turned with an appeal to

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Mr. Speaker Doby, who was apparently too thrilled and surprised to indulge in conversation with those on the bench beside him, and who made no attempt to quell hand-clapping and even occasional whistling; again, after the manner of experts, Mr. Crewe addressed himself forcibly to an individual in the audience, usually a sensitive and responsive person like the Honourable Jacob Botcher, who on such occasions assumed a look of infinite wisdom and nodded his head slowly. There was no doubt about it that the compelling personality of Mr. Humphrey Crewe was creating a sensation. Genius is sure of itself, and statesmen are born, not made.

Able and powerful as was Mr. Crewe's discourse, the man and not the words had fastened the wandering attention of Austen Vane. He did not perceive his friend of the evening before, Mr. Widgeon, coming towards him up the side aisle, until he felt a touch on the arm.

"Take my seat. It ain't exactly a front one," whispered the member from Hull, "my wife's cousin's comin' on the noon train. Not a bad speech, is it?" he added. "Acts like a veteran. I didn't callate he had it in him."

Thus aroused, Austen made his way towards the vacant chair, and when he was seated raised his eyes to the gallery rail, and Mr. Crewe, the legislative chamber, and its audience ceased to exist. It is quite impossible—unless one is a poetical genius—to reproduce on paper that gone and sickly sensation which is, paradoxically, so exquisite. The psychological cause of it in this instance was, primarily, the sight, by Austen Vane, of his own violets on a black, tailor-made gown trimmed with wide braid, and secondarily of an oval face framed in a black hat, the subtle curves of which no living man could describe. The face was turned in his direction, and he felt an additional thrill when he realized that she must have been watching him as he came in, for she was leaning forward with a gloved hand on the railing.

He performed that act of conventionality known as a bow, and she nodded her head—-black hat and all. The real salutation was a divine ray which passed between their eyes—hers and his—over the commonplace mortals between. And after that, although the patient legislative clock in the corner which had marked the space of other great events (such as the Woodchuck Session) continued to tick, undisturbed in this instance by the pole of the sergeant-at-arms, time became a lost dimension for Austen Vane. He made a few unimportant discoveries such as the fact that Mrs. Pomfret and her daughter were seated beside Victoria, listening with a rapt attention; and that Mr. Crewe had begun to read statistics; and that some people were gaping and others leaving. He could look up at the gallery without turning his head, and sometimes he caught her momentary glance, and again, with her chin in her hand, she was watching Mr. Crewe with a little smile creasing the corners of her eyes.

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A horrible thought crossed Austen's mind—perhaps they were not his violets after all! Because she had smiled at him, yesterday and to-day, he had soared heavenwards on wings of his own making. Perhaps they were Mr. Crewe's violets. Had she not come to visit Mr. Crewe, to listen to his piece de resistance, without knowing that he, Austen Vane, would be in the capital? The idea that her interest in Austen Vane was possibly connected with the study of mankind had a sobering effect on him; and the notion that she had another sort of interest in Mr. Crewe seemed ridiculous enough, but disturbing, and supported by feats.

Austen had reached this phase in his reflections when he was aroused by a metallic sound which arose above the resonant tones of the orator of the day. A certain vessel, to the use of which, according to Mr. Dickens, the satire male portion of the American nation was at one time addicted,—a cuspidor, in plain language,—had been started, by some unknown agency in the back seats, rolling down the centre aisle, and gathering impetus as it went, bumped the louder on each successive step until it hurled itself with a clash against the clerk's desk, at the feet of the orator himself. During its descent a titter arose which gradually swelled into a roar of laughter, and Austen's attention was once more focused upon the member from Leith. But if any man had so misjudged the quality of Humphrey Crewe as to suppose for an instant that he could be put out of countenance by such a manoeuvre, that man was mightily mistaken. Mr. Crewe paused, with his forefinger on the page, and fixed a glassy eye on the remote neighbourhood in the back seats where the disturbance had started.

"I am much obliged to the gentleman," he said coldly, "but he has sent me an article which I never use, under any conditions. I would not deprive him of its convenience."

Whereupon, it is not too much to say, Mr. Crews was accorded an ovation, led by his stanch friend and admirer, the Honourable Jacob Botcher, although that worthy had been known to use the article in question.

Mr. Speaker Doby glanced at the faithful clock, and arose majestically.

"I regret to say," he announced, "that the time of the gentleman from Leith is up."

Mr. Botcher rose slowly to his feet.

"Mr. Speaker," he began, in a voice that rumbled through the crevices of the gallery, "I move you, sir, that a vote of thanks be accorded to the gentleman from Leith for his exceedingly able and instructive speech on national affairs."

"Second the motion," said the Honourable Brush Bascom, instantly.

"And leave to print in the State Tribune!" cried a voice from somewhere among the submerged four hundred and seventy.

“Gentlemen of the House,” said Mr. Crewe, when the laughter had subsided, “I have given you a speech which is the result of much thought and preparation on my part. I have not flaunted the star-spangled banner in your faces, or indulged in oratorical fireworks. Mine have been the words of a plain business man, and I have not indulged in wild accusations or flights of imagination. Perhaps, if I had,” he added, “there are some who would have been better pleased. I thank my friends for their kind attention and approbation.”

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Nevertheless, amidst somewhat of a pandemonium, the vote of thanks was given and the House adjourned; while Mr. Crewe's friends of whom he had spoken could be seen pressing around him and shaking him by the hand. Austen got to his feet, his eyes again sought the gallery, whence he believed he received a look of understanding from a face upon which amusement seemed plainly written. She had turned to glance down at him, despite the fact that Mrs. Pomfret was urging her to leave. Austen started for the door, and managed to reach it long before his neighbours had left the vicinity of their seats. Once in the corridor, his eye singled her out amongst those descending the gallery stairs, and he had a little thrill of pride and despair when he realized that she was the object of the scrutiny, too, of the men around him; the women were interested, likewise, in Mrs. Pomfret, whose appearance, although appropriate enough for a New York matinee, proclaimed her as hailing from that mysterious and fabulous city of wealth. This lady, with her lorgnette, was examining the faces about her in undisguised curiosity, and at the same time talking to Victoria in a voice which she took no pains to lower.

"I think it outrageous," she was saying. "If some Radical member had done that in Parliament, he would have been expelled from the House. But of course in Parliament they wouldn't have those horrid things to roll down the aisles. Poor dear Humphrey! The career of a gentleman in politics is a thankless one in this country. I wonder at his fortitude."

Victoria's eyes alone betokened her amusement.

"How do you do, Mr. Vane?" she said. "I'm so glad to see you again."

Austen said something which he felt was entirely commonplace and inadequate to express his own sentiments, while Alice gave him an uncertain bow, and Mrs. Pomfret turned her glasses upon him.

"You remember Mr. Vane," said Victoria; "you met him at Humphrey's."

"Did I?" answered Mrs. Pomfret. "How do you do? Can't something be done to punish those rowdies?"

Austen grew red.

"Mr. Vane isn't a member of the House," said Victoria.

"Oh," exclaimed Mrs. Pomfret. "Something ought to be done about it. In England such a thing wouldn't be allowed to drop for a minute. If I lived in this State, I think I should do something. Nobody in America seems to have the spirit even to make a protest."

Austen turned quietly to Victoria.

“When are you going away?” he asked.

“To-morrow morning—earlier than I like to think of. I have to be in New York by to-morrow night.”

She flashed at him a look of approbation for his self-control, and then, by a swift transition which he had often remarked, her expression changed to one of amusement, although a seriousness lurked in the depths of her eyes. Mrs. Pomfret had gone on, with Alice, and they followed.

“And—am I not to see you again before you go?” he exclaimed.

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He didn't stop to reason than upon the probable consequences of his act in seeking her. Nature, which is stronger than reason, was compelling him.

"That depends," said Victoria.

"Upon whom?"

"Upon you."

They were on the lower stairs by this times, and there was silence between then for a few moments as they descended,—principally because, after this exalting remark, Austen could not trust himself to speak.

"Will you go driving with me?" he asked, and was immediately thunderstruck at his boldness.

"Yes," she answered, simply.

"How soon may I come?" he demanded,

She laughed softly, but with a joyous note which was not hidden from him as they stepped out of the darkened corridor into the dazzling winter noonday.

"I will be ready at three o'clock," she said.

He looked at his watch.

"Two hours and a half!" he cried.

"If that is too early," she said mischievously, "we can go later."

"Too early!" he repeated. But the rest of his protest was cut short by Mr. Crewe.

"Hello, Victoria, what did you think of my speech?"

"The destinies of the nation are settled," said Victoria. "Do you know Mr. Vane?"

"Oh, yes, how are you?" said Mr, Crewe; "glad to see you," and he extended a furred glove. "Were you there?"

"Yes," said Austen.

"I'll send you a copy. I'd like to talk it over with you. Come on, Victoria, I've arranged for an early lunch. Come on, Mrs. Pomfret—get in, Alice."

Mrs. Pomfret, still protesting against the profane interruption to Mr. Crewe's speech, bent her head to enter Mr. Crewe's booby sleigh, which had his crest on the panel. Alice was hustled in next, but Victoria avoided his ready assistance and got in herself, Mr. Crewe getting in beside her.

"Au revoir," she called out to Austen, as the door slammed. The coachman gathered his horses together, and off they went at a brisk trot. Then the little group which had been watching the performance dispersed. Halfway across the park Austen perceived some one signaling violently to him, and discovered his friend, young Tom Gaylord.

"Come to dinner with me," said young Tom, "and tell me whether the speech of your friend from Leith will send him to Congress. I saw you hobnobbing with him just now. What's the matter, Austen? I haven't seen that guilty expression on your face since we were at college together."

"What's the best livery-stable in town?" Austen asked.

"By George, I wondered why you came down here. Who are you going to take out in a sleigh? There's a girl in it, is there?"

"Not yet, Tom," said Austen.

"I've often asked myself why I ever had any use for such a secretive cuss as you," declared young Mr. Gaylord. "But if you're really goin' to get interested in girls, you ought to see old Flint's daughter. I wrote you about her. Why," exclaimed Tom, "wasn't she one of those that got into Crewe's sleigh?"

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“Tom,” said Austen, “where did you say that livery-stable was?”

“Oh, dang the livery-stable!” answered Mr. Gaylord. “I hear there’s quite a sentiment for you for governor. How about it? You know I’ve always said you could be United States senator and President. If you’ll only say the word, Austen, we’ll work up a movement around the State that’ll be hard to beat.”

“Tom,” said Austen, laying his hand on young Mr. Gaylord’s farther shoulder, “you’re a pretty good fellow. Where did you say that livery-stable was?

“I’ll go sleigh-riding with you,” said Mr. Gaylord. “I guess the Pingsquit bill can rest one afternoon.”

“Tom, I don’t know any man I’d rather take than you,” said Austen.

The unsuspecting Tom was too good-natured to be offended, and shortly after dinner Austen found himself in the process of being looked over by a stout gentleman named Putter, proprietor of Putter’s Livery, who claimed to be a judge of men as well as horses. Austen had been through his stalls and chosen a mare.

“Durned if you don’t look like a man who can handle a horse,” said Mr. Putter. And as long as you’re a friend of Tom Gaylord’s I’ll let you have her. Nobody drives that mare but me. What’s your name?”

“Vane.”

“Ain’t any relation to old Hilary, be you?”

“I’m his son,” said Austen, “only he doesn’t boast about it.”

“Godfrey!” exclaimed Mr. Putter, with a broad grin, “I guess you kin have her. Ain’t you the man that shot a feller out West? Seems to me I heerd somethin’ about it.”

“Which one did you hear about?” Austen asked.

“Good Lord!” said Mr. Putter, “you didn’t shoot more’n one, did you?”

It was just three o’clock when Austen drove into the semicircle opposite the Widow Peasley’s, rang Mr. Crewe’s door-bell, and leaped into the sleigh once more, the mare’s nature being such as to make it undesirable to leave her. Presently Mr. Crewe’s butler appeared, and stood dubiously in the vestibule.

“Will you tell Miss Flint that Mr. Vane has called for her, and that I cannot leave the horse?”

The man retired with obvious disapproval. Then Austen heard Victoria's voice in the hallway:—"Don't make a goose of yourself, Humphrey." Here she appeared, the colour fresh in her cheeks, her slender figure clad in a fur which even Austen knew was priceless. She sprang into the sleigh, the butler, with annoying deliberation, and with the air of saying that this was an affair of which he washed his hands, tucked in Mr. Putter's best robe about her feet, the mare leaped forward, and they were off, out of the circle and flying up the hill on the hard snow-tracks.

"Whew!" exclaimed Victoria, "what a relief! Are you staying in that dear little house?" she asked, with a glance at the Widow Peasley's.

"Yes," said Austen.

"I wish I were."

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He looked at her shyly. He was not a man to do homage to material gods, but the pomp and circumstance with which she was surrounded had had a sobering effect upon him, and added to his sense of the instability and unreality of the present moment. He had an almost guilty feeling of having broken an unwritten law, of abducting a princess, and the old Duncan house had seemed to frown protestingly that such an act should have taken place under its windows. If Victoria had been—to him—an ordinary mortal in expensive furs instead of a princess, he would have snapped his fingers at the pomp and circumstance. These typified the comforts which, in a wild and forgetful moment, he might ask her to leave. Not that he believed she would leave them. He had lived long enough to know that an interest by a woman in a man—especially a man beyond the beaten track of her observation—did not necessarily mean that she might marry him if he asked her. And yet—oh, Tantalus! here she was beside him, for one afternoon again his very own, their two souls ringing with the harmony of whirling worlds in sunlit space. He sought refuge in thin thought; he strove, in oblivion, to drain the cup of the hour of its nectar, even as he had done before. Generations of Puritan Vanes (whose descendant alone had harassed poor Sarah Austere) were in his blood; and there they hung in the long gallery of Time, mutely but sternly forbidding when he raised his hand to the stem.

In silence they reached the crest where the little city ended abruptly in view of the paradise of the silent hills,—his paradise, where there were no palaces or thought of palaces. The wild wind of the morning was still. In this realm at least, a heritage from his mother, seemingly untrodden by the foot of man, the woman at his side was his. From Holdfast over the spruces to Sawanec in the blue distance he was lord, a domain the wealth of which could not be reckoned in the coin of Midas. He turned to her as they flew down the slope, and she averted her face, perchance perceiving in that look a possession from which a woman shrinks; and her remark, startlingly indicative of the accord between them, lent a no less startling reality to the enchantment.

“This is your land, isn’t it?” she said.

“I sometimes feel as though it were,” he answered. “I was out here this morning, when the wind was at play,” and he pointed with his whip at a fantastic snowdrift, before I saw you.”

“You looked as though you had come from it,” she answered. You seemed —I suppose you will think me silly—but you seemed to bring something of this with you into that hail. I always think of you as out on the hills and mountains.”

“And you,” he said, “belong here, too.”

She drew a deep breath.

“I wish I did. But you—you really do belong here. You seem to have absorbed all the clearness of it, and the strength and vigour. I was watching you this morning, and you were so utterly out of place in those surroundings.” Victoria paused, her colour deepening.

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His blood kept pace with the mare's footsteps, but he did not reply.

"What did you think of Humphrey's speech?" she asked, abruptly changing the subject.

"I thought it a surprisingly good one,—what I heard of it," he answered. "That wasn't much. I didn't think he'd do as well."

"Humphrey's clever in a great many ways," Victoria agreed. "If he didn't have such an impenetrable conceit, he might go far, because he learns quickly, and has an industry that is simply appalling. But he hasn't quite the manner for politics, has he?"

"I think I should call his manner a drawback," said Austen, "though not by any means an insurmountable one."

Victoria laughed.

"The other qualities all need to be very great," she said. "He was furious at me for coming out this afternoon. He had it all arranged to drive over to the Forge, and had an early lunch."

"And I," said Austen, "have all the more reason to be grateful to you."

"Oh, if you knew the favour you were doing me," she cried, "bringing me out here where I can breathe. I hope you don't think I dislike Humphrey," she went on. "Of course, if I did, I shouldn't visit him. You see, I have known him for so long."

"I hadn't a notion that you disliked him," said Austen. "I am curious about his career; that's one reason I came down. He somehow inspires curiosity."

"And awe," she added. "Humphrey's career has all the fascination of a runaway locomotive. One watches it transfixed, awaiting the inevitable crash."

Their eyes met, and they both laughed.

"It's no use trying to be a humbug," said Victoria, "I can't. And I do like Humphrey, in spite of his career."

And they laughed again. The music of the bells ran faster and faster still, keeping time to a wilder music of the sunlit hills and sky; nor was it strange that her voice, when she spoke, did not break the spell, but laid upon him a deeper sense of magic.

"This brings back the fairy books," she said, "and all those wonderful and never-to-be-forgotten sensations of the truant, doesn't it? You've been a truant—haven't you?"

“Yes,” he laughed, “I’ve been a truant, but I never quite realized the possibilities of the part—until to-day.”

She was silent a moment, and turned away her head, surveying the landscape that fell away for miles beyond.

“When I was a child,” she said, “I used to think that by opening a door I could step into an enchanted realm like this. Only I could never find the door. Perhaps,” she added, gayly pursuing the conceit, “it was because you had the key, and I didn’t know you in those days.” She gave him a swift, searching look, smiling, whimsical yet startled,—so elusive that the memory of it afterwards was wont to come and go like a flash of light. “Who are you?” she asked.

His blood leaped, but he smiled in delighted understanding of her mood. Sarah Austen had brought just such a magic touch to an excursion, and even at that moment Austen found himself marvelling a little at the strange resemblance between the two.

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“I am a plain person whose ancestors came from a village called Camden Street,” he replied. “Camden Street is there, on a shelf of the hills, and through the arch of its elms you can look off over the forests of the lowlands until they end in the blue reaches of the ocean,—if you could see far enough.”

“If you could see far enough,” said Victoria, unconsciously repeating his words. “But that doesn’t explain you,” she exclaimed: “You are like nobody I ever met, and you have a supernatural faculty of appearing suddenly, from nowhere, and whisking me away like the lady in the fable, out of myself and the world I live in. If I become so inordinately grateful as to talk nonsense, you mustn’t blame me. Try not to think of the number of times I’ve seen you, or when it was we first met.”

“I believe,” said Austen, gravely, “it was when a mammoth beast had his cave on Holdfast, and the valleys were covered with cocoanut-palms.”

“And you appeared suddenly then, too, and rescued me. You have always been uniformly kind,” she said, “but—a little intangible.”

“A myth,” he suggested, “with neither height, breadth, nor thickness.”

“You have height and breadth,” she answered, measuring him swiftly with her eye; “I am not sure about the thickness. Perhaps. What I mean to say is, that you seem to be a person in the world, but not of it. Your exits and entrances are too mysterious, and then you carry me out of it, —although I invite myself, which is not at all proper.”

“I came down here to see you,” he said, and took a firmer grip on the reins. “I exist to that extent.”

“That’s unworthy of you,” she cried. “I don’t believe you—would have known I was here unless you had caught eight of me.”

“I should have known it,” he said.

“How?”

“Because I heard you playing. I am sure it was you playing.”

“Yes, it was I,” she answered simply, “but I did not know that—you heard. Where were you?

“I suppose,” he replied, “a sane witness would have testified that I was in the street—-one of those partial and material truths which are so misleading.”

She laughed again, joyously.

“Seriously, why did you come down here?” she insisted. “I am not so absorbed in Humphrey’s career that I cannot take an interest in yours. In fact, yours interests me more, because it is more mysterious. Humphrey’s,” she added, laughing, “is charted from day to day, and announced in bulletins. He is more generous to his friends than—-you.”

“I have nothing to chart,” said Austen, “except such pilgrimages as this,—and these, after all, are unchartable. Your friend, Mr. Crewe, on the other hand, is well away on his voyage after the Golden Fleece. I hope he is provided with a Lynceus.”

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She was silent for a long time, but he was feverishly conscious of her gaze upon him, and did not dare to turn his eyes to hers. The look in them he beheld without the aid of physical vision, and in that look was the world-old riddle of her sex typified in the image on the African desert, which Napoleon had tried to read, and failed. And while wisdom was in the look, there was in it likewise the eternal questioning of a fate quite as inscrutable, against which wisdom would avail nothing. It was that look which, for Austen, revealed in her in their infinite variety all women who had lived; those who could resist, and those who could yield, and yielding all, bestow a gift which left them still priceless; those to whom sorrow might bring sadness, and knowledge mourning, and yet could rob them of no jot of sweetness. And knowing this, he knew that to gain her now (could such a high prize be gained!) would be to lose her. If he were anything to her (realize it or not as she might), it was because he found strength to resist this greatest temptation of his life. Yield, and his guerdon was lost, and he would be Austen Vane no longer—yield, and his right to act, which would make him of value in her eyes as well as in his own, was gone forever.

Well he knew what the question in her eyes meant or something of what it meant, so inexplicably is the soul of woman linked to events. He had pondered often on that which she had asked him when he had brought her home over the hills in the autumn twilight. He remembered her words, and the very inflection of her voice. “Then you won’t tell me?” How could he tell her? He became aware that she was speaking now, in an even tone.

“I had an odd experience this morning, when I was waiting for Mrs. Pomfret outside the state-house,” she said. “A man was standing looking up at the statue of the patriot with a strange, rapt expression on his face,—such a good face,—and he was so big and honest and uncompromising I wanted to talk to him. I didn’t realize that I was staring at him so hard, because I was trying to remember where I had seen him before,—and then I remembered suddenly that it was with you.”

“With me?” Austen repeated.

“You were standing with him, in front of the little house, when I save you yesterday. His name was Redbrook. It appears that he had seen me,” Victoria replied, “when I went to Mercer to call on Zeb Meader. And he asked me if I knew you.”

“Of course you denied it,” said Austen.

“I couldn’t, very well,” laughed Victoria, “because you had confessed to the acquaintance first.”

“He merely wished to have the fact corroborated. Mr. Redbrook is a man who likes to be sure of his ground.”

“He told me a very interesting thing about you,” she continued slowly, with her eye upon. Austen’s profile. “He said that a great many men wanted you to be their candidate for governor of the State,—more than you had any idea of,—and that you wouldn’t consent. Mr. Redbrook grew so enthusiastic that he forgot, for the moment, my —relationship to the railroad. He is not the only person with whom I have talked who has —forgotten it, or hasn’t known of it.”

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Austen was silent.

“Why won’t you be a candidate,” she asked, in a low voice, “if such men as that want you?”

“I am afraid Mr. Redbrook exaggerates,” he said. “The popular demand of which he spoke is rather mythical. And I should be inclined to accuse him, too, of a friendly attempt to install me in your good graces.”

“No,” answered Victoria, smiling, with serious eyes, “I won’t be put off that way. Mr. Redbrook isn’t the kind of man that exaggerates—I’ve seen enough of his type to know that. And he told me about your—reception last night at the Widow Peasley’s. You wouldn’t have told me,” she added reproachfully.

He laughed.

“It was scarcely a subject I could have ventured,” he said.

“But I asked you,” she objected. “Now tell me, why did you refuse to be their candidate? It wasn’t because you were not likely to get elected, was it?”

He permitted himself a glance which was a tribute of admiration—a glance which she returned steadfastly.

“It isn’t likely that I should have been elected,” he answered, “but you are right—that is not the reason I refused.”

“I thought not,” she said, “I did not believe you were the kind of man to refuse for that reason. And you would have been elected.”

“What makes you think so?” he asked curiously.

“I have been thinking since I saw you last—yes, and I have been making inquiries. I have been trying to find out things—which you will not tell me.” She paused, with a little catch of her breath, and went on again. “Do you believe I came all the way up here just to hear Humphrey Crewe make a speech and to drive with him in a high sleigh and listen to him talk about his career? When serious men of the people like Mr. Redbrook and that nice Mr. Jenney at Leith and a lot of others who do not ordinarily care for politics are thinking and indignant, I have come to the conclusion there must be a cause for it. They say that the railroad governs them through disreputable politicians,—and I—I am beginning to believe it is true. I have had some of the politicians pointed out to me in the Legislature, and they look like it.”

Austen did not smile. She was speaking quietly, but he saw that she was breathing deeply, and he knew that she possessed a courage which went far beyond that of most women, and an insight into life and affairs.

“I am going to find out,” she said, “whether these things are true.”

“And then?” he asked involuntarily.

“If they are true, I am going to tell my father about them, and ask him to investigate. Nobody seems to have the courage to go to him.”

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Austen did not answer. He felt the implication; he knew that, without realizing his difficulties, and carried on by a feeling long pent up, she had measured him unjustly, and yet he felt no resentment, and no shock. Perhaps he might feel that later. Now he was filled only with a sympathy that was yet another common bond between them. Suppose she did find out? He knew that she would not falter until she came to the end of her investigation, to the revelation of Mr. Flint's code of business ethics. Should the revolt take place, she would be satisfied with nothing less than the truth, even as he, Austen Vane, had not been satisfied. And he thought of the life-long faith that would be broken thereby.

They had made the circle of the hills, and the sparkling lights of the city lay under them like blue diamond points in the twilight of the valley. The crests behind them deepened in purple as the saffron faded in the west, and a gossamer cloud of Tyrian dye floated over Holdfast. In silence they turned for a last lingering look, and in silence went down the slope into the world again, and through the streets to the driveway of the Duncan house. It was only when they had stopped before the door that she trusted herself to speak.

"I ought not to have said what I did," she began, in a low voice; "I didn't realize—but I cannot understand you."

"You have said nothing which you need ever have cause to regret," he replied. He was too great for excuses, too great for any sorrow save what she herself might feel, as great as the silent hills from which he came.

She stood for a moment on the edge of the steps, her eyes lustrous,—yet gazing into his with a searching, troubled look that haunted him for many days. But her self-command was unshaken, her power to control speech was the equal of his. And this power of silence in her revealed in such instants—was her greatest fascination for Austen, the thing which set her apart among women; which embodied for him the whole charm and mystery of her sex.

"Good-by," she said simply.

"Good-by," he said, and seized her hand—and drove away.

Without ringing the bell Victoria slipped into the hall,—for the latch was not caught,—-and her first impulse was to run up the staircase to her room. But she heard Mrs. Pomfret's voice on the landing above and fled, as to a refuge, into the dark drawing-room, where she stood for a moment motionless, listening for the sound of his sleigh-bells as they fainted on the winter's night. Then she seated herself to think, if she could, though it is difficult to think when one's heart is beating a little wildly. It was Victoria's nature to think things out. For the first time in her life she knew sorrow, and it made it worse that that sorrow was indefinable. She felt an accountable attraction for this man

who had so strangely come into her life, whose problems had suddenly become her problems. But she did not connect the attraction for Austen Vane with her misery. She recalled him as he had left her, big and strong and sorrowful, with a yearning look that was undisguised, and while her faith in him came surging back again, she could not understand.

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Gradually she became aware of men's voices, and turned with a start to perceive that the door of the library was open, and that Humphrey Crewe and another were standing in the doorway against the light. With an effort of memory she identified the other man as the Mr. Tooting who had made himself so useful at Mr. Crewe's garden party.

"I told you I could make you governor, Mr. Crewe," Mr. Tooting was saying. "Say, why do you think the Northeastern crowd—why do you think Hilary Vane is pushing your bills down the sidings? I'll tell you, because they know you're a man of ability, and they're afraid of you, and they know you're a gentleman, and can't be trusted with their deals, so they just shunted you off at Kodunk with a jolly about sendin' you to Congress if you made a hit on a national speech. I've been in the business a good many years, and I've seen and done some things for the Northeastern that stick in my throat"—(at this point Victoria sat down again and gripped the arms of her chair), "I don't like to see a decent man sawbucked the way they're teeterin' you, Mr. Crewe. I know what I'm talkin' about, and I tell you that Ridout and Jake Botcher and Brush Bascom haven't any more notion of lettin' your bills out of committee than they have Gaylord's. Why? Because they've got orders not to."

"You're making some serious charges, Mr. Tooting," said Mr. Crewe.

"And what's more, I can prove 'em. You know yourself that anybody who talks against the Northeastern is booted down and blacklisted. You've seen that, haven't you?"

"I have observed," said Mr. Crewe, "that things do not seem to be as they should in a free government."

"And it makes your blood boil as an American citizen, don't it? It does mine," said Mr. Tooting, with fine indignation. "I was a poor boy, and had to earn my living, but I've made up my mind I've worn the collar long enough—if I have to break rocks. And I want to repeat what I said a little while ago," he added, weaving his thumb into Mr. Crewe's buttonhole; "I know a thing or two, and I've got some brains, as they know, and I can make you governor of this State if you'll only say the word. It's a cinch."

Victoria started to rise once more, and realized that to escape she would have to cross the room directly in front of the two men. She remained sitting where she was in a fearful fascination, awaiting Humphrey Crewe's answer. There was a moment's pause.

"I believe you made the remark, Mr. Tooting," he said, "that in your opinion there is enough anti-railroad sentiment in the House to pass any bill which the railroad opposes."

"If a leader was to get up there, like you, with the arguments I could put into his hands, they would make the committee discharge that Pingsquit bill of the Gaylords', and pass it."

“On what do you base your opinion?” asked Mr. Crewe.

“Well,” said Mr. Tooting, “I guess I’m a pretty shrewd observer and have had practice enough. But you know Austen Vane, don’t you?”

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Victoria held her breath.

“I’ve a slight acquaintance with him,” replied Mr. Crewe; “I’ve helped him along in one or two minor legal matters. He seems to be a little —well, pushing, you might say.”

“I want to tell you one thing about Austen,” continued Mr. Tooting. “Although I don’t stand much for old Hilary, I’d take Austen Vane’s opinion on most things as soon as that of any man in the State. If he only had some sense about himself, he could be governor next time —there’s a whole lot that wants him. I happen to know some of ’em offered it to him last night.”

“Austen Vane governor!” exclaimed Mr. Crewe, with a politely deprecating laugh.

“It may sound funny,” said Mr. Tooting, stoutly; “I never understood what he has about him. He’s never done anything but buck old Hilary in that damage case and send back a retainer pass to old Flint, but he’s got something in his make-up that gets under your belt, and a good many of these old hayseeds’ll eat out of his hand, right now. Well, I don’t want this to go any farther, you’re a gentleman,—but Austen came down here yesterday and had the whole thing sized up by last night. Old Hilary thought the Gaylords sent for him to lobby their bill through. They may have sent for him, all right, but he wouldn’t lobby for ’em. He could have made a pile of money out of ’em. Austen doesn’t seem to care about money—he’s queer. He says as long as he has a horse and a few books and a couple of sandwiches a day he’s all right. Hilary had him up in Number Seven tryin’ to find out what he came down for, and Austen told him pretty straight—what he didn’t tell the Gaylords, either. He kind of likes old Hilary,—because he’s his father, I guess,—and he said there were enough men in that House to turn Hilary and his crowd upside down. That’s how I know for certain. If Austen Vane said it, I’ll borrow money to bet on it,” declared Mr. Tooting.

“You don’t think young Vane is going to get into the race?” queried Mr. Crewe.

“No,” said Mr. Tooting, somewhat contemptuously. “No, I tell you he hasn’t got that kind of sense. He never took any trouble to get ahead, and I guess he’s sort of sensitive about old Hilary. It’d make a good deal of a scandal in the family, with Austen as an anti-railroad candidate.” Mr. Tooting lowered his voice to a tone that was caressingly confidential. “I tell you, and you sleep on it, a man of your brains and money can’t lose. It’s a chance in a million, and when you win you’ve got this little State tight in your pocket, and a desk in the millionaire’s club at Washington. Well, so long,” said Mr. Tooting, “you think that over.”

“You have, at least, put things in a new and interesting light,” said Mr. Crewe. “I will try to decide what my duty is.”

“Your duty’s pretty plain to me,” said Mr. Tooting. “If I had money, I’d know that the best way to use it is for the people,—ain’t that so?”

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“In the meantime,” Mr. Crewe continued, “you may drop in to-morrow at three.”

“You’d better make it to-morrow night, hadn’t you?” said Mr. Tooting, significantly. “There ain’t any back way to this house.”

“As you choose,” said Mr. Crewe.

They passed within a few feet of Victoria, who resisted an almost uncontrollable impulse to rise and confront them. The words given her to use were surging in her brain, and yet she withheld them why, she knew not. Perhaps it was because, after such communion as the afternoon had brought, the repulsion she felt for Mr. Tooting aided her to sit where she was. She heard the outside door open and close, and she saw Humphrey Crewe walk past her again into his library, and that door closed, and she was left in darkness. Darkness indeed for Victoria, who throughout her life had lived in light alone; in the light she had shed, and the light which she had kindled in others. With a throb which was an exquisite pain, she understood now the compassion in Austen’s eyes, and she saw so simply and so clearly why he had not told her that her face burned with the shame of her demand. The one of all others to whom she could go in this trouble was denied her, and his lips were sealed, who would have spoken honestly and without prejudice. She rose and went quietly out into the biting winter night, and stood staring through the trees at the friendly reddened windows of the little cottage across the way with a yearning that passed her understanding. Out of those windows, to Victoria, shone honesty and truth, and the peace which these alone may bring.

CHAPTER XIV

THE DESCENDANTS OF HORATIUS

So the twenty honourable members of the State Senate had been dubbed by the man who had a sense of humour and a smattering of the classics, because they had been put there to hold the bridge against the Tarquins who would invade the dominions of the Northeastern. Twenty picked men, and true they were indeed, but a better name for their body would have been the ‘Life Guard of the Sovereign.’ The five hundred far below them might rage and at times revolt, but the twenty in their shining armour stood undaunted above the vulnerable ground and smiled grimly at the mob. The citadel was safe.

The real Horatius of the stirring time of which we write was that old and tried veteran, the Honourable Brush Bascom; and Spurius Lartius might be typified by the indomitable warrior, the Honourable Jacob Botcher, while the Honourable Samuel Doby of Hale, Speaker of the House, was unquestionably Herminius. How the three held the bridge that year will be told in as few and as stirring words as possible. A greater than Porsena

confronted them, and well it was for them, and for the Empire, that the Body Guard of the Twenty stood behind them.

> “Lars Porsena of Clusium,
> By the Nine Gods he swore.”

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The morning after the State Tribune had printed that memorable speech on national affairs—statistics and all, with an editorial which gave every evidence of Mr. Peter Pardriff's best sparkle—Mr. Crewe appeared on the floor of the House with a new look in his eye which made discerning men turn and stare at him. It was the look of the great when they are justly indignant, when their trust—nobly given—has been betrayed. Washington, for instance, must have had just such a look on the battlefield of Trenton. The Honourable Jacob Botcher, pressing forward as fast as his bulk would permit and with the newspaper in his hand, was met by a calm and distant manner which discomposed that statesman, and froze his stout index finger to the editorial which "perhaps Mr. Crewe had not seen."

Mr. Crewe was too big for resentment, but he knew how to meet people who didn't measure up to his standards. Yes, he had seen the editorial, and the weather still continued fine. The Honourable Jacob was left behind scratching his head, and presently he sought a front seat in which to think, the back ones not giving him room enough. The brisk, cheery greeting of the Honourable Brush Bascom fared no better, but Mr. Bascom was a philosopher, and did not disturb the great when their minds were revolving on national affairs and the welfare of humanity in general. Mr. Speaker Doby and Mr. Ridout got but abstract salutations also, and were correspondingly dismayed.

That day, and for many days thereafter, Mr. Crewe spent some time—as was entirely proper—among the back seats, making the acquaintance of his humbler fellow members of the submerged four hundred and seventy. He had too long neglected this, so he told them, but his mind had been on high matters. During many of his mature years he had pondered as to how the welfare of community and State could be improved, and the result of that thought was embodied in the bills of which they had doubtless received copies. If not, down went their names in a leather-bound memorandum, and they got copies in the next mails.

The delight of some of the simple rustic members at this unbending of a great man may be imagined. To tell the truth, they had looked with little favour upon the intimacy which had sprung up between him and those tyrannical potentates, Messrs. Botcher and Bascom, and many who had the courage of their convictions expressed then very frankly. Messrs. Botcher and Bascom were, when all was said, mere train despatchers of the Northeastern, who might some day bring on a wreck the like of which the State had never seen. Mr. Crewe was in a receptive mood; indeed his nature, like Nebuchadnezzar's, seemed to have experienced some indefinable and vital change. Was this the Mr. Crewe the humble rural members had pictured to themselves? Was this the Mr. Crewe who, at the beginning of the session, had told them roundly it was their duty to vote for his bills?

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Mr. Crewe was surprised, he said, to hear so much sentiment against the Northeastern Railroads. Yes, he was a friend of Mr. Flint's—they were neighbours in the country. But if these charges had any foundation whatever, they ought to be looked into—they ought to be taken up. A sovereign people should not be governed by a railroad. Mr. Crewe was a business man, but first of all he was a citizen; as a business man he did not intend to talk vaguely, but to investigate thoroughly. And then, if charges should be made, he would make them specifically, and as a citizen contend for the right.

It is difficult to restrain one's pen in dealing with a hero, but it is not too much to say that Mr. Crewe impressed many of the country members favourably. How, indeed, could he help doing so? His language was moderate, his poise that of a man of affairs, and there was a look in his eye and a determination in his manner that boded ill for the Northeastern if he should, after weighing the facts, decide that they ought to be flagellated. His friendship with Mr. Flint and the suspicion that he might be inclined to fancy Mr. Flint's daughter would not influence him in the least; of that many of his hearers were sure. Not a few of them were invited to dinner at the Duncan house, and shown the library and the conservatory.

"Walk right in," said Mr. Crewe. "You can't hurt the flowers unless you bump against the pots, and if you walk straight you can't do that. I brought the plants down from my own hothouse in Leith. Those are French geraniums—very hard to get. They're double, you see, and don't look like the scrawny things you see in this country. Yes (with a good-natured smile), I guess they do cost something. I'll ask my secretary what I paid for that plant. Is that dinner, Waters? Come right in, gentlemen, we won't wait for ceremony."

Whereupon the delegation would file into the dining room in solemn silence behind the imperturbable Waters, with dubious glances at Mr. Waters' imperturbable understudy in green and buff and silver buttons. Honest red hands, used to milking at five o'clock in the morning, and hands not so red that measured dry goods over rural counters for insistent female customers fingered in some dismay what seemed an inexplicable array of table furniture.

"It don't make any difference which fork you take," said the good-natured owner of this palace of luxury, "only I shouldn't advise you to use one for the soup you wouldn't get much of it—what? Yes, this house suits me very well. It was built by old man Duncan, you know, and his daughter married an Italian nobleman and lives in a castle. The State ought to buy the house for a governor's mansion. It's a disgrace that our governor should have to live in the Pelican Hotel, and especially in a room next to that of the chief counsel of the Northeastern, with only a curtain and a couple of folding doors between."

"That's right," declared an up-state member, the governor hadn't ought to live next to Vane. But as to gettin' him a house like this—kind of royal, ain't it? Couldn't do justice to it on fifteen hundred a year, could he? Costs you a little mite more to live in it, don't it?"

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“It costs me something,” Mr. Crewe admitted modestly. “But then our governors are all rich men, or they couldn’t afford to pay the Northeastern lobby campaign expenses. Not that I believe in a rich man for governor, gentlemen. My contention is that the State should pay its governors a sufficient salary to make them independent of the Northeastern, a salary on which they can live as befits a chief executive.”

These sentiments, and others of a similar tenor, were usually received in silence by his rural guests, but Mr. Crewe, being a broad-minded man of human understanding, did not set down their lack of response to surliness or suspicion of a motive, but rather to the innate caution of the hill farmer; and doubtless, also, to a natural awe of the unwonted splendour with which they were surrounded. In a brief time his kindly hospitality became a byword in the capital, and fabulous accounts of it were carried home at week ends to toiling wives and sons and daughters, to incredulous citizens who sat on cracker boxes and found the Sunday papers stale and unprofitable for weeks thereafter. The geraniums—the price of which Mr. Crewe had forgotten to find out—-were appraised at four figures, and the conservatory became the hanging gardens of Babylon under glass; the functionary in buff and green and silver buttons and his duties furnished the subject for long and heated arguments. And incidentally everybody who had a farm for sale wrote to Mr. Crewe. Since the motives of every philanthropist and public benefactor are inevitably challenged by cynics, there were many who asked the question, “What did Mr. Crewe want?” It is painful even to touch upon this when we know that Mr. Crewe was merely doing his duty as he saw it, when we know that he spelled the word, mentally, with a capital D.

There were many, too, who remarked that a touching friendship in the front seats (formerly plainly visible to the naked eye from the back) had been strained—at least. Mr. Crewe still sat with Mr. Botcher and Mr. Bascom, but he was not a man to pretend after the fires had cooled. The Honourable Jacob Botcher, with his eyes shut so tight, that his honest face wore an expression of agony, seemed to pray every morning for the renewal of that friendship when the chaplain begged the Lord to guide the Legislature into the paths of truth; and the Honourable Brush Bascom wore an air of resignation which was painful to see. Conversation languished, and the cosey and familiar haunts of the Pelican knew Mr. Crewe no more.

Mr. Crewe never forgot, of course, that he was a gentleman, and a certain polite intercourse existed. During the sessions, as a matter of fact, Mr. Bascom had many things to whisper to Mr. Botcher, and Mr. Butcher to Mr. Bascom, and in order to facilitate this Mr. Crewe changed seats with the Honourable Jacob. Neither was our hero a man to neglect, on account of strained relations, to insist upon his rights. His eyes were open now, and he saw men and things

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political as they were; he knew that his bills for the emancipation of the State were prisoners in the maw of the dragon, and not likely to see the light of law. Not a legislative day passed that he did not demand, with a firmness and restraint which did him infinite credit, that Mr. Bascom's and Mr. Butcher's committees report those bills to the House either favourably or unfavourably. And we must do exact justice, likewise, to Messrs. Bascom and Butcher; they, too, incited perhaps thereto by Mr. Crewe's example, answered courteously that the very excellent bills in question were of such weight and importance as not to be decided on lightly, and that there were necessary State expenditures which had first to be passed upon. Mr. Speaker Doby, with all the will in the world, could do nothing: and on such occasions (Mr. Crewe could see) Mr. Doby bore a striking resemblance to the picture of the mockturtle in "Alice m Wonderland"—a fact which had been pointed out by Miss Victoria Flint. In truth, all three of these gentlemen wore, when questioned, such a sorrowful and injured air as would have deceived a more experienced politician than the new member from Leith. The will to oblige was infinite.

There was no doubt about the fact that the session was rapidly drawing to a close; and likewise that the committees guided by the Honourables Jacob Butcher and Brush Bascom, composed of members carefully picked by that judge of mankind, Mr. Doby, were wrestling day and night (behind closed doors) with the intellectual problems presented by the bills of the member from Leith. It is not to be supposed that a man of Mr. Crewe's shrewdness would rest at the word of the chairmen. Other members were catechized, and in justice to Messrs. Bascom and Botcher it must be admitted that the assertions of these gentlemen were confirmed. It appeared that the amount of thought which was being lavished upon these measures was appalling.

By this time Mr. Crewe had made some new friends, as was inevitable when such a man unbent. Three of these friends owned, by a singular chance, weekly newspapers, and having conceived a liking as well as an admiration for him, began to say pleasant things about him in their columns—which Mr. Crewe (always thoughtful) sent to other friends of his. These new and accidental newspaper friends declared weekly that measures of paramount importance were slumbering in committees, and cited the measures. Other friends of Mr. Crewe were so inspired by affection and awe that they actually neglected their business and spent whole days in the rural districts telling people what a fine man Mr. Crewe was and circulating petitions for his bills; and incidentally the committees of Mr. Butcher and Mr. Bascom were flooded with these petitions, representing the spontaneous sentiment of an aggrieved populace.

"Just then a scout came flying,
All wild with haste and fear
To arms! to arms! Sir Consul
Lars Porsena is here.

On the low hills to westward
The Consul fixed his eye,
And saw the swarthy storm of dust
Rise fast along the sky.”

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It will not do to push a comparison too far, and Mr. Hamilton Tooting, of course, ought not to be made to act the part of Tarquin the Proud. Like Tarquin, however, he had been deposed—one of those fatuous acts which the wisest will commit. No more could the Honourable Hilary well be likened to Pandora, for he only opened the box wide enough to allow one mischievous sprite to take wings—one mischievous sprite that was to prove a host. Talented and invaluable lieutenant that he was, Mr. Tooting had become an exile, to explain to any audience who should make it worth his while the mysterious acts by which the puppets on the stage were moved, and who moved them; who, for instance, wrote the declamation which his Excellency Asa Gray recited as his own. Mr. Tooting, as we have seen, had a remarkable business head, and combined with it—as Austen Vane remarked—the rare instinct of the Norway rat which goes down to the sea in ships—when they are safe. Burrowing continually amongst the bowels of the vessel, Mr. Tooting knew the weak timbers better than the Honourable Hilary Vanes who thought the ship as sound as the day Augustus Flint had launched her. But we have got a long way from Horatius in our imagery.

Little birds flutter around the capital, picking up what crumbs they may. One of them, occasionally fed by that humanitarian, the Honourable Jacob Botcher, whispered a secret that made the humanitarian knit his brows. He was the scout that came flying (if by a burst of imagination we can conceive the Honourable Jacob in this aerial act)—-came flying to the Consul in room Number Seven with the news that Mr. Hamilton Tooting had been detected on two evenings slipping into the Duncan house. But the Consul—strong man that he was—merely laughed. The Honourable Elisha Jane did some scouting on his own account. Some people are so small as to be repelled by greatness, to be jealous of high gifts and power, and it was perhaps inevitable that a few of the humbler members whom Mr. Crewe had entertained should betray his hospitality, and misinterpret his pure motives.

It was a mere coincidence, perhaps, that after Mr. Jane's investigation the intellectual concentration which one of the committees had bestowed on two of Mr. Crewe's bills came to an end. These bills, it is true, carried no appropriation, and, were, respectively, the acts to incorporate the State Economic League and the Children's Charities Association. These suddenly appeared in the House one morning, with favourable recommendations, and, mirabile dicta, the end of the day saw them through the Senate and signed by the governor. At last Mr. Crewe by his Excellency had stamped the mark of his genius on the statute books, and the Honourable Jacob Botcher, holding out an olive branch, took the liberty of congratulating him.

A vainer man, a lighter character than Humphrey Crewe, would have been content to have got something; and let it rest at that. Little Mr. Butcher or Mr. Speaker Doby, with his sorrowful smile, guessed the iron hand within the velvet glove of the Leith statesman; little they knew the man they were dealing with. Once aroused, he would not be pacified by bribes of cheap olive branches and laurels. When the proper time

came, he would fling down the gauntlet—before Rome itself, and then let Horatius and his friends beware.

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The hour has struck at last—and the man is not wanting. The French Revolution found Napoleon ready, and our own Civil War General Ulysses Grant. Of that ever memorable session but three days remained, and those who had been prepared to rise in the good cause had long since despaired. The Pingsquit bill, and all other bills that spelled liberty, were still prisoners in the hands of grim jailers, and Thomas Gaylord, the elder, had worn several holes in the carpet of his private room in the Pelican, and could often be descried from Main Street running up and down between the windows like a caged lion, while young Tom had been spied standing, with his hands in his pockets, smiling on the world.

Young Tom had his own way of doing things, though he little dreamed of the help Heaven was to send him in this matter. There was, in the lower House, a young man by the name of Harper, a lawyer from Brighton, who was sufficiently eccentric not to carry a pass. The light of fame, as the sunset gilds a weathercock on a steeple, sometimes touches such men for an instant and makes them immortal. The name of Mr. Harper is remembered, because it is linked with a greater one. But Mr. Harper was the first man over the wall.

History chooses odd moments for her entrances. It was at the end of one of those busy afternoon sessions, with a full house, when Messrs. Bascom, Botcher, and Ridout had done enough of blocking and hacking and hewing to satisfy those doughty defenders of the bridge, that a slight, unprepossessing-looking young man with spectacles arose to make a motion. The Honourable Jacob Botcher, with his books and papers under his arm, was already picking his way up the aisle, nodding genially to such of the faithful as he saw; Mr. Bascom was at the Speaker's desk, and Mr. Ridout receiving a messenger from the Honourable Hilary at the door. The Speaker, not without some difficulty, recognized Mr. Harper amidst what seemed the beginning of an exodus—and Mr. Harper read his motion.

Men halted in the aisles, and nudged other men to make them stop talking. Mr. Harper's voice was not loud, and it shook a trifle with excitement, but those who heard passed on the news so swiftly to those who had not that the House was sitting (or standing) in amazed silence by the time the motion reached the Speaker, who had actually risen to receive it. Mr. Doby regarded it for a few seconds and raised his eyes mournfully to Mr. Harper himself, as much as to say that he would give the young man a chance to take it back if he could—if the words had not been spoken which would bring the offender to the block in the bloom and enthusiasm of youth. Misguided Mr. Harper had committed unutterable treason to the Empire!

"The gentleman from Brighton, Mr. Harper," said the Speaker, sadly, "offers the following resolution, and moves its adoption: 'Resolved, that the Committee on Incorporations be instructed to report House bill number 302, entitled "An act to incorporate the Pingsquit Railroad," by eleven-thirty o'clock to-morrow morning'—the gentleman from Putnam, Mr. Bascom."

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The House listened and looked on entranced, as though they were the spectators to a tragedy. And indeed it seemed as though they were. Necks were craned to see Mr. Harper; he didn't look like a hero, but one never can tell about these little men. He had hurled defiance at the Northeastern Railroads, and that was enough for Mr. Redbrook and Mr. Widgeon and their friends, who prepared to rush into the fray trusting to Heaven for speech and parliamentary law. O for a leader now! Horatius is on the bridge, scarce concealing his disdain for this puny opponent, and Lartius and Herminius not taking the trouble to arm. Mr. Bascom will crush this one with the flat of his sword.

"Mr. Speaker," said that gentleman, informally, "as Chairman of the Committee on Incorporations, I rise to protest against such an unheard-of motion in this House. The very essence of orderly procedure, of effective business, depends on the confidence of the House in its committees, and in all of my years as a member I have never known of such a thing. Gentlemen of the House, your committee are giving to this bill and other measures their undivided attention, and will report them at the earliest practicable moment. I hope that this motion will be voted down."

Mr. Bascom, with a glance around to assure himself that most of the hundred members of the Newcastle delegation—vassals of the Winona Corporation and subject to the Empire—had not made use of their passes and boarded, as usual, the six o'clock train, took his seat. A buzz of excitement ran over the house, a dozen men were on their feet, including the plainly agitated Mr. Harper himself. But who is this, in the lunar cockpit before the Speaker's desk, demanding firmly to be heard—so firmly that Mr. Harper, with a glance at him, sits down again; so firmly that Mr. Speaker Doby, hypnotized by an eye, makes the blunder that will eventually cost him his own head?

"The gentleman from Leith, Mr. Crewe."

As though sensing a drama, the mutterings were hushed once more. Mr. Jacob Botcher leaned forward, and cracked his seat; but none, even those who had tasted of his hospitality, recognized that the Black Knight had entered the lists—the greatest deeds of this world, and the heroes of them, coming unheralded out of the plain clay. Mr. Crewe was the calmest man under the roof as he saluted the Speaker, walked up to the clerk's desk, turned his back to it, and leaned both elbows on it; and he regarded the sea of faces with the identical self-possession he had exhibited when he had made his famous address on national affairs. He did not raise his voice at the beginning, but his very presence seemed to compel silence, and curiosity was at fever heat. What was he going to say?

"Gentlemen of the House," said Mr. Crewe, "I have listened to the gentleman from Putnam with some—amusement. He has made the statement that he and his committee are giving to the Pingsquit bill and other measures—some other measures—their undivided attention. Of this I have no doubt whatever. He neglected to define

the species of attention he is giving them—I should define it as the kindly care which the warden of a penitentiary bestows upon his charges."

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Mr. Crewe was interrupted here. The submerged four hundred and seventy had had time to rub their eyes and get their breath, to realize that their champion had dealt Mr. Bascom a blow to cleave his helm, and a roar of mingled laughter and exultation arose in the back seats, and there was more craning to see the glittering eyes of the Honourable Brush and the expressions of his two companions-in-arms. Mr. Speaker Doby beat the stone with his gavel, while Mr. Crewe continued to lean back calmly until the noise was over.

“Gentlemen,” he went on, “I will enter at the proper time into a situation—known, I believe, to most of you—that brings about a condition of affairs by which the gentleman’s committee, or the gentleman himself, with his capacious pockets, does not have to account to the House for every bill assigned to him by the Speaker. I have taken the trouble to examine a little into the gentleman’s past record—he has been chairman of such committees for years past, and I find no trace that bills inimical to certain great interests have ever been reported back by him. The Pingsquit bill involves the vital principle of competition. I have read it with considerable care and believe it to be, in itself, a good measure, which deserves a fair hearing. I have had no conversation whatever with those who are said to be its promoters. If the bill is to pass, it has little enough time to get to the Senate. By the gentleman from Putnam’s own statement his committee have given it its share of attention, and I believe this House is entitled to know the verdict, is entitled to accept or reject a report. I hope the motion will prevail.”

He sat down amidst a storm of applause which would have turned the head of a lesser man. No such personal ovation had been seen in the House for years. How the Speaker got order; how the Honourable Brush Bascom declared that Mr. Crewe would be called upon to prove his statements; how Mr. Botcher regretted that a new member of such promise should go off at half-cock; how Mr. Ridout hinted that the new member might think he had an animus; how Mr. Terry of Lee and Mr. Widgeon of Hull denounced, in plain hill language, the Northeastern Railroads and lauded the man of prominence who had the grit to oppose them, need not be gone into. Mr. Crewe at length demanded the previous question, which was carried, and the motion was carried, too, two hundred and fifty to one hundred and fifty-two. The House adjourned.

We will spare the blushes of the hero of this occasion, who was threatened with suffocation by an inundation from the back seats. In answer to the congratulations and queries, he replied modestly that nobody else seemed to have had the sand to do it, so he did it himself. He regarded it as a matter of duty, however unpleasant and unforeseen; and if, as they said, he had been a pioneer, education and a knowledge of railroads and the world had helped him. Whereupon, adding tactfully that he desired the evening to himself to prepare for the battle of the morrow (of which he foresaw he was to bear the burden), he extricated himself from his admirers and made his way unostentatiously out of a side door into his sleigh. For the man who had kindled a fire—the blaze of which was to mark an epoch—he was exceptionally calm. Not so the only visitor whom Waters had instructions to admit that evening.

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“Say, you hit it just right,” cried the visitor, too exultant to take off his overcoat. “I’ve been down through the Pelican, and there ain’t been such excitement since Snow and Giddings had the fight for United States senator in the ’80’s. The place is all torn up, and you can’t get a room there for love or money. They tell me they’ve been havin’ conferences steady in Number Seven since the session closed, and Hilary Vane’s sent for all the Federal and State office-holders to be here in the morning and lobby. Botcher and Jane and Bascom are circulatin’ like hot water, tellin’ everybody that because they wouldn’t saddle the State with a debt with your bills you turned sour on ’em, and that you’re more of a corporation and railroad man than any of ’em. They’ve got their machine to working a thousand to the minute, and everybody they have a slant on is going into line. One of them fellers, a conductor, told me he had to go with ’em. But our boys ain’t idle, I can tell you that. I was in the back of the gallery when you spoke up, and I shook ’em off the leash right away.”

Mr. Crewe leaned back from the table and thrust his hands in his pockets and smiled. He was in one of his delightful moods.

“Take off your overcoat, Tooting,” he said; “you’ll find one of my best political cigars over there, in the usual place.”

“Well, I guessed about right, didn’t I?” inquired Mr. Tooting, biting off one of the political cigars. “I gave you a pretty straight tip, didn’t I, that young Tom Gaylord was goin’ to have somebody make that motion to-day? But say, it’s funny he couldn’t get a better one than that feller Harper. If you hadn’t come along, they’d have smashed him to pulp. I’ll bet the most surprised man in the State to-night, next to Brush Bascom, is young Tom Gaylord. It’s a wonder he ain’t been up here to thank you.”

“Maybe he has been,” replied Mr. Crewe. “I told Waters to keep everybody out to-night because I want to know exactly what I’m going to say on the floor tomorrow. I don’t want ’em to give me trouble. Did you bring some of those papers with you?”

Mr. Tooting fished a bundle from his overcoat pocket. The papers in question, of which he had a great number stored away in Ripton, represented the foresight, on Mr. Tooting’s part, of years. He was a young man with a praiseworthy ambition to get on in the world, and during his apprenticeship in the office of the Honourable Hilary Vane many letters and documents had passed through his hands. A less industrious person would have neglected the opportunity. Mr. Tooting copied them; and some, which would have gone into the waste-basket, he laid carefully aside, bearing in mind the adage about little scraps of paper—if there is one. At any rate, he now had a manuscript collection which was unique in its way, which would have been worth much to a great many men, and with characteristic generosity he was placing it at the disposal of Mr. Crewe.

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Mr. Crewe, in reading them, had other sensations. He warmed with indignation as an American citizen that a man should sit in a mahogany office in New York and dictate the government of a free and sovereign State; and he found himself in the grip of a righteous wrath when he recalled what Mr. Flint had written to him. “As a neighbour, it will give me the greatest pleasure to help you to the extent of my power, but the Northeastern Railroads cannot interfere in legislative or political matters.” The effrontery of it was appalling! Where, he demanded of Mr. Tooting, did the common people come in? And this extremely pertinent question Mr. Tooting was unable to answer.

But the wheels of justice had begun to turn.

Mr. Tooting had not exaggerated the tumult and affright at the Pelican Hotel. The private telephone in Number Seven was busy all evening, while more or less prominent gentlemen were using continually the public ones in the boxes in the reading room downstairs. The Feudal system was showing what it could do, and the word had gone out to all the holders of fiefs that the vassals should be summoned. The Duke of Putnam had sent out a general call to the office-holders in that county. Theirs not to reason why—but obey; and some of them, late as was the hour, were already travelling (free) towards the capital. Even the congressional delegation in Washington had received telegrams, and sent them again to Federal office-holders in various parts of the State. If Mr. Crewe had chosen to listen, he could have heard the tramp of armed men. But he was not of the metal to be dismayed by the prospect of a great conflict. He was as cool as Cromwell, and after Mr. Tooting had left him to take charge once more of his own armies in the yield, the genlemon from Leith went to bed and slept soundly.

The day of the battle dawned darkly, with great flakes flying. As early as seven o’clock the later cohorts began to arrive, and were soon as thick as bees in the Pelican, circulating in the lobby, conferring in various rooms of which they had the numbers with occupants in bed and out. A wonderful organization, that Feudal System, which could mobilize an army overnight! And each unit of it, like the bee, working unselfishly for the good of the whole; like the bee, flying straight for the object to be attained. Every member of the House from Putnam County, for instance, was seen by one of these indefatigable captains, and if the member had a mortgage or an ambition, or a wife and family that made life a problem, or a situation on the railroad or in some of the larger manufacturing establishments, let him beware! If he lived in lodgings in the town, he stuck his head out of the window to perceive a cheery neighbour from the country on his doorstep. Think of a system which could do this, not for Putnam County alone, but for all the counties in the State!

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The Honourable Hilary Vane, captain-general of the Forces, had had but four hours' sleep, and his Excellency, the Honourable Asa Gray, when he arose in the twilight of the morning, had to step carefully to avoid the cigar butts on the floor which—like so many empty cartridge shells were unpleasant reminders that a rebellion of no mean magnitude had arisen against the power to which he owed allegiance, and by the favour of which he was attended with pomp and circumstance wherever he chose to go.

Long before eleven o'clock the paths to the state-house were thronged with people. Beside the office-holders and their friends who were in town, there were many residents of the capital city in the habit of going to hear the livelier debates. Not that the powers of the Empire had permitted debates on most subjects, but there could be no harm in allowing the lower House to discuss as fiercely as they pleased dog and sheep laws and hedgehog bounties. But now! The oldest resident couldn't remember a case of high treason and rebellion against the Northeastern such as this promised to be, and the sensation took on an added flavour from the fact that the arch rebel was a figure of picturesque interest, a millionaire with money enough to rent the Duncan house and fill its long-disused stable with horses, who was a capitalist himself and a friend of Mr. Flint's; of whom it was said that he was going to marry Mr. Flint's daughter!

Long before eleven, too, the chiefs over tens and the chiefs over hundreds had gathered their men and marched them into the state-house; and Mr. Tooting, who was everywhere that morning, noticed that some of these led soldiers had pieces of paper in their hands. The chaplain arose to pray for guidance, and the House was crowded to its capacity, and the gallery filled with eager and expectant faces—but the hero of the hour had not yet arrived. When at length he did walk down the aisle, as unconcernedly as though he were an unknown man entering a theatre, feminine whispers of "There he is!" could plainly be heard above the buzz, and simultaneous applause broke out in spots, causing the Speaker to rap sharply with his gavel. Poor Mr. Speaker Doby! He looked more like the mock-turtle than ever! and might have exclaimed, too, that once he had been a real turtle: only yesterday, in fact, before he had made the inconceivable blunder of recognizing Mr. Humphrey Crewe. Mr. Speaker Doby had spent a part of the night in room Number Seven listening to things about himself. Herminius the unspeakable has given the enemy a foothold in Rome.

Apparently unaware that he was the centre of interest, Mr. Crewe, carrying a neat little bag full of papers, took his seat beside the Honourable Jacob Botcher, nodding to that erstwhile friend as a man of the world should. And Mr. Botcher, not to be outdone, nodded back.

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We shall skip over the painful interval that elapsed before the bill in question was reached: painful, at least, for every one but Mr. Crewe, who sat with his knees crossed and his arms folded. The hosts were facing each other, awaiting the word; the rebels prayerfully watching their gallant leader; and the loyal vassals—whose wavering ranks had been added to overnight—with their eyes on Mr. Bascom. And in justice to that veteran it must be said, despite the knock-out blow he had received, that he seemed as debonair as ever.

> "Now while the three were tightening
> The harness on their backs."

Mr. Speaker Doby read many committee reports, and at the beginning of each there was a stir of expectation that it might be the signal for battle. But at length he fumbled among his papers, cleared away the lump in his throat, and glanced significantly at Mr. Bascom.

"The Committee on Incorporations, to whom was referred House bill number 302, entitled "An act to incorporate the Pingsquit Railroad," having considered the same, report the same with the following resolution: 'Resolved, that it is inexpedient to legislate. Brush Bascom, for the Committee.' Gentlemen, are you ready for the question? As many as are of opinion that the report of the Committee should be adopted—the gentleman from Putnam, Mr. Bascom."

Again let us do exact justice, and let us not be led by our feelings to give a prejudiced account of this struggle. The Honourable Brush Bascom, skilled from youth in the use of weapons, opened the combat so adroitly that more than once the followers of his noble opponent winced and trembled. The bill, Mr. Bascom said, would have been reported that day, anyway—a statement received with mingled cheers and jeers. Then followed a brief and somewhat intimate history of the Gaylord Lumber Company, not at all flattering to that corporation. Mr. Bascom hinted, at an animus: there was no more need for a railroad in the Pingsquit Valley than there was for a merry-go-round in the cellar of the state-house. (Loud laughter from everybody, some irreverent person crying out that a merry-go-round was better than poker tables.) When Mr. Bascom came to discuss the gentleman from Leith, and recited the names of the committees for which Mr. Crewe—in his desire to be of service to the State had applied, there was more laughter, even amongst Mr. Crewe's friends, and Mr. Speaker Doby relaxed so far as to smile sadly. Mr. Bascom laid his watch on the clerk's desk and began to read the list of bills Mr. Crewe had introduced, and as this reading proceeded some of the light-minded showed a tendency to become slightly hysterical. Mr. Bascom said that he would like to see all those bills grow into laws,—with certain slight changes,—but that he could not conscientiously vote to saddle the people with another Civil War debt. It was well for the State, he hinted, that those committees were composed of stanch men who would do their duty in all weathers, regardless of demagogues who sought to gratify inordinate ambitions.

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The hope of the revolutionists bore these strokes and others as mighty with complacency, as though they had been so many playful taps; and while the battle surged hotly around him he sat calmly listening or making occasional notes with a gold pencil. Born leader that he was, he was biding his time. Mr. Bascom's attack was met valiantly, but unskillfully, from the back seats. The Honourable Jacob Botcher arose, and filled the hall with extracts from the "Book of Arguments"—in which he had been coached overnight by the Honourable Hilary Vane. Mr. Botcher's tone towards his erstwhile friend was regretful,—a good man gone wrong through impulse and inexperience. "I am, sir," said Mr. Bascom to the Speaker, "sincerely sorry—sincerely sorry that an individual of such ability as the member from Leith should be led, by the representations of political adventurers and brigands and malcontents, into his present deplorable position of criticising a State which is his only by adoption, the political conditions of which were as sound and as free from corporate domination, sir, as those of any State in the broad Union." (Loud cheers.) This appeal to State pride by Mr. Botches is a master stroke, and the friends of the champion of the liberties of the people are beginning (some of them) to be a little nervous and doubtful.

Following Mr. Botches were wild and scattering speeches from the back benches—-unskillful and pitiable counter-strokes. Where was the champion? Had he been tampered with overnight, and persuaded of the futility of rebellion? Persuaded that his head would be more useful on his own neck in the councils of the nation than on exhibition to the populace from the point of a pike? It looks, to a calm spectator from the gallery, as though the rebel forces are growing weaker and more demoralized every moment. Mr. Redbrook's speech, vehement and honest, helps a little; people listen to an honest and forceful man, however he may lack technical knowledge, but the majority of the replies are mere incoherent denunciations of the Northeastern Railroads.

On the other hand, the astounding discipline amongst the legions of the Empire excites the admiration and despair even of their enemies; there is no random fighting here and breaking of ranks to do useless hacking. A grave farmer with a beard delivers a short and temperate speech (which he has by heart), mildly inquiring what the State would do without the Northeastern Railroads; and the very moderation of this query coming from a plain and hard-headed agriculturist (the boss of Grenville, if one but knew it!) has a telling effect. And then to cap the climax, to make the attitude of the rebels even more ridiculous in the minds of thinking people, Mr. Ridout is given the floor. Skilled in debate when he chooses to enter it, his knowledge of the law only exceeded by his knowledge of how it is to be evaded—to Lartius is assigned the task of following up the rout. And Mr. Crewe has ceased taking notes.

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When the House leader and attorney for the Northeastern took his seat, the victory to all appearances was won. It was a victory for conservatism and established order against sensationalism and anarchy—Mr. Ridout had contrived to make that clear without actually saying so. It was as if the Ute Indians had sought to capture Washington and conduct the government. Just as ridiculous as that! The debate seemed to be exhausted, and the long-suffering Mr. Doby was inquiring for the fiftieth time if the House were ready for the question, when Mr. Crewe of Leith arose and was recognized. In three months he had acquired such a remarkable knowledge of the game of parliamentary tactics as to be able, patiently, to wait until the bolt of his opponents had been shot; and a glance sufficed to revive the drooping spirits of his followers, and to assure them that their leader knew what he was about.

“Mr. Speaker,” he said, “I have listened with great care to the masterly defence of that corporation on which our material prosperity and civic welfare is founded (laughter); I have listened to the gentleman’s learned discussion of the finances of that road, tending to prove that it is an eleemosynary institution on a grand scale. I do not wish to question unduly the intellects of those members of this House who by their votes will prove that they have been convinced by the gentleman’s argument.” Here Mr. Crewe paused and drew a slip of paper from his pocket and surveyed the back seats. “But I perceive,” he continued, “that a great interest has been taken in this debate—so great an interest that since yesterday numbers of gentlemen have come in from various parts of the State to listen to it (laughter and astonishment), gentlemen who hold Federal and State offices. (Renewed laughter and searching of the House.) I repeat, Mr. Speaker, that I do not wish to question the intellects of my fellow-members, but I notice that many of them who are seated near the Federal and State office-holders in question have in their hands slips of paper similar to this. And I have reason to believe that these slips were written by somebody in room Number Seven of the Pelican Hotel.” (Tremendous commotion, and craning to see whether one’s neighbour has a slip. The, faces of the redoubtable three a study.)

“I procured one of these slips,” Mr. Crewe continued, “through a fellow-member who has no use for it—whose intelligence, in fact, is underrated by the gentlemen in Number Seven. I will read the slip.

“’Vote yes on the question. Yes means that the report of the Committee will be accepted, and that the Pingsquit bill will not pass. Wait for Bascom’s signal, and destroy this paper.'”

There was no need, indeed, for Mr. Crewe to say any more than that—no need for the admirable discussion of railroad finance from an expert’s standpoint which followed to controvert Mr. Ridout’s misleading statements. The reading of the words on the slip of paper of which he had so mysteriously got possession (through Mr. Hamilton Tooting) was sufficient to bring about a disorder that for a full minute—Mr. Speaker Doby found it impossible to quell. The gallery shook with laughter, and honourable members with

slips of paper in their hands were made as conspicuous as if they had been caught wearing dunces' caps.

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It was then only, with belated wisdom, that Mr. Bascom and his two noble companions gave up the fight, and let the horde across the bridge—too late, as we shall see. The populace, led by a redoubtable leader, have learned their strength. It is true that the shining senatorial twenty of the body-guard stand ready to be hacked to pieces at their posts before the Pingsquit bill shall become a law; and should unutterable treason take place here, his Excellency is prepared to be drawn and quartered rather than sign it. It is the Senate which, in this somewhat inaccurate repetition of history, hold the citadel if not the bridge; and in spite of the howling mob below their windows, scornfully refuse even to discuss the Pingsquit bill. The Honourable Hilary Vane, whose face they study at dinner time, is not worried. Popular wrath does not continue to boil, and many changes will take place in the year before the Legislature meets again.

This is the Honourable Hilary's public face. But are there not private conferences in room Number Seven of which we can know nothing —exceedingly uncomfortable conferences for Horatius and his companions? Are there not private telegrams and letters to the president of the Northeastern in New York advising him that the Pingsquit bill has passed the House, and that a certain Mr. Crewe is primarily responsible? And are there not queries—which history may disclose in after years—as to whether Mr. Crewe's abilities as a statesman have not been seriously underrated by those who should have been the first to perceive them? Verily, pride goeth before a fall.

In this modern version of ours, the fathers throng about another than Horatius after the session of that memorable morning. Publicly and privately, Mr. Crewe is being congratulated, and we know enough of his character to appreciate the modesty with which the congratulations are accepted. He is the same Humphrey Crewe that he was before he became the corner-stone of the temple; success is a mere outward and visible sign of intrinsic worth in the inner man, and Mr. Crewe had never for a moment underestimated his true value.

"There's, no use wasting time in talking about it," he told the grateful members who sought to press his hands. "Go home and organize. I've got your name. Get your neighbours into line, and keep me informed. I'll pay for the postage-stamps. I'm no impractical reformer, and if we're going to do this thing, we'll have to do it right."

They left him, impressed by the force of this argument, with an added respect for Mr. Crewe, and a vague feeling that they were pledged to something which made not a few of them a trifle uneasy. Mr. Redbrook was one of these.

The felicitations of his new-found friend and convert, Mr. Tooting, Mr. Crewe cut short with the terseness of a born commander.

"Never mind that," he said, "and follow 'em up and get 'em pledged if you can."

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Get ’em pledged! Pledged to what? Mr. Tooting evidently knew, for he wasted no precious moments in asking questions.

There is no time at this place to go into the feelings of Mr. Tom Gaylord the younger when he learned that his bill had passed the House. He, too, meeting Mr. Crewe in the square, took the opportunity to express his gratitude to the member from Leith.

“Come in on Friday afternoon, Gaylord,” answered Mr. Crewe. “I’ve got several things to talk to you about. Your general acquaintance around the State will be useful, and there must be men you know of in the lumber sections who can help us considerably.”

“Help us?” repeated young Tom, in same surprise.

“Certainly,” replied Mr. Crewe; “you don’t think we’re going to drop the fight here, do you? We’ve got to put a stop in this State to political domination by a railroad, and as long as there doesn’t seem to be anyone else to take hold, I’m going to. Your bill’s a good bill, and we’ll pass it next session.”

Young Tom regarded Mr. Crewe with a frank stare.

“I’m going up to the Pingsquit Valley on Friday,” he answered.

“Then you’d better come up to Leith to see me as soon as you get back,” said Mr. Crewe. “These things can’t wait, and have to be dealt with practically.”

Young Tom had not been the virtual head of the Gaylord Company for some years without gaining a little knowledge of politics and humanity. The invitation to Leith he valued, of course, but he felt that it would not do to accept it with too much ardour. He was, he said, a very busy man.

“That’s the trouble with most people,” declared Mr. Crewe; “they won’t take the time to bother about politics, and then they complain when things don’t go right. Now I’m givin’ my time to it, when I’ve got other large interests to attend to.”

On his way back to the Pelican, young Tom halted several times reflectively, as certain points in this conversation which he seemed to have missed at the time—came back to him. His gratitude to Mr. Crewe as a public benefactor was profound, of course; but young Tom’s sense of humour was peculiar, and he laughed more than once, out loud, at nothing at all. Then he became grave again, and went into the hotel and wrote a long letter, which he addressed to Mr. Austen Vane.

And now, before this chapter which contains these memorable events is closed, one more strange and significant fact is to be chronicled. On the evening of the day which saw Mr. Crewe triumphantly leading the insurgent forces to victory, that gentleman sent his private secretary to the office of the State Tribune to leave an order for fifty copies of

the paper to be delivered in the morning. Morning came, and the fifty copies, and Mr. Crewe's personal copy in addition, were handed to him by the faithful Waters when he entered his dining room at an early hour. Life is full of disillusions. Could this be the State Tribune he held in his hand? The State Tribune of Mr. Peter Pardriff, who had stood so staunchly for Mr. Crewe and better things? Who had hitherto held the words of the Leith statesman in such golden estimate as to curtail advertising columns when it was necessary to print them for the public good?

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Mr. Crewe's eye travelled from column to column, from page to page, in vain. By some incredible oversight on the part of Mr. Pardriff, the ringing words were not there,—nay, the soul-stirring events of that eventful day appeared, on closer inspection, to have been deliberately edited out! The terrible indignation of the righteous arose as Mr. Crewe read (in the legislative proceedings of the day before) that the Pingsquit bill had been discussed by certain members—of whom he was one —and passed. This was all —literally all! If Mr. Pardriff had lived in the eighteenth century, he would probably have referred as casually to the Boston massacre as a street fight—which it was.

Profoundly disgusted with human kind,—as the noblest of us will be at times,—Mr. Crewe flung down the paper, and actually forgot to send the fifty copies to his friends!

CHAPTER XV

THE DISTURBANCE OF JUNE SEVENTH

After Mr. Speaker Doby had got his gold watch from an admiring and apparently reunited House, and had wept over it, the Legislature adjourned. This was about the first of April, that sloppiest and windiest of months in a northern climate, and Mr. Crewe had intended, as usual, to make a little trip southward to a club of which he was a member. A sense of duty, instead, took him to Leith, where he sat through the days in his study, dictating letters, poring over a great map of the State which he had hung on the wall, and scanning long printed lists. If we could stand behind him, we should see that these are what are known as check-lists, or rosters of the voters in various towns.

Mr. Crewe also has an unusual number of visitors for this muddy weather, when the snow-water is making brooks of the roads. Interested observers —if there were any—-might have remarked that his friendship with Mr. Hamilton Tooting had increased, that gentleman coming up from Ripton at least twice a week, and aiding Mr. Crewe to multiply his acquaintances by bringing numerous strangers to see him. Mr. Tooting, as we know, had abandoned the law office of the Honourable Hilary Vane and was now engaged in travelling over the State, apparently in search of health. These were signs, surely, which the wise might have read with profit: in the offices, for instance, of the Honourable Hilary Vane in Ripton Square, where seismic disturbances were registered; but the movement of the needle (to the Honourable Hilary's eye) was almost imperceptible. What observer, however experienced, would have believed that such delicate tracings could herald a volcanic eruption?

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Throughout the month of April the needle kept up its persistent registering, and the Honourable Hilary continued to smile. The Honourable Jacob Botcher, who had made a trip to Ripton and had cited that very decided earthquake shock of the Pingsquit bill, had been ridiculed for his pains, and had gone away again comforted by communion with a strong man. The Honourable Jacob had felt little shocks in his fief: Mr. Tooting had visited it, sitting with his feet on the tables of hotel waiting-rooms, holding private intercourse with gentlemen who had been disappointed in office. Mr. Tooting had likewise been a sojourner in the domain of the Duke of Putnam. But the Honourable Brush was not troubled, and had presented Mr. Tooting with a cigar.

In spite of the strange omission of the State Tribune to print his speech and to give his victory in the matter of the Pingsquit bill proper recognition, Mr. Crewe was too big a man to stop his subscription to the paper. Conscious that he had done his duty in that matter, neither praise nor blame could affect him; and although he had not been mentioned since, he read it assiduously every afternoon upon its arrival at Leith, feeling confident that Mr. Peter Pardriff (who had always in private conversation proclaimed himself emphatically for reform) would not eventually refuse—to a prophet—public recognition. One afternoon towards the end of that month of April, when the sun had made the last snow-drift into a pool, Mr. Crewe settled himself on his south porch and opened the State Tribune, and his heart gave a bound as his eye fell upon the following heading to the leading editorial:—

A *worthy public servant for governor*

Had his reward come at last? Had Mr. Peter Pardriff seen the error of his way? Mr. Crewe leisurely folded back the sheet, and called to his secretary, who was never far distant.

“Look here,” he said, “I guess Pardriff’s recovered his senses. Look here!”

The tired secretary, ready with his pencil and notebook to order fifty copies, responded, staring over his employer’s shoulder. It has been said of men in battle that they have been shot and have run forward some hundred feet without knowing what has happened to them. And so Mr. Crewe got five or six lines into that editorial before he realized in full the baseness of Mr. Pardriff’s treachery.

“These are times” (so ran Mr. Pardriff’s composition) “when the sure and steadying hand of a strong man is needed at the helm of State. A man of conservative, business habits of mind; a man who weighs the value of traditions equally with the just demands of a new era; a man with a knowledge of public affairs derived from long experience;” (!!!) “a man who has never sought office, but has held it by the will of the people, and who himself is a proof that the conduct of State institutions in the past has been just and equitable. One who

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has served with distinction upon such boards as the Railroad Commission, the Board of Equalization, *etc*., *etc*." (!!!) "A stanch Republican, one who puts party before—" here the newspaper began to shake a little, and Mr. Crewe could not for the moment see whether the next word were place or principle. He skipped a few lines. The Tribune, it appeared, had a scintillating idea, which surely must have occurred to others in the State. "Why not the Honourable Adam B. Hunt of Edmundton for the next governor?"

The Honourable Adam B. Hunt of Edmundton!

It is a pleasure to record, at this crisis, that Mr. Crewe fixed upon his secretary as steady an eye as though Mr. Pardriff's bullet had missed its mark.

"Get me," he said coolly, "the 'State Encyclopaedia of Prominent Men.'" (Just printed. Fogarty and Co., Newcastle, publishers.)

The secretary fetched it, open at the handsome and lifelike steel-engraving of the Honourable Adam, with his broad forehead and kindly, twinkling eyes, and the tuft of beard on his chin; with his ample statesman's coat in natural creases, and his white shirt-front and little black tie. Mr. Crewe gazed at this work of art long and earnestly. The Honourable Adam B. Hunt did not in the least have the appearance of a bolt from the blue. And then Mr. Crewe read his biography.

Two things he shrewdly noted about that biography; it was placed, out of alphabetical order, fourth in the book, and it was longer than any other with one exception that of Mr. Ridout, the capital lawyer. Mr. Ridout's place was second in this invaluable volume, he being preceded only by a harmless patriarch. These facts were laid before Mr. Tooting, who was directed by telephone to come to Leith as soon as he should arrive in Ripton from his latest excursion. It was nine o'clock at night when that long-suffering and mud-bespattered individual put in an appearance at the door of his friend's study.

"Because I didn't get on to it," answered Mr. Tooting, in response to a reproach for not having registered a warning—for he was Mr. Crewe's seismograph. "I knew old Adam was on the Railroads' governor's bench, but I hadn't any notion he'd been moved up to the top of the batting list. I told you right. Ridout was going to be their next governor if you hadn't singed him with the Pingsquit bill. This was done pretty slick, wasn't it? Hilary got back from New York day before yesterday, and Pardriff has the editorial to-day. Say, I always told you Pardriff wasn't a reformer, didn't I?"

Mr. Crewe looked pained.

"I prefer to believe the best of people until I know the worst," he said. "I did not think Mr. Pardriff capable of ingratitude."

What Mr. Crewe meant by this remark is enigmatical.

“He ain’t,” replied Mr. Tooting, “he’s grateful for that red ticket he carries around with him when he travels, and he’s grateful to the Honourable Adam B. Hunt for favours to come. Peter Pardriff’s a grateful cuss, all-right, all right.”

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Mr. Crewe tapped his fingers on the desk thoughtfully.

“The need of a reform campaign is more apparent than ever,” he remarked.

Mr. Tooting put his tongue in his cheek; and, seeing a dreamy expression on his friend’s face, accidentally helped himself to a cigar out of the wrong box.

“It’s up to a man with a sense of duty and money to make it,” Mr. Tooting agreed, taking a long pull at the Havana.

“As for the money,” replied Mr. Crewe, “the good citizens of the State should be willing to contribute largely. I have had a list of men of means prepared, who will receive notices at the proper time.”

Mr. Hamilton Tooting spread out his feet, and appeared to be studying them carefully.

“It’s funny you should have mentioned cash,” he said, after a moment’s silence, “and it’s tough on you to have to be the public-spirited man to put it up at the start. I’ve got a little memorandum here,” he added, fumbling apologetically in his pocket; “it certainly costs something to move the boys around and keep ’em indignant.”

Mr. Tooting put the paper on the edge of the desk, and Mr. Crewe, without looking, reached out his hand for it, the pained expression returning to his face.

“Tooting,” he said, “you’ve got a very flippant way of speaking of serious things. It strikes me that these expenses are out of all proportion to the simplicity of the task involved. It strikes me—ahem that you might find, in some quarters at least, a freer response to a movement founded on principle.”

“That’s right,” declared Mr. Tooting, “I’ve thought so myself. I’ve got mad, and told ’em so to their faces. But you’ve said yourself, Mr. Crewe, that we’ve got to deal with this thing practically.”

“Certainly,” Mr. Crewe interrupted. He loved the word.

“And we’ve got to get workers, haven’t we? And it costs money to move ’em round, don’t it? We haven’t got a bushel basket of passes. Look here,” and he pushed another paper at Mr. Crewe, “here’s ten new ones who’ve made up their minds that you’re the finest man in the State. That makes twenty.”

Mr. Crewe took that paper deprecatingly, but nevertheless began a fire of cross-questions on Mr. Tooting as to the personality, habits, and occupations of the discerning ten in question, making certain little marks of his own against each name. Thus it will be seen that Mr. Crewe knew perfectly what he was about—although no one else did except Mr. Tooting, who merely looked mysterious when questioned on the streets of

Ripton or Newcastle or Kingston. It was generally supposed, however, that the gentleman from Leith was going to run for the State Senate, and was attempting to get a following in other counties, in order to push through his measures next time. Hence the tiny fluctuations of Hilary Vane's seismograph an instrument, as will be shown, utterly out-of-date. Not so the motto toujours l'audace. Geniuses continue (at long intervals) to be born, and to live up to that motto.

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That seismograph of the Honourable Hilary's persisted in tracing only a slightly ragged line throughout the beautiful month of May, in which favourable season the campaign of the Honourable Adam B. Hunt took root and flourished—apparently from the seed planted by the State Tribune. The ground, as usual, had been carefully prepared, and trained gardeners raked, and watered, and weeded the patch. It had been decreed and countersigned that the Honourable Adam B. Hunt was the flower that was to grow this year.

There must be something vitally wrong with an instrument which failed to register the great earthquake shock of June the seventh!

Now that we have come to the point where this shock is to be recorded on these pages, we begin to doubt whether our own pen will be able adequately to register it, and whether the sheet is long enough and broad enough upon which to portray the relative importance of the disturbance created. The trouble is, that there is nothing to measure it by. What other event in the history of the State produced the vexation of spirit, the anger, the tears, the profanity; the derision, the laughter of fools, the contempt; the hope, the glee, the prayers, the awe, the dumb amazement at the superb courage of this act? No, for a just comparison we shall have to reach back to history and fable: David and Goliath; Theseus and the Minotaur; or, better still, Cadmus and the Dragon! It was Cadmus (if we remember rightly) who wasted no time whatever, but actually jumped down the dragon's throat and cut him up from the inside! And it was Cadmus, likewise, who afterwards sowed the dragon's teeth.

That wondrous clear and fresh summer morning of June the seventh will not be forgotten for many years. The trees were in their early leaf in Ripton Square, and the dark pine patches on Sawanec looked (from Austen's little office) like cloud shadows against the shimmer of the tender green. He sat at his table, which was covered with open law-books and papers, but his eyes were on the distant mountain, and every scent-laden breeze wafted in at his open window seemed the bearer of a tremulous, wistful, yet imperious message—"Come!" Throughout the changing seasons Sawanec called to him in words of love: sometimes her face was hidden by cloud and fog and yet he heard her voice! Sometimes her perfume as to-day—made him dream; sometimes, when the western heavens were flooded with the golden light of the infinite, she veiled herself in magic purple, when to gaze at her was an exquisite agony, and she became as one forbidden to man. Though his soul cried out to her across the spaces, she was not for him. She was not for him!

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With a sigh he turned to his law-books again, and sat for a while staring steadfastly at a section of the 'Act of Consolidation of the Northeastern Railroads' which he had stumbled on that morning. The section, if he read its meaning aright, was fraught with the gravest consequences for the Northeastern Railroads; if he read its meaning aright, the Northeastern Railroads had been violating it persistently for many years and were liable for unknown sums in damages. The discovery of it had dazed him, and the consequences resulting from a successful suit under the section would be so great that he had searched diligently, though in vain, for some modification of it since its enactment. Why had not some one discovered it before? This query appeared to be unanswerable, until the simple—though none the less remarkable—solution came to him, that perhaps no definite occasion had hitherto arisen for seeking it. Undoubtedly the Railroads' attorneys must know of its existence—his own father, Hilary Vane, having been instrumental in drawing up the Act. And a long period had elapsed under which the Northeastern Railroads had been a law unto themselves.

The discovery was of grave import to Austen. A month before, chiefly through the efforts of his friend, Tom, who was gradually taking his father's place in the Gaylord Lumber Company, Austen had been appointed junior counsel for that corporation. The Honourable Galusha Hammer still remained the senior counsel, but was now confined in his house at Newcastle by an illness which made the probability of his return to active life extremely doubtful; and Tom had repeatedly declared that in the event of his non-recovery Austen should have Mr. Hammer's place. As counsel for the Gaylord Lumber Company, it was clearly his duty to call the attention of young Mr. Gaylord to the section; and in case Mr. Hammer did not resume his law practice, it would fall upon Austen himself to bring the suit. His opponent in this matter would be his own father.

The consequences of this culminating conflict between them, the coming of which he had long dreaded—although he had not foreseen its specific cause—weighed heavily upon Austen. It was Tom Gaylord himself who abruptly aroused him from his revery by bursting in at the door.

"Have you heard what's up?" he cried, flinging down a newspaper before Austen's eyes. "Have you seen the Guardian?"

"What's the matter now, Tom?"

"Matter!" exclaimed Tom; "read that. Your friend and client, the Honourable Humphrey Crewe, is out for governor."

"Humphrey Crewe for governor!"

"On an anti-railroad platform. I might have known something of the kind was up when he began to associate with Tooting, and from the way he spoke to me in March. But

who'd have thought he'd have the cheek to come out for governor? Did you ever hear of such tommyrot?"

Austen looked grave.

"I'm not sure it's such tommyrot," he said.

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“Not tommyrot?” Tom ejaculated. “Everybody’s laughing. When I passed the Honourable Hilary’s door just now, Brush Bascom and some of the old liners were there, reciting parts of the proclamation, and the boys down in the Ripton House are having the time of their lives.”

Austen took the Guardian, and there, sure enough, filling a leading column, and in a little coarser type than the rest of the page, he read:

> *Downwith railroad rule*!
>
> The Honourable Humphrey Crewe of Leith, at the request
> of twenty prominent citizens, consents to become a candidate
> for the Republican Nomination for Governor.

Ringing letter of acceptance, in which he denounces the political power of the Northeastern Railroads, and declares that the State is governed from a gilded suite of offices in New Pork.

“The following letter, evincing as it does a public opinion thoroughly aroused in all parts of the State against the present disgraceful political conditions, speaks for itself. The standing and character of its signers give it a status which Republican voters cannot ignore.”

The letter followed. It prayed Mr. Crewe, in the name of decency and good government, to carry the standard of honest men to victory. Too long had a proud and sovereign State writhed under the heel of an all-devouring corporation! Too long had the Northeastern Railroads elected, for their own selfish ends, governors and legislatures and controlled railroad commissions The spirit of 1776 was abroad in the land. It was eminently fitting that the Honourable Humphrey Crewe of Leith, who had dared to fling down the gauntlet in the face of an arrogant power, should be the leader of the plain people, to recover the rights which had been wrested from them. Had he not given the highest proof that he had the people’s interests at heart? He was clearly a man who “did things.”

At this point Austen looked up and smiled.

“Tom,” he asked, “has it struck you that this is written in the same inimitable style as a part of the message of the Honourable Asa Gray?”

Tom slapped his knee.

“That’s exactly what I said I!” he cried. “Tooting wrote it. I’ll swear to it.”

“And the twenty prominent citizens—do you know any of ’em, Tom?”

“Well,” said Tom, in delighted appreciation, “I’ve heard of three of ’em, and that’s more than any man I’ve met can boast of. Ed Dubois cuts my hair when I go to Kingston. He certainly is a prominent citizen in the fourth ward. Jim Kendall runs the weekly newspaper in Grantley—I understood it was for sale. Bill Clements is prominent enough up at Groveton. He wanted a trolley franchise some years ago, you remember.”

“And didn’t get it.”

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Mr. Crewe's answer was characteristically terse and businesslike. The overwhelming compliment of a request from such gentlemen must be treated in the nature of a command—and yet he had hesitated for several weeks, during which period he had cast about for another more worthy of the honour. Then followed a somewhat technical and (to the lay mind) obscure recapitulation of the iniquities the Northeastern was committing, which proved beyond peradventure that Mr. Crewe knew what he was talking about; such phrases as "rolling stock," "milking the road"—an imposing array of facts and figures. Mr. Crewe made it plain that he was a man who "did things." And if it were the will of Heaven that he became governor, certain material benefits would as inevitably ensue as the day follows the night. The list of the material benefits, for which there was a crying need, bore a strong resemblance to a summary of the worthy measures upon which Mr. Crewe had spent so much time and labour in the last Legislature.

Austen laid down the paper, leaned back in his chair, and thrust his hands in his pockets, and with a little vertical pucker in his forehead, regarded his friend.

"What do you think of that?" Tom demanded. "Now, what do you think of it?"

"I think," said Austen, "that he'll scare the life out of the Northeastern before he gets through with them."

"What!" exclaimed Tom, incredulously. He had always been willing to accept Austen's judgment on men and affairs, but this was pretty stiff. "What makes you think so?"

"Well, people don't know Mr. Crewe, for one thing. And they are beginning to have a glimmer of light upon the Railroad."

"Do you mean to say he has a chance for the nomination?"

"I don't know. It depends upon how much the voters find out about him before the convention."

Tom sat down rather heavily.

"You could have been governor," he complained reproachfully, "by raising your hand. You've got more ability than any man in the State, and you sit here gazin' at that mountain and lettin' a darned fool millionaire walk in ahead of you."

Austen rose and crossed over to Mr. Gaylord's chair, and, his hands still in his pockets, looked down thoughtfully into that gentleman's square and rugged face.

"Tom," he said, "there's no use discussing this delusion of yours, which seems to be the only flaw in an otherwise sane character. We must try to keep it from the world."

Tom laughed in spite of himself.

“I’m hanged if I understand you,” he declared, “but I never did. You think Crewe and Tooting may carry off the governorship, and you don’t seem to care.”

“I do care,” said Austen, briefly. He went to the window and stood for a moment with his back to his friend, staring across at Sawanec. Tom had learned by long experience to respect these moods, although they were to him inexplicable. At length Austen turned.

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“Tom,” he said, “can you come in to-morrow about this time? If you can’t, I’ll go to your office if you will let me know when you’ll be in. There’s a matter of business I want to talk to you about.”

Tom pulled out his watch.

“I’ve got to catch a train for Mercer,” he replied, “but I will come in in the morning and see you.”

A quarter of an hour later Austen went down the narrow wooden flight of stairs into the street, and as he emerged from the entry almost bumped into the figure of a young man that was hurrying by. He reached out and grasped the young man by the collar, pulling him up so short as almost to choke him.

“Hully gee!” cried the young man whose progress had been so rudely arrested. “Great snakes!” (A cough.) “What’re you tryin’ to do? Oh,” (apologetically) “it’s you, Aust. Let me go. This day ain’t long enough for me. Let me go.”

Austen kept his grip and regarded Mr. Tooting thoughtfully.

“I want to speak to you, Ham,” he said; “better come upstairs.”

“Say, Aust, on the dead, I haven’t time. Pardriff’s waitin’ for some copy now.”

“Just for a minute, Ham,” said Austen; “I won’t keep you long.”

“Leggo my collar, then, if you don’t want to choke me. Say, I don’t believe you know how strong you are.”

“I didn’t know you wore a collar any more, Ham,” said Austen.

Mr. Tooting grinned in appreciation of this joke.

“You must think you’ve got one of your Wild West necktie parties on,” he gasped. “I’ll come. But if you love me, don’t let the boys in Hilary’s office see me.”

“They use the other entry,” answered Austen, indicating that Mr. Tooting should go up first—which he did. When they reached the office Austen shut the door, and stood with his back against it, regarding Mr. Tooting thoughtfully.

At first Mr. Tooting returned the look with interest swagger—aggression would be too emphatic, and defiance would not do. His was the air, perhaps, of Talleyrand when he said, “There seems to be an inexplicable something in me that brings bad luck to governments that neglect me:” the air of a man who has made a brilliant coup d’etat. All day he had worn that air—since five o’clock in the morning, when he had sprung

from his pallet. The world might now behold the stuff that was in Hamilton Tooting. Power flowed out of his right hand from an inexhaustible reservoir which he had had the sagacity to tap, and men leaped into action at his touch. He, the once, neglected, had the destiny of a State in his keeping.

Gradually, however, it became for some strange reason difficult to maintain that aggressive stare upon Austen Vane, who shook his head slowly.

“Ham, why did you do it?” he asked.

“Why?” cried Mr. Tooting, fiercely biting back a treasonable smile. “Why not? Ain’t he the best man in the State to make a winner? Hasn’t he got the money, and the brains, and the get-up-and-git? Why, it’s a sure thing. I’ve been around the State, and I know the sentiment. We’ve got ’em licked, right now. What have you got against it? You’re on our side, Aust.”

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“Ham,” said Austen, “are you sure you have the names and addresses of those twenty prominent citizens right, so that any voter may go out and find ’em?”

“What are you kidding about, Aust?” retorted Mr. Tooting, biting back the smile again. “Say, you never get down to business with me. You don’t blame Crewe for comin’ out, do you?”

“I don’t see how Mr. Crewe could have resisted such an overwhelming demand,” said Austen. “He couldn’t shirk such a duty. He says so himself, doesn’t he?”

“Oh, go on!” exclaimed Mr. Tooting, who was not able to repress a grin.

“The letter of the twenty must have been a great surprise to Mr. Crewe. He says he was astonished. Did the whole delegation go up to Leith, or only a committee?”

Mr. Tooting’s grin had by this time spread all over his face—a flood beyond his control.

“Well, there’s no use puffin’ it on with you, Aust. That was done pretty slick, that twenty-prominent-citizen business, if I do say it myself. But you don’t know that feller Crewe—-he’s a full-size cyclone when he gets started, and nothin’ but a range of mountains could stop him.”

“It must be fairly exciting to—ride him, Ham.”

“Say, but it just is. Kind of breathless, though. He ain’t very well known around the State, and he was bound to run—and I just couldn’t let him come out without any clothes on.”

“I quite appreciate your delicacy, Ham.”

Mr. Tooting’s face took on once more a sheepish look, which changed almost immediately to one of disquietude.

“Say, I’ll come back again some day and kid with you. I’ve got to go, Aust—that’s straight. This is my busy day.”

“Wouldn’t you gain some time if you left by the window?” Austen asked.

At this suggestion Mr. Tooting’s expressive countenance showed genuine alarm.

“Say, you ain’t going to put up any Wild West tricks on me, are you? I heard you nearly flung Tom Gaylord out of the one in the other room.”

“If this were a less civilized place, Ham, I’d initiate you into what is known as the bullet dance. As it is, I have a great mind to speed you on your way by assisting you downstairs.”

Mr. Hamilton Tooting became ashy pale.

“I haven’t done anything to you, Aust. Say—you didn’t—?” He did not finish.

Terrified by something in Austen’s eye, which may or may not have been there at the time of the Blodgett incident, Mr. Tooting fled without completing his inquiry. And, his imagination being great, he reproduced for himself such a vivid sensation of a bullet-hole in his spine that he missed his footing near the bottom, and measured his length in the entry. Such are the humiliating experiences which sometimes befall the Talleyrands—but rarely creep into their biographies.

Austen, from the top of the stairway, saw this catastrophe, but did not smile. He turned on his heel, and made his way slowly around the corner of the passage into the other part of the building, and paused at the open doorway of the Honourable Hilary’s outer office. By the street windows sat the Honourable Brush Bascom, sphinx-like, absorbing wisdom and clouds of cigar smoke which emanated from the Honourable Nat Billings.

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“Howdy, Austen?” said Brush, genially, lookin’ for the Honourable Hilary? Flint got up from New York this morning, and sent for him a couple of hours ago. He’ll be back at two.”

“Have you read the pronunciamento?” inquired Mr. Billings. “Say, Austen, knowin’ your sentiments, I wonder you weren’t one of the twenty prominent citizens.”

“All you anti-railroad fellers ought to get together,” Mr. Bascom suggested; “you’ve got us terrified since your friend from Leith turned the light of publicity on us this morning. I hear Ham Tooting’s been in and made you an offer.”

News travels fast in Ripton.

“Austen kicked him downstairs,” said Jimmy Towle, the office boy, who had made a breathless entrance during the conversation, and felt it to be the psychological moment to give vent to the news with which he was bursting.

“Is that straight?” Mr. Billings demanded. He wished he had done it himself. “Is that straight?” he repeated, but Austen had gone.

“Of course it’s straight,” said Jimmy Towle, vigorously. A shrewd observer of human nature, he had little respect for Senator Billings. “Ned Johnson saw him pick himself up at the foot of Austen’s stairway.”

The Honourable Brush’s agate eyes caught the light, and he addressed Mr. Billings in a voice which, by dint of long training, only carried a few feet.

“There’s the man the Northeastern’s got to look out for,” he said. “The Humphrey Crewes don’t count. But if Austen Vane ever gets started, there’ll be trouble. Old man Flint’s got some such idea as that, too. I overheard him givin’ it to old Hilary once, up at Fairview, and Hilary said he couldn’t control him. I guess nobody else can control him. I wish I’d seen him kick Ham downstairs.”

“I’d like to kick him downstairs,” said Mr. Billings, savagely biting off another cigar.

“I guess you hadn’t better try it, Nat,” said Mr. Bascom.

Meanwhile Austen had returned to his own office, and shut the door. His luncheon hour came and went, and still he sat by the open window gazing out across the teeming plain, and up the green valley whence the Blue came singing from the highlands. In spirit he followed the water to Leith, and beyond, where it swung in a wide circle and hurried between wondrous hills like those in the backgrounds of the old Italians: hills of close-cropped pastures, dotted with shapely sentinel oaks and maples which cast sharp, rounded shadows on the slopes at noonday; with thin fantastic elms on the gentle sky-lines, and forests massed here and there—silent, impenetrable hills from a

story-book of a land of mystery. The river coursed between them on its rocky bed, flinging its myriad gems to the sun. This was the Vale of the Blue, and she had touched it with meaning for him, and gone.

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He drew from his coat a worn pocket-book, and from the pocket-book a letter. It was dated in New York in February, and though he knew it by heart he found a strange solace in the pain which it gave him to reread it. He stared at the monogram on the paper, which seemed so emblematic of her; for he had often reflected that her things—-even such minute insignia as this—belonged to her. She impressed them not only with her taste, but with her character. The entwined letters, Y. F., of the design were not, he thought, of a meaningless, frivolous daintiness, but stood for something. Then he read the note again. It was only a note.

"*My dear Mr*. *Vane*: I have come back to find my mother ill, and I am taking her to France. We are sailing, unexpectedly, to-morrow, there being a difficulty about a passage later. I cannot refrain from sending you a line before I go to tell you that I did you an injustice. You will no doubt think it strange that I should write to you, but I shall be troubled until it is off my mind. I am ashamed to have been so stupid. I think I know now why you would not consent to be a candidate, and I respect you for it.

"Sincerely your friend,

"*Victoriaflint*."

What did she know? What had she found out? Had she seen her father and talked to him? That was scarcely possible, since her mother had been ill and she had left at once. Austen had asked himself these questions many times, and was no nearer the solution. He had heard nothing of her since, and he told himself that perhaps it was better, after all, that she was still away. To know that she was at Fairview, and not to be able to see her, were torture indeed.

The note was formal enough, and at times he pretended to be glad that it was. How could it be otherwise? And why should he interpret her interest in him in other terms than those in which it was written? She had a warm heart—that he knew; and he felt for her sake that he had no right to wish for more than the note expressed. After several unsuccessful attempts; he had answered it in a line, "I thank you, and I understand."

CHAPTER XVI

THE "BOOK OF ARGUMENTS" IS OPENED

The Honourable Hilary Vane returned that day from Fairview in no very equable frame of mind. It is not for us to be present at the Councils on the Palatine when the "Book of Arguments" is opened, and those fitting the occasion are chosen and sent out to the faithful who own printing-presses and free passes. The Honourable Hilary Vane bore away from the residence of his emperor a great many memoranda in an envelope, and he must have sighed as he drove through the leafy roads for Mr. Hamilton Tooting, with

his fertile mind and active body. A year ago, and Mr. Tooting would have seized these memoranda of majesty, and covered their margins with

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new suggestions: Mr. Tooting, on occasions, had even made additions to the “Book of Arguments” itself—additions which had been used in New York and other States with telling effect against Mr. Crewes there. Mr. Tooting knew by heart the time of going to press of every country newspaper which had passes (in exchange for advertising!). It was two o’clock when the Honourable Hilary reached his office, and by three all the edicts would have gone forth, and the grape-shot and canister would have been on their way to demolish the arrogance of this petty Lord of Leith..

“Tooting’s a dangerous man, Vane. You oughtn’t to have let him go,” Mr. Flint had said. “I don’t care a snap of my finger for the other fellow.”

How Mr. Tooting’s ears would have burned, and how his blood would have sung with pride to have heard himself called dangerous by the president of the Northeastern!

He who, during all the valuable years of his services, had never had a sign that that potentate was cognizant of his humble existence.

The Honourable Brush Bascom, as we know, was a clever man; and although it had never been given him to improve on the “Book of Arguments,” he had ideas of his own. On reading Mr. Crewe’s defiance that morning, he had, with characteristic promptitude and a desire to be useful, taken the first train out of Putnam for Ripton, to range himself by the side of the Honourable Hilary in the hour of need. The Feudal System anticipates, and Mr. Bascom did not wait for a telegram.

On the arrival of the chief counsel from Fairview other captains had put in an appearance, but Mr. Bascom alone was summoned, by a nod, into the private office. What passed between them seems too sacred to write about. The Honourable Hilary would take one of the slips from the packet and give it to Mr. Bascom.

“If that were recommended, editorially, to the Hull Mercury, it might serve to clear away certain misconceptions in that section.

“Certain,” Mr. Bascom would reply.

“It has been thought wise,” the Honourable Hilary continued, “to send an annual to the Groveton News. Roberts, his name is. Suppose you recommend to Mr. Roberts that an editorial on this subject would be timely.”

Slip number two. Mr. Bascom marks it ‘Roberts.’ Subject: “What would the State do without the Railroad?”

“And Grenville, being a Prohibition centre, you might get this worked up for the Advertiser there.”

Mr. Bascom's agate eyes are full of light as he takes slip number three. Subject: "Mr. Humphrey Crewe has the best-stocked wine cellar in the State, and champagne every night for dinner." Slip number four, taken direct from the second chapter of the "Book of Arguments": "Mr. Crewe is a reformer because he has been disappointed in his inordinate ambitions," *etc*. Slip number five: "Mr. Crewe is a summer resident, with a house in New York," *etc*., *etc*.

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Slip number six, “Book of Arguments,” paragraph, chapter: “Humphrey Crewe, Defamer of our State.” Assigned, among others, to the Ripton Record.

“Paul Pardriff went up to Leith to-day,” said Mr. Bascom.

“Go to see him,” replied the Honourable Hilary. “I’ve been thinking for some time that the advertising in the Ripton Record deserves an additional annual.”

Mr. Bascom, having been despatched on this business, and having voluntarily assumed control of the Empire Bureau of Publication, the chief counsel transacted other necessary legal business with State Senator Billings and other gentlemen who were waiting. At three o’clock word was sent in that Mr. Austen Vane was outside, and wished to speak with his father as soon as the latter was at leisure. Whereupon the Honourable Hilary shooed out the minor clients, leaned back in his chair, and commanded that his son be admitted.

“Judge,” said Austen, as he closed the door behind him, “I don’t want to bother you.”

The Honourable Hilary regarded his son for a moment fixedly out of his little eyes.

“Humph” he said.

Austen looked down at his father. The Honourable Hilary’s expression was not one which would have aroused, in the ordinary man who beheld him, a feeling of sympathy or compassion: it was the impenetrable look with which he had faced his opponents for many years. But Austen felt compassion.

“Perhaps I’d better come in another time—when you are less busy,” he suggested.

“Who said I was busy?” inquired the Honourable Hilary.

Austen smiled a little sadly. One would have thought, by that smile, that the son was the older and wiser of the two.

“I didn’t mean to cast any reflection on your habitual industry, Judge,” he said.

“Humph!” exclaimed Mr. Vane. “I’ve got more to do than sit in the window and read poetry, if that’s what you mean.”

“You never learned how to enjoy life, did you, Judge?” he said. “I don’t believe you ever really had a good time. Own up.”

“I’ve had sterner things to think about. I’ve had ’to earn my living —and give you a good time.”

“I appreciate it,” said Austen.

“Humph! Sometimes I think you don’t show it a great deal,” the Honourable Hilary answered.

“I show it as far as I can, Judge,” said his son. “I can’t help the way I was made.”

“I try to take account of that,” said the Honourable Hilary.

Austen laughed.

“I’ll drop in to-morrow morning,” he said.

But the Honourable Hilary pointed to a chair on the other side of the desk.

“Sit down. To-day’s as good as to-morrow,” he remarked, with sententious significance, characteristically throwing the burden of explanation on the visitor.

Austen found the opening unexpectedly difficult. He felt that this was a crisis in their relations, and that it had come at an unfortunate hour.

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“Judge,” he said, trying to control the feeling that threatened to creep into his voice, “we have jogged along for some years pretty peaceably, and I hope you won’t misunderstand what I’m going to say.”

The Honourable Hilary grunted.

“It was at your request that I went into the law. I have learned to like that profession. I have stuck to it as well as my wandering, Bohemian nature will permit, and while I do not expect you necessarily to feel any pride in such progress as I have made, I have hoped—that you might feel an interest.”

The Honourable Hilary grunted again.

“I suppose I am by nature a free-lance,” Austen continued. “You were good enough to acknowledge the force of my argument when I told you it would be best for me to strike out for myself. And I suppose it was inevitable, such being the case, and you the chief counsel for the Northeastern Railroads, that I should at some time or another be called upon to bring suits against your client. It would have been better, perhaps, if I had not started to practise in this State. I did so from what I believe was a desire common to both of us to—to live together.”

The Honourable Hilary reached for his Honey Dew, but he did not speak.

“To live together,” Austen repeated. “I want to say that, if I had gone away, I believe I should always have regretted the fact.” He paused, and took from his pocket a slip of paper. “I made up my mind from the start that I would always be frank with you. In spite of my desire to amass riches, there are some suits against the Northeastern which I have —somewhat quixotically—refused. Here is a section of the act which permitted the consolidation of the Northeastern Railroads. You are no doubt aware of its existence.”

The Honourable Hilary took the slip of paper in his hand and stared at it. “The rates for fares and freights existing at the time of the passage of this act shall mot be increased on the roads leased or united under it.” What his sensations were when he read it no man might have read in his face, but his hand trembled a little, and along silence ensued before he gave it back to his son with the simple comment:—“Well?”

“I do not wish to be understood to ask your legal opinion, although you probably know that lumber rates have been steadily raised, and if a suit under that section were successful the Gaylord Lumber Company could recover a very large sum of money from the Northeastern Railroads,” said Austen. “Having discovered the section, I believe it to be my duty to call it to the attention of the Gaylords. What I wish to know is, whether my taking the case would cause you any personal inconvenience or distress? If so, I will refuse it.”

“No,” answered the Honourable Hilary, “it won’t. Bring suit. Much use it’ll be. Do you expect they can recover under that section?”

“I think it is worth trying,” said Austen.

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“Why didn’t somebody try it before?” asked the Honourable Hilary.

“See here, Judge, I wish you’d let me out of an argument about it. Suit is going to be brought, whether I bring it or another man. If you would prefer for any reason that I shouldn’t bring it—I won’t. I’d much rather resign as counsel for the Gaylords—and I am prepared to do so.”

“Bring suit,” answered the Honourable Hilary, quickly, “bring suit by all means. And now’s your time. This seems to be a popular season for attacking the property which is the foundation of the State’s prosperity.” ("Book of Arguments,” chapter 3.)

In spite of himself, Austen smiled again. Long habit had accustomed Hilary Vane to put business considerations before family ties; and this habit had been the secret of his particular success. And now, rather than admit by the least sign the importance of his son’s discovery of the statute (which he had had in mind for many years, and to which he had more than once, by the way, called Mr. Flint’s attention), the Honourable Hilary deliberately belittled the matter as part and parcel of the political tactics against the Northeastern.

Sears caused by differences of opinion are soon healed; words count for nothing, and it is the soul that attracts or repels. Mr. Vane was not analytical, he had been through a harassing day, and he was unaware that it was not Austen’s opposition, but Austen’s smile, which set the torch to his anger. Once, shortly after his marriage, when he had come home in wrath after a protracted quarrel with Mr. Tredway over the orthodoxy of the new minister, in the middle of his indignant recital of Mr. Tredway’s unwarranted attitude, Sarah Austen had smiled. The smile had had in it, to be sure, nothing of conscious superiority, but it had been utterly inexplicable to Hilary Vane. He had known for the first time what it was to feel murder in the heart, and if he had not rushed out of the room, he was sure he would have strangled her. After all, the Hilary Vanes of this world cannot reasonably be expected to perceive the humour in their endeavours.

Now the son’s smile seemed the reincarnation of the mother’s. That smile was in itself a refutation of motive on Austen’s part which no words could have made more emphatic; it had in it (unconsciously, too) compassion for and understanding of the Honourable Hilary’s mood and limitations. Out of the corner of his mental vision—-without grasping it—the Honourable Hilary perceived this vaguely. It was the smile in which a parent privately indulges when a child kicks his toy locomotive because its mechanism is broken. It was the smile of one who, unforgetful of the scheme of the firmament and the spinning planets, will not be moved to anger by him who sees but the four sides of a pit.

Hilary Vane grew red around the eyes—a danger signal of the old days.

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“Take the suit,” he said. “If you don’t, I’ll make it known all over the State that you started it. I’ll tell Mr. Flint to-morrow. Take it, do you hear me? You ask me if I have any pride in you. I answer, yes. I’d like to see what you can do. I’ve done what I could for you, and now I wash my hands of you. Go,—ruin yourself if you want to. You’ve always been headed that way, and there’s no use trying to stop you. You don’t seem to have any notion of decency or order, or any idea of the principle on which this government was based. Attack property destroy it. So much the better for you and your kind. Join the Humphrey Crewes—you belong with ’em. Give those of us who stand for order and decency as much trouble as you can. Brand us as rascals trying to enrich ourselves with politics, and proclaim yourselves saints nobly striving to get back the rights of the people. If you don’t bring that suit, I tell you I’ll give you the credit for it—and I mean what I say.”

Austen got to his feet. His own expression, curiously enough, had not changed to one of anger. His face had set, but his eyes held the look that seemed still to express compassion, and what he felt was a sorrow that went to the depths of his nature. What he had so long feared—what he knew they had both feared—had come at last.

“Good-by, Judge,” he said.

Hilary Vane stared at him dumbly. His anger had not cooled, his eyes still flamed, but he suddenly found himself bereft of speech. Austen put his hand on his father’s shoulder, and looked down silently into his face. But Hilary was stiff as in a rigour, expressionless save for the defiant red in his eye.

“I don’t think you meant all that, Judge, and I don’t intend to hold it against you.”

Still Hilary stared, his lips in the tight line which was the emblem of his character, his body rigid. He saw his son turn and walk to the door, and turn again with his handle on the knob, and Hilary did not move. The door closed, and still he sat there, motionless, expressionless.

Austen was hailed by those in the outer office, but he walked through them as though the place were empty. Rumours sprang up behind him of which he was unconscious; the long-expected quarrel had come; Austen had joined the motley ranks of the rebels under Mr. Crewe. Only the office boy, Jimmy Towle, interrupted the jokes that were flying by repeating, with dogged vehemence, “I tell you it ain’t so. Austen kicked Ham downstairs. Ned Johnson saw him.” Nor was it on account of this particular deed that Austen was a hero in Jimmy’s eyes.

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Austen, finding himself in the square, looked at his watch. It was four o'clock. He made his way under the maples to the house in Hanover Street, halted for a moment contemplatively before the familiar classic pillars of its porch, took a key from his pocket, and (unprecedented action!) entered by the front door. Climbing to the attic, he found two valises—one of which he had brought back from Pepper County—and took them to his own room. They held, with a little crowding, most of his possessions, including a photograph of Sarah Austen, which he left on the bureau to the last. Once or twice he paused in his packing to gaze at the face, striving to fathom the fleeting quality of her glance which the photograph had so strangely caught. In that glance nature had stamped her enigma—for Sarah Austen was a child of nature. Hers was the gentle look of wild things—but it was more; it was the understanding of—the unwritten law of creation, the law by which the flowers grow, and wither; the law by which the animal springs upon its prey, and, unerring, seeks its mate; the law of the song of the waters, and the song of the morning stars; the law that permits evil and pain and dumb, incomprehensible suffering; the law that floods at sunset the mountain lands with colour and the soul with light; and the law that rends the branches in the blue storm. Of what avail was anger against it, or the puny rage of man? Hilary Vane, not recognizing it, had spent his force upon it, like a hawk against a mountain wall, but Austen looked at his mother's face and understood. In it was not the wisdom of creeds and cities, but the unworldly wisdom which comprehends and condones.

His packing finished, with one last glance at the room Austen went downstairs with his valises and laid them on the doorstep. Then he went to the stable and harnessed Pepper, putting into the buggy his stable blanket and halter and currycomb, and, driving around to the front of the house, hitched the horse at the stone post, and packed the valises in the back of the buggy. After that he walked slowly to the back of the house and looked in at the kitchen window. Euphrasia, her thin arms bare to the elbow, was bending over a wash-tub. He spoke her name, and as she lifted her head a light came into her face which seemed to make her young again. She dried her hands hastily on her apron as she drew towards him. He sprang through the window, and patted her on the back—his usual salutation. And as she raised her eyes to his (those ordinarily sharp eyes of Euphrasia's), they shone with an admiration she had accorded to no other human being since he had come into the world. Terms of endearment she had, characteristically, never used, she threw her soul into the sounding of his name.

"Off to the hills, Austen? I saw you a-harnessing of Pepper."

"Phrasie," he said, still patting her, "I'm going to the country for a while."

"To the country?" she repeated.

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“To stay on a farm for a sort of vacation.”

Her face brightened.

“Goin’ to take a real vacation, be you?”

He laughed.

“Oh, I don’t have to work very hard, Phrasie. You know I get out a good deal. I just thought—I just thought I’d like to—sleep in the country —for a while.”

“Well,” answered Euphrasia, “I guess if you’ve took the notion, you’ve got to go. It was that way with your mother before you. I’ve seen her leave the house on a bright Sabbath half an hour before meetin’ to be gone the whole day, and Hilary and all the ministers in town couldn’t stop her.”

“I’ll drop in once in a while to see you, Phrasie. I’ll be at Jabe Jenney’s.”

“Jabe’s is not more than three or four miles from Flint’s place,” Euphrasia remarked.

“I’ve thought of that,” said Austen.

“You’d thought of it!”

Austen coloured.

“The distance is nothing,” he said quickly, “with Pepper.”

“And you’ll come and see me?” asked Euphrasia.

“If you’ll do something for me,” he said.

“I always do what you want, Austen. You know I’m not able to refuse you.”

He laid his hands on her shoulders.

“You’ll promise?” he asked.

“I’ll promise,” said Euphrasia, solemnly.

He was silent for a moment, looking down at her.

“I want you to promise to stay here and take care of the Judge.”

Fright crept into her eyes, but his own were smiling, reassuring.

“Take care of him!” she cried, the very mention of Hilary raising the pitch of her voice. “I guess I’ll have to. Haven’t I took care of him nigh on forty years, and small thanks and recompense I get for it except when you’re here. I’ve wore out my life takin’ care of him” (more gently). “What do you mean by makin’ me promise such a thing, Austen?”

“Well,” said Austen, slowly, “the Judge is worried now. Things are not going as smoothly with him as usual.”

“Money?” demanded Euphrasia. “He ain’t lost money, has he?”

A light began to dance in Austen’s eyes in spite of the weight within him.

“Now, Phrasie,” he said, lifting her chin a little, “you know you don’t care any more about money than I do.”

“Lord help me,” she exclaimed, “Lord help me if I didn’t! And as long as you don’t care for it, and no sense can be knocked into your head about it, I hope you’ll marry somebody that does know the value of it. If Hilary was to lose what he has now, before it comes rightly to you, he’d ought to be put in jail.”

Austen laughed, and shook his head.

“Phrasie, the Lord did you a grave injustice when he didn’t make you a man, but I suppose he’ll give you a recompense hereafter. No, I believe I am safe in saying that the Judge’s securities are still secure. Not that I really know—or care—” (shakes of the head from Euphrasia). “Poor old Judge! Worse things than finance are troubling him now.”

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“Not a woman!” cried Euphrasia, horror-stricken at the very thought. “He hasn’t took it into his head after all these years—”

“No,” said Austen, laughing, “no, no. It’s not quite as bad as that, but it’s pretty bad.”

“In Heaven’s name, what is it?” she demanded. “Reformers,” said Austen.

“Reformers?” she repeated. “What might they be?”

“Well,” answered Austen, “you might call them a new kind of caterpillar —only they feed on corporations instead of trees.”

Euphrasia shook her head vigorously.

“Go ’long,” she exclaimed. “When you talk like that I never can follow you, Austen. If Hilary has any worries, I guess he brought ’em on himself. I never knew him to fail.”

“Ambitious and designing persons are making trouble for his railroad.”

“Well, I never took much stock in that railroad,” said Euphrasia, with emphasis. “I never was on it but an engine gave out, and the cars was jammed, and it wasn’t less than an hour late. And then they’re eternally smashin’ folks or runnin’ ’em down. You served ’em right when you made ’em pay that Meader man six thousand dollars, and I told Hilary so.” She paused, and stared at Austen fixedly as a thought came into her head. “You ain’t leavin’ him because of this trouble, are you, Austen?”

“Phrasie,” he said, “I—I don’t want to quarrel with him now. I think it would be easy to quarrel with him.”

“You mean him quarrel with you,” returned Euphrasia. “I’d like to see him! If he did, it wouldn’t take me long to pack up and leave.”

“That’s just it. I don’t want that to happen. And I’ve had a longing to go out and pay a little visit to Jabe up in the hills, and drive his colts for him. You see,” he said, “I’ve got a kind of affection for the Judge.”

Euphrasia looked at him, and her lips trembled.

“He don’t deserve it,” she declared, “but I suppose he’s your father.”

“He can’t get out of that,” said Austen.

“I’d like to see him try it,” said Euphrasia. “Come in soon, Austen,” she whispered, “come in soon.”

She stood on the lawn and watched him as he drove away, and he waved good-by to her over the hood of the buggy. When he was out of sight she lifted her head, gave her eyes a vigorous brush with her checked apron, and went back to her washing.

It was not until Euphrasia had supper on the table that Hilary Vane came home, and she glanced at him sharply as he took his usual seat. It is a curious fact that it is possible for two persons to live together for more than a third of a century, and at the end of that time understand each other little better than at the beginning. The sole bond between Euphrasia and Hilary was that of Sarah Austen and her son. Euphrasia never knew when Hilary was tired, or when he was cold, or hungry, or cross, although she provided for all these emergencies. Her service to him was unflagging, but he had never been under the slightest delusion that it was not an inheritance from his wife. There must have been some affection between Mr. Vane and his housekeeper, hidden away in the strong boxes of both but up to the present this was only a theory—not quite as probable as that about the inhabitants of Mars.

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He ate his supper to-night with his usual appetite, which had always been sparing; and he would have eaten the same amount if the Northeastern Railroads had been going into the hands of a receiver the next day. Often he did not exchange a word with Euphrasia between home-coming and bed-going, and this was apparently to be one of these occasions. After supper he went, as usual, to sit on the steps of his porch, and to cut his piece of Honey Dew, which never varied a milligram. Nine o'clock struck, and Euphrasia, who had shut up the back of the house, was on her way to bed with her lamp in her hand, when she came face to face with him in the narrow passageway.

"Where's Austen?" he asked.

Euphrasia halted. The lamp shook, but she raised it to the level of his eyes.

"Don't you know?" she demanded.

"No," he said, with unparalleled humility.

She put down the lamp on the little table that stood beside her.

"He didn't tell you he was a-goin'?"

"No," said Hilary.

"Then how did you know he wasn't just buggy-ridin'?" she said.

Hilary Vane was mute.

"You've be'n to his room!" she exclaimed. "You've seen his things are gone!"

He confessed it by his silence. Then, with amazing swiftness and vigour for one of her age, Euphrasia seized him by the arms and shook him.

"What have you done to him?" she cried; "what have you done to him? You sent him off. You've never understood him—you've never behaved like a father to him. You ain't worthy to have him." She flung herself away and stood facing Hilary at a little distance. What a fool I was! What a fool! I might have known it, and I promised him."

"Promised him?" Hilary repeated. The shaking, the vehemence and anger, of Euphrasia seemed to have had no effect whatever on the main trend of his thoughts.

"Where has he gone?"

"You can find out for yourself," she retorted bitterly. "I wish on your account it was to China. He came here this afternoon, as gentle as ever, and packed up his things, and said he was goin' away because you was worried. Worried!" she exclaimed scornfully.

“His worry and his trouble don’t count—but yours. And he made me promise to stay with you. If it wasn’t for him,” she cried, picking up the lamp, “I’d leave you this very night.”

She swept past him, and up the narrow stairway to her bedroom.

CHAPTER XVII

BUSY DAYS AT WEDDERBURN

There is no blast so powerful, so withering, as the blast of ridicule. Only the strongest men can withstand it, only reformers who are such in deed, and not alone in name, can snap their fingers at it, and liken it to the crackling of thorns under a pot. Confucius and Martin Luther must have been ridiculed, Mr. Crewe reflected, and although he did not have time to assure himself on these historical points,

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the thought stayed him. Sixty odd weekly newspapers, filled with arguments from the Book, attacked him all at once; and if by chance he should have missed the best part of this flattering personal attention, the editorials which contained the most spice were copied at the end of the week into the columns of his erstwhile friend, the State Tribune, now the organ of that mysterious personality, the Honourable Adam B. Hunt. 'Et tu, Brute!'

Moreover, Mr. Peter Pardriff had something of his own to say. Some gentlemen of prominence (not among the twenty signers of the new Declaration of Independence) had been interviewed by the Tribune reporter on the subject of Mr. Crewe's candidacy. Here are some of the answers, duly tabulated.

"Negligible."—Congressman Fairplay.

"One less vote for the Honourable Adam B. Hunt."—The Honourable Jacob Botcher.

"A monumental farce."—Ex-Governor Broadbent.

"Who is Mr. Crewe?"—Senator Whitredge. (Ah ha! Senator, this want shall be supplied, at least.)

"I have been very busy. I do not know what candidates are in the field."—Mr. Augustus P. Flint, president of the Northeastern Railroads. (The unkindest cut of all!)

"I have heard that a Mr. Crewe is a candidate, but I do not know much about him. They tell me he is a summer resident at Leith."—The Honourable Hilary Vane.

"A millionaire's freak—not to be taken seriously.—State Senator Nathaniel Billings."

The State Tribune itself seemed to be especially interested in the past careers of the twenty signers. Who composed this dauntless band, whose members had arisen with remarkable unanimity and martyr's zeal in such widely scattered parts of the State? Had each been simultaneously inspired with the same high thought, and—more amazing still—with the idea of the same peerless leader? The Tribune modestly ventured the theory that Mr. Crewe had appeared to each of the twenty in a dream, with a flaming sword pointing to the steam of the dragon's breath. Or, perhaps, a star had led each of the twenty to Leith. (This likening of Mr. H—n T—g to a star caused much merriment among that gentleman's former friends and acquaintances.) The Tribune could not account for this phenomenon by any natural laws, and was forced to believe that the thing was a miracle—in which case it behooved the Northeastern Railroads to read the handwriting on the wall. Unless—unless the twenty did not exist! Unless the whole thing were a joke! The Tribune remembered a time when a signed statement, purporting to come from a certain Mrs. Amanda P. Pillow, of 22 Blair Street, Newcastle,

had appeared, to the effect that three bottles of Rand's Peach Nectar had cured her of dropsy. On investigation there was no Blair Street, and Mrs. Amanda P. Pillow was as yet unborn. The one sure thing about the statement was that Rand's Peach Nectar could be had, in large or small quantities, as desired. And the Tribune was prepared to state; on its own authority, that a Mr. Humphrey Crewe did exist, and might reluctantly consent to take the nomination for the governorship. In industry and zeal he was said to resemble the celebrated and lamented Mr. Rand, of the Peach Nectar.

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Ingratitude merely injures those who are capable of it, although it sometimes produces sadness in great souls. What were Mr. Crewe's feelings when he read this drivel? When he perused the extracts from the "Book of Arguments" which appeared (with astonishing unanimity, too!) in sixty odd weekly newspapers of the State—an assortment of arguments for each county.

"Brush Bascom's doin' that work now," said Mr. Tooting, contemptuously, "and he's doin' it with a shovel. Look here! He's got the same squib in three towns within a dozen miles of each other, the one beginning 'Political conditions in this State are as clean as those of any State in the Union, and the United Northeastern Railroads is a corporation which is, fortunately, above calumny. A summer resident who, to satisfy his lust for office, is rolling to defame—'"

"Yes," interrupted Mr. Crewe, "never mind reading any more of that rot."

"It's botched," said Mr. Tooting, whose artistic soul was jarred. "I'd have put that in Avalon County, and Weave, and Marshall. I know men that take all three of those papers in Putnam."

No need of balloonists to see what the enemy is about, when we have a Mr. Tooting.

"They're stung!" he cried, as he ran rapidly through the bundle of papers—Mr. Crewe having subscribed, with characteristic generosity, to the entire press of the State. "Flint gave 'em out all this stuff about the railroad bein' a sacred institution. You've got 'em on the run right now, Mr. Crewe. You'll notice that, Democrats and Republicans, they've dropped everybody else, that they've all been sicked on to you. They're scared."

"I came to that conclusion some time ago," replied Mr. Crewe, who was sorting over his letters.

"And look there!" exclaimed Mr. Tooting, tearing out a paragraph, "there's the best campaign material we've had yet. Say, I'll bet Flint taken that doddering idiot's pass away for writing that."

Mr. Crewe took the extract, and read:—

"A summer resident of Leith, who is said to be a millionaire many times over, and who had a somewhat farcical career as a legislator last winter, has announced himself as a candidate for the Republican nomination on a platform attacking the Northeastern Railroads. Mr. Humphrey Crewe declares that the Northeastern Railroads govern us. What if they do? Every sober-minded citizen, will agree that they give us a pretty good government. More power to them."

Mr. Crewe permitted himself to smile.

“They are playing into our hands, sure enough. What?”

This is an example of the spirit in which the ridicule and abuse was met.

It was Senator Whitredge—only, last autumn so pleased to meet Mr. Crewe at Mr. Flint’s—who asked the hypocritical question, “Who is Humphrey Crewe?” A biography (in pamphlet form, illustrated,—send your name and address) is being prepared by the invaluable Mr. Tooting, who only sleeps six hours these days. We shall see it presently, when it emerges from that busy hive at Wedderburn.

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Wedderburn was a hive, sure enough. Not having a balloon ourselves, it is difficult to see all that is going on there; but there can be no mistake (except by the Honourable Hilary's seismograph) that it has become the centre of extraordinary activity. The outside world has paused to draw breath at the spectacle, and members of the metropolitan press are filling the rooms of the Ripton House and adding to the prosperity of its livery-stable. Mr. Crewe is a difficult man to see these days—there are so many visitors at Wedderburn, and the representatives of the metropolitan press hitch their horses and stroll around the grounds, or sit on the porch and converse with gentlemen from various counties of the State who (as the Tribune would put it) have been led by a star to Leith.

On the occasion of one of these gatherings, when Mr. Crewe had been inaccessible for four hours, Mrs. Pomfret drove up in a victoria with her daughter Alice.

"I'm sure I don't know when we're going to see poor dear Humphrey again," said Mrs. Pomfret, examining the group on the porch through her gold-mounted lenses; these awful people are always here when I come. I wonder if they sleep here, in the hammocks and lounging chairs! Alice, we must be very polite to them—so much depends on it."

"I'm always polite, mother," answered Alice, "except when you tell me not to be. The trouble is I never know myself."

The victoria stopped in front of the door, and the irreproachable Waters advanced across the porch.

"Waters," said Mrs. Pomfret, "I suppose Mr. Crewe is too busy to come out."

"I'm afraid so, madam," replied Waters; "there's a line of gentlemen waitin' here" (he eyed them with no uncertain disapproval). and I've positive orders not to disturb him, madam."

"I quite understand, at a time like this," said Mrs. Pomfret, and added, for the benefit of her audience, "when Mr. Crewe has been public-spirited and unselfish enough to undertake such a gigantic task. Tell him Miss Pomfret and I call from time to time because we are so interested, and that the whole of Leith wishes him success."

"I'll tell him, madam," said Waters,

But Mrs. Pomfret did not give the signal for her coachman to drive on. She looked, instead, at the patient gathering.

"Good morning, gentlemen," she said.

"Mother!" whispered Alice, "what are you going to do?"

The gentlemen rose.

“I’m Mrs. Pomfret,” she said, as though that simple announcement were quite sufficient,—as it was, for the metropolitan press. Not a man of them who had not seen Mrs. Pomfret’s important movements on both sides of the water chronicled. “I take the liberty of speaking to you, as we all seem to be united in a common cause. How is the campaign looking?”

Some of the gentlemen shifted their cigars from one hand to the other, and grinned sheepishly.

“I am so interested,” continued Mrs. Pomfret; “it is so unusual in America for a gentleman to be willing to undertake such a thing, to subject himself to low criticism, and to have his pure motives questioned. Mr. Crewe has rare courage—I have always said so. And we are all going to put our shoulder to the wheel, and help him all we can.”

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There was one clever man there who was quick to see his opportunity, and seize it for his newspaper.

“And are you going to help Mr. Crewe in his campaign, Mrs. Pomfret?”

“Most assuredly,” answered Mrs. Pomfret. “Women in this country could do so much if they only would. You know,” she added, in her most winning manner, “you know that a woman can often get a vote when a man can’t.”

“And you, and—other ladies will go around to the public meetings?”

“Why not, my friend; if Mr. Crewe has no objection? and I can conceive of none.”

“You would have an organization of society ladies to help Mr. Crewe?”

“That’s rather a crude way of putting it,” answered Mrs. Pomfret, with her glasses raised judicially. “Women in what you call I society are, I am glad to say, taking an increasing interest in politics. They are beginning to realize that it is a duty.”

“Thank you,” said the reporter; “and now would you mind if I took a photograph of you in your carriage.”

“Oh, mother,” protested Alice, “you won’t let him do that!”

“Be quiet, Alice. Lady Aylestone and the duchess are photographed in every conceivable pose for political purposes. Wymans, just drive around to the other side of the circle.”

The article appeared next day, and gave, as may be imagined, a tremendous impetus to Mr. Crewe’s cause. “A new era in American politics!” “Society to take a hand in the gubernatorial campaign of Millionaire Humphrey Crewe!” “Noted social leader, Mrs. Patterson Pomfret, declares it a duty, and saga that English women have the right idea.” And a photograph of Mrs. Patterson Pomfret herself, in her victoria, occupied a generous portion of the front page.

“What’s all this rubbish about Mrs. Pomfret?” was Mr. Crewe’s grateful comment when he saw it. “I spent two valuable hours with that reporter givin’ him material and statistics, and I can’t find that he’s used a word of it.”

“Never you mind about that,” Mr. Tooting replied. “The more advertising you get, the better, and this shows that the right people are behind you. Mrs. Pomfret’s a smart woman, all right. She knows her job. And here’s more advertising,” he continued, shoving another sheet across the desk, “a fine likeness of you in caricature labelled, ’Ajax defying the Lightning.’ Who’s Ajax? There was an Italian, a street contractor, with

that name—or something like it—in Newcastle a couple of years ago—in the eighth ward."

In these days, when false rumours fly apace to the injury of innocent men, it is well to get at the truth, if possible. It is not true that Mr. Paul Pardriff, of the 'Ripton Record,' has been to Wedderburn. Mr. Pardriff was getting into a buggy to go—somewhere—-when he chanced to meet the Honourable Brush Bascom, and the buggy was sent back to the livery-stable. Mr. Tooting had been to see Mr. Pardriff before the world-quaking announcement of June 7th, and had found

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Mr. Pardriff a reformer who did not believe that the railroad should run the State. But the editor of the Ripton Record was a man after Emerson's own heart: "a foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds"—and Mr. Pardriff did not go to Wedderburn. He went off on an excursion up the State instead, for he had been working too hard; and he returned, as many men do from their travels, a conservative. He listened coldly to Mr. Tooting's impassioned pleas for cleaner politics, until Mr. Tooting revealed the fact that his pockets were full of copy. It seems that a biography was to be printed—a biography which would, undoubtedly, be in great demand; the biography of a public benefactor, illustrated with original photographs and views in the country. Mr. Tooting and Mr. Pardriff both being men of the world, some exceeding plain talk ensued between them, and when two such minds unite, a way out is sure to be found. One can be both a conservative and a radical—if one is clever. There were other columns in Mr. Pardriff's paper besides editorial columns; editorial columns, Mr. Pardriff said, were sacred to his convictions. Certain thumb-worn schedules were referred to. Paul Pardriff, Ripton, agreed to be the publisher of the biography.

The next edition of the Record was an example of what Mr. Emerson meant. Three columns contained extracts of absorbing interest from the forthcoming biography and, on another page, an editorial. The Honourable Humphrey Crewe, of Leith, is an estimable gentleman and a good citizen, whose public endeavours have been of great benefit to the community. A citizen of Avalon County, the Record regrets that it cannot support his candidacy for the Republican gubernatorial nomination. We are not among those who seek to impugn motives, and while giving Mr. Crewe every credit that his charges against the Northeastern Railroads are made in good faith, we beg to differ from him. That corporation is an institution which has stood the test of time, and enriches every year the State treasury by a large sum in taxes. Its management is in safe, conservative hands. No one will deny Mr. Crewe's zeal for the State's welfare, but it must be borne in mind that he is a newcomer in politics, and that conditions, seen from the surface, are sometimes deceptive. We predict for Mr. Crewe a long and useful career, but we do not think that at this time, and on this platform, he will obtain the governorship."

"Moral courage is what the age needs," had been Mr. Crewe's true and sententious remark when he read this editorial. But, bearing in mind a biblical adage, he did not blame Mr. Tooting for his diplomacy. "Send in the next man."

Mr. Tooting opened the study door and glanced over the public-spirited citizens awaiting, on the porch, the pleasure of their leader.

"Come along, Caldwell," said Mr. Tooting. "He wants your report from Kingston. Get a hustle on!"

Mr. Caldwell made his report, received many brief and business-like suggestions, and retired, impressed. Whereupon Mr. Crewe commanded Mr. Tooting to order his automobile—an occasional and rapid spin over the country roads being the only diversion the candidate permitted himself. Wishing to be alone with his thoughts, he did not take Mr. Tooting with him on these excursions.

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“And by the way,” said Mr. Crewe, as he seized the steering wheel a few moments later, “just drop a line to Austen Vane, will you, and tell him I want to see him up here within a day or two. Make an appointment. It has occurred to me that he might be very useful.”

Mr. Tooting stood on the driveway watching the cloud of dust settle on the road below. Then he indulged in a long and peculiarly significant whistle through his teeth, rolled his eyes heavenward, and went into the house. He remembered Austen’s remark about riding a cyclone.

Mr. Crewe took the Tunbridge road. On his excursion of the day before he had met Mrs. Pomfret, who had held up her hand, and he had protestingly brought the car to a stop.

“Your horses don’t frighten,” he had said.

“No, but I wanted to speak to you, Humphrey,” Mrs. Pomfret had replied; “you are becoming so important that nobody ever has a glimpse of you. I wanted to tell you what an interest we take in this splendid thing you are doing.”

“Well,” said Mr. Crewe, “it was a plain duty, and nobody else seemed willing to undertake it.”

Mrs. Pomfret’s eyes had flashed.

“Men of that type are scarce,” she answered. “But you’ll win. You’re the kind of man that wins.”

“Oh, yes, I’ll win,” said Mr. Crewe.

“You’re so magnificently sure of yourself,” cried Mrs. Pomfret. “Alice is taking such an interest. Every day she asks, ’When is Humphrey going to make his first speech?’ You’ll let us know in time, won’t you?”

“Did you put all that nonsense in the New York Flare?” asked Mr. Crewe.

“Oh, Humphrey, I hope you liked it,” cried Mrs. Pomfret. “Don’t make the mistake of despising what women can do. They elected the Honourable Billy Aylestone—he said so himself. I’m getting all the women interested.”

“Who’ve you been calling on now?” he inquired.

Mrs. Pomfret hesitated.

“I’ve been up at Fairview to see about Mrs. Flint. She isn’t much better.”

“Is Victoria home?” Mr. Crewe demanded, with undisguised interest.

“Poor dear girl!” said Mrs. Pomfret, “of course I wouldn’t have mentioned the subject to her, but she wanted to know all about it. It naturally makes an awkward situation between you and her, doesn’t it?”

“Oh, Victoria’s level-headed enough,” Mr. Crewe had answered; “I guess she knows something about old Flint and his methods by this time. At any rate, it won’t make any difference with me,” he added magnanimously, and threw in his clutch. He had encircled Fairview in his drive that day, and was, curiously enough, headed in that direction now. Slow to make up his mind in some things, as every eligible man must be, he was now coming rapidly to the notion that he might eventually decide upon Victoria as the most fitting mate for one in his position. Still, there was no hurry. As for going to Fairview House, that might be awkward, besides being open to misconstruction by his constituents. Mr. Crewe reflected, as he rushed up the hills, that he had missed Victoria since she had been abroad—and a man so continually occupied as he did not have time to miss many people. Mr. Crewe made up his mind he would encircle Fairview every day until he ran across her.

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The goddess of fortune sometimes blesses the persistent even before they begin to persist—perhaps from sheer weariness at the remembrance of previous importuning. Victoria, on a brand-new and somewhat sensitive five-year-old, was coming out of the stone archway when Mr. Crewe (without any signal this time!) threw on his brakes. An exhibition of horsemanship followed, on Victoria's part, which Mr. Crewe beheld with admiration. The five-year-old swung about like a weathercock in a gust of wind, assuming an upright position, like the unicorn in the British coat of arms. Victoria cut him, and he came down on all fours and danced into the wire fence that encircled the Fairview domain, whereupon he got another stinging reminder that there was some one on his back.

"Bravo!" cried Mr. Crewe, leaning on the steering wheel and watching the performance with delight. Never, he thought, had Victoria been more appealing; strangely enough, he had not remembered that she was quite so handsome, or that her colour was so vivid; or that her body was so straight and long and supple. He liked the way in which she gave it to that horse, and he made up his mind that she would grace any position, however high. Presently the horse made a leap into the road in front of the motor and stood trembling, ready to bolt.

"For Heaven's sake, Humphrey," she cried, "shut off your power? Don't sit there like an idiot—do you think I'm doing this for pleasure?"

Mr. Crewe good-naturedly turned off his switch, and the motor, with a dying sigh, was silent. He even liked the notion of being commanded to do a thing; there was a relish about it that was new. The other women of his acquaintance addressed him more deferentially.

"Get hold of the bridle," he said to the chauffeur. "You've got no business to have an animal like that," was his remark to Victoria.

"Don't touch him!" she said to the man, who was approaching with a true machinist's fear of a high-spirited horse. "You've got no business to have a motor like that, if you can't handle it any better than you do."

"You managed him all right. I'll say that for you," said Mr. Crewe.

"No thanks to you," she replied. Now that the horse was comparatively quiet, she sat and regarded Mr. Crewe with an amusement which was gradually getting the better of her anger. A few moments since, and she wished with great intensity that she had been using the whip on his shoulders instead. Now that she had time to gather up the threads of the situation, the irresistibly comic aspect of it grew upon her, and little creases came into the corners of her eyes—which Mr. Crewe admired. She recalled—-with indignation, to be sure—the conversation she had overheard in the dining room of the Duncan house, but her indignation was particularly directed, on that occasion,

towards Mr. Tooting. Here was Humphrey Crewe, sitting talking to her in the road—-Humphrey Crewe, whose candidacy for the governorship impugned her father's management of the Northeastern Railroads—and she was unable to take the matter seriously! There must be something wrong with her, she thought.

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“So you’re home again,” Mr. Crewe observed, his eyes still bearing witness to the indubitable fact. “I shouldn’t have known it—I’ve been so busy.”

“Is the Legislature still in session?” Victoria soberly inquired.

“You are a little behind the times—ain’t you?” said Mr. Crewe, in surprise. “How long have you been home? Hasn’t anybody told you what’s going on?”

“I only came up ten days ago,” she answered, “and I’m afraid I’ve been something of a recluse. What is going on?”

“Well,” he declared, “I should have thought you’d heard it, anyway. I’ll send you up a few newspapers when I get back. I’m a candidate for the governorship.”

Victoria bit her lip, and leaned over to brush a fly from the neck of her horse.

“You are getting on rapidly, Humphrey,” she said. “Do you think you’ve got—any chance?”

“Any chance!” he repeated, with some pardonable force. “I’m sure to be nominated. There’s an overwhelming sentiment among the voters of this State for decent politics. It didn’t take me long to find that out. The only wonder is that somebody hasn’t seen it before.”

“Perhaps,” she answered, giving him a steady look, “perhaps somebody has.”

One of Mr. Crewe’s greatest elements of strength was his imperviousness to this kind of a remark.

“If anybody’s seen it,” he replied, “they haven’t the courage of their convictions.” Such were the workings of Mr. Crewe’s mind that he had already forgotten that first talk with Mr. Hamilton Tooting. “Not that I want to take too much credit on myself,” he added, with becoming modesty, “I have had some experience in the world, and it was natural that I should get a fresh view. Are you coming down to Leith in a few days?”

“I may,” said Victoria.

“Telephone me,” said Mr. Crewe, “and if I can get off, I will. I’d like to talk to you. You have more sense than most women I know.”

“You overwhelm me, Humphrey. Compliments sound strangely on your lips.”

“When I say a thing, I mean it,” Mr. Crewe declared. “I don’t pay compliments. I’d make it a point to take a little time off to talk to you. You see, so many men are interested in

this thing from various parts of the State, and we are so busy organizing, that it absorbs most of my day."

"I couldn't think of encroaching," Victoria protested.

"That's all right—you can be a great help. I've got confidence in your judgment. By the way," he asked suddenly, "you haven't seen your friend Austen Vane since you got back, have you?"

"Why do you call him my friend?" said Victoria. Mr. Crew perceived that the exercise had heightened her colour, and the transition appealed to his sense of beauty.

"Perhaps I put it a little strongly," he replied. "You seemed to take an interest in him, for some reason. I suppose it's because you like new types."

"I like Mr. Vane very much,—and for himself," she said quietly. "But I haven't seen him since I came back. Nor do I think I am likely to see him. What made you ask about him?"

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“Well, he seems to be a man of some local standing, and he ought to be in this campaign. If you happen to see him, you might mention the subject to him. I’ve sent for him to come up and see me.”

“Mr. Vane doesn’t seem to me to be a person one can send for like that,” Victoria remarked judicially. “As to advising him as to what course he should take politically—-that would even be straining my friendship for you, Humphrey. On reflection,” she added, smiling, “there may appear to you reasons why I should not care to meddle with—politics, just now.”

“I can’t see it,” said Mr. Crewe; “you’ve got a mind of your own, and you’ve never been afraid to use it, so far as I know. If you should see that Vane man, just give him a notion of what I’m trying to do.”

“What are you trying to do?” inquired Victoria, sweetly.

“I’m trying to clean up this State politically,” said Mr. Crewe, “and I’m going to do it. When you come down to Leith, I’ll tell you about it, and I’ll send you the newspapers to-day. Don’t be in a hurry,” he cried, addressing over his shoulder two farmers in a wagon who had driven up a few moments before, and who were apparently anxious to pass. “Wind her up, Adolphe.”

The chauffeur, standing by the crank, started the engine instantly, and the gears screamed as Mr. Crewe threw in his low speed. The five-year-old whirled, and bolted down the road at a pace which would have seemed to challenge a racing car; and the girl in the saddle, bending to the motion of the horse, was seen to raise her hand in warning.

“Better stay whar you be,” shouted one of the farmers; “don’t go to follerin’ her. The hoes is runnin’ away.”

Mr. Crewe steered his car into the Fairview entrance, and backed into the road again, facing the other way. He had decided to go home.

“That lady can take care of herself,” he said, and started off towards Leith, wondering how it was that Mr. Flint had not confided his recent political troubles to his daughter.

“That hoss is ugly, sure enough,” said the farmer who had spoken before.

Victoria flew on, down the narrow road. After twenty strides she did not attempt to disguise from herself the fact that the five-year-old was in a frenzy of fear, and running away. Victoria had been run away with before, and having some knowledge of the animal she rode, she did not waste her strength by pulling on the curb, but sought rather to quiet him with her voice, which had no effect whatever. He was beyond appeal, his head was down, and his ears trembling backwards and straining for a sound of the

terror that pursued him. The road ran through the forest, and Victoria reflected that the grade, on the whole, was downward to the East Tunbridge station, where the road crossed the track and took to the hills beyond. Once among them, she would be safe—he might run as far, as he pleased. But could she pass the station? She held a firm rein, and tried to keep her mind clear.

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Suddenly, at a slight bend of the road, the corner of the little red building came in sight, some hundreds of yards ahead; and, on the side where it stood, in the clearing, was a white mass which Victoria recognized as a pile of lumber. She saw several men on the top of the pile, standing motionless; she heard one of them shout; the horse swerved, and she felt herself flung violently to the left.

Her first thought, after striking, was one of self-congratulation that her safety stirrup and habit had behaved properly. Before she could rise, a man was leaning over her—and in the instant she had the impression that he was a friend. Other people had had this impression of him on first acquaintance—his size, his genial, brick-red face, and his honest blue eyes all doubtless contributing.

“Are you hurt, Miss Flint?” he asked.

“Not in the least,” she replied, springing to her feet to prove the contrary. What’s become of my horse?”

“Two of the men have gone after him,” he said, staring at her with undisguised but honest admiration. Whereupon he became suddenly embarrassed, and pulled out a handkerchief the size of a table napkin. “Let me dust you off.”

“Thank you,” said Victoria, laughing, and beginning the process herself. Her new acquaintance plied the handkerchief, his face a brighter brick-red than ever.

“Thank God, there wasn’t a freight on the siding,” he remarked, so fervently that Victoria stole a glance at him. The dusting process continued.

“There,” she exclaimed, at last, adjusting her stock and shaking her skirt, “I’m ever so much obliged. It was very foolish in me to tumble off, wasn’t it?”

“It was the only thing you could have done,” he declared. “I had a good view of it, and he flung you like a bean out of a shooter. That’s a powerful horse. I guess you’re the kind that likes to take risks.”

Victoria laughed at his expressive phrase, and crossed the road, and sat down on the edge of the lumber pile, in the shade.

“There seems to be nothing to do but wait,” she said, “and to thank you again. Will you tell me your name?”

“I’m Tom Gaylord,” he replied.

Her colour, always so near the surface, rose a little as she regarded him. So this was Austen Vane’s particular friend, whom he had tried to put out of his window. A

Herculean task, Victoria thought, from Tom's appearance. Tom sat down within a few feet of her.

"I've seen you a good many times, Miss Flint," he remarked, applying the handkerchief to his face.

"And I've seen you—once, Mr. Gaylord," some mischievous impulse prompted her to answer. Perhaps the impulse was more deep-seated, after all.

"Where?" demanded Tom, promptly.

"You were engaged," said Victoria, "in a struggle in a window on Ripton Square. It looked, for a time," she continued, "as if you were going to be dropped on the roof of the porch."

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Tom gazed at her in confusion and surprise.

“You seem to be fond, too, of dangerous exercise,” she observed.

“Do you mean to say you remembered me from that?” he exclaimed. “Oh, you know Austen Vane, don’t you?”

“Does Mr. Vane acknowledge the acquaintance?” Victoria inquired.

“It’s funny, but you remind me of Austen,” said Tom, grinning; “you seem to have the same queer way of saying things that he has.” Here he was conscious of another fit of embarrassment. “I hope you don’t mind what I say, Miss Flint.”

“Not at all,” said Victoria. She turned, and looked across the track.

“I suppose they are having a lot of trouble in catching my horse,” she remarked.

“They’ll get him,” Tom assured her, “one of those men is my manager. He always gets what he starts out for. What were we talking about? Oh, Austen Vane. You see, I’ve known him ever since I was a shaver, and I think the world of him. If he asked me to go to South America and get him a zebra to-morrow, I believe I’d do it.”

“That is real devotion,” said Victoria. The more she saw of young Tom, the better she liked him, although his conversation was apt to be slightly embarrassing.

“We’ve been through a lot of rows together,” Tom continued, warming to his subject, “in school and college. You see, Austen’s the kind of man who doesn’t care what anybody thinks, if he takes it into his head to do a thing. It was a great piece of luck for me that he shot that fellow out West, or he wouldn’t be here now. You heard about that, didn’t you?”

“Yes,” said Victoria, “I believe I did.”

“And yet,” said Tom, “although I’m as good a friend as he has, I never quite got under his skin. There’s some things I wouldn’t talk to him about. I’ve learned that. I never told him, for instance, that I saw him out in a sleigh with you at the capital.”

“Oh,” said Victoria; and she added, “Is he ashamed of it?”

“It’s not that,” replied Tom, hastily, “but I guess if he’d wanted me to know about it, he’d have told me.”

Victoria had begun to realize that, in the few minutes which had elapsed since she had found herself on the roadside, gazing up into young Tom’s eyes, she had somehow become quite intimate with him.

“I fancy he would have told you all there was to tell about it—if the matter had occurred to him again,” she said, with the air of finally dismissing a subject already too prolonged. But Tom knew nothing of the shades and conventions of the art of conversation.

“He’s never told me he knew you at all!” he exclaimed, staring at Victoria. Apparently some of the aspects of this now significant omission on Austen’s part were beginning to dawn on Tom.

“It wasn’t worth mentioning,” said Victoria, briefly, seeking for a pretext to change the subject.

“I don’t believe that,” said Tom, “you can’t expect me to sit here and look at you and believe that. How long has he known you?”

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“I saw him once or twice last summer, at Leith,” said Victoria, now wavering between laughter and exasperation. She had got herself into a quandary indeed when she had to parry the appalling frankness of such inquiries.

“The more you see of him, the more you’ll admire him, I’ll prophesy,” said Tom. “If he’d been content to travel along the easy road, as most fellows are, he would have been counsel for the Northeastern. Instead of that—” here Tom halted abruptly, and turned scarlet: “I forgot,” he said, “I’m always putting my foot in it, with ladies.”

He was so painfully confused that Victoria felt herself suffering with him, and longed to comfort him.

“Please go on, Mr. Gaylord,” she said; “I am very much interested in my neighbours here, and I know that a great many of them think that the railroad meddles in politics. I’ve tried to find out what they think, but it is so difficult for a woman to understand. If matters are wrong, I’m sure my father will right them when he knows the situation. He has so much to attend to.” She paused. Tom was still mopping his forehead. “You may say anything you like to me, and I shall not take offence.”

Tom’s admiration of her was heightened by this attitude.

“Austen wouldn’t join Mr. Crewe in his little game, anyway,” he said. “When Ham Tooting, Crewe’s manager, came to him he kicked him downstairs.”

Victoria burst out laughing.

“I constantly hear of these ferocious deeds which Mr. Vane commits,” she said, “and yet he seems exceptionally good-natured and mild-mannered.”

“That’s straight—he kicked him downstairs. Served Tooting right, too.”

“There does seem to have been an element of justice in it,” Victoria remarked.

“You haven’t seen Austen since he left his father?” Mr. Gaylord inquired.

“Left him! Where—has he gone?”

“Gone up to live with Jabe Jenney. If Austen cared anything about money, he never would have broken with the old man, who has some little put away.”

“Why did he leave his father?” asked Victoria, not taking the trouble now to conceal her interest.

“Well,” said Tom, “you know they never did get along. It hasn’t been Austen’s fault—-he’s tried. After he came back from the West he stayed here to please old Hilary, when

he might have gone to New York and made a fortune at the law, with his brains. But after Austen saw the kind of law the old man practised he wouldn't stand for it, and got an office of his own."

Victoria's eyes grew serious.

"What kind of law does Hilary Vane practise?" she asked.

Tom hesitated and began to mop his forehead again.

"Please don't mind me," Victoria pleaded.

"Well, all right," said Tom, "I'll tell you the truth, or die for it. But I don't want to make you-unhappy."

"You will do me a kindness, Mr. Gaylord," she said, "by telling me what you believe to be true."

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There was a note in her voice which young Tom did not understand. Afterwards, when he reflected about the matter, he wondered if she were unhappy.

“I don’t want to blame Hilary too much,” he answered. “I know Austen don’t. Hilary’s grown up with that way of doing things, and in the old days there was no other way. Hilary is the chief counsel for the Northeastern, and he runs the Republican organization in this State for their benefit. But Austen made up his mind that there was no reason why he should grow up that way. He says that a lawyer should keep to his profession, and not become a lobbyist in the interest of his clients. He lived with the old man until the other day, because he has a real soft spot for him. Austen put up with a good deal. And then Hilary turned loose on him and said a lot of things he couldn’t stand. Austen didn’t answer, but went up and packed his bags and made Hilary’s housekeeper promise to stay with him, or she’d have left, too. They say Hilary’s sorry, now. He’s fond of Austen, but he can’t get along with him.”

“Do—Do you know what they quarreled about?” asked Victoria, in a low voice.

“This spring,” said Tom, “the Gaylord Lumber Company made Austen junior counsel. He ran across a law the other day that nobody else seems to have had sense enough to discover, by which we can sue the railroad for excessive freight rates. It means a lot of money. He went right in to Hilary and showed him the section, told him that suit was going to be brought, and offered to resign. Hilary flew off the track—and said if he didn’t bring suit he’d publish it all over the State that Austen started it. Galusha Hammer, our senior counsel, is sick, and I don’t think he’ll ever get well. That makes Austen senior counsel. But he persuaded old Tom, my father, not to bring this suit until after the political campaign, until Mr. Crewe gets through with his fireworks. Hilary doesn’t know that.”

“I see,” said Victoria.

Down the hill, on the far side of the track, she perceived the two men approaching with a horse; then she remembered the fact that she had been thrown, and that it was her horse. She rose to her feet.

“I’m ever so much obliged to you, Mr. Gaylord,” she said; “you have done me a great favour by—telling me these things. And thanks for letting them catch the horse. I’m afraid I’ve put you to a lot of bother.”

“Not at all,” said Tom, “not at all.” He was studying her face. Its expression troubled and moved him strangely, for he was not an analytical person. “I didn’t mean to tell you those things when I began,” he apologized, “but you wanted to hear them.”

“I wanted to hear them,” repeated Victoria. She held out her hand to him.

“You’re not going to ride home!” he exclaimed. “I’ll take you up in my buggy—it’s in the station shed.”

She smiled, turned and questioned and thanked the men, examined the girths and bridle, and stroked the five-year-old on the neck. He was wet from mane to fetlocks.

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“I don’t think he’ll care to run much farther,” she said. “If you’ll pull him over to the lumber pile, Mr. Gaylord, I’ll mount him.”

They performed her bidding in silence, each paying her a tribute in his thoughts. As for the five-year-old, he was quiet enough by this time. When she was in the saddle she held out her hand once more to Tom.

“I hope we shall meet soon again,” she said, and smiling back at him, started on her way towards Fairview.

Tom stood for a moment looking after her, while the two men indulged in surprised comments.

“Andrews,” said young Mr. Gaylord, “just fetch my buggy and follow her until she gets into the gate.”

CHAPTER XVIII

A SPIRIT IN THE WOODS

Empires crack before they crumble, and the first cracks seem easily mended—even as they have been mended before. A revolt in Gaul or Britain or Thrace is little to be minded, and a prophet in Judea less. And yet into him who sits in the seat of power a premonition of something impending gradually creeps—a premonition which he will not acknowledge, will not define. Yesterday, by the pointing of a finger, he created a province; to-day he dares not, but consoles himself by saying he does not wish to point. No antagonist worthy of his steel has openly defied him, worthy of recognition by the opposition of a legion. But the sense of security has been subtly and indefinably shaken.

By the strange telepathy which defies language, to the Honourable Hilary Vane, Governor of the Province, some such unacknowledged forebodings have likewise been communicated. A week after his conversation with Austen, on the return of his emperor from a trip to New York, the Honourable Hilary was summoned again to the foot of the throne, and his thoughts as he climbed the ridges towards Fairview were not in harmony with the carols of the birds in the depths of the forest and the joy of the bright June weather. Loneliness he had felt before, and to its ills he had applied the antidote of labour. The burden that sat upon his spirit to-day was not mere loneliness; to the truth of this his soul attested, but Hilary Vane had never listened to the promptings of his soul. He would have been shocked if you had told him this. Did he not confess, with his eyes shut, his sins every Sunday? Did he not publicly acknowledge his soul?

Austen Vane had once remarked that, if some keen American lawyer would really put his mind to the evasion of the Ten Commandments, the High Heavens themselves

might be cheated. This saying would have shocked the Honourable Hilary inexpressibly. He had never been employed by a syndicate to draw up papers to avoid these mandates; he revered them, as he revered the Law, which he spelled with a capital. He spelled the word Soul with a capital likewise, and certainly no higher recognition could be desired than this!

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Never in the Honourable Hilary's long, laborious, and preeminently model existence had he realized that happiness is harmony. It would not be true to assert that, on this wonderful June day, a glimmering of this truth dawned upon him. Such a statement would be open to the charge of exaggeration, and his frame of mind was pessimistic. But he had got so far as to ask himself the question,—Cui bono? and repeated it several times on his drive, until a verse of Scripture came, unbidden, to his lips. "For what hate man of all his labour, and of the vexation of his heart, wherein he hath laboured under the sun?" and "there is one event unto all." Austen's saying, that he had never learned how to enjoy life, he remembered, too. What had Austen meant by that?

Hitherto Hilary Vane had never failed of self-justification in any event which had befallen him; and while this consciousness of the rectitude of his own attitude had not made him happier, there had been a certain grim pleasure in it. To the fact that he had ruined, by sheer over-righteousness, the last years of the sunny life of Sarah Austen he had been oblivious—until to-day. The strange, retrospective mood which had come over him this afternoon led his thoughts into strange paths, and he found himself wondering if, after all, it had not been in his power to make her happier. Her dryad-like face, with its sweet, elusive smile, seemed to peer at him now wistfully out of the forest, and suddenly a new and startling thought rose up within him—after six and thirty years. Perhaps she had belonged in the forest! Perhaps, because he had sought to cage her, she had pined and died! The thought gave Hilary unwonted pain, and he strove to put it away from him; but memories such as these, once aroused, are not easily set at rest, and he bent his head as he recalled (with a new and significant pathos) those hopeless and pitiful flights into the wilds she loved.

Now Austen had gone. Was there a Law behind these actions of mother and son which he had persisted in denouncing as vagaries? Austen was a man: a man, Hilary could not but see, who had the respect of his fellows, whose judgment and talents were becoming recognized. Was it possible that he, Hilary Vane, could have been one of those referred to by the Preacher? During the week which had passed since Austen's departure the house in Hanover Street had been haunted for Hilary. The going of his son had not left a mere void,—that would have been pain enough. Ghosts were there, ghosts which he could but dimly feel and see, and more than once, in the long evenings, he had taken to the streets to avoid them.

In that week Hilary's fear of meeting his son in the street or in the passages of the building had been equalled by a yearning to see him. Every morning, at the hour Austen was wont to drive Pepper to the Ripton House stables across the square, Hilary had contrived to be standing near his windows—a little back, and out of sight. And—-stranger still!—he had turned from these glimpses to the reports of the Honourable Brush Bascom and his associates with a distaste he had never felt before.

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With some such thoughts as these Hilary Vane turned into the last straight stretch of the avenue that led to Fairview House, with its red and white awnings gleaming in the morning sun. On the lawn, against a white and purple mass of lilacs and the darker background of pines, a straight and infinitely graceful figure in white caught his eye and held it. He recognized Victoria. She wore a simple summer gown, the soft outline of its flounces mingling subtly with the white clusters behind her. She turned her head at the sound of the wheels and looked at him; the distance was not too great for a bow, but Hilary did not bow. Something in her face deterred him from this act,—something which he himself did not understand or define. He sought to pronounce the incident negligible. What was the girl, or her look, to him? And yet (he found himself strangely thinking) he had read in her eyes a trace of the riddle which had been relentlessly pursuing him; there was an odd relation in her look to that of Sarah Austen. During the long years he had been coming to Fairview, even before the new house was built, when Victoria was in pinafores, he had never understood her. When she was a child, he had vaguely recognized in her a spirit antagonistic to his own, and her sayings had had a disconcerting ring. And now this simple glance of hers had troubled him—only more definitely.

It was a new experience for the Honourable Hilary to go into a business meeting with his faculties astray. Absently he rang the stable bell, surrendered his horse, and followed a footman to the retired part of the house occupied by the railroad president. Entering the oak-bound sanctum, he crossed it and took a seat by the window, merely nodding to Mr. Flint, who was dictating a letter. Mr. Flint took his time about the letter, but when it was finished he dismissed the stenographer with an impatient and powerful wave of the hand—as though brushing the man bodily out of the room. Remaining motionless until the door had closed, Mr. Flint turned abruptly and fixed his eyes on the contemplative figure of his chief counsel.

“Well?” he said.

“Well, Flint,” answered the Honourable Hilary.

“Well,” said Mr. Flint, “that bridge over Maple River has got loosened up so by the freshet that we have to keep freight cars on it to hold it down, and somebody is trying to make trouble by writing a public letter to the Railroad Commission, and calling attention to the head-on collision at Barker’s Station.”

“Well,” replied the Honourable Hilary, again, “that won’t have any influence on the Railroad Commission.”

“No,” said Mr. Flint, “but it all goes to increase this confounded public sentiment that’s in the air, like smallpox. Another jackass pretends to have kept a table of the through trains on the Sumsic division, and says they’ve averaged forty-five minutes late at Edmundton. He says the through express made the run faster thirty years ago.”

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“I guess that’s so,” said the Honourable Hilary, “I was counsel for that road then. I read that letter. He says there isn’t an engine on the division that could pull his hat off, up grade.”

Neither of the two gentlemen appeared to deem this statement humorous.

“What these incendiaries don’t understand,” said Mr. Flint, “is that we have to pay dividends.”

“It’s because they don’t get ’em,” replied Mr. Vane, sententiously.

“The track slid into the water at Glendale,” continued Mr. Flint. “I suppose they’ll tell us we ought to rock ballast that line. You’ll see the Railroad Commission, and give ’em a sketch of a report.”

“I had a talk with Young yesterday,” said Mr. Vane, his eyes on the stretch of lawn and forest framed by the window. For the sake of the ignorant, it may be well to add that the Honourable Orrin Young was the chairman of the Commission.

“And now,” said Mr. Flint, “not that this Crewe business amounts to that” (here the railroad president snapped his fingers with the intensity of a small pistol shot), “but what’s he been doing?”

“Political advertising,” said the Honourable Hilary.

“Plenty of it, I guess,” Mr. Flint remarked acidly. “That’s one thing Tooting can’t teach him. He’s a natural-born genius at it.”

“Tooting can help—even at that,” answered Mr. Vane, ironically. “They’ve got a sketch of so-called Northeastern methods in forty weekly newspapers this week, with a picture of that public benefactor and martyr, Humphrey Crewe. Here’s a sample of it.”

Mr. Flint waved the sample away.

“You’ve made a list of the newspapers that printed it?” Mr. Flint demanded. Had he lived in another age he might have added, “Have the malefactors burned alive in my garden.”

“Brush has seen some of ’em,” said Mr. Vane, no doubt referring to the editors, “and I had some of ’em come to Ripton. They’ve got a lot to say about the freedom of the press, and their right to take political advertising. Crewe’s matter is in the form of a despatch, and most of ’em pointed out at the top of the editorial columns that their papers are not responsible for despatches in the news columns. Six of ’em are out and out for Crewe, and those fellows are honest enough.”

“Take away their passes and advertising,” said Mr. Flint. ("Off with their heads!” said the Queen of Hearts.)

“I wouldn’t do that if I were you, Flint; they might make capital out of it. I think you’ll find that five of ’em have sent their passes back, anyway.”

“Freeman will give you some new ideas” (from the “Book of Arguments,” although Mr. Flint did not say so) “which have occurred to me might be distributed for editorial purposes next week. And, by the way, what have you done about that brilliant Mr. Coombes of the ‘Johnstown Ray,’ who says ’the Northeastern Railroads give us a pretty good government’?”

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The Honourable Hilary shook his head.

“Too much zeal,” he observed. “I guess he won’t do it again.”

For a while after that they talked of strictly legal matters, which the chief counsel produced in order out of his bag. But when these were finally disposed of, Mr. Flint led the conversation back to the Honourable Humphrey Crewe, who stood harmless—to be sure—like a bull on the track which it might be unwise to run over.

“He doesn’t amount to a soap bubble in a gale,” Mr. Flint declared contemptuously. “Sometimes I think we made a great mistake to notice him.

“We haven’t noticed him,” said Mr. Vane; “the newspapers have.”

Mr. Flint brushed this distinction aside.

“That,” he said irritably, “and letting Tooting go—”

The Honourable Hilary’s eyes began to grow red. In former days Mr. Flint had not often questioned his judgment.

“There’s one thing more I wanted to mention to you,” said the chief counsel. “In past years I have frequently drawn your attention to that section of the act of consolidation which declares that rates and fares existing at the time of its passage shall not be increased.”

“Well,” said Mr. Flint, impatiently, “well, what of it?”

“Only this,” replied the Honourable Hilary, “you disregarded my advice, and the rates on many things are higher than they were.”

“Upon my word, Vane,” said Mr. Flint, “I wish you’d chosen some other day to croak. What do you want me to do? Put all the rates back because this upstart politician Crewe is making a noise? Who’s going to dig up that section?”

“Somebody has dug it up,” said Mr. Vane:

This was the last straw.

“Speak out, man!” he cried. “What are you leading up to?”

“Just this,” answered the Honourable Hilary; “that the Gaylord Lumber Company are going to bring suit under that section.”

Mr. Flint rose, thrust his hands in his pockets, and paced the room twice.

“Have they got a case?” he demanded.

“It looks a little that way tome,” said Mr. Vane. “I’m not prepared to give a definite opinion as yet.”

Mr. Flint measured the room twice again.

“Did that old fool Hammer stumble on to this?”

“Hammer’s sick,” said Mr. Vane; “they say he’s got Bright’s disease. My son discovered that section.”

There was a certain ring of pride in the Honourable Hilary’s voice, and a lifting of the head as he pronounced the words “my son,” which did not escape Mr. Flint. The railroad president walked slowly to the arm of the chair in which his chief counsel was seated, and stood looking down at him. But the Honourable Hilary appeared unconscious of what was impending.

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“Your son!” exclaimed Mr. Flint. “So your son, the son of the man who has been my legal adviser and confidant and friend for thirty years, is going to join the Crewel and Tootings in their assaults on established decency and order! He’s out for cheap political preferment, too, is he? By thunder! I thought that he had some such thing in his mind when he came in here and threw his pass in my face and took that Meader suit. I don’t mind telling you that he’s the man I’ve been afraid of all along. He’s got a head on him—I saw that at the start. I trusted to you to control him, and this is how you do it.”

It was characteristic of the Honourable Hilary, when confronting an angry man, to grow cooler as the other’s temper increased.

“I don’t want to control him,” he said.

“I guess you couldn’t,” retorted Mr. Flint.

“That’s a better way of putting it,” replied the Honourable Hilary, “I couldn’t.”

The chief counsel for the Northeastern Railroads got up and went to the window, where he stood for some time with his back turned to the president. Then Hilary Vane faced about.

“Mr. Flint,” he began, in his peculiar deep and resonant voice, “you’ve said some things to-day that I won’t forget. I want to tell you, first of all, that I admire my son.”

“I thought so,” Mr. Flint interrupted.

“And more than that,” the Honourable Hilary continued, “I prophesy that the time will come when you’ll admire him. Austen Vane never did an underhanded thing in his life—or committed a mean action. He’s be’n wild, but he’s always told me the truth. I’ve done him injustice a good many times, but I won’t stand up and listen to another man do him injustice.” Here he paused, and picked up his bag. “I’m going down to Ripton to write out my resignation as counsel for your roads, and as soon as you can find another man to act, I shall consider it accepted.”

It is difficult to put down on paper the sensations of the president of the Northeastern Railroads as he listened to these words from a man with whom he had been in business relations for over a quarter of a century, a man upon whose judgment he had always relied implicitly, who had been a strong fortress in time of trouble. Such sentences had an incendiary, blasphemous ring on Hilary Vane’s lips—at first. It was as if the sky had fallen, and the Northeastern had been wiped out of existence.

Mr. Flint’s feelings were, in a sense, akin to those of a traveller by sea who wakens out of a sound sleep in his cabin, with peculiar and unpleasant sensations, which he gradually discovers are due to cold water, and he realizes that the boat on which he is travelling is sinking.

The Honourable Hilary, with his bag, was halfway to the door, when Mr. Flint crossed the room in three strides and seized him by the arm.

“Hold on, Vane,” he said, speaking with some difficulty; “I’m—I’m a little upset this morning, and my temper got the best of me. You and I have been good friends for too many years for us to part this way. Sit down a minute, for God’s sake, and let’s cool off. I didn’t intend to say what I did. I apologize.”

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Mr. Flint dropped his counsel's arm, and pulled out a handkerchief, and mopped his face. "Sit down, Hilary," he said.

The Honourable Hilary's tight lips trembled. Only three or four times in their long friendship had the president made use of his first name.

"You wouldn't leave me in the lurch now, Hilary," Mr. Flint continued, "when all this nonsense is in the air? Think of the effect such an announcement would have! Everybody knows and respects you, and we can't do without your advice and counsel. But I won't put it on that ground. I'd never forgive myself, as long as I lived, if I lost one of my oldest and most valued personal friends in this way."

The Honourable Hilary looked at Mr. Flint, and sat down. He began to cut a piece of Honey Dew, but his hand shook. It was difficult, as we know, for him to give expression to his feelings.

"All right," he said.

Half an hour later Victoria, from under the awning of the little balcony in front of her mother's sitting room, saw her father come out bareheaded into the sun and escort the Honourable Hilary Vane to his buggy. This was an unwonted proceeding.

Victoria loved to sit in that balcony, a book lying neglected in her lap, listening to the summer sounds: the tinkle of distant cattle bells, the bass note of a hurrying bee, the strangely compelling song of the hermit-thrush, which made her breathe quickly; the summer wind, stirring wantonly, was prodigal with perfumes gathered from the pines and the sweet June clover in the fields and the banks of flowers; in the distance, across the gentle foreground of the hills, Sawanec beckoned —did Victoria but raise her eyes! —to a land of enchantment.

The appearance of her father and Hilary had broken her reverie, and a new thought, like a pain, had clutched her. The buggy rolled slowly down the drive, and Mr. Flint, staring after it a moment, went in the house. After a few minutes he emerged again, an old felt hat on his head which he was wont to wear in the country and a stick in his hand. Without raising his eyes, he started slowly across the lawn; and to Victoria, leaning forward intently over the balcony rail, there seemed an unwonted lack of purpose in his movements. Usually he struck out briskly in the direction of the pastures where his prize Guernseys were feeding, stopping on the way to pick up the manager of his farm. There are signs, unknown to men, which women read, and Victoria felt her heart beating, as she turned and entered the sitting room through the French window. A trained nurse was softly closing the door of the bedroom on the right.

"Mrs. Flint is asleep," she said.

“I am going out for a little while, Miss Oliver,” Victoria answered, and the nurse returned a gentle smile of understanding.

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Victoria, descending the stairs, hastily pinned on a hat which she kept in the coat closet, and hurried across the lawn in the direction Mr. Flint had taken. Reaching the pine grove, thinned by a famous landscape architect, she paused involuntarily to wonder again at the ultramarine of Sawanec through the upright columns of the trunks under the high canopy of boughs. The grove was on a plateau, which was cut on the side nearest the mountain by the line of a gray stone wall, under which the land fell away sharply. Mr. Flint was seated on a bench, his hands clasped across his stick, and as she came softly over the carpet of the needles he did not hear her until she stood beside him.

“You didn’t tell me that you were going for a walk,” she said reproachfully.

He started, and dropped his stick. She stooped quickly, picked it up for him, and settled herself at his side.

“I—I didn’t expect to go, Victoria,” he answered.

“You see,” she said, “it’s useless to try to slip away. I saw you from the balcony.”

“How’s your mother feeling?” he asked.

“She’s asleep. She seems better to me since she’s come back to Fairview.”

Mr. Flint stared at the mountain with unseeing eyes.

“Father,” said Victoria, “don’t you think you ought to stay up here at least a week, and rest? I think so.”

“No,” he said, “no. There’s a directors’ meeting of a trust company to-morrow which I have to attend. I’m not tired.”

Victoria shook her head, smiling at him with serious eyes.

“I don’t believe you know when you are tired,” she declared. “I can’t see the good of all these directors’ meetings. Why don’t you retire, and live the rest of your life in peace? You’ve got—money enough, and even if you haven’t,” she added, with the little quiver of earnestness that sometimes came into her voice, “we could sell this big house and go back to the farmhouse to live. We used to be so happy there.”

He turned abruptly, and fixed upon her a steadfast, searching stare that held, nevertheless, a strange tenderness in it.

“You don’t care for all this, do you, Victoria?” he demanded, waving his stick to indicate the domain of Fairview.

She laughed gently, and raised her eyes to the green roof of the needles.

“If we could only keep the pine grove!” she sighed. “Do you remember what good times we had in the farmhouse, when you and I used to go off for whole days together?”

“Yes,” said Mr. Flint, “yes.”

“We don’t do that any more,” said Victoria. “It’s only a little drive and a walk, now and then. And they seem to be growing—scarcer.”

Mr. Flint moved uneasily, and made an attempt to clear his voice.

“I know it,” he said, and further speech seemingly failed him. Victoria had the greater courage of the two.

“Why don’t we?” she asked.

“I’ve often thought of it,” he replied, still seeking his words with difficulty. “I find myself with more to do every year, Victoria, instead of less.”

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“Then why don’t you give it up?”

“Why?” he asked, “why? Sometimes I wish with my whole soul I could give it up. I’ve always said that you had more sense than most women, but even you could not understand.”

“I could understand,” said Victoria.

He threw at her another glance,—a ring in her words proclaimed their truth in spite of his determined doubt. In her eyes—had he but known it!—was a wisdom that exceeded his.

“You don’t realize what you’re saying,” he exclaimed; “I can’t leave the helm.”

“Isn’t it,” she said, “rather the power that is so hard to relinquish?”

The feelings of Augustus Flint when he heard this question were of a complex nature. It was the second time that day he had been shocked, —the first being when Hilary Vane had unexpectedly defended his son. The word Victoria had used, power, had touched him on the quick. What had she meant by it? Had she been his wife and not his daughter, he would have flown into a rage. Augustus Flint was not a man given to the psychological amusement of self-examination; he had never analyzed his motives. He had had little to do with women, except Victoria. The Rose of Sharon knew him as the fountainhead from which authority and money flowed, but Victoria, since her childhood, had been his refuge from care, and in the haven of her companionship he had lost himself for brief moments of his life. She was the one being he really loved, with whom he consulted on such affairs of importance as he felt to be within her scope and province,—the cattle, the men on the place outside of the household, the wisdom of buying the Baker farm; bequests to charities, paintings, the library; and recently he had left to her judgment the European baths and the kind of treatment which her mother had required. Victoria had consulted with the physicians in Paris, and had made these decisions herself. From a child she had never shown a disposition to evade responsibility.

To his intimate business friends, Mr. Flint was in the habit of speaking of her as his right-hand man, but she was circumscribed by her sex,—or rather by Mr. Flint’s idea of her sex,—and it never occurred to him that she could enter into the larger problems of his life. For this reason he had never asked himself whether such a state of affairs would be desirable. In reality it was her sympathy he craved, and such an interpretation of himself as he chose to present to her.

So her question was a shock. He suddenly beheld his daughter transformed, a new personality who had been thinking, and thinking along paths which he had never cared to travel.

“The power!” he repeated. “What do you mean by that, Victoria?”

She sat for a moment on the end of the bench, gazing at him with a questioning, searching look which he found disconcerting. What had happened to his daughter? He little guessed the tumult in her breast. She herself could not fully understand the strange turn the conversation had taken towards the gateway of the vital things.

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“It is natural for men to love power, isn’t it?”

“I suppose so,” said Mr. Flint, uneasily. “I don’t know what you’re driving at, Victoria.”

“You control the lives and fortunes of a great many people.”

“That’s just it,” answered Mr. Flint, with a dash at this opening; “my responsibilities are tremendous. I can’t relinquish them.”

“There is no—younger man to take your place? Not that I mean you are old, father,” she continued, “but you have worked very hard all your life, and deserve a holiday the rest of it.”

“I don’t know of any younger man,” said Mr. Flint. “I don’t mean to say I’m the only person in the world who can safeguard the stockholders’ interests in the Northeastern. But I know the road and its problems. I don’t understand this from you, Victoria. It doesn’t sound like you. And as for letting go the helm now,” he added, with a short laugh tinged with bitterness, “I’d be posted all over the country as a coward.”

“Why?” asked Victoria, in the same quiet way.

“Why? Because a lot of discontented and disappointed people who have made failures of their lives are trying to give me as much trouble as they can.”

“Are you sure they are all disappointed and discontented, father?” she said.

“What,” exclaimed Mr. Flint, “you ask me that question? You, my own daughter, about people who are trying to make me out a rascal!”

“I don’t think they are trying to make you out a rascal—at least most of them are not,” said Victoria. “I don’t think the—what you might call the personal aspect enters in with the honest ones.”

Mr. Flint was inexpressibly amazed. He drew a long breath.

“Who are the honest ones?” he cried. “Do you mean to say that you, my own daughter, are defending these charlatans?”

“Listen, father,” said Victoria. “I didn’t mean to worry you, I didn’t mean to bring up that subject to-day. Come—let’s go for a walk and see the new barn.”

But Mr. Flint remained firmly planted on the bench.

“Then you did intend to bring up the subject—some day?” he asked.

“Yes,” said Victoria. She sat down again. “I have often wanted to hear —your side of it.”

“Whose side have you heard?” demanded Mr. Flint.

A crimson flush crept into her cheek, but her father was too disturbed to notice it.

“You know,” she said gently, “I go about the country a good deal, and I hear people talking,—farmers, and labourers, and people in the country stores who don’t know that I’m your daughter.”

“What do they say?” asked Mr. Flint, leaning forward eagerly and aggressively.

Victoria hesitated, turning over the matter in her mind.

“You understand, I am merely repeating what they say—”

“Yes, yes,” he interrupted, “I want to know how far this thing has gone among them.”

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“Well,” continued Victoria, looking at him bravely, “as nearly as I can remember their argument it is this: that the Northeastern Railroads control the politics of the State for their own benefit. That you appoint the governors and those that go to the Legislature, and that—Hilary Vane gets them elected. They say that he manages a political machine—that’s the right word, isn’t it?—for you. And that no laws can be passed of which you do not approve. And they say that the politicians whom Hilary Vane commands, and the men whom they put into office are all beholden to the railroad, and are of a sort which good citizens cannot support. They say that the railroad has destroyed the people’s government.”

Mr. Flint, for the moment forgetting or ignoring the charges, glanced at her in astonishment. The arraignment betrayed an amount of thought on the subject which he had not suspected.

“Upon my word, Victoria,” he said, “you ought to take the stump for Humphrey Crewe.”

She reached out with a womanly gesture, and laid her hand upon his.

“I am only telling you—what I hear,” she said.

“Won’t you explain to me the way you look at it? These people don’t all seem to be dishonest men or charlatans. Some of them, I know, are honest.” And her colour rose again.

“Then they are dupes and fools,” Mr. Flint declared vehemently. “I don’t know how to explain it to you the subject is too vast, too far-reaching. One must have had some business experience to grasp it. I don’t mean to say you’re not intelligent, but I’m at a loss where to begin with you. Looked at from their limited point of view, it would seem as if they had a case. I don’t mean your friend, Humphrey Crewe—it’s anything to get office with him. Why, he came up here and begged me—”

“I wasn’t thinking of Humphrey Crewe,” said Victoria. Mr. Flint gave an ejaculation of distaste.

“He’s no more of a reformer than I am. And now we’ve got that wild son of Hilary Vane’s—the son of one of my oldest friends and associates —making trouble. He’s bitten with this thing, too, and he’s got some brains in his head. Why,” exclaimed Mr. Flint, stopping abruptly and facing his daughter, “you know him! He’s the one who drove you home that evening from Crewe’s party.”

“I remember,” Victoria faltered, drawing her hand away.

“I wasn’t very civil to him that night, but I’ve always been on the lookout for him. I sent him a pass once, and he came up here and gave me as insolent a talking to as I ever had in my life.”

How well Victoria recalled that first visit, and how she had wondered about the cause of it! So her father and Austen Vane had quarrelled from the first.

“I’m sure he didn’t mean to be insolent,” she said, in a low voice. “He isn’t at all that sort.”

“I don’t know what sort he is, except that he isn’t my sort,” Mr. Flint retorted, intent upon the subject which had kindled his anger earlier in the day. “I don’t pretend to understand him. He could probably have been counsel for the road if he had behaved decently. Instead, he starts in with suits against us. He’s hit upon something now.”

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The president of the Northeastern dug savagely into the ground with his stick, and suddenly perceived that his daughter had her face turned away from his, towards the mountain.

“Well, I won’t bore you with that.”

She turned with a look in her eyes that bewildered him.

“You’re not—boring me,” she said.

“I didn’t intend to go into all that,” he explained more calmly, “but the last few days have been trying, we’ve got to expect the wind to blow from all directions.”

Victoria smiled at him faintly.

“I have told you,” she said, “that what you need is a trip abroad. Perhaps some day you will remember it.”

“Maybe I’ll go in the autumn,” he answered, smiling back at her. “These little flurries don’t amount to anything more than mosquito-bites—only mosquitoes are irritating. You and I understand each other, Victoria, and now listen. I’ll give you the broad view of this subject, the view I’ve got to take, and I’ve lived in the world and seen more of it than some folks who think they know it all. I am virtually the trustee for thousands of stockholders, many of whom are widows and orphans. These people are innocent; they rely on my ability, and my honesty, for their incomes. Few men who have not had experience in railroad management know one-tenth of the difficulties and obstructions encountered by a railroad president who strives to do his duty by the road. My business is to run the Northeastern as economically as is consistent with good service and safety, and to give the stockholders the best return for their money. I am the steward—and so long as I am the steward,” he exclaimed, “I’m going to do what I think is right, taking into consideration all the difficulties that confront me.”

He got up and took a turn or two on the pine-needles. Victoria regarded him in silence. He appeared to her at that moment the embodiment of the power he represented. Force seemed to emanate from him, and she understood more clearly than ever how, from a poor boy on an obscure farm in Truro, he had risen to his present height.

“I don’t say the service is what it should be,” he went on, “but give me time—give me time. With all this prosperity in the country we can’t handle the freight. We haven’t got cars enough, tracks enough, engines enough. I won’t go into that with you. But I do expect you to understand this: that politicians are politicians; they have always been corrupt as long as I have known them, and in my opinion they always will be. The Northeastern is the largest property holder in the State, pays the biggest tax, and has the most at stake. The politicians could ruin us in a single session of the Legislature—-

and what's more, they would do it. We'd have to be paying blackmail all the time to prevent measures that would compel us to go out of business. This is a fact, and not a theory. What little influence I exert politically I have to maintain in

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order to protect the property of my stockholders from annihilation. It isn't to be supposed," he concluded, "that I'm going to see the State turned over to a man like Humphrey Crewe. I wish to Heaven that this and every other State had a George Washington for governor and a majority of Robert Morrises in the Legislature. If they exist, in these days, the people won't elect 'em—that's all. The kind of man the people will elect, if you let 'em alone, is—a man who brings in a bill and comes to you privately and wants you to buy him off."

"Oh, father," Victoria cried, "I can't believe that of the people I see about here! They seem so kind and honest and high-principled."

Mr. Flint gave a short laugh.

"They're dupes, I tell you. They're at the mercy of any political schemer who thinks it worth his while to fool 'em. Take Leith, for instance. There's a man over there who has controlled every office in that town for twenty-five years or more. He buys and sells votes and credentials like cattle. His name is Job Braden."

"Why," said Victoria, I saw him at Humphrey Crewe's garden-party."

"I guess you did," said Mr. Flint, "and I guess Humphrey Crewe saw him before he went."

Victoria was silent, the recollection of the talk between Mr. Tooting and Mr. Crewe running through her mind, and Mr. Tooting's saying that he had done "dirty things" for the Northeastern. She felt that this was something she could not tell her father, nor could she answer his argument with what Tom Gaylord had said. She could not, indeed, answer Mr. Flint's argument at all; the subject, as he had declared, being too vast for her. And moreover, as she well knew, Mr. Flint was a man whom other men could not easily answer; he bore them down, even as he had borne her down. Involuntarily her mind turned to Austen, and she wondered what he had said; she wondered how he would have answered her father—whether he could have answered him. And she knew not what to think. Could it be right, in a position of power and responsibility, to acknowledge evil and deal with it as evil? That was, in effect, the gist of Mr. Flint's contention. She did not know. She had never (strangely enough, she thought) sought before to analyze the ethical side of her father's character. One aspect of him she had shared with her mother, that he was a tower of defence and strength, and that his name alone had often been sufficient to get difficult things done.

Was he right in this? And were his opponents charlatans, or dupes, or idealists who could never be effective? Mr. Crewe wanted an office; Tom Gaylord had a suit against the road, and Austen Vane was going to bring that suit! What did she really know of

Austen Vane? But her soul cried out treason at this, and she found herself repeating, with intensity, “I believe in him! I believe in him!” She would have given worlds to have been able to stand up before her father and tell him that Austen would not bring the suit at this time that Austen had not allowed his name to be mentioned for office in this connection, and had spurned Mr. Crewe’s advances. But she had not seen Austen since February.

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What was his side of it? He had never told her, and she respected his motives—yet, what was his side? Fresh from the inevitably deep impressions which her father's personality had stamped upon her, she wondered if Austen could cope with the argument before which she had been so helpless.

The fact that she made of each of these two men the embodiment of a different and opposed idea did not occur to Victoria until that afternoon. Unconsciously, each had impersonated the combatants in a struggle which was going on in her own breast. Her father himself, instinctively, had chosen Austen Vane for his antagonist without knowing that she had an interest in him. Would Mr. Flint ever know? Or would the time come when she would be forced to take a side? The blood mounted to her temples as she put the question from her.

CHAPTER XIX

MR. JABE JENNEY ENTERTAINS

Mr. Flint had dropped the subject with his last remark, nor had Victoria attempted to pursue it. Bewildered and not a little depressed (a new experience for her), she had tried to hide her feelings. He, too, was harassed and tired, and she had drawn him away from the bench and through the pine woods to the pastures to look at his cattle and the model barn he was building for them. At half-past three, in her runabout, she had driven him to the East Tunbridge station, where he had taken the train for New York. He had waved her a good-by from the platform, and smiled: and for a long time, as she drove through the silent roads, his words and his manner remained as vivid as though he were still by her side. He was a man who had fought and conquered, and who fought on for the sheer love of it.

It was a blue day in the hill country. At noon the clouds had crowned Sawanec—a sure sign of rain; the rain had come and gone, a June downpour, and the overcast sky lent (Victoria fancied) to the country-side a new atmosphere. The hills did not look the same. It was the kind of a day when certain finished country places are at their best—-or rather seem best to express their meaning; a day for an event; a day set strangely apart with an indefinable distinction. Victoria recalled such days in her youth when weddings or garden-parties had brought canopies into service, or news had arrived to upset the routine of the household. Raindrops silvered the pines, and the light winds shook them down on the road in a musical shower.

Victoria was troubled, as she drove, over a question which had recurred to her many times since her talk that morning: had she been hypocritical in not telling her father that she had seen more of Austen Vane than she had implied by her silence? For many years Victoria had chosen her own companions; when the custom had begun, her mother had made a protest which Mr. Flint had answered with a laugh; he thought

Victoria's judgment better than his wife's. Ever since that time the Rose of Sharon had taken

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the attitude of having washed her hands of responsibility for a course which must inevitably lead to ruin. She discussed some of Victoria's acquaintances with Mrs. Pomfret and other intimates; and Mrs. Pomfret had lost no time in telling Mrs. Flint about her daughter's sleigh-ride at the State capital with a young man from Ripton who seemed to be seeing entirely too much of Victoria. Mrs. Pomfret had marked certain danger signs, and as a conscientious woman was obliged to speak of them. Mrs. Pomfret did not wish to see Victoria make a mesalliance.

"My dear Fanny," Mrs. Flint had cried, lifting herself from the lace pillows, "what do you expect me to do especially when I have nervous prostration? I've tried to do my duty by Victoria—goodness knows—to bring her up—among the sons and daughters of the people who are my friends. They tell me that she has temperament—whatever that may be. I'm sure I never found out, except that the best thing to do with people who have it is to let them alone and pray for them. When we go abroad I like the Ritz and Claridge's and that new hotel in Rome. I see my friends there. Victoria, if you please, likes the little hotels in the narrow streets where you see nobody, and where you are most uncomfortable." (Miss Oliver, it's time for those seven drops.) "As I was saying, Victoria's enigmatical hopeless, although a French comtesse who wouldn't look at anybody at the baths this spring became wild about her, and a certain type of elderly English peer always wants to marry her. (I suppose I do look pale to-day.) Victoria loves art, and really knows something about it. She adores to potter around those queer places abroad where you see strange English and Germans and Americans with red books in their hands. What am I to do about this young man of whom you speak—-whatever his name is? I suppose Victoria will marry him—it would be just like her. But what can I do, Fanny? I can't manage her, and it's no use going to her father. He would only laugh. Augustus actually told me once there was no such thing as social position in this country!"

"American men of affairs," Mrs. Pomfret judicially replied, "are too busy to consider position. They make it, my dear, as a by-product." Mrs. Pomfret smiled, and mentally noted this aptly technical witticism for use again.

"I suppose they do," assented the Rose of Sharon, "and their daughters sometimes squander it, just as their sons squander their money."

"I'm not at all sure that Victoria is going to squander it," was Mrs. Pomfret's comforting remark. "She is too much of a personage, and she has great wealth behind her. I wish Alice were more like her, in some ways. Alice is so helpless, she has to be prodded and prompted continually. I can't leave her for a moment. And when she is married, I'm going into a sanatorium for six months."

"I hear," said Mrs. Flint, "that Humphrey Crewe is quite epris."

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“Poor dear Humphrey!” exclaimed Mrs. Pomfret, “he can think of nothing else but politics.”

But we are not to take up again, as yet, the deeds of the crafty Ulysses. In order to relate an important conversation between Mrs. Pomfret and the Rose of Sharon, we have gone back a week in this history, and have left Victoria—absorbed in her thoughts—driving over a wood road of many puddles that led to the Four Corners, near Avalon. The road climbed the song-laden valley of a brook, redolent now with scents of which the rain had robbed the fern, but at length Victoria reached an upland where the young corn was springing from the, black furrows that followed the contours of the hillsides, where the big-eyed cattle lay under the heavy maples and oaks or gazed at her across the fences.

Victoria drew up in front of an unpainted farm-house straggling beside the road, a farm-house which began with the dignity of fluted pilasters and ended in a tumble-down open shed filled with a rusty sleigh and a hundred nondescript articles—some of which seemed to be moving. Intently studying this phenomenon from her runabout, she finally discovered that the moving objects were children; one of whom, a little girl, came out and stared at her.

“How do you do, Mary?” said Victoria. “Isn’t your name Mary?”

The child nodded.

“I remember you,” she said; “you’re the rich lady, mother met at the party, that got father a job.”

Victoria smiled. And such was the potency of the smile that the child joined in it.

“Where’s brother?” asked Victoria. “He must be quite grown up since we gave him lemonade.”

Mary pointed to the woodshed.

“O dear!” exclaimed Victoria, leaping out of the runabout and hitching her horse, “aren’t you afraid some of those sharp iron things will fall on him?” She herself rescued brother from what seemed untimely and certain death, and set him down in safety in the middle of the grass plot. He looked up at her with the air of one whose dignity has been irretrievably injured, and she laughed as she reached down and pulled his nose. Then his face, too, became wreathed in smiles.

“Mary, how old are you?”

“Seven, ma’am.”

“And I’m five,” Mary’s sister chimed in.

“I want you to promise me,” said Victoria, “that you won’t let brother play in that shed. And the very next time I come I’ll bring you both the nicest thing I can think of.”

Mary began to dance.

“We’ll promise, we’ll promise!” she cried for both, and at this juncture Mrs. Fitch, who had run from the washtub to get into her Sunday waist, came out of the door.

“So you hain’t forgot me!” she exclaimed. “I was almost afeard you’d forgot me.”

“I’ve been away,” said Victoria, gently taking the woman’s hand and sitting down on the doorstep.

“Don’t set there,” said Mrs. Fitch; “come into the parlour. You’ll dirty your dress—Mary!” This last in admonition.

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“Let her stay where she is,” said Victoria, putting her arm around the child. “The dress washes, and it’s so nice outside.”

“You rich folks certainly do have strange notions,” declared Mrs. Fitch, fingering the flounce on Victoria’s skirt, which formed the subject of conversation for the next few minutes.

“How are you getting on?” Victoria asked at length.

A look of pain came into the woman’s eyes.

“You’ve be’n so good to us, and done so much gettin’ Eben a job on your father’s place, that I don’t feel as if I ought to lie to you. He done it again—on Saturday night. First time in three months. The manager up at Fairview don’t know it. Eben was all right Monday.”

“I’m sorry,” said Victoria, simply. “Was it bad?”

“It might have be’n. Young Mr. Vane is stayin’ up at Jabe Jenney’s—you know, the first house as you turn off the hill road. Mr. Vane heard some way what you’d done for us, and he saw Eben in Ripton Saturday night, and made him get into his buggy and come home. I guess he had a time with Eben. Mr. Vane, he came around here on Sunday, and gave him as stiff a talkin’ to as he ever got, I guess. He told Eben he’d ought to be ashamed of himself goin’ back on folks who was tryin’ to help him pay his mortgage. And I’ll say this for Eben, he was downright ashamed. He told Mr. Vane he could lick him if he caught him drunk again, and Mr. Vane said he would. My, what a pretty colour you’ve got to-day.”

Victoria rose. “I’m going to send you down some washing,” she said.

Mrs. Fitch insisted upon untying the horse, while Victoria renewed her promises to the children.

There were two ways of going back to Fairview,—a long and a short way, —and the long way led by Jabe Jenney’s farm. Victoria came to the fork in the road, paused,—-and took the long way. Several times after this, she pulled her horse down to a walk, and was apparently on the point of turning around again: a disinterested observer in a farm wagon, whom she passed, thought that she had missed her road. “The first house after you turn off the hill road,” Mrs. Fitch had said. She could still, of course, keep on the hill road, but that would take her to Weymouth, and she would never get home.

It is useless to go into the reasons for this act of Victoria’s. She did not know them herself. The nearer Victoria got to Mr. Jenney’s, the more she wished herself back at the forks. Suppose Mrs. Fitch told him of her visit! Perhaps she could pass the Jenneys’ unnoticed. The chances of this, indeed, seemed highly favourable, and it was

characteristic of her sex that she began to pray fervently to this end. Then she turned off the hill road, feeling as though she had but to look back to see the smoke of the burning bridges.

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Victoria remembered the farm now; for Mr. Jabe Jenney, being a person of importance in the town of Leith, had a house commensurate with his estate. The house was not large, but its dignity was akin to Mr. Jenney's position: it was painted a spotless white, and not a shingle or a nail was out of place. Before it stood the great trees planted by Mr. Jenney's ancestors, which Victoria and other people had often paused on their drives to admire, and on the hillside was a little, old-fashioned flower garden; lilacs clustered about the small-paned windows, and a bitter-sweet clung to the roof and pillars of the porch. These details of the place (which she had never before known as Mr. Jenney's) flashed into Victoria's mind before she caught sight of the great trees themselves looming against the sombre blue-black of the sky: the wind, rising fitfully, stirred the leaves with a sound like falling waters, and a great drop fell upon her cheek. Victoria raised her eyes in alarm, and across the open spaces, toward the hills which piled higher and higher yet against the sky, was a white veil of rain. She touched with her whip the shoulder of her horse, recalling a farm a quarter of a mile beyond —she must not be caught here!

More drops followed, and the great trees seemed to reach out to her a protecting shelter. She spoke to the horse. Beyond the farm-house, on the other side of the road, was a group of gray, slate-shingled barns, and here two figures confronted her. One was that of the comfortable, middle-aged Mr. Jenney himself, standing on the threshold of the barn, and laughing heartily, and crying: "Hang on to him That's right—get him by the nose!"

The person thus addressed had led a young horse to water at the spring which bubbled out of a sugar-kettle hard by; and the horse, quivering, had barely touched his nostrils to the water when he reared backward, jerking the halter-rope taut. Then followed, with bewildering rapidity, a series of manoeuvres on the part of the horse to get away, and on the part of the person to prevent this, and inasmuch as the struggle took place in the middle of the road, Victoria had to stop. By the time the person had got the horse by the nose,—shutting off his wind,—the rain was coming down in earnest.

"Drive right in," cried Mr. Jenney, hospitably; "you'll get wet. Look out, Austen, there's a lady comin'. Why, it's Miss Flint!"

Victoria knew that her face must be on fire. She felt Austen Vane's quick glance upon her, but she did not dare look to the right or left as she drove into the barn. There seemed no excuse for any other course.

"How be you?" said Mr. Jenney; "kind of lucky you happened along here, wahn't it? You'd have been soaked before you got to Harris's. How be you? I ain't seen you since that highfalutin party up to Crewe's."

"It's very kind of you to let me come in, Mr. Jenney."

“But I have a rain-coat and a boot, and—I really ought to be going on.”

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Here Victoria produced the rain-coat from under the seat. The garment was a dark blue, and Mr. Jenney felt of its gossamer weight with a good-natured contempt.

“That wouldn’t be any more good than so much cheesecloth,” he declared, nodding in the direction of the white sheet of the storm. “Would it, Austen.”

She turned her head slowly and met Austen’s eyes. Fortunate that the barn was darkened, that he might not see how deep the colour mantling in her temples! His head was bare, and she had never really marked before the superb setting of it on his shoulders, for he wore a gray flannel shirt open at the neck, revealing a bronzed throat. His sinewy arms —weather-burned, too—were bare above the elbows.

Explanations of her presence sprang to her lips, but she put them from her as subterfuges unworthy of him. She would not attempt to deceive him in the least. She had wished to see him again—nor did she analyze her motives. Once more beside him, the feeling of confidence, of belief in him, rose within her and swept all else away—-burned in a swift consuming flame the doubts of absence. He took her hand, but she withdrew it quickly.

“This is a fortunate accident,” he said, “fortunate, at least, for me.”

“Perhaps Mr. Jenney will not agree with you,” she retorted.

But Mr. Jenney was hitching the horse and throwing a blanket over him. Suddenly, before they realized it, the farmer had vanished into the storm, and this unexplained desertion of their host gave rise to an awkward silence between them, which each for a while strove vainly to break. In the great moments of life, trivialities become dwarfed and ludicrous, and the burden of such occasions is on the woman.

“So you’ve taken to farming,” she said,-"isn’t it about haying time?”

He laughed.

“We begin next week. And you—you’ve come back in season for it. I hope that your mother is better.”

“Yes,” replied Victoria, simply, “the baths helped her. But I’m glad to get back,—I like my own country so much better,—and especially this part of it,” she added. “I can bear to be away from New York in the winter, but not from Fairview in the summer.”

At this instant Mr. Jenney appeared at the barn door bearing a huge green umbrella.

“Come over to the house—Mis’ Jenney is expectin’ you,” he said.

Victoria hesitated. To refuse would be ungracious; moreover, she could risk no misinterpretation of her acts, and she accepted. Mrs. Jenney met her on the doorstep, and conducted her into that sanctum reserved for occasions, the parlour, with its Bible, its flat, old-fashioned piano, its samplers, its crayon portrait of Mr. and Mrs. Jenney after their honeymoon; with its aroma that suggested Sundays and best manners. Mrs. Jenney, with incredible rapidity (for her figure was not what it had been at the time of the crayon portrait), had got into a black dress, over which she wore a spotless apron. She sat in the parlour with her guest until Mr. Jenney reappeared with shining face and damp hair.

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“You’ll excuse me, my dear,” said Mrs. Jenney, “but the supper’s on the stove, and I have to run out now and then.”

Mr. Jenney was entertaining. He had the shrewd, humorous outlook upon life characteristic of the best type of New England farmer, and Victoria got along with him famously. His comments upon his neighbours were kindly but incisive, except when the question of spirituous liquors occurred to him. Austen Vane he thought the world of, and dwelt upon this subject a little longer than Victoria, under the circumstances, would have wished.

“He comes out here just like it was home,” said Mr. Jenney, “and helps with the horses and cows the same as if he wasn’t gettin’ to be one of the greatest lawyers in the State.”

“O dear, Mr. Jenney,” said Victoria, glancing out of the window, “I’ll really have to go home. I’m sure it won’t stop raining for hours. But I shall be perfectly dry in my rain-coat,—no matter how much you may despise it.”

“You’re not a-going to do anything of the kind,” cried Mrs. Jenney from the doorway. “Supper’s all ready, and you’re going to walk right in.”

“Oh, I really have to go,” Victoria exclaimed.

“Now I know it ain’t as grand as you’d get at home,” said Mr. Jenney. “It ain’t what we’d give you, Miss Victoria,—that’s only simple home fare,—it’s what you’d give us. It’s the honour of having you,” he added,—and Victoria thought that no courtier could have worded an invitation better. She would not be missed at Fairview. Her mother was inaccessible at this hour, and the servants would think of her as dining at Leith. The picture of the great, lonely house, of the ceremonious dinner which awaited her single presence, gave her an irresistible longing to sit down with these simple, kindly souls. Austen was the only obstacle. He, too, had changed his clothes, and now appeared, smiling at her behind Mrs. Jenney. The look of prospective disappointment in the good woman’s face decided Victoria.

“I’ll stay, with pleasure,” she said.

Mr. Jenney pronounced grace. Victoria sat across the table from Austen, and several times the consciousness of his grave look upon her as she talked heightened the colour in her cheek. He said but little during the meal. Victoria heard how well Mrs. Jenney’s oldest son was doing in Springfield, and how the unmarried daughter was teaching, now, in the West. Asked about Europe, that land of perpetual mystery to the native American, the girl spoke so simply and vividly of some of the wonders she had seen that she held the older people entranced long after the meal was finished. But at length she observed, with a start, the gathering darkness. In the momentary happiness of this experience, she had been forgetful.

“I will drive home with you, if you’ll allow me,” said Austen.

“Oh, no, I really don’t need an escort, Mr. Vane. I’m so used to driving about at night, I never think of it,” she answered.

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“Of course he’ll drive home with you, dear,” said Mrs. Jenney. “And, Jabe, you’ll hitch up and go and fetch Austen back.”

“Certain,” Mr. Jenney agreed.

The rain had ceased, and the indistinct outline of the trees and fences betrayed the fact that the clouds were already thinning under the moon. Austen had lighted the side lamps of the runabout, revealing the shining pools on the road as they drove along—for the first few minutes in silence.

“It was very good of you to stay,” he said; “you do not know how much pleasure you have given them.”

Her feminine appreciation responded to the tact of this remark: it was so distinctly what he should have said.

How delicate, she thought, must be his understanding of her, that he should have spoken so!

“I was glad to stay,” she answered, in a low voice. “I—enjoyed it, too.”

“They have very little in their lives,” he said, and added, with a characteristic touch, “I do not mean to say that your coming would not be an event in any household.”

She laughed with him, softly, at this sally.

“Not to speak of the visit you are making them,” she replied.

“Oh, I’m one of the family,” he said; “I come and go. Jabe’s is my country house, when I can’t stand the city any longer.”

She saw that he did not intend to tell her why he had left Ripton on this occasion. There fell another silence. They were like prisoners, and each strove to explore the bounds of their captivity: each sought a lawful ground of communication. Victoria suddenly remembered—with an access of indignation—her father’s words, “I do not know what sort he is, but he is not my sort.” A while ago, and she had blamed herself vehemently for coming to Jabe Jenney’s, and now the act had suddenly become sanctified in her sight. She did not analyze her feeling for Austen, but she was consumed with a fierce desire that justice should be done him. “He was honourable—honourable!” she found herself repeating under her breath. No man or woman could look into his face, take his hand, sit by his side, without feeling that he was as dependable as the stars in their courses. And her father should know this, must be made to know it. This man was to be distinguished from opportunists and self-seekers, from fanatics who strike at random. His chief possession was a priceless one—a conscience.

As for Austen, it sufficed him for the moment that he had been lifted, by another seeming caprice of fortune, to a seat of torture the agony whereof was exquisite. An hour, and only the ceaseless pricking memory of it would abide. The barriers had risen higher since he had seen her last, but still he might look into her face and know the radiance of her presence. Could he only trust himself to guard his tongue! But the heart on such occasions will cheat language of its meaning.

“What have you been doing since I saw you last?” she asked. “It seems that you still continue to lead a life of violence.”

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“Sometimes I wish I did,” he answered, with a laugh; “the humdrum existence of getting practice enough to keep a horse is not the most exciting in the world. To what particular deed of violence do you refer?”

“The last achievement, which is in every one’s mouth, that of assisting Mr. Tooting down-stairs.”

“I have been defamed,” Austen laughed; “he fell down, I believe. But as I have a somewhat evil reputation, and as he came out of my entry, people draw their own conclusions. I can’t imagine who told you that story.”

“Never mind,” she answered. “You see, I have certain sources of information about you.”

He tingled over this, and puzzled over it so long that she laughed.

“Does that surprise you?” she asked. “I fail to see why I should be expected to lose all interest in my friends—even if they appear to have lost interest in me.”

“Oh, don’t say that!” he cried so sharply that she wished her words unsaid. “You can’t mean it! You don’t know!”

She trembled at the vigorous passion he put into the words.

“No, I don’t mean it,” she said gently.

The wind had made a rent in the sheet of the clouds, and through it burst the moon in her full glory, flooding field and pasture, and the black stretches of pine forest at their feet. Below them the land fell away, and fell again to the distant broadening valley, to where a mist of white vapour hid the course of the Blue. And beyond, the hills rose again, tier upon tier, to the shadowy outline of Sawanec herself against the hurrying clouds and the light-washed sky. Victoria, gazing at the scene, drew a deep breath, and turned and looked at him in the quick way which he remembered so well.

“Sometimes,” she said, “it is so beautiful that it hurts to look at it. You love it—do you ever feel that way?”

“Yes,” he said, but his answer was more than the monosyllable. “I can see that mountain from my window, and it seriously interferes with my work. I really ought to move into another building.”

There was a little catch in her laugh.

“And I watch it,” she continued, “I watch it from the pine grove by the hour. Sometimes it smiles, and sometimes it is sad, and sometimes it is far, far away, so remote and mysterious that I wonder if it is ever to come back and smile again.”

“Have you ever seen the sunrise from its peak?” said Austen.

“No. Oh, how I should love to see it!” she exclaimed.

“Yes, you would like to see it,” he answered simply. He would like to take her there, to climb, with her hand in his, the well-known paths in the darkness, to reach the summit in the rosy-fingered dawn: to see her stand on the granite at his side in the full glory of the red light, and to show her a world which she was henceforth to share with him.

Some such image, some such vision of his figure on the rock, may have been in her mind as she turned her face again toward the mountain.

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“You are cold,” he said, reaching for the mackintosh in the back of the trap.

“No,” she said. But she stopped the horse and acquiesced by slipping her arms into the coat, and he felt upon his hand the caress of a stray wisp of hair at her neck. Under a spell of thought and feeling, seemingly laid by the magic of the night, neither spoke for a space. And then Victoria summoned her forces, and turned to him again. Her tone bespoke the subtle intimacy that always sprang up between them, despite bars and conventions.

“I was sure you would understand why I wrote you from New York,” she said, “although I hesitated a long time before doing so. It was very stupid of me not to realize the scruples which made you refuse to be a candidate for the governorship, and I wanted to —to apologize.”

“It wasn’t necessary,” said Austen, “but—I valued the note.” The words seemed so absurdly inadequate to express his appreciation of the treasure which he carried with him, at that moment, in his pocket. “But, really,” he added, smiling at her in the moonlight, “I must protest against your belief that I could have been an effective candidate! I have roamed about the State, and I have made some very good friends here and there among the hill farmers, like Mr. Jenney. Mr. Redbrook is one of these. But it would have been absurd of me even to think of a candidacy founded on personal friendships. I assure you,” he added, smiling, “there was no self denial in my refusal.”

She gave him an appraising glance which he found at once enchanting and disconcerting.

“You are one of those people, I think, who do not know their own value. If I were a man, and such men as Mr. Redbrook and Mr. Jenney knew me and believed sufficiently in me and in my integrity of purpose to ask me to be their candidate” (here she hesitated an instant), “and I believed that the cause were a good one, I should not have felt justified in refusing. That is what I meant. I have always thought of you as a man of force and a man of action. But I did not see—the obstacle in your way.”

She hesitated once more, and added, with a courage which did not fail of its direct appeal, “I did not realize that you would be publicly opposing your father. And I did not realize that you would not care to criticise —mine.”

On the last word she faltered and glanced at his profile.

Had she gone too far?

“I felt that you would understand,” he answered. He could not trust himself to speak further. How much did she know? And how much was she capable of grasping?

His reticence served only to fortify her trust—to elevate it. It was impossible for her not to feel something of that which was in him and crying for utterance. She was a woman. And if this one action had been but the holding of her coat, she would have known. A man who could keep silent under these conditions must indeed be a rock of might and honour; and she felt sure now, with a surging of joy, that the light she had seen shining from it was the beacon of truth. A question trembled on her lips—the question for which she had long been gathering strength. Whatever the outcome of this communion, she felt that there must be absolute truth between them.

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“I want to ask you something, Mr. Vane—I have been wanting to for a long time.”

She saw the muscles of his jaw tighten,—a manner he had when earnest or determined,—and she wondered in agitation whether he divined what she was going to say. He turned his face slowly to hers, and his eyes were troubled.

“Yes,” he said.

“You have always spared my feelings,” she went on. “Now—now I am asking for the truth—as you see it. Do the Northeastern Railroads wrongfully govern this State for their own ends?”

Austen, too, as he thought over it afterwards, in the night, was surprised at her concise phrasing, suggestive; as it was, of much reflection. But at the moment, although he had been prepared for and had braced himself against something of this nature, he was nevertheless overcome by the absolute and fearless directness of her speech.

“That is a question,” he answered, “which you will have to ask your father.”

“I have asked him,” she said, in a low voice; “I want to know what—you believe.”

“You have asked him!” he repeated, in astonishment.

“Yes. You mustn’t think that, in asking you, I am unfair to him in any way—or that I doubt his sincerity. We have been” (her voice caught a little) “the closest friends ever since I was a child.” She paused. “But I want to know what you believe.”

The fact that she emphasized the last pronoun sent another thrill through him. Did it, then, make any difference to her what he believed? Did she mean to differentiate him from out of the multitude? He had to steady himself before he answered:—“I have sometimes thought that my own view might not be broad enough.”

She turned to him again.

“Why are you evading?” she asked. “I am sure it is not because you have not settled convictions. And I have asked you—a favour.”

“You have done me an honour,” he answered, and faced her suddenly. “You must see,” he cried, with a power and passion in his voice that startled and thrilled her in turn, “you must see that it’s because I wish to be fair that I hesitate. I would tell you—anything. I do not agree with my own father,—we have been—apart—for years because of this. And I do—not agree with Mr. Flint. I am sure that they both are wrong. But I cannot help seeing their point of view. These practices are the result of an evolution, of an evolution of their time. They were forced to cope with conditions in the way they did, or

go to the wall. They make the mistake of believing that the practices are still necessary to-day."

"Oh!" she exclaimed, a great hope rising within her at these words. "Oh, and you believe they are not!" His explanation seemed so simple, so inspiring. And above and beyond that, he was sure. Conviction rang in every word. Had he not, she remembered, staked his career by disagreeing with his father? Yes, and he had been slow to condemn; he had seen their side. It was they who condemned him. He must have justice—he should have it!

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“I believe such practices are not necessary now,” he said firmly. “A new generation has come—a generation more jealous of its political rights, and not so willing to be rid of them by farming them out. A change has taken place even in the older men, like Mr. Jenney and Mr. Redbrook, who simply did not think about these questions ten years ago. Men of this type, who could be leaders, are ready to assume their responsibilities, are ready to deal fairly with railroads and citizens alike. This is a matter of belief. I believe it—Mr. Flint and my father do not. They see the politicians, and I see the people. I belong to one generation, and they to another. With the convictions they have, added to the fact that they are in a position of heavy responsibility toward the owners of their property, they cannot be blamed for hesitating to try any experiments.”

“And the practices are—bad?” Victoria asked.

“They are entirely subversive of the principles of American government, to say the least,” replied Austen, grimly. He was thinking of the pass which Mr. Flint had sent him, and of the kind of men Mr. Flint employed to make the practices effective.

They descended into the darkness of a deep valley, scored out between the hills by one of the rushing tributaries of the Blue. The moon fell down behind the opposite ridge, and the road ran through a deep forest. He no longer saw the shades of meaning in her face, but in the blackness of Erebus he could have sensed her presence at his side. Speech, though of this strange kind of which neither felt the strangeness, had come and gone between them, and now silence spoke as eloquently. Twice or thrice their eyes met through the gloom,—and there was light. At length she spoke with the impulsiveness in her voice that he found so appealing.

“You must see my father—you must talk to him. He doesn’t know how fair you are!”

To Austen the inference was obvious that Mr. Flint had conceived for him a special animosity, which he must have mentioned to Victoria, and this inference opened the way to a wide speculation in which he was at once elated and depressed. Why had he been so singled out? And had Victoria defended him? Once before he remembered that she had told him he must see Mr. Flint. They had gained the ridge now, and the moon had risen again for them, striking black shadows from the maples on the granite-cropped pastures. A little farther on was a road which might have been called the rear entrance to Fairview.

What was he to say?

“I am afraid Mr. Flint has other things to do than to see me,” he answered. “If he wished to see me, he would say so.”

“Would you go to see him, if he were to ask you?” said Victoria.

“Yes,” he replied, “but that is not likely to happen. Indeed, you are giving my opinion entirely too much importance in your father’s eyes,” he added, with an attempt to carry it off lightly; “there is no more reason why he should care to discuss the subject with me than with any other citizen of the State of my age who thinks as I do.”

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“Oh, yes, there is,” said Victoria; “he regards you as a person whose opinion has some weight. I am sure of that. He thinks of you as a person of convictions—and he has heard things about you. You talked to him once,” she went on, astonished at her own boldness, “and made him angry. Why don’t you talk to him again?” she cried, seeing that Austen was silent. “I am sure that what you said about the change of public opinion in the State would appeal to him. And oh, don’t quarrel with him! You have a faculty of differing with people without quarrelling with them. My father has so many cares, and he tries so hard to do right as he sees it. You must remember that he was a poor farmer’s son, and that he began to work at fourteen in Brampton, running errands for a country printer. He never had any advantages except those he made for himself, and he had to fight his way in a hard school against men who were not always honourable. It is no wonder that he sometimes takes—a material view of things. But he is reasonable and willing to listen to what other men have to say, if he is not antagonized.”

“I understand,” said Austen, who thought Mr. Flint blest in his advocate. Indeed, Victoria’s simple reference to her father’s origin had touched him deeply. “I understand, but I cannot go to him. There is every reason why I cannot,” he added, and she knew that he was speaking with difficulty, as under great emotion.

“But if he should send for you?” she asked. She felt his look fixed upon her with a strange intensity, and her heart leaped as she dropped her eyes.

“If Mr. Flint should send for me,” he answered slowly, “I would come—and gladly. But it must be of his own free will.”

Victoria repeated the words over to herself, “It must be of his own free will,” waiting until she should be alone to seek their full interpretation. She turned, and looked across the lawn at Fairview House shining in the light. In another minute they had drawn up before the open door.

“Won’t you come in—and wait for Mr. Jenney?” she asked.

He gazed down into her face, searchingly, and took her hand.

“Good night,” he said; “Mr. Jenney is not far behind. I think—I think I should like the walk.”

CHAPTER XX

MR. CREWE: AN APPRECIATION (1)

It is given to some rare mortals—with whom fame precedes grey hairs or baldness to read, while still on the rising tide of their efforts, that portion of their lives which has already been inscribed on the scroll of history—or something like it. Mr. Crewe in kilts at

five; and (prophetic picture!) with a train of cars which—so the family tradition runs—-was afterwards demolished; Mr. Crewe at fourteen, in delicate health; this picture was taken abroad, with a long-suffering tutor who could speak feelingly, if he would, of embryo geniuses. Even at this early period Humphrey

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Crewe's thirst for knowledge was insatiable: he cared little, the biography tells us, for galleries and churches and ruins, but his comments upon foreign methods of doing business were astonishingly precocious. He recommended to amazed clerks in provincial banks the use of cheques, ridiculed to speechless station-masters the side-entrance railway carriage with its want of room, and the size of the goods trucks. He is said to have been the first to suggest that soda-water fountains might be run at a large profit in London.

In college, in addition to keeping up his classical courses, he found time to make an exhaustive study of the railroads of the United States, embodying these ideas in a pamphlet published shortly after graduation. This pamphlet is now, unfortunately, very rare, but the anonymous biographer managed to get one and quote from it. If Mr. Crewe's suggestions had been carried out, seventy-five per cent of the railroad accidents might have been eliminated. Thorough was his watchword even then. And even at that period he foresaw, with the prophecy of genius, the days of single-track congestion.

His efforts to improve Leith and the State in general, to ameliorate the condition of his neighbours, were fittingly and delicately dwelt upon. A desire to take upon himself the burden of citizenship led—as we know—to further self-denial. He felt called upon to go to the Legislature—and this is what he saw:—(Mr. Crewe is quoted here at length in an admirable, concise, and hair-raising statement given in an interview to his biographer. But we have been with him, and know what he saw. It is, for lack of space, reluctantly omitted.)

And now we are to take up where the biography left off; to relate, in a chapter if possible, one of the most remarkable campaigns in the history of this country. A certain reformer of whose acquaintance the honest chronicler boasts (a reformer who got elected!) found, on his first visit to the headquarters he had hired—two citizens under the influence of liquor and a little girl with a skip rope. Such are the beginnings that try men's souls.

The window of every independent shopkeeper in Ripton contained a large-sized picture of the Leith statesman, his determined chin slightly thrust down into the Gladstone collar. Underneath were the words, "I will put an end to graft and railroad rule. I am a Candidate of the People. Opening rally of the People's Campaign at the Opera House, at 8 P.M., July 10th. The Hon. Humphrey Crewe, of Leith, will tell the citizens of Ripton how their State is governed."

"Father," said Victoria, as she read this announcement (three columns wide, in the Ripton Record) as they sat at breakfast together, "do you mind my going? I can get Hastings Weare to take me."

“Not at all,” said Mr. Flint, who had returned from New York in a better frame of mind. “I should like a trustworthy account of that meeting. Only,” he added, “I should advise you to go early, Victoria, in order to get a seat.”

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“You don’t object to my listening to criticism of you?”

“Not by Humphrey Crewe,” laughed Mr. Flint.

Early suppers instead of dinners were the rule at Leith on the evening of the historic day, and the candidate himself, in his red Leviathan, was not inconsiderably annoyed, on the way to Ripton, by innumerable carryalls and traps filled with brightly gowned recruits of that organization of Mrs. Pomfret’s which Beatrice Chillingham had nicknamed “The Ladies’ Auxiliary.”. In vain Mr. Crewe tooted his horn: the sound of it was drowned by the gay talk and laughter in the carryalls, and shrieks ensued when the Leviathan cut by with only six inches to spare, and the candidate turned and addressed the drivers in language more forceful than polite, and told the ladies they acted as if they were going to a Punch-and-Judy show.

“Poor dear Humphrey!” said, Mrs. Pomfret, “is so much in earnest. I wouldn’t give a snap for a man without a temper.”

“Poor dear Humphrey” said Beatrice Chillingham, in an undertone to her neighbour, “is exceedingly rude and ungrateful. That’s what I think.”

The occupants of one vehicle heard the horn, and sought the top of a grassy mound to let the Leviathan go by. And the Leviathan, with characteristic contrariness, stopped.

“Hello,” said Mr. Crewe, with a pull at his cap. “I intended to be on the lookout for you.”

“That is very thoughtful, Humphrey, considering how many things you have to be on the lookout for this evening,” Victoria replied.

“That’s all right,” was Mr. Crewe’s gracious reply. “I knew you’d be sufficiently broad-minded to come, and I hope you won’t take offence at certain remarks I think it my duty to make.”

“Don’t let my presence affect you,” she answered, smiling; “I have come prepared for anything.”

“I’ll tell Tooting to give you a good seat,” he called back, as he started onward.

Hastings Weare looked up at her, with laughter-brimming eyes.

“Victoria, you’re a wonder!” he remarked. “Say, do you remember that tall fellow we met at Humphrey’s party, Austen Vane?”

Yes.”

“I saw him on the street in Ripton the other day, and he came right up and spoke to me. He hadn’t forgotten my name. Now, he’d be my notion of a candidate. He makes you feel as if your presence in the world meant something to him.”

“I think he does feel that way,” replied Victoria.

“I don’t blame him if he feels that way about you,” said Hastings, who made love openly.

“Hastings,” she answered, “when you get a little older, you will learn to confine yourself to your own opinions.”

“When I do,” he retorted audaciously, “they never make you blush like that.”

“It’s probably because you have never learned to be original,” she replied. But Hastings had been set to thinking.

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Mrs. Pomfret, with her foresight and her talent for management, had given the Ladies' Auxiliary notice that they were not to go farther forward than the twelfth row. She herself, with some especially favoured ones, occupied a box, which was the nearest thing to being on the stage. One unforeseen result of Mrs. Pomfret's arrangement was that the first eleven rows were vacant, with the exception of one old man and five or six schoolboys. Such is the courage of humanity in general! On the arrival of the candidate, instead of a surging crowd lining the sidewalk, he found only a fringe of the curious, whose usual post of observation was the railroad station, standing silently on the curb. Within, Mr. Tooting's duties as an usher had not been onerous. He met Mr. Crewe in the vestibule, and drew him into the private office.

"The railroad's fixed 'em," said the manager, indignantly, but sotto voce; "I've found that out. Hilary Vane had the word passed around town that if they came, somethin' would fall on 'em. The Tredways and all the people who own factories served notice on their men that if they paid any attention to this meeting they'd lose their job. But say, the people are watchin' you, just the same."

"How many people are in there?" Mr. Crewe demanded.

"Twenty-seven, when I came out," said Mr. Tooting, with commendable accuracy. "But it wants fifteen minutes to eight."

"And who," asked Mr. Crewe, "is to introduce me?"

An expression of indignation spread over Mr. Tooting's face.

"There ain't a man in Ripton's got sand enough!" he exclaimed. "Sol Gridley was a-goin' to, but he went to New York on the noon train. I guess it's a pleasure trip," Mr. Tooting hinted darkly.

"Why," said Mr. Crewe, "he's the fellow—"

"Exactly," Mr. Tooting replied, "and he did get a lot of 'em, travelling about. But Sol has got to work on the quiet, you understand. He feels he can't come out right away."

"And how about Amos Ricketts? Where's he?"

"Amos," said Mr. Tooting, regretfully, "was taken very sudden about five o'clock. One of his spells come on, and he sent me word to the Ripton House. He had his speech all made up, and it was a good one, too. He was going to tell folks pretty straight how the railroad beat him for mayor."

Mr. Crewe made a gesture of disgust.

"I'll introduce myself," he said. "They all know me, anyhow."

“Say,” said Mr. Tooting, laying a hand on his candidate’s arm. “You couldn’t do any better. I’ve bin for that all along.”

“Hold on,” said Mr. Crewe, listening, “a lot of people are coming in now.”

What Mr. Crewe had heard, however, was the arrival of the Ladies’ Auxiliary,—five and thirty strong, from Leith. But stay! Who are these coming? More ladies—ladies in groups of two and three and five! ladies of Ripton whose husbands, for some unexplained reason, have stayed at home; and Mr. Tooting, as he watched them with mingled feelings, became a woman’s suffragist on the spot. He dived into the private office once more, where he found Mr. Crewe seated with his legs crossed, calmly reading a last winter’s playbill. (Note for a more complete biography.)

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“Well, Tooting,” he said, “I thought they’d begin to come.”

“They’re mostly women,” Mr. Tooting informed him.

“Women!”

“Hold on!” said Mr. Tooting, who had the true showman’s instinct. “Can’t you see that folks are curious? They’re afraid to come ’emselves, and they’re sendin’ their wives and daughters. If you get the women tonight, they’ll go home and club the men into line.”

Eight strokes boomed out from the tower of the neighbouring town hall, and an expectant flutter spread over the audience,—a flatter which disseminated faint odours of sachet and other mysterious substances in which feminine apparel is said to the laid away. The stage was empty, save for a table which held a pitcher of water and a glass.

“It’s a pretty good imitation of a matinee,” Hastings Weare remarked. “I wonder whom the front seats are reserved for. Say, Victoria, there’s your friend Mr. Vane in the corner. He’s looking over here.”

“He has a perfect right to look where he chooses,” said Victoria. She wondered whether he would come over and sit next to her if she turned around, and decided instantly that he wouldn’t. Presently, when she thought Hastings was off his guard, she did turn, to meet, as she expected, Austen’s glance fixed upon her. Their greeting was the signal of two people with a mutual understanding. He did not rise, and although she acknowledged to herself a feeling of disappointment, she gave him credit for a nice comprehension of the situation. Beside him was his friend Tom Gaylord, who presented to her a very puzzled face. And then, if there had been a band, it would have been time to play “See, the Conquering Hero Comes!”

Why wasn’t there a band? No such mistake, Mr. Tooting vowed, should be made at the next rally.

It was Mrs. Pomfret who led the applause from her box as the candidate walked modestly up the side aisle and presently appeared, alone, on the stage. The flutter of excitement was renewed, and this time it might almost be called a flutter of apprehension. But we who have heard Mr. Crewe speak are in no alarm for our candidate. He takes a glass of iced water; he arranges, with the utmost sangfroid, his notes on the desk and adjusts the reading light. Then he steps forward and surveys the scattered groups.

“Ladies—” a titter ran through the audience,—a titter which started somewhere in the near neighbourhood of Mr. Hastings Weare—and rose instantly to several hysterical peals of feminine laughter. Mrs. Pomfret, outraged, sweeps the frivolous offenders with her lorgnette; Mr. Crewe, with his arm resting, on the reading-desk, merely raises the

palm of his hand to a perpendicular reproof,—“and gentlemen.” At this point the audience is thoroughly cowed. “Ladies and gentlemen and fellow citizens. I thank you for the honour you have done me in coming here to listen to the opening speech of my campaign to-night. It is a campaign

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for decency and good government, and I know that the common people of the State—of whom I have the honour to be one—demand these things. I cannot say as much for the so-called prominent citizens," said Mr. Crewe, glancing about him; "not one of your prominent citizens in Ripton would venture to offend the powers that be by consenting to introduce me to-night, or dared come into this theatre and take seats within thirty feet of this platform." Here Mr. Crewe let his eyes rest significantly on the eleven empty rows, while his hearers squirmed in terrified silence at this audacity. Even the Ripton women knew that this was high treason beneath the walls of the citadel, and many of them glanced furtively at the strangely composed daughter of Augustus P. Flint.

"I will show you that I can stand on my own feet," Mr. Crewe continued. "I will introduce myself. I am Humphrey Crewe of Leith, and I claim to have added something to the welfare and prosperity of this State, and I intend to add more before I have finished."

At this point, as might have been expected, spontaneous applause broke forth, originating in the right-hand stage box. Here was a daring defiance indeed, a courage of such a high order that it completely carried away the ladies and drew reluctant plaudits from the male element. "Give it to 'em, Humphrey!" said one of those who happened to be sitting next to Miss Flint, and who received a very severe pinch in the arm in consequence.

"I thank the gentleman," answered Mr. Crewe, "and I propose to —(Handclapping and sachet.) I propose to show that you spend something like two hundred thousand dollars a year to elect legislators and send 'em to the capital, when the real government of your State is in a room in the Pelican Hotel known as the Railroad Room, and the real governor is a citizen of your town, the Honourable Hilary Vane, who sits there and acts for his master, Mr. Augustus P. Flint of New York. And I propose to prove to you that, before the Honourable Adam B. Hunt appeared as that which has come to be known as the 'regular' candidate, Mr. Flint sent for him to go to New York and exacted certain promises from him. Not that it was necessary, but the Northeastern Railroads never take any chances. (Laughter.) The Honourable Adam B. Hunt is what they call a 'safe' man, meaning by that a man who will do what Mr. Flint wants him to do. While I am not 'safe' because I have dared to defy them in your name, and will do what the people want me to do. (Clapping and cheers from a gentleman in the darkness, afterwards identified as Mr. Tooting.) Now, my friends, are you going to continue to allow a citizen of New York to nominate your governors, and do you intend, tamely, to give the Honourable Adam B. Hunt your votes?"

"They ain't got any votes," said a voice—not that of Mr. Hastings Weare, for it came from the depths of the gallery.

“‘The hand that rocks the cradle sways the world,’” answered Mr. Crewe, and there was no doubt about the sincerity of the applause this time.

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“The campaign of the Honourable Humphrey Crewe of Leith,” said the State Tribune next day, “was inaugurated at the Opera House in Ripton last night before an enthusiastic audience consisting of Mr. Austen Vane, Mr. Thomas Gaylord, Jr., Mr. Hamilton Tooting, two reporters, and seventy-four ladies, who cheered the speaker to the echo. About half of these ladies were summer residents of Leith in charge of the well-known social leader, Mrs. Patterson Pomfret,—an organized league which, it is understood, will follow the candidate about the State in the English fashion, kissing the babies and teaching the mothers hygienic cooking and how to ondule the hair.”

After speaking for an hour and a half, the Honourable Humphrey Crewe declared that he would be glad to meet any of the audience who wished to shake his hand, and it was Mrs. Pomfret who reached him first.

“Don’t be discouraged, Humphrey,—you are magnificent,” she whispered.

“Discouraged!” echoed Mr. Crewe. “You can’t kill an idea, and we’ll see who’s right and who’s wrong before I get through with ’em.”

“What a noble spirit!” Mrs. Pomfret exclaimed aside to Mrs. Chillingham. Then she added, in a louder tone, “Ladies, if you will kindly tell me your names, I shall be happy to introduce you to the candidate. Well, Victoria, I didn’t expect to see you here.”

“Why not?” said Victoria. “Humphrey, accept my congratulations.”

“Did you like it?” asked Mr. Crewe. “I thought it was a pretty good speech myself. There’s nothing like telling the truth, you know. And, by the way, I hope to see you in a day or two, before I start for Kingston. Telephone me when you come down to Leith.”

The congratulations bestowed on the candidate by the daughter of the president of the Northeastern Railroads quite took the breath out of the spectators who witnessed the incident, and gave rise to the wildest conjectures. And the admiration of Mr. Hastings Weare was unbounded.

“You’ve got the most magnificent nerve I ever saw, Victoria,” he exclaimed, as they made their way towards the door.

“You forget Humphrey,” she replied.

Hastings looked at her and chuckled. In fact, he chuckled all the way home. In the vestibule they met Mr. Austen Vane and Mr. Thomas Gaylord, the latter coming forward with a certain palpable embarrassment. All through the evening Tom had been trying to account for her presence at the meeting, until Austen had begged him to keep his speculations to himself. “She can’t be engaged to him!” Mr. Gaylord had exclaimed more than once, under his breath. “Why not?” Austen had answered; “there’s a good

deal about him to admire." "Because she's got more sense," said Tom doggedly. Hence he was at a loss for words when she greeted him.

"Well, Mr. Gaylord," she said, "you see no bones were broken, after all. But I appreciated your precaution in sending the buggy behind me, although it wasn't necessary.

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“I felt somewhat responsible,” replied Tom, and words failed him. “Here’s Austen Vane,” he added, indicating by a nod of the head the obvious presence of that gentleman. “You’ll excuse me. There’s a man here I want to see.”

“What’s the matter with Mr. Gaylord?” Victoria asked. “He seems so —queer.”

They were standing apart, alone, Hastings Weare having gone to the stables for the runabout.

“Mr. Gaylord imagines he doesn’t get along with the opposite sex,” Austen replied, with just a shade of constraint.

“Nonsense!” exclaimed Victoria; “we got along perfectly the other day when he rescued me from the bushes. What’s the matter with him?”

Austen laughed, and their eyes met.

“I think he is rather surprised to see you here,” he said.

“And you?” returned Victoria. “Aren’t you equally out of place?”

He did not care to go into an explanation of Tom’s suspicion in regard to Mr. Crewe.

“My curiosity was too much for me,” he replied, smiling.

“So was mine,” she replied, and suddenly demanded: “What did you think of Humphrey’s speech?”

Their eyes met. And despite the attempted seriousness of her tone they joined in an irresistible and spontaneous laughter. They were again on that plane of mutual understanding and intimacy for which neither could account.

“I have no criticism to make of Mr. Crewe as an orator, at least,” he said.

Then she grew serious again, and regarded him steadfastly.

“And—what he said?” she asked.

Austen wondered again at the courage she had displayed. All he had been able to think of in the theatre, while listening to Mr. Crewe’s words of denunciation of the Northeastern Railroads, had been of the effect they might have on Victoria’s feelings, and from time to time he had glanced anxiously at her profile. And now, looking into her face, questioning, trustful—he could not even attempt to evade. He was silent.

“I shouldn’t have asked you that,” she said. “One reason I came was because—-because I wanted to hear the worst. You were too considerate to tell me—all.”

He looked mutely into her eyes, and a great desire arose in him to be able to carry her away from it all. Many times within the past year, when the troubles and complications of his life had weighed upon him, his thoughts had turned to, that Western country, limited only by the bright horizons where the sun rose and set. If he could only take her there, or into his own hills, where no man might follow them! It was a primeval longing, and, being a woman and the object of it, she saw its essential meaning in his face. For a brief moment they stood as completely alone as on the crest of Sawanec.

“Good night,” she said, in a low voice.

He did not trust himself to speak at once, but went down the steps with her to the curb, where Hastings Weare was waiting in the runabout.

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“I was just telling Miss Flint,” said that young gentleman, “that you would have been my candidate.”

Austen’s face relaxed.

“Thank you, Mr. Weare,” he said simply; and to Victoria, “Good night.”

At the corner, when she turned, she saw him still standing on the edge of the sidewalk, his tall figure thrown into bold relief by the light which flooded from the entrance. The account of the Ripton meeting, substantially as it appeared in the State Tribune, was by a singular coincidence copied at once into sixty-odd weekly newspapers, and must have caused endless merriment throughout the State. Congressman Fairplay’s prophecy of “negligible” was an exaggeration, and one gentleman who had rashly predicted that Mr. Crewe would get twenty delegates out of a thousand hid himself for shame. On the whole, the “monumental farce” forecast seemed best to fit the situation. A conference was held at Leith between the candidate, Mr. Tooting, and the Honourable Timothy Watling of Newcastle, who was preparing the nominating speech, although the convention was more than two months distant. Mr. Watling was skilled in rounded periods of oratory and in other things political; and both he and Mr. Tooting reiterated their opinion that there was no particle of doubt about Mr. Crewe’s nomination.

“But we’ll have to fight fire with fire,” Mr. Tooting declared. It was probably an accident that he happened to kick, at this instant, Mr. Watling under cover of the table. Mr. Watling was an old and valued friend.

“Gentlemen,” said Mr. Crewe, “I haven’t the slightest doubt of my nomination, either. I do not hesitate to say, however, that the expenses of this campaign, at this early stage, seem to me out of all proportion. Let me see what you have there.”

The Honourable Timothy Wading had produced a typewritten list containing some eighty towns and wards, each followed by a name and the number of the delegates therefrom —and figures.

“They’d all be enthusiastic Crewe men—if they could be seen by the right party,” declared Mr. Tooting.

Mr. Crewe ran his eye over the list.

“Whom would you suggest to see ’em?” he asked coldly.

“There’s only one party I know of that has much influence over ’em,” Mr. Tooting replied, with a genial but deferential indication of his friend.

At this point Mr. Crewe’s secretary left the room on an errand, and the three statesmen went into executive session. In politics, as in charity, it is a good rule not to let one’s

right hand know what the left hand doeth. Half an hour later the three emerged into the sunlight, Mr. Tooting and Mr. Watling smoking large cigars.

“You’ve got a great lay-out here, Mr. Crewe,” Mr. Watling remarked. “It must have stood you in a little money, eh? Yes, I’ll get mileage books, and you’ll hear from me every day or two.”

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And now we are come to the infinitely difficult task of relating in a whirlwind manner the story of a whirlwind campaign—a campaign that was to make the oldest resident sit up and take notice. In the space of four short weeks a miracle had begun to show itself. First, there was the Kingston meeting, with the candidate, his thumb in his watch-pocket, seated in an open carriage beside Mr. Hamilton Tooting,—a carriage draped with a sheet on which was painted "Down with Railroad Ring Rule."

The carriage was preceded by the Kingston Brass Band, producing throbbing martial melodies, and followed (we are not going to believe the State Tribune any longer) by a jostling' and cheering crowd. The band halts before the G.A.R. Hall; the candidate alights, with a bow of acknowledgment, and goes to the private office until the musicians are seated in front of the platform, when he enters to renewed cheering and the tune of "See, the Conquering Hero Comes!"

An honest historian must admit that there were two accounts of this meeting. Both agree that Mr. Crewe introduced himself, and poured a withering sarcasm on the heads of Kingston's prominent citizens. One account, which the ill-natured declared to be in Mr. Tooting's style, and which appeared (in slightly larger type than that of the other columns) in the Kingston and local papers, stated that the hall was crowded to suffocation, and that the candidate was "accorded an ovation which lasted for fully five minutes."

Mr. Crewe's speech was printed—in this slightly larger type. Woe to the Honourable Adam B. Hunt, who had gone to New York to see whether he could be governor! Why didn't he come out on the platform? Because he couldn't. "Safe" candidates couldn't talk. His subservient and fawning reports on accidents while chairman of the Railroad Commission were ruthlessly quoted (amid cheers and laughter). What kind of railroad service was Kingston getting compared to what it should have? Compared, indeed, to what it had twenty years ago? An informal reception was held afterwards.

More meetings followed, at the rate of four a week, in county after county. At the end of fifteen days a selectman (whose name will go down in history) voluntarily mounted the platform and introduced the Honourable Humphrey Crewe to the audience; not, to be sure, as the saviour of the State; and from that day onward Mr. Crewe did not lack for a sponsor. On the other hand, the sponsors became more pronounced, and at Harwich (a free-thinking district) a whole board of selectmen and five prominent citizens sat gravely beside the candidate in the town hall.

(1) Paul Pardriff, Ripton. Sent post free, on application, to voters and others.

MR. CREWE'S CAREER

By Winston Churchill
book 3.

CHAPTER XXI

ST. GILES OF THE BLAMELESS LIFE

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The burden of the valley of vision: woe to the Honourable Adam B. Hunt! Where is he all this time? On the porch of his home in Edmundton, smoking cigars, little heeding the rising of the waters; receiving visits from the Honourables Brush Bascom, Nat Billings, and Jacob Botcher, and signing cheques to the order of these gentlemen for necessary expenses. Be it known that the Honourable Adam was a man of substance in this world's goods. To quote from Mr. Crewe's speech at Hull: "The Northeastern Railroads confer—they do not pay, except in passes. Of late years their books may be searched in vain for evidence of the use of political funds. The man upon whom they choose to confer your governorship is always able to pay the pipers." (Purposely put in the plural.)

Have the pipers warned the Honourable Adam of the rising tide against him? Have they asked him to gird up his loins and hire halls and smite the upstart hip and thigh? They have warned him, yes, that the expenses may be a little greater than ordinary. But it is not for him to talk, or to bestir himself in any unseemly manner, for the prize which he was to have was in the nature of a gift. In vain did Mr. Crewe cry out to him four times a week for his political beliefs, for a statement of what he would do if he were elected governor. The Honourable Adam's dignified answer was that he had always been a good Republican, and would die one. Following a time-honoured custom, he refused to say anything, but it was rumoured that he believed in the gold standard.

It is August, and there is rejoicing in—Leith. There is no doubt now that the campaign of the people progresses; no need any more for the true accounts of the meetings, in large print, although these are still continued. The reform rallies resemble matinees no longer, and two real reporters accompany Mr. Crewe on his tours. Nay, the campaign of education has already borne fruit, which the candidate did not hesitate to mention in his talks Edmundton has more trains, Kingston has more trains, and more cars. No need now to stand up for twenty miles on a hot day; and more cars are building, and more engines; likewise some rates have been lowered. And editors who declare that the Northeastern gives the State a pretty good government have, like the guinea pigs, long been suppressed.

In these days were many councils at Fairview and in the offices of the Honourable Hilary Vane at Ripton; councils behind closed doors, from which the councillors emerged with smiling faces that men might not know the misgivings in their hearts; councils, nevertheless, out of which leaked rumours of dissension and recrimination conditions hitherto unheard of. One post ran to meet another, and one messenger ran to meet another; and it was even reported—though on doubtful authority—after the rally in his town the Honourable Jacob Botcher had made the remark that, under certain conditions, he might become a reformer.

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None of these upsetting rumours, however, were allowed by Mr. Bascom and other gentlemen close to the Honourable Adam B. Hunt to reach that candidate, who continued to smoke in tranquillity on the porch of his home until the fifteenth day of August. At eight o'clock that morning the postman brought him a letter marked personal, the handwriting on which he recognized as belonging to the Honourable Hilary Vane. For some reason, as he read, the sensations of the Honourable Adam were disquieting; the contents of the letter, to say the least, were peculiar. "To-morrow, at noon precisely, I shall be driving along the Broad Brook road by the abandoned mill—-three miles towards Edmundton from Hull. I hope you will find it convenient to be there."

These were the strange words the Honourable Hilary had written, and the Honourable Adam knew that it was an order. At that very instant Mr. Hunt had been reading in the Guardian the account of an overflow meeting in Newcastle, by his opponent, in which Mr. Crewe had made some particularly choice remarks about him; and had been cheered to the echo. The Honourable Adam put the paper down, and walked up the street to talk to Mr. Burrows, the postmaster whom, with the aid of Congressman Fairplay, he had had appointed at Edmundton. The two racked their brains for three hours; and Postmaster Burrows, who was the fortunate possessor of a pass, offered to go down to Ripton in the interest of his liege lord and see what was up. The Honourable Adam, however, decided that he could wait for twenty-four hours.

The morning of the sixteenth dawned clear, as beautiful a summer's day for a drive as any man could wish. But the spirit of the Honourable Adam did not respond to the weather, and he had certain vague forebodings as his horse jogged toward Hull, although these did not take such a definite shape as to make him feel a premonitory pull of his coat-tails. The ruined mill beside the rushing stream was a picturesque spot, and the figure of the Honourable Hilary Vane, seated on the old millstone, in the green and gold shadows of a beech, gave an interesting touch of life to the landscape. The Honourable Adam drew up and eyed his friend and associate of many years before addressing him.

"How are you, Hilary?"

"Hitch your horse," said Mr. Vane.

The Honourable Adam was some time in picking out a convenient tree. Then he lighted a cigar, and approached Mr. Vane, and at length let himself down, cautiously, on the millstone. Sitting on his porch had not improved Mr. Hunt's figure.

"This is kind of mysterious, ain't it, Hilary?" he remarked, with a tug at his goatee.

"I don't know but what it is," admitted Mr. Vane, who did not look as though the coming episode were to give him unqualified joy.

“Fine weather,” remarked the Honourable Adam, with a brave attempt at geniality.

“The paper predicts rain to-morrow,” said the Honourable Hilary.

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“You don’t smoke, do you?” asked the Honourable Adam.

“No,” said the Honourable Hilary.

A silence, except for the music of the brook over the broken dam.

“Pretty place,” said the Honourable Adam; “I kissed my wife here once —before I was married.”

This remark, although of interest, the Honourable Hilary evidently thought did not require an answer:

“Adam,” said Mr. Vane, presently, “how much money have you spent so far?”

“Well,” said Mr. Hunt, “it has been sort of costly, but Brush and the boys tell me the times are uncommon, and I guess they are. If that crazy cuss Crewe hadn’t broken loose, it would have been different. Not that I’m uneasy about him, but all this talk of his and newspaper advertising had to be counteracted some. Why, he has a couple of columns a week right here in the Edmundton Courier. The papers are bleedin’ him to death, certain.”

“How much have you spent?” asked the Honourable Hilary.

The Honourable Adam screwed up his face and pulled his goatee thoughtfully.

“What are you trying to get at, Hilary,” he inquired, sending for me to meet you out here in the woods in this curious way? If you wanted to see me, why didn’t you get me to go down to Ripton, or come up and sit on my porch? You’ve been there before.”

“Times,” said the Honourable Hilary, repeating, perhaps unconsciously, Mr. Hunt’s words, “are uncommon. This man Crewe’s making more headway than you think. The people don’t know him, and he’s struck a popular note. It’s the fashion to be down on railroads these days.”

“I’ve taken that into account,” replied Mr. Hunt.

“It’s unlucky, and it comes high. I don’t think he’s got a show for the nomination, but my dander’s up, and I’ll beat him if I have to mortgage my house.”

The Honourable Hilary grunted, and ruminated.

“How much did you say you’d spent, Adam?”

“If you think I’m not free enough, I’ll loosen up a little more,” said the Honourable Adam.

“How free have you been?” said the Honourable Hilary.

For some reason the question, put in this form, was productive of results.

“I can’t say to a dollar, but I’ve got all the amounts down in a book. I guess somewhere in the neighbourhood of nine thousand would cover it.”

Mr. Vane grunted again.

“Would you take a cheque, Adam?” he inquired.

“What for?” cried the Honourable Adam.

“For the amount you’ve spent,” said the Honourable Hilary, sententiously.

The Honourable Adam began to breathe with apparent difficulty, and his face grew purple. But Mr. Vane did not appear to notice these alarming symptoms. Then the candidate turned about, as on a pivot, seized Mr. Vane by the knee, and looked into his face.

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“Did you come up here with orders for me to get out?” he demanded, with some pardonable violence. “By thunder, I didn’t think that of my old friend, Hilary Vane. You ought to have known me better, and Flint ought to have known me better. There ain’t a mite of use of our staying here another second, and you can go right back and tell Flint what I said. Flint knows I’ve been waiting to be governor for eight years, and each year it’s been just a year ahead. You ask him what he said to me when he sent for me to go to New York. I thought he was a man of his word, and he promised me that I should be governor this year.”

The Honourable Hilary gave no indication of being moved by this righteous outburst.

“You can be governor next year, when this reform nonsense has blown over,” he said. “You can’t be this year, even if you stay in the race.”

“Why not?” the Honourable Adam asked pugnaciously.

“Your record won’t stand it—not just now,” said Mr. Vane, slowly.

“My record is just as good as yours, or any man’s,” said the Honourable Adam.

“I never run for office,” answered Mr. Vane.

“Haven’t I spent the days of my active life in the service of that road —and is this my reward? Haven’t I done what Flint wanted always?”

“That’s just the trouble,” said the Honourable Hilary; too many folks know it. If we’re going to win this time, we’ve got to have a man who’s never had any Northeastern connections.”

“Who have you picked?” demanded the Honourable Adam, with alarming calmness.

“We haven’t picked anybody yet,” said Mr. Vane, “but the man who goes in will give you a cheque for what you’ve spent, and you can be governor next time.”

“Well, if this isn’t the d-dest, coldest-blooded proposition ever made, I want to know!” cried the Honourable Adam. “Will Flint put up a bond of one hundred thousand dollars that I’ll be nominated and elected next year? This is the clearest case of going back on an old friend I ever saw. If this is the way you fellows get scared because a sham reformer gets up and hollers against the road, then I want to serve notice on you that I’m not made of that kind of stuff. When I go into a fight, I go in to stay, and you can’t pull me out by the coat-tails in favour of a saint who’s never done a lick of work for the road. You tell Flint that.”

“All right, Adam,” said Hilary.

Some note in Hilary's voice, as he made this brief answer, suddenly sobered the Honourable Adam, and sent a cold chill down his spine. He had had many dealings with Mr. Vane, and he had always been as putty in the chief counsel's hands. This simple acquiescence did more to convince the Honourable Adam that his chances of nomination were in real danger than a long and forceful summary of the situation could have accomplished. But like many weak men, the Honourable Adam had a stubborn streak, and a fatuous idea that opposition and indignation were signs of strength.

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“I’ve made sacrifices for the road before, and effaced myself. But by thunder, this is too much!”

Corporations, like republics, are proverbially ungrateful. The Honourable Hilary might have voiced this sentiment, but refrained.

“Mr. Flint’s a good friend of yours, Adam. He wanted me to say that he’d always taken care of you, and always would, so far as in his power. If you can’t be landed this time, it’s common sense for you to get out, and wait—isn’t it? We’ll see that you get a cheque to cover what you’ve put out.”

The humour in this financial sacrifice of Mr. Flint’s (which the unknown new candidate was to make with a cheque) struck neither the Honourable Adam nor the Honourable Hilary. The transaction, if effected, would resemble that of the shrine to the Virgin built by a grateful Marquis of Mantua—which a Jew paid for.

The Honourable Adam got to his feet.

“You can tell Flint,” he said, “that if he will sign a bond of one hundred thousand dollars to elect me next time, I’ll get out. That’s my last word.”

“All right, Adam,” replied Mr. Vane, rising also.

Mr. Hunt stared at the Honourable Hilary thoughtfully; and although the gubernatorial candidate was not an observant man, he was suddenly struck by the fact that the chief counsel was growing old.

“I won’t hold this against you, Hilary,” he said.

“Politics,” said the Honourable Hilary, “are business matters.”

“I’ll show Flint that it would have been good business to stick to me,” said the Honourable Adam. “When he gets panicky, and spends all his money on new equipment and service, it’s time for me to drop him. You can tell him so from me.”

“Hadn’t you better write him?” said the Honourable Hilary.

The rumour of the entry of Mr. Giles Henderson of Kingston into the gubernatorial contest preceded, by ten days or so, the actual event. It is difficult for the historian to unravel the precise circumstances which led to this candidacy. Conservative citizens throughout the State, it was understood, had become greatly concerned over the trend political affairs were taking; the radical doctrines of one candidate—propounded for very obvious reasons—they turned from in disgust; on the other hand, it was evident that an underlying feeling existed in certain sections that any candidate who was said to have had more or less connection with the Northeastern Railroads was undesirable at the

present time. This was not to be taken as a reflection on the Northeastern, which had been the chief source of the State's prosperity, but merely as an acknowledgment that a public opinion undoubtedly existed, and ought to be taken into consideration by the men who controlled the Republican party.

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This was the gist of leading articles which appeared simultaneously in several newspapers, apparently before the happy thought of bringing forward Mr. Giles Henderson had occurred to anybody. He was mentioned first, and most properly, by the editor of the “Kingston Pilot;” and the article, with comments upon it, ran like wildfire through the press of the State,—appearing even in those sheets which maintained editorially that they were for the Honourable Adam B. Hunt first and last and, all the time. Whereupon Mr. Giles Henderson began to receive visits from the solid men—not politicians of the various cities and counties. For instance, Mr. Silas Tredway of Ripton, made such a pilgrimage and, as a citizen who had voted in 1860 for Abraham Lincoln (showing Mr. Tredway himself to have been a radical once), appealed to Mr. Henderson to save the State.

At first Mr. Henderson would give no ear to these appeals, but shook his head pessimistically. He was not a politician—so much the better, we don’t want a politician; he was a plain business man exactly what is needed; a conservative, level-headed business man wholly lacking in those sensational qualities which are a stench in the nostrils of good citizens. Mr. Giles Henderson admitted that the time had come when a man of these qualities was needed—but he was not the man. Mr. Tredway was the man—so he told Mr. Tredway; Mr. Gates of Brampton was the man—so he assured Mr. Gates. Mr. Henderson had no desire to meddle in politics; his life was a happy and a full one. But was it not Mr. Henderson’s duty? Cincinnatus left the plough, and Mr. Henderson should leave the ledger at the call of his countrymen.

Mr. Giles Henderson was mild-mannered and blue-eyed, with a scanty beard that was turning white; he was a deacon of the church, a member of the school board, president of the Kingston National Bank; the main business of his life had been in coal (which incidentally had had to be transported over the Northeastern Railroads); and coal rates, for some reason, were cheaper from Kingston than from many points out of the State the distances of which were nearer. Mr. Henderson had been able to sell his coal at a lower price than any other large dealer in the eastern part of the State. Mr. Henderson was the holder of a large amount of stock in the Northeastern, inherited from his father. Facts of no special significance, and not printed in the weekly newspapers. Mr. Henderson lived in a gloomy Gothic house on High Street, ate three very plain meals a day, and drank iced water. He had been a good husband and a good father, and had always voted the Republican ticket. He believed in the gold standard, a high tariff, and eternal damnation. At last his resistance was overcome, and he consented to allow his name to be used.

It was used, with a vengeance. Spontaneous praise of Mr. Giles Henderson bubbled up all over the State, and editors who were for the Honourable Adam B. Hunt suddenly developed a second choice. No man within the borders of the commonwealth had so many good qualities as the new candidate, and it must have been slightly annoying to one of that gentleman’s shrinking nature to read daily, on coming down to breakfast, a

list of virtues attributed to him as long as a rate schedule. How he must have longed for the record of one wicked deed to make him human!

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Who will pick a flaw in the character of the Honourable Giles Henderson? Let that man now stand forth.

The news of the probable advent of Mr. Giles Henderson on the field, as well as the tidings of his actual consent to be a candidate, were not slow in reaching Leith. And—-Mr. Crewe's Bureau of Information being in perfect working order—the dastardly attempt on the Honourable Adam B. Hunt's coat-tails was known there. More wonders to relate: the Honourable Adam B. Hunt had become a reformer; he had made a statement at last, in which he declared with vigour that no machine or ring was behind him; he stood on his own merits, invited the minutest inspection of his record, declared that he was an advocate of good government, and if elected would be the servant of no man and of no corporation.

Thrice-blessed State, in which there were now three reform candidates for governor!

All of these happenings went to indicate confusion in the enemy's camp, and corresponding elation in Mr. Crewe's. Woe to the reputation for political sagacity of the gentleman who had used the words "negligible" and "monumental farce"! The tide was turning, and the candidate from Leith redoubled his efforts. Had he been confounded by the advent of the Honourable Giles? Not at all. Mr. Crewe was not given to satire; his methods, as we know, were direct. Hence the real author of the following passage in his speech before an overflow meeting in the State capital remains unknown:

"My friends," Mr. Crewe had said, "I have been waiting for the time when St. Giles of the Blameless Life would be pushed forward, apparently as the only hope of our so-called 'solid citizens.' (Prolonged laughter, and audible repetitions of Mr. Henderson's nickname, which was to stick.) I will tell you by whose desire St. Giles became a candidate, and whose bidding he will do if he becomes governor as blindly and obediently as the Honourable Adam B. Hunt ever did. (Shouts of "Flint!" and, "The Northeastern!") I see you know. Who sent the solid citizens to see Mr. Henderson? ("Flint!") This is a clever trick—exactly what I should have done if I'd been running their campaign—only they didn't do it early enough. They picked Mr. Giles Henderson for two reasons: because he lives in Kingston, which is anti-railroad and supported the Gaylord bill, and, because he never in his life committed any positive action, good or bad—and he never will. And they made another mistake—the Honourable Adam B. Hunt wouldn't back out." (Laughter and cheers.)

CHAPTER XXII

IN WHICH EUPHRASIA TAKES A HAND

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Austen had not forgotten his promise to Euphrasia, and he had gone to Hanover Street many times since his sojourn at Mr. Jabe Jenney's. Usually these visits had taken place in the middle of the day, when Euphrasia, with gentle but determined insistence, had made him sit down before some morsel which she had prepared against his coming, and which he had not the heart to refuse. In answer to his inquiries about Hilary, she would toss her head and reply, disdainfully, that he was as comfortable as he should be. For Euphrasia had her own strict ideas of justice, and to her mind Hilary's suffering was deserved. That suffering was all the more terrible because it was silent, but Euphrasia was a stern woman. To know that he missed Austen, to feel that Hilary was being justly punished for his treatment of her idol, for his callous neglect and lack of realization of the blessings of his life—these were Euphrasia's grim compensations.

At times, even, she had experienced a strange rejoicing that she had promised Austen to remain with his father, for thus it had been given her to be the daily witness of a retribution for which she had longed during many years. Nor did she strive to hide her feelings. Their intercourse, never voluminous, had shrunk to the barest necessities for the use of speech; but Hilary, ever since the night of his son's departure, had read in the face of his housekeeper a knowledge of his suffering, an exultation a thousand times more maddening than the little reproaches of language would have been. He avoided her more than ever, and must many times have regretted bitterly the fact that he had betrayed himself to her. As for Euphrasia, she had no notion of disclosing Hilary's torture to his son. She was determined that the victory, when it came, should be Austen's, and the surrender Hilary's.

"He manages to eat his meals, and gets along as common," she would reply. "He only thinks of himself and that railroad."

But Austen read between the lines.

"Poor old Judge," he would answer; "it's because he's made that way, Phrasie. He can't help it, any more than I can help flinging law-books on the floor and running off to the country to have a good time. You know as well as I do that he hasn't had much joy out of life; that he'd like to be different, only he doesn't know how."

"I can't see that it takes much knowledge to treat a wife and son like human beings," Euphrasia retorted; "that's only common humanity. For a man that goes to meetin' twice a week, you'd have thought he'd have learned something by this time out of the New Testament. He's prayed enough in his life, goodness knows!"

Now Euphrasia's ordinarily sharp eyes were sharpened an hundred fold by affection; and of late, at odd moments during his visits, Austen had surprised them fixed on him with a penetration that troubled him.

“You don’t seem to fancy the tarts as much as you used to,” she would remark. “Time was when you’d eat three and four at a sittin’.”

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“Phrasie, one of your persistent fallacies is, that I’m still a boy.”

“You ain’t yourself,” said Euphrasia, ignoring this pleasantry, “and you ain’t been yourself for some months. I’ve seen it. I haven’t brought you up for nothing. If he’s troubling you, don’t you worry a mite. He ain’t worth it. He eats better than you do.”

“I’m not worrying much about that,” Austen answered, smiling. “The Judge and I will patch it up before long—I’m sure. He’s worried now over these people who are making trouble for his railroad.”

“I wish railroads had never been invented,” cried Euphrasia. “It seems to me they bring nothing but trouble. My mother used to get along pretty well in a stage-coach.”

One evening in September, when the summer days were rapidly growing shorter and the mists rose earlier in the valley of the Blue, Austen, who had stayed late at the office preparing a case, ate his supper at the Ripton House. As he sat in the big dining room, which was almost empty, the sense of loneliness which he had experienced so often of late came over him, and he thought of Euphrasia. His father, he knew, had gone to Kingston for the night, and so he drove up Hanover Street and hitched Pepper to the stone post before the door. Euphrasia, according to an invariable custom, would be knitting in the kitchen at this hour; and at the sight of him in the window, she dropped her work with a little, joyful cry.

“I was just thinking of you!” she said, in a low voice of tenderness which many people would not have recognized as Euphrasia’s; as though her thoughts of him were the errant ones of odd moments! “I’m so glad you come. It’s lonesome here of evenings, Austen.”

He entered silently and sat down beside her, in a Windsor chair which had belonged to some remote Austen of bygone days.

“You don’t have as good things to eat up at Mis’ Jenney’s as I give you,” she remarked. “Not that you appear to care much for eatables any more. Austen, are you feeling poorly?”

“I can dig more potatoes in a day than any other man in Ripton,” he declared.

“You’d ought to get married,” said Euphrasia, abruptly. “I’ve told you that before, but you never seem to pay any attention to what I say.”

“Why haven’t you tried it, Phrasie?” he retorted.

He was not prepared for what followed. Euphrasia did not answer at once, but presently her knitting dropped to her lap, and she sat staring at the old clock on the kitchen shelf.

“He never asked me,” she said, simply.

Austen was silent. The answer seemed to recall, with infinite pathos, Euphrasia’s long-lost youth, and he had not thought of youth as a quality which could ever have pertained to her. She must have been young once, and fresh, and full of hope for herself; she must have known, long ago, something of what he now felt, something of the joy and pain, something of the inexpressible, never ceasing yearning for the fulfilment of a desire that dwarfed all others. Euphrasia had been denied that fulfilment. And he—-would he, too, be denied it?

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Out of Euphrasia's eyes, as she gazed at the mantel-shelf, shone the light of undying fires within—fires which at a touch could blaze forth after endless years, transforming the wrinkled face, softening the sterner lines of character. And suddenly there was a new bond between the two. So used are the young to the acceptance of the sacrifice of the old that they lose sight of that sacrifice. But Austen saw now, in a flash, the years of Euphrasia's self-denial, the years of memories, the years of regrets for that which might have been.

"Phrasie," he said, laying a hand on hers, which rested on the arm of the chair, I was only joking, you know."

"I know, I know," Euphrasia answered hastily, and turned and looked into his face searchingly. Her eyes were undimmed, and the light was still in them which revealed a soul of which he had had no previous knowledge.

"I know you was, dear. I never told that to a living being except your mother. He's dead now—he never knew. But I told her—I couldn't help it. She had a way of drawing things out of you, and you just couldn't resist. I'll never forget that day she came in here and looked at me and took my hand—same as you have it now. She wasn't married then. I'll never forget the sound of her voice as she said, 'Euphrasia, tell me about it.'" (Here Euphrasia's own voice trembled.) "I told her, just as I'm telling you,—because I couldn't help it. Folks, had to tell her things."

She turned her hand and clasped his tightly with her own thin fingers.

"And oh, Austen," she cried, "I want so that you should be happy! She was so unhappy, it doesn't seem right that you should be, too."

"I shall be, Phrasie," he said; "you mustn't worry about that."

For a while the only sound in the room was the ticking of the old clock with the quaint, coloured picture on its panel. And then, with a movement which, strangely, was an acute reminder of a way Victoria had, Euphrasia turned and searched his face once more.

"You're not happy," she said.

He could not put this aside—nor did he wish to. Her own confidence had been so simple, so fine, so sure of his sympathy, that he felt it would be unworthy to equivocate; the confessions of the self-reliant are sacred things. Yes, and there had been times when he had longed to unburden himself; but he had had no intimate on this plane, and despite the great sympathy between them—that Euphrasia might understand had never occurred to him. She had read his secret.

In that instant Euphrasia, with the instinct which love lends to her sex, had gone farther; indignation seized her—and the blame fell upon the woman. Austen's words, unconsciously, were an answer to her thoughts.

"It isn't anybody's fault but my own," he said.

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Euphrasia's lips were tightly closed. Long ago the idol of her youth had faded into the substance of which dreams are made—to be recalled by dreams alone; another worship had filled her heart, and Austen Vane had become—for her—the fulness and the very meaning of life itself; one to be admired of all men, to be desired of all women. Visions of Austen's courtship had at times risen in her mind, although Euphrasia would not have called it a courtship. When the time came, Austen would confer; and so sure of his judgment was Euphrasia that she was prepared to take the recipient of the priceless gift into her arms. And now! Was it possible that a woman lived who would even hesitate? Curiosity seized Euphrasia with the intensity of a passion. Who was this woman? When and where had he seen her? Ripton could not have produced her—for it was characteristic of Euphrasia that no girl of her acquaintance was worthy to be raised to such a height; Austen's wife would be an unknown of ideal appearance and attainments. Hence indignation rocked Euphrasia, and doubts swayed her. In this alone she had been an idealist, but she might have known that good men were a prey to the unworthy of the opposite sex.

She glanced at Austen's face, and he smiled at her gently, as though he divined something of her thoughts.

"If it isn't your fault, that you're not happy, then the matter's easily mended," she said.

He shook his head at her, as though in reproof.

"Was yours—easily mended?" he asked.

Euphrasia was silent a moment.

"He never knew," she repeated, in a low voice.

"Well, Phrasie, it looks very much as if we were in the same boat," he said.

Euphrasia's heart gave a bound.

"Then you haven't spoke!" she cried; "I knew you hadn't. I—I was a woman—but sometimes I've thought I'd ought to have given him some sign. You're a man, Austen; thank God for it, you're a man. If a man loves a woman, he's only got to tell her so."

"It isn't as simple as that," he answered.

Euphrasia gave him a startled glance.

"She ain't married?" she exclaimed.

"No," he said, and laughed in spite of himself.

Euphrasia breathed again. For Sarah Austen had had a morality of her own, and on occasions had given expression to extreme views.

“She’s not playin’ with you?” was Euphrasia’s next question, and her tone boded ill to any young person who would indulge in these tactics with Austen.

He shook his head again, and smiled at her vehemence.

“No, she’s not playing with me—she isn’t that kind. I’d like to tell you, but I can’t—I can’t. It was only because you guessed that I said anything about it.” He disengaged his hand, and rose, and patted her on the cheek. “I suppose I had to tell somebody,” he said, “and you seemed, somehow, to be the right person, Phrasie.”

Euphrasia rose abruptly and looked up intently into his face. He thought it strange afterwards, as he drove along the dark roads, that she had not answered him.

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Even though the matter were on the knees of the gods, Euphrasia would have taken it thence, if she could. Nor did Austen know that she shared with him, that night, his waking hours.

The next morning Mr. Thomas Gaylord, the younger, was making his way towards the office of the Gaylord Lumber Company, conveniently situated on Willow Street, near the railroad. Young Tom was in a particularly jovial frame of mind, despite the fact that he had arrived in Ripton, on the night express, as early as five o'clock in the morning. He had been touring the State ostensibly on lumber business, but young Tom had a large and varied personal as well as commercial acquaintance, and he had the inestimable happiness of being regarded as an honest man, while his rough and genial qualities made him beloved. For these reasons and others of a more material nature, suggestions from Mr. Thomas Gaylord were apt to be well received—and Tom had been making suggestions.

Early as he was at his office—the office-boy was sprinkling the floor —young Tom had a visitor who was earlier still. Pausing in the doorway, Mr. Gaylord beheld with astonishment a prim, elderly lady in a stiff, black dress sitting upright on the edge of a capacious oak chair which seemed itself rather discomfited by what it contained,—for its hospitality had hitherto been extended to visitors of a very different sort.

"Well, upon my soul," cried young Tom, "if it isn't Euphrasia!"

"Yes, it's me," said Euphrasia; "I've been to market, and I had a notion to see you before I went home."

Mr. Gaylord took the office-boy lightly by the collar of his coat and lifted him, sprinkling can and all, out of the doorway and closed the door. Then he drew his revolving chair close to Euphrasia, and sat down. They were old friends, and more than once in a youth far from model Tom had experienced certain physical reproof at her hands, for which he bore no ill-will. There was anxiety on his face as he asked:—"There hasn't been any accident, has there, Euphrasia?"

"No," she said.

"No new row?" inquired Tom.

"No," said Euphrasia. She was a direct person, as we know, but true descendants of the Puritans believe in the decency of preliminaries, and here was certainly an affair not to be plunged into. Euphrasia was a spinster in the strictest sense of that formidable and highly descriptive term, and she intended ultimately to discuss with Tom a subject of which she was supposed by tradition to be wholly ignorant, the mere mention of which still brought warmth to her cheeks. Such a delicate matter should surely be led up to delicately. In the meanwhile Tom was mystified.

“Well, I’m mighty glad to see you, anyhow,” he said heartily. “It was fond of you to call, Euphrasia. I can’t offer you a cigar.”

“I should think not,” said Euphrasia.

Tom reddened. He still retained for her some of his youthful awe.

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“I can’t do the honours of hospitality as I’d wish to,” he went on; “I can’t give you anything like the pies you used to give me.”

“You stole most of ’em,” said Euphrasia.

“I guess that’s so,” said young Tom, laughing, “but I’ll never taste pies like ’em again as long as I live. Do you know, Euphrasia, there were two reasons why those were the best pies I ever ate?”

“What were they?” she asked, apparently unmoved.

“First,” said Tom, “because you made ’em, and second, because they were stolen.”

Truly, young Tom had a way with women, had he only been aware of it.

“I never took much stock in stolen things,” said Euphrasia.

“It’s because you never were tempted with such pie as that,” replied the audacious Mr. Gaylord.

“You’re gettin’ almighty stout,” said Euphrasia.

As we see her this morning, could she indeed ever have had a love affair?

“I don’t have to use my legs as much as I once did,” said Tom. And this remark brought to an end the first phase of this conversation,—brought to an end, apparently, all conversation whatsoever. Tom racked his brain for a new topic, opened his roll-top desk, drummed on it, looked up at the ceiling and whistled softly, and then turned and faced again the imperturbable Euphrasia.

“Euphrasia,” he said, you’re not exactly a politician, I believe.”

“Well,” said Euphrasia, “I’ve be’n maligned a good many times, but nobody ever went that far.”

Mr. Gaylord shook with laughter.

“Then I guess there’s no harm in confiding political secrets to you,” he said. “I’ve been around the State some this week, talking to people I know, and I believe if your Austen wasn’t so obstinate, we could make him governor.”

“Obstinate?” ejaculated Euphrasia.

“Yes,” said Tom, with a twinkle in his eye, “obstinate. He doesn’t seem to want something that most men would give their souls for.”

“And why should he dirty himself with politics?” she demanded. “In the years I’ve lived with Hilary Vane I’ve seen enough of politicians, goodness knows. I never want to see another.”

“If Austen was governor, we’d change some of that. But mind, Euphrasia, this is a secret,” said Tom, raising a warning finger. “If Austen hears about it now, the jig’s up.”

Euphrasia considered and thawed a little.

“They don’t often have governors that young, do they?” she asked.

“No,” said Tom, forcibly, “they don’t. And so far as I know, they haven’t had such a governor for years as Austen would make. But he won’t push himself. You know, Euphrasia, I have always believed that he will be President some day.”

Euphrasia received this somewhat startling prediction complacently. She had no doubt of its accuracy, but the enunciation of it raised young Tom in her estimation, and incidentally brought her nearer her topic.

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“Austen ain’t himself lately,” she remarked.

“I knew that he didn’t get along with Hilary,” said Tom, sympathetically, beginning to realize now that Euphrasia had come to talk about her idol.

“It’s Hilary doesn’t get along with him,” she retorted indignantly. “He’s responsible—not Austen. Of all the narrow, pig-headed, selfish men the Lord ever created, Hilary Vane’s the worst. It’s Hilary drove him out of his mother’s house to live with strangers. It’s Austen that comes around to inquire for his father—Hilary never has a word to say about Austen.” A trace of colour actually rose under Euphrasia’s sallow skin, and she cast her eyes downward. “You’ve known him a good while, haven’t you, Tom?”

“All my life,” said Tom, mystified again, “all my life. And I, think more of him than of anybody else in the world.”

“I calculated as much,” she said; “that’s why I came.” She hesitated. Artful Euphrasia! We will let the ingenuous Mr. Gaylord be the first to mention this delicate matter, if possible. “Goodness knows, it ain’t Hilary I came to talk about. I had a notion that you’d know if anything else was troubling Austen.”

“Why,” said Tom, “there can’t be any business troubles outside of those Hilary’s mixed up in. Austen doesn’t spend any money to speak of, except what he gives away, and he’s practically chief counsel for our company.”

Euphrasia was silent a moment.

“I suppose there’s nothing else that could bother him,” she remarked. She had never held Tom Gaylord’s powers of comprehension in high estimation, and the estimate had not risen during this visit. But she had undervalued him; even Tom could rise to an inspiration—when the sources of all other inspirations were eliminated.

“Why,” he exclaimed, with a masculine lack of delicacy, “he may be in love—”

“That’s struck you, has it?” said Euphrasia.

But Tom appeared to be thinking; he was, in truth, engaged in collecting his cumulative evidence: Austen’s sleigh-ride at the capital, which he had discovered; his talk with Victoria after her fall, when she had betrayed an interest in Austen which Tom had thought entirely natural; and finally Victoria’s appearance at Mr. Crewe’s rally in Ripton. Young Mr. Gaylord had not had a great deal of experience in affairs of the heart, and he was himself aware that his diagnosis in such a matter would not carry much weight. He had conceived a tremendous admiration for Victoria, which had been shaken a little by the suspicion that she might be intending to marry Mr. Crewe. Tom Gaylord saw no reason why Austen Vane should not marry Mr. Flint’s daughter if he chose—or any other man’s daughter; partaking, in this respect, somewhat of Euphrasia’s view. As for Austen

himself, Tom had seen no symptoms; but then, he reflected, he would not be likely to see any. However, he perceived the object now of Euphrasia's visit, and began to take the liveliest interest in it.

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“So you think Austen’s in love?” he demanded.

Euphrasia sat up straighter, if anything.

“I didn’t say anything of the kind,” she returned.

“He wouldn’t tell me, you know,” said Tom; “I can only guess at it.”

“And the—lady?” said Euphrasia, craftily.

“I’m up a tree there, too. All I know is that he took her sleigh-riding one afternoon at the capital, and wouldn’t tell me who he was going to take. And then she fell off her horse down at East Tunbridge Station—”

“Fell off her horse!” echoed Euphrasia, an accident comparable in her mind to falling off a roof. What manner of young woman was this who fell off horses?

“She wasn’t hurt,” Tom continued, “and she rode the beast home. He was a wild one, I can tell you, and she’s got pluck. That’s the first time I ever met her, although I had often seen her and thought she was a stunner to look at. She talked as if she took an interest in Austen.”

An exact portrayal of Euphrasia’s feelings at this description of the object of Austen’s affections is almost impossible. A young woman who was a stunner, who rode wild horses and fell off them and rode them again, was beyond the pale not only of Euphrasia’s experience but of her imagination likewise. And this hoyden had talked as though she took an interest in Austen! Euphrasia was speechless.

“The next time I saw her,” said Tom, “was when she came down here to listen to Humphrey Crewe’s attacks on the railroad. I thought that was a sort of a queer thing for Flint’s daughter to do, but Austen didn’t seem to look at it that way. He talked to her after the show was over.”

At this point Euphrasia could contain herself no longer, and in her excitement she slipped off the edge of the chair and on to her feet.

“Flint’s daughter?” she cried; “Augustus P. Flint’s daughter?”

Tom looked at her in amazement.

“Didn’t you know who it was?” he stammered. But Euphrasia was not listening.

“I’ve seen her,” she was saying; “I’ve seen her ridin’ through Ripton in that little red wagon, drivin’ herself, with a coachman perched up beside her. Flint’s daughter!” Euphrasia became speechless once more, the complications opened up being too vast

for intelligent comment. Euphrasia, however, grasped some of the problems which Austen had had to face. Moreover, she had learned what she had come for, and the obvious thing to do now was to go home and reflect. So, without further ceremony, she walked to the door and opened it, and turned again with her hand on the knob. “Look here, Tom Gaylord,” she said, “if you tell Austen I was here, I’ll never forgive you. I don’t believe you’ve got any more sense than to do it.”

And with these words she took her departure, ere the amazed Mr. Gaylord had time to show her out. Half an hour elapsed before he opened his letters.

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When she arrived home in Hanover Street it was nine o'clock—an hour well on in the day for Euphrasia. Unlocking the kitchen door, she gave a glance at the stove to assure herself that it had not been misbehaving, and went into the passage on her way up-stairs to take off her gown before sitting down to reflect upon the astonishing thing she had heard. Habit had so crystallized in Euphrasia that no news, however amazing, could have shaken it. But in the passage she paused; an unwonted, or rather untimely, sound reached her ears, a sound which came from the front of the house—and at nine o'clock in the morning! Had Austen been at home, Euphrasia would have thought nothing of it. In her remembrance Hilary Vane, whether he returned from a journey or not, had never been inside the house at that hour on a week-day; and, unlike the gentleman in "La Vie de Boheme," Euphrasia did not have to be reminded of the Sabbath.

Perhaps Austen had returned! Or perhaps it was a burglar! Euphrasia, undaunted, ran through the darkened front hall to where the graceful banister ended in a curve at the foot of the stairs, and there, on the bottom step, sat a man with his head in his hands. Euphrasia shrieked. He looked up, and she saw that it was Hilary Vane. She would have shrieked, anyway.

"What in the world's the matter with you?" she cried.

"I—I stumbled coming down the stairs," he said.

"But what are you doing at home in the middle of the morning?" she demanded.

He did not answer her. The subdued light which crept under the porch and came in through the fan shaped window over the door fell on his face.

"Are you sick?" said Euphrasia. In all her life she had never seen him look like that.

He shook his head, but did not attempt to rise. A Hilary Vane without vigour!

"No," he said, "no. I just came up here from the train to—get somethin' I'd left in my room."

"A likely story!" said Euphrasia. "You've never done that in thirty years. You're sick, and I'm a-going for the doctor."

She put her hand to his forehead, but he thrust it away and got to his feet, although in the effort he compressed his lips and winced.

"You stay where you are," he said; "I tell you I'm not sick, and I'm going down to the square. Let, the doctors alone—I haven't got any use for 'em."

He walked to the door, opened it, and went out and slammed it in her face. By the time she had got it open again—a crack—he had reached the sidewalk, and was apparently in full possession of his powers and faculties.

CHAPTER XXIII

A FALLING-OUT IN HIGH PLACES

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Although one of the most exciting political battles ever fought is fast coming to its climax, and a now jubilant Mr. Crewe is contesting every foot of ground in the State with the determination and pertinacity which make him a marked man; although the convention wherein his fate will be decided is now but a few days distant, and everything has been done to secure a victory which mortal man can do, let us follow Hilary Vane to Fairview. Not that Hilary has been idle. The “Book of Arguments” is exhausted, and the chiefs and the captains have been to Ripton, and received their final orders, but more than one has gone back to his fief with the vision of a changed Hilary who has puzzled them. Rumours have been in the air that the harmony between the Source of Power and the Distribution of Power is not as complete as it once was. Certainly, Hilary Vane is not the man he was—although this must not even be whispered. Senator Whitredge had told—but never mind that. In the old days an order was an order; there were no rebels then. In the old days there was no wavering and rescinding, and if the chief counsel told you, with brevity, to do a thing, you went and did it straightway, with the knowledge that it was the best thing to do. Hilary Vane had aged suddenly, and it occurred for the first time to many that, in this utilitarian world, old blood must be superseded by young blood.

Two days before the convention, immediately after taking dinner at the Ripton House with Mr. Nat Billings, Hilary Vane, in response to a summons, drove up to Fairview. One driving behind him would have observed that the Honourable Hilary’s horse took his own gaits, and that the reins, most of the time, drooped listlessly on his quarters. A September stillness was in the air, a September purple clothed the distant hills, but to Hilary the glories of the day were as things non-existent. Even the groom at Fairview, who took his horse, glanced back at him with a peculiar expression as he stood for a moment on the steps with a hesitancy the man had never before remarked.

In the meantime Mr. Flint, with a pile of letters in a special basket on the edge of his desk, was awaiting his counsel; the president of the Northeastern was pacing his room, as was his wont when his activities were for a moment curbed, or when he had something on his mind; and every few moments he would glance towards his mantel at the clock which was set to railroad time. In past days he had never known Hilary Vane to be a moment late to an appointment. The door was open, and five and twenty minutes had passed the hour before he saw the lawyer in the doorway. Mr. Flint was a man of such preoccupation of mind that he was not likely to be struck by any change there might have been in his counsel’s appearance.

“It’s half-past three,” he said.

Hilary entered, and sat down beside the window.

“You mean that I’m late,” he replied.

“I’ve got some engineers coming here in less than an hour,” said Mr. Flint.

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“I’ll be gone in less than an hour,” said Hilary.

“Well,” said Mr. Flint, “let’s get down to hardtack. I’ve got to be frank with you, Vane, and tell you plainly that this political business is all at sixes and sevens.”

“It isn’t necessary to tell me that,” said Hilary.

“What do you mean?”

“I mean that I know it.”

“To put it mildly,” the president of the Northeastern continued, “it’s the worst mixed-up campaign I ever knew. Here we are with the convention only two days off, and we don’t know where we stand, how many delegates we’ve got, or whether this upstart at Leith is going to be nominated over our heads. Here’s Adam Hunt with his back up, declaring he’s a reformer, and all his section of the State behind him. Now if that could have been handled otherwise—”

“Who told Hunt to go in?” Hilary inquired.

“Things were different then,” said Mr. Flint, vigorously. “Hunt had been promised the governorship for a long time, and when Ridout became out of the question—”

“Why did Ridout become out of the question?” asked Hilary.

Mr. Flint made a gesture of impatience.

“On account of that foolishness in the Legislature, of course.”

“That foolishness in the Legislature, as you call it, represented a sentiment all over the State,” said Hilary. “And if I’d been you, I wouldn’t have let Hunt in this year. But you didn’t ask my opinion. You asked me when you begged me to get Adam out, and I predicted that he wouldn’t get out.”

Mr. Flint took a turn up and down the room.

“I’m sorry I didn’t send for him to go to New York,” he said. “Well, anyway, the campaign’s been muddled, that’s certain,—whoever muddled it.” And the president looked at his counsel as though he, at least, had no doubts on this point. But Hilary appeared unaware of the implication, and made no reply.

“I can’t find out what Bascom and Botcher are doing,” Mr. Flint went on;
“I don’t get any reports—they haven’t been here. Perhaps you know.
They’ve had trip passes enough to move the whole population of Putnam

County. Fairplay says they're gettin' delegates for Adam Hunt instead of Giles Henderson. And Whitredge says that Jake Botcher is talking reform."

"I guess Botcher and Bascom know their business," said Mr. Vane. If Mr. Flint had been a less concentrated man, he might have observed that the Honourable Hilary had not cut a piece of Honey Dew this afternoon.

"What is their business?" asked Mr. Flint—a little irrelevantly for him.

"What you and I taught 'em," said Mr. Vane.

Mr. Flint considered this a moment, and decided to let it pass. He looked at the Honourable Hilary more closely, however.

"What's the matter with you, Vane? You're not sick, are you?"

"No."

Mr. Flint took another turn.

"Now the question is, what are we going to do? If you've got any plan, I want to hear it."

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Mr. Vane was silent.

“Suppose Crewe goes into the convention with enough delegates to lock it up, so that none of the three has a majority?”

“I guess he’ll do that,” said Mr. Vane. He fumbled in his pocket, and drew out a typewritten list. It must be explained that the caucuses, or primaries, had been held in the various towns of the State at odd dates, and that the delegates pledged for the different candidates had been published in the newspapers from time to time—although very much in accordance with the desires of their individual newspapers. Mr. Crewe’s delegates necessarily had been announced by what is known as political advertising. Mr. Flint took the Honourable Hilary’s list, ran his eye over it, and whistled.

“You mean he claims three hundred and fifty out of the thousand.”

“No,” said Hilary, “he claims six hundred. He’ll have three hundred and fifty.”

In spite of the ‘Book of Arguments,’ Mr. Crewe was to have three hundred! It was incredible, preposterous. Mr. Flint looked at his counsel once more, and wondered whether he could be mentally failing.

“Fairplay only gives him two hundred.”

“Fairplay only gave him ten, in the beginning,” said Hilary.

“You come here two days before the convention and tell me Crewe has three hundred and fifty!” Mr. Flint exclaimed, as though Hilary Vane were personally responsible for Mr. Crewe’s delegates. A very different tone from that of other times, when conventions were mere ratifications of Imperial decrees. “Do you realize what it means if we lose control? Thousands and thousands of dollars in improvements—rolling stock, better service, new bridges, and eliminations of grade crossings. And they’ll raise our tax rate to the average, which means thousands more. A new railroad commission that we can’t talk to, and lower dividends—lower dividends, do you understand? That means trouble with the directors, the stockholders, and calls for explanations. And what explanations can I make which can be printed in a public report?”

“You were always pretty good at ’em, Flint,” said Hilary.

This remark, as was perhaps natural, did not improve the temper of the president of the Northeastern.

“If you think I like this political business any better than you do, you’re mightily mistaken,” he replied. “And now I want to hear what plan you’ve got for the convention. Suppose there’s a deadlock, as you say there will be, how are you going to handle it? Can you get a deal through between Giles Henderson and Adam Hunt? With all my

other work, I've had to go into this myself. Hunt hasn't got a chance. Bascom and Botcher are egging him on and making him believe he has. When Hunt gets into the convention and begins to fall off, you've got to talk to him, Vane. And his delegates have all got to be seen at the Pelican the night before and understand that they're to swing to Henderson after two ballots. You've got to keep your hand on the throttle in the convention, you understand. And I don't need to impress upon you how grave are the consequences if this man Crewe gets in, with public sentiment behind him and a reactionary Lower House. You've got to keep your hand on the throttle."

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“That’s part of my business, isn’t it?” Hilary asked, without turning his head.

Mr. Flint did not answer, but his eye rested again on his counsel’s face.

“I’m that kind of a lawyer,” Hilary continued, apparently more to himself than to his companion. “You pay me for that sort of thing more than for the work I do in the courts. Isn’t that so, Flint?”

Mr. Flint was baffled. Two qualities which were very dear to him he designated as sane and safe, and he had hitherto regarded his counsel as the sanest and safest of men. This remark made him wonder seriously whether the lawyer’s mind were not giving away; and if so, to whom was he to turn at this eleventh hour? No man in the State knew the ins and outs of conventions as did Hilary Vane; and, in the rare times when there had been crises, he had sat quietly in the little room off the platform as at the keyboard of an organ, and the delegates had responded to his touch. Hilary Vane had named the presidents of conventions, and the committees, and by pulling out stops could get such resolutions as he wished—or as Mr. Flint wished. But now?

Suddenly a suspicion invaded Mr. Flint’s train of thought; he repeated Hilary’s words over to himself. “I’m that kind of a lawyer,” and another individuality arose before the president of the Northeastern. Instincts are curious things. On the day, some years before, when Austen Vane had brought his pass into this very room and laid it down on his desk, Mr. Flint had recognized a man with whom he would have to deal,—a stronger man than Hilary. Since then he had seen Austen’s hand in various disturbing matters, and now it was as if he heard Austen speaking. “I’m that kind of a lawyer.” Not Hilary Vane, but Hilary Vane’s son was responsible for Hilary Vane’s condition—this recognition came to Mr. Flint in a flash. Austen had somehow accomplished the incredible feat of making Hilary Vane ashamed—and when such men as Hilary are ashamed, their usefulness is over. Mr. Flint had seen the thing happen with a certain kind of financiers, one day aggressive, combative, and the next broken, querulous men. Let a man cease to believe in what he is doing, and he loses force.

The president of the Northeastern used a locomotive as long as possible, but when it ceased to be able to haul a train up-grade, he sent it to the scrap-heap. Mr. Flint was far from being a bad man, but he worshipped power, and his motto was the survival of the fittest. He did not yet feel pity for Hilary—for he was angry. Only contempt,—-contempt that one who had been a power should come to this. To draw a somewhat far-fetched parallel, a Captain Kidd or a Caesar Borgia with a conscience would never have been heard of. Mr. Flint did not call it a conscience—he had a harder name for it. He had to send Hilary, thus vitiated, into the Convention to conduct the most important battle since the founding of the Empire, and Austen Vane was responsible.

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Mr. Flint had to control himself. In spite of his feelings, he saw that he must do so. And yet he could not resist saying: "I get a good many rumours here. They tell me that there may be another candidate in the field—a dark horse."

"Who?" asked Hilary.

"There was a meeting in the room of a man named Redbrook during the Legislature to push this candidate," said Mr. Flint, eyeing his counsel significantly, "and now young Gaylord has been going quietly around the State in his interest."

Suddenly the listless figure of Hilary Vane straightened, and the old look which had commanded the respect and obedience of men returned to his eye.

"You mean my son?" he demanded.

"Yes," said Mr. Flint; "they tell me that when the time comes, your, son will be a candidate on a platform opposed to our interests."

"Then," said Hilary, "they tell you a damned lie."

Hilary Vane had not sworn for a quarter of a century, and yet it is to be doubted if he ever spoke more nobly. He put his hands on the arms of his chair and lifted himself to his feet, where he stood for a moment, a tell figure to be remembered. Mr. Flint remembered it for many years. Hilary Vane's long coat was open, and seemed in itself to express this strange and new-found vigour in its flowing lines; his head was thrown back, and a look on his face which Mr. Flint had never seen there. He drew from an inner pocket a long envelope, and his hand trembled, though with seeming eagerness, as he held it out to Mr. Flint.

"Here!" he said.

"What's this?" asked Mr. Flint. He evinced no desire to take it, but Hilary pressed it on him.

"My resignation as counsel for your road."

The president of the Northeastern, bewildered by this sudden transformation, stared at the envelope.

"What? Now—to-day?" he said.

"No," answered Hilary; "read it. You'll see it takes effect the day after the State convention. I'm not much use any more you've done your best to bring that home to me, and you'll need a new man to do—the kind of work I've been doing for you for twenty-five years. But you can't get a new man in a day, and I said I'd stay with you,

and I keep my word. I'll go to the convention; I'll do my best for you, as I always have. But I don't like it, and after that I'm through. After that I become a lawyer—lawyer, do you understand?"

"A lawyer?" Mr. Flint repeated.

"Yes, a lawyer. Ever since last June, when I came up here, I've realized what I was. A Brush Bascom, with a better education and more brains, but a Brush Bascom—with the brains prostituted. While things were going along smoothly I didn't know—you never attempted to talk to me this way before. Do you remember how you took hold of me that day, and begged me to stay? I do, and I stayed. Why? Because I was a friend of yours. Association with you for twenty-five years had got under my skin, and I thought it had got under yours." Hilary let his hand fall. "To-day you've given me a notion of what friendship is. You've given me a chance to estimate myself on a new basis, and I'm much obliged to you for that. I haven't got many years left, but I'm glad to have found out what my life has been worth before I die."

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He buttoned up his coat slowly, glaring at Mr. Flint the while with a courage and a defiance that were superb. And he had picked up his hat before Mr. Flint found his tongue.

“You don’t mean that, Vane,” he cried. “My God, think what you’ve said!”

Hilary pointed at the desk with a shaking finger.

“If that were a scaffold, and a rope were around my neck, I’d say it over again. And I thank God I’ve had a chance to say it to you.” He paused, cleared his throat, and continued in a voice that all at once had become unemotional and natural. “I’ve three tin boxes of the private papers you wanted. I didn’t think of ’em to-day, but I’ll bring ’em up to you myself on Thursday.”

Mr. Flint reflected afterwards that what made him helpless must have been the sudden change in Hilary’s manner to the commonplace. The president of the Northeastern stood where he was, holding the envelope in his hand, apparently without the power to move or speak. He watched the tall form of his chief counsel go through the doorway, and something told him that that exit was coincident with the end of an era.

The end of an era of fraud, of self-deception, of conditions that violated every sacred principle of free government which men had shed blood to obtain.

CHAPTER XXIV

AN ADVENTURE OF VICTORIA’S

Mrs. Pomfret was a proud woman, for she had at last obtained the consent of the lion to attend a lunch party. She would have liked a dinner much better, but beggars are not choosers, and she seized eagerly on the lunch. The two days before the convention Mr. Crewe was to spend at Leith; having continual conferences, of course, receiving delegations, and discussing with prominent citizens certain offices which would be in his gift when he became governor. Also, there was Mr. Watling’s nominating speech to be gone over carefully, and Mr. Crewe’s own speech of acceptance to be composed. He had it in his mind, and he had decided that it should have two qualities: it should be brief and forceful.

Gratitude, however, is one of the noblest qualities of man, and a statesman should not fail to reward his faithful workers and adherents. As one of the chiefest of these, Mrs. Pomfret was entitled to high consideration. Hence the candidate had consented to have a lunch given in his honour, naming the day and the hour; and Mrs. Pomfret, believing that a prospective governor should possess some of the perquisites of royalty, in a rash moment submitted for his approval a list of guests. This included two distinguished

foreigners who were staying at the Leith Inn, an Englishman and an Austrian, and an elderly lady of very considerable social importance who was on a visit to Mrs. Pomfret.

Mr. Crewe had graciously sanctioned the list, but took the liberty of suggesting as an addition to it the name of Miss Victoria Flint, explaining over the telephone to Mrs. Pomfret that he had scarcely seen Victoria all summer, and that he wanted particularly to see her. Mrs. Pomfret declared that she had only left out Victoria because her presence might be awkward for both of them, but Mr. Crewe waved this aside as a trivial and feminine objection; so Victoria was invited, and another young man to balance the table.

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Mrs. Pomfret, as may have been surmised, was a woman of taste, and her villa at Leith, though small, had added considerably to her reputation for this quality. Patterson Pomfret had been a gentleman with red cheeks and an income, who incidentally had been satisfied with both. He had never tried to add to the income, which was large enough to pay the dues of the clubs the lists of which he thought worthy to include his name; large enough to pay hotel bills in London and Paris and at the baths, and to free the servants at country houses; large enough to clothe his wife and himself, and to teach Alice the three essentials of music, French, and deportment. If that man is notable who has mastered one thing well, Patterson Pomfret was a notable man: he had mastered the possibilities of his income, and never in any year had he gone beyond it by so much as a sole d vin blanc or a pair of red silk stockings. When he died, he left a worthy financial successor in his wife.

Mrs. Pomfret, knowing the income, after an exhaustive search decided upon Leith as the place to build her villa. It must be credited to her foresight that, when she built, she saw the future possibilities of the place. The proper people had started it. And it must be credited to her genius that she added to these possibilities of Leith by bringing to it such families as she thought worthy to live in the neighbourhood —families which incidentally increased the value of the land. Her villa had a decided French look, and was so amazingly trim and neat and generally shipshape as to be fit—for only the daintiest and most discriminating feminine occupation. The house was small, and its metamorphosis from a plain wooden farm-house had been an achievement that excited general admiration. Porches had been added, and a coat of spotless white relieved by an orange striping so original that many envied, but none dared to copy it. The striping went around the white chimneys, along the cornice, under the windows and on the railings of the porch: there were window boxes gay with geraniums and abundant awnings striped white and red, to match the flowers: a high, formal hemlock hedge hid the house from the road, through which entered a blue-stone drive that cut the close-cropped lawn and made a circle to the doorway. Under the great maples on the lawn were a tea-table, rugs, and wicker chairs, and the house itself was furnished by a variety of things of a design not to be bought in the United States of America: desks, photograph frames, writing-sets, clocks, paperknives, flower baskets, magazine racks, cigarette boxes, and dozens of other articles for the duplicates of which one might have searched Fifth Avenue in vain.

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Mr. Crewe was a little late. Important matters, he said, had detained him at the last moment, and he particularly enjoined Mrs. Pomfret's butler to listen carefully for the telephone, and twice during lunch it was announced that Mr. Crewe was wanted. At first he was preoccupied, and answered absently across the table the questions of the Englishman and the Austrian about American politics, and talked to the lady of social prominence on his right not at all; nor to Mrs. Pomfret'—who excused him. Being a lady of discerning qualities, however, the hostess remarked that Mr. Crewe's eyes wandered more than once to the far end of the oval table, where Victoria sat, and even Mrs. Pomfret could not deny the attraction. Victoria wore a filmy gown of mauve that infinitely became her, and a shadowy hat which, in the semi-darkness of the dining room, was a wondrous setting for her shapely head. Twice she caught Mr. Crewe's look upon her and returned it amusedly from under her lashes,—and once he could have sworn that she winked perceptibly. What fires she kindled in his deep nature it is impossible to say.

She had kindled other fires at her side. The tall young Englishman had lost interest in American politics, had turned his back upon poor Alice Pomfret, and had forgotten the world in general. Not so the Austrian, who was on the other side of Alice, and who could not see Victoria. Mr. Crewe, by his manner and appearance, had impressed him as a person of importance, and he wanted to know more. Besides, he wished to improve his English, and Alice had been told to speak French to him. By a lucky chance, after several blind attempts, he awakened the interest of the personality.

"I hear you are what they call reform in America?"

This was not the question that opened the gates.

"I don't care much for the word," answered Mr. Crewe, shortly; "I prefer the word progressive."

Discourse on the word "progressive" by the Austrian almost a monologue. But he was far from being discouraged.

"And Mrs. Pomfret tells me they play many detestable tricks on you—yes?"

"Tricks!" exclaimed Mr. Crewe, the memory of many recent ones being fresh in his mind; "I should say so. Do you know what a caucus is?"

"Caucus—caucus? It brings something to my head. Ah, I have seen a picture of it, in some English book. A very funny picture—it is in fun, yes?"

"A picture?" said Mr. Crewe. "Impossible!"

"But no," said the Austrian, earnestly, with one finger to his temples. "It is a funny picture, I know. I cannot recall. But the word caucus I remember. That is a droll word."

“Perhaps, Baron,” said Victoria, who had been resisting an almost uncontrollable desire to laugh, “you have been reading ’Alice in Wonderland.’”

The Englishman, Beatrice Chillingham, and some others (among whom were not Mr. Crewe and Mrs. Pomfret) gave way to an extremely pardonable mirth, in which the good-natured baron joined.

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“Ach!” he cried. “It is so, I have seen it in ‘Alice in Wonderland.’” Here the puzzled expression returned to his face, “But they are birds, are they not?”

Men whose minds are on serious things are impatient of levity, and Mr. Crewe looked at the baron:

“No,” he said, “they are not birds.”

This reply was the signal for more laughter.

“A thousand pardons,” exclaimed the baron. “It is I who am so ignorant. You will excuse me—yes?”

Mr. Crewe was mollified. The baron was a foreigner, he had been the object of laughter, and Mr. Crewe’s chivalrous spirit resented it.

“What we call a caucus in the towns of this State,” he said, “is a meeting of citizens of one party to determine who their candidates shall be. A caucus is a primary. There is a very loose primary law in this State, purposely kept loose by the politicians of the Northeastern Railroads, in order that they may play such tricks on decent men as they have been playing on me.”

At this mention of the Northeastern Railroads the lady on Mr. Crewe’s right, and some other guests, gave startled glances at Victoria. They observed with surprise that she seemed quite unmoved.

“I’ll tell you one or two of the things those railroad lobbyists have done,” said Mr. Crewe, his indignation rising with the subject, and still addressing the baron. “They are afraid to let the people into the caucuses, because they know I’ll get the delegates. Nearly everywhere I speak to the people, I get the delegates. The railroad politicians send word to the town rings to hold snap caucuses’ when they hear I’m coming into a town to speak, and the local politicians give out notices only a day before, and only to the voters they want in the caucus. In Hull the other day, out of a population of two thousand, twenty men elected four delegates for the railroad candidate.”

“It is corruption!” cried the baron, who had no idea who Victoria was, and a very slim notion of what Mr. Crewe was talking about.

“Corruption!” said Mr. Crewe. “What can you expect when a railroad owns a State? The other day in Britain, where they elect fourteen delegates, the editor of a weekly newspaper printed false ballots with two of my men at the top and one at the bottom, and eleven railroad men in the middle. Fortunately some person with sense discovered the fraud before it was too late.”

“You don’t tell me!” said the baron.

“And every State and federal office-holder has been distributing passes for the last three weeks.”

“Pass?” repeated the baron. “You mean they fight with the fist—so? To distribute a pass—so,” and the baron struck out at an imaginary enemy. “It is the American language. I have read it in the prize-fight. I am told to read the prize-fight and the base-ball game.”

Mr. Crewe thought it obviously useless to continue this conversation.

“The railroad,” said the baron, “he is the modern Machiavelli.”

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“I say,” Mr. Rangely, the Englishman, remarked to Victoria, “this is a bit rough on you, you know.”

“Oh, I’m used to it,” she laughed.

“Mr. Crewe,” said Mrs. Pomfret, to the table at large, “deserves tremendous credit for the fight he has made, almost single-handed. Our greatest need in this country is what you have in England, Mr. Rangely, —gentlemen in politics. Our country gentlemen, like Mr. Crewe, are now going to assume their proper duties and responsibilities.” She laid her napkin on the table and glanced at Alice as she continued: “Humphrey, I shall have to appoint you, as usual, the man of the house. Will you take the gentlemen into the library?”

Another privilege of celebrity is to throw away one’s cigar, and walk out of the smoking room if one is bored. Mr. Crewe was, in a sense, the host. He indicated with a wave of his hand the cigars and cigarettes which Mrs. Pomfret had provided, and stood in a thoughtful manner before the empty fireplace, with his hands in his pockets, replying in brief sentences to the questions of Mr. Chillingham and the others. To tell the truth, Mr. Crewe was bringing to bear all of his extraordinary concentration of mind upon a problem with which he had been occupied for some years past. He was not a man, as we know, to take the important steps of life in a hurry, although; like the truly great, he was capable of making up his mind in a very brief period when it was necessary to strike. He had now, after weighing the question with the consideration which its gravity demanded, finally decided upon definite action. Whereupon he walked out of the library, leaving the other guests to comment as they would; or not comment at all, for all he cared. Like all masterful men, he went direct to the thing he wanted.

The ladies were having coffee under the maples, by the tea-table. At some little distance from the group Beatrice Chillingham was walking with Victoria, and it was evident that Victoria found Miss Chillingham’s remarks amusing. These were the only two in the party who did not observe Mr. Crewe’s approach. Mrs. Pomfret, when she saw the direction which he was taking, lost the thread of her conversation, and the lady who was visiting her wore a significant expression.

“Victoria,” said Mr. Crewe, “let’s go around to the other side of the house and look at the view.”

Victoria started and turned to him from Miss Chillingham, with the fun still sparkling in her eyes. It was, perhaps, as well for Mr. Crewe that he had not overheard their conversation; but this might have applied to any man.

“Are you sure you can spare the time?” she asked.

Mr. Crewe looked at his watch—probably from habit.

“I made it a point to leave the smoking room early,” he replied.

“We’re flattered—aren’t we, Beatrice?”

Miss Chillingham had a turned-up nose, and a face which was apt to be slightly freckled at this time of year; for she contemned vanity and veils. For fear of doing her an injustice, it must be added that she was not at all bad-looking; quite the contrary All that can be noted in this brief space is that Beatrice Chillingham was herself. Some people declared that she was possessed of the seven devils of her sex which Mr. Stockton wrote about.

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“I’m flattered,” she said, and walked off towards the tea-table with a glance in which Victoria read many meanings. Mr. Crewe paid no attention either to words, look, or departure.

“I want to talk to you,” he said.

“You’ve made that very plain, at least,” answered Victoria. “Why did you pretend it was the view?”

“Some conventionalities have to be observed, I suppose,” he said. “Let’s go around there. It is a good view.”

“Don’t you think this is a little—marked?” asked Victoria, surveying him with her hands behind her back.

“I can’t help it if it is,” said Mr. Crewe. “Every hour is valuable to me, and I’ve got to take my chances when I get ’em. For some reason, you haven’t been down at Leith much this summer. Why didn’t you telephone me, as I asked you.”

“Because I’ve suddenly grown dignified, I suppose,” she said. “And then, of course, I hesitated to intrude upon such a person of importance as you have become, Humphrey.”

“I’ve always got time to see you,” he replied. “I always shall have. But I appreciate your delicacy. That sort of thing counts with a man more than most women know.”

“Then I am repaid,” said Victoria, “for exercising self-control.”

“I find it always pays,” declared Mr. Crewe, and he glanced at her with distinct approval. They were skirting the house, and presently came out upon a tiny terrace where young Ridley had made a miniature Italian garden when the Electric dividends had increased, and from which there was a vista of the shallows of the Blue. Here was a stone garden-seat which Mrs. Pomfret had brought from Italy, and over which she had quarrelled with the customs authorities. Mr. Crewe, with a wave of his hand, signified his pleasure that they should sit, and cleared his throat.

“It’s just as well, perhaps,” he began, “that we haven’t had the chance to see each other earlier. When a man starts out upon an undertaking of the gravest importance, wherein he stakes his reputation, an undertaking for which he is ridiculed and reviled, he likes to have his judgment justified. He likes to be vindicated, especially in the eyes of—people whom he cares about. Personally, I never had any doubt that I should be the next governor, because I knew in the beginning that I had estimated public sentiment correctly. The man who succeeds in this world is the man who has sagacity enough to gauge public sentiment ahead of time, and the courage to act on his beliefs.” Victoria looked at him steadily. He was very calm, and he had one knee crossed over the other.

“And the sagacity,” she added, “to choose his lieutenants in the fight.”

“Exactly,” said Mr. Crewe. “I have always declared, Victoria, that you had a natural aptitude for affairs.”

“I have heard my father say,” she continued, still maintaining her steady glance, “that Hamilton Tooting is one of the shrewdest politicians he has ever known. Isn’t Mr. Tooting one of your right-hand men?”

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“He could hardly be called that,” Mr. Crewe replied. “In fact, I haven’t any what you might call ‘right-hand men.’ The large problems I have had to decide for myself. As for Tooting, he’s well enough in his way; he understands the tricks of the politicians—he’s played ’em, I guess. He’s uneducated; he’s merely a worker. You see,” he went on, “one great reason why I’ve been so successful is because I’ve been practical. I’ve taken materials as I’ve found them.”

“I see,” answered Victoria, turning her head and gazing over the terrace at the sparkling reaches of the river. She remembered the close of that wintry afternoon in Mr. Crewe’s house at the capital, and she was quite willing to do him exact justice, and to believe that he had forgotten it —which, indeed, was the case.

“I want to say,” he continued, “that although I have known and—ahem —admired you for many years, Victoria, what has struck me most forcibly in your favour has been your open-mindedness—especially on the great political questions this summer. I have no idea how much you know about them, but one would naturally have expected you, on account of your father, to be prejudiced. Sometime, when I have more leisure, I shall go into them, fully with you. And in the meantime I’ll have my secretary send you the complete list of my speeches up to date, and I know you will read them carefully.”

“You are very kind, Humphrey,” she said.

Absorbed in the presentation of his subject (which chanced to be himself), Mr. Crewe did not observe that her lips were parted, and that there were little creases around her eyes.

“And sometime,” said Mr. Crewe, when all this has blown over a little, I shall have a talk with your father. He undoubtedly understands that there is scarcely any question of my election. He probably realizes, too, that he has been in the—wrong, and that railroad domination must cease—he has already made several concessions, as you know. I wish you would tell him from me that when I am governor, I shall make it a point to discuss the whole matter with him, and that he will find in me no foe of corporations. Justice is what I stand for. Temperamentally, I am too conservative, I am too much of a business man, to tamper with vested interests.”

“I will tell him, Humphrey,” said Victoria.

Mr. Crewe coughed, and looked at his watch once, more. “And now, having made that clear,” he said, “and having only a quarter of an hour before I have to leave to keep an appointment, I am going to take up another subject. And I ask you to believe it is not done lightly, or without due consideration, but as the result of some years of thought.”

Victoria turned to him seriously—and yet the creases were still around her eyes.

“I can well believe it, Humphrey,” she answered. “But—have you time?”

“Yes,” he said, “I have learned the value of minutes.”

“But not of hours, perhaps,” she replied.

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“That,” said Mr. Crewe, indulgently, “is a woman’s point of view. A man cannot dally through life, and your kind of woman has no use for a man who dallies. First, I will give you my idea of a woman.”

“I am all attention,” said Victoria.

“Well,” said Mr. Crewe, putting the tops of his fingers together, “she should excel as a housewife. I haven’t any use for your so-called intellectual woman. Of course, what I mean by a housewife is something a little less bourgeoise; she should be able to conduct an establishment with the neatness and despatch and economy of a well-run hotel. She should be able to seat a table instantly and accurately, giving to the prominent guests the prestige they deserve. Nor have I any sympathy with the notion that makes a married woman a law unto herself. She enters voluntarily into an agreement whereby she puts herself under the control of her husband: his interests, his career, his—”

“Comfort?” suggested Victoria.

“Yes, his comfort—all that comes first. And his establishment is conducted primarily, and his guests selected, in the interests of his fortunes. Of course, that goes without saying of a man in high place in public life. But he must choose for his wife a woman who is equal to all these things,—to my mind her highest achievement,—who makes the most of the position he gives her, presides at his table and entertainments, and reaches such people as, for any reason, he is unable to reach. I have taken the pains to point out these things in a general way, for obvious reasons. My greatest desire is to be fair.”

“What,” asked Victoria, with her eyes on the river, “what are the wages?”

Mr. Crewe laughed. Incidentally, he thought her profile very fine.

“I do not believe in flattery,” he said, “but I think I should add to the qualifications personality and a sense of humour. I am quite sure I could never live with a woman—-who didn’t have a sense of humour.”

“I should think it would be a little difficult,” said Victoria, “to get a woman with the qualifications you enumerate and a sense of humour thrown in.”

“Infinitely difficult,” declared Mr. Crewe, with more ardour than he had yet shown. “I have waited a good many years, Victoria.”

“And yet,” she said, “you have been happy. You have a perpetual source of enjoyment denied to some people.”

“What is that?” he asked. It is natural for a man to like to hear the points of his character discussed by a discerning woman.

“Yourself,” said Victoria, suddenly looking him full in the face. “You are complete, Humphrey, as it is. You are happily married already. Besides,” she added, laughing a little, “the qualities you have mentioned—with the exception of the sense of humour—-are not those of a wife, but of a business partner of the opposite sex. What you really want is a business partner with something like a fifth interest, and whose name shall not appear in the agreement.”

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Mr. Crewe laughed again. Nevertheless, he was a little puzzled over this remark.

“I am not sentimental,” he began.

“You certainly are not,” she said.

“You have a way,” he replied, with a shade of reproof in his voice, “you have a way at times of treating serious things with a little less gravity than they deserve. I am still a young man, but I have seen a good deal of life, and I know myself pretty well. It is necessary to treat matrimony from a practical as well as a sentimental point of view. There wouldn’t be half the unhappiness and divorces if people took time to do this, instead of rushing off and getting married immediately. And of course it is especially important for a man in my position to study every aspect of the problem before he takes a step.”

By this time a deep and absorbing interest in a new aspect of Mr. Crewe’s character had taken possession of Victoria.

“And you believe that, by taking thought, you can get the kind of a wife you want?” she asked.

“Certainly,” he replied; “does that strike you as strange?”

“A little,” said Victoria. “Suppose,” she added gently, “suppose that the kind of wife you’d want wouldn’t want you?”

Mr. Crewe laughed again.

“That is a contingency which a strong man does not take into consideration,” he answered. “Strong men get what they want. But upon my word, Victoria, you have a delicious way of putting things. In your presence I quite forget the problems and perplexities which beset me. That,” he said, with delicate meaning, “that is another quality I should desire in a woman.”

“It is one, fortunately, that isn’t marketable,” she said, “and it’s the only quality you’ve mentioned that’s worth anything.”

“A woman’s valuation,” said Mr. Crewe.

“If it made you forget your own affairs, it would be priceless.”

“Look here, Victoria,” cried Mr. Crewe, uncrossing his knees, “joking’s all very well, but I haven’t time for it to-day. And I’m in a serious mood. I’ve told you what I want, and now that I’ve got to go in a few minutes, I’ll come to the point. I don’t suppose a man could

pay a woman a higher compliment than to say that his proposal was the result of some years of thought and study."

Here Victoria laughed outright, but grew serious again at once.

"Unless he proposed to her the day he met her. That would be a real compliment."

"The man," said Mr. Crewe, impatiently, "would be a fool."

"Or else a person of extreme discernment," said Victoria. "And love is lenient with fools. By the way, Humphrey, it has just occurred to me that there's one quality which some people think necessary in a wife, which you didn't mention."

"What's that?"

"Love," said Victoria.

"Love, of course," he agreed; "I took that for granted."

"I supposed you did," said Victoria, meekly.

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“Well, now, to come to the point—” he began again.

But she interrupted him by glancing at the watch on her gown, and rising.

“What’s the matter?” he asked, with some annoyance.

“The fifteen minutes are up,” she announced. “I cannot take the responsibility of detaining you.”

“We will put in tantalizing as another attractive quality,” he laughed. “I absolve you of all responsibility. Sit down.”

“I believe you mentioned obedience,” she answered, and sat down again at the end of the bench, resting her chin on her gloved hand, and looking at him. By this time her glances seemed to have gained a visibly disturbing effect. He moved a little nearer to her, took off his hat (which he had hitherto neglected to do), and thrust his hands abruptly into his pockets—as much as to say that he would not be responsible for their movements if they were less free.

“Hang it all, Victoria,” he exclaimed, “I’m a practical man, and I try to look at this, which is one of the serious things in life, in a practical way.”

“One of the serious things,” she repeated, as though to herself.

“Yes,” he said, “certainly.”

“I merely asked to be sure of the weight you gave it. Go on.”

“In a practical way, as I was saying. Long ago I suspected that you had most of those qualities.”

“I’m overwhelmed, Humphrey,” she cried, with her eyes dancing. “But—do you think I could cultivate the rest?”

“Oh, well,” said Mr. Crewe, I put it that way because no woman is perfect, and I dislike superlatives.”

“I should think superlatives would be very hard to live with,” she reflected. “But—-dreadful thought!—suppose I should lack an essential?”

“What—for instance?”

“Love—for instance. But then you did not put it first. It was I who mentioned it, and you who took it for granted.”

“Affection seems to be a more sensible term for it,” he said. “Affection is the lasting and sensible thing. You mentioned a partnership, a word that singularly fits into my notion of marriage. I want to be honest with you, and understate my feelings on that subject.”

Victoria, who had been regarding him with a curious look that puzzled him, laughed again.

“I have been hoping you haven’t exaggerated them,” she replied.

“They’re stronger than you think,” he declared. “I never felt this way in my life before. What I meant to say was, that I never understood running away with a woman.”

“That does not surprise me,” said Victoria.

“I shouldn’t know where to run to,” he proclaimed.

“Perhaps the woman would, if you got a clever one. At any rate, it wouldn’t matter. One place is as good as another. Some go to Niagara, and some to Coney Island, and others to Venice. Personally, I should have no particular preference.”

“No preference!” he exclaimed.

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“I could be happy in Central Park,” she declared.

“Fortunately,” said Mr. Crewe, “you will never be called upon to make the trial.”

Victoria was silent. Her thoughts, for the moment, had flown elsewhere, but Mr. Crewe did not appear to notice this. He fell back into the rounded hollow of the bench, and it occurred to him that he had never quite realized that profile. And what an ornament she would be to his table.

“I think, Humphrey,” she said, “that we should be going back.”

“One moment, and I’ll have finished,” he cried. “I’ve no doubt you are prepared for what I am going to say. I have purposely led up to it, in order that there might be no misunderstanding. In short, I have never seen another woman with personal characteristics so well suited for my life, and I want you to marry me, Victoria. I can offer you the position of the wife of a man with a public career—for which you are so well fitted.”

Victoria shook her head slowly, and smiled at him.

“I couldn’t fill the position,” she said.

“Perhaps,” he replied, smiling back at her, “perhaps I am the best judge of that.”

“And you thought,” she asked slowly, “that I was that kind of a woman?”

“I know it to be a practical certainty,” said Mr. Crewe.

“Practical certainties,” said Victoria, “are not always truths. If I should sign a contract, which I suppose, as a business man, you would want, to live up to the letter of your specifications,—even then I could not do it. I should make life a torture for you, Humphrey. You see, I am honest with you, too—much as your offer dazzles me.” And she shook her head again.

“That,” exclaimed Mr. Crewe, impatiently, “is sheer nonsense. I want you, and I mean to have you.”

There came a look into her eyes which Mr. Crewe did not see, because her face was turned from him.

“I could be happy,” she said, “for days and weeks and years in a but on the side of Sawanec. I could be happy in a farm-house where I had to do all the work. I am not the model housewife which your imagination depicts, Humphrey. I could live in two rooms and eat at an Italian restaurant—with the right man. And I am afraid the wrong one would wake up one day and discover that I had gone. I am sorry to disillusionize you,

but I don't care a fig for balls and garden-parties and salons. It would be much more fun to run away from them to the queer places of the earth—with the right man. And I should have to possess one essential to put up with—greatness and what you call a public career."

"And what is that essential?" he asked.

"Love," said Victoria. He heard the word but faintly, for her face was still turned away from him. "You've offered me the things that are attainable by taking thought, by perseverance, by pertinacity, by the outwitting of your fellow-men, by the stacking of coins. And I want—the unattainable, the divine gift which is bestowed, which cannot be acquired. If it could be acquired, Humphrey," she added, looking at him, "I am sure you would acquire it—if you thought it worth while."

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“I don’t understand you,” he said,—and looked it.

“No,” said Victoria, “I was afraid you wouldn’t. And moreover, you never would. There is no use in my trying to make myself any clearer, and you’ll have to keep your appointment. I hesitate to contradict you, but I am not the kind of woman you want. That is one reason I cannot marry you. And the other is, that I do not love you.”

“You can’t be in love with any one else?” he cried.

“That does seem rather preposterous, I’ll admit,” she answered. “But if I were, it wouldn’t make any difference.”

“You won’t marry me?” he said, getting to his feet. There was incredulity in his voice, and a certain amount of bewilderment. The thing was indeed incredible!

“No,” said Victoria, “I won’t.”

And he had only to look into her face to see that it was so. Hitherto nil desperandum had been a good working motto, but something told him it was useless in this case. He thrust on his hat and pulled out his watch.

“Well,” he said, “that settles it. I must—say I can’t see your point of view—but that settles it. I must say, too, that your refusal is something of a shock after what I had been led to expect after the past few years.”

“The person you are in love with led you to expect it, Humphrey, and that person is—-yourself. You are in love temporarily with your own ideal of me.”

“And your refusal comes at an unfortunate tune for me,” he continued, not heeding her words, “when I have an affair on my hands of such magnitude, which requires concentrated thought. But I’m not a man to cry, and I’ll make the best of it.”

“If I thought it were more than a temporary disappointment, I should be sorry for you,” said Victoria. “I remember that you felt something like this when Mr. Rutter wouldn’t sell you his land. The lady you really want,” she added, pointing with her parasol at the house, “is in there, waiting for you.”

Mr. Crewe did not reply to this prophecy, but followed Victoria around the house to the group on the lawn, where he bade his hostess a somewhat preoccupied farewell, and bowed distantly to the guests.

“He has so much on his mind,” said Mrs. Pomfret. “And oh, I quite forgot—Humphrey!” she cried, calling after him, “Humphrey!”

“Yes,” he said, turning before he reached his automobile. “What is it?”

“Alice and I are going to the convention, you know, and I meant to tell you that there would be ten in the party—but I didn’t have a chance.” Here Mrs. Pomfret glanced at Victoria, who had been joined at once by the tall Englishman. “Can you get tickets for ten?”

Mr. Crewe made a memorandum.

“Yes,” he said, “I’ll get the tickets—but I don’t see what you want to go for.”

CHAPTER XXV

MORE ADVENTURER

Victoria had not, of course, confided in Beatrice Chillingham what had occurred in the garden, although that lady had exhibited the liveliest interest, and had had her suspicions. After Mr. Crewe’s departure Mr. Rangely, the tall young Englishman, had renewed his attentions assiduously, although during the interval in the garden he had found Miss Chillingham a person of discernment.

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“She’s not going to marry that chap, is she, Miss Chillingham?” he had asked.

“No,” said Beatrice; “you have my word for it, she isn’t.”

As she was leaving, Mrs. Pomfret had taken Victoria’s hand and drawn her aside, and looked into her face with a meaning smile.

“My dear!” she exclaimed, “he particularly asked that you be invited.”

“Who?” said Victoria.

“Humphrey. He stipulated that you should be here.”

“Then I’m very much obliged to him,” said Victoria, “for I’ve enjoyed myself immensely. I like your Englishman so much.”

“Do you?” said Mrs. Pomfret, searching Victoria’s face, while her own brightened. “He’s heir to one of the really good titles, and he has an income of his own. I couldn’t put him up here, in this tiny box, because I have Mrs. Fronde. We are going to take him to the convention—and if you’d care to go, Victoria—?”

Victoria laughed.

“It isn’t as serious as that,” she said. “And I’m afraid I can’t go to the convention—I have some things to do in the neighbourhood.”

Mrs. Pomfret looked wise.

“He’s a most attractive man, with the best prospects. It would be a splendid match for you, Victoria.”

“Mrs. Pomfret,” replied Victoria, wavering between amusement and a desire to be serious, “I haven’t the slightest intention of making what you call a ‘match.’” And there was in her words a ring of truth not to be mistaken.

Mrs. Pomfret kissed her.

“One never can tell what may happen,” she said. “Think of him, Victoria. And your dear mother—perhaps you will know some day what the responsibility is of seeing a daughter well placed in life.”

Victoria coloured, and withdrew her hand.

“I fear that time is a long way off, Mrs. Pomfret,” she replied.

“I think so much of Victoria,” Mrs. Pomfret declared a moment later to her guest; “she’s like my own daughter. But at times she’s so hopelessly unconventional. Why, I believe Rangely’s actually going home with her.”

“He asked her to drop him at the Inn,” said Mrs. Fronde. “He’s head over heels in love already.”

“It would be such a relief to dear Rose,” sighed Mrs. Pomfret.

“I like the girl,” replied Mrs. Fronde, dryly. “She has individuality, and knows her own mind. Whoever she marries will have something to him.”

“I devoutly hope so!” said Mrs. Pomfret.

It was quite true that Mr. Arthur Rangely had asked Victoria to drop him at the Inn. But when they reached it he made another request.

“Do you mind if I go a bit farther, Miss Flint?” he suggested. “I’d rather like the walk back.”

Victoria laughed.

“Do come,” she said.

He admired the country, but he looked at Victoria, and asked a hundred exceedingly frank questions about Leith, about Mrs. Pomfret, whom he had met at his uncle’s seat in Devonshire, and about Mr. Crewe and the railroads in politics. Many of these Victoria parried, and she came rapidly to the conclusion that Mr. Arthur Rangely was a more astute person than—to a casual observer he would seem.

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He showed no inclination to fix the limits of his walk, and made no protest as she drove under the stone archway at the entrance of Fairview. Victoria was amused and interested, and she decided that she liked Mr. Rangely.

“Will you come up for tea?” she asked. “I’ll send you home.”

He accepted with alacrity. They had reached the first turn when their attention was caught by the sight of a buggy ahead of them, and facing towards them. The horse, with the reins hanging loosely over the shafts, had strayed to the side of the driveway and was contentedly eating the shrubbery that lined it. Inside the vehicle, hunched up in the corner of the seat, was a man who presented an appearance of helplessness which struck them both with a sobering effect.

“Is the fellow drunk?” said Mr. Rangely.

Victoria’s answer was a little cry which startled him, and drew his look to her. She had touched her horse with the whip, and her eyes had widened in real alarm.

“It’s Hilary Vane!” she exclaimed. “I—I wonder what can have happened!”

She handed the reins to Mr. Rangely, and sprang out and flew to Hilary’s side.

“Mr. Vane!” she cried. “What’s the matter? Are you ill?”

She had never seen him look so. To her he had always been as one on whom pity would be wasted, as one who long ago had established his credit with the universe to his own satisfaction. But now, suddenly, intense pity welled up within her, and even in that moment she wondered if it could be because he was Austen’s father. His hands were at his sides, his head was fallen forward a little, and his face was white. But his eyes frightened her most; instead of the old, semi-defiant expression which she remembered from childhood, they had in them a dumb suffering that went to her heart. He looked at her, tried to straighten up, and fell back again.

“N—nothing’s the matter,” he said, “nothing. A little spell. I’ll be all right in a moment.”

Victoria did not lose an instant, but climbed into the buggy at his side and gathered up the reins, and drew the fallen lap-robe over his knees.

“I’m going to take you back to Fairview,” she said. “And we’ll telephone for a doctor.”

But she had underrated the amount of will left in him. He did not move, though indeed if he had seized the reins from her hands, he could have given her no greater effect of surprise. Life came back into the eyes at the summons, and dominance into the voice, although he breathed heavily.

“No, you’re not,” he said; “no, you’re not. I’m going to Ripton—do you understand? I’ll be all right in a minute, and I’ll take the lines.”

Victoria, when she got over her astonishment at this, reflected quickly. She glanced at him, and the light of his expression was already fading. There was some reason why he did not wish to go back to Fairview, and common sense told her that agitation was not good for him; besides, they would have to telephone to Ripton for a physician, and it was quicker to drive there. Quicker to drive in her own runabout, did she dare to try to move him into it. She made up her mind.

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“Please follow on behind with that trap,” she called out to Rangely; “I’m going to Ripton.”

He nodded understandingly, admiringly, and Victoria started Hilary’s horse out of the bushes towards the entrance way. From time to time she let her eyes rest upon him anxiously.

“Are you comfortable?” she asked.

“Yes,” he said, “yes. I’m all right. I’ll be able to drive in a minute.”

But the minutes passed, and he made no attempt to take the reins. Victoria had drawn the whalebone whip from its socket, and was urging on the horse as fast as humanity would permit; and the while she was aware that Hilary’s look was fixed upon her—in fact, never left her. Once or twice, in spite of her anxiety to get him home, Victoria blushed faintly, as she wondered what he was thinking about.

And all the while she asked herself what it was that had brought him to this condition. Victoria knew sufficient of life and had visited hospitals enough to understand that mental causes were generally responsible for such breakdowns—Hilary had had a shock. She remembered how in her childhood he had been the object of her particular animosity; how she used to put out her tongue at him, and imitate his manner, and how he had never made the slightest attempt to conciliate her; most people of this sort are sensitive to the instincts of children; but Hilary had not been. She remembered—how long ago it seemed now!—the day she had given him, in deviltry, the clipping about Austen shooting Mr. Blodgett.

The Hilary Vane who sat beside her to-day was not the same man. It was unaccountable, but he was not. Nor could this changed estimate of him be attributed to her regard for Austen, for she recalled a day only a few months since—in June—when he had come up to Fairview and she was standing on the lawn, and she had looked at him without recognition; she had not, then, been able to bring herself to bow to him; to her childhood distaste had been added the deeper resentment of Austen’s wrongs. Her early instincts about Hilary had been vindicated, for he had treated his son abominably and driven Austen from his mother’s home. To misunderstand and maltreat Austen Vane, of all people Austen, whose consideration for his father had been what it had! Could it be that Hilary felt remorse? Could it be that he loved Austen in some peculiar manner all his own?

Victoria knew now—so strangely—that the man beside her was capable of love, and she had never felt that way about Hilary Vane. And her mind was confused, and her heart was troubled and wrung. Insight flashed upon her of the terrible loneliness of a life surrounded by outstretched, loving arms to which one could not fly; scenes from a famous classic she had read with a favourite teacher at school came to her, and she knew that she was the witness of a retribution, of a suffering beyond conception of a

soul prepared for suffering,—not physical suffering, but of that torture which is the meaning of hell.

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However, there was physical suffering. It came and went, and at such moments she saw the traces of it in the tightening of his lips, and longed with womanly intuition to alleviate it. She had not spoken —although she could have cried aloud; she knew not what to say. And then suddenly she reached out and touched his hand. Nor could she have accounted for the action.

“Are you in much pain?” she asked.

She felt him tremble.

“No,” he said; “it’s only a spell—I’ve had ’em before. I—I can drive in a few minutes.”

“And do you think,” she asked, “that I would allow you to go the rest of the way alone?”

“I guess I ought to thank you for comin’ with me,” he said.

Victoria looked at him and smiled. And it was an illuminating smile for her as well as for Hilary. Suddenly, by that strange power of sympathy which the unselfish possess, she understood the man, understood Austen’s patience with him and affection for him. Suddenly she had pierced the hard layers of the outer shell, and had heard the imprisoned spirit crying with a small persistent voice,—a spirit stifled for many years and starved—and yet it lived and struggled still.

Yes, and that spirit itself must have felt her own reaching out to it —who can, say? And how it must have striven again for utterance—

“It was good of you to come,” he said.

“It was only common humanity,” she answered, touching the horse.

“Common humanity,” he repeated. “You’d have done it for anybody along the road, would you?”

At this remark, so characteristic of Hilary, Victoria, hesitated. She understood it now. And yet she hesitated to give him an answer that was hypocritical.

“I have known you all my life, Mr. Vane, and you are a very old friend of my father’s.”

“Old,” he repeated, “yes, that’s it. I’m ready for the scrap-heap —better have let me lie, Victoria.”

Victoria started. A new surmise had occurred to her upon which she did not like to dwell.

“You have worked too hard, Mr. Vane—you need a rest. And I have been telling father that, too. You both need a rest.”

He shook his head.

“I’ll never get it,” he said. “Stopping work won’t give it to me.”

She pondered on these words as she guided the horse over a crossing. And all that Austen had said to her, all that she had been thinking of for a year past, helped her to grasp their meaning. But she wondered still more at the communion which, all at once, had been established between Hilary Vane and herself, and why he was saying these things to her. It was all so unreal and inexplicable.

“I can imagine that people who have worked hard all their lives must feel that way,” she answered, though her voice was not as steady as she could have wished. “You—you have so much to live for.”

Her colour rose. She was thinking of Austen—and she knew that Hilary Vane knew that she was thinking of Austen. Moreover, she had suddenly grasped the fact that the gentle but persistently strong influence of the son’s character had brought about the change in the father. Hilary Vane’s lips closed again, as in pain, and she divined the reason.

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Victoria knew the house in Hanover Street, with its classic porch, with its certain air of distinction and stability, and long before she had known it as the Austen residence she remembered wondering who lived in it. The house had individuality, and (looked at from the front) almost perfect proportions; consciously—it bespoke the gentility of its builders. Now she drew up before it and called to Mr. Rangely, who was abreast, to tie his horse and ring the bell. Hilary was already feeling with his foot for the step of the buggy.

“I’m all right,” he insisted; “I can manage now,” but Victoria seized his arm with a firm, detaining hand.

“Please wait,—Mr. Vane,” she pleaded.

But the feeling of shame at his helplessness was strong.

“It’s over now. I—I can walk. I’m much obliged to you, Victoria—much obliged.”

Fortunately Hilary’s horse showed no inclination to go any farther—even to the stable. And Victoria held on to his arm. He ceased to protest, and Mr. Rangely quickly tied the other horse and came to Victoria’s aid. Supported by the young Englishman, Hilary climbed the stone steps and reached the porch, declaring all the while that he needed no assistance, and could walk alone. Victoria rang the bell, and after an interval the door was opened by Euphrasia Cotton.

Euphrasia stood upright with her hand on the knob, and her eyes flashed over the group and rested fixedly on the daughter of Mr. Flint.

“Mr. Vane was not very well,” Victoria explained, “and we came home with him.”

“I’m all right,” said Hilary, once more, and to prove it he stepped—not very steadily—-across the threshold into the hall, and sat down on a chair which had had its place at the foot of the stairs from time immemorial. Euphrasia stood still.

“I think,” said Victoria, “that Mr. Vane had better see a doctor. Have you a telephone?”

“No, we haven’t,” said Euphrasia.

Victoria turned to Mr. Rangely, who had been a deeply interested spectator to this scene.

“A little way down the street, on the other side, Dr. Tredway lives. You will see his sign.”

“And if he isn’t in, go to the hospital. It’s only a few doors farther on.”

“I’ll wait,” said Victoria, simply, when he had gone; “my father will wish to know about Mr. Vane.”

“Hold on,” said Hilary, “I haven’t any use for a doctor—I won’t see one. I know what the trouble is, and I’m all right.”

Victoria became aware—for the first time that Hilary Vane’s housekeeper had not moved; that Euphrasia Cotton was still staring at her in a most disconcerting manner, and was paying no attention whatever to Hilary.

“Come in and set down,” she said; and seeing Victoria glance at Hilary’s horse, she added, “Oh, he’ll stand there till doomsday.”

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Victoria, thinking that the situation would be less awkward, accepted the invitation, and Euphrasia shut the door. The hall, owing to the fact that the shutters of the windows by the stairs were always closed, was in semidarkness. Victoria longed to let in the light, to take this strange, dried-up housekeeper and shake her into some semblance of natural feeling. And this was Austen's home! It was to this house, made gloomy by these people, that he had returned every night! Infinitely depressed, she felt that she must take some action, or cry aloud.

"Mr. Vane," she said, laying a hand upon his shoulder, "I think you ought, at least, to lie down for a little while. Isn't there a sofa in —in the parlour?" she asked Euphrasia.

"You can't get him to do anything," Euphrasia replied, with decision; "he'll die some day for want of a little common sense. I shouldn't wonder if he was took on soon."

"Oh!" cried Victoria. She could think of no words to answer this remark.

"It wouldn't surprise me," Euphrasia continued. "He fell down the stairs here not long ago, and went right on about his business. He's never paid any attention to anybody, and I guess it's a mite late to expect him to begin now. Won't you set down?"

There was another chair against the low wainscoting, and Victoria drew it over beside Hilary and sat down in it. He did not seem to notice the action, and Euphrasia continued to stand. Standing seemed to be the natural posture of this remarkable woman, Victoria thought—a posture of vigilance, of defiance. A clock of one of the Austen grandfathers stood obscurely at the back of the hall, and the measured swing of its pendulum was all that broke the silence. This was Austen's home. It seemed impossible for her to realize that he could be the product of this environment—until a portrait on the opposite wall, above the stairs, came out of the gloom and caught her eye like the glow of light. At first, becoming aware of it with a start, she thought it a likeness of Austen himself. Then she saw that the hair was longer, and more wavy than his, and fell down a little over the velvet collar of a coat with a wide lapel and brass buttons, and that the original of this portrait had worn a stock. The face had not quite the strength of Austen's, she thought, but a wondrous sweetness and intellect shone from it, like an expression she had seen on his face. The chin rested on the hand, an intellectual hand,—and the portrait brought to her mind that of a young English statesman she had seen in the National Gallery in London.

"That's Channing Austen,—he was minister to Spain."

Victoria started. It was Euphrasia who was speaking, and unmistakable pride was in her voice.

Fortunately for Victoria, who would not in the least have known what to reply, steps were heard on the porch, and Euphrasia opened the door. Mr. Rangely had returned.

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“Here’s the doctor, Miss Flint,” he said, “and I’ll wait for you outside.”

Victoria rose as young Dr. Tredway came forward. They were old friends, and the doctor, it may be recalled, had been chiefly responsible for the preservation of the life of Mr. Zebulun Meader.

“I have sent for you, Doctor,” she said, “against instructions and on my own responsibility. Mr. Vane is ill, although he refuses to admit it.”

Dr. Tredway had a respect for Victoria and her opinions, and he knew Hilary. He opened the door a little wider, and looked critically at Mr. Vane.

“It’s nothing but a spell,” Hilary insisted. “I’ve had ’em before. I suppose it’s natural that they should scare the women-folks some.”

“What kind of a spell was it, Mr. Vane?” asked the doctor.

“It isn’t worth talking about,” said Hilary. “You might as well pick up that case of yours and go home again. I’m going down to the square in a little while.”

“You see,” Euphrasia put in, “he’s made up his mind to kill himself.”

“Perhaps,” said the doctor, smiling a little, “Mr. Vane wouldn’t object to Miss Flint telling me what happened.”

Victoria glanced at the doctor and hesitated. Her sympathy for Hilary, her new understanding of him, urged her on—and yet never in her life had she been made to feel so distinctly an intruder. Here was the doctor, with his case; here was this extraordinary housekeeper, apparently ready to let Hilary walk to the square, if he wished, and to shut the door on their backs; and here was Hilary himself, who threatened at any moment to make his word good and depart from their midst. Only the fact that she was convinced that Hilary was in real danger made her relate, in a few brief words, what had occurred, and when she had finished Mr. Vane made no comment whatever.

Dr. Tredway turned to Hilary.

“I am going to take a mean advantage of you, Mr. Vane,” he said, “and sit here awhile and talk to you. Would you object to waiting a little while, Miss Flint? I have something to say to you,” he added significantly, “and this meeting will save me a trip to Fairview.”

“Certainly I’ll wait,” she said.

“You can come along with me,” said Euphrasia, “if you’ve a notion to.”

Victoria was of two minds whether to accept this invitation. She had an intense desire to get outside, but this was counter-balanced by a sudden curiosity to see more of this strange woman who loved but one person in the world. Tom Gaylord had told Victoria that. She followed Euphrasia to the back of the hall.

“There’s the parlour,” said Euphrasia; “it’s never be’n used since Mrs. Vane died,—but there it is.”

“Oh,” said Victoria, with a glance into the shadowy depths of the room, “please don’t open it for me. Can’t we go,” she added, with an inspiration, “can’t we go into—the kitchen?” She knew it was Euphrasia’s place.

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“Well,” said Euphrasia, “I shouldn’t have thought you’d care much about kitchens.” And she led the way onward; through the little passage, to the room where she had spent most of her days. It was flooded with level, yellow rays of light that seemed to be searching the corners in vain for dust. Victoria paused in the doorway.

“I’m afraid you do me an injustice,” she said. “I like some kitchens.”

“You don’t look as if you knew much about ’em,” was Euphrasia’s answer. With Victoria once again in the light, Euphrasia scrutinized her with appalling frankness, taking in every detail of her costume and at length raising her eyes to the girl’s face. Victoria coloured. On her visits about the country-side she had met women of Euphrasia’s type before, and had long ago ceased to be dismayed by their manner. But her instinct detected in Euphrasia a hostility for which she could not account.

In that simple but exquisite gown which so subtly suited her, the creation of which had aroused the artist in a celebrated Parisian dressmaker, Victoria was, indeed, a strange visitant in that kitchen. She took a seat by the window, and an involuntary exclamation of pleasure escaped her as her eyes fell upon the little, old-fashioned flower garden beneath it. The act and the exclamation for the moment disarmed Euphrasia.

“They were Sarah Austen’s—Mrs. Vane’s,” she explained, “just as she planted them the year she died. I’ve always kept ’em just so.”

“Mrs. Vane must have loved flowers,” said Victoria.

“Loved ’em! They were everything to her—and the wild flowers, too. She used to wander off and spend whole days in the country, and come back after sunset with her arms full.”

“It was nature she loved,” said Victoria, in a low voice.

“That was it—nature,” said Euphrasia. “She loved all nature. There wasn’t a living, creeping thing that wasn’t her friend. I’ve seen birds eat out of her hand in that window where you’re settin’, and she’d say to me, ’Phrasie, keep still! They’d love you, too, if they only knew you, but they’re afraid you’ll scrub ’em if you get hold of them, the way you used to scrub me.’”

Victoria smiled—but it was a smile that had tears in it. Euphrasia Cotton was standing in the shaft of sunlight at the other window, staring at the little garden.

“Yes, she used to say funny things like that, to make you laugh when you were all ready to cry. There wasn’t many folks understood her. She knew every path and hilltop within miles of here, and every brook and spring, and she used to talk about that mountain just as if it was alive.”

Victoria caught her breath.

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“Yes,” continued Euphrasia, “the mountain was alive for her. ’He’s angry to-day, Phrasie. That’s because, you lost your temper and scolded Hilary.’ It’s a queer thing, but there have been hundreds of times since when he needed scoldin’ bad, and I’ve looked at the mountain and held my tongue. It was just as if I saw her with that half-whimsical, half-reproachful expression in her eyes, holding up her finger at me. And there were other mornings when she’d say, ’The mountain’s lonesome today, he wants me.’ And I vow, I’d look at the mountain and it would seem lonesome. That sounds like nonsense, don’t it?” Euphrasia demanded, with a sudden sharpness.

“No,” said Victoria, “it seems very real to me.”

The simplicity, the very ring of truth, and above all the absolute lack of self-consciousness in the girl’s answer sustained the spell.

“She’d go when the mountain called her, it didn’t make any difference whether it was raining—rain never appeared to do her any hurt. Nothin’ natural ever did her any hurt. When she was a little child flittin’ about like a wild creature, and she’d come in drenched to the skin, it was all I could do to catch her and change her clothes. She’d laugh at me. ’We’re meant to be wet once in a while, Phrasie,’ she’d say; ’that’s what the rain’s for, to wet us. It washes some of the wickedness out of us.’ It was the unnatural things that hurt her—the unkind words and makin’ her act against her nature. ‘Phrasie,’ she said once, ’I can’t pray in the meeting-house with my eyes shut—I can’t, I can’t. I seem to know what they’re all wishing for when they pray,—for more riches, and more comfort, and more security, and more importance. And God is such a long way off. I can’t feel Him, and the pew hurts my back.’ She used to read me some, out of a book of poetry, and one verse I got by heart—I guess her prayers were like that.”

“Do you—remember the verse?” asked Victoria.

Euphrasia went to a little shelf in the corner of the kitchen and produced a book, which, she opened and handed to Victoria.

“There’s the verse!” she said; “read it aloud. I guess you’re better at that than I am.”

And Victoria read:—

> “Higher still and higher
> From the earth thou springest
> Like a cloud of fire;
> The blue deep thou wingest,
> And singing still dost soar, and soaring ever singest.”

Victoria let fall the volume on her lap.

“There’s another verse in that book she liked,” said Euphrasia, “but it always was sad to me.”

Victoria took the book, and read again:—

> “Weary wind, who wanderest
> Like the world’s rejected guest,
> Hast thou still some secret nest
> On the tree or billow?”

Euphrasia laid the volume tenderly on the shelf, and turned and faced Victoria.

“She was unhappy like that before she died,” she exclaimed, and added, with a fling of her head towards the front of the house, “he killed her.”

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“Oh, no!” cried Victoria, involuntarily rising to her feet. “Oh, no! I’m sure he didn’t mean to. He didn’t understand her!”

“He killed her,” Euphrasia repeated. “Why didn’t he understand her? She was just as simple as a child, and just as trusting, and just as loving. He made her unhappy, and now he’s driven her son out of her house, and made him unhappy. He’s all of her I have left, and I won’t see him unhappy.”

Victoria summoned her courage.

“Don’t you think,” she asked bravely, “that Mr. Austen Vane ought to be told that his father is—in this condition?”

“No,” said Euphrasia, determinedly. “Hilary will have to send for him. This time it’ll be Austen’s victory.”

“But hasn’t he had—a victory?” Victoria persisted earnestly. “Isn’t this—victory enough?”

“What do you mean?” Euphrasia cried sharply.

“I mean,” she answered, in a low voice, “I mean that Mr. Vane’s son is responsible for his condition to-day. Oh—not consciously so. But the cause of this trouble is mental—-can’t you see it? The cause of this trouble is remorse. Can’t you see that it has eaten into his soul? Do you wish a greater victory than this, or a sadder one? Hilary Vane will not ask for his son—because he cannot. He has no more power to send that message than a man shipwrecked on an island. He can only give signals of distress—that some may heed. Would She have waited for such a victory as you demand? And does Austen Vane desire it? Don’t you think that he would come to his father if he knew? And have you any right to keep the news from him? Have you any right to decide what their vengeance shall be?”

Euphrasia had stood mute as she listened to these words which she had so little expected, but her eyes flashed and her breath came quickly. Never had she been so spoken to! Never had any living soul come between her and her cherished object the breaking of the heart of Hilary Vane! Nor, indeed, had that object ever been so plainly set forth as Victoria had set it forth. And this woman who dared to do this had herself brought unhappiness to Austen. Euphrasia had almost forgotten that, such had been the strange harmony of their communion.

“Have you the right to tell Austen?” she demanded.

“Have I?” Victoria repeated. And then, as the full meaning of the question came to her; the colour flooded into her face, and she would have fled, if she could, bud Euphrasia’s words came in a torrent.

“You’ve made him unhappy, as well as Hilary. He loves you—but he wouldn’t speak of it to you. Oh, no, he didn’t tell me who it was, but I never rested till I found out. He never would have told me about it at all, or anybody else, but that I guessed it. I saw he was unhappy, and I calculated it wasn’t Hilary alone made him so. One night he came in here, and I knew all at once—somehow—there was a woman to blame, and I asked him, and he couldn’t lie to me. He said it wasn’t anybody’s fault but his own—he wouldn’t say any more than that, except that he hadn’t spoken to her. I always expected the time was coming when there would be—a woman. And I never thought the woman lived that he’d love who wouldn’t love him. I can’t see how any woman could help lovin’ him.

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“And then I found out it was that railroad. It came between Sarah Austen and her happiness, and now it’s come between Austen and his. Perhaps you don’t love him!” cried Euphrasia. “Perhaps you’re too rich and high and mighty. Perhaps you’re a-going to marry that fine young man who came with you in the buggy. Since I heard who you was, I haven’t had a happy hour. Let me tell you there’s no better blood in the land than the Austen blood. I won’t mention the Vanes. If you’ve led him on, if you’ve deceived him, I hope you may be unhappy as Sarah Austen was—”

“Don’t!” pleaded Victoria; “don’t! Please don’t!” and she seized Euphrasia by the arms, as though seeking by physical force to stop the intolerable flow of words. “Oh, you don’t know me; you can’t understand me if you say that. How can you be so cruel?”

In another moment she had gone, leaving Euphrasia standing in the middle of the floor, staring after her through the doorway.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE FOCUS OF WRATH

Victoria, after leaving Euphrasia, made her way around the house towards Mr. Rangely, who was waiting in the runabout, her one desire for the moment being to escape. Before she had reached the sidewalk under the trees, Dr. Tredway had interrupted her.

“Miss Flint,” he called out, “I wanted to say a word to you before you went.”

“Yes,” she said, stopping and turning to him.

He paused a moment before speaking, as he looked into her face.

“I don’t wonder this has upset you a little,” he said; “a reaction always comes afterwards—even with the strongest of us.”

“I am all right,” she replied, unconsciously repeating Hilary’s words. “How is Mr. Vane?”

“You have done a splendid thing,” said the doctor, gravely. And he continued, after a moment: “It is Mr. Vane I wanted to speak to you about. He is an intimate friend, I believe, of your father’s, as well as Mr. Flint’s right-hand man in—in a business way in this State. Mr. Vane himself will not listen to reason. I have told him plainly that if he does not drop all business at once, the chances are ten to one that he will forfeit his life very shortly. I understand that there is a—a convention to be held at the capital the day after to-morrow, and that it is Mr. Vane’s firm intention to attend it. I take the liberty of suggesting that you lay these facts before your father, as Mr. Flint probably has more influence with Hilary Vane than any other man. However,” he added, seeing Victoria hesitate, “if there is any reason why you should not care to speak to Mr. Flint—”

“Oh, no,” said Victoria; “I’ll speak to him, certainly. I was going to ask you—have you thought of Mr. Austen Vane? He might be able to do something.”

“Of course,” said the doctor, after a moment, “it is an open secret that Austen and his father have—have, in short, never agreed. They are not now on speaking terms.”

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“Don’t you think,” asked Victoria, summoning her courage, “that Austen Vane ought to be told?”

“Yes,” the doctor repeated decidedly, “I am sure of it. Everybody who knows Austen Vane as I do has the greatest admiration for him. You probably remember him in that Meader case,—he isn’t a man one would be likely to forget,—and I know that this quarrel with his father isn’t of Austen’s seeking.”

“Oughtn’t he to be told—at once?” said Victoria.

“Yes,” said the doctor; “time is valuable, and we can’t predict what Hilary will do. At any rate, Austen ought to know—but the trouble is, he’s at Jenney’s farm. I met him on the way out there just before your friend the Englishman caught me. And unfortunately I have a case which I cannot neglect. But I can send word to him.”

“I know where Jenney’s farm is,” said Victoria; “I’ll drive home that way.”

“Well,” exclaimed Dr. Tredway, heartily, “that’s good of you. Somebody who knows Hilary’s situation ought to see him, and I can think of no better messenger than you.”

And he helped her into the runabout.

Young Mr. Rangely being a gentleman, he refrained from asking Victoria questions on the drive out of Ripton, and expressed the greatest willingness to accompany her on this errand and to see her home afterwards. He had been deeply impressed, but he felt instinctively that after such a serious occurrence, this was not the time to continue to give hints of his admiration. He had heard in England that many American women whom he would be likely to meet socially were superficial and pleasure-loving; and Arthur Rangely came of a family which had long been cited as a vindication of a government by aristocracy,—a family which had never shirked responsibilities. It is not too much to say that he had pictured Victoria among his future tenantry; she had appealed to him first as a woman, but the incident of the afternoon had revealed her to him, as it were, under fire.

They spoke quietly of places they both had visited, of people whom they knew in common, until they came to the hills—the very threshold of Paradise on that September evening. Those hills never failed to move Victoria, and they were garnished this evening in no earthly colours, —rose-lighted on the billowy western pasture slopes and pearl in the deep clefts of the streams, and the lordly form of Sawanec shrouded in indigo against a flame of orange. And orange fainted, by the subtlest of colour changes, to azure in which swam, so confidently, a silver evening star.

In silence they drew up before Mr. Jenney’s ancestral trees, and through the deepening shadows beneath these the windows of the farm-house glowed with welcoming light. At

Victoria's bidding Mr. Rangely knocked to ask for Austen Vane, and Austen himself answered the summons. He held a book in his hand, and as Rangely spoke she saw Austen's look turn quickly to her, and met it through the gathering gloom between them. In an instant he was at her side, looking up questioningly into her face, and the telltale blood leaped into hers. What must he think of her for coming again? She could not speak of her errand too quickly.

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“Mr. Vane, I came to leave a message.”

“Yes?” he said, and glanced at the broad-shouldered, well-groomed figure of Mr. Rangely, who was standing at a discreet distance.

“Your father has had an attack of some kind,—please don’t be alarmed, he seems to be recovered now,—and I thought and Dr. Tredway thought you ought to know about it. The doctor could not leave Ripton, and I offered to come and tell you.”

“An attack?” he repeated.

“Yes.” Hilary and she related simply how she had found Hilary at Fairview, and how she had driven him home. But, during the whole of her recital, she could not rid herself of the apprehension that he was thinking her interference unwarranted, her coming an indelicate repetition of the other visit. As he stood there listening in the gathering dusk, she could not tell from his face what he thought. His expression, when serious, had a determined, combative, almost grim note in it, which came from a habit he had of closing his jaw tightly; and his eyes were like troubled skies through which there trembled an occasional flash of light.

Victoria had never felt his force so strongly as now, and never had he seemed more distant; at times—she had thought—she had had glimpses of his soul; to-night he was inscrutable, and never had she realized the power (which she bad known he must possess) of making himself so. And to her? Her pride forbade her recalling at that moment the confidences which had passed between them and which now seemed to have been so impossible. He was serious because he was listening to serious news—-she told herself. But it was more than this: he had shut himself up, he was impenetrable. Shame seized her; yes, and anger; and shame again at the remembrance of her talk with Euphrasia—and anger once more. Could he think that she would make advances to tempt his honour, and risk his good opinion and her own?

Confidence is like a lute-string, giving forth sweet sounds in its perfection; there are none so discordant as when it snaps.

Victoria scarcely heard Austen’s acknowledgments of her kindness, so perfunctory did they seem, so unlike the man she had known; and her own protestations that she had done nothing to merit his thanks were to her quite as unreal. She introduced him to the Englishman.

“Mr. Rangely has been good enough to come with me,” she said.

“I’ve never seen anybody act with more presence of mind than Miss Flint,” Rangely declared, as he shook Austen’s hand. “She did just the right thing, without wasting any time whatever.”

“I’m sure of it,” said Austen, cordially enough. But to Victoria’s keener ear, other tones which she had heard at other times were lacking. Nor could she, clever as she was, see the palpable reason standing before her!

“I say,” said Rangely, as they drove away, “he strikes me as a remarkably sound chap, Miss Flint. There is something unusual about him, something clean cut.”

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“I’ve heard other people say so,” Victoria replied. For the first time since she had known him, praise of Austen was painful to her. What was this curious attraction that roused the interest of all who came in contact with him? The doctor had it, Mr. Redbrook, Jabe Jenney,—even Hamilton Tooting, she remembered. And he attracted women as well as men —it must be so. Certainly her own interest in him—a man beyond the radius of her sphere—and their encounters had been strange enough! And must she go on all her life hearing praises of him? Of one thing she was sure—who was not?—that Austen Vane had a future. He was the type of man which is inevitably impelled into places of trust.

Manly men, as a rule, do not understand women. They humour them blindly, seek to comfort them—if they weep—with caresses, laugh with them if they have leisure, and respect their curious and unaccountable moods by keeping out of the way. Such a husband was Arthur Rangely destined to make; a man who had seen any number of women and understood none,—as wondrous mechanisms. He had merely acquired the faculty of appraisal, although this does not mean that he was incapable of falling in love.

Mr. Rangely could not account for the sudden access of gayety in Victoria’s manner as they drove to Fairview through the darkness, nor did he try. He took what the gods sent him, and was thankful. When he reached Fairview he was asked to dinner, as he could not possibly get back to the Inn in time. Mr. Flint had gone to Sumner with the engineers, leaving orders to be met at the East Tunbridge station at ten; and Mrs. Flint, still convalescent, had dined in her sitting room. Victoria sat opposite her guest in the big dining room, and Mr. Rangely pronounced the occasion decidedly jolly. He had, he proclaimed, with the exception of Mr. Vane’s deplorable accident, never spent a better day in his life.

Victoria wondered at her own spirits, which were feverish, as she listened to transatlantic gossip about girls she had known who had married Mr. Rangely’s friends, and stories of Westminster and South Africa, and certain experiences of Mr. Rangely’s at other places than Leith on the American continent, which he had grown sufficiently confidential to relate. At times, lifting her eyes to him as he sat smoking after dinner on the other side of the library fire, she almost doubted his existence. He had come into her life at one o’clock that day—it seemed an eternity since. And a subconscious voice, heard but not heeded, told her that in the awakening from this curious dream he would be associated in her memory with tragedy, just as a tune or a book or a game of cards reminds one of painful periods of one’s existence. To-morrow the—episode would be a nightmare; to-night her one desire was to prolong it.

And poor Mr. Rangely little imagined the part he was playing—as little as he deserved it. Reluctant to leave, propriety impelled him to ask for a trap at ten, and it was half past before he finally made his exit from the room with a promise to pay his respects soon—-very soon.

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Victoria stood before the fire listening to the sound of the wheels gradually growing fainter, and her mind refused to work. Hanover Street, Mr. Jenney's farm-house, were unrealities too. Ten minutes later—if she had marked the interval—came the sound of wheels again, this time growing louder. Then she heard a voice in the hall, her father's voice.

"Towers, who was that?"

"A young gentleman, sir, who drove home with Miss Victoria. I didn't get his name, sir."

"Has Miss Victoria retired?"

"She's in the library, sir. Here are some telegrams, Mr. Flint."

Victoria heard her father tearing open the telegrams and walking towards the library with slow steps as he read them. She did not stir from her place before the fire. She saw him enter and, with a characteristic movement which had become almost habitual of late, crush the telegrams in front of him with both hands.

"Well, Victoria?" he said.

"Well, father?"

It was characteristic of him, too, that he should momentarily drop the conversation, unravel the ball of telegrams, read one, crush them once more,—a process that seemed to give him relief. He glanced at his daughter—she had not moved. Whatever Mr. Flint's original character may have been in his long-forgotten youth on the wind-swept hill farm in Truro, his methods of attack lacked directness now; perhaps a long business and political experience were responsible for this trait.

"Your mother didn't come down to dinner, I suppose."

"No," said Victoria.

Simpson tells me the young bull got loose and cut himself badly. He says it's the fault of the Eben Fitch you got me to hire."

"I don't believe it was Eben's fault—Simpson doesn't like him," Victoria replied.

"Simpson tells me Fitch drinks."

"Let a man get a bad name," said Victoria, "and Simpson will take care that he doesn't lose it." The unexpected necessity of defending one of her proteges aroused her. "I've made it a point to see Eben every day for the last three months, and he hasn't touched a drop. He's one of the best workers we have on the place."

“I’ve got too much on my mind to put up with that kind of thing,” said Mr. Flint, “and I won’t be worried here on the place. I can get capable men to tend cattle, at least. I have to put up with political rascals who rob and deceive me as soon as my back is turned, I have to put up with inefficiency and senility, but I won’t have it at home.”

“Fitch will be transferred to the gardener if you think best,” she said.

It suddenly occurred to Victoria, in the light of a new discovery, that in the past her father’s irritability had not extended to her. And this discovery, she knew, ought to have some significance, but she felt unaccountably indifferent to it. Mr. Flint walked to a window at the far end of the room and flung apart the tightly closed curtains before it.

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“I never can get used to this new-fangled way of shutting everything up tight,” he declared. “When I lived in Centre Street, I used to read with the curtains up every night, and nobody ever shot me.” He stood looking out at the starlight for awhile, and turned and faced her again.

“I haven’t seen much of you this summer, Victoria,” he remarked.

“I’m sorry, father. You know I always like to walk with you every day you are here.” He had aroused her sufficiently to have a distinct sense that this was not the time to refer to the warning she had given him that he was working too hard. But he was evidently bent on putting this construction on her answer.

“Several times I have asked for you, and you have been away,” he said.

“If you had only let me know, I should have made it a point to be at home.”

“How can I tell when these idiots will give me any rest?” he asked. He crushed the telegrams again, and came down the room and stopped in front of her. “Perhaps there has been a particular reason why you have not been at home as much as usual.”

“A particular reason?” she repeated, in genuine surprise.

“Yes,” he said; “I have been hearing things which, to put it mildly, have astonished me.”

“Hearing things?”

“Yes,” he exclaimed. “I may be busy, I may be harassed by tricksters and bunglers, but I am not too busy not to care something about my daughter’s doings. I expect them to deceive me, Victoria, but I pinned my faith somewhere. I pinned it on you. On you, do you understand?”

She raised her head for the first time and looked at him, with her lips quivering. But she did not speak.

“Ever since you were a child you have been everything to me, all I had to fly to. I was always sure of one genuine, disinterested love—and that was yours. I was always sure of hearing the truth from your lips.”

“Father!” she cried.

He seemed not to hear the agonized appeal in her voice. Although he spoke in his usual tones, Augustus Flint was, in fact, beside himself.

“And now,” he said, “and now I learn that you have been holding clandestine meetings with a man who is my enemy, with a man who has done me more harm than any other

single individual, with a man whom I will not have in my house—do you understand? I can only say that before to-night, I gave him credit for having the decency not to enter it, not to sit down at my table."

Victoria turned away from him, and seized the high oak shelf of the mantel with both hands. He saw her shoulders rising and falling as her breath came deeply, spasmodically—like sobbing. But she was not sobbing as she turned again and looked into his face. Fear was in her eye, and the high courage to look: fear and courage. She seemed to be looking at another man, at a man who was not her father. And Mr. Flint, despite his anger, vaguely interpreting her meaning, was taken aback. He had never seen anybody with such a look. And the unexpected quiet quality of her voice intensified his strange sensation.

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“A Mr. Rangely, an Englishman, who is staying at the Leith Inn, was here to dinner to-night. He has never been here before.”

“Austen Vane wasn’t here to-night?”

“Mr. Vane has never been in this house to my knowledge but once, and you knew more about that meeting than I do.”

And still Victoria spoke quietly, inexplicably so to Mr. Flint—and to herself. It seemed to her that some other than she were answering with her voice, and that she alone felt. It was all a part of the nightmare, all unreal, and this was not her father; nevertheless, she suffered now, not from anger alone, nor sorrow, nor shame for him and for herself, nor disgust, nor a sense of injustice, nor cruelty—but all of these played upon a heart responsive to each with a different pain.

And Mr. Flint, halted for the moment by her look and manner, yet goaded on by a fiend of provocation which had for months been gathering strength, and which now mastered him completely, persisted. He knew not what he did or said.

“And you haven’t seen him to-day, I suppose,” he cried.

“Yes, I have seen him to-day.”

“Ah, you have! I thought as much. Where did you meet him to-day?”

Victoria turned half away from him, raised a hand to the mantel-shelf again, and lifted a foot to the low brass fender as she looked down into the fire. The movement was not part of a desire to evade him, as he fancied in his anger, but rather one of profound indifference, of profound weariness—the sunless deeps of sorrow. And he thought her capable of deceiving him! He had been her constant companion from childhood, and knew only the visible semblance of her face, her form, her smile. Her sex was the sex of subterfuge.

“I went to the place where he is living, and asked for him,” she said, “and he came out and spoke to me.”

“You?” he repeated incredulously. There was surely no subterfuge in her tone, but an unreal, unbelievable note which his senses seized, and to which he clung. “You! My daughter!”

“Yes,” she answered, “I, your daughter. I suppose you think I am shameless. It is true—I am.”

Mr. Flint was utterly baffled. He was at sea. He had got beyond the range of his experience; defence, denial, tears, he could have understood and coped with. He

crushed the telegrams into a tighter ball, sought for a footing, and found a precarious one.

“And all this has been going on without my knowledge, when you knew my sentiments towards the man?”

“Yes,” she said. “I do not know what you include in that remark, but I have seen him many times as many times, perhaps, as you have heard about.”

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He wheeled, and walked over to a cabinet between two of the great windows and stood there examining a collection of fans which his wife had bought at a famous sale in Paris. Had he suddenly been asked the question, he could not have said whether they were fans or beetles. And it occurred to Victoria, as her eyes rested on his back, that she ought to be sorry for him—but wasn't, somehow. Perhaps she would be tomorrow. Mr. Flint looked at the fans, and an obscure glimmering of the truth came to him that instead of administering a severe rebuke to the daughter he believed he had known all his life, he was engaged in a contest with the soul of a woman he had never known. And the more she confessed, the more she apparently yielded, the more impotent he seemed, the tighter the demon gripped him. Obstacles, embarrassments, disappointments, he had met early in his life, and he had taken them as they came. There had followed a long period when his word had been law. And now, as age came on, and he was meeting with obstacles again, he had lost the magic gift of sweeping them aside; the growing certainty that he was becoming powerless haunted him night and day. Unbelievably strange, however, it was that the rays of his anger by some subconscious process had hovered from the first about the son of Hilary Vane, and were now, by the trend of event after event, firmly focussed there.

He left the cabinet abruptly and came back to Victoria.

She was standing in the same position.

"You have spared me something," he said. "He has apparently undermined me with my own daughter. He has evidently given you an opinion of me which is his. I think I can understand why you have not spoken of these —meetings."

"It is an inference that I expected," said Victoria. Then she lifted her head and looked at him, and again he could not read her expression, for a light burned in her eyes that made them impenetrable to him,—a light that seemed pitilessly to search out and reveal the dark places and the weak places within him which he himself had not known were there. Could there be another standard by which men and women were measured and judged?

Mr. Flint snapped his fingers, and turned and began to pace the room.

"It's all pretty clear," he said; "there's no use going into it any farther. You believe, with the rest of them, that I'm a criminal and deserve the penitentiary. I don't care a straw about the others," he cried, snapping his fingers again. "And I suppose, if I'd had any sense, I might have expected it from you, too, Victoria—though you are my daughter."

He was aware that her eyes followed him.

"How many times have you spoken with Austen Vane?" she asked.

“Once,” he exclaimed; “that was enough. Once.”

“And he gave you the impression,” she continued slowly, “that he was deceitful, and dishonourable, and a coward? a man who would say things behind your back that he dared not say to your face? who desired reward for himself at any price, and in any manner? a man who would enter your house and seek out your daughter and secretly assail your character?”

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Mr. Flint stopped in the middle of the floor.

“And you tell me he has not done these things?”

“Suppose I did tell you so,” said Victoria, “would you believe me? I have no reason to think that you would. I am your daughter, I have been your most intimate companion, and I had the right to think that you should have formed some estimate of my character. Suppose I told you that Austen Vane has avoided me, that he would not utter a word against you or in favour of himself? Suppose I told you that I, your daughter, thought there might be two sides to the political question that is agitating you, and wished in fairness to hear the other side, as I intended to tell you when you were less busy? Suppose I told you that Austen Vane was the soul of honour, that he saw your side and presented it as ably as you have presented it? that he had refrained in many matters which might have been of advantage to him—although I did not hear of them from him—on account of his father? Would you believe me?”

“And suppose I told you,” cried Mr. Flint—so firmly fastened on him was the long habit of years of talking another down, “suppose I told you that this was the most astute and the craftiest course he could take? I’ve always credited him with brains. Suppose I told you that he was intriguing now, as he has been all along, to obtain the nomination for the governorship? Would you believe me?”

“No,” answered Victoria, quietly.

Mr. Flint went to the lamp, unrolled the ball of telegrams, seized one and crossed the room quickly, and held it out to her. His hand shook a little.

“Read that!” he said.

She read it: “Estimate that more than half of delegates from this section pledged to Henderson will go to Austen Vane when signal is given in convention. Am told on credible authority same is true of other sections, including many of Hunt’s men and Crewe’s. This is the result of quiet but persistent political work I spoke about. *Billings*.”

She handed the telegram back to her father in silence. “Do you believe it now?” he demanded exultantly.

“Who is the man whose name is signed to that message?” she asked.

Mr. Flint eyed her narrowly.

“What difference does that make?” he demanded.

“None,” said Victoria. But a vision of Mr. Billings rose before her. He had been pointed out to her as the man who had opposed Austen in the Meader suit. “If the bishop of the

diocese signed it, I would not believe that Austen Vane had anything to do with the matter."

"Ah, you defend him!" cried Mr. Flint. "I thought so—I thought so. I take off my hat to him, he is a cleverer man even than I. His own father, whom he has ruined, comes up here and defends him."

"Does Hilary Vane defend him?" Victoria asked curiously.

"Yes," said Mr. Flint, beside himself; "incredible as it may seem, he does. I have Austen Vane to thank for still another favour—he is responsible for Hilary's condition to-day. He has broken him down—he has made him an imbecile. The convention is scarcely thirty-six hours off, and Hilary is about as fit to handle it as—as Eben Fitch. Hilary, who never failed me in his life!"

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Victoria did not speak for a moment, and then she reached out her hand quickly and laid it on his that still held the telegram. A lounge stood on one side of the fireplace, and she drew him gently to it, and he sat down at her side. His acquiescence to her was a second nature, and he was once more bewildered. His anger now seemed to have had no effect upon her whatever.

“I waited up to tell you about Hilary Vane, father,” she said gently. “He has had a stroke, which I am afraid is serious.”

“A stroke!” cried Mr. Flint, “Why didn’t you tell me? How do you know?”

Victoria related how she had found Hilary coming away from Fairview, and what she had done, and the word Dr. Tredway had sent.

“Good God!” cried Mr. Flint, “he won’t be able to go to the convention!” And he rose and pressed the electric button. “Towers,” he said, when the butler appeared, “is Mr. Freeman still in my room? Tell him to telephone to Ripton at once and find out how Mr. Hilary Vane is. They’ll have to send a messenger. That accounts for it,” he went on, rather to himself than to Victoria, and he began to pace the room once more; “he looked like a sick man when he was here. And who have we got to put in his place? Not a soul!”

He paced awhile in silence. He appeared to have forgotten Victoria.

“Poor Hilary!” he said again, “poor Hilary! I’ll go down there the first thing in the morning.”

Another silence, and then Mr. Freeman, the secretary, entered.

“I telephoned to Dr. Tredway’s, Mr. Flint. I thought that would be quickest. Mr. Vane has left home. They don’t know where he’s gone.”

“Left home! It’s impossible!” and he glanced at Victoria, who had risen to her feet. “There must be some mistake.”

“No, sir. First I got the doctor, who said that Mr. Vane was gone—at the risk of his life. And then I talked to Mr. Austen Vane himself, who was there consulting with the doctor. It appears that Mr. Hilary Vane had left home by eight o’clock, when Mr. Austen Vane got there.”

“Hilary’s gone out of his head,” exclaimed Mr. Flint. “This thing has unhinged him. Here, take these telegrams. No, wait a minute, I’ll go out there. Call up Billings, and see if you can get Senator Whitredge.”

He started out of the room, halted, and turned his head and hesitated.

“Father,” said Victoria, “I don’t think Hilary Vane is out of his mind.”

“You don’t?” he said quickly. “Why?”

By some unaccountable change in the atmosphere, of which Mr. Flint was unconscious, his normal relation to his daughter had been suddenly reestablished. He was giving ear, as usual, to her judgment.

“Did Hilary Vane tell you he would go to the convention?” she asked.

“Yes.” In spite of himself, he had given the word an apologetic inflection.

“Then he has gone already,” she said. “I think, if you will telephone a little later to the State capital, you will find that he is in his room at the Pelican Hotel.”

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“By thunder, Victoria!” he ejaculated, “you may be right. It would be like him.”

CHAPTER XXVII

THE ARENA AND THE DUST

Alas! that the great genius who described the battle of Waterloo is not alive to-day and on this side of the Atlantic, for a subject worthy of his pen is at hand,—nothing less than that convention of conventions at which the Honourable Humphrey Crewe of Leith is one of the candidates. One of the candidates, indeed! Will it not be known, as long as there are pensions, and a governor and a state-house and a seal and State sovereignty and a staff, as the Crewe Convention? How charge after charge was made during the long, hot day and into the night; how the delegates were carried out limp and speechless and starved and wet through, and carried in to vote again,—will all be told in time. But let us begin at the beginning, which is the day before.

But look! it is afternoon, and the candidates are arriving at the Pelican. The Honourable Adam B. Hunt is the first, and walks up the hill from the station escorted by such prominent figures as the Honourables Brush Bascom and Jacob Botcher, and surrounded by enthusiastic supporters who wear buttons with the image of their leader—goatee and all—and the singularly prophetic superscription, ‘To the Last Ditch!’ Only veterans and experts like Mr. Bascom and Mr. Botcher can recognize the last ditch when they see it.

Another stir in the street—occasioned by the appearance of the Honourable Giles Henderson,—of the blameless life. Utter a syllable against him if you can! These words should be inscribed on his buttons if he had any—but he has none. They seem to be, unuttered, on the tongues of the gentlemen who escort the Honourable Giles, United States Senator Greene and the Honourable Elisha Jane, who has obtained leave of absence from his consular post to attend the convention,—and incidentally to help prepare for it.

But who and what is this? The warlike blast of a siren horn is heard, the crowd in the lobby rushes to the doors, people up-stairs fly to the windows, and the Honourable Adam B. Hunt leans out and nearly falls out, but is rescued by Division Superintendent Manning of the Northeastern Railroads, who has stepped in from Number Seven to give a little private tug of a persuasive nature to the Honourable Adam’s coat-tails. A red Leviathan comes screaming down Main Street with a white trail of dust behind it, smothering the occupants of vehicles which have barely succeeded in getting out of the way, and makes a spectacular finish before the Pelican by sliding the last fifty feet on locked rear wheels.

A group in the street raises a cheer. It is the People's Champion! Dust coat, gauntlets, goggles, cannot hide him; and if they did, some one would recognize that voice, familiar now and endeared to many, and so suited to command:—"Get that baggage off, and don't waste any time! Jump out, Watling—that handle turns the other way. Well, Tooting, are the headquarters ready? What was the matter that I couldn't get you on the telephone?" (To the crowd.) "Don't push in and scratch the paint. He's going to back out in a minute, and somebody'll get hurt."

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Mr. Hamilton Tooting (Colonel Hamilton Tooting that is to be—it being an open secret that he is destined for the staff) is standing hatless on the sidewalk ready to receive the great man. The crowd in the rotunda makes a lane, and Mr. Crewe, glancing neither to the right nor left, walks upstairs; and scarce is he installed in the bridal suite, surrounded by his faithful workers for reform, than that amazing reception begins. Mr. Hamilton Tooting, looking the very soul of hospitality, stands by the doorway with an open box of cigars in his left hand, pressing them upon the visitors with his right. Reform, contrary to the preconceived opinion of many, is not made of icicles, nor answers with a stone a request for bread. As the hours run on, the visitors grow more and more numerous, and after supper the room is packed to suffocation, and a long line is waiting in the corridor, marshalled and kept in good humour by able lieutenants; while Mr. Crewe is dimly to be perceived through clouds of incense burning in his honour—-and incidentally at his expense—with a welcoming smile and an appropriate word for each caller, whose waistcoat pockets, when they emerge, resemble cartridge-belts of cigars.

More cigars were hastily sent for, and more. There are to be but a thousand delegates to the convention, and at least two thousand men have already passed through the room—and those who don't smoke have friends. It is well that Mr. Crewe has stuck to his conservative habit of not squeezing hands too hard.

"Isn't that Mr. Putter, who keeps a livery-stable here?" inquired Mr. Crewe, about nine o'clock—our candidate having a piercing eye of his own. Mr. Putter's coat, being brushed back, has revealed six cigars.

"Why, yes—yes," says Mr. Watling.

"Is he a delegate?" Mr. Crewe demanded.

"Why, I guess he must be," says Mr. Watling.

But Mr. Putter is not a delegate.

"You've stood up and made a grand fight, Mr. Crewe," says another gentleman, a little later, with a bland, smooth shaven face and strong teeth to clinch Mr. Crewe's cigars. "I wish I was fixed so as I could vote for you."

Mr. Crewe looks at him narrowly.

"You look very much like a travelling man from New York, who tried to sell me farm machinery," he answers.

"Where are you from?"

“You ain’t exactly what they call a tyro, are you?” says the bland-faced man; “but I guess you’ve missed the mark this shot. Well, so long.”

“Hold on!” says Mr. Crewe, “Watling will talk to you.”

And, as the gentleman follows Mr. Wailing through the press, a pamphlet drops from his pocket to the floor. It is marked ’Catalogue of the Raines Farm Implement Company.’ Mr. Watling picks it up and hands it to the gentleman, who winks again.

“Tim,” he says, “where can we sit down? How much are you getting out of this? Brush and Jake Botcher are bidding high down-stairs, and the quotation on delegates has gone up ten points in ten minutes. It’s mighty good of you to remember old friends, Tim, even if they’re not delegates.”

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Meanwhile Mr. Crewe is graciously receiving others who are crowding to him.

“How are you, Mr. Giddings? How are the cows? I carry some stock that’ll make you sit up—I believe I told you when I was down your way. Of course, mine cost a little money, but that’s one of my hobbies. Come and see ’em some day. There’s a good hotel in Ripton, and I’ll have you met there and drive you back.”

Thus, with a genial and kindly remark to each, he passes from one to the other, and when the members of the press come to him for his estimate of the outcome on the morrow, he treats them with the same courtly consideration.

“Estimate!” cries Mr. Crewe. “Where have your eyes been to-night, my friends? Have you seen the people coming into these headquarters? Have you seen ’em pouring into any other headquarters? All the State and federal office-holders in the country couldn’t stop me now. Estimate! I’ll be nominated on the first ballot.”

They wrote it down.

“Thank you, Mr. Crewe,” they said; “that’s the kind of talk we like to hear.”

“And don’t forget,” said Mr. Crewe, “to mention this reception in the accounts.”

Mr. Tooting, who makes it a point from time to time to reconnoitre, saunters halfway down-stairs and surveys the crowded rotunda from the landing. Through the blue medium produced by the burning of many cigars (mostly Mr. Crewe’s) he takes note of the burly form of Mr. Thomas Gaylord beside that of Mr. Redbrook and other rural figures; he takes note of a quiet corner with a ring of chairs surrounded by scouts and outposts, although it requires a trained eye such as Mr. Tooting’s to recognize them as such—for they wear no uniforms. They are, in truth, minor captains of the feudal system, and their present duties consist (as Mr. Tooting sees clearly) in preventing the innocent and inquisitive from unprofitable speech with the Honourable Jacob Botcher, who sits in the inner angle conversing cordially with those who are singled out for this honour. Still other scouts conduct some of the gentlemen who have talked with Mr. Botcher up the stairs to a mysterious room on the second floor. Mr. Tooting discovers that the room is occupied by the Honourable Brush Bascom; Mr. Tooting learns with indignation that certain of these guests of Mr. Bascom’s are delegates pledged to Mr. Crewe, whereupon he rushes back to the bridal suite to report to his chief. The cigars are giving out again, and the rush has slackened, and he detaches the People’s Champion from the line and draws him to the inner room.

“Brush Bascom’s conducting a bourse on the second floor and is running the price up right along,” cried the honest and indignant Mr. Tooting. He’s stringin’ Adam Hunt all right. They say he’s got Adam to cough up six thousand extra since five o’clock, but the

question is—ain't he stringin' us? He paid six hundred for a block of ten not quarter of an hour ago—and nine of 'em were our delegates."

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It must be remembered that these are Mr. Tooting's words, and Mr. Crewe evidently treated them as the product of that gentleman's vivid imagination. Translated, they meant that the Honourable Adam B. Hunt has no chance for the nomination, but that the crafty Messrs. Botcher and Bascom are inducing him to think that he has—by making a supreme effort. The supreme effort is represented by six thousand dollars.

"Are you going to lie down under that?" Mr. Tooting demanded, forgetting himself in his zeal for reform and Mr. Crewe. But Mr. Tooting, in some alarm, perceived the eye of his chief growing virtuous and glassy.

"I guess I know when I'm strung, as you call it, Mr. Tooting," he replied severely. "This cigar bill alone is enough to support a large family for several months."

And with this merited reproof he turned on his heel and went back to his admirers without, leaving Mr. Tooting aghast, but still resourceful. Ten minutes later that gentleman was engaged in a private conversation with his colleague, the Honourable Timothy Wading.

"He's up on his hind legs at last," said Mr. Tooting; "it looks as if he was catching on."

Mr. Wading evidently grasped these mysterious words, for he looked grave.

"He thinks he's got the nomination cinched, don't he?"

"That's the worst of it," cried Mr. Tooting.

"I'll see what I can do," said the Honourable Tim. "He's always talking about thorough, let him do it thorough." And Mr. Watling winked.

"Thorough," repeated Mr. Tooting, delightedly.

"That's it—Colonel," said Mr. Watling. "Have you ordered your uniform yet, Ham?"

Mr. Tooting plainly appreciated this joke, for he grinned.

"I guess you won't starve if you don't get that commissionership, Tim," he retorted.

"And I guess," returned Mr. Watling, "that you won't go naked if you don't have a uniform."

Victoria's surmise was true. At ten o'clock at night, two days before the convention, a tall figure had appeared in the empty rotunda of the Pelican, startling the clerk out of a doze. He rubbed his eyes and stared, recognized Hilary Vane, and yet failed to recognize him. It was an extraordinary occasion indeed which would cause Mr. McAvoy to lose his aplomb; to neglect to seize the pen and dip it, with a flourish, into the ink, and

extend its handle towards the important guest; to omit a few fitting words of welcome. It was Hilary who got the pen first, and wrote his name in silence, and by this time Mr. McAvoy had recovered his presence of mind sufficiently to wield the blotter.

“We didn’t expect you to-night, Mr. Vane,” he said, in a voice that sounded strange to him, “but we’ve kept Number Seven, as usual. Front!”

“The old man’s seen his day, I guess,” Mr. McAvoy remarked, as he studied the register with a lone reporter. “This Crewe must have got in on ’em hard, from what they tell me, and Adam Hunt has his dander up.”

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The next morning at ten o'clock, while the workmen were still tacking down the fireproof carpets in headquarters upstairs, and before even the advance guard of the armies had begun to arrive, the eye of the clerk was caught by a tall young man rapidly approaching the desk.

"Is Mr. Hilary Vane here?"

"He's in Number Seven," said Mr. McAvoy, who was cudgelling his brains. "Give me your card, and I'll send it up."

"I'll go up," said the caller, turning on his heel and suiting the action to the word, leaving Mr. McAvoy to make active but futile inquiries among the few travelling men and reporters seated about.

"Well, if you fellers don't know him, I give up," said the clerk, irritably, "but he looks as if he ought to be somebody. He knows his business, anyway."

In the meantime Mr. Vane's caller had reached the first floor; he hesitated just a moment before knocking at the door of Number Seven, and the Honourable Hilary's voice responded. The door opened.

Hilary was seated, as usual, beside the marble-topped table, which was covered with newspapers and memoranda. In the room were Mr. Ridout, the capital lawyer, and Mr. Manning, the division superintendent. There was an instant of surprised silence on the part of the three, but the Honourable Hilary was the only one who remained expressionless.

"If you don't mind, gentlemen," said the visitor, "I should like to talk to my father for a few minutes."

"Why, certainly, Austen," Mr. Ridout replied, with an attempt at heartiness. Further words seemed to fail him, and he left the room somewhat awkwardly, followed by Mr. Manning; but the Honourable Hilary appeared to take no notice of this proceeding.

"Judge," said Austen, when the door had closed behind them, "I won't keep you long. I didn't come down here to plead with you to abandon what you believe to be your duty, because I know that would be useless. I have had a talk with Dr. Tredway," he added gently, "and I realize that you are risking your life. If I could take you back to Ripton I would, but I know that I cannot. I see your point of view, and if I were in your place I should do the same thing. I only wanted to tell you this—" Austen's voice caught a little, "if—anything should happen, I shall be at Mrs. Peasley's on Maple Street, opposite the Duncan house." He laid his hand for an instant, in the old familiar way, on Hilary's shoulder, and looked down into the older man's face. It may have been that Hilary's lips trembled a little. "I—I'll see you later, Judge, when it's all over. Good luck to you."

He turned slowly, went to the door and opened it, gave one glance at the motionless figure in the chair, and went out. He did not hear the voice that called his name, for the door had shut.

Mr. Ridout and Mr. Manning were talking together in low tones at the head of the stairs. It was the lawyer who accosted Austen.

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“The old gentleman don’t seem to be quite himself, Austen. Don’t seem well. You ought to hold him in he can’t work as hard as he used to.”

“I think you’ll find, Mr. Ridout,” answered Austen, deliberately, “that he’ll perform what’s required of him with his usual efficiency.”

Mr. Ridout followed Austen’s figure with his eyes until he was hidden by a turn of the stairs. Then he whistled.

“I can’t make that fellow out,” he exclaimed. “Never could. All I know is that if Hilary Vane pulls us through this mess, in the shape he’s in, it’ll be a miracle.

“His mind seems sound enough to-day—but he’s lost his grip, I tell you. I don’t wonder Flint’s beside himself. Here’s Adam Hunt with both feet in the trough, and no more chance of the nomination than I have, and Bascom and Botcher teasing him on, and he’s got enough votes with Crewe to lock up that convention for a dark horse. And who’s the dark horse?”

Mr. Manning, who was a silent man, pointed with his thumb in the direction Austen had taken.

“Hilary Vane’s own son,” said Mr. Ridout, voicing the gesture; “they tell me that Tom Gaylord’s done some pretty slick work. Now I leave it to you, Manning, if that isn’t a mess!”

At this moment the conversation was interrupted by the appearance on the stairway of the impressive form of United States Senator Whitredge, followed by a hall boy carrying the senatorial gripsack. The senator’s face wore a look of concern which could not possibly be misinterpreted.

“How’s Hilary?” were his first words.

Mr. Ridout and Mr. Manning glanced at each other.

“He’s in Number Seven; you’d better take a look at him, Senator.”

The senator drew breath, directed that his grip be put in the room where he was to repose that night, produced an amber cigar-holder from a case, and a cigar from his waistcoat pocket.

“I thought I’d better come down early,” he said, “things aren’t going just as they should, and that’s the truth. In fact,” he added, significantly tapping his pocket, “I’ve got a letter from Mr. Flint to Hilary which I may have to use. You understand me.”

“I guessed as much,” said Mr. Ridout.

“Ahem! I saw young Vane going out of the hotel just now,” the senator remarked. “I am told, on pretty good authority, that under certain circumstances, which I must confess seem not unlikely at present, he may be a candidate for the nomination. The fact that he is in town tends to make the circumstance more probable.”

“He’s just been in to see Hilary,” said Mr. Ridout.

“You don’t tell me!” said the senator, pausing as he lighted his cigar; “I was under the impression that they were not on speaking terms.”

“They’ve evidently got together now, that—” said Mr. Ridout. “I wonder how old Hilary would feel about it. We couldn’t do much with Austen Vane if he was governor—that’s a sure thing.”

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The senator pondered a moment.

“It’s been badly managed,” he muttered; “there’s no doubt of that. Hunt must be got out of the way. When Bascom and Botcher come, tell them I want to see them in my room, not in Number Seven.”

And with this impressive command, received with nods of understanding, Senator Whitredge advanced slowly towards Number Seven, knocked, and entered. Be it known that Mr. Flint, with characteristic caution, had not confided even to the senator that the Honourable Hilary had had a stroke.

“Ah, Vane,” he said, in his most affable tones, “how are you?”

The Honourable Hilary, who was looking over some papers, shot at him a glance from under his shaggy eyebrows.

“Came in here to find out—didn’t you, Whitredge?” he replied.

“What?” said the senator, taken aback; and for once at a loss for words.

The Honourable Hilary rose and stood straighter than usual, and looked the senator in the eye.

“What’s your diagnosis?” he asked. “Superannuated—unfit for duty —unable to cope with the situation ready to be superseded? Is that about it?”

To say that Senator Whitredge was startled and uncomfortable would be to put his case mildly. He had never before seen Mr. Vane in this mood.

“Ha-ha!” he laughed; “the years are coming over us a little, aren’t they? But I guess it isn’t quite time for the youngsters to step in yet.”

“No, Whitredge,” said Mr. Vane, slowly, without taking his eye from the senator’s, “and it won’t be until this convention is over. Do you understand?”

“That’s the first good news I’ve heard this morning,” said the senator, with the uneasy feeling that, in some miraculous way, the Honourable Hilary had read the superseding orders from highest authority through his pocket.

“You may take it as good news or bad news, as you please, but it’s a fact. And now I want ‘*you*’ to tell Ridout that I wish to see him again, and to bring in Doby, who is to be chairman of the convention.”

“Certainly,” assented the senator, with alacrity, as he started for the door. Then he turned. “I’m glad to see you’re all right, Vane,” he added; “I’d heard that you were a little

under the weather—a bilious attack on account of the heat—that's all I meant." He did not wait for an answer, nor would he have got one. And he found Mr. Ridout in the hall.

"Well?" said the lawyer, expectantly, and looking with some curiosity at the senator's face.

"Well," said Mr. Whitredge, with marked impatience, "he wants to see you right away."

All day long Hilary Vane held conference in Number Seven, and at six o'clock sent a request that the Honourable Adam visit him. The Honourable Adam would not come; and the fact leaked out—through the Honourable Adam.

"He's mad clean through," reported the Honourable Elisha Jane, to whose tact and diplomacy the mission had been confided. "He said he would teach Flint a lesson. He'd show him he couldn't throw away a man as useful and efficient as he'd been, like a sucked orange."

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“Humph! A sucked orange. That’s what he said, is it? A sucked orange,” Hilary repeated.

“That’s what he said,” declared Mr. Jane, and remembered afterwards how Hilary had been struck by the simile.

At ten o’clock at night, at the very height of the tumult, Senator Whitredge had received an interrogatory telegram from Fairview, and had called a private conference (in which Hilary was not included) in a back room on the second floor (where the conflicting bands of Mr. Crewe and Mr. Hunt could not be heard), which Mr. Manning and Mr. Jane and State Senator Billings and Mr. Ridout attended. Query: the Honourable Hilary had quarrelled with Mr. Flint, that was an open secret; did not Mr. Vane think himself justified, from his own point of view, in taking a singular revenge in not over-exerting himself to pull the Honourable Adam out, thereby leaving the field open for his son, Austen Vane, with whom he was apparently reconciled? Not that Mr. Flint had hinted of such a thing! He had, in the telegram, merely urged the senator himself to see Mr. Hunt, and to make one more attempt to restrain the loyalty to that candidate of Messrs. Bascom and Botcher.

The senator made the attempt, and failed signally.

It was half-past midnight by the shining face of the clock on the tower of the state-house, and hope flamed high in the bosom of the Honourable Adam B. Hunt a tribute to the bellows-like skill of Messrs. Bascom and Botcher. The bands in the street had blown themselves out, the delegates were at last seeking rest, the hall boys in the corridors were turning down the lights, and the Honourable Adam, in a complacent and even jubilant frame of mind, had put on his carpet slippers and taken off his coat, when there came a knock at his door. He was not a little amazed and embarrassed, upon opening it, to see the Honourable Hilary. But these feelings gave place almost immediately to a sense of triumph; gone were the days when he had to report to Number Seven. Number Seven, in the person of Hilary (who was Number Seven), had been forced to come to him!

“Well, upon my soul!” he exclaimed heartily. “Come in, Hilary.”

He turned up the jets of the chandelier, and gazed at his friend, and was silent.

“Have a seat, Hilary,” he said, pushing up an armchair.

Mr. Vane sat down. Mr. Hunt took a seat opposite, and waited for his visitor to speak. He himself seemed to find no words.

“Adam,” said Mr. Vane, at length, “we’ve known each other for a good many years.”

“That’s so, Hilary. That’s so,” Mr. Hunt eagerly assented. What was coming?

“And whatever harm I’ve done in my life,” Hilary continued, “I’ve always tried to keep my word. I told you, when we met up there by the mill this summer, that if Mr. Flint had consulted me about your candidacy, before seeing you in New York, I shouldn’t have advised it—this time.”

The Honourable Adam’s face stiffened.

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“That’s what you said. But—”

“And I meant it,” Mr. Vane interrupted. “I was never pledged to your candidacy, as a citizen. I’ve been thinking over my situation some, this summer, and I’ll tell you in so many plain words what it is. I guess you know—I guess everybody knows who’s thought about it. I deceived myself for a long time by believing that I earned my living as the attorney for the Northeastern Railroads. I’ve drawn up some pretty good papers for them, and I’ve won some pretty difficult suits. I’m not proud of ’em all, but let that go. Do you know what I am?”

The Honourable Adam was capable only of a startled ejaculation. Was Hilary Vane in his right senses?

“I’m merely their paid political tool,” Mr. Vane continued, in the same tone. “I’ve sold them my brain, and my right of opinion as a citizen. I wanted to make this clear to you first of all. Not that you didn’t know it, but I wished you to know that I know it. When Mr. Flint said that you were to be the Republican nominee, my business was to work to get you elected, which I did. And when it became apparent that you couldn’t be nominated—”

“Hold on!” cried the Honourable Adam.

“Please wait until I have finished. When it became apparent that you couldn’t be nominated, Mr. Flint sent me to try to get you to withdraw, and he decreed that the new candidate should pay your expenses up to date. I failed in that mission.”

“I don’t blame you, Hilary,” exclaimed Mr. Hunt. “I told you so at the time. But I guess I’ll soon be in a position where I can make Flint walk the tracks—his own tracks.”

“Adam,” said Mr. Vane, “it is because I deserve as much of the blame as Mr. Flint that I am here.”

Again Mr. Hunt was speechless. The Honourable Hilary Vane in an apologetic mood! A surmise flashed into the brain of the Honourable Adam, and sparkled there. The Honourable Giles Henderson was prepared to withdraw, and Hilary had come, by authority, to see if he would pay the Honourable Giles’ campaign expenses. Well, he could snap his fingers at that.

“Flint has treated me like a dog,” he declared.

“Mr. Flint never pretended,” answered Mr. Vane, coldly, “that the nomination and election of a governor was anything but a business transaction. His regard for you is probably unchanged, but the interests he has at stake are too large to admit of sentiment as a factor.”

“Exactly,” exclaimed Mr. Hunt. “And I hear he hasn’t treated you just right, Hilary. I understand—”

Hilary’s eyes flashed for the first time.

“Never mind that, Adam,” he said quietly; “I’ve been treated as I deserve. I have nothing whatever to complain of from Mr. Flint. I will tell you why I came here to-night. I haven’t felt right about you since that interview, and the situation to-night is practically what it was then. You can’t be nominated.”

“Can’t be nominated!” gasped Mr: Hunt. And he reached to the table for his figures. “I’ll have four hundred on the first ballot, and I’ve got two hundred and fifty more pledged to me as second choice. If you’ve come up here at this time of night to try to deceive me on that, you might as well go back and wire Flint it’s no use. Why, I can name the delegates, if you’ll listen.”

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Mr. Vane shook his head sadly. And, confident as he was, the movement sent a cold chill down the Honourable Adam's spine, for faith in Mr. Vane's judgment had become almost a second nature. He had to force himself to remember that this was not the old Hilary.

"You won't have three hundred, Adam, at any time," answered Mr. Vane. "Once you used to believe what I said, and if you won't now, you won't. But I can't go away without telling you what I came for."

"What's that?" demanded Mr. Hunt, wonderingly.

"It's this," replied Hilary, with more force than he had yet shown. "You can't get that nomination. If you'll let me know what your campaign expenses have been up to date, —all of 'em, you understand, to-night too,—I'll give you a check for them within the next two weeks."

"Who makes this offer?" demanded Mr. Hunt, with more curiosity than alarm; "Mr. Flint?"

"No," said Hilary; "Mr. Flint does not use the road's funds for such purposes."

"Henderson?"

"No," said Hilary; "I can't see what difference it makes to you."

The Honourable Adam had an eminently human side, and he laid his hand on Mr. Vane's knee.

"I think I've got a notion as to where that money would come from, Hilary," he said. "I'm much obliged to you, my friend. I wouldn't take it even if I thought you'd sized up the situation right. But—I don't agree with you this time. I know I've got the nomination. And I want to say once more, that I think you're a square man, and I don't hold anything against you."

Mr. Vane rose.

"I'm sorry, Adam," he said; my offer holds good after to-morrow."

"After to-morrow!"

"Yes," said the Honourable Hilary. "I don't feel right about this thing. Er—good night, Adam."

"Hold on!" cried Mr. Hunt, as a new phase of the matter struck him. "Why, if I got out—"

"What then?" said Mr. Vane, turning around.

“Oh, I won’t get out,” said Mr. Hunt, “but if I did,—why, there wouldn’t, according to your way of thinking, be any chance for a dark horse.”

“What do you mean?” demanded Mr. Vane.

“Now don’t get mad, Hilary. I guess, and you know, that Flint hasn’t treated you decently this summer after all you’ve done for him, and I admire the way you’re standing by him. I wouldn’t do it. I just wanted to say,” Mr. Hunt added slowly, “that I respect you all the more for trying to get me out. If—always according to your notion of the convention—if I don’t get out, and haven’t any chance, they tell me on pretty good authority Austen Vane will get the nomination.”

Hilary Vane walked to the door, opened it and went out, and slammed it behind him.

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It is morning,—a hot morning, as so many recall,—and the partisans of the three leaders are early astir, and at seven-thirty Mr. Tooting discovers something going on briskly which he terms “dealing in futures.” My vote is yours as long as you are in the race, but after that I have something negotiable. The Honourable Adam Hunt strolls into the rotunda after an early breakfast, with a toothpick in his mouth, and is pointed out by the sophisticated to new arrivals as the man who spent seven thousand dollars over night, much of which is said to have stuck in the pockets of two feudal chiefs who could be named. Is it possible that there is a split in the feudal system at last? that the two feudal chiefs (who could be named) are rebels against highest authority? A smile from the sophisticated one. This duke and baron have merely stopped to pluck a bird; it matters not whether or not the bird is an erstwhile friend—he has been outlawed by highest authority, and is fair game. The bird (with the toothpick in his mouth) creates a smile from other chiefs of the system in good standing who are not too busy to look at him. They have ceased all attempts to buttonhole him, for he is unapproachable.

The other bird, the rebel of Leith, who has never been in the feudal system at all, they have stopped laughing at. It is he who has brought the Empire to its most precarious state.

And now, while strangers from near and far throng into town, drawn by the sensational struggle which is to culminate in battle to-day, Mr. Crewe is marshalling his forces. All the delegates who can be collected, and who wear the button with the likeness and superscription of Humphrey Crewe, are drawn up beside the monument in the park, where the Ripton Band is stationed; and presently they are seen by cheering crowds marching to martial music towards the convention hall, where they collect in a body, with signs and streamers in praise of the People’s Champion well to the front and centre. This is generally regarded as a piece of consummate general ship on the part of their leader. They are applauded from the galleries,—already packed,—especially from one conspicuous end where sit that company of ladies (now so famed) whose efforts have so materially aided the cause of the People’s Champion. Gay streamers vie with gayer gowns, and morning papers on the morrow will have something to say about the fashionable element and the special car which brought them from Leith.

“My, but it is hot!”

The hall is filled now, with the thousand delegates, or their representatives who are fortunate enough to possess their credentials. Something of this matter later. General Doby, chairman of the convention, an impressive but mournful figure, could not call a roll if he wanted to. Not that he will want to! Impossible to tell, by the convenient laws of the State, whether the duly elected delegates of Hull or Mercer or Truro are here or not, since their credentials

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may be bought or sold or conferred. Some political giants, who have not negotiated their credentials, are recognized as they walk down the aisle: the statesmanlike figure of Senator Whitredge (a cheer); that of Senator Green (not so statesmanlike, but a cheer); Congressman Fairplay (cheers); and—Hilary Vane! His a figure that does not inspire cheers,—least of all to-day,—the man upon whose shoulders rests the political future of the Northeastern. The conservative Mr. Tredways and other Lincoln radicals of long ago who rely on his strength and judgment are not the sort to cheer. And yet—and yet Hilary inspires some feeling when, with stooping gait, he traverses the hall, and there is a hush in many quarters as delegates and spectators watch his progress to the little room off the platform: the general's room, as the initiated know.

Ah, but few know what a hateful place it is to Hilary Vane to-day, this keyboard at which he has sat so complacently in years gone by, the envied of conventions. He sits down wearily at the basswood table, and scarcely hears the familiar sounds without, which indicate that the convention of conventions has begun. Extraordinary phenomenon at such a time, scenes of long ago and little cherished then, are stealing into his mind.

The Reverend Mr. Crane (so often chaplain of the Legislature, and known to the irreverent as the chaplain of the Northeastern) is praying now for guidance in the counsels of this great gathering of the people's representatives. God will hear Mr. Botcher better if he closes his eyes; which he does. Now the platform is being read by State Senator Billings; closed eyes would best suit this proceeding, too. As a parallel to that platform, one can think only of the Ten Commandments. The Republican Party (chosen children of Israel) must be kept free from the domination of corporations. (Cheers and banner waving for a full minute.) Some better method of choosing delegates which will more truly reflect the will of the people. (Plank of the Honourable Jacob Botcher, whose conscience is awakening.) Never mind the rest. It is a triumph for Mr. Crewe, and is all printed in that orthodox (reform) newspaper, the State Tribune, with urgent editorials that it must be carried out to the letter.

And what now? Delegates, credential holders, audience, and the Reverend Mr. Crane draw long breaths of heated carbon dioxide. Postmaster Burrows of Edmundton, in rounded periods, is putting in nomination his distinguished neighbour and fellow-citizen, the Honourable Adam B. Hunt, who can subscribe and say amen to every plank in that platform. He believes it, he has proclaimed it in public, and he embodies it. Mr. Burrows indulges in slight but effective sarcasm of sham reformers and so-called business men who perform the arduous task of cutting coupons and live in rarefied regions where they can only be seen by the common people when the light is turned on. (Cheers from two partisan bodies and groans and hisses from another. General Doby, with a pained face, pounding with the gavel. This isn't a circumstance to what's coming, General.)

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After General Doby has succeeded in abating the noise in honour-of the Honourable Adam, there is a hush of expectancy. Humphrey Crewe, who has made all this trouble and enthusiasm, is to be nominated next, and the Honourable Timothy Wailing of Newcastle arises to make that celebrated oration which the cynical have called the "thousand-dollar speech." And even if they had named it well (which is not for a moment to be admitted!), it is cheap for the price. How Mr. Crewe's ears must tingle as he paces his headquarters in the Pelican! Almost would it be sacrilege to set down cold, on paper, the words that come, burning, out of the Honourable Timothy's loyal heart. Here, gentlemen, is a man at last, not a mere puppet who signs his name when a citizen of New York pulls the string; one who is prepared to make any sacrifice,—to spend his life, if need be, in their service. (A barely audible voice, before the cheering commences, "I guess that's so.") Humphrey Crewe needs no defence—the Honourable Timothy avers—at his hands, or any one's. Not merely an idealist, but a practical man who has studied the needs of the State; unselfish to the core; longing, like Washington, the Father of his Country, to remain in a beautiful country home, where he dispenses hospitality with a flowing hand to poor and rich alike, yet harking to the call of duty. Leaving, like the noble Roman of old, his plough in the furrow—(Same voice as before, "I wish he'd left his automobil' thar!" Hisses and laughter.) The Honourable Timothy, undaunted, snatches his hand from the breast of his Prince Albert and flings it, with a superb gesture, towards the Pelican. "Gentlemen, I have the honour to nominate to this convention that peerless leader for the right, the Honourable Humphrey Crewe of Leith —our next governor."

General Andrew Jackson himself, had he been alive and on this historic ground and chairman of that convention, could scarce have quelled the tumult aroused by this name and this speech—much less General Doby. Although a man of presence, measurable by scales with weights enough, our general has no more ponderosity now than a leaf in a mountain storm at Hale—and no more control over the hurricane. Behold him now, pounding with his gavel on something which should give forth a sound, but doesn't. Who is he (to change the speech's figure—not the general's), who is he to drive a wild eight-horse team, who is fit only to conduct Mr. Flint's oxen in years gone by?

It is a memorable scene, sketched to life for the metropolitan press. The man on the chair, his face lighted by a fanatic enthusiasm, is the Honourable Hamilton Tooting, coatless and collarless, leading the cheers that shake the building, that must have struck terror to the soul of Augustus P. Flint himself—fifty miles away. But the endurance of the human throat is limited.

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Why, in the name of political strategy, has United States Senator Greene been chosen to nominate the Honourable Giles Henderson of Kingston? Some say that it is the will of highest authority, others that the senator is a close friend of the Honourable Giles—-buys his coal from him, wholesale. Both surmises are true. The senator's figure is not impressive, his voice less so, and he reads from manuscript, to the accompaniment of continual cries of "Louder!" A hook for Leviathan! "A great deal of dribble," said the senator, for little rocks sometimes strike fire, "has been heard about the 'will of the people.'"

The Honourable Giles Henderson is beholden to no man and to no corporation, and will go into office prepared to do justice impartially to all."

"Bu—copia verborum—let us to the main business!"

To an hundred newspapers, to Mr. Flint at Fairview, and other important personages ticks out the momentous news that the balloting has begun. No use trying to hold your breath until the first ballot is announced; it takes time to obtain the votes of one thousand men—especially when neither General Doby nor any one else knows who they are! The only way is to march up on the stage by counties and file past the ballot-box. Putnam, with their glitter-eyed duke, Mr. Bascom, at their head —presumably solid for Adam B. Hunt; Baron Burrows, who farms out the post-office at Edmundton, leads Edmunds County; Earl Elisha Jane, consul at some hot place where he spends the inclement months drops the first ticket for Haines County, ostensibly solid for home-made virtue and the Honourable Giles.

An hour and a quarter of suspense and torture passes, while collars wilt and coats come off, and fans in the gallery wave incessantly, and excited conversation buzzes in every quarter. And now, see! there is whispering on the stage among the big-bugs. Mr. Chairman Doby rises with a paper in his hand, and the buzzing dies down to silence.

The Honourable Giles Henderson of Kingston has . .398
The Honourable Humphrey Crewe of Leith has . . . 353
The Honourable Adam B. Hunt of Edmundton has. . 249
And a majority being required, there is no choice!

Are the supporters of the People's Champion crest-fallen, think you? Mr. Tooting is not leading them for the moment, but is pressing through the crowd outside the hall and flying up the street to the Pelican and the bridal suite, where he is first with the news. Note for an unabridged biography: the great man is discovered sitting quietly by the window, poring over a book on the modern science of road-building, some notes from which he is making for his first message. And instead of the reek of tobacco smoke, the room is filled with the scent of the floral tributes brought down by the Ladies' Auxiliary from Leith. In Mr. Crewe's right-hand pocket, neatly typewritten, is his speech of

acceptance. He is never caught unprepared. Unkind, now, to remind him of that prediction made last night about the first ballot to the newspapers—and useless.

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“I told you last night they were buyin’ ’em right under our noses,” cried Mr. Tooting, in a paroxysm of indignation, “and you wouldn’t believe me. They got over one hundred and sixty away from us.”

“It strikes me, Mr. Tooting,” said Mr. Crewe, “that it was your business to prevent that.”

There will no doubt be a discussion, when the biographer reaches this juncture, concerning the congruity of reform delegates who can be bought. It is too knotty a point of ethics to be dwelt upon here.

“Prevent it!” echoed Mr. Tooting, and in the strong light of the righteousness of that eye reproaches failed him. “But there’s a whole lot of ’em can be seen, right now, while the ballots are being taken. It won’t be decided on the next ballot.”

“Mr. Tooting,” said Mr. Crewe, indubitably proving that he had the qualities of a leader—-if such proof were necessary, “go back to the convention. I have no doubt of the outcome, but that doesn’t mean you are to relax your efforts. Do you understand?”

“I guess I do,” replied Mr. Tooting, and was gone. “He still has his flag up,” he whispered into the Honourable Timothy Watling’s ear, when he reached the hall. “He’ll stand a little more yet.”

Mr. Tooting, at times, speaks a language unknown to us—and the second ballot is going on. And during its progress the two principal lieutenants of the People’s Champion were observed going about the hall apparently exchanging the time of day with various holders of credentials. Mr. Jane, too, is going about the hall, and Postmaster Burrows, and Postmaster Bill Fleeting of Brampton, and the Honourable Nat Billings, and Messrs. Bascom and Botcher, and Mr. Manning, division superintendent, and the Honourable Orrin Young, railroad commissioner and candidate for reappointment—all are embracing the opportunity to greet humble friends or to make new acquaintances. Another hour and a quarter, with the temperature steadily rising and the carbon dioxide increasing—-and the second ballot is announced.

The Honourable Giles Henderson of Kingston has . . 440
The Honourable Humphrey Crewe of Leith has 336
The Honourable Adam B. Hunt of Edmundton has . . . 255

And there are three votes besides improperly made out!

What the newspapers call indescribable excitement ensues. The three votes improperly made out are said to be trip passes accidentally dropped into the box by the supporters of the Honourable Elisha Jane. And add up the sum total of the votes! Thirty-one votes more than there are credentials in the hall! Mystery of mysteries how can it be? The ballot, announces General Doby, after endless rapping, is a blank. Cheers,

recriminations, exultation, disgust of decent citizens, attempts by twenty men to get the eye of the president (which is too watery to see any of them), and rushes for the platform to suggest remedies or ask what is going to be done about

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such palpable fraud. What can be done? Call the roll! How in blazes can you call the roll when you don't know who's here? Messrs. Jane, Botcher, Bascom, and Fleming are not disturbed, and improve their time. Watling and Tooting rush to the bridal suite, and rush back again to demand justice. General Doby mingles his tears with theirs, and somebody calls him a jellyfish. He does not resent it. Friction makes the air hotter and hotter—Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego would scarce enter into this furnace,—and General Doby has a large damp spot on his back as he pounds and pounds and pounds until we are off again on the third ballot. No dinner, and three-thirty P.M.! Two delegates have fainted, but the essential parts of them—the credentials—are left behind.

Four-forty, whispering again, and the gavel drops.

The Honourable Giles Henderson of Kingston has . . 412
The Honourable Humphrey Crewe of Leith has . . . 325
The Honourable Adam B. Hunt of Edmundton has. . . 250
And there is no choice on the third ballot!

Thirteen delegates are actually missing this time. Scour the town! And now even the newspaper adjectives describing the scene have given out. A persistent and terrifying rumour goes the rounds, where's Tom Gaylord? Somebody said he was in the hall a moment ago, on a Ripton credential. If so, he's gone out again—gone out to consult the dark horse, who is in town, somewhere. Another ominous sign: Mr. Redbrook, Mr. Widgeon of Hull, and the other rural delegates who have been voting for the People's Champion, and who have not been observed in friendly conversation with anybody at all, now have their heads together. Mr. Billings goes sauntering by, but cannot hear what they are saying. Something must be done, and right away, and the knowing metropolitan reporters are winking at each other and declaring darkly that a sensation is about to turn up.

Where is Hilary Vane? Doesn't he realize the danger? Or—traitorous thought!—-doesn't he care? To see his son nominated would be a singular revenge for the indignities which are said to have been heaped upon him. Does Hilary Vane, the strong man of the State, merely sit at the keyboard, powerless, while the tempest itself shakes from the organ a new and terrible music? Nearly, six hours he has sat at the basswood table, while senators, congressmen, feudal chiefs, and even Chairman Doby himself flit in and out, whisper in his ear, set papers before him, and figures and problems, and telegrams from highest authority. He merely nods his head, says a word now and then, or holds his peace. Does he know what he's about? If they had not heard things concerning his health,—and other things,—they would still feel safe. He seems the only calm man to be found in the hall—but is the calm aberration?

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A conference in the corner of the platform, while the fourth ballot is progressing, is held between Senators Whitredge and Greene, Mr. Ridout and Mr. Manning. So far the Honourable Hilary has apparently done nothing but let the storm take its course; a wing-footed messenger has returned who has seen Mr. Thomas Gaylord walking rapidly up Maple Street, and Austen Vane (most astute and reprehensible of politicians) is said to be at the Widow Peasley's, quietly awaiting the call. The name of Austen Vane—-another messenger says—is running like wildfire through the hall, from row to row. Mr. Crewe has no chance—so rumour goes. A reformer (to pervert the saying of a celebrated contemporary humorist) must fight Marquis of Queensberry to win; and the People's Champion, it is averred, has not. Shrewd country delegates who had listened to the Champion's speeches and had come to the capital prepared to vote for purity, had been observing the movements since yesterday, of Mr. Tooting and Mr. Wading with no inconsiderable interest. Now was the psychological moment for Austen Vane, but who was to beard Hilary?

No champion was found, and the Empire, the fate of which was in the hands of a madman, was cracking. Let an individual of character and known anti-railroad convictions (such as the gentleman said to be at the Widow Peasley's) be presented to the convention, and they would nominate him. Were Messrs. Bascom and Botcher going to act the part of Samsons? Were they working for revenge and a new regime? Mr. Whitredge started for the Pelican, not at his ordinary senatorial gait, to get Mr. Flint on the telephone.

The result of the fourth ballot was announced, and bedlam broke loose.

The Honourable Giles Henderson of Kingston has . . 419 The Honourable Humphrey Crewe of Leith has . . . . 337 The Honourable Adam B. Hunt of Edmundton has . . . 256

Total, one thousand and eleven out of a thousand! Two delegates abstained from voting, and proclaimed the fact, but were heard only a few feet away. Other delegates, whose flesh and blood could stand the atmosphere no longer, were known to have left the hall! Aha! the secret is out, if anybody could hear it. At the end of every ballot several individuals emerge and mix with the crowd in the street. Astute men sometimes make mistakes, and the following conversation occurs between one of the individuals in question and Mr. Crewe's chauffeur.

Individual: "Do you want to come in and see the convention and vote?"

Chauffeur: "I am Frenchman."

Individual: "That doesn't cut any ice. I'll make out the ballot, and all you'll have to do is to drop it in the box."
Chauffeur: "All right; I vote for Meester Crewe."

Sudden disappearance of the individual.

Nor is this all. The Duke of Putnam, for example, knows how many credentials there are in his county—say, seventy-six. He counts the men present and voting, and his result is sixty-one. Fifteen are absent, getting food or—something else. Fifteen vote over again. But, as the human brain is prone to error, and there are men in the street, the Duke miscalculates; the Earl of Haines miscalculates, too. Result—eleven over a thousand votes, and some nine hundred men in the hall!

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How are you going to stop it? Mr. Watling climbs up on the platform and shakes his fist in General Doby's face, and General Doby tearfully appeals for an honest ballot—to the winds.

In the meantime the Honourable Elisha Jane, spurred on by desperation and thoughts of a 'dolce far niente' gone forever; has sought and cornered Mr. Bascom.

"For God's sake, Brush," cries the Honourable Elisha, "hasn't this thing gone far enough? A little of it is all right—the boys understand that; but have you thought what it means to you and me if these blanked reformers get in,—if a feller like Austen Vane is nominated?"

That cold, hard glitter which we have seen was in Mr. Bascom's eyes.

"You fellers have got the colic," was the remark of the arch-rebel. "Do you think old Hilary doesn't know what he's about?"

"It looks that way to me," said Mr. Jane.

"It looks that way to Doby too, I guess," said Mr. Bascom, with a glance of contempt at the general; "he's lost about fifteen pounds to-day. Did Hilary send you down here?" he demanded.

"No," Mr. Jane confessed.

"Then go back and chase yourself around the platform some more," was Mr. Bascom's unfeeling advice, "and don't have a fit here. All the brains in this hall are in Hilary's room. When he's ready to talk business with me in behalf of the Honourable Giles Henderson, I guess he'll do so."

But fear had entered the heart of the Honourable Elisha, and there was a sickly feeling in the region of his stomach which even the strong medicine administered by the Honourable Brush failed to alleviate. He perceived Senator Whitredge, returned from the Pelican. But the advice —if any—the president of the Northeastern has given the senator is not forthcoming in practice. Mr. Flint, any more than Ulysses himself, cannot recall the tempests when his own followers have slit the bags—and in sight of Ithaca! Another conference at the back of the stage, out of which emerges State Senator Nat Billings and gets the ear of General Doby.

"Let 'em yell," says Mr. Billings—as though the general, by raising one adipose hand, could quell the storm. Eyes are straining, scouts are watching at the back of the hall and in the street, for the first glimpse of the dreaded figure of Mr. Thomas Gaylord. "Let 'em yell;" counsels Mr. Billings, "and if they do nominate anybody nobody'll hear 'em. And send word to Putnam County to come along on their fifth ballot."

It is Mr. Billings himself who sends word to Putnam County, in the name of the convention's chairman. Before the messenger can reach Putnam County another arrives on the stage, with wide pupils, "Tom Gaylord is coming!" This momentous news, Marconi-like, penetrates the storm, and is already on the floor. Mr. Widgeon and Mr. Redbrook are pushing their way towards the door. The conference, emboldened by terror, marches in a body into the little room, and surrounds the calmly insane Lieutenant-general of the forces; it would be ill-natured to say that visions of lost railroad commissionerships, lost consulships, lost postmasterships, —yes, of lost senatorships, were in these loyal heads at this crucial time.

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It was all very well (so said the first spokesman) to pluck a few feathers from a bird so bountifully endowed as the Honourable Adam, but were not two gentlemen who should be nameless carrying the joke a little too far? Mr. Vane unquestionably realized what he was doing, but—was it not almost time to call in the two gentlemen and—and come to some understanding?

“Gentlemen,” said the Honourable Hilary, apparently unmoved, “I have not seen Mr. Bascom or Mr. Botcher since the sixteenth day of August, and I do not intend to.”

Some clearing of throats followed this ominous declaration,—and a painful silence. The thing must be said and who would say it? Senator Whitredge was the hero.

Mr. Thomas Gaylord has just entered the convention hall, and is said to be about to nominate—a dark horse. The moment was favourable, the convention demoralized, and at least one hundred delegates had left the hall. (How about the last ballot, Senator, which showed 1011?)

The Honourable Hilary rose abruptly, closed the door to shut out the noise, and turned and looked Mr. Whitredge in the eye.

“Who is the dark horse?” he demanded.

The members of the conference coughed again, looked at each other, and there was a silence. For some inexplicable reason, nobody cared to mention the name of Austen Vane.

The Honourable Hilary pointed at the basswood table.

“Senator,” he said, “I understand you have been telephoning Mr. Flint. Have you got orders to sit down there?”

“My dear sir,” said the Senator, “you misunderstand me.”

“Have you got orders to sit down there?” Mr. Vane repeated.

“No,” answered the Senator, “Mr. Flint’s confidence in you—”

The Honourable Hilary sat down again, and at that instant the door was suddenly flung open by Postmaster Bill Fleeting of Brampton, his genial face aflame with excitement and streaming with perspiration. Forgotten, in this moment, is senatorial courtesy and respect for the powers of the feudal system.

“Say, boys,” he cried, “Putnam County’s voting, and there’s be’n no nomination and ain’t likely to be. Jim Scudder, the station-master at Wye, is here on credentials, and he says for sure the thing’s fizzled out, and Tom Gaylord’s left the hall!”

Again a silence, save for the high hum let in through the open doorway. The members of the conference stared at the Honourable Hilary, who seemed to have forgotten their presence; for he had moved his chair to the window, and was gazing out over the roofs at the fast-fading red in the western sky.

An hour later, when the room was in darkness save for the bar of light that streamed in from the platform chandelier, Senator Whitredge entered.

“Hilary!” he said.

There was no answer. Mr. Whitredge felt in his pocket for a match, struck it, and lighted the single jet over the basswood table. Mr. Vane still sat by the window. The senator turned and closed the door, and read from a paper in his hand; so used was he to formality that he read it formally, yet with a feeling of intense relief, of deference, of apology.

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“Fifth ballot:—The Honourable Giles Henderson of Kingston has . . . 587; The Honourable Adam B. Hunt of Edmundton has . . . 230; The Honourable Humphrey Crewe of Leith has . . . 154.

And Giles Henderson is nominated—Hilary?”

“Yes,” said Mr. Vane.

“I don’t think any of us were—quite ourselves to-day. It wasn’t that we didn’t believe in you—but we didn’t have all the threads in our hands, and—for reasons which I think I can understand—you didn’t take us into your confidence. I want to—”

The words died on the senator’s lips. So absorbed had he been in his momentous news, and solicitous over the result of his explanation, that his eye looked outward for the first time, and even then accidentally.

“Hilary!” he cried; “for God’s sake, what’s the matter? Are you sick?”

“Yes, Whitredge,” said Mr. Vane, slowly, “sick at heart.”

It was but natural that these extraordinary and incomprehensible words should have puzzled and frightened the senator more than ever.

“Your heart!” he repeated.

“Yes, my heart,” said Hilary.

The senator reached for the ice-water on the table.

“Here,” he cried, pouring out a glass, “it’s only the heat—it’s been a hard day—drink this.”

But Hilary did not raise his arm. The door opened others coming to congratulate Hilary Vane on the greatest victory he had ever won. Offices were secure once more, the feudal system intact, and rebels justly punished; others coming to make their peace with the commander whom, senseless as they were, they had dared to doubt.

They crowded past each other on the threshold, and stood grouped beyond the basswood table, staring—staring—men suddenly come upon a tragedy instead of a feast, the senator still holding the glass of water in a hand that trembled and spilled it. And it was the senator, after all, who first recovered his presence of mind. He set down the water, pushed his way through the group into the hall, where the tumult and the shouting die. Mr. Giles Henderson, escorted, is timidly making his way towards the platform to read his speech of acceptance of a willing bondage, when a voice rings out: —“If there is a physician in the house, will he please come forward?”

And then a hush,—and then the buzz of comment. Back to the little room once more, where they are gathered speechless about Hilary Vane. And the doctor comes young Dr. Tredway of Ripton, who is before all others.

“I expected this to happen, gentlemen,” he said, “and I have been here all day, at the request of Mr. Vane’s son, for this purpose.”

“Austen!”

It was Hilary who spoke.

“I have sent for him,” said the doctor. “And now, gentlemen, if you will kindly—”

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They withdrew and the doctor shut the door. Outside, the Honourable Giles is telling them how seriously he regards the responsibility of the honour thrust upon him by a great party. But nobody hears him in the wild rumours that fly from mouth to mouth as the hall empties. Rushing in against the tide outpouring, tall, stern, vigorous, is a young man whom many recognize, whose name is on many lips as they make way for him, who might have saved them if he would. The door of the little room opens, and he stands before his father, looking down at him. And the stern expression is gone from his face.

“Austen!” said Mr. Vane.

“Yes, Judge.”

“Take me away from here. Take me home—now—to-night.”

Austen glanced at Dr. Tredway.

“It is best,” said the doctor; “we will take him home—to-night.”

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE VOICE OF AN ERA

They took him home, in the stateroom of the sleeper attached to the night express from the south, although Mr. Flint, by telephone, had put a special train at his disposal. The long service of Hilary Vane was over; he had won his last fight for the man he had chosen to call his master; and those who had fought behind him, whose places, whose very luminary existences, had depended on his skill, knew that the end had come; nay, were already speculating, manoeuvring, and taking sides. Who would be the new Captain-general? Who would be strong enough to suppress the straining ambitions of the many that the Empire might continue to flourish in its integrity and gather tribute? It is the world-old cry around the palace walls: Long live the new ruler—if you can find him among the curdling factions.

They carried Hilary home that September night, when Sawanec was like a gray ghost-mountain facing the waning moon, back to the home of those strange, Renaissance Austens which he had reclaimed for a grim puritanism, and laid him in the carved and canopied bedstead Channing Austen had brought from Spain. Euphrasia had met them at the door, but a trained nurse from the Ripton hospital was likewise in waiting; and a New York specialist had been summoned to prolong, if possible, the life of one from whom all desire for life had passed.

Before sunrise a wind came from the northern spruces; the dawn was cloudless, fiery red, and the air had an autumn sharpness. At ten o’clock Dr. Harmon arrived, was met

at the station by Austen, and spent half an hour with Dr. Tredway. At noon the examination was complete. Thanks to generations of self-denial by the Vanes of Camden Street, Mr. Hilary Vane might live indefinitely, might even recover, partially; but at present he was condemned to remain, with his memories, in the great canopied bed.

The Honourable Hilary had had another caller that morning besides Dr. Harmon,—no less a personage than the president of the Northeastern Railroads himself, who had driven down from Fairview immediately after breakfast. Austen having gone to the station, Dr. Tredway had received Mr. Flint in the darkened hall, and had promised to telephone to Fairview the verdict of the specialist. At present Dr. Tredway did not think it wise to inform Hilary of Mr. Flint's visit—not, at least, until after the examination.

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Mr. Vane exhibited the same silent stoicism on receiving the verdict of Dr. Harmon as he had shown from the first. With the clew to Hilary's life which Dr. Tredway had given him, the New York physician understood the case; one common enough in his practice in a great city where the fittest survive—sometimes only to succumb to unexpected and irreparable blows in the evening of life.

On his return from seeing Dr. Harmon off Austen was met on the porch by Dr. Tredway.

"Your father has something on his mind," said the doctor, "and perhaps it is just as well that he should be relieved. He is asking for you, and I merely wished to advise you to make the conversation as short as possible."

Austen climbed the stairs in obedience to this summons, and stood before his father at the bedside. Hilary lay, back among the pillows, and the brightness of that autumn noonday only served to accentuate the pallor of his face, the ravages of age which had come with such incredible swiftness, and the outline of a once vigorous frame. The eyes alone shone with a strange new light, and Austen found it unexpectedly difficult to speak. He sat down on the bed and laid his hand on the helpless one that rested on the coverlet.

"Austen," said Mr. Vane, "I want you to go to Fairview."

His son's hand tightened over his own.

"Yes, Judge."

"I want you to go now."

"Yes, Judge."

"You know the combination of my safe at the office. It's never been changed since—-since you were there. Open it. You will find two tin boxes, containing papers labelled Augustus P. Flint. I want you to take them to Fairview and put them into the hands of Mr. Flint himself. I—I cannot trust any one else. I promised to take them myself, but—-Flint will understand."

"I'll go right away," said Austen, rising, and trying to speak cheerfully. "Mr. Flint was here early this morning—inquiring for you."

Hilary Vane's lips trembled, and another expression came into his eyes.

"Rode down to look at the scrap-heap,—did he?"

Austen strove to conceal his surprise at his father's words and change of manner.

“Tredway saw him,” he said. “I’m pretty sure Mr. Flint doesn’t feel that way, Judge. He has taken your illness very much to heart, I know, and he left some fruit and flowers for you.”

“I guess his daughter sent those,” said Hilary.

“His daughter?” Austen repeated.

“If I didn’t think so,” Mr. Vane continued, “I’d send ’em back. I never knew what she was until she picked me up and drove me down here. I’ve always done Victoria an injustice.”

Austen walked to the door, and turned slowly.

“I’ll go at once, Judge,” he said.

In the kitchen he was confronted by Euphrasia.

“When is that woman going away?” she demanded. “I’ve took care of Hilary Vane nigh on to forty years, and I guess I know as much about nursing, and more about Hilary, than that young thing with her cap and apron. I told Dr. Tredway so. She even came down here to let me know what to cook for him, and I sent her about her business.”

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Austen smiled. It was the first sign, since his return the night before, Euphrasia had given that an affection for Hilary Vane lurked beneath the nature.

“She won’t stay long, Phrasie,” he answered, and added mischievously, “for a very good reason.”

“And what’s that?” asked Euphrasia.

“Because you won’t allow her to. I have a notion that she’ll pack up and leave in about three days, and that all the doctors in Ripton couldn’t keep her here.”

“Get along with you,” said Euphrasia, who could not for the life of her help looking a little pleased.

“I’m going off for a few hours,” he said more seriously. “Dr. Tredway tells me they do not look for any developments—for the worse.”

“Where are you going?” asked Euphrasia, sharply.

“To Fairview,” he said.

Euphrasia moved the kettle to another part of the stove.

“You’ll see her?” she said.

“Who?” Austen asked. But his voice must have betrayed him a little, for Euphrasia turned and seized him by the elbows and looked up into his face.

“Victoria,” she said.

He felt himself tremble at the name,—at the strangeness of its sound on Euphrasia’s lips.

“I do not expect to see Miss Flint,” he answered, controlling himself as well as he was able. “I have an errand for the Judge with Mr. Flint himself.”

Euphrasia had guessed his secret! But how?

“Hadn’t you better see her?” said Euphrasia, in a curious monotone.

“But I have no errand with her,” he objected, mystified yet excited by Euphrasia’s manner.

“She fetched Hilary home,” said Euphrasia.

“Yes.”

She couldn't have be'n kinder if she was his own daughter."

"I know—" he began, but Euphrasia interrupted.

"She sent that Englishman for the doctor, and waited to take the news to her father, and she came out in this kitchen and talked to me."

Austen started. Euphrasia was not looking at him now, and suddenly she dropped his arms and went to the window overlooking the garden.

"She wouldn't go in the parlour, but come right out here in her fine clothes. I told her I didn't think she belonged in a kitchen—but I guess I did her an injustice," said Euphrasia, slowly.

"I think you did," he said, and wondered.

"She looked at that garden," Euphrasia went on, "and cried out. I didn't callate she was like that. And the first thing I knew I was talking about your mother, and I'd forgot who I was talking to. She wahn't like a stranger—it was just as if I'd known her always. I haven't understood it yet. And after a while I told her about that verse, and she wanted to see it—the verse about the skylark, you know—"

"Yes," said Austen.

"Well, the way she read it made me cry, it brought back Sarah Austen so. Somehow, I can't account for it, she puts me in mind of your mother."

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Austen did not speak.

“In more ways than one,” said Euphrasia. “I didn’t look to find her so natural—and so gentle. And their she has a way of scolding you, just as Sarah Austen had, that you’d never suspect.”

“Did she scold you—Phrasie?” asked Austen. And the irresistible humour that is so near to sorrow made him smile again.

“Indeed she did! And it surprised, me some—coming right out of a summer sky. I told her what I thought about Hilary, and how he’d driven you out of your own mother’s house. She said you’d ought to be sent for, and I said you oughtn’t to set foot in this house until Hilary sent for you. She said I’d no right to take such a revenge—that you’d come right away if you knew Hilary’d had a stroke, and that Hilary’d never send for you—because he couldn’t. She said he was like a man on a desert island.”

“She was right,” answered Austen.

“I don’t know about that,” said Euphrasia; “she hadn’t put up with Hilary for forty years, as I had, and seen what he’d done to your mother and you. But that’s what she said. And she went for you herself, when she found the doctor couldn’t go. Austen, ain’t you going to see her?”

Austen shook his head gently, and smiled at her.

“I’m afraid it’s no use, Phrasie,” he said. “Just because she has been —kind we mustn’t be deceived. It’s h er nature to be kind.”

Euphrasia crossed the room swiftly, and seized his arm again.

“She loves you, Austen,” she cried; “she loves you. Do you think that I’d love her, that I’d plead for her, if she didn’t?”

Austen’s breath came deeply. He disengaged himself, and went to the window.

“No,” he said, “you don’t know. You can’t—know. I have only seen her—a few times. She lives a different life—and with other people. She will marry a man who can give her more.”

“Do you think I could be deceived?” exclaimed Euphrasia, almost fiercely. “It’s as true as the sun shining on that mountain. You believe she loves the Englishman, but I tell you she loves you—you.”

He turned towards her.

“How do you know?” he asked, as though he were merely curious.

“Because I’m a woman, and she’s a woman,” said Euphrasia. “Oh, she didn’t confess it. If she had, I shouldn’t think so much of her. But she told me as plain as though she had spoken it in words, before she left this room.”

Austen shook his head again.

“Phrasie,” he said, “I’m afraid you’ve been building castles in Spain.” And he went out, and across to the stable to harness Pepper.

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Austen did not believe Euphrasia. On that eventful evening when Victoria had called at Jabe Jenney's, the world's aspect had suddenly changed for him; old values had faded,—values which, after all, had been but tints and glows,—and sterner but truer colours took their places. He saw Victoria's life in a new perspective,—one in which his was but a small place in the background of her numerous beneficences; which was, after all, the perspective in which he had first viewed it. But, by degrees, the hope that she loved him had grown and grown until it had become unconsciously the supreme element of his existence,—the hope that stole sweetly into his mind with the morning light, and stayed him through the day, and blended into the dreams of darkness.

By inheritance, by tradition, by habits of thought, Austen Vane was an American,—an American as differentiated from the citizen of any other nation upon the earth. The French have an expressive phrase in speaking of a person as belonging to this or that world, meaning the circle by which the life of an individual is bounded; the true American recognizes these circles—but with complacency, and with a sure knowledge of his destiny eventually to find himself within the one for which he is best fitted by his talents and his tastes. The mere fact that Victoria had been brought up amongst people with whom he had nothing in common would not have deterred Austen Vane from pressing his suit; considerations of honour had stood in the way, and hope had begun to whisper that these might, in the end, be surmounted. Once they had disappeared, and she loved him, that were excuse and reason enough.

And suddenly the sight of Victoria with a probable suitor—who at once had become magnified into an accepted suitor—had dispelled hope. Euphrasia! Euphrasia had been deceived as he had, by a loving kindness and a charity that were natural. But what so natural (to one who had lived the life of Austen Vane) as that she should marry amongst those whose ways of life were her ways? In the brief time in which he had seen her and this other man, Austen's quickened perceptions had detected tacit understanding, community of interest, a habit of thought and manner,—in short, a common language, unknown to him, between the two. And, more than these, the Victoria of the blissful excursions he had known was changed as she had spoken to him—constrained, distant, apart; although still dispensing kindness, going out of her way to bring Hilary home, and to tell him of Hilary's accident. Rumour, which cannot be confined in casks or bottles, had since informed Austen Vane that Mr. Rangely had spent the day with Victoria, and had remained at Fairview far into the evening; rumour went farther (thanks to Mrs. Pomfret) and declared the engagement already an accomplished fact. And to Austen, in the twilight in front of Jabe Jenney's, the affair might well have assumed the proportions of an intimacy of long standing rather than that of the chance acquaintance of an hour. Friends in common, modes of life in common, and incidents in common are apt to sweep away preliminaries.

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Such were Austen's thoughts as he drove to Fairview that September afternoon when the leaves were turning their white backs to the northwest breeze. The sun was still high, and the distant hills and mountains were as yet scarce stained with blue, and stood out in startling clearness against the sky. Would he see her? That were a pain he scarce dared contemplate.

He reached the arched entrance, was on the drive. Here was the path again by which she had come down the hillside; here was the very stone on which she had stood—-awaiting him. Why? Why had she done that? Well-remembered figure amidst the yellow leaves dancing in the sunlight! Here he had stopped, perforce, and here he had looked up into his face and smiled and spoken!

At length he gained the plateau across which the driveway ran, between round young maples, straight to Fairview House, and he remembered the stares from the tea-tables, and how she had come out to his rescue. Now the lawn was deserted, save for a gardener among the shrubs. He rang the stable-bell, and as he waited for an answer to his summons, the sense of his remoteness from these surroundings of hers deepened, and with a touch of inevitable humour he recalled the low-ceiled bedroom at Mr. Jenney's and the kitchen in Hanover Street; the annual cost of the care of that lawn and driveway might well have maintained one of these households.

He told the stable-boy to wait. It is to be remarked as curious that the name of the owner of the house on Austen's lips brought the first thought of him to Austen's mind. He was going to see and speak with Mr. Flint, a man who had been his enemy ever since the day he had come here and laid down his pass on the president's desk; the man who—so he believed until three days ago—had stood between him and happiness. Well, it did not matter now.

Austen followed the silent-moving servant through the hall. Those were the stairs which knew her feet, these the rooms—so subtly flower-scented—she lived in; then came the narrow passage to the sterner apartment of the master himself. Mr. Flint was alone, and seated upright behind the massive oak desk, from which bulwark the president of the Northeastern was wont to meet his opponents and his enemies; and few visitors came into his presence, here or elsewhere, who were not to be got the better of, if possible. A life-long habit had accustomed Mr. Flint to treat all men as adversaries until they were proved otherwise. His square, close-cropped head, his large features, his alert eyes, were those of a fighter.

He did not rise, but nodded. Suddenly Austen was enveloped in a flame of wrath that rose without warning and blinded him, and it was with a supreme effort to control himself that he stopped in the doorway. He was frightened, for he had felt this before, and he knew it for the anger that demands physical violence.

"Come in, Mr. Vane," said the president.

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Austen advanced to the desk, and laid the boxes before Mr. Flint.

“Mr. Vane told me to say that he would have brought these himself, had it been possible. Here is the list, and I shall be much obliged if you will verify it before I go back.”

“Sit down.” said Mr. Flint.

Austen sat down, with the corner of the desk between them, while Mr. Flint opened the boxes and began checking off the papers on the list.

“How is your father this afternoon?” he asked, without looking up.

“As well as can be expected,” said Austen.

“Of course nobody knew his condition but himself,” Mr. Flint continued; “but it was a great shock to me—when he resigned as my counsel three days ago.”

Austen laid his forearm on the desk, and his hand closed.

“He resigned three days ago?” he exclaimed.

Mr. Flint was surprised, but concealed it.

“I can understand, under the circumstances, how he has overlooked telling you. His resignation takes effect to-day.”

Austen was silent a moment, while he strove to apply this fact to his father’s actions.

“He waited until after the convention.”

“Exactly,” said Mr. Flint, catching the implied accusation in Austen’s tone; “and needless to say, if I had been able to prevent his going, in view of what happened on Monday night, I should have done so. As you know, after his—accident, he went to the capital without informing any one.”

“As a matter of honour,” said Austen.

Mr. Flint looked up from the papers, and regarded him narrowly, for the tone in which this was spoken did not escape the president of the Northeastern. He saw, in fact, that at the outset he had put a weapon into Austen’s hands. Hilary’s resignation was a vindication of Austen’s attitude, an acknowledgment that the business and political practices of his life had been wrong.

What Austen really felt, when he had grasped the significance of that fact, was relief—-gratitude. A wave of renewed affection for his father swept over him, of affection and pity and admiration, and for the instant he forgot Mr. Flint.

“As a matter of honour,” Mr. Flint repeated. “Knowing he was ill, Mr. Vane insisted upon going to that convention, even at the risk of his life. It is a fitting close to a splendid career, and one that will not soon be forgotten.”

Austen merely looked at Mr. Flint, who may have found the glance a trifle disconcerting, for he turned to the papers again.

“I repeat,” he went on presently, “that this illness of Mr. Vane’s is not only a great loss to the Northeastern system, but a great blow to me personally. I have been associated with him closely for more than a quarter of a century, and I have never seen a lawyer of greater integrity, clear-headedness, and sanity of view. He saw things as they were, and he did as much to build up the business interests and the prosperity of this State as any man I know of. He was true to his word, and true to his friends.”

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Still Austen did not reply. He continued to look at Mr. Flint, and Mr. Flint continued to check the papers only more slowly. He had nearly finished the first box.

“A wave of political insanity, to put it mildly, seems to be sweeping over this country,” said the president of the Northeastern. “Men who would paralyze and destroy the initiative of private enterprise, men who themselves are ambitious, and either incapable or unsuccessful, have sprung up; writers who have no conscience, whose one idea is to make money out of a passing craze against honest capital, have aided them. Disappointed and dangerous politicians who merely desire office and power have lifted their voices in the hue and cry to fool the honest voter. I am glad to say I believe that the worst of this madness and rascality is over; that the common sense of the people of this country is too great to be swept away by the methods of these self-seekers; that the ordinary man is beginning to see that his bread and butter depends on the brain of the officers who are trying honestly to conduct great enterprises for the benefit of the average citizen.

“We did not expect to escape in this State,” Mr. Flint went on, raising his head and meeting Austen’s look; “the disease was too prevalent and too catching for the weak-minded. We had our self-seekers who attempted to bring ruin upon an institution which has done more for our population than any other. I do not hesitate to speak of the Northeastern Railroads as an institution, and as an institution which has been as conscientiously and conservatively conducted as any in the country, and with as scrupulous a regard for the welfare of all. Hilary Vane, as you doubtless know, was largely responsible for this. My attention, as president of all the roads, has been divided. Hilary Vane guarded the interests in this State, and no man could have guarded them better. He well deserves the thanks of future generations for the uncompromising fight he made against such men and such methods. It has broken him down at a time of life when he has earned repose, but he has the satisfaction of knowing that he has won the battle for conservative American principles, and that he has nominated a governor worthy of the traditions of the State.”

And Mr. Flint started checking off the papers again. Had the occasion been less serious, Austen could have smiled at Mr. Flint’s ruse—so characteristic of the tactics of the president of the Northeastern—of putting him into a position where criticism of the Northeastern and its practices would be criticism of his own father. As it was, he only set his jaw more firmly, an expression indicative of contempt for such tactics. He had not come there to be lectured out of the “Book of Arguments” on the divine right of railroads to govern, but to see that certain papers were delivered in safety.

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Had his purpose been deliberately to enter into a contest with Mr. Flint, Austen could not have planned the early part of it any better than by pursuing this policy of silence. To a man of Mr. Flint's temperament and training, it was impossible to have such an opponent within reach without attempting to hector him into an acknowledgment of the weakness of his position. Further than this, Austen had touched him too often on the quick merely to be considered in the light of a young man who held opposite and unfortunate views—although it was Mr. Flint's endeavour to put him in this light. The list of injuries was too fresh in Mr. Flint's mind—even that last conversation with Victoria, in which she had made it plain that her sympathies were with Austen.

But with an opponent who would not be led into ambush, who had the strength to hold his fire under provocation, it was no easy matter to maintain a height of conscious, matter-of-fact rectitude and implied reproof. Austen's silence, Austen's attitude, declared louder than words the contempt for such manoeuvres of a man who knows he is in the right —and knows that his adversary knows it. It was this silence and this attitude which proclaimed itself that angered Mr. Flint, yet made him warily conceal his anger and change his attack.

"It is some years since we met, Mr. Vane," he remarked presently.

Austen's face relaxed into something of a smile.

"Four, I think," he answered.

"You hadn't long been back from that Western experience. Well, your father has one decided consolation; you have fulfilled his hope that you would settle down here and practise in the State. And I hear that you are fast forging to the front. You are counsel for the Gaylord Company, I believe."

"The result of an unfortunate accident," said Austen; "Mr. Hammer died."

"And on the occasion when you did me the honour to call on me," said Mr. Flint, "if I remember rightly, you expressed some rather radical views —for the son of Hilary Vane."

"For the son of Hilary Vane," Austen agreed, with a smile.

Mr. Flint ignored the implication in the repetition.

"Thinking as mach as I do of Mr. Vane, I confess that your views at that time rather disturbed me. It is a matter of relief to learn that you have refused to lend yourself to the schemes of men like our neighbour, Mr. Humphrey Crewe, of Leith."

"Honesty compels me to admit," answered Austen, "that I did not refrain on Mr. Crewe's account."

“Although,” said Mr. Flint, drumming on the table, “there was some talk that you were to be brought forward as a dark horse in the convention, and as a candidate unfriendly to the interests of the Northeastern Railroads, I am glad you did not consent to be put in any such position. I perceive that a young man of your ability and—popularity, a Vane of Camden Street, must inevitably become a force in this State. And as a force, you must

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retain the conservatism of the Vanes—the traditional conservatism of the State. The Northeastern Railroads will continue to be a very large factor in the life of the people after you and I are gone, Mr. Vane. You will have to live, as it were, with that corporation, and help to preserve it. We shall have to work together, perhaps, to that end—who can say? I repeat, I am glad that your good sense led you to refrain from coming as a candidate before that Convention. There is time enough in the future, and you could not have been nominated."

"On the contrary," answered Austen, quietly, "I could have been nominated."

Mr. Flint smiled knowingly—but with an effort. What a relief it would have been to him to charge horse and foot, to forget that he was a railroad president dealing with a potential power.

"Do you honestly believe that?" he asked.

"I am not accustomed to dissemble my beliefs," said Austen, gravely. "The fact that my father had faith enough in me to count with certainty on my refusal to go before the convention enabled him to win the nomination for the candidate of your railroads."

Mr. Flint continued to smile, but into his eyes had crept a gleam of anger.

"It is easy to say such things—after the convention," he remarked.

"And it would have been impossible to say their before," Austen responded instantly, with a light in his own eyes. "My nomination was the only disturbing factor in the situation for you and the politicians who had your interests in hand, and it was as inevitable as night and day that the forces of the candidates who represented the two wings of the machine of the Northeastern Railroads should have united against Mr. Crewe. I want to say to you frankly that if my father had not been the counsel for your corporation, and responsible for its political success, or if he could have resigned with honour before the convention, I should not have refused to let my name go in. After all," he added, in a lower tone, and with a slight gesture characteristic of him when a subject was distasteful, "it doesn't matter who is elected governor this autumn."

"What?" cried Mr. Flint, surprised out of his attitude as much by Austen's manner as by Austen's words.

"It doesn't matter," said Austen, "whether the Northeastern Railroads have succeeded this time in nominating and electing a governor to whom they can dictate, and who will reappoint railroad commissioners and other State officials in their interests. The practices by which you have controlled this State, Mr. Flint, and elected governors and councillors and State and national senators are doomed. However necessary these

practices may have been from your point of view, they violated every principle of free government, and were they to continue, the nation to which we belong would inevitably decay and become the scorn of the world. Those practices depended for their success on one condition,—which

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in itself is the most serious of ills in a republic,—the ignorance and disregard of the voter. You have but to read the signs of the times to see clearly that the day of such conditions is past, to see that the citizens of this State and this country are thinking for themselves, as they should; are alive to the dangers and determined to avert it. You may succeed in electing one more governor and one more senate, or two, before the people are able to destroy the machinery you have built up and repeal the laws you have made to sustain it. I repeat, it doesn't matter in the long run. The era of political domination by a corporation, and mainly for the benefit of a corporation, is over."

Mr. Flint had been drumming on the desk, his face growing a darker red as Austen proceeded: Never, since he had become president of the Northeastern Railroads, had any man said such things to his face. And the fact that Austen Vane had seemingly not spoken in wrath, although forcefully enough to compel him to listen, had increased Mr. Flint's anger. Austen apparently cared very little for him or his opinions in comparison with his own estimate of right and wrong.

"It seems," said Mr. Flint, "that you have grown more radical since your last visit."

"If it be radical to refuse to accept a pass from a railroad to bind my liberty of action as an attorney and a citizen, then I am radical," replied Austen. "If it be radical to maintain that the elected representatives of the people should not receive passes, or be beholden to any man or any corporation, I acknowledge the term. If it be radical to declare that these representatives should be elected without interference, and while in office should do exact justice to the body of citizens on the one hand and the corporations on the other, I declare myself a radical. But my radicalism goes back behind the establishment of railroads, Mr. Flint, back to the foundation of this government, to the idea from which it sprang."

Mr. Flint smiled again.

"We have changed materially since then," he said. "I am afraid such a utopian state of affairs, beautiful as it is, will not work in the twentieth century. It is a commercial age, and the interests which are the bulwark of the country's strength must be protected."

"Yes," said Austen, "we have changed materially. The mistake you make, and men like you, is the stress which you lay on that word material. Are there no such things as moral interests, Mr. Flint? And are they not quite as important in government, if not more important, than material interests? Surely, we cannot have commercial and political stability without cominertial and political honour! if, as a nation, we lose sight of the ideals which have carried us so far, which have so greatly modified the conditions of other peoples than ourselves, we shall perish as a force in the world. And if this government proves a failure, how long do you think the material interests of which you

are so solicitous will endure? Or do you care whether they endure beyond your lifetime? Perhaps not. But it is a matter of importance, not only to the nation, but to the world, whether or not the moral idea of the United States of America is perpetuated, I assure you."

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“I begin to fear, Mr. Vane,” said the president of the Northeastern, “that you have missed your vocation. Suppose I were to grant you, for the sake of argument, that the Northeastern Railroads, being the largest taxpayers in this State, have taken an interest in seeing that conservative men fill responsible offices. Suppose such to be the case, and we abruptly cease—to take such an interest. What then? Are we not at the mercy of any and all unscrupulous men who build up a power of their own, and start again the blackmail of the old days?”

“You have put the case mildly,” said Austen, and ingeniously. “As a matter of fact, Mr. Flint, you know as well as I do that for years you have governed this State absolutely, for the purpose of keeping down your taxes, avoiding unnecessary improvements for safety and comfort, and paying high dividends—”

“Perhaps you realize that in depicting these criminal operations so graphically,” cried Mr. Flint, interrupting, “you are involving the reputation of one of the best citizens the State ever had—your own father.”

Austen Vane leaned forward across the desk, and even Mr. Flint (if the truth were known) recoiled a little before the anger he had aroused. It shot forth from Austen’s eyes, proclaimed itself in the squareness of the face, and vibrated in every word he spoke.

“Mr. Flint,” he said, “I refrain from comment upon your methods of argument. There were many years in which my father believed the practices which he followed in behalf of your railroad to be necessary—and hence justified. And I have given you the credit of holding the same belief. Public opinion would not, perhaps, at that time have protected your property from political blackmail. I merely wished you to know, Mr. Flint, that there is no use in attempting to deceive me in regard to the true colour of those practices. It is perhaps useless for me to add that in my opinion you understand as well as I do the real reason for Mr. Vane’s resignation and illness. Once he became convinced that the practices were wrong, he could no longer continue them without violating his conscience. He kept his word to you—at the risk of his life, and, as his son, I take a greater pride in him to-day than I ever have before.”

Austen got to his feet. He was formidable even to Mr. Flint, who had met many formidable, and angry men in his time—although not of this type. Perhaps—who can say?—he was the in the mind of the president unconscious embodiment of the Northeastern of the new forces which had arisen against him,—forces which he knew in his secret soul he could not combat, because they were the irresistible forces of things not material. All his life he had met and successfully conquered forces of another kind, and put down with a strong hand merely physical encroachments.

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Mr. Flint's nature was not an introspective one, and if he had tried, he could not have accounted for his feelings. He was angry—that was certain. But he measured the six feet and more of Austen Vane with his eye, and in spite of himself experienced the compelled admiration of one fighting man for another. A thought, which had made itself vaguely felt at intervals in the past half hour, shot suddenly and poignantly through Mr. Flint's mind what if this young man, who dared in spite of every interest to oppose him, should in the apparently inevitable trend of things, become...?

Mr. Flint rose and went to the window, where he stood silent for a space, looking out, played upon by unwonted conflicting thoughts and emotions. At length, with a characteristic snap of the fingers, he turned abruptly. Austen Vane was still standing beside the desk. His face was still square, determined, but Mr. Flint noted curiously that the anger was gone from his eyes, and that another—although equally human—-expression had taken its place,—a more disturbing expression, to Mr. Flint.

"It appears, Mr. Vane," he said, gathering up the papers and placing them in the boxes, "it appears that we are able to agree upon one point, at least—Hilary Vane."

"Mr. Flint," said Austen, "I did not come up here with any thought of arguing with you, of intruding any ideas—I may hold, but you have yourself asked me one question which I feel bound to answer to the best of my ability before I go. You have asked me what, in my opinion, would happen if you ceased—as you express it—to take an interest in the political, affairs of this State.

"I believe, as firmly as I stand here, that the public opinion which exists to-day would protect your property, and I base that belief on the good sense of the average American voter. The public would protect you not only in its own interests, but from an inherent sense of fair play. On the other hand, if you persist in a course of political manipulation which is not only obsolete but wrong, you will magnify the just charges against you, and the just wrath; you will put ammunition into the hands of the agitators you rightly condemn. The stockholders of your corporation, perhaps, are bound to suffer some from the fact that you have taken its life-blood to pay dividends, and the public will demand that it be built up into a normal and healthy condition. On the other hand, it could not have gone on as it was. But the corporation will suffer much more if a delayed justice is turned into vengeance.

"You ask me what I could do. I should recognize, frankly, the new conditions, and declare as frankly what the old ones were, and why such methods of defence as you adopted were necessary and justified. I should announce, openly, that from this day onward the Northeastern Railroads depended for fair play on an enlightened public—-and I think your trust would be well founded, and your course vindicated.

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I should declare, from this day onward, that the issue of political passes, newspaper passes, and all other subterfuges would be stopped, and that all political hirelings would be dismissed. I should appeal to the people of this State to raise up political leaders who would say to the corporations, 'We will protect you from injustice if you will come before the elected representatives of the people, openly, and say what you want and why you want it.' By such a course you would have, in a day, the affection of the people instead of their distrust. They would rally to your defence. And, more than that, you would have done a service for American government the value of which cannot well be estimated."

Mr. Flint rang the bell on his desk, and his secretary appeared.

"Put these in my private safe, Mr. Freeman," he said.

Mr. Freeman took the boxes, glanced curiously at Austen, and went out. It was the same secretary, Austen recalled, who had congratulated him four years before. Then Mr. Flint laid his hand deliberately on the desk, and smiled slightly as he turned to Austen.

"If you had run a railroad as long as I have, Mr. Vane," he said, "I do you the credit of thinking that you would have intelligence enough to grasp other factors which your present opportunities for observation have not permitted you to perceive. Nevertheless, I am much obliged to you for your opinion, and I value the—frankness in which it was given. And I shall hope to hear good news of your father. Remember me to him, and tell him how deeply I feel his affliction. I shall call again in a day or two."

Austen took up his hat.

"Good day, Mr. Flint," he said; "I will tell him."

By the time he had reached the door, Mr. Flint had gone back to the window once more, and appeared to have forgotten his presence.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE VALE OF THE BLUE

Austen himself could not well have defined his mental state as he made his way through the big rooms towards the door, but he was aware of one main desire—to escape from Fairview. With the odours of the flowers in the tall silver vases on the piano—her piano! —the spirit of desire which had so long possessed him, waking and sleeping, returned, —returned to torture him now with greater skill amidst these her possessions; her

volume of Chopin on the rack, bound in red leather and stamped with her initials, which compelled his glance as he passed, and brought vivid to his memory the night he had stood in the snow and heard her playing. So, he told himself, it must always be, for him to stand in the snow listening.

He reached the hall, with a vast relief perceived that it was empty, and opened the door and went out. Strange that he should note, first of all, as he parsed a moment at the top of the steps, that the very day had changed. The wind had fallen; the sun, well on his course towards the rim of western hills, poured the golden light of autumn over field and forest, while Sawanec was already in the blue shadow; the expectant stillness of autumn reigned, and all unconsciously Austen's blood was quickened though a quickening of pain.

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The surprise of the instant over, he noticed that his horse was gone, —had evidently been taken to the stables. And rather than ring the bell and wait in the mood in which he found himself, he took the path through the shrubbery from which he had seen the groom emerge.

It turned beyond the corner of the house, descended a flight of stone steps, and turned again.

They stood gazing each at the other for a space of time not to be computed before either spoke, and the sense of unreality which comes with a sudden fulfilment of intense desire—or dread—was upon Austen. Could this indeed be her figure, and this her face on which he watched the colour rise (so he remembered afterwards) like the slow flood of day? Were there so many Victorias, that a new one—and a strange one—should confront him at every meeting? And, even while he looked, this Victoria, too,—one who had been near him and departed,—was surveying him now from an unapproachable height of self-possession and calm. She held out her hand, and he took it, scarce knowing—that it was hers.

“How do you do, Mr. Vane?” she said; “I did not expect to meet you here.”

“I was searching for the stable, to get my horse,” he answered lamely.

“And your father?” she asked quickly; “I hope he is not—worse.”

It was thus she supplied him, quite naturally, with an excuse for being at Fairview. And yet her solicitude for Hilary was wholly unaffected.

“Dr. Harmon, who came from New York, has been more encouraging than I had dared to hope,” said Austen. “And, by the way, Mr. Vane believes that you had a share in the fruit and flowers which Mr. Flint so kindly brought. If—he had known that I were to see you, I am sure he would have wished me to thank you.”

Victoria turned, and tore a leaf from the spiraea.

“I will show you where the stables are,” she said; “the path divides a little farther on—-and you might find yourself in the kitchen.”

Austen smiled, and as she went on slowly, he followed her, the path not being wide enough for them to walk abreast, his eyes caressing the stray hairs that clustered about her neck and caught the light. It seemed so real, and yet so unrealizable, that he should be here with her.

“I am afraid,” he said, “that I did not express my gratitude as I should have done the evening you were good enough to come up to Jabe Jenney’s.”

He saw her colour rise again, but she did not pause.

“Please don’t say anything about it, Mr. Vane. Of course I understand how you felt,” she cried.

“Neither my father nor myself will forget that service,” said Austen.

“It was nothing,” answered Victoria, in a low voice. “Or, rather, it was something I shall always be glad that I did not miss. I have seen Mr. Vane all my life, but I never=-never really knew him until that day. I have come to the conclusion,” she added, in a lighter tone, “that the young are not always the best judges of the old. There,” she added, “is the path that goes to the kitchen, which you probably would have taken.”

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He laughed. Past and future were blotted out, and he lived only in the present. He could think of nothing but that she was here beside him. Afterwards, cataclysms might come and welcome.

“Isn’t there another place,” he asked, “where I might lose my way?”

She turned and gave him one of the swift, searching looks he recalled so well: a look the meaning of which he could not declare, save that she seemed vainly striving to fathom something in him—as though he were not fathomable! He thought she smiled a little as she took the left-hand path.

“You will remember me to your father?” she said. “I hope he is not suffering.”

“He is not suffering,” Austen replied. “Perhaps—if it were not too much to ask—perhaps you might come to see him, sometime? I can think of nothing that would give him greater pleasure.”

“I will come—sometime,” she answered. “I am going away to-morrow, but—”

“Away?” he repeated, in dismay. Now that he was beside her, all unconsciously the dominating male spirit which was so strong in him, and which moves not woman alone, but the world, was asserting itself. For the moment he was the only man, and she the only woman, in the universe.

“I am going on a promised visit to a friend of mine.”

“For how long?” he demanded.

“I don’t know, said Victoria, calmly; probably until she gets tired of me. And there,” she added, “are the stables, where no doubt you will find your faithful Pepper.”

They had come out upon an elevation above the hard service drive, and across it, below them, was the coach house with its clock-tower and weather-vane, and its two wings, enclosing a paved court where a whistling stable-boy was washing a carriage. Austen regarded this scene an instant, and glanced back at her profile. It was expressionless.

“Might I not linger—a few minutes?” he asked.

Her lips parted slightly in a smile, and she turned her head. How wonderfully, he thought, it was poised upon her shoulders.

“I haven’t been very hospitable, have I?” she said. But then, you seemed in such a hurry to go, didn’t you? You were walking so fast when I met you that you quite frightened me.”

“Was I?” asked Austen, in surprise.

She laughed.

“You looked as if you were ready to charge somebody. But this isn’t a very nice place—to linger, and if you really will stay awhile,” said Victoria, “we might walk over to the dairy, where that model protege of yours, Eben Fitch, whom you once threatened with corporal chastisement if he fell from grace, is engaged. I know he will be glad to see you.”

Austen laughed as he caught up with her. She was already halfway across the road.

“Do you always beat people if they do wrong?” she asked.

“It was Eben who requested it, if I remember rightly,” he said. “Fortunately, the trial has not yet arrived. Your methods,” he added, “seem to be more successful with Eben.”

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They went down the grassy slope with its groups of half-grown trees; through an orchard shot with slanting, yellow sunlight,—the golden fruit, harvested by the morning winds, littering the ground; and then by a gate into a dimpled, emerald pasture slope where the Guernseys were feeding along a water run. They spoke of trivial things that found no place in Austen's memory, and at times, upon one pretext or another, he fell behind a little that he might feast his eyes upon her.

Eben was not at the dairy, and Austen betraying no undue curiosity as to his whereabouts, they walked on up the slopes, and still upward towards the crest of the range of hills that marked the course of the Blue. He did not allow his mind to dwell upon this new footing they were on, but clung to it. Before, in those delicious moments with her, seemingly pilfered from the angry gods, the sense of intimacy had been deep; deep, because robbing the gods together, they had shared the feeling of guilt, had known that retribution would coma. And now the gods had locked their treasure-chest, although themselves powerless to redeem from him the memory of what he had gained. Nor could they, apparently, deprive him of the vision of her in the fields and woods beside him, though transformed by their magic into a new Victoria, keeping him lightly and easily at a distance.

Scattering the sheep that flecked the velvet turf of the uplands, they stood at length on the granite crown of the crest itself. Far below them wound the Blue into its vale of sapphire shadows, with its hillsides of the mystic fabric of the backgrounds of the masters of the Renaissance. For a while they stood in silence under the spell of the scene's enchantment, and then Victoria seated herself on the rock, and he dropped to a place at her side.

"I thought you would like the view," she said; "but perhaps you have been here, perhaps I am taking you to one of your own possessions."

He had flung his hat upon the rock, and she glanced at his serious, sunburned face. His eyes were still fixed, contemplatively, on the Yale of the Blue, but he turned to her with a smile.

"It has become yours by right of conquest," he answered.

She did not reply to that. The immobility of her face, save for the one look she had flashed upon him, surprised and puzzled him more and more —the world—old, indefinable, eternal feminine quality of the Spring.

"So you refused to be governor? she said presently,—surprising him again.

"It scarcely came to that," he replied.

"What did it come to?" she demanded.

He hesitated.

“I had to go down to the capital, on my father’s account, but I did not go to the convention. I stayed,” he said slowly, “at the little cottage across from the Duncan house where—you were last winter.” He paused, but she gave no sign. “Tom Gaylord came up there late in the afternoon, and wanted me to be a candidate.”

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“And you refused?”

“Yes.”

“But you could have been nominated!”

“Yes,” he admitted; “it is probable. The conditions were chaotic.”

“Are you sure you have done right?” she asked. “It has always seemed to me from what I know and have heard of you that you were made for positions of trust. You would have been a better governor than the man they have nominated.”

His expression became set.

“I am sure I have done right,” he answered deliberately. “It doesn’t make any difference who is governor this time.”

“Doesn’t make any difference!” she exclaimed.

“No,” he said. “Things have changed—the people have changed. The old method of politics, which was wrong, although it had some justification in conditions, has gone out. A new and more desirable state of affairs has come. I am at liberty to say this much to you now,” he added, fixing his glance upon her, “because my father has resigned as counsel for the Northeastern, and I have just had a talk with—Mr. Flint.”

“You have seen my father?” she asked, in a low voice, and her face was averted.

“Yes,” he answered.

“You—did not agree,” she said quickly.

His blood beat higher at the question and the manner of her asking it, but he felt that he must answer it honestly, unequivocally, whatever the cost.

“No, we did not agree. It is only fair to tell you that we differed —vitally. On the other hand, it is just that you should know that we did not part in anger, but, I think, with a mutual respect.”

She drew breath.

“I knew,” she said, “I knew if he could but talk to you he would understand that you were sincere—and you have proved it. I am glad—I am glad that you saw him.” The quality of the sunlight changed, the very hills leaped, and the river sparkled. Could she care? Why did she wish her father to know that he was sincere.

“You are glad that I saw him!” he repeated.

But she met his glance steadily.

“My father has so little faith in human nature,” she answered. “He has a faculty of doubting the honesty of his opponents—I suppose because so many of them have been dishonest. And—I believe in my friends,” she added, smiling. “Isn’t it natural that I should wish to have my judgment vindicated?”

He got to his feet and walked slowly to the far edge of the rock, where he stood for a while, seemingly gazing off across the spaces to Sawanec. It was like him, thus to question the immutable. Victoria sat motionless, but her eyes followed irresistibly the lines of power in the tall figure against the sky—the breadth of shoulder and slimness of hip and length of limb typical of the men who had conquered and held this land for their descendants. Suddenly, with a characteristic movement of determination; he swung about and came towards her, and at the same instant she rose.

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“Don’t you think we should be going back?” she said.

Rut he seemed not to hear her.

“May I ask you something?” he said.

“That depends,” she answered.

“Are you going to marry Mr. Rangely?”

“No,” she said, and turned away. “Why did you think that?”

He quivered.

“Victoria!”

She looked up at him, swiftly, half revealed, her eyes like stars surprised by the flush of dawn in her cheeks. Hope quickened at the vision of hope, the seats of judgment themselves were filled with radiance, and rumour, cowered and fled like the spirit of night. He could only gaze, enraptured.

“Yes?” she answered.

His voice was firm but low, yet vibrant with sincerity, with the vast store of feeling, of compelling magnetism that was in the man and moved in spite of themselves those who knew him. His words Victoria remembered afterwards—all of them; but it was to the call of the voice she responded. His was the fibre which grows stronger in times of crisis. Sure of himself, proud of the love which he declared, he spoke as a man who has earned that for which he prays,—simply and with dignity.

“I love you,” he said; “I have known it since I have known you, but you must see why I could not tell you so. It was very hard, for there were times when I led myself to believe that you might come to love me. There were times when I should have gone away if I hadn’t made a promise to stay in Ripton. I ask you to marry me, because I—know that I shall love you as long as I live. I can give you this, at least, and I can promise to protect and cherish you. I cannot give you that to which you have been accustomed all your life, that which you have here at Fairview, but I shouldn’t say this to you if I believed that you cared for them above —other things.”

“Oh, Austen!” she cried, “I do not—I—do not! They would be hateful to me—without you. I would rather live with you—at Jabe Jenney’s,” and her voice caught in an exquisite note between laughter and tears. “I love you, do you understand, you! Oh, how could you ever have doubted it? How could you? What you believe, I believe. And, Austen, I have been so unhappy for three days.”

He never knew whether, as the most precious of graces ever conferred upon man, with a womanly gesture she had raised her arms and laid her hands upon his shoulders before he drew her to him and kissed her face, that vied in colour with the coming glow in the western sky. Above the prying eyes of men, above the world itself, he held her, striving to realize some little of the vast joy of this possession, and failing. And at last she drew away from him, gently, that she might look searchingly into his face again, and shook her head slowly.

“And you were going away,” she said, “without a word I thought—you didn’t care. How could I have known that you were just—stupid?”

His eyes lighted with humour and tenderness.

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“How long have you cared, Victoria?” he asked.

She became thoughtful.

“Always, I think,” she answered; “only I didn’t know it. I think I loved you even before I saw you.”

“Before you saw me!”

“I think it began,” said Victoria, “when I learned that you had shot Mr. Blodgett—only I hope you will never do such a thing again. And you will please try to remember,” she added, after a moment, “that I am neither Eben Fitch nor your friend, Tom Gaylord.”

Sunset found them seated on the rock, with the waters of the river turned to wine at the miracle in the sky their miracle. At times their eyes wandered to the mountain, which seemed to regard them from a discreet distance—with a kindly and protecting majesty.

“And you promised,” said Victoria, “to take me up there. When will you do it?”

“I thought you were going away,” he replied.

“Unforeseen circumstances,” she answered, “have compelled me to change my plans.”

“Then we will go tomorrow,” he said.

“To the Delectable Land,” said Victoria, dreamily; “your land, where we shall be—-benevolent despots. Austen?”

“Yes?” He had not ceased to thrill at the sound of his name upon her lips.

“Do you think,” she asked, glancing at him, “do you think you have money enough to go abroad—just for a little while?”

He laughed joyously.

“I don’t know,” he said, “but I shall make it a point to examine my bank-account to-night. I haven’t done so—for some time.”

“We will go to Venice, and drift about in a gondola on one of those gray days when the haze comes in from the Adriatic and touches the city with the magic of the past. Sometimes I like the gray days best—when I am happy. And then,” she added, regarding him critically, “although you are very near perfection, there are some things you ought to see and learn to make your education complete. I will take you to all the queer places I love. When you are ambassador to France, you know, it would be humiliating to have to have an interpreter, wouldn’t it?”

“What’s the use of both of us knowing the language?” he demanded.

“I’m afraid we shall be—too happy,” she sighed, presently.

“Too happy!” he repeated.

“I sometimes wonder,” she said, “whether happiness and achievement go together. And yet—I feel sure that you will achieve.”

“To please you, Victoria,” he answered, “I think I should almost be willing to try.”

CHAPTER XXX

P.S.

By request of one who has read thus far, and is still curious.

Yes, and another who, in spite of himself, has fallen in love with Victoria and would like to linger a while longer, even though it were with the paltry excuse of discussing that world-old question of hers—Can sublime happiness and achievement go together? Novels on the problem of sex nowadays often begin with marriages, but rarely discuss the happy ones; and many a woman is forced to sit wistfully at home while her companion soars.

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“Yet may I look with heart unshook
On blow brought home or missed—
Yet may I hear with equal ear
The clarions down the List;
Yet set my lance above mischance
And ride the barriere—
Oh, hit or miss, how little ’tis,
My Lady is not there!”

A verse, in this connection, which may be a perversion of Mr. Kipling’s meaning, but not so far from it, after all. And yet, would the eagle attempt the great flights if contentment were on the plain? Find the mainspring of achievement, and you hold in your hand the secret of the world’s mechanism. Some aver that it is woman.

Do the gods ever confer the rarest of gifts upon him to whom they have given pinions? Do they mate him, ever, with another who soars as high as he, who circles higher that he may circle higher still? Who can answer? Must those who soar be condemned to eternal loneliness, and was it a longing they did not comprehend which bade them stretch their wings toward the sun? Who can say?

Alas, we cannot write of the future of Austen and Victoria Vane! We can only surmise, and hope, and pray,—yes, and believe. Romance walks with parted lips and head raised to the sky; and let us follow her, because thereby our eyes are raised with hers. We must believe, or perish.

Postscripts are not fashionable. The satiated theatre goer leaves before the end of the play, and has worked out the problem for himself long before the end of the last act. Sentiment is not supposed to exist in the orchestra seats. But above (in many senses) is the gallery, from whence an excited voice cries out when the sleeper returns to life, “It’s Rip Van Winkle!” The gallery, where are the human passions which make this world our world; the gallery, played upon by anger, vengeance, derision, triumph, hate, and love; the gallery, which lingers and applauds long after the fifth curtain, and then goes reluctantly home—to dream. And he who scorns the gallery is no artist, for there lives the soul of art. We raise our eyes to it, and to it we dedicate this our play;—and for it we lift the curtain once more after those in the orchestra have departed.

It is obviously impossible, in a few words, to depict the excitement in Ripton, in Leith, in the State at large, when it became known that the daughter of Mr. Flint was to marry Austen Vane,—a fitting if unexpected climax to a drama. How would Mr. Flint take it? Mr. Flint, it may be said, took it philosophically; and when Austen went up to see him upon this matter, he shook hands with his future son-in-law,—and they agreed to disagree. And beyond this it is safe to say that Mr. Flint was relieved; for in his secret soul he had for many years entertained a dread that Victoria might marry a foreigner. He had this consolation at any rate.

His wife denied herself for a day to her most intimate friends,—for it was she who had entertained visions of a title; and it was characteristic of the Rose of Sharon that she knew nothing of the Vanes beyond the name. The discovery that the Austens were the oldest family in the State was in the nature of a balm; and henceforth, in speaking of Austen, she never failed to mention the fact that his great-grandfather was Minister to Spain in the ’30’s,—a period when her own was engaged in a far different calling.

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And Hilary Vane received the news with a grim satisfaction, Dr. Tredway believing that it had done more for him than any medicine or specialists. And when, one warm October day, Victoria herself came and sat beside the canopied bed, her conquest was complete: he surrendered to her as he had never before surrendered to man or woman or child, and the desire to live surged back into his heart,—the desire to live for Austen and Victoria. It became her custom to drive to Ripton in the autumn mornings and to sit by the hour reading to Hilary in the mellow sunlight in the lee of the house, near Sarah Austen's little garden. Yes, Victoria believed she had developed in him a taste for reading; although he would have listened to Emerson from her lips.

And sometimes, when she paused after one of his long silences to glance at him, she would see his eyes fixed, with a strange rapt look, on the garden or the dim lavender form of Sawanec through the haze, and knew that he was thinking of a priceless thing which he had once possessed, and missed. Then Victoria would close the volume, and fall to dreaming, too.

What was happiness? Was it contentment? If it were, it might endure, —contentment being passive. But could active, aggressive, exultant joy exist for a lifetime, jealous of its least prerogative, perpetually watchful for its least abatement, singing unending anthems on its conquest of the world? The very intensity of her feelings at such times sobered Victoria—alarmed her. Was not perfection at war with the world's scheme, and did not achievement spring from a void?

But when Austen appeared, with Pepper, to drive her home to Fairview, his presence never failed to revive the fierce faith that it was his destiny to make the world better, and hers to help him. Wondrous afternoons they spent together in that stillest and most mysterious of seasons in the hill country—autumn! Autumn and happiness! Happiness as shameless as the flaunting scarlet maples on the slopes, defiant of the dying year of the future, shadowy and unreal as the hills before them in the haze. Once, after a long silence, she started from a revery with the sudden consciousness of his look intent upon her, and turned with parted lips and eyes which smiled at him out of troubled depths.

"Dreaming, Victoria?" he said.

"Yes," she answered simply, and was silent once more. He loved these silences of hers,—hinting, as they did, of unexplored chambers in an inexhaustible treasure-house which by some strange stroke of destiny was his. And yet he felt at times the vague sadness of them, like the sadness of the autumn, and longed to dispel it.

"It is so wonderful," she went on presently, in a low voice, "it is so wonderful I sometimes think that it must be like—like this; that it cannot last. I have been wondering whether we shall be as happy when the world discovers that you are great."

He shook his head at her slowly, in mild reproof.

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“Isn’t that borrowing trouble, Victoria?” he said. “I think you need have no fear of finding the world as discerning as yourself.”

She searched his face.

“Will you ever change?” she asked.

“Yes,” he said. “No man can stand such flattery as that without deteriorating, I warn you. I shall become consequential, and pompous, and altogether insupportable, and then you will leave me and never realize that it has been all your fault.”

Victoria laughed. But there was a little tremor in her voice, and her eyes still rested on his face.

“But I am serious, Austen,” she said. “I sometimes feel that, in the future, we shall not always have many such days as these. It’s selfish, but I can’t help it. There are so many things you will have to do without me. Don’t you ever think of that?”

His eyes grew grave, and he reached out and took her hand in his.

“I think, rather, of the trials life may bring, Victoria,” he answered, “of the hours when judgment halts, when the way is not clear. Do you remember the last night you came to Jabe Jenney’s? I stood in the road long after you had gone, and a desolation such as I had never known came over me. I went in at last, and opened a book to some verses I had been reading, which I shall never forget. Shall I tell you what they were?”

“Yes,” she whispered.

“They contain my answer to your question,” he said.

> “What became of all the hopes,
> Words and song and lute as well?
> Say, this struck you ’When life gropes
> Feebly for the path where fell
> Light last on the evening slopes,
>
> “’One friend in that path shall be,
> To secure my step from wrong;
> One to count night day for me,
> Patient through the watches long,
> Serving most with none to see.’”

“Victoria, can you guess who that friend is?”

She pressed his hand and smiled at him, but her eyes were wet.

“I have thought of it in that way, too, dear. But—but I did not know that you had. I do not think that many men have that point of view, Austen.”

“Many men,” he answered, “have not the same reason to be thankful as I.”

There is a time, when the first sharp winds which fill the air with flying leaves have come and gone, when the stillness has come again, and the sunlight is tinged with a yellower gold, and the pastures are still a vivid green, and the mountain stained with a deeper blue than any gem, called Indian summer. And it was in this season that Victoria and Austen were married, in a little church at Tunbridge, near Fairview, by the bishop of the diocese, who was one of Victoria’s dearest friends. Mr. Thomas Gaylord (for whose benefit there were many rehearsals) was best man, Miss Beatrice Chillingham maid of honour; and it was unanimously declared by Victoria’s bridesmaids, who came up from New York, that they had fallen in love with the groom.

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How describe the wedding breakfast and festivities at Fairview House, on a November day when young ladies could walk about the lawns in the filmiest of gowns! how recount the guests and leave out no friends—for none were left out! Mr. Jabe Jenney and Mrs. Jenney, who wept as she embraced both bride and groom; and Euphrasia, in a new steel-coloured silk and a state of absolute subjection and incredulous happiness. Would that there were time to chronicle that most amazing of conquests of Victoria over Euphrasia! And Mrs. Pomfret, who, remarkable as it may seem, not only recognized Austen without her lorgnette, but quite overwhelmed him with an unexpected cordiality, and declared her intention of giving them a dinner in New York.

“My dear,” she said, after kissing Victoria twice, “he is most distinguished-looking—I had no idea—and a person who grows upon one. And I am told he is descended from Channing Austen, of whom I have often heard my grandfather speak. Victoria, I always had the greatest confidence in your judgment.”

Although Victoria had a memory (what woman worth her salt has not?), she was far too happy to remind Mrs. Pomfret of certain former occasions, and merely smiled in a manner which that lady declared to be enigmatic. She maintained that she had never understood Victoria, and it was characteristic of Mrs. Pomfret that her respect increased in direct proportion to her lack of understanding.

Mr. Thomas Gaylord, in a waistcoat which was the admiration of all who beheld it, proposed the health of the bride; and proved indubitably that the best of oratory has its origin in the heart and not in the mind,—for Tom had never been regarded by his friends as a Demosthenes. He was interrupted from time to time by shouts of laughter; certain episodes in the early career of Mr. Austen Vane (in which, if Tom was to be believed, he was an unwilling participant) were particularly appreciated. And shortly after that, amidst a shower of miscellaneous articles and rice, Mr. and Mrs. Vane took their departure.

They drove through the yellow sunlight to Ripton, with lingering looks at the hills which brought back memories of boys and sorrows, and in Hanover Street bade good-by to Hilary Vane. A new and strange contentment shone in his face as he took Victoria’s hands in his, and they sat with him until Euphrasia came. It was not until they were well on their way to New York that they opened the letter he had given them, and discovered that it contained something which would have enabled them to remain in Europe the rest of their lives had they so chosen.

We must leave them amongst the sunny ruins of Italy and Greece and southern France, on a marvellous journey that was personally conducted by Victoria.

Mr. Crewe was unable to go to the wedding, having to attend a directors’ meeting of some importance in the West. He is still in politics, and still hopeful; and he was married, not long afterwards, to Miss Alice Pomfret.

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PG EDITOR'S BOOKMARKS:

Fame sometimes comes in the line of duty
Genius is almost one hundred percent directness
In a frenzy of anticipation, garnished and swept the room
It's noble, but it don't pay
Treason to party he regarded with a deep-seated abhorrence
Battles of selfish interests ebbed and flowed
A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds
His strength was his imperviousness to this kind of a remark
Many a silent tear of which they knew nothing
Politicians are politicians; they have always been corrupt
Gratitude, however, is one of the noblest qualities of man
One of your persistent fallacies is, that I'm still a boy
The burden of the valley of vision
Thrice-blessed State, in which there were now three reform candidates
Years of regrets for that which might have been

A FAR COUNTRY

By Winston Churchill

BOOK 1.

I.

My name is Hugh Paret. I was a corporation lawyer, but by no means a typical one, the choice of my profession being merely incidental, and due, as will be seen, to the accident of environment. The book I am about to write might aptly be called The Autobiography of a Romanticist. In that sense, if in no other, I have been a typical American, regarding my country as the happy hunting-ground of enlightened self-interest, as a function of my desires. Whether or not I have completely got rid of this romantic virus I must leave to those the aim of whose existence is to eradicate it from our literature and our life. A somewhat Augean task!

I have been impelled therefore to make an attempt at setting forth, with what frankness and sincerity I may, with those powers of selection of which I am capable, the life I have lived in this modern America; the passions I have known, the evils I have done. I endeavour to write a biography of the inner life; but in order to do this I shall have to relate those causal experiences of the outer existence that take place in the world of space and time, in the four walls of the home, in the school and university, in the noisy streets, in the realm of business and politics. I shall try to set down, impartially, the motives that have impelled my actions, to reveal in some degree the amazing mixture of

good and evil which has made me what I am to-day: to avoid the tricks of memory and resist the inherent desire to present myself other and better than I am. Your American romanticist is a sentimental spoiled child who believes in miracles, whose needs are mostly baubles, whose desires are dreams. Expediency is his motto. Innocent of a knowledge of the principles of the universe, he lives in a state of ceaseless activity, admitting no limitations, impatient of all restrictions. What he wants, he wants very badly indeed. This wanting things was the corner-stone of my character, and I believe that the science of the future will bear me out when I say that it might have been differently built upon. Certain it is that the system of education in vogue in the 70's and 80's never contemplated the search for natural corner-stones.

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At all events, when I look back upon the boy I was, I see the beginnings of a real person who fades little by little as manhood arrives and advances, until suddenly I am aware that a stranger has taken his place....

I lived in a city which is now some twelve hours distant from the Atlantic seaboard. A very different city, too, it was in youth, in my grandfather's day and my father's, even in my own boyhood, from what it has since become in this most material of ages.

There is a book of my photographs, preserved by my mother, which I have been looking over lately. First is presented a plump child of two, gazing in smiling trustfulness upon a world of sunshine; later on a lean boy in plaided kilts, whose wavy, chestnut-brown hair has been most carefully parted on the side by Norah, his nurse. The face is still childish. Then appears a youth of fourteen or thereabout in long trousers and the queerest of short jackets, standing beside a marble table against a classic background; he is smiling still in undiminished hope and trust, despite increasing vexations and crossings, meaningless lessons which had to be learned, disciplines to rack an aspiring soul, and long, uncomfortable hours in the stiff pew of the First Presbyterian Church. Associated with this torture is a peculiar Sunday smell and the faint rustling of silk dresses. I can see the stern black figure of Dr. Pound, who made interminable statements to the Lord.

"Oh, Lord," I can hear him say, "thou knowest..."

These pictures, though yellowed and faded, suggest vividly the being I once was, the feelings that possessed and animated me, love for my playmates, vague impulses struggling for expression in a world forever thwarting them. I recall, too, innocent dreams of a future unidentified, dreams from which I emerged vibrating with an energy that was lost for lack of a definite objective: yet it was constantly being renewed. I often wonder what I might have become if it could have been harnessed, directed! Speculations are vain. Calvinism, though it had begun to make compromises, was still a force in those days, inimical to spontaneity and human instincts. And when I think of Calvinism I see, not Dr. Pound, who preached it, but my father, who practised and embodied it. I loved him, but he made of righteousness a stern and terrible thing implying not joy, but punishment, the, suppression rather than the expansion of aspirations. His religion seemed woven all of austerity, contained no shining threads to catch my eye. Dreams, to him, were matters for suspicion and distrust.

I sometimes ask myself, as I gaze upon his portrait now, the duplicate of the one painted for the Bar Association, whether he ever could have felt the secret, hot thrills I knew and did not identify with religion. His religion was real to him, though he failed utterly to make it comprehensible to me. The apparent calmness, evenness of his life awed me. A successful lawyer, a respected and trusted citizen, was he lacking somewhat in virility, vitality? I cannot judge him, even to-day. I never knew him. There were times in my youth when the curtain of his unfamiliar spirit was withdrawn a little:

and once, after I had passed the crisis of some childhood disease, I awoke to find him bending over my bed with a tender expression that surprised and puzzled me.

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He was well educated, and from his portrait a shrewd observer might divine in him a genteel taste for literature. The fine features bear witness to the influence of an American environment, yet suggest the intellectual Englishman of Matthew Arnold's time. The face is distinguished, ascetic, the chestnut hair lighter and thinner than my own; the side whiskers are not too obtrusive, the eyes blue-grey. There is a large black cravat crossed and held by a cameo pin, and the coat has odd, narrow lapels. His habits of mind were English, although he harmonized well enough with the manners and traditions of a city whose inheritance was Scotch-Irish; and he invariably drank tea for breakfast. One of my earliest recollections is of the silver breakfast service and egg-cups which my great-grandfather brought with him from Sheffield to Philadelphia shortly after the Revolution. His son, Dr. Hugh Moreton Paret, after whom I was named, was the best known physician of the city in the decorous, Second Bank days.

My mother was Sarah Breck. Hers was my Scotch-Irish side. Old Benjamin Breck, her grandfather, undaunted by sea or wilderness, had come straight from Belfast to the little log settlement by the great river that mirrored then the mantle of primeval forest on the hills. So much for chance. He kept a store with a side porch and square-paned windows, where hams and sides of bacon and sugar loaves in blue glazed paper hung beside ploughs and calico prints, barrels of flour, of molasses and rum, all of which had been somehow marvellously transported over the passes of those forbidding mountains,—passes we blithely thread to-day in dining cars and compartment sleepers. Behind the store were moored the barges that floated down on the swift current to the Ohio, carrying goods to even remoter settlements in the western wilderness.

Benjamin, in addition to his emigrant's leather box, brought with him some of that pigment that was to dye the locality for generations a deep blue. I refer, of course, to his Presbyterianism. And in order the better to ensure to his progeny the fastness of this dye, he married the granddaughter of a famous divine, celebrated in the annals of New England,—no doubt with some injustice,—as a staunch advocate on the doctrine of infant damnation. My cousin Robert Breck had old Benjamin's portrait, which has since gone to the Kinley's. Heaven knows who painted it, though no great art were needed to suggest on canvas the tough fabric of that sitter, who was more Irish than Scotch. The heavy stick he holds might, with a slight stretch of the imagination, be a blackthorn; his head looks capable of withstanding many blows; his hand of giving many. And, as I gazed the other day at this picture hanging in the shabby suburban parlour, I could only contrast him with his anaemic descendants who possessed the likeness. Between the children of poor Mary Kinley,—Cousin Robert's daughter, and the hardy stock of the old country there is a gap indeed!

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Benjamin Breck made the foundation of a fortune. It was his son who built on the Second Bank the wide, corniced mansion in which to house comfortably his eight children. There, two tiers above the river, lived my paternal grandfather, Dr. Paret, the Breck's physician and friend; the Durretts and the Hambletons, iron-masters; the Hollisters, Sherwins, the McAlerys and Ewanses,—Breck connections,—the Willetts and Ogilvys; in short, everyone of importance in the days between the 'thirties and the Civil War. Theirs were generous houses surrounded by shade trees, with glorious back yards—I have been told—where apricots and pears and peaches and even nectarines grew.

The business of Breck and Company, wholesale grocers, descended to my mother's first cousin, Robert Breck, who lived at Claremore. The very sound of that word once sufficed to give me a shiver of delight; but the Claremore I knew has disappeared as completely as Atlantis, and the place is now a suburb (hateful word!) cut up into building lots and connected with Boyne Street and the business section of the city by trolley lines. Then it was "the country," and fairly saturated with romance. Cousin Robert, when he came into town to spend his days at the store, brought with him some of this romance, I had almost said of this aroma. He was no suburbanite, but rural to the backbone, professing a most proper contempt for dwellers in towns.

Every summer day that dawned held Claremore as a possibility. And such was my capacity for joy that my appetite would depart completely when I heard my mother say, questioningly and with proper wifely respect—

"If you're really going off on a business trip for a day or two, Mr. Paret" (she generally addressed my father thus formally), "I think I'll go to Robert's and take Hugh."

"Shall I tell Norah to pack, mother," I would exclaim, starting up.

"We'll see what your father thinks, my dear."

"Remain at the table until you are excused, Hugh," he would say.

Released at length, I would rush to Norah, who always rejoiced with me, and then to the wire fence which marked the boundary of the Peters domain next door, eager, with the refreshing lack of consideration characteristic of youth, to announce to the Peterses—-who were to remain at home the news of my good fortune. There would be Tom and Alfred and Russell and Julia and little Myra with her grass-stained knees, faring forth to seek the adventures of a new day in the shady western yard. Myra was too young not to look wistful at my news, but the others pretended indifference, seeking to lessen my triumph. And it was Julia who invariably retorted "We can go out to Uncle Jake's farm whenever we want to. Can't we, Tom?"...

No journey ever taken since has equalled in ecstasy that leisurely trip of thirteen miles in the narrow-gauge railroad that wound through hot fields of nodding corn tassels and between delicious, acrid-smelling woods to Claremore. No silent palace “sleeping in the sun,” no edifice decreed by Kubla Khan could have worn more glamour than the house of Cousin Robert Breck.

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It stood half a mile from the drowsy village, deep in its own grounds amidst lawns splashed with shadows, with gravel paths edged—in barbarous fashion, if you please with shells. There were flower beds of equally barbarous design; and two iron deer, which, like the figures on Keats's Grecian urn, were ever ready poised to flee,—and yet never fled. For Cousin Robert was rich, as riches went in those days: not only rich, but comfortable. Stretching behind the house were sweet meadows of hay and red clover basking in the heat, orchards where the cows cropped beneath the trees, arbours where purple clusters of Concords hung beneath warm leaves: there were woods beyond, into which, under the guidance of Willie Breck, I made adventurous excursions, and in the autumn gathered hickories and walnuts. The house was a rambling, wooden mansion painted grey, with red scroll-work on its porches and horsehair furniture inside. Oh, the smell of its darkened interior on a midsummer day! Like the flavour of that choicest of tropical fruits, the mangosteen, it baffles analysis, and the nearest I can come to it is a mixture of matting and corn-bread, with another element too subtle to define.

The hospitality of that house! One would have thought we had arrived, my mother and I, from the ends of the earth, such was the welcome we got from Cousin Jenny, Cousin Robert's wife, from Mary and Helen with the flaxen pig-tails, from Willie, whom I recall as permanently without shoes or stockings. Met and embraced by Cousin Jenny at the station and driven to the house in the squeaky surrey, the moment we arrived she and my mother would put on the dressing-sacks I associated with hot weather, and sit sewing all day long in rocking-chairs at the coolest end of the piazza. The women of that day scorned lying down, except at night, and as evening came on they donned starched dresses; I recall in particular one my mother wore, with little vertical stripes of black and white, and a full skirt. And how they talked, from the beginning of the visit until the end! I have often since wondered where the topics came from.

It was not until nearly seven o'clock that the train arrived which brought home my Cousin Robert. He was a big man; his features and even his ample moustache gave a disconcerting impression of rugged integrity, and I remember him chiefly in an alpaca or seersucker coat. Though much less formal, more democratic—in a word—than my father, I stood in awe of him for a different reason, and this I know now was because he possessed the penetration to discern the flaws in my youthful character,—flaws that persisted in manhood. None so quick as Cousin Robert to detect deceptions which were hidden from my mother.

His hobby was carpentering, and he had a little shop beside the stable filled with shining tools which Willie and I, in spite of their attractions, were forbidden to touch. Willie, by dire experience, had learned to keep the law; but on one occasion I stole in alone, and promptly cut my finger with a chisel. My mother and Cousin Jenny accepted the fiction that the injury had been done with a flint arrowhead that Willie had given me, but when Cousin Robert came home and saw my bound hand and heard the story, he gave me a certain look which sticks in my mind.

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“Wonderful people, those Indians were!” he observed. “They could make arrowheads as sharp as chisels.”

I was most uncomfortable....

He had a strong voice, and spoke with a rising inflection and a marked accent that still remains peculiar to our locality, although it was much modified in my mother and not at all noticeable in my father; with an odd nasal alteration of the burr our Scotch-Irish ancestors had brought with them across the seas. For instance, he always called my father Mr. Par-r-ret. He had an admiration and respect for him that seemed to forbid the informality of “Matthew.” It was shared by others of my father’s friends and relations.

“Sarah,” Cousin Robert would say to my mother, “you’re coddling that boy, you ought to lam him oftener. Hand him over to me for a couple of months—I’ll put him through his paces.... So you’re going to send him to college, are you? He’s too good for old Benjamin’s grocery business.”

He was very fond of my mother, though he lectured her soundly for her weakness in indulging me. I can see him as he sat at the head of the supper table, carving liberal helpings which Mary and Helen and Willie devoured with country appetites, watching our plates.

“What’s the matter, Hugh? You haven’t eaten all your lamb.”

“He doesn’t like fat, Robert,” my mother explained.

“I’d teach him to like it if he were my boy.”

“Well, Robert, he isn’t your boy,” Cousin Jenny would remind him.... His bark was worse than his bite. Like many kind people he made use of brusqueness to hide an inner tenderness, and on the train he was hail fellow well met with every Tom, Dick and Harry that commuted,—although the word was not invented in those days,—and the conductor and brakeman too. But he had his standards, and held to them....

Mine was not a questioning childhood, and I was willing to accept the scheme of things as presented to me entire. In my tenderer years, when I had broken one of the commandments on my father’s tablet (there were more than ten), and had, on his home-coming, been sent to bed, my mother would come softly upstairs after supper with a book in her hand; a book of selected Bible stories on which Dr. Pound had set the seal of his approval, with a glazed picture cover, representing Daniel in the lions’ den and an angel standing beside him. On the somewhat specious plea that Holy Writ might have a chastening effect, she was permitted to minister to me in my shame. The amazing adventure of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego particularly appealed to an imagination needing little stimulation. It never occurred to me to doubt that these

gentlemen had triumphed over caloric laws. But out of my window, at the back of the second storey, I often saw a sudden, crimson glow in the sky to the southward, as though that part of the city had caught fire. There were the big steel-works, my mother told me, belonging to Mr. Durrett and Mr. Hambleton, the father

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of Ralph Hambleton and the grandfather of Hambleton Durrett, my schoolmates at Miss Caroline's. I invariably connected the glow, not with Hambleton and Ralph, but with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego! Later on, when my father took me to the steel-works, and I beheld with awe a huge pot filled with molten metal that ran out of it like water, I asked him—if I leaped into that stream, could God save me? He was shocked. Miracles, he told me, didn't happen any more.

"When did they stop?" I demanded.

"About two thousand years ago, my son," he replied gravely.

"Then," said I, "no matter how much I believed in God, he wouldn't save me if I jumped into the big kettle for his sake?"

For this I was properly rebuked and silenced.

My boyhood was filled with obsessing desires. If God, for example, had cast down, out of his abundant store, manna and quail in the desert, why couldn't he fling me a little pocket money? A paltry quarter of a dollar, let us say, which to me represented wealth. To avoid the reproach of the Pharisees, I went into the closet of my bed-chamber to pray, requesting that the quarter should be dropped on the north side of Lyme Street, between Stamford and Tryon; in short, as conveniently near home as possible. Then I issued forth, not feeling overconfident, but hoping. Tom Peters, leaning over the ornamental cast-iron fence which separated his front yard from the street, presently spied me scanning the sidewalk.

"What are you looking for, Hugh?" he demanded with interest.

"Oh, something I dropped," I answered uneasily.

"What?"

Naturally, I refused to tell. It was a broiling, midsummer day; Julia and Russell, who had been warned to stay in the shade, but who were engaged in the experiment of throwing the yellow cat from the top of the lattice fence to see if she would alight on her feet, were presently attracted, and joined in the search. The mystery which I threw around it added to its interest, and I was not inconsiderably annoyed. Suppose one of them were to find the quarter which God had intended for me? Would that be justice?

"It's nothing," I said, and pretended to abandon the quest—to be renewed later. But this ruse failed; they continued obstinately to search; and after a few minutes Tom, with a shout, picked out of a hot crevice between the bricks—a nickel!

“It’s mine!” I cried fiercely.

“Did you lose it?” demanded Julia, the canny one, as Tom was about to give it up.

My lying was generally reserved for my elders.

“N-no,” I said hesitatingly, “but it’s mine all the same. It was—sent to me.”

“Sent to you!” they exclaimed, in a chorus of protest and derision. And how, indeed, was I to make good my claim? The Peterses, when assembled, were a clan, led by Julia and in matters of controversy, moved as one. How was I to tell them that in answer to my prayers for twenty-five cents, God had deemed five all that was good for me?

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“Some—somebody dropped it there for me.”

“Who?” demanded the chorus. “Say, that’s a good one!”

Tears suddenly blinded me. Overcome by chagrin, I turned and flew into the house and upstairs into my room, locking the door behind me. An interval ensued, during which I nursed my sense of wrong, and it pleased me to think that the money would bring a curse on the Peters family. At length there came a knock on the door, and a voice calling my name.

“Hugh! Hugh!”

It was Tom.

“Hughie, won’t you let me in? I want to give you the nickel.”

“Keep it!” I shouted back. “You found it.”

Another interval, and then more knocking.

“Open up,” he said coaxingly. “I—I want to talk to you.”

I relented, and let him in. He pressed the coin into my hand. I refused; he pleaded.

“You found it,” I said, “it’s yours.”

“But—but you were looking for it.”

“That makes no difference,” I declared magnanimously.

Curiosity overcame him.

“Say, Hughie, if you didn’t drop it, who on earth did?”

“Nobody on earth,” I replied cryptically....

Naturally, I declined to reveal the secret. Nor was this by any means the only secret I held over the Peters family, who never quite knew what to make of me. They were not troubled with imaginations. Julia was a little older than Tom and had a sharp tongue, but over him I exercised a distinct fascination, and I knew it. Literal himself, good-natured and warm-hearted, the gift I had of tingeing life with romance (to put the thing optimistically), of creating kingdoms out of back yards—at which Julia and Russell sniffed—held his allegiance firm.

II.

I must have been about twelve years of age when I realized that I was possessed of the bard's inheritance. A momentous journey I made with my parents to Boston about this time not only stimulated this gift, but gave me the advantage of which other travellers before me have likewise availed themselves—of being able to take certain poetic liberties with a distant land that my friends at home had never seen. Often during the heat of summer noons when we were assembled under the big maple beside the lattice fence in the Peters' yard, the spirit would move me to relate the most amazing of adventures. Our train, for instance, had been held up in the night by a band of robbers in black masks, and rescued by a traveller who bore a striking resemblance to my Cousin Robert Breck. He had shot two of the robbers. These fabrications, once started, flowed from me with ridiculous ease. I experienced an unwonted exhilaration, exaltation; I began to believe that they had actually occurred. In vain the astute Julia asserted that there were no train robbers in the east. What had my father done? Well, he had been very brave, but he had had no pistol. Had I been frightened? No, not at all; I, too, had wished for a pistol. Why hadn't I spoken of this before? Well, so many things had happened to me I couldn't tell them all at once. It was plain that Julia, though often fascinated against her will, deemed this sort of thing distinctly immoral.

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I was a boy divided in two. One part of me dwelt in a fanciful realm of his own weaving, and the other part was a commonplace and protesting inhabitant of a world of lessons, disappointments and discipline. My instincts were not vicious. Ideas bubbled up within me continually from an apparently inexhaustible spring, and the very strength of the longings they set in motion puzzled and troubled my parents: what I seem to see most distinctly now is a young mind engaged in a ceaseless struggle for self-expression, for self-development, against the inertia of a tradition of which my father was the embodiment. He was an enigma to me then. He sincerely loved me, he cherished ambitions concerning me, yet thwarted every natural, budding growth, until I grew unconsciously to regard him as my enemy, although I had an affection for him and a pride in him that flared up at times. Instead of confiding to him my aspirations, vague though they were, I became more and more secretive as I grew older. I knew instinctively that he regarded these aspirations as evidences in my character of serious moral flaws. And I would sooner have suffered many afternoons of his favourite punishment—solitary confinement in my room—than reveal to him those occasional fits of creative fancy which caused me to neglect my lessons in order to put them on paper. Loving literature, in his way, he was characteristically incapable of recognizing the literary instinct, and the symptoms of its early stages he mistook for inherent frivolity, for lack of respect for the truth; in brief, for original sin. At the age of fourteen I had begun secretly (alas, how many things I did secretly!) to write stories of a sort, stories that never were finished.

He regarded reading as duty, not pleasure. He laid out books for me, which I neglected. He was part and parcel of that American environment in which literary ambition was regarded as sheer madness. And no one who has not experienced that environment can have any conception of the pressure it exerted to stifle originality, to thrust the new generation into its religious and commercial moulds. Shall we ever, I wonder, develop the enlightened education that will know how to take advantage of such initiative as was mine? that will be on the watch for it, sympathize with it and guide it to fruition?

I was conscious of still another creative need, that of dramatizing my ideas, of converting them into action. And this need was to lead me farther than ever afield from the path of righteousness. The concrete realization of ideas, as many geniuses will testify, is an expensive undertaking, requiring a little pocket money; and I have already touched upon that subject. My father did not believe in pocket money. A sea story that my Cousin Donald Ewan gave me at Christmas inspired me to compose one of a somewhat different nature; incidentally, I deemed it a vast improvement on Cousin Donald's book. Now, if I only had a boat, with the assistance of Ham Durrett and

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Tom Peters, Gene Hollister and Perry Blackwood and other friends, this story of mine might be staged. There were, however, as usual, certain seemingly insuperable difficulties: in the first place, it was winter time; in the second, no facilities existed in the city for operations of a nautical character; and, lastly, my Christmas money amounted only to five dollars. It was my father who pointed out these and other objections. For, after a careful perusal of the price lists I had sent for, I had been forced to appeal to him to supply additional funds with which to purchase a row-boat. Incidentally, he read me a lecture on extravagance, referred to my last month's report at the Academy, and finished by declaring that he would not permit me to have a boat even in the highly improbable case of somebody's presenting me with one. Let it not be imagined that my ardour or my determination were extinguished. Shortly after I had retired from his presence it occurred to me that he had said nothing to forbid my making a boat, and the first thing I did after school that day was to procure, for twenty-five cents, a second-hand book on boat construction. The woodshed was chosen as a shipbuilding establishment. It was convenient—and my father never went into the back yard in cold weather. Inquiries of lumber-yards developing the disconcerting fact that four dollars and seventy-five cents was inadequate to buy the material itself, to say nothing of the cost of steaming and bending the ribs, I reluctantly abandoned the ideal of the graceful craft I had sketched, and compromised on a flat bottom. Observe how the ways of deception lead to transgression: I recalled the cast-off lumber pile of Jarvis, the carpenter, a good-natured Englishman, coarse and fat: in our neighbourhood his reputation for obscenity was so well known to mothers that I had been forbidden to go near him or his shop. Grits Jarvis, his son, who had inherited the talent, was also contraband. I can see now the huge bulk of the elder Jarvis as he stood in the melting, soot-powdered snow in front of his shop, and hear his comments on my pertinacity.

"If you ever wants another man's missus when you grows up, my lad, Gawd 'elp 'im!"

"Why should I want another man's wife when I don't want one of my own?" I demanded, indignant.

He laughed with his customary lack of moderation.

"You mind what old Jarvis says," he cried. "What you wants, you gets."

I did get his boards, by sheer insistence. No doubt they were not very valuable, and without question he more than made up for them in my mother's bill. I also got something else of equal value to me at the moment,—the assistance of Grits, the contraband; daily, after school, I smuggled him into the shed through the alley, acquiring likewise the services of Tom Peters, which was more of a triumph than it would seem. Tom always had to be "worked up" to participation in my ideas, but in the end he almost invariably succumbed. The notion of building a boat in the dead of winter, and so far

from her native element, naturally struck him at first as ridiculous. Where in Jehoshaphat was I going to sail it if I ever got it made? He much preferred to throw snowballs at innocent wagon drivers.

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All that Tom saw, at first, was a dirty, coal-spattered shed with dim recesses, for it was lighted on one side only, and its temperature was somewhere below freezing. Surely he could not be blamed for a tempered enthusiasm! But for me, all the dirt and cold and discomfort were blotted out, and I beheld a gallant craft manned by sturdy seamen forging her way across blue water in the South Seas. Treasure Island, alas, was as yet unwritten; but among my father's books were two old volumes in which I had hitherto taken no interest, with crude engravings of palms and coral reefs, of naked savages and tropical mountains covered with jungle, the adventures, in brief, of one Captain Cook. I also discovered a book by a later traveller. Spurred on by a mysterious motive power, and to the great neglect of the pons asinorum and the staple products of the Southern States, I gathered an amazing amount of information concerning a remote portion of the globe, of head-hunters and poisoned stakes, of typhoons, of queer war-craft that crept up on you while you were dismantling galleons, when desperate hand-to-hand encounters ensued. Little by little as I wove all this into personal adventures soon to be realized, Tom forgot the snowballs and the maddened grocery-men who chased him around the block; while Grits would occasionally stop sawing and cry out:—"Ah, s'y!" frequently adding that he would be G—d—d.

The cold woodshed became a chantry on the New England coast, the alley the wintry sea soon to embrace our ship, the saw-horses—which stood between a coal-bin on one side and unused stalls filled with rubbish and kindling on the other—the ways; the yard behind the lattice fence became a backwater, the flapping clothes the sails of ships that took refuge there—on Mondays and Tuesdays. Even my father was symbolized with unparalleled audacity as a watchful government which had, up to the present, no inkling of our semi-piratical intentions! The cook and the housemaid, though remonstrating against the presence of Grits, were friendly confederates; likewise old Cephas, the darkey who, from my earliest memory, carried coal and wood and blacked the shoes, washed the windows and scrubbed the steps.

One afternoon Tom went to work....

The history of the building of the good ship Petrel is similar to that of all created things, a story of trial and error and waste. At last, one March day she stood ready for launching. She had even been caulked; for Grits, from an unknown and unquestionably dubious source, had procured a bucket of tar, which we heated over afire in the alley and smeared into every crack. It was natural that the news of such a feat as we were accomplishing should have leaked out, that the "yard" should have been visited from time to time by interested friends, some of whom came to admire, some to scoff, and all to speculate. Among the scoffers, of course, was Ralph Hambleton, who stood with his hands in his pockets and cheerfully predicted all sorts of dire calamities. Ralph was always a superior boy, tall and a trifle saturnine and cynical, with an amazing self-confidence not wholly due to the wealth of his father, the iron-master. He was older than I.

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“She won’t float five minutes, if you ever get her to the water,” was his comment, and in this he was supported on general principles by Julia and Russell Peters. Ralph would have none of the Petrel, or of the South Seas either; but he wanted,—so he said,—“to be in at the death.” The Hambletons were one of the few families who at that time went to the sea for the summer, and from a practical knowledge of craft in general Ralph was not slow to point out the defects of ours. Tom and I defended her passionately.

Ralph was not a romanticist. He was a born leader, excelling at organized games, exercising over boys the sort of fascination that comes from doing everything better and more easily than others. It was only during the progress of such enterprises as this affair of the Petrel that I succeeded in winning their allegiance; bit by bit, as Tom’s had been won, fanning their enthusiasm by impersonating at once Achilles and Homer, recruiting while relating the Odyssey of the expedition in glowing colours. Ralph always scoffed, and when I had no scheme on foot they went back to him. Having surveyed the boat and predicted calamity, he departed, leaving a circle of quaint and youthful figures around the Petrel in the shed: Gene Hollister, romantically inclined, yet somewhat hampered by a strict parental supervision; Ralph’s cousin Ham Durrett, who was even then a rather fat boy, good-natured but selfish; Don and Harry Ewan, my second cousins; Mac and Nancy Willett and Sam and Sophy McAlery. Nancy was a tomboy, not to be denied, and Sophy her shadow. We held a council, the all-important question of which was how to get the Petrel to the water, and what water to get her to. The river was not to be thought of, and Blackstone Lake some six miles from town. Finally, Logan’s mill-pond was decided on,—a muddy sheet on the outskirts of the city. But how to get her to Logan’s mill-pond? Cephas was at length consulted. It turned out that he had a coloured friend who went by the impressive name of Thomas Jefferson Taliaferro (pronounced Tolliver), who was in the express business; and who, after surveying the boat with some misgivings,—for she was ten feet long,—finally consented to transport her to “tide-water” for the sum of two dollars. But it proved that our combined resources only amounted to a dollar and seventy-five cents. Ham Durrett never contributed to anything. On this sum Thomas Jefferson compromised.

Saturday dawned clear, with a stiff March wind catching up the dust into eddies and whirling it down the street. No sooner was my father safely on his way to his office than Thomas Jefferson was reported to be in the alley, where we assembled, surveying with some misgivings Thomas Jefferson’s steed, whose ability to haul the Petrel two miles seemed somewhat doubtful. Other difficulties developed; the door in the back of the shed proved to be too narrow for our ship’s beam. But men embarked on a desperate enterprise are not to be stopped by such trifles, and the problem was solved by sawing out two adjoining boards. These were afterwards replaced with skill by the ship’s carpenter, Able Seaman Grits Jarvis. Then the Petrel by heroic efforts was got into the wagon, the seat of which had been removed, old Thomas Jefferson perched himself precariously in the bow and protestingly gathered up his rope-patched reins.

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“Folks’ll ‘low I’se plum crazy, drivin’ dis yere boat,” he declared, observing with concern that some four feet of the stern projected over the tail-board. “Ef she topples, I’ll git to heaven quicker’n a bullet.”

When one is shanghaied, however,—in the hands of buccaneers,—it is too late to withdraw. Six shoulders upheld the rear end of the Petrel, others shoved, and Thomas Jefferson’s rickety horse began to move forward in spite of himself. An expression of sheer terror might have been observed on the old negro’s crinkled face, but his voice was drowned, and we swept out of the alley. Scarcely had we travelled a block before we began to be joined by all the boys along the line of march; marbles, tops, and even incipient baseball games were abandoned that Saturday morning; people ran out of their houses, teamsters halted their carts. The breathless excitement, the exaltation I had felt on leaving the alley were now tinged with other feelings, unanticipated, but not wholly lacking in delectable quality,—concern and awe at these unforeseen forces I had raised, at this ever growing and enthusiastic body of volunteers springing up like dragon’s teeth in our path. After all, was not I the hero of this triumphal procession? The thought was consoling, exhilarating. And here was Nancy marching at my side, a little subdued, perhaps, but unquestionably admiring and realizing that it was I who had created all this. Nancy, who was the aptest of pupils, the most loyal of followers, though I did not yet value her devotion at its real worth, because she was a girl. Her imagination kindled at my touch. And on this eventful occasion she carried in her arms a parcel, the contents of which were unknown to all but ourselves. At length we reached the muddy shores of Logan’s pond, where two score eager hands volunteered to assist the Petrel into her native element.

Alas! that the reality never attains to the vision. I had beheld, in my dreams, the Petrel about to take the water, and Nancy Willett standing very straight making a little speech and crashing a bottle of wine across the bows. This was the content of the mysterious parcel; she had stolen it from her father’s cellar. But the number of uninvited spectators, which had not been foreseen, considerably modified the programme,—as the newspapers would have said. They pushed and crowded around the ship, and made frank and even brutal remarks as to her seaworthiness; even Nancy, inured though she was to the masculine sex, had fled to the heights, and it looked at this supreme moment as though we should have to fight for the Petrel. An attempt to muster her doughty buccaneers failed; the gunner too had fled,—Gene Hollister; Ham Durrett and the Ewanses were nowhere to be seen, and a muster revealed only Tom, the fidus Achates, and Grits Jarvis.

“Ah, s’y!” he exclaimed in the teeth of the menacing hordes. “Stand back, carn’t yer? I’ll bash yer face in, Johnny. Whose boat is this?”

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Shall it be whispered that I regretted his belligerency? Here, in truth, was the drama staged,—my drama, had I only been able to realize it. The good ship beached, the headhunters hemming us in on all sides, the scene prepared for one of those struggles against frightful odds which I had so graphically related as an essential part of our adventures.

“Let’s roll the cuss in the fancy collar,” proposed one of the head-hunters,—meaning me.

“I’ll stove yer slats if yer touch him,” said Grits, and then resorted to appeal. “I s’y, carn’t yer stand back and let a chap ’ave a charnst?”

The head-hunters only jeered. And what shall be said of the Captain in this moment of peril? Shall it be told that his heart was beating wildly?—bumping were a better word. He was trying to remember that he was the Captain. Otherwise, he must admit with shame that he, too, should have fled. So much for romance when the test comes. Will he remain to fall fighting for his ship? Like Horatius, he glanced up at the hill, where, instead of the porch of the home where he would fain have been, he beheld a wisp of a girl standing alone, her hat on the back of her head, her hair flying in the wind, gazing intently down at him in his danger. The renegade crew was nowhere to be seen. There are those who demand the presence of a woman in order to be heroes....

“Give us a chance, can’t you?” he cried, repeating Grits’s appeal in not quite such a stentorian tone as he would have liked, while his hand trembled on the gunwale. Tom Peters, it must be acknowledged, was much more of a buccaneer when it was a question of deeds, for he planted himself in the way of the belligerent chief of the head-hunters (who spoke with a decided brogue).

“Get out of the way!” said Tom, with a little squeak in his voice. Yet there he was, and he deserves a tribute.

An unlooked-for diversion saved us from annihilation, in the shape of one who had a talent for creating them. We were bewilderingly aware of a girlish figure amongst us.

“You cowards!” she cried. “You cowards!”

Lithe, and fairly quivering with passion, it was Nancy who showed us how to face the head-hunters. They gave back. They would have been brave indeed if they had not retreated before such an intense little nucleus of energy and indignation!...

“Ah, give ’em a chanst,” said their chief, after a moment.... He even helped to push the boat towards the water. But he did not volunteer to be one of those to man the Petrel on her maiden voyage. Nor did Logan’s pond, that wild March day, greatly resemble the South Seas. Nevertheless, my eye on Nancy, I stepped proudly aboard and seized an

“oar.” Grits and Tom followed,—when suddenly the Petrel sank considerably below the water-line as her builders had estimated it. Ere we fully realized this, the now friendly head-hunters had given us a shove, and we were off! The Captain, who

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should have been waving good-bye to his lady love from the poop, sat down abruptly,—the crew likewise; not, however, before she had heeled to the scuppers, and a half-bucket of iced water had run it. Head-hunters were mere daily episodes in Grits's existence, but water... He muttered something in cockney that sounded like a prayer.... The wind was rapidly driving us toward the middle of the pond, and something cold and ticklish was seeping through the seats of our trousers. We sat like statues....

The bright scene etched itself in my memory—the bare brown slopes with which the pond was bordered, the Irish shanties, the clothes-lines with red flannel shirts snapping in the biting wind; Nancy motionless on the bank; the group behind her, silent now, impressed in spite of itself at the sight of our intrepidity.

The Petrel was sailing stern first.... Would any of us, indeed, ever see home again? I thought of my father's wrath turned to sorrow because he had refused to gratify a son's natural wish and present him with a real rowboat.... Out of the corners of our eyes we watched the water creeping around the gunwale, and the very muddiness of it seemed to enhance its coldness, to make the horrors of its depths more mysterious and hideous. The voice of Grits startled us.

"O Gawd," he was saying, "we're a-going to sink, and I carn't swim! The blarsted tar's give way back here."

"Is she leaking?" I cried.

"She's a-filling up like a bath tub," he lamented.

Slowly but perceptibly, in truth, the bow was rising, and above the whistling of the wind I could hear his chattering as she settled.... Then several things happened simultaneously: an agonized cry behind me, distant shouts from the shore, a sudden upward lunge of the bow, and the torture of being submerged, inch by inch, in the icy, yellow water. Despite the splashing behind me, I sat as though paralyzed until I was waist deep and the boards turned under me, and then, with a spasmodic contraction of my whole being I struck out—only to find my feet on the muddy bottom. Such was the inglorious end of the good ship Petrel! For she went down, with all hands, in little more than half a fathom of water.... It was not until then I realized that we had been blown clear across the pond!

Figures were running along the shore. And as Tom and I emerged dragging Grits between us,—for he might have been drowned there abjectly in the shallows,—we were met by a stout and bare-armed Irishwoman whose scanty hair, I remember, was drawn into a tight knot behind her head; and who seized us, all three, as though we were a bunch of carrots.

“Come along wid ye!” she cried.

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Shivering, we followed her up the hill, the spectators of the tragedy, who by this time had come around the pond, trailing after. Nancy was not among them. Inside the shanty into which we were thrust were two small children crawling about the floor, and the place was filled with steam from a wash-tub against the wall and a boiler on the stove. With a vigorous injunction to make themselves scarce, the Irishwoman slammed the door in the faces of the curious and ordered us to remove our clothes. Grits was put to bed in a corner, while Tom and I, provided with various garments, huddled over the stove. There fell to my lot the red flannel shirt which I had seen on the clothes-line. She gave us hot coffee, and was back at her wash-tub in no time at all, her entire comment on a proceeding that seemed to Tom and me to have certain elements of gravity being, “By’s will be by’s!” The final ironical touch was given the anti-climax when our rescuer turned out to be the mother of the chief of the head-hunters himself! He had lingered perforce with his brothers and sister outside the cabin until dinner time, and when he came in he was meek as Moses.

Thus the ready hospitality of the poor, which passed over the heads of Tom and me as we ate bread and onions and potatoes with a ravenous hunger. It must have been about two o’clock in the afternoon when we bade good-bye to our preserver and departed for home....

At first we went at a dog-trot, but presently slowed down to discuss the future looming portentously ahead of us. Since entire concealment was now impossible, the question was,—how complete a confession would be necessary? Our cases, indeed, were dissimilar, and Tom’s incentive to hold back the facts was not nearly so great as mine. It sometimes seemed to me in those days unjust that the Peterses were able on the whole to keep out of criminal difficulties, in which I was more or less continuously involved: for it did not strike me that their sins were not those of the imagination. The method of Tom’s father was the slipper. He and Tom understood each other, while between my father and myself was a great gulf fixed. Not that Tom yearned for the slipper; but he regarded its occasional applications as being as inevitable as changes in the weather; lying did not come easily to him, and left to himself he much preferred to confess and have the matter over with. I have already suggested that I had cultivated lying, that weapon of the weaker party, in some degree, at least, in self-defence.

Tom was loyal. Moreover, my conviction would probably deprive him for six whole afternoons of my company, on which he was more or less dependent. But the defence of this case presented unusual difficulties, and we stopped several times to thrash them out. We had been absent from dinner, and doubtless by this time Julia had informed Tom’s mother of the expedition, and anyone could see that our clothing had been wet. So I lingered in no little anxiety behind the Peters stable while he made the investigation. Our spirits rose considerably when he returned to report that Julia had unexpectedly been a trump, having quieted his mother by the surmise that he was spending the day with his Aunt Fanny. So far, so good. The problem now was to decide upon what to admit. For we must both tell the same story.

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It was agreed that we had fallen into Logan's Pond from a raft: my suggestion. Well, said Tom, the Petrel hadn't proved much better than a raft, after all. I was in no mood to defend her.

This designation of the Petrel as a "raft" was my first legal quibble. The question to be decided by the court was, What is a raft? just as the supreme tribunal of the land has been required, in later years, to decide, What is whiskey? The thing to be concealed if possible was the building of the "raft," although this information was already in the possession of a number of persons, whose fathers might at any moment see fit to congratulate my own on being the parent of a genius. It was a risk, however, that had to be run. And, secondly, since Grits Jarvis was contraband, nothing was to be said about him.

I have not said much about my mother, who might have been likened on such occasions to a grand jury compelled to indict, yet torn between loyalty to an oath and sympathy with the defendant. I went through the Peters yard, climbed the wire fence, my object being to discover first from Ella, the housemaid, or Hannah, the cook, how much was known in high quarters. It was Hannah who, as I opened the kitchen door, turned at the sound, and set down the saucepan she was scouring.

"Is it home ye are? Mercy to goodness!" (this on beholding my shrunken costume) "Glory be to God you're not drownded! and your mother worritin' her heart out! So it's into the wather ye were?"

I admitted it.

"Hannah?" I said softly.

"What then?"

"Does mother know—about the boat?"

"Now don't ye be wheedlin'."

I managed to discover, however, that my mother did not know, and surmised that the best reason why she had not been told had to do with Hannah's criminal acquiescence concerning the operations in the shed. I ran into the front hall and up the stairs, and my mother heard me coming and met me on the landing.

"Hugh, where have you been?"

As I emerged from the semi-darkness of the stairway she caught sight of my dwindled garments, of the trousers well above my ankles. Suddenly she had me in her arms and was kissing me passionately. As she stood before me in her grey, belted skirt, the familiar red-and-white cameo at her throat, her heavy hair parted in the middle, in her

eyes was an odd, appealing look which I know now was a sign of mother love struggling with a Presbyterian conscience. Though she inherited that conscience, I have often thought she might have succeeded in casting it off—or at least some of it—had it not been for the fact that in spite of herself she worshipped its incarnation in the shape of my father. Her voice trembled a little as she drew me to the sofa beside the window.

“Tell me about what happened, my son,” she said.

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It was a terrible moment for me. For my affections were still quiveringly alive in those days, and I loved her. I had for an instant an instinctive impulse to tell her the whole story,—South Sea Islands and all! And I could have done it had I not beheld looming behind her another figure which represented a stern and unsympathetic Authority, and somehow made her, suddenly, of small account. Not that she would have understood the romance, but she would have comprehended me. I knew that she was powerless to save me from the wrath to come. I wept. It was because I hated to lie to her,—yet I did so. Fear gripped me, and—like some respectable criminals I have since known—I understood that any confession I made would inexorably be used against me.... I wonder whether she knew I was lying? At any rate, the case appeared to be a grave one, and I was presently remanded to my room to be held over for trial....

Vividly, as I write, I recall the misery of the hours I have spent, while awaiting sentence, in the little chamber with the honeysuckle wall-paper and steel engravings of happy but dumpy children romping in the fields and groves. On this particular March afternoon the weather had become morne, as the French say; and I looked down sadly into the grey back yard which the wind of the morning had strewn with chips from the Petrel. At last, when shadows were gathering in the corners of the room, I heard footsteps. Ella appeared, prim and virtuous, yet a little commiserating. My father wished to see me, downstairs. It was not the first time she had brought that summons, and always her manner was the same!

The scene of my trials was always the sitting room, lined with grim books in their walnut cases. And my father sat, like a judge, behind the big desk where he did his work when at home. Oh, the distance between us at such an hour! I entered as delicately as Agag, and the expression in his eye seemed to convict me before I could open my mouth.

“Hugh,” he said, “your mother tells me that you have confessed to going, without permission, to Logan’s Pond, where you embarked on a raft and fell into the water.”

The slight emphasis he contrived to put on the word raft sent a colder shiver down my spine than the iced water had done. What did he know? or was this mere suspicion? Too late, now, at any rate, to plead guilty.

“It was a sort of a raft, sir,” I stammered.

“A sort of a raft,” repeated my father. “Where, may I ask, did you find it?”

“I—I didn’t exactly find it, sir.”

“Ah!” said my father. (It was the moment to glance meaningly at the jury.) The prisoner gulped. “You didn’t exactly find it, then. Will you kindly explain how you came by it?”

“Well, sir, we—I—put it together.”

“Have you any objection to stating, Hugh, in plain English, that you made it?”

“No, sir, I suppose you might say that I made it.”

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“Or that it was intended for a row-boat?”

Here was the time to appeal, to force a decision as to what constituted a row-boat.

“Perhaps it might be called a row-boat, sir,” I said abjectly.

“Or that, in direct opposition to my wishes and commands in forbidding you to have a boat, to spend your money foolishly and wickedly on a whim, you constructed one secretly in the woodshed, took out a part of the back partition, thus destroying property that did, not belong to you, and had the boat carted this morning to Logan’s Pond?” I was silent, utterly undone. Evidently he had specific information.... There are certain expressions that are, at times, more than mere figures of speech, and now my father’s wrath seemed literally towering. It added visibly to his stature.

“Hugh,” he said, in a voice that penetrated to the very corners of my soul, “I utterly fail to understand you. I cannot imagine how a son of mine, a son of your mother who is the very soul of truthfulness and honour—can be a liar.” (Oh, the terrible emphasis he put on that word!) “Nor is it as if this were a new tendency—I have punished you for it before. Your mother and I have tried to do our duty by you, to instil into you Christian teaching. But it seems wholly useless. I confess that I am at a less how to proceed. You seem to have no conscience whatever, no conception of what you owe to your parents and your God. You not only persistently disregard my wishes and commands, but you have, for many months, been leading a double life, facing me every day, while you were secretly and continually disobeying me. I shudder to think where this determination of yours to have what you desire at any price will lead you in the future. It is just such a desire that distinguishes wicked men from good.”

I will not linger upon a scene the very remembrance of which is painful to this day.... I went from my father’s presence in disgrace, in an agony of spirit that was overwhelming, to lock the door of my room and drop face downward on the bed, to sob until my muscles twitched. For he had, indeed, put into me an awful fear. The greatest horror of my boyish imagination was a wicked man. Was I, as he had declared, utterly depraved and doomed in spite of myself to be one?

There came a knock at my door—Ella with my supper. I refused to open, and sent her away, to fall on my knees in the darkness and pray wildly to a God whose attributes and character were sufficiently confused in my mind. On the one hand was the stern, despotic Monarch of the Westminster Catechism, whom I addressed out of habit, the Father who condemned a portion of his children from the cradle. Was I one of those who he had decreed before I was born must suffer the tortures of the flames of hell? Putting two and two together, what I had learned in Sunday school and gathered from parts of Dr. Pound’s sermons, and the intimation of my father that wickedness

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was within me, like an incurable disease,—was not mine the logical conclusion? What, then, was the use of praying?... My supplications ceased abruptly. And my ever ready imagination, stirred to its depths, beheld that awful scene of the last day: the darkness, such as sometimes creeps over the city in winter, when the jaundiced smoke falls down and we read at noonday by gas-light. I beheld the tortured faces of the wicked gathered on the one side, and my mother on the other amongst the blessed, gazing across the gulf at me with yearning and compassion. Strange that it did not strike me that the sight of the condemned whom they had loved in life would have marred if not destroyed the happiness of the chosen, about to receive their crowns and harps! What a theology—-that made the Creator and Preserver of all mankind thus illogical!

III.

Although I was imaginative, I was not morbidly introspective, and by the end of the first day of my incarceration my interest in that solution had waned. At times, however, I actually yearned for someone in whom I could confide, who could suggest a solution. I repeat, I would not for worlds have asked my father or my mother or Dr. Pound, of whom I had a wholesome fear, or perhaps an unwholesome one. Except at morning Bible reading and at church my parents never mentioned the name of the Deity, save to instruct me formally. Intended or no, the effect of my religious training was to make me ashamed of discussing spiritual matters, and naturally I failed to perceive that this was because it laid its emphasis on personal salvation.... I did not, however, become an unbeliever, for I was not of a nature to contemplate with equanimity a godless universe....

My sufferings during these series of afternoon confinements did not come from remorse, but were the result of a vague sense of injury; and their effect was to generate within me a strange motive power, a desire to do something that would astound my father and eventually wring from him the confession that he had misjudged me. To be sure, I should have to wait until early manhood, at least, for the accomplishment of such a coup. Might it not be that I was an embryonic literary genius? Many were the books I began in this ecstasy of self-vindication, only to abandon them when my confinement came to an end.

It was about this time, I think, that I experienced one of those shocks which have a permanent effect upon character. It was then the custom for ladies to spend the day with one another, bringing their sewing; and sometimes, when I unexpectedly entered the sitting-room, the voices of my mother’s visitors would drop to a whisper. One afternoon I returned from school to pause at the head of the stairs. Cousin Bertha Ewan and Mrs. McAlery were discussing with my mother an affair that I judged from the awed tone in which they spoke might prove interesting.

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“Poor Grace,” Mrs. McAlery was saying, “I imagine she’s paid a heavy penalty. No man alive will be faithful under those circumstances.”

I stopped at the head of the stairs, with a delicious, guilty feeling.

“Have they ever heard of her?” Cousin Bertha asked.

“It is thought they went to Spain,” replied Mrs. McAlery, solemnly, yet not without a certain zest. “Mr. Jules Hollister will not have her name mentioned in his presence, you know. And Whitcomb chased them as far as New York with a horse-pistol in his pocket. The report is that he got to the dock just as the ship sailed. And then, you know, he went to live somewhere out West,—in Iowa, I believe.”

“Did he ever get a divorce?” Cousin Bertha inquired.

“He was too good a church member, my dear,” my mother reminded her.

“Well, I’d have got one quick enough, church member or no church member,” declared Cousin Bertha, who had in her elements of daring.

“Not that I mean for a moment to excuse her,” Mrs. McAlery put in, “but Edward Whitcomb did have a frightful temper, and he was awfully strict with her, and he was old enough, anyhow, to be her father. Grace Hollister was the last woman in the world I should have suspected of doing so hideous a thing. She was so sweet and simple.”

“Jennings was very attractive,” said my Cousin Bertha. “I don’t think I ever saw a handsomer man. Now, if he had looked at me—”

The sentence was never finished, for at this crucial moment I dropped a grammar....

I had heard enough, however, to excite my curiosity to the highest pitch. And that evening, when I came in at five o’clock to study, I asked my mother what had become of Gene Hollister’s aunt.

“She went away, Hugh,” replied my mother, looking greatly troubled.

“Why?” I persisted.

“It is something you are too young to understand.”

Of course I started an investigation, and the next day at school I asked the question of Gene Hollister himself, only to discover that he believed his aunt to be dead! And that night he asked his mother if his Aunt Grace were really alive, after all? Whereupon complications and explanations ensued between our parents, of which we saw only the surface signs.... My father accused me of eavesdropping (which I denied), and

sentenced me to an afternoon of solitary confinement for repeating something which I had heard in private. I have reason to believe that my mother was also reprimanded.

It must not be supposed that I permitted the matter to rest. In addition to Grits Jarvis, there was another contraband among my acquaintances, namely, Alec Pound, the scrape-grace son of the Reverend Doctor Pound. Alec had an encyclopaedic mind, especially well stocked with the kind of knowledge I now desired; first and last he taught me much, which I would better have got in another way. To him I appealed and got the story, my worst suspicions being confirmed. Mrs. Whitcomb's house had been across the alley from that of Mr. Jennings, but no one knew that anything was "going on," though there had been signals from the windows—the neighbours afterwards remembered....

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I listened shudderingly.

“But,” I cried, “they were both married!”

“What difference does that make when you love a woman?” Alec replied grandly. “I could tell you much worse things than that.”

This he proceeded to do. Fascinated, I listened with a sickening sensation. It was a mild afternoon in spring, and we stood in the deep limestone gutter in front of the parsonage, a little Gothic wooden house set in a gloomy yard.

“I thought,” said I, “that people couldn’t love any more after they were married, except each other.”

Alec looked at me pityingly.

“You’ll get over that notion,” he assured me.

Thus another ingredient entered my character. Denied its food at home, good food, my soul eagerly consumed and made part of itself the fermenting stuff that Alec Pound so willing distributed. And it was fermenting stuff. Let us see what it did to me. Working slowly but surely, it changed for me the dawning mystery of sex into an evil instead of a holy one. The knowledge of the tragedy of Grace Hollister started me to seeking restlessly, on bookshelves and elsewhere, for a secret that forever eluded me, and forever led me on. The word fermenting aptly describes the process begun, suggesting as it does something closed up, away from air and sunlight, continually working in secret, engendering forces that fascinated, yet inspired me with fear. Undoubtedly this secretiveness of our elders was due to the pernicious dualism of their orthodox Christianity, in which love was carnal and therefore evil, and the flesh not the gracious soil of the spirit, but something to be deplored and condemned, exorcised and transformed by the miracle of grace. Now love had become a terrible power (gripping me) whose enchantment drove men and women from home and friends and kindred to the uttermost parts of the earth....

It was long before I got to sleep that night after my talk with Alec Pound. I alternated between the horror and the romance of the story I had heard, supplying for myself the details he had omitted: I beheld the signals from the windows, the clandestine meetings, the sudden and desperate flight. And to think that all this could have happened in our city not five blocks from where I lay!

My consternation and horror were concentrated on the man,—and yet I recall a curious bifurcation. Instead of experiencing that automatic righteous indignation which my father and mother had felt, which had animated old Mr. Jules Hollister when he had sternly forbidden his daughter’s name to be mentioned in his presence, which had made

these people outcasts, there welled up within me an intense sympathy and pity. By an instinctive process somehow linked with other experiences, I seemed to be able to enter into the feelings of these two outcasts, to understand the fearful yet fascinating nature of the impulse that had led them to elude the vigilance and probity of a world with

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which I myself was at odds. I pictured them in a remote land, shunned by mankind. Was there something within me that might eventually draw me to do likewise? The desire in me to which my father had referred, which would brook no opposition, which twisted and squirmed until it found its way to its object? I recalled the words of Jarvis, the carpenter, that if I ever set my heart on another man's wife, God help him. God help me!

A wicked man! I had never beheld the handsome and fascinating Mr. Jennings, but I visualised him now; dark, like all villains, with a black moustache and snapping black eyes. He carried a cane. I always associated canes with villains. Whereupon I arose, groped for the matches, lighted the gas, and gazing at myself in the mirror was a little reassured to find nothing sinister in my countenance....

Next to my father's faith in a Moral Governor of the Universe was his belief in the Tariff and the Republican Party. And this belief, among others, he handed on to me. On the cinder playground of the Academy we Republicans used to wage, during campaigns, pitched battles for the Tariff. It did not take a great deal of courage to be a Republican in our city, and I was brought up to believe that Democrats were irrational, inferior, and —with certain exceptions like the Hollisters—dirty beings. There was only one degree lower, and that was to be a mugwump. It was no wonder that the Hollisters were Democrats, for they had a queer streak in them; owing, no doubt, to the fact that old Mr. Jules Hollister's mother had been a Frenchwoman. He looked like a Frenchman, by the way, and always wore a skullcap.

I remember one autumn afternoon having a violent quarrel with Gene Hollister that bade fair to end in blows, when he suddenly demanded:—"I'll bet you anything you don't know why you're a Republican."

"It's because I'm for the Tariff," I replied triumphantly.

But his next question floored me. What, for example, was the Tariff? I tried to bluster it out, but with no success.

"Do you know?" I cried finally, with sudden inspiration.

It turned out that he did not.

"Aren't we darned idiots," he asked, "to get fighting over something we don't know anything about?"

That was Gene's French blood, of course. But his question rankled. And how was I to know that he would have got as little satisfaction if he had hurled it into the marching ranks of those imposing torch-light processions which sometimes passed our house at

night, with drums beating and fifes screaming and torches waving,—thousands of citizens who were for the Tariff for the same reason as I: to wit, because they were Republicans.

Yet my father lived and died in the firm belief that the United States of America was a democracy!

Resolved not to be caught a second time in such a humiliating position by a Democrat, I asked my father that night what the Tariff was. But I was too young to understand it, he said. I was to take his word for it that the country would go to the dogs if the Democrats got in and the Tariff were taken away. Here, in a nutshell, though neither he nor I realized it, was the political instruction of the marching hordes. Theirs not to reason why. I was too young, they too ignorant. Such is the method of Authority!

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The steel-mills of Mr. Durrett and Mr. Hambleton, he continued, would be forced to shut down, and thousands of workmen would starve. This was just a sample of what would happen. Prosperity would cease, he declared. That word, Prosperity, made a deep impression on me, and I recall the certain reverential emphasis he laid on it. And while my solicitude for the workmen was not so great as his and Mr. Durrett's, I was concerned as to what would happen to us if those twin gods, the Tariff and Prosperity, should take their departure from the land. Knowing my love for the good things of the table, my father intimated, with a rare humour I failed to appreciate, that we should have to live henceforth in spartan simplicity. After that, like the intelligent workman, I was firmer than ever for the Tariff.

Such was the idealistic plane on which—and from a good man—I received my first political instruction! And for a long time I connected the dominance of the Republican Party with the continuation of manna and quails, in other words, with nothing that had to do with the spiritual welfare of any citizen, but with clothing and food and material comforts. My education was progressing....

Though my father revered Plato and Aristotle, he did not, apparently, take very seriously the contention that that government alone is good "which seeks to attain the permanent interests of the governed by evolving the character of its citizens." To put the matter brutally, politics, despite the lofty sentiments on the transparencies in torchlight processions, had only to do with the belly, not the soul.

Politics and government, one perceives, had nothing to do with religion, nor education with any of these. A secularized and disjointed world! Our leading citizens, learned in the classics though some of them might be, paid no heed to the dictum of the Greek idealist, who was more practical than they would have supposed. "The man who does not carry his city within his heart is a spiritual starveling."

One evening, a year or two after that tariff campaign, I was pretending to study my lessons under the student lamp in the sitting-room while my mother sewed and my father wrote at his desk, when there was a ring at the door-bell. I welcomed any interruption, even though the visitor proved to be only the druggist's boy; and there was always the possibility of a telegram announcing, for instance, the death of a relative. Such had once been the case when my Uncle Avery Paret had died in New York, and I was taken out of school for a blissful four days for the funeral.

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I went tiptoeing into the hall and peeped over the banisters while Ella opened the door. I heard a voice which I recognized as that of Perry Blackwood's father asking for Mr. Paret; and then to my astonishment, I saw filing after him into the parlour some ten or twelve persons. With the exception of Mr. Ogilvy, who belonged to one of our old families, and Mr. Watling, a lawyer who had married the youngest of Gene Hollister's aunts, the visitors entered stealthily, after the manner of burglars; some of these were heavy-jowled, and all had an air of mystery that raised my curiosity and excitement to the highest pitch. I caught hold of Ella as she came up the stairs, but she tore herself free, and announced to my father that Mr. Josiah Blackwood and other gentlemen had asked to see him. My father seemed puzzled as he went downstairs.... A long interval elapsed, during which I did not make even a pretence of looking at my arithmetic. At times the low hum of voices rose to what was almost an uproar, and on occasions I distinguished a marked Irish brogue.

"I wonder what they want?" said my mother, nervously.

At last we heard the front door shut behind them, and my father came upstairs, his usually serene face wearing a disturbed expression.

"Who in the world was it, Mr. Paret?" asked my mother.

My father sat down in the arm-chair. He was clearly making an effort for self-control.

"Blackwood and Ogilvy and Watling and some city politicians," he exclaimed.

"Politicians!" she repeated. "What did they want? That is, if it's anything you can tell me," she added apologetically.

"They wished me to be the Republican candidate for the mayor of this city."

This tremendous news took me off my feet. My father mayor!

"Of course you didn't consider it, Mr. Paret," my mother was saying.

"Consider it!" he echoed reprovingly. "I can't imagine what Ogilvy and Watling and Josiah Blackwood were thinking of! They are out of their heads. I as much as told them so."

This was more than I could bear, for I had already pictured myself telling the news to envious schoolmates.

"Oh, father, why didn't you take it?" I cried.

By this time, when he turned to me, he had regained his usual expression.

“You don’t know what you’re talking about, Hugh,” he said. “Accept a political office! That sort of thing is left to politicians.”

The tone in which he spoke warned me that a continuation of the conversation would be unwise, and my mother also understood that the discussion was closed. He went back to his desk, and began writing again as though nothing had happened.

As for me, I was left in a palpitating state of excitement which my father’s self-control or sang-froid only served to irritate and enhance, and my head was fairly spinning as, covertly, I watched his pen steadily covering the paper.

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How could he—how could any man of flesh and blood sit down calmly after having been offered the highest honour in the gift of his community! And he had spurned it as if Mr. Blackwood and the others had gratuitously insulted him! And how was it, if my father so revered the Republican Party that he would not suffer it to be mentioned slightingly in his presence, that he had refused contemptuously to be its mayor?...

The next day at school, however, I managed to let it be known that the offer had been made and declined. After all, this seemed to make my father a bigger man than if he had accepted it. Naturally I was asked why he had declined it.

“He wouldn’t take it,” I replied scornfully. “Office-holding should be left to politicians.”

Ralph Hambleton, with his precocious and cynical knowledge of the world, minimized my triumph by declaring that he would rather be his grandfather, Nathaniel Durrett, than the mayor of the biggest city in the country. Politicians, he said, were bloodsuckers and thieves, and the only reason for holding office was that it enabled one to steal the taxpayers’ money....

As I have intimated, my vision of a future literary career waxed and waned, but a belief that I was going to be Somebody rarely deserted me. If not a literary lion, what was that Somebody to be? Such an environment as mine was woefully lacking in heroic figures to satisfy the romantic soul. In view of the experience I have just related, it is not surprising that the notion of becoming a statesman did not appeal to me; nor is it to be wondered at, despite the somewhat exaggerated respect and awe in which Ralph’s grandfather was held by my father and other influential persons, that I failed to be stirred by the elements of greatness in the grim personality of our first citizen, the iron-master. For he possessed such elements. He lived alone in Ingrain Street in an uncompromising mansion I always associated with the Sabbath, not only because I used to be taken there on decorous Sunday visits by my father, but because it was the very quintessence of Presbyterianism. The moment I entered its “portals”—as Mr. Hawthorne appropriately would have called them—my spirit was overwhelmed and suffocated by its formality and orderliness. Within its stern walls Nathaniel Durrett had made a model universe of his own, such as the Deity of the Westminster Confession had no doubt meant his greater one to be if man had not rebelled and foiled him.... It was a world from which I was determined to escape at any cost.

My father and I were always ushered into the gloomy library, with its high ceiling, with its long windows that reached almost to the rococo cornice, with its cold marble mantelpiece that reminded me of a tombstone, with its interminable book shelves filled with yellow bindings. On the centre table, in addition to a ponderous Bible, was one of those old-fashioned carafes of red glass tipped with blue surmounted by a tumbler of blue tipped with red. Behind this table Mr. Durrett sat reading a volume of sermons, a really handsome old man in his black tie and pleated shirt; tall and spare, straight as a ramrod, with a finely moulded head and straight nose and sinewy hands the colour of

mulberry stain. He called my father by his first name, an immense compliment, considering how few dared to do so.

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“Well, Matthew,” the old man would remark, after they had discussed Dr. Pound’s latest flight on the nature of the Trinity or the depravity of man, or horticulture, or the Republican Party, “do you have any better news of Hugh at school?”

“I regret to say, Mr. Durrett,” my father would reply, “that he does not yet seem to be aroused to a sense of his opportunities.”

Whereupon Mr. Durrett would gimble me with a blue eye that lurked beneath grizzled brows, quite as painful a proceeding as if he used an iron tool. I almost pity myself when I think of what a forlorn stranger I was in their company. They two, indeed, were of one kind, and I of another sort who could never understand them,—nor they me. To what depths of despair they reduced me they never knew, and yet they were doing it all for my good! They only managed to convince me that my love of folly was ineradicable, and that I was on my way head first for perdition. I always looked, during these excruciating and personal moments, at the coloured glass bottle.

“It grieves me to hear it, Hugh,” Mr. Durrett invariably declared. “You’ll never come to any good without study. Now when I was your age...”

I knew his history by heart, a common one in this country, although he made an honourable name instead of a dishonourable one. And when I contrast him with those of his successors whom I was to know later...! But I shall not anticipate. American genius had not then evolved the false entry method of overcapitalization. A thrilling history, Mr. Durrett’s, could I but have entered into it. I did not reflect then that this stern old man must have throbbed once; nay, fire and energy still remained in his bowels, else he could not have continued to dominate a city. Nor did it occur to me that the great steel-works that lighted the southern sky were the result of a passion, of dreams similar to those possessing me, but which I could not express. He had founded a family whose position was virtually hereditary, gained riches which for those days were great, compelled men to speak his name with a certain awe. But of what use were such riches as his when his religion and morality compelled him to banish from him all the joys in the power of riches to bring?

No, I didn’t want to be an iron-master. But it may have been about this time that I began to be impressed with the power of wealth, the adulation and reverence it commanded, the importance in which it clothed all who shared in it....

The private school I attended in the company of other boys with whom I was brought up was called Densmore Academy, a large, square building of a then hideous modernity, built of smooth, orange-red bricks with threads of black mortar between them. One reads of happy school days, yet I fail to recall any really happy hours spent there, even in the yard, which was covered with black cinders that cut you when you fell. I think of it as a penitentiary, and the memory of the barred lower windows gives substance to this impression.

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I suppose I learned something during the seven years of my incarceration. All of value, had its teachers known anything of youthful psychology, of natural bent, could have been put into me in three. At least four criminally wasted years, to say nothing of the benumbing and desiccating effect of that old system of education! Chalk and chalk-dust! The Mediterranean a tinted portion of the map, Italy a man's boot which I drew painfully, with many yawns; history no glorious epic revealing as it unrolls the Meaning of Things, no revelation of that wondrous distillation of the Spirit of man, but an endless marching and counter-marching up and down the map, weary columns of figures to be learned by rote instantly to be forgotten again. "On June the 7th General So-and-so proceeded with his whole army—" where? What does it matter? One little chapter of Carlyle, illuminated by a teacher of understanding, were worth a million such text-books. Alas, for the hatred of Virgil! "Paret" (a shiver), "begin at the one hundred and thirtieth line and translate!" I can hear myself droning out in detestable English a meaningless portion of that endless journey of the pious AEneas; can see Gene Hollister, with heart-rending glances of despair, stumbling through Cornelius Nepos in an unventilated room with chalk-rubbed blackboards and heavy odours of ink and stale lunch. And I graduated from Densmore Academy, the best school in our city, in the 80's, without having been taught even the rudiments of citizenship.

Knowledge was presented to us as a corpse, which bit by bit we painfully dissected. We never glimpsed the living, growing thing, never experienced the Spirit, the same spirit that was able magically to waft me from a wintry Lyme Street to the South Seas, the energizing, electrifying Spirit of true achievement, of life, of God himself. Little by little its flames were smothered until in manhood there seemed no spark of it left alive. Many years were to pass ere it was to revive again, as by a miracle. I travelled. Awakening at dawn, I saw, framed in a port-hole, rose-red Seriphos set in a living blue that paled the sapphire; the seas Ulysses had sailed, and the company of the Argonauts. My soul was steeped in unimagined colour, and in the memory of one rapturous instant is gathered what I was soon to see of Greece, is focussed the meaning of history, poetry and art. I was to stand one evening in spring on the mound where heroes sleep and gaze upon the plain of Marathon between darkening mountains and the blue thread of the strait peaceful now, flushed with pink and white blossoms of fruit and almond trees; to sit on the cliff-throne whence a Persian King had looked down upon a Salamis fought and lost.... In that port-hole glimpse a Themistocles was revealed, a Socrates, a Homer and a Phidias, an AEschylus, and a Pericles; yes, and a John brooding Revelations on his sea-girt rock as twilight falls over the waters....

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I saw the Roman Empire, that Scarlet Woman whose sands were dyed crimson with blood to appease her harlotry, whose ships were laden with treasures from the immutable East, grain from the valley of the Nile, spices from Arabia, precious purple stuffs from Tyre, tribute and spoil, slaves and jewels from conquered nations she absorbed; and yet whose very emperors were the unconscious instruments of a Progress they wot not of, preserved to the West by Marathon and Salamis. With Caesar's legions its message went forth across Hispania to the cliffs of the wild western ocean, through Hercynian forests to tribes that dwelt where great rivers roll up their bars by misty, northern seas, and even to Celtic fastnesses beyond the Wall....

IV.

In and out of my early memories like a dancing ray of sunlight flits the spirit of Nancy. I was always fond of her, but in extreme youth I accepted her incense with masculine complacency and took her allegiance for granted, never seeking to fathom the nature of the spell I exercised over her. Naturally other children teased me about her; but what was worse, with that charming lack of self-consciousness and consideration for what in after life are called the finer feelings, they teased her about me before me, my presence deterring them not at all. I can see them hopping around her in the Peters yard crying out:—"Nancy's in love with Hugh! Nancy's in love with Hugh!"

A sufficiently thrilling pastime, this, for Nancy could take care of herself. I was a bungler beside her when it came to retaliation, and not the least of her attractions for me was her capacity for anger: fury would be a better term. She would fly at them—even as she flew at the head-hunters when the Petrel was menaced; and she could run like a deer. Woe to the unfortunate victim she overtook! Masculine strength, exercised apologetically, availed but little, and I have seen Russell Peters and Gene Hollister retire from such encounters humiliated and weeping. She never caught Ralph; his methods of torture were more intelligent and subtle than Gene's and Russell's, but she was his equal when it came to a question of tongues.

"I know what's the matter with you, Ralph Hambleton," she would say. "You're jealous." An accusation that invariably put him on the defensive. "You think all the girls are in love with you, don't you?"

These scenes I found somewhat embarrassing. Not so Nancy. After discomfiting her tormenters, or wounding and scattering them, she would return to my side.... In spite of her frankly expressed preference for me she had an elusiveness that made a continual appeal to my imagination. She was never obvious or commonplace, and long before I began to experience the discomforts and sufferings of youthful love I was fascinated by a nature eloquent with contradictions and inconsistencies. She was a tomboy, yet her own sex was enhanced rather than overwhelmed by contact with the other: and no

matter how many trees she climbed she never seemed to lose her daintiness. It was innate.

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She could, at times, be surprisingly demure. These impressions of her daintiness and demureness are particularly vivid in a picture my memory has retained of our walking together, unattended, to Susan Blackwood's birthday party. She must have been about twelve years old. It was the first time I had escorted her or any other girl to a party; Mrs. Willett had smiled over the proceeding, but Nancy and I took it most seriously, as symbolic of things to come. I can see Powell Street, where Nancy lived, at four o'clock on a mild and cloudy December afternoon, the decorous, retiring houses, Nancy on one side of the pavement by the iron fences and I on the other by the tree boxes. I can't remember her dress, only the exquisite sense of her slimness and daintiness comes back to me, of her dark hair in a long braid tied with a red ribbon, of her slender legs clad in black stockings of shining silk. We felt the occasion to be somehow too significant, too eloquent for words....

In silence we climbed the flight of stone steps that led up to the Blackwood mansion, when suddenly the door was opened, letting out sounds of music and revelry. Mr. Blackwood's coloured butler, Ned, beamed at us hospitably, inviting us to enter the brightness within. The shades were drawn, the carpets were covered with festal canvas, the folding doors between the square rooms were flung back, the prisms of the big chandeliers flung their light over animated groups of matrons and children. Mrs. Watling, the mother of the Watling twins—too young to be present was directing with vivacity the game of "King William was King James's son," and Mrs. McAlery was playing the piano.

> "Now choose you East, now choose you West,
> Now choose the one you love the best!"

Tom Peters, in a velvet suit and consequently very miserable, refused to embrace Ethel Hollister; while the scornful Julia lurked in a corner: nothing would induce her to enter such a foolish game. I experienced a novel discomfiture when Ralph kissed Nancy.... Afterwards came the feast, from which Ham Durrett, in a pink paper cap with streamers, was at length forcibly removed by his mother. Thus early did he betray his love for the flesh pots....

It was not until I was sixteen that a player came and touched the keys of my soul, and it awoke, bewildered, at these first tender notes. The music quickened, tripping in ecstasy, to change by subtle phrases into themes of exquisite suffering hitherto unexperienced. I knew that I loved Nancy.

With the advent of longer dresses that reached to her shoe tops a change had come over her. The tomboy, the willing camp-follower who loved me and was unashamed, were gone forever, and a mysterious, transfigured being, neither girl nor woman, had magically been evolved. Could it be possible that she loved me still? My complacency had vanished; suddenly I had become the aggressor, if only I had known how to "aggress"; but in her presence I was seized by an accursed shyness that paralyzed my

tongue, and the things I had planned to say were left unuttered. It was something—-though I did not realize it—to be able to feel like that.

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The time came when I could no longer keep this thing to myself. The need of an outlet, of a confidant, became imperative, and I sought out Tom Peters. It was in February; I remember because I had ventured—with incredible daring—to send Nancy an elaborate, rosy Valentine; written on the back of it in a handwriting all too thinly disguised was the following verse, the triumphant result of much hard thinking in school hours:—

> Should you of this the sender guess
> Without another sign,
> Would you repent, and rest content
> To be his Valentine

I grew hot and cold by turns when I thought of its possible effects on my chances.

One of those useless, slushy afternoons, I took Tom for a walk that led us, as dusk came on, past Nancy's house. Only by painful degrees did I succeed in overcoming my bashfulness; but Tom, when at last I had blurted out the secret, was most sympathetic, although the ailment from which I suffered was as yet outside of the realm of his experience. I have used the word "ailment" advisedly, since he evidently put my trouble in the same category with diphtheria or scarlet fever, remarking that it was "darned hard luck." In vain I sought to explain that I did not regard it as such in the least; there was suffering, I admitted, but a degree of bliss none could comprehend who had not felt it. He refused to be envious, or at least to betray envy; yet he was curious, asking many questions, and I had reason to think before we parted that his admiration for me was increased. Was it possible that he, too, didn't love Nancy? No, it was funny, but he didn't. He failed to see much in girls: his tone remained commiserating, yet he began to take an interest in the progress of my suit.

For a time I had no progress to report. Out of consideration for those members of our weekly dancing class whose parents were Episcopalians the meetings were discontinued during Lent, and to call would have demanded a courage not in me; I should have become an object of ridicule among my friends and I would have died rather than face Nancy's mother and the members of her household. I set about making ingenious plans with a view to encounters that might appear casual. Nancy's school was dismissed at two, so was mine. By walking fast I could reach Salisbury Street, near St. Mary's Seminary for Young Ladies, in time to catch her, but even then for many days I was doomed to disappointment. She was either in company with other girls, or else she had taken another route; this I surmised led past Sophy McAlery's house, and I enlisted Tom as a confederate. He was to make straight for the McAlery's on Elm while I followed Powell, two short blocks away, and if Nancy went to Sophy's and left there alone he was to announce the fact by a preconcerted signal. Through long and persistent practice he had acquired a whistle shrill enough to wake the dead, accomplished by placing a finger of each hand between his teeth;—a gift that was the

envy of his acquaintances, and the subject of much discussion as to whether his teeth were peculiar. Tom insisted that they were; it was an added distinction.

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On this occasion he came up behind Nancy as she was leaving Sophy's gate and immediately sounded the alarm. She leaped in the air, dropped her school-books and whirled on him.

"Tom Peters! How dare you frighten me so!" she cried.

Tom regarded her in sudden dismay.

"I—I didn't mean to," he said. "I didn't think you were so near."

"But you must have seen me."

"I wasn't paying much attention," he equivocated,—a remark not calculated to appease her anger.

"Why were you doing it?"

"I was just practising," said Tom.

"Practising!" exclaimed Nancy, scornfully. "I shouldn't think you needed to practise that any more."

"Oh, I've done it louder," he declared, "Listen!"

She seized his hands, snatching them away from his lips. At this critical moment I appeared around the corner considerably out of breath, my heart beating like a watchman's rattle. I tried to feign nonchalance.

"Hello, Tom," I said. "Hello, Nancy. What's the matter?"

"It's Tom—he frightened me out of my senses." Dropping his wrists, she gave me a most disconcerting look; there was in it the suspicion of a smile. "What are you doing here, Hugh?"

"I heard Tom," I explained.

"I should think you might have. Where were you?"

"Over in another street," I answered, with deliberate vagueness. Nancy had suddenly become demure. I did not dare look at her, but I had a most uncomfortable notion that she suspected the plot. Meanwhile we had begun to walk along, all three of us, Tom, obviously ill at ease and discomfited, lagging a little behind. Just before we reached the corner I managed to kick him. His departure was by no means graceful.

“I’ve got to go;” he announced abruptly, and turned down the side street. We watched his sturdy figure as it receded.

“Well, of all queer boys!” said Nancy, and we walked on again.

“He’s my best friend,” I replied warmly.

“He doesn’t seem to care much for your company,” said Nancy.

“Oh, they have dinner at half past two,” I explained.

“Aren’t you afraid of missing yours, Hugh?” she asked wickedly.

“I’ve got time. I’d—I’d rather be with you.” After making which audacious remark I was seized by a spasm of apprehension. But nothing happened. Nancy remained demure. She didn’t remind me that I had reflected upon Tom.

“That’s nice of you, Hugh.”

“Oh, I’m not saying it because it’s nice,” I faltered. “I’d rather be with you than—with anybody.”

This was indeed the acme of daring. I couldn’t believe I had actually said it. But again I received no rebuke; instead came a remark that set me palpitating, that I treasured for many weeks to come.

“I got a very nice valentine,” she informed me.

“What was it like?” I asked thickly.

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“Oh, beautiful! All pink lace and—and Cupids, and the picture of a young man and a young woman in a garden.”

“Was that all?”

“Oh, no, there was a verse, in the oddest handwriting. I wonder who sent it?”

“Perhaps Ralph,” I hazarded ecstatically.

“Ralph couldn’t write poetry,” she replied disdainfully. “Besides, it was very good poetry.”

I suggested other possible authors and admirers. She rejected them all. We reached her gate, and I lingered. As she looked down at me from the stone steps her eyes shone with a soft light that filled me with radiance, and into her voice had come a questioning, shy note that thrilled the more because it revealed a new Nancy of whom I had not dreamed.

“Perhaps I’ll meet you again—coming from school,” I said.

“Perhaps,” she answered. “You’ll be late to dinner, Hugh, if you don’t go....”

I was late, and unable to eat much dinner, somewhat to my mother’s alarm. Love had taken away my appetite.... After dinner, when I was wandering aimlessly about the yard, Tom appeared on the other side of the fence.

“Don’t ever ask me to do that again,” he said gloomily.

I did meet Nancy again coming from school, not every day, but nearly every day. At first we pretended that there was no arrangement in this, and we both feigned surprise when we encountered one another. It was Nancy who possessed the courage that I lacked. One afternoon she said:—“I think I’d better walk with the girls to-morrow, Hugh.”

I protested, but she was firm. And after that it was an understood thing that on certain days I should go directly home, feeling like an exile. Sophy McAlery had begun to complain: and I gathered that Sophy was Nancy’s confidante. The other girls had begun to gossip. It was Nancy who conceived the brilliant idea—the more delightful because she said nothing about it to me—of making use of Sophy. She would leave school with Sophy, and I waited on the corner near the McAlery house. Poor Sophy! She was always of those who piped while others danced. In those days she had two straw-coloured pigtails, and her plain, faithful face is before me as I write. She never betrayed to me the excitement that filled her at being the accomplice of our romance.

Gossip raged, of course. Far from being disturbed, we used it, so to speak, as a handle for our love-making, which was carried on in an inferential rather than a direct fashion.

Were they saying that we were lovers? Delightful! We laughed at one another in the sunshine.... At last we achieved the great adventure of a clandestine meeting and went for a walk in the afternoon, avoiding the houses of our friends. I've forgotten which of us had the boldness to propose it. The crocuses and tulips had broken the black mould, the flower beds in the front yards were beginning to blaze with scarlet and yellow, the lawns had turned a living green. What did we talk about? The substance has vanished, only the flavour remains.

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One awoke of a morning to the twittering of birds, to walk to school amidst delicate, lace-like shadows of great trees acloud with old gold: the buds lay curled like tiny feathers on the pavements. Suddenly the shade was dense, the sunlight white and glaring, the odour of lilacs heavy in the air, spring in all its fulness had come,—spring and Nancy. Just so subtly, yet with the same seeming suddenness had budded and come to leaf and flower a perfect understanding, which nevertheless remained undefined. This, I had no doubt, was my fault, and due to the incomprehensible shyness her presence continued to inspire. Although we did not altogether abandon our secret trysts, we began to meet in more natural ways; there were garden parties and picnics where we strayed together through the woods and fields, pausing to tear off, one by one, the petals of a daisy, "She loves me, she loves me not." I never ventured to kiss her; I always thought afterwards I might have done so, she had seemed so willing, her eyes had shone so expectantly as I sat beside her on the grass; nor can I tell why I desired to kiss her save that this was the traditional thing to do to the lady one loved. To be sure, the very touch of her hand was galvanic. Paradoxically, I saw the human side of her, the yielding gentleness that always amazed me, yet I never overcame my awe of the divine; she was a being sacrosanct. Whether this idealism were innate or the result of such romances as I had read I cannot say.... I got, indeed, an avowal of a sort. The weekly dancing classes having begun again, on one occasion when she had waltzed twice with Gene Hollister I protested.

"Don't be silly, Hugh," she whispered. "Of course I like you better than anyone else—-you ought to know that."

We never got to the word "love," but we knew the feeling.

One cloud alone flung its shadow across these idyllic days. Before I was fully aware of it I had drawn very near to the first great junction-point of my life, my graduation from Densmore Academy. We were to "change cars," in the language of Principal Haime. Well enough for the fortunate ones who were to continue the academic journey, which implied a postponement of the serious business of life; but month after month of the last term had passed without a hint from my father that I was to change cars. Again and again I almost succeeded in screwing up my courage to the point of mentioning college to him,—never quite; his manner, though kind and calm, somehow strengthened my suspicion that I had been judged and found wanting, and doomed to "business": galley slavery, I deemed it, humdrum, prosaic, degrading! When I thought of it at night I experienced almost a frenzy of self-pity. My father couldn't intend to do that, just because my monthly reports hadn't always been what he thought they ought to be! Gene Hollister's were no better, if as good, and he was going to Princeton. Was I, Hugh Paret, to be denied the distinction of being a college man, the delights of university existence, cruelly separated and set apart from my friends whom I loved! held up to the world and especially to Nancy Willett as good for nothing else! The thought was unbearable. Characteristically, I hoped against hope.

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I have mentioned garden parties. One of our annual institutions was Mrs. Willett's children's party in May; for the Willett house had a garden that covered almost a quarter of a block. Mrs. Willett loved children, the greatest regret of her life being that providence had denied her a large family. As far back as my memory goes she had been something of an invalid; she had a sweet, sad face, and delicate hands so thin as to seem almost transparent; and she always sat in a chair under the great tree on the lawn, smiling at us as we soared to dizzy heights in the swing, or played croquet, or scurried through the paths, and in and out of the latticed summer-house with shrieks of laughter and terror. It all ended with a feast at a long table made of sawhorses and boards covered with a white cloth, and when the cake was cut there was wild excitement as to who would get the ring and who the thimble.

We were more decorous, or rather more awkward now, and the party began with a formal period when the boys gathered in a group and pretended indifference to the girls. The girls were cleverer at it, and actually achieved the impression that they were indifferent. We kept an eye on them, uneasily, while we talked. To be in Nancy's presence and not alone with Nancy was agonizing, and I wondered at a sang-froid beyond my power to achieve, accused her of coldness, my sufferings being the greater because she seemed more beautiful, daintier, more irreproachable than I had ever seen her. Even at that early age she gave evidence of the social gift, and it was due to her efforts that we forgot our best clothes and our newly born self-consciousness. When I begged her to slip away with me among the currant bushes she whispered:—"I can't, Hugh. I'm the hostess, you know."

I had gone there in a flutter of anticipation, but nothing went right that day. There was dancing in the big rooms that looked out on the garden; the only girl with whom I cared to dance was Nancy, and she was busy finding partners for the backward members of both sexes; though she was my partner, to be sure, when it all wound up with a Virginia reel on the lawn. Then, at supper, to cap the climax of untoward incidents, an animated discussion was begun as to the relative merits of the various colleges, the girls, too, taking sides. Mac Willett, Nancy's cousin, was going to Yale, Gene Hollister to Princeton, the Ewan boys to our State University, while Perry Blackwood and Ralph Hambleton and Ham Durrett were destined for Harvard; Tom Peters, also, though he was not to graduate from the Academy for another year. I might have known that Ralph would have suspected my misery. He sat triumphantly next to Nancy herself, while I had been told off to entertain the faithful Sophy. Noticing my silence, he demanded wickedly:—"Where are you going, Hugh?"

"Harvard, I think," I answered with as bold a front as I could muster. "I haven't talked it over with my father yet." It was intolerable to admit that I of them all was to be left behind.

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Nancy looked at me in surprise. She was always downright.

“Oh, Hugh, doesn’t your father mean to put you in business?” she exclaimed.

A hot flush spread over my face. Even to her I had not betrayed my apprehensions on this painful subject. Perhaps it was because of this very reason, knowing me as she did, that she had divined my fate. Could my father have spoken of it to anyone?

“Not that I know of,” I said angrily. I wondered if she knew how deeply she had hurt me. The others laughed. The colour rose in Nancy’s cheeks, and she gave me an appealing, almost tearful look, but my heart had hardened. As soon as supper was over I left the table to wander, nursing my wrongs, in a far corner of the garden, gay shouts and laughter still echoing in my ears. I was negligible, even my pathetic subterfuge had been detected and cruelly ridiculed by these friends whom I had always loved and sought out, and who now were so absorbed in their own prospects and happiness that they cared nothing for mine. And Nancy! I had been betrayed by Nancy!... Twilight was coming on. I remember glancing down miserably at the new blue suit I had put on so hopefully for the first time that afternoon.

Separating the garden from the street was a high, smooth board fence with a little gate in it, and I had my hand on the latch when I heard the sound of hurrying steps on the gravel path and a familiar voice calling my name.

“Hugh! Hugh!”

I turned. Nancy stood before me.

“Hugh, you’re not going!”

“Yes, I am.”

“Why?”

“If you don’t know, there’s no use telling you.”

“Just because I said your father intended to put you in business! Oh, Hugh, why are you so foolish and so proud? Do you suppose that anyone—that I—think any the worse of you?”

Yes, she had read me, she alone had entered into the source of that prevarication, the complex feelings from which it sprang. But at that moment I could not forgive her for humiliating me. I hugged my grievance.

“It was true, what I said,” I declared hotly. “My father has not spoken. It is true that I’m going to college, because I’ll make it true. I may not go this year.”

She stood staring in sheer surprise at sight of my sudden, quivering passion. I think the very intensity of it frightened her. And then, without more ado, I opened the gate and was gone....

That night, though I did not realize it, my journey into a Far Country was begun.

The misery that followed this incident had one compensating factor. Although too late to electrify Densmore and Principal Haime with my scholarship, I was determined to go to college now, somehow, sometime. I would show my father, these companions of mine, and above all Nancy herself the stuff of which I was made, compel them sooner or later to admit that they had misjudged me. I had been possessed by similar resolutions before, though none so strong, and they had a way of sinking below the surface of my consciousness, only to rise again and again until by sheer pressure they achieved realization.

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Yet I might have returned to Nancy if something had not occurred which I would have thought unbelievable: she began to show a marked preference for Ralph Hambleton. At first I regarded this affair as the most obvious of retaliations. She, likewise, had pride. Gradually, however, a feeling of uneasiness crept over me: as pretence, her performance was altogether too realistic; she threw her whole soul into it, danced with Ralph as often as she had ever danced with me, took walks with him, deferred to his opinions until, in spite of myself, I became convinced that the preference was genuine. I was a curious mixture of self-confidence and self-depreciation, and never had his superiority seemed more patent than now. His air of satisfaction was maddening.

How well I remember his triumph on that hot, June morning of our graduation from Densmore, a triumph he had apparently achieved without labour, and which he seemed to despise. A fitful breeze blew through the chapel at the top of the building; we, the graduates, sat in two rows next to the platform, and behind us the wooden benches nicked by many knives—were filled with sisters and mothers and fathers, some anxious, some proud and some sad. So brief a span, like that summer's day, and youth was gone! Would the time come when we, too, should sit by the waters of Babylon and sigh for it? The world was upside down.

We read the one hundred and third psalm. Then Principal Haime, in his long "Prince Albert" and a ridiculously inadequate collar that emphasized his scrawny neck, reminded us of the sacred associations we had formed, of the peculiar responsibilities that rested on us, who were the privileged of the city. "We had crossed to-day," he said, "an invisible threshold. Some were to go on to higher institutions of learning. Others..." I gulped. Quoting the Scriptures, he complimented those who had made the most of their opportunities. And it was then that he called out, impressively, the name of Ralph Forrester Hambleton. Summa cum laude! Suddenly I was seized with passionate, vehement regrets at the sound of the applause. I might have been the prize scholar, instead of Ralph, if I had only worked, if I had only realized what this focussing day of graduation meant! I might have been a marked individual, with people murmuring words of admiration, of speculation concerning the brilliancy of my future!... When at last my name was called and I rose to receive my diploma it seemed as though my incompetency had been proclaimed to the world...

That evening I stood in the narrow gallery of the flag-decked gymnasium and watched Nancy dancing with Ralph.

I let her go without protest or reproach. A mysterious lesion seemed to have taken place, I felt astonished and relieved, yet I was heavy with sadness. My emancipation had been bought at a price. Something hitherto spontaneous, warm and living was withering within me.

V.

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It was true to my father's character that he should have waited until the day after graduation to discuss my future, if discussion be the proper word. The next evening at supper he informed me that he wished to talk to me in the sitting-room, whither I followed him with a sinking heart. He seated himself at his desk, and sat for a moment gazing at me with a curious and benumbing expression, and then the blow fell.

"Hugh, I have spoken to your Cousin Robert Breck about you, and he has kindly consented to give you a trial."

"To give me a trial, sir!" I exclaimed.

"To employ you at a small but reasonable salary."

I could find no words to express my dismay. My dreams had come to this, that I was to be made a clerk in a grocery store! The fact that it was a wholesale grocery store was little consolation.

"But father," I faltered, "I don't want to go into business."

"Ah!" The sharpness of the exclamation might have betrayed to me the pain in which he was, but he recovered himself instantly. And I could see nothing but an inexorable justice closing in on me mechanically; a blind justice, in its inability to read my soul. "The time to have decided that," he declared, "was some years ago, my son. I have given you the best schooling a boy can have, and you have not shown the least appreciation of your advantages. I do not enjoy saying this, Hugh, but in spite of all my efforts and of those of your mother, you have remained undeveloped and irresponsible. My hope, as you know, was to have made you a professional man, a lawyer, and to take you into my office. My father and grandfather were professional men before me. But you are wholly lacking in ambition."

And I had burned with it all my life!

"I have ambition," I cried, the tears forcing themselves to my eyes.

"Ambition—for what, my son?"

I hesitated. How could I tell him that my longings to do something, to be somebody in the world were never more keen than at that moment? Matthew Arnold had not then written his definition of God as the stream of tendency by which we fulfil the laws of our being; and my father, at any rate, would not have acquiesced in the definition. Dimly but passionately I felt then, as I had always felt, that I had a mission to perform, a service to do which ultimately would be revealed to me. But the hopelessness of explaining this took on, now, the proportions of a tragedy. And I could only gaze at him.

"What kind of ambition, Hugh?" he repeated sadly.

“I—I have sometimes thought I could write, sir, if I had a chance. I like it better than anything else. I—I have tried it. And if I could only go to college—”

“Literature!” There was in his voice a scandalized note.

“Why not, father?” I asked weakly.

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And now it was he who, for the first time, seemed to be at a loss to express himself. He turned in his chair, and with a sweep of the hand indicated the long rows of musty-backed volumes. “Here,” he said, “you have had at your disposal as well-assorted a small library as the city contains, and you have not availed yourself of it. Yet you talk to me of literature as a profession. I am afraid, Hugh, that this is merely another indication of your desire to shun hard work, and I must tell you frankly that I fail to see in you the least qualification for such a career. You have not even inherited my taste for books. I venture to say, for instance, that you have never even read a paragraph of Plutarch, and yet when I was your age I was completely familiar with the Lives. You will not read Scott or Dickens.”

The impeachment was not to be denied, for the classics were hateful to me. Naturally I was afraid to make such a damning admission. My father had succeeded in presenting my ambition as the height of absurdity and presumption, and with something of the despair of a shipwrecked mariner my eyes rested on the green expanses of those book-backs, Bohn’s Standard Library! Nor did it occur to him or to me that one might be great in literature without having read so much as a gritty page of them....

He finished his argument by reminding me that worthless persons sought to enter the arts in the search for a fool’s paradise, and in order to satisfy a reprehensible craving for notoriety. The implication was clear, that imaginative production could not be classed as hard work. And he assured me that literature was a profession in which no one could afford to be second class. A Longfellow, a Harriet Beecher Stowe, or nothing. This was a practical age and a practical country. We had indeed produced Irvings and Hawthornes, but the future of American letters was, to say the least, problematical. We were a utilitarian people who would never create a great literature, and he reminded me that the days of the romantic and the picturesque had passed. He gathered that I desired to be a novelist. Well, novelists, with certain exceptions, were fantastic fellows who blew iridescent soap-bubbles and who had no morals. In the face of such a philosophy as his I was mute. The world appeared a dreary place of musty offices and smoky steel-works, of coal dust, of labour without a spark of inspiration. And that other, the world of my dreams, simply did not exist.

Incidentally my father had condemned Cousin Robert’s wholesale grocery business as a refuge of the lesser of intellect that could not achieve the professions,—an inference not calculated to stir my ambition and liking for it at the start.

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I began my business career on the following Monday morning. At breakfast, held earlier than usual on my account, my mother's sympathy was the more eloquent for being unspoken, while my father wore an air of unwonted cheerfulness; charging me, when I departed, to give his kindest remembrances to my Cousin Robert Breck. With a sense of martyrdom somehow deepened by this attitude of my parents I boarded a horse-car and went down town. Early though it was, the narrow streets of the wholesale district reverberated with the rattle of trucks and echoed with the shouts of drivers. The day promised to be scorching. At the door of the warehouse of Breck and Company I was greeted by the ineffable smell of groceries in which the suggestion of parched coffee prevailed. This is the sharpest remembrance of all, and even to-day that odour affects me somewhat in the manner that the interior of a ship affects a person prone to seasickness. My Cousin Robert, in his well-worn alpaca coat, was already seated at his desk behind the clouded glass partition next the alley at the back of the store, and as I entered he gazed at me over his steel-rimmed spectacles with that same disturbing look of clairvoyance I have already mentioned as one of his characteristics. The grey eyes were quizzical, and yet seemed to express a little commiseration.

"Well, Hugh, you've decided to honour us, have you?" he asked.

"I'm much obliged for giving me the place, Cousin Robert," I replied.

But he had no use for that sort of politeness, and he saw through me, as always.

"So you're not too tony for the grocery business, eh?"

"Oh, no, sir."

"It was good enough for old Benjamin Breck," he said. "Well, I'll give you a fair trial, my boy, and no favouritism on account of relationship, any more than to Willie."

His strong voice resounded through the store, and presently my cousin Willie appeared in answer to his summons, the same Willie who used to lead me, on mischief bent, through the barns and woods and fields of Claremore. He was barefoot no longer, though freckled still, grown lanky and tall; he wore a coarse blue apron that fell below his knees, and a pencil was stuck behind his ear.

"Get an apron for Hugh," said his father.

Willie's grin grew wider.

"I'll fit him out," he said.

"Start him in the shipping department," directed Cousin Robert, and turned to his letters.

I was forthwith provided with an apron, and introduced to the slim and anaemic but cheerful Johnny Hedges, the shipping clerk, hard at work in the alley. Secretly I looked down on my fellow-clerks, as one destined for a higher mission, made out of better stuff, —finer stuff. Despite my attempt to hide this sense of superiority they were swift to discover it; and perhaps it is to my credit as well as theirs that they did not resent it. Curiously enough, they seemed to acknowledge it. Before the week was out I had earned the nickname of Beau Brummel.

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“Say, Beau,” Johnny Hedges would ask, when I appeared of a morning, “what happened in the great world last night?”

I had an affection for them, these fellow-clerks, and I often wondered at their contentment with the drab lives they led, at their self-congratulation for “having a job” at Breck and Company’s.

“You don’t mean to say you like this kind of work?” I exclaimed one day to Johnny Hedges, as we sat on barrels of XXXX flour looking out at the hot sunlight in the alley.

“It ain’t a question of liking it, Beau,” he rebuked me. “It’s all very well for you to talk, since your father’s a millionaire” (a fiction so firmly embedded in their heads that no amount of denial affected it), “but what do you think would happen to me if I was fired? I couldn’t go home and take it easy—you bet not. I just want to shake hands with myself when I think that I’ve got a home, and a job like this. I know a feller—a hard worker he was, too who walked the pavements for three months when the Colvers failed, and couldn’t get nothing, and took to drink, and the last I heard of him he was sleeping in police stations and walking the ties, and his wife’s a waitress at a cheap hotel. Don’t you think it’s easy to get a job.”

I was momentarily sobered by the earnestness with which he brought home to me the relentlessness of our civilization. It seemed incredible. I should have learned a lesson in that store. Barring a few discordant days when the orders came in too fast or when we were short handed because of sickness, it was a veritable hive of happiness; morning after morning clerks and porters arrived, pale, yet smiling, and laboured with cheerfulness from eight o’clock until six, and departed as cheerfully for modest homes in obscure neighbourhoods that seemed to me areas of exile. They were troubled with no visions of better things. When the travelling men came in from the “road” there was great hilarity. Important personages, these, looked up to by the city clerks; jolly, reckless, Elizabethan-like rovers, who had tasted of the wine of liberty—and of other wines with the ineradicable lust for the road in their blood. No more routine for Jimmy Bowles, who was king of them all. I shudder to think how much of my knowledge of life I owe to this Jimmy, whose stories would have filled a quarto volume, but could on no account have been published; for a self-respecting post-office would not have allowed them to pass through the mails. As it was, Jimmy gave them circulation enough. I can still see his round face, with the nose just indicated, his wicked, twinkling little eyes, and I can hear his husky voice fall to a whisper when “the boss” passed through the store. Jimmy, when visiting us, always had a group around him. His audacity with women amazed me, for he never passed one of the “lady clerks” without some form of caress, which they resented but invariably laughed at. One day he imparted to me his code of morality: he never made love to another man’s wife, so he assured me, if he knew the man! The secret of life he had discovered in laughter, and by laughter he sold quantities of Cousin Robert’s groceries.

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Mr. Bowles boasted of a catholic acquaintance in all the cities of his district, but before venturing forth to conquer these he had learned his own city by heart. My Cousin Robert was not aware of the fact that Mr. Bowles “showed” the town to certain customers. He even desired to show it to me, but an epicurean strain in my nature held me back. Johnny Hedges went with him occasionally, and Henry Schneider, the bill clerk, and I listened eagerly to their experiences, afterwards confiding them to Tom....

There were times when, driven by an overwhelming curiosity, I ventured into certain strange streets, alone, shivering with cold and excitement, gripped by a fascination I did not comprehend, my eyes now averted, now irresistibly raised toward the white streaks of light that outlined the windows of dark houses....

One winter evening as I was going home, I encountered at the mail-box a young woman who shot at me a queer, twisted smile. I stood still, as though stunned, looking after her, and when halfway across the slushy street she turned and smiled again. Prodigiously excited, I followed her, fearful that I might be seen by someone who knew me, nor was it until she reached an unfamiliar street that I ventured to overtake her. She confounded me by facing me.

“Get out!” she cried fiercely.

I halted in my tracks, overwhelmed with shame. But she continued to regard me by the light of the street lamp.

“You didn’t want to be seen with me on Second Street, did you? You’re one of those sneaking swells.”

The shock of this sudden onslaught was tremendous. I stood frozen to the spot, trembling, convicted, for I knew that her accusation was just; I had wounded her, and I had a desire to make amends.

“I’m sorry,” I faltered. “I didn’t mean—to offend you. And you smiled—” I got no farther. She began to laugh, and so loudly that I glanced anxiously about. I would have fled, but something still held me, something that belied the harshness of her laugh.

“You’re just a kid,” she told me. “Say, you get along home, and tell your mamma I sent you.”

Whereupon I departed in a state of humiliation and self-reproach I had never before known, wandering about aimlessly for a long time. When at length I arrived at home, late for supper, my mother’s solicitude only served to deepen my pain. She went to the kitchen herself to see if my mince-pie were hot, and served me with her own hands. My father remained at his place at the head of the table while I tried to eat, smiling indulgently at her ministrations.

“Oh, a little hard work won’t hurt him, Sarah,” he said. “When I was his age I often worked until eleven o’clock and never felt the worse for it. Business must be pretty good, eh, Hugh?”

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I had never seen him in a more relaxing mood, a more approving one. My mother sat down beside me.... Words seem useless to express the complicated nature of my suffering at that moment,—my remorse, my sense of deception, of hypocrisy,—yes, and my terror. I tried to talk naturally, to answer my father's questions about affairs at the store, while all the time my eyes rested upon the objects of the room, familiar since childhood. Here were warmth, love, and safety. Why could I not be content with them, thankful for them? What was it in me that drove me from these sheltering walls out into the dark places? I glanced at my father. Had he ever known these wild, destroying desires? Oh, if I only could have confided in him! The very idea of it was preposterous. Such placidity as theirs would never understand the nature of my temptations, and I pictured to myself their horror and despair at my revelation. In imagination I beheld their figures receding while I drifted out to sea, alone. Would the tide—which was somehow within me—carry me out and out, in spite of all I could do?

> "Give me that man
> That is not passion's slave, and I will wear him
> In my heart's core...."

I did not shirk my tasks at the store, although I never got over the feeling that a fine instrument was being employed where a coarser one would have done equally well. There were moments when I was almost overcome by surges of self-commiseration and of impotent anger: for instance, I was once driven out of a shop by an incensed German grocer whom I had asked to settle a long-standing account. Yet the days passed, the daily grind absorbed my energies, and when I was not collecting, or tediously going over the stock in the dim recesses of the store, I was running errands in the wholesale district, treading the burning brick of the pavements, dodging heavy trucks and drays and perspiring clerks who flew about with memorandum pads in their hands, or awaiting the pleasure of bank tellers. Save Harvey, the venerable porter, I was the last to leave the store in the evening, and I always came away with the taste on my palate of Breck and Company's mail, it being my final duty to "lick" the whole of it and deposit it in the box at the corner. The gum on the envelopes tasted of winter-green.

My Cousin Robert was somewhat astonished at my application.

"We'll make a man of you yet, Hugh," he said to me once, when I had performed a commission with unexpected despatch....

Business was his all-in-all, and he had an undisguised contempt for higher education. To send a boy to college was, in his opinion, to run no inconsiderable risk of ruining him. What did they amount to when they came home, strutting like peacocks, full of fads and fancies, and much too good to associate with decent, hard-working citizens? Nevertheless when autumn came and my friends departed with eclat for the East, I was desperate indeed! Even the contemplation

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of Robert Breck did not console me, and yet here, in truth, was a life which might have served me as a model. His store was his castle; and his reputation for integrity and square dealing as wide as the city. Often I used to watch him with a certain envy as he stood in the doorway, his hands in his pockets, and greeted fellow-merchant and banker with his genuine and dignified directness. This man was his own master. They all called him “Robert,” and they made it clear by their manner that they knew they were addressing one who fulfilled his obligations and asked no favours.

Crusty old Nathaniel Durrett once declared that when you bought a bill of goods from Robert Breck you did not have to check up the invoice or employ a chemist. Here was a character to mould upon. If my ambition could but have been bounded by Breck and Company, I, too, might have come to stand in that doorway content with a tribute that was greater than Caesar’s.

I had been dreading the Christmas holidays, which were indeed to be no holidays for me. And when at length they arrived they brought with them from the East certain heroes fashionably clad, citizens now of a larger world than mine. These former companions had become superior beings, they could not help showing it, and their presence destroyed the Balance of Things. For alas, I had not wholly abjured the feminine sex after all! And from being a somewhat important factor in the lives of Ruth Hollister and other young women I suddenly became of no account. New interests, new rivalries and loyalties had arisen in which I had no share; I must perforce busy myself with invoices of flour and coffee and canned fruits while sleigh rides and coasting and skating expeditions to Blackstone Lake followed one another day after day,—for the irony of circumstances had decreed a winter uncommonly cold. There were evening parties, too, where I felt like an alien, though my friends were guilty of no conscious neglect; and had I been able to accept the situation simply, I should not have suffered.

The principal event of those holidays was a play given in the old Hambleton house (which later became the Boyne Club), under the direction of the lively and talented Mrs. Watling. I was invited, indeed, to participate; but even if I had had the desire I could not have done so, since the rehearsals were carried on in the daytime. Nancy was the leading lady. I have neglected to mention that she too had been away almost continuously since our misunderstanding, for the summer in the mountains,—a sojourn recommended for her mother’s health; and in the autumn she had somewhat abruptly decided to go East to boarding-school at Farmington. During the brief months of her absence she had marvellously acquired maturity and aplomb, a worldliness of manner and a certain frivolity that seemed to put those who surrounded her on a lower plane. She was only seventeen, yet she seemed the woman of thirty whose role she played. First there were murmurs, then sustained applause. I scarcely recognized her: she had taken wings and soared far above me, suggesting a sphere of power and luxury hitherto unimagined and beyond the scope of the world to which I belonged.

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Her triumph was genuine. When the play was over she was immediately surrounded by enthusiastic admirers eager to congratulate her, to dance with her. I too would have gone forward, but a sense of inadequacy, of unimportance, of an inability to cope with her, held me back, and from a corner I watched her sweeping around the room, holding up her train, and leaning on the arm of Bob Lansing, a classmate whom Ralph had brought home from Harvard. Then it was Ralph's turn: that affair seemed still to be going on. My feelings were a strange medley of despondency and stimulation....

Our eyes met. Her partner now was Ham Durrett. Capriciously releasing him, she stood before me,

"Hugh, you haven't asked me to dance, or even told me what you thought of the play."

"I thought it was splendid," I said lamely.

Because she refrained from replying I was farther than ever from understanding her. How was I to divine what she felt? or whether any longer she felt at all? Here, in this costume of a woman of the world, with the string of pearls at her neck to give her the final touch of brilliancy, was a strange, new creature who baffled and silenced me.... We had not gone halfway across the room when she halted abruptly.

"I'm tired," she exclaimed. "I don't feel like dancing just now," and led the way to the big, rose punch-bowl, one of the Durretts' most cherished possessions. Glancing up at me over the glass of lemonade I had given her she went on: "Why haven't you been to see me since I came home? I've wanted to talk to you, to hear how you are getting along."

Was she trying to make amends, or reminding me in this subtle way of the cause of our quarrel? What I was aware of as I looked at her was an attitude, a vantage point apparently gained by contact with that mysterious outer world which thus vicariously had laid its spell on me; I was tremendously struck by the thought that to achieve this attitude meant emancipation, invulnerability against the aches and pains which otherwise our fellow-beings had the power to give us; mastery over life,—the ability to choose calmly, as from a height, what were best for one's self, untroubled by loves and hates. Untroubled by loves and hates! At that very moment, paradoxically, I loved her madly, but with a love not of the old quality, a love that demanded a vantage point of its own. Even though she had made an advance—and some elusiveness in her manner led me to doubt it I could not go to her now. I must go as a conqueror,—a conqueror in the lists she herself had chosen, where the prize is power.

"Oh, I'm getting along pretty well," I said. "At any rate, they don't complain of me."

"Somehow," she ventured, "somehow it's hard to think of you as a business man."

I took this for a reference to the boast I had made that I would go to college.

“Business isn’t so bad as it might be,” I assured her.

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“I think a man ought to go away to college,” she declared, in what seemed another tone. “He makes friends, learns certain things,—it gives him finish. We are very provincial here.”

Provincial! I did not stop to reflect how recently she must have acquired the word; it summed up precisely the self-estimate at which I had arrived. The sting went deep. Before I could think of an effective reply Nancy was being carried off by the young man from the East, who was clearly infatuated. He was not provincial. She smiled back at me brightly over his shoulder.... In that instant were fused in one resolution all the discordant elements within me of aspiration and discontent. It was not so much that I would show Nancy what I intended to do—I would show myself; and I felt a sudden elation, and accession of power that enabled me momentarily to despise the puppets with whom she danced.... From this mood I was awakened with a start to feel a hand on my shoulder, and I turned to confront her father, McAlery Willett; a gregarious, easygoing, pleasure-loving gentleman who made only a pretence of business, having inherited an ample fortune from his father, unique among his generation in our city in that he paid some attention to fashion in his dress; good living was already beginning to affect his figure. His mellow voice had a way of breaking an octave.

“Don’t worry, my boy,” he said. “You stick to business. These college fellows are cocks of the walk just now, but some day you’ll be able to snap your fingers at all of ’em.”

The next day was dark, overcast, smoky, damp-the soft, unwholesome dampness that follows a spell of hard frost. I spent the morning and afternoon on the gloomy third floor of Breck and Company, making a list of the stock. I remember the place as though I had just stepped out of it, the freight elevator at the back, the dusty, iron columns, the continuous piles of cases and bags and barrels with narrow aisles between them; the dirty windows, spotted and soot-streaked, that looked down on Second Street. I was determined now to escape from all this, and I had my plan in mind.

No sooner had I swallowed my supper that evening than I set out at a swift pace for a modest residence district ten blocks away, coming to a little frame house set back in a yard,—one of those houses in which the ringing of the front door-bell produces the greatest commotion; children’s voices were excitedly raised and then hushed. After a brief silence the door was opened by a pleasant-faced, brown-bearded man, who stood staring at me in surprise. His hair was rumpled, he wore an old house coat with a hole in the elbow, and with one finger he kept his place in the book which he held in his hand.

“Hugh Paret!” he exclaimed.

He ushered me into a little parlour lighted by two lamps, that bore every evidence of having been recently vacated. Its features somehow bespoke a struggle for existence; as though its occupants had worried much and loved much. It was a room best

described by the word “home”—home made more precious by a certain precariousness. Toys and school-books strewed the floor, a sewing-bag and apron lay across the sofa, and in one corner was a roll-topped desk of varnished oak. The seats of the chairs were comfortably depressed.

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So this was where Mr. Wood lived! Mr. Wood, instructor in Latin and Greek at Densmore Academy. It was now borne in on me for the first time that he did live and have his ties like any other human being, instead of just appearing magically from nowhere on a platform in a chalky room at nine every morning, to vanish again in the afternoon. I had formerly stood in awe of his presence. But now I was suddenly possessed by an embarrassment, and (shall I say it?) by a commiseration bordering on contempt for a man who would consent to live thus for the sake of being a schoolteacher. How strange that civilization should set such a high value on education and treat its functionaries with such neglect!

Mr. Wood's surprise at seeing me was genuine. For I had never shown a particular interest in him, nor in the knowledge which he strove to impart.

"I thought you had forgotten me, Hugh," he said, and added whimsically: "most boys do, when they graduate."

I felt the reproach, which made it the more difficult for me to state my errand.

"I knew you sometimes took pupils in the evening, Mr. Wood."

"Pupils,—yes," he replied, still eyeing me. Suddenly his eyes twinkled. He had indeed no reason to suspect me of thirsting for learning. "But I was under the impression that you had gone into business, Hugh."

"The fact is, sir," I explained somewhat painfully, "that I am not satisfied with business. I feel—as if I ought to know more. And I came to see if you would give me lessons about three nights a week, because I want to take the Harvard examinations next summer."

Thus I made it appear, and so persuaded myself, that my ambition had been prompted by a craving for knowledge. As soon as he could recover himself he reminded me that he had on many occasions declared I had a brain.

"Your father must be very happy over this decision of yours," he said.

That was the point, I told him. It was to be a surprise for my father; I was to take the examinations first, and inform him afterwards.

To my intense relief, Mr. Wood found the scheme wholly laudable, and entered into it with zest. He produced examinations of preceding years from a pigeonhole in his desk, and inside of half an hour the arrangement was made, the price of the lessons settled. They were well within my salary, which recently had been raised....

When I went down town, or collecting bills for Breck and Company, I took a text-book along with me in the street-cars. Now at last I had behind my studies a driving force. Algebra, Latin, Greek and history became worth while, means to an end. I astonished

Mr. Wood; and sometimes he would tilt back his chair, take off his spectacles and pull his beard.

“Why in the name of all the sages,” he would demand, “couldn’t you have done this well at school? You might have led your class, instead of Ralph Hambleton.”

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I grew very fond of Mr. Wood, and even of his thin little wife, who occasionally flitted into the room after we had finished. I fully intended to keep up with them in after life, but I never did. I forgot them completely....

My parents were not wholly easy in their minds concerning me; they were bewildered by the new aspect I presented. For my lately acquired motive was strong enough to compel me to restrict myself socially, and the evenings I spent at home were given to study, usually in my own room. Once I was caught with a Latin grammar: I was just "looking over it," I said. My mother sighed. I knew what was in her mind; she had always been secretly disappointed that I had not been sent to college. And presently, when my father went out to attend a trustee's meeting, the impulse to confide in her almost overcame me; I loved her with that affection which goes out to those whom we feel understand us, but I was learning to restrain my feelings. She looked at me wistfully.... I knew that she would insist on telling my father, and thus possibly frustrate my plans. That I was not discovered was due to a certain quixotic twist in my father's character. I was working now, and though not actually earning my own living, he no longer felt justified in prying into my affairs.

When June arrived, however, my tutor began to show signs that his conscience was troubling him, and one night he delivered his ultimatum. The joke had gone far enough, he implied. My intentions, indeed, he found praiseworthy, but in his opinion it was high time that my father were informed of them; he was determined to call at my father's office.

The next morning was blue with the presage of showers; blue, too, with the presage of fate. An interminable morning. My tasks had become utterly distasteful. And in the afternoon, so when I sat down to make out invoices, I wrote automatically the names of the familiar customers, my mind now exalted by hope, now depressed by anxiety. The result of an interview perhaps even now going on would determine whether or no I should be immediately released from a slavery I detested. Would Mr. Wood persuade my father? If not, I was prepared to take more desperate measures; remain in the grocery business I would not. In the evening, as I hurried homeward from the corner where the Boyne Street car had dropped me, I halted suddenly in front of the Peters house, absorbing the scene where my childhood had been spent: each of these spreading maples was an old friend, and in these yards I had played and dreamed. An unaccountable sadness passed over me as I walked on toward our gate; I entered it, gained the doorway of the house and went upstairs, glancing into the sitting room. My mother sat by the window, sewing. She looked up at me with an ineffable expression, in which I read a trace of tears.

"Hugh!" she exclaimed.

I felt very uncomfortable, and stood looking down at her.

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“Why didn’t you tell us, my son?” In her voice was in truth reproach; yet mingled with that was another note, which I think was pride.

“What has father said?” I asked.

“Oh, my dear, he will tell you himself. I—I don’t know—he will talk to you.”

Suddenly she seized my hands and drew me down to her, and then held me away, gazing into my face with a passionate questioning, her lips smiling, her eyes wet. What did she see? Was there a subtler relationship between our natures than I guessed? Did she understand by some instinctive power the riddle within me? divine through love the force that was driving me on she knew not whither, nor I? At the sound of my father’s step in the hall she released me. He came in as though nothing had happened.

“Well, Hugh, are you home?” he said....

Never had I been more impressed, more bewildered by his self-command than at that time. Save for the fact that my mother talked less than usual, supper passed as though nothing had happened. Whether I had shaken him, disappointed him, or gained his reluctant approval I could not tell. Gradually his outward calmness turned my suspense to irritation....

But when at length we were alone together, I gained a certain reassurance. His manner was not severe. He hesitated a little before beginning.

“I must confess, Hugh; that I scarcely know what to say about this proceeding of yours. The thing that strikes me most forcibly is that you might have confided in your mother and myself.”

Hope flashed up within me, like an explosion.

“I—I wanted to surprise you, father. And then, you see, I thought it would be wiser to find out first how well I was likely to do at the examinations.”

My father looked at me. Unfortunately he possessed neither a sense of humour nor a sense of tragedy sufficient to meet such a situation. For the first time in my life I beheld him at a disadvantage; for I had, somehow, managed at length to force him out of position, and he was puzzled. I was quick to play my trump card.

“I have been thinking it over carefully,” I told him, “and I have made up my mind that I want to go into the law.”

“The law!” he exclaimed sharply.

“Why, yes, sir. I know that you were disappointed because I did not do sufficiently well at school to go to college and study for the bar.”

I felt indeed a momentary pang, but I remembered that I was fighting for my freedom.

“You seemed satisfied where you were,” he said in a puzzled voice, “and your Cousin Robert gives a good account of you.”

“I’ve tried to do the work as well as I could, sir,” I replied. “But I don’t like the grocery business, or any other business. I have a feeling that I’m not made for it.”

“And you think, now, that you are made for the law?” he asked, with the faint hint of a smile.

“Yes, sir, I believe I could succeed at it. I’d like to try,” I replied modestly.

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“You’ve given up the idiotic notion of wishing to be an author?”

I implied that he himself had convinced me of the futility of such a wish. I listened to his next words as in a dream.

“I must confess to you, Hugh, that there are times when I fail to understand you. I hope it is as you say, that you have arrived at a settled conviction as to your future, and that this is not another of those caprices to which you have been subject, nor a desire to shirk honest work. Mr. Wood has made out a strong case for you, and I have therefore determined to give you a trial. If you pass the examinations with credit, you may go to college, but if at any time you fail to make good progress, you come home, and go into business again. Is that thoroughly understood?”

I said it was, and thanked him effusively.... I had escaped,—the prison doors had flown open. But it is written that every happiness has its sting; and my joy, intense though it was, had in it a core of remorse....

I went downstairs to my mother, who was sitting in the hall by the open door.

“Father says I may go!” I said.

She got up and took me in her arms.

“My dear, I am so glad, although we shall miss you dreadfully.... Hugh?”

“Yes, mother.”

“Oh, Hugh, I so want you to be a good man!”

Her cry was a little incoherent, but fraught with a meaning that came home to me, in spite of myself....

A while later I ran over to announce to the amazed Tom Peters that I was actually going to Harvard with him. He stood in the half-lighted hallway, his hands in his pockets, blinking at me.

“Hugh, you’re a wonder!” he cried. “How in Jehoshaphat did you work it?"...

I lay long awake that night thinking over the momentous change so soon to come into my life, wondering exultantly what Nancy Willett would say now. I was not one, at any rate, to be despised or neglected.

VI.

The following September Tom Peters and I went East together. In the early morning Boston broke on us like a Mecca as we rolled out of the old Albany station, joint lords of a “herdic.” How sharply the smell of the salt-laden east wind and its penetrating coolness come back to me! I seek in vain for words to express the exhilarating effect of that briny coolness on my imagination, and of the visions it summoned up of the newer, larger life into which I had marvellously been transported. We alighted at the Parker House, full-fledged men of the world, and tried to act as though the breakfast of which we partook were merely an incident, not an Event; as though we were Seniors, and not freshmen, assuming an indifference to the beings by whom we were surrounded and who were breakfasting, too,—although the nice-looking ones with fresh faces and trim clothes were all undoubtedly Olympians. The better to proclaim our nonchalance, we seated ourselves on a lounge of the marble-paved lobby and smoked cigarettes. This was liberty indeed! At length we departed for Cambridge, in another herdic.

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Boston! Could it be possible? Everything was so different here as to give the place the aspect of a dream: the Bulfinch State House, the decorous shops, the still more decorous dwellings with the purple-paned windows facing the Common; Back Bay, still boarded up, ivy-spread, suggestive of a mysterious and delectable existence. We crossed the Charles River, blue-grey and still that morning; traversed a nondescript district, and at last found ourselves gazing out of the windows at the mellowed, plum-coloured bricks of the University buildings.... All at once our exhilaration evaporated as the herdic rumbled into a side street and backed up before the door of a not-too-inviting, three-storied house with a queer extension on top. Its steps and vestibule were, however, immaculate. The bell was answered by a plainly overworked servant girl, of whom we inquired for Mrs. Bolton, our landlady. There followed a period of waiting in a parlour from which the light had been almost wholly banished, with slippery horsehair furniture and a marble-topped table; and Mrs. Bolton, when she appeared, dressed in rusty black, harmonized perfectly with the funereal gloom. She was a tall, rawboned, severe lady with a peculiar red-mottled complexion that somehow reminded one of the outcropping rocks of her native New England soil.

“You want to see your rooms, I suppose,” she remarked impassively when we had introduced ourselves, and as we mounted the stairs behind her Tom, in a whisper, nicknamed her “Granite Face.” Presently she left us.

“Hospitable soul!” said Tom, who, with his hands in his pockets, was gazing at the bare walls of our sitting-room. “We’ll have to go into the house-furnishing business, Hughie. I vote we don’t linger here to-day—we’ll get melancholia.”

Outside, however, the sun was shining brightly, and we departed immediately to explore Cambridge and announce our important presences to the proper authorities.... We went into Boston to dine.... It was not until nine o’clock in the evening that we returned and the bottom suddenly dropped out of things. He who has tasted that first, acute homesickness of college will know what I mean. It usually comes at the opening of one’s trunk. The sight of the top tray gave me a pang I shall never forget. I would not have believed that I loved my mother so much! These articles had been packed by her hands; and in one corner, among the underclothes on which she had neatly sewed my initials, lay the new Bible she had bought. “Hugh Moreton Paret, from his Mother. September, 1881.” I took it up (Tom was not looking) and tried to read a passage, but my eyes were blurred. What was it within me that pressed and pressed until I thought I could bear the pain of it no longer? I pictured the sitting-room at home, and my father and mother there, thinking of me. Yes, I must acknowledge it; in the bitterness of that moment I longed to be back once more in the railed-off space on the floor of Breck and Company, writing invoices....

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Presently, as we went on silently with our unpacking, we became aware of someone in the doorway.

“Hello, you fellows!” he cried. “We’re classmates, I guess.”

We turned to behold an ungainly young man in an ill-fitting blue suit. His face was pimply, his eyes a Teutonic blue, his yellow hair rumpled, his naturally large mouth was made larger by a friendly grin.

“I’m Hermann Krebs,” he announced simply. “Who are you?”

We replied, I regret to say, with a distinct coolness that did not seem to bother him in the least. He advanced into the room, holding out a large, red, and serviceable hand, evidently it had never dawned on him that there was such a thing in the world as snobbery. But Tom and I had been “coached” by Ralph Hambleton and Perry Blackwood, warned to be careful of our friendships. There was a Reason! In any case Mr. Krebs would not have appealed to us. In answer to a second question he was informed what city we hailed from, and he proclaimed himself likewise a native of our state.

“Why, I’m from Elkington!” he exclaimed, as though the fact sealed our future relationships. He seated himself on Tom’s trunk and added: “Welcome to old Harvard!”

We felt that he was scarcely qualified to speak for “old Harvard,” but we did not say so.

“You look as if you’d been pall-bearers for somebody,” was his next observation.

To this there seemed no possible reply.

“You fellows are pretty well fixed here,” he went on, undismayed, gazing about a room which had seemed to us the abomination of desolation. “Your folks must be rich. I’m up under the skylight.”

Even this failed to touch us. His father—he told us with undiminished candour—had been a German emigrant who had come over in ’49, after the cause of liberty had been lost in the old country, and made eye-glasses and opera glasses. There hadn’t been a fortune in it. He, Hermann, had worked at various occupations in the summer time, from peddling to farming, until he had saved enough to start him at Harvard. Tom, who had been bending over his bureau drawer, straightened up.

“What did you want to come here for?” he demanded.

“Say, what did you?” Mr. Krebs retorted genially. “To get an education, of course.”

“An education!” echoed Tom.

“Isn’t Harvard the oldest and best seat of learning in America?” There was an exaltation in Krebs’s voice that arrested my attention, and made me look at him again. A troubled chord had been struck within me.

“Sure,” said Tom.

“What did you come for?” Mr. Krebs persisted.

“To sow my wild oats,” said Tom. “I expect to have something of a crop, too.”

For some reason I could not fathom, it suddenly seemed to dawn on Mr. Krebs, as a result of this statement, that he wasn’t wanted.

“Well, so long,” he said, with a new dignity that curiously belied the informality of his farewell.

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An interval of silence followed his departure.

“Well, he’s got a crust!” said Tom, at last.

My own feeling about Mr. Krebs had become more complicated; but I took my cue from Tom, who dealt with situations simply.

“He’ll come in for a few knockouts,” he declared. “Here’s to old Harvard, the greatest institution of learning in America! Oh, gee!”

Our visitor, at least, made us temporarily forget our homesickness, but it returned with redoubled intensity when we had put out the lights and gone to bed.

Before we had left home it had been mildly hinted to us by Ralph and Perry Blackwood that scholarly eminence was not absolutely necessary to one’s welfare and happiness at Cambridge. The hint had been somewhat superfluous; but the question remained, what was necessary? With a view of getting some light on this delicate subject we paid a visit the next evening to our former friends and schoolmates, whose advice was conveyed with a masterly circumlocution that impressed us both. There are some things that may not be discussed directly, and the conduct of life at a modern university—which is a reflection of life in the greater world—is one of these. Perry Blackwood and Ham did most of the talking, while Ralph, characteristically, lay at full length on the window-seat, interrupting with an occasional terse and cynical remark very much to the point. As a sophomore, he in particular seemed lifted immeasurably above us, for he was—as might have been expected already a marked man in his class. The rooms which he shared with his cousin made a tremendous impression on Tom and me, and seemed palatial in comparison to our quarters at Mrs. Bolton’s, eloquent of the freedom and luxury of undergraduate existence; their note, perhaps, was struck by the profusion of gay sofa pillows, then something of an innovation. The heavy, expensive furniture was of a pattern new to me; and on the mantel were three or four photographs of ladies in the alluring costume of the musical stage, in which Tom evinced a particular interest.

“Did grandfather send ’em?” he inquired.

“They’re Ham’s,” said Ralph, and he contrived somehow to get into those two words an epitome of his cousin’s character. Ham was stouter, and his clothes were more striking, more obviously expensive than ever.... On our way homeward, after we had walked a block or two in silence, Tom exclaimed:—“Don’t make friends with the friendless!—eh, Hughie? We knew enough to begin all right, didn’t we?"...

Have I made us out a pair of deliberate, calculating snobs? Well, after all it must be remembered that our bringing up had not been of sufficient liberality to include the Krebses of this world. We did not, indeed, spend much time in choosing and weighing

those whom we should know and those whom we should avoid; and before the first term of that Freshman year was over Tom had become a favourite. He had the gift

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of making men feel that he delighted in their society, that he wished for nothing better than to sit for hours in their company, content to listen to the arguments that raged about him. Once in a while he would make a droll observation that was greeted with fits of laughter. He was always referred to as “old Tom,” or “good old Tom”; presently, when he began to pick out chords on the banjo, it was discovered that he had a good tenor voice, though he could not always be induced to sing.... Somewhat to the jeopardy of the academic standard that my father expected me to sustain, our rooms became a rendezvous for many clubable souls whose maudlin, midnight attempts at harmony often set the cocks crowing.

> “Free from care and despair,
> What care we?
> ’Tis wine, ’tis wine
> That makes the jollity.”

As a matter of truth, on these occasions it was more often beer; beer transported thither in Tom’s new valise,—given him by his mother,—and stuffed with snow to keep the bottles cold. Sometimes Granite Face, adorned in a sky-blue wrapper, would suddenly appear in the doorway to declare that we were a disgrace to her respectable house: the university authorities should be informed, *etc*., *etc*. Poor woman, we were outrageously inconsiderate of her.... One evening as we came through the hall we caught a glimpse in the dimly lighted parlour of a young man holding a shy and pale little girl on his lap, Annie, Mrs. Bolton’s daughter: on the face of our landlady was an expression I had never seen there, like a light. I should scarcely have known her. Tom and I paused at the foot of the stairs. He clutched my arm.

“Darned if it wasn’t our friend Krebs!” he whispered.

While I was by no means so popular as Tom, I got along fairly well. I had escaped from provincialism, from the obscure purgatory of the wholesale grocery business; new vistas, exciting and stimulating, had been opened up; nor did I offend the sensibilities and prejudices of the new friends I made, but gave a hearty consent to a code I found congenial. I recognized in the social system of undergraduate life at Harvard a reflection of that of a greater world where I hoped some day to shine; yet my ambition did not prey upon me. Mere conformity, however, would not have taken me very far in a sphere from which I, in common with many others, desired not to be excluded.... One day, in an idle but inspired moment, I paraphrased a song from “Pinafore,” applying it to a college embroglio, and the brief and lively vogue it enjoyed was sufficient to indicate a future usefulness. I had “found myself.” This was in the last part of the freshman year, and later on I became a sort of amateur, class poet-laureate. Many were the skits I composed, and Tom sang them....

During that freshman year we often encountered Hermann Krebs, whistling merrily, on the stairs.

“Got your themes done?” he would inquire cheerfully.

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And Tom would always mutter, when he was out of earshot: "He has got a crust!"

When I thought about Krebs at all,—and this was seldom indeed,—his manifest happiness puzzled me. Our cool politeness did not seem to bother him in the least; on the contrary, I got the impression that it amused him. He seemed to have made no friends. And after that first evening, memorable for its homesickness, he never ventured to repeat his visit to us.

One windy November day I spied his somewhat ludicrous figure striding ahead of me, his trousers above his ankles. I was bundled up in a new ulster,—of which I was secretly quite proud,—but he wore no overcoat at all.

"Well, how are you getting along?" I asked, as I overtook him.

He made clear, as he turned, his surprise that I should have addressed him at all, but immediately recovered himself.

"Oh, fine," he responded. "I've had better luck than I expected. I'm correspondent for two or three newspapers. I began by washing windows, and doing odd jobs for the professors' wives." He laughed. "I guess that doesn't strike you as good luck."

He showed no resentment at my patronage, but a self-sufficiency that made my sympathy seem superfluous, giving the impression of an inner harmony and content that surprised me.

"I needn't ask how you're getting along," he said....

At the end of the freshman year we abandoned Mrs. Bolton's for more desirable quarters.

I shall not go deeply into my college career, recalling only such incidents as, seen in the retrospect, appear to have had significance. I have mentioned my knack for song-writing; but it was not, I think, until my junior year there was startlingly renewed in me my youthful desire to write, to create something worth while, that had so long been dormant.

The inspiration came from Alonzo Cheyne, instructor in English; a remarkable teacher, in spite of the finicky mannerisms which Tom imitated. And when, in reading aloud certain magnificent passages, he forgot his affectations, he managed to arouse cravings I thought to have deserted me forever. Was it possible, after all, that I had been right and my father wrong? that I might yet be great in literature?

A mere hint from Alonzo Cheyne was more highly prized by the grinds than fulsome praise from another teacher. And to his credit it should be recorded that the grinds were the only ones he treated with any seriousness; he took pains to answer their questions;

but towards the rest of us, the Chosen, he showed a thinly veiled contempt. None so quick as he to detect a simulated interest, or a wily effort to make him ridiculous; and few tried this a second time, for he had a rapier-like gift of repartee that transfixed the offender like a moth on a pin. He had a way of eyeing me at times, his glasses in his hand, a queer smile on his lips, as much as to imply that there was one at least among the lost who was made for better things. Not that my work was poor, but I knew that it might have been better. Out of his classes, however, beyond the immediate, disturbing influence of his personality I would relapse into indifference....

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Returning one evening to our quarters, which were now in the “Yard,” I found Tom seated with a blank sheet before him, thrusting his hand through his hair and biting the end of his penholder to a pulp. In his muttering, which was mixed with the curious, stingless profanity of which he was master, I caught the name of Cheyne, and I knew that he was facing the crisis of a fortnightly theme. The subject assigned was a narrative of some personal experience, and it was to be handed in on the morrow. My own theme was already, written.

“I’ve been holding down this chair for an hour, and I can’t seem to think of a thing.” He rose to fling himself down on the lounge. “I wish I was in Canada.”

“Why Canada?”

“Trout fishing with Uncle Jake at that club of his where he took me last summer.” Tom gazed dreamily at the ceiling. “Whenever I have some darned foolish theme like this to write I want to go fishing, and I want to go like the devil. I’ll get Uncle Jake to take you, too, next summer.”

“I wish you would.”

“Say, that’s living all right, Hughie, up there among the tamaracks and balsams!” And he began, for something like the thirtieth time, to relate the adventures of the trip.

As he talked, the idea presented itself to me with sudden fascination to use this incident as the subject of Tom’s theme; to write it for him, from his point of view, imitating the droll style he would have had if he had been able to write; for, when he was interested in any matter, his oral narrative did not lack vividness. I began to ask him questions: what were the trees like, for instance? How did the French-Canadian guides talk? He had the gift of mimicry: aided by a partial knowledge of French I wrote down a few sentences as they sounded. The canoe had upset and he had come near drowning. I made him describe his sensations.

“I’ll write your theme for you,” I exclaimed, when he had finished.

“Gee, not about that!”

“Why not? It’s a personal experience.”

His gratitude was pathetic.... By this time I was so full of the subject that it fairly clamoured for expression, and as I wrote the hours flew. Once in a while I paused to ask him a question as he sat with his chair tilted back and his feet on the table, reading a detective story. I sketched in the scene with bold strokes; the desolate bois brule on the mountain side, the polished crystal surface of the pool broken here and there with the circles left by rising fish; I pictured Armand, the guide, his pipe between his teeth, holding the canoe against the current; and I seemed to smell the sharp tang of the

balsams, to hear the roar of the rapids below. Then came the sudden hooking of the big trout, habitant oaths from Armand, bouleversement, wetness, darkness, confusion; a half-strangled feeling, a brief glimpse of green things and sunlight, and then strangulation, or what seemed like it; strangulation, the sense of being picked up and hurled by a terrific force whither? a blinding whiteness, in which it was impossible to breathe, one sharp, almost unbearable pain, then another, then oblivion.... Finally, awakening, to be confronted by a much worried Uncle Jake.

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By this time the detective story had fallen to the floor, and Tom was huddled up in his chair, asleep. He arose obediently and wrapped a wet towel around his head, and began to write. Once he paused long enough to mutter:—“Yes, that’s about it,—that’s the way I felt!” and set to work again, mechanically,—all the praise I got for what I deemed a literary achievement of the highest order! At three o’clock, a.m., he finished, pulled off his clothes automatically and tumbled into bed. I had no desire for sleep. My brain was racing madly, like an engine without a governor. I could write! I could write! I repeated the words over and over to myself. All the complexities of my present life were blotted out, and I beheld only the long, sweet vista of the career for which I was now convinced that nature had intended me. My immediate fortunes became unimportant, immaterial. No juice of the grape I had ever tasted made me half so drunk.... With the morning, of course, came the reaction, and I suffered the after sensations of an orgie, awaking to a world of necessity, cold and grey and slushy, and necessity alone made me rise from my bed. My experience of the night before might have taught me that happiness lies in the trick of transforming necessity, but it did not. The vision had faded,—temporarily, at least; and such was the distraction of the succeeding days that the subject of the theme passed from my mind....

One morning Tom was later than usual in getting home. I was writing a letter when he came in, and did not notice him, yet I was vaguely aware of his standing over me. When at last I looked up I gathered from his expression that something serious had happened, so mournful was his face, and yet so utterly ludicrous.

“Say, Hugh, I’m in the deuce of a mess,” he announced.

“What’s the matter?” I inquired.

He sank down on the table with a groan.

“It’s Alonzo,” he said.

Then I remembered the theme.

“What—what’s he done?” I demanded.

“He says I must become a writer. Think of it, me a writer! He says I’m a young Shakespeare, that I’ve been lazy and hid my light under a bushel! He says he knows now what I can do, and if I don’t keep up the quality, he’ll know the reason why, and write a personal letter to my father. Oh, hell!”

In spite of his evident anguish, I was seized with a convulsive laughter. Tom stood staring at me moodily.

“You think it’s funny,—don’t you? I guess it is, but what’s going to become of me? That’s what I want to know. I’ve been in trouble before, but never in any like this. And who got me into it? You!”

Here was gratitude!

“You’ve got to go on writing ’em, now.” His voice became desperately pleading. “Say, Hugh, old man, you can temper ’em down—temper ’em down gradually. And by the end of the year, let’s say, they’ll be about normal again.”

He seemed actually shivering.

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“The end of the year!” I cried, the predicament striking me for the first time in its fulness. “Say, you’ve got a crust!”

“You’ll do it, if I have to hold a gun over you,” he announced grimly.

Mingled with my anxiety, which was real, was an exultation that would not down. Nevertheless, the idea of developing Tom into a Shakespeare,—Tom, who had not the slightest desire to be one I was appalling, besides having in it an element of useless self-sacrifice from which I recoiled. On the other hand, if Alonzo should discover that I had written his theme, there were penalties I did not care to dwell upon .... With such a cloud hanging over me I passed a restless night.

As luck would have it the very next evening in the level light under the elms of the Square I beheld sauntering towards me a dapper figure which I recognized as that of Mr. Cheyne himself. As I saluted him he gave me an amused and most disconcerting glance; and when I was congratulating myself that he had passed me he stopped.

“Fine weather for March, Paret,” he observed.

“Yes, sir,” I agreed in a strange voice.

“By the way,” he remarked, contemplating the bare branches above our heads, “that was an excellent theme your roommate handed in. I had no idea that he possessed such—such genius. Did you, by any chance, happen to read it?”

“Yes, sir,—I read it.”

“Weren’t you surprised?” inquired Mr. Cheyne.

“Well, yes, sir—that is—I mean to say he talks just like that, sometimes—that is, when it’s anything he cares about.”

“Indeed!” said Mr. Cheyne. “That’s interesting, most interesting. In all my experience, I do not remember a case in which a gift has been developed so rapidly. I don’t want to give the impression—ah that there is no room for improvement, but the thing was very well done, for an undergraduate. I must confess I never should have suspected it in Peters, and it’s most interesting what you say about his cleverness in conversation.” He twirled the head of his stick, apparently lost in reflection. “I may be wrong,” he went on presently, “I have an idea it is you—” I must literally have jumped away from him. He paused a moment, without apparently noticing my panic, “that it is you who have influenced Peters.”

“Sir?”

“I am wrong, then. Or is this merely commendable modesty on your part?”

“Oh, no, sir.”

“Then my hypothesis falls to the ground. I had greatly hoped,” he added meaningly, “that you might be able to throw some light on this mystery.”

I was dumb.

“Paret,” he asked, “have you time to come over to my rooms for a few minutes this evening?”

“Certainly, sir.”

He gave me his number in Brattle Street....

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Like one running in a nightmare and making no progress I made my way home, only to learn from Hallam,—who lived on the same floor,—that Tom had inconsiderately gone to Boston for the evening, with four other weary spirits in search of relaxation! Avoiding our club table, I took what little nourishment I could at a modest restaurant, and restlessly paced the moonlit streets until eight o'clock, when I found myself in front of one of those low-gabled colonial houses which, on less soul-shaking occasions, had exercised a great charm on my imagination. My hand hung for an instant over the bell.... I must have rung it violently, for there appeared almost immediately an old lady in a lace cap, who greeted me with gentle courtesy, and knocked at a little door with glistening panels. The latch was lifted by Mr. Cheyne himself.

"Come in, Paret," he said, in a tone that was unexpectedly hospitable.

I have rarely seen a more inviting room. A wood fire burned brightly on the brass andirons, flinging its glare on the big, white beam that crossed the ceiling, and reddening the square panes of the windows in their panelled recesses. Between these were rows of books,—attractive books in chased bindings, red and blue; books that appealed to be taken down and read. There was a table covered with reviews and magazines in neat piles, and a lamp so shaded as to throw its light only on the white blotter of the pad. Two easy chairs, covered with flowered chintz, were ranged before the fire, in one of which I sank, much bewildered, upon being urged to do so.

I utterly failed to recognize "Alonzo" in this new atmosphere. And he had, moreover, dropped the subtly sarcastic manner I was wont to associate with him.

"Jolly old house, isn't it?" he observed, as though I had casually dropped in on him for a chat; and he stood, with his hands behind him stretched to the blaze, looking down at me. "It was built by a certain Colonel Draper, who fought at Louisburg, and afterwards fled to England at the time of the Revolution. He couldn't stand the patriots, I'm not so sure that I blame him, either. Are you interested in colonial things, Mr. Paret?"

I said I was. If the question had concerned Aztec relics my answer would undoubtedly have been the same. And I watched him, dazedly, while he took down a silver porringer from the shallow mantel shelf.

"It's not a Revere," he said, in a slightly apologetic tone as though to forestall a comment, "but it's rather good, I think. I picked it up at a sale in Dorchester. But I have never been able to identify the coat of arms."

He showed me a ladle, with the names of "Patience and William Simpson" engraved quaintly thereon, and took down other articles in which I managed to feign an interest. Finally he seated himself in the chair opposite, crossed his feet, putting the tips of his fingers together and gazing into the fire.

“So you thought you could fool me,” he said, at length.

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I became aware of the ticking of a great clock in the corner. My mouth was dry.

“I am going to forgive you,” he went on, more gravely, “for several reasons. I don’t flatter, as you know. It’s because you carried out the thing so perfectly that I am led to think you have a gift that may be cultivated, Paret. You wrote that theme in the way Peters would have written it if he had not been—what shall I say?—scripturally inarticulate. And I trust it may do you some good if I say it was something of a literary achievement, if not a moral one.”

“Thank you, sir,” I faltered.

“Have you ever,” he inquired, lapsing a little into his lecture-room manner, “seriously thought of literature as a career? Have you ever thought of any career seriously?”

“I once wished to be a writer, sir,” I replied tremulously, but refrained from telling him of my father’s opinion of the profession. Ambition—a purer ambition than I had known for years—leaped within me at his words. He, Alonzo Cheyne, had detected in me the Promethean fire!

I sat there until ten o’clock talking to the real Mr. Cheyne, a human Mr. Cheyne unknown in the lecture-room. Nor had I suspected one in whom cynicism and distrust of undergraduates (of my sort) seemed so ingrained, of such idealism. He did not pour it out in preaching; delicately, unobtrusively and on the whole rather humorously he managed to present to me in a most disillusionizing light that conception of the university held by me and my intimate associates. After I had left him I walked the quiet streets to behold as through dissolving mists another Harvard, and there trembled in my soul like the birth-struggle of a flame something of the vision later to be immortalized by St. Gaudens, the spirit of Harvard responding to the spirit of the Republic—to the call of Lincoln, who voiced it. The place of that bronze at the corner of Boston Common was as yet empty, but I have since stood before it to gaze in wonder at the light shining in darkness on mute, uplifted faces, black faces! at Harvard’s son leading them on that the light might live and prevail.

I, too, longed for a Cause into which I might fling myself, in which I might lose myself... I halted on the sidewalk to find myself staring from the opposite side of the street at a familiar house, my old landlady’s, Mrs. Bolton’s, and summoned up before me was the tired, smiling face of Hermann Krebs. Was it because when he had once spoken so crudely of the University I had seen the reflection of her spirit in his eyes? A light still burned in the extension roof—Krebs’s light; another shone dimly through the ground glass of the front door. Obeying a sudden impulse, I crossed the street.

Mrs. Bolton, in the sky-blue wrapper, and looking more forbidding than ever, answered the bell. Life had taught her to be indifferent to surprises, and it was I who became abruptly embarrassed.

“Oh, it’s you, Mr. Paret,” she said, as though I had been a frequent caller. I had never once darkened her threshold since I had left her house.

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“Yes,” I answered, and hesitated.... “Is Mr. Krebs in?”

“Well,” she replied in a lifeless tone, which nevertheless had in it a touch of bitterness, “I guess there’s no reason why you and your friends should have known he was sick.”

“Sick!” I repeated. “Is he very sick?”

“I calculate he’ll pull through,” she said. “Sunday the doctor gave him up. And no wonder! He hasn’t had any proper food since he’s be’n here!” She paused, eyeing me. “If you’ll excuse me, Mr. Paret, I was just going up to him when you rang.”

“Certainly,” I replied awkwardly. “Would you be so kind as to tell him—when he’s well enough—that I came to see him, and that I’m sorry?”

There was another pause, and she stood with a hand defensively clutching the knob.

“Yes, I’ll tell him,” she said.

With a sense of having been baffled, I turned away.

Walking back toward the Yard my attention was attracted by a slowly approaching cab whose occupants were disturbing the quiet of the night with song.

“Shollity—’tis wine, ’tis wine, that makesh—shollity.”

The vehicle drew up in front of a new and commodious building,—I believe the first of those designed to house undergraduates who were willing to pay for private bathrooms and other modern luxuries; out of one window of the cab protruded a pair of shoeless feet, out of the other a hatless head I recognized as belonging to Tom Peters; hence I surmised that the feet were his also. The driver got down from the box, and a lively argument was begun inside—for there were other occupants—as to how Mr. Peters was to be disembarked; and I gathered from his frequent references to the “Shgyptian obelisk” that the engineering problem presented struck him as similar to the unloading of Cleopatra’s Needle.

“Careful, careful!” he cautioned, as certain expelling movements began from within, “Easy, Ham, you jam-fool, keep the door shut, y’ll break me.”

“Now, Jerry, all heave sh’gether!” exclaimed a voice from the blackness of the interior.

“Will ye wait a minute, Mr. Durrett, sir?” implored the cabdriver. “You’ll be after ruining me cab entirely.” (Loud roars and vigorous resistance from the obelisk, the cab rocking violently.) “This gintleman” (meaning me) “will have him by the head, and I’ll get hold of his feet, sir.” Which he did, after a severe kick in the stomach.

“Head’sh all right, Martin.”

“To be sure it is, Mr. Peters. Now will ye rest aisy awhile, sir?”

“I’m axphyxiated,” cried another voice from the darkness, the mined voice of Jerome Kyme, our classmate.

“Get the tackles under him!” came forth in commanding tones from Conybear.

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In the meantime many windows had been raised and much gratuitous advice was being given. The three occupants of the cab's seat who had previously clamoured for Mr. Peters' removal, now inconsistently resisted it; suddenly he came out with a jerk, and we had him fairly upright on the pavement minus a collar and tie and the buttons of his evening waistcoat. Those who remained in the cab engaged in a riotous game of hunt the slipper, while Tom peered into the dark interior, observing gravely the progress of the sport. First flew out an overcoat and a much-battered hat, finally the pumps, all of which in due time were adjusted to his person, and I started home with him, with much parting counsel from the other three.

"Whereinell were you, Hughie?" he inquired. "Hunted all over for you. Had a sousin' good time. Went to Babcock's—had champagne—then to see Babesh in—th'—-Woods. Ham knows one of the Babesh had supper with four of 'em. Nice Babesh!"

"For heaven's sake don't step on me again!" I cried.

"Sh'poloshize, old man. But y'know I'm William Shakespheare. C'n do what I damplease." He halted in the middle of the street and recited dramatically:—

"'Not marble, nor th' gilded monuments
Of princhesh sh'll outlive m' powerful rhyme.'"

"How's that, Alonzho, b'gosh?"

"Where did you learn it?" I demanded, momentarily forgetting his condition.

"Fr'm Ralph," he replied, "says I wrote it. Can't remember...."

After I had got him to bed,—a service I had learned to perform with more or less proficiency,—I sat down to consider the events of the evening, to attempt to get a proportional view. The intensity of my disgust was not hypocritical as I gazed through the open door into the bedroom and recalled the times when I, too, had been in that condition. Tom Peters drunk, and sleeping it off, was deplorable, without doubt; but Hugh Paret drunk was detestable, and had no excuse whatever. Nor did I mean by this to set myself on a higher ethical plane, for I felt nothing but despair and humility. In my state of clairvoyance I perceived that he was a better man, than I, and that his lapses proceeded from a love of liquor and the transcendent sense of good-fellowship that liquor brings.

VII.

The crisis through which I passed at Cambridge, inaugurated by the events I have just related, I find very difficult to portray. It was a religious crisis, of course, and my most pathetic memory concerning it is of the vain attempts to connect my yearnings and

discontents with the theology I had been taught; I began in secret to read my Bible, yet nothing I hit upon seemed to point a way out of my present predicament, to give any definite clew to the solution of my life. I was not mature enough to reflect that orthodoxy was a Sunday religion unrelated to a world whose wheels were turned by the motives of self-interest; that it

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consisted of ideals not deemed practical, since no attempt was made to put them into practice in the only logical manner,—by reorganizing civilization to conform with them. The implication was that the Christ who had preached these ideals was not practical.... There were undoubtedly men in the faculty of the University who might have helped me had I known of them; who might have given me, even at that time, a clew to the modern, logical explanation of the Bible as an immortal record of the thoughts and acts of men who had sought to do just what I was seeking to do,—connect the religious impulse to life and make it fruitful in life: an explanation, by the way, a thousand-fold more spiritual than the old. But I was hopelessly entangled in the meshes of the mystic, the miraculous and supernatural. If I had analyzed my yearnings, I might have realized that I wanted to renounce the life I had been leading, not because it was sinful, but because it was aimless. I had not learned that the Greek word for sin is “a missing of the mark.” Just aimlessness! I had been stirred with the desire to perform some service for which the world would be grateful: to write great literature, perchance. But it had never been suggested to me that such swellings of the soul are religious, that religion is that kind of feeling, of motive power that drives the writer and the scientist, the statesman and the sculptor as well as the priest and the Prophet to serve mankind for the joy of serving: that religion is creative, or it is nothing: not mechanical, not a force imposed from without, but a driving power within. The “religion” I had learned was salvation from sin by miracle: sin a deliberate rebellion, not a pathetic missing of the mark of life; useful service of man, not the wandering of untutored souls who had not been shown the way. I felt religious. I wanted to go to church, I wanted to maintain, when it was on me, that exaltation I dimly felt as communion with a higher power, with God, and which also was identical with my desire to write, to create....

I bought books, sets of Wordsworth and Keats, of Milton and Shelley and Shakespeare, and hid them away in my bureau drawers lest Tom and my friends should see them. These too I read secretly, making excuses for not joining in the usual amusements. Once I walked to Mrs. Bolton’s and inquired rather shamefacedly for Hermann Krebs, only to be informed that he had gone out.... There were lapses, of course, when I went off on the old excursions,—for the most part the usual undergraduate follies, though some were of a more serious nature; on these I do not care to dwell. Sex was still a mystery.... Always I awoke afterwards to bitter self-hatred and despair.... But my work in English improved, and I earned the commendation and friendship of Mr. Cheyne. With a wisdom for which I was grateful he was careful not to give much sign of it in classes, but the fact that he was “getting soft on me” was evident enough to be regarded with suspicion. Indeed the state into which I had fallen became a matter of increasing concern to my companions, who tried every means from ridicule to sympathy, to discover its cause and shake me out of it. The theory most accepted was that I was in love.

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“Come on now, Hughie—tell me who she is. I won’t give you away,” Tom would beg. Once or twice, indeed, I had imagined I was in love with the sisters of Boston classmates whose dances I attended; to these parties Tom, not having overcome his diffidence in respect to what he called “social life,” never could be induced to go.

It was Ralph who detected the true cause of my discontent. Typical as no other man I can recall of the code to which we had dedicated ourselves, the code that moulded the important part of the undergraduate world and defied authority, he regarded any defection from it in the light of treason. An instructor, in a fit of impatience, had once referred to him as the Mephistopheles of his class; he had fatal attractions, and a remarkable influence. His favourite pastime was the capricious exercise of his will on weaker characters, such as his cousin, Ham Durrett; if they “swore off,” Ralph made it his business to get them drunk again, and having accomplished this would proceed himself to administer a new oath and see that it was kept. Alcohol seemed to have no effect whatever on him. Though he was in the class above me, I met him frequently at a club to which I had the honour to belong, then a suite of rooms over a shop furnished with a pool and a billiard table, easy-chairs and a bar. It has since achieved the dignity of a house of its own.

We were having, one evening, a “religious” argument, Cinibar, Laurens and myself and some others. I can’t recall how it began; I think Cinibar had attacked the institution of compulsory chapel, which nobody defended; there was something inherently wrong, he maintained, with a religion to which men had to be driven against their wills. Somewhat to my surprise I found myself defending a Christianity out of which I had been able to extract but little comfort and solace. Neither Laurens nor Conybear, however, were for annihilating it: although they took the other side of the discussion of a subject of which none of us knew anything, their attacks were but half-hearted; like me, they were still under the spell exerted by a youthful training.

We were all of us aware of Ralph, who sat at some distance looking over the pages of an English sporting weekly. Presently he flung it down.

“Haven’t you found out yet that man created God, Hughie?” he inquired. “And even if there were a personal God, what reason have you to think that man would be his especial concern, or any concern of his whatever? The discovery of evolution has knocked your Christianity into a cocked hat.”

I don’t remember how I answered him. In spite of the superficiality of his own arguments, which I was not learned enough to detect, I was ingloriously routed. Darwin had kicked over the bucket, and that was all there was to it.... After we had left the club both Conybear and Laurens admitted they were somewhat disturbed, declaring that Ralph had gone too far. I spent a miserable night, recalling

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the naturalistic assertions he had made so glibly, asking myself again and again how it was that the religion to which I so vainly clung had no greater effect on my actions and on my will, had not prevented me from lapses into degradation. And I hated myself for having argued upon a subject that was still sacred. I believed in Christ, which is to say that I believed that in some inscrutable manner he existed, continued to dominate the world and had suffered on my account.

To whom should I go now for a confirmation of my wavering beliefs? One of the results—it will be remembered of religion as I was taught it was a pernicious shyness, and even though I had found a mentor and confessor, I might have hesitated to unburden myself. This would be different from arguing with Ralph Hambleton. In my predicament, as I was wandering through the yard, I came across a notice of an evening talk to students in Holder Chapel, by a clergyman named Phillips Brooks. This was before the time, let me say in passing, when his sermons at Harvard were attended by crowds of undergraduates. Well, I stood staring at the notice, debating whether I should go, trying to screw up my courage; for I recognized clearly that such a step, if it were to be of any value, must mean a distinct departure from my present mode of life; and I recall thinking with a certain revulsion that I should have to "turn good." My presence at the meeting would be known the next day to all my friends, for the idea of attending a religious gathering when one was not forced to do so by the authorities was unheard of in our set. I should be classed with the despised "pious ones" who did such things regularly. I shrank from the ridicule. I had, however, heard of Mr. Brooks from Ned Symonds, who was by no means of the pious type, and whose parents attended Mr. Brooks's church in Boston.... I left my decision in abeyance. But when evening came I stole away from the club table, on the plea of an engagement, and made my way rapidly toward Holder Chapel. I had almost reached it—when I caught a glimpse of Symonds and of some others approaching,—and I went on, to turn again. By this time the meeting, which was in a room on the second floor, had already begun. Palpitating, I climbed the steps; the door of the room was slightly ajar; I looked in; I recall a distinct sensation of surprise,—the atmosphere of that meeting was so different from what I had expected. Not a "pious" atmosphere at all! I saw a very tall and heavy gentleman, dressed in black, who sat, wholly at ease, on the table! One hand was in his pocket, one foot swung clear of the ground; and he was not preaching, but talking in an easy, conversational tone to some forty young men who sat intent on his words. I was too excited to listen to what he was saying, I was making a vain attempt to classify him. But I remember the thought, for it struck me with force,—that if Christianity were so thoroughly discredited by evolution, as Ralph Hambleton and other agnostics would have one believe, why should this remarkably sane and able-looking person be standing up for it as though it were still an established and incontrovertible fact?

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He had not, certainly, the air of a dupe or a sentimentalist, but inspired confidence by his very personality. Youthlike, I watched him narrowly for flaws, for oratorical tricks, for all kinds of histrionic symptoms. Again I was near the secret; again it escaped me. The argument for Christianity lay not in assertions about it, but in being it. This man was Christianity.... I must have felt something of this, even though I failed to formulate it. And unconsciously I contrasted his strength, which reinforced the atmosphere of the room, with that of Ralph Hambleton, who was, a greater influence over me than I have recorded, and had come to sway me more and more, as he had swayed others. The strength of each was impressive, yet this Mr. Brooks seemed to me the bodily presentment of a set of values which I would have kept constantly before my eyes.... I felt him drawing me, overcoming my hesitation, belittling my fear of ridicule. I began gently to open the door—when something happened,—one of those little things that may change the course of a life. The door made little noise, yet one of the men sitting in the back of the room chanced to look around, and I recognized Hermann Krebs. His face was still sunken from his recent illness. Into his eyes seemed to leap a sudden appeal, an appeal to which my soul responded yet I hurried down the stairs and into the street. Instantly I regretted my retreat, I would have gone back, but lacked the courage; and I strayed unhappily for hours, now haunted by that look of Krebs, now wondering what the remarkably sane-looking and informal clergyman whose presence dominated the little room had been talking about. I never learned, but I did live to read his biography, to discover what he might have talked about,—for he if any man believed that life and religion are one, and preached consecration to life's task.

Of little use to speculate whether the message, had I learned it then, would have fortified and transformed me!

In spite of the fact that I was unable to relate to a satisfying conception of religion my new-born determination, I made up my mind, at least, to renounce my tortuous ways. I had promised my father to be a lawyer; I would keep my promise, I would give the law a fair trial; later on, perhaps, I might demonstrate an ability to write. All very praiseworthy! The season was Lent, a fitting time for renunciations and resolves. Although I had more than once fallen from grace, I believed myself at last to have settled down on my true course—when something happened. The devil interfered subtly, as usual—now in the person of Jerry Kyme. It should be said in justice to Jerry that he did not look the part. He had sunny-red, curly hair, mischievous blue eyes with long lashes, and he harboured no respect whatever for any individual or institution, sacred or profane; he possessed, however, a shrewd sense of his own value, as many innocent and unsuspecting souls discovered as early as our freshman year, and his method of putting down the presumptuous was both effective and unique. If he liked you, there could be no mistake about it.

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One evening when I was engaged in composing a theme for Mr. Cheyne on no less a subject than the interpretation of the work of William Wordsworth, I found myself unexpectedly sprawling on the floor, in my descent kicking the table so vigorously as to send the ink-well a foot or two toward the ceiling. This, be it known, was a typical proof of Jerry's esteem. For he had entered noiselessly, jerking the back of my chair, which chanced to be tilted, and stood with his hands in his pockets, surveying the ruin he had wrought, watching the ink as it trickled on the carpet. Then he picked up the book.

"Poetry, you darned old grind!" he exclaimed disgustedly. "Say, Parry, I don't know what's got into you, but I want you to come home with me for the Easter holidays. It'll do you good. We'll be on the Hudson, you know, and we'll manage to make life bearable somehow."

I forgot my irritation, in sheer surprise.

"Why, that's mighty good of you, Jerry—" I began, struggling to my feet.

"Oh, rot!" he exclaimed. "I shouldn't ask you if I didn't want you."

There was no denying the truth of this, and after he had gone I sat for a long time with my pen in my mouth, reflecting as to whether or not I should go. For I had the instinct that here was another cross-roads, that more depended on my decision than I cared to admit. But even then I knew what I should do. Ridiculous not to—I told myself. How could a week or ten days with Jerry possibly affect my newborn, resolve?

Yet the prospect, now, of a visit to the Kymes' was by no means so glowing as it once would have been. For I had seen visions, I had dreamed dreams, beheld a delectable country of my very own. A year ago—nay, even a month ago—how such an invitation would have glittered!... I returned at length to my theme, over which, before Jerry's arrival, I had been working feverishly. But now the glamour had gone from it.

Presently Tom came in.

"Anyone been here?" he demanded.

"Jerry," I told him.

"What did he want?"

"He wanted me to go home with him at Easter."

"You're going, of course."

"I don't know. I haven't decided."

“You’d be a fool not to,” was Tom’s comment. It voiced, succinctly, a prevailing opinion.

It was the conclusion I arrived at in my own mind. But just why I had been chosen for the honour, especially at such a time, was a riddle. Jerry’s invitations were charily given, and valued accordingly; and more than once, at our table, I had felt a twinge of envy when Conybear or someone else had remarked, with the proper nonchalance, in answer to a question, that they were going to Weathersfield. Such was the name of the Kyme place....

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I shall never forget the impression made on me by the decorous luxury of that big house, standing amidst its old trees, halfway up the gentle slope that rose steadily from the historic highway where poor Andre was captured. I can see now the heavy stone pillars of its portico vignetted in a flush of tenderest green, the tulips just beginning to flame forth their Easter colours in the well-kept beds, the stately, well-groomed evergreens, the vivid lawns, the clipped hedges. And like an overwhelming wave of emotion that swept all before it, the impressiveness of wealth took possession of me. For here was a kind of wealth I had never known, that did not exist in the West, nor even in the still Puritan environs of Boston where I had visited. It took itself for granted, proclaimed itself complacently to have solved all problems. By ignoring them, perhaps. But I was too young to guess this. It was order personified, gaining effect at every turn by a multitude of details too trivial to mention were it not for the fact that they entered deeply into my consciousness, until they came to represent, collectively, the very flower of achievement. It was a wealth that accepted tribute calmly, as of inherent right. Law and tradition defended its sanctity more effectively than troops. Literature descended from her high altar to lend it dignity; and the long, silent library displayed row upon row of the masters, appropriately clad in morocco or calf,—Smollett, Macaulay, Gibbon, Richardson, Fielding, Scott, Dickens, Irving and Thackeray, as though each had striven for a tablet here. Art had denied herself that her canvases might be hung on these walls; and even the Church, on that first Sunday of my visit, forgot the blood of her martyrs that she might adorn an appropriate niche in the setting. The clergyman, at one of the dinner parties, gravely asked a blessing as upon an Institution that included and absorbed all other institutions in its being....

The note of that house was a tempered gaiety. Guests arrived from New York, spent the night and departed again without disturbing the even tenor of its ways. Unobtrusive servants ministered to their wants,—and to mine....

Conybear was there, and two classmates from Boston, and we were treated with the amiable tolerance accorded to college youths and intimates of the son of the house. One night there was a dance in our honour. Nor have I forgotten Jerry's sister, Nathalie, whom I had met at Class Days, a slim and willowy, exotic young lady of the Botticelli type, with a crown of burnished hair, yet more suggestive of a hothouse than of spring. She spoke English with a French accent. Capricious, impulsive, she captured my interest because she put a high value on her favour; she drove me over the hills, informing me at length that I was sympathique—different from the rest; in short, she emphasized and intensified what I may call the Weathersfield environment, stirred up in me new and vague aspirations that troubled yet excited me.

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Then there was Mrs. Kyme, a pretty, light-hearted lady, still young, who seemed to have no intention of growing older, who romped and played songs for us on the piano. The daughter of an old but now impecunious Westchester family, she had been born to adorn the position she held, she was adapted by nature to wring from it the utmost of the joys it offered. From her, rather than from her husband, both of the children seemed to have inherited. I used to watch Mr. Grosvenor Kyme as he sat at the end of the dinner-table, dark, preoccupied, taciturn, symbolical of a wealth new to my experience, and which had about it a certain fabulous quality. It toiled not, neither did it spin, but grew as if by magic, day and night, until the very conception of it was overpowering. What must it be to have had ancestors who had been clever enough to sit still until a congested and discontented Europe had begun to pour its thousands and hundreds of thousands into the gateway of the western world, until that gateway had become a metropolis? ancestors, of course, possessing what now suddenly appeared to me as the most desirable of gifts—since it reaped so dazzling a harvest-business foresight. From time to time these ancestors had continued to buy desirable corners, which no amount of persuasion had availed to make them relinquish. Lease them, yes; sell them, never! By virtue of such a system wealth was as inevitable as human necessity; and the thought of human necessity did not greatly bother me. Mr. Kyme's problem of life was not one of making money, but of investing it. One became automatically a personage....

It was due to one of those singular coincidences—so interesting a subject for speculation—that the man who revealed to me this golden romance of the Kyme family was none other than a resident of my own city, Mr. Theodore Watling, now become one of our most important and influential citizens; a corporation lawyer, new and stimulating qualification, suggesting as it did, a deus ex machina of great affairs. That he, of all men, should come to Weathersfield astonished me, since I was as yet to make the connection between that finished, decorous, secluded existence and the source of its being. The evening before my departure he arrived in company with two other gentlemen, a Mr. Talbot and a Mr. Saxes, whose names were spoken with respect in a sphere of which I had hitherto taken but little cognizance-Wall Street. Conybear informed me that they were "magnates,"... We were sitting in the drawing-room at tea, when they entered with Mr. Watling, and no sooner had he spoken to Mrs. Kyme than his quick eye singled me out of the group.

"Why, Hugh!" he exclaimed, taking my hand. "I had no idea I should meet you here—I saw your father only last week, the day I left home." And he added, turning to Mrs. Kyme, "Hugh is the son of Mr. Matthew Paret, who has been the leader of our bar for many years."

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The recognition and the tribute to my father were so graciously given that I warmed with gratitude and pride, while Mr. Kyme smiled a little, remarking that I was a friend of Jerry's. Theodore Watling, for being here, had suddenly assumed in my eyes a considerable consequence, though the note he struck in that house was a strange one. It was, however, his own note, and had a certain distinction, a ring of independence, of the knowledge of self-worth. Dinner at Weathersfield we youngsters had usually found rather an oppressive ceremony, with its shaded lights and precise ritual over which Mr. Kyme presided like a high priest; conversation had been restrained. That night, as Johnnie Laurens afterwards expressed it, "things loosened up," and Mr. Watling was responsible for the loosening. Taking command of the Kyme dinner table appeared to me to be no mean achievement, but this is just what he did, without being vulgar or noisy or assertive. Suavitar in modo, forbiter in re. If, as I watched him there with a newborn pride and loyalty, I had paused to reconstruct the idea that the mention of his name would formerly have evoked, I suppose I should have found him falling short of my notion of a gentleman; it had been my father's opinion; but Mr. Watling's marriage to Gene Hollister's aunt had given him a standing with us at home. He possessed virility, vitality in a remarkable degree, yet some elusive quality that was neither tact nor delicacy—though related to these differentiated him from the commonplace, self-made man of ability. He was just off the type. To liken him to a clothing store model of a well-built, broad-shouldered man with a firm neck, a handsome, rather square face not lacking in colour and a conventional, drooping moustache would be slanderous; yet he did suggest it. Suggesting it, he redeemed it: and the middle western burr in his voice was rather attractive than otherwise. He had not so much the air of belonging there, as of belonging anywhere—one of those anomalistic American citizens of the world who go abroad and make intimates of princes. Before the meal was over he had inspired me with loyalty and pride, enlisted the admiration of Jerry and Conybear and Johnnie Laurens; we followed him into the smoking-room, sitting down in a row on a leather lounge behind our elders.

Here, now that the gentlemen were alone, there was an inspiring largeness in their talk that fired the imagination. The subject was investments, at first those of coal and iron in my own state, for Mr. Watling, it appeared, was counsel for the Boyne Iron Works.

"It will pay you to keep an eye on that company, Mr. Kyme," he said, knocking the ashes from his cigar. "Now that old Mr. Durrett's gone—"

"You don't mean to say Nathaniel Durrett's dead!" said Mr. Kyme.

The lawyer nodded.

"The old regime passed with him. Adolf Scherer succeeds him, and you may take my word for it, he's a coming man. Mr. Durrett, who was a judge of men, recognized that. Scherer was an emigrant, he had ideas, and rose to be a foreman. For the last few years Mr. Durrett threw everything on his shoulders...."

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Little by little the scope of the discussion was enlarged until it ranged over a continent, touching lightly upon lines of railroad, built or projected, across the great west our pioneers had so lately succeeded in wresting from the savages, upon mines of copper and gold hidden away among the mountains, and millions of acres of forest and grazing lands which a complacent government would relinquish provided certain technicalities were met: touching lightly, too, very lightly,—upon senators and congressmen at Washington. And for the first time I learned that not the least of the functions of these representatives of the people was to act as the medium between capital and investment, to facilitate the handing over of the Republic's resources to those in a position to develop them. The emphasis was laid on development, or rather on the resulting prosperity for the country: that was the justification, and it was taken for granted as supreme. Nor was it new to me; this cult of prosperity. I recalled the torch-light processions of the tariff enthusiasts of my childhood days, my father's championship of the Republican Party. He had not idealized politicians, either. For the American, politics and ethics were strangers.

Thus I listened with increasing fascination to these gentlemen in evening clothes calmly treating the United States as a melon patch that existed largely for the purpose of being divided up amongst a limited and favored number of persons. I had a feeling of being among the initiated. Where, it may be asked, were my ideals? Let it not be supposed that I believed myself to have lost them. If so, the impression I have given of myself has been wholly inadequate. No, they had been transmuted, that is all, transmuted by the alchemy of Weathersfield, by the personality of Theodore Watling into brighter visions. My eyes rarely left his face; I hung on his talk, which was interspersed with native humour, though he did not always join in the laughter, sometimes gazing at the fire, as though his keen mind were grappling with a problem suggested. I noted the respect in which his opinions were held, and my imagination was fired by an impression of the power to be achieved by successful men of his profession, by the evidence of their indispensability to capital itself.... At last when the gentlemen rose and were leaving the room, Mr. Watling lingered, with his hand on my arm.

"Of course you're going through the Law School, Hugh," he said.

"Yes, sir," I replied.

"Good!" he exclaimed emphatically. "The law, to-day, is more of a career than ever, especially for a young man with your antecedents and advantages, and I know of no city in the United States where I would rather start practice, if I were a young man, than ours. In the next twenty years we shall see a tremendous growth. Of course you'll be going into your father's office. You couldn't do better. But I'll keep an eye on you, and perhaps I'll be able to help you a little, too."

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I thanked him gratefully.

A famous artist, who started out in youth to embrace a military career and who failed to pass an examination at West Point, is said to have remarked that if silicon had been a gas he would have been a soldier. I am afraid I may have given the impression that if I had not gone to Weathersfield and encountered Mr. Watling I might not have been a lawyer. This impression would be misleading. And while it is certain that I have not exaggerated the intensity of the spiritual experience I went through at Cambridge, a somewhat belated consideration for the truth compels me to register my belief that the mood would in any case have been ephemeral. The poison generated by the struggle of my nature with its environment had sunk too deep, and the very education that was supposed to make a practical man of me had turned me into a sentimentalist. I became, as will be seen, anything but a practical man in the true sense, though the world in which I had been brought up and continued to live deemed me such. My father was greatly pleased when I wrote him that I was now more than ever convinced of the wisdom of choosing the law as my profession, and was satisfied that I had come to my senses at last. He had still been prepared to see me “go off at a tangent,” as he expressed it. On the other hand, the powerful effect of the appeal made by Weathersfield and Mr. Watling must not be underestimated. Here in one object lesson was emphasized a host of suggestions each of which had made its impression. And when I returned to Cambridge Alonzo Cheyne knew that he had lost me....

I pass over the rest of my college course, and the years I spent at the Harvard Law School, where were instilled into me without difficulty the dictums that the law was the most important of all professions, that those who entered it were a priestly class set aside to guard from profanation that Ark of the Covenant, the Constitution of the United States. In short, I was taught law precisely as I had been taught religion,—scriptural infallibility over again,—a static law and a static theology,—a set of concepts that were supposed to be equal to any problems civilization would have to meet until the millennium. What we are wont to call wisdom is often naively innocent of impending change. It has no barometric properties.

I shall content myself with relating one incident only of this period. In the January of my last year I went with a party of young men and girls to stay over Sunday at Beverly Farms, where Mrs. Fremantle—a young Boston matron had opened her cottage for the occasion. This “cottage,” a roomy, gabled structure, stood on a cliff, at the foot of which roared the wintry Atlantic, while we danced and popped corn before the open fires. During the daylight hours we drove about the country in sleighs, or made ridiculous attempts to walk on snow-shoes.

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On Sunday afternoon, left temporarily to my own devices, I wandered along the cliff, crossing into the adjoining property. The wind had fallen; the waves, much subdued, broke rhythmically against the rocks; during the night a new mantle of snow had been spread, and the clouds were still low and menacing. As I strolled I became aware of a motionless figure ahead of me,—one that seemed oddly familiar; the set of the shabby overcoat on the stooping shoulders, the unconscious pose contributed to a certain sharpness of individuality; in the act of challenging my memory, I halted. The man was gazing at the seascape, and his very absorption gave me a sudden and unfamiliar thrill. The word absorption precisely expresses my meaning, for he seemed indeed to have become a part of his surroundings,—an harmonious part. Presently he swung about and looked at me as though he had expected to find me there—and greeted me by name.

“Krebs!” I exclaimed.

He smiled, and flung out his arm, indicating the scene. His eyes at that moment seemed to reflect the sea,—they made the gaunt face suddenly beautiful.

“This reminds me of a Japanese print,” he said.

The words, or the tone in which he spoke, curiously transformed the picture. It was as if I now beheld it, anew, through his vision: the grey water stretching eastward to melt into the grey sky, the massed, black trees on the hillside, powdered with white, the snow in rounded, fantastic patches on the huge boulders at the foot of the cliff. Krebs did not seem like a stranger, but like one whom I had known always,—one who stood in a peculiar relationship between me and something greater I could not define. The impression was fleeting, but real.... I remember wondering how he could have known anything about Japanese prints.

“I didn’t think you were still in this part of the country,” I remarked awkwardly.

“I’m a reporter on a Boston newspaper, and I’ve been sent up here to interview old Mr. Dome, who lives in that house,” and he pointed to a roof above the trees. “There is a rumour, which I hope to verify, that he has just given a hundred thousand dollars to the University.”

“And—won’t he see you?”

“At present he’s taking a nap,” said Krebs. “He comes here occasionally for a rest.”

“Do you like interviewing?” I asked.

He smiled again.

“Well, I see a good many different kinds of people, and that’s interesting.”

“But—being a reporter?” I persisted.

This continued patronage was not a conscious expression of superiority on my part, but he did not seem to resent it. He had aroused my curiosity.

“I’m going into the law,” he said.

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The quiet confidence with which he spoke aroused, suddenly, a twinge of antagonism. He had every right to go into the law, of course, and yet!... my query would have made it evident to me, had I been introspective in those days, that the germ of the ideal of the profession, implanted by Mr. Watling, was expanding. Were not influential friends necessary for the proper kind of career? and where were Krebs's? In spite of the history of Daniel Webster and a long line of American tradition, I felt an incongruity in my classmate's aspiration. And as he stood there, gaunt and undoubtedly hungry, his eyes kindling, I must vaguely have classed him with the revolutionaries of all the ages; must have felt in him, instinctively, a menace to the stability of that Order with which I had thrown my fortunes. And yet there were comparatively poor men in the Law School itself who had not made me feel this way! He had impressed me against my will, taken me by surprise, commiseration had been mingled with other feelings that sprang out of the memory of the night I had called on him, when he had been sick. Now I resented something in him which Tom Peters had called "crust."

"The law!" I repeated. "Why?"

"Well," he said, "even when I was a boy, working at odd jobs, I used to think if I could ever be a lawyer I should have reached the top notch of human dignity."

Once more his smile disarmed me.

"And now" I asked curiously.

"You see, it was an ideal with me, I suppose. My father was responsible for that. He had the German temperament of '48, and when he fled to this country, he expected to find Utopia." The smile emerged again, like the sun shining through clouds, while fascination and antagonism again struggled within me. "And then came frightful troubles. For years he could get only enough work to keep him and my mother alive, but he never lost his faith in America. 'It is man,' he would say, 'man has to grow up to it —to liberty.' Without the struggle, liberty would be worth nothing. And he used to tell me that we must all do our part, we who had come here, and not expect everything to be done for us. He had made that mistake. If things were bad, why, put a shoulder to the wheel and help to make them better.

"That helped me," he continued, after a moment's pause. "For I've seen a good many things, especially since I've been working for a newspaper. I've seen, again and again, the power of the law turned against those whom it was intended to protect, I've seen lawyers who care a great deal more about winning cases than they do about justice, who prostitute their profession to profit making,—profit making for themselves and others. And they are often the respectable lawyers, too, men of high standing, whom you would not think would do such things. They are on the side of the powerful, and the best of them are all retained by rich men and corporations. And what is the result? One

of the worst evils, I think, that can befall a country. The poor man goes less and less to the courts. He is getting bitter, which is bad, which is dangerous. But men won't see it."

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It was on my tongue to refute this, to say that everybody had a chance. I could indeed recall many arguments that had been drilled into me; quotations, even, from court decisions. But something prevented me from doing this,—something in his manner, which was neither argumentative nor combative.

“That’s why I am going into the law,” he added. “And I intend to stay in it if I can keep alive. It’s a great chance for me—for all of us. Aren’t you at the Law School?”

I nodded. Once more, as his earnest glance fell upon me, came that suggestion of a subtle, inexplicable link between us; but before I could reply, steps were heard behind us, and an elderly servant, bareheaded, was seen coming down the path.

“Are you the reporter?” he demanded somewhat impatiently of Krebs. “If you want to see Mr. Dome, you’d better come right away. He’s going out for a drive.”

For a while, after he had shaken my hand and departed, I stood in the snow, looking after him....

VIII

On the Wednesday of that same week the news of my father’s sudden and serious illness came to me in a telegram, and by the time I arrived at home it was too late to see him again alive. It was my first experience with death, and what perplexed me continually during the following days was an inability to feel the loss more deeply. When a child, I had been easily shaken by the spectacle of sorrow. Had I, during recent years, as a result of a discovery that emotions arising from human relationships lead to discomfort and suffering, deliberately been forming a shell, until now I was incapable of natural feelings? Of late I had seemed closer to my father, and his letters, though formal, had given evidence of his affection; in his repressed fashion he had made it clear that he looked forward to the time when I was to practise with him. Why was it then, as I gazed upon his fine features in death, that I experienced no intensity of sorrow? What was it in me that would not break down? He seemed worn and tired, yet I had never thought of him as weary, never attributed to him any yearning. And now he was released.

I wondered what had been his private thoughts about himself, his private opinions about life; and when I reflect now upon my lack of real knowledge at five and twenty, I am amazed at the futility of an expensive education which had failed to impress upon me the simple, basic fact that life was struggle; that either development or retrogression is the fate of all men, that characters are never completely made, but always in the making. I had merely a disconcerting glimpse of this truth, with no powers of formulation, as I sat beside my mother in the bedroom, where every article evoked some childhood scene. Here was the dent in the walnut foot-board of the bed made,

one wintry day, by the impact of my box of blocks; the big arm-chair, covered with I know not what stiff embroidery, which had served on countless occasions as a chariot driven to victory. I even remembered how every Wednesday morning I had been banished from the room, which had been so large a part of my childhood universe, when Ella, the housemaid, had flung open all its windows and crowded its furniture into the hall.

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The thought of my wanderings since then became poignant, almost terrifying. The room, with all its memories, was unchanged. How safe I had been within its walls! Why could I not have been, content with what it represented? of tradition, of custom,—of religion? And what was it within me that had lured me away from these?

I was miserable, indeed, but my misery was not of the kind I thought it ought to be. At moments, when my mother relapsed into weeping, I glanced at her almost in wonder. Such sorrow as hers was incomprehensible. Once she surprised and discomfited me by lifting her head and gazing fixedly at me through her tears.

I recall certain impressions of the funeral. There, among the pall-bearers, was my Cousin Robert Breck, tears in the furrows of his cheeks. Had he loved my father more than I? The sight of his grief moved me suddenly and strongly.... It seemed an age since I had worked in his store, and yet here he was still, coming to town every morning and returning every evening to Claremore, loving his friends, and mourning them one by one. Was this, the spectacle presented by my Cousin Robert, the reward of earthly existence? Were there no other prizes save those known as greatness of character and depth of human affections? Cousin Robert looked worn and old. The other pall-bearers, men of weight, of long standing in the community, were aged, too; Mr. Blackwood, and Mr. Jules Hollister; and out of place, somehow, in this new church building. It came to me abruptly that the old order was gone,—had slipped away during my absence. The church I had known in boyhood had been torn down to make room for a business building on Boyne Street; the edifice in which I sat was expensive, gave forth no distinctive note; seemingly transitory with its hybrid interior, its shiny oak and blue and red organ-pipes, betokening a compromised and weakened faith. Nondescript, likewise, seemed the new minister, Mr. Randlett, as he prayed unctuously in front of the flowers massed on the platform. I vaguely resented his laudatory references to my father.

The old church, with its severity, had actually stood for something. It was the Westminster Catechism in wood and stone, and Dr. Pound had been the human incarnation of that catechism, the fit representative of a wrathful God, a militant shepherd who had guarded with vigilance his respectable flock, who had protested vehemently against the sins of the world by which they were surrounded, against the "dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie." How Dr. Pound would have put the emphasis of the Everlasting into those words!

Against what was Mr. Randlett protesting?

My glance wandered to the pews which held the committees from various organizations, such as the Chamber of Commerce and the Bar Association, which had come to do honour to my father. And there, differentiated from the others, I saw the spruce, alert figure of Theodore Watling. He, too, represented a new type and a new note,—this time

a forceful note, a secular note that had not belonged to the old church, and seemed likewise anomalistic in the new....

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During the long, slow journey in the carriage to the cemetery my mother did not raise her veil. It was not until she reached out and seized my hand, convulsively, that I realized she was still a part of my existence.

In the days that followed I became aware that my father's death had removed a restrictive element, that I was free now to take without criticism or opposition whatever course in life I might desire. It may be that I had apprehended even then that his professional ideals would not have coincided with my own. Mingled with this sense of emancipation was a curious feeling of regret, of mourning for something I had never valued, something fixed and dependable for which he had stood, a rock and a refuge of which I had never availed myself!... When his will was opened it was found that the property had been left to my mother during her lifetime. It was larger than I had thought, four hundred thousand dollars, shrewdly invested, for the most part, in city real estate. My father had been very secretive as to money matters, and my mother had no interest in them.

Three or four days later I received in the mail a typewritten letter signed by Theodore Watling, expressing sympathy for my bereavement, and asking me to drop in on him, down town, before I should leave the city. In contrast to the somewhat dingy offices where my father had practised in the Blackwood Block, the quarters of Watling, Fowndes and Ripon on the eighth floor of the new Durrett Building were modern to a degree, finished in oak and floored with marble, with a railed-off space where young women with nimble fingers played ceaselessly on typewriters. One of them informed me that Mr. Watling was busy, but on reading my card added that she would take it in. Meanwhile, in company with two others who may have been clients, I waited. This, then, was what it meant to be a lawyer of importance, to have, like a Chesterfield, an ante-room where clients cooled their heels and awaited one's pleasure...

The young woman returned, and led me through a corridor to a door on which was painted Mr. Wailing.

I recall him tilted back in his chair in a debonnair manner beside his polished desk, the hint of a smile on his lips; and leaning close to him was a yellow, owl-like person whose eyes, as they turned to me, gave the impression of having stared for years into hard, artificial lights. Mr. Watling rose briskly.

"How are you, Hugh?" he said, the warmth of his greeting tempered by just the note of condolence suitable to my black clothes. "I'm glad you came. I wanted to see you before you went back to Cambridge. I must introduce you to Judge Bering, of our State Supreme Court. Judge, this is Mr. Paret's boy."

The judge looked me over with a certain slow impressiveness, and gave me a soft and fleshy hand.

“Glad to know you, Mr. Paret. Your father was a great loss to our bar,” he declared.

I detected in his tone and manner a slight reservation that could not be called precisely judicial dignity; it was as though, in these few words, he had gone to the limit of self-commitment with a stranger—a striking contrast to the confidential attitude towards Mr. Watling in which I had surprised him.

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“Judge,” said Mr. Watling, sitting down again, “do you recall that time we all went up to Mr. Paret’s house and tried to induce him to run for mayor? That was before you went on the lower bench.”

The judge nodded gloomily, caressing his watch chain, and suddenly rose to go.

“That will be all right, then?” Mr. Watling inquired cryptically, with a smile. The other made a barely perceptible inclination of the head and departed. Mr. Watling looked at me. “He’s one of the best men we have on the bench to-day,” he added. There was a trace of apology in his tone.

He talked a while of my father, to whom, so he said, he had looked up ever since he had been admitted to the bar.

“It would be a pleasure to me, Hugh, as well as a matter of pride,” he said cordially, but with dignity, “to have Matthew Paret’s son in my office. I suppose you will be wishing to take your mother somewhere this summer, but if you care to come here in the autumn, you will be welcome. You will begin, of course, as other young men begin,—as I began. But I am a believer in blood, and I’ll be glad to have you. Mr. Fowndes and Mr. Ripon feel the same way.” He escorted me to the door himself.

Everywhere I went during that brief visit home I was struck by change, by the crumbling and decay of institutions that once had held me in thrall, by the superimposition of a new order that as yet had assumed no definite character. Some of the old landmarks had disappeared; there were new and aggressive office buildings, new and aggressive residences, new and aggressive citizens who lived in them, and of whom my mother spoke with gentle deprecation. Even Claremore, that paradise of my childhood, had grown shrivelled and shabby, even tawdry, I thought, when we went out there one Sunday afternoon; all that once represented the magic word “country” had vanished. The old flat piano, made in Philadelphia ages ago, the horsehair chairs and sofa had been replaced by a nondescript furniture of the sort displayed behind plate-glass windows of the city’s stores: rocking-chairs on stands, upholstered in clashing colours, their coiled springs only half hidden by tassels, and “ornamental” electric fixtures, instead of the polished coal-oil lamps. Cousin Jenny had grown white, Willie was a staid bachelor, Helen an old maid, while Mary had married a tall, anaemic young man with glasses, Walter Kinley, whom Cousin Robert had taken into the store. As I contemplated the Brecks odd questions suggested themselves: did honesty and warm-heartedness necessarily accompany a lack of artistic taste? and was virtue its own reward, after all? They drew my mother into the house, took off her wraps, set her down in the most comfortable rocker, and insisted on making her a cup of tea.

I was touched. I loved them still, and yet I was conscious of reservations concerning them. They, too, seemed a little on the defensive with me, and once in a while Mary was caustic in her remarks.

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“I guess nothing but New York will be good enough for Hugh now. He’ll be taking Cousin Sarah away from us.”

“Not at all, my dear,” said my mother, gently, “he’s going into Mr. Watling’s office next autumn.”

“Theodore Watling?” demanded Cousin Robert, pausing in his carving.

“Yes, Robert. Mr. Watling has been good enough to say that he would like to have Hugh. Is there anything—?”

“Oh, I’m out of date, Sarah,” Cousin Robert replied, vigorously severing the leg of the turkey. “These modern lawyers are too smart for me. Watling’s no worse than the others, I suppose,—only he’s got more ability.”

“I’ve never heard anything against him,” said my mother in a pained voice. “Only the other day McAlery Willett congratulated me that Hugh was going to be with him.”

“You mustn’t mind Robert, Sarah,” put in Cousin Jenny,—a remark reminiscent of other days.

“Dad has a notion that his generation is the only honest one,” said Helen, laughingly, as she passed a plate.

I had gained a sense of superiority, and I was quite indifferent to Cousin Robert’s opinion of Mr. Watling, of modern lawyers in general. More than once a wave of self-congratulation surged through me that I had possessed the foresight and initiative to get out of the wholesale grocery business while there was yet time. I looked at Willie, still freckled, still literal, still a plodder, at Walter Kinley, and I thought of the drabness of their lives; at Cousin Robert himself as he sat smoking his cigar in the bay-window on that dark February day, and suddenly I pitied him. The suspicion struck me that he had not prospered of late, and this deepened to a conviction as he talked.

“The Republican Party is going to the dogs,” he asserted.

“It used to be an honourable party, but now it is no better than the other. Politics are only conducted, now, for the purpose of making unscrupulous men rich, sir. For years I furnished this city with good groceries, if I do say it myself. I took a pride in the fact that the inmates of the hospitals, yes, and the dependent poor in the city’s institutions, should have honest food. You can get anything out of the city if you are willing to pay the politicians for it. I lost my city contracts. Why? Because I refused to deal with scoundrels. Weill and Company and other unscrupulous upstarts are willing to do so, and poison the poor and the sick with adulterated groceries! The first thing I knew was that the city auditor was holding back my bills for supplies, and paying Weill’s. That’s

what politics and business, yes, sir, and the law, have come to in these days. If a man wants to succeed, he must turn into a rascal."

I was not shocked, but I was silent, uncomfortable, wishing that it were time to take the train back to the city. Cousin Robert's face was more worn than I had thought, and I contrasted him inevitably with the forceful person who used to stand, in his worn alpaca coat, on the pavement in front of his store, greeting with clear-eyed content his fellow merchants of the city. Willie Breck, too, was silent, and Walter Kinley took off his glasses and wiped them. In the meanwhile Helen had left the group in which my mother sat, and, approaching us, laid her hands on her father's shoulders.

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“Now, dad,” she said, in affectionate remonstrance, “you’re excited about politics again, and you know it isn’t good for you. And besides, they’re not worth it.”

“You’re right, Helen,” he replied. Under the pressure of her hands he made a strong effort to control himself, and turned to address my mother across the room.

“I’m getting to be a crotchety old man,” he said. “It’s a good thing I have a daughter to remind me of it.”

“It is a good thing, Robert,” said my mother.

During the rest of our visit he seemed to have recovered something of his former spirits and poise, taking refuge in the past. They talked of their own youth, of families whose houses had been landmarks on the Second Bank.

“I’m worried about your Cousin Robert, Hugh,” my mother confided to me, when we were at length seated in the train. “I’ve heard rumours that things are not so well at the store as they might be.” We looked out at the winter landscape, so different from that one which had thrilled every fibre of my being in the days when the railroad on which we travelled had been a winding narrow gauge. The orchards—those that remained—were bare; stubble pricked the frozen ground where tassels had once waved in the hot, summer wind. We flew by row after row of ginger-bread, suburban houses built on “villa plots,” and I read in large letters on a hideous sign-board, “Woodbine Park.”

“Hugh, have you ever heard anything against—Mr. Watling?”

“No, mother,” I said. “So far as I knew, he is very much looked up to by lawyers and business men. He is counsel, I believe, for Mr. Blackwood’s street car line on Boyne Street. And I told you, I believe, that I met him once at Mr. Kyme’s.”

“Poor Robert!” she sighed. “I suppose business trouble does make one bitter,—I’ve seen it so often. But I never imagined that it would overtake Robert, and at his time of life! It is an old and respected firm, and we have always had a pride in it.” ...

That night, when I was going to bed, it was evident that the subject was still in her mind. She clung to my hand a moment.

“I, too, am afraid of the new, Hugh,” she said, a little tremulously. “We all grow so, as age comes on.”

“But you are not old, mother,” I protested.

“I have a feeling, since your father has gone, that I have lived my life, my dear, though I’d like to stay long enough to see you happily married—to have grandchildren. I was not young when you were born.” And she added, after a little while, “I know nothing

about business affairs, and now—now that your father is no longer here, sometimes I'm afraid—"

"Afraid of what, mother?"

She tried to smile at me through her tears. We were in the old sitting-room, surrounded by the books.

"I know it's foolish, and it isn't that I don't trust you. I know that the son of your father couldn't do anything that was not honourable. And yet I am afraid of what the world is becoming. The city is growing so fast, and so many new people are coming in. Things are not the same. Robert is right, there. And I have heard your father say the same thing. Hugh, promise me that you will try to remember always what he was, and what he would wish you to be!"

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“I will, mother,” I answered. “But I think you would find that Cousin Robert exaggerates a little, makes things seem worse than they really are. Customs change, you know. And politics were never well—Sunday schools.” I, too, smiled a little. “Father knew that. And he would never take an active part in them.”

“He was too fine!” she exclaimed.

“And now,” I continued, “Cousin Robert has happened to come in contact with them through business. That is what has made the difference in him. Before, he always knew they were corrupt, but he rarely thought about them.”

“Hugh,” she said suddenly, after a pause, “you must remember one thing,—that you can afford to be independent. I thank God that your father has provided for that!”

I was duly admitted, the next autumn, to the bar of my own state, and was assigned to a desk in the offices of Watling, Fowndes and Ripon. Larry Weed was my immediate senior among the apprentices, and Larry was a hero-worshipper. I can see him now. He suggested a bullfrog as he sat in the little room we shared in common, his arms akimbo over a law book, his little legs doubled under him, his round, eyes fixed expectantly on the doorway. And even if I had not been aware of my good fortune in being connected with such a firm as Theodore Watling’s, Larry would shortly have brought it home to me. During those weeks when I was making my first desperate attempts at briefing up the law I was sometimes interrupted by his exclamations when certain figures went by in the corridor.

“Say, Hugh, do you know who that was?”

“No.”

“Miller Gorse.”

“Who’s he?”

“Do you mean to say you never heard of Miller Gorse?”

“I’ve been away a long time,” I would answer apologetically. A person of some importance among my contemporaries at Harvard, I had looked forward to a residence in my native city with the complacency of one who has seen something of the world,—-only to find that I was the least in the new kingdom. And it was a kingdom. Larry opened up to me something of the significance and extent of it, something of the identity of the men who controlled it.

“Miller Gorse,” he said impressively, “is the counsel for the railroad.”

“What railroad? You mean the—” I was adding, when he interrupted me pityingly.

“After you’ve been here a while you’ll find out there’s only one railroad in this state, so far as politics are concerned. The Ashuela and Northern, the Lake Shore and the others don’t count.”

I refrained from asking any more questions at that time, but afterwards I always thought of the Railroad as spelled with a capital.

“Miller Gorse isn’t forty yet,” Larry told me on another occasion. “That’s doing pretty well for a man who comes near running this state.”

For the sake of acquiring knowledge, I endured Mr. Weed’s patronage. I inquired how Mr. Gorse ran the state.

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“Oh, you’ll find out soon enough,” he assured me.

“But Mr. Barbour’s president of the Railroad.”

“Sure. Once in a while they take something up to him, but as a rule he leaves things to Gorse.”

Whereupon I resolved to have a good look at Mr. Gorse at the first opportunity. One day Mr. Watling sent out for some papers.

“He’s in there now;” said Larry. “You take ’em.”

“In there” meant Mr. Watling’s sanctum. And in there he was. I had only a glance at the great man, for, with a kindly but preoccupied “Thank you, Hugh,” Mr. Watling took the papers and dismissed me. Heaviness, blackness and impassivity,—these were the impressions of Mr. Gorse which I carried away from that first meeting. The very solidity of his flesh seemed to suggest the solidity of his position. Such, say the psychologists, is the effect of prestige.

I remember well an old-fashioned picture puzzle in one of my boyhood books. The scene depicted was to all appearances a sylvan, peaceful one, with two happy lovers seated on a log beside a brook; but presently, as one gazed at the picture, the head of an animal stood forth among the branches, and then the body; more animals began to appear, bit by bit; a tiger, a bear, a lion, a jackal, a fox, until at last, whenever I looked at the page, I did not see the sylvan scene at all, but only the predatory beasts of the forest. So, one by one, the figures of the real rulers of the city superimposed themselves for me upon the simple and democratic design of Mayor, Council, Board of Aldermen, Police Force, *etc*., that filled the eye of a naive and trusting electorate which fondly imagined that it had something to say in government. Miller Gorse was one of these rulers behind the screen, and Adolf Scherer, of the Boyne Iron Works, another; there was Leonard Dickinson of the Corn National Bank; Frederick Grierson, becoming wealthy in city real estate; Judah B. Tallant, who, though outlawed socially, was deferred to as the owner of the Morning Era; and even Ralph Hambleton, rapidly superseding the elderly and conservative Mr. Lord, who had hitherto managed the great Hambleton estate. Ralph seemed to have become, in a somewhat gnostic manner, a full-fledged financier. Not having studied law, he had been home for four years when I became a legal fledgling, and during the early days of my apprenticeship I was beholden to him for many “eye openers” concerning the conduct of great affairs. I remember him sauntering into my room one morning when Larry Weed had gone out on an errand.

“Hello, Hughie,” he said, with his air of having nothing to do. “Grinding it out? Where’s Watling?”

“Isn’t he in his office?”

“No.”

“Well, what can we do for you?” I asked.

Ralph grinned.

“Perhaps I’ll tell you when you’re a little older. You’re too young.” And he sank down into Larry Weed’s chair, his long legs protruding on the other side of the table. “It’s a matter of taxes. Some time ago I found out that Dickinson and Tallant and others I could mention were paying a good deal less on their city property than we are. We don’t propose to do it any more—that’s all.”

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“How can Mr. Watling help you?” I inquired.

“Well, I don’t mind giving you a few tips about your profession, Hughie. I’m going to get Watling to fix it up with the City Hall gang. Old Lord doesn’t like it, I’ll admit, and when I told him we had been contributing to the city long enough, that I proposed swinging into line with other property holders, he began to blubber about disgrace and what my grandfather would say if he were alive. Well, he isn’t alive. A good deal of water has flowed under the bridges since his day. It’s a mere matter of business, of getting your respectable firm to retain a City Hall attorney to fix it up with the assessor.”

“How about the penitentiary?” I ventured, not too seriously.

“I shan’t go to the penitentiary, neither will Watling. What I do is to pay a lawyer’s fee. There isn’t anything criminal in that, is there?”

For some time after Ralph had departed I sat reflecting upon this new knowledge, and there came into my mind the bitterness of Cousin Robert Breck against this City Hall gang, and his remarks about lawyers. I recalled the tone in which he had referred to Mr. Watling. But Ralph’s philosophy easily triumphed. Why not be practical, and become master of a situation which one had not made, and could not alter, instead of being overwhelmed by it? Needless to say, I did not mention the conversation to Mr. Watling, nor did he dwindle in my estimation. These necessary transactions did not interfere in any way with his personal relationships, and his days were filled with kindnesses. And was not Mr. Ripon, the junior partner, one of the evangelical lights of the community, conducting advanced Bible classes every week in the Church of the Redemption?... The unfolding of mysteries kept me alert. And I understood that, if I was to succeed, certain esoteric knowledge must be acquired, as it were, unofficially. I kept my eyes and ears open, and applied myself, with all industry, to the routine tasks with which every young man in a large legal firm is familiar. I recall distinctly my pride when, the Board of Aldermen having passed an ordinance lowering the water rates, I was intrusted with the responsibility of going before the court in behalf of Mr. Ogilvy’s water company, obtaining a temporary restricting order preventing the ordinance from going at once into effect. Here was an affair in point. Were it not for lawyers of the calibre of Watling, Fowndes and Ripon, hard-earned private property would soon be confiscated by the rapacious horde. Once in a while I was made aware that Mr. Watling had his eye on me.

“Well, Hugh,” he would say, “how are you getting along? That’s right, stick to it, and after a while we’ll hand the drudgery over to somebody else.”

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He possessed the supreme quality of a leader of men in that he took pains to inform himself concerning the work of the least of his subordinates; and he had the gift of putting fire into a young man by a word or a touch of the hand on the shoulder. It was not difficult for me, therefore, to comprehend Larry Weed's hero-worship, the loyalty of other members of the firm or of those occupants of the office whom I have not mentioned. My first impression of him, which I had got at Jerry Kyme's, deepened as time went on, and I readily shared the belief of those around me that his legal talents easily surpassed those of any of his contemporaries. I can recall, at this time, several noted cases in the city when I sat in court listening to his arguments with thrills of pride. He made us all feel—no matter how humble may have been our contributions to the preparation—that we had a share in his triumphs. We remembered his manner with judges and juries, and strove to emulate it. He spoke as if there could be no question as to his being right as to the law and the facts, and yet, in some subtle way that bated analysis, managed not to antagonize the court. Victory was in the air in that office. I do not mean to say there were not defeats; but frequently these defeats, by resourcefulness, by a never-say-die spirit, by a consummate knowledge, not only of the law, but of other things at which I have hinted, were turned into ultimate victories. We fought cases from one court to another, until our opponents were worn out or the decision was reversed. We won, and that spirit of winning got into the blood. What was most impressed on me in those early years, I think, was the discovery that there was always a path—if one were clever enough to find it—from one terrace to the next higher. Staying power was the most prized of all the virtues. One could always, by adroitness, compel a legal opponent to fight the matter out all over again on new ground, or at least on ground partially new. If the Court of Appeals should fail one, there was the Supreme Court; there was the opportunity, also, to shift from the state to the federal courts; and likewise the much-prized device known as a change of venue, when a judge was supposed to be "prejudiced."

IX.

As my apprenticeship advanced I grew more and more to the inhabitants of our city into two kinds, the who were served, and the inefficient, who were separate efficient, neglected; but the mental process of which the classification was the result was not so deliberate as may be supposed. Sometimes, when an important client would get into trouble, the affair took me into the police court, where I saw the riff-raff of the city penned up, waiting to have justice doled out to them: weary women who had spent the night in cells, indifferent now as to the front they presented to the world, the finery rued that they had tended so carefully to catch the eyes of men on the darkened

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streets; brazen young girls, who blazed forth defiance to all order; derelict men, sodden and hopeless, with scrubby beards; shifty looking burglars and pickpockets. All these I beheld, at first with twinges of pity, later to mass them with the ugly and inevitable with whom society had to deal somehow. Lawyers, after all, must be practical men. I came to know the justices of these police courts, as well as other judges. And underlying my acquaintance with all of them was the knowledge—though not on the threshold of my consciousness—that they depended for their living, every man of them, those who were appointed and those who were elected, upon a political organization which derived its sustenance from the element whence came our clients. Thus by degrees the sense of belonging to a special priesthood had grown on me.

I recall an experience with that same Mr. Nathan. Weill, the wholesale grocer of whose commerce with the City Hall my Cousin Robert Breck had so bitterly complained. Late one afternoon Mr. Weill's carriage ran over a child on its way up-town through one of the poorer districts. The parents, naturally, were frantic, and the coachman was arrested. This was late in the afternoon, and I was alone in the office when the telephone rang. Hurrying to the police station, I found Mr. Weill in a state of excitement and abject fear, for an ugly crowd had gathered outside.

"Could not Mr. Watling or Mr. Fowndes come?" demanded the grocer.

With an inner contempt for the layman's state of mind on such occasions I assured him of my competency to handle the case. He was impressed, I think, by the sergeant's deference, who knew what it meant to have such an office as ours interfere with the affair. I called up the prosecuting attorney, who sent to Monahan's saloon, close by, and procured a release for the coachman on his own recognizance, one of many signed in blank and left there by the justice for privileged cases. The coachman was hustled out by a back door, and the crowd dispersed.

The next morning, while a score or more of delinquents sat in the anxious seats, Justice Garry recognized me and gave me precedence. And Mr. Weill, with a sigh of relief, paid his fine.

"Mr. Paret, is it?" he asked, as we stood together for a moment on the sidewalk outside the court. "You have managed this well. I will remember."

He was sued, of course. When he came to the office he insisted on discussing the case with Mr. Watling, who sent for me.

"That is a bright young man," Mr. Weill declared, shaking my hand. "He will get on."

"Some day," said Mr. Watling, "he may save you a lot of money, Weill."

“When my friend Mr. Watling is United States Senator,—eh?”

Mr. Watling laughed. “Before that, I hope. I advise you to compromise this suit, Weill,” he added. “How would a thousand dollars strike you? I’ve had Paret look up the case, and he tells me the little girl has had to have an operation.”

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“A thousand dollars!” cried the grocer. “What right have these people to let their children play on the streets? It’s an outrage.”

“Where else have the children to play?” Mr. Watling touched his arm. “Weill,” he said gently, “suppose it had been your little girl?” The grocer pulled out his handkerchief and mopped his bald forehead. But he rallied a little.

“You fight these damage cases for the street railroads all through the courts.”

“Yes,” Mr. Watling agreed, “but there a principle is involved. If the railroads once got into the way of paying damages for every careless employee, they would soon be bankrupt through blackmail. But here you have a child whose father is a poor janitor and can’t afford sickness. And your coachman, I imagine, will be more particular in the future.”

In the end Mr. Weill made out a cheque and departed in a good humour, convinced that he was well out of the matter. Here was one of many instances I could cite of Mr. Watling’s tenderness of heart. I felt, moreover, as if he had done me a personal favour, since it was I who had recommended the compromise. For I had been to the hospital and had seen the child on the cot,—a dark little thing, lying still in her pain, with the bewildered look of a wounded animal....

Not long after this incident of Mr. Weill’s damage suit I obtained a more or less definite promotion by the departure of Larry Weed. He had suddenly developed a weakness of the lungs. Mr. Watling got him a place in Denver, and paid his expenses west.

The first six or seven years I spent in the office of Wading, Fowndes and Ripon were of importance to my future career, but there is little to relate of them. I was absorbed not only in learning law, but in acquiring that esoteric knowledge at which I have hinted—not to be had from my seniors and which I was convinced was indispensable to a successful and lucrative practice. My former comparison of the organization of our city to a picture puzzle wherein the dominating figures become visible only after long study is rather inadequate. A better analogy would be the human anatomy: we lawyers, of course, were the brains; the financial and industrial interests the body, helpless without us; the City Hall politicians, the stomach that must continually be fed. All three, law, politics and business, were interdependent, united by a nervous system too complex to be developed here. In these years, though I worked hard and often late, I still found time for convivialities, for social gaieties, yet little by little without realizing the fact, I was losing zest for the companionship of my former intimates. My mind was becoming polarized by the contemplation of one object, success, and to it human ties were unconsciously being sacrificed.

Tom Peters began to feel this, even at a time when I believed myself still to be genuinely fond of him. Considering our respective temperaments in youth, it is curious that he

should have been the first to fall in love and marry. One day he astonished me by announcing his engagement to Susan Blackwood.

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“That ends the liquor, Hughie,” he told me, beamingly. “I promised her I’d eliminate it.”

He did eliminate it, save for mild relapses on festive occasions. A more seemingly incongruous marriage could scarcely be imagined, and yet it was a success from the start. From a slim, silent, self-willed girl Susan had grown up into a tall, rather rawboned and energetic young woman. She was what we called in those days “intellectual,” and had gone in for kindergartens, and after her marriage she turned out to be excessively domestic; practising her theories, with entire success, upon a family that showed a tendency to increase at an alarming rate. Tom, needless to say, did not become intellectual. He settled down—prematurely, I thought—into what is known as a family man, curiously content with the income he derived from the commission business and with life in general; and he developed a somewhat critical view of the tendencies of the civilization by which he was surrounded. Susan held it also, but she said less about it. In the comfortable but unpretentious house they rented on Cedar Street we had many discussions, after the babies had been put to bed and the door of the living-room closed, in order that our voices might not reach the nursery. Perry Blackwood, now Tom’s brother-in-law, was often there. He, too, had lapsed into what I thought was an odd conservatism. Old Josiah, his father, being dead, he occupied himself mainly with looking after certain family interests, among which was the Boyne Street car line. Among “business men” he was already getting the reputation of being a little difficult to deal with. I was often the subject of their banter, and presently I began to suspect that they regarded my career and beliefs with some concern. This gave me no uneasiness, though at limes I lost my temper. I realized their affection for me; but privately I regarded them as lacking in ambition, in force, in the fighting qualities necessary for achievement in this modern age. Perhaps, unconsciously, I pitied them a little.

“How is Judah B. to-day, Hughie?” Tom would inquire. “I hear you’ve put him up for the Boyne Club, now that Mr. Watling has got him out of that libel suit.”

“Carter Ives is dead,” Perry would add, sarcastically, “let bygones be bygones.”

It was well known that Mr. Tallant, in the early days of his newspaper, had blackmailed Mr. Ives out of some hundred thousand dollars. And that this, more than any other act, stood in the way, with certain recalcitrant gentlemen, of his highest ambition, membership in the Boyne.

“The trouble with you fellows is that you refuse to deal with conditions as you find them,” I retorted. “We didn’t make them, and we can’t change them. Tallant’s a factor in the business life of this city, and he has to be counted with.”

Tom would shake his head exasperatingly.

“Why don’t you get after Ralph?” I demanded. “He doesn’t antagonize Tallant, either.”

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“Ralph’s hopeless,” said Tom. “He was born a pirate, you weren’t, Hughie. We think there’s a chance for his salvation, don’t we, Perry?”

I refused to accept the remark as flattering.

Another object of their assaults was Frederick Grierson, who by this time had emerged from obscurity as a small dealer in real estate into a manipulator of blocks and corners.

“I suppose you think it’s a lawyer’s business to demand an ethical bill of health of every client,” I said. “I won’t stand up for all of Tallant’s career, of course, but Mr. Wading has a clear right to take his cases. As for Grierson, it seems to me that’s a matter of giving a dog a bad name. Just because his people weren’t known here, and because he has worked up from small beginnings. To get down to hard-pan, you fellows don’t believe in democracy,—in giving every man a chance to show what’s in him.”

“Democracy is good!” exclaimed Perry. “If the kind of thing we’re coming to is democracy, God save the state!"...

On the other hand I found myself drawing closer to Ralph Hambleton, sometimes present at these debates, as the only one of my boyhood friends who seemed to be able to “deal with conditions as he found them.” Indeed, he gave one the impression that, if he had had the making of them, he would not have changed them.

“What the deuce do you expect?” I once heard him inquire with good-natured contempt. “Business isn’t charity, it’s war.

“There are certain things,” maintained Perry, stoutly, “that gentlemen won’t do.”

“Gentlemen!” exclaimed Ralph, stretching his slim six feet two: We were sitting in the Boyne Club. “It’s ungentlemanly to kill, or burn a town or sink a ship, but we keep armies and navies for the purpose. For a man with a good mind, Perry, you show a surprising inability to think things, out to a logical conclusion. What the deuce is competition, when you come down to it? Christianity? Not by a long shot! If our nations are slaughtering men and starving populations in other countries,—are carried on, in fact, for the sake of business, if our churches are filled with business men and our sky pilots pray for the government, you can’t expect heathen individuals like me to do business on a Christian basis,—if there is such a thing. You can make rules for croquet, but not for a game that is based on the natural law of the survival of the fittest. The darned fools in the legislatures try it occasionally, but we all know it’s a sop to the ‘common people.’ Ask Hughie here if there ever was a law put on the statute books that his friend Watling couldn’t get ‘round’? Why, you’ve got competition even among the churches. Yours, where I believe you teach in the Sunday school, would go bankrupt if it proclaimed real Christianity. And you’ll go bankrupt if you practise it, Perry, my boy.

Some early, wide-awake, competitive, red-blooded bird will relieve you of the Boyne Street car line."

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It was one of this same new and “fittest” species who had already relieved poor Mr. McAlery Willett of his fortune. Mr. Willett was a trusting soul who had never known how to take care of himself or his money, people said, and now that he had lost it they blamed him. Some had been saved enough for him and Nancy to live on in the old house, with careful economy. It was Nancy who managed the economy, who accomplished remarkable things with a sum they would have deemed poverty in former days. Her mother had died while I was at Cambridge. Reverses did not subdue Mr. Willett’s spirits, and the fascination modern “business” had for him seemed to grow in proportion to the misfortunes it had caused him. He moved into a tiny office in the Durrett Building, where he appeared every morning about half-past ten to occupy himself with heaven knows what short cuts to wealth, with prospectuses of companies in Mexico or Central America or some other distant place: once, I remember, it was a tea, company in which he tried to interest his friends, to raise in the South a product he maintained would surpass Orange Pekoe. In the afternoon between three and four he would turn up at the Boyne Club, as well groomed, as spruce as ever, generally with a flower in his buttonhole. He never forgot that he was a gentleman, and he had a gentleman’s notions of the fitness of things, and it was against his principles to use, a gentleman’s club for the furtherance of his various enterprises.

“Drop into my office some day, Dickinson,” he would say. “I think I’ve got something there that might interest you!”

He reminded me, when I met him, that he had always predicted I would get along in life....

The portrait of Nancy at this period is not so easily drawn. The decline of the family fortunes seemed to have had as little effect upon her as upon her father, although their characters differed sharply. Something of that spontaneity, of that love of life and joy in it she had possessed in youth she must have inherited from McAlery Willett, but these qualities had disappeared in her long before the coming of financial reverses. She was nearing thirty, and in spite of her beauty and the rarer distinction that can best be described as breeding, she had never married. Men admired her, but from a distance; she kept them at arm’s length, they said: strangers who visited the city invariably picked her out of an assembly and asked who she was; one man from New York who came to visit Ralph and who had been madly in love with her, she had amazed many people by refusing, spurning all he might have given her. This incident seemed a refutation of the charge that she was calculating. As might have been foretold, she had the social gift in a remarkable degree, and in spite of the limitations of her purse the knack of dressing better than other women, though at that time the organization of our social life still remained comparatively simple, the custom of luxurious and expensive entertainment not having yet set in.

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The more I reflect upon those days, the more surprising does it seem that I was not in love with her. It may be that I was, unconsciously, for she troubled my thoughts occasionally, and she represented all the qualities I admired in her sex. The situation that had existed at the time of our first and only quarrel had been reversed, I was on the highroad to the worldly success I had then resolved upon, Nancy was poor, and for that reason, perhaps, prouder than ever. If she was inaccessible to others, she had the air of being peculiarly inaccessible to me—the more so because some of the superficial relics of our intimacy remained, or rather had been restored. Her very manner of camaraderie seemed paradoxically to increase the distance between us. It piqued me. Had she given me the least encouragement, I am sure I should have responded; and I remember that I used occasionally to speculate as to whether she still cared for me, and took this method of hiding her real feelings. Yet, on the whole, I felt a certain complacency about it all; I knew that suffering was disagreeable, I had learned how to avoid it, and I may have had, deep within me, a feeling that I might marry her after all. Meanwhile my life was full, and gave promise of becoming even fuller, more absorbing and exciting in the immediate future.

One of the most fascinating figures, to me, of that Order being woven, like a cloth of gold, out of our hitherto drab civilization,—an Order into which I was ready and eager to be initiated,—was that of Adolf Scherer, the giant German immigrant at the head of the Boyne Iron Works. His life would easily lend itself to riotous romance. In the old country, in a valley below the castle perched on the rack above, he had begun life by tending his father's geese. What a contrast to "Steeltown" with its smells and sickening summer heat, to the shanty where Mrs. Scherer took boarders and bent over the wash-tub! She, too, was an immigrant, but lived to hear her native Wagner from her own box at Covent Garden; and he to explain, on the deck of an imperial yacht, to the man who might have been his sovereign certain processes in the manufacture of steel hitherto untried on that side of the Atlantic. In comparison with Adolf Scherer, citizen of a once despised democracy, the minor prince in whose dominions he had once tended geese was of small account indeed!

The Adolf Scherer of that day—though it is not so long ago as time flies—was even more solid and impressive than the man he afterwards became, when he reached the dizzier heights from which he delivered to an eager press opinions on politics and war, eugenics and woman's suffrage and other subjects that are the despair of specialists. Had he stuck to steel, he would have remained invulnerable. But even then he was beginning to abandon the field of production for that of exploitation: figuratively speaking, he had taken to soap, which with the aid of water may be blown into beautiful, iridescent bubbles

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to charm the eye. Much good soap, apparently, has gone that way, never to be recovered. Everybody who was anybody began to blow bubbles about that time, and the bigger the bubble the greater its attraction for investors of hard-earned savings. Outside of this love for financial iridescence, let it be called, Mr. Scherer seemed to care little then for glitter of any sort. Shortly after his elevation to the presidency of the Boyne Iron Works he had been elected a member of the Boyne Club,—an honour of which, some thought, he should have been more sensible; but generally, when in town, he preferred to lunch at a little German restaurant annexed to a saloon, where I used often to find him literally towering above the cloth,—for he was a giant with short legs,—his napkin tucked into his shirt front, engaged in lively conversation with the ministering Heinrich. The chef at the club, Mr. Scherer insisted, could produce nothing equal to Heinrich's sauer-kraut and sausage. My earliest relationship with Mr. Scherer was that of an errand boy, of bringing to him for his approval papers which might not be intrusted to a common messenger. His gruffness and brevity disturbed me more than I cared to confess. I was pretty sure that he eyed me with the disposition of the self-made to believe that college educations and good tailors were the heaviest handicaps with which a young man could be burdened: and I suspected him of an inimical attitude toward the older families of the city. Certain men possessed his confidence; and he had built, as it were, a stockade about them, sternly keeping the rest of the world outside. In Theodore Watling he had a childlike faith.

Thus I studied him, with a deliberation which it is the purpose of these chapters to confess, though he little knew that he was being made the subject of analysis. Nor did I ever venture to talk with him, but held strictly to my role of errand boy,—even after the conviction came over me that he was no longer indifferent to my presence. The day arrived, after some years, when he suddenly thrust toward me a big, hairy hand that held the document he was examining.

"Who drew this, Mr. Paret!" he demanded.

Mr. Ripon, I told him.

The Boyne Works were buying up coal-mines, and this was a contract looking to the purchase of one in Putman County, provided, after a certain period of working, the yield and quality should come up to specifications. Mr. Scherer requested me to read one of the sections, which puzzled him. And in explaining it an idea flashed over me.

"Do you mind my making a suggestion, Mr. Scherer?" I ventured.

"What is it?" he asked brusquely.

I showed him how, by the alteration of a few words, the difficulty to which he had referred could not only be eliminated, but that certain possible penalties might be evaded, while the apparent meaning of the section remained unchanged. In other words, it gave the Boyne Iron Works an advantage that was not contemplated. He seized the paper, stared at what I had written in pencil on the margin, and then stared at me. Abruptly, he began to laugh.

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“Ask Mr. Wading what he thinks of it?”

“I intended to, provided it had your approval, sir,” I replied.

“You have my approval, Mr. Paret,” he declared, rather cryptically, and with the slight German hardening of the v’s into which he relapsed at times. “Bring it to the Works this afternoon.”

Mr. Wading agreed to the alteration. He looked at me amusedly.

“Yes, I think that’s an improvement, Hugh,” he said. I had a feeling that I had gained ground, and from this time on I thought I detected a change in his attitude toward me; there could be no doubt about the new attitude of Mr. Scherer, who would often greet me now with a smile and a joke, and sometimes went so far as to ask my opinions.... Then, about six months later, came the famous Ribblevale case that aroused the moral indignation of so many persons, among whom was Perry Blackwood.

“You know as well as I do, Hugh, how this thing is being manipulated,” he declared at Tom’s one Sunday evening; “there was nothing the matter with the Ribblevale Steel Company—it was as right as rain before Leonard Dickinson and Grierson and Scherer and that crowd you train with began to talk it down at the Club. Oh, they’re very compassionate. I’ve heard ’em. Dickinson, privately, doesn’t think much of Ribblevale paper, and Pugh” (the president of the Ribblevale) “seems worried and looks badly. It’s all very clever, but I’d hate to tell you in plain words what I’d call it.”

“Go ahead,” I challenged him audaciously. “You haven’t any proof that the Ribblevale wasn’t in trouble.”

“I heard Mr. Pugh tell my father the other day it was a d—d outrage. He couldn’t catch up with these rumours, and some of his stockholders were liquidating.”

“You, don’t suppose Pugh would want to admit his situation, do you?” I asked.

“Pugh’s a straight man,” retorted Perry. “That’s more than I can say for any of the other gang, saving your presence. The unpleasant truth is that Scherer and the Boyne people want the Ribblevale, and you ought to know it if you don’t.” He looked at me very hard through the glasses he had lately taken to wearing. Tom, who was lounging by the fire, shifted his position uneasily. I smiled, and took another cigar.

“I believe Ralph is right, Perry, when he calls you a sentimentalist. For you there’s a tragedy behind every ordinary business transaction. The Ribblevale people are having a hard time to keep their heads above water, and immediately you smell conspiracy. Dickinson and Scherer have been talking it down. How about it, Tom?”

But Tom, in these debates, was inclined to be noncommittal, although it was clear they troubled him.

“Oh, don’t ask me, Hughie,” he said.

“I suppose I ought to cultivate the scientific point of view, and look with impartial interest at this industrial cannibalism,” returned Perry, sarcastically. “Eat or be eaten that’s what enlightened self-interest has come to. After all, Ralph would say, it is nature, the insect world over again, the victim duped and crippled before he is devoured, and the lawyer —how shall I put it?—facilitating the processes of swallowing and digesting....”

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There was no use arguing with Perry when he was in this vein....

Since I am not writing a technical treatise, I need not go into the details of the Ribblevale suit. Since it to say that the affair, after a while, came apparently to a deadlock, owing to the impossibility of getting certain definite information from the Ribblevale books, which had been taken out of the state. The treasurer, for reasons of his own, remained out of the state also; the ordinary course of summoning him before a magistrate in another state had naturally been resorted to, but the desired evidence was not forthcoming.

“The trouble is,” Mr. Wading explained to Mr. Scherer, “that there is no law in the various states with a sufficient penalty attached that will compel the witness to divulge facts he wishes to conceal.”

It was the middle of a February afternoon, and they were seated in deep, leather chairs in one corner of the reading room of the Boyne Club. They had the place to themselves. Fowndes was there also, one leg twisted around the other in familiar fashion, a bored look on his long and sallow face. Mr. Wading had telephoned to the office for me to bring them some papers bearing on the case.

“Sit down, Hugh,” he said kindly.

“Now we have present a genuine legal mind,” said Mr. Scherer, in the playful manner he had adopted of late, while I grinned appreciatively and took a chair. Mr. Watling presently suggested kidnapping the Ribblevale treasurer until he should promise to produce the books as the only way out of what seemed an impasse. But Mr. Scherer brought down a huge fist on his knee.

“I tell you it is no joke, Watling, we’ve got to win that suit,” he asserted.

“That’s all very well,” replied Mr. Watling. “But we’re a respectable firm, you know. We haven’t had to resort to safe-blowing, as yet.”

Mr. Scherer shrugged his shoulders, as much as to say it were a matter of indifference to him what methods were resorted to. Mr. Watling’s eyes met mine; his glance was amused, yet I thought I read in it a query as to the advisability, in my presence, of going too deeply into the question of ways and means. I may have been wrong. At any rate, its sudden effect was to embolden me to give voice to an idea that had begun to simmer in my mind, that excited me, and yet I had feared to utter it. This look of my chief’s, and the lighter tone the conversation had taken decided me.

“Why wouldn’t it be possible to draw up a bill to fit the situation?” I inquired.

Mr. Wading started.

“What do you mean?” he asked quickly.

All three looked at me. I felt the blood come into my face, but it was too late to draw back.

“Well—the legislature is in session. And since, as Mr. Watling says, there is no sufficient penalty in other states to compel the witness to produce the information desired, why not draw up a bill and—and have it passed—” I paused for breath—-“imposing a sufficient penalty on home corporations in the event of such evasions. The Ribblevale Steel Company is a home corporation.”

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I had shot my bolt.... There followed what was for me an anxious silence, while the three of them continued to stare at me. Mr. Watling put the tips of his fingers together, and I became aware that he was not offended, that he was thinking rapidly.

“By George, why not, Fowndes?” he demanded.

“Well,” said Fowndes, “there’s an element of risk in such a proceeding I need not dwell upon.”

“Risk!” cried the senior partner vigorously. “There’s risk in everything. They’ll howl, of course. But they howl anyway, and nobody ever listens to them. They’ll say it’s special legislation, and the Pilot will print sensational editorials for a few days. But what of it? All of that has happened before. I tell you, if we can’t see those books, we’ll lose the suit. That’s in black and white. And, as a matter of justice, we’re entitled to know what we want to know.”

“There might be two opinions as to that,” observed Fowndes, with his sardonic smile.

Mr. Watling paid no attention to this remark. He was already deep in thought. It was characteristic of his mind to leap forward, seize a suggestion that often appeared chimerical to a man like Fowndes and turn it into an accomplished Fact. “I believe you’ve hit it, Hugh,” he said. “We needn’t bother about the powers of the courts in other states. We’ll put into this bill an appeal to our court for an order on the clerk to compel the witness to come before the court and testify, and we’ll provide for a special commissioner to take depositions in the state where the witness is. If the officers of a home corporation who are outside of the state refuse to testify, the penalty will be that the ration goes into the hands of a receiver.”

Fowndes whistled.

“That’s going some!” he said.

“Well, we’ve got to go some. How about it, Scherer?”

Even Mr. Scherer’s brown eyes were snapping.

“We have got to win that suit, Watling.”

We were all excited, even Fowndes, I think, though he remained expressionless. Ours was the tense excitement of primitive man in chase: the quarry which had threatened to elude us was again in view, and not unlikely to fall into our hands. Add to this feeling, on my part, the thrill that it was I who had put them on the scent. I had all the sensations of an aspiring young brave who for the first time is admitted to the councils of the tribe!

“It ought to be a popular bill, too,” Mr. Schemer was saying, with a smile of ironic appreciation at the thought of demagogues advocating it. “We should have one of Lawler’s friends introduce it.”

“Oh, we shall have it properly introduced,” replied Mr. Wading.

“It may come back at us,” suggested Fowndes pessimistically. “The Boyne Iron Works is a home corporation too, if I am not mistaken.”

“The Boyne Iron Works has the firm of Wading, Fowndes and Ripon behind it,” asserted Mr. Scherer, with what struck me as a magnificent faith.

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“You mustn’t forget Paret,” Mr. Watling reminded him, with a wink at me.

We had risen. Mr. Scherer laid a hand on my arm.

“No, no, I do not forget him. He will not permit me to forget him.”

A remark, I thought, that betrayed some insight into my character... Mr. Watling called for pen and paper and made then and there a draft of the proposed bill, for no time was to be lost. It was dark when we left the Club, and I recall the elation I felt and strove to conceal as I accompanied my chief back to the office. The stenographers and clerks were gone; alone in the library we got down the statutes and set to work. to perfect the bill from the rough draft, on which Mr. Fowndes had written his suggestions. I felt that a complete yet subtle change had come over my relationship with Mr. Watling.

In the midst of our labours he asked me to call up the attorney for the Railroad. Mr. Gorse was still at his office.

“Hello! Is that you, Miller?” Mr. Watling said. “This is Wading. When can I see you for a few minutes this evening? Yes, I am leaving for Washington at nine thirty. Eight o’clock. All right, I’ll be there.”

It was almost eight before he got the draft finished to his satisfaction, and I had picked it out on the typewriter. As I handed it to him, my chief held it a moment, gazing at me with an odd smile.

“You seem to have acquired a good deal of useful knowledge, here and there, Hugh,” he observed.

“I’ve tried to keep my eyes open, Mr. Watling,” I said.

“Well,” he said, “there are a great many things a young man practising law in these days has to learn for himself. And if I hadn’t given you credit for some cleverness, I shouldn’t have wanted you here. There’s only one way to look at—at these matters we have been discussing, my boy, that’s the common-sense way, and if a man doesn’t get that point of view by himself, nobody can teach it to him. I needn’t enlarge upon it”

“No, sir,” I said.

He smiled again, but immediately became serious.

“If Mr. Gorse should approve of this bill, I’m going to send you down to the capital—to-night. Can you go?”

I nodded.

“I want you to look out for the bill in the legislature. Of course there won’t be much to do, except to stand by, but you will get a better idea of what goes on down there.”

I thanked him, and told him I would do my best.

“I’m sure of that,” he replied. “Now it’s time to go to see Gorse.”

The legal department of the Railroad occupied an entire floor of the Corn Bank building. I had often been there on various errands, having on occasions delivered sealed envelopes to Mr. Gorse himself, approaching him in the ordinary way through a series of offices. But now, following Mr. Watling through the dimly lighted corridor, we came to a door on which no name was painted, and which was presently opened by a stenographer. There was in the proceeding a touch of mystery that revived keenly my boyish love for romance; brought back the days when I had been, in turn, Captain Kidd and Ali Baba.

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I have never realized more strongly than in that moment the psychological force of prestige. Little by little, for five years, an estimate of the extent of Miller Gorse's power had been coming home to me, and his features stood in my mind for his particular kind of power. He was a tremendous worker, and often remained in his office until ten and eleven at night. He dismissed the stenographer by the wave of a hand which seemed to thrust her bodily out of the room.

"Hello, Miller," said Mr. Watling.

"Hello, Theodore," replied Mr. Gorse.

"This is Paret, of my office."

"I know," said Mr. Gorse, and nodded toward me. I was impressed by the felicity with which a cartoonist of the Pilot had once caricatured him by the use of curved lines. The circle of the heavy eyebrows ended at the wide nostrils; the mouth was a crescent, but bowed downwards; the heavy shoulders were rounded. Indeed, the only straight line to be discerned about him was that of his hair, black as bitumen, banged across his forehead; even his polished porphyry eyes were constructed on some curvilinear principle, and never seemed to focus. It might be said of Mr. Gorse that he had an overwhelming impersonality. One could never be quite sure that one's words reached the mark.

In spite of the intimacy which I knew existed between them, in my presence at least Mr. Gorse's manner was little different with Mr. Watling than it was with other men. Mr. Wading did not seem to mind. He pulled up a chair close to the desk and began, without any preliminaries, to explain his errand.

"It's about the Ribblevale affair," he said. "You know we have a suit."

Gorse nodded.

"We've got to get at the books, Miller,—that's all there is to it. I told you so the other day. Well, we've found out a way, I think."

He thrust his hand in his pocket, while the railroad attorney remained impassive, and drew out the draft of the bill. Mr. Gorse read it, then read it over again, and laid it down in front of him.

"Well," he said.

"I want to put that through both houses and have the governor's signature to it by the end of the week."

“It seems a little raw, at first sight, Theodore,” said Mr. Gorse, with the suspicion of a smile.

My chief laughed a little.

“It’s not half so raw as some things I might mention, that went through like greased lightning,” he replied. “What can they do? I believe it will hold water. Tallant’s, and most of the other newspapers in the state, won’t print a line about it, and only Socialists and Populists read the Pilot. They’re disgruntled anyway. The point is, there’s no other way out for us. Just think a moment, bearing in mind what I’ve told you about the case, and you’ll see it.”

Mr. Gorse took up the paper again, and read the draft over.

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“You know as well as I do, Miller, how dangerous it is to leave this Ribblevale business at loose ends. The Carlisle steel people and the Lake Shore road are after the Ribblevale Company, and we can’t afford to run any risk of their getting it. It’s logically a part of the Boyne interests, as Scherer says, and Dickinson is ready with the money for the reorganization. If the Carlisle people and the Lake Shore get it, the product will be shipped out by the L and G, and the Railroad will lose. What would Barbour say?”

Mr. Barbour, as I have perhaps mentioned, was the president of the Railroad, and had his residence in the other great city of the state. He was then, I knew, in the West.

“We’ve got to act now,” insisted Mr. Watling. “That’s open and shut. If you have any other plan, I wish you’d trot it out. If not, I want a letter to Paul Varney and the governor. I’m going to send Paret down with them on the night train.”

It was clear to me then, in the discussion following, that Mr. Watling’s gift of persuasion, though great, was not the determining factor in Mr. Gorse’s decision. He, too, possessed boldness, though he preferred caution. Nor did the friendship between the two enter into the transaction. I was impressed more strongly than ever with the fact that a lawsuit was seldom a mere private affair between two persons or corporations, but involved a chain of relationships and nine times out of ten that chain led up to the Railroad, which nearly always was vitally interested in these legal contests. Half an hour of masterly presentation of the situation was necessary before Mr. Gorse became convinced that the introduction of the bill was the only way out for all concerned.

“Well, I guess you’re right, Theodore,” he said at length. Whereupon he seized his pen and wrote off two notes with great rapidity. These he showed to Mr. Watling, who nodded and returned them. They were folded and sealed, and handed to me. One was addressed to Colonel Paul Varney, and the other to the Hon. W. W. Trulease, governor of the state.

“You can trust this young man?” demanded Mr. Gorse.

“I think so,” replied Mr. Watling, smiling at me. “The bill was his own idea.”

The railroad attorney wheeled about in his chair and looked at me; looked around me, would better express it, with his indefinite, encompassing yet inclusive glance. I had riveted his attention. And from henceforth, I knew, I should enter into his calculations. He had made for me a compartment in his mind.

“His own idea!” he repeated.

“I merely suggested it,” I was putting in, when he cut me short.

“Aren’t you the son of Matthew Paret?”

“Yes,” I said.

He gave me a queer glance, the significance of which I left untranslated. My excitement was too great to analyze what he meant by this mention of my father....

When we reached the sidewalk my chief gave me a few parting instructions.

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“I need scarcely say, Hugh,” he added, “that your presence in the capital should not be advertised as connected with this—legislation. They will probably attribute it to us in the end, but if you’re reasonably careful, they’ll never be able to prove it. And there’s no use in putting our cards on the table at the beginning.”

“No indeed, sir!” I agreed.

He took my hand and pressed it.

“Good luck,” he said. “I know you’ll get along all right.”

A FAR COUNTRY

By Winston Churchill

BOOK 2.

X.

This was not my first visit to the state capital. Indeed, some of that recondite knowledge, in which I took a pride, had been gained on the occasions of my previous visits. Rising and dressing early, I beheld out of the car window the broad, shallow river glinting in the morning sunlight, the dome of the state house against the blue of the sky. Even at that early hour groups of the gentlemen who made our laws were scattered about the lobby of the Potts House, standing or seated within easy reach of the gaily coloured cuspidors that protected the marble floor: heavy-jawed workers from the cities mingled with moon-faced but astute countrymen who manipulated votes amongst farms and villages; fat or cadaverous, Irish, German or American, all bore in common a certain indefinable stamp. Having eaten my breakfast in a large dining-room that resounded with the clatter of dishes, I directed my steps to the apartment occupied from year to year by Colonel Paul Barney, generalissimo of the Railroad on the legislative battlefield,—a position that demanded a certain uniqueness of genius.

“How do you do, sir,” he said, in a guarded but courteous tone as he opened the door. I entered to confront a group of three or four figures, silent and rather hostile, seated in a haze of tobacco smoke around a marble-topped table. On it reposed a Bible, attached to a chain.

“You probably don’t remember me, Colonel,” I said. “My name is Pared, and I’m associated with the firm of Watling, Fowndes, and Ripon.”

His air of marginality,—heightened by a grey moustache and goatee a la Napoleon Third,—vanished instantly; he became hospitable, ingratiating.

“Why—why certainly, you were down heah with Mr. Fowndes two years ago.” The Colonel spoke with a slight Southern accent. “To be sure, sir. I’ve had the honour of meeting your father. Mr. Norris, of North Haven, meet Mr. Paret—one of our rising lawyers...” I shook hands with them all and sat down. Opening his long coat, Colonel Varney revealed two rows of cigars, suggesting cartridges in a belt. These he proceeded to hand out as he talked. “I’m glad to see you here, Mr. Paret. You must stay awhile, and become acquainted with the men who—ahem—are shaping the destinies of a great state. It would give me pleasure to escort you about.”

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I thanked him. I had learned enough to realize how important are the amenities in politics and business. The Colonel did most of the conversing; he could not have filled with efficiency and ease the important post that was his had it not been for the endless fund of humorous anecdotes at his disposal. One by one the visitors left, each assuring me of his personal regard: the Colonel closed the door, softly, turning the key in the lock; there was a sly look in his black eyes as he took a chair in proximity to mine.

“Well, Mr. Paret,” he asked softly, “what’s up?”

Without further ado I handed him Mr. Gorse’s letter, and another Mr. Watling had given me for him, which contained a copy of the bill. He read these, laid them on the table, glancing at me again, stroking his goatee the while. He chuckled.

“By gum!” he exclaimed. “I take off my hat to Theodore Watling, always did.” He became contemplative. “It can be done, Mr. Paret, but it’s going to take some careful driving, sir, some reaching out and flicking ’em when they r’ar and buck. Paul Varney’s never been stumped yet. Just as soon as this is introduced we’ll have Gates and Armstrong down here—they’re the Ribblevale attorneys, aren’t they? I thought so,—-and the best legal talent they can hire. And they’ll round up all the disgruntled fellows, you know,—that ain’t friendly to the Railroad. We’ve got to do it quick, Mr. Paret. Gorse gave you a letter to the Governor, didn’t he?”

“Yes,” I said.

“Well, come along. I’ll pass the word around among the boys, just to let ’em know what to expect.” His eyes glittered again. “I’ve been following this Ribblevale business,” he added, “and I understand Leonard Dickinson’s all ready to reorganize that company, when the time comes. He ought to let me in for a little, on the ground floor.”

I did not venture to make any promises for Mr. Dickinson.

“I reckon it’s just as well if you were to meet me at the Governor’s office,” the Colonel added reflectively, and the hint was not lost on me. “It’s better not to let ’em find out any sooner than they have to where this thing comes from,—you understand.” He looked at his watch. “How would nine o’clock do? I’ll be there, with Trulease, when you come,—-by accident, you understand. Of course he’ll be reasonable, but when they get to be governors they have little notions, you know, and you’ve got to indulge ’em, flatter ’em a little. It doesn’t hurt, for when they get their backs up it only makes more trouble.”

He put on a soft, black felt hat, and departed noiselessly...

At nine o’clock I arrived at the State House and was ushered into a great square room overlooking the park. The Governor was seated at a desk under an elaborate

chandelier, and sure enough, Colonel Varney was there beside him; making barely perceptible signals.

“It is a pleasure to make your acquaintance, Mr. Paret,” said Mr. Trulease. “Your name is a familiar one in your city, sir. And I gather from your card that you are associated with my good friend, Theodore Watling.”

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I acknowledged it. I was not a little impressed by the perfect blend of cordiality, democratic simplicity and impressiveness Mr. Trulease had achieved. For he had managed, in the course of a long political career, to combine in exact proportions these elements which, in the public mind, should up the personality of a chief executive. Momentarily he overcame the feeling of superiority with which I had entered his presence; neutralized the sense I had of being associated now with the higher powers which had put him where he was. For I knew all about his "record."

"You're acquainted with Colonel Varney?" he inquired.

"Yes, Governor, I've met the Colonel," I said.

"Well, I suppose your firm is getting its share of business these days," Mr. Trulease observed. I acknowledged it was, and after discussing for a few moments the remarkable growth of my native city the Governor tapped on his desk and inquired what he could do for me. I produced the letter from the attorney for the Railroad. The Governor read it gravely.

"Ah," he said, "from Mr. Gorse." A copy of the proposed bill was enclosed, and the Governor read that also, hemmed and hawed a little, turned and handed it to Colonel Varney, who was sitting with a detached air, smoking contemplatively, a vacant expression on his face. "What do you think of this, Colonel?"

Whereupon the Colonel tore himself away from his reflections.

"What's that, Governor?"

"Mr. Gorse has called my attention to what seems to him a flaw in our statutes, an inability to obtain testimony from corporations whose books are elsewhere, and who may thus evade, he says, to a certain extent, the sovereign will of our state."

The Colonel took the paper with an admirable air of surprise, adjusted his glasses, and became absorbed in reading, clearing his throat once or twice and emitting an exclamation.

"Well, if you ask me, Governor," he said, at length, "all I can say is that I am astonished somebody didn't think of this simple remedy before now. Many times, sir, have I seen justice defeated because we had no such legislation as this."

He handed it back. The Governor studied it once more, and coughed.

"Does the penalty," he inquired, "seem to you a little severe?"

"No, sir," replied the Colonel, emphatically. "Perhaps it is because I am anxious, as a citizen, to see an evil abated. I have had an intimate knowledge of legislation, sir, for

more than twenty years in this state, and in all that time I do not remember to have seen a bill more concisely drawn, or better calculated to accomplish the ends of justice. Indeed, I often wondered why this very penalty was not imposed. Foreign magistrates are notoriously indifferent as to affairs in another state than their own. Rather than go into the hands of a receiver I venture to say that hereafter, if this bill is made a law, the necessary testimony will be forthcoming."

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The Governor read the bill through again.

“If it is introduced, Colonel,” he said, “the legislature and the people of the state ought to have it made clear to them that its aim is to remedy an injustice. A misunderstanding on this point would be unfortunate.”

“Most unfortunate, Governor.”

“And of course,” added the Governor, now addressing me, “it would be improper for me to indicate what course I shall pursue in regard to it if it should come to me for my signature. Yet I may go so far as to say that the defect it seeks to remedy seems to me a real one. Come in and see me, Mr. Paret, when you are in town, and give my cordial regards to Mr. Watling.”

So gravely had the farce been carried on that I almost laughed, despite the fact that the matter in question was a serious one for me. The Governor held out his hand, and I accepted my dismissal.

I had not gone fifty steps in the corridor before I heard the Colonel’s voice in my ear.

“We had to give him a little rope to go through with his act,” he whispered confidentially. “But he’ll sign it all right. And now, if you’ll excuse me, Mr. Paret, I’ll lay a few mines. See you at the hotel, sir.”

Thus he indicated, delicately, that it would be better for me to keep out of sight. On my way to the Potts House the bizarre elements in the situation struck me again with considerable force. It seemed so ridiculous, so puerile to have to go through with this political farce in order that a natural economic evolution might be achieved. Without doubt the development of certain industries had reached a stage where the units in competition had become too small, when a greater concentration of capital was necessary. Curiously enough, in this mental argument of justification, I left out all consideration of the size of the probable profits to Mr. Scherer and his friends. Profits and brains went together. And, since the Almighty did not limit the latter, why should man attempt to limit the former? We were playing for high but justifiable stakes; and I resented the comedy which an hypocritical insistence on the forms of democracy compelled us to go through. It seemed unworthy of men who controlled the destinies of state and nation. The point of view, however, was consoling. As the day wore on I sat in the Colonel’s room, admiring the skill with which he conducted the campaign: a green country lawyer had been got to introduce the bill, it had been expedited to the Committee on the Judiciary, which would have an executive session immediately after dinner. I had ventured to inquire about the hearings.

“There won’t be any hearings, sir,” the Colonel assured me. “We own that committee from top to bottom.”

Indeed, by four o'clock in the afternoon the message came that the committee had agreed to recommend the bill.

Shortly after that the first flurry occurred. There came a knock at the door, followed by the entrance of a stocky Irish American of about forty years of age, whose black hair was plastered over his forehead. His sea-blue eyes had a stormy look.

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“Hello, Jim,” said the Colonel. “I was just wondering where you were.”

“Sure, you must have been!” replied the gentleman sarcastically.

But the Colonel’s geniality was unruffled.

“Mr. Maker,” he said, “you ought to know Mr. Paret. Mr. Maker is the representative from Ward Five of your city, and we can always count on him to do the right thing, even if he is a Democrat. How about it, Jim?”

Mr. Maker relighted the stump of his cigar.

“Take a fresh one, Jim,” said the Colonel, opening a bureau drawer.

Mr. Maker took two.

“Say, Colonel,” he demanded, “what’s this bill that went into the judiciary this morning?”

“What bill?” asked the Colonel, blandly.

“So you think I ain’t on?” Mr. Maker inquired.

The Colonel laughed.

“Where have you been, Jim?”

“I’ve been up to the city, seem’ my wife—that’s where I’ve been.”

The Colonel smiled, as at a harmless fiction.

“Well, if you weren’t here, I don’t see what right you’ve got to complain. I never leave my good Democratic friends on the outside, do I?”

“That’s all right,” replied Mr. Maker, doggedly, “I’m on, I’m here now, and that bill in the Judiciary doesn’t pass without me. I guess I can stop it, too. How about a thousand apiece for five of us boys?”

“You’re pretty good at a joke, Jim,” remarked the Colonel, stroking his goatee.

“Maybe you’re looking for a little publicity in this here game,” retorted Mr. Maker, darkly. “Say, Colonel, ain’t we always treated the Railroad on the level?”

“Jim,” asked the Colonel, gently, “didn’t I always take care of you?”

He had laid his hand on the shoulder of Mr. Maker, who appeared slightly mollified, and glanced at a massive silver watch.

“Well, I’ll be dropping in about eight o’clock,” was his significant reply, as he took his leave.

“I guess we’ll have to grease the wheels a little,” the Colonel remarked to me, and gazed at the ceiling....

The telegram apropos of the Ward Five leader was by no means the only cipher message I sent back during my stay. I had not needed to be told that the matter in hand would cost money, but Mr. Watling’s parting instruction to me had been to take the Colonel’s advice as to specific sums, and obtain confirmation from Fowndes. Nor was it any surprise to me to find Democrats on intimate terms with such a stout Republican as the Colonel. Some statesman is said to have declared that he knew neither Easterners nor Westerners, Northerners nor Southerners, but only Americans; so Colonel Varney recognized neither Democrats nor Republicans; in our legislature party divisions were sunk in a greater loyalty to the Railroad.

At the Colonel’s suggestion I had laid in a liberal supply of cigars and whiskey. The scene in his room that evening suggested a session of a sublimated grand lodge of some secret order, such were the mysterious comings and goings, knocks and suspenses. One after another the “important” men duly appeared and were introduced, the Colonel supplying the light touch.

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“Why, cuss me if it isn’t Billy! Mr. Paret, I want you to shake hands with Mr. Donovan, the floor leader of the ‘opposition,’ sir. Mr. Donovan has had the habit of coming up here for a friendly chat ever since he first came down to the legislature. How long is it, Billy?”

“I guess it’s nigh on to fifteen years, Colonel.”

“Fifteen years!” echoed the Colonel, “and he’s so good a Democrat it hasn’t changed his politics a particle.”

Mr. Donovan grinned in appreciation of this thrust, helped himself liberally from the bottle on the mantel, and took a seat on the bed. We had a “friendly chat.”

Thus I made the acquaintance also of the Hon. Joseph Mecklin, Speaker of the House, who unbent in the most flattering way on learning my identity.

“Mr. Paret’s here on that little matter, representing Watling, Fowndes and Ripon,” the Colonel explained. And it appeared that Mr. Mecklin knew all about the “little matter,” and that the mention of the firm of Watling, Fowndes and Ripon had a magical effect in these parts. The President of the Senate, the Hon. Lafe Giddings, went so far as to say that he hoped before long to see Mr. Watling in Washington. By no means the least among our callers was the Hon. Fitch Truesdale, editor of the St. Helen’s Messenger, whose editorials were of the trite effectiveness that is taken widely for wisdom, and were assiduously copied every week by other state papers and labeled “Mr. Truesdale’s Common Sense.” At countless firesides in our state he was known as the spokesman of the plain man, who was blissfully ignorant of the fact that Mr. Truesdale was owned body and carcass by Mr. Cyrus Ridden, the principal manufacturer of St. Helen’s and a director in several subsidiary lines of the Railroad. In the legislature, the Hon. Fitch’s function was that of the moderate counsellor and bellwether for new members, hence nothing could have been more fitting than the choice of that gentleman for the honour of moving, on the morrow, that Bill No. 709 ought to pass.

Mr. Truesdale reluctantly consented to accept a small “loan” that would help to pay the mortgage on his new press....

When the last of the gathering had departed, about one o’clock in the morning, I had added considerably to my experience, gained a pretty accurate idea of who was who in the legislature and politics of the state, and established relationships—as the Colonel reminded me—likely to prove valuable in the future. It seemed only gracious to congratulate him on his management of the affair,—so far. He appeared pleased, and squeezed my hand.

“Well, sir, it did require a little delicacy of touch. And if I do say it myself, it hasn’t been botched,” he admitted. “There ain’t an outsider, as far as I can learn, who has caught on to the nigger in the wood-pile. That’s the great thing, to keep ’em ignorant as long as

possible. You understand. They yell bloody murder when they do find out, but generally it's too late, if a bill's been handled right."

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I found myself speculating as to who the “outsiders” might be. No Ribblevale attorneys were on the spot as yet,—of that I was satisfied. In the absence of these, who were the opposition? It seemed to me as though I had interviewed that day every man in the legislature.

I was very tired. But when I got into bed, it was impossible to sleep. My eyes smarted from the tobacco smoke; and the events of the day, in disorderly manner, kept running through my head. The tide of my exhilaration had ebbed, and I found myself struggling against a revulsion caused, apparently, by the contemplation of Colonel Varney and his associates; the instruments, in brief, by which our triumph over our opponents was to be effected. And that same idea which, when launched amidst the surroundings of the Boyne Club, had seemed so brilliant, now took on an aspect of tawdriness. Another thought intruded itself,—that of Mr. Pugh, the president of the Ribblevale Company. My father had known him, and some years before I had traveled halfway across the state in his company; his kindliness had impressed me. He had spent a large part of his business life, I knew, in building up the Ribblevale, and now it was to be wrested from him; he was to be set aside, perhaps forced to start all over again when old age was coming on! In vain I accused myself of sentimentality, and summoned all my arguments to prove that in commerce efficiency must be the only test. The image of Mr. Pugh would not down.

I got up and turned on the light, and took refuge in a novel I had in my bag. Presently I grew calmer. I had chosen. I had succeeded. And now that I had my finger at last on the nerve of power, it was no time to weaken.

It was half-past six when I awoke and went to the window, relieved to find that the sun had scattered my morbid fancies with the darkness; and I speculated, as I dressed, whether the thing called conscience were not, after all, a matter of nerves. I went downstairs through the tobacco-stale atmosphere of the lobby into the fresh air and sparkly sunlight of the mild February morning, and leaving the business district I reached the residence portion of the little town. The front steps of some of the comfortable houses were being swept by industrious servant girls, and out of the chimneys twisted, fantastically, rich blue smoke; the bare branches of the trees were silver-grey against the sky; gaining at last an old-fashioned, wooden bridge, I stood for awhile gazing at the river, over the shallows of which the spendthrift hand of nature had flung a shower of diamonds. And I reflected that the world was for the strong, for him who dared reach out his hand and take what it offered. It was not money we coveted, we Americans, but power, the self-expression conferred by power. A single experience such as I had had the night before would since to convince any sane man that democracy was a failure, that the world-old principle of aristocracy

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would assert itself, that the attempt of our ancestors to curtail political power had merely resulted in the growth of another and greater economic power that bade fair to be limitless. As I walked slowly back into town I felt a reluctance to return to the noisy hotel, and finding myself in front of a little restaurant on a side street, I entered it. There was but one other customer in the place, and he was seated on the far side of the counter, with a newspaper in front of him; and while I was ordering my breakfast I was vaguely aware that the newspaper had dropped, and that he was looking at me. In the slight interval that elapsed before my brain could register his identity I experienced a distinct shock of resentment; a sense of the reintrusion of an antagonistic value at a moment when it was most unwelcome....

The man had risen and was coming around the counter. He was Hermann Krebs.

“Paret!” I heard him say.

“You here?” I exclaimed.

He did not seem to notice the lack of cordiality in my tone. He appeared so genuinely glad to see me again that I instantly became rather ashamed of my ill nature.

“Yes, I’m here—in the legislature,” he informed me.

“A Solon!”

“Exactly.” He smiled. “And you?” he inquired.

“Oh, I’m only a spectator. Down here for a day or two.”

He was still lanky, his clothes gave no evidence of an increased prosperity, but his complexion was good, his skin had cleared. I was more than ever baked by a resolute good humour, a simplicity that was not innocence, a whimsical touch seemingly indicative of a state of mind that refused to take too seriously certain things on which I set store. What right had he to be contented with life?

“Well, I too am only a spectator here,” he laughed. “I’m neither fish, flesh nor fowl, nor good red herring.”

“You were going into the law, weren’t you?” I asked. “I remember you said something about it that day we met at Beverly Farms.”

“Yes, I managed it, after all. Then I went back home to Elkington to try to make a living.”

“But somehow I have never thought of you as being likely to develop political aspirations, Krebs,” I said.

“I should say not! he exclaimed.

“Yet here you are, launched upon a political career! How did it happen?”

“Oh, I’m not worrying about the career,” he assured me. “I got here by accident, and I’m afraid it won’t happen again in a hurry. You see, the hands in those big mills we have in Elkington sprang a surprise on the machine, and the first thing I knew I was nominated for the legislature. A committee came to my boarding-house and told me, and there was the deuce to pay, right off. The Railroad politicians turned in and worked for the Democratic candidate, of course, and the Hutchinses, who own the mills, tried through emissaries to intimidate their operatives.”

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“And then?” I asked.

“Well,—I’m here,” he said.

“Wouldn’t you be accomplishing more,” I inquired, “if you hadn’t antagonized the Hutchinses?”

“It depends upon what you mean by accomplishment,” he answered, so mildly that I felt more rued than ever.

“Well, from what you say, I suppose you’re going in for reform, that these workmen up at Elkington are not satisfied with their conditions and imagine you can help to better them. Now, provided the conditions are not as good as they might be, how are you going to improve them if you find yourself isolated here, as you say?”

“In other words, I should cooperate with Colonel Varney and other disinterested philanthropists,” he supplied, and I realized that I was losing my temper.

“Well, what can you do?” I inquired defiantly.

“I can find out what’s going on,” he said. “I have already learned something, by the way.”

“And then?” I asked, wondering whether the implication were personal.

“Then I can help—disseminate the knowledge. I may be wrong, but I have an idea that when the people of this country learn how their legislatures are conducted they will want to change things.”

“That’s right!” echoed the waiter, who had come up with my griddle-cakes. “And you’re the man to tell ’em, Mr. Krebs.”

“It will need several thousand of us to do that, I’m afraid,” said Krebs, returning his smile.

My distaste for the situation became more acute, but I felt that I was thrown on the defensive. I could not retreat, now.

“I think you are wrong,” I declared, when the waiter had departed to attend to another customer. “The people the great majority of them, at least are indifferent, they don’t want to be bothered with politics. There will always be labour agitation, of course,—the more wages those fellows get, the more they want. We pay the highest wages in the world to-day, and the standard of living is higher in this country than anywhere else. They’d ruin our prosperity, if we’d let ’em.”

“How about the thousands of families who don’t earn enough to live decently even in times of prosperity?” inquired Krebs.

“It’s hard, I’ll admit, but the inefficient and the shiftless are bound to suffer, no matter what form of government you adopt.”

“You talk about standards of living,—I could show you some examples of standards to make your heart sick,” he said. “What you don’t realize, perhaps, is that low standards help to increase the inefficient of whom you complain.”

He smiled rather sadly. “The prosperity you are advocating,” he added, after a moment, “is a mere fiction, it is gorging the few at the expense of the many. And what is being done in this country is to store up an explosive gas that some day will blow your superstructure to atoms if you don’t wake up in time.”

“Isn’t that a rather one-sided view, too?” I suggested.

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“I’ve no doubt it may appear so, but take the proceedings in this legislature. I’ve no doubt you know something about them, and that you would maintain they are justified on account of the indifference of the public, and of other reasons, but I can cite an instance that is simply legalized thieving.” For the first time a note of indignation crept into Krebs’s voice. “Last night I discovered by a mere accident, in talking to a man who came in on a late train, that a bill introduced yesterday, which is being rushed through the Judiciary Committee of the House—an apparently innocent little bill—will enable, if it becomes a law, the Boyne Iron Works, of your city, to take possession of the Ribblevale Steel Company, lock, stock, and barrel. And I am told it was conceived by a lawyer who claims to be a respectable member of his profession, and who has extraordinary ability, Theodore Watling.”

Krebs put his hand in his pocket and drew out a paper. “Here’s a copy of it,—House Bill 709.” His expression suddenly changed. “Perhaps Mr. Watling is a friend of yours.”

“I’m with his firm,” I replied....

Krebs’s fingers closed over the paper, crumpling it.

“Oh, then, you know about this,” he said. He was putting the paper back into his pocket when I took it from him. But my adroitness, so carefully schooled, seemed momentarily to have deserted me. What should I say? It was necessary to decide quickly.

“Don’t you take rather a—prejudiced view of this, Krebs?” I said. “Upon my word, I can’t see why you should accept a rumour running around the lobbies that Mr. Watling drafted this bill for a particular purpose.”

He was silent. But his eyes did not leave my face.

“Why should any sensible man, a member of the legislature, take stock in that kind of gossip?” I insisted. “Why not judge this bill by its face, without heeding a cock and bull story as to how it may have originated? It is a good bill, or a bad bill? Let’s see what it says.”

I read it.

“So far as I can see, it is legislation which we ought to have had long ago, and tends to compel a publicity in corporation affairs that is much needed, to put a stop to practices which every decent citizen deplores.”

He drew the paper out of my hand.

“You needn’t go on, Paret,” he told me. “It’s no use.”

“Well, I’m sorry we don’t agree,” I said, and got up. I left him twisting the paper in his fingers.

Beside the clerk’s desk in the Potts House, relating one of his anecdotes, I spied Colonel Varney, and managed presently to draw him upstairs to his room. “What’s the matter?” he asked.

“Do you know a man named Krebs in the House?” I said.

“From Elkington? Why, that’s the man the Hutchinses let slip through,—the Hutchinses, who own the mills over there. The agitators put up a job on them.” The Colonel was no longer the genial and social purveyor of anecdotes. He had become tense, alert, suspicious. “What’s he up to?”

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“He’s found out about this bill,” I replied.

“How?”

“I don’t know. But someone told him that it originated in our office, and that we were going to use it in our suit against the Ribblevale.”

I related the circumstances of my running across Krebs, speaking of having known him at Harvard. Colonel Varney uttered an oath, and strode across to the window, where he stood looking down into the street from between the lace curtains.

“We’ll have to attend to him, right off,” he said.

I was surprised to find myself resenting the imputation, and deeply. “I’m afraid he’s one of those who can’t be ‘attended to,’” I answered.

“You mean that he’s in the employ of the Ribblevale people?” the Colonel inquired.

“I don’t mean anything of the kind,” I retorted, with more heat, perhaps, than I realized. The Colonel looked at me queerly.

“That’s all right, Mr. Paret. Of course I don’t want to question your judgment, sir. And you say he’s a friend of yours.”

“I said I knew him at college.”

“But you will pardon me,” the Colonel went on, “when I tell you that I’ve had some experience with that breed, and I have yet to see one of ’em you couldn’t come to terms with in some way—in some way,” he added, significantly. I did not pause to reflect that the Colonel’s attitude, from his point of view (yes, and from mine,—had I not adopted it?) was the logical one. In that philosophy every man had his price, or his weakness. Yet, such is the inconsistency of human nature, I was now unable to contemplate this attitude with calmness.

“Mr. Krebs is a lawyer. Has he accepted a pass from the Railroad?” I demanded, knowing the custom of that corporation of conferring this delicate favour on the promising young talent in my profession.

“I reckon he’s never had the chance,” said Mr. Varney.

“Well, has he taken a pass as a member of the legislature?”

“No,—I remember looking that up when he first came down. Sent that back, if I recall the matter correctly.” Colonel Varney went to a desk in the corner of the room, unlocked it, drew forth a black book, and running his fingers through the pages stopped at the

letter K. “Yes, sent back his legislative pass, but I’ve known ’em to do that when they were holding out for something more. There must be somebody who can get close to him.”

The Colonel ruminated awhile. Then he strode to the door and called out to the group of men who were always lounging in the hall.

“Tell Alf Young I want to see him, Fred.”

I waited, by no means free from uneasiness and anxiety, from a certain lack of self-respect that was unfamiliar. Mr. Young, the Colonel explained, was a legal light in Galesburg, near Elkington,—the Railroad lawyer there. And when at last Mr. Young appeared he proved to be an oily gentleman of about forty, inclining to stoutness, with one of those “blue,” shaven faces.

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“Want me, Colonel?” he inquired blithely, when the door had closed behind him; and added obsequiously, when introduced to me, “Glad to meet you, Mr. Paret. My regards to Mr. Watling, when you go back.

“Alf,” demanded the Colonel, “what do you know of this fellow Krebs?”

Mr. Young laughed. Krebs was “nutty,” he declared—that was all there was to it.

“Won’t he—listen to reason?”

“It’s been tried, Colonel. Say, he wouldn’t know a hundred-dollar bill if you showed him one.”

“What does he want?”

“Oh, something,—that’s sure, they all want something.” Mr. Young shrugged his shoulder expressively, and by a skillful manipulation of his lips shifted his cigar from one side of his mouth to the other without raising his hands. “But it ain’t money. I guess he’s got a notion that later on the labour unions’ll send him to the United States Senate some day. He’s no slouch, either, when it comes to law. I can tell you that.”

“No—no flaw in his—record?” Colonel Varney’s agate eyes sought those of Mr. Young, meaningly.

“That’s been tried, too,” declared the Galesburg attorney. “Say, you can believe it or not, but we’ve never dug anything up so far. He’s been too slick for us, I guess.”

“Well,” exclaimed the Colonel, at length, “let him squeal and be d—d! He can’t do any more than make a noise. Only I hoped we’d be able to grease this thing along and slide it through the Senate this afternoon, before they got wind of it.”

“He’ll squeal, all right, until you smother him,” Mr. Young observed.

“We’ll smother him some day!” replied the Colonel, savagely.

Mr. Young laughed.

But as I made my way toward the State House I was conscious of a feeling of relief. I had no sooner gained a front seat in the gallery of the House of Representatives when the members rose, the Senate marched gravely in, the Speaker stopped jesting with the Chaplain, and over the Chaplain’s face came suddenly an agonized expression. Folding his hands across his stomach he began to call on God with terrific fervour, in an intense and resounding voice. I was struck suddenly by the irony of it all. Why have a legislature when Colonel Paul Varney was so efficient! The legislature was a mere sop to democratic prejudice, to pray over it heightened the travesty. Suppose there were a

God after all? not necessarily the magnified monarch to whom these pseudo-democrats prayed, but an Intelligent Force that makes for righteousness. How did He, or It, like to be trifled with in this way? And, if He existed, would not His disgust be immeasurable as He contemplated that unctuous figure in the “Prince Albert” coat, who pretended to represent Him?

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As the routine business began I searched for Krebs, to find him presently at a desk beside a window in the rear of the hall making notes on a paper; there was, confessedly, little satisfaction in the thought that the man whose gaunt features I contemplated was merely one of those impractical idealists who beat themselves to pieces against the forces that sway the world and must forever sway it. I should be compelled to admit that he represented something unique in that assembly if he had the courage to get up and oppose House Bill 709. I watched him narrowly; the suggestion intruded itself—perhaps he had been "seen," as the Colonel expressed it. I repudiated it. I grew impatient, feverish; the monotonous reading of the clerk was interrupted now and then by the sharp tones of the Speaker assigning his various measures to this or that committee, "unless objection is offered," while the members moved about and murmured among themselves; Krebs had stopped making notes; he was looking out of the window. At last, without any change of emphasis in his droning voice, the clerk announced the recommendation of the Committee on Judiciary that House Bill 709 ought to pass.

Down in front a man had risen from his seat—the felicitous Mr. Truesdale. Glancing around at his fellow-members he then began to explain in the impressive but conversational tone of one whose counsels are in the habit of being listened to, that this was merely a little measure to remedy a flaw in the statutes. Mr. Truesdale believed in corporations when corporations were good, and this bill was calculated to make them good, to put an end to jugglery and concealment. Our great state, he said, should be in the forefront of such wise legislation, which made for justice and a proper publicity; but the bill in question was of greater interest to lawyers than to laymen, a committee composed largely of lawyers had recommended it unanimously, and he was sure that no opposition would develop in the House. In order not to take up their time he asked: therefore, that it be immediately put on its second and third reading and allowed to pass.

He sat down, and I looked at Krebs. Could he, could any man, any lawyer, have the presumption to question such an obviously desirable measure, to arraign the united judgment of the committee's legal talent? Such was the note Mr. Truesdale so admirably struck. As though fascinated, I continued to gaze at Krebs. I hated him, I desired to see him humiliated, and yet amazingly I found myself wishing with almost equal vehemence that he would be true to himself. He was rising,—slowly, timidly, I thought, his hand clutching his desk lid, his voice sounding wholly inadequate as he addressed the Speaker. The Speaker hesitated, his tone palpably supercilious.

"The gentleman from—from Elkington, Mr. Krebs."

There was a craning of necks, a staring, a tittering. I burned with vicarious shame as Krebs stood there awkwardly, his hand still holding the desk. There were cries of "louder" when he began; some picked up their newspapers, while others started

conversations. The Speaker rapped with his gavel, and I failed to hear the opening words. Krebs paused, and began again. His speech did not, at first, flow easily.

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“Mr. Speaker, I rise to protest against this bill, which in my opinion is not so innocent as the gentleman from St. Helen’s would have the House believe. It is on a par, indeed, with other legislation that in past years has been engineered through this legislature under the guise of beneficent law. No, not on a par. It is the most arrogant, the most monstrous example of special legislation of them all. And while I do not expect to be able to delay its passage much longer than the time I shall be on my feet—”

“Then why not sit down?” came a voice, just audible.

As he turned swiftly toward the offender his profile had an eagle-like effect that startled me, seemingly realizing a new quality in the man. It was as though he had needed just the stimulus of that interruption to electrify and transform him. His awkwardness disappeared; and if he was a little bombastic, a little “young,” he spoke with the fire of conviction.

“Because,” he cried, “because I should lose my self-respect for life if I sat here and permitted the political organization of a railroad, the members of which are here under the guise of servants of the people, to cow me into silence. And if it be treason to mention the name of that Railroad in connection with its political tyranny, then make the most of it.” He let go of the desk, and tapped the copy of the bill. “What are the facts? The Boyne Iron Works, under the presidency of Adolf Scherer, has been engaged in litigation with the Ribblevale Steel Company for some years: and this bill is intended to put into the hands of the attorneys for Mr. Scherer certain information that will enable him to get possession of the property. Gentlemen, that is what ‘legal practice’ has descended to in the hands of respectable lawyers. This device originated with the resourceful Mr. Theodore Watling, and if it had not had the approval of Mr. Miller Gorse, it would never have got any farther than the judiciary committee. It was confided to the skillful care of Colonel Paul Varney to be steered through this legislature, as hundreds of other measures have been steered through,—without unnecessary noise. It may be asked why the Railroad should bother itself by lending its political organization to private corporations? I will tell you. Because corporations like the Boyne corporation are a part of a network of interests, these corporations aid the Railroad to maintain its monopoly, and in return receive rebates.”

Krebs had raised his voice as the murmurs became louder. At this point a sharp-faced lawyer from Belfast got to his feet and objected that the gentleman from Elkington was wasting the time of the House, indulging in hearsay. His remarks were not germane, *etc*. The Speaker rapped again, with a fine show of impartiality, and cautioned the member from Elkington.

“Very well,” replied Krebs. “I have said what I wanted to say on that score, and I know it to be the truth. And if this House does not find it germane, the day is coming when its constituents will.”

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Whereupon he entered into a discussion of the bill, dissecting it with more calmness, with an ability that must have commanded, even from some hostile minds, an unwilling respect. The penalty, he said, was outrageous, hitherto unheard of in law,—putting a corporation in the hands of a receiver, at the mercy of those who coveted it, because one of its officers refused, or was unable, to testify. He might be in China, in Timbuctoo when the summons was delivered at his last or usual place of abode. Here was an enormity, an exercise of tyrannical power exceeding all bounds, a travesty on popular government.... He ended by pointing out the significance of the fact that the committee had given no hearings; by declaring that if the bill became a law, it would inevitably react upon the heads of those who were responsible for it.

He sat down, and there was a flutter of applause from the scattered audience in the gallery.

“By God, that’s the only man in the whole place!”

I was aware, for the first time, of a neighbour at my side,—a solid, red-faced man, evidently a farmer. His trousers were tucked into his boots, and his gnarled and powerful hands, ingrained with dirt, clutched the arms of the seat as he leaned forward.

“Didn’t he just naturally lambaste ’em?” he cried excitedly. “They’ll down him, I guess, —but say, he’s right. A man would lose his self-respect if he didn’t let out his mind at them hoss thieves, wouldn’t he? What’s that fellow’s name?”

I told him.

“Krebs,” he repeated. “I want to remember that. Durned if I don’t shake hands with him.”

His excitement astonished me. Would the public feel like that, if they only knew?... The Speaker’s gavel had come down like a pistol shot.

One “war-hoss”—as my neighbour called them—after another proceeded to crush the member from Elkington. It was, indeed, very skillfully done, and yet it was a process from which I did not derive, somehow, much pleasure. Colonel Varney’s army had been magnificently trained to meet just this kind of situation: some employed ridicule, others declared, in impassioned tones, that the good name of their state had been wantonly assailed, and pointed fervently to portraits on the walls of patriots of the past,—-sentiments that drew applause from the fickle gallery. One gentleman observed that the obsession of a “railroad machine” was a sure symptom of a certain kind of insanity, of which the first speaker had given many other evidences. The farmer at my side remained staunch.

“They can’t fool me,” he said angrily, “I know ’em. Do you see that fellow gettin’ up to talk now? Well, I could tell you a few things about him, all right. He comes from Glasgow, and his name’s Letchworth. He’s done more harm in his life than all the criminals he’s kept out of prison,—belongs to one of the old families down there, too.”

I had, indeed, remarked Letchworth’s face, which seemed to me peculiarly evil, its lividity enhanced by a shock of grey hair. His method was withering sarcasm, and he was clearly unable to control his animus....

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No champion appeared to support Krebs, who sat pale and tense while this denunciation of him was going on. Finally he got the floor. His voice trembled a little, whether with passion, excitement, or nervousness it was impossible to say. But he contented himself with a brief defiance. If the bill passed, he declared, the men who voted for it, the men who were behind it, would ultimately be driven from political life by an indignant public. He had a higher opinion of the voters of the state than those who accused him of slandering it, than those who sat silent and had not lifted their voices against this crime.

When the bill was put to a vote he demanded a roll call. Ten members besides himself were recorded against House Bill No. 709!

In spite of this overwhelming triumph my feelings were not wholly those of satisfaction when I returned to the hotel and listened to the exultations and denunciations of such politicians as Letchworth, Young, and Colonel Varney. Perhaps an image suggesting Hermann Krebs as some splendid animal at bay, dragged down by the hounds, is too strong: he had been ingloriously crushed, and defeat, even for the sake of conviction, was not an inspiring spectacle.... As the chase swept on over his prostrate figure I rapidly regained poise and a sense of proportion; a “master of life” could not permit himself to be tossed about by sentimentality; and gradually I grew ashamed of my bad quarter of an hour in the gallery of the House, and of the effect of it—which lingered awhile—as of a weakness suddenly revealed, which must at all costs be overcome. I began to see something dramatic and sensational in Krebs’s performance....

The Ribblevale Steel Company was the real quarry, after all. And such had been the expedition, the skill and secrecy, with which our affair was conducted, that before the Ribblevale lawyers could arrive, alarmed and breathless, the bill had passed the House, and their only real chance of halting it had been lost. For the Railroad controlled the House, not by owning the individuals composing it, but through the leaders who dominated it,—men like Letchworth and Truesdale. These, and Colonel Varney, had seen to it that men who had any parliamentary ability had been attended to; all save Krebs, who had proved a surprise. There were indeed certain members who, although they had railroad passes in their pockets (which were regarded as just perquisites,—the Railroad being so rich!), would have opposed the bill if they had felt sufficiently sure of themselves to cope with such veterans as Letchworth. Many of these had allowed themselves to be won over or cowed by the oratory which had crushed Krebs.

Nor did the Ribblevale people—be it recorded—scruple to fight fire with fire. Their existence, of course, was at stake, and there was no public to appeal to. A part of the legal army that rushed to the aid of our adversaries spent the afternoon and most of the night organizing all those who could be induced by one means or another to reverse their sentiments, and in searching for the few who had grievances against the existing power. The following morning a motion was introduced to reconsider; and in the debate

that followed, Krebs, still defiant, took an active part. But the resolution required a two-thirds vote, and was lost.

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When the battle was shifted to the Senate it was as good as lost. The Judiciary Committee of the august body did indeed condescend to give hearings, at which the Ribblevale lawyers exhausted their energy and ingenuity without result with only two dissenting votes the bill was calmly passed. In vain was the Governor besieged, entreated, threatened,—it was said; Mr. Trulease had informed protesters—so Colonel Varney gleefully reported—that he had "become fully convinced of the inherent justice of the measure." On Saturday morning he signed it, and it became a law....

Colonel Varney, as he accompanied me to the train, did not conceal his jubilation.

"Perhaps I ought not to say it, Mr. Paret, but it couldn't have been done neater. That's the art in these little affairs, to get 'em runnin' fast, to get momentum on 'em before the other party wakes up, and then he can't stop 'em." As he shook hands in farewell he added, with more gravity: "We'll see each other often, sir, I guess. My very best regards to Mr. Watling."

Needless to say, I had not confided to him the part I had played in originating House Bill No. 709, now a law of the state. But as the train rolled on through the sunny winter landscape a sense of well-being, of importance and power began to steal through me. I was victoriously bearing home my first scalp,—one which was by no means to be despised.... It was not until we reached Rossiter, about five o'clock, that I was able to get the evening newspapers. Such was the perfection of the organization of which I might now call myself an integral part that the "best" publications contained only the barest mention,—and that in the legislative news,—of the signing of the bill. I read with complacency and even with amusement the flaring headlines I had anticipated in Mr. Lawler's 'Pilot.'

"The Governor Signs It!"

"Special legislation, forced through by the Railroad Lobby, which will drive honest corporations from this state."

"Ribblevale Steel Company the Victim."

It was common talk in the capital, the article went on to say, that Theodore Watling himself had drawn up the measure.... Perusing the editorial page my eye fell on the name, Krebs. One member of the legislature above all deserved the gratitude of the people of the state,—the member from Elkington. "An unknown man, elected in spite of the opposition of the machine, he had dared to raise his voice against this iniquity," *etc*., *etc*.

We had won. That was the essential thing. And my legal experience had taught me that victory counts; defeat is soon forgotten. Even the discontented, half-baked and heterogeneous element from which the Pilot got its circulation had short memories.

XI.

The next morning, which was Sunday, I went to Mr. Watling's house in, Fillmore Street —a new residence at that time, being admired as the dernier cri in architecture. It had a mediaeval look, queer dormers in a steep roof of red tiles, leaded windows buried deep in walls of rough stone. Emerging from the recessed vestibule on a level with the street were the Watling twins, aglow with health, dressed in identical costumes of blue. They had made their bow to society that winter.

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“Why, here’s Hugh!” said Frances. “Doesn’t he look pleased with himself?”

“He’s come to take us to church,” said Janet.

“Oh, he’s much too important,” said Frances. “He’s made a killing of some sort,—-haven’t you, Hugh?"...

I rang the bell and stood watching them as they departed, reflecting that I was thirty-two years of age and unmarried. Mr. Watling, surrounded with newspapers and seated before his library fire, glanced up at me with a welcoming smile: how had I borne the legislative baptism of fire? Such, I knew, was its implication.

“Everything went through according to schedule, eh? Well, I congratulate you, Hugh,” he said.

“Oh, I didn’t have much to do with it,” I answered, smiling back at him. “I kept out of sight.”

“That’s an art in itself.”

“I had an opportunity, at close range, to study the methods of our lawmakers.”

“They’re not particularly edifying,” Mr. Watling replied. “But they seem, unfortunately, to be necessary.”

Such had been my own thought.

“Who is this man Krebs?” he inquired suddenly. “And why didn’t Varney get hold of him and make him listen to reason?”

“I’m afraid it wouldn’t have been any use,” I replied. “He was in my class at Harvard. I knew him—slightly. He worked his way through, and had a pretty hard time of it. I imagine it affected his ideas.”

“What is he, a Socialist?”

“Something of the sort.” In Theodore Watling’s vigorous, sanity-exhaling presence Krebs’s act appeared fantastic, ridiculous. “He has queer notions about a new kind of democracy which he says is coming. I think he is the kind of man who would be willing to die for it.”

“What, in these days!” Mr. Watling looked at me incredulously. “If that’s so, we must keep an eye on him, a sincere fanatic is a good deal more dangerous than a reformer who wants something. There are such men,” he added, “but they are rare. How was the Governor, Trulease?” he asked suddenly. “Tractable?”

“Behaved like a lamb, although he insisted upon going through with his little humbug,” I said.

Mr. Watling laughed. “They always do,” he observed, “and waste a lot of valuable time. You’ll find some light cigars in the corner, Hugh.”

I sat down beside him and we spent the morning going over the details of the Ribblevale suit, Mr. Watling delegating to me certain matters connected with it of a kind with which I had not hitherto been entrusted; and he spoke again, before I left, of his intention of taking me into the firm as soon as the affair could be arranged. Walking homeward, with my mind intent upon things to come, I met my mother at the corner of Lyme Street coming from church. Her face lighted up at sight of me.

“Have you been working to-day, Hugh?” she asked.

I explained that I had spent the morning with Mr. Watling.

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“I’ll tell you a secret, mother. I’m going to be taken into the firm.”

“Oh, my dear, I’m so glad!” she exclaimed. “I often think, if only your father were alive, how happy he would be, and how proud of you. I wish he could know. Perhaps he does know.”

Theodore Watling had once said to me that the man who can best keep his own counsel is the best counsel for other men to keep. I did not go about boasting of the part I had played in originating the now famous Bill No. 709, the passage of which had brought about the capitulation of the Ribblevale Steel Company to our clients. But Ralph Hambleton knew of it, of course.

“That was a pretty good thing you pulled off, Hughie,” he said. “I didn’t think you had it in you.”

It was rank patronage, of course, yet I was secretly pleased. As the years went on I was thrown more and more with him, though in boyhood there had been between us no bond of sympathy. About this time he was beginning to increase very considerably the Hambleton fortune, and a little later I became counsel for the Crescent Gas and Electric Company, in which he had shrewdly gained a controlling interest. Even toward the colossal game of modern finance his attitude was characteristically that of the dilettante, of the amateur; he played it, as it were, contemptuously, even as he had played poker at Harvard, with a cynical audacity that had a peculiarly disturbing effect upon his companions. He bluffed, he raised the limit in spite of protests, and when he lost one always had the feeling that he would ultimately get his money back twice over. At the conferences in the Boyne Club, which he often attended, his manner toward Mr. Dickinson and Mr. Scherer and even toward Miller Gorse was frequently one of thinly veiled amusement at their seriousness. I often wondered that they did not resent it. But he was a privileged person.

His cousin, Ham Durrett, whose inheritance was even greater than Ralph’s had been, had also become a privileged person whose comings and goings and more reputable doings were often recorded in the newspapers. Ham had attained to what Gene Hollister aptly but inadvertently called “notoriety”: as Ralph wittily remarked, Ham gave to polo and women that which might have gone into high finance. He spent much of his time in the East; his conduct there and at home would once have created a black scandal in our community, but we were gradually leaving our Calvinism behind us and growing more tolerant: we were ready to Forgive much to wealth especially if it was inherited. Hostesses lamented the fact that Ham was “wild,” but they asked him to dinners and dances to meet their daughters.

If some moralist better educated and more far-seeing than Perry Blackwood (for Perry had become a moralist) had told these hostesses that Hambleton Durrett was a victim

of our new civilization, they would have raised their eyebrows. They deplored while they coveted. If Ham had been told he was a victim of any sort, he would have laughed.

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He enjoyed life; he was genial and jovial, both lavish and parsimonious,—this latter characteristic being the curious survival of the trait of the ancestors to which he owed his millions. He was growing even heavier, and decidedly red in the face.

Perry used to take Ralph to task for not saving Ham from his iniquities, and Ralph would reply that Ham was going to the devil anyway, and not even the devil himself could stop him.

“You can stop him, and you know it,” Perry retorted indignantly.

“What do you want me to do with him?” asked Ralph. “Convert him to the saintly life I lead?”

This was a poser.

“That’s a fact,” sand Perry, “you’re no better than he is.”

“I don’t know what you mean by ‘better,’” retorted Ralph, grinning. “I’m wiser, that’s all.” (We had been talking about the ethics of business when Perry had switched off to Ham.) “I believe, at least, in restraint of trade. Ham doesn’t believe in restraint of any kind.”

When, therefore, the news suddenly began to be circulated in the Boyne Club that Ham was showing a tendency to straighten up, surprise and incredulity were genuine. He was drinking less,—much less; and it was said that he had severed certain ties that need not again be definitely mentioned. The theory of religious regeneration not being tenable, it was naturally supposed that he had fallen in love; the identity of the unknown lady becoming a fruitful subject of speculation among the feminine portion of society. The announcement of the marriage of Hambleton Durrett would be news of the first magnitude, to be absorbed eagerly by the many who had not the honour of his acquaintance, —comparable only to that of a devastating flood or a murder mystery or a change in the tariff.

Being absorbed in affairs that seemed more important, the subject did not interest me greatly. But one cold Sunday afternoon, as I made my way, in answer to her invitation, to see Nancy Willett, I found myself wondering idly whether she might not be by way of making a shrewd guess as to the object of Hambleton’s affections. It was well known that he had entertained a hopeless infatuation for her; and some were inclined to attribute his later lapses to her lack of response. He still called on her, and her lectures, which she delivered like a great aunt with a recondite knowledge of the world, he took meekly. But even she had seemed powerless to alter his habits....

Powell Street, that happy hunting-ground of my youth, had changed its character, become contracted and unfamiliar, sooty. The McAlerys and other older families who

had not decayed with the neighbourhood were rapidly deserting it, moving out to the new residence district known as “the Heights.” I came to the Willett House. That, too, had an air of shabbiness,—of well-tended shabbiness, to be sure; the stone steps had been scrupulously scrubbed, but one of them was cracked clear across, and the silver on the polished name-plate was wearing off; even the act of pulling the knob of a door-bell was becoming obsolete, so used had we grown to pushing porcelain buttons in bright, new vestibules. As I waited for my summons to be answered it struck me as remarkable that neither Nancy nor her father had been contaminated by the shabbiness that surrounded them.

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She had managed rather marvellously to redeem one room from the old-fashioned severity of the rest of the house, the library behind the big “parlour.” It was Nancy’s room, eloquent of her daintiness and taste, of her essential modernity and luxuriousness; and that evening, as I was ushered into it, this quality of luxuriousness, of being able to shut out the disagreeable aspects of life that surrounded and threatened her, particularly impressed me. She had not lacked opportunities to escape. I wondered uneasily as I waited why she had not embraced them. I strayed about the room. A coal fire burned in the grate, the red-shaded lamps gave a subdued but cheerful light; some impulse led me to cross over to the windows and draw aside the heavy hangings. Dusk was gathering over that garden, bleak and frozen now, where we had romped together as children. How queer the place seemed! How shrivelled! Once it had had the wide range of a park. There, still weathering the elements, was the old-fashioned latticed summer-house, but the fruit-trees that I recalled as clouds of pink and white were gone.... A touch of poignancy was in these memories. I dropped the curtain, and turned to confront Nancy, who had entered noiselessly.

“Well, Hugh, were you dreaming?” she said.

“Not exactly,” I replied, embarrassed. “I was looking at the garden.”

“The soot has ruined it. My life seems to be one continual struggle against the soot,—-the blacks, as the English call them. It’s a more expressive term. They are like an army, you know, overwhelming in their relentless invasion. Well, do sit down. It is nice of you to come. You’ll have some tea, won’t you?”

The maid had brought in the tray. Afternoon tea was still rather a new custom with us, more of a ceremony than a meal; and as Nancy handed me my cup and the thinnest of slices of bread and butter I found the intimacy of the situation a little disquieting. Her manner was indeed intimate, and yet it had the odd and disturbing effect of making her seem more remote. As she chatted I answered her perfunctorily, while all the time I was asking myself why I had ceased to desire her, whether the old longing for her might not return—was not even now returning? I might indeed go far afield to find a wife so suited to me as Nancy. She had beauty, distinction, and position. She was a woman of whom any man might be proud....

“I haven’t congratulated you yet, Hugh,” she said suddenly, “now that you are a partner of Mr. Watling’s. I hear on all sides that you are on the high road to a great success.”

“Of course I’m glad to be in the firm,” I admitted.

It was a new tack for Nancy, rather a disquieting one, this discussion of my affairs, which she had so long avoided or ignored. “You are getting what you have always wanted, aren’t you?”

I wondered in some trepidation whether by that word “always” she was making a deliberate reference to the past.

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“Always?” I repeated, rather fatuously.

“Nearly always, ever since you have been a man.”

I was incapable of taking advantage of the opening, if it were one. She was baffling.

“A man likes to succeed in his profession, of course,” I said.

“And you made up your mind to succeed more deliberately than most men. I needn’t ask you if you are satisfied, Hugh. Success seems to agree with you,—although I imagine you will never be satisfied.”

“Why do you say that?” I demanded.

“I haven’t known you all your life for nothing. I think I know you much better than you know yourself.”

“You haven’t acted as if you did,” I exclaimed.

She smiled.

“Have you been interested in what I thought about you?” she asked.

“That isn’t quite fair, Nancy,” I protested. “You haven’t given me much evidence that you did think about me.”

“Have I received much encouragement to do so?” she inquired.

“But you haven’t seemed to invite—you’ve kept me at arm’s length.”

“Oh, don’t fence!” she cried, rather sharply.

I had become agitated, but her next words gave me a shock that was momentarily paralyzing.

“I asked you to come here to-day, Hugh, because I wished you to know that I have made up my mind to marry Hambleton Durrett.”

“Hambleton Durrett!” I echoed stupidly. “Hambleton Durrett!”

“Why not?”

“Have you—have you accepted him?”

“No. But I mean to do so.”

“You—you love him?”

“I don’t see what right you have to ask.”

“But you just said that you invited me here to talk frankly.”

“No, I don’t love him.”

“Then why, in heaven’s name, are you going to marry him?”

She lay back in her chair, regarding me, her lips slightly parted. All at once the full flavour of her, the superfine quality was revealed after years of blindness.—Nor can I describe the sudden rebellion, the revulsion that I experienced. Hambleton Durrett! It was an outrage, a sacrilege! I got up, and put my hand on the mantel. Nancy remained motionless, inert, her head lying back against the chair. Could it be that she were enjoying my discomfiture? There is no need to confess that I knew next to nothing of women; had I been less excited, I might have made the discovery that I still regarded them sentimentally. Certain romantic axioms concerning them, garnered from Victorian literature, passed current in my mind for wisdom; and one of these declared that they were prone to remain true to an early love. Did Nancy still care for me? The query, coming as it did on top of my emotion, brought with it a strange and overwhelming perplexity. Did I really care for her? The many years during which I had practised the habit of caution began to exert an inhibiting pressure. Here was a situation, an opportunity suddenly thrust upon me which might never return, and which I was utterly unprepared to meet. Would I be happy with Nancy, after all? Her expression was still enigmatic.

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“Why shouldn’t I marry him?” she demanded.

“Because he’s not good enough for you.”

“Good!” she exclaimed, and laughed. “He loves me. He wants me without reservation or calculation.” There was a sting in this. “And is he any worse,” she asked slowly, “than many others who might be mentioned?”

“No,” I agreed. I did not intend to be led into the thankless and disagreeable position of condemning Hambleton Durrett. “But why have you waited all these years if you did not mean to marry a man of ability, a man who has made something of himself?”

“A man like you, Hugh?” she said gently.

I flushed.

“That isn’t quite fair, Nancy.”

“What are you working for?” she suddenly inquired, straightening up.

“What any man works for, I suppose.”

“Ah, there you have hit it,—what any man works for in our world. Power,—personal power. You want to be somebody,—isn’t that it? Not the noblest ambition, you’ll have to admit,—not the kind of thing we used to dream about, when we did dream. Well, when we find we can’t realize our dreams, we take the next best thing. And I fail to see why you should blame me for taking it when you yourself have taken it. Hambleton Durrett can give it to me. He’ll accept me on my own terms, he won’t interfere with me, I shan’t be disillusionized,—and I shall have a position which I could not hope to have if I remained unmarried, a very marked position as Hambleton Durrett’s wife. I am thirty, you know.”

Her frankness appalled me.

“The trouble with you, Hugh, is that you still deceive yourself. You throw a glamour over things. You want to keep your cake and eat it too.

“I don’t see why you say that. And marriage especially—”

She took me up.

“Marriage! What other career is open to a woman? Unless she is married, and married well, according to the money standard you men have set up, she is nobody. We can’t all be Florence Nightingales, and I am unable to imagine myself a Julia Ward Howe or a Harriet Beecher Stowe. What is left? Nothing but marriage. I’m hard and cynical, you

will say, but I have thought, and I'm not afraid, as I have told you, to look things in the face. There are very few women, I think, who would not take the real thing if they had the chance before it were too late, who wouldn't be willing to do their own cooking in order to get it."

She fell silent suddenly. I began to pace the room.

"For God's sake, don't do this, Nancy!" I begged.

But she continued to stare into the fire, as though she had not heard me.

"If you had made up your mind to do it, why did you tell me?" I asked.

"Sentiment, I suppose. I am paying a tribute to what I once was, to what you once were," she said. A—a sort of good-bye to sentiment."

"Nancy!" I said hoarsely.

She shook her head.

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“No, Hugh. Surely you can’t misjudge me so!” she answered reproachfully. “Do you think I should have sent for you if I had meant—that!”

“No, no, I didn’t think so. But why not? You—you cared once, and you tell me plainly you don’t love him. It was all a terrible mistake. We were meant for each other.”

“I did love you then,” she said. “You never knew how much. And there is nothing I wouldn’t give to bring it all back again. But I can’t. It’s gone. You’re gone, and I’m gone. I mean what we were. Oh, why did you change?”

“It was you who changed,” I declared, bewildered.

“Couldn’t you see—can’t you see now what you did? But perhaps you couldn’t help it. Perhaps it was just you, after all.”

“What I did?”

“Why couldn’t you have held fast to your faith? If you had, you would have known what it was I adored in you. Oh, I don’t mind telling you now, it was just that faith, Hugh, that faith you had in life, that faith you had in me. You weren’t cynical and calculating, like Ralph Hambleton, you had imagination. I—I dreamed, too. And do you remember the time when you made the boat, and we went to Logan’s Pond, and you sank in her?”

“And you stayed,” I went on, “when all the others ran away? You ran down the hill like a whirlwind.”

She laughed.

“And then you came here one day, to a party, and said you were going to Harvard, and quarrelled with me.”

“Why did you doubt met” I asked agitatedly. “Why didn’t you let me see that you still cared?”

“Because that wasn’t you, Hugh, that wasn’t your real self. Do you suppose it mattered to me whether you went to Harvard with the others? Oh, I was foolish too, I know. I shouldn’t have said what I did. But what is the use of regrets?” she exclaimed. “We’ve both run after the practical gods, and the others have hidden their faces from us. It may be that we are not to blame, either of us, that the practical gods are too strong. We’ve learned to love and worship them, and now we can’t do without them.”

“We can try, Nancy,” I pleaded.

“No,” she answered in a low voice, “that’s the difference between you and me. I know myself better than you know yourself, and I know you better.” She smiled again.

“Unless we could have it all back again, I shouldn’t want any of it. You do not love me __”

I started once more to protest.

“No, no, don’t say it!” she cried.

“You may think you do, just this moment, but it’s only because—you’ve been moved. And what you believe you want isn’t me, it’s what I was. But I’m not that any more,—I’m simply recalling that, don’t you see? And even then you wouldn’t wish me, now, as I was. That sounds involved, but you must understand. You want a woman who will be wrapped up in your career, Hugh, and yet who will not share it,—who will devote herself body and soul to what you have become.

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A woman whom you can shape. And you won't really love her, but only just so much of her as may become the incarnation of you. Well, I'm not that kind of woman. I might have been, had you been different. I'm not at all sure. Certainly I'm not that kind now, even though I know in my heart that the sort of career you have made for yourself, and that I intend to make for myself is all dross. But now I can't do without it."

"And yet you are going to marry Hambleton Durrett!" I said.

She understood me, although I regretted my words at once.

"Yes, I am going to marry him." There was a shade of bitterness, of defiance in her voice. "Surely you are not offering me the—the other thing, now. Oh, Hugh!"

"I am willing to abandon it all, Nancy."

"No," she said, "you're not, and I'm not. What you can't see and won't see is that it has become part of you. Oh, you are successful, you will be more and more successful. And you think I should be somebody, as your wife, Hugh, more perhaps, eventually, than I shall be as Hambleton's. But I should be nobody, too. I couldn't stand it now, my dear. You must realize that as soon as you have time to think it over. We shall be friends."

The sudden gentleness in her voice pierced me through and through. She held out her hand. Something in her grasp spoke of a resolution which could not be shaken.

"And besides," she added sadly, "I don't love you any more, Hugh. I'm mourning for something that's gone. I wanted to have just this one talk with you. But we shan't mention it again,—we'll close the book."...

At that I fled out of the house, and at first the thought of her as another man's wife, as Hambleton Durrett's wife, was seemingly not to be borne. It was incredible! "We'll close the book." I found myself repeating the phrase; and it seemed then as though something within me I had believed dead—something that formerly had been all of me—had revived again to throb with pain.

It is not surprising that the acuteness of my suffering was of short duration, though I remember certain sharp twinges when the announcement of the engagement burst on the city. There was much controversy over the question as to whether or not Ham Durrett's reform would be permanent; but most people were willing to give him the benefit of the doubt; it was time he settled down and took the position in the community that was to be expected of one of his name; and as for Nancy, it was generally agreed that she had done well for herself. She was not made for poverty—and who so well as she was fitted for the social leadership of our community?

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They were married in Trinity Church in the month of May, and I was one of Ham's attendants. Ralph was "best man." For the last time the old Willett mansion in Powell Street wore the gala air of former days; carpets were spread over the sidewalk, and red and white awnings; rooms were filled with flowers and flung open to hundreds of guests. I found the wedding something of an ordeal. I do not like to dwell upon it—-especially upon that moment when I came to congratulate Nancy as she stood beside Ham at the end of the long parlour. She seemed to have no regrets. I don't know what I expected of her—certainly not tears and tragedy. She seemed taller than ever, and very beautiful in her veil and white satin gown and the diamonds Ham had given her; very much mistress of herself, quite a contrast to Ham, who made no secret of his elation. She smiled when I wished her happiness.

"We'll be home in the autumn, Hugh, and expect to see a great deal of you," she said.

As I paused in a corner of the room my eye fell upon Nancy's father. McAlery Willett's elation seemed even greater than Ham's. With a gardenia in his frock-coat and a glass of champagne in his hand he went from group to group; and his familiar laughter, which once had seemed so full of merriment and fun, gave me to-day a somewhat scandalized feeling. I heard Ralph's voice, and turned to discover him standing beside me, his long legs thrust slightly apart, his hands in his pockets, overlooking the scene with typical, semi-contemptuous amusement.

"This lets old McAlery out, anyway," he said.

"What do you mean?" I demanded.

"One or two little notes of his will be cancelled, sooner or later—that's all."

For a moment I was unable to speak.

"And do you think that she—that Nancy found out—?" I stammered.

"Well, I'd be willing to take that end of the bet," he replied. "Why the deuce should she marry Ham? You ought to know her well enough to understand how she'd feel if she discovered some of McAlery's financial coups? Of course it's not a thing I talk about, you understand. Are you going to the Club?"

"No, I'm going home," I said. I was aware of his somewhat compassionate smile as I left him....

XII.

One November day nearly two years after my admission as junior member of the firm of Watling, Fowndes and Ripon seven gentlemen met at luncheon in the Boyne Club; Mr.

Barbour, President of the Railroad, Mr. Scherer, of the Boyne Iron Works and other corporations, Mr. Leonard Dickinson, of the Corn National Bank, Mr. Halsey, a prominent banker from the other great city of the state, Mr. Grunewald, Chairman of the Republican State Committee, and Mr. Frederick Grierson, who had become a very important man in our community. At four o'clock they emerged from the club: citizens in Boyne Street who saw them chatting amicably on the steps little suspected that in the last three hours these gentlemen had chosen and practically elected the man who was to succeed Mr. Wade as United States Senator in Washington. Those were the days in which great affairs were simply and efficiently handled. No democratic nonsense about leaving the choice to an electorate that did not know what it wanted.

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The man chosen to fill this high position was Theodore Watling. He said he would think about the matter.

In the nation at large, through the defection of certain Northern states neither so conservative nor fortunate as ours, the Democratic party was in power, which naturally implies financial depression. There was no question about our ability to send a Republican Senator; the choice in the Boyne Club was final; but before the legislature should ratify it, a year or so hence, it were just as well that the people of the state should be convinced that they desired Mr. Watling more than any other man; and surely enough, in a little while such a conviction sprang up spontaneously. In offices and restaurants and hotels, men began to suggest to each other what a fine thing it would be if Theodore Watling might be persuaded to accept the toga; at the banks, when customers called to renew their notes and tight money was discussed and Democrats excoriated, it was generally agreed that the obvious thing to do was to get a safe man in the Senate. From the very first, Watling sentiment stirred like spring sap after a hard winter.

The country newspapers, watered by providential rains, began to put forth tender little editorial shoots, which Mr. Judah B. Tallant presently collected and presented in a charming bouquet in the Morning Era. “The Voice of the State Press;” thus was the column headed; and the remarks of the Hon. Fitch Truesdale, of the St. Helen’s Messenger, were given a special prominence. Mr. Truesdale was the first, in his section, to be inspired by the happy thought that the one man preeminently fitted to represent the state in the present crisis, when her great industries had been crippled by Democratic folly, was Mr. Theodore Watling. The Rossiter Banner, the Elkington Star, the Belfast Recorder, and I know not how many others simultaneously began to sing Mr. Watling’s praises.

“Not since the troublous times of the Civil War,” declared the Morning Era, “had the demand for any man been so unanimous.” As a proof of it, there were the country newspapers, “which reflected the sober opinion of the firesides of the common people.”

There are certain industrious gentlemen to whom little credit is given, and who, unlike the average citizen who reserves his enthusiasm for election time, are patriotic enough to labour for their country’s good all the year round. When in town, it was their habit to pay a friendly call on the Counsel for the Railroad, Mr. Miller Gorse, in the Corn Bank Building. He was never too busy to converse with them; or, it might better be said, to listen to them converse. Let some legally and politically ambitious young man observe Mr. Gorse’s method. Did he inquire what the party worker thought of Mr. Watling for the Senate? Not at all! But before the party worker left he was telling Mr. Gorse that public sentiment demanded Mr. Watling. After leaving Mr. Gorse they wended their way to the Durrett Building

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and handed their cards over the rail of the offices of Watling, Fowndes and Ripon. Mr. Watling shook hands with scores of them, and they departed, well satisfied with the flavour of his cigars and intoxicated by his personality. He had a marvellous way of cutting short an interview without giving offence. Some of them he turned over to Mr. Paret, whom he particularly desired they should know. Thus Mr. Paret acquired many valuable additions to his acquaintance, cultivated a memory for names and faces that was to stand him in good stead; and kept, besides, an indexed note-book into which he put various bits of interesting information concerning each. Though not immediately lucrative, it was all, no doubt, part of a lawyer's education.

During the summer and the following winter Colonel Paul Varney came often to town and spent much of his time in Mr. Paret's office smoking Mr. Watling's cigars and discussing the coming campaign, in which he took a whole-souled interest.

"Say, Hugh, this is goin' slick!" he would exclaim, his eyes glittering like round buttons of jet. "I never saw a campaign where they fell in the way they're doing now. If it was anybody else but Theodore Watling, it would scare me. You ought to have been in Jim Broadhurst's campaign," he added, referring to the junior senator, "they wouldn't wood up at all, they was just listless. But Gorse and Barbour and the rest wanted him, and we had to put him over. I reckon he is useful down there in Washington, but say, do you know what he always reminded me of? One of those mud-turtles I used to play with as a boy up in Columbia County,—shuts up tight soon as he sees you coming. Now Theodore Watling ain't like that, any way of speaking. We can get up some enthusiasm for a man of his sort. He's liberal and big. He's made his pile, and he don't begrudge some of it to the fellows who do the work. Mark my words, when you see a man who wants a big office cheap, look out for him."

This, and much more wisdom I imbibed while assenting to my chief's greatness. For Mr. Varney was right,—one could feel enthusiasm for Theodore Watling; and my growing intimacy with him, the sense that I was having a part in his career, a share in his success, became for the moment the passion of my life. As the campaign progressed I gave more and more time to it, and made frequent trips of a confidential nature to the different counties of the state. The whole of my being was energized. The national fever had thoroughly pervaded my blood—the national fever to win. Prosperity—writ large—demanded it, and Theodore Watling personified, incarnated the cause. I had neither the time nor the desire to philosophize on this national fever, which animated all my associates: animated, I might say, the nation, which was beginning to get into a fever about games. If I remember rightly, it was about this time that golf was introduced, tennis had become a commonplace, professional baseball was in full swing; Ham Durrett had even organized a local polo team.... The man who failed to win something tangible in sport or law or business or politics was counted out. Such was the spirit of America, in the closing years of the nineteenth century.

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And yet, when one has said this, one has failed to express the national Geist in all its subtlety. In brief, the great American sport was not so much to win the game as to beat it; the evasion of rules challenged our ingenuity; and having won, we set about devising methods whereby it would be less and less possible for us winners to lose in the future. No better illustration of this tendency could be given than the development which had recently taken place in the field of our city politics, hitherto the battle-ground of Irish politicians who had fought one another for supremacy. Individualism had been rampant, competition the custom; you bought an alderman, or a boss who owned four or five aldermen, and then you never could be sure you were to get what you wanted, or that the aldermen and the bosses would "stay bought." But now a genius had appeared, an American genius who had arisen swiftly and almost silently, who appealed to the imagination, and whose name was often mentioned in a whisper,—the Hon. Judd Jason, sometimes known as the Spider, who organized the City Hall and capitalized it; an ultimate and logical effect—if one had considered it—of the Manchester school of economics. Enlightened self-interest, stripped of sentiment, ends on Judd Jasons. He ran the city even as Mr. Sherrill ran his department store; you paid your price. It was very convenient. Being a genius, Mr. Jason did not wholly break with tradition, but retained those elements of the old muddled system that had their value, chartering steamboats for outings on the river, giving colossal picnics in Lowry Park. The poor and the wanderer and the criminal (of the male sex at least) were cared for. But he was not loved, as the rough-and-tumble Irishmen had been loved; he did not make himself common; he was surrounded by an aura of mystery which I confess had not failed of effect on me. Once, and only once during my legal apprenticeship, he had been pointed out to me on the street, where he rarely ventured. His appearance was not impressive....

Mr. Jason could not, of course, prevent Mr. Watling's election, even did he so desire, but he did command the allegiance of several city candidates—both democratic and republican—for the state legislature, who had as yet failed to announce their preferences for United States Senator. It was important that Mr. Watling's vote should be large, as indicative of a public reaction and repudiation of Democratic national folly. This matter among others was the subject of discussion one July morning when the Republican State Chairman was in the city; Mr. Grunewald expressed anxiety over Mr. Jason's continued silence. It was expedient that somebody should "see" the boss.

"Why not Paret?" suggested Leonard Dickinson. Mr. Watling was not present at this conference. "Paret seems to be running Watling's campaign, anyway."

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It was settled that I should be the emissary. With lively sensations of curiosity and excitement, tempered by a certain anxiety as to my ability to match wits with the Spider, I made my way to his "lair" over Monahan's saloon, situated in a district that was anything but respectable. The saloon, on the ground floor, had two apartments; the bar-room proper where Mike Monahan, chamberlain of the establishment, was wont to stand, red faced and smiling, to greet the courtiers, big and little, the party workers, the district leaders, the hangers-on ready to be hired, the city officials, the police judges,—-yes, and the dignified members of state courts whose elections depended on Mr. Jason's favour: even Judge Bering, whose acquaintance I had made the day I had come, as a law student, to Mr. Watling's office, unbent from time to time sufficiently to call there for a small glass of rye and water, and to relate, with his owl-like gravity, an anecdote to the "boys." The saloon represented Democracy, so dear to the American public. Here all were welcome, even the light-fingered gentlemen who enjoyed the privilege of police protection; and who sometimes, through fortuitous circumstances, were hauled before the very magistrates with whom they had rubbed elbows on the polished rail. Behind the bar-room, and separated from it by swinging doors only the elite ventured to thrust apart, was an audience chamber whither Mr. Jason occasionally descended. Anecdote and political reminiscence gave place here to matters of high policy.

I had several times come to the saloon in the days of my apprenticeship in search of some judge or official, and once I had run down here the city auditor himself. Mike Monahan, whose affair it was to know everyone, recognized me. It was part of his business, also, to understand that I was now a member of the firm of Watling, Fowndes and Ripon.

"Good morning to you, Mr. Paret," he said suavely. We held a colloquy in undertones over the bar, eyed by the two or three customers who were present. Mr. Monahan disappeared, but presently returned to whisper: "Sure, he'll see you," to lead the way through the swinging doors and up a dark stairway. I came suddenly on a room in the greatest disorder, its tables and chairs piled high with newspapers and letters, its windows streaked with soot. From an open door on its farther side issued a voice.

"Is that you, Mr. Paret? Come in here."

It was little less than a command.

"Heard of you, Mr. Paret. Glad to know you. Sit down, won't you?"

The inner room was almost dark. I made out a bed in the corner, and propped up in the bed a man; but for the moment I was most aware of a pair of eyes that flared up when the man spoke, and died down again when he became silent. They reminded me of those insects which in my childhood days we called "lightning bugs." Mr. Jason gave

me a hand like a woman's. I expressed my pleasure at meeting him, and took a chair beside the bed.

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“I believe you’re a partner of Theodore Watling’s now aren’t you? Smart man, Watling.”

“He’ll make a good senator,” I replied, accepting the opening.

“You think he’ll get elected—do you?” Mr. Jason inquired.

I laughed.

“Well, there isn’t much doubt about that, I imagine.”

“Don’t know—don’t know. Seen some dead-sure things go wrong in my time.”

“What’s going to defeat him?” I asked pleasantly.

“I don’t say anything,” Mr. Jason replied. “But I’ve known funny things to happen—-never does to be dead sure.”

“Oh, well, we’re as sure as it’s humanly possible to be,” I declared. The eyes continued to fascinate me, they had a peculiar, disquieting effect. Now they died down, and it was as if the man’s very presence had gone out, as though I had been left alone; and I found it exceedingly difficult, under the circumstances, to continue to address him. Suddenly he flared up again.

“Watling send you over here?” he demanded.

“No. As a matter of fact, he’s out of town. Some of Mr. Watling’s friends, Mr. Grunewald and Mr. Dickinson, Mr. Gorse and others, suggested that I see you, Mr. Jason.”

There came a grunt from the bed.

“Mr. Watling has always valued your friendship and support,” I said.

“What makes him think he ain’t going to get it?”

“He hasn’t a doubt of it,” I went on diplomatically. “But we felt—and I felt personally, that we ought to be in touch with you, to work along with you, to keep informed how things are going in the city.”

“What things?”

“Well—there are one or two representatives, friends of yours, who haven’t come out for Mr. Watling. We aren’t worrying, we know you’ll do the right thing, but we feel that it would have a good deal of influence in some other parts of the state if they declared themselves. And then you know as well as I do that this isn’t a year when any of us can afford to recognize too closely party lines; the Democratic administration has brought on

a panic, the business men in that party are down on it, and it ought to be rebuked. And we feel, too, that some of the city's Democrats ought to be loyal to Mr. Watling,—not that we expect them to vote for him in caucus, but when it comes to the joint ballot—"

"Who?" demanded Mr. Jason.

"Senator Dowse and Jim Maher, for instance," I suggested.

"Jim voted for Bill 709 all right—didn't he?" said Mr. Jason abruptly.

"That's just it," I put in boldly. "We'd like to induce him to come in with us this time. But we feel that—the inducement would better come through you."

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I thought Mr. Jason smiled. By this time I had grown accustomed to the darkness, the face and figure of the man in the bed had become discernible. Power, I remember thinking, chooses odd houses for itself. Here was no overbearing, full-blooded ward ruffian brimming with vitality, but a thin, sallow little man in a cotton night-shirt, with iron-grey hair and a wiry moustache; he might have been an overworked clerk behind a dry-goods counter; and yet somehow, now that I had talked to him, I realized that he never could have been. Those extraordinary eyes of his, when they were functioning, marked his individuality as unique. It were almost too dramatic to say that he required darkness to make his effect, but so it seemed. I should never forget him. He had in truth been well named the Spider.

“Of course we haven’t tried to get in touch with them. We are leaving them to you,” I added.

“Paret,” he said suddenly, “I don’t care a damn about Grunewald—never did. I’d turn him down for ten cents. But you can tell Theodore Watling for me, and Dickinson, that I guess the ‘inducement’ can be fixed.”

I felt a certain relief that the interview had come to an end, that the moment had arrived for amenities. To my surprise, Mr. Jason anticipated me.

“I’ve been interested in you, Mr. Paret,” he observed. “Know who you are, of course, knew you were in Watling’s office. Then some of the boys spoke about you when you were down at the legislature on that Ribblevale matter. Guess you had more to do with that bill than came out in the newspapers—eh?”

I was taken off my guard.

“Oh, that’s talk,” I said.

“All right, it’s talk, then? But I guess you and I will have some more talk after a while,—-after Theodore Watling gets to be United States Senator. Give him my regards, and—-and come in when I can do anything for you, Mr. Paret.”

Thanking him, I groped my way downstairs and let myself out by a side door Monahan had shown me into an alleyway, thus avoiding the saloon. As I walked slowly back to the office, seeking the shade of the awnings, the figure in the darkened room took on a sinister aspect that troubled me....

The autumn arrived, the campaign was on with a whoop, and I had my first taste of “stump” politics. The acrid smell of red fire brings it back to me. It was a medley of railroad travel, of committees provided with badges—and cigars, of open carriages slowly drawn between lines of bewildered citizens, of Lincoln clubs and other clubs marching in serried ranks, uniformed and helmeted, stalwarts carrying torches and

banners. And then there were the draughty opera-houses with the sylvan scenery pushed back and plush chairs and sofas pushed forward; with an ominous table, a pitcher of water on it and a glass, near the footlights. The houses were packed with more bewildered citizens. What a wonderful study of mob-psychology it would have offered! Men who

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had not thought of the grand old Republican party for two years, and who had not cared much about it when they had entered the dooms, after an hour or so went mad with fervour. The Hon. Joseph Mecklin, ex-Speaker of the House, with whom I traveled on occasions, had a speech referring to the martyred President, ending with an appeal to the revolutionary fathers who followed Washington with bleeding feet. The Hon. Joseph possessed that most valuable of political gifts, presence; and when with quivering voice he finished his peroration, citizens wept with him. What it all had to do with the tariff was not quite clear. Yet nobody seemed to miss the connection.

We were all of us most concerned, of course, about the working-man and his dinner pail,—whom the Democrats had wantonly thrown out of employment for the sake of a doctrinaire theory. They had put him in competition with the serf of Europe. Such was the subject-matter of my own modest addresses in this, my maiden campaign. I had the sense to see myself in perspective; to recognize that not for me, a dignified and substantial lawyer of affairs, were the rhetorical flights of the Hon. Joseph Mecklin. I spoke with a certain restraint. Not too dryly, I hope. But I sought to curb my sentiments, my indignation, at the manner in which the working-man had been treated; to appeal to the common sense rather than to the passions of my audiences. Here were the statistics! (drawn, by the way, from the Republican Campaign book). Unscrupulous demagogues—Democratic, of course—had sought to twist and evade them. Let this terrible record of lack of employment and misery be compared with the prosperity under Republican rule.

“One of the most effective speakers in this campaign for the restoration of Prosperity,” said the Rossiter Banner, “is Mr. Hugh Paret, of the firm of Watling, Fowndes and Ripon. Mr. Paret’s speech at the Opera-House last evening made a most favourable impression. Mr. Paret deals with facts. And his thoughtful analysis of the situation into which the Democratic party has brought this country should convince any sane-minded voter that the time has come for a change.”

I began to keep a scrap-book, though I locked it up in the drawer of my desk. In it are to be found many clippings of a similarly gratifying tenor....

Mecklin and I were well contrasted. In this way, incidentally, I made many valuable acquaintances among the “solid” men of the state, the local capitalists and manufacturers, with whom my manner of dealing with public questions was in particular favour. These were practical men; they rather patronized the Hon. Joseph, thus estimating, to a nicety, a mans value; or solidity, or specific gravity, it might better be said, since our universe was one of checks and balances. The Hon. Joseph and his like, skyrocketing through the air, were somehow necessary in the scheme of things, but not to be taken too seriously. Me they did take seriously, these provincial lords,

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inviting me to their houses and opening their hearts. Thus, when we came to Elkington, Mr. Mecklin reposed in the Commercial House, on the noisy main street. Fortunately for him, the clanging of trolley cars never interfered with his slumbers. I slept in a wide chamber in the mansion of Mr. Ezra Hutchins. There were many Hutchinses in Elkington,—brothers and cousins and uncles and great-uncles,—and all were connected with the woollen mills. But there is always one supreme Hutchins, and Ezra was he: tall, self-contained, elderly, but well preserved through frugal living, essentially American and typical of his class, when he entered the lobby of the Commercial House that afternoon the babel of political discussion was suddenly hushed; politicians, traveling salesmen and the members of the local committee made a lane for him; to him, the Hon. Joseph and I were introduced. Mr. Hutchins knew what he wanted. He was cordial to Mr. Mecklin, but he took me. We entered a most respectable surrey with tassels, driven by a raw-boned coachman in a black overcoat, drawn by two sleek horses.

“How is this thing going, Paret?” he asked.

I gave him Mr. Grunewald’s estimated majority.

“What do you think?” he demanded, a shrewd, humorous look in his blue eyes.

“Well, I think we’ll carry the state. I haven’t had Grunewald’s experience in estimating.”

Ezra Hutchins smiled appreciatively.

“What does Watling think?”

“He doesn’t seem to be worrying much.”

“Ever been in Elkington before?”

I said I hadn’t.

“Well, a drive will do you good.”

It was about four o’clock on a mild October afternoon. The little town, of fifteen thousand inhabitants or so, had a wonderful setting in the widening valley of the Scopanong, whose swiftly running waters furnished the power for the mills. We drove to these through a gateway over which the words “No Admittance” were conspicuously painted, past long brick buildings that bordered the canals; and in the windows I caught sight of drab figures of men and women bending over the machines. Half of the buildings, as Mr. Hutchins pointed out, were closed,—mute witnesses of tariff-tinkering madness. Even more eloquent of democratic folly was that part of the town through

which we presently passed, streets lined with rows of dreary houses where the workers lived. Children were playing on the sidewalks, but theirs seemed a listless play; listless, too, were the men and women who sat on the steps,—listless, and somewhat sullen, as they watched us passing. Ezra Hutchins seemed to read my thought.

“Since the unions got in here I’ve had nothing but trouble,” he said. “I’ve tried to do my duty by my people, God knows. But they won’t see which side their bread’s buttered on. They oppose me at every step, they vote against their own interests. Some years ago they put up a job on us, and sent a scatter-brained radical to the legislature.”

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“Krebs.”

“Do you know him?”

“Slightly. He was in my class at Harvard.... Is he still here?” I asked, after a pause.

“Oh, yes. But he hasn’t gone to the legislature this time, we’ve seen to that. His father was a respectable old German who had a little shop and made eye-glasses. The son is an example of too much education. He’s a notoriety seeker. Oh, he’s clever, in a way. He’s given us a good deal of trouble, too, in the courts with damage cases."...

We came to a brighter, more spacious, well-to-do portion of the town, where the residences faced the river. In a little while the waters widened into a lake, which was surrounded by a park, a gift to the city of the Hutchins family. Facing it, on one side, was the Hutchins Library; on the other, across a wide street, where the maples were turning, were the Hutchinses’ residences of various dates of construction, from that of the younger George, who had lately married a wife, and built in bright yellow brick, to the old-fashioned mansion of Ezra himself. This, he told me, had been good enough for his father, and was good enough for him. The picture of it comes back to me, now, with singular attractiveness. It was of brick, and I suppose a modification of the Georgian; the kind of house one still sees in out-of-the way corners of London, with a sort of Dickensy flavour; high and square and uncompromising, with small-paned windows, with a flat roof surrounded by a low balustrade, and many substantial chimneys. The third storey was lower than the others, separated from them by a distinct line. On one side was a wide porch. Yellow and red leaves, the day’s fall, scattered the well-kept lawn. Standing in the doorway of the house was a girl in white, and as we descended from the surrey she came down the walk to meet us. She was young, about twenty. Her hair was the colour of the russet maple leaves.

“This is Mr. Paret, Maude.” Mr. Hutchins looked at his watch as does a man accustomed to live by it. “If you’ll excuse me, Mr. Paret, I have something important to attend to. Perhaps Mr. Paret would like to look about the grounds?” He addressed his daughter.

I said I should be delighted, though I had no idea what grounds were meant. As I followed Maude around the house she explained that all the Hutchins connection had a common back yard, as she expressed it. In reality, there were about two blocks of the property, extending behind all the houses. There were great trees with swings, groves, orchards where the late apples glistened between the leaves, an old-fashioned flower garden loath to relinquish its blooming. In the distance the shadowed western ridge hung like a curtain of deep blue velvet against the sunset.

“What a wonderful spot!” I exclaimed.

“Yes, it is nice,” she agreed, “we were all brought up here—I mean my cousins and myself. There are dozens of us. And dozens left,” she added, as the shouts and laughter of children broke the stillness.

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A boy came running around the corner of the path. He struck out at Maude. With a remarkably swift movement she retaliated.

“Ouch!” he exclaimed.

“You got him that time,” I laughed, and, being detected, she suddenly blushed. It was this act that drew my attention to her, that defined her as an individual. Before that I had regarded her merely as a shy and provincial girl. Now she was brimming with an unsuspected vitality. A certain interest was aroused, although her shyness towards me was not altered. I found it rather a flattering shyness.

“It’s Hugh,” she explained, “he’s always trying to be funny. Speak to Mr. Paret, Hugh.”

“Why, that’s my name, too,” I said.

“Is it?”

“She knocked my hat off a little while ago,” said Hugh. “I was only getting square.”

“Well, you didn’t get square, did you?” I asked.

“Are you going to speak in the tows hall to-night?” the boy demanded. I admitted it. He went off, pausing once to stare back at me.... Maude and I walked on.

“It must be exciting to speak before a large audience,” she said. “If I were a man, I think I should like to be in politics.”

“I cannot imagine you in politics,” I answered.

She laughed.

“I said, if I were a man.”

“Are you going to the meeting?”

“Oh, yes. Father promised to take me. He has a box.”

I thought it would be pleasant to have her there.

“I’m afraid you’ll find what I have to say rather dry,” I said.

“A woman can’t expect to understand everything,” she answered quickly.

This remark struck me favourably. I glanced at her sideways. She was not a beauty, but she was distinctly well-formed and strong. Her face was oval, her features not quite regular,—giving them a certain charm; her colour was fresh, her eyes blue, the lighter

blue one sees on Chinese ware: not a poetic comparison, but so I thought of them. She was apparently not sophisticated, as were most of the young women at home whom I knew intimately (as were the Watling twins, for example, with one of whom, Frances, I had had, by the way, rather a lively flirtation the spring before); she seemed refreshingly original, impressionable and plastic....

We walked slowly back to the house, and in the hallway I met Mrs. Hutchins, a bustling, housewifely lady, inclined to stoutness, whose creased and kindly face bore witness to long acquiescence in the discipline of matrimony, to the contentment that results from an essentially circumscribed and comfortable life. She was, I learned later, the second Mrs. Hutchins, and Maude their only child. The children of the first marriage, all girls, had married and scattered.

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Supper was a decorous but heterogeneous meal of the old-fashioned sort that gives one the choice between tea and cocoa. It was something of an occasion, I suspected. The minister was there, the Reverend Mr. Doddridge, who would have made, in appearance at least, a perfect Puritan divine in a steeple hat and a tippet. Only—he was no longer the leader of the community; and even in his grace he had the air of deferring to the man who provided the bounties of which we were about to partake rather than to the Almighty. Young George was there, Mr. Hutchins's nephew, who was daily becoming more and more of a factor in the management of the mills, and had built the house of yellow brick that stood out so incongruously among the older Hutchinses' mansions, and marked a transition. I thought him rather a yellow-brick gentleman himself for his assumption of cosmopolitan manners. His wife was a pretty, discontented little woman who plainly deplored her environment, longed for larger fields of conquest: George, she said, must remain where he was, for the present at least,—-Uncle Ezra depended on him; but Elkington was a prosy place, and Mrs. George gave the impression that she did not belong here. They went to the city on occasions; both cities. And when she told me we had a common acquaintance in Mrs. Hambleton Durrett—whom she thought so lovely!—I knew that she had taken Nancy as an ideal: Nancy, the social leader of what was to Mrs. George a metropolis.

Presently the talk became general among the men, the subject being the campaign, and I the authority, bombarded with questions I strove to answer judicially. What was the situation in this county and in that? the national situation? George indulged in rather a vigorous arraignment of the demagogues, national and state, who were hurting business in order to obtain political power. The Reverend Mr. Doddridge assented, deploring the poverty that the local people had brought on themselves by heeding the advice of agitators; and Mrs. Hutchins, who spent much of her time in charity work, agreed with the minister when he declared that the trouble was largely due to a decline in Christian belief. Ezra Hutchins, too, nodded at this.

"Take that man Krebs, for example," the minister went on, stimulated by this encouragement, "he's an atheist, pure and simple." A sympathetic shudder went around the table at the word. George alone smiled. "Old Krebs was a free-thinker; I used to get my glasses of him. He was at least a conscientious man, a good workman, which is more than can be said for the son. Young Krebs has talent, and if only he had devoted himself to the honest practice of law, instead of stirring up dissatisfaction among these people, he would be a successful man to-day."

Mr. Hutchins explained that I was at college with Krebs.

"These people must like him," I said, "or they wouldn't have sent him to the legislature."

"Well, a good many of them do like him," the minister admitted. "You see, he actually lives among them. They believe his socialistic doctrines because he's a friend of theirs."

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“He won’t represent this town again, that’s sure,” exclaimed George. “You didn’t see in the papers that he was nominated,—did you, Paret?”

“But if the mill people wanted him, George, how could it be prevented?” his wife demanded.

George winked at me.

“There are more ways of skinning a cat than one,” he said cryptically.

“Well, it’s time to go to the meeting, I guess,” remarked Ezra, rising. Once more he looked at his watch.

We were packed into several family carriages and started off. In front of the hall the inevitable red fire was burning, its quivering light reflected on the faces of the crowd that blocked the street. They stood silent, strangely apathetic as we pushed through them to the curb, and the red fire went out suddenly as we descended. My temporary sense of depression, however, deserted me as we entered the hall, which was well lighted and filled with people, who clapped when the Hon. Joseph and I, accompanied by Mr. Doddridge and the Hon. Henry Clay Mellish from Pottstown, with the local chairman, walked out on the stage. A glance over the audience sufficed to ascertain that that portion of the population whose dinner pails we longed to fill was evidently not present in large numbers. But the farmers had driven in from the hills, while the merchants and storekeepers of Elkington had turned out loyally.

The chairman, in introducing me, proclaimed me as a coming man, and declared that I had already achieved, in the campaign, considerable notoriety. As I spoke, I was pleasantly aware of Maude Hutchins leaning forward a little across the rail of the right-hand stage box—for the town hall was half opera-house; her attitude was one of semi-absorbed admiration; and the thought that I had made an impression on her stimulated me. I spoke with more aplomb. Somewhat to my surprise, I found myself making occasional, unexpected witticisms that drew laughter and applause. Suddenly, from the back of the hall, a voice called out:—“How about House Bill 709?”

There was a silence, then a stirring and craning of necks. It was my first experience of heckling, and for the moment I was taken aback. I thought of Krebs. He had, indeed, been in my mind since I had risen to my feet, and I had scanned the faces before me in search of his. But it was not his voice.

“Well, what about Bill 709?” I demanded.

“You ought to know something about it, I guess,” the voice responded.

“Put him out!” came from various portions of the hall.

Inwardly, I was shaken. Not—in orthodox language from any “conviction of sin.” Yet it was my first intimation that my part in the legislation referred to was known to any save a select few. I blamed Krebs, and a hot anger arose within me against him. After all, what could they prove?

“No, don’t put him out,” I said. “Let him come up here to the platform. I’ll yield to him. And I’m entirely willing to discuss with him and defend any measures passed in the legislature of this state by a Republican majority. Perhaps,” I added, “the gentleman has a copy of the law in his pocket, that I may know what he is talking about, and answer him intelligently.”

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At this there was wild applause. I had the audience with me. The offender remained silent and presently I finished my speech. After that Mr. Mecklin made them cheer and weep, and Mr. Mellish made them laugh. The meeting had been highly successful.

“You polished him off, all right,” said George Hutchins, as he took my hand.

“Who was he?”

“Oh, one of the local sore-heads. Krebs put him up to it, of course.”

“Was Krebs here?” I asked.

“Sitting in the corner of the balcony. That meeting must have made him feel sick.” George bent forward and whispered in my ear: “I thought Bill 709 was Watling’s idea.”

“Oh, I happened to be in the Potts House about that time,” I explained.

George, of whom it may be gathered that he was not wholly unsophisticated, grinned at me appreciatively.

“Say, Paret,” he replied, putting his hand through my arm, “there’s a little legal business in prospect down here that will require some handling, and I wish you’d come down after the campaign and talk it over, with us. I’ve just about made up my mind that you’re he man to tackle it.”

“All right, I’ll come,” I said.

“And stay with me,” said George....

We went to his yellow-brick house for refreshments, salad and ice-cream and (in the face of the Hutchins traditions) champagne. Others had been invited in, some twenty persons.... Once in a while, when I looked up, I met Maude’s eyes across the room. I walked home with her, slowly, the length of the Hutchinses’ block. Floating over the lake was a waning October moon that cast through the thinning maples a lace-work of shadows at our feet; I had the feeling of well-being that comes to heroes, and the presence of Maude Hutchins was an incense, a vestal incense far from unpleasing. Yet she had reservations which appealed to me. Hers was not a gushing provincialism, like that of Mrs. George.

“I liked your speech so much, Mr. Paret,” she told me. “It seemed so sensible and—-controlled, compared to the others. I have never thought a great deal about these things, of course, and I never understood before why taking away the tariff caused so much misery. You made that quite plain.

“If so, I’m glad,” I said.

She was silent a moment.

“The working people here have had a hard time during the last year,” she went on. “Some of the mills had to be shut down, you know. It has troubled me. Indeed, it has troubled all of us. And what has made it more difficult, more painful is that many of them seem actually to dislike us. They think it’s father’s fault, and that he could run all the mills if he wanted to. I’ve been around a little with mother and sometimes the women wouldn’t accept any help from us; they said they’d rather starve than take charity, that they had the right to work. But father couldn’t run the mills at a loss—could he?”

“Certainly not,” I replied.

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“And then there’s Mr. Krebs, of whom we were speaking at supper, and who puts all kinds of queer notions into their heads. Father says he’s an anarchist. I heard father say at supper that he was at Harvard with you. Did you like him?”

“Well,” I answered hesitatingly, “I didn’t know him very well.”

“Of course not,” she put in. “I suppose you couldn’t have.”

“He’s got these notions,” I explained, “that are mischievous and crazy—but I don’t dislike him.”

“I’m glad to hear you say that!” she answered quietly. “I like him, too—he seems so kind, so understanding.”

“Do you know him?”

“Well,—” she hesitated—“I feel as though I do. I’ve only met him once, and that was by accident. It was the day the big strike began, last spring, and I had been shopping, and started for the mills to get father to walk home with me, as I used to do. I saw the crowds blocking the streets around the canal. At first I paid no attention to them, but after a while I began to be a little uneasy, there were places where I had to squeeze through, and I couldn’t help seeing that something was wrong, and that the people were angry. Men and women were talking in loud voices. One woman stared at me, and called my name, and said something that frightened me terribly. I went into a doorway—and then I saw Mr. Krebs. I didn’t know who he was. He just said, ’You’d better come with me, Miss Hutchins,’ and I went with him. I thought afterwards that it was a very courageous thing for him to do, because he was so popular with the mill people, and they had such a feeling against us. Yet they didn’t seem to resent it, and made way for us, and Mr. Krebs spoke to many of them as we passed. After we got to State Street, I asked him his name, and when he told me I was speechless. He took off his hat and went away. He had such a nice face—not at all ugly when you look at it twice—and kind eyes, that I just couldn’t believe him to be as bad as father and George think he is. Of course he is mistaken,” she added hastily, “but I am sure he is sincere, and honestly thinks he can help those people by telling them what he does.”

The question shot at me during the meeting rankled still; I wanted to believe that Krebs had inspired it, and her championship of him gave me a twinge of jealousy,—the slightest twinge, to be sure, yet a perceptible one. At the same time, the unaccountable liking I had for the man stirred to life. The act she described had been so characteristic.

“He’s one of the born rebels against society,” I said glibly. “Yet I do think he’s sincere.”

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Maude was grave. “I should be sorry to think he wasn’t,” she replied. After I had bidden her good night at the foot of the stairs, and gone to my room, I reflected how absurd it was to be jealous of Krebs. What was Maude Hutchins to me? And even if she had been something to me, she never could be anything to Krebs. All the forces of our civilization stood between the two; nor was she of a nature to take plunges of that sort. The next day, as I lay back in my seat in the parlour-car and gazed at the autumn landscape, I indulged in a luxurious contemplation of the picture she had made as she stood on the lawn under the trees in the early morning light, when my carriage had driven away; and I had turned, to perceive that her eyes had followed me. I was not in love with her, of course. I did not wish to return at once to Elkington, but I dwelt with a pleasant anticipation upon my visit, when the campaign should be over, with George.

XIII.

“The good old days of the Watling campaign,” as Colonel Paul Varney is wont to call them, are gone forever. And the Colonel himself, who stuck to his gods, has been through the burning, fiery furnace of Investigation, and has come out unscathed and unrepentant. The flames of investigation, as a matter of fact, passed over his head in their vain attempt to reach the “man higher up,” whose feet they licked; but him they did not devour, either. A veteran in retirement, the Colonel is living under his vine and fig tree on the lake at Rossiter; the vine bears Catawba grapes, of which he is passionately fond; the fig tree, the Bartlett pears he gives to his friends. He has saved something from the spoils of war, but other veterans I could mention are not so fortunate. The old warriors have retired, and many are dead; the good old methods are becoming obsolete. We never bothered about those mischievous things called primaries. Our county committees, our state committees chose the candidates for the conventions, which turned around and chose the committees. Both the committees and the conventions—under advice—chose the candidates. Why, pray, should the people complain, when they had everything done for them? The benevolent parties, both Democratic and Republican, even undertook the expense of printing the ballots! And generous ballots they were (twenty inches long and five wide!), distributed before election, in order that the voters might have the opportunity of studying and preparing them: in order that Democrats of delicate feelings might take the pains to scratch out all the Democratic candidates, and write in the names of the Republican candidates. Patriotism could go no farther than this....

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I spent the week before election in the city, where I had the opportunity of observing what may be called the charitable side of politics. For a whole month, or more, the burden of existence had been lifted from the shoulders of the homeless. No church or organization, looked out for these frowsy, blear-eyed and ragged wanderers who had failed to find a place in the scale of efficiency. For a whole month, I say, Mr. Judd Jason and his lieutenants made them their especial care; supported them in lodging-houses, induced the night clerks to give them attention; took the greatest pains to ensure them the birth-right which, as American citizens, was theirs,—that of voting. They were not only given homes for a period, but they were registered; and in the abundance of good feeling that reigned during this time of cheer, even the foreigners were registered! On election day they were driven, like visiting notables, in carryalls and carriages to the polls! Some of them, as though in compensation for ills endured between elections, voted not once, but many times; exercising judicial functions for which they should be given credit. For instance, they were convinced that the Hon. W. W. Trulease had made a good governor; and they were Watling enthusiasts,—intent on sending men to the legislature who would vote for him for senator; yet there were cases in which, for the minor offices, the democrat was the better man!

It was a memorable day. In spite of Mr. Lawler's Pilot, which was as a voice crying in the wilderness, citizens who had wives and homes and responsibilities, business men and clerks went to the voting booths and recorded their choice for Trulease, Watling and Prosperity: and working-men followed suit. Victory was in the air. Even the policemen wore happy smiles, and in some instances the election officers themselves in absent-minded exuberance thrust bunches of ballots into the boxes!

In response to an insistent demand from his fellow-citizens Mr. Watling, the Saturday evening before, had made a speech in the Auditorium, decked with bunting and filled with people. For once the Morning Era did not exaggerate when it declared that the ovation had lasted fully ten minutes. "A remarkable proof" it went on to say, "of the esteem and confidence in which our fellow-citizen is held by those who know him best, his neighbours in the city where he has given so many instances of his public spirit, where he has achieved such distinction in the practice of the law. He holds the sound American conviction that the office should seek the man. His address is printed in another column, and we believe it will appeal to the intelligence and sober judgment of the state. It is replete with modesty and wisdom."

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Mr. Watling was introduced by Mr. Bering of the State Supreme Court (a candidate for re-election), who spoke with deliberation, with owl-like impressiveness. He didn't believe in judges meddling in politics, but this was an unusual occasion. (Loud applause.) Most unusual. He had come here as a man, as an American, to pay his tribute to another man, a long-time friend, whom he thought to stand somewhat aside and above mere party strife, to represent values not merely political.... So accommodating and flexible is the human mind, so "practical" may it become through dealing with men and affairs, that in listening to Judge Bering I was able to ignore the little anomalies such a situation might have suggested to the theorist, to the mere student of the institutions of democracy. The friendly glasses of rye and water Mr. Bering had taken in Monahan's saloon, the cases he had "arranged" for the firm of Watling, Fowndes and Ripon were forgotten. Forgotten, too, when Theodore Watling stood up and men began, to throw their hats in the air,—were the cavilling charges of Mr. Lawler's Pilot that, far from the office seeking the man, our candidate had spent over a hundred thousand dollars of his own money, to say nothing of the contributions of Mr. Scherer, Mr. Dickinson and the Railroad! If I had been troubled with any weak, ethical doubts, Mr. Watling would have dispelled them; he had red blood in his veins, a creed in which he believed, a rare power of expressing himself in plain, everyday language that was often colloquial, but never—as the saying goes—"cheap." The dinner-pail predicament was real to him. He would present a policy of our opponents charmingly, even persuasively, and then add, after a moment's pause: "There is only one objection to this, my friends—that it doesn't work." It was all in the way he said it, of course. The audience would go wild with approval, and shouts of "that's right" could be heard here and there. Then he proceeded to show why it didn't work. He had the faculty of bringing his lessons home, the imagination to put himself into the daily life of those who listened to him,—the life of the storekeeper, the clerk, of the labourer and of the house-wife. The effect of this can scarcely be overestimated. For the American hugs the delusion that there are no class distinctions, even though his whole existence may be an effort to rise out of once class into another. "Your wife," he told them once, "needs a dress. Let us admit that the material for the dress is a little cheaper than it was four years ago, but when she comes to look into the family stocking—" (Laughter.) "I needn't go on. If we could have things cheaper, and more money to buy them with, we should all be happy, and the Republican party could retire from business."

He did not once refer to the United States Senatorship.

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It was appropriate, perhaps, that many of us dined on the evening of election day at the Boyne Club. There was early evidence of a Republican land-slide. And when, at ten o'clock, it was announced that Mr. Trulease was re-elected by a majority which exceeded Mr. Grunewald's most hopeful estimate, that the legislature was "safe," that Theodore Watling would be the next United States Senator, a scene of jubilation ensued within those hallowed walls which was unprecedented. Chairs were pushed back, rugs taken up, Gene Hollister played the piano and a Virginia reel started; in a burst of enthusiasm Leonard Dickinson ordered champagne for every member present. The country was returning to its senses. Theodore Watling had preferred, on this eventful night, to remain quietly at home. But presently carriages were ordered, and a "delegation" of enthusiastic friends departed to congratulate him; Dickinson, of course, Grierson, Fowndes, Ogilvy, and Grunewald. We found Judah B. Tallant there,—in spite of the fact that it was a busy night for the Era; and Adolf Scherer himself, in expansive mood, was filling the largest of the library chairs. Mr. Watling was the least excited of them all; remarkably calm, I thought, for a man on the verge of realizing his life's high ambition. He had some old brandy, and a box of cigars he had been saving for an occasion. He managed to convey to everyone his appreciation of the value of their cooperation....

It was midnight before Mr. Scherer arose to take his departure. He seized Mr. Watling's hand, warmly, in both of his own.

"I have never," he said, with a relapse into the German f's, "I have never had a happier moment in my life, my friend, than when I congratulate you on your success." His voice shook with emotion. "Alas, we shall not see so much of you now."

"He'll be on guard, Scherer," said Leonard Dickinson, putting his arm around my chief.

"Good night, Senator," said Tallant, and all echoed the word, which struck me as peculiarly appropriate. Much as I had admired Mr. Watling before, it seemed indeed as if he had undergone some subtle change in the last few hours, gained in dignity and greatness by the action of the people that day. When it came my turn to bid him good night, he retained my hand in his.

"Don't go yet, Hugh," he said.

"But you must be tired," I objected.

"This sort of thing doesn't make a man tired," he laughed, leading me back to the library, where he began to poke the fire into a blaze. "Sit down awhile. You must be tired, I think,—you've worked hard in this campaign, a good deal harder than I have. I haven't said much about it, but I appreciate it, my boy." Mr. Watling had the gift of expressing his feelings naturally, without sentimentality. I would have given much for that gift.

“Oh, I liked it,” I replied awkwardly.

I read a gentle amusement in his eyes, and also the expression of something else, difficult to define. He had seated himself, and was absently thrusting at the logs with the poker.

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“You’ve never regretted going into law?” he asked suddenly, to my surprise.

“Why, no, sir,” I said.

“I’m glad to hear that. I feel, to a considerable extent, responsible for your choice of a profession.”

“My father intended me to be a lawyer,” I told him. “But it’s true that you gave me my—-my first enthusiasm.”

He looked up at me at the word.

“I admired your father. He seemed to me to be everything that a lawyer should be. And years ago, when I came to this city a raw country boy from upstate, he represented and embodied for me all the fine traditions of the profession. But the practice of law isn’t what it was in his day, Hugh.”

“No,” I agreed, “that could scarcely be expected.”

“Yes, I believe you realize that,” he said. “I’ve watched you, I’ve taken a personal pride in you, and I have an idea that eventually you will succeed me here—neither Fowndes nor Ripon have the peculiar ability you have shown. You and I are alike in a great many respects, and I am inclined to think we are rather rare, as men go. We are able to keep one object vividly in view, so vividly as to be able to work for it day and night. I could mention dozens who had and have more natural talent for the law than I, more talent for politics than I. The same thing may be said about you. I don’t regard either of us as natural lawyers, such as your father was. He couldn’t help being a lawyer.”

Here was new evidence of his perspicacity.

“But surely,” I ventured, “you don’t feel any regrets concerning your career, Mr. Watling?”

“No,” he said, “that’s just the point. But no two of us are made wholly alike. I hadn’t practised law very long before I began to realize that conditions were changing, that the new forces at work in our industrial life made the older legal ideals impracticable. It was a case of choosing between efficiency and inefficiency, and I chose efficiency. Well, that was my own affair, but when it comes to influencing others—” He paused. “I want you to see this as I do, not for the sake of justifying myself, but because I honestly believe there is more to it than expediency,—a good deal more. There’s a weak way of looking at it, and a strong way. And if I feel sure you understand it, I shall be satisfied.

“Because things are going to change in this country, Hugh. They are changing, but they are going to change more. A man has got to make up his mind what he believes in, and be ready to fight for it. We’ll have to fight for it, sooner perhaps than we realize. We are

a nation divided against ourselves; democracy—Jacksonian democracy, at all events, is a flat failure, and we may as well acknowledge it. We have a political system we have outgrown, and which, therefore, we have had to nullify. There are certain needs, certain tendencies of development in nations as well as in individuals,—needs stronger than the state,

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stronger than the law or constitution. In order to make our resources effective, combinations of capital are more and more necessary, and no more to be denied than a chemical process, given the proper ingredients, can be thwarted. The men who control capital must have a free hand, or the structure will be destroyed. This compels us to do many things which we would rather not do, which we might accomplish openly and unopposed if conditions were frankly recognized, and met by wise statesmanship which sought to bring about harmony by the reshaping of laws and policies. Do you follow me?"

"Yes," I answered. "But I have never heard the situation stated so clearly. Do you think the day will come when statesmanship will recognize this need?"

"Ah," he said, "I'm afraid not—in my time, at least. But we shall have to develop that kind of statesmen or go on the rocks. Public opinion in the old democratic sense is a myth; it must be made by strong individuals who recognize and represent evolutionary needs, otherwise it's at the mercy of demagogues who play fast and loose with the prejudice and ignorance of the mob. The people don't value the vote, they know nothing about the real problems. So far as I can see, they are as easily swayed to-day as the crowd that listened to Mark Antony's oration about Caesar. You've seen how we have to handle them, in this election and—in other matters. It isn't a pleasant practice, something we'd indulge in out of choice, but the alternative is unthinkable. We'd have chaos in no time. We've just got to keep hold, you understand—we can't leave it to the irresponsible."

"Yes," I said. In this mood he was more impressive than I had ever known him, and his confidence flattered and thrilled me.

"In the meantime, we're criminals," he continued. "From now on we'll have to stand more and more denunciation from the visionaries, the dissatisfied, the trouble makers. We may as well make up our minds to it. But we've got something on our side worth fighting for, and the man who is able to make that clear will be great."

"But you—you are going to the Senate," I reminded him.

He shook his head.

"The time has not yet come," he said. "Confusion and misunderstanding must increase before they can diminish. But I have hopes of you, Hugh, or I shouldn't have spoken. I shan't be here now—of course I'll keep in touch with you. I wanted to be sure that you had the right view of this thing."

“I see it now,” I said. “I had thought of it, but never—never as a whole—not in the large sense in which you have expressed it.” To attempt to acknowledge or deprecate the compliment he had paid me was impossible; I felt that he must have read my gratitude and appreciation in my manner.

“I mustn’t keep you up until morning.” He glanced at the clock, and went with me through the hall into the open air. A meteor darted through the November night. “We’re like that,” he observed, staring after it, a “flash across the darkness, and we’re gone.”

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“Only—there are many who haven’t the satisfaction of a flash,” I was moved to reply.

He laughed and put his hand on my shoulder as he bade me good night.

“Hugh, you ought to get married. I’ll have to find a nice girl for you,” he said. With an elation not unmingled with awe I made my way homeward.

Theodore Watling had given me a creed.

A week or so after the election I received a letter from George Hutchins asking me to come to Elkington. I shall not enter into the details of the legal matter involved. Many times that winter I was a guest at the yellow-brick house, and I have to confess, as spring came on, that I made several trips to Elkington which business necessity did not absolutely demand.

I considered Maude Hutchins, and found the consideration rather a delightful process. As became an eligible and successful young man, I was careful not to betray too much interest; and I occupied myself at first with a review of what I deemed her shortcomings. Not that I was thinking of marriage—but I had imagined the future Mrs. Paret as tall; Maude was up to my chin: again, the hair of the fortunate lady was to be dark, and Maude’s was golden red: my ideal had esprit, lightness of touch, the faculty of seizing just the aspect of a subject that delighted me, and a knowledge of the world; Maude was simple, direct, and in a word provincial. Her provinciality, however, was negative rather than positive, she had no disagreeable mannerisms, her voice was not nasal; her plasticity appealed to me. I suppose I was lost without knowing it when I began to think of moulding her.

All of this went on at frequent intervals during the winter, and while I was organizing the Elkington Power and Traction Company for George I found time to dine and sup at Maude’s house, and to take walks with her. I thought I detected an incense deliciously sweet; by no means overpowering, like the lily’s, but more like the shy fragrance of the wood flower. I recall her kind welcomes, the faint deepening of colour in her cheeks when she greeted me, and while I suspected that she looked up to me she had a surprising and tantalizing self-command.

There came moments when I grew slightly alarmed, as, for instance, one Sunday in the early spring when I was dining at the Ezra Hutchins’s house and surprised Mrs. Hutchins’s glance on me, suspecting her of seeking to divine what manner of man I was. I became self-conscious; I dared not look at Maude, who sat across the table; thereafter I began to feel that the Hutchins connection regarded me as a suitor. I had grown intimate with George and his wife, who did not refrain from sly allusions; and George himself once remarked, with characteristic tact, that I was most conscientious in my attention to the traction affair; I have reason to believe they were even less delicate with Maude. This was the logical time to withdraw—but I dallied. The experience

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was becoming more engrossing,—if I may so describe it,—and spring was approaching. The stars in their courses were conspiring. I was by no means as yet a self-acknowledged wooer, and we discussed love in its lighter phases through the medium of literature. Heaven forgive me for calling it so! About that period, it will be remembered, a mushroom growth of volumes of a certain kind sprang into existence; little books with “artistic” bindings and wide margins, sweetened essays, some of them written in beautiful English by dilettante authors for drawing-room consumption; and collections of short stories, no doubt chiefly bought by philanderers like myself, who were thus enabled to skate on thin ice over deep water. It was a most delightful relationship that these helped to support, and I fondly believed I could reach shore again whenever I chose.

There came a Sunday in early May, one of those days when the feminine assumes a large importance. I had been to the Hutchinses’ church; and Maude, as she sat and prayed decorously in the pew beside me, suddenly increased in attractiveness and desirability. Her voice was very sweet, and I felt a delicious and languorous thrill which I identified not only with love, but also with a reviving spirituality. How often the two seem to go hand in hand!

She wore a dress of a filmy material, mauve, with a design in gold thread running through it. Of late, it seemed, she had had more new dresses: and their modes seemed more cosmopolitan; at least to the masculine eye. How delicately her hair grew, in little, shining wisps, around her white neck! I could have reached out my hand and touched her. And it was this desire,—although by no means overwhelming,—that startled me. Did I really want her? The consideration of this vital question occupied the whole time of the sermon; made me distrait at dinner,—a large family gathering. Later I found myself alone with heron a bench in the Hutchinses’ garden where we had walked the day of my arrival, during the campaign.

The gardens were very different, now. The trees had burst forth again into leaf, the spiraea bushes seemed weighted down with snow, and with a note like that of the quivering bass string of a ’cello the bees hummed among the fruit blossoms. And there beside me in her filmy dress was Maude, a part of it all—the meaning of all that set my being clamouring. She was like some ripened, delicious flower ready to be picked.... One of those pernicious, make-believe volumes had fallen on the bench between us, for I could not read any more; I could not think; I touched her hand, and when she drew it gently away I glanced at her. Reason made a valiant but hopeless effort to assert itself. Was I sure that I wanted her—for life? No use! I wanted her now, no matter what price that future might demand. An awkward silence fell between us—awkward to me, at least—and I, her guide and mentor, became banal, apologetic, confused. I made some idiotic remark about being together in the Garden of Eden.

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“I remember Mr. Doddridge saying in Bible class that it was supposed to be on the Euphrates,” she replied. “But it’s been destroyed by the flood.”

“Let’s make another—one of our own,” I suggested.

“Why, how silly you are this afternoon.”

“What’s to prevent us—Maude?” I demanded, with a dry throat.

“Nonsense!” she laughed. In proportion as I lost poise she seemed to gain it.

“It’s not nonsense,” I faltered. “If we were married.”

At last the fateful words were pronounced—irrevocably. And, instead of qualms, I felt nothing but relief, joy that I had been swept along by the flood of feeling. She did not look at me, but gazed straight ahead of her.

“If I love you, Maude?” I stammered, after a moment.

“But I don’t love you,” she replied, steadily.

Never in my life had I been so utterly taken aback.

“Do you mean,” I managed to say, “that after all these months you don’t like me a little?”

“‘Liking’ isn’t loving.” She looked me full in the face. “I like you very much.”

“But—” there I stopped, paralyzed by what appeared to me the quintessence of feminine inconsistency and caprice. Yet, as I stared at her, she certainly did not appear capricious. It is not too much to say that I was fairly astounded at this evidence of self-command and decision, of the strength of mind to refuse me. Was it possible that she had felt nothing and I all? I got to my feet.

“I hate to hurt your feelings,” I heard her say. “I’m very sorry."... She looked up at me. Afterwards, when reflecting on the scene, I seemed to remember that there were tears in her eyes. I was not in a condition to appreciate her splendid sincerity. I was overwhelmed and inarticulate. I left her there, on the bench, and went back to George’s, announcing my intention of taking the five o’clock train....

Maude Hutchins had become, at a stroke, the most desirable of women. I have often wondered how I should have felt on that five-hour journey back to the city if she had fallen into my arms! I should have persuaded myself, no doubt, that I had not done a foolish thing in yielding to an impulse and proposing to an inexperienced and provincial young woman, yet there would have been regrets in the background. Too deeply

chagrined to see any humour in the situation, I settled down in a Pullman seat and went over and over again the event of that afternoon until the train reached the city.

As the days wore on, and I attended to my cases, I thought of Maude a great deal, and in those moments when the pressure of business was relaxed, she obsessed me. She must love me,—only she did not realize it. That was the secret! Her value had risen amazingly, become supreme; the very act of refusing me had emphasized her qualifications as a wife, and I now desired her with all the intensity of a nature which had been permitted always to achieve

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its objects. The inevitable process of idealization began. In dusty offices I recalled her freshness as she had sat beside me in the garden,—the freshness of a flower; with Berkeleyan subjectivism I clothed the flower with colour, bestowed it with fragrance. I conferred on Maude all the gifts and graces that woman had possessed since the creation. And I recalled, with mingled bitterness and tenderness, the turn of her head, the down on her neck, the half-revealed curve of her arm.... In spite of the growing sordidness of Lyme Street, my mother and I still lived in the old house, for which she very naturally had a sentiment. In vain I had urged her from time to time to move out into a brighter and fresher neighbourhood. It would be time enough, she said, when I was married.

“If you wait for that, mother,” I answered, “we shall spend the rest of our lives here.”

“I shall spend the rest of my life here,” she would declare. “But you—you have your life before you, my dear. You would be so much more contented if—if you could find some nice girl. I think you live—too feverishly.”

I do not know whether or not she suspected me of being in love, nor indeed how much she read of me in other ways. I did not confide in her, nor did it strike me that she might have yearned for confidences; though sometimes, when I dined at home, I surprised her gentle face—framed now with white hair—lifted wistfully toward me across the table. Our relationship, indeed, was a pathetic projection of that which had existed in my childhood; we had never been confidants then. The world in which I lived and fought, of great transactions and merciless consequences frightened her; her own world was more limited than ever. She heard disquieting things, I am sure, from Cousin Robert Breck, who had become more and more querulous since the time-honoured firm of Breck and Company had been forced to close its doors and the home at Claremore had been sold. My mother often spent the day in the scrolled suburban cottage with the coloured glass front door where he lived with the Kinleys and Helen....

If my mother suspected that I was anticipating marriage, and said nothing, Nancy Durrett suspected and spoke out.

Life is such a curious succession of contradictions and surprises that I record here without comment the fact that I was seeing much more of Nancy since her marriage than I had in the years preceding it. A comradeship existed between us. I often dined at her house and had fallen into the habit of stopping there frequently on my way home in the evening. Ham did not seem to mind. What was clear, at any rate, was that Nancy, before marriage, had exacted some sort of an understanding by which her “freedom” was not to be interfered with. She was the first among us of the “modern wives.”

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Ham, whose heartstrings and purse-strings were oddly intertwined, had stipulated that they were to occupy the old Durrett mansion; but when Nancy had made it “livable,” as she expressed it, he is said to have remarked that he might as well have built a new house and been done with it. Not even old Nathaniel himself would have recognized his home when Nancy finished what she termed furnishing: out went the horsehair, the hideous chandeliers, the stuffy books, the Recamier statuary, and an army of upholsterers, wood-workers, *etc*., from Boston and New York invaded the place. The old mahogany doors were spared, but matched now by Chippendale and Sheraton; the new, polished floors were covered with Oriental rugs, the dreary Durrett pictures replaced by good canvases and tapestries. Nancy had what amounted to a genius for interior effects, and she was the first to introduce among us the luxury that was to grow more and more prevalent as our wealth increased by leaps and bounds. Only Nancy’s luxury, though lavish, was never vulgar, and her house when completed had rather marvellously the fine distinction of some old London mansion filled with the best that generations could contribute. It left Mrs. Frederick Grierson—whose residence on the Heights had hitherto been our “grandest”—breathless with despair.

With characteristic audacity Nancy had chosen old Nathaniel’s sanctum for her particular salon, into which Ham himself did not dare to venture without invitation. It was hung in Pompeiian red and had a little wrought-iron balcony projecting over the yard, now transformed by an expert into a garden. When I had first entered this room after the metamorphosis had taken place I inquired after the tombstone mantel.

“Oh, I’ve pulled it up by the roots,” she said.

“Aren’t you afraid of ghosts?” I inquired.

“Do I look it?” she asked. And I confessed that she didn’t. Indeed, all ghosts were laid, nor was there about her the slightest evidence of mourning or regret. One was forced to acknowledge her perfection in the part she had chosen as the arbitress of social honours. The candidates were rapidly increasing; almost every month, it seemed, someone turned up with a fortune and the aspirations that go with it, and it was Mrs. Durrett who decided the delicate question of fitness. With these, and with the world at large, her manner might best be described as difficult; and I was often amused at the way in which she contrived to keep them at arm’s length and make them uncomfortable. With her intimates—of whom there were few—she was frank.

“I suppose you enjoy it,” I said to her once.

“Of course I enjoy it, or I shouldn’t do it,” she retorted. “It isn’t the real thing, as I told you once. But none of us gets the real thing. It’s power.... Just as you enjoy what you’re doing—sorting out the unfit. It’s a game, it keeps us from brooding over things we can’t help. And after all, when we have good appetites and are fairly happy, why should we complain?”

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“I’m not complaining,” I said, taking up a cigarette, “since I still enjoy your favour.”

She regarded me curiously.

“And when you get married, Hugh?”

“Sufficient unto the day,” I replied.

“How shall I get along, I wonder, with that simple and unsophisticated lady when she appears?”

“Well,” I said, “you wouldn’t marry me.”

She shook her head at me, and smiled....

“No,” she corrected me, “you like me better as Hams’ wife than you would have as your own.”

I merely laughed at this remark.... It would indeed have been difficult to analyze the new relationship that had sprung up between us, to say what elements composed it. The roots of it went back to the beginning of our lives; and there was much of sentiment in it, no doubt. She understood me as no one else in the world understood me, and she was fond of me in spite of it.

Hence, when I became infatuated with Maude Hutchins, after that Sunday when she so unexpectedly had refused me, I might have known that Nancy’s suspicions would be aroused. She startled me by accusing me, out of a clear sky, of being in love. I denied it a little too emphatically.

“Why shouldn’t you tell me, Hugh, if it’s so?” she asked. “I didn’t hesitate to tell you.”

It was just before her departure for the East to spend the summer. We were on the balcony, shaded by the big maple that grew at the end of the garden.

“But there’s nothing to tell,” I insisted.

She lay back in her chair, regarding me.

“Did you think that I’d be jealous?”

“There’s nothing to be jealous about.”

“I’ve always expected you to get married, Hugh. I’ve even predicted the type.”

She had, in truth, with an accuracy almost uncanny.

“The only thing I’m afraid of is that she won’t like me. She lives in that place you’ve been going to so much, lately,—doesn’t she?”

Of course she had put two and two together, my visits to Elkington and my manner, which I had flattered myself had not been distrait. On the chance that she knew more, from some source, I changed my tactics.

“I suppose you mean Maude Hutchins,” I said.

Nancy laughed.

“So that’s her name!”

“It’s the name of a girl in Elkington. I’ve been doing legal work for the Hutchinses, and I imagine some idiot has been gossiping. She’s just a young girl—much too young for me.”

“Men are queer creatures,” she declared. “Did you think I should be jealous?”

It was exactly what I had thought, but I denied it.

“Why should you be—even if there were anything to be jealous about? You didn’t consult me when you got married. You merely announced an irrevocable decision.”

Nancy leaned forward and laid her hand on my arm.

“My dear,” she said, “strange as it may seem, I want you to be happy. I don’t want you to make a mistake, Hugh, too great a mistake.”

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I was surprised and moved. Once more I had a momentary glimpse of the real Nancy....

Our conversation was interrupted by the arrival of Ralph Hambleton....

XIV.

However, thoughts of Maude continued to possess me. She still appeared the most desirable of beings, and a fortnight after my repulse, without any excuse at all, I telegraphed the George Hutchinses that I was coming to pay them a visit. Mrs. George, wearing a knowing smile, met me at the station in a light buck-board.

“I’ve asked Maude to dinner,” she said....

Thus with masculine directness I returned to the charge, and Maude’s continued resistance but increased my ardour; could not see why she continued to resist me.

“Because I don’t love you,” she said.

This was incredible. I suggested that she didn’t know what love was, and she admitted it was possible: she liked me very, very much. I told her, sagely, that this was the best foundation for matrimony. That might be, but she had had other ideas. For one thing, she felt that she did not know me.... In short, she was charming and maddening in her defensive ruses, in her advances and retreats, for I pressed her hard during the four weeks which followed, and in them made four visits. Flinging caution to the winds, I did not even pretend to George that I was coming to see him on business. I had the Hutchins family on my side, for they had the sense to see that the match would be an advantageous one; I even summoned up enough courage to talk to Ezra Hutchins on the subject.

“I’ll not attempt to influence Maude, Mr. Paret—I’ve always said I wouldn’t interfere with her choice. But as you are a young man of sound habits, sir, successful in your profession, I should raise no objection. I suppose we can’t keep her always.”

To conceal his emotion, he pulled out the watch he lived by. “Why, it’s church time!” he said.... I attended church regularly at Elkington....

On a Sunday night in June, following a day during which victory seemed more distant than ever, with startling unexpectedness Maude capitulated. She sat beside me on the bench, obscured, yet the warm night quivered with her presence. I felt her tremble.... I remember the first exquisite touch of her soft cheek. How strange it was that in conquest the tumult of my being should be stilled, that my passion should be transmuted into awe that thrilled yet disquieted! What had I done? It was as though I had suddenly entered an unimagined sanctuary filled with holy flame....

Presently, when we began to talk, I found myself seeking more familiar levels. I asked her why she had so long resisted me, accusing her of having loved me all the time.

“Yes, I think I did, Hugh. Only—I didn’t know it.”

“You must have felt something, that afternoon when I first proposed to you!”

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“You didn’t really want me, Hugh. Not then.”

Surprised, and a little uncomfortable at this evidence of intuition, I started to protest. It seemed to me then as though I had always wanted her.

“No, no,” she exclaimed, “you didn’t. You were carried away by your feelings—you hadn’t made up your mind. Indeed, I can’t see why you want me now.”

“You believe I do,” I said, and drew her toward me.

“Yes, I—I believe it, now. But I can’t see why. There must be so many attractive girls in the city, who know so much more than I do.”

I sought fervidly to reassure her on this point.... At length when we went into the house she drew away from me at arm’s length and gave me one long searching look, as though seeking to read my soul.

“Hugh, you will always love me—to the very end, won’t you?”

“Yes,” I whispered, “always.”

In the library, one on each side of the table, under the lamp, Ezra Hutchins and his wife sat reading. Mrs. Hutchins looked up, and I saw that she had divined.

“Mother, I am engaged to Hugh,” Maude said, and bent over and kissed her. Ezra and I stood gazing at them. Then he turned to me and pressed my hand.

“Well, I never saw the man who was good enough for her, Hugh. But God bless you, my son. I hope you will prize her as we prize her.”

Mrs. Hutchins embraced me. And through her tears she, too, looked long into my face. When she had released me Ezra had his watch in his hand.

“If you’re going on the ten o’clock train, Hugh—”

“Father!” Maude protested, laughing, “I must say I don’t call that very polite."...

In the train I slept but fitfully, awakening again and again to recall the extraordinary fact that I was now engaged to be married, to go over the incidents of the evening. Indifferent to the backings and the bumpings of the car, the voices in the stations, the clanging of locomotive bells and all the incomprehensible startings and stoppings, exalted yet troubled I beheld Maude luminous with the love I had amazingly awakened, a love somewhere beyond my comprehension. For her indeed marriage was made in heaven. But for me? Could I rise now to the ideal that had once been mine, thrust

henceforth evil out of my life? Love forever, live always in this sanctuary she had made for me? Would the time come when I should feel a sense of bondage?...

The wedding was set for the end of September. I continued to go every week to Elkington, and in August, Maude and I spent a fortnight at the sea. There could be no doubt as to my mother's happiness, as to her approval of Maude; they loved each other from the beginning. I can picture them now, sitting together with their sewing on the porch of the cottage at Mattapoisett. Out on the bay little white-caps danced in the sunlight, sail-boats tacked hither and thither, the strong cape breeze, laden with invigorating salt, stirred Maude's hair, and occasionally played havoc with my papers.

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“She is just the wife for you, Hugh,” my mother confided to me. “If I had chosen her myself I could not have done better,” she added, with a smile.

I was inclined to believe it, but Maude would have none of this illusion.

“He just stumbled across me,” she insisted....

We went on long sails together, towards Wood’s Hole and the open sea, the sprays washing over us. Her cheeks grew tanned.... Sometimes, when I praised her and spoke confidently of our future, she wore a troubled expression.

“What are you thinking about?” I asked her once.

“You mustn’t put me on a pedestal,” she said gently. “I want you to see me as I am—I don’t want you to wake up some day and be disappointed. I’ll have to learn a lot of things, and you’ll have to teach me. I can’t get used to the fact that you, who are so practical and successful in business, should be such a dreamer where I am concerned.”

I laughed, and told her, comfortably, that she was talking nonsense.

“What did you think of me, when you first knew me?” I inquired.

“Well,” she answered, with the courage that characterized her, “I thought you were rather calculating, that you put too high a price on success. Of course you attracted me. I own it.”

“You hid your opinions rather well,” I retorted, somewhat discomfited.

She flushed.

“Have you changed them?” I demanded.

“I think you have that side, and I think it a weak side, Hugh. It’s hard to tell you this, but it’s better to say so now, since you ask me. I do think you set too high a value on success.’

“Well, now that I know what success really is, perhaps I shall reform,” I told her.

“I don’t like to think that you fool yourself,” she replied, with a perspicacity I should have found extraordinary.

Throughout my life there have been days and incidents, some trivial, some important, that linger in my memory because they are saturated with “atmosphere.” I recall, for instance, a gala occasion in youth when my mother gave one of her luncheon parties; on my return from school, the house and its surroundings wore a mysterious, exciting

and unfamiliar look, somehow changed by the simple fact that guests sat decorously chatting in a dining-room shining with my mother's best linen and treasured family silver and china. The atmosphere of my wedding-day is no less vivid. The house of Ezra Hutchins was scarcely recognizable: its doors and windows were opened wide, and all the morning people were being escorted upstairs to an all-significant room that contained a collection like a jeweller's exhibit,—a bewildering display. There was a massive punch-bowl from which dangled the card of Mr. and Mrs. Adolf Scherer, a really wonderful tea set of old English silver given by Senator and Mrs. Watling, and Nancy Willett, with her certainty of good taste, had sent an old English tankard of the time of the second Charles. The secret was in that room. And it magically transformed for me (as I stood, momentarily alone, in the doorway where I had first beheld Maude) the accustomed scene, and charged with undivined significance the blue shadows under the heavy foliage of the maples. The September sunlight was heavy, tinged with gold....

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So fragmentary and confused are the events of that day that a cubist literature were necessary to convey the impressions left upon me. I had something of the feeling of a recruit who for the first time is taking part in a brilliant and complicated manoeuvre. Tom and Susan Peters flit across the view, and Gene Hollister and Perry Blackwood and the Ewanses,—all of whom had come up in a special car; Ralph Hambleton was “best man,” looking preternaturally tall in his frock-coat: and his manner, throughout the whole proceeding, was one of good-natured tolerance toward a folly none but he might escape.

“If you must do it, Hughie, I suppose you must,” he had said to me. “I’ll see you through, of course. But don’t blame me afterwards.”

Maude was a little afraid of him....

I dressed at George’s; then, like one of those bewildering shifts of a cinematograph, comes the scene in church, the glimpse of my mother’s wistful face in the front pew; and I found myself in front of the austere Mr. Doddridge standing beside Maude—or rather beside a woman I tried hard to believe was Maude—so veiled and generally encased was she. I was thinking of this all the time I was mechanically answering Mr. Doddridge, and even when the wedding march burst forth and I led her out of the church. It was as though they had done their best to disguise her, to put our union on the other-worldly plane that was deemed to be its only justification, to neutralize her sex at the very moment it should have been most enhanced. Well, they succeeded. If I had not been as conventional as the rest, I should have preferred to have run away with her in the lavender dress she wore when I first proposed to her. It was only when we had got into the carriage and started for the house and she turned to me her face from which the veil had been thrown back that I realized what a sublime meaning it all had for her. Her eyes were wet. Once more I was acutely conscious of my inability to feel deeply at supreme moments. For months I had looked forward with anticipation and impatience to my wedding-day.

I kissed her gently. But I felt as though she had gone to heaven, and that the face I beheld enshrouded were merely her effigy. Commonplace words were inappropriate, yet it was to these I resorted.

“Well—it wasn’t so bad after all! Was it?”

She smiled at me.

“You don’t want to take it back?”

She shook her head.

“I think it was a beautiful wedding, Hugh. I’m so glad we had a good day."...

She seemed shy, at once very near and very remote. I held her hand awkwardly until the carriage stopped.

A little later we were standing in a corner of the parlour, the atmosphere of which was heavy with the scent of flowers, submitting to the onslaught of relatives. Then came the wedding breakfast: croquettes, champagne, chicken salad, ice-cream, the wedding-cake, speeches and more kisses.... I remember Tom Peters holding on to both my hands.

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“Good-bye, and God bless you, old boy,” he was saying. Susan, in view of the occasion, had allowed him a little more champagne than usual—enough to betray his feelings, and I knew that these had not changed since our college days. I resolved to see more of him. I had neglected him and undervalued his loyalty.... He had followed me to my room in George’s house where I was dressing for the journey, and he gave it as his deliberate judgment that in Maude I had “struck gold.”

“She’s just the girl for you, Hughie,” he declared. “Susan thinks so, too.”

Later in the afternoon, as we sat in the state-room of the car that was bearing us eastward, Maude began to cry. I sat looking at her helplessly, unable to enter into her emotion, resenting it a little. Yet I tried awkwardly to comfort her.

“I can’t bear to leave them,” she said.

“But you will see them often, when we come back,” I reassured her. It was scarcely the moment for reminding her of what she was getting in return. This peculiar family affection she evinced was beyond me; I had never experienced it in any poignant degree since I had gone as a freshman to Harvard, and yet I was struck by the fact that her emotions were so rightly placed. It was natural to love one’s family. I began to feel, vaguely, as I watched her, that the new relationship into which I had entered was to be much more complicated than I had imagined. Twilight was coming on, the train was winding through the mountain passes, crossing and re-crossing a swift little stream whose banks were massed with alder; here and there, on the steep hillsides, blazed the goldenrod.... Presently I turned, to surprise in her eyes a wide, questioning look,—the look of a child. Even in this irrevocable hour she sought to grasp what manner of being was this to whom she had confided her life, and with whom she was faring forth into the unknown. The experience was utterly unlike my anticipation. Yet I responded. The kiss I gave her had no passion in it.

“I’ll take good care of you, Maude,” I said.

Suddenly, in the fading light, she flung her arms around me, pressing me tightly, desperately.

“Oh, I know you will, Hugh, dear. And you’ll forgive me, won’t you, for being so horrid to-day, of all days? I do love you!”

Neither of us had ever been abroad. And although it was before the days of swimming-pools and gymnasiums and a la carte cafes on ocean liners, the Atlantic was imposing enough. Maude had a more lasting capacity for pleasure than I, a keener enjoyment of new experiences, and as she lay beside me in the steamer-chair where I had carefully tucked her she would exclaim:

“I simply can’t believe it, Hugh! It seems so unreal. I’m sure I shall wake up and find myself back in Elkington.”

“Don’t speak so loud, my dear,” I cautioned her. There were some very formal-looking New Yorkers next us.

“No, I won’t,” she whispered. “But I’m so happy I feel as though I should like to tell everyone.”

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“There’s no need,” I answered smiling.

“Oh, Hugh, I don’t want to disgrace you!” she exclaimed, in real alarm. “Otherwise, so far as I am concerned, I shouldn’t care who knew.”

People smiled at her. Women came up and took her hands. And on the fourth day the formidable New Yorkers unexpectedly thawed.

I had once thought of Maude as plastic. Then I had discovered she had a mind and will of her own. Once more she seemed plastic; her love had made her so. Was it not what I had desired? I had only to express a wish, and it became her law. Nay, she appealed to me many times a day to know whether she had made any mistakes, and I began to drill her in my silly traditions,—gently, very gently.

“Well, I shouldn’t be quite so familiar with people, quite so ready to make acquaintances, Maude. You have no idea who they may be. Some of them, of course, like the Sardells, I know by reputation.”

The Sardells were the New Yorkers who sat next us.

“I’ll try, Hugh, to be more reserved, more like the wife of an important man.” She smiled.

“It isn’t that you’re not reserved,” I replied, ignoring the latter half of her remark. “Nor that I want you to change,” I said. “I only want to teach you what little of the world I know myself.”

“And I want to learn, Hugh. You don’t know how I want to learn!”

The sight of mist-ridden Liverpool is not a cheering one for the American who first puts foot on the mother country’s soil, a Liverpool of yellow-browns and dingy blacks, of tilted funnels pouring out smoke into an atmosphere already charged with it. The long wharves and shed roofs glistened with moisture.

“Just think, Hugh, it’s actually England!” she cried, as we stood on the wet deck. But I felt as though I’d been there before.

“No wonder they’re addicted to cold baths,” I replied. “They must feel perfectly at home in them, especially if they put a little lampblack in the water.”

Maude laughed.

“You grumpy old thing!” she exclaimed.

Nothing could dampen her ardour, not the sight of the rain-soaked stone houses when we got ashore, nor even the frigid luncheon we ate in the lugubrious hotel. For her it

was all quaint and new. Finally we found ourselves established in a compartment upholstered in light grey, with tassels and arm-supporters, on the window of which was pasted a poster with the word reserved in large, red letters. The guard inquired respectfully, as the porter put our new luggage in the racks, whether we had everything we wanted. The toy locomotive blew its toy whistle, and we were off for the north; past dingy, yellow tenements of the smoking factory towns, and stretches of orderly, hedge-spaced rain-swept country. The quaint cottages we glimpsed, the sight of distant, stately mansions on green slopes caused Maude to cry out with rapture:—“Oh, Hugh, there’s a manor-house!”

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More vivid than were the experiences themselves of that journey are the memories of them. We went to windswept, Sabbath-keeping Edinburgh, to high Stirling and dark Holyrood, and to Abbotsford. It was through Sir Walter's eyes we beheld Melrose bathed in autumn light, by his aid repeopled it with forgotten monks eating their fast-day kale.

And as we sat reading and dreaming in the still, sunny corners I forgot, that struggle for power in which I had been so furiously engaged since leaving Cambridge. Legislatures, politicians and capitalists receded into a dim background; and the gift I had possessed, in youth, of living in a realm of fancy showed astonishing signs of revival.

"Why, Hugh," Maude exclaimed, "you ought to have been a writer!"

"You've only just begun to fathom my talents," I replied laughingly. "Did you think you'd married just a dry old lawyer?"

"I believe you capable of anything," she said....

I grew more and more to depend on her for little things.

She was a born housewife. It was pleasant to have her do all the packing, while I read or sauntered in the queer streets about the inns. And she took complete charge of my wardrobe.

She had a talent for drawing, and as we went southward through England she made sketches of the various houses that took our fancy—suggestions for future home-building; we spent hours in the evenings in the inn sitting-rooms incorporating new features into our residence, continually modifying our plans. Now it was a Tudor house that carried us away, now a Jacobean, and again an early Georgian with enfolding wings and a wrought-iron grill. A stage of bewilderment succeeded.

Maude, I knew, loved the cottages best. She said they were more "homelike." But she yielded to my liking for grandeur.

"My, I should feel lost in a palace like that!" she cried, as we gazed at the Marquis of So-and-So's country-seat.

"Well, of course we should have to modify it," I admitted. "Perhaps—perhaps our family will be larger."

She put her hand on my lips, and blushed a fiery red....

We examined, with other tourists, at a shilling apiece historic mansions with endless drawing-rooms, halls, libraries, galleries filled with family portraits; elaborate, formal bedrooms where famous sovereigns had slept, all roped off and carpeted with canvas

strips to protect the floors. Through mullioned windows we caught glimpses of gardens and geometrical parterres, lakes, fountains, statuary, fantastic topiary and distant stretches of park. Maude sighed with admiration, but did not covet. She had me. But I was often uncomfortable, resenting the vulgar, gaping tourists with whom we were herded and the easy familiarity of the guides. These did not trouble Maude, who often annoyed me by asking naive questions herself. I would nudge her.

One afternoon when, with other compatriots, we were being hurried through a famous castle, the guide unwittingly ushered us into a drawing-room where the owner and several guests were seated about a tea-table. I shall never forget the stares they gave us before we had time precipitately to retreat, nor the feeling of disgust and rebellion that came over me. This was heightened by the remark of a heavy, six-foot Ohioan with an infantile face and a genial manner.

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“I notice that they didn’t invite us to sit down and have a bite,” he said. “I call that kind of inhospitable.”

“It was ’is lordship himself!” exclaimed the guide, scandalized.

“You don’t say!” drawled our fellow-countryman. “I guess I owe you another shilling, my friend.”

The guide, utterly bewildered, accepted it. The transatlantic point of view towards the nobility was beyond him.

“His lordship could make a nice little income if he set up as a side show,” added the Ohioan.

Maude giggled, but I was furious. And no sooner were we outside the gates than I declared I should never again enter a private residence by the back door.

“Why, Hugh, how queer you are sometimes,” she said.

“I maybe queer, but I have a sense of fitness,” I retorted.

She asserted herself.

“I can’t see what difference it makes. They didn’t know us. And if they admit people for money—”

“I can’t help it. And as for the man from Ohio—”

“But he was so funny!” she interrupted. “And he was really very nice.”

I was silent. Her point of view, eminently sensible as it was, exasperated me. We were leaning over the parapet of a little-stone bridge. Her face was turned away from me, but presently I realized that she was crying. Men and women, villagers, passing across the bridge, looked at us curiously. I was miserable, and somewhat appalled; resentful, yet striving to be gentle and conciliatory. I assured her that she was talking nonsense, that I loved her. But I did not really love her at that moment; nor did she relent as easily as usual. It was not until we were together in our sitting-room, a few hours later, that she gave in. I felt a tremendous sense of relief.

“Hugh, I’ll try to be what you want. You know I am trying. But don’t kill what is natural in me.”

I was touched by the appeal, and repentant...

It is impossible to say when the little worries, annoyances and disagreements began, when I first felt a restlessness creeping over me. I tried to hide these moods from her, but always she divined them. And yet I was sure that I loved Maude; in a surprisingly short period I had become accustomed to her, dependent on her ministrations and the normal, cosy intimacy of our companionship. I did not like to think that the keen edge of the enjoyment of possession was wearing a little, while at the same time I philosophized that the divine fire, when legalized, settles down to a comfortable glow. The desire to go home that grew upon me I attributed to the irritation aroused by the spectacle of a fixed social order commanding such unquestioned deference from the many who were content to remain resignedly outside of it. Before the setting in of the Liberal movement and the “American invasion” England was a country in which (from my point of view) one must be “somebody” in order to be happy. I was “somebody” at home; or at least rapidly becoming so....

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London was shrouded, parliament had risen, and the great houses were closed. Day after day we issued forth from a musty and highly respectable hotel near Piccadilly to a gloomy Tower, a soggy Hampton Court or a mournful British Museum. Our native longing for luxury—or rather my native longing—impelled me to abandon Smith's Hotel for a huge hostelry where our suite overlooked the Thames, where we ran across a man I had known slightly at Harvard, and other Americans with whom we made excursions and dined and went to the theatre. Maude liked these persons; I did not find them especially congenial. My life-long habit of unwillingness to accept what life sent in its ordinary course was asserting itself; but Maude took her friends as she found them, and I was secretly annoyed by her lack of discrimination. In addition to this, the sense of having been pulled up by the roots grew upon me.

"Suppose," Maude surprised me by suggesting one morning as we sat at breakfast watching the river craft flit like phantoms through the yellow-green fog—"suppose we don't go to France, after all, Hugh?"

"Not go to France!" I exclaimed. "Are you tired of the trip?"

"Oh, Hugh!" Her voice caught. "I could go on, always, if you were content."

"And—what makes you think that I'm not content?"

Her smile had in it just a touch of wistfulness.

"I understand you, Hugh, better than you think. You want to get back to your work, and—and I should be happier. I'm not so silly and so ignorant as to think that I can satisfy you always. And I'd like to get settled at home,—I really should."

There surged up within me a feeling of relief. I seized her hand as it lay on the table.

"We'll come abroad another time, and go to France," I said. "Maude, you're splendid!"

She shook her head.

"Oh, no, I'm not."

"You do satisfy me," I insisted. "It isn't that at all. But I think, perhaps, it would be wiser to go back. It's rather a crucial time with me, now that Mr. Watling's in Washington. I've just arrived at a position where I shall be able to make a good deal of money, and later on—"

"It isn't the money, Hugh," she cried, with a vehemence which struck me as a little odd. "I sometimes think we'd be a great deal happier without—without all you are going to make."

I laughed.

“Well, I haven’t made it yet.”

She possessed the frugality of the Hutchinses. And some times my lavishness had frightened her, as when we had taken the suite of rooms we now occupied.

“Are you sure you can afford them, Hugh?” she had asked when we first surveyed them.

I began married life, and carried it on without giving her any conception of the state of my finances. She had an allowance from the first.

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As the steamer slipped westward my spirits rose, to reach a climax of exhilaration when I saw the towers of New York rise gleaming like huge stalagmites in the early winter sun. Maude likened them more happily—to gigantic ivory chessmen. Well, New York was America's chessboard, and the Great Players had already begun to make moves that astonished the world. As we sat at breakfast in a Fifth Avenue hotel I ran my eye eagerly over the stock-market reports and the financial news, and rallied Maude for a lack of spirits.

"Aren't you glad to be home?" I asked her, as we sat in a hansom.

"Of course I am, Hugh!" she protested. "But—I can't look upon New York as home, somehow. It frightens me."

I laughed indulgently.

"You'll get used to it," I said. "We'll be coming here a great deal, off and on."

She was silent. But later, when we took a hansom and entered the streams of traffic, she responded to the stimulus of the place: the movement, the colour, the sight of the well-appointed carriages, of the well-fed, well-groomed people who sat in them, the enticement of the shops in which we made our purchases had their effect, and she became cheerful again....

In the evening we took the "Limited" for home.

We lived for a month with my mother, and then moved into our own house. It was one which I had rented from Howard Ogilvy, and it stood on the corner of Baker and Clinton streets, near that fashionable neighbourhood called "the Heights." Ogilvy, who was some ten years older than I, and who belonged to one of our old families, had embarked on a career then becoming common, but which at first was regarded as somewhat meteoric: gradually abandoning the practice of law, and perceiving the possibilities of the city of his birth, he had "gambled" in real estate and other enterprises, such as our local water company, until he had quadrupled his inheritance. He had built a mansion on Grant Avenue, the wide thoroughfare bisecting the Heights. The house he had vacated was not large, but essentially distinctive; with the oddity characteristic of the revolt against the banal architecture of the 80's. The curves of the tiled roof enfolded the upper windows; the walls were thick, the note one of mystery. I remember Maude's naive delight when we inspected it.

"You'd never guess what the inside was like, would you, Hugh?" she cried.

From the panelled box of an entrance hall one went up a few steps to a drawing-room which had a bowed recess like an oriel, and window-seats. The dining-room was an odd shape, and was wainscoted in oak; it had a tiled fireplace and (according to Maude)

the “sweetest” china closet built into the wall. There was a “den” for me, and an octagonal reception-room on the corner. Upstairs, the bedrooms were quite as unusual, the plumbing of the new pattern, heavy and imposing. Maude expressed the air of seclusion when she exclaimed that she could almost imagine herself in one of the mediaeval towns we had seen abroad.

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“It’s a dream, Hugh,” she sighed. “But—do you think we can afford it?"...

“This house,” I announced, smiling, “is only a stepping-stone to the palace I intend to build you some day.”

“I don’t want a palace!” she cried. “I’d rather live here, like this, always.”

A certain vehemence in her manner troubled me. I was charmed by this disposition for domesticity, and yet I shrank from the contemplation of its permanency. I felt vaguely, at the time, the possibility of a future conflict of temperaments. Maude was docile, now. But would she remain docile? and was it in her nature to take ultimately the position that was desirable for my wife? Well, she must be moulded, before it were too late. Her ultra-domestic tendencies must be halted. As yet blissfully unaware of the inability of the masculine mind to fathom the subtleties of feminine relationships, I was particularly desirous that Maude and Nancy Durrett should be intimates. The very day after our arrival, and while we were still at my mother’s, Nancy called on Maude, and took her out for a drive. Maude told me of it when I came home from the office.

“Dear old Nancy!” I said. “I know you liked her.”

“Of course, Hugh. I should like her for your sake, anyway. She’s—she’s one of your oldest and best friends.”

“But I want you to like her for her own sake.”

“I think I shall,” said Maude. She was so scrupulously truthful! “I was a little afraid of her, at first.”

“Afraid of Nancy!” I exclaimed.

“Well, you know, she’s much older than I. I think she is sweet. But she knows so much about the world—so much that she doesn’t say. I can’t describe it.”

I smiled.

“It’s only her manner. You’ll get used to that, when you know what she really is.”

“Oh, I hope so,” answered Maude. “I’m very anxious to like her—I do like her. But it takes me such a lot of time to get to know people.”

Nancy asked us to dinner.

“I want to help Maude all I can,—if she’ll let me,” Nancy said.

“Why shouldn’t she let you?” I asked.

“She may not like me,” Nancy replied.

“Nonsense!” I exclaimed.

Nancy smiled.

“It won’t be my fault, at any rate, if she doesn’t,” she said. “I wanted her to meet at first just the right people your old friends and a few others. It is hard for a woman—-especially a young woman—coming among strangers.” She glanced down the table to where Maude sat talking to Ham. “She has an air about her,—a great deal of self-possession.”

I, too, had noticed this, with pride and relief. For I knew Maude had been nervous.

“You are luckier than you deserve to be,” Nancy reminded me. “But I hope you realize that she has a mind of her own, that she will form her own opinions of people, independently of you.”

I must have betrayed the fact that I was a little startled, for the remark came as a confirmation of what I had dimly felt.

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“Of course she has,” I agreed, somewhat lamely. “Every woman has, who is worth her salt.”

Nancy’s smile bespoke a knowledge that seemed to transcend my own.

“You do like her?” I demanded.

“I like her very much indeed,” said Nancy, a little gravely. “She’s simple, she’s real, she has that which so few of us possess nowadays—character. But—I’ve got to be prepared for the possibility that she may not get along with me.”

“Why not?” I demanded.

“There you are again, with your old unwillingness to analyze a situation and face it. For heaven’s sake, now that you have married her, study her. Don’t take her for granted. Can’t you see that she doesn’t care for the things that amuse me, that make my life?”

“Of course, if you insist on making yourself out a hardened, sophisticated woman—” I protested. But she shook her head.

“Her roots are deeper,—she is in touch, though she may not realize it, with the fundamentals. She is one of those women who are race-makers.”

Though somewhat perturbed, I was struck by the phrase. And I lost sight of Nancy’s generosity. She looked me full in the face.

“I wonder whether you can rise to her,” she said. “If I were you, I should try. You will be happier—far happier than if you attempt to use her for your own ends, as a contributor to your comfort and an auxiliary to your career. I was afraid—I confess it—that you had married an aspiring, simpering and empty-headed provincial like that Mrs. George Hutchins’ whom I met once, and who would sell her soul to be at my table. Well, you escaped that, and you may thank God for it. You’ve got a chance, think it over.

“A chance!” I repeated, though I gathered something of her meaning.

“Think it over, said Nancy again. And she smiled.

“But—do you want me to bury myself in domesticity?” I demanded, without grasping the significance of my words.

“You’ll find her reasonable, I think. You’ve got a chance now, Hugh. Don’t spoil it.”

She turned to Leonard Dickinson, who sat on her other side....

When we got home I tried to conceal my anxiety as to Maude's impressions of the evening. I lit a cigarette, and remarked that the dinner had been a success.

"Do you know what I've been wondering all evening?" Maude asked. "Why you didn't marry Nancy instead of me."

"Well," I replied, "it just didn't come off. And Nancy was telling me at dinner how fortunate I was to have married you."

Maude passed this.

"I can't see why she accepted Hambleton Durrett. It seems horrible that such a woman as she is could have married—just for money.

"Nancy has an odd streak in her," I said. "But then we all have odd streaks. She's the best friend in the world, when she is your friend."

"I'm sure of it," Maude agreed, with a little note of penitence.

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“You enjoyed it,” I ventured cautiously.

“Oh, yes,” she agreed. “And everyone was so nice to me—for your sake of course.”

“Don’t be ridiculous!” I said. “I shan’t tell you what Nancy and the others said about you.”

Maude had the gift of silence.

“What a beautiful house!” she sighed presently. “I know you’ll think me silly, but so much luxury as that frightens me a little. In England, in those places we saw, it seemed natural enough, but in America—! And they all your friends—seem to take it as a matter of course.”

“There’s no reason why we shouldn’t have beautiful things and well served dinners, too, if we have the money to pay for them.”

“I suppose not,” she agreed, absently.

XV.

That winter many other entertainments were given in our honour. But the conviction grew upon me that Maude had no real liking for the social side of life, that she acquiesced in it only on my account. Thus, at the very outset of our married career, an irritant developed: signs of it, indeed, were apparent from the first, when we were preparing the house we had rented for occupancy. Hurrying away from my office at odd times to furniture and department stores to help decide such momentous questions as curtains, carpets, chairs and tables I would often spy the tall, uncompromising figure of Susan Peters standing beside Maude’s, while an obliging clerk spread out, anxiously, rugs or wall-papers for their inspection.

“Why don’t you get Nancy to help you, too!” I ventured to ask her once.

“Ours is such a little house—compared to Nancy’s, Hugh.”

My attitude towards Susan had hitherto remained undefined. She was Tom’s wife and Tom’s affair. In spite of her marked disapproval of the modern trend in business and social life,—a prejudice she had communicated to Tom, as a bachelor I had not disliked her; and it was certain that these views had not mitigated Tom’s loyalty and affection for me. Susan had been my friend, as had her brother Perry, and Lucia, Perry’s wife: they made no secret of the fact that they deplored in me what they were pleased to call plutocratic obsessions, nor had their disapproval always been confined to badinage. Nancy, too, they looked upon as a renegade. I was able to bear their reproaches with the superior good nature that springs from success, to point out why the American

tradition to which they so fatuously clung was a things of the past. The habit of taking dinner with them at least once a week had continued, and their arguments rather amused me. If they chose to dwell in a backwater out of touch with the current of great affairs, this was a matter to be deplored, but I did not feel strongly enough to resent it. So long as I remained a bachelor the relationship had not troubled me, but now that I was married I began to consider with some alarm its power to affect my welfare.

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It had remained for Nancy to inform me that I had married a woman with a mind of her own. I had flattered myself that I should be able to control Maude, to govern her predilections, and now at the very beginning of our married life she was showing a disquieting tendency to choose for herself. To be sure, she had found my intimacy with the Peterses and Blackwoods already formed; but it was an intimacy from which I was growing away. I should not have quarrelled with her if she had not discriminated: Nancy made overtures, and Maude drew back; Susan presented herself, and with annoying perversity and in an extraordinarily brief time Maude had become her intimate. It seemed to me that she was always at Susan's, lunching or playing with the children, who grew devoted to her; or with Susan, choosing carpets and clothes; while more and more frequently we dined with the Peterses and the Blackwoods, or they with us. With Perry's wife Maude was scarcely less intimate than with Susan. This was the more surprising to me since Lucia Blackwood was a dyed-in-the-wool "intellectual," a graduate of Radcliffe, the daughter of a Harvard professor. Perry had fallen in love with her during her visit to Susan. Lucia was, perhaps, the most influential of the group; she scorned the world, she held strong views on the higher education of women; she had long discarded orthodoxy for what may be called a Cambridge stoicism of simple living and high thinking; while Maude was a strict Presbyterian, and not in the least given to theories. When, some months after our homecoming, I ventured to warn her gently of the dangers of confining one's self to a coterie—especially one of such narrow views—-her answer was rather bewildering.

"But isn't Tom your best friend?" she asked.

I admitted that he was.

"And you always went there such a lot before we were married."

This, too, was undeniable. "At the same time," I replied, "I have other friends. I'm fond of the Blackwoods and the Peterses, I'm not advocating seeing less of them, but their point of view, if taken without any antidote, is rather narrowing. We ought to see all kinds," I suggested, with a fine restraint.

"You mean—more worldly people," she said with her disconcerting directness.

"Not necessarily worldly," I struggled on. "People who know more of the world—yes, who understand it better."

Maude sighed.

"I do try, Hugh,—I return their calls,—I do try to be nice to them. But somehow I don't seem to get along with them easily—I'm not myself, they make me shy. It's because I'm provincial."

“Nonsense!” I protested, “you’re not a bit provincial.” And it was true; her dignity and self-possession redeemed her.

Nancy was not once mentioned. But I think she was in both our minds....

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Since my marriage, too, I had begun to resent a little the attitude of Tom and Susan and the Blackwoods of humorous yet affectionate tolerance toward my professional activities and financial creed, though Maude showed no disposition to take this seriously. I did suspect, however, that they were more and more determined to rescue Maude from what they would have termed a frivolous career; and on one of these occasions—so exasperating in married life when a slight cause for pique tempts husband or wife to try to ask myself whether this affair were only a squall, something to be looked for once in a while on the seas of matrimony, and weathered: or whether Maude had not, after all, been right when she declared that I had made a mistake, and that we were not fitted for one another? In this gloomy view endless years of incompatibility stretched ahead; and for the first time I began to rehearse with a certain cold detachment the chain of apparently accidental events which had led up to my marriage: to consider the gradual blindness that had come over my faculties; and finally to wonder whether judgment ever entered into sexual selection. Would Maude have relapsed into this senseless fit if she had realized how fortunate she was? For I was prepared to give her what thousands of women longed for, position and influence. My resentment rose again against Perry and Tom, and I began to attribute their lack of appreciation of my achievements to jealousy. They had not my ability; this was the long and short of it.... I pondered also, regretfully, on my bachelor days. And for the first time, I, who had worked so hard to achieve freedom, felt the pressure of the yoke I had fitted over my own shoulders. I had voluntarily, though unwittingly, returned to slavery. This was what had happened. And what was to be done about it? I would not consider divorce.

Well, I should have to make the best of it. Whether this conclusion brought on a mood of reaction, I am unable to say. I was still annoyed by what seemed to the masculine mind a senseless and dramatic performance on Maude's part, an incomprehensible case of "nerves." Nevertheless, there stole into my mind many recollections of Maude's affection, many passages between us; and my eye chanced to fall on the ink-well she had bought me out of the allowance I gave her. An unanticipated pity welled up within me for her loneliness, her despair in that room upstairs. I got up—and hesitated. A counteracting, inhibiting wave passed through me. I hardened. I began to walk up and down, a prey to conflicting impulses. Something whispered, "go to her"; another voice added, "for your own peace of mind, at any rate." I rejected the intrusion of this motive as unworthy, turned out the light and groped my way upstairs. The big clock in the hall struck twelve.

I listened outside the door of the bedroom, but all was silent within. I knocked.

"Maude!" I said, in a low voice.

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There was no response.

“Maude—let me in! I didn’t mean to be unkind—I’m sorry.”

After an interval I heard her say: “I’d rather stay here,—to-night.”

But at length, after more entreaty and self-abasement on my part, she opened the door. The room was dark. We sat down together on the window-seat, and all at once she relaxed and her head fell on my shoulder, and she began weeping again. I held her, the alternating moods still running through me.

“Hugh,” she said at length, “how could you be so cruel? when you know I love you and would do anything for you.”

“I didn’t mean to be cruel, Maude,” I answered.

“I know you didn’t. But at times you seem so—indifferent, and you can’t understand how it hurts. I haven’t anybody but you, now, and it’s in your power to make me happy or—or miserable.”

Later on I tried to explain my point of view, to justify myself.

“All I mean,” I concluded at length, “is that my position is a little different from Perry’s and Tom’s. They can afford to isolate themselves, but I’m thrown professionally with the men who are building up this city. Some of them, like Ralph Hambleton and Mr. Ogilvy, I’ve known all my life. Life isn’t so simple for us, Maude—we can’t ignore the social side.”

“I understand,” she said contentedly. “You are more of a man of affairs—much more than Tom or Perry, and you have greater responsibilities and wider interests. I’m really very proud of you. Only—don’t you think you are a little too sensitive about yourself, when you are teased?”

I let this pass....

I give a paragraph from a possible biography of Hugh Paret which, as then seemed not improbable, might in the future have been written by some aspiring young worshipper of success.

“On his return from a brief but delightful honeymoon in England Mr. Paret took up again, with characteristic vigour, the practice of the law. He was entering upon the prime years of manhood; golden opportunities confronted him as, indeed, they confronted other men—but Paret had the foresight to take advantage of them. And his training under Theodore Watling was now to produce results.... The reputations had already been made of some of that remarkable group of financial geniuses who were chiefly

instrumental in bringing about the industrial evolution begun after the Civil War: at the same time, as is well known, a political leadership developed that gave proof of a deplorable blindness to the logical necessity of combinations in business. The lawyer with initiative and brains became an indispensable factor," *etc*., *etc*.

The biography might have gone on to relate my association with and important services to Adolf Scherer in connection with his constructive dream. Shortly after my return from abroad, in answer to his summons, I found him at Heinrich's, his napkin tucked into his shirt front, and a dish of his favourite sausages before him.

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“So, the honeymoon is over!” he said, and pressed my hand. “You are right to come back to business, and after awhile you can have another honeymoon, eh? I have had many since I married. And how long do you think was my first? A day! I was a foreman then, and the wedding was at six o’clock in the morning. We went into the country, the wife and I.”

He laid down his knife and fork, possessed by the memory. “I have grown rich since, and we’ve been to Europe and back to Germany, and travelled on the best ships and stayed at the best hotels, but I never enjoyed a holiday more than that day. It wasn’t long afterwards I went to Mr. Durrett and told him how he could save much money. He was always ready to listen, Mr. Durrett, when an employee had anything to say. He was a big man,—an iron-master. Ah, he would be astonished if only he could wake up now!”

“He would not only have to be an iron-master,” I agreed, “but a financier and a railroad man to boot.”

“A jack of all trades,” laughed Mr. Scherer. “That’s what we are—men in my position. Well, it was comparatively simple then, when we had no Sherman law and crazy statutes, such as some of the states are passing, to bother us. What has got into the politicians, that they are indulging in such foolishness?” he exclaimed, more warmly. “We try to build up a trade for this country, and they’re doing their best to tie our hands and tear it down. When I was in Washington the other day I was talking with one of those Western senators whose state has passed those laws. He said to me, ’Mr. Scherer, I’ve been making a study of the Boyne Iron Works. You are clever men, but you are building up monopolies which we propose to stop.’ ‘By what means?’” I asked. “‘Rebates, for one,’ said he, ’you get preferential rates from your railroad which give you advantages over your competitors.’ Foolishness!” Mr. Scherer exclaimed. “I tell him the railroad is a private concern, built up by private enterprise, and it has a right to make special rates for large shippers. No,—railroads are public carriers with no right to make special rates. I ask him what else he objects to, and he says patented processes. As if we don’t have a right to our own patents! We buy them. I buy them, when other steel companies won’t touch ’em. What is that but enterprise, and business foresight, and taking risks? And then he begins to talk about the tariff taking money out of the pockets of American consumers and making men like me rich. I have come to Washington to get the tariff raised on steel rails; and Watling and other senators we send down there are raising it for us. We are building up monopolies! Well, suppose we are. We can’t help it, even if we want to. Has he ever made a study of the other side of the question—the competition side? Of course he hasn’t.”

He brought down his beer mug heavily on the table. In times of excitement his speech suggested the German idiom. Abruptly his air grew mysterious; he glanced around the room, now becoming empty, and lowered his voice.

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“I have been thinking a long time, I have a little scheme,” he said, “and I have been to Washington to see Watling, to talk over it. Well, he thinks much of you. Fowndes and Ripon are good lawyers, but they are not smart like you. See Paret, he says, and he can come down and talk to me. So I ask you to come here. That is why I say you are wise to get home. Honeymoons can wait—eh?”

I smiled appreciatively.

“They talk about monopoly, those Populist senators, but I ask you what is a man in my place to do? If you don’t eat, somebody eats you—is it not so? Like the boa-constrictors—that is modern business. Look at the Keystone Plate people, over there at Morris. For years we sold them steel billets from which to make their plates, and three months ago they serve notice on us that they are getting ready to make their own billets, they buy mines north of the lakes and are building their plant. Here is a big customer gone. Next year, maybe, the Empire Tube Company goes into the business of making crude steel, and many more thousands of tons go from us. What is left for us, Paret?”

“Obviously you’ve got to go into the tube and plate business yourselves,” I said.

“So!” cried Mr. Scherer, triumphantly, “or it is close up. We are not fools, no, we will not lie down and be eaten like lambs for any law. Dickinson can put his hand on the capital, and I—I have already bought a tract on the lakes, at Bolivar, I have already got a plant designed with the latest modern machinery. I can put the ore right there, I can send the coke back from here in cars which would otherwise be empty, and manufacture tubes at eight dollars a ton less than they are selling. If we can make tubes we can make plates, and if we can make plates we can make boilers, and beams and girders and bridges.... It is not like it was but where is it all leading, my friend? The time will come—is right on us now, in respect to many products—when the market will be flooded with tubes and plates and girders, and then we’ll have to find a way to limit production. And the inefficient mills will all be forced to shut down.”

The logic seemed unanswerable, even had I cared to answer it.... He unfolded his campaign. The Boyne Iron Works was to become the Boyne Iron Works, Ltd., owner of various subsidiary companies, some of which were as yet blissfully ignorant of their fate. All had been thought out as calmly as the partition of Poland—only, lawyers were required; and ultimately, after the process of acquisition should have been completed, a delicate document was to be drawn up which would pass through the meshes of that annoying statutory net, the Sherman Anti-trust Law. New mines were to be purchased, extending over a certain large area; wide coal deposits; little strips of railroad to tap them. The competition of the Keystone Plate people was to be met by acquiring and bringing up to date the plate mills of King and Son, over the

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borders of a sister state; the Somersworth Bridge and Construction Company and the Gring Steel and Wire Company were to be absorbed. When all of this should have been accomplished, there would be scarcely a process in the steel industry, from the smelting of the ore to the completion of a bridge, which the Boyne Iron Works could not undertake. Such was the beginning of the “lateral extension” period.

“Two can play at that game,” Mr. Scherer said. “And if those fellows could only be content to let well enough alone, to continue buying their crude steel from us, there wouldn’t be any trouble."...

It was evident, however, that he really welcomed the “trouble,” that he was going into battle with enthusiasm. He had already picked out his points of attack and was marching on them. Life, for him, would have been a poor thing without new conflicts to absorb his energy; and he had already made of the Boyne Iron Works, with its open-hearth furnaces, a marvel of modern efficiency that had opened the eyes of the Steel world, and had drawn the attention of a Personality in New York,—a Personality who was one of the new and dominant type that had developed with such amazing rapidity, the banker-dinosaur; preying upon and superseding the industrial-dinosaur, conquering type of the preceding age, builder of the railroads, mills and manufactories. The banker-dinosaurs, the gigantic ones, were in Wall Street, and strove among themselves for the industrial spoils accumulated by their predecessors. It was characteristic of these monsters that they never fought in the open unless they were forced to. Then the earth rocked, huge economic structures tottered and fell, and much dust arose to obscure the vision of smaller creatures, who were bewildered and terrified. Such disturbances were called “panics,” and were blamed by the newspapers on the Democratic party, or on the reformers who had wantonly assailed established institutions. These dominant bankers had contrived to gain control of the savings of thousands and thousands of fellow-citizens who had deposited them in banks or paid them into insurance companies, and with the power thus accumulated had sallied forth to capture railroads and industries. The railroads were the strategic links. With these in hand, certain favoured industrial concerns could be fed, and others starved into submission.

Adolf Scherer might be said to represent a transitional type. For he was not only an iron-master who knew every detail of his business, who kept it ahead of the times; he was also a strategist, wise in his generation, making friends with the Railroad while there had yet been time, at length securing rebates and favours. And when that Railroad (which had been constructed through the enterprise and courage of such men as Nathaniel Durrett) had passed under the control of the banker-personality to whom I have referred, and had become part of a system, Adolf Scherer remained in alliance, and continued to receive favours.... I can well remember the time when the ultimate authority of our Railroad was transferred, quietly, to Wall Street. Alexander Barbour, its

president, had been a great man, but after that he bowed, in certain matters, to a greater one.

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I have digressed.... Mr. Scherer unfolded his scheme, talking about “units” as calmly as though they were checkers on a board instead of huge, fiery, reverberating mills where thousands and thousands of human beings toiled day and night—beings with families, and hopes and fears, whose destinies were to be dominated by the will of the man who sat opposite me. But—did not he in his own person represent the triumph of that American creed of opportunity? He, too, had been through the fire, had sweated beside the blasts, had handled the ingots of steel. He was one of the “fittest” who had survived, and looked it. Had he no memories of the terrors of that struggle?... Adolf Scherer had grown to be a giant. And yet without me, without my profession he was a helpless giant, at the mercy of those alert and vindictive lawmakers who sought to restrain and hamper him, to check his growth with their webs. How stimulating the idea of his dependence! How exhilarating too, the thought that that vision which had first possessed me as an undergraduate—on my visit to Jerry Kyme—was at last to be realized! I had now become the indispensable associate of the few who divided the spoils, I was to have a share in these myself.

“You’re young, Paret,” Mr. Scherer concluded. “But Watling has confidence in you, and you will consult him frequently. I believe in the young men, and I have already seen something of you—so?"...

When I returned to the office I wrote Theodore Watling a letter expressing my gratitude for the position he had, so to speak, willed me, of confidential legal adviser to Adolf Scherer. Though the opportunity had thrust itself upon me suddenly, and sooner than I expected it, I was determined to prove myself worthy of it. I worked as I had never worked before, making trips to New York to consult leading members of this new branch of my profession there, trips to Washington to see my former chief. There were, too, numerous conferences with local personages, with Mr. Dickinson and Mr. Grierson, and Judah B. Tallant,—whose newspaper was most useful; there were consultations and negotiations of a delicate nature with the owners and lawyers of other companies to be “taken in.” Nor was it all legal work, in the older and narrower sense. Men who are playing for principalities are making war. Some of our operations had all the excitement of war. There was information to be got, and it was got—somehow. Modern war involves a spy system, and a friendly telephone company is not to be despised. And all of this work from first to last had to be done with extreme caution. Moribund distinctions of right and wrong did not trouble me, for the modern man labours religiously when he knows that Evolution is on his side.

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For all of these operations a corps of counsel had been employed, including the firm of Harrington and Bowes next to Theodore Watling, Joel Harrington was deemed the ablest lawyer in the city. We organized in due time the corporation known as the Boyne Iron Works, Limited; a trust agreement was drawn up that was a masterpiece of its kind, one that caused, first and last, meddling officials in the Department of Justice at Washington no little trouble and perplexity. I was proud of the fact that I had taken no small part in its composition.... In short, in addition to certain emoluments and opportunities for investment, I emerged from the affair firmly established in the good graces of Adolf Scherer, and with a reputation practically made.

A year or so after the Boyne Company, Ltd., came into existence I chanced one morning to go down to the new Ashuela Hotel to meet a New Yorker of some prominence, and was awaiting him in the lobby, when I overheard a conversation between two commercial travellers who were sitting with their backs to me.

“Did you notice that fellow who went up to the desk a moment ago?” asked one.

“The young fellow in the grey suit? Sure. Who is he? He looks as if he was pretty well fixed.”

“I guess he is,” replied the first. “That’s Paret. He’s Scherer’s confidential counsel. He used to be Senator Watling’s partner, but they say he’s even got something on the old man.”

In spite of the feverish life I led, I was still undoubtedly young-looking, and in this I was true to the incoming type of successful man. Our fathers appeared staid at six and thirty. Clothes, of course, made some difference, and my class and generation did not wear the sombre and cumbersome kind, with skirts and tails; I patronized a tailor in New York. My chestnut hair, a little darker than my father’s had been, showed no signs of turning grey, although it was thinning a little at the crown of the forehead, and I wore a small moustache, clipped in a straight line above the mouth. This made me look less like a college youth. Thanks to a strong pigment in my skin, derived probably from Scotch-Irish ancestors, my colour was fresh. I have spoken of my life as feverish, and yet I am not so sure that this word completely describes it. It was full to overflowing—-one side of it; and I did not miss (save vaguely, in rare moments of weariness) any other side that might have been developed. I was busy all day long, engaged in affairs I deemed to be alone of vital importance in the universe. I was convinced that the welfare of the city demanded that supreme financial power should remain in the hands of the group of men with whom I was associated, and whose battles I fought in the courts, in the legislature, in the city council, and sometimes in Washington,—although they were well cared for there. By every means ingenuity could devise, their enemies were to be driven from the field, and they were to be protected from blackmail.

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A sense of importance sustained me; and I remember in that first flush of a success for which I had not waited too long—what a secret satisfaction it was to pick up the Era and see my name embedded in certain dignified notices of board meetings, transactions of weight, or cases known to the initiated as significant. "Mr. Scherer's interests were taken care of by Mr. Hugh Paret." The fact that my triumphs were modestly set forth gave me more pleasure than if they had been trumpeted in headlines. Although I might have started out in practice for myself, my affection and regard for Mr. Watling kept me in the firm, which became Watling, Fowndes and Paret, and a new, arrangement was entered into: Mr. Ripon retired on account of ill health.

There were instances, however, when a certain amount of annoying publicity was inevitable. Such was the famous Galligan case, which occurred some three or four years after my marriage. Aloysius Galligan was a brakeman, and his legs had become paralyzed as the result of an accident that was the result of defective sills on a freight car. He had sued, and been awarded damages of $15,000. To the amazement and indignation of Miller Gorse, the Supreme Court, to which the Railroad had appealed, affirmed the decision. It wasn't the single payment of $15,000 that the Railroad cared about, of course; a precedent might be established for compensating maimed employees which would be expensive in the long run. Carelessness could not be proved in this instance. Gorse sent for me. I had been away with Maude at the sea for two months, and had not followed the case.

"You've got to take charge, Paret, and get a rehearing. See Bering, and find out who in the deuce is to blame for this. Chesley's one, of course. We ought never to have permitted his nomination for the Supreme Bench. It was against my judgment, but Varney and Gill assured me that he was all right."

I saw Judge Bering that evening. We sat on a plush sofa in the parlour of his house in Baker Street.

"I had a notion Gorse'd be mad," he said, "but it looked to me as if they had it on us, Paret. I didn't see how we could do anything else but affirm without being too rank. Of course, if he feels that way, and you want to make a motion for a rehearing, I'll see what can be done."

"Something's got to be done," I replied. "Can't you see what such a decision lets them in for?"

"All right," said the judge, who knew an order when he heard one, "I guess we can find an error." He was not a little frightened by the report of Mr. Gorse's wrath, for election-day was approaching. "Say, you wouldn't take me for a sentimental man, now, would you?"

I smiled at the notion of it.

“Well, I’ll own up to you this kind of got under my skin. That Galligan is a fine-looking fellow, if there ever was one, and he’ll never be of a bit of use any more. Of course the case was plain sailing, and they ought to have had the verdict, but that lawyer of his handled it to the queen’s taste, if I do say so. He made me feel real bad, by God,—as if it was my own son Ed who’d been battered up. Lord, I can’t forget the look in that man Galligan’s eyes. I hate to go through it again, and reverse it, but I guess I’ll have to, now.”

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The Judge sat gazing at the flames playing over his gas log.

“Who was the lawyer?” I asked.

“A man by the name of Krebs,” he replied. “Never heard of him before. He’s just moved to the city.”

“This city?” I ejaculated.

The Judge glanced at me interestedly.

“This city, of course. What do you know about him?”

“Well,” I answered, when I had recovered a little from the shock—for it was a distinct shock—“he lived in Elkington. He was the man who stirred up the trouble in the legislature about Bill 709.”

The Judge slapped his knee.

“That fellow!” he exclaimed, and ruminated. “Why didn’t somebody tell me?” he added, complainingly. “Why didn’t Miller Gorse let me know about it, instead of licking up a fuss after it’s all over?"...

Of all men of my acquaintance I had thought the Judge the last to grow maudlin over the misfortunes of those who were weak or unfortunate enough to be defeated and crushed in the struggle for existence, and it was not without food for reflection that I departed from his presence. To make Mr. Bering “feel bad” was no small achievement, and Krebs had been responsible for it, of course,—not Galligan. Krebs had turned up once more! It seemed as though he were destined to haunt me. Well, I made up my mind that he should not disturb me again, at any rate: I, at least, had learned to eliminate sentimentality from business, and it was not without deprecation I remembered my experience with him at the Capital, when he had made me temporarily ashamed of my connection with Bill 709. I had got over that. And when I entered the court room (the tribunal having graciously granted a rehearing on the ground that it had committed an error in the law!) my feelings were of lively curiosity and zest. I had no disposition to underrate his abilities, but I was fortified by the consciousness of a series of triumphs behind me, by a sense of association with prevailing forces against which he was helpless. I could afford to take a superior attitude in regard to one who was destined always to be dramatic.

As the case proceeded I was rather disappointed on the whole that he was not dramatic—not even as dramatic as he had been when he defied the powers in the Legislature. He had changed but little, he still wore ill-fitting clothes, but I was forced to acknowledge that he seemed to have gained in self-control, in presence. He had nodded at me

before the case was called, as he sat beside his maimed client; and I had been on the alert for a hint of reproach in his glance: there was none. I smiled back at him....

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He did not rant. He seemed to have rather a remarkable knowledge of the law. In a conversational tone he described the sufferings of the man in the flannel shirt beside him, but there could be no question of the fact that he did produce an effect. The spectators were plainly moved, and it was undeniable that some of the judges wore rather a sheepish look as they toyed with their watch chains or moved the stationery in front of them. They had seen maimed men before, they had heard impassioned, sentimental lawyers talk about wives and families and God and justice. Krebs did none of this. Just how he managed to bring the thing home to those judges, to make them ashamed of their role, just how he managed—in spite of my fortified attitude to revive something of that sense of discomfort I had experienced at the State House is difficult to say. It was because, I think, he contrived through the intensity of his own sympathy to enter into the body of the man whose cause he pleaded, to feel the despair in Galligan's soul—an impression that was curiously conveyed despite the dignified limits to which he confined his speech. It was strange that I began to be rather sorry for him, that I felt a certain reluctant regret that he should thus squander his powers against overwhelming odds. What was the use of it all!

At the end his voice became more vibrant—though he did not raise it—as he condemned the Railroad for its indifference to human life, for its contention that men were cheaper than rolling-stock.

I encountered him afterward in the corridor. I had made a point of seeking him out, perhaps from some vague determination to prove that our last meeting in the little restaurant at the Capital had left no traces of embarrassment in me: I was, in fact, rather aggressively anxious to reveal myself to him as one who has thriven on the views he condemned, as one in whose unity of mind there is no rift. He was alone, apparently waiting for someone, leaning against a steam radiator in one of his awkward, angular poses, looking out of the court-house window.

"How are you?" I said blithely. "So you've left Elkington for a wider field." I wondered whether my alert cousin-in-law, George Hutchins, had made it too hot for him.

He turned to me unexpectedly a face of profound melancholy; his expression had in it, oddly, a trace of sternness; and I was somewhat taken aback by this evidence that he was still bearing vicariously the troubles of his client. So deep had been the thought I had apparently interrupted that he did not realize my presence at first.

"Oh, it's you, Paret. Yes, I've left Elkington," he said.

"Something of a surprise to run up against you suddenly, like this."

"I expected to see you," he answered gravely, and the slight emphasis he gave the pronoun implied not only a complete knowledge of the situation and of the part I had

taken in it, but also a greater rebuke than if his accusation had been direct. But I clung to my affability.

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“If I can do anything for you, let me know,” I told him. He said nothing, he did not even smile. At this moment he was opportunely joined by a man who had the appearance of a labour leader, and I walked away. I was resentful; my mood, in brief, was that of a man who has done something foolish and is inclined to talk to himself aloud: but the mood was complicated, made the more irritating by the paradoxical fact that that last look he had given me seemed to have borne the traces of affection....

It is perhaps needless to add that the court reversed its former decision.

XVI.

The Pilot published a series of sensational articles and editorials about the Galligan matter, a picture of Galligan, an account of the destitute state of his wife and family. The time had not yet arrived when such newspapers dared to attack the probity of our courts, but a system of law that permitted such palpable injustice because of technicalities was bitterly denounced. What chance had a poor man against such a moloch as the railroad, even with a lawyer of such ability as had been exhibited by Hermann Krebs? Krebs was praised, and the attention of Mr. Lawler’s readers was called to the fact that Krebs was the man who, some years before, had opposed single-handed in the legislature the notorious Bill No. 709. It was well known in certain circles—the editorial went on to say—that this legislation had been drawn by Theodore Watling in the interests of the Boyne Iron Works, *etc*., *etc*. Hugh Paret had learned at the feet of an able master. This first sight of my name thus opprobriously flung to the multitude gave me an unpleasant shock. I had seen Mr. Scherer attacked, Mr. Gorse attacked, and Mr. Watling: I had all along realized, vaguely, that my turn would come, and I thought myself to have acquired a compensating philosophy. I threw the sheet into the waste basket, presently picked it out again and reread the sentence containing my name. Well, there were certain penalties that every career must pay. I had become, at last, a marked man, and I recognized the fact that this assault would be the forerunner of many.

I tried to derive some comfort and amusement from the thought of certain operations of mine that Mr. Lawler had not discovered, that would have been matters of peculiar interest to his innocent public: certain extra-legal operations at the time when the Bovine corporation was being formed, for instance. And how they would have licked their chops had they learned of that manoeuvre by which I had managed to have one of Mr. Scherer’s subsidiary companies in another state, with property and assets amounting to more than twenty millions, reorganized under the laws of New Jersey, and the pending case thus transferred to the Federal court, where we won hands down! This Galligan affair was nothing to that. Nevertheless, it was annoying. As I sat in the street car on

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my way homeward, a man beside me was reading the Pilot. I had a queer sensation as he turned the page, and scanned the editorial; and I could not help wondering what he and the thousands like him thought of me; what he would say if I introduced myself and asked his opinion. Perhaps he did not think at all: undoubtedly he, and the public at large, were used to Mr. Lawler's daily display of "injustices." Nevertheless, like slow acid, they must be eating into the public consciousness. It was an outrage—this freedom of the press.

With renewed exasperation I thought of Krebs, of his disturbing and almost uncanny faculty of following me up. Why couldn't he have remained in Elkington? Why did he have to follow me here, to make capital out of a case that might never have been heard of except for him?... I was still in this disagreeable frame of mind when I turned the corner by my house and caught sight of Maude, in the front yard, bending bareheaded over a bed of late flowers which the frost had spared. The evening was sharp, the dusk already gathering.

"You'll catch cold," I called to her.

She looked up at the sound of my voice.

"They'll soon be gone," she sighed, referring to the flowers. "I hate winter."

She put her hand through my arm, and we went into the house. The curtains were drawn, a fire was crackling on the hearth, the lamps were lighted, and as I dropped into a chair this living-room of ours seemed to take on the air of a refuge from the vague, threatening sinister things of the world without. I felt I had never valued it before. Maude took up her sewing and sat down beside the table.

"Hugh," she said suddenly, "I read something in the newspaper—"

My exasperation flared up again.

"Where did you get that disreputable sheet?" I demanded.

"At the dressmaker's!" she answered. "I—I just happened to see the name, Paret."

"It's just politics," I declared, "stirring up discontent by misrepresentation. Jealousy."

She leaned forward in her chair, gazing into the flames.

"Then it isn't true that this poor man, Galligan—isn't that his name?—was cheated out of the damages he ought to have to keep himself and his family alive?"

“You must have been talking to Perry or Susan,” I said. “They seem to be convinced that I am an oppressor of the poor.

“Hugh!” The tone in which she spoke my name smote me. “How can you say that? How can you doubt their loyalty, and mine? Do you think they would undermine you, and to me, behind your back?”

“I didn’t mean that, of course, Maude. I was annoyed about something else. And Tom and Perry have an air of deprecating most of the enterprises in which I am professionally engaged. It’s very well for them to talk. All Perry has to do is to sit back and take in receipts from the Boyne Street car line, and Tom is content if he gets a few commissions every week. They’re like militiamen criticizing soldiers under fire. I know they’re good friends of mine, but sometimes I lose patience with them.”

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I got up and walked to the window, and came back again and stood before her.

“I’m sorry for this man, Galligan,” I went on, “I can’t tell you how sorry. But few people who are not on the inside, so to speak, grasp the fact that big corporations, like the Railroad, are looked upon as fair game for every kind of parasite. Not a day passes in which attempts are not made to bleed them. Some of these cases are pathetic. It had cost the Railroad many times fifteen thousand dollars to fight Galligan’s case. But if they had paid it, they would have laid themselves open to thousands of similar demands. Dividends would dwindle. The stockholders have a right to a fair return on their money. Galligan claims that there was a defective sill on the car which is said to have caused the wreck. If damages are paid on that basis, it means the daily inspection of every car which passes over their lines. And more than that: there are certain defects, as in the present case, which an inspection would not reveal. When a man accepts employment on a railroad he assumes a certain amount of personal risk,—it’s not precisely a chambermaid’s job. And the lawyer who defends such cases, whatever his personal feelings may be, cannot afford to be swayed by them. He must take the larger view.”

“Why didn’t you tell me about it before?” she asked.

“Well, I didn’t think it of enough importance—these things are all in the day’s work.”

“But Mr. Krebs? How strange that he should be here, connected with the case!”

I made an effort to control myself.

“Your old friend,” I said. “I believe you have a sentiment about him.”

She looked up at me.

“Scarcely that,” she replied gravely, with the literalness that often characterized her, “but he isn’t a person easily forgotten. He may be queer, one may not agree with his views, but after the experience I had with him I’ve never been able to look at him in the way George does, for instance, or even as father does.”

“Or even as I do,” I supplied.

“Well, perhaps not even as you do,” she answered calmly. “I believe you once told me, however, that you thought him a fanatic, but sincere.”

“He’s certainly a fanatic!” I exclaimed.

“But sincere, Hugh-you still think him sincere.”

“You seem a good deal concerned about a man you’ve laid eyes on but once.”

She considered this.

“Yes, it is surprising,” she admitted, “but it’s true. I was sorry for him, but I admired him. I was not only impressed by his courage in taking charge of me, but also by the trust and affection the work-people showed. He must be a good man, however mistaken he may be in the methods he employs. And life is cruel to those people.”

“Life is-life,” I observed. “Neither you nor I nor Krebs is able to change it.”

“Has he come here to practice?” she asked, after a moment.

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“Yes. Do you want me to invite him to dinner?” and seeing that she did not reply I continued: “In spite of my explanation I suppose you think, because Krebs defended the man Galligan, that a monstrous injustice has been done.”

“That is unworthy of you,” she said, bending over her stitch.

I began to pace the room again, as was my habit when overwrought.

“Well, I was going to tell you about this affair if you had not forestalled me by mentioning it yourself. It isn’t pleasant to be vilified by rascals who make capital out of vilification, and a man has a right to expect some sympathy from his wife.”

“Did I ever deny you that, Hugh?” she asked. “Only you don’t ever seem to need it, to want it.”

“And there are things,” I pursued, “things in a man’s province that a woman ought to accept from her husband, things which in the very nature of the case she can know nothing about.”

“But a woman must think for herself,” she declared. “She shouldn’t become a mere automaton,—and these questions involve so much! People are discussing them, the magazines and periodicals are beginning to take them up.”

I stared at her, somewhat appalled by this point of view. There had, indeed, been signs of its development before now, but I had not heeded them. And for the first time I beheld Maude in a new light.

“Oh, it’s not that I don’t trust you,” she continued, “I’m open to conviction, but I must be convinced. Your explanation of this Galligan case seems a sensible one, although it’s depressing. But life is hard and depressing sometimes I’ve come to realize that. I want to think over what you’ve said, I want to talk over it some more. Why won’t you tell me more of what you are doing? If you only would confide in me—as you have now! I can’t help seeing that we are growing farther and farther apart, that business, your career, is taking all of you and leaving me nothing.” She faltered, and went on again. “It’s difficult to tell you this—you never give me the chance. And it’s not for my sake alone, but for yours, too. You are growing more and more self-centred, surrounding yourself with a hard shell. You don’t realize it, but Tom notices it, Perry notices it, it hurts them, it’s that they complain of. Hugh!” she cried appealingly, sensing my resentment, forestalling the words of defence ready on my lips. “I know that you are busy, that many men depend on you, it isn’t that I’m not proud of you and your success, but you don’t understand what a woman craves,—she doesn’t want only to be a good housekeeper, a good mother, but she wants to share a little, at any rate, in the life of her husband, in his troubles as well as in his successes. She wants to be of some little use, of some little help to him.”

My feelings were reduced to a medley.

“But you are a help to me—a great help,” I protested.

She shook her head. “I wish I were,” she said.

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It suddenly occurred to me that she might be. I was softened, and alarmed by the spectacle she had revealed of the widening breach between us. I laid my hand on her shoulder.

“Well, I’ll try to do better, Maude.”

She looked up at me, questioningly yet gratefully, through a mist of tears. But her reply—whatever it might have been—was forestalled by the sound of shouts and laughter in the hallway. She sprang up and ran to the door.

“It’s the children,” she exclaimed, “they’ve come home from Susan’s party!”

It begins indeed to look as if I were writing this narrative upside down, for I have said nothing about children. Perhaps one reason for this omission is that I did not really appreciate them, that I found it impossible to take the same minute interest in them as Tom, for instance, who was, apparently, not content alone with the six which he possessed, but had adopted mine. One of them, little Sarah, said “Uncle Tom” before “Father.” I do not mean to say that I had not occasional moments of tenderness toward them, but they were out of my thoughts much of the time. I have often wondered, since, how they regarded me; how, in their little minds, they defined the relationship. Generally, when I arrived home in the evening I liked to sit down before my study fire and read the afternoon newspapers or a magazine; but occasionally I went at once to the nursery for a few moments, to survey with complacency the medley of toys on the floor, and to kiss all three. They received my caresses with a certain shyness—the two younger ones, at least, as though they were at a loss to place me as a factor in the establishment. They tumbled over each other to greet Maude, and even Tom. If I were an enigma to them, what must they have thought of him? Sometimes I would discover him on the nursery floor, with one or two of his own children, building towers and castles and railroad stations, or forts to be attacked and demolished by regiments of lead soldiers. He was growing comfortable-looking, if not exactly stout; prematurely paternal, oddly willing to renounce the fiercer joys of life, the joys of acquisition, of conquest, of youth.

“You’d better come home with me, Chickabiddy,” he would say, “that father of yours doesn’t appreciate you. He’s too busy getting rich.”

“Chickabiddy,” was his name for little Sarah. Half of the name stuck to her, and when she was older we called her Biddy.

She would gaze at him questioningly, her eyes like blue flower cups, a strange little mixture of solemnity and bubbling mirth, of shyness and impulsiveness. She had fat legs that creased above the tops of the absurd little boots that looked to be too tight; sometimes she rolled and tumbled in an ecstasy of abandon, and again she would sit motionless, as though absorbed in dreams. Her hair was like corn silk in the sun,

twisting up into soft curls after her bath, when she sat rosily presiding over her supper table.

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As I look back over her early infancy, I realize that I loved her, although it is impossible for me to say how much of this love is retrospective. Why I was not mad about her every hour of the day is a puzzle to me now. Why, indeed, was I not mad about all three of them? There were moments when I held and kissed them, when something within me melted: moments when I was away from them, and thought of them. But these moments did not last. The something within me hardened again, I became indifferent, my family was wiped out of my consciousness as though it had never existed.

There was Matthew, for instance, the oldest. When he arrived, he was to Maude a never-ending miracle, she would have his crib brought into her room, and I would find her leaning over the bedside, gazing at him with a rapt expression beyond my comprehension. To me he was just a brick-red morsel of humanity, all folds and wrinkles, and not at all remarkable in any way. Maude used to annoy me by getting out of bed in the middle of the night when he cried, and at such times I was apt to wonder at the odd trick the life-force had played me, and ask myself why I got married at all. It was a queer method of carrying on the race. Later on, I began to take a cursory interest in him, to watch for signs in him of certain characteristics of my own youth which, in the philosophy of my manhood, I had come to regard as defects. And it disturbed me somewhat to see these signs appear. I wished him to be what I had become by force of will—a fighter. But he was a sensitive child, anxious for approval; not robust, though spiritual rather than delicate; even in comparative infancy he cared more for books than toys, and his greatest joy was in being read to. In spite of these traits—perhaps because of them—there was a sympathy between us. From the time that he could talk the child seemed to understand me. Occasionally I surprised him gazing at me with a certain wistful look that comes back to me as I write.

Moreton, Tom used to call Alexander the Great because he was a fighter from the cradle, beating his elder brother, too considerate to strike back, and likewise—when opportunity offered—his sister; and appropriating their toys. A self-sufficient, doughty young man, with the round head that withstands many blows, taking by nature to competition and buccaneering in general. I did not love him half so much as I did Matthew—if such intermittent emotions as mine may be called love. It was a standing joke of mine—which Maude strongly resented—that Moreton resembled Cousin George of Elkington.

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Imbued with the highest ambition of my time, I had set my barque on a great circle, and almost before I realized it the barque was burdened with a wife and family and the steering had insensibly become more difficult; for Maude cared nothing about the destination, and when I took any hand off the wheel our ship showed a tendency to make for a quiet harbour. Thus the social initiative, which I believed should have been the woman's, was thrust back on me. It was almost incredible, yet indisputable, in a day when most American women were credited with a craving for social ambition that I, of all men, should have married a wife in whom the craving was wholly absent! She might have had what other women would have given their souls for. There were many reasons why I wished her to take what I deemed her proper place in the community as my wife—not that I cared for what is called society in the narrow sense; with me, it was a logical part of a broader scheme of life; an auxiliary rather than an essential, but a needful auxiliary; a means of dignifying and adorning the position I was taking. Not only that, but I felt the need of intercourse—of intercourse of a lighter and more convivial nature with men and women who saw life as I saw it. In the evenings when we did not go out into that world our city afforded ennui took possession of me: I had never learned to care for books, I had no resources outside of my profession, and when I was not working on some legal problem I dawdled over the newspapers and went to bed. I don't mean to imply that our existence, outside of our continued intimacy with the Peterses and the Blackwoods, was socially isolated. We gave little dinners that Maude carried out with skill and taste; but it was I who suggested them; we went out to other dinners, sometimes to Nancy's—though we saw less and less of her—sometimes to other houses. But Maude had given evidence of domestic tastes and a disinclination for gaiety that those who entertained more were not slow to sense. I should have liked to take a larger house, but I felt the futility of suggesting it; the children were still small, and she was occupied with them. Meanwhile I beheld, and at times with considerable irritation, the social world changing, growing larger and more significant, a more important function of that higher phase of American existence the new century seemed definitely to have initiated. A segregative process was away to which Maude was wholly indifferent. Our city was throwing off its social conservatism; wealth (which implied ability and superiority) was playing a greater part, entertainments were more luxurious, lines more strictly drawn. We had an elaborate country club for those who could afford expensive amusements. Much of this transformation had been due to the initiative and leadership of Nancy Durrett....

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Great and sudden wealth, however, if combined with obscure antecedents and questionable qualifications, was still looked upon askance. In spite of the fact that Adolf Scherer had “put us on the map,” the family of the great iron-master still remained outside of the social pale. He himself might have entered had it not been for his wife, who was supposed to be “queer,” who remained at home in her house opposite Gallatin Park and made little German cakes,—a huge house which an unknown architect had taken unusual pains to make pretentious and hideous, for it was Rhenish, Moorish and Victorian by turns. Its geometric grounds matched those of the park, itself a monument to bad taste in landscape. The neighbourhood was highly respectable, and inhabited by families of German extraction. There were two flaxen-haired daughters who had just graduated from an expensive boarding-school in New York, where they had received the polish needful for future careers. But the careers were not forthcoming.

I was thrown constantly with Adolf Scherer; I had earned his gratitude, I had become necessary to him. But after the great coup whereby he had fulfilled Mr. Watling’s prophecy and become the chief factor in our business world he began to show signs of discontent, of an irritability that seemed foreign to his character, and that puzzled me. One day, however, I stumbled upon the cause of this fermentation, to wonder that I had not discovered it before. In many ways Adolf Scherer was a child. We were sitting in the Boyne Club.

“Money—yes!” he exclaimed, apropos of some demand made upon him by a charitable society. “They come to me for my money—there is always Scherer, they say. He will make up the deficit in the hospitals. But what is it they do for me? Nothing. Do they invite me to their houses, to their parties?”

This was what he wanted, then,—social recognition. I said nothing, but I saw my opportunity: I had the clew, now, to a certain attitude he had adopted of late toward me, an attitude of reproach; as though, in return for his many favours to me, there were something I had left undone. And when I went home I asked Maude to call on Mrs. Scherer.

“On Mrs. Scherer!” she repeated.

“Yes, I want you to invite them to dinner.” The proposal seemed to take away her breath. “I owe her husband a great deal, and I think he feels hurt that the wives of the men he knows down town haven’t taken up his family.” I felt that it would not be wise, with Maude, to announce my rather amazing discovery of the iron-master’s social ambitions.

“But, Hugh, they must be very happy, they have their friends. And after all this time wouldn’t it seem like an intrusion?”

“I don’t think so,” I said, “I’m sure it would please him, and them. You know how kind he’s been to us, how he sent us East in his private car last year.”

“Of course I’ll go if you wish it, if you’re sure they feel that way.” She did make the call, that very week, and somewhat to my surprise reported that she liked Mrs. Scherer and the daughters: Maude’s likes and dislikes, needless to say, were not governed by matters of policy.

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“You were right, Hugh,” she informed me, almost with enthusiasm, “they did seem lonely. And they were so glad to see me, it was rather pathetic. Mr. Scherer, it seems, had talked to them a great deal about you. They wanted to know why I hadn’t come before. That was rather embarrassing. Fortunately they didn’t give me time to talk, I never heard people talk as they do. They all kissed me when I went away, and came down the steps with me. And Mrs. Scherer went into the conservatory and picked a huge bouquet. There it is,” she said, laughingly, pointing to several vases. “I separated the colours as well as I could when I got home. We had coffee, and the most delicious German cakes in the Turkish room, or the Moorish room, whichever it is. I’m sure I shan’t be able to eat anything more for days. When do you wish to have them for dinner?”

“Well,” I said, “we ought to have time to get the right people to meet them. We’ll ask Nancy and Ham.”

Maude opened her eyes.

“Nancy! Do you think Nancy would like them?”

“I’m going to give her a chance, anyway,” I replied....

It was, in some ways, a memorable dinner. I don’t know what I expected in Mrs. Scherer—from Maude’s description a benevolent and somewhat stupid, blue-eyed German woman, of peasant extraction. There could be no doubt about the peasant extraction, but when she hobbled into our little parlour with the aid of a stout, gold-headed cane she dominated it. Her very lameness added to a distinction that evinced itself in a dozen ways. Her nose was hooked, her colour high,—despite the years in Steelville,—her peculiar costume heightened the effect of her personality; her fire-lit black eyes bespoke a spirit accustomed to rule, and instead of being an aspirant for social honours, she seemed to confer them. Conversation ceased at her entrance.

“I’m sorry we are late, my dear,” she said, as she greeted Maude affectionately, “but we have far to come. And this is your husband!” she exclaimed, as I was introduced. She scrutinized me. “I have heard something of you, Mr. Paret. You are smart. Shall I tell you the smartest thing you ever did?” She patted Maude’s shoulder. “When you married your wife—that was it. I have fallen in love with her. If you do not know it, I tell you.”

Next, Nancy was introduced.

“So you are Mrs. Hambleton Durrett?”

Nancy acknowledged her identity with a smile, but the next remark was a bombshell.

“The leader of society.”

“Alas!” exclaimed Nancy, “I have been accused of many terrible things.”

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Their glances met. Nancy's was amused, baffling, like a spark in amber. Each, in its way, was redoubtable. A greater contrast between two women could scarcely have been imagined. It was well said (and not snobbishly) that generations had been required to make Nancy's figure: she wore a dress of blue sheen, the light playing on its ripples; and as she stood, apparently wholly at ease, looking down at the wife of Adolf Scherer, she reminded me of an expert swordsman who, with remarkable skill, was keeping a too pressing and determined aspirant at arm's length. I was keenly aware that Maude did not possess this gift, and I realized for the first time something of the similarity between Nancy's career and my own. She, too, in her feminine sphere, exercised, and subtly, a power in which human passions were deeply involved.

If Nancy Durrett symbolized aristocracy, established order and prestige, what did Mrs. Scherer represent? Not democracy, mob rule—certainly. The stocky German peasant woman with her tightly drawn hair and heavy jewels seemed grotesquely to embody something that ultimately would have its way, a lusty and terrible force in the interests of which my own services were enlisted; to which the old American element in business and industry, the male counterpart of Nancy Willett, had already succumbed. And now it was about to storm the feminine fastnesses! I beheld a woman who had come to this country with a shawl aver her head transformed into a new species of duchess, sure of herself, scorning the delicate euphemisms in which Fancy's kind were wont to refer to asocial realm, that was no less real because its boundaries had not definitely been defined. She held her stick firmly, and gave Nancy an indomitable look.

"I want you to meet my daughters. Gretchen, Anna, come here and be introduced to Mrs. Durrett."

It was not without curiosity I watched these of the second generation as they made their bows, noted the differentiation in the type for which an American environment and a "finishing school" had been responsible. Gretchen and Anna had learned—in crises, such as the present—to restrain the superabundant vitality they had inherited. If their cheekbones were a little too high, their Delft blue eyes a little too small, their colour was of the proverbial rose-leaves and cream. Gene Hollister's difficulty was to know which to marry. They were nice girls,—of that there could be no doubt; there was no false modesty in their attitude toward "society"; nor did they pretend—as so many silly people did, that they were not attempting to get anywhere in particular, that it was less desirable to be in the centre than on the dubious outer walks. They, too, were so glad to meet Mrs. Durrett.

Nancy's eyes twinkled as they passed on.

"You see what I have let you in for?" I said.

"My dear Hugh," she replied, "sooner or later we should have had to face them anyhow. I have recognized that for some time. With their money, and Mr. Scherer's prestige, and

the will of that lady with the stick, in a few years we should have had nothing to say. Why, she's a female Napoleon. Hilda's the man of the family."

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After that, Nancy invariably referred to Mrs. Scherer as Hilda.

If Mrs. Scherer was a surprise to us, her husband was a still greater one; and I had difficulty in recognizing the Adolf Scherer who came to our dinner party as the personage of the business world before whom lesser men were wont to cringe. He seemed rather mysteriously to have shed that personality; become an awkward, ingratiating, rather too exuberant, ordinary man with a marked German accent. From time to time I found myself speculating uneasily on this phenomenon as I glanced down the table at his great torso, white waist-coated for the occasion. He was plainly “making up” to Nancy, and to Mrs. Ogilvy, who sat opposite him. On the whole, the atmosphere of our entertainment was rather electric. “Hilda” was chiefly responsible for this; her frankness was of the breath-taking kind. Far from attempting to hide or ignore the struggle by which she and her husband had attained their present position, she referred with the utmost naivete to incidents in her career, while the whole table paused to listen.

“Before we had a carriage, yes, it was hard for me to get about. I had to be helped by the conductors into the streetcars. I broke my hip when we lived in Steelville, and the doctor was a numbskull. He should be put in prison, is what I tell Adolf. I was standing on a clothes-horse, when it fell. I had much washing to do in those days.”

“And—can nothing be done, Mrs. Scherer?” asked Leonard Dickinson, sympathetically.

“For an old woman? I am fifty-five. I have had many doctors. I would put them all in prison. How much was it you paid Dr. Stickney, in New York, Adolf? Five thousand dollars? And he did nothing—nothing. I’d rather be poor again, and work. But it is well to make the best of it."...

“Your grandfather was a fine man, Mr. Durrett,” she informed Hambleton. “It is a pity for you, I think, that you do not have to work.”

Ham, who sat on her other side, was amused.

“My grandfather did enough work for both of us,” he said.

“If I had been your grandfather, I would have started you in puddling,” she observed, as she eyed with disapproval the filling of his third glass of champagne. “I think there is too much gay life, too much games for rich young men nowadays. You will forgive me for saying what I think to young men?”

“I’ll forgive you for not being my grandfather, at any rate,” replied Ham, with unaccustomed wit.

She gazed at him with grim humour.

“It is bad for you I am not,” she declared.

There was no gainsaying her. What can be done with a lady who will not recognize that morality is not discussed, and that personalities are tabooed save between intimates. Hilda was a personage as well as a Tartar. Laws, conventions, usages—to all these she would conform when it pleased her. She would have made an admirable inquisitorial judge, and quite as admirable a sick nurse. A rare criminal lawyer, likewise, was wasted in her. She was one of those individuals, I perceived, whose loyalties dominate them; and who, in behalf of those loyalties, carry chips on their shoulders.

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“It is a long time that I have been wanting to meet you,” she informed me. “You are smart.”

I smiled, yet I was inclined to resent her use of the word, though I was by no means sure of the shade of meaning she meant to put into it. I had, indeed, an uneasy sense of the scantiness of my fund of humour to meet and turn such a situation; for I was experiencing, now, with her, the same queer feeling I had known in my youth in the presence of Cousin Robert Breck—the suspicion that this extraordinary person saw through me. It was as though she held up a mirror and compelled me to look at my soul features. I tried to assure myself that the mirror was distorted. I lost, nevertheless, the sureness of touch that comes from the conviction of being all of a piece. She contrived to resolve me again into conflicting elements. I was, for the moment, no longer the self-confident and triumphant young attorney accustomed to carry all before him, to command respect and admiration, but a complicated being whose unity had suddenly been split. I glanced around the table at Ogilvy, at Dickinson, at Ralph Hambleton. These men were functioning truly. But was I? If I were not, might not this be the reason for the lack of synthesis—of which I was abruptly though vaguely aware between my professional life, my domestic relationships, and my relationships with friends. The loyalty of the woman beside me struck me forcibly as a supreme trait. Where she had given, she did not withdraw. She had conferred it instantly on Maude. Did I feel that loyalty towards a single human being? towards Maude herself—my wife? or even towards Nancy? I pulled myself together, and resolved to give her credit for using the word “smart” in its unobjectionable sense. After all; Dickens had so used it.

“A lawyer must needs know something of what he is about, Mrs. Scherer, if he is to be employed by such a man as your husband,” I replied.

Her black eyes snapped with pleasure.

“Ah, I suppose that is so,” she agreed. “I knew he was a great man when I married him, and that was before Mr. Nathaniel Durrett found it out.”

“But surely you did not think, in those days, that he would be as big as he has become? That he would not only be president of the Boyne Iron Works, but of a Boyne Iron Works that has exceeded Mr. Durrett’s wildest dreams.”

She shook her head complacently.

“Do you know what I told him when he married me? I said, ’Adolf, it is a pity you are born in Germany.’ And when he asked me why, I told him that some day he might have been President of the United States.”

“Well, that won’t be a great deprivation to him,” I remarked. “Mr. Scherer can do what he wants, and the President cannot.”

“Adolf always does as he wants,” she declared, gazing at him as he sat beside the brilliant wife of the grandson of the man whose red-shirted foreman he had been. “He does what he wants, and gets what he wants. He is getting what he wants now,” she added, with such obvious meaning that I found no words to reply. “She is pretty, that Mrs. Durrett, and clever,—is it not so?”

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I agreed. A new and indescribable note had come into Mrs. Scherer's voice, and I realized that she, too, was aware of that flaw in the redoubtable Mr. Scherer which none of his associates had guessed. It would have been strange if she had not discovered it. "She is beautiful, yes," the lady continued critically, "but she is not to compare with your wife. She has not the heart,—it is so with all your people of society. For them it is not what you are, but what you have done, and what you have."

The banality of this observation was mitigated by the feeling she threw into it.

"I think you misjudge Mrs. Durrett," I said, incautiously. "She has never before had the opportunity of meeting Mr. Scherer of appreciating him."

"Mrs. Durrett is an old friend of yours?" she asked.

"I was brought up with her."

"Ah!" she exclaimed, and turned her penetrating glance upon me. I was startled. Could it be that she had discerned and interpreted those renascent feelings even then stirring within me, and of which I myself was as yet scarcely conscious? At this moment, fortunately for me, the women rose; the men remained to smoke; and Scherer, as they discussed matters of finance, became himself again. I joined in the conversation, but I was thinking of those instants when in flashes of understanding my eyes had met Nancy's; instants in which I was lifted out of my humdrum, deadly serious self and was able to look down objectively upon the life I led, the life we all led—and Nancy herself; to see with her the comic irony of it all. Nancy had the power to give me this exquisite sense of detachment that must sustain her. And was it not just this sustenance she could give that I needed? For want of it I was hardening, crystallizing, growing blind to the joy and variety of existence. Nancy could have saved me; she brought it home to me that I needed salvation.... I was struck by another thought; in spite of our separation, in spite of her marriage and mine, she was still nearer to me—far nearer—-than any other being.

Later, I sought her out. She looked up at me amusedly from the window-seat in our living-room, where she had been talking to the Scherer girls.

"Well, how did you get along with Hilda?" she asked. "I thought I saw you struggling."

"She's somewhat disconcerting," I said. "I felt as if she were turning me inside out."

Nancy laughed.

"Hilda's a discovery—a genius. I'm going to have them to dinner myself."

"And Adolf?" I inquired. "I believe she thought you were preparing to run away with him. You seemed to have him hypnotized."

“I’m afraid your great man won’t be able to stand—elevation,” she declared. “He’ll have vertigo. He’s even got it now, at this little height, and when he builds his palace on Grant Avenue, and later moves to New York, I’m afraid he’ll wobble even more.”

“Is he thinking of doing all that?” I asked.

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“I merely predict New York—it’s inevitable,” she replied. “Grant Avenue, yes; he wants me to help him choose a lot. He gave me ten thousand dollars for our Orphans’ Home, but on the whole I think I prefer Hilda even if she doesn’t approve of me.”

Nancy rose. The Scherers were going. While Mr. Scherer pressed my hand in a manner that convinced me of his gratitude, Hilda was bidding an affectionate good night to Maude. A few moments later she bore her husband and daughters away, and we heard the tap-tap of her cane on the walk outside....

XVII.

The remembrance of that dinner when with my connivance the Scherers made their social debut is associated in my mind with the coming of the fulness of that era, mad and brief, when gold rained down like manna from our sooty skies. Even the church was prosperous; the Rev. Carey Heddon, our new minister, was well abreast of the times, typical of the new and efficient Christianity that has finally buried the hatchet with enlightened self-interest. He looked like a young and prosperous man of business, and indeed he was one.

The fame of our city spread even across the Atlantic, reaching obscure hamlets in Europe, where villagers gathered up their lares and penates, mortgaged their homes, and bought steamship tickets from philanthropists,—philanthropists in diamonds. Our Huns began to arrive, their Attilas unrecognized among them: to drive our honest Americans and Irish and Germans out of the mills by “lowering the standard of living.” Still—according to the learned economists in our universities, enlightened self-interest triumphed. Had not the honest Americans and Germans become foremen and even presidents of corporations? What greater vindication for their philosophy could be desired?

The very aspect of the city changed like magic. New buildings sprang high in the air; the Reliance Trust (Mr. Grierson’s), the Scherer Building, the Hambleton Building; a stew hotel, the Ashuela, took proper care of our visitors from the East,—a massive, grey stone, thousand-awninged affair on Boyne Street, with a grill where it became the fashion to go for supper after the play, and a head waiter who knew in a few weeks everyone worth knowing.

To return for a moment to the Huns. Maude had expressed a desire to see a mill, and we went, one afternoon, in Mr. Scherer’s carriage to Steelville, with Mr. Scherer himself, —a bewildering, educative, almost terrifying experience amidst fumes and flames, gigantic forces and titanic weights. It seemed a marvel that we escaped being crushed or burned alive in those huge steel buildings reverberating with sound. They appeared a very bedlam of chaos, instead of the triumph of order, organization and human skill. Mr. Scherer was very proud of it all, and ours was a sort of triumphal procession,

accompanied by superintendents, managers and other factotums. I thought of my childhood image of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, and our progress through the flames seemed no less remarkable and miraculous.

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Maude, with alarm in her eyes, kept very close to me, as I supplemented the explanations they gave her. I had been there many times before.

“Why, Hugh,” she exclaimed, “you seem to know a lot about it!”

Mr. Scherer laughed.

“He’s had to talk about it once or twice in court—eh, Hugh? You didn’t realize how clever your husband was did you, Mrs. Paret?”

“But this is so—complicated,” she replied. “It is overwhelming.”

“When I found out how much trouble he had taken to learn about my business,” added Mr. Scherer, “there was only one thing to do. Make him my lawyer. Hugh, you have the floor, and explain the open-hearth process.”

I had almost forgotten the Huns. I saw Maude gazing at them with a new kind of terror. And when we sat at home that evening they still haunted her.

“Somehow, I can’t bear to think about them,” she said. “I’m sure we’ll have to pay for it, some day.”

“Pay for what?” I asked.

“For making them work that way. And twelve hours! It can’t be right, while we have so much, and are so comfortable.”

“Don’t be foolish,” I exclaimed. “They’re used to it. They think themselves lucky to get the work—and they are. Besides, you give them credit for a sensitiveness that they don’t possess. They wouldn’t know what to do with such a house as this if they had it.”

“I never realized before that our happiness and comfort were built on such foundations;” she said, ignoring my remark.

“You must have seen your father’s operatives, in Elkington, many times a week.”

“I suppose I was too young to think about such things,” she reflected. “Besides, I used to be sorry for them, sometimes. But these men at the steel mills—I can’t tell you what I feel about them. The sight of their great bodies and their red, sullen faces brought home to me the cruelty of life. Did you notice how some of them stared at us, as though they were but half awake in the heat, with that glow on their faces? It made me afraid—afraid that they’ll wake up some day, and then they will be terrible. I thought of the children. It seems not only wicked, but mad to bring ignorant foreigners over here and make them slaves like that, and so many of them are hurt and maimed. I can’t forget them.”

“You’re talking Socialism,” I said crossly, wondering whether Lucia had taken it up as her latest fad.

“Oh, no, I’m not,” said Maude, “I don’t know what Socialism is. I’m talking about something that anyone who is not dazzled by all this luxury we are living in might be able to see, about something which, when it comes, we shan’t be able to help.”

I ridiculed this. The prophecy itself did not disturb me half as much as the fact that she had made it, as this new evidence that she was beginning to think for herself, and along lines so different from my own development.

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While it lasted, before novelists, playwrights, professors and ministers of the Gospel abandoned their proper sphere to destroy it, that Golden Age was heaven; the New Jerusalem—in which we had ceased to believe—would have been in the nature of an anticlimax to any of our archangels of finance who might have attained it. The streets of our own city turned out to be gold; gold likewise the acres of unused, scrubby land on our outskirts, as the incident of the Riverside Franchise—which I am about to relate—-amply proved.

That scheme originated in the alert mind of Mr. Frederick Grierson, and in spite of the fact that it has since become notorious in the eyes of a virtue-stricken public, it was entered into with all innocence at the time: most of the men who were present at the "magnate's" table at the Boyne Club the day Mr. Grierson broached it will vouch for this. He casually asked Mr. Dickinson if he had ever noticed a tract lying on the river about two miles beyond the Heights, opposite what used to be in the old days a road house.

"This city is growing so fast, Leonard," said Grierson, lighting a special cigar the Club kept for him, "that it might pay a few of us to get together and buy that tract, have the city put in streets and sewers and sell it in building lots. I think I can get most of it at less than three hundred dollars an acre."

Mr. Dickinson was interested. So were Mr. Ogilvy and Ralph Hambleton, and Mr. Scherer, who chanced to be there. Anything Fred Grierson had to say on the question of real estate was always interesting. He went on to describe the tract, its size and location.

"That's all very well, Fred," Dickinson objected presently, "but how are your prospective householders going to get out there?"

"Just what I was coming to," cried Grierson, triumphantly, "we'll get a franchise, and build a street-railroad out Maplewood Avenue, an extension of the Park Street line. We can get the franchise for next to nothing, if we work it right." (Mr. Grierson's eye fell on me), "and sell it out to the public, if you underwrite it, for two million or so."

"Well, you've got your nerve with you, Fred, as usual," said Dickinson. But he rolled his cigar in his mouth, an indication, to those who knew him well, that he was considering the matter. When Leonard Dickinson didn't say "no" at once, there was hope. "What do you think the property holders on Maplewood Avenue would say? Wasn't it understood, when that avenue was laid out, that it was to form part of the system of boulevards?"

"What difference does it make what they say?" Ralph interposed.

Dickinson smiled. He, too, had an exaggerated respect for Ralph. We all thought the proposal daring, but in no way amazing; the public existed to be sold things to, and what

did it matter if the Maplewood residents, as Ralph said; and the City Improvement League protested?

Perry Blackwood was the Secretary of the City Improvement League, the object of which was to beautify the city by laying out a system of parkways.

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The next day some of us gathered in Dickinson's office and decided that Grierson should go ahead and get the options. This was done; not, of course, in Grierson's name. The next move, before the formation of the Riverside Company, was to "see" Mr. Judd Jason. The success or failure of the enterprise was in his hands. Mahomet must go to the mountain, and I went to Monahan's saloon, first having made an appointment. It was not the first time I had been there since I had made that first memorable visit, but I never quite got over the feeling of a neophyte before Buddha, though I did not go so far as to analyze the reason,—that in Mr. Jason I was brought face to face with the concrete embodiment of the philosophy I had adopted, the logical consequence of enlightened self-interest. If he had ever heard of it, he would have made no pretence of being anything else. Greatness, declares some modern philosopher, has no connection with virtue; it is the continued, strong and logical expression of some instinct; in Mr. Jason's case, the predatory instinct. And like a true artist, he loved his career for itself—not for what its fruits could buy. He might have built a palace on the Heights with the tolls he took from the disreputable houses of the city; he was contented with Monahan's saloon: nor did he seek to propitiate a possible God by endowing churches and hospitals with a portion of his income. Try though I might, I never could achieve the perfection of this man's contempt for all other philosophies. The very fact of my going there in secret to that dark place of his from out of the bright, respectable region in which I lived was in itself an acknowledgment of this. I thought him a thief—a necessary thief—and he knew it: he was indifferent to it; and it amused him, I think, to see clinging to me, when I entered his presence, shreds of that morality which those of my world who dealt with him thought so needful for the sake of decency.

He was in bed, reading newspapers, as usual. An empty coffee-cup and a plate were on the littered table.

"Sit down, sit down, Paret," he said. "What do you hear from the Senator?"

I sat down, and gave him the news of Mr. Watling. He seemed, as usual, distrait, betraying no curiosity as to the object of my call, his lean, brown fingers playing with the newspapers on his lap. Suddenly, he flashed out at me one of those remarks which produced the uncanny conviction that, so far as affairs in the city were concerned, he was omniscient.

"I hear somebody has been getting options on that tract of land beyond the Heights, on the river."

He had "focussed."

"How did you hear that?" I asked.

He smiled.

“It’s Grierson, ain’t it?”

“Yes, it’s Grierson,” I said.

“How are you going to get your folks out there?” he demanded.

“That’s what I’ve come to see you about. We want a franchise for Maplewood Avenue.”

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“Maplewood Avenue!” He lay back with his eyes closed, as though trying to visualize such a colossal proposal....

When I left him, two hours later, the details were all arranged, down to Mr. Jason’s consideration from Riverside Company and the “fee” which his lawyer, Mr. Bitter, was to have for “presenting the case” before the Board of Aldermen. I went back to lunch at the Boyne Club, and to receive the congratulations of my friends. The next week the Riverside Company was formed, and I made out a petition to the Board of Aldermen for a franchise; Mr. Bitter appeared and argued: in short, the procedure so familiar to modern students of political affairs was gone through. The Maplewood Avenue residents rose en masse, supported by the City Improvement League. Perry Blackwood, as soon as he heard of the petition, turned up at my office. By this time I was occupying Mr. Watling’s room.

“Look here,” he began, as soon as the office-boy had closed the door behind him, “this is going it a little too strong.”

“What is?” I asked, leaning back in my chair and surveying him.

“This proposed Maplewood Avenue Franchise. Hugh,” he said, “you and I have been friends a good many years, Lucia and I are devoted to Maude.”

I did not reply.

“I’ve seen all along that we’ve been growing apart,” he added sadly. “You’ve got certain ideas about things which I can’t share. I suppose I’m old fashioned. I can’t trust myself to tell you what I think—what Tom and I think about this deal.”

“Go ahead, Perry,” I said.

He got up, plainly agitated, and walked to the window. Then he turned to me appealingly.

“Get out of it, for God’s sake get out of it, before it’s too late. For your own sake, for Maude’s, for the children’s. You don’t realize what you are doing. You may not believe me, but the time will come when these fellows you are in with will be repudiated by the community,—their money won’t help them. Tom and I are the best friends you have,” he added, a little irrelevantly.

“And you think I’m going to the dogs.”

“Now don’t take it the wrong way,” he urged.

“What is it you object to about the Maplewood franchise?” I asked. “If you’ll look at a map of the city, you’ll see that development is bound to come on that side. Maplewood

Avenue is the natural artery, somebody will build a line out there, and if you'd rather have eastern capitalists—"

"Why are you going to get this franchise?" he demanded. "Because we haven't a decent city charter, and a healthy public spirit, you fellows are buying it from a corrupt city boss, and bribing a corrupt board of aldermen. That's the plain language of it. And it's only fair to warn you that I'm going to say so, openly."

"Be sensible," I answered. "We've got to have street railroads,—your family has one. We know what the aldermen are, what political conditions are. If you feel this way about it, the thing to do is to try to change them. But why blame me for getting a franchise for a company in the only manner in which, under present conditions, a franchise can be got? Do you want the city to stand still? If not, we have to provide for the new population."

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“Every time you bribe these rascals for a franchise you entrench them,” he cried. “You make it more difficult to oust them. But you mark my words, we shall get rid of them some day, and when that fight comes, I want to be in it.”

He had grown very much excited; and it was as though this excitement suddenly revealed to me the full extent of the change that had taken place in him since he had left college. As he stood facing me, almost glaring at me through his eye-glasses, I beheld a slim, nervous, fault-finding doctrinaire, incapable of understanding the world as it was, lacking the force of his pioneer forefathers. I rather pitied him.

“I’m sorry we can’t look at this thing alike, Perry,” I told him. “You’ve said solve pretty hard things, but I realize that you hold your point of view in good faith, and that you have come to me as an old friend. I hope it won’t make any difference in our personal relations.”

“I don’t see how it can help making a difference,” he answered slowly. His excitement had cooled abruptly: he seemed dazed. At this moment my private stenographer entered to inform me that I was being called up on the telephone from New York. “Well, you have more important affairs to attend to, I won’t bother you any more,” he added.

“Hold on,” I exclaimed, “this call can wait. I’d like to talk it over with you.”

“I’m afraid it wouldn’t be any use, Hugh,” he said, and went out.

After talking with the New York client whose local interests I represented I sat thinking over the conversation with Perry. Considering Maude’s intimacy with and affection for the Blackwoods, the affair was awkward, opening up many uncomfortable possibilities; and it was the prospect of discomfort that bothered me rather than regret for the probable loss of Perry’s friendship. I still believed myself to have an affection for him: undoubtedly this was a sentimental remnant....

That evening after dinner Tom came in alone, and I suspected that Perry had sent him. He was fidgety, ill at ease, and presently asked if I could see him a moment in my study. Maude’s glance followed us.

“Say, Hugh, this is pretty stiff,” he blurted out characteristically, when the door was closed.

“I suppose you mean the Riverside Franchise,” I said. He looked up at me, miserably, from the chair into which he had sunk, his hands in his pockets.

“You’ll forgive me for talking about it, won’t you? You used to lecture me once in a while at Cambridge, you know.”

“That’s all right—go ahead,” I replied, trying to speak amiably.

“You know I’ve always admired you, Hugh,—I never had your ability,” he began painfully, “you’ve gone ahead pretty fast,—the truth is that Perry and I have been worried about you for some time. We’ve tried not to be too serious in showing it, but we’ve felt that these modern business methods were getting into your system without your realizing it. There are some things a man’s friends can tell him, and it’s their duty to tell him. Good God, haven’t you got enough, Hugh,—enough success and enough money, without going into a thing like this Riverside scheme?”

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I was intensely annoyed, if not angry; and I hesitated a moment to calm myself.

“Tom, you don’t understand my position,” I said. “I’m willing to discuss it with you, now that you’ve opened up the subject. Perry’s been talking to you, I can see that. I think Perry’s got queer ideas,—to be plain with you, and they’re getting queerer.”

He sat down again while, with what I deemed a rather exemplary patience, I went over the arguments in favour of my position; and as I talked, it clarified in my own mind. It was impossible to apply to business an individual code of ethics,—even to Perry’s business, to Tom’s business: the two were incompatible, and the sooner one recognized that the better: the whole structure of business was built up on natural, as opposed to ethical law. We had arrived at an era of frankness—that was the truth—and the sooner we faced this truth the better for our peace of mind. Much as we might deplore the political system that had grown up, we had to acknowledge, if we were consistent, that it was the base on which our prosperity was built. I was rather proud of having evolved this argument; it fortified my own peace of mind, which had been disturbed by Tom’s attitude. I began to pity him. He had not been very successful in life, and with the little he earned, added to Susan’s income, I knew that a certain ingenuity was required to make both ends meet. He sat listening with a troubled look. A passing phase of feeling clouded for a brief moment my confidence when there arose in my mind an unbidden memory of my youth, of my father. He, too, had mistrusted my ingenuity. I recalled how I had out-manoeuvred him and gone to college; I remembered the March day so long ago, when Tom and I had stood on the corner debating how to deceive him, and it was I who had suggested the nice distinction between a boat and a raft. Well, my father’s illogical attitude towards boyhood nature, towards human nature, had forced me into that lie, just as the senseless attitude of the public to-day forced business into a position of hypocrisy.

“Well, that’s clever,” he said, slowly and perplexedly, when I had finished. “It’s damned clever, but somehow it looks to me all wrong. I can’t pick it to pieces.” He got up rather heavily. “I—I guess I ought to be going. Susan doesn’t know where I am.”

I was exasperated. It was clear, though he did not say so, that he thought me dishonest. The pain in his eyes had deepened.

“If you feel that way—” I said.

“Oh, God, I don’t know how I feel!” he cried. “You’re the oldest friend I have, Hugh,—I can’t forget that. We’ll say nothing more about it.” He picked up his hat and a moment later I heard the front door close behind him. I stood for a while stock-still, and then went into the living-room, where Maude was sewing.

“Why, where’s Tom?” she inquired, looking up.

“Oh, he went home. He said Susan didn’t know where he was.”

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“How queer! Hugh, was there anything the matter? Is he in trouble?” she asked anxiously.

I stood toying with a book-mark, reflecting. She must inevitably come to suspect that something had happened, and it would be as well to fortify her.

“The trouble is,” I said after a moment, “that Perry and Tom would like to run modern business on the principle of a charitable institution. Unfortunately, it is not practical. They’re upset because I have been retained by a syndicate whose object is to develop some land out beyond Maplewood Avenue. They’ve bought the land, and we are asking the city to give us a right to build a line out Maplewood Avenue, which is the obvious way to go. Perry says it will spoil the avenue. That’s nonsense, in the first place. The avenue is wide, and the tracks will be in a grass plot in the centre. For the sake of keeping tracks off that avenue he would deprive people of attractive homes at a small cost, of the good air they can get beyond the heights; he would stunt the city’s development.”

“That does seem a little unreasonable,” Maude admitted. “Is that all he objects to?”

“No, he thinks it an outrage because, in order to get the franchise, we have to deal with the city politicians. Well, it so happens, and always has happened, that politics have been controlled by leaders, whom Perry calls ‘bosses,’ and they are not particularly attractive men. You wouldn’t care to associate with them. My father once refused to be mayor of the city for this reason. But they are necessities. If the people didn’t want them, they’d take enough interest in elections to throw them out. But since the people do want them, and they are there, every time a new street-car line or something of that sort needs to be built they have to be consulted, because, without their influence nothing could be done. On the other hand, these politicians cannot afford to ignore men of local importance like Leonard Dickinson and Adolf Scherer and Miller Gorse who represent financial substance and’ responsibility. If a new street-railroad is to be built, these are the logical ones to build it. You have just the same situation in Elkington, on a smaller scale.

“Your family, the Hutchinses, own the mills and the street-railroads, and any new enterprise that presents itself is done with their money, because they are reliable and sound.”

“It isn’t pleasant to think that there are such people as the politicians, is it?” said Maude, slowly.

“Unquestionably not,” I agreed. “It isn’t pleasant to think of some other crude forces in the world. But they exist, and they have to be dealt with. Suppose the United States should refuse to trade with Russia because, from our republican point of view, we regarded her government as tyrannical and oppressive? or to cooperate with England in

some undertaking for the world's benefit because we contended that she ruled India with an iron hand? In such a case, our President and Senate would be scoundrels for making and ratifying a treaty. Yet here are Perry and Tom, and no doubt Susan and Lucia, accusing me, a lifetime friend, of dishonesty because I happen to be counsel for a syndicate that wishes to build a street-railroad for the convenience of the people of the city."

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“Oh, no, not of dishonesty!” she exclaimed. “I can’t—I won’t believe they would do that.”

“Pretty near it,” I said. “If I listened to them, I should have to give up the law altogether.”

“Sometimes,” she answered in a low voice, “sometimes I wish you would.”

“I might have expected that you would take their point of view.”

As I was turning away she got up quickly and put her hand on my shoulder.

“Hugh, please don’t say such things—you’ve no right to say them.”

“And you?” I asked.

“Don’t you see,” she continued pleadingly, “don’t you see that we are growing apart? That’s the only reason I said what I did. It isn’t that I don’t trust you, that I don’t want you to have your work, that I demand all of you. I know a woman can’t ask that,—can’t have it. But if you would only give me—give the children just a little, if I could feel that we meant something to you and that this other wasn’t gradually becoming everything, wasn’t absorbing you more and more, killing the best part of you. It’s poisoning our marriage, it’s poisoning all your relationships.”

In that appeal the real Maude, the Maude of the early days of our marriage flashed forth again so vividly that I was taken aback. I understood that she had had herself under control, had worn a mask—a mask I had forced on her; and the revelation of the continued existence of that other Maude was profoundly disturbing. Was it true, as she said, that my absorption in the great game of modern business, in the modern American philosophy it implied was poisoning my marriage? or was it that my marriage had failed to satisfy and absorb me? I was touched—but sentimentally touched: I felt that this was a situation that ought to touch me; I didn’t wish to face it, as usual: I couldn’t acknowledge to myself that anything was really wrong... I patted her on the shoulder, I bent over and kissed her.

“A man in my position can’t altogether choose just how busy he will be,” I said smiling. “Matters are thrust upon me which I have to accept, and I can’t help thinking about some of them when I come home. But we’ll go off for a real vacation soon, Maude, to Europe—and take the children.”

“Oh, I hope so,” she said.

From this time on, as may be supposed, our intercourse with both the Blackwoods began to grow less frequent, although Maude continued to see a great deal of Lucia; and when we did dine in their company, or they with us, it was quite noticeable that their former raillery was suppressed. Even Tom had ceased to refer to me as the young Napoleon of the Law: he clung to me, but he too kept silent on the subject of business.

Maude of course must have noticed this, must have sensed the change of atmosphere, have known that the Blackwoods, at least, were maintaining appearances for her sake. She did not speak to me of the change, nor I to her; but when I thought of her silence, it

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was to suspect that she was weighing the question which had led up to the difference between Perry and me, and I had a suspicion that the fact that I was her husband would not affect her ultimate decision. This faculty of hers of thinking things out instead of accepting my views and decisions was, as the saying goes, getting a little "on my nerves": that she of all women should have developed it was a recurring and unpleasant surprise. I began at times to pity myself a little, to feel the need of sympathetic companionship —feminine companionship....

I shall not go into the details of the procurement of what became known as the Riverside Franchise. In spite of the Maplewood residents, of the City Improvement League and individual protests, we obtained it with absurd ease. Indeed Perry Blackwood himself appeared before the Public Utilities Committee of the Board of Aldermen, and was listened to with deference and gravity while he discoursed on the defacement of a beautiful boulevard to satisfy the greed of certain private individuals. Mr. Otto Bitter and myself, who appeared for the petitioners, had a similar reception. That struggle was a tempest in a tea-pot. The reformer raged, but he was feeble in those days, and the great public believed what it read in the respectable newspapers. In Mr. Judah B. Tallant's newspaper, for instance, the Morning Era, there were semi-playful editorials about "obstructionists." Mr. Perry Blackwood was a well-meaning, able gentleman of an old family, *etc*., but with a sentiment for horse-cars. The Era published also the resolutions which (with interesting spontaneity!) had been passed by our Board of Trade and Chamber of Commerce and other influential bodies in favour of the franchise; the idea—unknown to the public—of Mr. Hugh Paret, who wrote drafts of the resolutions and suggested privately to Mr. Leonard Dickinson that a little enthusiasm from these organizations might be helpful. Mr. Dickinson accepted the suggestion eagerly, wondering why he hadn't thought of it himself. The resolutions carried some weight with a public that did not know its right hand from its left.

After fitting deliberation, one evening in February the Board of Aldermen met and granted the franchise. Not unanimously, oh, no! Mr. Jason was not so simple as that! No further visits to Monahan's saloon on my part, in this connection were necessary; but Mr. Otto Bitter met me one day in the hotel with a significant message from the boss.

"It's all fixed," he informed me. "Murphy and Scott and Ottheimer and Grady and Loth are the decoys. You understand?"

"I think I gather your meaning," I said.

Mr. Bitter smiled by pulling down one corner of a crooked mouth.

"They'll vote against it on principle, you know," he added. "We get a little something from the Maple Avenue residents."

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I've forgotten what the Riverside Franchise cost. The sum was paid in a lump sum to Mr. Bitter as his "fee,"—so, to their chagrin, a grand jury discovered in later years, when they were barking around Mr. Jason's hole with an eager district attorney snapping his whip over them. I remember the cartoon. The municipal geese were gone, but it was impossible to prove that this particular fox had used his enlightened reason in their procurement. Mr. Bitter was a legally authorized fox, and could take fees. How Mr. Jason was to be rewarded by the land company's left-hand, unknown, to the land company's right hand, became a problem worthy of a genius. The genius was found, but modesty forbids me to mention his name, and the problem was solved, to wit: the land company bought a piece of downtown property from—Mr. Ryerson, who was Mr. Grierson's real estate man and the agent for the land company, for a consideration of thirty thousand dollars. An unconfirmed rumour had it that Mr. Ryerson turned over the thirty thousand to Mr. Jason. Then the Riverside Company issued a secret deed of the same property back to Mr. Ryerson, and this deed was not recorded until some years later.

Such are the elaborate transactions progress and prosperity demand. Nature is the great teacher, and we know that her ways are at times complicated and clumsy. Likewise, under the "natural" laws of economics, new enterprises are not born without travail, without the aid of legal physicians well versed in financial obstetrics. One hundred and fifty to two hundred thousand, let us say, for the right to build tracks on Maplewood Avenue, and we sold nearly two million dollars worth of the securities back to the public whose aldermen had sold us the franchise. Is there a man so dead as not to feel a thrill at this achievement? And let no one who declares that literary talent and imagination are nonexistent in America pronounce final judgment until he reads that prospectus, in which was combined the best of realism and symbolism, for the labours of Alonzo Cheyne were not to be wasted, after all. Mr. Dickinson, who was a director in the Maplewood line, got a handsome underwriting percentage, and Mr. Berringer, also a director, on the bonds and preferred stock he sold. Mr. Paret, who entered both companies on the ground floor, likewise got fees. Everybody was satisfied except the trouble makers, who were ignored. In short, the episode of the Riverside Franchise is a triumphant proof of the contention that business men are the best fitted to conduct the politics of their country.

We had learned to pursue our happiness in packs, we knew that the Happy Hunting-Grounds are here and now, while the Reverend Carey Heddon continued to assure the maimed, the halt and the blind that their kingdom was not of this world, that their time was coming later. Could there have been a more idyl arrangement! Everybody should have been satisfied, but everybody was not. Otherwise these pages would never have been written.

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A FAR COUNTRY

By Winston Churchill

BOOK 3.

XVIII.

As the name of our city grew to be more and more a byword for sudden and fabulous wealth, not only were the Huns and the Slavs, the Czechs and the Greeks drawn to us, but it became the fashion for distinguished Englishmen and Frenchmen and sometimes Germans and Italians to pay us a visit when they made the grand tour of America. They had been told that they must not miss us; scarcely a week went by in our community—-so it was said—in which a full-fledged millionaire was not turned out. Our visitors did not always remain a week,—since their rapid journeyings from the Atlantic to the Pacific, from Canada to the Gulf rarely occupied more than four,—but in the books embodying their mature comments on the manners, customs and crudities of American civilization no less than a chapter was usually devoted to us; and most of the adjectives in their various languages were exhausted in the attempt to prove how symptomatic we were of the ambitions and ideals of the Republic. The fact that many of these gentlemen—-literary and otherwise—returned to their own shores better fed and with larger balances in the banks than when they departed is neither here nor there. Egyptians are proverbially created to be spoiled.

The wiser and more fortunate of these travellers and students of life brought letters to Mr. and Mrs. Hambleton Durrett. That household was symptomatic—if they liked—of the new order of things; and it was rare indeed when both members of it were at home to entertain them. If Mr. Durrett were in the city, and they did not happen to be Britons with sporting proclivities, they simply were not entertained: when Mrs. Durrett received them dinners were given in their honour on the Durrett gold plate, and they spent cosey and delightful hours conversing with her in the little salon overlooking the garden, to return to their hotels and jot down paragraphs on the superiority of the American women over the men. These particular foreigners did not lay eyes on Mr. Durrett, who was in Florida or in the East playing polo or engaged in some other pursuit. One result of the lavishness and luxury that amazed them they wrote—had been to raise the standard of culture of the women, who were our leisure class. But the travellers did not remain long enough to arrive at any conclusions of value on the effect of luxury and lavishness on the sacred institution of marriage.

If Mr. Nathaniel Durrett could have returned to his native city after fifteen years or so in the grave, not the least of the phenomena to startle him would have been that which was taking place in his own house. For he would have beheld serenely established in

that former abode of Calvinism one of the most reprehensible of exotic abominations, a ‘mariage de convenance;’ nor could he have failed to observe, moreover, the complacency with which the descendants of his friends, the pew holders in Dr. Pound’s church, regarded the matter: and not only these, but the city at large. The stronghold of Scotch Presbyterianism had become a London or a Paris, a Gomorrah!

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Mrs. Hambleton Durrett went her way, and Mr. Durrett his. The less said about Mr. Durrett's way—even in this suddenly advanced age—the better. As for Nancy, she seemed to the distant eye to be walking through life in a stately and triumphant manner. I read in the newspapers of her doings, her comings and goings; sometimes she was away for months together, often abroad; and when she was at home I saw her, but infrequently, under conditions more or less formal. Not that she was formal,—or I: our intercourse seemed eloquent of an intimacy in a tantalizing state of suspense. Would that intimacy ever be renewed? This was a question on which I sometimes speculated. The situation that had suspended or put an end to it, as the case might be, was never referred to by either of us.

One afternoon in the late winter of the year following that in which we had given a dinner to the Scherers (where the Durretts had rather marvellously appeared together) I left my office about three o'clock—a most unusual occurrence. I was restless, unable to fix my mind on my work, filled with unsatisfied yearnings the object of which I sought to keep vague, and yet I directed my steps westward along Boyne Street until I came to the Art Museum, where a loan exhibition was being held. I entered, bought a catalogue, and presently found myself standing before number 103, designated as a portrait of Mrs. Hambleton Durrett,—painted in Paris the autumn before by a Polish artist then much in vogue, Stanislaus Czesky. Nancy—was it Nancy?—was standing facing me, tall, superb in the maturity of her beauty, with one hand resting on an antique table, a smile upon her lips, a gentle mockery in her eyes as though laughing at the world she adorned. With the smile and the mockery—somehow significant, too, of an achieved inaccessibility—went the sheen of her clinging gown and the glint of the heavy pearls drooping from her high throat to her waist. These caught the eye, but failed at length to hold it, for even as I looked the smile faded, the mockery turned to wistfulness. So I thought, and looked again—to see the wistfulness: the smile had gone, the pearls seemed heavier. Was it a trick of the artist? had he seen what I saw, or thought I saw? or was it that imagination which by now I might have learned to suspect and distrust. Wild longings took possession of me, for the portrait had seemed to emphasize at once how distant now she was from me, and yet how near! I wanted to put that nearness to the test. Had she really changed? did anyone really change? and had I not been a fool to accept the presentment she had given me? I remembered those moments when our glances had met as across barriers in flashes of understanding. After all, the barriers were mere relics of the superstition of the past. What if I went to her now? I felt that I needed her as I never had needed anyone in all my life.... I was aroused by the sound of lowered voices beside me.

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“That’s Mrs. Hambleton Durrett,” I heard a woman say. “Isn’t she beautiful?”

The note of envy struck me sharply—horribly. Without waiting to listen to the comment of her companion I hurried out of the building into the cold, white sunlight that threw into bold relief the mediocre houses of the street. Here was everyday life, but the portrait had suggested that which might have been—might be yet. What did I mean by this? I didn’t know, I didn’t care to define it,—a renewal of her friendship, of our intimacy. My being cried out for it, and in the world in which I lived we took what we wanted—why not this? And yet for an instant I stood on the sidewalk to discover that in new situations I was still subject to unaccountable qualms of that thing I had been taught to call “conscience”; whether it were conscience or not must be left to the psychologists. I was married—terrible word! the shadow of that Institution fell athwart me as the sun went under a cloud; but the sun came out again as I found myself walking toward the Durrett house reflecting that numbers of married men called on Nancy, and that what I had in mind in regard to her was nothing that the court would have pronounced an infringement upon the Institution.... I reached her steps, the long steps still guarded by the curved wrought-iron railings reminiscent of Nathaniel’s day, though the “portals” were gone, a modern vestibule having replaced them; I rang the bell; the butler, flung open the doors. He, at any rate, did not seem surprised to see me here, he greeted me with respectful cordiality and led me, as a favoured guest, through the big drawing-room into the salon.

“Mr. Paret, Madam!”

Nancy, rose quickly from the low chair where she sat cutting the pages of a French novel.

“Hugh!” she exclaimed. “I’m out if anyone calls. Bring tea,” she added to the man, who retired. For a moment we stood gazing at each other, questioningly. “Well, won’t you sit down and stay awhile?” she asked.

I took a chair on the opposite side of the fire.

“I just thought I’d drop in,” I said.

“I am flattered,” said Nancy, “that a person so affaire should find time to call on an old friend. Why, I thought you never left your office until seven o’clock.”

“I don’t, as a rule, but to-day I wasn’t particularly busy, and I thought I’d go round to the Art Museum and look at your portrait.”

“More flattery! Hugh, you’re getting quite human. What do you think of it?”

“I like it. I think it quite remarkable.”

“Have a cigarette!”

I took one.

“So you really like it,” she said.

“Don’t you?”

“Oh, I think it’s a trifle—romantic,” she replied “But that’s Czesky. He made me quite cross,—the feminine presentation of America, the spoiled woman who has shed responsibilities and is beginning to have a glimpse—just a little one—of the emptiness of it all.”

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I was stirred.

“Then why do you accept it, if it isn’t you?” I demanded. “One doesn’t refuse Czesky’s canvases,” she replied. “And what difference does it make? It amused him, and he was fairly subtle about it. Only those who are looking for romance, like you, are able to guess what he meant, and they would think they saw it anyway, even if he had painted me—extinct.”

“Extinct!” I repeated.

She laughed.

“Hugh, you’re a silly old goose!”

“That’s why I came here, I think, to be told so,” I said.

Tea was brought in. A sense of at-homeness stole over me,—I was more at home here in this room with Nancy, than in any other place in the world; here, where everything was at once soothing yet stimulating, expressive of her, even the smaller objects that caught my eye,—the crystal inkstand tipped with gold, the racks for the table books, her paper-cutter. Nancy’s was a discriminating luxury. And her talk! The lightness with which she touched life, the unexplored depths of her, guessed at but never fathomed! Did she feel a little the need of me as I felt the need of her?

“Why, I believe you’re incurably romantic, Hugh,” she said laughingly, when the men had left the room. “Here you are, what they call a paragon of success, a future senator, Ambassador to England. I hear of those remarkable things you have done—even in New York the other day a man was asking me if I knew Mr. Paret, and spoke of you as one of the coming men. I suppose you will be moving there, soon. A practical success! It always surprises me when I think of it, I find it difficult to remember what a dreamer you were and here you turn out to be still a dreamer! Have you discovered, too, the emptiness of it all?” she inquired provokingly. “I must say you don’t look it”—she gave me a critical, quizzical glance—“you look quite prosperous and contented, as though you enjoyed your power.”

I laughed uneasily.

“And then,” she continued, “and then one day when your luncheon has disagreed with you—you walk into a gallery and see a portrait of—of an old friend for whom in youth, when you were a dreamer, you professed a sentimental attachment, and you exclaim that the artist is a discerning man who has discovered the secret that she has guarded so closely. She’s sorry that she ever tried to console herself with baubles it’s what you’ve suspected all along. But you’ll just run around to see for yourself—to be sure of

it." And she handed me my tea. "Come now, confess. Where are your wits—I hear you don't lack them in court."

"Well," I said, "if that amuses you—"

"It does amuse me," said Nancy, twining her fingers across her knee and regarding me smilingly, with parted lips, "it amuses me a lot—it's so characteristic."

"But it's not true, it's unjust," I protested vigorously, smiling, too, because the attack was so characteristic of her.

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“What then?” she demanded.

“Well, in the first place, my luncheon didn’t disagree with me. It never does.”

She laughed. “But the sentiment—come now—the sentiment? Do you perceive any hint of emptiness—despair?”

Our chairs were very close, and she leaned forward a little.

“Emptiness or no emptiness,” I said a little tremulously, “I know that I haven’t been so contented, so happy for a long time.”

She sat very still, but turned her gaze on the fire.

“You really wouldn’t want to find that, Hugh,” she said in another voice, at which I exclaimed. “No, I’m not being sentimental. But, to be serious, I really shouldn’t care to think that of you. I’d like to think of you as a friend—a good friend—although we don’t see very much of one another.”

“But that’s why I came, Nancy,” I explained. “It wasn’t just an impulse—that is, I’ve been thinking of you a great deal, all along. I miss you, I miss the way you look at things—-your point of view. I can’t see any reason why we shouldn’t see something of each other—now—”

She continued to stare into the fire.

“No,” she said at length, “I suppose there isn’t any reason.” Her mood seemed suddenly to change as she bent over and extinguished the flame under the kettle. “After all,” she added gaily, “we live in a tolerant age, we’ve reached the years of discretion, and we’re both too conventional to do anything silly—even if we wanted to—-which we don’t. We’re neither of us likely to quarrel with the world as it is, I think, and we might as well make fun of it together. We’ll begin with our friends. What do you think of Mr. Scherer’s palace?”

“I hear you’re building it for him.”

“I told him to get Eyre,” said Nancy, laughingly, “I was afraid he’d repeat the Gallatin Park monstrosity on a larger scale, and Eyre’s the only man in this country who understands the French. It’s been rather amusing,” she went on, “I’ve had to fight Hilda, and she’s no mean antagonist. How she hates me! She wanted a monstrosity, of course, a modernized German rock-grotto sort of an affair, I can imagine. She’s been so funny when I’ve met her at dinner. ’I understand you take a great interest in the house, Mrs. Durrett.’ Can’t you hear her?”

“Well, you did get ahead of her,” I said.

“I had to. I couldn’t let our first citizen build a modern Rhine castle, could I? I have some public spirit left. And besides, I expect to build on Grant Avenue myself.”

“And leave here?”

“Oh, it’s too grubby, it’s in the slums,” said Nancy. “But I really owe you a debt of gratitude, Hugh, for the Scherers.”

“I’m told Adolf’s lost his head over you.”

“It’s not only over me, but over everything. He’s so ridiculously proud of being on the board of the Children’s Hospital.... You ought to hear him talking to old Mrs. Ogilvy, who of course can’t get used to him at all,—she always has the air of inquiring what he’s doing in that galley. She still thinks of him as Mr. Durrett’s foreman.”

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The time flew. Her presence was like a bracing, tingling atmosphere in which I felt revived and exhilarated, self-restored. For Nancy did not question—she took me as I was. We looked out on the world, as it were, from the same window, and I could not help thinking that ours, after all, was a large view. The topics didn't matter—our conversation was fragrant with intimacy; and we were so close to each other it seemed incredible that we ever should be parted again. At last the little clock on the mantel chimed an hour, she started and looked up.

"Why, it's seven, Hugh!" she exclaimed, rising. "I'd no idea it was so late, and I'm dining with the Dickinsons. I've only just time to dress."

"It's been like a reunion, hasn't it?—a reunion after many years," I said. I held her hand unconsciously—she seemed to be drawing me to her, I thought she swayed, and a sudden dizziness seized me. Then she drew away abruptly, with a little cry. I couldn't be sure about the cry, whether I heard it or not, a note was struck in the very depths of me.

"Come in again," she said, "whenever you're not too busy." And a minute later I found myself on the street.

This was the beginning of a new intimacy with Nancy, resembling the old intimacy yet differing from it. The emotional note of our parting on the occasion I have just related was not again struck, and when I went eagerly to see her again a few days later I was conscious of limitations,—not too conscious: the freedom she offered and which I gladly accepted was a large freedom, nor am I quite sure that even I would have wished it larger, though there were naturally moments when I thought so: when I asked myself what I did wish, I found no answer. Though I sometimes chafed, it would have been absurd of me to object to a certain timidity or caution I began to perceive in her that had been absent in the old Nancy; but the old Nancy had ceased to exist, and here instead was a highly developed, highly specialized creature in whom I delighted; and after taking thought I would not have robbed her of fine acquired attribute. As she had truly observed, we were both conventional; conventionality was part of the price we had willingly paid for membership in that rarer world we had both achieved. It was a world, to be sure, in which we were rapidly learning to take the law into our own hands without seeming to defy it, in order that the fear of it might remain in those less fortunately placed and endowed: we had begun with the appropriation of the material property of our fellow-citizens, which we took legally; from this point it was, of course, merely a logical step to take—legally, too other gentlemen's human property—their wives, in short: the more progressive East had set us our example, but as yet we had been chary to follow it.

About this time rebellious voices were beginning to make themselves heard in the literary wilderness proclaiming liberty—liberty of the sexes. There were Russian novels

and French novels, and pioneer English novels preaching liberty with Nietzschean stridency, or taking it for granted. I picked these up on Nancy's table.

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“Reading them?” she said, in answer to my query. “Of course I’m reading them. I want to know what these clever people are thinking, even if I don’t always agree with them, and you ought to read them too. It’s quite true what foreigners say about our men,—-that they live in a groove, that they haven’t any range of conversation.”

“I’m quite willing to be educated,” I replied. “I haven’t a doubt that I need it.”

She was leaning back in her chair, her hands behind her head, a posture she often assumed. She looked up at me amusedly.

“I’ll acknowledge that you’re more teachable than most of them,” she said. “Do you know, Hugh, sometimes you puzzle me greatly. When you are here and we’re talking together I can never think of you as you are out in the world, fighting for power—and getting it. I suppose it’s part of your charm, that there is that side of you, but I never consciously realize it. You’re what they call a dual personality.”

“That’s a pretty hard name!” I exclaimed.

She laughed.

“I can’t help it—you are. Oh, not disagreeably so, quite normally—that’s the odd thing about you. Sometimes I believe that you were made for something different, that in spite of your success you have missed your ‘metier.’”

“What ought I to have been?”

“How can I tell? A Goethe, perhaps—a Goethe smothered by a twentieth-century environment. Your love of adventure isn’t dead, it’s been merely misdirected, real adventure, I mean, forth faring, straying into unknown paths. Perhaps you haven’t yet found yourself.”

“How uncanny!” I said, stirred and startled.

“You have a taste for literature, you know, though you’ve buried it. Give me Turgeniev. We’ll begin with him....”

Her reading and the talks that followed it were exciting, amazingly stimulating.... Once Nancy gave me an amusing account of a debate which had taken place in the newly organized woman’s discussion club to which she belonged over a rather daring book by an English novelist. Mrs. Dickinson had revolted.

“No, she wasn’t really shocked, not in the way she thought she was,” said Nancy, in answer to a query of mine.

“How was she shocked, then?”

“As you and I are shocked.”

“But I’m not shocked,” I protested.

“Oh, yes, you are, and so am I—not on the moral side, nor is it the moral aspect that troubles Lula Dickinson. She thinks it’s the moral aspect, but it’s really the revolutionary aspect, the menace to those precious institutions from which we derive our privileges and comforts.”

I considered this, and laughed.

“What’s the use of being a humbug about it,” said Nancy.

“But you’re talking like a revolutionary,” I said.

“I may be talking like one, but I’m not one. I once had the makings of one—of a good one,—a ‘proper’ one, as the English would say.” She sighed.

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“You regret it?” I asked curiously.

“Of course I regret it!” she cried. “What woman worth her salt doesn’t regret it, doesn’t want to live, even if she has to suffer for it? And those people—the revolutionaries, I mean, the rebels—they live, they’re the only ones who do live. The rest of us degenerate in a painless paralysis we think of as pleasure. Look at me! I’m incapable of committing a single original act, even though I might conceive one. Well, there was a time when I should have been equal to anything and wouldn’t have cared a—a damn.”

I believed her....

I fell into the habit of dropping in on Nancy at least twice a week on my way from the office, and I met her occasionally at other houses. I did not tell Maude of that first impulsive visit; but one evening a few weeks later she asked me where I had been, and when I told her she made no comment. I came presently to the conclusion that this renewed intimacy did not trouble her—which was what I wished to believe. Of course I had gone to Nancy for a stimulation I failed to get at home, and it is the more extraordinary, therefore, that I did not become more discontented and restless: I suppose this was because I had grown to regard marriage as most of the world regarded it, as something inevitable and humdrum, as a kind of habit it is useless to try to shake off. But life is so full of complexities and anomalies that I still had a real affection for Maude, and I liked her the more because she didn’t expect too much of me, and because she didn’t complain of my friendship with Nancy although I should vehemently have denied there was anything to complain of. I respected Maude. If she was not a squaw, she performed religiously the traditional squaw duties, and made me comfortable: and the fact that we lived separate mental existences did not trouble me because I never thought of hers—or even that she had one. She had the children, and they seemed to suffice. She never renewed her appeal for my confidence, and I forgot that she had made it.

Nevertheless I always felt a tug at my heartstrings when June came around and it was time for her and the children to go to Mattapoisett for the summer; when I accompanied them, on the evening of their departure, to the smoky, noisy station and saw deposited in the sleeping-car their luggage and shawls and bundles. They always took the evening train to Boston; it was the best. Tom and Susan were invariably there with candy and toys to see them off—if Susan and her children had not already gone—and at such moments my heart warmed to Tom. And I was astonished as I clung to Matthew and Moreton and little Biddy at the affection that welled up within me, saddened when I kissed Maude good-bye. She too was sad, and always seemed to feel compunctions for deserting me.

“I feel so selfish in leaving you all alone!” she would say. “If it weren’t for the children—-they need the sea air. But I know you don’t miss me as I miss you. A man doesn’t, I suppose.... Please don’t work so hard, and promise me you’ll come on and stay a long

time. You can if you want to. We shan't starve." She smiled. "That nice room, which is yours, at the southeast corner, is always waiting for you. And you do like the sea, and seeing the sail-boats in the morning."

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I felt an emptiness when the train pulled out. I did love my family, after all! I would go back to the deserted house, and I could not bear to look in at the nursery door, at the little beds with covers flung over them. Why couldn't I appreciate these joys when I had them?

One evening, as we went home in an open street-car together, after such a departure, Tom blurted out:—"Hugh, I believe I care for your family as much as for my own. I often wonder if you realize how wonderful these children are! My boys are just plain ruffians—although I think they're pretty decent ruffians, but Matthew has a mind—he's thoughtful—and an imagination. He'll make a name for himself some day if he's steered properly and allowed to develop naturally. Moreton's more like my boys. And as for Chickabiddy!—" words failed him.

I put my hand on his knee. I actually loved him again as I had loved and yearned for him as a child,—he was so human, so dependable. And why couldn't this feeling last? He disapproved—foolishly, I thought—of my professional career, and this was only one of his limitations. But I knew that he was loyal. Why hadn't I been able to breathe and be reasonably happy in that atmosphere of friendship and love in which I had been placed—or rather in which I had placed myself?.... Before the summer was a day or two older I had grown accustomed to being alone, and enjoyed the liberty; and when Maude and the children returned in the autumn, similarly, it took me some days to get used to the restrictions imposed by a household. I run the risk of shocking those who read this by declaring that if my family had been taken permanently out of my life, I should not long have missed them. But on the whole, in those years my marriage relation might be called a negative one. There were moments, as I have described, when I warmed to Maude, moments when I felt something akin to a violent antagonism aroused by little mannerisms and tricks she had. The fact that we got along as well as we did was probably due to the orthodox teaching with which we had been inoculated,—to the effect that matrimony was a moral trial, a shaking-down process. But moral trials were ceasing to appeal to people, and more and more of them were refusing to be shaken down. We didn't cut the Gordian knot, but we managed to loosen it considerably.

I have spoken of a new species of titans who inhabited the giant buildings in Wall Street, New York, and fought among themselves for possession of the United States of America. It is interesting to note that in these struggles a certain chivalry was observed among the combatants, no matter how bitter the rivalry: for instance, it was deemed very bad form for one of the groups of combatants to take the public into their confidence; cities were upset and stirred to the core by these conflicts, and the citizens never knew who was doing the fighting, but imagined that some burning issue was at stake that concerned them. As a matter of fact the issue always did concern them, but not in the way they supposed.

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Gradually, out of the chaotic melee in which these titans were engaged had emerged one group more powerful than the rest and more respectable, whose leader was the Personality to whom I have before referred. He and his group had managed to gain control of certain conservative fortresses in various cities such as the Corn National Bank and the Ashuela Telephone Company—to mention two of many: Adolf Scherer was his ally, and the Boyne Iron Works, Limited, was soon to be merged by him into a greater corporation still. Leonard Dickinson might be called his local governor-general. We manned the parapets and kept our ears constantly to the ground to listen for the rumble of attacks; but sometimes they burst upon us fiercely and suddenly, without warning. Such was the assault on the Ashuela, which for years had exercised an apparently secure monopoly of the city's telephone service, which had been able to ignore with complacency the shrillest protests of unreasonable subscribers. Through the Pilot it was announced to the public that certain benevolent "Eastern capitalists" were ready to rescue them from their thraldom if the city would grant them a franchise. Mr. Lawler, the disinterestedness of whose newspaper could not be doubted, fanned the flame day by day, sent his reporters about the city gathering instances of the haughty neglect of the Ashuela, proclaiming its instruments antiquated compared with those used in more progressive cities, as compared with the very latest inventions which the Automatic Company was ready to install provided they could get their franchise. And the prices! These, too, would fall—under competition. It was a clever campaign. If the city would give them a franchise, that Automatic Company—so well named! would provide automatic instruments. Each subscriber, by means of a numerical disk, could call up any other, subscriber; there would be no central operator, no listening, no tapping of wires; the number of calls would be unlimited. As a proof of the confidence of these Eastern gentlemen in our city, they were willing to spend five millions, and present more than six hundred telephones free to the city departments! What was fairer, more generous than this! There could be no doubt that popular enthusiasm was enlisted in behalf of the "Eastern Capitalists," who were made to appear in the light of Crusaders ready to rescue a groaning people from the thrall of monopoly. The excitement approached that of a presidential election, and became the dominant topic at quick-lunch counters and in street-cars. Cheap and efficient service! Down with the Bastille of monopoly!

As counsel for the Ashuela, Mr. Ogilvy sent for me, and by certain secret conduits of information at my disposal I was not long in discovering the disquieting fact that a Mr. Orthwein, who was described as a gentleman with fat fingers and a plausible manner, had been in town for a week and had been twice seen entering and emerging from Monahan's saloon. In short, Mr. Jason had already been "seen." Nevertheless I went to him myself, to find him for the first time in my experience absolutely non-committal.

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“What’s the Ashuela willing to do?” he demanded.

I mentioned a sum, and he shook his head. I mentioned another, and still he shook his head.

“Come ’round again,” he said...

I was compelled to report this alarming situation to Ogilvy and Dickinson and a few chosen members of a panicky board of directors.

“It’s that damned Grannis crowd,” said Dickinson, mentioning an aggressive gentleman who had migrated from Chicago to Wall Street some five years before in a pink collar.

“But what’s to be done?” demanded Ogilvy, playing nervously with a gold pencil on the polished table. He was one of those Americans who in a commercial atmosphere become prematurely white, and today his boyish, smooth-shaven face was almost as devoid of colour as his hair. Even Leonard Dickinson showed anxiety, which was unusual for him.

“You’ve got to fix it, Hugh,” he said.

I did not see my way, but I had long ago learned to assume the unruffled air and judicial manner of speaking that inspires the layman with almost superstitious confidence in the lawyer....

“We’ll find a way out,” I said.

Mr. Jason, of course, held the key to the situation, and just how I was to get around him was problematical. In the meantime there was the public: to permit the other fellow to capture that was to be lacking in ordinary prudence; if its votes counted for nothing, its savings were desirable; and it was fast getting into a state of outrage against monopoly. The chivalry of finance did not permit of a revelation that Mr. Grannis and his buccaneers were behind the Automatic, but it was possible to direct and strengthen the backfire which the Era and other conservative newspapers had already begun. Mr. Tallant for delicate reasons being persona non grata at the Boyne Club, despite the fact that he had so many friends there, we met for lunch in a private room at the new hotel, and as we sipped our coffee and smoked our cigars we planned a series of editorials and articles that duly appeared. They made a strong appeal to the loyalty of our citizens to stand by the home company and home capital that had taken generous risks to give them service at a time when the future of the telephone business was by no means assured; they belittled the charges made by irresponsible and interested “parties,” and finally pointed out, not without effect, that one logical consequence of having two telephone companies would be to compel subscribers in self-defence to install two telephones instead of one. And where was the saving in that?

“Say, Paret,” said Judah B. when we had finished our labours; “if you ever get sick of the law, I’ll give you a job on the Era’s staff. This is fine, the way you put it. It’ll do a lot of good, but how in hell are you going to handle Judd?....”

For three days the inspiration was withheld. And then, as I was strolling down Boyne Street after lunch gazing into the store windows it came suddenly, without warning. Like most inspirations worth anything, it was very simple. Within half an hour I had reached Monahan’s saloon and found Mr. Jason out of bed, but still in his bedroom, seated meditatively at the window that looked over the alley.

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“You know the crowd in New York behind this Automatic company as well as I do, Jason,” I said. “Why do you want to deal with them when we’ve always been straight with you, when we’re ready to meet them and go one better? Name your price.”

“Suppose I do—what then,” he replied. “This thing’s gone pretty far. Under that damned new charter the franchise has got to be bid for—hasn’t it? And the people want this company. There’ll be a howl from one end of this town to the other if we throw ’em down.”

“We’ll look out for the public,” I assured him, smiling.

“Well,” he said, with one of his glances that were like flashes, “what you got up your sleeve?”

“Suppose another telephone company steps in, and bids a little higher for the franchise. That relieves, your aldermen of all responsibility, doesn’t it?”

“Another telephone company!” he repeated.

I had already named it on my walk.

“The Interurban,” I said.

“A dummy company?” said Mr. Jason.

“Lively enough to bid something over a hundred thousand to the city for its franchise,” I replied.

Judd Jason, with a queer look, got up and went to a desk in a dark corner, and after rummaging for a few moments in one of the pigeon-holes, drew forth a glass cylinder, which he held out as he approached me.

“You get it, Mr. Paret,” he said.

“What is it?” I asked, “a bomb!”

“That,” he announced, as he twisted the tube about in his long fingers, holding it up to the light, “is the finest brand of cigars ever made in Cuba. A gentleman who had every reason to be grateful to me—I won’t say who he was—gave me that once. Well, the Lord made me so’s I can’t appreciate any better tobacco than those five-cent ‘Bobtails’ Monahan’s got downstairs, and I saved it. I saved it for the man who would put something over me some day, and—you get it.”

“Thank you,” I said, unconsciously falling in with the semi-ceremony of his manner. “I do not flatter myself that the solution I have suggested did not also occur to you.”

“You’ll smoke it?” he asked.

“Surely.”

“Now? Here with me?”

“Certainly,” I agreed, a little puzzled. As I broke the seal, pulled out the cork and unwrapped the cigar from its gold foil he took a stick and rapped loudly on the floor. After a brief interval footsteps were heard on the stairs and Mike Monahan, white aproned and scarlet faced, appeared at the door.

“Bobtails,” said Mr. Jason, laconically.

“It’s them I thought ye’d be wanting,” said the saloon-keeper, holding out a handful. Judd Jason lighted one, and began smoking reflectively.

I gazed about the mean room, with its litter of newspapers and reports, its shabby furniture, and these seemed to have become incongruous, out of figure in the chair facing me keeping with the thoughtful figure in the chair facing me.

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“You had a college education, Mr. Paret,” he remarked at length.

“Yes.”

“Life’s a queer thing. Now if I’d had a college education, like you, and you’d been thrown on the world, like me, maybe I’d be livin’ up there on Grant Avenue and you’d be down here over the saloon.”

“Maybe,” I said, wondering uneasily whether he meant to imply a similarity in our gifts. But his manner remained impassive, speculative.

“Ever read Carlyle’s ’French Revolution’?” he asked suddenly.

“Why, yes, part of it, a good while ago.”

“When you was in college?”

“Yes.”

“I’ve got a little library here,” he said, getting up and raising the shades and opening the glass doors of a bookcase which had escaped my attention. He took down a volume of Carlyle, bound in half calf.

“Wouldn’t think I cared for such things, would you?” he demanded as he handed it to me.

“Well, you never can tell what a man’s real tastes are until you know him,” I observed, to conceal my surprise.

“That’s so,” he agreed. “I like books—some books. If I’d had an education, I’d have liked more of ’em, known more about ’em. Now I can read this one over and over. That feller Carlyle was a genius, he could look right into the bowels of the volcano, and he was on to how men and women feet down there, how they hate, how they square ’emselves when they get a chance.”

He had managed to bring before me vividly that terrible, volcanic flow on Versailles of the Paris mob. He put back the book and resumed his seat.

“And I know how these people fed down here, below the crust,” he went on, waving his cigar out of the window, as though to indicate the whole of that mean district. “They hate, and their hate is molten hell. I’ve been through it.”

“But you’ve got on top,” I suggested.

“Sure, I’ve got on top. Do you know why? it’s because I hated—that’s why. A man’s feelings, if they’re strong enough, have a lot to do with what he becomes.”

“But he has to have ability, too,” I objected.

“Sure, he has to have ability, but his feeling is the driving power if he feels strong enough, he can make a little ability go a long way.”

I was struck by the force of this remark. I scarcely recognized Judd Jason. The man, as he revealed himself, had become at once more sinister and more fascinating.

“I can guess how some of those Jacobins felt when they had the aristocrats in the dock. They’d got on top—the Jacobins, I mean. It’s human nature to want to get on top—ain’t it?” He looked at me and smiled, but he did not seem to expect a reply. “Well, what you call society, rich, respectable society like you belong to would have made a bum and a criminal out of me if I hadn’t been too smart for ’em, and it’s a kind of satisfaction to have ’em coming down here to Monahan’s for things they can’t have without my leave. I’ve got a half Nelson on ’em. I wouldn’t live up on Grant Avenue if you gave me Scherer’s new house.”

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I was silent.

“Instead of starting my career in college, I started in jail,” he went on, apparently ignoring any effect he may have produced. So subtly, so dispassionately indeed was he delivering himself of these remarks that it was impossible to tell whether he meant their application to be personal, to me, or general, to my associates. “I went to jail when I was fourteen because I wanted a knife to make kite sticks, and I stole a razor from a barber. I was bitter when they steered me into a lockup in Hickory Street. It was full of bugs and crooks, and they put me in the same cell with an old-timer named ‘Red’ Waters; who was one of the slickest safe-blowers around in those days. Red took a shine to me, found out I had a head piece, and said their gang could use a clever boy. If I’d go in with him, I could make all kinds of money. I guess I might have joined the gang if Red hadn’t kept talking—about how the boss of his district named Gallagher would come down and get him out,—and sure enough Gallagher did come down and get him out. I thought I’d rather be Gallagher than Red—Red had to serve time once in a while. Soon as he got out I went down to Gallagher’s saloon, and there was Red leaning over the bar. ’Here’s a smart kid! he says, ’He and me were room-mates over in Hickory Street.’ He got to gassing me, and telling me I’d better come along with him, when Gallagher came in. ’What is it ye’d like to be, my son?’ says he. A politician, I told him. I was through going to jail. Gallagher had a laugh you could hear all over the place. He took me on as a kind of handy boy around the establishment, and by and by I began to run errands and find out things for him. I was boss of that ward myself when I was twenty-six.... How’d you like that cigar?”

I praised it.

“It ought to have been a good one,” he declared. “Well, I don’t want to keep you here all afternoon telling you my life story.”

I assured him I had been deeply interested.

“Pretty slick idea of yours, that dummy company, Mr. Paret. Go ahead and organize it.” He rose, which was contrary to his custom on the departure of a visitor. “Drop in again. We’ll talk about the books."...

I walked slowly back reflecting on this conversation, upon the motives impelling Mr. Jason to become thus confidential; nor was it the most comforting thought in the world that the artist in me had appealed to the artist in him, that he had hailed me as a breather. But for the grace of God I might have been Mr. Jason and he Mr. Paret: undoubtedly that was what he had meant to imply... And I was forced to admit that he had succeeded—deliberately or not—in making the respectable Mr. Paret just a trifle uncomfortable.

In the marble vestibule of the Corn National Bank I ran into Tallant, holding his brown straw hat in his hand and looking a little more moth-eaten than usual.

“Hello, Paret,” he said “how is that telephone business getting along?”

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“Is Dickinson in?” I asked.

Tallant nodded.

We went through the cool bank, with its shining brass and red mahogany, its tiled floor, its busy tellers attending to files of clients, to the president’s sanctum in the rear. Leonard Dickinson, very spruce and dignified in a black cutaway coat, was dictating rapidly to a woman, stenographer, whom he dismissed when he saw us. The door was shut.

“I was just asking Paret about the telephone affair,” said Mr. Tallant.

“Well, have you found a way out?” Leonard Dickinson looked questioningly at me.

“It’s all right,” I answered. “I’ve seen Jason.”

“All right!” they both ejaculated at once.

“We win,” I said.

They stood gazing at me. Even Dickinson, who was rarely ruffled, seemed excited.

“Do you mean to say you’ve fixed it?” he demanded.

I nodded. They stared at me in amazement.

“How the deuce did you manage it?”

“We organize the Interurban Telephone Company, and bid for the franchise—that’s all.”

“A dummy company!” cried Tallant. “Why, it’s simple as ABC!”

Dickinson smiled. He was tremendously relieved, and showed it.

“That’s true about all great ideas, Tallant,” he said. “They’re simple, only it takes a clever man to think of them.”

“And Jason agrees?” Tallant demanded.

I nodded again. “We’ll have to outbid the Automatic people. I haven’t seen Bitter yet about the—about the fee.”

“That’s all right,” said Leonard Dickinson, quickly. “I take off my hat to you. You’ve saved us. You can ask any fee you like,” he added genially. “Let’s go over to—to the Ashuela and get some lunch.” He had been about to say the Club, but he remembered

Mr. Tallant's presence in time. "Nothing's worrying you, Hugh?" he added, as we went out, followed by the glances of his employees.

"Nothing," I said....

XVIX.

Making money in those days was so ridiculously easy! The trouble was to know how to spend it. One evening when I got home I told Maude I had a surprise for her.

"A surprise?" she asked, looking up from a little pink smock she was making for Chickabiddy.

"I've bought that lot on Grant Avenue, next to the Ogilvys'."

She dropped her sewing, and stared at me.

"Aren't you pleased?" I asked. "At last we are going to have a house of our very own. What's the matter?"

"I can't bear the thought of leaving here. I'm so used to it. I've grown to love it. It's part of me."

"But," I exclaimed, a little exasperated, "you didn't expect to live here always, did you? The house has been too small for us for years. I thought you'd be delighted." (This was not strictly true, for I had rather expected some such action on her part.) "Most women would. Of course, if it's going to make such a difference to you as that, I'll sell the lot. That won't be difficult."

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I got up, and started to go into my study. She half rose, and her sewing fell to the floor.

“Oh, why are we always having misunderstandings? Do sit down a minute, Hugh. Don’t think I’m not appreciative,” she pleaded. “It was—such a shock.”

I sat down rather reluctantly.

“I can’t express what I think,” she continued, rather breathlessly, “but sometimes I’m actually frightened, we’re going through life so fast in these days, and it doesn’t seem as if we were getting the real things out of it. I’m afraid of your success, and of all the money you’re making.”

I smiled.

“I’m not so rich yet, as riches go in these days, that you need be alarmed,” I said.

She looked at me helplessly a moment.

“I feel that it isn’t—right, somehow, that you’ll pay for it, that we’ll pay for it. Goodness knows, we have everything we want, and more too. This house—this house is real, and I’m afraid that won’t be a home, won’t be real. That we’ll be overwhelmed with—with things!"...

She was interrupted by the entrance of the children. But after dinner, when she had seen them to bed, as was her custom, she came downstairs into my study and said quietly:—“I was wrong, Hugh. If you want to build a house, if you feel that you’d be happier, I have no right to object. Of course my sentiment for this house is natural, the children were born here, but I’ve realized we couldn’t live here always.”

“I’m glad you look at it that way,” I replied. “Why, we’re already getting cramped, Maude, and now you’re going to have a governess I don’t know where you’d put her.”

“Not too large, a house,” she pleaded. “I know you think I’m silly, but this extravagance we see everywhere does make me uneasy. Perhaps it’s because I’m provincial, and always shall be.”

“Well, we must have a house large enough to be comfortable in,” I said. “There’s no reason why we shouldn’t be comfortable.” I thought it as well not to confess my ambitions, and I was greatly relieved that she did not reproach me for buying the lot without consulting her. Indeed, I was grateful for this unanticipated acquiescence, I felt nearer to her, than I had for a long time. I drew up another chair to my desk.

“Sit down and we’ll make a few sketches, just for fun,” I urged.

“Hugh,” she said presently, as we were blacking out prospective rooms, “do you remember all those drawings and plans we made in England, on our wedding trip, and how we knew just what we wanted, and changed our minds every few days? And now we’re ready to build, and haven’t any ideas at all!”

“Yes,” I answered—but I did not look at her.

“I have the book still—it’s in the attic somewhere, packed away in a box. I suppose those plans would seem ridiculous now.”

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It was quite true,—now that we were ready to build the home that had been deferred so long, now that I had the money to spend without stint on its construction, the irony of life had deprived me of those strong desires and predilections I had known on my wedding trip. What a joy it would have been to build then! But now I found myself: wholly lacking in definite ideas as to style and construction. Secretly, I looked forward to certain luxuries, such as a bedroom and dressing-room and warm tiled bathroom all to myself bachelor privacies for which I had longed. Two mornings later at the breakfast table Maude asked me if I had thought of an architect.

“Why, Archie Lammerton, I suppose. Who else is there? Have you anyone else in mind?”

“N-no,” said Maude. “But I heard of such a clever man in Boston, who doesn’t charge Mr. Lammerton’s prices; and who designs such beautiful private houses.”

“But we can afford to pay Lammerton’s prices,” I replied, smiling. “And why shouldn’t we have the best?”

“Are you sure—he is the best, Hugh?”

“Everybody has him,” I said.

Maude smiled in return.

“I suppose that’s a good reason,” she answered.

“Of course it’s a good reason,” I assured her. “These people—the people we know—-wouldn’t have had Lammerton unless he was satisfactory. What’s the matter with his houses?”

“Well,” said Maude, “they’re not very original. I don’t say they’re not good, in away, but they lack a certain imagination. It’s difficult for me to express what I mean, ‘machine made’ isn’t precisely the idea, but there should be a certain irregularity in art—shouldn’t there? I saw a reproduction in one of the architectural journals of a house in Boston by a man named Frey, that seemed to me to have great charm.”

Here was Lucia, unmistakably.

“That’s all very well,” I said impatiently, “but when one has to live in a house, one wants something more than artistic irregularity. Lammerton knows how to build for everyday existence; he’s a practical man, as well as a man of taste, he may not be a Christopher Wrenn, but he understands conveniences and comforts. His chimneys don’t smoke, his windows are tight, he knows what systems of heating are the best, and whom to go to: he knows what good plumbing is. I’m rather surprised you don’t appreciate that, Maude, you’re so particular as to what kind of rooms the children shall have, and you

want a schoolroom-nursery with all the latest devices, with sun and ventilation. The Berringers wouldn't have had him, the Hollisters and Dickinsons wouldn't have had him if his work lacked taste."

"And Nancy wouldn't have had him," added Maude, and she smiled once more.

"Well, I haven't consulted Nancy, or anyone else," I replied—a little tartly, perhaps. "You don't seem to realize that some fashions may have a basis of reason. They are not all silly, as Lucia seems to think. If Lammerton builds satisfactory houses, he ought to be forgiven for being the fashion, he ought to have a chance." I got up to leave. "Let's see what kind of a plan he'll draw up, at any rate."

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Her glance was almost indulgent.

“Of course, Hugh. I want you to be satisfied, to be pleased,” she said.

“And you?” I questioned, “you are to live in the house more than I.”

“Oh, I’m sure it will turn out all right,” she replied. “Now you’d better run along, I know you’re late.”

“I am late,” I admitted, rather lamely. “If you don’t care for Lammerton’s drawings, we’ll get another architect.”

Several years before Mr. Lammerton had arrived among us with a Beaux Arts moustache and letters of introduction to Mrs. Durrett and others. We found him the most adaptable, the most accommodating of young men, always ready to donate his talents and his services to private theatricals, tableaux, and fancy-dress balls, to take a place at a table at the last moment. One of his most appealing attributes was his “belief” in our city,—a form of patriotism that culminated, in later years, in “million population” clubs. I have often heard him declare, when the ladies had left the dining-room, that there was positively no limit to our future growth; and, incidentally, to our future wealth. Such sentiments as these could not fail to add to any man’s popularity, and his success was a foregone conclusion. Almost before we knew it he was building the new Union Station of which he had foreseen the need, to take care of the millions to which our population was to be swelled; building the new Post Office that the unceasing efforts of Theodore Watling finally procured for us: building, indeed, Nancy’s new house, the largest of our private mansions save Mr. Scherer’s, a commission that had immediately brought about others from the Dickinsons and the Berringers.... That very day I called on him in his offices at the top of one of our new buildings, where many young draftsmen were bending over their boards. I was ushered into his private studio.

“I suppose you want something handsome, Hugh,” he said, looking at me over his cigarette, “something commensurate with these fees I hear you are getting.”

“Well, I want to be comfortable,” I admitted.

We lunched at the Club together, where we talked over the requirements.

When he came to dinner the next week and spread out his sketch on the living-room table Maude drew in her breath.

“Why, Hugh,” she exclaimed in dismay, “it’s as big as—as big as the White House!”

“Not quite,” I answered, laughing with Archie. “We may as well take our ease in our old age.”

“Take our ease!” echoed Maude. “We’ll rattle ’round in it. I’ll never get used to it.”

“After a month, Mrs. Paret, I’ll wager you’ll be wondering how you ever got along without it,” said Archie.

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It was not as big as the White House, yet it could not be called small. I had seen, to that. The long facade was imposing, dignified, with a touch of conventionality and solidity in keeping with my standing in the city. It was Georgian, of plum-coloured brick with marble trimmings and marble wedges over the ample windows, some years later I saw the house by Ferguson, of New York, from which Archie had cribbed it. At one end, off the dining-room, was a semicircular conservatory. There was a small portico, with marble pillars, and in the ample, swift sloping roof many dormers; servants' rooms, Archie explained. The look of anxiety on Maude's face deepened as he went over the floor plans, the reception-room; dining room to seat thirty, the servants' hall; and upstairs Maude's room, boudoir and bath and dress closet, my "apartments" adjoining on one side and the children's on the other, and the guest-rooms with baths....

Maude surrendered, as one who gives way to the inevitable. When the actual building began we both of us experienced, I think; a certain mild excitement; and walked out there, sometimes with the children, in the spring evenings, and on Sunday afternoons. "Excitement" is, perhaps, too strong a word for my feelings: there was a pleasurable anticipation on my part, a looking forward to a more decorous, a more luxurious existence; a certain impatience at the delays inevitable in building. But a new legal commercial enterprise of magnitude began to absorb me at his time, and somehow the building of this home—the first that we possessed was not the event it should have been; there were moments when I felt cheated, when I wondered what had become of that capacity for enjoyment which in my youth had been so keen. I remember indeed, one grey evening when I went there alone, after the workmen had departed, and stood in the litter of mortar and bricks and boards gazing at the completed front of the house. It was even larger than I had imagined it from the plans; in the Summer twilight there was an air about it,—if not precisely menacing, at least portentous, with its gaping windows and towering roof. I was a little tired from a hard day; I had the odd feeding of having raised up something with which—momentarily at least—I doubted my ability to cope: something huge, impersonal; something that ought to have represented a fireside, a sanctuary, and yet was the embodiment of an element quite alien to the home; a restless element with which our American atmosphere had, by invisible degrees, become charged. As I stared at it, the odd fancy seized me that the building somehow typified my own career.... I had gained something, in truth, but had I not also missed something? something a different home would have embodied?

Maude and the children had gone, to the seaside.

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With a vague uneasiness I turned away from the contemplation of those walls. The companion mansions were closed, their blinds tightly drawn; the neighbourhood was as quiet as the country, save for a slight but persistent noise that impressed itself on my consciousness. I walked around the house to spy in the back yard; a young girl rather stealthily gathering laths, and fragments of joists and flooring, and loading them into a child's express-wagon. She started when she saw me. She was little, more than a child, and the loose calico dress she wore seemed to emphasize her thinness. She stood stock-still, staring at me with frightened yet defiant eyes. I, too, felt a strange timidity in her presence.

"Why do you stop?" I asked at length.

"Say, is this your heap?" she demanded.

I acknowledged it. A hint of awe widened her eyes. Then site glanced at the half-filled wagon.

"This stuff ain't no use to you, is it?"

"No, I'm glad to have you take it."

She shifted to the other foot, but did not continue her gathering. An impulse seized me, I put down my walkingstick and began picking up pieces of wood, flinging them into the wagon. I looked at her again, rather furtively; she had not moved. Her attitude puzzled me, for it was one neither of surprise nor of protest. The spectacle of the "millionaire" owner of the house engaged in this menial occupation gave her no thrills. I finished the loading.

"There!" I said, and drew a dollar bill out of my pocket and gave it to her. Even then she did not thank me, but took up the wagon tongue and went off, leaving on me a disheartening impression of numbness, of life crushed out. I glanced up once more at the mansion I had built for myself looming in the dusk, and walked hurriedly away....

One afternoon some three weeks after we had moved into the new house, I came out of the Club, where I had been lunching in conference with Scherer and two capitalists from New York. It was after four o'clock, the day was fading, the street lamps were beginning to cast sickly streaks of jade-coloured light across the slush of the pavements. It was the sight of this slush (which for a brief half hour that morning had been pure snow, and had sent Matthew and Moreton and Biddy into ecstasies at the notion of a "real Christmas"), that brought to my mind the immanence of the festival, and the fact that I had as yet bought no presents. Such was the predicament in which I usually found myself on Christmas eve; and it was not without a certain sense of annoyance at the task thus abruptly confronting me that I got into my automobile and directed the chauffeur to the shopping district. The crowds surged along the wet sidewalks and

overflowed into the street, and over the heads of the people I stared at the blazing shop-windows decked out in Christmas greens. My chauffeur, a bristly-haired Parisian, blew his horn insolently, men and women jostled each other to get out of the

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way, their holiday mood giving place to resentment as they stared into the windows of the limousine. With the American inability to sit still I shifted from one corner of the seat to another, impatient at the slow progress of the machine: and I felt a certain contempt for human beings, that they should make all this fuss, burden themselves with all these senseless purchases, for a tradition. The automobile stopped, and I fought my way across the sidewalk into the store of that time-honoured firm, Elgin, Yates and Garner, pausing uncertainly before the very counter where, some ten years before, I had bought an engagement ring. Young Mr. Garner himself spied me, and handing over a customer to a tired clerk, hurried forward to greet me, his manner implying that my entrance was in some sort an event. I had become used to this aroma of deference.

"What can I show you, Mr. Paret?" he asked.

"I don't know—I'm looking around," I said, vaguely, bewildered by the glittering baubles by which I was confronted. What did Maude want? While I was gazing into the case, Mr. Garner opened a safe behind him, laying before me a large sapphire set with diamonds in a platinum brooch; a beautiful stone, in the depths of it gleaming a fire like a star in an arctic sky. I had not given Maude anything of value of late. Decidedly, this was of value; Mr. Garner named the price glibly; if Mrs. Paret didn't care for it, it might be brought back or exchanged. I took it, with a sigh of relief. Leaving the store, I paused on the edge of the rushing stream of humanity, with the problem of the children's gifts still to be solved. I thought of my own childhood, when at Christmastide I had walked with my mother up and down this very street, so changed and modernized now; recalling that I had had definite desires, desperate ones; but my imagination failed me when I tried to summon up the emotions connected with them. I had no desires now: I could buy anything in reason in the whole street. What did Matthew and Moreton want? and little Biddy? Maude had not "spoiled" them; but they didn't seem to have any definite wants. The children made me think, with a sudden softening, of Tom Peters, and I went into a tobacconist's and bought him a box of expensive cigars. Then I told the chauffeur to take me to a toy-shop, where I stood staring through a plate-glass window at the elaborate playthings devised for the modern children of luxury. In the centre was a toy man-of-war, three feet in length, with turrets and guns, and propellers and a real steam-engine. As a boy I should have dreamed about it, schemed for it, bartered my immortal soul for it. But—if I gave it to Matthew, what was there for Moreton? A steam locomotive caught my eye, almost as elaborate. Forcing my way through the doors, I captured a salesman, and from a state bordering on nervous collapse he became galvanized into an intense alertness and respect when he understood my desires. He didn't know the price of the objects in question. He brought the proprietor, an obsequious little German who, on learning my name, repeated it in every sentence. For Biddy I chose a doll that was all but human; when held by a young woman for my inspection, it elicited murmurs of admiration from the women shoppers by

whom we were surrounded. The proprietor promised to make a special delivery of the three articles before seven o'clock....

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Presently the automobile, after speeding up the asphalt of Grant Avenue, stopped before the new house. In spite of the change that house had made in my life, in three weeks I had become amazingly used to it; yet I had an odd feeling that Christmas eve as I stood under the portico with my key in the door, the same feeling of the impersonality of the place which I had experienced before. Not that for one moment I would have exchanged it for the smaller house we had left. I opened the door. How often, in that other house, I had come in the evening seeking quiet, my brain occupied with a problem, only to be annoyed by the romping of the children on the landing above. A noise in one end of it echoed to the other. But here, as I entered the hall, all was quiet: a dignified, deep-carpeted stairway swept upward before me, and on either side were wide, empty rooms; and in the subdued light of one of them I saw a dark figure moving silently about—the butler. He came forward to relieve me, deftly, of my hat and overcoat. Well, I had it at last, this establishment to which I had for so long looked forward. And yet that evening, as I hesitated in the hall, I somehow was unable to grasp that it was real and permanent, the very solidity of the walls and doors paradoxically suggested transientness, the butler a flitting ghost. How still the place was! Almost oppressively still. I recalled oddly a story of a peasant who, yearning for the great life, had stumbled upon an empty palace, its tables set with food in golden dishes. Before two days had passed he had fled from it in horror back to his crowded cottage and his drudgery in the fields. Never once had the sense of possession of the palace been realized. Nor did I feel that I possessed this house, though I had the deeds of it in my safe and the receipted bills in my files. It eluded me; seemed, in my, bizarre mood of that evening, almost to mock me. “You have built me,” it seemed to say, “but I am stronger than you, because you have not earned me.” Ridiculous, when the years of my labour and the size of my bank account were considered! Such, however, is the verbal expression of my feeling. Was the house empty, after all? Had something happened? With a slight panicky sensation I climbed the stairs, with their endless shallow treads, to hurry through the silent hallway to the schoolroom. Reassuring noises came faintly through the heavy door. I opened it. Little Biddy was careening round and round, crying out:—“To-morrow’s Chris’mas! Santa Claus is coming tonight.”

Matthew was regarding her indulgently, sympathetically, Moreton rather scornfully. The myth had been exploded for both, but Matthew still hugged it. That was the difference between them. Maude, seated on the floor, perceived me first, and glanced up at me with a smile.

“It’s father!” she said.

Biddy stopped in the midst of a pirouette. At the age of seven she was still shy with me, and retreated towards Maude.

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“Aren’t we going to have a tree, father?” demanded Moreton, aggressively. “Mother won’t tell us—neither will Miss Allsop.”

Miss Allsop was their governess.

“Why do you want a tree?” I asked.

“Oh, for Biddy,” he said.

“It wouldn’t be Christmas without a tree,” Matthew declared, “—and Santa Claus,” he added, for his sister’s benefit.

“Perhaps Santa Claus, when he sees we’ve got this big house, will think we don’t need anything, and go on to some poorer children,” said Maude. “You wouldn’t blame him if he did that,—would you?”

The response to this appeal cannot be said to have been enthusiastic....

After dinner, when at last all of them were in bed, we dressed the tree; it might better be said that Maude and Miss Allsop dressed it, while I gave a perfunctory aid. Both the women took such a joy in the process, vying with each other in getting effects, and as I watched them eagerly draping the tinsel and pinning on the glittering ornaments I wondered why it was that I was unable to find the same joy as they. Thus it had been every Christmas eve. I was always tired when I got home, and after dinner relaxation set in.

An electrician had come while we were at the table, and had fastened on the little electric bulbs which did duty as candles.

“Oh,” said Maude, as she stood off to survey the effect, “isn’t it beautiful! Come, Miss Allsop, let’s get the presents.”

They flew out of the room, and presently hurried back with their arms full of the usual parcels: parcels from Maude’s family in Elkington, from my own relatives, from the Blackwoods and the Peterses, from Nancy. In the meantime I had had my own contributions brought up, the man of war, the locomotive, the big doll. Maude stood staring.

“Hugh, they’ll be utterly ruined!” she exclaimed.

“The boys might as well have something instructive,” I replied, “and as for Biddy—-nothing’s too good for her.”

“I might have known you wouldn’t forget them, although you are so busy.".....

We filled the three stockings hung by the great fireplace. Then, with a last lingering look at the brightness of the tree, she stood in the doorway and turned the electric switch.

“Not before seven to-morrow morning, Miss Allsop,” she said. “Hugh, you will get up, won’t you? You mustn’t miss seeing them. You can go back to bed again.”

I promised.

Evidently, this was Reality to Maude. And had it not been one of my dreams of marriage, this preparing for the children’s Christmas, remembering the fierce desires of my own childhood? It struck me, after I had kissed her good night and retired to my dressing-room, that fierce desires burned within me still, but the objects towards which their flames leaped out differed. That was all. Had I remained a child, since my idea of pleasure was still that of youth? The craving far excitement, adventure,

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was still unslaked; the craving far freedom as keen as ever. During the whole of my married life, I had been conscious of an inner protest against “settling down,” as Tom Peters had settled down. The smaller house from which we had moved, with its enforced propinquity, hard emphasized the bondage of marriage. Now I had two rooms to myself, in the undisputed possession of which I had taken a puerile delight. On one side of my dressing-room Archie Lammerton had provided a huge closet containing the latest devices for the keeping of a multitudinous wardrobe; there was a reading-lamp, and the easiest of easy-chairs, imported from England, while between the windows were shelves of Italian walnut which I had filled with the books I had bought while at Cambridge, and had never since opened. As I sank down in my chair that odd feeling of uneasiness, of transience and unreality, of unsatisfaction I had had ever since we had moved suddenly became intensified, and at the very moment when I had gained everything I had once believed a man could desire! I was successful, I was rich, my health had not failed, I had a wife who catered to my wishes, lovable children who gave no trouble and yet—there was still the void to be filled, the old void I had felt as a boy, the longing for something beyond me, I knew not what; there was the strange inability to taste any of these things, the need at every turn for excitement, for a stimulus. My marriage had been a disappointment, though I strove to conceal this from myself; a disappointment because it had not filled the requirements of my category—excitement and mystery: I had provided the setting and lacked the happiness. Another woman Nancy—might have given me the needed stimulation; and yet my thoughts did not dwell on Nancy that night, my longings were not directed towards her, but towards the vision of a calm, contented married happiness I had looked forward to in youth,—a vision suddenly presented once more by the sight of Maude’s simple pleasure in dressing the Christmas tree. What restless, fiendish element in me prevented my enjoying that? I had something of the fearful feeling of a ghost in my own house and among my own family, of a spirit doomed to wander, unable to share in what should have been my own, in what would have saved me were I able to partake of it. Was it too late to make that effort?.... Presently the strains of music pervaded my consciousness, the chimes of Trinity ringing out in the damp night the Christmas hymn, Adeste Fideles. It was midnight it was Christmas. How clear the notes rang through the wet air that came in at my window! Back into the dim centuries that music led me, into candle-lit Gothic chapels of monasteries on wind-swept heights above the firs, and cathedrals in mediaeval cities. Twilight ages of war and scourge and stress and storm—and faith. “Oh, come, all ye Faithful!” What a strange thing, that faith whose flame so marvellously persisted, piercing the gloom; the Christmas myth, as I had heard someone once call it. Did it possess the power to save me? Save me from what? Ah, in this hour I knew. In the darkness the Danger loomed up before me, vague yet terrible, and I trembled. Why was not this Thing ever present, to chasten and sober me? The Thing was myself.

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Into my remembrance, by what suggestion I know not, came that March evening when I had gone to Holder Chapel at Harvard to listen to a preacher, a personality whose fame and influence had since spread throughout the land. Some dim fear had possessed me then. I recalled vividly the man, and the face of Hermann Krebs as I drew back from the doorway....

When I awoke my disquieting, retrospective mood had disappeared, and yet there clung to me, minus the sanction of fear or reward or revealed truth, a certain determination to behave, on this day at least, more like a father and a husband: to make an effort to enter into the spirit of the festival, and see what happened. I dressed in cheerful haste, took the sapphire pendant from its velvet box, tiptoed into the still silent schoolroom and hung it on the tree, flooding on the electric light that set the tinsel and globes ablaze. No sooner had I done this than I heard the patter of feet in the hallway, and a high-pitched voice—Biddy's —crying out:—"It's Santa Claus!"

Three small, flannel-wrappered figures stood in the doorway.

"Why, it's father!" exclaimed Moreton.

"And he's all dressed!" said Matthew.

"Oh-h-h!" cried Biddy, staring at the blazing tree, "isn't it beautiful!"

Maude was close behind them. She gave an exclamation of delighted surprise when she saw me, and then stood gazing with shining eyes at the children, especially at Biddy, who stood dazzled by the glory of the constellation confronting her.... Matthew, too, wished to prolong the moment of mystery. It was the practical Moreton who cried: —"Let's see what we've got!"

The assault and the sacking began. I couldn't help thinking as I watched them of my own wildly riotous, Christmas-morning sensations, when all the gifts had worn the aura of the supernatural; but the arrival of these toys was looked upon by my children as a part of the natural order of the universe. At Maude's suggestion the night before we had placed my presents, pieces de resistance, at a distance from the tree, in the hope that they would not be spied at once, that they would be in some sort a climax. It was Matthew who first perceived the ship, and identified it, by the card, as his property. To him it was clearly wonderful, but no miracle. He did not cry out, or call the attention of the others to it, but stood with his feet apart, examining it, his first remark being a query as to why it didn't fly the American flag. It's ensign was British. Then Moreton saw the locomotive, was told that it was his, and took possession of it violently. Why wasn't there more track? Wouldn't I get more track? I explained that it would go by steam, and he began unscrewing the cap on the little boiler until he was distracted by the man-of-war, and with natural acquisitiveness started to take possession of that. Biddy was bewildered by the doll, which Maude had taken up and was holding in her lap.

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She had had talking dolls before, and dolls that closed their eyes; she recognized this one, indeed, as a sort of super-doll, but her little mind was modern, too, and set no limits on what might be accomplished. She patted it, but was more impressed by the raptures of Miss Allsop, who had come in and was admiring it with some extravagance. Suddenly the child caught sight of her stocking, until now forgotten, and darted for the fireplace.

I turned to Maude, who stood beside me, watching them.

“But you haven’t looked on the tree yourself,” I reminded her.

She gave me an odd, questioning glance, and got up and set down the doll. As she stood for a moment gazing at the lights, she seemed very girlish in her dressing-gown, with her hair in two long plaits down her back.

“Oh, Hugh!” She lifted the pendant from the branch and held it up. Her gratitude, her joy at receiving a present was deeper than the children’s!

“You chose it for me?”

I felt something like a pang when I thought how little trouble it had been.

“If you don’t like it,” I said, “or wish to have it changed—”

“Changed!” she exclaimed reproachfully. “Do you think I’d change it? Only—it’s much too valuable—”

I smiled.... Miss Allsop deftly undid the clasp and hung it around Maude’s neck.

“How it suits you, Mrs. Paret!” she cried....

This pendant was by no means the only present I had given Maude in recent years, and though she cared as little for jewels as for dress she seemed to attach to it a peculiar value and significance that disturbed and smote me, for the incident had revealed a love unchanged and unchangeable. Had she taken my gift as a sign that my indifference was melting?

As I went downstairs and into the library to read the financial page of the morning newspaper I asked myself, with a certain disquiet, whether, in the formal, complicated, and luxurious conditions in which we now lived it might be possible to build up new ties and common interests. I reflected that this would involve confessions and confidences on my part, since there was a whole side of my life of which Maude knew nothing. I had convinced myself long ago that a man’s business career was no affair of his wife’s: I

had justified that career to myself: yet I had always had a vague feeling that Maude, had she known the details, would not have approved of it. Impossible, indeed, for a woman to grasp these problems. They were outside of her experience.

Nevertheless, something might be done to improve our relationship, something which would relieve me of that uneasy lack of unity I felt when at home, of the lassitude and ennui I was wont to feel creeping over me on Sundays and holidays....

XX.

I find in relating those parts of my experience that seem to be of most significance I have neglected to tell of my mother's death, which occurred the year before we moved to Grant Avenue. She had clung the rest of her days to the house in which I had been born. Of late years she had lived in my children, and Maude's devotion to her had been unflagging. Truth compels me to say that she had long ceased to be a factor in my life. I have thought of her in later years.

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Coincident with the unexpected feeling of fruitlessness that came to me with the Grant Avenue house, of things achieved but not realized or appreciated, was the appearance of a cloud on the business horizon; or rather on the political horizon, since it is hard to separate the two realms. There were signs, for those who could read, of a rising popular storm. During the earliest years of the new century the political atmosphere had changed, the public had shown a tendency to grow restless; and everybody knows how important it is for financial operations, for prosperity, that the people should mind their own business. In short, our commercial-romantic pilgrimage began to meet with unexpected resistance. It was as though the nation were entering into a senseless conspiracy to kill prosperity.

In the first place, in regard to the Presidency of the United States, a cog had unwittingly been slipped. It had always been recognized—as I have said—by responsible financial personages that the impulses of the majority of Americans could not be trusted, that these—who had inherited illusions of freedom—must be governed firmly yet with delicacy; unknown to them, their Presidents must be chosen for them, precisely as Mr. Watling had been chosen for the people of our state, and the popular enthusiasm manufactured later. There were informal meetings in New York, in Washington, where candidates were discussed; not that such and such a man was settled upon,—it was a process of elimination. Usually the affair had gone smoothly. For instance, a while before, a benevolent capitalist of the middle west, an intimate of Adolf Scherer, had become obsessed with the idea that a friend of his was the safest and sanest man for the head of the nation, had convinced his fellow-capitalists of this, whereupon he had gone ahead to spend his energy and his money freely to secure the nomination and election of this gentleman.

The Republican National Committee, the Republican National Convention were allowed to squabble to their hearts' content as to whether Smith, Jones or Brown should be nominated, but it was clearly understood that if Robinson or White were chosen there would be no corporation campaign funds. This applied also to the Democratic party, on the rare occasions when it seemed to have an opportunity of winning. Now, however, through an unpardonable blunder, there had got into the White House a President who was inclined to ignore advice, who appealed over the heads of the "advisers" to the populace; who went about tilting at the industrial structures we had so painfully wrought, and in frequent blasts of presidential messages enunciated new and heretical doctrines; who attacked the railroads, encouraged the brazen treason of labour unions, inspired an army of "muck-rakers" to fill the magazines with the wildest and most violent of language. State legislatures were emboldened to pass mischievous and restrictive laws, and much of my time began to be occupied in inducing, by various means, our courts to declare these unconstitutional. How we sighed for a business man or a lawyer in the White House! The country had gone mad, the stock-market trembled, the cry of "corporation control" resounded everywhere, and everywhere demagogues arose to inaugurate "reform campaigns," in an abortive attempt to "clean up politics." Down with the bosses, who were the tools of the corporations!

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In our own city, which we fondly believed to be proof against the prevailing madness, a slight epidemic occurred; slight, yet momentarily alarming. Accidents will happen, even in the best regulated political organizations,—and accidents in these days appeared to be the rule. A certain Mr. Edgar Greenhalge, a middle-aged, mild-mannered and inoffensive man who had made a moderate fortune in wholesale drugs, was elected to the School Board. Later on some of us had reason to suspect that Perry Blackwood—-with more astuteness than he had been given credit for—was responsible for Mr. Greenhalge's candidacy. At any rate, he was not a man to oppose, and in his previous life had given no hint that he might become a trouble maker. Nothing happened for several months. But one day on which I had occasion to interview Mr. Jason on a little matter of handing over to the Railroad a piece of land belonging to the city, which was known as Billings' Bowl, he inferred that Mr. Greenhaige might prove a disturber of that profound peace with which the city administration had for many years been blessed.

"Who the hell is he?" was Mr. Jason's question.

It appeared that Mr. G.'s private life had been investigated, with disappointingly barren results; he was, seemingly, an anomalistic being in our Nietzschean age, an unaggressive man; he had never sold any drugs to the city; he was not a church member; nor could it be learned that he had ever wandered into those byways of the town where Mr. Jason might easily have got trace of him: if he had any vices, he kept them locked up in a safe-deposit box that could not be "located." He was very genial, and had a way of conveying disturbing facts—when he wished to convey them—under cover of the most amusing stories. Mr. Jason was not a man to get panicky. Greenhalge could be handled all right, only—what was there in it for Greenhalge?—a nut difficult for Mr. Jason to crack. The two other members of the School Board were solid. Here again the wisest of men was proved to err, for Mr. Greenhalge turned out to have powers of persuasion; he made what in religious terms would have been called a conversion in the case of another member of the board, an hitherto staunch old reprobate by the name of Muller, an ex-saloon-keeper in comfortable circumstances to whom the idea of public office had appealed.

Mr. Greenhalge, having got wind of certain transactions that interested him extremely, brought them in his good-natured way to the knowledge of Mr. Gregory, the district attorney, suggesting that he investigate. Mr. Gregory smiled; undertook, as delicately as possible, to convey to Mr. Greenhalge the ways of the world, and of the political world in particular, wherein, it seemed, everyone was a good fellow. Mr. Greenhalge was evidently a good fellow, and didn't want to make trouble over little things. No, Mr. Greenhalge didn't want to make trouble; he appreciated a comfortable life as much as Mr. Gregory; he told

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the district attorney a funny story which might or might not have had an application to the affair, and took his leave with the remark that he had been happy to make Mr. Gregory's acquaintance. On his departure the district attorney's countenance changed. He severely rebuked a subordinate for some trivial mistake, and walked as rapidly as he could carry his considerable weight to Monahan's saloon.... One of the things Mr. Gregory had pointed out incidentally was that Mr. Greenhalge's evidence was vague, and that a grand jury wanted facts, which might be difficult to obtain. Mr. Greenhalge, thinking over the suggestion, sent for Krebs. In the course of a month or two the investigation was accomplished, Greenhalge went back to Gregory; who repeated his homilies, whereupon he was handed a hundred or so typewritten pages of evidence.

It was a dramatic moment.

Mr. Gregory resorted to pleading. He was sure that Mr. Greenhalge didn't want to be disagreeable, it was true and unfortunate that such things were so, but they would be amended: he promised all his influence to amend them. The public conscience, said Mr. Gregory, was being aroused. Now how much better for the party, for the reputation, the fair name of the city if these things could be corrected quietly, and nobody indicted or tried! Between sensible and humane men, wasn't that the obvious way? After the election, suit could be brought to recover the money. But Mr. Greenhalge appeared to be one of those hopeless individuals without a spark of party loyalty; he merely continued to smile, and to suggest that the district attorney prosecute. Mr. Gregory temporized, and presently left the city on a vacation. A day or two after his second visit to the district attorney's office Mr. Greenhalge had a call from the city auditor and the purchasing agent, who talked about their families,—which was very painful. It was also intimated to Mr. Greenhalge by others who accosted him that he was just the man for mayor. He smiled, and modestly belittled his qualifications....

Suddenly, one fine morning, a part of the evidence Krebs had gathered appeared in the columns of the Mail and State, a new and enterprising newspaper for which the growth and prosperity of our city were responsible; the sort of "revelations" that stirred to amazement and wrath innocent citizens of nearly every city in our country: politics and "graft" infesting our entire educational system, teachers and janitors levied upon, prices that took the breath away paid to favoured firms for supplies, specifications so worded that reasonable bids were barred. The respectable firm of Ellery and Knowles was involved. In spite of our horror, we were Americans and saw the humour of the situation, and laughed at the caricature in the Mail and State representing a scholar holding up a pencil and a legend under it, "No, it's not gold, but it ought to be."

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Here I must enter into a little secret history. Any affair that threatened the integrity of Mr. Jason's organization was of serious moment to the gentlemen of the financial world who found that organization invaluable and who were also concerned about the fair name of their community; a conference in the Boyne Club decided that the city officials were being persecuted, and entitled therefore to "the very best of counsel,"—in this instance, Mr. Hugh Paret. It was also thought wise by Mr. Dickinson, Mr. Gorse, and Mr. Grierson, and by Mr. Paret himself that he should not appear in the matter; an aspiring young attorney, Mr. Arbuthnot, was retained to conduct the case in public. Thus capital came to the assistance of Mr. Jason, a fund was raised, and I was given carte blanche to defend the miserable city auditor and purchasing agent, both of whom elicited my sympathy; for they were stout men, and rapidly losing weight. Our first care was to create a delay in the trial of the case in order to give the public excitement a chance to die down. For the public is proverbially unable to fix its attention for long on one object, continually demanding the distraction that our newspapers make it their business to supply. Fortunately, a murder was committed in one of our suburbs, creating a mystery that filled the "extras" for some weeks, and this was opportunely followed by the embezzlement of a considerable sum by the cashier of one of our state banks. Public interest was divided between baseball and the tracking of this criminal to New Zealand.

Our resentment was directed, not so much against Commissioner Greenhalge as against Krebs. It is curious how keen is the instinct of men like Grierson, Dickinson, Tallant and Scherer for the really dangerous opponent. Who the deuce was this man Krebs? Well, I could supply them with some information: they doubtless recalled the Galligan, case; and Miller Gorse, who forgot nothing, also remembered his opposition in the legislature to House Bill 709. He had continued to be the obscure legal champion of "oppressed" labour, but how he had managed to keep body and soul together I knew not. I had encountered him occasionally in court corridors or on the street; he did not seem to change much; nor did he appear in our brief and perfunctory conversations to bear any resentment against me for the part I had taken in the Galligan affair. I avoided him when it was possible.... I had to admit that he had done a remarkably good piece of work in collecting Greenhalge's evidence, and how the, erring city officials were to be rescued became a matter of serious concern. Gregory, the district attorney, was in an abject funk; in any case a mediocre lawyer, after the indictment he was no help at all. I had to do all the work, and after we had selected the particular "Railroad" judge before whom the case was to be tried, I talked it over with him. His name was Notting, he understood perfectly what was required of him, and that he was

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for the moment the chief bulwark on which depended the logical interests of capital and sane government for their defence; also, his re-election was at stake. It was indicated to newspapers (such as the Mail and State) showing a desire to keep up public interest in the affair that their advertising matter might decrease; Mr. Sherrill's great department store, for instance, did not approve of this sort of agitation. Certain stationers, booksellers and other business men had got "cold feet," as Mr. Jason put it, the prospect of bankruptcy suddenly looming ahead of them,—since the Corn National Bank held certain paper....

In short, when the case did come to trial, it "blew up," as one of our ward leaders dynamically expressed it. Several important witnesses were mysteriously lacking, and two or three school-teachers had suddenly decided—to take a trip to Europe. The district attorney was ill, and assigned the prosecution to a mild assistant; while a sceptical jury—composed largely of gentlemen who had the business interests of the community, and of themselves, at heart returned a verdict of "not guilty." This was the signal for severely dignified editorials in Mr. Tallant's and other conservative newspapers, hinting that it might be well in the future for all well-meaning but misguided reformers to think twice before subjecting the city to the cost of such trials, and uselessly attempting to inflame public opinion and upset legitimate business. The Era expressed the opinion that no city in the United States was "more efficiently and economically governed than our own." "Irregularities" might well occur in every large organization; and it would better have become Mr. Greenhalge if, instead of hiring an unknown lawyer thirsting for notoriety to cook up charges, he had called the attention of the proper officials to the matter, *etc*., *etc*. The Pilot alone, which relied on sensation for its circulation, kept hammering away for a time with veiled accusations. But our citizens had become weary....

As a topic, however, this effective suppression of reform was referred to with some delicacy by my friends and myself. Our interference had been necessary and therefore justified, but we were not particularly proud of it, and our triumph had a temporarily sobering effect. It was about this time, if I remember correctly, that Mr. Dickinson gave the beautiful stained-glass window to the church....

Months passed. One day, having occasion to go over to the Boyne Iron Works to get information at first hand from certain officials, and having finished my business, I boarded a South Side electric car standing at the terminal. Just before it started Krebs came down the aisle of the car and took the seat in front of me.

"Well," I said, "how are you?" He turned in surprise, and thrust his big, bony hand across the back of the seat. "Come and sit here." He came. "Do you ever get back to Cambridge in these days?" I asked cordially.

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“Not since I graduated from newspaper work in Boston. That’s a good many years ago. By the way, our old landlady died this year.”

“Do you mean—?” “Granite Face,” I was about to say. I had forgotten her name, but that homesick scene when Tom and I stood before our open trunks, when Krebs had paid us a visit, came back to me. “You’ve kept in touch with her?” I asked, in surprise.

“Well,” said Krebs, “she was one of the few friends I had at Cambridge. I had a letter from the daughter last week. She’s done very well, and is an instructor in biology in one of the western universities.”

I was silent a moment.

“And you,—you never married, did you?” I inquired, somewhat irrelevantly.

His semi-humorous gesture seemed to deny that such a luxury was for him. The conversation dragged a little; I began to feel the curiosity he invariably inspired. What was his life? What were his beliefs? And I was possessed by a certain militancy, a desire to “smoke him out.” I did not stop to reflect that mine was in reality a defensive rather than an aggressive attitude.

“Do you live down here, in this part of the city?” I asked.

No, he boarded in Fowler Street. I knew it as in a district given over to the small houses of working-men.

“I suppose you are still a socialist.”

“I suppose I am,” he admitted, and added, “at any rate, that is as near as you can get to it.”

“Isn’t it fairly definite?”

“Fairly, if my notions are taken in general as the antithesis of what you fellows believe.”

“The abolition of property, for instance.”

“The abolition of too much property.”

“What do you mean by ’too much’?”

“When it ceases to be real to a man, when it represents more than his need, when it drives him and he becomes a slave to it.”

Involuntarily I thought of my new house,—not a soothing reflection.

“But who is going to decree how much property, a man should have?”

“Nobody—everybody. That will gradually tend to work itself out as we become more sensible and better educated, and understand more clearly what is good for us.”

I retorted with the stock, common-sense phrase.

“If we had a division to-morrow, within a few years or so the most efficient would contrive to get the bulk of it back in their hands.”

“That’s so,” he admitted. “But we’re not going to have a division to-morrow.”

“Thank God!” I exclaimed.

He regarded me.

“The ‘efficient’ will have to die or be educated first. That will take time.”

“Educated!”

“Paret, have you ever read any serious books on what you call socialism?” he asked.

I threw out an impatient negative. I was going on to protest that I was not ignorant of the doctrine.

“Oh, what you call socialism is merely what you believe to be the more or less crude and utopian propaganda of an obscure political party. That isn’t socialism. Nor is the anomalistic attempt that the Christian Socialists make to unite modern socialistic philosophy with Christian orthodoxy, socialism.”

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“What is socialism, then?” I demanded, somewhat defiantly.

“Let’s call it education, science,” he said smilingly, “economics and government based on human needs and a rational view of religion. It has been taught in German universities, and it will be taught in ours whenever we shall succeed in inducing your friends, by one means or another, not to continue endowing them. Socialism, in the proper sense, is merely the application of modern science to government.”

I was puzzled and angry. What he said made sense somehow, but it sounded to me like so much gibberish.

“But Germany is a monarchy,” I objected.

“It is a modern, scientific system with monarchy as its superstructure. It is anomalous, but frank. The monarchy is there for all men to see, and some day it will be done away with. We are supposedly a democracy, and our superstructure is plutocratic. Our people feel the burden, but they have not yet discovered what the burden is.”

“And when they do?” I asked, a little defiantly.

“When they do,” replied Krebs, “they will set about making the plutocrats happy. Now plutocrats are discontented, and never satisfied; the more they get, the more they want, the more they are troubled by what other people have.”

I smiled in spite of myself.

“Your interest in—in plutocrats is charitable, then?”

“Why, yes,” he said, “my interest in all kinds of people is charitable. However improbable it may seem, I have no reason to dislike or envy people who have more than they know what to do with.” And the worst of it was he looked it. He managed somehow simply by sitting there with his strange eyes fixed upon me—in spite of his ridiculous philosophy—to belittle my ambitions, to make of small worth my achievements, to bring home to me the fact that in spite of these I was neither contented nor happy though he kept his humour and his poise, he implied an experience that was far deeper, more tragic and more significant than mine. I was goaded into making an injudicious remark.

“Well, your campaign against Ennerly and Jackson fell through, didn’t it?” Ennerly and Jackson were the city officials who had been tried.

“It wasn’t a campaign against them,” he answered. “And considering the subordinate part I took in it, it could scarcely be called mine.”

“Greenhalge turned to you to get the evidence.”

“Well, I got it,” he said.

“What became of it?”

“You ought to know.”

“What do you mean?”

“Just what I say, Paret,” he answered slowly. “You ought to know, if anyone knows.”

I considered this a moment, more soberly. I thought I might have counted on my fingers the number of men cognizant of my connection with the case. I decided that he was guessing.

“I think you should explain that,” I told him.

“The time may come, when you’ll have to explain it.”

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“Is that a threat?” I demanded.

“A threat?” he repeated. “Not at all.”

“But you are accusing me—”

“Of what?” he interrupted suddenly.

He had made it necessary for me to define the nature of his charges.

“Of having had some connection with the affair in question.”

“Whatever else I may be, I’m not a fool,” he said quietly. “Neither the district attorney’s office, nor young Arbuthnot had brains enough to get them out of that scrape. Jason didn’t have influence enough with the judiciary, and, as I happen to know, there was a good deal of money spent.”

“You may be called upon to prove it,” I retorted, rather hotly.

“So I may.”

His tone, far from being defiant, had in it a note of sadness. I looked at him. What were his potentialities? Was it not just possible that I should have to revise my idea of him, acknowledge that he might become more formidable than I had thought?

There was an awkward silence.

“You mustn’t imagine, Paret, that I have any personal animus against you, or against any of the men with whom you’re associated,” he went on, after a moment. “I’m sorry you’re on that side, that’s all,—I told you so once before. I’m not calling you names, I’m not talking about morality and immorality. Immorality, when you come down to it, is often just the opposition to progress that comes from blindness. I don’t make the mistake of blaming a few individuals for the evils of modern industrial society, and on the other hand you mustn’t blame individuals for the discomforts of what you call the reform movement, for that movement is merely a symptom—a symptom of a disease due to a change in the structure of society. We’ll never have any happiness or real prosperity until we cure that disease. I was inclined to blame you once, at the capital that time, because it seemed to me that a man with all the advantages you have had and a mind like yours didn’t have much excuse. But I’ve thought about it since; I realize now that I’ve had a good many more ‘advantages’ than you, and to tell you the truth, I don’t see how you could have come out anywhere else than where you are,—all your surroundings and training were against it. That doesn’t mean that you won’t grasp the situation some day—I have an idea you will. It’s just an idea. The man who ought to be condemned isn’t the man that doesn’t understand what’s going on, but the man who comes to understand and persists in opposing it.” He rose and looked down at me with

the queer, disturbing smile I remembered. “I get off at this corner,” he added, rather diffidently. “I hope you’ll forgive me for being personal. I didn’t mean to be, but you rather forced it on me.”

“Oh, that’s all right,” I replied. The car stopped, and he hurried off. I watched his tall figure as it disappeared among the crowd on the sidewalk....

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I returned to my office in one of those moods that are the more disagreeable because conflicting. To-day in particular I had been aroused by what Tom used to call Krebs's "crust," and as I sat at my desk warm waves of resentment went through me at the very notion of his telling me that my view was limited and that therefore my professional conduct was to be forgiven! It was he, the fanatic, who saw things in the larger scale! an assumption the more exasperating because at the moment he made it he almost convinced me that he did, and I was unable to achieve for him the measure of contempt I desired, for the incident, the measure of ridicule it deserved. My real animus was due to the fact that he had managed to shake my self-confidence, to take the flavour out of my achievements,—a flavour that was in the course of an hour to be completely restored by one of those interesting coincidences occasionally occurring in life. A young member of my staff entered with a telegram; I tore it open, and sat staring at it a moment before I realized that it brought to me the greatest honour of my career.

The Banker-Personality in New York had summoned me for consultation. To be recognized by him conferred indeed an ennoblement, the Star and Garter, so to speak, of the only great realm in America, that of high finance; and the yellow piece of paper I held in my hand instantly re-magnetized me, renewed my energy, and I hurried home to pack my bag in order to catch the seven o'clock train. I announced the news to Maude.

"I imagine it's because he knows I have made something of a study of the coal roads situation," I added.

"I'm glad, Hugh," she said. "I suppose it's a great compliment."

Never had her inadequacy to appreciate my career been more apparent! I looked at her curiously, to realize once more with peculiar sharpness how far we were apart; but now the resolutions I had made—and never carried out—on that first Christmas in the new home were lacking. Indeed, it was the futility of such resolutions that struck me at this moment. If her manner had been merely one of indifference, it would in a way have been easier to bear; she was simply incapable of grasping the significance of the event, the meaning to me of the years of unceasing, ambitious effort it crowned.

"Yes, it is something of a recognition," I replied. "Is there anything I can get for you in New York? I don't know how long I shall have to stay—I'll telegraph you when I'm getting back." I kissed her and hurried out to the automobile. As I drove off I saw her still standing in the doorway looking after me.... In the station I had a few minutes to telephone Nancy.

"If you don't see me for a few days it's because I've gone to New York," I informed her.

"Something important, I'm sure."

"How did you guess?" I demanded, and heard her laugh.

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“Come back soon and tell me about it,” she said, and I walked, exhilarated, to the train.... As I sped through the night, staring out of the window into the darkness, I reflected on the man I was going to see. But at that time, although he represented to me the quintessence of achievement and power, I did not by any means grasp the many sided significance of the phenomenon he presented, though I was keenly aware of his influence, and that men spoke of him with bated breath. Presidents came and went, kings and emperors had responsibilities and were subject daily to annoyances, but this man was a law unto himself. He did exactly what he chose, and compelled other men to do it. Wherever commerce reigned,—and where did it not?—he was king and head of its Holy Empire, Pope and Emperor at once. For he had his code of ethics, his religion, and those who rebelled, who failed to conform, he excommunicated; a code something like the map of Europe,—apparently inconsistent in places. What I did not then comprehend was that he was the American Principle personified, the supreme individual assertion of the conviction that government should remain modestly in the background while the efficient acquired the supremacy that was theirs by natural right; nor had I grasped at that time the crowning achievement of a unity that fused Christianity with those acquisitive dispositions said to be inherent in humanity. In him the Lion and the Lamb, the Eagle and the Dove dwelt together in amity and power.

New York, always a congenial place to gentlemen of vitality and means and influential connections, had never appeared to me more sparkling, more inspiring. Winter had relented, spring had not as yet begun. And as I sat in a corner of the dining-room of my hotel looking out on the sunlit avenue I was conscious of partaking of the vigour and confidence of the well-dressed, clear-eyed people who walked or drove past my window with the air of a conquering race. What else was there in the world more worth having than this conquering sense? Religion might offer charms to the weak. Yet here religion itself became sensible, and wore the garb of prosperity. The stonework of the tall church on the corner was all lace; and the very saints in their niches, who had known martyrdom and poverty, seemed to have renounced these as foolish, and to look down complacently on the procession of wealth and power.. Across the street, behind a sheet of glass, was a carrosserie where were displayed the shining yellow and black panels of a closed automobile, the cost of which would have built a farm-house and stocked a barn.

At eleven o’clock, the appointed hour, I was in Wall Street. Sending in my name, I was speedily ushered into a room containing a table, around which were several men; but my eyes were drawn at once to the figure of the great banker who sat, massive and preponderant, at one end, smoking a cigar, and listening in silence to the conversation I had interrupted. He rose courteously and gave me his hand, and a glance that is unforgettable.

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“It is good of you to come, Mr. Paret,” he said simply, as though his summons had not been a command. “Perhaps you know some of these gentlemen.”

One of them was our United States Senator, Theodore Watling. He, as it turned out, had been summoned from Washington. Of course I saw him frequently, having from time to time to go to Washington on various errands connected with legislation. Though spruce and debonnair as ever, in the black morning coat he invariably wore, he appeared older than he had on the day when I had entered his office. He greeted me warmly, as always.

“Hugh, I’m glad to see you here,” he said, with a slight emphasis on the last word. My legal career was reaching its logical climax, the climax he had foreseen. And he added, to the banker, that he had brought me up.

“Then he was trained in a good school,” remarked that personage, affably.

Mr. Barbour, the president of our Railroad, was present, and nodded to me kindly; also a president of a smaller road. In addition, there were two New York attorneys of great prominence, whom I had met. The banker’s own special lieutenant of the law, Mr. Clement T. Grolier, for whom I looked, was absent; but it was forthwith explained that he was offering, that morning, a resolution of some importance in the Convention of his Church, but that he would be present after lunch.

“I have asked you to come here, Mr. Paret,” said the banker, “not only because I know something personally of your legal ability, but because I have been told by Mr. Scherer and Mr. Barbour that you happen to have considerable knowledge of the situation we are discussing, as well as some experience with cases involving that statute somewhat hazy to lay minds, the Sherman anti-trust law.”

A smile went around the table. Mr. Watling winked at me; I nodded, but said nothing. The banker was not a man to listen to superfluous words. The keynote of his character was despatch....

The subject of the conference, like many questions bitterly debated and fought over in their time, has in the year I write these words come to be of merely academic interest. Indeed, the very situation we discussed that day has been cited in some of our modern text-books as a classic consequence of that archaic school of economics to which the name of Manchester is attached. Some half dozen or so of the railroads running through the anthracite coal region had pooled their interests,—an extremely profitable proceeding. The public paid. We deemed it quite logical that the public should pay—-having been created largely for that purpose; and very naturally we resented the fact that the meddling Person who had got into the White House without asking anybody’s leave,—who apparently did not believe in the infallibility of our legal Bible, the Constitution,—should maintain that the anthracite roads had formed a combination in

restraint of trade, should lay down the preposterous doctrine—so subversive of the Rights of Man—that railroads should not own coal mines. Congress had passed a law to meet this contention, suit had been brought, and in the lower court the government had won.

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As the day wore on our numbers increased, we were joined by other lawyers of renown, not the least of whom was Mr. Grolier himself, fresh from his triumph over religious heresy in his Church Convention. The note of the conference became tinged with exasperation, and certain gentlemen seized the opportunity to relieve their pent-up feelings on the subject of the President and his slavish advisers,—some of whom, before they came under the spell of his sorcery, had once been sound lawyers and sensible men. With the exception of the great Banker himself, who made few comments, Theodore Watling was accorded the most deference; as one of the leaders of that indomitable group of senators who had dared to stand up against popular clamour, his opinions were of great value, and his tactical advice was listened to with respect. I felt more pride than ever in my former chief, who had lost none of his charm. While in no way minimizing the seriousness of the situation, his wisdom was tempered, as always, with humour; he managed, as it were, to neutralize the acid injected into the atmosphere by other gentlemen present; he alone seemed to bear no animus against the Author of our troubles; suave and calm, good natured, he sometimes brought the company into roars of laughter and even succeeded in bringing occasional smiles to the face of the man who had summoned us—when relating some characteristic story of the queer genius whom the fates (undoubtedly as a practical joke) had made the chief magistrate of the United States of America. All geniuses have weaknesses; Mr. Wading had made a study of the President's, and more than once had lured him into an impasse. The case had been appealed to the Supreme Court, and Mr. Wading, with remarkable conciseness and penetration, reviewed the characteristics of each and every member of that tribunal, all of whom he knew intimately. They were, of course, not subject to "advice," as were some of the gentlemen who sat on our state courts; no sane and self-respecting American would presume to "approach" them. Nevertheless they were human, and it were wise to take account, in the conduct of the case, of the probable bias of each individual.

The President, overstepping his constitutional, Newtonian limits, might propose laws, Congress might acquiesce in them, but the Supreme Court, after listening to lawyers like Grolier (and he bowed to the attorney), made them: made them, he might have added, without responsibility to any man in our unique Republic that scorned kings and apotheosized lawyers. A Martian with a sense of humour witnessing a stormy session of Congress would have giggled at the thought of a few tranquil gentlemen in another room of the Capitol waiting to decide what the people's representatives meant—or whether they meant anything....

For the first time since I had known Theodore Watling, however, I saw him in the shadow of another individual; a man who, like a powerful magnet, continually drew our glances. When we spoke, we almost invariably addressed him, his rare words fell like bolts upon the consciousness. There was no apparent rift in that personality.

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When, about five o'clock, the conference was ended and we were dismissed, United States Senator, railroad presidents, field-marshals of the law, the great banker fell into an eager conversation with Grolier over the Canon on Divorce, the subject of warm debate in the convention that day. Grolier, it appeared, had led his party against the theological liberals. He believed that law was static, but none knew better its plasticity; that it was infallible, but none so well as he could find a text on either side. His reputation was not of the popular, newspaper sort, but was known to connoisseurs, editors, financiers, statesmen and judges,—to those, in short, whose business it is to make themselves familiar with the instruments of power. He was the banker's chief legal adviser, the banker's rapier of tempered steel, sheathed from the vulgar view save when it flashed forth on a swift errand.

"I'm glad to be associated with you in this case, Mr. Paret," Mr. Grolier said modestly, as we emerged into the maelstrom of Wall Street. "If you can make it convenient to call at my office in the morning, we'll go over it a little. And I'll see you in a day or two in Washington, Watling. Keep your eye on the bull," he added, with a twinkle, "and don't let him break any more china than you can help. I don't know where we'd be if it weren't for you fellows."

By "you fellows," he meant Mr. Watling's distinguished associates in the Senate....

Mr. Watling and I dined together at a New York club. It was not a dinner of herbs. There was something exceedingly comfortable about that club, where the art of catering to those who had earned the right to be catered to came as near perfection as human things attain. From the great, heavily curtained dining-room the noises of the city had been carefully excluded; the dust of the Avenue, the squalour and smells of the brown stone fronts and laddered tenements of those gloomy districts lying a pistol-shot east and west. We had a vintage champagne, and afterwards a cigar of the club's special importation.

"Well," said Mr. Watling, "mow that you're a member of the royal council, what do you think of the King?"

"I've been thinking a great deal about him," I said, and indeed it was true. He had made, perhaps, his greatest impression when I had shaken his hand in parting. The manner in which he had looked at me then had puzzled me; it was as though he were seeking to divine something in me that had escaped him. "Why doesn't the government take him over?" I exclaimed.

Mr. Watling smiled.

"You mean, instead of his mines and railroads and other properties?"

“Yes. But that’s your idea. Don’t you remember you said something of the kind the night of the election, years ago? It occurred to me to-day, when I was looking at him.”

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“Yes,” he agreed thoughtfully, “if some American genius could find a way to legalize that power and utilize the men who created it the worst of our problems would be solved. A man with his ability has a right to power, and none would respond more quickly or more splendidly to a call of the government than he. All this fight is waste, Hugh, damned waste of the nation’s energy.” Mr. Watling seldom swore. “Look at the President! There’s a man of remarkable ability, too. And those two oughtn’t to be fighting each other. The President’s right, in a way. Yes, he is, though I’ve got to oppose him.”

I smiled at this from Theodore Watling, though I admired him the more for it. And suddenly, oddly, I happened to remember what Krebs had said, that our troubles were not due to individuals, but to a disease that had developed in industrial society. If the day should come when such men as the President and the great banker would be working together, was it not possible, too, that the idea of Mr. Watling and the vision of Krebs might coincide? I was struck by a certain seeming similarity in their views; but Mr. Watling interrupted this train of thought by continuing to express his own.

“Well,—they’re running right into a gale when they might be sailing with it,” he said.

“You think we’ll have more trouble?” I asked.

“More and more,” he replied. “It’ll be worse before it’s better I’m afraid.” At this moment a club servant announced his cab, and he rose. “Well, good-bye, my son,” he said. “I’ll hope to see you in Washington soon. And remember there’s no one thinks any more of you than I do.”

I escorted him to the door, and it was with a real pang I saw him wave to me from his cab as he drove away. My affection for him was never more alive than in this hour when, for the first time in my experience, he had given real evidence of an inner anxiety and lack of confidence in the future.

XXI.

In spite of that unwonted note of pessimism from Mr. Watling, I went home in a day or two flushed with my new honours, and it was impossible not to be conscious of the fact that my aura of prestige was increased —tremendously increased—by the recognition I had received. A certain subtle deference in the attitude of the small minority who owed allegiance to the personage by whom I had been summoned was more satisfying than if I had been acclaimed at the station by thousands of my fellow-citizens who knew nothing of my journey and of its significance, even though it might have a concern for them. To men like Berringer, Grierson and Tallant and our lesser great lights the banker was a semi-mythical figure, and many times on the day of my return I was stopped on the street to satisfy the curiosity of my friends as to my impressions. Had he, for

instance, let fall any opinions, prognostications on the political and financial situation?
Dickinson and Scherer

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were the only other men in the city who had the honour of a personal acquaintance with him, and Scherer was away, abroad, gathering furniture and pictures for the house in New York Nancy had predicted, and which he had already begun to build! With Dickinson I lunched in private, in order to give him a detailed account of the conference. By five o'clock I was ringing the door-bell of Nancy's new mansion on Grant Avenue. It was several blocks below my own.

"Well, how does it feel to be sent for by the great sultan?" she asked, as I stood before her fire. "Of course, I have always known that ultimately he couldn't get along without you."

"Even if he has been a little late in realizing it," I retorted.

"Sit down and tell me all about him," she commanded.

"I met him once, when Ham had the yacht at Bar Harbor."

"And how did he strike you?"

"As somewhat wrapped up in himself," said Nancy.

We laughed together.

"Oh, I fell a victim," she went on. "I might have sailed off with him, if he had asked me."

"I'm surprised he didn't ask you."

"I suspect that it was not quite convenient," she said. "Women are secondary considerations to sultans, we're all very well when they haven't anything more serious to occupy them. Of course that's why they fascinate us. What did he want with you, Hugh?"

"He was evidently afraid that the government would win the coal roads suit unless I was retained."

"More laurels!" she sighed. "I suppose I ought to be proud to know you."

"That's exactly what I've been trying to impress on you all these years," I declared. "I've laid the laurels at your feet, in vain."

She sat with her head back on the cushions, surveying me.

"Your dress is very becoming," I said irrelevantly.

“I hoped it would meet your approval,” she mocked.

“I’ve been trying to identify the shade. It’s elusive—like you.”

“Don’t be banal.... What is the colour?”

“Poinsetta!”

“Pretty nearly,” she agreed, critically.

I took the soft crepe between my fingers.

“Poet!” she smiled. “No, it isn’t quite poinsetta. It’s nearer the red-orange of a tree I remember one autumn, in the White Mountains, with the setting sun on it. But that wasn’t what we were talking about. Laurels! Your laurels.”

“My laurels,” I repeated. “Such as they are, I fling them into your lap.”

“Do you think they increase your value to me, Hugh?”

“I don’t know,” I said thickly.

She shook her head.

“No, it’s you I like—not the laurels.”

“But if you care for me—?” I began.

She lifted up her hands and folded them behind the knot of her hair.

“It’s extraordinary how little you have changed since we were children, Hugh. You are still sixteen years old, that’s why I like you. If you got to be the sultan of sultans yourself, I shouldn’t like you any better, or any worse.”

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“And yet you have just declared that power appeals to you!”

“Power—yes. But a woman—a woman like me—wants to be first, or nothing.”

“You are first,” I asserted. “You always have been, if you had only realized it.”

She gazed up at me dreamily.

“If you had only realized it! If you had only realized that all I wanted of you was to be yourself. It wasn’t what you achieved. I didn’t want you to be like Ralph or the others.”

“Myself? What are you trying to say?”

“Yourself. Yes, that is what I like about you. If you hadn’t been in such a hurry—if you hadn’t misjudged me so. It was the power in you, the craving, the ideal in you that I cared for—not the fruits of it. The fruits would have come naturally. But you forced them, Hugh, for quicker results.”

“What kind of fruits?” I asked.

“Ah,” she exclaimed, “how can I tell what they might have been! You have striven and striven, you have done extraordinary things, but have they made you any happier? have you got what you want?”

I stooped down and seized her wrists from behind her head.

“I want you, Nancy,” I said. “I have always wanted you. You’re more wonderful to-day than you have ever been. I could find myself—with you.”

She closed her eyes. A dreamy smile was on her face, and she lay unresisting, very still. In that tremendous moment, for which it seemed I had waited a lifetime, I could have taken her in my arms—and yet I did not. I could not tell why: perhaps it was because she seemed to have passed beyond me—far beyond—in realization. And she was so still!

“We have missed the way, Hugh,” she whispered, at last.

“But we can find it again, if we seek it together,” I urged.

“Ah, if I only could!” she said. “I could have once. But now I’m afraid—afraid of getting lost.” Slowly she straightened up, her hands falling into her lap. I seized them again, I was on my knees in front of her, before the fire, and she, intent, looking down at me, into me, through me it seemed—at something beyond which yet was me.

“Hugh,” she asked, “what do you believe? Anything?”

“What do I believe?”

“Yes. I don’t mean any cant, cut-and-dried morality. The world is getting beyond that. But have you, in your secret soul, any religion at all? Do you ever think about it? I’m not speaking about anything orthodox, but some religion—even a tiny speck of it, a germ—harmonizing with life, with that power we feel in us we seek to express and continually violate.”

“Nancy!” I exclaimed.

“Answer me—answer me truthfully,” she said....

I was silent, my thoughts whirling like dust atoms in a storm.

“You have always taken things—taken what you wanted. But they haven’t satisfied you, convinced you that that is all of life.”

“Do you mean—that we should renounce?” I faltered.

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“I don’t know what I mean. I am asking, Hugh, asking. Haven’t you any clew? Isn’t there any voice in you, anywhere, deep down, that can tell me? give me a hint? just a little one?”

I was wracked. My passion had not left me, it seemed to be heightened, and I pressed her hands against her knees. It was incredible that my hands should be there, in hers, feeling her. Her beauty seemed as fresh, as un-wasted as the day, long since, when I despaired of her. And yet and yet against the tumult and beating of this passion striving to throb down thought, thought strove. Though I saw her as a woman, my senses and my spirit commingled and swooned together.

“This is life,” I murmured, scarcely knowing what I said.

“Oh, my dear!” she cried, and her voice pierced me with pain, “are we to be lost, overpowered, engulfed, swept down its stream, to come up below drifting—wreckage? Where, then, would be your power? I’m not speaking of myself. Isn’t life more than that? Isn’t it in us, too,—in you? Think, Hugh. Is there no god, anywhere, but this force we feel, restlessly creating only to destroy? You must answer—you must find out.”

I cannot describe the pleading passion in her voice, as though hell and heaven were wrestling in it. The woman I saw, tortured yet uplifted, did not seem to be Nancy, yet it was the woman I loved more than life itself and always had loved.

“I can’t think,” I answered desperately, “I can only feel—and I can’t express what I feel. It’s mixed, it’s dim, and yet bright and shining—it’s you.”

“No, it’s you,” she said vehemently. “You must interpret it.” Her voice sank: “Could it be God?” she asked.

“God!” I exclaimed sharply.

Her hands fell away from mine.... The silence was broken only by the crackling of the wood fire as a log turned over and fell. Never before, in all our intercourse that I could remember, had she spoken to me about religion.... With that apparent snap in continuity incomprehensible to the masculine mind-her feminine mood had changed. Elements I had never suspected, in Nancy, awe, even a hint of despair, entered into it, and when my hand found hers again, the very quality of its convulsive pressure seemed to have changed. I knew then that it was her soul I loved most; I had been swept all unwittingly to its very altar.

“I believe it is God,” I said. But she continued to gaze at me, her lips parted, her eyes questioning.

“Why is it,” she demanded, “that after all these centuries of certainty we should have to start out to find him again? Why is it when something happens like—like this, that we

should suddenly be torn with doubts about him, when we have lived the best part of our lives without so much as thinking of him?"

"Why should you have qualms?" I said. "Isn't this enough? and doesn't it promise—all?"

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“I don’t know. They’re not qualms—in the old sense.” She smiled down at me a little tearfully. “Hugh, do you remember when we used to go to Sunday-school at Dr. Pound’s church, and Mrs. Ewan taught us? I really believed something then—that Moses brought down the ten commandments of God from the mountain, all written out definitely for ever and ever. And I used to think of marriage” (I felt a sharp twinge), “of marriage as something sacred and inviolable,—something ordained by God himself. It ought to be so—oughtn’t it? That is the ideal.”

“Yes—but aren’t you confusing—?” I began.

“I am confusing and confused. I shouldn’t be—I shouldn’t care if there weren’t something in you, in me, in our—friendship, something I can’t explain, something that shines still through the fog and the smoke in which we have lived our lives—something which, I think, we saw clearer as children. We have lost it in our hasty groping. Oh, Hugh, I couldn’t bear to think that we should never find it! that it doesn’t really exist! Because I seem to feel it. But can we find it this way, my dear?” Her hand tightened on mine.

“But if the force drawing us together, that has always drawn us together, is God?” I objected.

“I asked you,” she said. “The time must come when you must answer, Hugh. It may be too late, but you must answer.”

“I believe in taking life in my own hands,” I said.

“It ought to be life,” said Nancy. “It—it might have been life.... It is only when a moment, a moment like this comes that the quality of what we have lived seems so tarnished, that the atmosphere which we ourselves have helped to make is so sordid. When I think of the intrigues, and divorces, the self-indulgences,—when I think of my own marriage—” her voice caught. “How are we going to better it, Hugh, this way? Am I to get that part of you I love, and are you to get what you crave in me? Can we just seize happiness? Will it not elude us just as much as though we believed firmly in the ten commandments?”

“No,” I declared obstinately.

She shook her head.

“What I’m afraid of is that the world isn’t made that way—for you—for me. We’re permitted to seize those other things because they’re just baubles, we’ve both found out how worthless they are. And the worst of it is they’ve made me a coward, Hugh. It isn’t that I couldn’t do without them, I’ve come to depend on them in another way. It’s because they give me a certain protection,—do you see? they’ve come to stand in the

place of the real convictions we've lost. And—well, we've taken the baubles, can we reach out our hands and take—this? Won't we be punished for it, frightfully punished?"

"I don't care if we are," I said, and surprised myself.

"But I care. It's weak, it's cowardly, but it's so. And yet I want to face the situation—I'm trying to get you to face it, to realize how terrible it is."

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“I only know that I want you above everything else in the world—I’ll take care of you—”

I seized her arms, I drew her down to me.

“Don’t!” she cried. “Oh, don’t!” and struggled to her feet and stood before me panting. “You must go away now—please, Hugh. I can’t bear any more—I want to think.”

I released her. She sank into the chair and hid her face in her hands....

As may be imagined, the incident I have just related threw my life into a tangle that would have floored a less persistent optimist and romanticist than myself, yet I became fairly accustomed to treading what the old moralists called the devious paths of sin. In my passion I had not hesitated to lay down the doctrine that the courageous and the strong took what they wanted,—a doctrine of which I had been a consistent disciple in the professional and business realm. A logical buccaneer, superman, “master of life” would promptly have extended this doctrine to the realm of sex. Nancy was the mate for me, and Nancy and I, our development, was all that mattered, especially my development. Let every man and woman look out for his or her development, and in the end the majority of people would be happy. This was going Adam Smith one better. When it came to putting that theory into practice, however, one needed convictions: Nancy had been right when she had implied that convictions were precisely what we lacked; what our world in general lacked. We had desires, yes convictions, no. What we wanted we got not by defying the world, but by conforming to it: we were ready to defy only when our desires overcame the resistance of our synapses, and even then not until we should have exhausted every legal and conventional means.

A superman with a wife and family he had acquired before a great passion has made him a superman is in rather a predicament, especially if he be one who has achieved such superhumanity as he possesses not by challenging laws and conventions, but by getting around them. My wife and family loved me; and paradoxically I still had affection for them, or thought I had. But the superman creed is, “be yourself, realize yourself, no matter how cruel you may have to be in order to do so.” One trouble with me was that remnants of the Christian element of pity still clung to me. I would be cruel if I had to, but I hoped I shouldn’t have to: something would turn up, something in the nature of an intervening miracle that would make it easy for me. Perhaps Maude would take the initiative and relieve me.... Nancy had appealed for a justifying doctrine, and it was just what I didn’t have and couldn’t evolve. In the meanwhile it was quite in character that I should accommodate myself to a situation that might well be called anomalous.

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This “accommodation” was not unaccompanied by fever. My longing to realize my love for Nancy kept me in a constant state of tension—of “nerves”; for our relationship had merely gone one step farther, we had reached a point where we acknowledged that we loved each other, and paradoxically halted there; Nancy clung to her demand for new sanctions with a tenacity that amazed and puzzled and often irritated me. And yet, when I look back upon it all, I can see that some of the difficulty lay with me: if she had her weakness—which she acknowledged—I had mine—and kept it to myself. It was part of my romantic nature not to want to break her down. Perhaps I loved the ideal better than the woman herself, though that scarcely seems possible.

We saw each other constantly. And though we had instinctively begun to be careful, I imagine there was some talk among our acquaintances. It is to be noted that the gossip never became riotous, for we had always been friends, and Nancy had a saving reputation for coldness. It seemed incredible that Maude had not discovered my secret, but if she knew of it, she gave no sign of her knowledge. Often, as I looked at her, I wished she would. I can think of no more expressive sentence in regard to her than the trite one that she pursued the even tenor of her way; and I found the very perfection of her wifehood exasperating. Our relationship would, I thought, have been more endurable if we had quarrelled. And yet we had grown as far apart, in that big house, as though we had been separated by a continent; I lived in my apartments, she in hers; she consulted me about dinner parties and invitations; for, since we had moved to Grant Avenue, we entertained and went out more than before. It seemed as though she were making every effort consistent with her integrity and self-respect to please me. Outwardly she conformed to the mould; but I had long been aware that inwardly a person had developed. It had not been a spontaneous development, but one in resistance to pressure; and was probably all the stronger for that reason. At times her will revealed itself in astonishing and unexpected flashes, as when once she announced that she was going to change Matthew’s school.

“He’s old enough to go to boarding-school,” I said. “I’ll look up a place for him.”

“I don’t wish him to go to boarding-school yet, Hugh,” she said quietly.

“But that’s just what he needs,” I objected. “He ought to have the rubbing-up against other boys that boarding-school will give him. Matthew is timid, he should have learned to take care of himself. And he will make friendships that will help him in a larger school.”

“I don’t intend to send him,” Maude said.

“But if I think it wise?”

“You ought to have begun to consider such things many years ago. You have always been too—busy to think of the children. You have left them to me. I am doing the best I can with them.”

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“But a man should have something to say about boys. He understands them.”

“You should have thought of that before.”

“They haven’t been old enough.”

“If you had taken your share of responsibility for them, I would listen to you.”

“Maude!” I exclaimed reproachfully.

“No, Hugh,” she went on, “you have been too busy making money. You have left them to me. It is my task to see that the money they are to inherit doesn’t ruin them.”

“You talk as though it were a great fortune,” I said.

But I did not press the matter. I had a presentiment that to press it might lead to unpleasant results.

It was this sense of not being free, of having gained everything but freedom that was at times galling in the extreme: this sense of living with a woman for whom I had long ceased to care, a woman with a baffling will concealed beneath an unruffled and serene exterior. At moments I looked at her across the table; she did not seem to have aged much: her complexion was as fresh, apparently, as the day when I had first walked with her in the garden at Elkington; her hair the same wonderful colour; perhaps she had grown a little stouter. There could be no doubt about the fact that her chin was firmer, that certain lines had come into her face indicative of what is called character. Beneath her pliability she was now all firmness; the pliability had become a mockery. It cannot be said that I went so far as to hate her for this,—when it was in my mind,—but my feelings were of a strong antipathy. And then again there were rare moments when I was inexplicably drawn to her, not by love and passion; I melted a little in pity, perhaps, when my eyes were opened and I saw the tragedy, yet I am not referring now to such feelings as these. I am speaking of the times when I beheld her as the blameless companion of the years, the mother of my children, the woman I was used to and should—by all canons I had known—have loved....

And there were the children. Days and weeks passed when I scarcely saw them, and then some little incident would happen to give me an unexpected wrench and plunge me into unhappiness. One evening I came home from a long talk with Nancy that had left us both wrought up, and I had entered the library before I heard voices. Maude was seated under the lamp at the end of the big room reading from “Don Quixote”; Matthew and Biddy were at her feet, and Moreton, less attentive, at a little distance was taking apart a mechanical toy. I would have tiptoed out, but Biddy caught sight of me.

“It’s father!” she cried, getting up and flying to me.

“Oh, father, do come and listen! The story’s so exciting, isn’t it, Matthew?”

I looked down into the boy’s eyes shining with an expression that suddenly pierced my heart with a poignant memory of myself. Matthew was far away among the mountains and castles of Spain.

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“Matthew,” demanded his sister, “why did he want to go fighting with all those people?”

“Because he was dotty,” supplied Moreton, who had an interesting habit of picking up slang.

“It wasn’t at all,” cried Matthew, indignantly, interrupting Maude’s rebuke of his brother.

“What was it, then?” Moreton demanded.

“You wouldn’t understand if I told you,” Matthew was retorting, when Maude put her hand on his lips.

“I think that’s enough for to-night,” she said, as she closed the book. “There are lessons to do—and father wants to read his newspaper in quiet.”

This brought a protest from Biddy.

“Just a little more, mother! Can’t we go into the schoolroom? We shan’t disturb father there.”

“I’ll read to them—a few minutes,” I said.

As I took the volume from her and sat down Maude shot at me a swift look of surprise. Even Matthew glanced at me curiously; and in his glance I had, as it were, a sudden revelation of the boy’s perplexity concerning me. He was twelve, rather tall for his age, and the delicate modelling of his face resembled my father’s. He had begun to think.. What did he think of me?

Biddy clapped her hands, and began to dance across the carpet.

“Father’s going to read to us, father’s going to read to us,” she cried, finally clambering up on my knee and snuggling against me.

“Where is the place?” I asked.

But Maude had left the room. She had gone swiftly and silently.

“I’ll find it,” said Moreton.

I began to read, but I scarcely knew what I was reading, my fingers tightening over Biddy’s little knee....

Presently Miss Allsop, the governess, came in. She had been sent by Maude. There was wistfulness in Biddy’s voice as I kissed her good night.

“Father, if you would only read oftener!” she said, “I like it when you read—better than anyone else.".....

Maude and I were alone that night. As we sat in the library after our somewhat formal, perfunctory dinner, I ventured to ask her why she had gone away when I had offered to read.

“I couldn’t bear it, Hugh,” she answered.

“Why?” I asked, intending to justify myself.

She got up abruptly, and left me. I did not follow her. In my heart I understood why....

Some years had passed since Ralph’s prophecy had come true, and Perry and the remaining Blackwoods had been “relieved” of the Boyne Street line. The process need not be gone into in detail, being the time-honoured one employed in the Ribblevale affair of “running down” the line, or perhaps it would be better to say “showing it up.” It had not justified its survival in our efficient days, it had held out—thanks to Perry—with absurd and anachronous persistence against the inevitable consolidation. Mr. Tallant’s newspaper had published many complaints of the age and scarcity of the cars, *etc*.; and alarmed holders of securities, in whose vaults they had lain since time immemorial, began to sell.... I saw little of Perry in those days, as I have explained, but one day I met him in the Hambleton Building, and he was white.

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“Your friends are doing thus, Hugh,” he said.

“Doing what?”

“Undermining the reputation of a company as sound as any in this city, a company that’s not overcapitalized, either. And we’re giving better service right now than any of your consolidated lines."...

He was in no frame of mind to argue with; the conversation was distinctly unpleasant. I don’t remember what I said sething to the effect that he was excited, that his language was extravagant. But after he had walked off and left me I told Dickinson that he ought to be given a chance, and one of our younger financiers, Murphree, went to Perry and pointed out that he had nothing to gain by obstruction; if he were only reasonable, he might come into the new corporation on the same terms with the others.

All that Murphree got for his pains was to be ordered out of the office by Perry, who declared that he was being bribed to desert the other stockholders.

“He utterly failed to see the point of view,” Murphree reported in some astonishment to Dickinson.

“What else did he say?” Mr. Dickinson asked.

Murphree hesitated.

“Well—what?” the banker insisted.

“He wasn’t quite himself,” said Murphree, who was a comparative newcomer in the city and had a respect for the Blackwood name. “He said that that was the custom of thieves: when they were discovered, they offered to divide. He swore that he would get justice in the courts.”

Mr. Dickinson smiled....

Thus Perry, through his obstinacy and inability to adapt himself to new conditions, had gradually lost both caste and money. He resigned from the Boyne Club. I was rather sorry for him. Tom naturally took the matter to heart, but he never spoke of it; I found that I was seeing less of him, though we continued to dine there at intervals, and he still came to my house to see the children. Maude continued to see Lucia. For me, the situation would have been more awkward had I been less occupied, had my relationship with Maude been a closer one. Neither did she mention Perry in those days. The income that remained to him being sufficient for him and his family to live on comfortably, he began to devote most of his time to various societies of a semipublic nature until—in the spring of which I write his activities suddenly became concentrated in the organization of a “Citizens Union,” whose avowed object was to make a campaign

against “graft” and political corruption the following autumn. This announcement and the call for a mass-meeting in Kingdon Hall was received by the newspapers with a good-natured ridicule, and in influential quarters it was generally hinted that this was Mr. Blackwood’s method of “getting square” for having been deprived of the Boyne Street line. It was quite characteristic of Ralph Hambleton that he should go, out of curiosity, to the gathering at Kingdon Hall, and drop into my office the next morning.

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“Well, Hughie, they’re after you,” he said with a grin.

“After me? Why not include yourself?”

He sat down and stretched his long legs and his long arms, and smiled as he gaped.

“Oh, they’ll never get me,” he said. And I knew, as I gazed at him, that they never would.

“What sort of things did they say?” I asked.

“Haven’t you read the Pilot and the Mail and State?”

“I just glanced over them. Did they call names?”

“Call names! I should say they did. They got drunk on it, worked themselves up like dervishes. They didn’t cuss you personally,—that’ll come later, of course. Judd Jason got the heaviest shot, but they said he couldn’t exist a minute if it wasn’t for the ‘respectable’ crowd—capitalists, financiers, millionaires and their legal tools. Fact is, they spoke a good deal of truth, first and last, in a fool kind of way.”

“Truth!” I exclaimed irritatedly.

Ralph laughed. He was evidently enjoying himself.

“Is any of it news to you, Hughie, old boy?”

“It’s an outrage.”

“I think it’s funny,” said Ralph. “We haven’t had such a circus for years. Never had. Of course I shouldn’t like to see you go behind the bars,—not that. But you fellows can’t expect to go on forever skimming off the cream without having somebody squeal sometime. You ought to be reasonable.”

“You’ve skimmed as much cream as anybody else.”

“You’ve skimmed the cream, Hughie,—you and Dickinson and Scherer and Grierson and the rest,—I’ve only filled my jug. Well, these fellows are going to have a regular roof-raising campaign, take the lid off of everything, dump out the red-light district some of our friends are so fond of.”

“Dump it where?” I asked curiously.

“Oh,” answered Ralph, “they didn’t say. Out into the country, anywhere.”

“But that’s damned foolishness,” I declared.

“Didn’t say it wasn’t,” Ralph admitted. “They talked a lot of that, too, incidentally. They’re going to close the saloons and dance halls and make this city sadder than heaven. When they get through, it’ll all be over but the inquest.”

“What did Perry do?” I asked.

“Well, he opened the meeting,—made a nice, precise, gentlemanly speech. Greenhalge and a few young highbrows and a reformed crook named Harrod did most of the hair-raising. They’re going to nominate Greenhalge for mayor; and he told ’em something about that little matter of the school board, and said he would talk more later on. If one of the ablest lawyers in the city hadn’t been hired by the respectable crowd and a lot of other queer work done, the treasurer and purchasing agent would be doing time. They seemed to be interested, all right.”

I turned over some papers on my desk, just to show Ralph that he hadn’t succeeded in disturbing me.

“Who was in the audience? anyone you ever heard of?” I asked.

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“Sure thing. Your cousin Robert Breck; and that son-in-law of his—what’s his name? And some other representatives of our oldest families,—Alec Pound. He’s a reformer now, you know. They put him on the resolutions committee. Sam Ogilvy was there, he’d be classed as respectably conservative. And one of the Ewanses. I could name a few others, if you pressed me. That brother of Fowndes who looks like an up-state minister. A lot of women—Miller Gorse’s sister, Mrs. Datchet, who never approved of Miller. Quite a genteel gathering, I give you my word, and all astonished and mad as hell when the speaking was over. Mrs. Datchet said she had been living in a den of iniquity and vice, and didn’t know it.”

“It must have been amusing,” I said.

“It was,” said Ralph. “It’ll be more amusing later on. Oh, yes, there was another fellow who spoke I forgot to mention—that queer Dick who was in your class, Krebs, got the school board evidence, looked as if he’d come in by freight. He wasn’t as popular as the rest, but he’s got more sense than all of them put together.”

“Why wasn’t he popular?”

“Well, he didn’t crack up the American people,—said they deserved all they got, that they’d have to learn to think straight and be straight before they could expect a square deal. The truth was, they secretly envied these rich men who were exploiting their city, and just as long as they envied them they hadn’t any right to complain of them. He was going into this campaign to tell the truth, but to tell all sides of it, and if they wanted reform, they’d have to reform themselves first. I admired his nerve, I must say.”

“He always had that,” I remarked. “How did they take it?”

“Well, they didn’t like it much, but I think most of them had a respect for him. I know I did. He has a whole lot of assurance, an air of knowing what he’s talking about, and apparently he doesn’t give a continental whether he’s popular or not. Besides, Greenhalge had cracked him up to the skies for the work he’d done for the school board.”

“You talk as if he’d converted you,” I said.

Ralph laughed as he rose and stretched himself.

“Oh, I’m only the intelligent spectator, you ought to know that by this time, Hughie. But I thought it might interest you, since you’ll have to go on the stump and refute it all. That’ll be a nice job. So long.”

And he departed. Of course I knew that he had been baiting me, his scent for the weaknesses of his friends being absolutely fiendish. I was angry because he had succeeded,—because he knew he had succeeded. All the morning uneasiness

possessed me, and I found it difficult to concentrate on the affairs I had in hand. I felt premonitions, which I tried in vain to suppress, that the tide of the philosophy of power and might were starting to ebb: I scented vague calamities ahead, calamities I associated with Krebs; and when I went out to the

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Club for lunch this sense of uneasiness, instead of being dissipated, was increased. Dickinson was there, and Scherer, who had just got back from Europe; the talk fell on the Citizens Union, which Scherer belittled with an air of consequence and pompousness that struck me disagreeably, and with an eye newly critical I detected in him a certain disintegration, deterioration. Having dismissed the reformers, he began to tell of his experiences abroad, referring in one way or another to the people of consequence who had entertained him.

“Hugh,” said Leonard Dickinson to me as we walked to the bank together, “Scherer will never be any good any more. Too much prosperity. And he’s begun to have his nails manicured.”

After I had left the bank president an uncanny fancy struck me that in Adolf Scherer I had before me a concrete example of the effect of my philosophy on the individual....

Nothing seemed to go right that spring, and yet nothing was absolutely wrong. At times I became irritated, bewildered, out of tune, and unable to understand why. The weather itself was uneasy, tepid, with long spells of hot wind and dust. I no longer seemed to find refuge in my work. I was unhappy at home. After walking for many years in confidence and security along what appeared to be a certain path, I had suddenly come out into a vague country in which it was becoming more and more difficult to recognize landmarks. I did not like to confess this; and yet I heard within me occasional whispers. Could it be that I, Hugh Paret, who had always been so positive, had made a mess of my life? There were moments when the pattern of it appeared to have fallen apart, resolved itself into pieces that refused to fit into each other.

Of course my relationship with Nancy had something to do with this....

One evening late in the spring, after dinner, Maude came into the library.

“Are you busy, Hugh?” she asked.

I put down my newspapers.

“Because,” she went on, as she took a chair near the table where I was writing, “I wanted to tell you that I have decided to go to Europe, and take the children.”

“To Europe!” I exclaimed. The significance of the announcement failed at once to register in my brain, but I was aware of a shock.

“Yes.”

“When?” I asked.

“Right away. The end of this month.”

“For the summer?”

“I haven’t decided how long I shall stay.”

I stared at her in bewilderment. In contrast to the agitation I felt rising within me, she was extraordinarily calm, unbelievably so.

“But where do you intend to go in Europe?”

“I shall go to London for a month or so, and after that to some quiet place in France, probably at the sea, where the children can learn French and German. After that, I have no plans.”

“But—you talk as if you might stay indefinitely.”

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“I haven’t decided,” she repeated.

“But why—why are you doing this?”

I would have recalled the words as soon as I had spoken them. There was the slightest unsteadiness in her voice as she replied:—“Is it necessary to go into that, Hugh? Wouldn’t it be useless as well as a little painful? Surely, going to Europe without one’s husband is not an unusual thing in these days. Let it just be understood that I want to go, that the children have arrived at an age when it will do them good.”

I got up and began to walk up and down the room, while she watched me with a silent calm which was incomprehensible. In vain I summoned my faculties to meet it.

I had not thought her capable of such initiative.

“I can’t see why you want to leave me,” I said at last, though with a full sense of the inadequacy of the remark, and a suspicion of its hypocrisy.

“That isn’t quite true,” she answered. “In the first place, you don’t need me. I am not of the slightest use in your life, I haven’t been a factor in it for years. You ought never to have married me,—it was all a terrible mistake. I began to realize that after we had been married a few months—even when we were on our wedding trip. But I was too inexperienced—perhaps too weak to acknowledge it to myself. In the last few years I have come to see it plainly. I should have been a fool if I hadn’t. I am not your wife in any real sense of the word, I cannot hold you, I cannot even interest you. It’s a situation that no woman with self-respect can endure.”

“Aren’t those rather modern sentiments, for you, Maude?” I said.

She flushed a little, but otherwise retained her remarkable composure.

“I don’t care whether they are ‘modern’ or not, I only know that my position has become impossible.”

I walked to the other end of the room, and stood facing the carefully drawn curtains of the windows; fantastically, they seemed to represent the impasse to which my mind had come. Did she intend, ultimately, to get a divorce? I dared not ask her. The word rang horribly in my ears, though unpronounced; and I knew then that I lacked her courage, and the knowledge was part of my agony.

I turned.

“Don’t you think you’ve overdrawn things, Maude exaggerated them? No marriages are perfect. You’ve let your mind dwell until it has become inflamed on matters which really don’t amount to much.”

“I was never saner, Hugh,” she replied instantly. And indeed I was forced to confess that she looked it. That new Maude I had seen emerging of late years seemed now to have found herself; she was no longer the woman I had married,—yielding, willing to overlook, anxious to please, living in me.

“I don’t influence you, or help you in any way. I never have.”

“Oh, that’s not true,” I protested.

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But she cut me short, going on inexorably:—“I am merely your housekeeper, and rather a poor one at that, from your point of view. You ignore me. I am not blaming you for it—you are made that way. It’s true that you have always supported me in luxury,—that might have been enough for another woman. It isn’t enough for me—I, too, have a life to live, a soul to be responsible for. It’s not for my sake so much as for the children’s that I don’t want it to be crushed.”

“Crushed!” I repeated.

“Yes. You are stifling it. I say again that I’m not blaming you, Hugh. You are made differently from me. All you care for, really, is your career. You may think that you care, at times, for—other things, but it isn’t so.”

I took, involuntarily, a deep breath. Would she mention Nancy? Was it in reality Nancy who had brought about this crisis? And did Maude suspect the closeness of that relationship?

Suddenly I found myself begging her not to go; the more astonishing since, if at any time during the past winter this solution had presented itself to me as a possibility, I should eagerly have welcomed it! But should I ever have had the courage to propose a separation? I even wished to delude myself now into believing that what she suggested was in reality not a separation. I preferred to think of it as a trip.... A vision of freedom thrilled me, and yet I was wracked and torn. I had an idea that she was suffering, that the ordeal was a terrible one for her; and at that moment there crowded into my mind, melting me, incident after incident of our past.

“It seems to me that we have got along pretty well together, Maude. I have been negligent—I’ll admit it. But I’ll try to do better in the future. And—if you’ll wait a month or so, I’ll go to Europe with you, and we’ll have a good time.”

She looked at me sadly,—pityingly, I thought.

“No, Hugh, I’ve thought it all out. You really don’t want me. You only say this because you are sorry for me, because you dislike to have your feelings wrung. You needn’t be sorry for me, I shall be much happier away from you.”

“Think it over, Maude,” I pleaded. “I shall miss you and the children. I haven’t paid much attention to them, either, but I am fond of them, and depend upon them, too.”

She shook her head.

“It’s no use, Hugh. I tell you I’ve thought it all out. You don’t care for the children, you were never meant to have any.”

“Aren’t you rather severe in your judgments?”

“I don’t think so,” she answered. “I’m willing to admit my faults, that I am a failure so far as you are concerned. Your ideas of life and mine are far apart.”

“I suppose,” I exclaimed bitterly, “that you are referring to my professional practices.”

A note of weariness crept into her voice. I might have known that she was near the end of her strength.

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“No, I don’t think it’s that,” she said dispassionately. “I prefer to put it down, that part of it, to a fundamental difference of ideas. I do not feel qualified to sit in judgment on that part of your life, although I’ll admit that many of the things you have done, in common with the men with whom you are associated, have seemed to me unjust and inconsiderate of the rights and feelings of others. You have alienated some of your best friends. If I were to arraign you at all, it would be on the score of heartlessness. But I suppose it isn’t your fault, that you haven’t any heart.”

“That’s unfair,” I put in.

“I don’t wish to be unfair,” she replied. “Only, since you ask me, I have to tell you that that is the way it seems to me. I don’t want to introduce the question of right and wrong into this, Hugh, I’m not capable of unravelling it; I can’t put myself into your life, and see things from your point of view, weigh your problems and difficulties. In the first place, you won’t let me. I think I understand you, partly—but only partly. You have kept yourself shut up. But why discuss it? I have made up my mind.”

The legal aspect of the matter occurred to me. What right had she to leave me? I might refuse to support her. Yet even as these thoughts came I rejected them; I knew that it was not in me to press this point. And she could always take refuge with her father; without the children, of course. But the very notion sickened me. I could not bear to think of Maude deprived of the children. I had seated myself again at the table. I put my hand to my forehead.

“Don’t make it hard, Hugh,” I heard her say, gently. “Believe me, it is best. I know. There won’t be any talk about it,—right away, at any rate. People will think it natural that I should wish to go abroad for the summer. And later—well, the point of view about such affairs has changed. They are better understood.”

She had risen. She was pale, still outwardly composed,—but I had a strange, hideous feeling that she was weeping inwardly.

“Aren’t you coming back—ever?” I cried.

She did not answer at once.

“I don’t know,” she said, “I don’t know,” and left the room abruptly....

I wanted to follow her, but something withheld me. I got up and walked around the room in a state of mind that was near to agony, taking one of the neglected books out of the shelves, glancing at its meaningless print, and replacing it; I stirred the fire, opened the curtains and gazed out into the street and closed them again. I looked around me, a sudden intensity of hatred seized me for this big, silent, luxurious house; I recalled Maude’s presentiment about it. Then, thinking I might still dissuade her, I went slowly

up the padded stairway—to find her door locked; and a sense of the finality of her decision came over me. I knew then that I could not alter it even were I to go all the lengths of abjectness. Nor could I, I knew, have brought myself to have feigned a love I did not feel.

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What was it I felt? I could not define it. Amazement, for one thing, that Maude with her traditional, Christian view of marriage should have come to such a decision. I went to my room, undressed mechanically and got into bed....

She gave no sign at the breakfast table of having made the decision of the greatest moment in our lives; she conversed as usual, asked about the news, reproved the children for being noisy; and when the children had left the table there were no tears, reminiscences, recriminations. In spite of the slight antagonism and envy of which I was conscious,—that she was thus superbly in command of the situation, that she had developed her pinions and was thus splendidly able to use them,—my admiration for her had never been greater. I made an effort to achieve the frame of mind she suggested: since she took it so calmly, why should I be tortured by the tragedy of it? Perhaps she had ceased to love me, after all! Perhaps she felt nothing but relief. At any rate, I was grateful to her, and I found a certain consolation, a sop to my pride in the reflection that the initiative must have been hers to take. I could not have deserted her.

“When do you think of leaving?” I asked.

“Two weeks from Saturday on the Olympic, if that is convenient for you.” Her manner seemed one of friendly solicitude. “You will remain in the house this summer, as usual, I suppose?”

“Yes,” I said.

It was a sunny, warm morning, and I went downtown in the motor almost blithely. It was the best solution after all, and I had been a fool to oppose it.... At the office, there was much business awaiting me; yet once in a while, during the day, when the tension relaxed, the recollection of what had happened flowed back into my consciousness. Maude was going!

I had telephoned Nancy, making an appointment for the afternoon. Sometimes—not too frequently—we were in the habit of going out into the country in one of her motors, a sort of landaulet, I believe, in which we were separated from the chauffeur by a glass screen. She was waiting for me when I arrived, at four; and as soon as we had shot clear of the city, “Maude is going away,” I told her.

“Going away?” she repeated, struck more by the tone of my voice than by what I had said.

“She announced last night that she was going abroad indefinitely.”

I had been more than anxious to see how Nancy would take the news. A flush gradually deepened in her cheeks.

“You mean that she is going to leave you?”

“It looks that way. In fact, she as much as said so.”

“Why?” said Nancy.

“Well, she explained it pretty thoroughly. Apparently, it isn’t a sudden decision,” I replied, trying to choose my words, to speak composedly as I repeated the gist of our conversation. Nancy, with her face averted, listened in silence—a silence that continued some time after I had ceased to speak.

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“She didn’t—she didn’t mention—?” the sentence remained unfinished.

“No,” I said quickly, “she didn’t. She must know, of course, but I’m sure that didn’t enter into it.”

Nancy’s eyes as they returned to me were wet, and in them was an expression I had never seen before,—of pain, reproach, of questioning. It frightened me.

“Oh, Hugh, how little you know!” she cried.

“What do you mean?” I demanded.

“That is what has brought her to this decision—you and I.”

“You mean that—that Maude loves me? That she is jealous?” I don’t know how I managed to say it.

“No woman likes to think that she is a failure,” murmured Nancy.

“Well, but she isn’t really,” I insisted. “She could have made another man happy—a better man. It was all one of those terrible mistakes our modern life seems to emphasize so.”

“She is a woman,” Nancy said, with what seemed a touch of vehemence. “It’s useless to expect you to understand.... Do you remember what I said to you about her? How I appealed to you when you married to try to appreciate her?”

“It wasn’t that I didn’t appreciate her,” I interrupted, surprised that Nancy should have recalled this, “she isn’t the woman for me, we aren’t made for each other. It was my mistake, my fault, I admit, but I don’t agree with you at all, that we had anything to do with her decision. It is just the—the culmination of a long period of incompatibility. She has come to realize that she has only one life to live, and she seems happier, more composed, more herself than she has ever been since our marriage. Of course I don’t mean to say it isn’t painful for her.... But I am sure she isn’t well, that it isn’t because of our seeing one another,” I concluded haltingly.

“She is finer than either of us, Hugh,—far finer.”

I did not relish this statement.

“She’s fine, I admit. But I can’t see how under the circumstances any of us could have acted differently.” And Nancy not replying, I continued: “She has made up her mind to go,—I suppose I could prevent it by taking extreme measures,—but what good would it do? Isn’t it, after all, the most sensible, the only way out of a situation that has become impossible? Times have changed, Nancy, and you yourself have been the first to admit

it. Marriage is no longer what it was, and people are coming to look upon it more sensibly. In order to perpetuate the institution, as it was, segregation, insulation, was the only course. Men segregated their wives, women their husbands,—the only logical method of procedure, but it limited the individual. Our mothers and fathers thought it scandalous if husband or wife paid visits alone. It wasn't done. But our modern life has changed all that. A marriage, to be a marriage, should be proof against disturbing influences, should leave the individuals free; the binding element should be love, not the force of an imposed authority. You seemed to agree to all this."

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“Yes, I know,” she admitted. “But I cannot think that happiness will ever grow out of unhappiness.”

“But Maude will not be unhappy,” I insisted. “She will be happier, far happier, now that she has taken the step.”

“Oh, I wish I thought so,” Nancy exclaimed. “Hugh, you always believe what you want to believe. And the children. How can you bear to part with them?”

I was torn, I had a miserable sense of inadequacy.

“I shall miss them,” I said. “I have never really appreciated them. I admit I don’t deserve to have them, and I am willing to give them up for you, for Maude...”

We had made one of our favourite drives among the hills on the far side of the Ashuela, and at six were back at Nancy’s house. I did not go in, but walked slowly homeward up Grant Avenue. It had been a trying afternoon. I had not expected, indeed, that Nancy would have rejoiced, but her attitude, her silences, betraying, as they did, compunctions, seemed to threaten our future happiness.

XXII.

One evening two or three days later I returned from the office to gaze up at my house, to realize suddenly that it would be impossible for me to live there, in those great, empty rooms, alone; and I told Maude that I would go to the Club—during her absence. I preferred to keep up the fiction that her trip would only be temporary. She forbore from contradicting me, devoting herself efficiently to the task of closing the house, making it seem, somehow, a rite,—the final rite in her capacity as housewife. The drawing-room was shrouded, and the library; the books wrapped neatly in paper; a smell of camphor pervaded the place; the cheerful schoolroom was dismantled; trunks and travelling bags appeared. The solemn butler packed my clothes, and I arranged for a room at the Club in the wing that recently had been added for the accommodation of bachelors and deserted husbands. One of the ironies of those days was that the children began to suggest again possibilities of happiness I had missed—especially Matthew. With all his gentleness, the boy seemed to have a precocious understanding of the verities, and the capacity for suffering which as a child I had possessed. But he had more self-control. Though he looked forward to the prospect of new scenes and experiences with the anticipation natural to his temperament, I thought he betrayed at moments a certain intuition as to what was going on.

“When are you coming over, father?” he asked once. “How soon will your business let you?”

He had been brought up in the belief that my business was a tyrant.

“Oh, soon, Matthew,—sometime soon,” I said.

I had a feeling that he understood me, not intellectually, but emotionally. What a companion he might have been!.... Moreton and Biddy moved me less. They were more robust, more normal, less introspective and imaginative; Europe meant nothing to them, but they were frankly delighted and excited at the prospect of going on the ocean, asking dozens of questions about the great ship, impatient to embark.....

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“I shan’t need all that, Hugh,” Maude said, when I handed her a letter of credit. “I—I intend to live quite simply, and my chief expenses will be the children’s education. I am going to give them the best, of course.”

“Of course,” I replied. “But I want you to live over there as you have been accustomed to live here. It’s not exactly generosity on my part,—I have enough, and more than enough.”

She took the letter.

“Another thing—I’d rather you didn’t go to New York with us, Hugh. I know you are busy—”

“Of course I’m going,” I started to protest.

“No,” she went on, firmly. “I’d rather you didn’t. The hotel people will put me on the steamer very comfortably,—and there are other reasons why I do not wish it.” I did not insist.... On the afternoon of her departure, when I came uptown, I found her pinning some roses on her jacket.

“Perry and Lucia sent them,” she informed me. She maintained the friendly, impersonal manner to the very end; but my soul, as we drove to the train, was full of un-probed wounds. I had had roses put in her compartments in the car; Tom and Susan Peters were there with more roses, and little presents for the children. Their cheerfulness seemed forced, and I wondered whether they suspected that Maude’s absence would be prolonged.

“Write us often, and tell us all about it, dear,” said Susan, as she sat beside Maude and held her hand; Tom had Biddy on his knee. Maude was pale, but smiling and composed.

“I hope to get a little villa in France, near the sea,” she said. “I’ll send you a photograph of it, Susan.”

“And Chickabiddy, when she comes back, will be rattling off French like a native,” exclaimed Tom, giving her a hug.

“I hate French,” said Biddy, and she looked at him solemnly. “I wish you were coming along, Uncle Tom.”

Bells resounded through the great station. The porter warned us off. I kissed the children one by one, scarcely realizing what I was doing. I kissed Maude. She received my embrace passively.

“Good-bye, Hugh,” she said.

I alighted, and stood on the platform as the train pulled out. The children crowded to the windows, but Maude did not appear.... I found myself walking with Tom and Susan past hurrying travellers and porters to the Decatur Street entrance, where my automobile stood waiting.

“I’ll take you home, Susan,” I said.

“We’re ever so much obliged, Hugh,” she answered, “but the street-cars go almost to ferry’s door. We’re dining there.”

Her eyes were filled with tears, and she seemed taller, more ungainly than ever—older. A sudden impression of her greatness of heart was borne home to me, and I grasped the value of such rugged friendship as hers—as Tom’s.

“We shouldn’t know how to behave in an automobile,” he said, as though to soften her refusal. And I stood watching their receding figures as they walked out into the street and hailed the huge electric car that came to a stop beyond them. Above its windows was painted “The Ashuela Traction Company,” a label reminiscent of my professional activities. Then I heard the chauffeur ask:—“Where do you wish to go, sir?”

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“To the Club,” I said.

My room was ready, my personal belongings, my clothes had been laid out, my photographs were on the dressing-table. I took up, mechanically, the evening newspaper, but I could not read it; I thought of Maude, of the children, memories flowed in upon me,—a flood not to be dammed.... Presently the club valet knocked at my door. He had a dinner card.

“Will you be dining here, sir?” he inquired.

I went downstairs. Fred Grierson was the only man in the dining-room.

“Hello, Hugh,” he said, “come and sit down. I hear your wife’s gone abroad.”

“Yes,” I answered, “she thought she’d try it instead of the South Shore this summer.”

Perhaps I imagined that he looked at me queerly. I had made a great deal of money out of my association with Grierson, I had valued very highly being an important member of the group to which he belonged; but to-night, as I watched him eating and drinking greedily, I hated him even as I hated myself. And after dinner, when he started talking with a ridicule that was a thinly disguised bitterness about the Citizens Union and their preparations for a campaign I left him and went to bed.

Before a week had passed my painful emotions had largely subsided, and with my accustomed resiliency I had regained the feeling of self-respect so essential to my happiness. I was free. My only anxiety was for Nancy, who had gone to New York the day after my last talk with her; and it was only by telephoning to her house that I discovered when she was expected to return.... I found her sitting beside one of the open French windows of her salon, gazing across at the wooded hills beyond the Ashuela. She was serious, a little pale; more exquisite, more desirable than ever; but her manner implied the pressure of control, and her voice was not quite steady as she greeted me.

“You’ve been away a long time,” I said.

“The dressmakers,” she answered. Her colour rose a little. “I thought they’d never get through.”

“But why didn’t you drop me a line, let me know when you were coming?” I asked, taking a chair beside her, and laying my hand on hers. She drew it gently away.

“What’s the matter?” I asked.

“I’ve been thinking it all over—what we’re doing. It doesn’t seem right, it seems terribly wrong.”

“But I thought we’d gone over all that,” I replied, as patiently as I could. “You’re putting it on an old-fashioned, moral basis.”

“But there must be same basis,” she urged. “There are responsibilities, obligations—-there must be!—that we can’t get away from. I can’t help feeling that we ought to stand by our mistakes, and by our bargains; we made a choice—it’s cheating, somehow, and if we take this—what we want—we shall be punished for it.”

“But I’m willing to be punished, to suffer, as I told you. If you loved me—”

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“Hugh!” she exclaimed, and I was silent. “You don’t understand,” she went on, a little breathlessly, “what I mean by punishment is deterioration. Do you remember once, long ago, when you came to me before I was married, I said we’d both run after false gods, and that we couldn’t do without them? Well, and now this has come; it seems so wonderful to me, coming again like that after we had passed it by, after we thought it had gone forever; it’s opened up visions for me that I never hoped to see again. It ought to restore us, dear—that’s what I’m trying to say—to redeem us, to make us capable of being what we were meant to be. If it doesn’t do that, if it isn’t doing so, it’s the most horrible of travesties, of mockeries. If we gain life only to have it turn into death—slow death; if we go to pieces again, utterly. For now there’s hope. The more I think, the more clearly I see that we can’t take any step without responsibilities. If we take this, you’ll have me, and I’ll have you. And if we don’t save each other—”

“But we will,” I said.

“Ah,” she exclaimed, “if we could start new, without any past. I married Ham with my eyes open.”

“You couldn’t know that he would become—well, as flagrant as he is. You didn’t really know what he was then.”

“There’s no reason why I shouldn’t have anticipated it. I can’t claim that I was deceived, that I thought my marriage was made in heaven. I entered into a contract, and Ham has kept his part of it fairly well. He hasn’t interfered with my freedom. That isn’t putting it on a high plane, but there is an obligation involved. You yourself, in your law practice, are always insisting upon the sacredness of contract as the very basis of our civilization.”

Here indeed would have been a home thrust, had I been vulnerable at the time. So intent was I on overcoming her objections, that I resorted unwittingly to the modern argument I had more than once declared in court to be anathema-the argument of the new reform in reference to the common law and the constitution.

“A contract, no matter how seriously entered into at the time it was made, that later is seen to violate the principles of humanity should be void. And not only this, but you didn’t consent that he should disgrace you.”

Nancy winced.

“I never told you that he paid my father’s debts, I never told anyone,” she said, in a low voice.

“Even then,” I answered after a moment, “you ought to see that it’s too terrible a price to pay for your happiness. And Ham hasn’t ever pretended to consider you in any way. It’s certain you didn’t agree that he should do—what he is doing.”

“Suppose I admitted it,” she said, “there remain Maude and your children. Their happiness, their future becomes my responsibility as well as yours.”

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“But I don’t love Maude, and Maude doesn’t love me. I grant it’s my fault, that I did her a wrong in marrying her, but she is right in leaving me. I should be doing her a double wrong. And the children will be happy with her, they will be well brought up. I, too, have thought this out, Nancy,” I insisted, “and the fact is that in our respective marriages we have been, each of us, victims of our time, of our education. We were born in a period of transition, we inherited views of life that do not fit conditions to-day. It takes courage to achieve happiness, initiative to emancipate one’s self from a morality that begins to hamper and bind. To stay as we are, to refuse to take what is offered us, is to remain between wind and water. I don’t mean that we should do anything—hastily. We can afford to take a reasonable time, to be dignified about it. But I have come to the conclusion that the only thing that matters in the world is a love like ours, and its fulfilment. Achievement, success, are empty and meaningless without it. And you do love me—you’ve admitted it.”

“Oh, I don’t want to talk about it,” she exclaimed, desperately.

“But we have to talk about it,” I persisted. “We have to thrash it out, to see it straight, as you yourself have said.”

“You speak of convictions, Hugh,—new convictions, in place of the old we have discarded. But what are they? And is there no such thing as conscience—even though it be only an intuition of happiness or unhappiness? I do care for you, I do love you—”

“Then why not let that suffice?” I exclaimed, leaning towards her.

She drew back.

“But I want to respect you, too,” she said.

I was shocked, too shocked to answer.

“I want to respect you,” she repeated, more gently. “I don’t want to think that—that what we feel for each other is—unconsecrated.”

“It consecrates itself,” I declared.

She shook her head.

“Surely it has its roots in everything that is fine in both of us.”

“We both went wrong,” said Nancy. “We both sought to wrest power and happiness from the world, to make our own laws. How can we assert that—this is not merely a continuation of it?”

“But can’t we work out our beliefs together?” I demanded. “Won’t you trust me, trust our love for one another?”

Her breath came and went quickly.

“Oh, you know that I want you, Hugh, as much as you want me, and more. The time may come when I can’t resist you.”

“Why do you resist me?” I cried, seizing her hands convulsively, and swept by a gust of passion at her confession.

“Try to understand that I am fighting for both of us!” she pleaded—an appeal that wrung me in spite of the pitch to which my feelings had been raised. “Hugh, dear, we must think it out. Don’t now.”

I let her hands drop....

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Beyond the range of hills rising from the far side of the Ashuela was the wide valley in which was situated the Cloverdale Country Club, with its polo field, golf course and tennis courts; and in this same valley some of our wealthy citizens, such as Howard Ogilvy and Leonard Dickinson, had bought “farms,” week-end playthings for spring and autumn. Hambleton Durrett had started the fashion. Capriciously, as he did everything else, he had become the owner of several hundred acres of pasture, woodland and orchard, acquired some seventy-five head of blooded stock, and proceeded to house them in model barns and milk by machinery; for several months he had bored everyone in the Boyne Club whom he could entice into conversation on the subject of the records of pedigreed cows, and spent many bibulous nights on the farm in company with those parasites who surrounded him when he was in town. Then another interest had intervened; a feminine one, of course, and his energies were transferred (so we understood) to the reconstruction and furnishing of a little residence in New York, not far from Fifth Avenue. The farm continued under the expert direction of a superintendent who was a graduate of the State Agricultural College, and a select clientele, which could afford to pay the prices, consumed the milk and cream and butter. Quite consistent with their marital relations was the fact that Nancy should have taken a fancy to the place after Ham’s interest had waned. Not that she cared for the Guernseys, or Jerseys, or whatever they may have been; she evinced a sudden passion for simplicity,—-occasional simplicity, at least,—for a contrast to and escape from a complicated life of luxury. She built another house for the superintendent banished him from the little farmhouse (where Ham had kept two rooms); banished along with the superintendent the stiff plush furniture, the yellow-red carpets, the easels and the melodeon, and decked it out in bright chintzes, with wall-papers to match, dainty muslin curtains, and rag-carpet rugs on the hardwood floors. The pseudo-classic porch over the doorway, which had suggested a cemetery, was removed, and a wide piazza added, furnished with wicker lounging chairs and tables, and shaded with gay awnings.

Here, to the farm, accompanied by a maid, she had been in the habit of retiring from time to time, and here she came in early July. Here, dressed in the simplest linen gowns of pink or blue or white, I found a Nancy magically restored to girlhood,—anew Nancy, betraying only traces of the old, a new Nancy in a new Eden. We had all the setting, all the illusion of that perfect ideal of domesticity, love in a cottage. Nancy and I, who all our lives had spurned simplicity, laughed over the joy we found in it: she made a high art of it, of course; we had our simple dinners, which Mrs. Olsen cooked and served in the open air; sometimes on the porch, sometimes under the great butternut tree spreading its shade

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over what in a more elaborate country-place, would have been called a lawn,—an uneven plot of grass of ridges and hollows that ran down to the orchard. Nancy's eyes would meet mine across the little table, and often our gaze would wander over the pastures below, lucent green in the level evening light, to the darkening woods beyond, gilt-tipped in the setting sun. There were fields of ripening yellow grain, of lusty young corn that grew almost as we watched it: the warm winds of evening were heavy with the acrid odours of fecundity. Fecundity! In that lay the elusive yet insistent charm of that country; and Nancy's, of course, was the transforming touch that made it paradise. It was thus, in the country, I suggested that we should spend the rest of our existence. What was the use of amassing money, when happiness was to be had so simply?

"How long do you think you could stand it?" she asked, as she handed me a plate of blackberries.

"Forever, with the right woman," I announced.

"How long could the woman stand it?".... She humoured, smilingly, my crystal-gazing into our future, as though she had not the heart to deprive me of the pleasure.

"I simply can't believe in it, Hugh," she said when I pressed her for an answer.

"Why not?"

"I suppose it's because I believe in continuity, I haven't the romantic temperament,—I always see the angel with the flaming sword. It isn't that I want to see him."

"But we shall redeem ourselves," I said. "It won't be curiosity and idleness. We are not just taking this thing, and expecting to give nothing for it in return."

"What can we give that is worth it?" she exclaimed, with one of her revealing flashes.

"We won't take it lightly, but seriously," I told her. "We shall find something to give, and that something will spring naturally out of our love. We'll read together, and think and plan together."

"Oh, Hugh, you are incorrigible," was all she said.

The male tendency in me was forever strained to solve her, to deduce from her conversation and conduct a body of consistent law. The effort was useless. Here was a realm, that of Nancy's soul, in which there was apparently no such thing as relevancy. In the twilight, after dinner, we often walked through the orchard to a grassy bank beside the little stream, where we would sit and watch the dying glow in the sky. After a rain its swollen waters were turbid, opaque yellow-red with the clay of the hills; at other times it

ran smoothly, temperately, almost clear between the pasture grasses and wild flowers. Nancy declared that it reminded her of me. We sat there, into the lush, warm nights, and the moon shone down on us, or again through long silences we searched the bewildering, starry chart of the heavens, with the undertones of the night-chorus of the fields in our ears. Sometimes she let my head rest upon her knee; but when, throbbing at her touch, with the life-force

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pulsing around us, I tried to take her in my arms, to bring her lips to mine, she resisted me with an energy of will and body that I could not overcome, I dared not overcome. She acknowledged her love for me, she permitted me to come to her, she had the air of yielding but never yielded. Why, then, did she allow the words of love to pass? and how draw the line between caresses? I was maddened and disheartened by that elusive resistance in her—apparently so frail a thing!—that neither argument nor importunity could break down. Was there something lacking in me? or was it that I feared to mar or destroy the love she had. This, surely, had not been the fashion of other loves, called unlawful, the classic instances celebrated by the poets of all ages rose to mock me.

“Incurably romantic,” she had called me, in calmer moments, when I was able to discuss our affair objectively. And once she declared that I had no sense of tragedy. We read “Macbeth” together, I remember, one rainy Sunday. The modern world, which was our generation, would seem to be cut off from all that preceded it as with a descending knife. It was precisely from “the sense of tragedy” that we had been emancipated: from the “agonized conscience,” I should undoubtedly have said, had I been acquainted then with Mr. Santayana’s later phrase. Conscience—the old kind of conscience,—and nothing inherent in the deeds themselves, made the tragedy; conscience was superstition, the fear of the wrath of the gods: conscience was the wrath of the gods. Eliminate it, and behold! there were no consequences. The gods themselves, that kind of gods, became as extinct as the deities of the Druids, the Greek fates, the terrible figures of German mythology. Yes, and as the God of Christian orthodoxy.

Had any dire calamities overtaken the modern Macbeths, of whose personal lives we happened to know something? Had not these great ones broken with impunity all the laws of traditional morality? They ground the faces of the poor, played golf and went to church with serene minds, untroubled by criticism; they appropriated, quite freely, other men’s money, and some of them other men’s wives, and yet they were not haggard with remorse. The gods remained silent. Christian ministers regarded these modern transgressors of ancient laws benignly and accepted their contributions. Here, indeed, were the supermen of the mad German prophet and philosopher come to life, refuting all classic tragedy. It is true that some of these supermen were occasionally swept away by disease, which in ancient days would have been regarded as a retributive scourge, but was in fact nothing but the logical working of the laws of hygiene, the result of overwork. Such, though stated more crudely, were my contentions when desire did not cloud my brain and make me incoherent. And I did not fail to remind Nancy, constantly, that this was the path on which her feet had been set; that to waver now was to perish. She smiled, yet she showed concern.

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“But suppose you don’t get what you want?” she objected. “What then? Suppose one doesn’t become a superman? or a superwoman? What’s to happen to one? Is there no god but the superman’s god, which is himself? Are there no gods for those who can’t be supermen? or for those who may refuse to be supermen?”

To refuse, I maintained, were a weakness of the will.

“But there are other wills,” she persisted, “wills over which the superman may conceivably have no control. Suppose, for example, that you don’t get me, that my will intervenes, granting it to be conceivable that your future happiness and welfare, as you insist, depend upon your getting me—which I doubt.”

“You’ve no reason to doubt it.”

“Well, granting it, then. Suppose the orthodoxies and superstitions succeed in inhibiting me. I may not be a superwoman, but my will, or my conscience, if you choose, may be stronger than yours. If you don’t get what you want, you aren’t happy. In other words, you fail. Where are your gods then? The trouble with you, my dear Hugh, is that you have never failed,” she went on, “you’ve never had a good, hard fall, you’ve always been on the winning side, and you’ve never had the world against you. No wonder you don’t understand the meaning and value of tragedy.”

“And you?” I asked.

“No,” she agreed, “nor I. Yet I have come to feel, instinctively, that somehow concealed in tragedy is the central fact of life, the true reality, that nothing is to be got by dodging it, as we have dodged it. Your superman, at least the kind of superman you portray, is petrified. Something vital in him, that should be plastic and sensitive, has turned to stone.”

“Since when did you begin to feel this?” I inquired uneasily.

“Since—well, since we have been together again, in the last month or two. Something seems to warn me that if we take—what we want, we shan’t get it. That’s an Irish saying, I know, but it expresses my meaning. I may be little, I may be superstitious, unlike the great women of history who have dared. But it’s more than mere playing safe—my instinct, I mean. You see, you are involved. I believe I shouldn’t hesitate if only myself were concerned, but you are the uncertain quantity—more uncertain than you have any idea; you think you know yourself, you think you have analyzed yourself, but the truth is, Hugh, you don’t know the meaning of struggle against real resistance.”

I was about to protest.

“I know that you have conquered in the world of men and affairs,” she hurried on, “against resistance, but it isn’t the kind of resistance I mean. It doesn’t differ essentially from the struggle in the animal kingdom.”

I bowed. “Thank you,” I said.

She laughed a little.

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“Oh, I have worshipped success, too. Perhaps I still do—that isn’t the point. An animal conquers his prey, he is in competition, in constant combat with others of his own kind, and perhaps he brings to bear a certain amount of intelligence in the process. Intelligence isn’t the point, either. I know what I’m saying is trite, it’s banal, it sounds like moralizing, and perhaps it is, but there is so much confusion to-day that I think we are in danger of losing sight of the simpler verities, and that we must suffer for it. Your super-animal, your supreme-stag subdues the other stags, but he never conquers himself, he never feels the need of it, and therefore he never comprehends what we call tragedy.”

“I gather your inference,” I said, smiling.

“Well,” she admitted, “I haven’t stated the case with the shade of delicacy it deserves, but I wanted to make my meaning clear. We have raised up a class in America, but we have lost sight, a little—considerably, I think—of the distinguishing human characteristics. The men you were eulogizing are lords of the forest, more or less, and we women, who are of their own kind, what they have made us, surrender ourselves in submission and adoration to the lordly stag in the face of all the sacraments that have been painfully inaugurated by the race for the very purpose of distinguishing us from animals. It is equivalent to saying that there is no moral law; or, if there is, nobody can define it. We deny, inferentially, a human realm as distinguished from the animal, and in the denial it seems to me we are cutting ourselves off from what is essential human development. We are reverting to the animal. I have lost and you have lost—not entirely, perhaps, but still to a considerable extent—the bloom of that fervour, of that idealism, we may call it, that both of us possessed when we were in our teens. We had occasional visions. We didn’t know what they meant, or how to set about their accomplishment, but they were not, at least, mere selfish aspirations; they implied, unconsciously no doubt, an element of service, and certainly our ideal of marriage had something fine in it.”

“Isn’t it for a higher ideal of marriage that we are searching?” I asked.

“If that is so,” Nancy objected, “then all the other elements of our lives are sadly out of tune with it. Even the most felicitous union of the sexes demands sacrifice, an adjustment of wills, and these are the very things we balk at; and the trouble with our entire class in this country is that we won’t acknowledge any responsibility, there’s no sacrifice in our eminence, we have no sense of the whole.”

“Where did you get all these ideas?” I demanded.

She laughed.

“Well,” she admitted, “I’ve been thrashing around a little; and I’ve read some of the moderns, you know. Do you remember my telling you I didn’t agree with them? and now this thing has come on me like a judgment. I’ve caught their mania for liberty, for

self-realization—whatever they call it—but their remedies are vague, they fail to convince me that individuals achieve any quality by just taking what they want, regardless of others."....

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I was unable to meet this argument, and the result was that when I was away from her I too began to “thrash around” among the books in a vain search for a radical with a convincing and satisfying philosophy. Thus we fly to literature in crises of the heart! There was no lack of writers who sought to deal—and deal triumphantly with the very situation in which I was immersed. I marked many passages, to read them over to Nancy, who was interested, but who accused me of being willing to embrace any philosophy, ancient or modern, that ran with the stream of my desires. It is worth recording that the truth of this struck home. On my way back to the city I reflected that, in spite of my protests against Maude’s going—protests wholly sentimental and impelled by the desire to avoid giving pain on the spot—I had approved of her departure because I didn’t want her. On the other hand I had to acknowledge if I hadn’t wanted Nancy, or rather, if I had become tired of her, I should have been willing to endorse her scruples.... It was not a comforting thought.

One morning when I was absently opening the mail I found at my office I picked up a letter from Theodore Watling, written from a seaside resort in Maine, the contents of which surprised and touched me, troubled me, and compelled me to face a situation with which I was wholly unprepared to cope. He announced that this was to be his last term in the Senate. He did not name the trouble his physician had discovered, but he had been warned that he must retire from active life. “The specialist whom I saw in New York,” he went on, “wished me to resign at once, but when I pointed out to him how unfair this would be to my friends in the state, to my party as a whole—especially in these serious and unsettled times—he agreed that I might with proper care serve out the remainder of my term. I have felt it my duty to write to Barbour and Dickinson and one or two others in order that they might be prepared and that no time may be lost in choosing my successor. It is true that the revolt within the party has never gained much headway in our state, but in these days it is difficult to tell when and where a conflagration may break out, or how far it will go. I have ventured to recommend to them the man who seems to me the best equipped to carry on the work I have been trying to do here—in short, my dear Hugh, yourself. The Senate, as you know, is not a bed of roses just now for those who think as we do; but I have the less hesitancy in making the recommendation because I believe you are not one to shun a fight for the convictions we hold in common, and because you would regard, with me, the election of a senator with the new views as a very real calamity. If sound business men and lawyers should be eliminated from the Senate, I could not contemplate with any peace of mind what might happen to the country. In thus urging you, I know you will believe me when I say that my affection and judgment are equally involved, for it would be a matter

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of greater pride than I can express to have you follow me here as you have followed me at home. And I beg of you seriously to consider it.... I understand that Maude and the children are abroad. Remember me to them affectionately when you write. If you can find it convenient to come here, to Maine, to discuss the matter, you may be sure of a welcome. In any case, I expect to be in Washington in September for a meeting of our special committee. Sincerely and affectionately yours, Theodore Watling."

It was characteristic of him that the tone of the letter should be uniformly cheerful, that he should say nothing whatever of the blow this must be to his ambitions and hopes; and my agitation at the new and disturbing prospect thus opened up for me was momentarily swept away by feelings of affection and sorrow. A sharp realization came to me of how much I admired and loved this man, and this was followed by a pang at the thought of the disappointment my refusal would give him. Complications I did not wish to examine were then in the back of my mind; and while I still sat holding the letter in my hand the telephone rang, and a message came from Leonard Dickinson begging me to call at the bank at once.

Miller Gorse was there, and Tallant, waving a palm-leaf while sitting under the electric fan. They were all very grave, and they began to talk about the suddenness of Mr. Watling's illness and to speculate upon its nature. Leonard Dickinson was the most moved of the three; but they were all distressed, and showed it—even Tallant, whom I had never credited with any feelings; they spoke about the loss to the state. At length Gorse took a cigar from his pocket and lighted it; the smoke, impelled by the fan, drifted over the panelled partition into the bank.

"I suppose Mr. Watling mentioned to you what he wrote to us," he said.

"Yes," I admitted.

"Well," he asked, "what do you think of it?"

"I attribute it to Mr. Watling's friendship," I replied.

"No," said Gorse, in his businesslike manner, "Watling's right, there's no one else." Considering the number of inhabitants of our state, this remark had its humorous aspect.

"That's true," Dickinson put in, "there's no one else available who understands the situation as you do, Hugh, no one else we can trust as we trust you. I had a wire from Mr. Barbour this morning—he agrees. We'll miss you here, but now that Watling will be gone we'll need you there. And he's right—it's something we've got to decide on right

away, and get started on soon, we can't afford to wobble and run any chances of a revolt."

"It isn't everybody the senatorship comes to on a platter—especially at your age," said Tallant.

"To tell you the truth," I answered, addressing Dickinson, "I'm not prepared to talk about it now. I appreciate the honour, but I'm not at all sure I'm the right man. And I've been considerably upset by this news of Mr. Watling."

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“Naturally you would be,” said the banker, sympathetically, “and we share your feelings. I don’t know of any man for whom I have a greater affection than I have for Theodore Wading. We shouldn’t have mentioned it now, Hugh, if Watling hadn’t started the thing himself, if it weren’t important to know where we stand right away. We can’t afford to lose the seat. Take your time, but remember you’re the man we depend upon.”

Gorse nodded. I was aware, all the time Dickinson was speaking, of being surrounded by the strange, disquieting gaze of the counsel for the Railroad....

I went back to my office to spend an uneasy morning. My sorrow for Mr. Watling was genuine, but nevertheless I found myself compelled to consider an honour no man lightly refuses. Had it presented itself at any other time, had it been due to a happier situation than that brought about by the illness of a man whom I loved and admired, I should have thought the prospect dazzling indeed, part and parcel of my amazing luck. But now—now I was in an emotional state that distorted the factors of life, all those things I hitherto had valued; even such a prize as this I weighed in terms of one supreme desire: how would the acceptance of the senatorship affect the accomplishment of this desire? That was the question. I began making rapid calculations: the actual election would take place in the legislature a year from the following January; provided I were able to overcome Nancy’s resistance—which I was determined to do—nothing in the way of divorce proceedings could be thought of for more than a year; and I feared delay. On the other hand, if we waited until after I had been duly elected to get my divorce and marry Nancy my chances of reelection would be small. What did I care for the senatorship anyway—if I had her? and I wanted her now, as soon as I could get her. She—a life with her represented new values, new values I did not define, that made all I had striven for in the past of little worth. This was a bauble compared with the companionship of the woman I loved, the woman intended for me, who would give me peace of mind and soul and develop those truer aspirations that had long been thwarted and starved for lack of her. Gradually, as she regained the ascendency over my mind she ordinarily held—and from which she had been temporarily displaced by the arrival of Mr. Watling’s letter and the talk in the bank—I became impatient and irritated by the intrusion. But what answer should I give to Dickinson and Gorse? what excuse for declining such an offer? I decided, as may be imagined, to wait, to temporize.

The irony of circumstances—of what might have been—prevented now my laying this trophy at Nancy’s feet, for I knew I had only to mention the matter to be certain of losing her.

XXIII.

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I had bought a small automobile, which I ran myself, and it was my custom to arrive at the farm every evening about five o'clock. But as I look back upon those days they seem to have lost succession, to be fused together, as it were, into one indeterminable period by the intense pressure of emotion; unsatisfied emotion,—and the state of physical and mental disorganization set up by it is in the retrospect not a little terrifying. The world grew more and more distorted, its affairs were neglected, things upon which I had set high values became as nothing. And even if I could summon back something of the sequence of our intercourse, it would be a mere repetition—growing on my part more irrational and insistent—of what I have already related. There were long, troubled, and futile silences when we sat together on the porch or in the woods and fields; when I wondered whether it were weakness or strength that caused Nancy to hold out against my importunities: the fears she professed of retribution, the benumbing effects of the conventional years, or the deep-rooted remnants of a Calvinism which—as she proclaimed—had lost definite expression to persist as an intuition. I recall something she said when she turned to me after one of these silences.

"Do you know how I feel sometimes? as though you and I had wandered together into a strange country, and lost our way. We have lost our way, Hugh—it's all so clandestine, so feverish, so unnatural, so unrelated to life, this existence we're leading. I believe it would be better if it were a mere case of physical passion. I can't help it," she went on, when I had exclaimed against this, "we are too—too complicated, you are too complicated. It's because we want the morning stars, don't you see?" She wound her fingers tightly around mine. "We not only want this, but all of life besides—you wouldn't be satisfied with anything less. Oh, I know it. That's your temperament, you were made that way, and I shouldn't be satisfied if you weren't. The time would come when you would blame me I don't mean vulgarly—and I couldn't stand that. If you weren't that way, if that weren't your nature, I mean, I should have given way long ago."

I made some sort of desperate protest.

"No, if I didn't know you so well I believe I should have given in long ago. I'm not thinking of you alone, but of myself, too. I'm afraid I shouldn't be happy, that I should begin to think—and then I couldn't stop. The plain truth, as I've told you over and over again, is that I'm not big enough." She continued smiling at me, a smile on which I could not bear to look. "I was wrong not to have gone away," I heard her say. "I will go away."

I was, at the time, too profoundly discouraged to answer....

One evening after an exhausting talk we sat, inert, on the grass hummock beside the stream. Heavy clouds had gathered in the sky, the light had deepened to amethyst, the valley was still, swooning with expectancy, louder and louder the thunder rolled from behind the distant hills, and presently a veil descended to hide them from our view. Great drops began to fall, unheeded.

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“We must go in,” said Nancy, at length.

I followed her across the field and through the orchard. From the porch we stood gazing out at the whitening rain that blotted all save the nearer landscape, and the smell of wet, midsummer grasses will always be associated with the poignancy of that moment.... At dinner, between the intervals of silence, our talk was of trivial things. We made a mere pretence of eating, and I remember having my attention arrested by the sight of a strange, pitying expression on the face of Mrs. Olsen, who waited on us. Before that the woman had been to me a mere ministering automaton. But she must have had ideas and opinions, this transported Swedish peasant.... Presently, having cleared the table, she retired.... The twilight deepened to dusk, to darkness. The storm, having spent the intensity of its passion in those first moments of heavy downpour and wind, had relaxed to a gentle rain that pattered on the roof, and from the stream came recurringly the dirge of the frogs. All I could see of Nancy was the dim outline of her head and shoulders: she seemed fantastically to be escaping me, to be fading, to be going; in sudden desperation I dropped on my knees beside her, and I felt her hands straying with a light yet agonized touch, over my head.

“Do you think I haven’t suffered, too? that I don’t suffer?” I heard her ask.

Some betraying note for which I had hitherto waited in vain must have pierced to my consciousness, yet the quiver of joy and the swift, convulsive movement that followed it seemed one. Her strong, lithe body was straining in my arms, her lips returning my kisses.... Clinging to her hands, I strove to summon my faculties of realization; and I began to speak in broken, endearing sentences.

“It’s stronger than we are—stronger than anything else in the world,” she said.

“But you’re not sorry?” I asked.

“I don’t want to think—I don’t care,” she replied. “I only know that I love you. I wonder if you will ever know how much!”

The moments lengthened into hours, and she gently reminded me that it was late. The lights in the little farmhouses near by had long been extinguished. I pleaded to linger; I wanted her, more of her, all of her with a fierce desire that drowned rational thought, and I feared that something might still come between us, and cheat me of her.

“No, no,” she cried, with fear in her voice. “We shall have to think it out very carefully—-what we must do. We can’t afford to make any mistakes.”

“We’ll talk it all over to-morrow,” I said.

With a last, reluctant embrace I finally left her, walked blindly to where the motor car was standing, and started the engine. I looked back. Outlined in the light of the doorway I saw her figure in what seemed an attitude of supplication....

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I drove cityward through the rain, mechanically taking the familiar turns in the road, barely missing a man in a buggy at a four-corners. He shouted after me, but the world to which he belonged didn't exist. I lived again those moments that had followed Nancy's surrender, seeking to recall and fix in my mind every word that had escaped from her lips—the trivial things that to lovers are so fraught with meaning. I lived it all over again, as I say, but the reflection of it, though intensely emotional, differed from the reality in that now I was somewhat able to regard the thing, to regard myself, objectively; to define certain feelings that had flitted in filmy fashion through my consciousness, delicate shadows I recognized at the time as related to sadness. When she had so amazingly yielded, the thought for which my mind had been vaguely groping was that the woman who lay there in my arms, obscured by the darkness, was not Nancy at all! It was as if this one precious woman I had so desperately pursued had, in the capture, lost her identity, had mysteriously become just woman, in all her significance, yes, and helplessness. The particular had merged (inevitably, I might have known) into the general: the temporary had become the lasting, with a chain of consequences vaguely implied that even in my joy gave me pause. For the first time in my life I had a glimpse of what marriage might mean,—marriage in a greater sense than I had ever conceived it, a sort of cosmic sense, implying obligations transcending promises and contracts, calling for greatness of soul of a kind I had not hitherto imagined. Was there in me a grain of doubt of my ability to respond to such a high call? I began to perceive that such a union as we contemplated involved more obligations than one not opposed to traditional views of morality. I fortified myself, however,—if indeed I really needed fortification in a mood prevailingly triumphant and exalted,—with the thought that this love was different, the real thing, the love of maturity steeped in the ideals of youth. Here was a love for which I must be prepared to renounce other things on which I set a high value; prepared, in case the world, for some reason, should not look upon us with kindliness. It was curious that such reflections as these should have been delayed until after the achievement of my absorbing desire, more curious that they should have followed so closely on the heels of it. The affair had shifted suddenly from a basis of adventure, of uncertainty; to one of fact, of commitment; I am exaggerating my concern in order to define it; I was able to persuade myself without much difficulty that these little, cloudy currents in the stream of my joy were due to a natural reaction from the tremendous strain of the past weeks, mere morbid fancies.

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When at length I reached my room at the Club I sat looking out at the rain falling on the shining pavements under the arc-lights. Though waves of heat caused by some sudden recollection or impatient longing still ran through my body, a saner joy of anticipation was succeeding emotional tumult, and I reflected that Nancy had been right in insisting that we walk circumspectly in spite of passion. After all, I had outwitted circumstance, I had gained the prize, I could afford to wait a little. We should talk it over to-morrow,—-no, to-day. The luminous face of the city hall clock reminded me that midnight was long past....

I awoke with the consciousness of a new joy, suddenly to identify it with Nancy. She was mine! I kept repeating it as I dressed; summoning her, not as she had lain in my arms in the darkness—though the intoxicating sweetness of that pervaded me—but as she had been before the completeness of her surrender, dainty, surrounded by things expressing an elusive, uniquely feminine personality. I could afford to smile at the weather, at the obsidian sky, at the rain still falling persistently; and yet, as I ate my breakfast, I felt a certain impatience to verify what I knew was a certainty, and hurried to the telephone booth. I resented the instrument, its possibilities of betrayal, her voice sounded so matter-of-fact as she bade me good morning and deplored the rain.

“I’ll be out as soon as I can get away,” I said. “I have a meeting at three, but it should be over at four.” And then I added irresistibly: “Nancy, you’re not sorry? You—you still—?”

“Yes, don’t be foolish,” I heard her reply, and this time the telephone did not completely disguise the note for which I strained. I said something more, but the circuit was closed....

I shall not attempt to recount the details of our intercourse during the week that followed. There were moments of stress and strain when it seemed to me that we could not wait, moments that strengthened Nancy’s resolution to leave immediately for the East: there were other, calmer periods when the wisdom of her going appealed to me, since our ultimate union would be hastened thereby. We overcame by degrees the distastefulness of the discussion of ways and means.... We spent an unforgettable Sunday among the distant high hills, beside a little lake of our own discovery, its glinting waters sapphire and chrysoprase. A grassy wood road, at the inviting entrance to which we left the automobile, led down through an undergrowth of laurel to a pebbly shore, and there we lunched; there we lingered through the long summer afternoon, Nancy with her back against a tree, I with my head in her lap gazing up at filmy clouds drifting imperceptibly across the sky, listening to the droning notes of the bees, notes that sometimes rose in a sharp crescendo, and again were suddenly hushed. The smell of the wood-mould mingled with the fainter scents of wild flowers. She had brought

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along a volume by a modern poet: the verses, as Nancy read them, moved me,—they were filled with a new faith to which my being responded, the faith of the forth-farer; not the faith of the anchor, but of the sail. I repeated some of the lines as indications of a creed to which I had long been trying to convert her, though lacking the expression. She had let the book fall on the grass. I remember how she smiled down at me with the wisdom of the ages in her eyes, seeking my hand with a gesture that was almost maternal.

“You and the poets,” she said, “you never grow up. I suppose that’s the reason why we love you—and these wonderful visions of freedom you have. Anyway, it’s nice to dream, to recreate the world as one would like to have it.”

“But that’s what you and I are doing,” I insisted.

“We think we’re doing it—or rather you think so,” she replied. “And sometimes, I admit that you almost persuade me to think so. Never quite. What disturbs me,” she continued, “is to find you and the poets founding your new freedom on new justifications, discarding the old law only to make a new one,—as though we could ever get away from necessities, escape from disagreeable things, except in dreams. And then, this delusion of believing that we are masters of our own destiny—” She paused and pressed my fingers.

“There you go-back to predestination!” I exclaimed.

“I don’t go back to anything, or forward to anything,” she exclaimed. “Women are elemental, but I don’t expect you to understand it. Laws and codes are foreign to us, philosophies and dreams may dazzle us for the moment, but what we feel underneath and what we yield to are the primal forces, the great necessities; when we refuse joys it’s because we know these forces by a sort of instinct, when we’re overcome it’s with a full knowledge that there’s a price. You’ve talked a great deal, Hugh, about carving out our future. I listened to you, but I resisted you. It wasn’t the morality that was taught me as a child that made me resist, it was something deeper than that, more fundamental, something I feel but can’t yet perceive, and yet shall perceive some day. It isn’t that I’m clinging to the hard and fast rules because I fail to see any others, it isn’t that I believe that all people should stick together whether they are happily married or not, but—I must say it even now—I have a feeling I can’t define that divorce isn’t for us. I’m not talking about right and wrong in the ordinary sense—it’s just what I feel. I’ve ceased to think.”

“Nancy!” I reproached her.

“I can’t help it—I don’t want to be morbid. Do you remember my asking you about God?—the first day this began? and whether you had a god? Well, that’s the trouble with us all to-day, we haven’t any God, we’re wanderers, drifters. And now it’s just life that’s got hold of us, my dear, and swept us away together. That’s our justification—if we needed one—it’s been too strong for us.” She leaned back against the tree and closed her eyes. “We’re like chips in the torrent of it, Hugh."....

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It was not until the shadow of the forest had crept far across the lake and the darkening waters were still that we rose reluctantly to put the dishes in the tea basket and start on our homeward journey. The tawny fires of the sunset were dying down behind us, the mist stealing, ghostlike, into the valleys below; in the sky a little moon curled like a freshly cut silver shaving, that presently turned to gold, the white star above it to fire.

Where the valleys widened we came to silent, decorous little towns and villages where yellow-lit windows gleaming through the trees suggested refuge and peace, while we were wanderers in the night. It was Nancy's mood; and now, in the evening's chill, it recurred to me poignantly. In one of these villages we passed a church, its doors flung open; the congregation was singing a familiar hymn. I slowed down the car; I felt her shoulder pressing against my own, and reached out my hand and found hers.

"Are you warm enough?" I asked....

We spoke but little on that drive, we had learned the futility of words to express the greater joys and sorrows, the love that is compounded of these.

It was late when we turned in between the white dates and made our way up the little driveway to the farmhouse. I bade her good night on the steps of the porch.

"You do love me, don't you?" she whispered, clinging to me with a sudden, straining passion. "You will love me, always no matter what happens?"

"Why, of course, Nancy," I answered.

"I want to hear you say it, 'I love you, I shall love you always.'"

I repeated it fervently....

"No matter what happens?"

"No matter what happens. As if I could help it, Nancy! Why are you so sad to-night?"

"Ah, Hugh, it makes me sad—I can't tell why. It is so great, it is so terrible, and yet it's so sweet and beautiful."

She took my face in her hands and pressed a kiss against my forehead....

The next day was dark. At two o'clock in the afternoon the electric light was still burning over my desk when the telephone rang and I heard Nancy's voice.

"Is that you, Hugh?"

"Yes."

“I have to go East this afternoon.”

“Why?” I asked. Her agitation had communicated itself to me. “I thought you weren’t going until Thursday. What’s the matter?”

“I’ve just had a telegram,” she said. “Ham’s been hurt—I don’t know how badly—he was thrown from a polo pony this morning at Narragansett, in practice, and they’re taking him to Boston to a private hospital. The telegram’s from Johnny Shephard. I’ll be at the house in town at four.”

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Filled with forebodings I tried in vain to suppress I dropped the work I was doing and got up and paced the room, pausing now and again to gaze out of the window at the wet roofs and the grey skies. I was aghast at the idea of her going to Ham now even though he were hurt badly hurt; and yet I tried to think it was natural, that it was fine of her to respond to such a call. And she couldn't very well refuse his summons. But it was not the news of her husband's accident that inspired the greater fear, which was quelled and soothed only to rise again when I recalled the note I had heard in her voice, a note eloquent of tragedy—of tragedy she had foreseen. At length, unable to remain where I was any longer, I descended to the street and walked uptown in the rain. The Durrett house was closed, the blinds of its many windows drawn, but Nancy was watching for me and opened the door. So used had I grown to seeing her in the simple linen dresses she had worn in the country, a costume associated with exclusive possession, that the sight of her travelling suit and hat renewed in me an agony of apprehension. The unforeseen event seemed to have transformed her once more. Her veil was drawn up, her face was pale, in her eyes were traces of tears.

"You're going?" I asked, as I took her hands.

"Hugh, I have to go."

She led me through the dark, shrouded drawing room into the little salon where the windows were open on the silent city-garden. I took her in my arms; she did not resist, as I half expected, but clung to me with what seemed desperation.

"I have to go, dear—you won't make it too hard for me! It's only—ordinary decency, and there's no one else to go to him."

She drew me to the sofa, her eyes beseeching me.

"Listen, dear, I want you to see it as I see it. I know that you will, that you do. I should never be able to forgive myself if I stayed away now, I—neither of us could ever be happy about it. You do see, don't you?" she implored.

"Yes," I admitted agitatedly.

Her grasp on my hand tightened.

"I knew you would. But it makes me happier to hear you say it."

We sat for a moment in helpless silence, gazing at one another. Slowly her eyes had filled.

"Have you heard anything more?" I managed to ask.

She drew a telegram from her bag, as though the movement were a relief.

“This is from the doctor in Boston—his name is Magruder. They have got Ham there, it seems. A horse kicked him in the head, after he fell,—he had just recovered consciousness.”

I took the telegram. The wordy seemed meaningless, all save those of the last sentence. “The situation is serious, but by no means hopeless.” Nancy had not spoken of that. The ignorant cruelty of its convention! The man must have known what Hambleton Durrett was! Nancy read my thoughts, and took the paper from my hand.

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“Hugh, dear, if it’s hard for you, try to understand that it’s terrible for me to think that he has any claim at all. I realize now, as I never did before, how wicked it was in me to marry him. I hate him, I can’t bear the thought of going near him.”

She fell into wild weeping. I tried to comfort her, who could not comfort myself; I don’t remember my inadequate words. We were overwhelmed, obliterated by the sense of calamity.... It was she who checked herself at last by an effort that was almost hysterical.

“I mustn’t yield to it!” she said. “It’s time to leave and the train goes at six. No, you mustn’t come to the station, Hugh—I don’t think I could stand it. I’ll send you a telegram.” She rose. “You must go now—you must.”

“You’ll come back to me?” I demanded thickly, as I held her.

“Hugh, I am yours, now and always. How can you doubt it?”

At last I released her, when she had begged me again. And I found myself a little later walking past the familiar, empty houses of those streets....

The front pages of the evening newspapers announced the accident to Hambleton Durrett, and added that Mrs. Durrett, who had been lingering in the city, had gone to her husband’s bedside. The morning papers contained more of biography and ancestry, but had little to add to the bulletin; and there was no lack of speculation at the Club and elsewhere as to Ham’s ability to rally from such a shock. I could not bear to listen to these comments: they were violently distasteful to me. The unforeseen accident and Nancy’s sudden departure had thrown my life completely out of gear: I could not attend to business, I dared not go away lest the news from Nancy be delayed. I spent the hours in an exhausting mental state that alternated between hope and fear, a state of unmitigated, intense desire, of balked realization, sometimes heightening into that sheer terror I had felt when I had detected over the telephone that note in her voice that seemed of despair. Had she had a presentiment, all along, that something would occur to separate us? As I went back over the hours we had passed together since she had acknowledged her love, in spite of myself the conviction grew on me that she had never believed in the reality of our future. Indeed, she had expressed her disbelief in words. Had she been looking all along for a sign—a sign of wrath? And would she accept this accident of Ham’s as such?

Retrospection left me trembling and almost sick.

It was not until the second morning after her departure that I received a telegram giving the name of her Boston hotel, and saying that there was to be a consultation that day, and as soon as it had taken place she would write. Such consolation as I could gather from it was derived from four words at the end,—she missed me dreadfully. Some

tremor of pity for her entered into my consciousness, without mitigating greatly the wildness of my resentment, of my forebodings.

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I could bear no longer the city, the Club, the office, the daily contact with my associates and clients. Six hours distant, near Rossiter, was a small resort in the mountains of which I had heard. I telegraphed Nancy to address me there, notified the office, packed my bag, and waited impatiently for midday, when I boarded the train. At seven I reached a little station where a stage was waiting to take me to Callender's Mill.

It was not until morning that I beheld my retreat, when little wisps of vapour were straying over the surface of the lake, and the steep green slopes that rose out of the water on the western side were still in shadow. The hotel, a much overgrown and altered farm-house, stood, surrounded by great trees, in an ancient clearing that sloped gently to the water's edge, where an old-fashioned, octagonal summerhouse overlooked a landing for rowboats. The resort, indeed, was a survival of simpler times....

In spite of the thirty-odd guests, people of very moderate incomes who knew the place and had come here year after year, I was as much alone as if I had been the only sojourner. The place was so remote, so peaceful in contrast to the city I had left, which had become intolerable. And at night, during hours of wakefulness, the music of the waters falling over the dam was soothing. I used to walk down there and sit on the stones of the ruined mill; or climb to the crests on the far side of the pond to gaze for hours westward where the green billows of the Alleghenies lost themselves in the haze. I had discovered a new country; here, when our trials should be over, I would bring Nancy, and I found distraction in choosing sites for a bungalow. In my soul hope flowered with little watering. Uncertain news was good news. After two days of an impatience all but intolerable, her first letter arrived, I learned that the specialists had not been able to make a diagnosis, and I began to take heart again. At times, she said, Ham was delirious and difficult to manage; at other times he sank into a condition of coma; and again he seemed to know her and Ralph, who had come up from Southampton, where he had been spending the summer. One doctor thought that Ham's remarkable vitality would pull him through, in spite of what his life had been. The shock—as might have been surmised—had affected the brain.... The letters that followed contained no additional news; she did not dwell on the depressing reactions inevitable from the situation in which she found herself—one so much worse than mine; she expressed a continual longing for me; and yet I had trouble to convince myself that they did not lack the note of reassurance for which I strained as I eagerly scanned them—of reassurance that she had no intention of permitting her husband's condition to interfere with that ultimate happiness on which it seemed my existence depended. I tried to account for the absence of this note by reflecting that the letters were of necessity

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brief, hurriedly scratched off at odd moments; and a natural delicacy would prevent her from referring to our future at such a time. They recorded no change in Ham's condition save that the periods of coma had ceased. The doctors were silent, awaiting the arrival in this country of a certain New York specialist who was abroad. She spent most of her days at the hospital, returning to the hotel at night exhausted: the people she knew in the various resorts around Boston had been most kind, sending her flowers, and calling when in town to inquire. At length came the news that the New York doctor was home again; and coming to Boston. In that letter was a sentence which rang like a cry in my ears: "Oh, Hugh, I think these doctors know now what the trouble is, I think I know. They are only waiting for Dr. Jameson to confirm it."

It was always an effort for me to control my impatience after the first rattling was heard in the morning of the stage that brought the mail, and I avoided the waiting group in front of the honeycombed partition of boxes beside the "office." On the particular morning of which I am now writing the proprietor himself handed me a letter of ominous thickness which I took with me down to the borders of the lake before tearing open the flap. In spite of the calmness and restraint of the first lines, because of them, I felt creeping over me an unnerving sensation I knew for dread....

"Hugh, the New York doctor has been here. It is as I have feared for some weeks, but I couldn't tell you until I was sure. Ham is not exactly insane, but he is childish. Sometimes I think that is even worse. I have had a talk with Dr. Jameson, who has simply confirmed the opinion which the other physicians have gradually been forming. The accident has precipitated a kind of mental degeneration, but his health, otherwise, will not be greatly affected.

"Jameson was kind, but very frank, for which I was grateful. He did not hesitate to say that it would have been better if the accident had been fatal. Ham won't be helpless, physically. Of course he won't be able to play polo, or take much active exercise. If he were to be helpless, I could feel that I might be of some use, at least of more use. He knows his friends. Some of them have been here to see him, and he talks quite rationally with them, with Ralph, with me, only once in a while he says something silly. It seems odd to write that he is not responsible, since he never has been,—his condition is so queer that I am at a loss to describe it. The other morning, before I arrived from the hotel and when the nurse was downstairs, he left the hospital, and we found him several blocks along Commonwealth Avenue, seated on a bench, without a hat—he was annoyed that he had forgotten it, and quite sensible otherwise. We began by taking him out every morning in an automobile. To-day he had a walk with Ralph, and insisted on going into a club here, to which they both belong. Two or three men were there whom they knew, and he talked to them about his fall from the pony and told them just how it happened.

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“At such times only a close observer can tell from his manner that everything is not right.

“Ralph, who always could manage him, prevented his taking anything to drink. He depends upon Ralph, and it will be harder for me when he is not with us. His attitude towards me is just about what it has always been. I try to amuse him by reading the newspapers and with games; we have a chess-board. At times he seems grateful, and then he will suddenly grow tired and hard to control. Once or twice I have had to call in Dr. Magruder, who owns the hospital.

“It has been terribly hard for me to write all this, but I had to do it, in order that you might understand the situation completely. Hugh dear, I simply can’t leave him. This has been becoming clearer and clearer to me all these weeks, but it breaks my heart to have to write it. I have struggled against it, I have lain awake nights trying to find justification for going to you, but it is stronger than I. I am afraid of it—I suppose that’s the truth. Even in those unforgettable days at the farm I was afraid of it, although I did not know what it was to be. Call it what you like, say that I am weak. I am willing to acknowledge that it is weakness. I wish no credit for it, it gives me no glow, the thought of it makes my heart sick. I’m not big enough I suppose that’s the real truth. I once might have been; but I’m not now,—the years of the life I chose have made a coward of me. It’s not a question of morals or duty it’s simply that I can’t take the thing for which my soul craves. It’s too late. If I believed in prayer I’d pray that you might pity and forgive me. I really can’t expect you to understand what I can’t myself explain. Oh, I need pity—and I pity you, my dear. I can only hope that you will not suffer as I shall, that you will find relief away to work out your life. But I will not change my decision, I cannot change it. Don’t come on, don’t attempt to see me now. I can’t stand any more than I am standing, I should lose my mind.”

Here the letter was blotted, and some words scratched out. I was unable to reconstruct them.

“Ralph and I,” she proceeded irrelevantly, “have got Ham to agree to go to Buzzard’s Bay, and we have taken a house near Wareham. Write and tell me that you forgive and pity me. I love you even more, if such a thing is possible, than I have ever loved you. This is my only comfort and compensation, that I have had and have been able to feel such a love, and I know I shall always feel it.—Nancy.” The first effect of this letter was a paralyzing one. I was unable to realize or believe the thing that had happened to me, and I sat stupidly holding the sheet in my hand until I heard voices along the path, and then I fled instinctively, like an animal, to hide my injury from any persons I might meet. I wandered down the shore of the lake, striking at length into the woods, seeking some inviolable shelter; nor was I conscious of physical effort until I found

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myself panting near the crest of the ridge where there was a pasture, which some ancient glacier had strewn with great boulders. Beside one of these I sank. Heralded by the deep tones of bells, two steers appeared above the shoulder of a hill and stood staring at me with bovine curiosity, and fell to grazing again. A fleet of white clouds, like ships pressed with sail, hurried across the sky as though racing for some determined port; and the shadows they cast along the hillsides accentuated the high brightness of the day, emphasized the vivid and hateful beauty of the landscape. My numbness began to be penetrated by shooting pains, and I grasped little by little the fulness of my calamity, until I was in the state of wild rebellion of one whom life for the first time has foiled in a supreme desire. There was no fate about this thing, it was just an absurd accident. The operation of the laws of nature had sent a man to the ground: another combination of circumstances would have killed him, still another, and he would have arisen unhurt. But because of this particular combination my happiness was ruined, and Nancy's! She had not expected me to understand. Well, I didn't understand, I had no pity, in that hour I felt a resentment almost amounting to hate; I could see only unreasoning superstition in the woman I wanted above everything in the world. Women of other days had indeed renounced great loves: the thing was not unheard of. But that this should happen in these times—and to me! It was unthinkable that Nancy of all women shouldn't be emancipated from the thralls of religious inhibition! And if it wasn't "conscience," what was it?

Was it, as she said, weakness, lack of courage to take life when it was offered her?.... I was suddenly filled with the fever of composing arguments to change a decision that appeared to me to be the result of a monstrous caprice and delusion; writing them out, as they occurred to me, in snatches on the backs of envelopes—her envelopes. Then I proceeded to make the draft of a letter, the effort required for composition easing me until the draft was finished; when I started for the hotel, climbing fences, leaping streams, making my way across rock faces and through woods; halting now and then as some reenforcing argument occurred to me to write it into my draft at the proper place until the sheets were interlined and blurred and almost illegible. It was already three o'clock when I reached my room, and the mail left at four. I began to copy and revise my scrawl, glancing from time to time at my watch, which I had laid on the table. Hurriedly washing my face and brushing my hair, I arrived downstairs just as the stage was leaving....

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After the letter had gone still other arguments I might have added began to occur to me, and I regretted that I had not softened some of the things I wrote and made others more emphatic. In places argument had degenerated into abject entreaty. Never had my desire been so importunate as now, when I was in continual terror of losing her. Nor could I see how I was to live without her, life lacking a motive being incomprehensible: yet the fire of optimism in me, though died down to ashes, would not be extinguished. At moments it flared up into what almost amounted to a conviction that she could not resist my appeal. I had threatened to go to her, and more than once I started packing....

Three days later I received a brief note in which she managed to convey to me, though tenderly and compassionately, that her decision was unalterable. If I came on, she would refuse to see me. I took the afternoon stage and went back to the city, to plunge into affairs again; but for weeks my torture was so acute that it gives me pain to recall it, to dwell upon it to-day.... And yet, amazing as it may seem, there came a time when hope began to dawn again out of my despair. Perhaps my life had not been utterly shattered, after all: perhaps Ham Durrett would get well: such things happened, and Nancy would no longer have an excuse for continuing to refuse me. Little by little my anger at what I had now become convinced was her weakness cooled, and—though paradoxically I had continued to love her in spite of the torture for which she was responsible, in spite of the resentment I felt, I melted toward her. True to my habit of reliance on miracles, I tried to reconcile myself to a period of waiting.

Nevertheless I was faintly aware—consequent upon if not as a result of this tremendous experience—of some change within me. It was not only that I felt at times a novel sense of uneasiness at being a prey to accidents, subject to ravages of feeling; the unity of mind that had hitherto enabled me to press forward continuously toward a concrete goal showed signs of breaking up:—the goal had lost its desirability. I seemed oddly to be relapsing into the states of questioning that had characterized my earlier years. Perhaps it would be an exaggeration to say that I actually began to speculate on the possible existence of a realm where the soul might find a refuge from the buffetings of life, from which the philosophy of prosperity was powerless to save it....

XXIV.

It was impossible, of course, that my friends should have failed to perceive the state of disorganization I was in, and some of them at least must have guessed its cause. Dickinson, on his return from Maine, at once begged me to go away. I rather congratulated myself that Tom had chosen these months for a long-delayed vacation in Canada. His passion for fishing still persisted.

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In spite of the fact I have noted, that I had lost a certain zest for results, to keep busy seemed to be the only way to relieve my mind of an otherwise intolerable pressure: and I worked sometimes far into the evening. In the background of my thoughts lay the necessity of coming to a decision on the question of the senatorship; several times Dickinson and Gorse had spoken of it, and I was beginning to get letters from influential men in other parts of the state. They seemed to take it for granted that there was no question of my refusing. The time came when I had grown able to consider the matter with a degree of calmness. What struck me first, when I began to debate upon it, was that the senatorship offered a new and possibly higher field for my energies, while at the same time the office would be a logical continuation of a signal legal career. I was now unable to deny that I no longer felt any exhilaration at the prospect of future legal conquests similar to those of the past; but once in the Senate, I might regain something of that intense conviction of fighting for a just and sound cause with which Theodore Wading had once animated me: fighting there, in the Capitol at Washington, would be different; no stigma of personal gain attached to it; it offered a nearer approach to the ideal I had once more begun to seek, held out hopes of a renewal of my unity of mind. Mr. Watling had declared that there was something to fight for; I had even glimpsed that something, but I had to confess that for some years I had not been consciously fighting for it. I needed something to fight for.

There was the necessity, however, of renewing my calculations. If Hambleton Durrett should recover, even during the ensuing year, and if Nancy relented it would not be possible for us to be divorced and married for some time. I still clung tenaciously to the belief that there were no relationships wholly unaffected by worldly triumphs, and as Senator I should have strengthened my position. It did not strike me—even after all my experience—that such a course as I now contemplated had a parallel in the one that I had pursued in regard to her when I was young.

It seemed fitting that Theodore Watling should be the first to know of my decision. I went to Washington to meet him. It pained me to see him looking more worn, but he was still as cheerful, as mentally vigorous as ever, and I perceived that he did not wish to dwell upon his illness. I did venture to expostulate with him on the risk he must be running in serving out his term. We were sitting in the dining room of his house.

“We’ve only one life to live, Hugh,” he answered, smiling at me, “and we might as well get all out of it we can. A few years more or less doesn’t make much difference—and I ought to be satisfied. I’d resign now, to please my wife, to please my friends, but we can’t trust this governor to appoint a safe man. How little we suspected when we elected him that he’d become infected. You never can tell, in these days, can you?”

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It was the note of devotion to his cause that I had come to hear: I felt it renewing me, as I had hoped. The threat of disease, the louder clamourings of the leaders of the mob had not sufficed to dismay him—though he admitted more concern over these. My sympathy and affection were mingled with the admiration he never failed to inspire.

“But you, Hugh,” he said concernedly, “you’re not looking very well, my son. You must manage to take a good rest before coming here—before the campaign you’ll have to go through. We can’t afford to have anything happen to you—you’re too young.”

I wondered whether he had heard anything.... He spoke to me again about the work to be done, the work he looked to me to carry on.

“We’ll have to watch for our opportunity,” he said, “and when it comes we can handle this new movement not by crushing it, but by guiding it. I’ve come to the conclusion that there is a true instinct in it, that there are certain things we have done which have been mistakes, and which we can’t do any more. But as for this theory that all wisdom resides in the people, it’s buncombe. What we have to do is to work out a practical programme.”

His confidence in me had not diminished. It helped to restore confidence in myself.

The weather was cool and bracing for September, and as we drove in a motor through the beautiful avenues of the city he pointed out a house for me on one of the circles, one of those distinguished residences, instances of a nascent good taste, that are helping to redeem the polyglot aspect of our national capital. Mr. Watling spoke—rather tactfully, I thought—of Maude and the children, and ventured the surmise that they would be returning in a few months. I interpreted this, indeed, as in rather the nature of a kindly hint that such a procedure would be wise in view of the larger life now dawning for me, but I made no comment.... He even sympathized with Nancy Durrett.

“She did the right thing, Hugh,” he said, with the admirable casual manner he possessed of treating subjects which he knew to be delicate. “Nancy’s a fine woman. Poor devil!” This in reference to Ham....

Mr. Watling reassured me on the subject of his own trouble, maintaining that he had many years left if he took care. He drove me to the station. I travelled homeward somewhat lifted out of myself by this visit to him; with some feeling of spaciousness derived from Washington itself, with its dignified Presidential Mansion among the trees, its granite shaft drawing the eye upward, with its winged Capitol serene upon the hill. Should we deliver these heirlooms to the mob? Surely Democracy meant more than that!

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All this time I had been receiving, at intervals, letters from Maude and the children. Maude's were the letters of a friend, and I found it easy to convince myself that their tone was genuine, that the separation had brought contentment to her; and those independent and self-sufficient elements in her character I admired now rather than deplored. At Etretat, which she found much to her taste, she was living quietly, but making friends with some American and English, and one French family of the same name, Buffon, as the great naturalist. The father was a retired silk manufacturer; they now resided in Paris, and had been very kind in helping her to get an apartment in that city for the winter. She had chosen one on the Avenue Kleber, not far from the Arc. It is interesting, after her arraignment of me, that she should have taken such pains to record their daily life for my benefit in her clear, conscientious handwriting. I beheld Biddy, her dresses tucked above slim little knees, playing in the sand on the beach, her hair flying in the wind and lighted by the sun which gave sparkle to the sea. I saw Maude herself in her beach chair, a book lying in her lap, its pages whipped by the breeze. And there was Moreton, who must be proving something of a handful, since he had fought with the French boys on the beach and thrown a "rock" through the windows of the Buffon family. I remember one of his letters—made perfect after much correcting and scratching,—in which he denounced both France and the French, and appealed to me to come over at once to take him home. Maude had enclosed it without comment. This letter had not been written under duress, as most of his were.

Matthew's letters—he wrote faithfully once a week—I kept in a little pile by themselves and sometimes reread them. I wondered whether it were because of the fact that I was his father—though a most inadequate one—that I thought them somewhat unusual. He had learned French—Maude wrote—with remarkable ease. I was particularly struck in these letters with the boy's power of observation, with his facile use of language, with the vivid simplicity of his descriptions of the life around him, of his experiences at school. The letters were thoughtful—not dashed off in a hurry; they gave evidence in every line of the delicacy of feeling that was, I think, his most appealing quality, and I put them down with the impression strong on me that he, too, longed to return home, but would not say so. There was a certain pathos in this youthful restraint that never failed to touch me, even in those times when I had been most obsessed with love and passion.... The curious effect of these letters was that of knowing more than they expressed. He missed me, he wished to know when I was coming over. And I was sometimes at a loss whether to be grateful to Maude or troubled because she had as yet given him no hint of our separation. What effect would it have on him when it should be

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revealed to him?.... It was through Matthew I began to apprehend certain elements in Maude I had both failed to note and appreciate; her little mannerisms that jarred, her habits of thought that exasperated, were forgotten, and I was forced to confess that there was something fine in the achievement of this attitude of hers that was without ill will or resentment, that tacitly acknowledged my continued rights and interest in the children. It puzzled and troubled me.

The Citizens Union began its campaign early that autumn, long before the Hons. Jonathan Parks and Timothy MacGuire—Republican and Democratic candidates for Mayor—thought of going on the stump. For several weeks the meetings were held in the small halls and club rooms of various societies and orders in obscure portions of the city.

The forces of “privilege and corruption” were not much alarmed. Perry Blackwood accused the newspapers of having agreed to a “conspiracy of silence”; but, as Judah B. Tallant remarked, it was the business of the press to give the public what it wanted, and the public as yet hadn’t shown much interest in the struggle being waged in its behalf. When the meetings began to fill up it would be time to report them in the columns of the Era. Meanwhile, however, the city had been quietly visited by an enterprising representative of a New York periodical of the new type that developed with the opening years of the century—one making a specialty of passionate “muck-raking.” And since the people of America love nothing better than being startled, Yardley’s Weekly had acquired a circulation truly fabulous. The emissary of the paper had attended several of the Citizens meetings; interviewed, it seemed, many persons: the result was a revelation to make the blood of politicians, capitalists and corporation lawyers run cold. I remember very well the day it appeared on our news stands, and the heated denunciations it evoked at the Boyne Club. Ralph Hambleton was the only one who took it calmly, who seemed to derive a certain enjoyment from the affair. Had he been a less privileged person, they would have put him in chancery. Leonard Dickinson asserted that Yardley’s should be sued for libel.

“There’s just one objection to that,” said Ralph.

“What?” asked the banker.

“It isn’t libel.”

“I defy them to prove it,” Dickinson snapped. “It’s a d—d outrage! There isn’t a city or village in the country that hasn’t exactly the same conditions. There isn’t any other way to run a city—”

“That’s what Mr. Krebs says,” Ralph replied, “that the people ought to put Judd Jason officially in charge. He tells ’em that Jason is probably a more efficient man than Democracy will be able to evolve in a coon’s age, that we ought to take him over, instead of letting the capitalists have him.”

“Did Krebs say that?” Dickinson demanded.

“You can’t have read the article very thoroughly, Leonard,” Ralph commented. “I’m afraid you only picked out the part of it that compliments you. This fellow seems to have been struck by Krebs, says he’s a coming man, that he’s making original contributions to the people’s cause. Quite a tribute. You ought to read it.”

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Dickinson, who had finished his lunch, got up and left the table after lighting his cigar. Ralph's look followed him amusedly.

"I'm afraid it's time to cash in and be good," he observed.

"We'll get that fellow Krebs yet," said Grierson, wrathfully. Miller Gorse alone made no remarks, but in spite of his silence he emanated an animosity against reform and reformers that seemed to charge the very atmosphere, and would have repressed any man but Ralph....

I sat in my room at the Club that night and reread the article, and if its author could have looked into my soul and observed the emotions he had set up, he would, no doubt, have experienced a grim satisfaction. For I, too, had come in for a share of the comment. Portions of the matter referring to me stuck in my brain like tar, such as the reference to my father, to the honoured traditions of the Parets and the Brecks which I had deliberately repudiated. I had less excuse than many others. The part I had played in various reprehensible transactions such as the Riverside Franchise and the dummy telephone company affair was dwelt upon, and I was dismissed with the laconic comment that I was a graduate of Harvard....

My associates and myself were referred to collectively as a "gang," with the name of our city prefixed; we were linked up with and compared to the gangs of other cities—the terminology used to describe us being that of the police reporter. We "operated," like burglars; we "looted": only, it was intimated in one place, "second-story men" were angels compared to us, who had never seen the inside of a penitentiary. Here we were, all arraigned before the bar of public opinion, the relentless Dickinson, the surfeited Scherer, the rapacious Grierson, the salacious Tallant. I have forgotten what Miller Gorse was called; nothing so classic as a Minotaur; Judd Jason was a hairy spider who spread his net and lurked in darkness for his victims. Every adjective was called upon to do its duty.... Even Theodore Watling did not escape, but it was intimated that he would be dealt with in another connection in a future number.

The article had a crude and terrifying power, and the pain it aroused, following almost immediately upon the suffering caused by my separation from Nancy, was cumulative in character and effect, seeming actively to reenforce the unwelcome conviction I had been striving to suppress, that the world, which had long seemed so acquiescent in conforming itself to my desires, was turning against me.

Though my hunger for Nancy was still gnawing, I had begun to fear that I should never get her now; and the fact that she would not even write to me seemed to confirm this.

Then there was Matthew—I could not bear to think that he would ever read that article.

In vain I tried that night to belittle to myself its contentions and probable results, to summon up the heart to fight; in vain I sought to reconstruct the point of view, to gain something of that renewed hope and power, of devotion to a cause I had carried away from Washington after my talk with Theodore Watling. He, though stricken, had not wavered in his faith. Why should I?

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Whether or not as the result of the article in Yardley's, which had been read more or less widely in the city, the campaign of the Citizens Union gained ground, and people began to fill the little halls to hear Krebs, who was a candidate for district attorney. Evidently he was entertaining and rousing them, for his reputation spread, and some of the larger halls were hired. Dickinson and Gorse became alarmed, and one morning the banker turned up at the Club while I was eating my breakfast.

"Look here, Hugh," he said, "we may as well face the fact that we've got a fight ahead of us,—we'll have to start some sort of a back-fire right away."

"You think Greenhalge has a chance of being elected?" I asked.

"I'm not afraid of Greenhalge, but of this fellow Krebs. We can't afford to have him district attorney, to let a demagogue like him get a start. The men the Republicans and Democrats have nominated are worse than useless. Parks is no good, and neither is MacGuire. If only we could have foreseen this thing we might have had better candidates put up—but there's no use crying over spilt milk. You'll have to go on the stump, Hugh—that's all there is to it. You can answer him, and the newspapers will print your speeches in full. Besides it will help you when it comes to the senatorship."

The mood of extreme dejection that had followed the appearance of the article in Yardley's did not last. I had acquired aggressiveness: an aggressiveness, however, differing in quality from the feeling I once would have had,—for this arose from resentment, not from belief. It was impossible to live in the atmosphere created by the men with whom I associated—especially at such a time—without imbibing something of the emotions animating them,—even though I had been free from these emotions myself. I, too, had begun to be filled with a desire for revenge; and when this desire was upon me I did not have in my mind a pack of reformers, or even the writer of the article in Yardley's. I thought of Hermann Krebs. He was my persecutor; it seemed to me that he always had been....

"Well, I'll make speeches if you like," I said to Dickinson.

"I'm glad," he replied. "We're all agreed, Gorse and the rest of us, that you ought to. We've got to get some ginger into this fight, and a good deal more money, I'm afraid. Jason sends word we'll need more. By the way, Hugh, I wish you'd drop around and talk to Jason and get his idea of how the land lies."

I went, this time in the company of Judah B. Tallant. Naturally we didn't expect to see Mr. Jason perturbed, nor was he. He seemed to be in an odd, rather exultant mood—if he can be imagined as exultant. We were not long in finding out what pleased him—-nothing less than the fact that Mr. Krebs had proposed him for mayor!

“D—d if I wouldn’t make a good one, too,” he said. “D—d if I wouldn’t show ’em what a real mayor is!”

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“I guess there’s no danger of your ever being mayor, Judd,” Tallant observed, with a somewhat uneasy jocularity.

“I guess there isn’t, Judah,” replied the boss, quickly, but with a peculiar violet flash in his eyes. “They won’t ever make you mayor, either, if I can help it. And I’ve a notion I can. I’d rather see Krebs mayor.”

“You don’t think he meant to propose you seriously,” Tallant exclaimed.

“I’m not a d—d fool,” said the boss. “But I’ll say this, that he half meant it. Krebs has a head-piece on him, and I tell you if any of this reform dope is worth anything his is. There’s some sense in what he’s talking, and if all the voters was like him you might get a man like me for mayor. But they’re not, and I guess they never will be.”

“Sure,” said Mr. Jason. “The people are dotty—there ain’t one in ten thousand understands what he’s driving at when he gets off things like that. They take it on the level.”

Tallant reflected.

“By gum, I believe you’re right,” he said. “You think they will blow up?” he added.

“Krebs is the whole show, I tell you. They wouldn’t be anywhere without him. The yaps that listen to him don’t understand him, but somehow he gets under their skins. Have you seen him lately?”

“Never saw him,” replied Tallant.

“Well, if you had, you’d know he was a sick man.”

“Sick!” I exclaimed. “How do you know?”

“It’s my business to know things,” said Judd Jason, and added to Tallant, “that your reporters don’t find out.”

“What’s the matter with him?” Tallant demanded. A slight exultation in his tone did not escape me.

“You’ve got me there,” said Jason, “but I have it pretty straight. Any one of your reporters will tell you that he looks sick.".....

The Era took Mr. Jason’s advice and began to publish those portions of Krebs’s speeches that were seemingly detrimental to his own cause. Other conservative newspapers followed suit....

Both Tallant and I were surprised to hear these sentiments out of the mouth of Mr. Jason.

“You don’t think that crowd’s going to win, do you?” asked the owner of the Era, a trifle uneasily.

“Win!” exclaimed the boss contemptuously. “They’ll blow up, and you’ll never hear of ’em. I’m not saying we won’t need a little—powder,” he added—which was one of the matters we had come to talk about. He gave us likewise a very accurate idea of the state of the campaign, mentioning certain things that ought to be done. “You ought to print some of Krebs’s speeches, Judah, like what he said about me. They’re talking it all around that you’re afraid to.”

“Print things like his proposal to make you mayor!”

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The information that I was to enter the lists against Krebs was received with satisfaction and approval by those of our friends who were called in to assist at a council of war in the directors' room of the Corn National Bank. I was flattered by the confidence these men seemed to have in my ability. All were in a state of anger against the reformers; none of them seriously alarmed as to the actual outcome of the campaign,—especially when I had given them the opinion of Mr. Jason. What disturbed them was the possible effect upon the future of the spread of heretical, socialistic doctrines, and it was decided to organize a publicity bureau, independently of the two dominant political parties, to be in charge of a certain New York journalist who made a business of such affairs, who was to be paid a sum commensurate with the emergency. He was to have carte blanche, even in the editorial columns of our newspapers. He was also to flood the city with "literature." We had fought many wars before this, and we planned our campaign precisely as though we were dealing with one of those rebellions in the realm of finance of which I have given an instance. But now the war chest of our opponents was negligible; and we were comforted by the thought that, however disagreeable the affair might be while it lasted, in the long run capital was invincible.

Before setting to work to prepare my speeches it was necessary to make an attempt to familiarize myself with the seemingly unprecedented line of argument Krebs had evolved—apparently as disconcerting to his friends as to his opponents. It occurred to me, since I did not care to attend Krebs's meetings, to ask my confidential stenographer, Miss McCoy, to go to Turner's Hall and take down one of his speeches verbatim. Miss McCoy had never intruded on me her own views, and I took for granted that they coincided with my own.

"I'd like to get an accurate record of what he is saying," I told her. "Do you mind going?"

"No, I'll be glad to go, Mr. Paret," she said quietly.

"He's doing more harm than we thought," I remarked, after a moment. "I've known him for a good many years. He's clever. He's sowing seeds of discontent, starting trouble that will be very serious unless it is headed off."

Miss McCoy made no comment....

Before noon the next day she brought in the speech, neatly typewritten, and laid it on my desk. Looking up and catching her eye just as she was about to withdraw, I was suddenly impelled to ask:—"Well, what did you think of it?"

She actually flushed, for the first time in my dealings with her betraying a feeling which I am sure she deemed most unprofessional.

"I liked it, Mr. Paret," she replied simply, and I knew that she had understated. It was quite apparent that Krebs had captivated her. I tried not to betray my annoyance.

“Was there a good audience?” I asked.

“Yes,” she said.

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“How many do you think?”

She hesitated.

“It isn’t a very large hall, you know. I should say it would hold about eight hundred people.”

“And—it was full?”—I persisted.

“Oh, yes, there were numbers of people standing.”

I thought I detected in her tone-although it was not apologetic—a desire to spare my feelings. She hesitated a moment more, and then left the room, closing the door softly behind her...

Presently I took up the pages and began to read. The language was simple and direct, an appeal to common sense, yet the words strangely seemed charged with an emotional power that I found myself resisting. When at length I laid down the sheets I wondered whether it were imagination, or the uncomfortable result of memories of conversations I had had with him.

I was, however, confronted with the task of refuting his arguments: but with exasperating ingenuity, he seemed to have taken the wind out of our sails. It is difficult to answer a man who denies the cardinal principle of American democracy,—that a good mayor or a governor may be made out of a dog-catcher. He called this the Cincinnatus theory: that any American, because he was an American, was fit for any job in the gift of state or city or government, from sheriff to Ambassador to Great Britain. Krebs substituted for this fallacy what may be called the doctrine of potentiality. If we inaugurated and developed a system of democratic education, based on scientific principles, and caught the dog-catcher, young enough, he might become a statesman or thinker or scientist and make his contribution to the welfare and progress of the nation: again, he might not; but he would have had his chance, he would not be in a position to complain.

Here was a doctrine, I immediately perceived, which it would be suicidal to attempt to refute. It ought, indeed, to have been my line. With a growing distaste I began to realize that all there was left for me was to flatter a populace that Krebs, paradoxically, belaboured. Never in the history of American “uplift” had an electorate been in this manner wooed! upbraided for expediency, a proneness to demand immediate results, an unwillingness to think, yes, and an inability to think straight. Such an electorate deserved to be led around by the nose by the Jasons and Dickinsons, the Gorses and the Griersons and the Parets.

Yes, he had mentioned me. That gave me a queer sensation. How is one to handle an opponent who praises one with a delightful irony? We, the Dickinsons, Griersons, Parets, Jasons, *etc*., had this virtue at least, and it was by no means the least of the virtues,—that we did think. We had a plan, a theory of government, and we carried it out. He was inclined to believe that morality consisted largely, if not wholly, in clear thinking, and not in the precepts of the Sunday-school. That was the trouble with the so-called “reform”

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campaigns, they were conducted on lines of Sunday-school morality; the people worked themselves up into a sort of revivalist frenzy, an emotional state which, if the truth were told, was thoroughly immoral, unreasonable and hypocritical: like all frenzies, as a matter of course it died down after the campaign was over. Moreover, the American people had shown that they were unwilling to make any sacrifices for the permanent betterment of conditions, and as soon as their incomes began to fall off they turned again to the bosses and capitalists like an abject flock of sheep.

He went on to explain that he wasn't referring now to that part of the electorate known as the labour element, the men who worked with their hands in mills, factories, *etc*. They had their faults, yet they possessed at least the virtue of solidarity, a willingness to undergo sacrifices in order to advance the standard of conditions; they too had a tenacity of purpose and a plan, such as it was, which the small business men, the clerks lacked....

We must wake up to the fact that we shouldn't get Utopia by turning out Mr. Jason and the highly efficient gentlemen who hired and financed him. It wasn't so simple as that. Utopia was not an achievement after all, but an undertaking, a state of mind, the continued overcoming of resistance by a progressive education and effort. And all this talk of political and financial "wickedness" was rubbish; the wickedness they complained of did not reside merely in individuals it was a social disorder, or rather an order that no longer suited social conditions. If the so-called good citizens would take the trouble to educate themselves, to think instead of allowing their thinking to be done for them they would see that the "evils" which had been published broadcast were merely the symptoms of that disease which had come upon the social body through their collective neglect and indifference. They held up their hands in horror at the spectacle of a commercial, licensed prostitution, they shunned the prostitute and the criminal; but there was none of us, if honest, who would not exclaim when he saw them, "there, but for the Grace of God, go I!" What we still called "sin" was largely the result of lack of opportunity, and the active principle of society as at present organized tended more and more to restrict opportunity. Lack of opportunity, lack of proper nutrition,—these made sinners by the wholesale; made, too, nine-tenths of the inefficient of whom we self-righteously complained. We had a national philosophy that measured prosperity in dollars and cents, included in this measurement the profits of liquor dealers who were responsible for most of our idiots. So long as we set our hearts on that kind of prosperity, so long as we failed to grasp the simple and practical fact that the greatest assets of a nation are healthy and sane and educated, clear-thinking human beings, just so long was prostitution logical, Riverside Franchises, traction deals, Judd Jasons, and the respectable gentlemen who continued to fill their coffers out of the public purse inevitable.

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The speaker turned his attention to the “respectable gentlemen” with the full coffers, amongst whom I was by implication included. We had simply succeeded under the rules to which society tacitly agreed. That was our sin. He ventured to say that there were few men in the hall who at the bottom of their hearts did not envy and even honour our success. He, for one, did not deem these “respectable gentlemen” utterly reprehensible; he was sufficiently emancipated to be sorry for us. He suspected that we were not wholly happy in being winners in such a game,—he even believed that we could wish as much as any others to change the game and the prizes. What we represented was valuable energy misdirected and misplaced, and in a reorganized community he would not abolish us, but transform us: transform, at least, the individuals of our type, who were the builders gone wrong under the influence of an outworn philosophy. We might be made to serve the city and the state with the same effectiveness that we had served ourselves.

If the best among the scientists, among the university professors and physicians were willing to labour—and they were—for the advancement of humanity, for the very love of the work and service without disproportionate emoluments, without the accumulation of a wealth difficult to spend, why surely these big business men had been moulded in infancy from no different clay! All were Americans. Instance after instance might be cited of business men and lawyers of ability making sacrifices, giving up their personal affairs in order to take places of honour in the government in which the salary was comparatively small, proving that even these were open to inducements other than merely mercenary ones.

It was unfortunate, he went on, but true, that the vast majority of people of voting age in the United States to-day who thought they had been educated were under the obligation to reeducate themselves. He suggested, whimsically, a vacation school for Congress and all legislative bodies as a starter. Until the fact of the utter inadequacy of the old education were faced, there was little or no hope of solving the problems that harassed us. One thing was certain—that they couldn’t be solved by a rule-of-thumb morality. Coincident with the appearance of these new and mighty problems, perhaps in response to them, a new and saner view of life itself was being developed by the world’s thinkers, new sciences were being evolved, correlated sciences; a psychology making a truer analysis of human motives, impulses, of human possibilities; an economics and a theory of government that took account of this psychology, and of the vast changes applied science had made in production and distribution. We lived in a new world, which we sought to ignore; and the new education, the new viewpoint was in truth nothing but religion made practical. It had never been thought practical before. The motive that compelled men to work for humanity in science, in medicine, in art—-yes, and in business, if we took the right view of it, was the religious motive. The application of religion was to-day extending from the individual to society. No religion that did not fill the needs of both was a true religion.

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This meant the development of a new culture, one to be founded on the American tradition of equality of opportunity. But culture was not a weed that grew overnight; it was a leaven that spread slowly and painfully, first inoculating a few who suffered and often died for it, that it might gradually affect the many. The spread of culture implied the recognition of leadership: democratic leadership, but still leadership. Leadership, and the wisdom it implied, did not reside in the people, but in the leaders who sprang from the people and interpreted their needs and longings.... He went on to discuss a part of the programme of the Citizens Union....

What struck me, as I laid down the typewritten sheets, was the extraordinary resemblance between the philosophies of Hermann Krebs and Theodore Watling. Only—Krebs's philosophy was the bigger, held the greater vision of the two; I had reluctantly and rather bitterly to admit it. The appeal of it had even reached and stirred me, whose task was to refute it! Here indeed was something to fight for—perhaps to die for, as he had said: and as I sat there in my office gazing out of the window I found myself repeating certain phrases he had used—the phrase about leadership, for instance. It was a tremendous conception of Democracy, that of acquiescence to developed leadership made responsible; a conception I was compelled to confess transcended Mr. Watling's, loyal as I was to him.... I began to reflect how novel all this was in a political speech—although what I have quoted was in the nature of a preamble. It was a sermon, an educational sermon. Well, that is what sermons always had been,—and even now pretended to be,—educational and stirring, appealing to the emotions through the intellect. It didn't read like the Socialism he used to preach, it had the ring of religion. He had called it religion.

With an effort of the will I turned from this ironical and dangerous vision of a Hugh Paret who might have been enlisted in an inspiring struggle, of a modern yet unregenerate Saul kicking against the pricks, condemned to go forth breathing fire against a doctrine that made a true appeal; against the man I believed I hated just because he had made this appeal. In the act of summoning my counter-arguments I was interrupted by the entrance of Grierson. He was calling on a matter of business, but began to talk about the extracts from Krebs's speech he had read in the Mail and State.

"What in hell is this fellow driving at, Paret?" he demanded. "It sounds to me like the ranting of a lunatic dervish. If he thinks so much of us, and the way we run the town, what's he squawking about?"

I looked at Grierson, and conceived an intense aversion for him. I wondered how I had ever been able to stand him, to work with him. I saw him in a sudden flash as a cunning, cruel bird of prey, a gorged, drab vulture with beady eyes, a resemblance so extraordinary that I wondered I had never remarked it before. For he had the hooked vulture nose, while the pink baldness of his head was relieved by a few scanty tufts of hair.

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“The people seem to like what he’s got to say,” I observed.

“It beats me,” said Grierson. “They don’t understand a quarter of it—I’ve been talking to some of ’em. It’s their d—d curiosity, I guess. You know how they’ll stand for hours around a street fakir.”

“It’s more than that,” I retorted.

Grierson regarded me piercingly.

“Well, we’ll put a crimp in him, all right,” he said, with a laugh.

I was in an unenviable state of mind when he left me. I had an impulse to send for Miss McCoy and ask her if she had understood what Krebs was “driving at,” but for reasons that must be fairly obvious I refrained. I read over again that part of Krebs’s speech which dealt with the immediate programme of the Citizens Union. After paying a tribute to Greenhalge as a man of common sense and dependability who would make a good mayor, he went on to explain the principle of the new charter they hoped ultimately to get, which should put the management of the city in the hands of one man, an expert employed by a commission; an expert whose duty it would be to conduct the affairs of the city on a business basis, precisely as those of any efficient corporation were conducted. This plan had already been adopted, with encouraging results, in several smaller cities of the country. He explained in some detail, with statistics, the waste and inefficiency and dishonesty in various departments under the present system, dwelling particularly upon the deplorable state of affairs in the city hospital.

I need not dwell upon this portion of his remarks. Since then text-books and serious periodicals have dealt with these matters thoroughly. They are now familiar to all thinking Americans.

XXV.

My entrance into the campaign was accompanied by a blare of publicity, and during that fortnight I never picked up a morning or evening newspaper without reading, on the first page, some such headline as “Crowds flock to hear Paret.” As a matter of fact, the crowds did flock; but I never quite knew as I looked down from platforms on seas of faces how much of the flocking was spontaneous. Much of it was so, since the struggle had then become sufficiently dramatic to appeal to the larger public imagination that is but occasionally waked; on the other hand, the magic of advertising cannot be underestimated; nor must the existence be ignored of an organized corps of shepherds under the vigilant direction of Mr. Judd Jason, whose duty it was to see that none of our meetings was lacking in numbers and enthusiasm. There was always a demonstrative gathering overflowing the sidewalk in front of the entrance, swaying and cheering in the

light of the street lamps, and on the floor within an ample scattering of suspiciously bleary-eyed voters to start the stamping and applauding. In spite of these known facts, the impression of popularity, of repudiation of reform by a large majority of level-headed inhabitants had reassuring and reenforcing effects.

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Astute citizens, spectators of the fray—if indeed there were any—might have remarked an unique and significant feature of that campaign: that the usual recriminations between the two great parties were lacking. Mr. Parks, the Republican candidate, did not denounce Mr. MacGuire, the Democratic candidate. Republican and Democratic speakers alike expended their breath in lashing Mr. Krebs and the Citizens Union.

It is difficult to record the fluctuations of my spirit. When I was in the halls, speaking or waiting to speak, I reacted to that phenomenon known as mob psychology, I became self-confident, even exhilarated; and in those earlier speeches I managed, I think, to strike the note for which I strove—the judicial note, suitable to a lawyer of weight and prominence, of deprecation rather than denunciation. I sought to embody and voice a fine and calm sanity at a time when everyone else seemed in danger of losing their heads, and to a large extent achieved it. I had known Mr. Krebs for more than twenty years, and while I did not care to criticise a fellow-member of the bar, I would go so far as to say that he was visionary, that the changes he proposed in government would, if adopted, have grave and far-reaching results: we could not, for instance, support in idleness those who refused to do their share of the work of the world. Mr. Krebs was well-meaning. I refrained from dwelling too long upon him, passing to Mr. Greenhalge, also well-meaning, but a man of mediocre ability who would make a mess of the government of a city which would one day rival New York and Chicago. (Loud cheers.) And I pointed out that Mr. Perry Blackwood had been unable to manage the affairs of the Boyne Street road. Such men, well-intentioned though they might be, were hindrances to progress. This led me naturally to a discussion of the Riverside Franchise and the Traction Consolidation. I was one of those whose honesty and good faith had been arraigned, but I would not stoop to refute the accusations. I dwelt upon the benefits to the city, uniform service, electricity and large comfortable cars instead of rattletrap conveyances, and the development of a large and growing population in the Riverside neighbourhood: the continual extension of lines to suburban districts that enabled hard-worked men to live out of the smoke: I called attention to the system of transfers, the distance a passenger might be conveyed, and conveyed quickly, for the sum of five cents. I spoke of our capitalists as men more sinned against than sinning. Their money was always at the service of enterprises tending to the development of our metropolis.

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When I was not in the meetings, however, and especially when in my room at night, I was continually trying to fight off a sense of loneliness that seemed to threaten to overwhelm me. I wanted to be alone, and yet I feared to be. I was aware, in spite of their congratulations on my efforts, of a growing dislike for my associates; and in the appalling emptiness of the moments when my depression was greatest I was forced to the realization that I had no disinterested friend—not one—in whom I could confide. Nancy had failed me; I had scarcely seen Tom Peters that winter, and it was out of the question to go to him. For the third time in my life, and in the greatest crisis of all, I was feeling the need of Something, of some sustaining and impelling Power that must be presented humanly, possessing sympathy and understanding and love.... I think I had a glimpse just a pathetic glimpse—of what the Church might be of human solidarity, comfort and support, of human tolerance, if stripped of the superstition of an ancient science. My tortures weren't of the flesh, but of the mind. My mind was the sheep which had gone astray. Was there no such thing, could there be no such thing as a human association that might at the same time be a divine organism, a fold and a refuge for the lost and divided minds? The source of all this trouble was social....

Then toward the end of that last campaign week, madness suddenly came upon me. I know now how near the breaking point I was, but the immediate cause of my "flying to pieces"—to use a vivid expression—was a speech made by Guptill, one of the Citizens Union candidates for alderman, a young man of a radical type not uncommon in these days, though new to my experience: an educated man in the ultra-radical sense, yet lacking poise and perspective, with a certain brilliance and assurance. He was a journalist, a correspondent of some Eastern newspapers and periodicals. In this speech, which was reported to me—for it did not get into the newspapers—I was the particular object of his attack. Men of my kind, and not the Judd Jasons (for whom there was some excuse) were the least dispensable tools of the capitalists, the greatest menace to civilization. We were absolutely lacking in principle, we were ready at any time to besmirch our profession by legalizing steals; we fouled our nests with dirty fees. Not all that he said was vituperation, for he knew something of the modern theory of the law that legal radicals had begun to proclaim, and even to teach in some tolerant universities.

The next night, in the middle of a prepared speech I was delivering to a large crowd in Kingdom Hall there had been jeers from a group in a corner at some assertion I made. Guptill's accusations had been festering in my mind. The faces of the people grew blurred as I felt anger boiling, rising within me; suddenly my control gave way, and I launched forth into a denunciation of Greenhalge, Krebs, Guptill

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and even of Perry Blackwood that must have been without license or bounds. I can recall only fragments of my remarks: Greenhalge wanted to be mayor, and was willing to put the stigma of slander on his native city in order to gain his ambition; Krebs had made a failure of his profession, of everything save in bringing shame on the place of his adoption; and on the single occasion heretofore when he had been before the public, in the School Board fiasco, the officials indicted on his supposed evidence had triumphantly been vindicated—, Guptill was gaining money and notoriety out of his spleen; Perry Blackwood was acting out of spite.... I returned to Krebs, declaring that he would be the boss of the city if that ticket were elected, demanding whether they wished for a boss an agitator itching for power and recognition....

I was conscious at the moment only of a wild relief and joy in letting myself go, feelings heightened by the clapping and cheers with which my characterizations were received. The fact that the cheers were mingled with hisses merely served to drive me on. At length, when I had returned to Krebs, the hisses were redoubled, angering me the more because of the evidence they gave of friends of his in my audiences. Perhaps I had made some of these friends for him! A voice shouted out above the uproar:—"I know about Krebs. He's a d—d sight better man than you." And this started a struggle in a corner of the hall.... I managed, somehow, when the commotion had subsided, to regain my poise, and ended by uttering the conviction that the common sense of the community would repudiate the Citizens Union and all it stood for....

But that night, as I lay awake listening to the street noises and staring at the glint from a street lamp on the brass knob of my bedstead, I knew that I had failed. I had committed the supreme violation of the self that leads inevitably to its final dissolution.... Even the exuberant headlines of the newspapers handed me by the club servant in the morning brought but little relief.

On the Saturday morning before the Tuesday of election there was a conference in the directors' room of the Corn National. The city reeked with smoke and acrid, stale gas, the electric lights were turned on to dispel the November gloom. It was not a cheerful conference, nor a confident one. For the first time in a collective experience the men gathered there were confronted with a situation which they doubted their ability to control, a situation for which there was no precedent. They had to reckon with a new and unsolvable equation in politics and finance,—the independent voter. There was an element of desperation in the discussion. Recriminations passed. Dickinson implied that Gorse with all his knowledge of political affairs ought to have foreseen that something like this was sure to happen, should have managed better the conventions of both great parties. The railroad counsel retorted that it had been as much Dickinson's fault as his. Grierson expressed a regret that I had broken out against the reformers; it had reacted, he said,—and this was just enough to sting me to retaliate that things had

been done in the campaign, chiefly through his initiative, that were not only unwise, but might land some of us in the penitentiary if Krebs were elected.

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“Well,” Grierson exclaimed, “whether he’s elected or not, I wouldn’t give much now for your chances of getting to the Senate. We can’t afford to fly in the face of the dear public.”

A tense silence followed this remark. In the street below the rumble of the traffic came to us muffled by the heavy plate-glass windows. I saw Tallant glance at Gorse and Dickinson, and I knew the matter had been decided between themselves, that they had been merely withholding it from me until after election. I was besmirched, for the present at least.

“I think you will do me the justice, gentlemen,” I remember saying slowly, with the excessive and rather ridiculous formality of a man who is near the end of his tether, “that the idea of representing you in the Senate was yours, not mine. You begged me to take the appointment against my wishes and my judgment. I had no desire to go to Washington then, I have less to-day. I have come to the conclusion that my usefulness to you is at an end.”

I got to my feet. I beheld Miller Gorse sitting impassive, with his encompassing stare, the strongest man of them all. A change of firmaments would not move him. But Dickinson had risen and put his hand on my shoulder. It was the first time I had ever seen him white.

“Hold on, Hugh,” he exclaimed, “I guess we’re all a little cantankerous today. This confounded campaign has got on our nerves, and we say things we don’t mean. You mustn’t think we’re not grateful for the services you’ve rendered us. We’re all in the same boat, and there isn’t a man who’s been on our side of this fight who could take a political office at this time. We’ve got to face that fact, and I know you have the sense to see it, too. I, for one, won’t be satisfied until I see you in the Senate. It’s where you belong, and you deserve to be there. You understand what the public is, how it blows hot and cold, and in a few years they’ll be howling to get us back, if these demagogues win.

“Sure,” chimed in Grierson, who was frightened, “that’s right, Hugh. I didn’t mean anything. Nobody appreciates you more than I do, old man.”

Tallant, too, added something, and Berringer,—I’ve forgotten what. I was tired, too tired to meet their advances halfway. I said that I had a speech to get ready for that night, and other affairs to attend to, and left them grouped together like crestfallen conspirators—all save Miller Gorse, whose pervasive gaze seemed to follow me after I had closed the door.

An elevator took me down to the lobby of the Corn Bank Building. I paused for a moment, aimlessly regarding the streams of humanity hurrying in and out, streaking the white marble floor with the wet filth of the streets. Someone spoke my name. It was

Bitter, Judd Jason's "legal" tool, and I permitted myself to be dragged out of the eddies into a quiet corner by the cigar stand.

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“Say, I guess we’ve got Krebs’s goat all right, this time,” he told me confidentially, in a voice a little above a whisper; “he was busy with the shirt-waist girls last year, you remember, when they were striking. Well, one of ’em, one of the strike leaders, has taken to easy street; she’s agreed to send him a letter to-night to come ’round to her room after his meeting, to say that she’s sick and wants to see him. He’ll go, all right. We’ll have some fun, we’ll be ready for him. Do you get me? So long. The old man’s waiting for me.”

It may seem odd that this piece of information did not produce an immediately revolting effect. I knew that similar practices had been tried on Krebs, but this was the first time I had heard of a definite plan, and from a man like Bitter. As I made my way out of the building I had, indeed, a nauseated feeling; Jason’s “lawyer” was a dirty little man, smelling of stale cigars, with a blue-black, unshaven face. In spite of the shocking nature of his confidence, he had actually not succeeded in deflecting the current of my thoughts; these were still running over the scene in the directors’ room. I had listened to him passively while he had held my buttonhole, and he had detained me but an instant.

When I reached the street I was wondering whether Gorse and Dickinson and the others, Grierson especially, could possibly have entertained the belief that I would turn traitor? I told myself that I had no intention of this. How could I turn traitor? and what would be the object? revenge? The nauseated feeling grew more acute.... Reaching my office, I shut the door, sat down at my desk, summoned my will, and began to jot down random notes for the part of my speech I was to give the newspapers, notes that were mere silly fragments of arguments I had once thought effective. I could no more concentrate on them than I could have written a poem. Gradually, like the smoke that settled down on our city until we lived in darkness at midday, the horror of what Bitter had told me began to pervade my mind, until I was in a state of terror.

Had I, Hugh Paret, fallen to this, that I could stand by consenting to an act which was worse than assassination? Was any cause worth it? Could any cause survive it? But my attempts at reasoning might be likened to the strainings of a wayfarer lost on a mountain side to pick his way in the gathering dusk. I had just that desperate feeling of being lost, and with it went an acute sense of an imminent danger; the ground, no longer firm under my feet, had become a sliding shale sloping toward an unseen precipice. Perhaps, like the wayfarer, my fears were the sharper for the memory of the beauty of the morning on that same mountain, when, filled with vigour, I had gazed on it from the plain below and beheld the sun breaking through the mists....

The necessity of taking some action to avert what I now realized as an infamy pressed upon me, yet in conflict with the pressure of this necessity there persisted that old rebellion, that bitterness which had been growing all these years against the man who, above all others, seemed to me to represent the forces setting at nought my achievements, bringing me to this pass....

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I thought of appealing to Leonard Dickinson, who surely, if he knew of it, would not permit this thing to be done; and he was the only man with the possible exception of Miller Gorse who might be able to restrain Judd Jason. But I delayed until after the luncheon hour, when I called up the bank on the telephone, to discover that it was closed. I had forgotten that the day was Saturday. I was prepared to say that I would withdraw from the campaign, warn Krebs myself if this kind of tactics were not suppressed. But I could not get the banker. Then I began to have doubts of Dickinson's power in the matter. Judd Jason had never been tractable, by any means; he had always maintained a considerable independence of the financial powers, and to-day not only financial control, but the dominance of Jason himself was at stake. He would fight for it to the last ditch, and make use of any means. No, it was of no use to appeal to him. What then? Well, there was a reaction, or an attempt at one. Krebs had not been born yesterday, he had avoided the wiles of the politicians heretofore, he wouldn't be fool enough to be taken in now. I told myself that if I were not in a state bordering on a nervous breakdown, I should laugh at such morbid fears, I steadied myself sufficiently to dictate the extract from my speech that was to be published. I was to make addresses at two halls, alternating with Parks, the mayoralty candidate. At four o'clock I went back to my room in the Club to try to get some rest....

Seddon's Hall, the place of my first meeting, was jammed that Saturday night. I went through my speech automatically, as in a dream, the habit of long years asserting itself. And yet—so I was told afterwards—my delivery was not mechanical, and I actually achieved more emphasis, gave a greater impression of conviction than at any time since the night I had lost my control and violently denounced the reformers. By some astonishing subconscious process I had regained my manner, but the applause came to me as from a distance. Not only was my mind not there; it did not seem to be anywhere. I was dazed, nor did I feel—save once—a fleeting surge of contempt for the mob below me with their silly faces upturned to mine. There may have been intelligent expressions among them, but they failed to catch my eye.

I remember being stopped by Grierson as I was going out of the side entrance. He took my hand and squeezed it, and there was on his face an odd, surprised look.

"That was the best yet, Hugh," he said.

I went on past him. Looking back on that evening now, it would almost seem as though the volition of another possessed me, not my own: seemingly, I had every intention of going on to the National Theatre, in which Parks had just spoken, and as I descended the narrow stairway and emerged on the side street I caught sight of my chauffeur awaiting me by the curb.

"I'm not going to that other meeting," I found myself saying. "I'm pretty tired."

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“Shall I drive you back to the Club, sir?” he inquired.

“No—I’ll walk back. Wait a moment.” I entered the ear, turned on the light and scribbled a hasty note to Andrews, the chairman of the meeting at the National, telling him that I was too tired to speak again that night, and to ask one of the younger men there to take my place. Then I got out of the car and gave the note to the chauffeur.

“You’re all right, sir?” he asked, with a note of anxiety in his voice. He had been with me a long time.

I reassured him. He started the car, and I watched it absently as it gathered speed and turned the corner. I began to walk, slowly at first, then more and more rapidly until I had gained a breathless pace; in ten minutes I was in West Street, standing in front of the Templar’s Hall where the meeting of the Citizens Union west in progress. Now that I had arrived there, doubt and uncertainty assailed me. I had come as it were in spite of myself, thrust onward by an impulse I did not understand, which did not seem to be mine. What was I going to do? The proceeding suddenly appeared to me as ridiculous, tinged with the weirdness of somnambulism. I revolted, walked away, got as far as the corner and stood beside a lamp post, pretending to be waiting for a car. The street lights were reflected in perpendicular, wavy-yellow ribbons on the wet asphalt, and I stood staring with foolish intentness at this phenomenon, wondering how a painter would get the effect in oils. Again I was walking back towards the hall, combating the acknowledgment to myself that I had a plan, a plan that I did not for a moment believe I would carry out. I was shivering.

I climbed the steps. The wide vestibule was empty except for two men who stopped a low-toned conversation to look at me. I wondered whether they recognized me; that I might be recognized was an alarming possibility which had not occurred to me.

“Who is speaking?” I asked.

“Mr. Krebs,” answered the taller man of the two.

The hum of applause came from behind the swinging doors. I pushed them open cautiously, passing suddenly out of the cold into the reeking, heated atmosphere of a building packed with human beings. The space behind the rear seats was filled with men standing, and those nearest glanced around with annoyance at the interruption of my entrance. I made my way along the wall, finally reaching a side aisle, whence I could get sight of the platform and the speaker.

I heard his words distinctly, but at first lacked the faculty of stringing them together, or rather of extracting their collective sense. The phrases indeed were set ringing through my mind, I found myself repeating them without any reference to their meaning; I had reached the peculiar pitch of excitement that counterfeits abnormal calm, and all sense

of strangeness at being there in that meeting had passed away. I began to wonder how I might warn Krebs, and presently decided to send him a note when he should have finished speaking—but I couldn't make up my mind whether to put my name to the note or not. Of course I needn't have entered the hall at all: I might have sent in my note at the side door.

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I must have wished to see Krebs, to hear him speak; to observe, perhaps, the effect on the audience. In spite of my inability to take in what he was saying, I was able to regard him objectively,—objectively, in a restricted sense. I noticed that he had grown even thinner; the flesh had fallen away from under his cheek-bones, and there were sharp, deep, almost perpendicular lines on either side of his mouth. He was emaciated, that was the word. Once in a while he thrust his hand through his dry, ashy hair which was of a tone with the paleness of his face. Such was his only gesture.

He spoke quietly, leaning with one elbow against the side of his reading stand. The occasional pulsations of applause were almost immediately hushed, as though the people feared to lose even a word that should fall from his dry lips. What was it he was talking about? I tried to concentrate my attention, with only partial success. He was explaining the new theory of city government that did not attempt to evade, but dealt frankly with the human needs of to-day, and sought to meet those needs in a positive way... What had happened to me, though I did not realize it, was that I had gradually come under the influence of a tragic spell not attributable to the words I heard, existing independently of them, pervading the spacious hall, weaving into unity dissentient minds. And then, with what seemed a retarded rather than sudden awareness, I knew that he had stopped speaking. Once more he ran his hand through his hair, he was seemingly groping for words that would not come. I was pierced by a strange agony—-the amazing source of which, seemed to be a smile on the face of Hermann Krebs, an ineffable smile illuminating the place like a flash of light, in which suffering and tragedy, comradeship and loving kindness—all were mingled. He stood for a moment with that smile on his face—swayed, and would have fallen had it not been for the quickness of a man on the platform behind him, and into whose arms he sank.

In an instant people had risen in their seats, men were hurrying down the aisles, while a peculiar human murmur or wail persisted like an undertone beneath the confusion of noises, striking the very note of my own feelings. Above the heads of those about me I saw Krebs being carried off the platform.... The chairman motioned for silence and inquired if there were a physician in the audience, and then all began to talk at once. The man who stood beside me clutched my arm.

“I hope he isn’t dead! Say, did you see that smile? My God, I’ll never forget it!”

The exclamation poignantly voiced the esteem in which Krebs was held. As I was thrust along out of the hall by the ebb of the crowd still other expressions of this esteem came to me in fragments, expressions of sorrow and dismay, of a loyalty I had not imagined. Mingled with these were occasional remarks of skeptics shaken, in human fashion, by the suggestion of the inevitable end that never fails to sober and terrify humanity.

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“I guess he was a bigger man than we thought. There was a lot of sense in what he had to say.”

“There sure was,” the companion of this speaker answered.

They spoke of him in the past tense. I was seized and obsessed by the fear that I should never see him again, and at the same moment I realized sharply that this was the one thing I wanted—to see him. I pushed through the people, gained the street, and fairly ran down the alley that led to the side entrance of the hall, where a small group was gathered under the light that hung above the doorway. There stood on the step, a little above the others, a young man in a grey flannel shirt, evidently a mechanic. I addressed him.

“What does the doctor say?”

Before replying he surveyed me with surprise and, I think, with instinctive suspicion of my clothes and bearing.

“What can he say?” he retorted.

“You mean—?” I began.

“I mean Mr. Krebs oughtn’t never to have gone into this campaign,” he answered, relenting a trifle, perhaps at the tone of my voice. “He knew it, too, and some of us fellows tried to stop him. But we couldn’t do nothing with him,” he added dejectedly.

“What is—the trouble?” I asked.

“They tell me it’s his heart. He wouldn’t talk about it.”

“When I think of what he done for our union!” exclaimed a thick-set man, plainly a steel worker. “He’s just wore himself out, fighting that crooked gang.” He stared with sudden aggressiveness at me. “Haven’t I seen you some-wheres?” he demanded.

A denial was on my lips when the sharp, sinister strokes of a bell were heard coming nearer.

“It’s the ambulance,” said the man on the step.

Glancing up the alley beyond the figures of two policemen who had arrived and were holding the people back, I saw the hood of the conveyance as it came to a halt, and immediately a hospital doctor and two assistants carrying a stretcher hurried towards us, and we made way for them to enter. After a brief interval, they were heard coming slowly down the steps inside. By the white, cruel light of the arc I saw Krebs lying

motionless.... I laid hold of one of the men who had been on the platform. He did not resent the act, he seemed to anticipate my question.

“He’s conscious. The doctors expect him to rally when he gets to the hospital.”

I walked back to the Club to discover that several inquiries had been made about me. Reporters had been there, Republican Headquarters had telephoned to know if I were ill. Leaving word that I was not to be disturbed under any circumstances, I went to my room, and spent most of the night in distracted thought. When at last morning came I breakfasted early, searching the newspapers for accounts of the occurrence at Templar’s Hall; and the fact that these were neither conspicuous nor circumstantial was in the nature of a triumph of self-control on the part of editors and reporters. News, however sensational, had severely to be condensed in the interest of a cause, and at this critical stage of the campaign to make a tragic hero of Hermann Krebs would have been the height of folly. There were a couple of paragraphs giving the gist of his speech, and a statement at the end that he had been taken ill and conveyed to the Presbyterian Hospital....

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The hospital itself loomed up before me that Sunday morning as I approached it along Ballantyne Street, a diluted sunshine washing the extended, businesslike facade of grimy, yellow brick. We were proud of that hospital in the city, and many of our foremost citizens had contributed large sums of money to the building, scarcely ten years old. It had been one of Maude's interests. I was ushered into the reception room, where presently came the physician in charge, a Dr. Castle, one of those quiet-mannered, modern young medical men who bear on their persons the very stamp of efficiency, of the dignity of a scientific profession. His greeting implied that he knew all about me, his presence seemed to increase the agitation I tried not to betray, and must have betrayed.

"Can I do anything for you, Mr. Paret?" he asked.

"I have come to inquire about Mr. Krebs, who was brought here last night, I believe."

I was aware for an instant of his penetrating, professional glance, the only indication of the surprise he must have felt that Hermann Krebs, of all men, should be the object of my solicitude.

"Why, we sent him home this morning. Nineteen twenty six Fowler Street. He wanted to go, and there was no use in his staying."

"He will recover?" I asked.

The physician shook his head, gazing at me through his glasses.

"He may live a month, Mr. Paret, he may die to-morrow. He ought never to have gone into this campaign, he knew he had this trouble. Hepburn warned him three months ago, and there's no man who knows more about the heart than Hepburn."

"Then there's no hope?" I asked.

"Absolutely none. It's a great pity." He added, after a moment, "Mr. Krebs was a remarkable man."

"Nineteen twenty-six Fowler Street?" I repeated.

"Yes."

I held out my hand mechanically, and he pressed it, and went with me to the door.

"Nineteen twenty-six Fowler Street," he repeated...

The mean and sordid aspect of Fowler Street emphasized and seemed to typify my despair, the pungent coal smoke stifled my lungs even as it stifled my spirit. Ugly factories, which were little more than sweatshops, wore an empty, menacing, "Sunday"

look, and the faint November sunlight glistened on dirty pavements where children were making a semblance of play. Monotonous rows of red houses succeeded one another, some pushed forward, others thrust back behind little plots of stamped earth. Into one of these I turned. It seemed a little cleaner, better kept, less sordid than the others. I pulled the bell, and presently the door was opened by a woman whose arms were bare to the elbow. She wore a blue-checked calico apron that came to her throat, but the apron was clean, and her firm though furrowed face gave evidences of recent housewifely exertions. Her eyes had the strange look of the cheerfulness that is intimately acquainted with sorrow. She did not seem surprised at seeing me.

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“I have come to ask about Mr. Krebs,” I told her.

“Oh, yes,” she said, “there’s been so many here this morning already. It’s wonderful how people love him, all kinds of people. No, sir, he don’t seem to be in any pain. Two gentlemen are up there now in his room, I mean.”

She wiped her arms, which still bore traces of soap-suds, and then, with a gesture natural and unashamed, lifted the corner of her apron to her eyes.

“Do you think I could see him—for a moment?” I asked. “I’ve known him for a long time.”

“Why, I don’t know,” she said, “I guess so. The doctor said he could see some, and he wants to see his friends. That’s not strange—he always did. I’ll ask. Will you tell me your name?”

I took out a card. She held it without glancing at it, and invited me in.

I waited, unnerved and feverish, pulsing, in the dark and narrow hall beside the flimsy rack where several coats and hats were hung. Once before I had visited Krebs in that lodging-house in Cambridge long ago with something of the same feelings. But now they were greatly intensified. Now he was dying....

The woman was descending.

“He says he wants to see you, sir,” she said rather breathlessly, and I followed her. In the semi-darkness of the stairs I passed the three men who had been with Krebs, and when I reached the open door of his room he was alone. I hesitated just a second, swept by the heat wave that follows sudden shyness, embarrassment, a sense of folly it is too late to avert.

Krebs was propped up with pillows.

“Well, this is good of you,” he said, and reached out his hand across the spread. I took it, and sat down beside the shiny oak bedstead, in a chair covered with tobacco-colored plush.

“You feel better?” I asked.

“Oh, I feel all right,” he answered, with a smile. “It’s queer, but I do.”

My eye fell upon the long line of sectional book-cases that lined one side of the room. “Why, you’ve got quite a library here,” I observed.

“Yes, I’ve managed to get together some good books. But there is so much to read nowadays, so much that is really good and new, a man has the hopeless feeling he can never catch up with it all. A thousand writers and students are making contributions today where fifty years ago there was one.”

“I’ve been following your speeches, after a fashion,—I wish I might have been able to read more of them. Your argument interested me. It’s new, unlike the ordinary propaganda of—”

“Of agitators,” he supplied, with a smile.

“Of agitators,” I agreed, and tried to return his smile. “An agitator who appears to suggest the foundations of a constructive programme and who isn’t afraid to criticise the man with a vote as well as the capitalist is an unusual phenomenon.”

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“Oh, when we realize that we’ve only got a little time left in which to tell what we think to be the truth, it doesn’t require a great deal of courage, Paret. I didn’t begin to see this thing until a little while ago. I was only a crude, hot-headed revolutionist. God knows I’m crude enough still. But I began to have a glimmering of what all these new fellows in the universities are driving at.” He waved his hand towards the book-cases. “Driving at collectively, I mean. And there are attempts, worthy attempts, to coordinate and synthesize the sciences. What I have been saying is not strictly original. I took it on the stump, that’s all. I didn’t expect it to have much effect in this campaign, but it was an opportunity to sow a few seeds, to start a sense of personal dissatisfaction in the minds of a few voters. What is it Browning says? It’s in Bishop Blougram, I believe. ’When the fight begins within himself, a man’s worth something.’ It’s an intellectual fight, of course.”

His words were spoken quietly, but I realized suddenly that the mysterious force which had drawn me to him now, against my will, was an intellectual rather than apparently sentimental one, an intellectual force seeming to comprise within it all other human attractions. And yet I felt a sudden contrition.

“See here, Krebs,” I said, “I didn’t come here to bother you about these matters, to tire you. I mustn’t stay. I’ll call in again to see how you are—from time to time.”

“But you’re not tiring me,” he protested, stretching forth a thin, detaining hand. “I don’t want to rot, I want to live and think as long as I can. To tell you the truth, Paret, I’ve been wishing to talk to you—I’m glad you came in.”

“You’ve been wishing to talk to me?” I said.

“Yes, but I didn’t expect you’d come in. I hope you won’t mind my saying so, under the circumstances, but I’ve always rather liked you, admired you, even back in the Cambridge days. After that I used to blame you for going out and taking what you wanted, and I had to live a good many years before I began to see that it’s better for a man to take what he wants than to take nothing at all. I took what I wanted, every man worth his salt does. There’s your great banker friend in New York whom I used to think was the arch-fiend. He took what he wanted, and he took a good deal, but it happened to be good for him. And by piling up his corporations, Ossa on Pelion, he is paving the way for a logical economic evolution. How can a man in our time find out what he does want unless he takes something and gives it a trial?”

“Until he begins to feel that it disagrees with him,” I said. “But then,” I added involuntarily, “then it may be too late to try something else, and he may not know what to try.” This remark of mine might have surprised me had it not been for the feeling—-now grown definite—that Krebs had something to give me, something to pass on to me, of all men. Indeed, he had hinted as much, when he acknowledged a wish to talk to me. “What seems so strange,” I said, as I looked at him lying back on his pillows, “is

your faith that we shall be able to bring order out of all this chaos—your belief in Democracy."

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“Democracy’s an adventure,” he replied, “the great adventure of mankind. I think the trouble in many minds lies in the fact that they persist in regarding it as something to be made safe. All that can be done is to try to make it as safe as possible. But no adventure is safe—life itself is an adventure, and neither is that safe. It’s a hazard, as you and I have found out. The moment we try to make life safe we lose all there is in it worth while.”

I thought a moment.

“Yes, that’s so,” I agreed. On the table beside the bed in company with two or three other volumes, lay a Bible. He seemed to notice that my eye fell upon it.

“Do you remember the story of the Prodigal Son?” he asked. “Well, that’s the parable of democracy, of self-government in the individual and in society. In order to arrive at salvation, Paret, most of us have to take our journey into a far country.”

“A far country!” I exclaimed. The words struck a reminiscent chord.

“We have to leave what seem the safe things, we have to wander and suffer in order to realize that the only true safety lies in development. We have first to cast off the leading strings of authority. It’s a delusion that we can insure ourselves by remaining within its walls—we have to risk our lives and our souls. It is discouraging when we look around us to-day, and in a way the pessimists are right when they say we don’t see democracy. We see only what may be called the first stage of it; for democracy is still in a far country eating the husks of individualism, materialism. What we see is not true freedom, but freedom run to riot, men struggling for themselves, spending on themselves the fruits of their inheritance; we see a government intent on one object alone—exploitation of this inheritance in order to achieve what it calls prosperity. And God is far away.”

“And—we shall turn?” I asked.

“We shall turn or perish. I believe that we shall turn.” He fixed his eyes on my face. “What is it,” he asked, “that brought you here to me, to-day?”

I was silent.

“The motive, Paret—the motive that sends us all wandering into is divine, is inherited from God himself. And the same motive, after our eyes shall have been opened, after we shall have seen and known the tragedy and misery of life, after we shall have made the mistakes and committed the sins and experienced the emptiness—the same motive will lead us back again. That, too, is an adventure, the greatest adventure of all. Because, when we go back we shall not find the same God—or rather we shall recognize him in ourselves. Autonomy is godliness, knowledge is godliness. We went

away cringing, superstitious, we saw everywhere omens and evidences of his wrath in the earth and sea and sky, we burned candles and sacrificed animals in the vain hope of averting scourges and other calamities. But when we come back it will be with a knowledge of his ways, gained at a price,—the price he, too, must have paid—and we shall be able to stand up and look him in the face, and all our childish superstitions and optimisms shall have been burned away."

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Some faith indeed had given him strength to renounce those things in life I had held dear, driven him on to fight until his exhausted body failed him, and even now that he was physically helpless sustained him. I did not ask myself, then, the nature of this faith. In its presence it could no more be questioned than the light. It was light; I felt bathed in it. Now it was soft, suffused: but I remembered how the night before in the hall, just before he had fallen, it had flashed forth in a smile and illumined my soul with an ecstasy that yet was anguish....

“We shall get back,” I said at length. My remark was not a question—it had escaped from me almost unawares.

“The joy is in the journey,” he answered. “The secret is in the search.”

“But for me?” I exclaimed.

“We’ve all been lost, Paret. It would seem as though we have to be.”

“And yet you are—saved,” I said, hesitating over the word.

“It is true that I am content, even happy,” he asserted, “in spite of my wish to live. If there is any secret, it lies, I think, in the struggle for an open mind, in the keeping alive of a desire to know more and more. That desire, strangely enough, hasn’t lost its strength. We don’t know whether there is a future life, but if there is, I think it must be a continuation of this.” He paused. “I told you I was glad you came in—I’ve been thinking of you, and I saw you in the hall last night. You ask what there is for you—I’ll tell you,—-the new generation.”

“The new generation.”

“That’s the task of every man and woman who wakes up. I’ve come to see how little can be done for the great majority of those who have reached our age. It’s hard—but it’s true. Superstition, sentiment, the habit of wrong thinking or of not thinking at all have struck in too deep, the habit of unreasoning acceptance of authority is too paralyzing. Some may be stung back into life, spurred on to find out what the world really is, but not many. The hope lies in those who are coming after us—we must do for them what wasn’t done for us. We really didn’t have much of a chance, Paret. What did our instructors at Harvard know about the age that was dawning? what did anybody know? You can educate yourself—or rather reeducate yourself. All this”—and he waved his hand towards his bookshelves—“all this has sprung up since you and I were at Cambridge; if we don’t try to become familiar with it, if we fail to grasp the point of view from which it’s written, there’s little hope for us. Go away from all this and get straightened out, make yourself acquainted with the modern trend in literature and criticism, with modern history, find out what’s being done in the field of education, read the modern sciences, especially biology, and psychology and sociology, and try to get a

glimpse of the fundamental human needs underlying such phenomena as the labour and woman's movements. God knows I've just begun to get my glimpse, and I've floundered around ever since I left college.... I don't mean to say we can ever see the whole, but we can get a clew, an idea, and pass it on to our children. You have children, haven't you?"

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“Yes,” I said....

He said nothing—he seemed to be looking out of the window.

“Then the scientific point of view in your opinion hasn’t done away with religion?” I asked presently.

“The scientific point of view is the religious point of view,” he said earnestly, “because it’s the only self-respecting point of view. I can’t believe that God intended to make a creature who would not ultimately weigh his beliefs with his reason instead of accepting them blindly. That’s immoral, if you like—especially in these days.”

“And are there, then, no ’over-beliefs’?” I said, remembering the expression in something I had read.

“That seems to me a relic of the method of ancient science, which was upside down,—a mere confusion with faith. Faith and belief are two different things; faith is the emotion, the steam, if you like, that drives us on in our search for truth. Theories, at a stretch, might be identified with ‘over-beliefs’ but when it comes to confusing our theories with facts, instead of recognizing them as theories, when it comes to living by ‘over-beliefs’ that have no basis in reason and observed facts,—that is fatal. It’s just the trouble with so much of our electorate to-day—unreasoning acceptance without thought.”

“Then,” I said, “you admit of no other faculty than reason?”

“I confess that I don’t. A great many insights that we seem to get from what we call intuition I think are due to the reason, which is unconsciously at work. If there were another faculty that equalled or transcended reason, it seems to me it would be a very dangerous thing for the world’s progress. We’d come to rely on it rather than on ourselves the trouble with the world is that it has been relying on it. Reason is the mind—it leaps to the stars without realizing always how it gets there. It is through reason we get the self-reliance that redeems us.”

“But you!” I exclaimed. “You rely on something else besides reason?”

“Yes, it is true,” he explained gently, “but that Thing Other-than-Ourselves we feel stirring in us is power, and that power, or the Source of it, seems to have given us our reason for guidance—if it were not so we shouldn’t have a semblance of freedom. For there is neither virtue nor development in finding the path if we are guided. We do rely on that power for movement—and in the moments when it is withdrawn we are helpless. Both the power and the reason are God’s.”

“But the Church,” I was moved by some untraced thought to ask, “you believe there is a future for the Church?”

“A church of all those who disseminate truth, foster open-mindedness, serve humanity and radiate faith,” he replied—but as though he were speaking to himself, not to me....

A few moments later there was a knock at the door, and the woman of the house entered to say that Dr. Hepburn had arrived. I rose and shook Krebs’s hand: sheer inability to express my emotion drove me to commonplaces.

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“I’ll come in soon again, if I may,” I told him.

“Do, Paret,” he said, “it’s done me good to talk to you—more good than you imagine.”

I was unable to answer him, but I glanced back from the doorway to see him smiling after me. On my way down the stairs I bumped into the doctor as he ascended. The dingy brown parlour was filled with men, standing in groups and talking in subdued voices. I hurried into the street, and on the sidewalk stopped face to face with Perry Blackwood.

“Hugh!” he exclaimed. “What are you doing here?”

“I came to inquire for Krebs,” I answered. “I’ve seen him.”

“You—you’ve been talking to him?” Perry demanded.

I nodded. He stared at me for a moment with an astonishment to which I was wholly indifferent. He did not seem to know just how to act.

“Well, it was decent of you, Hugh, I must say. How does he seem?”

“Not at all like—like what you’d expect, in his manner.”

“No,” agreed Perry agitatedly, “no, he wouldn’t. My God, we’ve lost a big man in him.”

“I think we have,” I said.

He stared at me again, gave me his hand awkwardly, and went into the house. It was not until I had walked the length of the block that I began to realize what a shock my presence there must have been to him, with his head full of the contrast between this visit and my former attitude. Could it be that it was only the night before I had made a speech against him and his associates? It is interesting that my mind rejected all sense of anomaly and inconsistency. Krebs possessed me; I must have been in reality extremely agitated, but this sense of being possessed seemed a quiet one. An amazing thing had happened—and yet I was not amazed. The Krebs I had seen was the man I had known for many years, the man I had ridiculed, despised and oppressed, but it seemed to me then that he had been my friend and intimate all my life: more than that, I had an odd feeling he had always been a part of me, and that now had begun to take place a merging of personality. Nor could I feel that he was a dying man. He would live on....

I could not as yet sort and appraise, reduce to order the possessions he had wished to turn over to me.

It was noon, and people were walking past me in the watery, diluted sunlight, men in black coats and top hats and women in bizarre, complicated costumes bright with colour. I had reached the more respectable portion of the city, where the churches were emptying. These very people, whom not long ago I would have acknowledged as my own kind, now seemed mildly animated automatons, wax figures. The day was like hundreds of Sundays I had known, the city familiar, yet passing strange. I walked like a ghost through it....

XXVI.

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Accompanied by young Dr. Strafford, I went to California. My physical illness had been brief. Dr. Brooke had taken matters in his own hands and ordered an absolute rest, after dwelling at some length on the vicious pace set by modern business and the lack of consideration and knowledge shown by men of affairs for their bodies. There was a limit to the wrack and strain which the human organism could stand. He must of course have suspected the presence of disturbing and disintegrating factors, but he confined himself to telling me that only an exceptional constitution had saved me from a serious illness; he must in a way have comprehended why I did not wish to go abroad, and have my family join me on the Riviera, as Tom Peters proposed. California had been my choice, and Dr. Brooke recommended the climate of Santa Barbara.

High up on the Montecito hills I found a villa beside the gateway of one of the deep canons that furrow the mountain side, and day after day I lay in a chair on the sunny terrace, with a continually recurring amazement at the brilliancy of my surroundings. In the early morning I looked down on a feathery mist hiding the world, a mist presently to be shot with silver and sapphire-blue, dissolved by slow enchantment until there lay revealed the plain and the shimmering ocean with its distant islands trembling in the haze. At sunset my eyes sought the mountains, mountains unreal, like glorified scenery of grand opera, with violet shadows in the wooded canon clefts, and crags of pink tourmaline and ruby against the skies. All day long in the tempered heat flowers blazed around me, insects hummed, lizards darted in and out of the terrace wall, birds flashed among the checkered shadows of the live oaks. That grove of gnarled oaks summoned up before me visions of some classic villa poised above Grecian seas, shining amidst dark foliage, the refuge of forgotten kings. Below me, on the slope, the spaced orange trees were heavy with golden fruit.

After a while, as I grew stronger, I was driven down and allowed to walk on the wide beach that stretched in front of the gay houses facing the sea. Cormorants dived under the long rollers that came crashing in from the Pacific; gulls wheeled and screamed in the soft wind; alert little birds darted here and there with incredible swiftness, leaving tiny footprints across the ribs and furrows of the wet sand. Far to the southward a dark barrier of mountains rose out of the sea. Sometimes I sat with my back against the dunes watching the drag of the outgoing water rolling the pebbles after it, making a gleaming floor for the light to dance.

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At first I could not bear to recall the events that had preceded and followed my visit to Krebs that Sunday morning. My illness had begun that night; on the Monday Tom Peters had come to the Club and insisted upon my being taken to his house.... When I had recovered sufficiently there had been rather a pathetic renewal of our friendship. Perry came to see me. Their attitude was one of apprehension not unmixed with wonder; and though they, knew of the existence of a mental crisis, suspected, in all probability, some of the causes of it, they refrained carefully from all comments, contenting themselves with telling me when I was well enough that Krebs had died quite suddenly that Sunday afternoon; that his death—occurring at such a crucial moment—-had been sufficient to turn the tide of the election and make Edgar Greenhalge mayor. Thousands who had failed to understand Hermann Krebs, but whom he had nevertheless stirred and troubled, suddenly awoke to the fact that he had had elements of greatness....

My feelings in those first days at Santa Barbara may be likened, indeed, to those of a man who has passed through a terrible accident that has deprived him of sight or hearing, and which he wishes to forget. What I was most conscious of then was an aching sense of loss—an ache that by degrees became a throbbing pain as life flowed back into me, re-inflaming once more my being with protest and passion, arousing me to revolt against the fate that had overtaken me. I even began at moments to feel a fierce desire to go back and take up again the fight from which I had been so strangely removed—removed by the agency of things still obscure. I might get Nancy yet, beat down her resistance, overcome her, if only I could be near her and see her. But even in the midst of these surges of passion I was conscious of the birth of a new force I did not understand, and which I resented, that had arisen to give battle to my passions and desires. This struggle was not mentally reflected as a debate between right and wrong, as to whether I should or should not be justified in taking Nancy if I could get her: it seemed as though some new and small yet dogged intruder had forced an entrance into me, an insignificant pigmy who did not hesitate to bar the pathway of the reviving giant of my desires. These contests sapped my strength. It seemed as though in my isolation I loved Nancy, I missed her more than ever, and the flavour she gave to life.

Then Hermann Krebs began to press himself on me. I use the word as expressive of those early resentful feelings,—I rather pictured him then as the personification of an hostile element in the universe that had brought about my miseries and accomplished my downfall; I attributed the disagreeable thwarting of my impulses to his agency; I did not wish to think of him, for he stood somehow for a vague future I feared to contemplate. Yet the illusion of his presence, once begun, continued to grow upon me, and I find

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myself utterly unable to describe that struggle in which he seemed to be fighting as against myself for my confidence; that process whereby he gradually grew as real to me as though he still lived—until I could almost hear his voice and see his smile. At moments I resisted wildly, as though my survival depended on it; at other moments he seemed to bring me peace. One day I recalled as vividly as though it were taking place again that last time I had been with him; I seemed once more to be listening to the calm yet earnest talk ranging over so many topics, politics and government, economics and science and religion. I did not yet grasp the synthesis he had made of them all, but I saw them now all focussed in him elements he had drawn from human lives and human experiences. I think it was then I first felt the quickenings of a new life to be born in travail and pain.... Wearied, yet exalted, I sank down on a stone bench and gazed out at the little island of Santa Cruz afloat on the shimmering sea.

I have mentioned my inability to depict the terrible struggle that went on in my soul. It seems strange that Nietzsche—that most ruthless of philosophers to the romantic mind!—should express it for me. “The genius of the heart, from contact with which every man goes away richer, not ‘blessed’ and overcome,....but richer himself, fresher to himself than before, opened up, breathed upon and sounded by a thawing wind; more uncertain, perhaps, more delicate, more bruised; but full of hopes which as yet lack names, full of a new will and striving, full of a new unwillingness and counterstriving."....

Such was my experience with Hermann Krebs. How keenly I remember that new unwillingness and counter-striving! In spite of the years it has not wholly died down, even to-day....

Almost coincident with these quickenings of which I have spoken was the consciousness of a hunger stronger than the craving for bread and meat, and I began to meditate on my ignorance, on the utter inadequacy and insufficiency of my early education, on my neglect of the new learning during the years that had passed since I left Harvard. And I remembered Krebs’s words—that we must “reeducate ourselves.” What did I know? A system of law, inherited from another social order, that was utterly unable to cope with the complexities and miseries and injustices of a modern industrial world. I had spent my days in mastering an inadequate and archaic code—why? in order that I might learn how to evade it? This in itself condemned it. What did I know of life? of the shining universe that surrounded me? What did I know of the insect and the flower, of the laws that moved the planets and made incandescent the suns? of the human body, of the human soul and its instincts? Was this knowledge acquired at such cost of labour and life and love by my fellow-men of so little worth to me that I could ignore it? declare that it had no significance for me? no bearing on my life and conduct?

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If I were to rise and go forward—and I now felt something like a continued impulse, in spite of relaxations and revolts—I must master this knowledge, it must be my guide, form the basis of my creed. I—who never had had a creed, never felt the need of one! For lack of one I had been rudely jolted out of the frail shell I had thought so secure, and stood, as it were, naked and shivering to the storms, staring at a world that was no function of me, after all. My problem, indeed, was how to become a function of it....

I resolved upon a course of reading, but it was a question what books to get. Krebs could have told me, if he had lived. I even thought once of writing Perry Blackwood to ask him to make a list of the volumes in Krebs's little library; but I was ashamed to do this.

Dr. Strafford still remained with me. Not many years out of the medical school, he had inspired me with a liking for him and a respect for his profession, and when he informed me one day that he could no longer conscientiously accept the sum I was paying him, I begged him to stay on. He was a big and wholesome young man, companionable, yet quiet and unobtrusive, watchful without appearing to be so, with the innate as well as the cultivated knowledge of psychology characteristic of the best modern physicians. When I grew better I came to feel that he had given his whole mind to the study of my case, though he never betrayed it in his conversation.

"Strafford," I said to him one morning with such an air of unconcern as I could muster, "I've an idea I'd like to read a little science. Could you recommend a work on biology?"

I chose biology because I thought he would know something about it.

"Popular biology, Mr. Paret?"

"Well, not too popular," I smiled. "I think it would do me good to use my mind, to chew on something. Besides, you can help me over the tough places."

He returned that afternoon with two books.

"I've been rather fortunate in getting these," he said. "One is fairly elementary. They had it at the library. And the other—" he paused delicately, "I didn't know whether you might be interested in the latest speculations on the subject."

"Speculations?" I repeated.

"Well, the philosophy of it." He almost achieved a blush under his tan. He held out the second book on the philosophy of the organism. "It's the work of a German scientist who stands rather high. I read it last winter, and it interested me. I got it from a clergyman I know who is spending the winter in Santa Barbara."

“A clergyman!”

Strafford laughed. “An ‘advanced’ clergyman,” he explained. “Oh, a lot of them are reading science now. I think it’s pretty decent of them.”

I looked at Strafford, who towered six feet three, and it suddenly struck me that he might be one of the forerunners of a type our universities were about to turn out. I wondered what he believed. Of one thing I was sure, that he was not in the medical profession to make money. That was a faith in itself.

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I began with the elementary work.

“You’d better borrow a Century Dictionary,” I said.

“That’s easy,” he said, and actually achieved it, with the clergyman’s aid.

The absorption in which I fought my way through those books may prove interesting to future generations, who, at Sunday-school age, when the fable of Adam and Eve was painfully being drummed into me (without any mention of its application), will be learning to think straight, acquiring easily in early youth what I failed to learn until after forty. And think of all the trouble and tragedy that will have been averted. It is true that I had read some biology at Cambridge, which I had promptly forgotten; it had not been especially emphasized by my instructors as related to life—certainly not as related to religion: such incidents as that of Adam and Eve occupied the religious field exclusively. I had been compelled to commit to memory, temporarily, the matter in those books; but what I now began to perceive was that the matter was secondary compared to the view point of science—and this had been utterly neglected. As I read, I experienced all the excitement of an old-fashioned romance, but of a romance of such significance as to touch the very springs of existence; and above all I was impressed with the integrity of the scientific method—an integrity commensurate with the dignity of man—that scorned to quibble to make out a case, to affirm something that could not be proved.

Little by little I became familiar with the principles of embryonic evolution, ontogeny, and of biological evolution, phylogeny; realized, for the first time, my own history and that of the ancestors from whom I had developed and descended. I, this marvellously complicated being, torn by desires and despairs, was the result of the union of two microscopic cells. “All living things come from the egg,” such had been Harvey’s dictum. The result was like the tonic of a cold douche. I began to feel cleansed and purified, as though something sticky-sweet which all my life had clung to me had been washed away. Yet a question arose, an insistent question that forever presses itself on the mind of man; how could these apparently chemical and mechanical processes, which the author of the book contented himself with recording, account for me? The spermia darts for the egg, and pierces it; personal history begins. But what mysterious shaping force is it that repeats in the individual the history of the race, supervises the orderly division of the cells, by degrees directs the symmetry, sets aside the skeleton and digestive tract and supervises the structure?

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I took up the second book, that on the philosophy of the organism, to read in its preface that a much-to-be-honoured British nobleman had established a foundation of lectures in a Scotch University for forwarding the study of a Natural Theology. The term possessed me. Unlike the old theology woven of myths and a fanciful philosophy of the decadent period of Greece, natural theology was founded on science itself, and scientists were among those who sought to develop it. Here was a synthesis that made a powerful appeal, one of the many signs and portents of a new era of which I was dimly becoming cognizant; and now that I looked for signs, I found them everywhere, in my young Doctor, in Krebs, in references in the texts; indications of a new order beginning to make itself felt in a muddled, chaotic human world, which might—which must have a parallel with the order that revealed itself in the egg! Might not both, physical and social, be due to the influence of the same invisible, experimenting, creating Hand?

My thoughts lingered lovingly on this theology so well named “natural,” on its conscientiousness, its refusal to affirm what it did not prove, on its lack of dogmatic dictums and infallible revelations; yet it gave me the vision of a new sanction whereby man might order his life, a sanction from which was eliminated fear and superstition and romantic hope, a sanction whose doctrines—unlike those of the sentimental theology—-did not fly in the face of human instincts and needs. Nor was it a theology devoid of inspiration and poetry, though poetry might be called its complement. With all that was beautiful and true in the myths dear to mankind it did not conflict, annulling only the vicious dogmatism of literal interpretation. In this connection I remembered something that Krebs had said—in our talk about poetry and art,—that these were emotion, religion expressed by the tools reason had evolved. Music, he had declared, came nearest to the cry of the human soul....

That theology cleared for faith an open road, made of faith a reasonable thing, yet did not rob it of a sense of high adventure; cleansed it of the taints of thrift and selfish concern. In this reaffirmation of vitalism there might be a future, yes, an individual future, yet it was far from the smug conception of salvation. Here was a faith conferred by the freedom of truth; a faith that lost and regained itself in life; it was dynamic in its operation; for, as Lessing said, the searching after truth, and not its possession, gives happiness to man. In the words of an American scientist, taken from his book on Heredity, “The evolutionary idea has forced man to consider the probable future of his own race on earth and to take measures to control that future, a matter he had previously left largely to fate.”

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Here indeed was another sign of the times, to find in a strictly scientific work a sentence truly religious! As I continued to read these works, I found them suffused with religion, religion of a kind and quality I had not imagined. The birthright of the spirit of man was freedom, freedom to experiment, to determine, to create—to create himself, to create society in the image of God! Spiritual creation the function of cooperative man through the coming ages, the task that was to make him divine. Here indeed was the germ of a new sanction, of a new motive, of a new religion that strangely harmonized with the concepts of the old—once the dynamic power of these was revealed.

I had been thinking of my family—of my family in terms of Matthew—and yet with a growing yearning that embraced them all. I had not informed Maude of my illness, and I had managed to warn Tom Peters not to do so. I had simply written her that after the campaign I had gone for a rest to California; yet in her letters to me, after this information had reached her, I detected a restrained anxiety and affection that troubled me. Sequences of words curiously convey meanings and implications that transcend their literal sense, true thoughts and feelings are difficult to disguise even in written speech. Could it be possible after all that had happened that Maude still loved me? I continually put the thought away from me, but continually it returned to haunt me. Suppose Maude could not help loving me, in spite of my weaknesses and faults, even as I loved Nancy in spite of hers? Love is no logical thing.

It was Matthew I wanted, Matthew of whom I thought, and trivial, long-forgotten incidents of the past kept recurring to me constantly. I still received his weekly letters; but he did not ask why, since I had taken a vacation, I had not come over to them. He represented the medium, the link between Maude and me that no estrangement, no separation could break.

All this new vision of mine was for him, for the coming generation, the soil in which it must be sown, the Americans of the future. And who so well as Matthew, sensitive yet brave, would respond to it? I wished not only to give him what I had begun to grasp, to study with him, to be his companion and friend, but to spare him, if possible, some of my own mistakes and sufferings and punishments. But could I go back? Happy coincidences of desires and convictions had been so characteristic of that other self I had been struggling to cast off: I had so easily been persuaded, when I had had a chance of getting Nancy, that it was the right thing to do! And now, in my loneliness, was I not growing just as eager to be convinced that it was my duty to go back to the family which in the hour of self-sufficiency I had cast off? I had believed in divorce then—why not now? Well, I still believed in it. I had thought of a union with Nancy as something that would bring about the “self-realization that

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springs from the gratification of a great passion,”—an appealing phrase I had read somewhere. But, it was at least a favourable symptom that I was willing now to confess that the “self-realization” had been a secondary and sentimental consideration, a rosy, self-created halo to give a moral and religious sanction to my desire. Was I not trying to do that very thing now? It tortured me to think so; I strove to achieve a detached consideration of the problem,—to arrive at length at a thought that seemed illuminating: that the it “wrongness” or “rightness,” utility and happiness of all such unions depend upon whether or not they become a part of the woof and warp of the social fabric; in other words, whether the gratification of any particular love by divorce and remarriage does or does not tend to destroy a portion of that fabric. Nancy certainly would have been justified in divorce. It did not seem in the retrospect that I would have been: surely not if, after I had married Nancy, I had developed this view of life that seemed to me to be the true view. I should have been powerless to act upon it. But the chances were I should not have developed it, since it would seem that any salvation for me at least must come precisely through suffering, through not getting what I wanted. Was this equivocating?

My mistake had been in marrying Maude instead of Nancy—a mistake largely due to my saturation with a false idea of life. Would not the attempt to cut loose from the consequences of that mistake in my individual case have been futile? But there was a remedy for it—the remedy Krebs had suggested: I might still prevent my children from making such a mistake, I might help to create in them what I might have been, and thus find a solution for myself. My errors would then assume a value.

But the question tortured me: would Maude wish it? Would it be fair to her if she did not? By my long neglect I had forfeited the right to go. And would she agree with my point of view if she did permit me to stay? I had less concern on this score, a feeling that that development of hers, which once had irritated me, was in the same direction as my own....

I have still strangely to record moments when, in spite of the aspirations I had achieved, of the redeeming vision I had gained, at the thought of returning to her I revolted. At such times recollections came into my mind of those characteristics in her that had seemed most responsible for my alienation.... That demon I had fed so mightily still lived. By what right—he seemed to ask—had I nourished him all these years if now I meant to starve him? Thus sometimes he defied me, took on Protean guises, blustered, insinuated, cajoled, managed to make me believe that to starve him would be to starve myself, to sap all there was of power in me. Let me try and see if I could do it! Again he whispered, to what purpose had I gained my liberty, if now I renounced it? I could not live in fetters, even though the fetters should be self-imposed. I was lonely now, but I would get over that, and life lay before me still.

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Fierce and tenacious, steel in the cruelty of his desires, fearful in the havoc he had wrought, could he be subdued? Foiled, he tore and rent me....

One morning I rode up through the shady canon, fragrant with bay, to the open slopes stained smoky-blue by the wild lilac, where the twisted madrona grows. As I sat gazing down on tiny headlands jutting out into a vast ocean my paralyzing indecision came to an end. I turned my horse down the trail again. I had seen at last that life was bigger than I, bigger than Maude, bigger than our individual wishes and desires. I felt as though heavy shackles had been struck from me. As I neared the house I spied my young doctor in the garden path, his hands in his pockets watching a humming-bird poised over the poppies. He greeted me with a look that was not wholly surprise at my early return, that seemed to have in it something of gladness.

“Strafford,” I said, “I’ve made up my mind to go to Europe.”

“I have been thinking for some time, Mr. Paret,” he replied, “that a sea-voyage is just what you need to set you on your feet.”

I started eastward the next morning, arriving in New York in time to catch one of the big liners sailing for Havre. On my way across the continent I decided to send a cable to Maude at Paris, since it were only fair to give her an opportunity to reflect upon the manner in which she would meet the situation. Save for an impatience which at moments I restrained with difficulty, the moods that succeeded one another as I journeyed did not differ greatly from those I had experienced in the past month. I was alternately exalted and depressed; I hoped and doubted and feared; my courage, my confidence rose and fell. And yet I was aware of the nascence within me of an element that gave me a stability I had hitherto lacked: I had made my decision, and I felt the stronger for it.

It was early in March. The annual rush of my countrymen and women for foreign shores had not as yet begun, the huge steamer was far from crowded. The faint throbbing of her engines as she glided out on the North River tide found its echo within me as I leaned on the heavy rail and watched the towers of the city receding in the mist; they became blurred and ghostlike, fantastic in the grey distance, sad, appealing with a strange beauty and power. Once the sight of them, sunlit, standing forth sharply against the high blue of American skies, had stirred in me that passion for wealth and power of which they were so marvellously and uniquely the embodiment. I recalled the bright day of my home-coming with Maude, when she too had felt that passion drawing me away from her, after the briefest of possessions.... Well, I had had it, the power. I had stormed and gained entrance to the citadel itself. I might have lived here in New York, secure, defiant of a veering public opinion that envied while it strove to sting. Why was I flinging it all away? Was this a sudden resolution of mine, forced by events, precipitated by a failure to achieve what of all things on earth I had most desired? or was it the

inevitable result of the development of the Hugh Paret of earlier days, who was not meant for that kind of power?

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The vibration of the monster ship increased to a strong, electric pulsation, the water hummed along her sides, she felt the swell of the open sea. A fine rain began to fall that hid the land—yes, and the life I was leaving. I made my way across the glistening deck to the saloon where, my newspapers and periodicals neglected, I sat all the morning beside a window gazing out at the limited, vignetted zone of waters around the ship. We were headed for the Old World. The wind rose, the rain became pelting, mingling with the spume of the whitecaps racing madly past: within were warmth and luxury, electric lights, open fires, easy chairs, and men and women reading, conversing as unconcernedly as though the perils of the deep had ceased to be. In all this I found an impelling interest; the naive capacity in me for wonder, so long dormant, had been marvellously opened up once more. I no longer thought of myself as the important man of affairs; and when in the progress of the voyage I was accosted by two or three men I had met and by others who had heard of me it was only to feel amazement at the remoteness I now felt from a world whose realities were stocks and bonds, railroads and corporations and the detested new politics so inimical to the smooth conduct of "business."

It all sounded like a language I had forgotten.

It was not until near the end of the passage that we ran out of the storm. A morning came when I went on deck to survey spaces of a blue and white sea swept by the white March sunlight; to discern at length against the horizon toward which we sped a cloud of the filmiest and most delicate texture and design. Suddenly I divined that the cloud was France! Little by little, as I watched, it took on substance. I made out headlands and cliffs, and then we were coasting beside them. That night I should be in Paris with Maude. My bag was packed, my steamer trunk closed. I strayed about the decks, in and out of the saloons, wondering at the indifference of other passengers who sat reading in steamer-chairs or wrote last letters to be posted at Havre. I was filled with impatience, anticipation, yes, with anxiety concerning the adventure that was now so imminent; with wavering doubts. Had I done the wisest thing after all? I had the familiar experience that often comes just before reunion after absence of recalling intimate and forgotten impressions of those whom I was about to see again the tones of their voices, little gestures....

How would they receive me?

The great ship had slowed down and was entering the harbour, carefully threading her way amongst smaller craft, the passengers lining the rails and gazing at the animated scene, at the quaint and cheerful French city bathed in sunlight.... I had reached the dock and was making my way through the hurrying and shifting groups toward the steamer train when I saw Maude. She was standing a little aside, scanning the faces that passed her.

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I remember how she looked at me, expectantly, yet timidly, almost fearfully. I kissed her.

“You’ve come to meet me!” I exclaimed stupidly. “How are the children?”

“They’re very well, Hugh. They wanted to come, too, but I thought it better not.”

Her restraint struck me as extraordinary; and while I was thankful for the relief it brought to a situation which might have been awkward, I was conscious of resenting it a little. I was impressed and puzzled. As I walked along the platform beside her she seemed almost a stranger: I had difficulty in realizing that she was my wife, the mother of my children. Her eyes were clear, more serious than I recalled them, and her physical as well as her moral tone seemed to have improved. Her cheeks glowed with health, and she wore a becoming suit of dark blue.

“Did you have a good trip, Hugh?” she asked.

“Splendid,” I said, forgetting the storm. We took our seats in an empty compartment. Was she glad to see me? She had come all the way from Paris to meet me! All the embarrassment seemed to be on my side. Was this composure a controlled one or had she indeed attained to the self-sufficiency her manner and presence implied? Such were the questions running through my head.

“You’ve really liked Paris?” I asked.

“Yes, Hugh, and it’s been very good for us all. Of course the boys like America better, but they’ve learned many things they wouldn’t have learned at home; they both speak French, and Biddy too. Even I have improved.”

“I’m sure of it,” I said.

She flushed.

“And what else have you been doing?”

“Oh, going to galleries. Matthew often goes with me. I think he quite appreciates the pictures. Sometimes I take him to the theatre, too, the Francais. Both boys ride in the Bois with a riding master. It’s been rather a restricted life for them, but it won’t have hurt them. It’s good discipline. We have little excursions in an automobile on fine days to Versailles and other places of interest around Paris, and Matthew and I have learned a lot of history. I have a professor of literature from the Sorbonne come in three times a week to give me lessons.”

“I didn’t know you cared for literature.”

“I didn’t know it either.” She smiled. “Matthew loves it. Monsieur Despard declares he has quite a gift for language.”

Maude had already begun Matthew’s education!

“You see a few people?” I inquired.

“A few. And they have been very kind to us. The Buffons, whom I met at Etretat, and some of their friends, mostly educated French people.”

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The little railway carriage in which we sat rocked with speed as we flew through the French landscape. I caught glimpses of solid, Norman farm buildings, of towers and keeps and delicate steeples, and quaint towns; of bare poplars swaying before the March gusts, of green fields ablaze in the afternoon sun. I took it all in distractedly. Here was Maude beside me, but a Maude I had difficulty in recognizing, whom I did not understand: who talked of a life she had built up for herself and that seemed to satisfy her; one with which I had nothing to do. I could not tell how she regarded my re-intrusion. As she continued to talk, a feeling that was almost desperation grew upon me. I had things to say to her, things that every moment of this sort of intercourse was making more difficult. And I felt, if I did not say them now, that perhaps I never should: that now or never was the appropriate time, and to delay would be to drift into an impossible situation wherein the chance of an understanding would be remote.

There was a pause. How little I had anticipated the courage it would take to do this thing! My blood was hammering.

“Maude,” I said abruptly, “I suppose you’re wondering why I came over here.”

She sat gazing at me, very still, but there came into her eyes a frightened look that almost unnerved me. She seemed to wish to speak, to be unable to. Passively, she let my hand rest on hers.

“I’ve been thinking a great deal during the last few months,” I went on unsteadily. “And I’ve changed a good many of my ideas—that is, I’ve got new ones, about things I never thought of before. I want to say, first, that I do not put forth any claim to come back into your life. I know I have forfeited any claim. I’ve neglected you, and I’ve neglected the children. Our marriage has been on a false basis from the start, and I’ve been to blame for it. There is more to be said about the chances for a successful marriage in these days, but I’m not going to dwell on that now, or attempt to shoulder off my shortcomings on my bringing up, on the civilization in which we have lived. You’ve tried to do your share, and the failure hasn’t been your fault. I want to tell you first of all that I recognize your right to live your life from now on, independently of me, if you so desire. You ought to have the children—” I hesitated a moment. It was the hardest thing I had to say. “I’ve never troubled myself about them, I’ve never taken on any responsibility in regard to their bringing up.”

“Hugh!” she cried.

“Wait—I’ve got more to tell you, that you ought to know. I shouldn’t be here to-day if Nancy Durrett had consented to—to get a divorce and marry me. We had agreed to that when this accident happened to Ham, and she went back to him. I have to tell you that I still love her—I can’t say how much, or define my feelings toward her now. I’ve given up all idea of her. I don’t think I’d marry her now, even if I had the chance, and you should decide to live away from me. I don’t know. I’m not so sure of myself as I

once was. The fact is, Maude, circumstances have been too much for me. I've been beaten. And I'm not at all certain that it wasn't a cowardly thing for me to come back to you at all."

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I felt her hand trembling under mine, but I had not the courage to look at her. I heard her call my name again a little cry, the very poignancy of pity and distress. It almost unnerved me.

“I knew that you loved her, Hugh,” she said. “It was only—only a little while after you married me that I found it out. I guessed it—women do guess such things—long before you realized it yourself. You ought to have married her instead of me. You would have been happier with her.”

I did not answer.

“I, too, have thought a great deal,” she went on, after a moment. “I began earlier than you, I had to.” I looked up suddenly and saw her smiling at me, faintly, through her tears. “But I’ve been thinking more, and learning more since I’ve been over here. I’ve come to see that that our failure hasn’t been as much your fault as I once thought, as much as you yourself declare. You have done me a wrong, and you’ve done the children a wrong. Oh, it is frightful to think how little I knew when I married you, but even then I felt instinctively that you didn’t love me as I deserved to be loved. And when we came back from Europe I knew that I couldn’t satisfy you, I couldn’t look upon life as you saw it, no matter how hard I tried. I did try, but it wasn’t any use. You’ll never know how much I’ve suffered all these years.

“I have been happier here, away from you, with the children; I’ve had a chance to be myself. It isn’t that I’m—much. It isn’t that I don’t need guidance and counsel and—-sympathy. I’ve missed those, but you’ve never given them to me, and I’ve been learning more and more to do without them. I don’t know why marriage should suddenly have become such a mockery and failure in our time, but I know that it is, that ours hasn’t been such an exception as I once thought. I’ve come to believe that divorce is often justified.”

“It is justified so far as you are concerned, Maude,” I replied. “It is not justified for me. I have forfeited, as I say, any rights over you. I have been the aggressor and transgressor from the start. You have been a good wife and a good mother, you have been faithful, I have had absolutely nothing to complain of.”

“Sometimes I think I might have tried harder,” she said. “At least I might have understood better. I was stupid. But everything went wrong. And I saw you growing away from me all the time, Hugh, growing away from the friends who were fond of you, as though you were fading in the distance. It wasn’t wholly because—because of Nancy that I left you. That gave me an excuse—an excuse for myself. Long before that I realized my helplessness, I knew that whatever I might have done was past doing.”

“Yes, I know,” I assented.

We sat in silence for a while. The train was skirting an ancient town set on a hill, crowned with a castle and a Gothic church whose windows were afire in the setting sun.

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“Maude,” I said, “I have not come to plead, to appeal to your pity as against your judgment and reason. I can say this much, that if I do not love you, as the word is generally understood, I have a new respect for you, and a new affection, and I think that these will grow. I have no doubt that there are some fortunate people who achieve the kind of mutual love for which it is human to yearn, whose passion is naturally transmuted into a feeling that may be even finer, but I am inclined to think, even in such a case, that some effort and unselfishness are necessary. At any rate, that has been denied to us, and we can never know it from our own experience. We can only hope that there is such a thing,—yes, and believe in it and work for it.”

“Work for it, Hugh?” she repeated.

“For others—for our children. I have been thinking about the children a great deal in the last few months especially about Matthew.”

“You always loved him best,” she said.

“Yes,” I admitted. “I don’t know why it should be so. And in spite of it, I have neglected him, neglected them, failed to appreciate them all. I did not deserve them. I have reproached myself, I have suffered for it, not as much as I deserved. I came to realize that the children were a bond between us, that their existence meant something greater than either of us. But at the same time I recognized that I had lost my right over them, that it was you who had proved yourself worthy.... It was through the children that I came to think differently, to feel differently toward you. I have come to you to ask your forgiveness.”

“Oh, Hugh!” she cried.

“Wait,” I said.... “I have come to you, through them. I want to say again that I should not be here if I had obtained my desires. Yet there is more to it than that. I think I have reached a stage where I am able to say that I am glad I didn’t obtain them. I see now that this coming to you was something I have wanted to do all along, but it was the cowardly thing to do, after I had failed, for it was not as though I had conquered the desires, the desires conquered me. At any rate, I couldn’t come to you to encumber you, to be a drag upon you. I felt that I must have something to offer you. I’ve got a plan, Maude, for my life, for our lives. I don’t know whether I can make a success of it, and you are entitled to decline to take the risk. I don’t fool myself that it will be all plain sailing, that there won’t be difficulties and discouragements. But I’ll promise to try.”

“What is it?” she asked, in a low voice. “I—I think I know.”

“Perhaps you have guessed it. I am willing to try to devote what is left of my life to you and to them. And I need your help. I acknowledge it. Let us try to make more possible for them the life we have missed.”

“The life we have missed!” she said.

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“Yes. My mistakes, my failures, have brought us to the edge of a precipice. We must prevent, if we can, those mistakes and failures for them. The remedy for unhappy marriages, for all mistaken, selfish and artificial relationships in life is a preventive one. My plan is that we try to educate ourselves together, take advantage of the accruing knowledge that is helping men and women to cope with the problems, to think straight. We can then teach our children to think straight, to avoid the pitfalls into which we have fallen.”

I paused. Maude did not reply. Her face was turned away from me, towards the red glow of the setting sun above the hills.

“You have been doing this all along, you have had the vision, the true vision, while I lacked it, Maude. I offer to help you. But if you think it is impossible for us to live together, if you believe my feeling toward you is not enough, if you don’t think I can do what I propose, or if you have ceased to care for me—”

She turned to me with a swift movement, her eyes filled with tears.

“Oh, Hugh, don’t say any more. I can’t stand it. How little you know, for all your thinking. I love you, I always have loved you. I grew to be ashamed of it, but I’m not any longer. I haven’t any pride any more, and I never want to have it again.”

“You’re willing to take me as I am,—to try?” I said.

“Yes,” she answered, “I’m willing to try.” She smiled at me. “And I have more faith than you, Hugh. I think we’ll succeed."....

At nine o’clock that night, when we came out through the gates of the big, noisy station, the children were awaiting us. They had changed, they had grown. Biddy kissed me shyly, and stood staring up at me.

“We’ll take you out to-morrow and show you how we can ride,” said Moreton.

Matthew smiled. He stood very close to me, with his hand through my arm.

“You’re going to stay, father?” he asked.

“I’m going to stay, Matthew,” I answered, “until we all go back to America."....

PG EDITOR’S BOOKMARKS:

Barriers were mere relics of the superstition of the past
Benumbing and desiccating effect of that old system of education
Conscience was superstition, the fear of the wrath of the gods

Conventionality was part of the price we had willingly paid
Conviction that government should remain modestly in the background
Everybody should have been satisfied, but everybody was not
I hated to lie to her,—yet I did so
I'm incapable of committing a single original act
It was not money we coveted, we Americans, but power
Knowledge was presented to us as a corpse
Marriage! What other career is open to a woman?
Meaningless lessons which had to be learned
Opponent who praises one with a delightful irony

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Righteousness a stern and terrible thing implying not joy
Staunch advocate on the doctrine of infant damnation
That's the great thing, to keep 'em ignorant as long as possible
The saloon represented Democracy, so dear to the American public
They deplored while they coveted
We lived separate mental existences
We had learned to pursue our happiness in packs
What you wants, you gets
Your American romanticist is a sentimental spoiled child

CONISTON

By Winston Churchill

"We have been compelled to see what was weak in democracy as well as what was strong. We have begun obscurely to recognize that things do not go of themselves, and that popular government is not in itself a panacea, is no better than any other form except as the virtue and wisdom of the people make it so, and that when men undertake to do their own kingship, they enter upon, the dangers and responsibilities as well as the privileges of the function. Above all, it looks as if we were on the way to be persuaded that no government can be carried on by declamation."

—*JamesRussell Lowell*.

BOOK I

CHAPTER I

First I am to write a love-story of long ago, of a time some little while after General Jackson had got into the White House and had shown the world what a real democracy was. The Era of the first six Presidents had closed, and a new Era had begun. I am speaking of political Eras. Certain gentlemen, with a pious belief in democracy, but with a firmer determination to get on top, arose,—and got in top. So many of these gentlemen arose in the different states, and they were so clever, and they found so many chinks in the Constitution to crawl through and steal the people's chestnuts, that the Era may be called the Boss-Era. After the Boss came along certain Things without souls, but of many minds, and found more chinks in the Constitution: bigger chinks, for the Things were bigger, and they stole more chestnuts. But I am getting far ahead of my love-story—and of my book.

The reader is warned that this first love-story will, in a few chapters, come to an end: and not to a happy end—otherwise there would be no book. Lest he should throw the book away when he arrives at this page, it is only fair to tell him that there is another and a much longer love story later on, if he will only continue to read, in which, it is hoped, he may not be disappointed.

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The hills seem to leap up against the sky as I describe that region where Cynthia Ware was born, and the very old country names help to summon up the picture. Coniston Mountain, called by some the Blue Mountain, clad in Hercynian forests, ten good miles in length, north and south, with its notch road that winds over the saddle behind the withers of it. Coniston Water, that oozes out from under the loam in a hundred places, on the eastern slope, gathers into a rushing stream to cleave the very granite, flows southward around the south end of Coniston Mountain, and having turned the mills at Brampton, idles through meadows westward in its own green valley until it comes to Harwich, where it works again and tumbles into a river. Brampton and Harwich are rivals, but Coniston Water gives of its power impartially to each. From the little farm clearings on the western slope of Coniston Mountain you can sweep the broad valley of a certain broad river where grew (and grow still) the giant pines that gave many a mast to King George's navy as tribute for the land. And beyond that river rises beautiful Farewell Mountain of many colors, now sapphire, now amethyst, its crest rimmed about at evening with saffron flame; and, beyond Farewell, the emerald billows of the western peaks catching the level light. A dozen little brooks are born high among the western spruces on Coniston to score deep, cool valleys in their way through Clovelly township to the broad music of the water and fresh river-valleys full of the music of the water and fresh with the odor of the ferns.

To this day the railroad has not reached Coniston Village—nay, nor Coniston Flat, four miles nearer Brampton. The village lies on its own little shelf under the forest-clad slope of the mountain, and in the midst of its dozen houses is the green triangle where the militia used to drill on June days. At one end of the triangle is the great pine mast that graced no frigate of George's, but flew the stars and stripes on many a liberty day. Across the road is Jonah Winch's store, with a platform so high that a man may step off his horse directly on to it; with its checker-paned windows, with its dark interior smelling of coffee and apples and molasses, yes, and of Endea rum—for this was before the days of the revivals.

How those checker-paned windows bring back the picture of that village green! The meeting-house has them, lantern-like, wide and high, in three sashes—white meeting-house, seat alike of government and religion, with its terraced steeple, with its classic porches north and south. Behind it is the long shed, and in front, rising out of the milkweed and the flowering thistle, the horse block of the first meeting-house, where many a pillion has left its burden in times bygone. Honest Jock Hallowell built that second meeting-house—was, indeed, still building it at the time of which we write. He had hewn every beam and king post in it, and set every plate and slip. And Jock Hallowell is the man who, unwittingly starts this chronicle.

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At noon, on one of those madcap April days of that Coniston country, Jock descended from his work on the steeple to perceive the ungainly figure of Jethro Bass coming toward him across the green. Jethro was about thirty years of age, and he wore a coonskin cap even in those days, and trousers tacked into his boots. He carried his big head bent forward, a little to one aide, and was not, at first sight, a prepossessing-looking person. As our story largely concerns him and we must get started somehow, it may as well be to fix a little attention on him.

“Heigho!” said Jock, rubbing his hands on his leather apron.

“H-how be you, Jock?” said Jethro, stopping.

“Heigho!” cried Jock, “what’s this game of fox and geese you’re a-playin’ among the farmers?”

“C-callate to git the steeple done before frost?” inquired Jethro, without so much as a smile. “B-build it tight, Jock—b-build it tight.”

“Guess he’ll build his’n tight, whatever it is,” said Jock, looking after him as Jethro made his way to the little tannery near by.

Let it be known that there was such a thing as social rank in Coniston; and something which, for the sake of an advantageous parallel, we may call an Established Church. Coniston was a Congregational town still, and the deacons and dignitaries of that church were likewise the pillars of the state. Not many years before the time of which we write actual disestablishment had occurred, when the town ceased—as a town—to pay the salary of Priest Ware, as the minister was called. The father of Jethro Bass, Nathan the currier, had once, in a youthful lapse, permitted a Baptist preacher to immerse him in Coniston Water. This had been the extent of Nathan’s religion; Jethro had none at all, and was, for this and other reasons, somewhere near the bottom of the social scale.

“Fox and geese!” repeated Jock, with his eyes still on Jethro’s retreating back. The builder of the meetinghouse rubbed a great, brown arm, scratched his head, and turned and came face to face with Cynthia Ware, in a poke bonnet.

Contrast is a favorite trick of authors, and no greater contrast is to be had in Coniston than that between Cynthia Ware and Jethro Bass. In the first place; Cynthia was the minister’s daughter, and twenty-one. I can summon her now under the great maples of the village street, a virginal figure, gray eyes that kindled the face shaded by the poke bonnet, and up you went above the clouds.

“What about fox and geese, Jock?” said Cynthia.

“Jethro Bass,” said Jock, who, by reason of his ability, was a privileged character. “Mark my words, Cynthy, Jethro Bass is an all-fired sight smarter that folks in this town think he be. They don’t take notice of him, because he don’t say much, and stutters. He hain’t be’n eddicated a great deal, but I wouldn’t be afeard to warrant he’d make a racket in the world some of these days.”

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“Jock Hallowell!” cried Cynthia, the gray beginning to dance, “I suppose you think Jethro’s going to be President.”

“All right,” said Jock, “you can laugh. Ever talked with Jethro?”

“I’ve hardly spoken two words to him in my life,” she replied. And it was true, although the little white parsonage was scarce two hundred yards from the tannery house.

“Jethro’s never ailed much,” Jock remarked, having reference to Cynthia’s proclivities for visiting the sick. “I’ve seed a good many different men in my time, and I tell you, Cynthia Ware, that Jethro’s got a kind of power you don’t often come acrost. Folks don’t suspicion it.”

In spite of herself, Cynthia was impressed by the ring of sincerity in the builder’s voice. Now that she thought of it, there was rugged power in Jethro’s face, especially when he took off the coonskin cap. She always nodded a greeting when she saw him in the tannery yard or on the road, and sometimes he nodded back, but oftener he had not appeared to see her. She had thought this failure to nod stupidity, but it might after all be abstraction.

“What makes you think he has ability?” she asked, picking flowers from a bunch of arbutus she held.

“He’s rich, for one thing,” said Jock. He had not intended a dissertation on Jethro Bass, but he felt bound to defend his statements.

“Rich!”

“Wal, he hain’t poor. He’s got as many as thirty mortgages round among the farmers—-some on land, and some on cattle.”

“How did he make the money?” demanded Cynthia, in surprise.

“Hides an’ wool an’ bark—turned ’em over an’ swep’ in. Gits a load, and Lyman Hull drives him down to Boston with that six-hoss team. Lyman gits drunk, Jethro keeps sober and saves.”

Jock began to fashion some wooden pegs with his adze, for nails were scarce in those days. Still Cynthia lingered, picking flowers from the bunch.

“What did you mean by ‘fox and geese’ Jock?” she said presently.

Jock laughed. He did not belong to the Establishment, but was a Universalist; politically he admired General Jackson. “What’d you say if Jethro was Chairman of the next Board of Selectmen?” he demanded.

No wonder Cynthia gasped. Jethro Bass, Chairman of the Board, in the honored seat of Deacon Moses Hatch, the perquisite of the church in Coniston! The idea was heresy. As a matter of fact, Jock himself uttered it as a playful exaggeration. Certain nonconformist farmers, of whom there were not a few in the town, had come into Jonah Winch's store that morning; and Jabez Miller, who lived on the north slope, had taken away the breath of the orthodox by suggesting that Jethro Bass be nominated for town office. Jock Hallowell had paused once or twice on his work on the steeple to look across the tree-tops at Coniston shouldering the sky. He had been putting two and two together, and now he was merely making five out of it, instead of four. He remembered that Jethro Bass had for some years been journeying through the town, baying his hides and wool, and collecting the interest on his mortgages.

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Cynthia would have liked to reprove Jock Hallowell, and tell him there were some subjects which should not be joked about. Jethro Bass, Chairman of the Board of Selectmen!

“Well, here comes, young Moses, I do believe,” said Jock, gathering his pegs into his apron and preparing to ascend once more. “Callated he’d spring up pretty soon.”

“Jock, you do talk foolishly for a man who is able to build a church,” said Cynthia, as she walked away. The young Moses referred to was Moses Hatch, Junior, son of the pillar of the Church and State, and it was an open secret that he was madly in love with Cynthia. Let it be said of him that he was a steady-going young man, and that he sighed for the moon.

“Moses,” said the girl, when they came in sight of the elms that, shaded the gable of the parsonage, “what do you think of Jethro Bass?”

“Jethro Bass!” exclaimed honest Moses, “whatever put him into your head, Cynthy?” Had she mentioned perhaps, any other young man in Coniston, Moses would have been eaten with jealousy.

“Oh, Jock was joking about him. What do you think of him?”

“Never thought one way or t’other,” he answered. “Jethro never had much to do with the boys. He’s always in that tannery, or out buyin’ of hides. He does make a sharp bargain when he buys a hide. We always goes shares on our’n.”

Cynthia was not only the minister’s daughter,—distinction enough,—her reputation for learning was spread through the country roundabout, and at the age of twenty she had had an offer to teach school in Harwich. Once a week in summer she went to Brampton, to the Social library there, and sat at the feet of that Miss Lucretia Penniman of whom Brampton has ever been so proud—Lucretia Penniman, one of the first to sound the clarion note for the intellectual independence of American women; who wrote the “Hymn to Coniston”; who, to the awe of her townspeople, went out into the great world and became editress of a famous woman’s journal, and knew Longfellow and Hawthorne and Bryant. Miss Lucretia it was who started the Brampton Social Library, and filled it with such books as both sexes might read with profit. Never was there a stricter index than hers. Cynthia, Miss Lucretia loved, and the training of that mind was the pleasantest task of her life.

Curiosity as a factor has never, perhaps, been given its proper weight by philosophers. Besides being fatal to a certain domestic animal, as an instigating force it has brought joy and sorrow into the lives of men and women, and made and marred careers. And curiosity now laid hold of Cynthia Ware. Why in the world she should ever have been curious about Jethro Bass is a mystery to many, for the two of them were as far apart as

the poles. Cynthia, of all people, took to watching the tanner's son, and listening to the brief colloquies he had with other men at Jonah Winch's store, when she went there to buy things for the parsonage; and

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it seemed to her that Jock had not been altogether wrong, and that there was in the man an indefinable but very compelling force. And when a woman begins to admit that a man has force, her curiosity usually increases. On one or two of these occasions Cynthia had been startled to find his eyes fixed upon her, and though the feeling she had was closely akin to fear, she found something distinctly pleasurable in it.

May came, and the pools dried up, the orchards were pink and white, the birches and the maples were all yellow-green on the mountain sides against the dark pines, and Cynthia was driving the minister's gig to Brampton. Ahead of her, in the canon made by the road between the great woods, strode an uncouth but powerful figure—coonskin cap, homespun breeches tucked into boots, and all. The gig slowed down, and Cynthia began to tremble with that same delightful fear. She knew it must be wicked, because she liked it so much. Unaccountable thing! She felt all akin to the nature about her, and her blood was coursing as the sap rushes through a tree. She would not speak to him; of that she was sure, and equally sure that he would not speak to her. The horse was walking now, and suddenly Jethro Bass faced around, and her heart stood still.

"H-how be you, Cynthy?" he asked.

"How do you do, Jethro?"

A thrush in the woods began to sing a hymn, and they listened. After that a silence, save for the notes of answering birds quickened by the song, the minister's horse nibbling at the bushes. Cynthia herself could not have explained why she lingered. Suddenly he shot a question at her.

"Where be you goin'?"

"To Brampton, to get Miss Lucretia to change this book," and she held it up from her lap. It was a very large book.

"Wh-what's it about," he demanded.

"Napoleon Bonaparte."

"Who was be?"

"He was a very strong man. He began life poor and unknown, and fought his way upward until he conquered the world."

"C-conquered the world, did you say? Conquered the world?"

"Yes."

Jethro pondered.

“Guess there’s somethin’ wrong about that book—somethin’ wrong. Conquer the United States?”

Cynthia smiled. She herself did not realize that we were not a part of the world, then.

“He conquered Europe; where all the kings and queens are, and became a king himself—an emperor.”

“I want to-know!” said Jethro. “You said he was a poor boy?”

“Why don’t you read the book, Jethro?” Cynthia answered. “I am sure I can get Miss Lucretia to let you have it.”

“Don’t know as I’d understand it,” he demurred.

“I’ll try to explain what you don’t understand,” said Cynthia, and her heart gave a bound at the very idea.

“Will You?” he said, looking at her eagerly. “Will you? You mean it?”

“Certainly,” she answered, and blushed, not knowing why. “I-I must be going,” and she gathered up the reins.

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“When will you give it to me?”

“I’ll stop at the tannery when I come back from Brampton,” she said, and drove on. Once she gave a fleeting glance over her shoulder, and he was still standing where she had left him.

When she returned, in the yellow afternoon light that flowed over wood and pasture, he came out of the tannery door. Jake Wheeler or Speedy Bates, the journeyman tailoress, from whom little escaped, could not have said it was by design—thought nothing, indeed, of that part of it.

“As I live!” cried Speedy from the window to Aunt Lucy Prescott in the bed, “if Cynthy ain’t givin’ him a book as big as the Bible!”

Aunt Lucy hoped, first, that it was the Bible, and second, that Jethro would read it. Aunt Lucy, and Established Church Coniston in general, believed in snatching brands from the burning, and who so deft as Cynthia at this kind of snatching! So Cynthia herself was a hypocrite for once, and did not know it. At that time Jethro’s sins were mostly of omission. As far as rum was concerned, he was a creature after Aunt Lucy’s own heart, for he never touched it: true, gaunt Deacon Ira Perkins, tithing-man, had once chided him for breaking the Sabbath—shooting at a fox.

To return to the book. As long as he lived, Jethro looked back to the joy of the monumental task of mastering its contents. In his mind, Napoleon became a rough Yankee general; of the cities, villages, and fortress he formed as accurate a picture as a resident of Venice from Marco Polo’s account of Tartary. Jethro had learned to read, after a fashion, to write, add, multiply, and divide. He knew that George Washington and certain barefooted companions had forced a proud Britain to her knees, and much of the warring in the book took color from Captain Timothy Prescott’s stories of General Stark and his campaigns, heard at Jonah Winch’s store. What Paris looked like, or Berlin, or the Hospice of St. Bernard—though imaged by a winter Coniston—troubled Jethro not at all; the thing that stuck in his mind was that Napoleon—for a considerable time, at least—compelled men to do his bidding. Constitutions crumble before the Strong. Not that Jethro philosophized about constitutions. Existing conditions presented themselves, and it occurred to him that there were crevices in the town system, and ways into power through the crevices for men clever enough to find them.

A week later, and in these same great woods on the way to Brampton, Cynthia overtook him once more. It was characteristic of him that he plunged at once into the subject uppermost in his mind.

“Not a very big place, this Corsica—not a very big place.”

“A little island in the Mediterranean,” said Cynthia.

“Hum. Country folks, the Bonapartes—country folks?”

Cynthia laughed.

“I suppose you might call them so,” she said. “They were poor, and lived out of the world.”

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“He was a smart man. But he found things goin’ his way. Didn’t have to move ’em.”

“Not at first;” she admitted; “but he had to move mountains later. How far have you read?”

“One thing that helped him,” said Jethro, in indirect answer to this question, “he got a smart woman for his wife—a smart woman.”

Cynthia looked down at the reins in her lap, and she felt again that wicked stirring within her,—incredible stirring of minister’s daughter for tanner’s son. Coniston believes, and always will believe, that the social bars are strong enough. So Cynthia looked down at the reins.

“Poor Josephine!” she said, “I always wish he had not cast her off.”

“C-cast her off?” said Jethro. “Cast her off! Why did he do that?”

“After a while, when he got to be Emperor, he needed a wife who would be more useful to him. Josephine had become a drag. He cared more about getting on in the world than he did about his wife.”

Jethro looked away contemplatively.

“Wa-wahn’t the woman to blame any?” he said.

“Read the book, and you’ll see,” retorted Cynthia, flicking her horse, which started at all gaits down the road. Jethro stood in his tracks, staring, but this time he did not see her face above the hood of the gig. Presently he trudged on, head downward, pondering upon another problem than Napoleon’s. Cynthia, at length, arrived in Brampton Street, in a humor that puzzled the good Miss Lucretia sorely.

CHAPTER II

The sun had dropped behind the mountain, leaving Coniston in amethystine shadow, and the last bee had flown homeward from the apple blossoms in front of Aunt Lucy Prescott’s window, before Cynthia returned. Aunt Lucy was Cynthia’s grandmother, and eighty-nine years of age. Still she sat in her window beside the lilac bush, lost in memories of a stout, rosy lass who had followed a stalwart husband up a broad river into the wilderness some seventy years agone in Indian days—Weathersfield Massacre days. That lass was Aunt Lucy herself, and in just such a May had Timothy’s axe rung through the Coniston forest and reared the log cabin, where six of her children were born. Likewise in review passed the lonely months when Timothy was fighting behind his rugged General Stark for that privilege more desirable to his kind than life—self

government. Timothy Prescott would pull the forelock to no man, would have such God-fearing persons as he chose make his laws for him.

Honest Captain Timothy and his Stark heroes, Aunt Lucy and her memories, have long gone to rest. Little did they dream of the nation we have lived to see, straining at her constitution like a great ship at anchor in a gale, with funnels belching forth smoke, and a new race of men thronging her decks for the mastery. Coniston is there still behind its mountain, with its rusty firelocks and its hillside graves.

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Cynthia, driving back from Brampton in the gig, smiled at Aunt Lucy in the window, but she did not so much as glance at the tannery house farther on. The tannery house, be it known, was the cottage where Jethro dwelt, and which had belonged to Nathan, his father; and the tannery sheds were at some distance behind it, nearer Coniston Water. Cynthia did not glance at the tannery house, for a wave of orthodox indignation had swept over her: at any rate, we may call it so. In other words, she was angry with herself: pitied and scorned herself, if the truth be told, for her actions—an inevitable mood.

In front of the minister's barn under the elms on the hill Cynthia pulled the harness from the tired horse with an energy that betokened activity of mind. She was not one who shrank from self-knowledge, and the question put itself to her, "Whither was this matter tending?" The fire that is in strong men has ever been a lure to women; and many, meaning to play with it, have been burnt thereby since the world began. But to turn the fire. to some use, to make the world better for it or stranger for it, that were an achievement indeed! The horse munching his hay, Cynthia lingered as the light fainted above the ridge, with the thought that this might be woman's province, and Miss Lucretia Penniman might go on leading her women regiments to no avail. Nevertheless she was angry with Jethro, not because of what he had said, but because of what he was.

The next day is Sunday, and there is mild excitement in Coniston. For Jethro Bass, still with the coonskin cap, but in a brass-buttoned coat secretly purchased in Brampton, appeared at meeting! It made no difference that he entered quietly, and sat in the rear slip, orthodox Coniston knew that he was behind them: good Mr. Ware knew it, and changed a little his prayers and sermon: Cynthia knew it, grew hot and cold by turns under her poke bonnet. Was he not her brand, and would she not get the credit of snatching him? How willingly, then, would she have given up that credit to the many who coveted it—if it were a credit. Was Jethro at meeting for any religious purpose?

Jethro's importance to Coniston lay in his soul, and that soul was numbered at present ninety and ninth. When the meeting was over, Aunt Lucy Prescott hobbled out at an amazing pace to advise him to read chapter seven of Matthew, but he had vanished: via the horse sheds; if she had known it, and along Coniston Water to the house by the tannery, where he drew breath in a state of mind not to be depicted. He had gazed at the back of Cynthia's poke bonnet for two hours, but he had an uneasy feeling that he would have to pay a price.

The price was paid, in part, during the next six days. To do Jethro's importance absolute justice, he did inspire fear among his contemporaries, and young men and women did not say much to his face; what they did say gave them little satisfaction. Grim Deacon Ira stopped him as he was going to buy hides, and would have prayed over him if Jethro had waited; dear Aunt Lucy did pray, but in private. In six days

orthodox Coniston came to the conclusion that this ninety and ninth soul were better left to her who had snatched it, Cynthia Ware.

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As for Cynthia, nothing was farther from her mind. Unchristian as was the thought, if this thing she had awakened could only have been put back to sleep again, she would have thought herself happy. But would she have been happy? When Moses Hatch congratulated her, with more humor than sincerity, he received the greatest scare of his life. Yet in those days she welcomed Moses's society as she never had before; and Coniston, including Moses himself, began thinking of a wedding.

Another Saturday came, and no Cynthia went to Brampton. Jethro may or may not have been on the road. Sunday, and there was Jethro on the back seat in the meetinghouse: Sunday noon, over his frugal dinner, the minister mildly remonstrates with Cynthia for neglecting one who has shown signs of grace, citing certain failures of others of his congregation: Cynthia turns scarlet, leaving the minister puzzled and a little uneasy: Monday, Miss Lucretia Penniman, alarmed, comes to Coniston to inquire after Cynthia's health: Cynthia drives back with her as far as Four Corners, talking literature and the advancement of woman; returns on foot, thinking of something else, when she discerns a figure seated on a log by the roadside, bent as in meditation. There was no going back the thing to do was to come on, as unconcernedly as possible, not noticing anything,—which Cynthia did, not without a little inward palpitating and curiosity, for which she hated herself and looked the sterner. The figure unfolded itself, like a Jack from a box.

"You say the woman wahn't any to blame—wahn't any to blame?"

The poke bonnet turned away. The shoulders under it began to shake, and presently the astonished Jethro heard what seemed to be faint peals of laughter. Suddenly she turned around to him, all trace of laughter gone.

"Why don't you read the book?"

"So I am," said Jethro, "so I am. Hain't come to this casting-off yet."

"And you didn't look ahead to find out?" This with scorn.

"Never heard of readin' a book in that fashion. I'll come to it in time—g-guess it won't run away."

Cynthia stared at him, perhaps with a new interest at this plodding determination. She was not quite sure that she ought to stand talking to him a third time in these woods, especially if the subject of conversation were not, as Coniston thought, the salvation of his soul. But she stayed. Here was a woman who could be dealt with by no known rules, who did not even deign to notice a week of marked coldness.

"Jethro," she said, with a terrifying sternness, "I am going to ask you a question, and you must answer me truthfully."

“G-guess I won’t find any trouble about that,” said Jethro, apparently not in the least terrified.

“I want you to tell me why you are going to meeting.”

“To see you,” said Jethro, promptly, “to see you.”

“Don’t you know that that is wrong?”

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“H-hadn’t thought much about it,” answered Jethro.

“Well, you should think about it. People don’t go to meeting to—to look at other people.”

“Thought they did,” said Jethro. “W-why do they wear their best clothes—why do they wear their best clothes?”

“To honor God,” said Cynthia, with a shade lacking in the conviction, for she added hurriedly: “It isn’t right for you to go to church to see—anybody. You go there to hear the Scriptures expounded, and to have your sins forgiven. Because I lent you that book, and you come to meeting, people think I’m converting you.”

“So you be,” replied Jethro, and this time it was he who smiled, “so you be.”

Cynthia turned away, her lips pressed together: How to deal with such a man! Wondrous notes broke on the stillness, the thrush was singing his hymn again, only now it seemed a paean. High in the azure a hawk wheeled, and floated.

“Couldn’t you see I was very angry with you?”

“S-saw you was goin’ with Moses Hatch more than common.”

Cynthia drew breath sharply. This was audacity—and yet she liked it.

“I am very fond of Moses,” she said quickly.

“You always was charitable, Cynthy,” said he.

“Haven’t I been charitable to you?” she retorted.

“G-guess it has be’n charity,” said Jethro. He looked down at her solemnly, thoughtfully, no trace of anger in his face, turned, and without another word strode off in the direction of Coniston Flat.

He left a tumultuous Cynthia, amazement and repentance struggling with anger, which forbade her calling him back: pride in her answering to pride in him, and she rejoicing fiercely that he had pride. Had he but known it, every step he took away from her that evening was a step in advance, and she gloried in the fact that he did not once look back. As she walked toward Coniston, the thought came to her that she was rid of the thing she had stirred up, perhaps forever, and the thrush burst into his song once more.

That night, after Cynthia’s candle had gone out, when the minister sat on his doorsteps looking at the glory of the moon on the mountain forest, he was startled by the sight of a figure slowly climbing toward him up the slope. A second glance told him that it was Jethro’s. Vaguely troubled, he watched his approach; for good Priest Ware, while able

to obey one-half the scriptural injunction, had not the wisdom of the serpent, and women, as typified by Cynthia, were a continual puzzle to him. That very evening, Moses Hatch had called, had been received with more favor than usual, and suddenly packed off about his business. Seated in the moonlight, the minister wondered vaguely whether Jethro Bass were troubling the girl. And now Jethro stood before him, holding out a book. Rising, Mr. Ware bade him good evening, mildly and cordially.

“C-come to leave this book for Cynthy,” said Jethro.

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Mr. Ware took it, mechanically.

“Have you finished it?” he asked kindly.

“All I want,” replied Jethro, “all I want.”

He turned, and went down the slope. Twice the words rose to the minister’s lips to call him back, and were suppressed. Yet what to say to him if he came? Mr. Ware sat down again, sadly wondering why Jethro Bass should be so difficult to talk to.

The parsonage was of only one story, with a steep, sloping roof. On the left of the doorway was Cynthia’s room, and the minister imagined he heard a faint, rustling noise at her window. Presently he arose, barred the door; could be heard moving around in his room for a while, and after that all was silence save for the mournful crying of a whippoorwill in the woods. Then a door opened softly, a white vision stole into the little entry lighted by the fan-window, above, seized the book and stole back. Had the minister been a prying man about his household, he would have noticed next day that Cynthia’s candle was burned down to the socket. He saw nothing of the kind: he saw, in fact, that his daughter flitted about the house singing, and he went out into the sun to drop potatoes.

No sooner had he reached the barn than this singing ceased. But how was Mr. Ware to know that?

Twice Cynthia, during the week that followed, got halfway down the slope of the parsonage hill, the book under her arm, on her way to the tannery; twice went back, tears of humiliation and self-pity in her eyes at the thought that she should make advances to a man, and that man the tanner’s son. Her household work done, a longing for further motion seized her, and she walked out under the maples of the village street. Let it be understood that Coniston was a village, by courtesy, and its shaded road a street. Suddenly, there was the tannery, Jethro standing in front of it, contemplative. Did he see her? Would he come to her? Cynthia, seized by a panic of shame, flew into Aunt Lucy Prescott’s, sat through half an hour of torture while Aunt Lucy talked of redemption of sinners, during ten minutes of which Jethro stood, still contemplative. What tumult was in his breast, or whether there was any tumult, Cynthia knew not. He went into the tannery again, and though she saw him twice later in the week, he gave no sign of seeing her.

On Saturday Cynthia bought a new bonnet in Brampton; Sunday morning put it on, suddenly remembered that one went to church to honor God, and wore her old one; walked to meeting in a flutter of expectancy not to be denied, and would have looked around had that not been a cardinal sin in Coniston. No Jethro! General opinion (had she waited to hear it among the horse sheds or on the green), that Jethro’s soul had slid back into the murky regions, from which it were folly for even Cynthia to try to drag it.

CHAPTER III

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To prove that Jethro's soul had not slid back into the murky regions, and that it was still indulging in flights, it is necessary to follow him (for a very short space) to Boston. Jethro himself went in Lyman Hull's six-horse team with a load of his own merchandise—hides that he had tanned, and other country produce. And they did not go by the way of Truro Pass to the Capital, but took the state turnpike over the ranges, where you can see for miles and miles and miles on a clear summer day across the trembling floors of the forest tops to lonely sentinel mountains fourscore miles away.

No one takes the state turnpike nowadays except crazy tourists who are willing to risk their necks and their horses' legs for the sake of scenery. The tough little Morgans of that time, which kept their feet like cats, have all but disappeared, but there were places on that road where Lyman Hull put the shoes under his wheels for four miles at a stretch. He was not a companion many people would have chosen with whom to enjoy the beauties of such a trip, and nearly everybody in Coniston was afraid of him. Jethro Bass would sit silent on the seat for hours and—it is a fact to be noted that when he told Lyman to do a thing, Lyman did it; not, perhaps, without cursing and grumbling. Lyman was a profane and wicked man—drover, farmer, trader, anything. He had a cider mill on his farm on the south slopes of Coniston which Mr. Ware had mentioned in his sermons, and which was the resort of the ungodly. The cider was not so good as Squire Northcutt's, but cheaper. Jethro was not afraid of Lyman, and he had a mortgage on the six-horse team, and on the farm and the cider mill.

After six days, Jethro and Lyman drove over Charlestown bridge and into the crooked streets of Boston, and at length arrived at a drover's hotel, or lodging-house that did not, we may be sure, front on Mount Vernon Street or face the Mall. Lyman proceeded to get drunk, and Jethro to sell the hides and other merchandise which Lyman had hauled for him.

There was a young man in Boston, when Jethro arrived in Lyman Hull's team, named William Wetherell. By extraordinary circumstances he and another connected with him are to take no small part in this story, which is a sufficient excuse for his introduction. His father had been a prosperous Portsmouth merchant in the West India trade, a man of many attainments, who had failed and died of a broken heart; and William, at two and twenty, was a clerk in the little jewellery shop of Mr. Judson in Cornhill.

William Wetherell had literary aspirations, and sat from morning till night behind the counter, reading and dreaming: dreaming that he was to be an Irving or a Walter Scott, and yet the sum total of his works in after years consisted of some letters to the Newcastle Guardian, and a beginning of the Town History of Coniston!

William had a contempt for the awkward young countryman who suddenly loomed up before him that summer's morning across the counter. But a moment before the clerk had been in a place where he would fain have lingered—a city where blue waters flow swiftly between white palaces toward the sunrise.

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> "And I have fitted up some chambers there
> Looking toward the golden Eastern air,
> And level with the living winds, which flow
> Like waves above the living waves below."

Little did William Wetherell guess, when he glanced up at the intruder, that he was looking upon one of the forces of his own life! The countryman wore a blue swallow tail coat (fashioned by the hand of Speedy Bates), a neck-cloth, a coonskin cap, and his trousers were tucked into rawhide boots. He did not seem a promising customer for expensive jewellery, and the literary clerk did not rise, but merely closed his book with his thumb in it.

"S-sell things here," asked the countryman, "s-sell things here?"

"Occasionally, when folks have money to buy them."

"My name's Jethro Bass," said the countryman, "Jethro Bass from Coniston. Ever hear of Coniston?"

Young Mr. Wetherell never had, but many years afterward he remembered his name, heaven knows why. Jethro Bass! Perhaps it had a strange ring to it.

"F-folks told me to be careful," was Jethro's next remark. He did not look at the clerk, but kept his eyes fixed on the things within the counter.

"Somebody ought to have come with you," said the clerk, with a smile of superiority.

"D-don't know much about city ways."

"Well," said the clerk, beginning to be amused, "a man has to keep his wits about him."

Even then Jethro spared him a look, but continued to study the contents of the case.

"What can I do for you, Mr. Bass? We have some really good things here. For example, this Swiss watch, which I will sell you cheap, for one hundred and fifty dollars."

"One hundred and fifty dollars—er—one hundred and fifty?"

Wetherell nodded. Still the countryman did not look up.

"F-folks told me to be careful," he repeated without a smile. He was looking at the lockets, and finally pointed a large finger at one of them—the most expensive, by the way. "W-what d'ye get for that?" he asked.

“Twenty dollars,” the clerk promptly replied. Thirty was nearer the price, but what did it matter.

“H-how much for that?” he said, pointing to another. The clerk told him. He inquired about them all, deliberately repeating the sums, considering with so well-feigned an air of a purchaser that Mr. Wetherell began to take a real joy in the situation. For trade was slack in August, and diversion scarce. Finally he commanded that the case be put on the top of the counter, and Wetherell humored him. Whereupon he picked up the locket he had first chosen. It looked very delicate in his huge, rough hand, and Wetherell was surprised that the eyes of Mr. Bass had been caught by the most expensive, for it was far from being the showiest.

“T-twenty dollars?” he asked.

“We may as well call it that,” laughed Wetherell.

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“It’s not too good for Cynthy,” he said.

“Nothing’s too good for Cynthy,” answered Mr. Wetherell, mockingly, little knowing how he might come to mean it.

Jethro Bass paid no attention to this speech. Pulling a great cowhide wallet from his pocket, still holding the locket in his hand, to the amazement of the clerk he counted out twenty dollars and laid them down.

“G-guess I’ll take that one, g-guess I’ll take that one,” he said.

Then he looked at Mr. Wetherell for the first time.

“Hold!” cried the clerk, more alarmed than he cared to show, “that’s not the price. Did you think I could sell it for that price?”

“W-wahn’t that the price you fixed?”

“You simpleton!” retorted Wetherell, with a conviction now that he was calling him the wrong name. “Give me back the locket, and you shall have your money, again.”

“W-wahn’t that the price you fixed?”

“Yes, but—”

“G-guess I’ll keep the locket—g-guess I’ll keep the locket.”

Wetherell looked at him aghast, and there was no doubt about his determination. With a sinking heart the clerk realized that he should have to make good to Mr. Judson the seven odd dollars of difference, and then he lost his head. Slipping round the counter to the door of the shop, he turned the key, thrust it in his pocket, and faced Mr. Bass again —from behind the counter.

“You don’t leave this shop,” cried the clerk, “until you give me back that locket.”

Jethro Bass turned. A bench ran along the farther wall, and there he planted himself without a word, while the clerk stared at him,—with what feelings of uneasiness I shall not attempt to describe,—for the customer was plainly determined to wait until hunger should drive one of them forth. The minutes passed, and Wetherell began to hate him. Then some one tried the door, peered in through the glass, perceived Jethro, shook the knob, knocked violently, all to no purpose. Jethro seemed lost in a reverie.

“This has gone far enough,” said the clerk, trying to keep his voice from shaking “it is beyond a joke. Give me back the locket.” And he tendered Jethro the money again.

“W-wahn’t that the price you fixed?” asked Jethro, innocently.

Wetherell choked. The man outside shook the door again, and people on the sidewalk stopped, and presently against the window panes a sea of curious faces gazed in upon them. Mr. Bass’s thoughts apparently were fixed on Eternity—he looked neither at the people nor at Wetherell. And then, the crowd parting as for one in authority, as in a bad dream the clerk saw his employer, Mr. Judson, courteously pushing away the customer at the door who would not be denied. Another moment, and Mr. Judson had gained admittance with his private key, and stood on the threshold staring at clerk and customer. Jethro gave no sign that the situation had changed.

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“William,” said Mr. Judson, in a dangerously quiet voice, “perhaps you can explain this extraordinary state of affairs.”

“I can, sir,” William cried. “This gentleman” (the word stuck in his throat), “this gentleman came in here to examine lockets which I had no reason to believe he would buy. I admit my fault, sir. He asked the price of the most expensive, and I told him twenty dollars, merely for a jest, sir.” William hesitated.

“Well?” said Mr. Judson.

“After pricing every locket in the case, he seized the first one, handed me twenty dollars, and now refuses to give it up, although he knows the price is twenty-seven.”

“Then?”

“Then I locked the door, sir. He sat down there, and hasn’t moved since.”

Mr. Judson looked again at Mr. Bass; this time with unmistakable interest. The other customer began to laugh, and the crowd was pressing in, and Mr. Judson turned and shut the door in their faces. All this time Mr. Bass had not moved, not so much as to lift his head or shift one of his great cowhide boots.

“Well, sir,” demanded Mr. Judson, “what have you to say?”

“N-nothin’. G-guess I’ll keep the locket. I’ve, paid for it—I’ve paid for it.”

“And you are aware, my friend,” said Mr. Judson, “that my clerk has given you the wrong price?”

“Guess that’s his lookout.” He still sat there, doggedly unconcerned.

A bull would have seemed more at home in a china shop than Jethro Bass in a jewellery store. But Mr. Judson himself was a man out of the ordinary, and instead of getting angry he began to be more interested.

“Took you for a greenhorn, did he?” he remarked.

“F-folks told me to be careful—to be careful,” said Mr. Bass.

Then Mr. Judson laughed. It was all the more disconcerting to William Wetherell, because his employer laughed rarely. He laid his hand on Jethro’s shoulder.

“He might have spared himself the trouble, my young friend,” he said. “You didn’t expect to find a greenhorn behind a jewellery counter, did you?”

“S-surprised me some,” said Jethro.

Mr. Judson laughed again, all the while looking at him.

“I am going to let you keep the locket,” he said, “because it will teach my greenhorn a lesson. William, do you hear that?”

“Yes, sir,” William said, and his face was very red.

Mr. Bass rose solemnly, apparently unmoved by his triumph in a somewhat remarkable transaction, and William long remembered how he towered over all of them. He held the locket out to Mr. Judson, who stared at it, astonished.

“What’s this?” said that gentleman; “you don’t want it?”

“Guess I’ll have it marked,” said Jethro, “ef it don’t cost extry.”

“Marked!” gasped Mr. Judson, “marked!”

“Ef it don’t cost extry,” Jethro repeated.

“Well, I’ll—” exclaimed Mr. Judson, and suddenly recalled the fact that he was a church member. “What inscription do you wish put into it?” he asked, recovering himself with an effort.

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Jethro thrust his hand into his pocket, and again the cowhide wallet came out. He tendered Mr. Judson a somewhat soiled piece of paper, and Mr. Judson read:—

> "Cynthy, from Jethro"

"Cynthy," Mr. Judson repeated, in a tremulous voice, "Cynthy, not Cynthia."

"H-how is it written," said Jethro, leaning over it, "h-how is it written?"

"Cynthy," answered Mr. Judson, involuntarily.

"Then make it Cynthy—make it Cynthy."

"Cynthy it shall be," said Mr. Judson, with conviction.

"When'll you have it done?"

"To-night," replied Mr. Judson, with a twinkle in his eye, "to-night, as a special favor."

"What time—w-what time?"

"Seven o'clock, sir. May I send it to your hotel? The Tremont House, I suppose?"

"I-I'll call," said Jethro, so solemnly that Mr. Judson kept his laughter until he was gone.

From the door they watched him silently as he strode across the street and turned the corner. Then Mr. Judson turned. "That man will make his mark, William," he said; and added thoughtfully, "but whether for good or evil, I know not."

CHAPTER IV

What Cynthia may have thought or felt during Jethro's absence in Boston, and for some months thereafter, she kept to herself. Honest Moses Hatch pursued his courting untroubled, and never knew that he had a rival. Moses would as soon have questioned the seasons or the weather as Cynthia's changes of moods,—which were indeed the weather for him, and when storms came he sat with his back to them, waiting for the sunshine. He had long ceased proposing marriage, in the firm belief that Cynthia would set the day in her own good time. Thereby he was saved much suffering.

The summer flew on apace, for Coniston. Fragrant hay was cut on hillsides won from rock and forest, and Coniston Water sang a gentler melody—save when the clouds floated among the spruces on the mountain and the rain beat on the shingles. During the still days before the turn of the year,—days of bending fruit boughs, crab-apples

glistening red in the soft sunlight,—rumor came from Brampton to wrinkle the forehead of Moses Hatch as he worked among his father's orchards.

The rumor was of a Mr. Isaac Dudley Worthington, a name destined to make much rumor before it was to be carved on the marble. Isaac D. Worthington, indeed, might by a stretch of the imagination be called the pioneer of all the genus to be known in the future as City Folks, who were, two generations later, to invade the country like a devouring army of locusts.

At that time a stranger in Brampton was enough to set the town agog. But a young man of three and twenty, with an independent income of four hundred dollars a year!—or any income at all not derived from his own labor—was unheard of. It is said that when the stage from over Truro Gap arrived in Brampton Street a hundred eyes gazed at him unseen, from various ambushes, and followed him up the walk to Silas Wheelock's, where he was to board. In half an hour Brampton knew the essentials of Isaac Worthington's story, and Sam Price was on his way with it to Coniston for distribution at Jonah Winch's store.

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Young Mr. Worthington was from Boston—no less; slim, pale, medium height, but with an alert look, and a high-bridged nose. But his clothes! Sam Price's vocabulary was insufficient here, they were cut in such a way, and Mr. Worthington was downright distinguished-looking under his gray beaver. Why had he come to Brampton? demanded Deacon Ira Perkins. Sam had saved this for the last. Young Mr. Worthington was threatened with consumption, and had been sent to live with his distant relative, Silas Wheelock.

The presence of a gentleman of leisure—although threatened with consumption—-became an all-absorbing topic in two villages and three hamlets, and more than one swain, hitherto successful, felt the wind blow colder. But in a fortnight it was known that a petticoat did not make Isaac Worthington even turn his head. Curiosity centred on Silas Wheelock's barn, where Mr. Worthington had fitted up a shop, and, presently various strange models of contrivances began to take shape there. What these were, Silas himself knew not; and the gentleman of leisure was, alas! close-mouthed. When he was not sawing and hammering and planing, he took long walks up and down Coniston Water, and was surprised deep in thought at several places.

Nathan Bass's story-and-a-half house, devoid of paint, faced the road, and behind it was the shed, or barn, that served as the tannery, and between the tannery and Coniston Water were the vats. The rain flew in silvery spray, and the drops shone like jewels on the coat of a young man who stood looking in at the tannery door. Young Jake Wheeler, son of the village spendthrift, was driving a lean white horse round in a ring: to the horse was attached a beam, and on the beam a huge round stone rolled on a circular oak platform. Jethro Bass, who was engaged in pushing hemlock bark under the stone to be crushed, straightened. Of the three, the horse had seen the visitor first, and stopped in his tracks.

"Jethro!" whispered Jake, tingling with an excitement that was but natural. Jethro had begun to sweep the finer pieces of bark toward the centre. "It's the city man, walked up here from Brampton."

It was indeed Mr. Worthington, slightly more sunburned and less citified-looking than on his arrival, and he wore a woollen cap of Brampton make. Even then, despite his wavy hair and delicate appearance, Isaac Worthington had the hawk-like look which became famous in later years, and at length he approached Jethro and fixed his eye upon him.

"Kind of slow work, isn't it?" remarked Mr. Worthington.

The white horse was the only one to break the silence that followed, by sneezing with all his might.

"How is the tannery business in these parts?" essayed Mr. Worthington again.

“Thinkin’ of it?” said Jethro. “T-thinkin’ of it, be you?”

“No,” answered Mr. Worthington, hastily. “If I were,” he added, “I’d put in new machinery. That horse and stone is primitive.”

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“What kind of machinery would you put in?” asked Jethro.

“Ah,” answered Worthington, “that will interest you. All New Englanders are naturally progressive, I take it.”

“W-what was it you took?”

“I was merely remarking on the enterprise of New Englanders,” said Worthington, flushing. “On my journey up here, beside the Merrimac, I had the opportunity to inspect the new steam-boiler, the falling-mill, the splitting machine, and other remarkable improvements. In fact, these suggested one or two little things to me, which might be of interest to you.”

“Well,” said Jethro, “they might, and then again they mightn’t. Guess it depends.”

“Depends!” exclaimed the man of leisure, “depends on what?”

“H-how much you know about it.”

Young Mr. Worthington, instead of being justly indignant, laughed and settled himself comfortably on a pile of bark. He thought Jethro a character, and he was not mistaken. On the other hand, Mr. Worthington displayed a knowledge of the falling-mill and splitting-machine and the process of tanneries in general that was surprising. Jethro, had Mr. Worthington but known it, was more interested in animate machines: more interested in Mr. Worthington than the falling-mill or, indeed, the tannery business.

At length the visitor fell silent, his sense of superiority suddenly gone. Others had had this same feeling with Jethro, even the minister; but the man of leisure (who was nothing of the sort) merely felt a kind of bewilderment.

“Callatin’ to live in Brampton—be you?” asked Jethro.

“I am living there now.”

“C-callatin’ to set up a mill some day?”

Mr. Worthington fairly leaped off the bark pile.

“What makes you say that?” he demanded.

“G-guesswork,” said Jethro, starting to shovel again, “g-guesswork.”

To take a walk in the wild, to come upon a bumpkin in cowhide boots crushing bark, to have him read within twenty minutes a cherished and well-hidden ambition which Brampton had not discovered in a month (and did not discover for many years) was

sufficiently startling. Well might Mr. Worthington tremble for his other ambitions, and they were many.

Jethro stepped out, passing Mr. Worthington as though he had already forgotten that gentleman's existence, and seized an armful of bark that lay under cover of a lean-to. Just then, heralded by a brightening of the western sky, a girl appeared down the road, her head bent a little as in thought, and if she saw the group by the tannery house she gave no sign. Two of them stared at her—Jake Wheeler and Mr. Worthington. Suddenly Jake, implike, turned and stared at Worthington.

"Cynthy Ware, the minister's daughter," he said.

"Haven't I seen her in Brampton?" inquired Mr. Worthington, little thinking of the consequences of the question.

"Guess you have," answered Jake. "Cynthy goes to the Social Library, to git books. She knows more'n the minister himself, a sight more."

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“Where does the minister live?” asked Mr. Worthington.

Jake pulled him by the sleeve toward the road, and pointed to the low gable of the little parsonage under the elms on the hill beyond the meeting-house. The visitor gave a short glance at it, swung around and gave a longer glance at the figure disappearing in the other direction. He did not suspect that Jake was what is now called a news agency. Then Mr. Worthington turned to Jethro, who was stooping over the bark.

“If you come to Brampton, call and see me,” he said. “You’ll find me at Silas Wheelock’s.”

He got no answer, but apparently expected none, and he started off down the Brampton road in the direction Cynthia had taken.

“That makes another,” said Jake, significantly, “and Speedy Bates says he never looks at wimmen. Godfrey, I wish I could see Moses now.”

Mr. Worthington had not been quite ingenuous with Jake. To tell the truth, he had made the acquaintance of the Social Library and Miss Lucretia, and that lady had sung the praises of her favorite. Once out of sight of Jethro, Mr. Worthington quickened his steps, passed the store, where he was remarked by two of Jonah’s customers, and his blood leaped when he saw the girl in front of him, walking faster now. Yes, it is a fact that Isaac Worthington’s blood once leaped. He kept on, but when near her had a spasm of fright to make his teeth fairly chatter, and than another spasm followed, for Cynthia had turned around.

“How do you do Mr. Worthington?” she said, dropping him a little courtesy. Mr. Worthington stopped in his tracks, and it was some time before he remembered to take off his woollen cap and sweep the mud with it.

“You know my name!” he exclaimed.

“It is known from Tarleton Four Corners to Harwich,” said Cynthia, “all that distance. To tell the truth,” she added, “those are the boundaries of my world.” And Mr. Worthington being still silent, “How do you like being a big frog in a little pond?”

“If it were your pond, Miss Cynthia,” he responded gallantly, “I should be content to be a little frog.”

“Would you?” she said; “I don’t believe you.”

This was not subtle flattery, but the truth—Mr. Worthington would never be content to be a little anything. So he had been judged twice in an afternoon, once by Jethro and again by Cynthia.

“Why don’t you believe me?” he asked ecstatically.

“A woman’s instinct, Mr. Worthington, has very little reason in it.”

“I hear, Miss Cynthia,” he said gallantly, “that your instinct is fortified by learning, since Miss Penniman tells me that you are quite capable of taking a school in Boston.”

“Then I should be doubly sure of your character,” she retorted with a twinkle.

“Will you tell my fortune?” he said gayly.

“Not on such a slight acquaintance,” she replied. “Good-by, Mr. Worthington.”

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“I shall see you in Brampton,” he cried, “I—I have seen you in Brampton.”

She did not answer this confession, but left him, and presently disappeared beyond the triangle of the green, while Mr. Worthington pursued his way to Brampton by the road, —his thoughts that evening not on waterfalls or machinery. As for Cynthia’s conduct, I do not defend or explain it, for I have found out that the best and wisest of women can at times be coquettish.

It was that meeting which shook the serenity of poor Moses, and he learned of it when he went to Jonah Winch’s store an hour later. An hour later, indeed, Coniston was discussing the man of leisure in a new light. It was possible that Cynthia might take him, and Deacon Ira Perkins made a note the next time he went to Brampton to question Silas Wheelock on Mr. Worthington’s origin, habits, and orthodoxy.

Cynthia troubled herself very little about any of these. Scarcely any purpose in the world is single, but she had had a purpose in talking to Mr. Worthington, besides the pleasure it gave her. And the next Saturday, when she rode off to Brampton, some one looked through the cracks in the tannery shed and saw that she wore her new bonnet.

There is scarcely a pleasanter place in the world than Brampton Street on a summer’s day. Down the length of it runs a wide green, shaded by spreading trees, and on either side, tree-shaded, too, and each in its own little plot, gabled houses of that simple, graceful architecture of our forefathers. Some of these had fluted pilasters and cornices, the envy of many a modern architect, and fan-shaped windows in dormer and doorway. And there was the church, then new, that still stands to the glory of its builders; with terraced steeple and pillared porch and the widest of checker-paned sashes to let in the light on high-backed pews and gallery.

The celebrated Social Library, halfway up the street, occupied part of Miss Lucretia’s little house; or, it might better be said, Miss Lucretia boarded with the Social Library. There Cynthia hitched her horse, gave greeting to Mr. Ezra Graves and others who paused, and, before she was fairly in the door, was clasped in Miss Lucretia’s arms. There were new books to be discussed, arrived by the stage the day before; but scarce half an hour had passed before Cynthia started guiltily at a timid knock, and Miss Lucretia rose briskly.

“It must be Ezra Graves come for the Gibbon,” she said. “He’s early.” And she went to the door. Cynthia thought it was not Ezra. Then came Miss Lucretia’s voice from the entry:—

“Why, Mr. Worthington! Have you read the Last of the Mohicans already?”

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There he stood, indeed, the man of leisure, and to-day he wore his beaver hat. No, he had not yet read the 'Last of the Mohicans.' There were things in it that Mr. Worthington would like to discuss with Miss Penniman. Was it not a social library? At this juncture there came a giggle from within that made him turn scarlet, and he scarcely heard Miss Lucretia offering to discuss the whole range of letters. Enter Mr. Worthington, bows profoundly to Miss Lucretia's guest, his beaver in his hand, and the discussion begins, Cynthia taking no part in it. Strangely enough, Mr. Worthington's remarks on American Indians are not only intelligent, but interesting. The clock strikes four, Miss Lucretia starts up, suddenly remembering that she has promised to read to an invalid, and with many regrets from Mr. Worthington, she departs. Then he sits down again, twirling his beaver, while Cynthia looks at him in quiet amusement.

"I shall walk to Coniston again, next week," he announced.

"What an energetic man!" said Cynthia.

"I want to have my fortune told."

"I hear that you walk a great deal," she remarked, "up and down Coniston Water. I shall begin to think you romantic, Mr. Worthington—perhaps a poet."

"I don't walk up and down Coniston Water for that reason," he answered earnestly.

"Might I be so bold as to ask the reason?" she ventured.

Great men have their weaknesses. And many, close-mouthed with their own sex, will tell their cherished hopes to a woman, if their interests are engaged. With a bas-relief of Isaac Worthington in the town library to-day (his own library), and a full-length portrait of him in the capitol of the state, who shall deny this title to greatness?

He leaned a little toward her, his face illumined by his subject, which was himself.

"I will confide in you," he said, "that some day I shall build here in Brampton a woollen mill which will be the best of its kind. If I gain money, it will not be to hoard it or to waste it. I shall try to make the town better for it, and the state, and I shall try to elevate my neighbors."

Cynthia could not deny that these were laudable ambitions.

"Something tells me," he continued, "that I shall succeed. And that is why I walk on Coniston Water—to choose the best site for a dam."

"I am honored by your secret, but I feel that the responsibility you repose in me is too great," she said.

“I can think of none in whom I would rather confide,” said he.

“And am I the only one in all Brampton, Harwich, and Coniston who knows this?” she asked.

Mr. Worthington laughed.

“The only one of importance,” he answered. “This week, when I went to Coniston, I had a strange experience. I left the brook at a tannery, and a most singular fellow was in the shed shovelling bark. I tried to get him to talk, and told him about some new tanning machinery I had seen. Suddenly he turned on me and asked me if I was ‘callatin’ to set up a mill.’ He gave me a queer feeling. Do you have many such odd characters in Coniston, Miss Cynthia? You’re not going?”

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Cynthia had risen, and all of the laugher was gone from her eyes. What had happened to make her grow suddenly grave, Isaac Worthington never knew.

“I have to get my father’s supper,” she said.

He, too, rose, puzzled and disconcerted at this change in her.

“And may I not come to Coniston?” he asked.

“My father and I should be glad to see you, Mr. Worthington,” she answered.

He untied her horse and essayed one more topic.

“You are taking a very big book,” he said. “May I look at the title?”

She showed it to him in silence. It was the “Life of Napoleon Bonaparte.”

CHAPTER V

Isaac Worthington came to Coniston not once, but many times, before the snow fell; and afterward, too, in Silas Wheelock’s yellow sleigh through the great drifts under the pines, the chestnut Morgan trotting to one side in the tracks. On one of these excursions he fell in with that singular character of a bumpkin who had interested him on his first visit, in coonskin cap and overcoat and mittens. Jethro Bass was plodding in the same direction, and Isaac Worthington, out of the goodness of his heart, invited him into the sleigh. He was scarcely prepared for the bumpkin’s curt refusal, but put it down to native boorishness, and thought no more about it then.

What troubled Mr. Worthington infinitely more was the progress of his suit; for it had become a snit, though progress is a wrong word to use in connection with it. So far had he got,—not a great distance,—and then came to what he at length discovered was a wall, and apparently impenetrable. He was not even allowed to look over it. Cynthia was kind, engaging; even mirthful, at times, save when he approached it; and he became convinced that a certain sorrow lay in the forbidden ground. The nearest he had come to it was when he mentioned again, by accident, that life of Napoleon.

That Cynthia would accept him, nobody doubted for an instant. It would be madness not to. He was orthodox, so Deacon Ira had discovered, of good habits, and there was the princely four hundred a year—almost a minister’s salary! Little people guessed that there was no love-making—only endless discussions of books beside the great centre chimney, and discussions of Isaac Worthington’s career.

It is a fact—for future consideration—that Isaac Worthington proposed to Cynthia Ware, although neither Speedy Bates nor Deacon Ira Perkins heard him do so. It had been

very carefully prepared, that speech, and was a model of proposals for the rising young men of all time. Mr. Worthington preferred to offer himself for what he was going to be —not for what he was. He tendered to Cynthia a note for a large amount, payable in some twenty years, with interest. The astonishing thing to record is that in twenty years he could have more than paid the note, although he could not have foreseen

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at that time the Worthington Free Library and the Truro Railroad, and the stained-glass window in the church and the great marble monument on the hill—to another woman. All of these things, and more, Cynthia might have had if she had only accepted that promise to pay! But she did not accept it. He was a trifle more robust than when he came to Brampton in the summer, but perhaps she doubted his promise to pay.

It may have been guessed, although the language we have used has been purposely delicate, that Cynthia was already in love with—somebody else. Shame of shames and horror of horrors—with Jethro Bass! With Strength, in the crudest form in which it is created, perhaps, but yet with Strength. The strength might gradually and eventually be refined. Such was her hope, when she had any. It is hard, looking back upon that virginal and cultured Cynthia, to be convinced that she could have loved passionately, and such a man! But love she did, and passionately, too, and hated herself for it, and prayed and struggled to cast out what she believed, at times, to be a devil.

The ancient allegory of Cupid and the arrows has never been improved upon: of Cupid, who should never in the world have been trusted with a weapon, who defies all game laws, who shoots people in the bushes and innocent bystanders generally, the weak and the helpless and the strong and self-confident! There is no more reason in it than that. He shot Cynthia Ware, and what she suffered in secret Coniston never guessed. What parallels in history shall I quote to bring home the enormity of such a mesalliance? Orthodox Coniston would have gone into sackcloth and ashes,—was soon to go into these, anyway.

I am not trying to keep the lovers apart for any mere purposes of fiction,—this is a true chronicle, and they stayed apart most of that winter. Jethro went about his daily tasks, which were now become manifold, and he wore the locket on its little chain himself. He did not think that Cynthia loved him—yet, but he had the effrontery to believe that she might, some day; and he was content to wait. He saw that she avoided him, and he was too proud to go to the parsonage and so incur ridicule and contempt.

Jethro was content to wait. That is a clew to his character throughout his life. He would wait for his love, he would wait for his hate: he had waited ten years before putting into practice the first step of a little scheme which he had been gradually developing during that time, for which he had been amassing money, and the life of Napoleon Bonaparte, by the way, had given him some valuable ideas. Jethro, as well as Isaac D. Worthington, had ambitions, although no one in Coniston had hitherto guessed them except Jock Hallowell—and Cynthia Ware, after her curiosity had been aroused.

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Even as Isaac D. Worthington did not dream of the Truro Railroad and of an era in the haze of futurity, it did not occur to Jethro Bass that his ambitions tended to the making of another era that was at hand. Makers of eras are too busy thinking about themselves and like immediate matters to worry about history. Jethro never heard the expression about "cracks in the Constitution," and would not have known what it meant,—he merely had the desire to get on top. But with Established Church Coniston tight in the saddle (in the person of Moses Hatch, Senior), how was he to do it?

As the winter wore on, and March town meeting approached, strange rumors of a Democratic ticket began to drift into Jonah Winch's store,—a Democratic ticket headed by Fletcher Bartlett, of all men, as chairman of the board. Moses laughed when he first heard of it, for Fletcher was an easy-going farmer of the Methodist persuasion who was always in debt, and the other members of the ticket, so far as Moses could learn of it—-were remarkable neither for orthodoxy or solidity. The rumors persisted, and still Moses laughed, for the senior selectman was a big man with flesh on him, who could laugh with dignity.

"Moses," said Deacon Lysander Richardson as they stood on the platform of the store one sunny Saturday in February, "somebody's put Fletcher up to this. He hain't got sense enough to act that independent all by himself."

"You be always croakin', Lysander," answered Moses.

Cynthia Ware, who had come to the store for buttons for Speedy Bates, who was making a new coat for the minister, heard these remarks, and stood thoughtfully staring at the blue coat-tails of the elders. A brass button was gone from Deacon Lysander's, and she wanted to sew it on. Suddenly she looked up, and saw Jock Hallowell standing beside her. Jock winked—and Cynthia blushed and hurried homeward without a word. She remembered, vividly enough, what Jack had told her the spring before, and several times during the week that followed she thought of waylaying him and asking what he knew. But she could not summon the courage. As a matter of fact, Jock knew nothing, but he had a theory. He was a strange man, Jock, who whistled all day on roof and steeple and meddled with nobody's business, as a rule. What had impelled him to talk to Cynthia in the way he had must remain a mystery.

Meanwhile the disquieting rumors continued to come in. Jabez Miller, on the north slope, had told Samuel Todd, who told Ephraim Williams, that he was going to vote for Fletcher. Moses Hatch hitched up his team and went out to see Jabez, spent an hour in general conversation, and then plumped the question, taking, as he said, that means of finding out. Jabez hemmed and hawed, said his farm was mortgaged; spoke at some length about the American citizen, however humble, having a right to vote as he chose. A most unusual line for Jabez, and the whole matter very

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mysterious and not a little ominous. Moses drove homeward that sparkling day, shutting his eyes to the glare of the ice crystals on the pines, and thinking profoundly. He made other excursions, enough to satisfy himself that this disease, so new and unheard of (the right of the unfit to hold office), actually existed. Where the germ began that caused it, Moses knew no better than the deacon, since those who were suspected of leanings toward Fletcher Bartlett were strangely secretive. The practical result of Moses' profound thought was a meeting, in his own house, without respect to party, Democrats and Whigs alike, opened by a prayer from the minister himself. The meeting, after a futile session, broke up dismally. Sedition and conspiracy existed; a chief offender and master mind there was, somewhere. But who was he?

Good Mr. Ware went home, troubled in spirit, shaking his head. He had a cold, and was not so strong as he used to be, and should not have gone to the meeting at all. At supper, Cynthia listened with her eyes on her plate while he told her of the affair.

"Somebody's behind this, Cynthia," he said. "It's the most astonishing thing in my experience that we cannot discover who has incited them. All the unattached people in the town seem to have been organized." Mr. Ware was wont to speak with moderation even at his own table. He said unattached—not ungodly.

Cynthia kept her eyes on her plate, but she felt as though her body were afire. Little did the minister imagine, as he went off to write his sermon, that his daughter might have given him the clew to the mystery. Yes, Cynthia guessed; and she could not read that evening because of the tumult of her thoughts. What was her duty in the matter? To tell her father her suspicions? They were only suspicions, after all, and she could make no accusations. And Jethro! Although she condemned him, there was something in the situation that appealed to a most reprehensible sense of humor. Cynthia caught herself smiling once or twice, and knew that it was wicked. She excused Jethro, and told herself that, with his lack of training, he could know no better. Then an idea came to her, and the very boldness of it made her grow hot again. She would appeal to him tell him that that power he had over other men could be put to better and finer uses. She would appeal to him, and he would abandon the matter. That the man loved her with the whole of his rude strength she was sure, and that knowledge had been the only salve to her shame.

So far we have only suspicions ourselves; and, strange to relate, if we go around Coniston with Jethro behind his little red Morgan, we shall come back with nothing but —suspicions. They will amount to convictions, yet we cannot prove them. The reader very naturally demands some specific information—how did Jethro do it? I confess that I can only indicate in a very general way: I can prove nothing. Nobody ever could prove anything against Jethro Bass. Bring the following evidence before any grand jury in the country, and see if they don't throw it out of court.

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Jethro in the course of his weekly round of strictly business visits throughout the town, drives into Samuel Todd's farmyard, and hitches on the sunny side of the red barns. The town of Coniston, it must be explained for the benefit of those who do not understand the word "town" in the New England senses was a tract of country about ten miles by ten, the most thickly settled portion of which was the village of Coniston, consisting of twelve houses. Jethro drives into the barnyard, and Samuel Todd comes out. He is a little man, and has a habit of rubbing the sharp ridge of his nose.

"How be you, Jethro?" says Samuel. "Killed the brindle Thursday. Finest hide you ever seed."

"G-goin' to town meetin' Tuesday—g-goin' to town meetin' Tuesday—Sam'l?" says Jethro.

"I was callatin' to, Jethro."

"Democrat—hain't ye—Democrat?"

"Callate to be."

"How much store do ye set by that hide?"

Samuel rubs his nose. Then he names a price that the hide might fetch, under favorable circumstances, in Boston—Jethro does not wince.

"Who d'ye callate to vote for, Sam'l?"

Samuel rubs his nose.

"Heerd they was a-goin' to put up Fletcher and Amos Cuthbert, an' Sam Price for Moderator." (What a convenient word is they when used politically!) "Hain't made up my mind, clear," says Samuel.

"C-comin' by the tannery after town meetin'?" inquired Jethro, casually.

"Don't know but what I kin."

"F-fetch the hide—f-fetch the hide."

And Jethro drives off, with Samuel looking after him, rubbing his nose. "No bill," says the jury—if you can get Samuel into court. But you can't. Even Moses Hatch can get nothing out of Samuel, who then talks Jacksonian principles and the nights of an American citizen.

Let us pursue this matter a little farther, and form a committee of investigation. Where did Mr. Todd learn anything about Jacksonian principles? From Mr. Samuel Price, whom they have spoken of for Moderator. And where did Mr. Price learn of these principles? Any one in Coniston will tell you that Mr. Price makes a specialty of orators and oratory; and will hold forth at the drop of a hat in Jonah Winch's store or anywhere else. Who is Mr. Price? He is a tall, sallow young man of eight and twenty, with a wedge-shaped face, a bachelor and a Methodist, who farms in a small way on the southern slope, and saves his money. He has become almost insupportable since they have named him for Moderator.

Get Mr. Sam Price into court. Here is a man who assuredly knows who they are: if we are, not much mistaken, he is their mouthpiece. Get, an eel into court. There is only one man in town who can hold an eel, and he isn't on the jury. Mr. Price will talk plentifully, in his nasal way; but he won't tell you anything.

Mr. Price has been nominated to fill Deacon Lysander Richardson's shoes in the following manner: One day in the late autumn a man in a coonskin cap stops beside Mr. Price's woodpile, where Mr. Price has been chopping wood, pausing occasionally to stare off through the purple haze at the south shoulder of Coniston Mountain.

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“How be you, Jethro?” says Mr. Price, nasally.

“D-Democrats are talkin’ some of namin’ you Moderator next meetin’,” says the man in the coonskin cap.

“Want to know!” ejaculates Mr. Price, dropping the axe and straightening up in amazement. For Mr. Price’s ambition soared no higher, and he had made no secret of it. “Wal! Whar’d you hear that, Jethro?”

“H-heerd it round—some. D-Democrat—hain’t you—Democrat?”

“Always callate to be.”

“J-Jacksonian Democrat?”

“Guess I be.”

Silence for a while, that Mr. Price may feel the gavel in his hand, which he does.

“Know somewhat about Jacksonian principles, don’t ye—know somewhat?”

“Callate to,” says Mr. Price, proudly.

“T-talk ’em up, Sam—t-talk ’em up. C-canvass, Sam.”

With these words of brotherly advice Mr. Bass went off down the road, and Mr. Price chopped no more wood that night; but repeated to himself many times in his nasal voice, “I want to know!” In the course of the next few weeks various gentlemen mentioned to Mr. Price that he had been spoken of for Moderator, and he became acquainted with the names of the other candidates on the same mysterious ticket who were mentioned. Whereupon he girded up his loins and went forth and preached the word of Jacksonian Democracy in all the farmhouses roundabout, with such effect that Samuel Todd and others were able to talk with some fluency about the rights of American citizens.

Question before the Committee, undisposed of: Who nominated Samuel Price for Moderator? Samuel Price gives the evidence, tells the court he does not know, and is duly cautioned and excused.

Let us call, next, Mr. Eben Williams, if we can. Moses Hatch, Senior, has already interrogated him with all the authority of the law and the church, for Mr. Williams is orthodox, though the deacons have to remind him of his duty once in a while. Eben is timid, and replies to us, as to Moses, that he has heard of the Democratic ticket, and callates that Fletcher Bartlett, who has always been the leader of the Democratic party,

has named the ticket. He did not mention Jethro Bass to Deacon Hatch. Why should he? What has Jethro Bass got to do with politics?

Eben lives on a southern spur, next to Amos Cuthbert, where you can look off for forty miles across the billowy mountains of the west. From no spot in Coniston town is the sunset so fine on distant Farewell Mountain, and Eben's sheep feed on pastures where only mountain-bred sheep can cling and thrive. Coniston, be it known, at this time is one of the famous wool towns of New England: before the industry went West, with other industries. But Eben Williams's sheep do not wholly belong to him they are mortgaged—and Eben's farm is mortgaged.

Jethro Bass—Eben testifies to us—is in the habit of visiting him once a month, perhaps, when he goes to Amos Cuthbert's. Just friendly calls. Is it not a fact that Jethro Bass holds his mortgage? Yes, for eight hundred dollars. How long has he held that mortgage? About a year and a half. Has the interest been paid promptly? Well, the fact is that Eben hasn't paid any interest yet.

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Now let us take the concrete incident. Before that hypocritical thaw early in February, Jethro called upon Amos Cuthbert—not so surly then as he has since become—and talked about buying his wool when it should be duly cut, and permitted Amos to talk about the position of second selectman, for which some person or persons unknown to the jury had nominated him. On his way down to the Four Corners, Jethro had merely pulled up his sleigh before Eben Williams's house, which stood behind a huge snow bank and practically on the road. Eben appeared at the door, a little dishevelled in hair and beard, for he had been sleeping.

"How be you, Jethro?" he said nervously. Jethro nodded.

"Weather looks a mite soft."

No answer.

"About that interest," said Eben, plunging into the dread subject, "don't know as I'm ready this month after all."

"G-goin' to town meetin', Eben?"

"Wahn't callatin' to," answered Eben.

"G-goin' to town meetin', Eben?"

Eben, puzzled and dismayed, ran his hand through his hair.

"Wahn't callatin' to—but I kin—I kin."

"D-Democrat—hain't ye—D-Democrat?"

"I kin be," said Eben. Then he looked at Jethro and added in a startled voice, "Don't know but what I be—Yes, I guess I be."

"H-heerd the ticket?"

Yes, Eben had heard the ticket. What man had not. Some one has been most industrious, and most disinterested, in distributing that ticket.

"Hain't a mite of hurry about the interest right now—right now," said Jethro. "M-may be along the third week in March—may be—c-can t tell."

And Jethro clucked to his horse, and drove away. Eben Williams went back into his house and sat down with his head in his hands. In about two hours, when his wife called him to fetch water, he set down the pail on the snow and stared across the next ridge at the eastern horizon, whitening after the sunset.

The third week in March was the week after town meeting!

“M-may be—c-can’t tell,” repeated Eben to himself, unconsciously imitating Jethro’s stutter. “Godfrey, I’ll hev to git that ticket straight from Amos.”

Yes, we may have our suspicions. But how can we get a bill on this evidence? There are some thirty other individuals in Coniston whose mortgages Jethro holds, from a horse to a house and farm. It is not likely that they will tell Beacon Hatch, or us; that they are going to town meeting and vote for that fatherless ticket because Jethro Bass wishes them to do so. And Jethro has never said that he wishes them to. If so, where are your witnesses? Have we not come back to our starting-point, even as Moses Hatch drove around in a circle.. And we have the advantage over Moses, for we suspect somebody, and he did not know whom to suspect. Certainly not Jethro Bass, the man that lived under his nose and never said anything—and had no right

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to. Jethro Bass had never taken any active part in politics, though some folks had heard, in his rounds on business, that he had discussed them, and had spread the news of the infamous ticket without a parent. So much was spoken of at the meeting over which Priest Ware prayed. It was even declared that, being a Democrat, Jethro might have influenced some of those under obligations to him. Sam Price was at last fixed upon as the malefactor, though people agreed that they had not given him credit for so much sense, and Jacksonian principles became as much abhorred by the orthodox as the spotted fever.

We can call a host of other witnesses if we like, among them cranky, happy-go-lucky Fletcher Bartlett, who has led forlorn hopes in former years. Court proceedings make tiresome reading, and if those who have been over ours have not arrived at some notion of the simple and innocent method of the new Era of politics note dawning—they never will. Nothing proved. But here is part of the ticket which nobody started:—

For

Senior selectman, *Fletcher Bartlett*.

(Farm and buildings on Thousand Acre Hill mortgaged to Jethro Bass.)

Second selectman, *Amos Cuthbert*.

(Farm and buildings on Town's End Ridge mortgaged to Jethro Bass.)

Third selectman, *Chester Perkins*.

(Sop of some kind to the Established Church party. Horse and cow mortgaged to Jethro Bass, though his father, the tithing-man, doesn't know it.)

Moderator, *Samuel price*.

(Natural ambition—dove of oratory and Jacksonian principles.)

etc., *etc*.

The notes are mine, not Moses's. Strange that they didn't occur to Moses. What a wealthy man has our hero become at thirty-one! Jethro Bass was rich beyond the dreams of avarice—for Coniston. Truth compels me to admit that the sum total of all his mortgages did not amount to nine thousand "dollars"; but that was a large sum of

money for Coniston in those days, and even now. Nathan Bass had been a saving man, and had left to his son one-half of this fortune. If thrift and the ability to gain wealth be qualities for a hero, Jethro had them—in those days.

The Sunday before March meeting, it blew bitter cold, and Priest Ware, preaching in mittens, denounced sedition in general. Underneath him, on the first landing of the high pulpit, the deacons sat with knitted brows, and the key-note from Isaiah Prescott's pitch pipe sounded like mournful echo of the mournful wind without.

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Monday was ushered in with that sleet storm to which the almanacs still refer, and another scarcely less important event occurred that day which we shall have to pass by for the present; on Tuesday, the sleet still raging, came the historic town meeting. Deacon Moses Hatch, his chores done and his breakfast and prayers completed, fought his way with his head down through a white waste to the meeting-house door, and unlocked it, and shivered as he made the fire. It was certainly not good election weather, thought Moses, and others of the orthodox persuasion, high in office, were of the same opinion as they stood with parted coat tails before the stove. Whoever had stirred up and organized the hordes, whoever was the author of that ticket of the discontented, had not counted upon the sleet. Heaven-sent sleet, said Deacon Ira Perkins, and would not speak to his son Chester, who sat down just then in one of the rear slips. Chester had become an agitator, a Jacksonian Democrat, and an outcast, to be prayed for but not spoken to.

We shall leave them their peace of mind for half an hour more, those stanch old deacons and selectmen, who did their duty by their fellow-citizens as they saw it and took no man's bidding. They could not see the trackless roads over the hills, now becoming tracked, and the bent figures driving doggedly against the storm, each impelled by a motive: each motive strengthened by a master mind until it had become imperative. Some, like Eben Williams behind his rickety horse, came through fear; others through ambition; others were actuated by both; and still others were stung by the pain of the sleet to a still greater jealousy and envy, and the remembrance of those who had been in power. I must not omit the conscientious Jacksonians who were misguided enough to believe in such a ticket.

The sheds were not large enough to hold the teams that day. Jethro's barn and tannery were full, and many other barns in the village. And now the peace of mind of the orthodox is a thing of the past. Deacon Lysander Richardson, the moderator, sits aghast in his high place as they come trooping in, men who have not been to town meeting for ten years. Deacon Lysander, with his white band of whiskers that goes around his neck like a sixteenth-century ruff under his chin, will soon be a memory. Now enters one, if Deacon Lysander had known it symbolic of the new Era. One who, though his large head is bent, towers over most of the men who make way for him in the aisle, nodding but not speaking, and takes his place in the chair under the platform on the right of the meeting-pause under one of the high, three-part windows. That chair was always his in future years, and there he sat afterward, silent, apparently taking no part. But not a man dropped a ballot into the box whom Jethro Bass did not see and mark.

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And now, when the meeting-house is crowded as it has never been before, when Jonah Winch has arranged his dinner booth in the corner, Deacon Lysander raps for order and the minister prays. They proceed, first, to elect a representative to the General Court. The Jacksonians do not contest that seat,—this year,—and Isaiah Prescott, fourteenth child of Timothy, the Stark hero, father of a young Ephraim whom we shall hear from later, is elected. And now! Now for a sensation, now for disorder and misrule!

“Gentlemen,” says Deacon Lysander, “you will prepare your ballots for the choice of the first Selectman.”

The Whigs have theirs written out, Deacon Moses Hatch. But who has written out these others that are being so assiduously passed around? Sam Price, perhaps, for he is passing them most assiduously. And what name is written on them? Fletcher Bartlett, of course; that was on the ticket. Somebody is tricked again. That is not the name on the ticket. Look over Sara Price’s shoulder and you will see the name—Jethro Bass.

It bursts from the lips of Fletcher Bartlett himself—of Fletcher, inflammable as gunpowder.

“Gentlemen, I withdraw as your candidate, and nominate a better and an abler man,—-Jethro Bass.”

“Jethro Bass for Chairman of the Selectmen!”

The cry is taken up all over the meeting-house, and rises high above the hiss of the sleet on the great windows. Somebody’s got on the stove, to add to the confusion and horror. The only man in the whole place who is not excited is Jethro Bass himself, who sits in his chair regardless of those pressing around him. Many years afterward he confessed to some one that he was surprised—and this is true. Fletcher Bartlett had surprised and tricked him, but was forgiven. Forty men are howling at the moderator, who is pounding on the table with a blacksmith’s blows. Squire Asa Northcutt, with his arms fanning like a windmill from the edge of the platform, at length shouts down everybody else—down to a hum. Some listen to him: hear the words “infamous outrage”—“if Jethro Bass is elected Selectman, Coniston will never be able to hold up her head among her sister towns for very shame.” (Momentary blank, for somebody has got on the stove again, a scuffle going on there.) “I see it all now,” says the Squire—-(marvel of perspicacity!) “Jethro Bass has debased and debauched this town—” (blank again, and the squire points a finger of rage and scorn at the unmoved offender in the chair) “he has bought and intimidated men to do his bidding. He has sinned against heaven, and against the spirit of that most immortal of documents—” (Blank again. Most unfortunate blank, for this is becoming oratory, but somebody from below has seized the squire by the leg.) Squire Northcutt is too dignified and elderly a person to descend to rough and tumble, but he did get his leg liberated and kicked Fletcher Bartlett in the face. Oh, Coniston, that such scenes should take place in your town

meeting! By this time another is orating, Mr. Sam Price, Jackson Democrat. There was no shorthand reporter in Coniston in those days, and it is just as well, perhaps, that the accusations and recriminations should sink into oblivion.

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At last, by mighty efforts of the peace loving in both parties, something like order is restored, the ballots are in the box, and Deacon Lysander is counting them: not like another moderator I have heard of, who spilled the votes on the floor until his own man was elected. No. Had they registered his own death sentence, the deacon would have counted them straight, and needed no town clerk to verify his figures. But when he came to pronounce the vote, shame and sorrow and mortification overcame him. Coniston, his native town, which he had served and revered, was dishonored, and it was for him, Lysander Richardson, to proclaim her disgrace. The deacon choked, and tears of bitterness stood in his eyes, and there came a silence only broken by the surging of the sleet as he rapped on the table.

“Seventy-five votes have been cast for Jethro Bass—sixty-three for Moses Hatch. Necessary for a choice, seventy—and Jethro Bass is elected senior Selectman.”

The deacon sat down, and men say that a great sob shook him, while Jacksonian Democracy went wild—not looking into future years to see what they were going wild about. Jethro Bass Chairman of the Board of Selectmen, in the honored place of Deacon Moses Hatch! Bourbon royalists never looked with greater abhorrence on the Corsican adventurer and usurper of the throne than did the orthodox in Coniston on this tanner, who had earned no right to aspire to any distinction, and who by his wiles had acquired the highest office in the town government. Fletcher Bartlett in, as a leader of the irresponsible opposition, would have been calamity enough. But Jethro Bass!

This man whom they had despised was the master mind who had organized and marshalled the loose vote, was the author of that ticket, who sat in his corner unmoved alike by the congratulations of his friends and the maledictions of his enemies; who rose to take his oath of office as unconcerned as though the house were empty, albeit Deacon Lysander could scarcely get the words out. And then Jethro sat down again in his chair—not to leave it for six and thirty years. From this time forth that chair became a seat of power, and of dominion over a state.

Thus it was that Jock Hallowell’s prophecy, so lightly uttered, came to pass.

How the remainder of that Jacksonian ticket was elected, down to the very hog-reeves, and amid what turmoil of the Democracy and bitterness of spirit of the orthodox, I need not recount. There is no moral to the story, alas—it was one of those things which inscrutable heaven permitted to be done. After that dark town-meeting day some of those stern old fathers became broken men, and it is said in Coniston that this calamity to righteous government, and not the storm, gave to Priest Ware his death-stroke.

CHAPTER VI

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And now we must go back for a chapter—a very short chapter—to the day before that town meeting which had so momentous an influence upon the history of Coniston and of the state. That Monday, too, it will be remembered, dawned in storm, the sleet hissing in the wide throats of the centre-chimneys, and bearing down great boughs of trees until they broke in agony. Dusk came early, and howling darkness that hid a muffled figure on the ice-bound road staring at the yellow cracks in the tannery door. Presently the figure crossed the yard; the door, flying open, released a shaft of light that shot across the white ground, revealed a face beneath a hood to him who stood within.

“Jethro!”

She darted swiftly past him, seizing the door and drawing it closed after her. A lantern hung on the central post and flung its rays upon his face. Her own, mercifully, was in the shadow, and burning now with a shame that was insupportable. Now that she was there, beside him, her strength failed her, and her courage—courage that she had been storing for this dread undertaking throughout the whole of that dreadful day. Now that she was there, she would have given her life to have been able to retrace her steps, to lose herself in the wild, dark places of the mountain.

“Cynthy!” His voice betrayed the passion which her presence had quickened.

The words she would have spoken would not come. She could think of nothing but that she was alone with him, and in bodily terror of him. She turned to the door again, to grasp the wooden latch; but he barred the way, and she fell back.

“Let me go,” she cried. “I did not mean to come. Do you hear?—let me go!”

To her amazement he stepped aside—a most unaccountable action for him. More unaccountable still, she did not move, now that she was free, but stood poised for flight, held by she knew not what.

“G-go if you’ve a mind to, Cynthy—if you’ve a mind to.”

“I’ve come to say something to you,” she faltered. It was not, at all the way she had pictured herself as saying it.

“H-haven’t took’ Moses—have you?”

“Oh,” she cried, “do you think I came here to speak of such a thing as that?”

“H-haven’t took—Moses, have you?”

She was trembling, and yet she could almost have smiled at this well-remembered trick of pertinacity.

“No,” she said, and immediately hated herself for answering him.

“H-haven’t took that Worthington cuss?”

He was jealous!

“I didn’t come to discuss Mr. Worthington,” she replied.

“Folks say it’s only a matter of time,” said he. “Made up your mind to take him, Cynthy? M-made up your mind?”

“You’ve no right to talk to me in this way,” she said, and added, the words seeming to slip of themselves from her lips, “Why do you do it?”

“Because I’m—interested,” he said.

“You haven’t shown it,” she flashed back, forgetting the place, and the storm, and her errand even, forgetting that Jake Wheeler, or any one in Coniston, might come and surprise her there.

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He took a step toward her, and she retreated. The light struck her face, and he bent over her as though searching it for a sign. The cape on her shoulders rose and fell as she breathed.

"'Twahn't charity, Cynthy—was it? 'Twahn't charity?"

"It was you who called it such," she answered, in a low voice.

A sleet-charged gust hurled itself against the door, and the lantern flickered.

"Wahn't it charity."

"It was friendship, Jethro. You ought to have known that, and you should not have brought back the book."

"Friendship," he repeated, "y-you said friendship?"

"Yes."

"M-meant friendship?"

"Yes," said Cynthia, but more faintly, and yet with a certain delicious fright as she glanced at him shyly. Surely there had never been a stranger man! Now he was apparently in a revery.

"G-guess it's because I'm not good enough to be anything more," he remarked suddenly. "Is that it?"

"You have not tried even to be a friend," she said.

"H-how about Worthington?" he persisted. "Just friends with him?"

"I won't talk about Mr. Worthington," cried Cynthia, desperately, and retreated toward the lantern again.

"J-just friends with Worthington?"

"Why?" she asked, her words barely heard above the gust, "why do you want to know?"

He came after her. It was as if she had summoned some unseen, uncontrollable power, only to be appalled by it, and the mountain-storm without seemed the symbol of it. His very voice seemed to partake of its strength.

"Cynthy," he said, "if you'd took him, I'd have killed him. Cynthy, I love you—I want you to be my woman—"

“Your woman!”

He caught her, struggling wildly, terror-stricken, in his arms, beat down her hands, flung back her hood, and kissed her forehead—her hair, blown by the wind—her lips. In that moment she felt the mystery of heaven and hell, of all kinds of power. In that moment she was like a seed flying in the storm above the mountain spruces whither, she knew not, cared not. There was one thought that drifted across the chaos like a blue light of the spirit: Could she control the storm? Could she say whither the winds might blow, where the seed might be planted? Then she found herself listening, struggling no longer, for he held her powerless. Strangest of all, most hopeful of all, his own mind was working, though his soul rocked with passion.

“Cynthy—ever since we stopped that day on the road in Northcutt’s woods, I’ve thought of nothin’ but to marry you—m-marry you. Then you give me that book—I hain’t had much education, but it come across me if you was to help me that way—And when I seed you with Worthington, I could have killed him easy as breakin’ bark.”

“Hush, Jethro.”

She struggled free and leaped away from him, panting, while he tore open his coat and drew forth something which gleamed in the lantern’s rays—a silver locket. Cynthia scarcely saw it. Her blood was throbbing in her temples, she could not reason, but she knew that the appeal for the sake of which she had stooped must be delivered now.

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“Jethro,” she said, “do you know why I came here—why I came to you?”

“No,” he said. “No. W—wanted me, didn’t you? Wanted me—I wanted you, Cynthy.”

“I would never have come to you for that,” she cried, “never!”

“L-love me, Cynthy—love me, don’t you?”

How could he ask, seeing that she had been in his arms, and had not fled? And yet she must go through with what she had come to do, at any cost.

“Jethro, I have come to speak to you about the town meeting tomorrow.”

He halted as though he had been struck, his hand tightening over the locket.

“T-town meetin’?”

“Yes. All this new organization is your doing,” she cried. “Do you think that I am foolish enough to believe that Fletcher Bartlett or Sam Price planned this thing? No, Jethro. I know who has done it, and I could have told them if they had asked me.”

He looked at her, and the light of a new admiration was in his eye.

“Knowed it—did you?”

“Yes,” she answered, a little defiantly, “I did.”

“H-how’d you know it—how’d you know it, Cynthy?” How did she know it, indeed?

“I guessed it,” said Cynthia, desperately, “knowing you, I guessed it.”

“A-always thought you was smart, Cynthy.”

“Tell me, did you do this thing?”

“Th-thought you knowed it—th-thought you knowed.”

“I believe that these men are doing your bidding.”

“Hain’t you guessin’ a little mite too much; Cynthy?”

“Jethro,” she said, “you told me just now that—that you loved me. Don’t touch me!” she cried, when he would have taken her in his arms again. “If you love me, you will tell me why you have done such a thing.”

What instinct there was in the man which forbade him speaking out to her, I know not. I do believe that he would have confessed, if he could. Isaac Worthington had been impelled to reveal his plans and aspirations, but Jethro Bass was as powerless in this supreme moment of his life as was Coniston Mountain to move the granite on which it stood. Cynthia's heart sank, and a note of passionate appeal came into her voice.

"Oh, Jethro!" she cried, "this is not the way to use your power, to compel men like Eben Williams and Samuel Todd and—and Lyman Hull, who is a drunkard and a vagabond, to come in and vote for those who are not fit to hold office." She was using the minister's own arguments. "We have always had clean men, and honorable and good men."

He did not speak, but dropped his hands to his sides. His thoughts were not to be fathomed, yet Cynthia took the movement for silent confession,—which it was not, and stood appalled at the very magnitude of his accomplishment, astonished at the secrecy he had maintained. She had heard that his name had been mentioned in the meeting at the house of Moses Hatch as having taken part in the matter, and she guessed something of certain of his methods. But she had felt his force, and knew that this was not the only secret of his power.

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What might he not aspire to, if properly guided? No, she did not believe him to be, unscrupulous—but merely ignorant: a man who was capable of such love as she felt was in him, a man whom she could love, could not mean to be unscrupulous. Defence of him leaped to her own lips.

“You did not know what you were doing,” she said. “I was sure of it, or I would not have come to you. Oh, Jethro! you must stop it—you must prevent this election.”

Her eyes met his, her own pleading, and the very wind without seemed to pause for his answer. But what she asked was impossible. That wind which he himself had loosed, which was to topple over institutions, was rising, and he could no more have stopped it then than he could have hushed the storm.

“You will not do what I ask—now?” she said, very slowly. Then her voice failed her, she drew her hands together, and it was as if her heart had ceased to beat. Sorrow and anger and fierce shame overwhelmed her, and she turned from him in silence and went to the door.

“Cynthy,” he cried hoarsely, “Cynthy!”

“You must never speak to me again,” she said, and was gone into the storm.

Yes, she had failed. But she did not know that she had left something behind which he treasured as long as he lived.

In the spring, when the new leaves were green on the slopes of Coniston, Priest Ware ended a life of faithful service. The high pulpit, taken from the old meeting house, and the cricket on which he used to stand and the Bible from which he used to preach have remained objects of veneration in Coniston to this day. A fortnight later many tearful faces gazed after the Truro coach as it galloped out of Brampton in a cloud of dust, and one there was watching unseen from the spruces on the hill, who saw within it a girl dressed in black, dry-eyed, staring from the window.

CHAPTER VII

Out of the stump of a blasted tree in the Coniston woods a flower will sometimes grow, and even so the story which I have now to tell springs from the love of Cynthia Ware and Jethro Bass. The flower, when it came to bloom, was fair in life, and I hope that in these pages it will not lose too much of its beauty and sweetness.

For a little while we are going to gallop through the years as before we have ambled through the days, although the reader’s breath may be taken away in the process. How Cynthia Ware went over the Truro Pass to Boston, and how she became a teacher in a high school there;—largely through the kindness of that Miss Lucretia Penniman of

whom we have spoken, who wrote in Cynthia's behalf to certain friends she had in that city; how she met one William Wetherell, no longer a clerk in Mr. Judson's jewellery shop, but a newspaper man with I know not what ambitions—and limitations in strength of body and will; how, many, many years afterward, she nursed him tenderly through a sickness and—married him, is all told in a paragraph. Marry him she did, to take care of him, and told him so. She made no secret of the maternal in this love.

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One evening, the summer after their marriage, they were walking in the Mall under the great elms that border the Common on the Tremont Street side. They often used to wander there, talking of the books he was to write when strength should come and a little leisure, and sometimes their glances would linger longingly on Colonnade Row that Bulfinch built across the way, where dwelt the rich and powerful of the city—and yet he would not have exchanged their lot for his. Could he have earned with his own hands such a house, and sit Cynthia there in glory, what happiness! But, I stray.

They were walking in the twilight, for the sun had sunk all red in the marshes of the Charles, when there chanced along a certain Mr. Judson, a jeweller, taking the air likewise. So there came into Wetherell's mind that amusing adventure with the country lad and the locket. His name, by reason of some strange quality in it, he had never forgotten, and suddenly he recalled that the place the countryman had come from was Coniston.

"Cynthia," said her husband, when Mr. Judson was gone, "did you know any one in Coniston named Jethro Bass?"

She did not answer him. And, thinking she had not heard, he spoke again.

"Why do you ask?" she said, in a low tone, without looking at him.

He told her the story. Not until the end of it did the significance of the name engraved come to him—Cynthy.

"Cynthy, from Jethro."

"Why, it might have been you!" he said jestingly. "Was he an admirer of yours, Cynthia, that strange, uncouth countryman? Did he give you the locket?"

"No," she answered, "he never did."

Wetherell glanced at her in surprise, and saw that her lip was quivering, that tears were on her lashes. She laid her hand on his arm.

"William," she said, drawing him to a bench, "come, let us sit down, and I will tell you the story of Jethro Bass. We have been happy together, you and I, for I have found peace with you. I have tried to be honest with you, William, and I will always be so. I told you before we were married that I loved another man. I have tried to forget him, but as God is my judge, I cannot. I believe I shall love him until I die."

They sat in the summer twilight, until darkness fell, and the lights gleamed through the leaves, and a deep, cool breath coming up from the sea stirred the leaves above their heads. That she should have loved Jethro seemed as strange to her as to him, and yet Wetherell was to feel the irresistible force of him. Hers was not a love that she chose,

or would have chosen, but something elemental that cried out from the man to her, and drew her. Something that had in it now, as of yore, much of pain and even terror, but drew her. Strangest of all was that William Wetherell understood and was not jealous of this thing: which leads us to believe that some essence of virility was lacking in him, some substance that makes the fighters and conquerors in this world. In such mood he listened to the story of Jethro Bass.

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“My dear husband,” said Cynthia, when she had finished, her hand tightening over his, “I have never told you this for fear that it might trouble you as it has troubled me. I have found in your love sanctuary; and all that remains of myself I have given to you.”

“You have found a weakling to protect, and an invalid to nurse,” he answered. “To have your compassion, Cynthia, is all I crave.”

So they lived through the happiest and swiftest years of his life, working side by side, sharing this strange secret between them. And after that night Cynthia talked to him often of Coniston, until he came to know the mountain that lay along the western sky, and the sweet hillsides by Coniston Water under the blue haze of autumn, aye, and clothed in the colors of spring, the bright blossoms of thorn and apple against the tender green of the woods and fields. So he grew to love the simple people there, but little did he foresee that he was to end his life among them!

But so it came to pass, she was taken from him, who had been the one joy and inspiration of his weary days, and he was driven, wandering, into unfrequented streets that he might not recall, the places where she had once trod, and through the wakeful nights her voice haunted him,—its laughter, its sweet notes of seriousness; little ways and manners of her look came to twist his heart, and he prayed God to take him, too, until it seemed that Cynthia frowned upon him for his weakness. One mild Sunday afternoon, he took little Cynthia by the hand and led her, toddling, out into the sunny Common, where he used to walk with her mother, and the infant prattle seemed to bring—at last a strange peace to his storm-tossed soul.

For many years these Sunday walks in the Common were Wetherell’s greatest pleasure and solace, and it seemed as though little Cynthia had come into the world with an instinct, as it were, of her mission that lent to her infant words a sweet gravity and weight. Many people used to stop and speak to the child, among them a great physician whom they grew to know. He was, there every Sunday, and at length it came to be a habit with him to sit down on the bench and take Cynthia on his knee, and his stern face would soften as he talked to her.

One Sunday when Cynthia was eight years old he missed them, and the next, and at dusk he strode into their little lodging behind the hill and up to the bedside. He glanced at Wetherell, patting Cynthia on the head the while, and bade her cheerily to go out of the room. But she held tight hold of her father’s hand and looked up at the doctor bravely.

“I am taking care of my father,” she said.

“So you shall, little woman,” he answered. “I would that we had such nurses as you at the hospital. Why didn’t you send for me at once?”

“I wanted to,” said Cynthia.

“Bless her good sense;” said the doctor; “she has more than you, Wetherell. Why didn’t you take her advice? If your father does not do as I tell him, he will be a very sick man indeed. He must go into the country and stay there.”

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“But I must live, Doctor,” said William Wetherell.

The doctor looked at Cynthia.

“You will not live if you stay here,” he replied.

“Then he will go,” said Cynthia, so quietly that he gave her another look, strange and tender and comprehending. He, sat and talked of many things: of the great war that was agonizing the nation; of the strong man who, harassed and suffering himself, was striving to guide it, likening Lincoln unto a physician. So the doctor was wont to take the minds of patients from themselves. And before he left he gave poor Wetherell a fortnight to decide.

As he lay on his back in that room among the chimney tops trying vainly to solve the problem of how he was to earn his salt in the country, a visitor was climbing the last steep flight of stairs. That visitor was none other than Sergeant Ephraim Prescott, son of Isaiah of the pitch-pipe, and own cousin of Cynthia Ware’s. Sergeant Ephraim was just home from the war and still clad in blue, and he walked with a slight limp by reason of a bullet he had got in the Wilderness, and he had such an honest, genial face that little Cynthia was on his knee in a moment.

“How be you, Will? Kind of poorly, I callate. So Cynthy’s b’en took,” he said sadly. “Always thought a sight of Cynthy. Little Cynthy favors her some. Yes, thought I’d drop in and see how you be on my way home.”

Sergeant Ephraim had much to say about the great war, and about Coniston. True to the instincts of the blood of the Stark hero, he had left the plough and the furrow’ at the first call, forty years of age though he was. But it had been otherwise with many in Coniston and Brampton and Harwich. Some of these, when the drafting came, had fled in bands to the mountain and defied capture. Mr. Dudley Worthington, now a mill owner, had found a substitute; Heth Sutton of Clovelly had been drafted and had driven over the mountain to implore Jethro Bass abjectly to get him out of it. In short, many funny things had happened—funny things to Sergeant Ephraim, but not at all to William Wetherell, who sympathized with Heth in his panic.

“So Jethro Bass has become a great man,” said Wetherell.

“Great!” Ephraim ejaculated. “Guess he’s the biggest man in the state to-day. Queer how he got his power began twenty-four years ago when I wahn’t but twenty. I call that town meetin’ to mind as if ’twas yesterday never was such an upset. Jethro’s be’n first Selectman ever sense, though he turned Republican in ’60. Old folks don’t fancy Jethro’s kind of politics much, but times change. Jethro saved my life, I guess.”

“Saved your life!” exclaimed Wetherell.

“Got me a furlough,” said Ephraim. “Guess I would have died in the hospital if he hadn’t got it so all-fired quick, and he druv down to Brampton to fetch me back. You’d have thought I was General Grant the way folks treated me.”

“You went back to the war after your leg healed?” Wetherell asked, in wondering admiration of the man’s courage.

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“Well,” said Ephraim, simply, “the other boys was gettin’ full of bullets and dysentery, and it didn’t seem just right. The leg troubles me some on wet days, but not to amount to much. You hain’t thinkin’ of dyin’ yourself, be ye, William?”

William was thinking very seriously of it, but it was Cynthia who spoke, and startled them both.

“The doctor says he will die if he doesn’t go to the country.”

“Somethin’ like consumption, William?” asked Ephraim.

“So the doctor said.”

“So I callated,” said Ephraim. “Come back to Coniston with me; there hain’t a healthier place in New England.”

“How could I support myself in Coniston?” Wetherell asked.

Ephraim ruminated. Suddenly he stuck his hand into the bosom of his blue coat, and his face lighted and even gushed as he drew out a crumpled letter.

“It don’t take much gumption to run a store, does it, William? Guess you could run a store, couldn’t you?”

“I would try anything,” said Wetherell.

“Well,” said Ephraim’ “there’s the store at Coniston. With folks goin’ West, and all that, nobody seems to want it much.” He looked at the letter. “Lem Hallowell’ says there hain’t nobody to take it.”

“Jonah Winch’s!” exclaimed Wetherell.

“Jonah made it go, but that was before all this hullabaloo about Temperance Cadets and what not. Jonah sold good rum, but now you can’t get nothin’ in Coniston but hard cider and potato whiskey. Still, it’s the place for somebody without much get-up,” and he eyed his cousin by marriage. “Better come and try it, William.”

So much for dreams! Instead of a successor to Irving and Emerson, William Wetherell became a successor to Jonah Winch.

That journey to Coniston was full of wonder to Cynthia, and of wonder and sadness to Wetherell, for it was the way his other Cynthia had come to Boston. From the state capital the railroad followed the same deep valley as the old coach road, but ended at Truro, and then they took stage over Truro Pass for Brampton, where honest Ephraim awaited them and their slender luggage with a team. Brampton, with its wide-shadowed

green, and terrace-steepled church; home once of the Social Library and Lucretia Penniman, now famous; home now of Isaac Dudley Worthington, whose great mills the stage driver had pointed out to them on Coniston Water as they entered the town.

Then came a drive through the cool evening to Coniston, Ephraim showing them landmarks. There was Deacon Lysander's house, where little Rias Richardson lived now; and on that slope and hidden in its forest nook, among the birches and briers, the little schoolhouse where Cynthia had learned to spell; here, where the road made an aisle in the woods, she had met Jethro. The choir of the birds was singing an evening anthem now as then, to the lower notes of Coniston Water, and the moist, hothouse fragrance of the ferns rose from the deep places.

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At last they came suddenly upon the little hamlet of Coniston itself. There was the flagpole and the triangular green, scene of many a muster; Jonah Winch's store, with its horse block and checker-paned windows, just as Jonah had left it; Nathan Bass's tannery shed, now weather-stained and neglected, for Jethro lived on Thousand Acre Hill now; the Prescott house, home of the Stark hero, where Ephraim lived, "innocent of paint" (as one of Coniston's sons has put it), "innocent of paint as a Coniston maiden's face"; the white meeting-house, where Priest Ware had preached—and the parsonage. Cynthia and Wetherell loitered in front of it, while the blue shadow of the mountain deepened into night, until Mr. Satterlee, the minister, found them there, and they went in and stood reverently in the little chamber on the right of the door, which had been Cynthia's.

Long Wetherell lay awake that night, in his room at the gable-end over the store, listening to the rustling of the great oak beside the windows, to the whippoorwills calling across Coniston Water. But at last a peace descended upon him, and he slept: yes, and awoke with the same sense of peace at little Cynthia's touch, to go out into the cool morning, when the mountain side was in myriad sheens of green under the rising sun. Behind the store was an old-fashioned garden, set about by a neat stone wall, hidden here and there by the masses of lilac and currant bushes, and at the south of it was a great rose-covered boulder of granite. And beyond, through the foliage of the willows and the low apple trees which Jonah Winch had set out, Coniston Water gleamed and tumbled. Under an arching elm near the house was the well, stone-rimmed, with its long pole and crotch, and bucket all green with the damp moss which clung to it.

Ephraim Prescott had been right when he had declared that it did not take much gumption to keep store in Coniston. William Wetherell merely assumed certain obligations at the Brampton bank, and Lem Hallowell, Jock's son, who now drove the Brampton stage, brought the goods to the door. Little Rias Richardson was willing to come in, and help move the barrels, and on such occasions wore carpet slippers to save his shoes. William still had time for his books; in that Coniston air he began to feel stronger, and to wonder whether he might not be a Washington Irving yet. And yet he had one worry and one fear, and both of these concerned one man,—Jethro Bass. Him, by her own confession, Cynthia Ware had loved to her dying day, hating herself for it: and he, William Wetherell, had married this woman whom Jethro had loved so violently, and must always love—so Wetherell thought: that was the worry. How would Jethro treat him? that was the fear. William Wetherell was not the most courageous man in the world.

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Jethro Bass had not been in Coniston since William's arrival. No need to ask where he was. Jake Wheeler, Jethro's lieutenant in Coniston, gave William a glowing account of that Throne Room in the Pelican Hotel at the capital, from whence Jethro ruled the state during the sessions of the General Court. This legislature sat to him as a sort of advisory committee of three hundred and fifty: an expensive advisory committee to the people, relic of an obsolete form of government. Many stories of the now all-powerful Jethro William heard from the little coterie which made their headquarters in his store—-stories of how those methods of which we have read were gradually spread over other towns and other counties. Not that Jethro held mortgages in these towns and counties, but the local lieutenants did, and bowed to him as an overlord. There were funny stories, and grim stories of vengeance which William Wetherell heard and trembled at. Might not Jethro wish to take vengeance upon him?

One story he did not hear, because no one in Coniston knew it. No one knew that Cynthia Ware and Jethro Bass had ever loved each other.

At last, toward the end of June, it was noised about that the great man was coming home for a few days. One beautiful afternoon William Wetherell stood on the platform of the store, looking off at Coniston, talking to Moses Hatch—young Moses, who is father of six children now and has forgotten Cynthia Ware. Old Moses sleeps on the hillside, let us hope in the peace of the orthodox and the righteous. A cloud of dust arose above the road to the southward, and out of it came a country wagon drawn by a fat horse, and in the wagon the strangest couple Wetherell had ever seen. The little woman who sat retiringly at one end of the seat was all in brilliant colors from bonnet to flounce, like a paroquet, red and green predominating. The man, big in build, large-headed, wore an old-fashioned blue swallow-tailed coat with brass buttons, a stock, and coonskin hat, though it was summer, and the thumping of William Wetherell's heart told him that this was Jethro Bass. He nodded briefly at Moses Hatch, who greeted him with genial obsequiousness.

"Legislatur' through?" shouted Moses.

The great man shook his head and drove on.

"Has Jethro Bass ever been a member of the Legislature?" asked the storekeeper, for the sake of something to say.

"Never would take any office but Chairman of the Selectmen," answered Moses, who apparently bore no ill will for his father's sake. "Jethro kind of fathers the Legislatur', I guess, though I don't take much stock in politics. Goes down sessions to see that they don't get too gumptious and kick off the swaddlin' clothes."

"And—was that his wife?" Wetherell asked, hesitatingly.

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“Aunt Listy, they call her. Nobody ever knew how he come to marry her. Jethro went up to Wisdom once, in the centre of the state, and come back with her. Funny place to bring a wife from—Wisdom! Funnier place to bring Listy from. He loads her down with them ribbons and gewgaws—all the shades of the rainbow! Says he wants her to be the best-dressed woman in the state. Callate she is,” added Moses, with conviction. “Listy’s a fine woman, but all she knows is enough to say, ‘Yes, Jethro,’ and ’No, Jethro.’—Guess that’s all Jethro wants in a wife; but he certainly is good to her.”

“And why has he come back before the Legislature’s over?” said Wetherell.

“Cuttin’ of his farms. Always comes back hayin’ time. That’s the way Jethro spends the money he makes in politics, and he hain’t no more of a farmer than—” Moses looked at Wetherell.

“Than I’m a storekeeper,” said the latter, smiling.

“Than I’m a lawyer,” said Moses, politely.

They were interrupted at this moment by the appearance of Jake Wheeler and Sam Price, who came gaping out of the darkness of the store.

“Was that Jethro, Mose?” demanded Jake. “Guess we’ll go along up and see if there’s any orders.”

“I suppose the humblest of God’s critturs has their uses,” Moses remarked contemplatively, as he watched the retreating figures of Sam and Jake. “Leastwise that’s Jethro’s philosophy. When you come to know him, you’ll notice how much those fellers walk like him. Never seed a man who had so many imitators. Some of,’em’s took to talkie’ like him, even to stutterin’. Bijah Bixby, over to Clovelly, comes pretty nigh it, too.”

Moses loaded his sugar and beans into his wagon, and drove off.

An air of suppressed excitement seemed to pervade those who came that afternoon to the store to trade and talk—mostly to talk. After such purchases as they could remember were made, they lingered on the barrels and on the stoop, in the hope of seeing Jethro, whose habit; it was, apparently, to come down and dispense such news as he thought fit for circulation. That Wetherell shared this excitement, too, he could not deny, but for a different cause. At last, when the shadows of the big trees had crept across the green, he came, the customers flocking to the porch to greet him, Wetherell standing curiously behind them in the door. Heedless of the dust, he strode down the road with the awkward gait that was all his own, kicking up his heels behind. And behind him, heels kicking up likewise, followed Jake and Sam, Jethro apparently oblivious of their presence. A modest silence was maintained from the stoop, broken at

length by Lem Hallowell, who (men said) was an exact reproduction of Jock, the meeting-house builder. Lem alone was not abashed in the presence of greatness.

“How be you, Jethro?” he said heartily. “Air the Legislatur’ behavin’ themselves?”

“B-bout as common,” said Jethro.

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Surely nothing very profound in this remark, but received as though it were Solomon's.

Be prepared for a change in Jethro, after the galloping years. He is now fifty-seven, but he might be any age. He is still smooth-shaven, his skin is clear, and his eye is bright, for he lives largely on bread and milk, and eschews stimulants. But the lines in his face have deepened and his big features seem to have grown bigger.

"Who be you thinkin' of for next governor, Jethro?" queries Rias Richardson, timidly.

"They say Alvy Hopkins of Gosport is willin' to pay for it," said Chester Perkins, sarcastically. Chester; we fear, is a born agitator, fated to remain always in opposition. He is still a Democrat, and Jethro, as is well known, has extended the mortgage so as to include Chester's farm.

"Wouldn't give a Red Brook Seedling for Alvy," ejaculated the nasal Mr. Price.

"D-don't like Red Brook Seedlings, Sam? D-don't like 'em?" said Jethro. He had parted his blue coat tails and seated himself on the stoop, his long legs hanging over it.

"Never seed a man who had a good word to say for 'em," said Mr. Price, with less conviction.

"Done well on mine," said Jethro, "d-done well. I was satisfied with my Red Brook Seedlings."

Mr. Price's sallow face looked as if he would have contradicted another man.

"How was that, Jethro?" piped up Jake Wheeler, voicing the general desire.

Jethro looked off into the blue space beyond the mountain line.

"G-got mine when they first come round—seed cost me considerable. Raised more than a hundred bushels L-Listy put some of 'em on the table—t-then gave some to my old hoss Tom. Tom said: 'Hain't I always been a good beast, Jethro? Hain't I carried you faithful, summer and winter, for a good many years? And now you give me Red Brook Seedlings?'"

Here everybody laughed, and stopped abruptly, for Jethro still looked contemplative.

"Give some of 'em to the hogs. W-wouldn't touch 'em. H-had over a hundred bushels on hand—n-new variety. W-what's that feller's name down to Ayer, Massachusetts, deals in all kinds of seeds? Ellett—that's it. Wrote to Ellet, said I had a hundred bushels of Red Brooks to sell, as fine a lookin' potato as I had in my cellar. Made up my mind to take what he offered, if it was only five cents. He wrote back a dollar a bushel.

I-I was always satisfied with my Red Brook Seedlings, Sam. But I never raised any more—n-never raised any more."

Uproarious laughter greeted the end of this story, and continued in fits as some humorous point recurred to one or the other of the listeners. William Wetherell perceived that the conversation, for the moment at least, was safely away from politics, and in that dubious state where it was difficult to reopen. This was perhaps what Jethro wanted. Even Jake Wheeler was tongue-tied, and Jethro appeared to be lost in reflection.

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At this instant a diversion occurred—a trifling diversion, so it seemed at the time. Around the corner of the store, her cheeks flushed and her dark hair flying, ran little Cynthia, her hands, browned already by the Coniston sun, filled with wild strawberries.

“See what I’ve found, Daddy!” she cried, “see what I’ve found!”

Jethro Bass started, and flung back his head like a man who has heard a voice from another world, and then he looked at the child with a kind of stupefaction. The cry, died on Cynthia’s lips, and she stopped, gazing up at him with wonder in her eyes.

“F-found strawberries?” said Jethro, at last.

“Yes,” she answered. She was very grave and serious now, as was her manner in dealing with people.

“S-show ’em to me,” said Jethro.

Cynthia went to him, without embarrassment, and put her hand on his knee. Not once had he taken his eyes from her face. He put out his own hand with an awkward, shy movement, picked a strawberry from her fingers, and thrust it in his mouth.

“Mm,” said Jethro, gravely. “Er—what’s your name, little gal—what’s your name?”

“Cynthia.”

There was a long pause.

“Er—er—Cynthia?” he said at length, “Cynthia?”

“Cynthia.”

“Er-er, Cynthia—not Cynthy?”

“Cynthia,” she said again.

He bent over her and lowered his voice.

“M-may I call you Cynthy—Cynthy?” he asked.

“Y-yes,” answered Cynthia, looking up to her father and then glancing shyly at Jethro.

His eyes were on the mountain, and he seemed to have forgotten her until she reached out to him, timidly, another strawberry. He seized her little hand instead and held it between his own—much to the astonishment of his friends.

“Whose little gal be you?” he asked.

“Dad’s.”

“She’s Will Wetherell’s daughter,” said Lem Hallowell. “He’s took on the store. Will,” he added, turning to Wetherell, “let me make you acquainted with Jethro Bass.”

Jethro rose slowly, and towered above Wetherell on the stoop. There was an inscrutable look in his black eyes, as of one who sees without being seen. Did he know who William Wetherell was? If so, he gave no sign, and took Wetherell’s hand limply.

“Will’s kinder hipped on book-l’arnin’,” Lemuel continued kindly. “Come here to keep store for his health. Guess you may have heerd, Jethro, that Will married Cynthy Ware. You call Cynthy to mind, don’t ye?”

Jethro Bass dropped Wetherell’s hand, but answered nothing.

CHAPTER VIII

A week passed, and Jethro did not appear in the village, report having it that he was cutting his farms on Thousand Acre Hill. When Jethro was farming,—so it was said,—-he would not stop to talk politics even with the President of the United States were that dignitary to lean over his pasture fence and beckon to him. On a sultry Friday morning, when William Wetherell was seated at Jonah Winch’s desk in the cool recesses of the store slowly and painfully going over certain troublesome accounts which seemed hopeless, he was thrown into a panic by the sight of one staring at him from the far side of a counter. History sometimes reverses itself.

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“What can I do for you—Mr. Bass?” asked the storekeeper, rather weakly.

“Just stepped in—stepped in,” he answered. “W-where’s Cynthy?”

“She was in the garden—shall I get her?”

“No,” he said, parting his coat tails and seating himself on the counter. “Go on figurin’, don’t mind me.”

The thing was manifestly impossible. Perhaps Wetherell indicated as much by his answer.

“Like storekeepin’?” Jethro asked presently, perceiving that he did not continue his work.

“A man must live, Mr. Bass,” said Wetherell; “I had to leave the city for my health. I began life keeping store,” he added, “but I little thought I should end it so.”

“Given to book-l’arnin’ then, wahn’t you?” Jethro remarked. He did not smile, but stared at the square of light that was the doorway, “Judson’s jewellery store, wahn’t it? Judson’s?”

“Yes, Judson’s,” Wetherell answered, as soon as he recovered from his amazement. There was no telling from Jethro’s manner whether he were enemy or friend; whether he bore the storekeeper a grudge for having attained to a happiness that had not been his.

“Hain’t made a great deal out of life, hev you? N-not a great deal?” Jethro observed at last.

Wetherell flushed, although Jethro had merely stated a truth which had often occurred to the storekeeper himself.

“It isn’t given to all of us to find Rome in brick and leave it in marble,” he replied a little sadly.

Jethro Bass looked at him quickly.

“Er-what’s that?” he demanded. “F-found Rome in brick, left it in marble. Fine thought.” He ruminated a little. “Never writ anything—did you—never writ anything?”

“Nothing worth publishing,” answered poor William Wetherell.

“J-just dreamed’—dreamed and kept store. S—something to have dreamed—eh—-something to have dreamed?”

Wetherell forgot his uneasiness in the unexpected turn the conversation had taken. It seemed very strange to him that he was at last face to face again wish the man whom Cynthia Ware had never been able to drive from her heart. Would, he mention her? Had he continued to love her, in spite of the woman he had married and adorned? Wetherell asked himself these questions before he spoke.

“It is more to have accomplished,” he said.

“S-something to have dreamed,” repeated Jethro, rising slowly from the counter. He went toward the doorway that led into the garden, and there he halted and stood listening.

“C-Cynthy!” he said, “C-Cynthy!”

Wetherell dropped his pen at the sound of the name on Jethro’s lips. But it was little Cynthia he was calling little Cynthia in the garden. The child came at his voice, and stood looking up at him silently.

“H-how old be you, Cynthy?”

“Nine,” answered Cynthia, promptly.

“L-like the country, Cynthy—like the country better than the city?”

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“Oh, yes,” said Cynthia.

“And country folks? L—like country folks better than city folks?”

“I didn’t know many city folks,” said Cynthia. “I liked the old doctor who sent Daddy up here ever so much, and I liked Mrs. Darwin.”

“Mis’ Darwin?”

“She kept the house we lived in. She used to give me cookies,” said Cynthia, “and bread to feed the pigeons.”

“Pigeons? F-folks keep pigeons in the city?”

“Oh, no,” said Cynthia, laughing at such an idea; “the pigeons came on the roof under our window, and they used to fly right up on the window-sill and feed out of my hand. They kept me company while Daddy, was away, working. On Sundays we used to go into the Common and feed them, before Daddy got sick. The Common was something like the country, only not half as nice.”

“C-couldn’t pick flowers in the Common and go barefoot—e—couldn’t go barefoot, Cynthy?”

“Oh, no,” said Cynthia, laughing again at his sober face.

“C-couldn’t dig up the Common and plant flowers—could you?”

“Of course you couldn’t.”

“P-plant ’em out there?” asked Jethro.

“Oh, yes,” cried Cynthia; “I’ll show you.” She hesitated a moment, and then thrust her hand into his. “Do you want to see?”

“Guess I do,” said he, energetically, and she led him into the garden, pointing out with pride the rows of sweet peas and pansies, which she had made herself. Impelled by a strange curiosity, William Wetherell went to the door and watched them. There was a look on the face of Jethro Bass that was new to it as he listened to the child talk of the wondrous things around them that summer’s day,—the flowers and the bees and the brook (they must go down and stand on the brink of it), and the songs of the vireo and the hermit thrush.

“Hain’t lonely here, Cynthy—hain’t lonely here?” he said.

“Not in the country,” said Cynthia. Suddenly she lifted her eyes to his with a questioning look. “Are you lonely, sometimes?”

He did not answer at once.

“Not with you, Cynthy—not with you.”

By all of which it will be seen that the acquaintance was progressing. They sat down for a while on the old millstone that formed the step, and there discussed Cynthia’s tastes. She was too old for dolls, Jethro supposed. Yes, Cynthia was too old for dolls. She did not say so, but the only doll she had ever owned had become insipid when the delight of such a reality as taking care of a helpless father had been thrust upon her. Books, suggested Jethro. Books she had known from her earliest infancy: they had been piled around that bedroom over the roof. Books and book lore and the command of the English tongue were William Wetherell’s only legacies to his daughter, and many an evening that spring she had read him to sleep from classic volumes of prose and poetry I hesitate to name, for fear you will think her precocious. They went across the green to Cousin Ephraim Prescott’s harness shop, where Jethro had tied his horse, and it was settled that Cynthia liked books.

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On the morning following this extraordinary conversation, Jethro Bass and his wife departed for the state capital. Listy was bedecked in amazing greens and yellows, and Jethro drove, looking neither to the right nor left, his coat tails hanging down behind the seat, the reins lying slack across the plump quarters of his horse—the same fat Tom who, by the way, had so indignantly spurned the Iced Brook Seedlings. And Jake Wheeler went along to bring back the team from Brampton. To such base uses are political lieutenants sometimes put, although fate would have told you it was an honor, and he came back to the store that evening fairly bristling with political secrets which he could not be induced to impart.

One evening a fortnight later, while the lieutenant was holding forth in commendably general terms on the politics of the state to a speechless if not wholly admiring audience, a bomb burst in their midst. William Wetherell did not know that it was a periodical bomb, like those flung at regular intervals from the Union mortars into Vicksburg. These bombs, at any rate, never failed to cause consternation and fright in Coniston, although they never did any harm. One thing noticeable, they were always fired in Jethro's absence. And the bombardier was always Chester Perkins, son of the most unbending and rigorous of tithing-men, but Chester resembled his father in no particular save that he, too, was a deacon and a pillar of the church. Deacon Ira had been tall and gaunt and sunken and uncommunicative. Chester was stout, and said to perspire even in winter, apoplectic, irascible, talkative, and still, as has been said, a Democrat. He drove up to the store this evening to the not inappropriate rumble of distant thunder, and he stood up in his wagon in front of the gathering and shook his fist in Jake Wheeler's face.

"This town's tired of puttin' up with a King," he cried. "Yes, King-=I said it, and I don't care who hears me. It's time to stop this one-man rule. You kin go and tell him I said it, Jake Wheeler, if you've a mind to. I guess there's plenty who'll do that."

An uneasy silence followed—the silence which cries treason louder than any voice. Some shifted uneasily, and spat, and Jake Wheeler thrust his hands in his pockets and walked away, as much as to say that it was treason even to listen to such talk. Lem Hallowell seemed unperturbed.

"On the rampage agin, Chet?" he remarked.

"You'd ought to know better, Lem," cried the enraged Chester; "hain't the hull road by the Four Corners ready to drop into the brook? What be you a-goin' to do about it?"

"I'll show you when I git to it," answered Lem, quietly. And, show them he did.

"Git to it!" shouted Chester, scornfully, "I'll git to it. I'll tell you right now I'm a candidate for the Chairman of the Selectmen, if town meetin' is eight months away. An', Sam Price, I'll expect the Democrats to git into line."

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With this ultimatum Chester drove away as rapidly as he had come.

“I want to know!” said Sam Price, an exclamation peculiarly suited to his voice. But nevertheless Sam might be counted on in each of these little rebellions. He, too, had remained steadfast to Jacksonian principles, and he had never forgiven Jethro about a little matter of a state office which he (Sam) had failed to obtain.

Before he went to bed Jake Wheeler had written a letter which he sent off to the state capital by the stage the next morning. In it he indicted no less than twenty of his fellow-townsmen for treason; and he also thought it wise to send over to Clovelly for Bijah Bixby, a lieutenant in that section, to come and look over the ground and ascertain by his well-known methods how far the treason had eaten into the body politic. Such was Jake’s ordinary procedure when the bombs were fired, for Mr. Wheeler was nothing if not cautious.

Three mornings later, a little after seven o’clock, when the storekeeper and his small daughter were preparing to go to Brampton upon a very troublesome errand, Chester Perkins appeared again. It is always easy to stir up dissatisfaction among the ne’er-do-wells (Jethro had once done it himself), and during the three days which had elapsed since Chester had flung down the gauntlet there had been more or less of downright treason heard in the store. William Wetherell, who had perplexities of his own, had done his best to keep out of the discussions that had raged on his cracker boxes and barrels, for his head was a jumble of figures which would not come right. And now as he stood there in the freshness of the early summer morning, waiting for Lem Hallowell’s stage, poor Wetherell’s heart was very heavy.

“Will Wetherell,” said Chester, “you be a gentleman and a student, hain’t you? Read history, hain’t you?”

“I have read some,” said William Wetherell.

“I callate that a man of parts,” said Chester, “such as you be, will help us agin corruption and a dictator. I’m a-countin’ on you, Will Wetherell. You’ve got the store, and you kin tell the boys the difference between right and wrong. They’ll listen to you, because you’re eddicated.”

“I don’t know anything about politics,” answered Wetherell, with an appealing glance at the silent group,—group that was always there. Rias Richardson, who had donned the carpet slippers preparatory to tending store for the day, shuffled inside. Deacon Lysander, his father, would not have done so.

“You know somethin’ about history and the Constitootion, don’t ye?” demanded Chester, truculently. N’Jethro Bass don’t hold your mortgage, does he? Bank in Brampton holds it—hain’t that so? You hain’t afeard of Jethro like the rest on ’em, be you?”

“I don’t know what right you have to talk to me that way, Mr. Perkins,” said Wetherell.

“What right? Jethro holds my mortgage—the hull town knows it-and he kin close me out to-morrow if he’s a mind to—”

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“See here, Chester Perkins,” Lem Hallowell interposed, as he drove up with the stage, “what kind of free principles be you preachin’? You’d ought to know better’n coerce.”

“What be you a-goin’ to do about that Four Corners road?” Chester cried to the stage driver.

“I give ’em till to-morrow night to fix it,” said Lem. “Git in, Will. Cynthy’s over to the harness shop with Eph. We’ll stop as we go ’long.”

“Give ’em till to-morrow night!” Chester shouted after them. “What you goin’ to do then?”

But Lem did not answer this inquiry. He stopped at the harness shop, where Ephraim came limping out and lifted Cynthia to the seat beside her father, and they joggled off to Brampton. The dew still lay in myriad drops on the red herd’s-grass, turning it to lavender in the morning sun, and the heavy scent of the wet ferns hung in the forest. Lem whistled, and joked with little Cynthia, and gave her the reins to drive, and of last they came in sight of Brampton Street, with its terrace-steepled church and line of wagons hitched to the common rail, for it was market day. Father and daughter walked up and down, hand in hand, under the great trees, and then they went to the bank.

It was a brick building on a corner opposite the common, imposing for Brampton, and very imposing to Wetherell. It seemed like a tomb as he entered its door, Cynthia clutching his fingers, and never but once in his life had he been so near to leaving all hope behind. He waited patiently by the barred windows until the clerk, who was counting bills, chose to look up at him.

“Want to draw money?” he demanded.

The words seemed charged with irony. William Wetherell told him, falteringly, his name and business, and he thought the man looked at him compassionately.

“You’ll have to see Mr. Worthington,” he said; “he hasn’t gone to the mills yet.”

“Dudley Worthington?” exclaimed Wetherell.

The teller smiled.

“Yes. He’s the president of this bank."’

He opened a door in the partition, and leaving Cynthia dangling her feet from a chair, Wetherell was ushered, not without trepidation, into the great man’s office, and found himself at last in the presence of Mr. Isaac D. Worthington, who used to wander up and down Coniston Water searching for a mill site.

He sat behind a table covered with green leather, on which papers were laid with elaborate neatness, and he wore a double-breasted skirted coat of black, with braided lapels, a dark purple blanket cravat with a large red cameo pin. And Mr. Worthington's features harmonized perfectly with this costume—those of a successful, ambitious man who followed custom and convention blindly; clean-shaven, save for reddish chops, blue eyes of extreme keenness, and thin-upped mouth which had been tightening year by year as the output of the Worthington Minx increased.

"Well, sir," he said sharply, "what can I do for you?"

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“I am William Wetherell, the storekeeper at Coniston.”

“Not the Wetherell who married Cynthia Ware!”

No, Mr. Worthington did not say that. He did not know that Cynthia Ware was married, or alive or dead, and—let it be confessed at once—he did not care.

This is what he did say:—

“Wetherell—Wetherell. Oh, yes, you’ve come about that note—the mortgage on the store at Coniston.” He stared at William Wetherell, drummed with his fingers on the table, and smiled slightly. “I am happy to say that the Brampton Bank does not own this note any longer. If we did,—merely as a matter of business, you understand” (he coughed),—“we should have had to foreclose.”

“Don’t own the note!” exclaimed Wetherell. “Who does own it?”

“We sold it a little while ago—since you asked for the extension—to Jethro Bass.”

“Jethro Bass!” Wetherell’s feet seemed to give way under him, and he sat down.

“Mr. Bass is a little quixotic—that is a charitable way to put it—quixotic. He does—-strange things like this once in awhile.”

The storekeeper found no words to answer, but sat mutely staring at him. Mr. Worthington coughed again.

“You appear to be an educated man. Haven’t I heard some story of your giving up other pursuits in Boston to come up here for your health? Certainly I place you now. I confess to a little interest in literature myself—in libraries.”

In spite of his stupefaction at the news he had just received, Wetherell thought of Mr. Worthington’s beaver hat, and of that gentleman’s first interest in libraries, for Cynthia had told the story to her husband.

“It is perhaps an open secret,” continued Mr. Worthington, “that in the near future I intend to establish a free library in Brampton. I feel it my duty to do all I can for the town where I have made my success, and there is nothing which induces more to the popular welfare than a good library.” Whereupon he shot at Wetherell another of his keen looks. “I do not talk this way ordinarily to my customers, Mr. Wetherell,” he began; “but you interest me, and I am going to tell you something in confidence. I am sure it will not be betrayed.”

“Oh, no,” said the bewildered storekeeper, who was in no condition to listen to confidences.

He went quietly to the door, opened it, looked out, and closed it softly. Then he looked out of the window.

“Have a care of this man Bass,” he said, in a lower voice. “He began many years ago by debauching the liberties of that little town of Coniston, and since then he has gradually debauched the whole state, judges and all. If I have a case to try” (he spoke now with more intensity and bitterness), “concerning my mills, or my bank, before I get through I find that rascal mixed up in it somewhere, and unless I arrange matters with him, I—”

He paused abruptly, his eyes going out of the window, pointing with a long finger at a grizzled man crossing the street with a yellow and red horse blanket thrown over his shoulders.

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“That man, Judge Baker, holding court in this town now, Bass owns body and soul.”

“And the horse blanket?” Wetherell queried, irresistibly.

Dudley Worthington did not smile.

“Take my advice, Mr. Wetherell, and pay off that note somehow.” An odor of the stable pervaded the room, and a great unkempt grizzled head and shoulders, horse blanket and all, were stuck into it.

“Mornin’, Dudley,” said the head, “busy?”

“Come right in, Judge,” answered Mr. Worthington. “Never too busy to see you.” The head disappeared.

“Take my advice, Mr. Wetherell.”

And then the storekeeper went into the bank.

For some moments he stood dazed by what he had heard, the query ringing in his head: Why had Jethro Bass bought that note? Did he think that the storekeeper at Coniston would be of use to him, politically? The words Chester Perkins had spoken that morning came back to Wetherell as he stood in the door. And how was he to meet Jethro Bass again with no money to pay even the interest on the note? Then suddenly he missed Cynthia, hurried out, and spied her under the trees on the common so deep in conversation with a boy that she did not perceive him until he spoke to her. The boy looked up, smiling frankly at something Cynthia had said to him. He had honest, humorous eyes, and a browned, freckled face, and was, perhaps, two years older than Cynthia.

“What’s the matter?” said Wetherell.

Cynthia’s face was flushed, and she was plainly vexed about something.

“I gave her a whistle,” said the boy, with a little laugh of vexation, “and now she says she won’t take it because I owned up I made it for another girl.”

Cynthia held it out to him, not deigning to appeal her ease.

“You must take it back,” she said.

“But I want you to have it,” said the boy.

“It wouldn’t be right for me to take it when you made it for somebody else.”

After all, people with consciences are born, not made. But this was a finer distinction that the boy had ever met with in his experience.

“I didn’t know you when I made the whistle,” he objected, puzzled and downcast.

“That doesn’t make any difference.”

“I like you better than the other girl.”

“You have no right to,” retorted the casuist; “you’ve known her longer.”

“That doesn’t make any difference,” said the boy; “there are lots of people I don’t like I have always known. This girl doesn’t live in Brampton, anyway.”

“Where does she live?” demanded Cynthia,—which was a step backward.

“At the state capital. Her name’s Janet Duncan. There, do you believe me now?”

William Wetherell had heard of Janet Duncan’s father, Alexander Duncan, who had the reputation of being the richest man in the state. And he began to wonder who the boy could be.

“I believe you,” said Cynthia; “but as long as you made it for her, it’s hers. Will you take it?”

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“No,” said he, determinedly.

“Very well,” answered Cynthia. She laid down the whistle beside him on the rail, and went off a little distance and seated herself on a bench. The boy laughed.

“I like that girl,” he remarked; “the rest of ’em take everything I give ’em, and ask for more. She’s prettier’n any of ’em, too.”

“What is your name?” Wetherell asked him, curiously, forgetting his own troubles.

“Bob Worthington.”

“Are you the son of Dudley Worthington”

“Everybody asks me that,” he said; “I’m tired of it. When I grow up, they’ll have to stop it.”

“But you should be proud of your father.”

“I am proud of him, everybody’s proud of him, Brampton’s proud of him—he’s proud of himself. That’s enough, ain’t it?” He eyed Wetherell somewhat defiantly, then his glance wandered to Cynthia, and he walked over to her. He threw himself down on the grass in front of her, and lay looking up at her solemnly. For a while she continued to stare inflexibly at the line of market wagons, and then she burst into a laugh.

“Thought you wouldn’t hold out forever,” he remarked.

“It’s because you’re so foolish,” said Cynthia, “that’s why I laughed.” Then she grew sober again and held out her hand to him. “Good-by.”

“Where are you going?”

“I must go back to my father. I—I think he doesn’t feel very well.”

“Next time I’ll make a whistle for you,” he called after her.

“And give it to somebody else,” said Cynthia.

She had hold of her father’s hand by that, but he caught up with her, very red in the face.

“You know that isn’t true,” he cried angrily, and taking his way across Brampton Street, turned, and stood staring after them until they were out of sight.

“Do you like him, Daddy?” asked Cynthia.

William Wetherell did not answer. He had other things to think about.

“Daddy?”

“Yes.”

“Does your trouble feel any better?”

“Some, Cynthia. But you mustn’t think about it.”

“Daddy, why don’t you ask Uncle Jethro to help you?”

At the name Wetherell started as if he had had a shock.

“What put him into your head, Cynthia?” he asked sharply. “Why do you call him ’Uncle Jethro’?”

“Because he asked me to. Because he likes me, and I like him.”

The whole thing was a riddle he could not solve—one that was best left alone. They had agreed to walk back the ten miles to Coniston, to save the money that dinner at the hotel would cost. And so they started, Cynthia flitting hither and thither along the roadside, picking the stately purple iris flowers in the marshy places, while Wetherell pondered.

CONISTON

BOOK 2.

CHAPTER IX

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When William Wetherell and Cynthia had reached the last turn in the road in Northcutt's woods, quarter of a mile from Coniston, they met the nasal Mr. Samuel Price driving silently in the other direction. The word "silently" is used deliberately, because to Mr. Price appertained a certain ghostlike quality of flitting, and to Mr. Price's horse and wagon likewise. He drew up for a brief moment when he saw Wetherell.

"Wouldn't hurry back if I was you, Will."

"Why not?"

Mr. Price leaned out of the wagon.

"Bije has come over from Clovelly to spy around a little mite."

It was evident from Mr. Price's manner that he regarded the storekeeper as a member of the reform party.

"What did he say, Daddy?" asked Cynthia, as Wetherell stood staring after the flitting buggy in bewilderment.

"I haven't the faintest idea, Cynthia," answered her father, and they walked on.

"Don't you know who 'Bije' is?

"No," said her father, "and I don't care."

It was almost criminal ignorance for a man who lived in that part of the country not to know Bijah Bixby of Clovelly, who was paying a little social visit to Coniston that day on his way home from the state capital,—tending, as it were, Jethro's flock. Still, Wetherell must be excused because he was an impractical literary man with troubles of his own. But how shall we chronicle Bijah's rank and precedence in the Jethro army, in which there are neither shoulder-straps nor annual registers? To designate him as the Chamberlain of that hill Rajah, the Honorable Heth Sutton, would not be far out of the way. The Honorable Heth, whom we all know and whom we shall see presently, is the man of substance and of broad acres in Clovelly: Bijah merely owns certain mortgages in that town, but he had created the Honorable Heth (politically) as surely as certain prime ministers we could name have created their sovereigns. The Honorable Heth was Bijah's creation, and a grand creation he was, as no one will doubt when they see him.

Bijah—as he will not hesitate to tell you—took Heth down in his pocket to the Legislature, and has more than once delivered him, in certain blocks of five and ten, and four and twenty, for certain considerations. The ancient Song of Sixpence applies to Bijah, but his pocket was generally full of proxies instead of rye, and the Honorable Heth

was frequently one of the four and twenty blackbirds. In short, Bijah was the working bee, and the Honorable Heth the ornamental drone.

I do not know why I have dwelt so long on such a minor character as Bijah, except that the man fascinates me. Of all the lieutenants in the state, his manners bore the closest resemblance to those of Jethro Bass. When he walked behind Jethro in the corridors of the Pelican, kicking up his heels behind, he might have been taken for Jethro's shadow. He was of a good height and size, smooth-shaven, with little eyes that kindled, and his mouth moved not at all when he spoke: unlike Jethro, he "used" tobacco.

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When Bijah had driven into Coniston village and hitched his wagon to the rail, he went direct to the store. Chester Perkins and others were watching him with various emotions from the stoop, and Bijah took a seat in the midst of them, characteristically engaging in conversation without the usual conventional forms of greeting, as if he had been there all day.

“H-how much did you git for your wool, Chester—h-how much?”

“Guess you hain’t here to talk about wool, Bije,” said Chester, red with anger.

“Kind of neglectin’ the farm lately, I hear,” observed Bijah.

“Jethro Bass sent you up to find out how much I was neglectin’ it,” retorted Chester, throwing all caution to the winds.

“Thinkin’ of upsettin’ Jethro, be you? Thinkin’ of upsettin’ Jethro?” remarked Bije, in a genial tone.

“Folks in Clovelly hain’t got nothin’ to do with it, if I am,” said Chester.

“Leetle early for campaignin’, Chester, leetle early.”

“We do our campaignin’ when we’re a mind to.”

Bijah looked around.

“Well, that’s funny. I could have took oath I seed Rias Richardson here.”

There was a deep silence.

“And Sam Price,” continued Bijah, in pretended astonishment, “wahn’t he settin’ on the edge of the stoop when I drove up?”

Another silence, broken only by the enraged breathing of Chester, who was unable to retort. Moses Hatch laughed. The discreet departure of these gentlemen certainly had its comical side.

“Rias as indoostrious as ever, Mose?” inquired Bijah.

“He has his busy times,” said Mose, grinning broadly.

“See you’ve got the boys with their backs up, Chester,” said Bijah.

“Some of us are sick of tyranny,” cried Chester; “you kin tell that to Jethro Bass when you go back, if he’s got time to listen to you buyin’ and sellin’ out of railroads.”

“Hear Jethro’s got the Grand Gulf Road in his pocket to do as he’s a mind to with,” said Moses, with a view to drawing Bijah out. But the remark had exactly the opposite effect, Bijah screwing up his face into an expression of extraordinary secrecy and cunning.

“How much did you git out of it, Bije?” demanded Chester.

“Hain’t looked through my clothes yet,” said Bijah, his face screwed up tighter than ever. “N-never look through my clothes till I git home, Chester, it hain’t safe.”

It has become painfully evident that Mr. Bixby is that rare type of man who can sit down under the enemy’s ramparts and smoke him out. It was a rule of Jethro’s code either to make an effective departure or else to remain and compel the other man to make an ineffective departure. Lem Hallowell might have coped with him; but the stage was late, and after some scratching of heads and delving for effectual banter (through which Mr. Bixby sat genial and unconcerned), Chester’s followers took their leave, each choosing his own pretext.

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In the meantime William Wetherell had entered the store by the back door—-unperceived, as he hoped. He had a vehement desire to be left in peace, and to avoid politics and political discussions forever—vain desire for the storekeeper of Coniston. Mr. Wetherell entered the store, and to take his mind from his troubles, he picked up a copy of Byron: gradually the conversation on the stoop died away, and just as he was beginning to congratulate himself and enjoy the book, he had an unpleasant sensation of some one approaching him measuredly. Wetherell did not move; indeed, he felt that he could not—he was as though charmed to the spot. He could have cried aloud, but the store was empty, and there was no one to hear him. Mr. Bixby did not speak until he was within a foot of his victim's ear. His voice was very nasal, too.

"Wetherell, hain't it?"

The victim nodded helplessly.

"Want to see you a minute."

"What is it?"

"Where can we talk private?" asked Mr. Bixby, looking around.

"There's no one here," Wetherell answered. "What do you wish to say?"

"If the boys was to see me speakin' to you, they might git suspicious—you understand," he confided, his manner conveying a hint that they shared some common policy.

"I don't meddle with politics," said Wetherell, desperately.

"Exactly!" answered Bijah, coming even closer. "I knowed you was a level-headed man, moment I set eyes on you. Made up my mind I'd have a little talk in private with you—-you understand. The boys hain't got no reason to suspicion you care anything about politics, have they?"

"None whatever."

"You don't pay no attention to what they say?"

"None."

You hear it?"

"Sometimes I can't help it."

"Ex'actly! You hear it."

“I told you I couldn’t help it.”

“Want you should vote right when the time comes,” said Bijah. “D-don’t want to see such an intelligent man go wrong an’ be sorry for it—you understand. Chester Perkins is hare-brained. Jethro Bass runs things in this state.”

“Mr. Bixby—”

“You understand,” said Bijah, screwing up his face. “Guess your watch is a-comin’ out.” He tucked it back caressingly, and started for the door—the back door. Involuntarily Wetherell put his hand to his pocket, felt something crackle under it, and drew the something out. To his amazement it was a ten-dollar bill.

“Here!” he cried so sharply in his fright that Mr. Bixby, turned around. Wetherell ran after him. “Take this back!”

“Guess you got me,” said Bijah. “W-what is it?”

“This money is yours,” cried Wetherell, so loudly that Bijah started and glanced at the front of the store.

“Guess you made some mistake,” he said, staring at the storekeeper with such amazing innocence that he began to doubt his senses, and clutched the bill to see if it was real.

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“But I had no money in my pocket,” said Wetherell, perplexedly. And then, gaining, indignation, “Take this to the man who sent you, and give it back to him.”

But Bijah merely whispered caressingly in his ear, “Nobody sent me,—you understand,—nobody sent me,” and was gone. Wetherell stood for a moment, dazed by the man’s audacity, and then, hurrying to the front stoop, the money still in his hand, he perceived Mr. Bixby in the sunlit road walking, Jethro-fashion, toward Ephraim Prescott’s harness shop.

“Why, Daddy,” said Cynthia, coming in from the garden, “where did you get all that money? Your troubles must feel better.”

“It is not mine,” said Wetherell, starting. And then, quivering with anger and mortification, he sank down on the stoop to debate what he should do.

“Is it somebody else’s?” asked the child, presently.

“Yes.”

“Then why don’t you give it back to them, Daddy?”

How was Wetherell to know, in his fright, that Mr. Bixby had for once indulged in an overabundance of zeal in Jethro’s behalf? He went to the door, laughter came to him across the green from the harness shop, and his eye following the sound, fastened on Bijah seated comfortably in the midst of the group there. Bitterly the storekeeper comprehended that, had he possessed courage, he would have marched straight after Mr. Bixby and confronted him before them all with the charge of bribery. The blood throbbed in his temples, and yet he sat there, trembling, despising himself, repeating that he might have had the courage if Jethro Bass had not bought the mortgage. The fear of the man had entered the storekeeper’s soul.

“Does it belong to that man over there?” asked Cynthia.

“Yes.”

“I’ll take it to him, Daddy,” and she held out her hand.

“Not now,” Wetherell answered nervously, glancing at the group. He went into the store, addressed an envelope to “Mr. Bijah Bixby of Clovelly,” and gave it to Cynthia. “When he comes back for his wagon, hand it to him,” he said, feeling that he would rather, at that moment, face the devil himself than Mr. Bixby.

Half an hour later, Cynthia gave Mr. Bixby the envelope as he unhitched his horse; and so deftly did Bijah slip it into his pocket, that he must certainly have misjudged its contents. None of the loungers at Ephraim’s remarked the transaction.

If Jethro had indeed instructed Bijah to look after his flock at Coniston, it was an ill-conditioned move, and some of the flock resented it when they were quite sure that Bijah was climbing the notch road toward Clovelly. The discussion (from which the storekeeper was providentially omitted) was in full swing when the stage arrived, and Lem Hallowell's voice silenced the uproar. It was Lem's boast that he never had been and never would be a politician.

"Why don't you folks quit railin' against Jethro and do somethin'?" he said. "Bije turns up here, and you all scatter like a flock of crows. I'm tired of makin' complaints about that Brampton road, and to-day the hull side of it give way, and put me in the ditch. Sure as the sun rises to-morrow, I'm goin' to make trouble for Jethro."

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“What be you a-goin’ to do, Lem?”

“Indict the town,” replied Lem, vigorously. “Who is the town? Jethro, hain’t he? Who has charge of the highways? Jethro Bass, Chairman of the Selectmen. I’ve spoke to him, time and agin, about that piece, and he hain’t done nothin’. To-night I go to Harwich and git the court to app’int an agent to repair that road, and the town’ll hev to pay the bill.”

The boldness of Lem’s intention for the moment took away their breaths, and then the awe-stricken hush which followed his declaration was broken by the sound of Chester’s fist hammering on the counter.

“That’s the sperrit,” he cried; “I’ll go along with you, Lem.”

“No, you won’t,” said Lem, “you’ll stay right whar you be.”

“Chester wants to git credit for the move,” suggested Sam Price, slyly.

“It’s a lie, Sam Price,” shouted Chester. “What made you sneak off when Bije Bixby come?”

“Didn’t sneak off,” retorted Sam, indignantly, through his nose; “forgot them eggs I left to home.”

“Sam,” said Lem, with a wink at Moses Hatch, “you hitch up your hoss and fetch me over to Harwich to git that indictment. Might git a chance to see that lady.”

“Wal, now, I wish I could, Lem, but my hoss is stun lame.”

There was a roar of laughter, during which Sam tried to look unconcerned.

“Mebbe Rias’ll take me over,” said Lem, soberly. “You hitch up, Rias?”

“He’s gone,” said Joe Northcutt, “slid out the door when you was speakin’ to Sam.”

“Hain’t none of you folks got spunk enough to carry me over to see the jedge?” demanded Lem; “my horses ain’t fit to travel to-night.” Another silence followed, and Lem laughed contemptuously but good-naturedly, and turned on his heel. “Guess I’ll walk, then,” he said.

“You kin have my white hoss, Lem,” said Moses Hatch.

“All right,” said Lem; “I’ll come round and hitch up soon’s I git my supper.”

An hour later, when Cynthia and her father and Millicent Skinner—who condescended to assist in the work and cooking of Mr. Wetherell's household—were seated at supper in the little kitchen behind the store, the head and shoulders of the stage-driver were thrust in at the window, his face shining from its evening application of soap and water. He was making eyes at Cynthia.

"Want to go to Harwich, Will?" he asked.

William set his cup down quickly.

"You hain't afeard, be you?" he continued. "Most folks that hasn't went West or died is afeard of Jethro Bass."

"Daddy isn't afraid of him, and I'm not," said Cynthia.

"That's right, Cynthy," said Lem, leaning over and giving a tug to the pigtail that hung down her back; "there hain't nothin' to be afeard of."

"I like him," said Cynthia; "he's very good to me."

"You stick to him, Cynthy," said the stage driver.

"Ready, Will?"

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It may readily be surmised that Mr. Wetherell did not particularly wish to make this excursion, the avowed object of which was to get Mr. Bass into trouble. But he went, and presently he found himself jogging along on the mountain road to Harwich. From the crest of Town's End ridge they looked upon the western peaks tossing beneath a golden sky. The spell of the evening's beauty seemed to have fallen on them both, and for a long time Lem spoke not a word, and nodded smilingly but absently to the greetings that came from the farm doorways.

"Will," he said at last, "you acted sensible. There's no mite of use of your gettin' mixed up in politics. You're too good for 'em."

"Too good!" exclaimed the storekeeper.

"You're eddicated," Lem replied, with a tactful attempt to cover up a deficiency; "you're a gentleman, ef you do keep store."

Lemuel apparently thought that gentlemen and politics were contradictions. He began to whistle, while Wetherell sat and wondered that any one could be so care-free on such a mission. The day faded, and went out, and the lights of Harwich twinkled in the valley. Wetherell was almost tempted to mention his trouble to this man, as he had been to Ephraim: the fear that each might think he wished to borrow money held him back.

"Jethro's all right," Lem remarked, "but if he neglects the road, he's got to stand for it, same's any other. I writ him twice to the capital, and give him fair warning afore he went. He knows I hain't doin' of it for politics. I've often thought," Lem continued, "that ef some smart, good woman could have got hold of him when he was young, it would have made a big difference. What's the matter?"

"Have you room enough?"

"I guess I've got the hull seat," said Lem. "As I was sayin', if some able woman had married Jethro and made him look at things a little mite different, he would have b'en a big man. He has all the earmarks. Why, when he comes back to Coniston, them fellers'll hunt their holes like rabbits, mark my words."

"You don't think—"

"Don't think what?"

"I understand he holds the mortgages of some of them," said Wetherell.

"Shouldn't blame him a great deal ef he did git tired and sell Chester out soon. This thing happens regular as leap year."

“Jethro Bass doesn’t seem to frighten you,” said the storekeeper.

“Well,” said Lem, “I hain’t afeard of him, that’s so. For the life of me, I can’t help likin’ him, though he does things that I wouldn’t do for all the power in Christendom. Here’s Jedge Parkinson’s house.”

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Wetherell remained in the wagon while Lemuel went in to transact his business. The judge's house, outlined in the starlight, was a modest dwelling with a little porch and clambering vines, set back in its own garden behind a picket fence. Presently, from the direction of the lines of light in the shutters, came the sound of voices, Lem's deep and insistent, and another, pitched in a high nasal key, deprecatory and protesting. There was still another, a harsh one that growled something unintelligible, and Wetherell guessed, from the fragments which he heard, that the judge before sitting down to his duty was trying to dissuade the stage driver from a step that was foolhardy. He guessed likewise that Lem was not to be dissuaded. At length a silence followed, then the door swung open, and three figures came down the illuminated path.

"Like to make you acquainted with Jedge Abner Parkinson, Mr. Wetherell, and Jim Irving. Jim's the sheriff of Truro County, and I guess the jedge don't need any recommendation as a lawyer from me. You won't mind stayin' awhile with the jedge while Jim and I go down town with the team? You're both literary folks."

Wetherell followed the judge into the house. He was sallow, tall and spare and stooping, clean-shaven, with a hooked nose and bright eyes—the face of an able and adroit man, and he wore the long black coat of the politician-lawyer. The room was filled with books, and from these Judge Parkinson immediately took his cue, probably through a fear that Wetherell might begin on the subject of Lemuel's errand. However, it instantly became plain that the judge was a true book lover, and despite the fact that Lem's visit had disturbed him not a little, he soon grew animated in a discussion on the merits of Sir Walter Scott, paced the room, pitched his nasal voice higher and higher, covered his table with volumes of that author to illustrate his meaning. Neither of them heard a knock, and they both stared dumfounded at the man who filled the doorway.

It was Jethro Bass!

He entered the room with characteristic unconcern, as if he had just left it on a trivial errand, and without a "How do you do?" or a "Good evening," parted his coat tails, and sat down in the judge's armchair. The judge dropped the volume of Scott on the desk, and as for Wetherell, he realized for once the full meaning of the biblical expression of a man's tongue cleaving to the roof of his mouth; the gleam of one of Jethro's brass buttons caught his eye and held it fascinated.

"Literary talk, Judge?" said Jethro. "D-don't mind me—go on."

"Thought you were at the capital," said the judge, reclaiming some of his self-possession.

"Good many folks thought so," answered Jethro, "g-good many folks."

There was no conceivable answer to this, so the judge sat down with an affectation of ease. He was a man on whom dignity lay heavily, and was not a little ruffled because Wetherell had been a witness of his discomfiture. He leaned back in his chair, then leaned forward, stretching his neck and clearing his throat, a position in which he bore a ludicrous resemblance to a turkey gobbler.

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“Most through the Legislature?” inquired the judge.

“’Bout as common,” said Jethro.

There was a long silence, and, forgetful for the moment of his own predicament, Wetherell found a fearful fascination in watching the contortions of the victim whose punishment was to precede his. It had been one of the delights of Louis XI to contemplate the movements of a certain churchman whom he had had put in a cage, and some inkling of the pleasure to be derived from this pastime of tyrants dawned on Wetherell. Perhaps the judge, too, thought of this as he looked at “Quentin Durward” on the table.

“I was just sayin’ to Lem Hallowell,” began the judge, at last, “that I thought he was a little mite hasty—”

“Er—indicted us, Judge?” said Jethro.

The judge and Wetherell heard the question with different emotions. Mr. Parkinson did not seem astonished at the miracle which had put Jethro in possession of this information, but heaved a long sigh of relief, as a man will when the worst has at length arrived.

“I had to, Jethro—couldn’t help it. I tried to get Hallowell to wait till you come back and talk it over friendly, but he wouldn’t listen; said the road was dangerous, and that he’d spoken about it too often. He said he hadn’t anything against you.”

“Didn’t come in to complain,” said Jethro, “didn’t come in to complain. Road is out of repair. W-what’s the next move?”

“I’m sorry, Jethro—I swan I’m sorry.” He cleared his throat. “Well,” he continued in his judicial manner, “the court has got to appoint an agent to repair that road, the agent will present the bill, and the town will have to pay the bill—whatever it is. It’s too bad, Jethro, that you have allowed this to be done.”

“You say you’ve got to app’int an agent?”

“Yes—I’m sorry—”

“Have you app’inted one?”

“No.”

“G-got any candidates?”

The judge scratched his head.

“Well, I don’t know as I have.”

“Well, have you?”

“No,” said the judge.

“A-any legal objection to my bein’ app’inted?” asked Jethro.

The judge looked at him and gasped. But the look was an involuntary tribute of admiration.

“Well,” he said hesitatingly, “I don’t know as there is, Jethro. No, there’s no legal objection to it.”

“A-any other kind of objection?” said Jethro.

The judge appeared to reflect.

“Well, no,” he said at last, “I don’t know as there is.”

“Well, is there?” said Jethro, again.

“No,” said the judge, with the finality of a decision. A smile seemed to be pulling at the corners of his mouth.

“Well, I’m a candidate,” said Jethro.

“Do you tell me, Jethro, that you want me to appoint you agent to fix that road?”

“I-I’m a candidate.”

“Well,” said the judge, rising, “I’ll do it.”

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“When?” said Jethro, sitting still.

“I’ll send the papers over to you within two or three days.

“O-ought to be done right away, Judge. Road’s in bad shape.”

“Well, I’ll send the papers over to you to-morrow.”

“How long—would it take to make out that app’intment—how long?”

“It wouldn’t take but a little while.”

“I’ll wait,” said Jethro.

“Do you want to take the appointment along with you to-night?” asked the judge, in surprise.

“G-guess that’s about it.”

Without a word the judge went over to his table, and for a while the silence was broken only by the scratching of his pen.

“Er—interested in roads,—Will,—interested in roads?”

The judge stopped writing to listen, since it was now the turn of the other victim.

“Not particularly,” answered Mr. Wetherell, whose throat was dry.

“C-come over for the drive—c-come over for the drive?”

“Yes,” replied the storekeeper, rather faintly.

“H-how’s Cynthy?” said Jethro.

The storekeeper was too astonished to answer. At that moment there was a heavy step in the doorway, and Lem Hallowell entered the room. He took one long look at Jethro and bent over and slapped his hand on his knee, and burst out laughing.

“So here you be!” he cried. “By Godfrey! ef you don’t beat all outdoors, Jethro. Wal, I got ahead of ye for once, but you can’t say I didn’t warn ye. Come purty nigh bustin’ the stage on that road today, and now I’m a-goin’ to hev an agent app’inted.”

“W-who’s the agent?” said Jethro.

“We’ll git one. Might app’int Will, there, only he don’t seem to want to get mixed up in it.”

“There’s the agent,” cried the judge, holding out the appointment to Jethro.

“Wh-what?” ejaculated Lem.

Jethro took the appointment, and put it in his cowhide wallet.

“Be you the agent?” demanded the amazed stage driver.

“C-callate to be,” said Jethro, and without a smile or another word to any one he walked out into the night, and after various exclamations of astonishment and admiration, the stage driver followed.

No one, indeed, could have enjoyed this unexpected coup of Jethro’s more than Lem himself, and many times on their drive homeward he burst into loud and unexpected fits of laughter at the sublime conception of the Chairman of the Selectmen being himself appointed road agent.

“Will,” said he, “don’t you tell this to a soul. We’ll have some fun out of some of the boys to-morrow.”

The storekeeper promised, but he had an unpleasant presentiment that he himself might be one of the boys in question.

“How do you suppose Jethro Bass knew you were going to indict the town?” he asked of the stage driver.

Lem burst into fresh peals of laughter; but this was something which he did not attempt to answer.

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CHAPTER X

It so happened that there was a certain spinster whom Sam Price had been trying to make up his mind to marry for ten years or more, and it was that gentleman's habit to spend at least one day in the month in Harwich for the purpose of paying his respects. In spite of the fact that his horse had been "stun lame" the night before, Mr. Price was able to start for Harwich, via Brampton, very early the next morning. He was driving along through Northcutt's woods with one leg hanging over the wheel, humming through his nose what we may suppose to have been a love-ditty, and letting his imagination run riot about the lady in question, when he nearly fell out of his wagon. The cause of this was the sight of fat Tom coming around a corner, with Jethro Bass behind him. Lem Hallowell and the storekeeper had kept their secret so well that Sam, if he was thinking about Jethro at all, believed him at that moment to be seated in the Throne Room at the Pelican House, in the capital.

Mr. Price, however, was one of an adaptable nature, and by the time he had pulled up beside Jethro he had recovered sufficiently to make a few remarks on farming subjects, and finally to express a polite surprise at Jethro's return.

"But you come a little mite late, hain't you, Jethro?" he asked finally, with all of the indifference he could assume.

"H-how's that, Sam—how's that?"

"It's too bad,—I swan it is,—but Lem Hallowell rode over to Harwich last night and indicted the town for that piece of road by the Four Corners. Took Will Wetherell along with him."

"D-don't say so!" said Jethro.

"I callate he done it," responded Sam, pulling a long face. "The court'll hev to send an agent to do the job, and I guess you'll hev to foot the bill, Jethro."

"C-court'll hev to app'int an agent?"

"I callate."

"Er—you a candidate—Sam—you a candidate?"

"Don't know but what I be," answered the usually wary Mr. Price.

"G-goin' to Harwich—hain't you?"

“Mebbe I be, and mebbe I hain’t,” said Sam, not able to repress a self-conscious snicker.

“M-might as well be you as anybody, Sam,” said Jethro, as he drove on.

It was not strange that the idea, thus planted, should grow in Mr. Price’s favor as he proceeded. He had been surprised at Jethro’s complaisance, and he wondered whether, after all, he had done well to help Chester stir people up at this time. When he reached Harwich, instead of presenting himself promptly at the spinster’s house, he went first to the office of Judge Parkinson, as became a prudent man of affairs.

Perhaps there is no need to go into the details of Mr. Price’s discomfiture on the occasion of this interview. The judge was by nature of a sour disposition, but he haw-hawed so loudly as he explained to Mr. Price the identity of the road agent that the judge of probate in the next office thought his colleague had gone mad. Afterward Mr. Price stood for some time in the entry, where no one could see him, scratching his head and repeating his favorite exclamation, “I want to know!” It has been ascertained that he omitted to pay his respects to the spinster on that day.

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Cyamon Johnson carried the story back to Coniston, where it had the effect of eliminating Mr. Price from local politics for some time to come.

That same morning Chester Perkins was seen by many driving wildly about from farm to farm, supposedly haranguing his supporters to make a final stand against the tyrant, but by noon it was observed by those naturalists who were watching him that his activity had ceased. Chester arrived at dinner time at Joe Northcutt's, whose land bordered on the piece of road which had caused so much trouble, and Joe and half a dozen others had been at work there all morning under the road agent whom Judge Parkinson had appointed. Now Mrs. Northcutt was Chester's sister, a woman who in addition to other qualities possessed the only sense of humor in the family. She ushered the unsuspecting Chester into the kitchen, and there, seated beside Joe and sipping a saucer of very hot coffee, was Jethro Bass himself. Chester halted in the doorway, his face brick-red, words utterly failing him, while Joe sat horror-stricken, holding aloft on his fork a smoking potato. Jethro continued to sip his coffee.

"B-busy times, Chester," he said, "b-busy times."

Chester choked. Where were the burning words of denunciation which came so easily to his tongue on other occasions? It is difficult to denounce a man who insists upon drinking coffee.

"Set right down, Chester," said Mrs. Northcutt, behind him.

Chester sat down, and to this day he cannot account for that action. Once seated, habit asserted itself; and he attacked the boiled dinner with a ferocity which should have been exercised against Jethro.

"I suppose the stores down to the capital is finer than ever, Mr. Bass," remarked Mrs. Northcutt.

"So-so, Mis' Northcutt, so-so."

"I was there ten years ago," remarked Mrs. Northcutt, with a sigh of reminiscence, "and I never see such fine silks and bonnets in my life. Now I've often wanted to ask you, did you buy that bonnet with the trembly jet things for Mis' Bass?"

"That bonnet come out full better'n I expected," answered Jethro, modestly.

"You have got taste in wimmin's fixin's, Mr. Bass. Strange? Now I wouldn't let Joe choose my things for worlds."

So the dinner progressed, Joe with his eyes on his plate, Chester silent, but bursting with anger and resentment, until at last Jethro pushed back his chair, and said good day to Mrs. Northcutt and walked out. Chester got up instantly and went after him, and Joe,

full of forebodings, followed his brother-in-law! Jethro was standing calmly on the grass plot, whittling a toothpick. Chester stared at him a moment, and then strode off toward the barn, unhitched his horse and jumped in his wagon. Something prompted him to take another look at Jethro, who was still whittling.

“C-carry me down to the road, Chester—c-carry me down to the road?” said Jethro.

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Joe Northcutt's knees gave way under him, and he sat down on a sugar kettle. Chester tightened up his reins so suddenly that his horse reared, while Jethro calmly climbed into the seat beside him and they drove off. It was some time before Joe had recovered sufficiently to arise and repair to the scene of operations on the road.

It was Joe who brought the astounding news to the store that evening. Chester was Jethro's own candidate for senior Selectman! Jethro himself had said so, that he would be happy to abdicate in Chester's favor, and make it unanimous—Chester having been a candidate so many times, and disappointed.

"Whar's Chester?" said Lem Hallowell.

Joe pulled a long face.

"Just come from his house, and he hain't done a lick of work sence noon time. Jest sets in a corner—won't talk, won't eat—jest sets thar."

Lem sat down on the counter and laughed until he was forced to brush the tears from his cheeks at the idea of Chester Perkins being Jethro's candidate. Where was reform now? If Chester were elected, it would be in the eyes of the world as Jethro's man. No wonder he sat in a corner and refused to eat.

"Guess you'll ketch it next, Will, for goin' over to Harwich with Lem," Joe remarked playfully to the storekeeper, as he departed.

These various occurrences certainly did not tend to allay the uneasiness of Mr. Wetherell. The next afternoon, at a time when a slack trade was slackest, he had taken his chair out under the apple tree and was sitting with that same volume of Byron in his lap—but he was not reading. The humorous aspects of the doings of Mr. Bass did not particularly appeal to him now; and he was, in truth, beginning to hate this man whom the fates had so persistently intruded into his life. William Wetherell was not, it may have been gathered, what may be called vindictive. He was a sensitive, conscientious person whose life should have been in the vale; and yet at that moment he had a fierce desire to confront Jethro Bass and—and destroy him. Yes, he felt equal to that.

Shocks are not very beneficial to sensitive natures. William Wetherell looked up, and there was Jethro Bass on the doorstep.

"G-great resource—readin'—great resource," he remarked.

In this manner Jethro snuffed out utterly that passion to destroy, and another sensation took its place—a sensation which made it very difficult for William Wetherell to speak, but he managed to reply that reading had been a great resource to him. Jethro had a parcel in his hand, and he laid it down on the step beside him; and he seemed, for once in his life, to be in a mood for conversation.

“It’s hard for me to read a book,” he observed. “I own to it—it’s a little mite hard. H-hev to kind of spell it out in places. Hain’t had much time for readin’. But it’s kind of pleasant to l’arn what other folks has done in the world by pickin’ up a book. T-takes your mind off things—don’t it?”

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Wetherell felt like saying that his reading had not been able to do that lately. Then he made the plunge, and shuddered as he made it.

“Mr. Bass—I—I have been waiting to speak to you about that mortgage.”

“Er—yes,” he answered, without moving his head, “er—about the mortgage.”

“Mr. Worthington told me that you had bought it.”

“Yes, I did—yes, I did.”

“I’m afraid you will have to foreclose,” said Wetherell; “I cannot reasonably ask you to defer the payments any longer.”

“If I foreclose it, what will you do?” he demanded abruptly.

There was but one answer—Wetherell would have to go back to the city and face the consequences. He had not the strength to earn his bread on a farm.

“If I’d a b’en in any hurry for the money—g-guess I’d a notified you,” said Jethro.

“I think you had better foreclose, Mr. Bass,” Wetherell answered; “I can’t hold out any hopes to you that it will ever be possible for me to pay it off. It’s only fair to tell you that.”

“Well,” he said, with what seemed a suspicion of a smile, “I don’t know but what that’s about as honest an answer as I ever got.”

“Why did you do it?” Wetherell cried, suddenly goaded by another fear; “why did you buy that mortgage?”

But this did not shake his composure.

“H-have a little habit of collectin’ ’em,” he answered, “same as you do books. G-guess some of ’em hain’t as valuable.”

William Wetherell was beginning to think that Jethro knew something also of such refinements of cruelty as were practised by Caligula. He drew forth his cowhide wallet and produced from it a folded piece of newspaper which must, Wetherell felt sure, contain the mortgage in question.

“There’s one power I always wished I had,” he observed, “the power to make folks see some things as I see ’em. I was acrost the Water to-night, on my hill farm, when the sun set, and the sky up thar above the mountain was all golden bars, and the river all a-flamin’ purple, just as if it had been dyed by some of them Greek gods you’re readin’

about. Now if I could put them things on paper, I wouldn't care a haycock to be President. No, sir."

The storekeeper's amazement as he listened to this speech may be imagined. Was this Jethro Bass? If so, here was a side of him the existence of which no one suspected. Wetherell forgot the matter in hand.

"Why don't you put that on paper?" he exclaimed.

Jethro smiled, and made a deprecating motion with his thumb.

"Sometimes when I hain't busy, I drop into the state library at the capital and enjoy myself. It's like goin' to another world without any folks to bother you. Er—er—there's books I'd like to talk to you about—sometime."

"But I thought you told me you didn't read much, Mr. Bass?"

He made no direct reply, but unfolded the newspaper in his hand, and then Wetherell saw that it was only a clipping.

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“H-happened to run across this in a newspaper—if this hain’t this county, I wahn’t born and raised here. If it hain’t Coniston Mountain about seven o’clock of a June evening, I never saw Coniston Mountain. Er—listen to this.”

Whereupon he read, with a feeling which Wetherell had not supposed he possessed, an extract: and as the storekeeper listened his blood began to run wildly. At length Jethro put down the paper without glancing at his companion.

“There’s somethin’ about that that fetches you spinnin’ through the air,” he said slowly. “Sh-showed it to Jim Willard, editor of the Newcastle Guardian. Er—what do you think he said?”

“I don’t know,” said Wetherell, in a low voice.

“Willard said, ’Bass, w-wish you’d find me that man. I’ll give him five dollars every week for a letter like that—er—five dollars a week.’”

He paused, folded up the paper again and put it in his pocket, took out a card and handed it to Wetherell.

James G. Willard, Editor.
Newcastle Guardian.

“That’s his address,” said Jethro. “Er—guess you’ll know what to do with it. Er—five dollars a week—five dollars a week.”

“How did you know I wrote this article?” said Wetherell, as the card trembled between his fingers.

“K-knowed the place was Coniston seen from the ’east, knowed there wahn’t any one is Brampton or Harwich could have done it—g-guessed the rest—guessed the rest.”

Wetherell could only stare at him like a man who, with the halter about his neck, has been suddenly reprieved. But Jethro Bass did not appear to be waiting for thanks. He cleared his throat, and had Wetherell not been in such a condition himself, he would actually have suspected him of embarrassment.

“Er—Wetherell?”

“Yes?”

“W-won’t say nothin’ about the mortgage—p-pay it when you can.”

This roused the storekeeper to a burst of protest, but he stemmed it.

“Hain’t got the money, have you?”

“No—but—”

“If I needed money, d’ye suppose I’d bought the mortgage?”

“No,” answered the still bewildered Wetherell, “of course not.” There he stuck, that other suspicion of political coercion suddenly rising uppermost. Could this be what the man meant? Wetherell put his hand to his head, but he did not dare to ask the question. Then Jethro Bass fixed his eyes upon him.

“Hain’t never mixed any in politics—hev you n-never mixed any?”

Wetherell’s heart sank.

“No,” he answered.

“D-don’t—take my advice—d-don’t.”

“What!” cried the storekeeper, so loudly that he frightened himself.

“D-don’t,” repeated Jethro, imperturbably.

There was a short silence, the storekeeper being unable to speak. Coniston Water, at the foot of the garden, sang the same song, but it seemed to Wetherell to have changed its note from sorrow to joy.

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“H-hear things, don’t you—hear things in the store?”

“Yes.”

“Don’t hear ’em. Keep out of politics, Will, s-stick to store-keepin’ and—and literature.”

Jethro got to his feet and turned his back on the storekeeper and picked up the parcel he had brought.

“C-Cynthy well?” he inquired.

“I—I’ll call her,” said Wetherell, huskily. “She—she was down by the brook when you came.”

But Jethro Bass did not wait. He took his parcel and strode down to Coniston Water, and there he found Cynthia seated on a rock with her toes in a pool.

“How be you, Cynthy?” said he, looking down at her.

“I’m well, Uncle Jethro,” said Cynthia.

“R-remembered what I told you to call me, hev you,” said Jethro, plainly pleased. “Th-that’s right. Cynthy?”

Cynthia looked up at him inquiringly.

“S-said you liked books—didn’t you? S-said you liked books?”

“Yes, I do,” she replied simply, “very much.”

He undid the wrapping of the parcel, and there lay disclosed a book with a very gorgeous cover. He thrust it into the child’s lap.

“It’s ’Robinson Crusoe’!” she exclaimed, and gave a little shiver of delight that made ripples in the pool. Then she opened it—not without awe, for William Wetherell’s hooks were not clothed in this magnificent manner. “It’s full of pictures,” cried Cynthia. “See, there he is making a ship!”

“Y-you read it, Cynthy?” asked Jethro, a little anxiously.

No, Cynthia hadn’t.

“L-like it, Cynthy—l-like it?” said he, not quite so anxiously.

Cynthia looked up at him with a puzzled expression.

“F-fetched it up from the capital for you, Cynthy—for you.”

“For me!”

A strange thrill ran through Jethro Bass as he gazed upon the wonder and delight in the face of the child.

“F-fetched it for you, Cynthy.”

For a moment Cynthia sat very still, and then she slowly closed the book and stared at the cover again, Jethro looking down at her the while. To tell the truth, she found it difficult to express the emotions which the event had summoned up.

“Thank you—Uncle Jethro,” she said.

Jethro, however, understood. He had, indeed, never failed to understand her from the beginning. He parted his coat tails and sat down on the rock beside her, and very gently opened the book again, to the first chapter.

“G-goin’ to read it, Cynthy?”

“Oh, yes,” she said, and trembled again.

“Er—read it to me?”

So Cynthia read “Robinson Crusoe” to him while the summer afternoon wore away, and the shadows across the pool grew longer and longer.

CHAPTER XI

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Thus William Wetherell became established in Coniston, and was started at last—poor man—upon a life that was fairly tranquil. Lem Hallowell had once covered him with blushes by unfolding a newspaper in the store and reading an editorial beginning: "We publish today a new and attractive feature of the Guardian, a weekly contribution from a correspondent whose modesty is to be compared only with his genius as a writer. We are confident that the readers of our Raper will appreciate the letter in another column signed 'W. W.'" And from that day William was accorded much of the deference due to a litterateur which the fates had hitherto denied him. Indeed, during the six years which we are about to skip over so lightly, he became a marked man in Coniston, and it was voted in towns meeting that he be intrusted with that most important of literary labors, the Town History of Coniston.

During this period, too, there sprang up the strangest of intimacies between him and Jethro Bass. Surely no more dissimilar men than these have ever been friends, and that the friendship was sometimes misjudged was one of the clouds on William Wetherell's horizon. As the years went on he was still unable to pay off the mortgage; and sometimes, indeed, he could not even meet the interest, in spite of the princely sum he received from Mr. Willard of the Guardian. This was one of the clouds on Jethro's horizon, too, if men had but known it, and he took such moneys as Wetherell insisted upon giving him grudgingly enough. It is needless to say that he refrained from making use of Mr. Wetherell politically, although no poorer vessel for political purposes was ever constructed. It is quite as needless to say, perhaps, that Chester Perkins never got to be Chairman of the Board of Selectmen.

After Aunt Listy died, Jethro was more than ever to be found, when in Coniston, in the garden or the kitchen behind the store. Yes, Aunt Listy is dead. She has flitted through these pages as she flitted through life itself, arrayed by Jethro like the rainbow, and quite as shadowy and unreal. There is no politician of a certain age in the state who does not remember her walking, clad in dragon-fly colors, through the streets of the capital on Jethro's arm, or descending the stairs of the Pelican House to supper. None of Jethro's detractors may say that he ever failed in kindness to her, and he loved her as much as was in his heart to love any woman after Cynthia Ware. As for Aunt Listy, she never seemed to feel any resentment against the child Jethro brought so frequently to Thousand Acre Hill. Poor Aunt Listy! some people used to wonder whether she ever felt any emotion at all. But I believe that she did, in her own way.

It is a well-known fact that Mr. Bijah Bixby came over from Clovelly, to request the place of superintendent of the funeral, a position which had already been filled. A special office, too, was created on this occasion for an old supporter of Jethro's, Senator Peleg Hartington of Brampton. He was made chairman of the bearers, of whom Ephraim Prescott was one.

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After this, as we have said, Jethro was more than ever at the store—or rather in that domestic domain behind it which Wetherell and Cynthia shared with Miss Millicent Skinner. Moses Hatch was wont to ask Cynthia how her daddies were. It was he who used to clear out the road to the little schoolhouse among the birches when the snow almost buried the little village, and on sparkling mornings after the storms his oxen would stop to breathe in front of the store, a cluster of laughing children clinging to the snow-plough and tumbling over good-natured Moses in their frolics. Cynthia became a country girl, and grew long and lithe of limb, and weather-burnt, and acquired an endurance that spoke wonders for the life-giving air of Coniston. But she was a serious child, and Wetherell and Jethro sometimes wondered whether she was ever a child at all. When Eben Hatch fell from the lumber pile on the ice, it was she who bound the cut in his head; and when Tom Richardson unexpectedly embraced the schoolhouse stove, Cynthia, not Miss Rebecca Northcutt, took charge of the situation.

It was perhaps inevitable, with such a helpless father, that the girl should grow up with a sense of responsibility, being what she was. Did William Wetherell go to Brampton, Cynthia examined his apparel, and he was marched shamefacedly back to his room to change; did he read too late at night, some unseen messenger summoned her out of her sleep, and he was packed off to bed. Miss Millicent Skinner, too, was in a like mysterious way compelled to abdicate her high place in favor of Cynthia, and Wetherell was utterly unable to explain how this miracle was accomplished. Not only did Millicent learn to cook, but Cynthia, at the age of fourteen, had taught her. Some wit once suggested that the national arms of the United States should contain the emblem of crossed frying-pans, and Millicent was in this respect a true American. When Wetherell began to suffer from her pies and doughnuts, the revolution took place—without stampeding, or recriminations, or trouble of any kind. One evening he discovered Cynthia, decked in an apron, bending over the stove, and Millicent looking on with an expression that was (for Millicent) benign.

This was to some extent explained, a few days later, when Wetherell found himself gazing across the counter at the motherly figure of Mrs. Moses Hatch, who held the well-deserved honor of being the best cook in Coniston.

“Hain’t had so much stomach trouble lately, Will?” she remarked.

“No,” he answered, surprised; “Cynthia is learning to cook.”

“Guess she is,” said Mrs. Moses. “That gal is worth any seven grown-up women in town. And she was four nights settin’ in my kitchen before I knowed what she was up to.”

“So you taught her, Amanda?

“I taught her some. She callated that Milly was killin’ you, and I guess she was.”

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During her school days, Jethro used frequently to find himself in front of the schoolhouse when the children came trooping out—quite by accident, of course. Winter or summer, when he went away on his periodical trips, he never came back without a little remembrance in his carpet bag, usually a book, on the subject of which he had spent hours in conference with the librarian at the state library at the capital. But in June of the year when Cynthia was fifteen, Jethro yielded to that passion which was one of the man's strangest characteristics, and appeared one evening in the garden behind the store with a bundle which certainly did not contain a book. With all the gravity of a ceremony he took off the paper, and held up in relief against the astonished Cynthia a length of cardinal cloth. William Wetherell, who was looking out of the window, drew his breath, and even Jethro drew back with an exclamation at the change wrought in her. But Cynthia snatched the roll from his hand and wound it up with a feminine deftness.

"Wh-what's the matter, Cynthy?"

"Oh, I can't wear that, Uncle Jethro," she said.

"C-can't wear it! Why not?"

Cynthia sat down on the grassy mound under the apple tree and clasped her hands across her knees. She looked up at him and shook her head.

"Don't you see that I couldn't wear it, Uncle Jethro?"

"Why not?" he demanded. "Ch-change it if you've a mind to hev green."

She shook her head, and smiled at him a little sadly.

"T-took me a full hour to choose that, Cynthy," said he. "H-had to go to Boston so I got it there."

He was, indeed, grievously disappointed at this reception of his gift, and he stood eying the cardinal cloth very mournfully as it lay on the paper. Cynthia, remorseful, reached up and seized his hand.

"Sit down here, Uncle Jethro." He sat down on the mound beside her, very much perplexed. She still held his hand in hers. "Uncle Jethro," she said slowly, "you mustn't think I'm not grateful."

"N-no," he answered; "I don't think that, Cynthy. I know you be."

"I am grateful—I'm very grateful for everything you give me, although I should love you just as much if you didn't give me anything."

She was striving very hard not to offend him, for in some ways he was as sensitive as Wetherell himself. Even Coniston folk had laughed at the idiosyncrasy which Jethro had of dressing his wife in brilliant colors, and the girl knew this.

“G-got it for you to wear to Brampton on the Fourth of July, Cynthy,” he said.

“Uncle Jethro, I couldn’t wear that to Brampton!”

“You’d look like a queen,” said he.

“But I’m not a queen,” objected Cynthia.

“Rather hev somethin’ else?”

“Yes,” she said, looking at him suddenly with the gleam of laughter in her eyes, although she was on the verge of tears.

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“Wh-what?” Jethro demanded.

“Well,” said Cynthia, demurely gazing down at her ankles, “shoes and stockings.” The barefooted days had long gone by.

Jethro laughed. Perhaps some inkling of her reasons came to him, for he had a strange and intuitive understanding of her. At any rate, he accepted her decision with a meekness which would have astonished many people who knew only that side of him which he showed to the world. Gently she released her hand, and folded up the bundle again and gave it to him.

“B-better keep it—hadn’t you?”

“No, you keep it. And I will wear it for you when I am rich, Uncle Jethro.”

Jethro did keep it, and in due time the cardinal cloth had its uses. But Cynthia did not wear it on the Fourth of July.

That was a great day for Brampton, being not only the nation’s birthday, but the hundredth year since the adventurous little band of settlers from Connecticut had first gazed upon Coniston Water at that place. Early in the morning wagon loads began to pour into Brampton Street from Harwich, from Coniston, from Tarleton Four Corners, and even from distant Clovelly, and Brampton was banner-hung for the occasion—flags across the stores, across the dwellings, and draped along the whole breadth of the meeting-house; but for sheer splendor the newly built mansion of Isaac D. Worthington outshone them all. Although its owner was a professed believer in republican simplicity, no such edifice ornamented any town to the west of the state capital. Small wonder that the way in front of it was blocked by a crowd lost in admiration of its Gothic proportions! It stands to-day one of many monuments to its builder, with its windows of one pane (unheard-of magnificence), its tower of stone, its porch with pointed arches and scroll-work. No fence divides its grounds from the public walk, and on the smooth-shaven lawn between the ornamental flower beds and the walk stand two stern mastiffs of iron, emblematic of the solidity and power of their owner. It was as much to see this house as to hear the oratory that the countryside flocked to Brampton that day.

All the day before Cynthia and Milly, and many another housewife, had been making wonderful things for the dinners they were to bring, and stowing them in the great basket ready for the early morning start. At six o’clock Jethro’s three-seated farm wagon was in front of the store. Cousin Ephraim Prescott, in a blue suit and an army felt hat with a cord, got up behind, a little stiffly by reason of that Wilderness bullet; and there were also William Wetherell and Lem Hallowell, his honest face shining, and Sue, his wife, and young Sue and Jock and Lilian, all a-quiver with excitement in their Sunday best.

And as they drove away there trotted up behind them Moses and Amandy Hatch, with their farm team, and all the little Hatches,—Eben and George and Judy and Liza. As they jogged along they drank in the fragrance of the dew-washed meadows and the pines, and a great blue heron stood knee-deep on the far side of Deacon Lysander's old mill-pond, watching them philosophically as they passed.

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It was eight o'clock when they got into the press of Brampton Street, and there was a hush as they made their way slowly through the throng, and many a stare at the curious figure in the old-fashioned blue swallowtail and brass buttons and tall hat, driving the farm wagon. Husbands pointed him out to their wives, young men to sisters and sweethearts, some openly, some discreetly. "There goes Jethro Bass," and some were bold enough to say, "Howdy, Jethro?" Jake Wheeler was to be observed in the crowd ahead of them, hurried for once out of his Jethro step, actually running toward the tavern, lest such a one arrive unheralded. Commotion is perceived on the tavern porch, —Mr. Sherman, the proprietor, bustling out, Jake Wheeler beside him; a chorus of "How be you, Jethros?" from the more courageous there,—but the farm team jogs on, leaving a discomfited gathering, into the side street, up an alley, and into the cool, ammonia-reeking sheds of lank Jim Sanborn's livery stable. No obsequiousness from lank Jim, who has the traces slipped and the reins festooned from the bits almost before Jethro has lifted Cynthia to the floor. Jethro, walking between Cynthia and her father, led the way, Ephraim, Lem, and Sue Hallowell following, the children, in unwonted shoes and stockings, bringing up the rear. The people parted, and presently they found themselves opposite the new-scrolled band stand among the trees, where the Harwich band in glittering gold and red had just been installed. The leader; catching sight of Jethro's party, and of Ephraim's corded army hat, made a bow, waved his baton, and they struck up "Marching through Georgia." It was, of course, not dignified to cheer, but I think that the blood of every man and woman and child ran faster with the music, and so many of them looked at Cousin Ephraim that he slipped away behind the line of wagons. So the day began.

"Jest to think of bein' that rich, Will!" exclaimed Amanda Hatch to the storekeeper, as they stood in the little group which had gathered in front of the first citizen's new mansion. "I own it scares me. Think how much that house must hev cost, and even them dogs," said Amanda, staring at the mastiffs with awe. "They tell me he has a grand piano from New York, and guests from Boston railroad presidents. I call Isaac Worthington to mind when he wahn't but a slip of a boy with a cough, runnin' after Cynthy Ware." She glanced down at Cynthia with something of compassion. "Just to think, child, he might have be'n your father!"

"I'm glad he isn't," said Cynthia, hotly.

"Of course, of course," replied the good-natured and well-intentioned Amanda, "I'd sooner have your father than Isaac Worthington. But I was only thinkin' how nice it would be to be rich."

Just then one of the glass-panelled doors of this house opened, and a good-looking lad of seventeen came out.

"That's Bob Worthington," said Amanda, determined that they should miss nothing. "My! it wahn't but the other day when he put on long pants. It won't be a great while before

he'll go into the mills and git all that money. Guess he'll marry some city person. He'd ought to take you, Cynthy."

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“I don’t want him,” said Cynthia, the color flaming into her cheeks. And she went off across the green in search of Jethro.

There was a laugh from the honest country folk who had listened. Bob Worthington came to the edge of the porch and stood there, frankly scanning the crowd, with an entire lack of self-consciousness. Some of them shifted nervously, with the New Englander’s dislike of being caught in the act of sight-seeing.

“What in the world is he starin’ at me for?” said Amanda, backing behind the bulkier form of her husband. “As I live, I believe he’s comin’ here.”

Young Mr. Worthington was, indeed, descending the steps and walking across the lawn toward them, nodding and smiling to acquaintances as he passed. To Wetherell’s astonishment he made directly for the place where he was standing and held out his hand.

“How do you do, Mr. Wetherell?” he said. “Perhaps you don’t remember me,—Bob Worthington.”

“I can’t say that I should have known you,” answered the storekeeper. They were all absurdly silent, thinking of nothing to say and admiring the boy because he was at ease.

“I hope you have a good seat at the exercises,” he said, pressing Wetherell’s hand again, and before he could thank him, Bob was off in the direction of the band stand.

“One thing,” remarked Amanda, “he ain’t much like his dad. You’d never catch Isaac Worthington bein’ that common.”

Just then there came another interruption for William Wetherell, who was startled by the sound of a voice in his ear—a nasal voice that awoke unpleasant recollections. He turned to confront, within the distance of eight inches, the face of Mr. Bijah Bixby of Clovelly screwed up into a greeting. The storekeeper had met Mr. Bixby several times since that first memorable meeting, and on each occasion, as now, his hand had made an involuntary movement to his watch pocket.

“Hain’t seed you for some time, Will,” remarked Mr. Bixby; “goin’ over to the exercises? We’ll move along that way,” and he thrust his hand under Mr. Wetherell’s elbow. “Whar’s Jethro?”

“He’s here somewhere,” answered the storekeeper, helplessly, moving along in spite of himself.

“Keepin’ out of sight, you understand,” said Bijah, with a knowing wink, as much as to say that Mr. Wetherell was by this time a past master in Jethro tactics. Mr. Bixby could never disabuse his mind of a certain interpretation which he put on the storekeeper’s

intimacy with Jethro. “You done well to git in with him, Will. Didn’t think you had it in you when I first looked you over.”

Mr. Wetherell wished to make an indignant denial, but he didn’t know exactly how to begin.

“Smartest man in the United States of America—guess you know that,” Mr. Bixby continued amiably. “They can’t git at him unless he wants ’em to. There’s a railroad president at Isaac Worthington’s who’d like to git at him to-day,—guess you know that, —Steve Merrill.”

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Mr. Wetherell didn't know, but he was given no time to say so.

"Steve Merrill, of the Grand Gulf and Northern. He hain't here to see Worthington; he's here to see Jethro, when Jethro's a mind to. Guess you understand."

"I know nothing about it," answered Wetherell, shortly. Mr. Bixby gave him a look of infinite admiration, as though he could not have pursued any more admirable line.

"I know Steve Merrill better'n I know you," said Mr. Bixby, "and he knows me. Whenever he sees me at the state capital he says, 'How be you, Bije?' just as natural as if I was a railroad president, and slaps me on the back. When be you goin' to the capital, Will? You'd ought to come down and be thar with the boys on this Truro Bill. You could reach some on 'em the rest of us couldn't git at."

William Wetherell avoided a reply to this very pointed inquiry by escaping into the meeting-house, where he found Jethro and Cynthia and Ephraim already seated halfway up the aisle.

On the platform, behind a bank of flowers, are the velvet covered chairs which contain the dignitaries of the occasion. The chief of these is, of course, Mr. Isaac Worthington, the one with the hawk-like look, sitting next to the Rev. Mr. Sweet, who is rather pudgy by contrast. On the other side of Mr. Sweet, next to the parlor organ and the quartette, is the genial little railroad president Mr. Merrill, batting the flies which assail the unprotected crown of his head, and smiling benignly on the audience.

Suddenly his eye becomes fixed, and he waves a fat hand vigorously at Jethro, who answers the salute with a nod of unwonted cordiality for him. Then comes a hush, and the exercises begin.

There is a prayer, of course, by the Rev. Mr. Sweet, and a rendering of "My Country" and "I would not Change my Lot," and other choice selections by the quartette; and an original poem recited with much feeling by a lady admirer of Miss Lucretia Penniman, and the "Hymn to Coniston" declaimed by Mr. Gamaliel Ives, president of the Brampton Literary Club. But the crowning event is, of course, the oration by Mr. Isaac D. Worthington, the first citizen, who is introduced under that title by the chairman of the day; and as the benefactor of Brampton, who has bestowed upon the town the magnificent gift which was dedicated such a short time ago, the Worthington Free Library.

Mr. Isaac D. Worthington stood erect beside the table, his hand thrust into the opening of his coat, and spoke at the rate of one hundred and eight words a minute, for exactly one hour. He sketched with much skill the creed of the men who had fought their way through the forests to build their homes by Coniston Water, who had left their clearings to risk their lives behind Stark and Ethan Allen for that creed; he paid a graceful tribute

to the veterans of the Civil War, scattered among his hearers—a tribute, by the way, which for some reason made Ephraim

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very indignant. Mr. Worthington went on to outline the duty of citizens of the present day, as he conceived it, and in this connection referred, with becoming modesty, to the Worthington Free Library. He had made his money in Brampton, and it was but right that he should spend it for the benefit of the people of Brampton. The library, continued Mr. Worthington when the applause was over, had been the dream of a certain delicate youth who had come, many years ago, to Brampton for his health. (It is a curious fact, by the way, that Mr. Worthington seldom recalled the delicate youth now, except upon public occasions.)

Yes, the dream of that youth had been to benefit in some way that community in which circumstances had decreed that he should live, and in this connection it might not be out of place to mention a bill then before the Legislature of the state, now in session. If the bill became a law, the greatest modern factor of prosperity, the railroad, would come to Brampton. The speaker was interrupted here by more applause. Mr. Worthington did not deem it dignified or necessary to state that the railroad to which he referred was the Truro Railroad; and that he, as the largest stockholder, might indirectly share that prosperity with Brampton. That would be wandering too far, from his subject, which, it will be recalled, was civic duties. He took a glass of water, and went on to declare that he feared—sadly feared—that the ballot was not held as sacred as it had once been. He asked the people of Brampton, and of the state, to stop and consider who in these days made the laws and granted the franchises. Whereupon he shook his head very slowly and sadly, as much as to imply that, if the Truro Bill did not pass, the corruption of the ballot was to blame. No, Mr. Worthington could think of no better subject on this Birthday of Independence than a recapitulation of the creed of our forefathers, from which we had so far wandered.

In short, the first citizen, as became him, had delivered the first reform speech ever heard in Brampton, and the sensation which it created was quite commensurate to the occasion. The presence in the audience of Jethro Bass, at whom many believed the remarks to have been aimed, added no little poignancy to that sensation, although Jethro gave no outward signs of the terror and remorse by which he must have been struck while listening to Mr. Worthington's ruminations of the corruption of the ballot. Apparently unconscious of the eyes upon him, he walked out of the meeting-house with Cynthia by his side, and they stood waiting for Wetherell and Ephraim under the maple tree there.

The be-ribboned members of the Independence Day committee were now on the steps, and behind them came Isaac Worthington and Mr. Merrill. The people, scenting a dramatic situation, lingered. Would the mill owner speak to the boss? The mill owner, with a glance at the boss, did nothing of the kind, but immediately began to talk rapidly to Mr. Merrill. That gentleman, however, would not be talked to, but came running over to Jethro and seized his hand, leaving Mr. Worthington to walk on by himself.

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“Jethro,” cried the little railroad president, “upon my word. Well, well. And Miss Jethro,” he took off his hat to Cynthia, “well, well. Didn’t know you had a girl, Jethro.”

“W-wish she was mine, Steve,” said Jethro. “She’s a good deal to me as it is. Hain’t you, Cynthy?”

“Yes,” said Cynthia.

“Well, well,” said Mr. Merrill, staring at her, “you’ll have to look out for her some day—-keep the boys away from her—eh? Upon my word! Well, Jethro,” said he, with a twinkle in his eye, “are you goin’ to reform? I’ll bet you’ve got an annual over my road in your pocket right now.”

“Enjoy the speech-makin’, Steve?” inquired Mr. Bass, solemnly.

Mr. Merrill winked at Jethro, and laughed heartily.

“Keep the boys away from her, Jethro,” he repeated, laying his hand on the shoulder of the lad who stood beside him. “It’s a good thing Bob’s going off to Harvard this fall. Seems to me I heard about some cutting up at Andover—eh, Bob?”

Bob grinned, showing a line of very white teeth.

Mr. Merrill took Jethro by the arm and led him off a little distance, having a message of some importance to give him, the purport of which will appear later. And Cynthia and Bob were left face to face. Of course Bob could have gone on, if he had wished it.

“Don’t remember me, do you?” he said.

“I do now,” said Cynthia, looking at him rather timidly through her lashes. Her face was hot, and she had been, very uncomfortable during Mr. Merrill’s remarks. Furthermore, Bob had not taken his eyes off her.

“I remembered you right away,” he said reproachfully; “I saw you in front of the house this morning, and you ran away.”

“I didn’t runaway,” replied Cynthia, indignantly.

“It looked like it, to me,” said Bob.. “I suppose you were afraid I was going to give you anther whistle.”

Cynthia bit her lip, and then she laughed. Then she looked around to see where Jethro was, and discovered that they were alone in front of the meeting-house. Ephraim and her father had passed on while Mr. Merrill was talking.

“What’s the matter?” asked Bob.

“I’m afraid they’ve gone,” said Cynthia. “I ought to be going after them. They’ll miss me.”

“Oh, no, they won’t,” said Bob, easily, “let’s sit down under the tree. They’ll come back.”

Whereupon he sat down under the maple. But Cynthia remained standing, ready to fly. She had an idea that it was wrong to stay—which made it all the more delightful.

“Sit down—Cynthia,” said he.

She glanced down at him, startled. He was sitting, with his legs crossed, looking up at her intently.

“I like that name,” he observed. “I like it better than any girl’s name I know. Do be good-natured and sit down.” And he patted the ground close beside him.

Shy laughed again. The laugh had in it an exquisite note of shyness, which he liked.

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“Why do you want me to sit down?” she asked suddenly.

“Because I want to talk to you.”

“Can’t you talk to me standing up?”

“I suppose I could,” said Bob, “but—I shouldn’t be able to say such nice things to you.”

The corners of her mouth trembled a little.

“And whose loss would that be?” she asked.

Bob Worthington was surprised at this retort, and correspondingly delighted. He had not expected it in a country storekeeper’s daughter, and he stared at Cynthia so frankly that she blushed again, and turned away. He was a young man who, it may be surmised, had had some experience with the other sex at Andover and elsewhere. He had not spent all of his life in Brampton.

“I’ve often thought of you since that day when you wouldn’t take the whistle,” he declared. “What are you laughing at?”

“I’m laughing at you,” said Cynthia, leaning against the tree, with her hands behind her.

“You’ve been laughing at me ever since you’ve stood there,” he said, aggrieved that his declarations should not betaken more seriously.

“What have you thought about me?” she demanded. She was really beginning to enjoy this episode.

“Well—” he began, and hesitated—and broke down and laughed—Cynthia laughed with him.

“I can tell you what I didn’t think,” said Bob.

“What?” asked Cynthia, falling into the trap.

“I didn’t think you’d be so—so good-looking,” said he, quite boldly.

“And I didn’t think you’d be so rude,” responded Cynthia. But though she blushed again, she was not exactly displeased.

“What are you going to do this afternoon?” he asked. “Let’s go for a walk.”

“I’m going back to Coniston.”

“Let’s go for a walk now,” said he, springing to his feet. “Come on.”

Cynthia looked at him and shook her head smilingly.

“Here’s Uncle Jethro—”

“Uncle Jethro!” exclaimed Bob, “is he your uncle?”

“Oh, no, not really. But he’s just the same. He’s very good to me.”

“I wonder whether he’d mind if I called him Uncle Jethro, too,” said Bob, and Cynthia laughed at the notion. This young man was certainly very comical, and very frank. “Good-by,” he said; “I’ll come to see you some day in Coniston.”

CHAPTER XII

That evening, after Cynthia had gone to bed, William Wetherell sat down at Jonah Winch’s desk in the rear of the store to gaze at a blank sheet of paper until the Muses chose to send him subject matter for his weekly letter to the Guardian. The window was open, and the cool airs from the mountain spruces mingled with the odors of corn meal and kerosene and calico print. Jethro Bass, who had supped with the storekeeper, sat in the wooden armchair silent, with his head bent. Sometimes he would sit there by the hour while Wetherell wrote or read, and take his departure when he was so moved without saying good night. Presently Jethro lifted his chin, and dropped it again; there was a sound of wheels without, and, after an interval, a knock at the door.

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William Wetherell dropped his pen with a start of surprise, as it was late for a visitor in Coniston. He glanced at Jethro, who did not move, and then he went to the door and shot back the great forged bolt of it, and stared out. On the edge of the porch stood a tallish man in a double-breasted frock coat.

“Mr. Worthington!” exclaimed the storekeeper.

Mr. Worthington coughed and pulled at one of his mutton-chop whiskers, and seemed about to step off the porch again. It was, indeed, the first citizen and reformer of Brampton. No wonder William Wetherell was mystified.

“Can I do anything for you?” he asked. “Have you missed your way?”

Wetherell thought he heard him muttering, “No, no,” and then he was startled by another voice in his ear. It was Jethro who was standing beside him.

“G-guess he hain’t missed his way a great deal. Er—come in—come in.”

Mr. Worthington took a couple of steps forward.

“I understood that you were to be alone,” he remarked, addressing Jethro with an attempted severity of manner.

“Didn’t say so—d-didn’t say so, did I?” answered Jethro.

“Very well,” said Mr. Worthington, “any other time will do for this little matter.”

“Er—good night,” said Jethro, shortly, and there was the suspicion of a gleam in his eye as Mr. Worthington turned away. The mill-owner, in fact, did not get any farther than the edge of the porch before he wheeled again.

“The affair which I have to discuss with you is of a private nature, Mr. Bass,” he said.

“So I callated,” said Jethro.

“You may have the place to yourselves, gentlemen,” Wetherell put in uneasily, and then Mr. Worthington came as far as the door, where he stood looking at the storekeeper with scant friendliness. Jethro turned to Wetherell.

“You a politician, Will?” he demanded.

“No,” said Wetherell.

“You a business man?”

“No,” he said again.

“You ever tell folks what you hear other people say?”

“Certainly not,” the storekeeper answered; “I’m not interested in other people’s business.”

“Exactly,” said Jethro. “Guess you’d better stay.”

“But I don’t care to stay,” Wetherell objected.

“Stay to oblige me—stay to oblige me?” he asked.

“Well, yes, if you put it that way,” Wetherell said, beginning to get some amusement out of the situation.

He did not know what Jethro’s object was in this matter; perhaps others may guess.

Mr. Worthington, who had stood by with ill-disguised impatience during this colloquy, note broke in.

“It is most unusual, Mr. Bass, to have a third person present at a conference in which he has no manner of concern. I think on the whole, since you have insisted upon my coming to you—”

“H-hain’t insisted that I know of,” said Jethro.

“Well,” said Mr. Worthington, “never mind that.

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“Perhaps it would be better for me to come to you some other time, when you are alone.”

In the meantime Wetherell had shut the door, and they had gradually walked to the rear of the store. Jethro parted his coat tails, and sat down again in the armchair. Wetherell, not wishing to be intrusive, went to his desk again, leaving the first citizen standing among the barrels.

“W-what other time?” Jethro asked.

“Any other time,” said Mr. Worthington.

“What other time?”

“To-morrow night?” suggested Mr. Worthington, striving to hide his annoyance.

“B-busy to-morrow night,” said Jethro.

“You know that what I have to talk to you about is of the utmost importance,” said Worthington. “Let us say Saturday night.”

“B-busy Saturday night,” said Jethro. “Meet you to-morrow.”

“What time?”

“Noon,” said Jethro, “noon.”

“Where?” asked Mr. Worthington, dubiously.

“Band stand in Brampton Street,” said Jethro, and the storekeeper was fain to bend over his desk to conceal his laughter, busying himself with his books. Mr. Worthington sat down with as much dignity as he could muster on one of Jonah’s old chairs, and Jonah Winch’s clock ticked and ticked, and Wetherell’s pen scratched and scratched on his weekly letter to Mr. Willard, although he knew that he was writing the sheerest nonsense. As a matter of fact, he tore up the sheets the next morning without reading them. Mr. Worthington unbuttoned his coat, fumbled in his pocket, and pulled out two cigars, one of which he pushed toward Jethro, who shook his head. Mr. Worthington lighted his cigar and cleared his throat.

“Perhaps you have observed, Mr. Bass,” he said, “that this is a rapidly growing section of the state—that the people hereabouts are every day demanding modern and efficient means of communication with the outside world.”

“Struck you as a mill owner, has it?” said Jethro.

“I do not care to emphasize my private interests,” answered Mr. Worthington, at last appearing to get into his stride again. “I wish to put the matter on broader grounds. Men like you and me ought not to be so much concerned with our own affairs as with those of the population amongst whom we live. And I think I am justified in putting it to you on these grounds.”

“H-have to be justified, do you—have to be justified?” Jethro inquired. “Er—why?”

This was a poser, and for a moment he stared at Jethro, blankly, until he decided how to take it. Then he crossed his legs and blew smoke toward the ceiling.

“It is certainly fairer to everybody to take the broadest view of a situation,” he remarked; “I am trying to regard this from the aspect of a citizen, and I am quite sure that it will appeal to you in the same light. If the spirit which imbued the founders of this nation means anything, Mr. Bass, it means that the able men who are given a chance to rise by their own efforts must still retain the duties and responsibilities of the humblest citizens. That, I take it, is our position, Mr. Bass,—yours and mine.”

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Mr. Worthington had uncrossed his legs, and was now by the inspiration of his words impelled to an upright position. Suddenly he glanced at Jethro, and started for Jethro had sunk down on the small of his back, his chin on his chest, in an attitude of lassitude if not of oblivion. There was a silence perhaps a little disconcerting for Mr. Worthington, who chose the opportunity to relight his cigar.

“G-got through?” said Jethro, without moving, “g-got through?”

“Through?” echoed Mr. Worthington, “through what?”

“T-through Sunday-school,” said Jethro.

Worthington dropped his match and stamped on it, and Wetherell began to wonder how much the man would stand. It suddenly came over the storekeeper that the predicament in which Mr. Worthington found himself whatever it was—must be a very desperate one. He half rose in his chair, sat down again, and lighted another match.

“Er—director in the Truro Road, hain’t you, Mr. Worthington?” asked Jethro, without looking at him.

“Yes.”

“Er—principal stockholder—ain’t you?”

“Yes—but that is neither here nor there, sir.”

“Road don’t pay—r-road don’t pay, does it?”

“It certainly does not.”

“W-would pay if it went to Brampton and Harwich?”

“Mr. Bass, the company consider that they are pledged to the people of this section to get the road through. I am not prepared to say whether the road would pay, but it is quite likely that it would not.”

“Ch-charitable organization?” said Jethro, from the depths of his chair.

“The pioneers in such matters take enormous risks for the benefit of the community, sir. We believe that we are entitled to a franchise, and in my opinion the General Court are behaving disgracefully in refusing us one. I will not say all I think about that affair, Mr. Bass. I am convinced that influences are at work—” He broke off with a catch in his throat.

“T-tried to get a franchise, did you?”

“I am not here to quibble with you, Mr. Bass. We tried to get it by every legitimate means, and failed, and you know it as well as I do.”

“Er—Heth Sutton didn’t sign his receipt—er—did he?”

The storekeeper, not being a politician, was not aware that the somewhat obscure reference of Jethro’s to the Speaker of the House concerned an application which Mr. Worthington was supposed to have made to that gentleman, who had at length acknowledged his inability to oblige, and had advised Mr. Worthington to go to headquarters. And Mr. Stephen Merrill, who had come to Brampton out of the kindness of his heart, had only arranged this meeting in a conversation with Jethro that day, after the reform speech.

Mr. Worthington sprang to his feet, and flung out a hand toward Jethro.

“Prove your insinuations, air,” he cried; “I defy you to prove your insinuations.”

But Jethro still sat unmoved.

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“H-Heth in the charitable organization, too?” he asked.

“People told me I was a fool to believe in honesty, but I thought better of the lawmakers of my state. I’ll tell you plainly what they said to me, sir. They said, ‘Go to Jethro Bass.’”

“Well, so you have, hain’t you? So you have.”

“Yes, I have. I’ve come to appeal to you in behalf of the people of your section to allow that franchise to go through the present Legislature.”

“Er—come to appeal, have you—come to appeal?”

“Yes,” said Mr. Worthington, sitting down again; “I have come to-night to appeal to you in the name of the farmers and merchants of this region—your neighbors,—to use your influence to get that franchise. I have come to you with the conviction that I shall not have appealed in vain.”

“Er—appealed to Heth in the name of the farmers and merchants?”

“Mr. Sutton is Speaker of the House.”

“F-farmers and merchants elected him,” remarked Jethro, as though stating a fact.

Worthington coughed.

“It is probable that I made a mistake in going to Sutton,” he admitted.

“If I w-wanted to catch a pike, w-wouldn’t use a pin-hook.”

“I might have known,” remarked Worthington, after a pause, “that Sutton could not have been elected Speaker without your influence.”

Jethro did not answer that, but still remained sunk in his chair. To all appearances he might have been asleep.

“W-worth somethin’ to the farmers and merchants to get that road through—w-worth somethin’, ain’t it?”

Wetherell held his breath. For a moment Mr. Worthington sat very still, his face drawn, and then he wet his lips and rose slowly.

“We may as well end this conversation, Mr. Bass,” he said, and though he tried to speak firmly his voice shook, “it seems to be useless. Good night.”

He picked up his hat and walked slowly toward the door, but Jethro did not move or speak. Mr. Worthington reached the door opened it, and the night breeze started the lamp to smoking. Wetherell got up and turned it down, and the first citizen was still standing in the doorway. His back was toward them, but the fingers of his left hand—-working convulsively caught Wetherell's eye and held it; save for the ticking of the clock and the chirping of the crickets in the grass, there was silence. Then Mr. Worthington closed the door softly, hesitated, turned, and came back and stood before Jethro.

"Mr. Bass," he said, "we've got to have that franchise."

William Wetherell glanced at the countryman who, without moving in his chair, without raising his voice, had brought the first citizen of Brampton to his knees. The thing frightened the storekeeper, revolted him, and yet its drama held him fascinated. By some subtle process which he had actually beheld, but could not fathom, this cold Mr. Worthington, this bank president who had given him sage advice, this preacher of political purity, had been reduced to a frenzied supplicant. He stood bending over Jethro.

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“What’s your price? Name it, for God’s sake.”

“B-better wait till you get the bill—hadn’t you? b-better wait till you get the bill.”

“Will you put the franchise through?”

“Goin’ down to the capital soon?” Jethro inquired.

“I’m going down on Thursday.”

“B-better come in and see me,” said Jethro.

“Very well,” answered Mr. Worthington; “I’ll be in at two o’clock on Thursday.” And then, without another word to either of them, he swung on his heel and strode quickly out of the store. Jethro did not move.

William Wetherell’s hand was trembling so that he could not write, and he could not trust his voice to speak. Although Jethro had never mentioned Isaac Worthington’s name to him, Wetherell knew that Jethro hated the first citizen of Brampton.

At length, when the sound of the wheels had died away, Jethro broke the silence.

“Er—didn’t laugh—did he, Will? Didn’t laugh once—did he?”

“Laugh!” echoed the storekeeper, who himself had never been further from laughter in his life.

“M-might have let him off easier if he’d laughed,” said Jethro, “if he’d laughed just once, m-might have let him off easier.”

And with this remark he went out of the store and left Wetherell alone.

CHAPTER XIII

The weekly letter to the Newcastle Guardian was not finished that night, but Coniston slept, peacefully, unaware of Mr. Worthington’s visit; and never, indeed, discovered it, since the historian for various reasons of his own did not see fit to insert the event in his plan of the Town History. Before another sun had set Jethro Bass had departed for the state capital, not choosing to remain to superintend the haying of the many farms which had fallen into his hand,—a most unusual omission for him.

Presently rumors of a mighty issue about the Truro Railroad began to be discussed by the politicians at the Coniston store, and Jake Wheeler held himself in instant readiness to answer a summons to the capital—which never came.

Delegations from Brampton and Harwich went to petition the Legislature for the franchise, and the Brampton Clarion and Harwich Sentinel declared that the people of Truro County recognized in Isaac Worthington a great and public-spirited man, who ought by all means to be the next governor—if the franchise went through.

One evening Lem Hallowell, after depositing a box of trimmings at Ephraim Prescott's harness shop, drove up to the platform of the store with the remark that "things were gittin' pretty hot down to the capital in that franchise fight."

"Hain't you b'en sent for yet, Jake?" he cried, throwing his reins over the backs of his sweating Morgans; "well, that's strange. Guess the fight hain't as hot as we hear about. Jethro hain't had to call out his best men."

"I'm a-goin' down if there's trouble," declared Jake, who consistently ignored banter.

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“Better git up and git,” said Lem; “there’s three out of the five railroads against Truro, and Steve Merrill layin’ low. Bije Bixby’s down there, and Heth Sutton, and Abner Parkinson, and all the big bugs. Better get aboard, Jake.”

At this moment the discussion was interrupted by the sight of Cynthia Wetherell coming across the green with an open letter in her hand.

“It’s a message from Uncle Jethro,” she said.

The announcement was sufficient to warrant the sensation it produced on all sides.

“’Tain’t a letter from Jethro, is it?” exclaimed Sam Price, overcome by a pardonable curiosity. For it was well known that one of Jethro’s fixed principles in life was embodied in his own motto, “Don’t write—send.”

“It’s very funny,” answered Cynthia, looking down at the paper with a puzzled expression. “’Dear Cynthia: Judge Bass wished me to say to you that he would be pleased if you and Will would come to the capital and spend a week with him at the Pelican House, and see the sights. The judge says Rias Richardson will tend store. Yours truly, P. Hartington.’ That’s all,” said Cynthia, looking up.

For a moment you could have heard a pine needle drop on the stoop. Then Rias thrust his hands in his pockets and voiced the general sentiment.

“Well, I’ll be—goldurned!” said he.

“Didn’t say nothin’ about Jake?” queried Lem.

“No,” answered Cynthia, “that’s all—except two pieces of cardboard with something about the Truro Railroad and our names. I don’t know what they are.” And she took them from the envelope.

“Guess I could tell you if I was pressed,” said Lem, amid a shout of merriment from the group.

“Air you goin’, Will?” said Sam Price, pausing with his foot on the step of his buggy, that he might have the complete news before he left.

“Godfrey, Will,” exclaimed Rigs, breathlessly, “you hain’t a-goin’ to throw up a chance to stay a hull week at the Pelican, be you?” The mere possibility of refusal overpowered Rias.

Those who are familiar with that delightful French song which treats of the leave-taking of one Monsieur Dumollet will appreciate, perhaps, the attentions which were showered upon William Wetherell and Cynthia upon their departure for the capital next morning.

Although Mr. Wetherell had at one time been actually a resident of Boston, he received quite as many cautions from his neighbors as Monsieur Dumollet. Billets doux and pistols were, of course, not mentioned, but it certainly behooved him, when he should have arrived at that place of intrigues, to be on the lookout for cabals.

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They took the stage-coach from Brampton over the pass: picturesque stage-coach with its apple-green body and leather springs, soon to be laid away forever if the coveted Truro Franchise Bill becomes a law; stage-coach which pulls up defiantly beside its own rival at Truro station, where our passengers take the train down the pleasant waterways and past the little white villages among the fruit trees to the capital. The thrill of anticipation was in Cynthia's blood, and the flush of pleasure on her cheeks, when they stopped at last under the sheds. The conductor snapped his fingers and cried, "This way, Judge," and there was Jethro in his swallow-tailed coat and stove-pipe hat awaiting them. He seized Wetherell's carpet-bag with one hand and Cynthia's arm with the other, and shouldered his way through the people, who parted when they saw who it was.

"Uncle Jethro," cried Cynthia, breathlessly, "I didn't know you were a judge. What are you judge of?"

"J-judge of clothes, Cynthy. D-don't you wish you had the red cloth to wear here?"

"No, I don't," said Cynthia. "I'm glad enough to be here without it."

"G-glad to hev you in any fixin's, Cynthy," he said, giving her arm a little squeeze, and by that time they were up the hill and William Wetherell quite winded. For Jethro was strong as an ox, and Cynthia's muscles were like an Indian's.

They were among the glories of Main Street now. The capital was then, and still remains, a typically beautiful New England city, with wide streets shaded by shapely maples and elms, with substantial homes set back amidst lawns and gardens. Here on Main Street were neat brick business buildings and banks and shops, with the park-like grounds of the Capitol farther on, and everywhere, from curb to doorway, were knots of men talking politics; broad-faced, sunburned farmers in store clothes, with beards that hid their shirt fronts; keen-featured, sallow, country lawyers in long black coats crumpled from much sitting on the small of the back; country storekeepers with shrewd eyes, and local proprietors and manufacturers.

"Uncle Jethro, I didn't know you were such a great man," she said.

"H-how did ye find out, Cynthy?"

"The way people treat you here. I knew you were great, of course," she hastened to add.

"H-how do they treat me?" he asked, looking down at her.

"You know," she answered. "They all stop talking when you come along and stare at you. But why don't you speak to them?"

Jethro smiled and squeezed her arm again, and then they were in the corridor of the famous Pelican Hotel, hazy with cigar smoke and filled with politicians. Some were standing, hanging on to pillars, gesticulating, some were ranged in benches along the wall, and a chosen few were in chairs grouped around the spittoons. Upon the appearance of Jethro's party, the talk was hushed, the groups gave way, and they accomplished a kind of triumphal march to the desk. The clerk, descrying them, desisted abruptly from a conversation across the cigar counter, and with all the form of a ceremony dipped the pen with a flourish into the ink and handed it to Jethro.

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“Your rooms are ready, Judge,” he said.

As they started for the stairs, Jethro and Cynthia leading the way, Wetherell felt a touch on his elbow and turned to confront Mr. Bijah Bixby—at very close range, as usual.

“C-come down at last, Will?” he said. “Thought ye would. Need everybody this time—-you understand.”

“I came on pleasure,” retorted Mr. Wetherell, somewhat angrily.

Mr. Bixby appeared hugely to enjoy the joke.

“So I callated,” he cried, still holding Wetherell’s hand in a mild, but persuasive grip. “So I callated. Guess I done you an injustice, Will.”

“How’s that?”

“You’re a leetle mite smarter than I thought you was. So long. Got a leetle business now—you understand a leetle business.”

Was it possible, indeed, for the simple-minded to come to the capital and not become involved in cabals? With some misgivings William Wetherell watched Mr. Bixby disappear among the throng, kicking up his heels behind, and then went upstairs. On the first floor Cynthia was standing by an open door.

“Dad,” she cried, “come and see the rooms Uncle Jethro’s got for us!” She took Wetherell’s hand and led him in. “See the lace curtains, and the chandelier, and the big bureau with the marble top.”

Jethro had parted his coat tails and seated himself enjoyably on the bed.

“D-don’t come often,” he said, “m-might as well have the best.”

“Jethro,” said Wetherell, coughing nervously and fumbling in the pocket of his coat, “you’ve been very kind to us, and we hardly know how to thank you. I—I didn’t have any use for these.”

He held out the pieces of cardboard which had come in Cynthia’s letter. He dared not look at Jethro, and his eye was fixed instead upon the somewhat grandiose signature of Isaac D. Worthington, which they bore. Jethro took them and tore them up, and slowly tossed the pieces into a cuspidor conveniently situated near the foot of the bed. He rose and thrust his hands into his pockets.

“Er—when you get freshened up, come into Number 7,” he said.

Number 7! But we shall come to that later. Supper first, in a great pillared dining room filled with notables, if we only had the key. Jethro sits silent at the head of the table eating his crackers and milk, with Cynthia on his left and William Wetherell on his right. Poor William, greatly embarrassed by his sudden projection into the limelight, is helpless in the clutches of a lady-waitress who is demanding somewhat fiercely that he make an immediate choice from a list of dishes which she is shooting at him with astonishing rapidity. But who is this, sitting beside him, who comes to William's rescue, and demands that the lady repeat the bill of fare? Surely a notable, for he has a generous presence, and jet-black whiskers which catch the light, which give the gentleman, as Mr. Bixby remarked, "quite a settin'." Yes, we have met him at last. It is none other than the Honorable Heth Sutton, Rajah of Clovelly, Speaker of the House, who has condescended to help Mr. Wetherell.

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His chamberlain, Mr. Bijah Bixby, sits on the other side of the Honorable Heth, and performs the presentation of Mr. Wetherell. But Mr. Sutton, as becomes a man of high position, says little after he has rebuked the waitress, and presently departs with a carefully chosen toothpick; whereupon Mr. Bixby moves into the vacant seat—not to Mr. Wetherell's unqualified delight.

"I've knowed him ever sense we was boys," said Mr. Bixby; "you saw how intimate we was. When he wants a thing done, he says, 'Bije, you go out and get 'em.' Never counts the cost. He was nice to you—wahn't he, Will?" And then Mr. Bixby leaned over and whispered in Mr. Wetherell's ear; "He knows—you understand—he knows."

"Knows what?" demanded Mr. Wetherell.

Mr. Bixby gave him another admiring look.

"Knows you didn't come down here with Jethro jest to see the sights."

At this instant the talk in the dining room fell flat, and looking up William Wetherell perceived a portly, rubicund man of middle age being shown to his seat by the headwaiter. The gentleman wore a great, glittering diamond in his shirt, and a watch chain that contained much fine gold. But the real cause of the silence was plainly in the young woman who walked beside him, and whose effective entrance argued no little practice and experience. She was of a type that catches the eye involuntarily and holds it,—tall, well-rounded, fresh-complexioned, with heavy coils of shimmering gold hair. Her pawn, which was far from unbecoming, was in keeping with those gifts with which nature had endowed her. She carried her head high, and bestowed swift and evidently fatal glances to right and left during her progress through the room. Mr. Bixby's voice roused the storekeeper from this contemplation of the beauty.

"That's Alvy Hopkins of Gosport and his daughter. Fine gal, hain't she? Ever sense she come down here t'other day she's stirred up more turmoil than any railroad bill I ever seed. She was most suffocated at the governor's ball with fellers tryin' to get dances—-some of 'em old fellers, too. And you understand about Alvy?"

"What about him?"

"Alvy says he's a-goin' to be the next governor, or fail up." Mr. Bixby's voice sank to a whisper, and he spoke into Mr. Wetherell's ear. "Alvy says he has twenty-five thousand dollars to put in if necessary. I'll introduce you to him, Will," he added meaningly. "Guess you can help him some—you understand?"

"Mr. Bixby!" cried Mr. Wetherell, putting down his knife and fork.

"There!" said Mr. Bixby, reassuringly; "'twon't be no bother. I know him as well as I do you—call each other by our given names. Guess I was the first man he sent for last

spring. He knows I go through all them river towns. He says, 'Bije, you get 'em.' I understood."

William Wetherell began to realize the futility of trying to convince Mr. Bixby of his innocence in political matters, and glanced at Jethro.

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“You wouldn’t think he was listenin’, would you, Will?” Mr. Bixby remarked.

“Listening?”

“Ears are sharp as a dog’s. Callate he kin hear as far as the governor’s table, and he don’t look as if he knows anything. One way he built up his power—listenin’ when they’re talkin’ sly out there in the rotunda. They’re almighty surprised when they l’arn he knows what they’re up to. Guess you understand how to go along by quiet and listen when they’re talkin’ sly.”

“I never did such a thing in my life,” cried William Wetherell, indignantly aghast.

But Mr. Bixby winked.

“So long, Will,” he said, “see you in Number 7.”

Never, since the days of Pompadour and Du Barry, until modern American politics were invented, has a state been ruled from such a place as Number 7 in the Pelican House—familiarly known as the Throne Room. In this historic cabinet there were five chairs, a marble-topped table, a pitcher of iced water, a bureau, a box of cigars and a Bible, a chandelier with all the gas jets burning, and a bed, whereon sat such dignitaries as obtained an audience,—railroad presidents, governors and ex-governors and prospective governors, the Speaker, the President of the Senate, Bijah Bixby, Peleg Hartington, mighty chiefs from the North Country, and lieutenants from other parts of the state. These sat on the bed by preference. Jethro sat in a chair by the window, and never took any part in the discussions that raged, but listened. Generally there was some one seated beside him who talked persistently in his ear; as at present, for instance, Mr. Chauncey Weed, Chairman of the Committee on Corporations of the House, who took the additional precaution of putting his hand to his mouth when he spoke.

Mr. Stephen Merrill was in the Throne Room that evening, and confidentially explained to the bewildered William Wetherell the exact situation in the Truro Franchise fight. Inasmuch as it has become our duty to describe this celebrated conflict,—in a popular and engaging manner, if possible,—we shall have to do so through Mr. Wetherell’s eyes, and on his responsibility. The biographies of some of the gentlemen concerned have since been published, and for some unaccountable reason contain no mention of the Truro franchise.

“All Gaul,” said Mr. Merrill—he was speaking to a literary man—“all Gaul is divided into five railroads. I am one, the Grand Gulf and Northern, the impecunious one. That is the reason I’m so nice to everybody, Mr. Wetherell. The other day a conductor on my road had a shock of paralysis when a man paid his fare. Then there’s Batch, president of the ‘Down East’ road, as we call it. Batch and I are out of this fight,—we don’t care whether

Isaac D. Worthington gets his franchise or not, or I wouldn't be telling you this. The two railroads which don't want him to get it, because the Truro would eventually become a competitor with them, are the Central and the Northwestern. Alexander Duncan is president of the Central."

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“Alexander Duncan!” exclaimed Wetherell. “He’s the richest man in the state, isn’t he?”

“Yes,” said Mr. Merrill, “and he lives in a big square house right here in the capital. He ain’t a bad fellow, Duncan. You’d like him. He loves books. I wish you could see his library.”

“I’m afraid there’s not much chance of that,” answered Wetherell.

“Well, as I say, there’s Duncan, of the Central, and the other is Lovejoy, of the Northwestern. Lovejoy’s a bachelor and a skinflint. Those two, Duncan and Lovejoy, are using every means in their power to prevent Worthington from getting that franchise. Have I made myself clear?”

“Do you think Mr. Worthington will get it?” asked Wetherell, who had in mind a certain nocturnal visit at his store.

Mr. Merrill almost leaped out of his chair at the question. Then he mopped his face, and winked very deliberately at the storekeeper. Then Mr. Merrill laughed.

“Well, well,” he said, “for a man who comes down here to stay with Jethro Bass to ask me that!” Whereupon Mr. Wetherell flushed, and began to perspire himself. “Didn’t you hear Isaac D. Worthington’s virtuous appeal to the people at Brampton?” said Mr. Merrill.

“Yes,” replied Wetherell, getting redder.

“I like you, Will,” said Mr. Merrill, unexpectedly, “darned if I don’t. I’ll tell you what I know about it, and you can have a little fun while you’re here, lookin’ on, only it won’t do to write about it to the Newcastle Guardian. Guess Willard wouldn’t publish it, anyhow. I suppose you know that Jethro pulls the strings, end we little railroad presidents dance. We’re the puppets now, but after a while, when I’m crowded out, all these little railroads will get together and there’ll be a row worth looking at, or I’m mistaken. But to go back to Worthington,” continued Mr. Merrill, “he made a little mistake with his bill in the beginning. Instead of going to Jethro, he went to Heth Sutton, and Heth got the bill as far as the Committee on Corporations, and there she’s been ever since, with our friend Chauncey Weed, who’s whispering over there.”

“Mr. Sutton couldn’t even get it out of the Committee!” exclaimed Wetherell.

“Not an inch. Jethro saw this thing coming about a year ago, and he took the precaution to have Chauncey Weed and the rest of the Committee in his pocket—and of course Heth Sutton’s always been there.”

William Wetherell thought of that imposing and manly personage, the Honorable Heth Sutton, being in Jethro's pocket, and marvelled. Mr. Chauncey Weed seemed of a species better able to thrive in the atmosphere of pockets.

"Well, as I say, there was the Truro Franchise Bill sound asleep in the Committee, and when Isaac D. Worthington saw that his little arrangement with Heth Sutton wasn't any good, and that the people of the state didn't have anything more to say about it than the Crow Indians, and that the end of the session was getting nearer and nearer, he got desperate and went to Jethro, I suppose. You know as well as I do that Jethro has agreed to put the bill through."

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“Then why doesn’t he get the Committee to report it and put it through?” asked Wetherell.

“Bless your simple literary nature,” exclaimed Mr Merrill, “Jethro’s got more power than any man in the state, but that isn’t saying that he doesn’t have to fight occasionally. He has to fight now. He has seven of the twelve senators hitched, and the governor. But Duncan and Lovejoy have bought up all the loose blocks of representatives, and it is supposed that the franchise forces only control a quorum. The end of the session is a week off, and never in all my experience have I seen a more praiseworthy attendance on the part of members.”

“Do you mean that they are being paid to remain in their seats?” cried the amazed Mr. Wetherell.

“Well,” answered Mr. Merrill, with a twinkle in his eye, “that is a little bald and—and unparliamentary, perhaps, but fairly accurate. Our friend Jethro is confronted with a problem to tax even his faculties, and to look at him, a man wouldn’t suspect he had a care in the world.”

Jethro was apparently quite as free from anxiety the next morning when he offered, after breakfast, to show Wetherell and Cynthia the sights of the town, though Wetherell could not but think that the Throne Room and the Truro Franchise Bill were left at a very crucial moment to take care of themselves. Jethro talked to Cynthia—or rather, Cynthia talked to Jethro upon innumerable subject’s; they looked upon the statue of a great statesman in the park, and Cynthia read aloud the quotation graven on the rock of the pedestal, “The People’s Government, made for the People, made by the People, and answerable to the People.” After that they went into the state library, where Wetherell was introduced to the librarian, Mr. Storrow. They did not go into the State House because, as everybody knows, Jethro Bass never went there. Mr. Bijah Bixby and other lieutenants might be seen in the lobbies, and the governor might sign bills in his own apartment there, but the real seat of government was that Throne Room into which we have been permitted to enter.

They walked out beyond the outskirts of the town, where there was a grove or picnic ground which was also used as a park by some of the inhabitants. Jethro liked the spot, and was in the habit sometimes of taking refuge there when the atmosphere of the Pelican House became too thick. The three of them had sat down on one of the board benches to rest, when presently two people were seen at a little distance walking among the trees, and the sight of them, for some reason, seemed to give Jethro infinite pleasure.

“Why,” exclaimed Cynthia, “one of them is that horrid girl everybody was looking at in the dining room last night.”

“D-don’t like her, Cynthy?” said Jethro.

“No,” said Cynthia, “I don’t.”

“Pretty—hain’t she—pretty?”

“She’s brazen,” declared Cynthia.

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It was, indeed, Miss Cassandra Hopkins, daughter of that Honorable Alva who—-according to Mr. Bixby was all ready with a certain sum of money to be the next governor. Miss Cassandra was arrayed fluffily in cool, pink lawn, and she carried a fringed parasol, and she was gazing upward with telling effect into the face of the gentleman by her side. This would have all been very romantic if the gentleman had been young and handsome, but he was certainly not a man to sweep a young girl off her feet. He was tall, angular, though broad-shouldered, with a long, scrawny neck that rose out of a very low collar, and a large head, scantily covered with hair—a head that gave a physical as well as a mental effect of hardness. His smooth-shaven face seemed to bear witness that its owner was one who had pushed frugality to the borders of a vice. It was not a pleasant face, but now it wore an almost benign expression under the influence of Miss Cassandra's eyes. So intent, apparently, were both of them upon each other that they did not notice the group on the bench at the other side of the grove. William Wetherell ventured to ask Jethro who the man was.

"N-name's Lovejoy," said Jethro.

"Lovejoy!" ejaculated the storekeeper, thinking of what Mr. Merrill had told him of the opponents of the Truro Franchise Bill. "President of the 'Northwestern' Railroad?"

Jethro gave his friend a shrewd look.

"G-gettin' posted—hain't you, Will?" he said.

"Is she going to marry that old man?" asked Cynthia.

Jethro smiled a little. "G-guess not," said he, "g-guess not, if the old man can help it. Nobody's married him yet, and hain't likely to."

Jethro was unusually silent on the way back to the hotel, but he did not seem to be worried or displeased. He only broke his silence once, in fact, when Cynthia called his attention to a large poster of some bloodhounds on a fence, announcing the fact in red letters that "Uncle Tom's Cabin" would be given by a certain travelling company at the Opera House the next evening.

"L-like to go, Cynthy?"

"Oh, Uncle Jethro, do you think we can go?"

"Never b'en to a show—hev you—never b'en to a show?"

"Never in my life," said Cynthia.

"We'll all go," said Jethro, and he repeated it once or twice as they came to Main Street, seemingly greatly tickled at the prospect. And there was the Truro Franchise Bill

hanging over him, with only a week left of the session, and Lovejoy's and Duncan's men sitting so tight in their seats! William Wetherell could not understand it.

CHAPTER XIV

Half an hour later, when Mr. Wetherell knocked timidly at Number 7,—drawn thither by an irresistible curiosity,—the door was opened by a portly person who wore a shining silk hat and ample gold watch chain. The gentleman had, in fact, just arrived; but he seemed perfectly at home as he laid down his hat on the marble-topped bureau, mopped his face, took a glass of iced water at a gulp, chose a cigar, and sank down gradually on the bed. Mr. Wetherell recognized him instantly as the father of the celebrated Cassandra.

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“Well, Jethro,” said the gentleman, “I’ve got to come into the Throne Room once a day anyhow, just to make sure you don’t forget me—eh?”

“A-Alvy,” said Jethro, “I want you to shake hands with a particular friend of mine, Mr. Will Wetherell of Coniston. Er—Will, the Honorable Alvy Hopkins of Gosport.”

Mr. Hopkins rose from the bed as gradually as he had sunk down upon it, and seized Mr. Wetherell’s hand impressively. His own was very moist.

“Heard you was in town, Mr. Wetherell,” he said heartily. “If Jethro calls you a particular friend, it means something, I guess. It means something to me, anyhow.”

“Will hain’t a politician,” said Jethro. “Er—Alvy?”

“Hello!” said Mr. Hopkins.

“Er—Will don’t talk.”

“If Jethro had been real tactful,” said the Honorable Alvy, sinking down again, “he’d have introduced me as the next governor of the state. Everybody knows I want to be governor, everybody knows I’ve got twenty thousand dollars in the bank to pay for that privilege. Everybody knows I’m going to be governor if Jethro says so.”

William Wetherell was a little taken aback at this ingenuous statement of the gentleman from Gosport. He looked out of the window through the foliage of the park, and his eye was caught by the monument there in front of the State House, and he thought of the inscription on the base of it, “The People’s Government.” The Honorable Alva had not mentioned the people—undoubtedly.

“Yes, Mr. Wetherell, twenty thousand dollars.” He sighed. “Time was when a man could be governor for ten. Those were the good old days—eh, Jethro?”

“A-Alvy, ‘Uncle Tom’s Cabin’s’ comin’ to town tomorrow—to-morrow.”

“You don’t tell me,” said the Honorable Alva, acquiescing cheerfully in the change of subject. “We’ll go. Pleased to have you, too, Mr. Wetherell.”

“Alvy,” said Jethro, again, “‘Uncle Tom’s Cabin’ comes to town to-morrow.”

Mr. Hopkins stopped fanning himself, and glanced at Jethro questioningly.

“A-Alvy, that give you an idea?” said Jethro, mildly.

Mr. Wetherell looked blank: it gave him no idea whatsoever, except of little Eva and the bloodhounds. For a few moments the Honorable Alva appeared to be groping, too, and then his face began to crease into a smile of comprehension.

“By Godfrey, Jethro, but you are smart.” he exclaimed, with involuntary tribute; “you mean buy up the theatre?”

“C-callate you’ll find it’s bought up.”

“You mean pay for it?” said Mr. Hopkins.

“You’ve guessed it, Alvy, you’ve guessed it.”

Mr. Hopkins gazed at him in admiration, leaned out of the perpendicular, and promptly drew from his trousers’ pocket a roll of stupendous proportions. Wetting his thumb, he began to push aside the top bills.

“How much is it?” he demanded.

But Jethro put up his hand.

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“No hurry, Alvy—n-no hurry. H-Honorable Alvy Hopkins of Gosport—p-patron of the theatre. Hain’t the first time you’ve b’en a patron, Alvy.”

“Jethro,” said Mr. Hopkins, solemnly, putting up his money, “I’m much obliged to you. I’m free to say I’d never have thought of it. If you ain’t the all-firedest smartest man in America to-day,—I don’t except any, even General Grant,—then I ain’t the next governor of this state.”

Whereupon he lapsed into an even more expressive silence, his face still glowing.

“Er—Alvy,” said Jethro presently, “what’s the name of your gal?”

“Well,” said Mr. Hopkins, “I guess you’ve got me. We did christen her Lily, but she didn’t turn out exactly Lily. She ain’t the type,” said Mr. Hopkins, slowly, not without a note of regret, and lapsed into silence.

“W-what did you say her name was, Alvy?”

“I guess her name’s Cassandra,” said the Honorable Alva.

“C-Cassandry?”

“Well, you see,” he explained a trifle apologetically, “she’s kind of taken some matters in her own hands, my gal. Didn’t like Lily, and it didn’t seem to fit her anyway, so she called herself Cassandra. Read it in a book. It means, ‘inspirer of love,’ or some such poetry, but I don’t deny that it goes with her better than Lily would.”

“Sh-she’s a good deal of a gal, Alvy—fine-appearin’ gal, Alvy.”

“Upon my word, Jethro, I didn’t know you ever looked at a woman. But I suppose you couldn’t help lookin’ at my gal—she does seem to draw men’s eyes as if she was magnetized some way.” Mr. Hopkins did not speak as though this quality of his daughter gave him unmixed delight. “But she’s a good-hearted gal, Cassy is, high-spirited, and I won’t deny she’s handsome and smart.”

“She’ll kind of grace my position when I’m governor. But to tell you the truth, Jethro, one old friend to another, durned if I don’t wish she was married. It’s a terrible thing for a father to say, I know, but I’d feel easier about her if she was married to some good man who could hold her. There’s young Joe Turner in Gosport, he’d give his soul to have her, and he’d do. Cassy says she’s after bigger game than Joe. She’s young—that’s her only excuse. Funny thing happened night before last,” continued Mr. Hopkins, laughing. “Lovejoy saw her, and he’s b’en out of his head ever since. Al must be pretty near my age, ain’t he? Well, there’s no fool like an old fool.”

“A-Alvy introduce me to Cassandry sometime will you?”

“Why, certainly,” answered Mr. Hopkins, heartily, “I’ll bring her in here. And now how about gettin’ an adjournment to-morrow night for ’Uncle Tom’s Cabin’? These night sessions kind of interfere.”

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Half an hour later, when the representatives were pouring into the rotunda for dinner, a crowd was pressing thickly around the desk to read a placard pinned on the wall above it. The placard announced the coming of Mr. Glover's Company for the following night, and that the Honorable Alva Hopkins of Gosport, ex-Speaker of the House, had bought three hundred and twelve seats for the benefit of the members. And the Honorable Alva himself, very red in the face and almost smothered, could be dimly discerned at the foot of the stairs trying to fight his way out of a group of overenthusiastic friends and admirers. Alva—so it was said on all sides—was doing the right thing.

So it was that one sensation followed another at the capital, and the politicians for the moment stopped buzzing over the Truro Franchise Bill to discuss Mr. Hopkins and his master-stroke. The afternoon Chronicle waxed enthusiastic on the subject of Mr. Hopkins's generosity, and predicted that, when Senator Hartington made the motion in the upper house and Mr. Jameson in the lower, the General Court would unanimously agree that there would be no evening session on the following day. The Honorable Alva was the hero of the hour.

That afternoon Cynthia and her father walked through the green park to make their first visit to the State House. They stood hand in hand on the cool, marble-paved floor of the corridor, gazing silently at the stained and battered battle-flags behind the glass, and Wetherell seemed to be listening again to the appeal of a great President to a great Country in the time of her dire need—the soul calling on the body to fight for itself. Wetherell seemed to feel again the thrill he felt when he saw the blue-clad men of this state crowded in the train at Boston: and to hear again the cheers, and the sobs, and the prayers as he looked upon the blood that stained stars and stripes alike with a holy stain. With that blood the country had been consecrated, and the state—yes, and the building where they stood. So they went on up the stairs, reverently, nor heeded the noise of those in groups about them, and through a door into the great hall of the representatives of the state.

Life is a mixture of emotions, a jumble of joy and sorrow and reverence and mirth and flippancy, of right feeling and heresy. In the morning William Wetherell had laughed at Mr. Hopkins and the twenty thousand dollars he had put in the bank to defraud the people; but now he could have wept over it, and as he looked down upon the three hundred members of that House, he wondered how many of them represented their neighbors who supposedly had sent them here—and how many Mr. Lovejoy's railroad, Mr. Worthington's railroad, or another man's railroad.

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But gradually he forgot the battle-flags, and his mood changed. Perhaps the sight of Mr. Speaker Sutton towering above the House, the very essence and bulk of authority, brought this about. He aroused in Wetherell unwilling admiration and envy when he arose to put a question in his deep voice, or rapped sternly with his gavel to silence the tumult of voices that arose from time to time; or while some member was speaking, or the clerk was reading a bill at breathless speed, he turned with wonderful nonchalance to listen to the conversation of the gentlemen on the bench beside him, smiled, nodded, pulled his whiskers, at once conscious and unconscious of his high position. And, most remarkable of all to the storekeeper, not a man of the three hundred, however obscure, could rise that the Speaker did not instantly call him by name.

William Wetherell was occupied by such reflections as these when suddenly there fell a hush through the House. The clerk had stopped reading, the Speaker had stopped conversing, and, seizing his gavel, looked expectantly over the heads of the members and nodded. A sleek, comfortably dressed mail arose smilingly in the middle of the House, and subdued laughter rippled from seat to seat as he addressed the chair.

“Mr. Jameson of Wantage.”

Mr. Jameson cleared his throat impressively and looked smilingly about him.

“Mr. Speaker and gentlemen of the House,” he said, “if I desired to arouse the enthusiasm—the just enthusiasm—of any gathering in this House, or in this city, or in this state, I should mention the name of the Honorable Alva Hopkins of Gosport. I think I am right.”

Mr. Jameson was interrupted, as he no doubt expected, by applause from floor and gallery. He stood rubbing his hands together, and it seemed to William Wetherell that the Speaker did not rap as sharply with his gavel as he had upon other occasions.

“Gentlemen of the House,” continued Mr. Jameson, presently, “the Honorable Alva Hopkins, whom we all know and love, has with unparalleled generosity—unparalleled, I say—bought up three hundred and twelve seats in Fosters Opera House for to-morrow night” (renewed applause), “in order that every member of this august body may have the opportunity to witness that most classic of histrionic productions, ’Uncle Tom’s Cabin’.” (Loud applause, causing the Speaker to rap sharply.) “That we may show a proper appreciation of this compliment—I move you, Mr. Speaker, that the House adjourn not later than six o’clock to-morrow, Wednesday evening, not to meet again until Thursday morning.”

Mr. Jameson of Wantage handed the resolution to a page and sat down amidst renewed applause. Mr. Wetherell noticed that many members turned in their seats as they clapped, and glancing along the gallery he caught a flash of red and perceived the

radiant Miss Cassandra herself leaning over the rail, her hands clasped in ecstasy. Mr. Lovejoy was not with her—he evidently preferred to pay his attentions in private.

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“There she is again,” whispered Cynthia, who had taken an instinctive and extraordinary dislike to Miss Cassandra. Then Mr. Sutton rose majestically to put the question.

“Gentlemen, are you ready for the question?” he cried. “All those in favor of the resolution of the gentleman from Wantage, Mr. Jameson—” the Speaker stopped abruptly. The legislators in the front seats swung around, and people in the gallery craned forward to see a member standing at his seat in the extreme rear of the hall. He was a little man in an ill-fitting coat, his wizened face clean-shaven save for the broom-shaped beard under his chin, which he now held in his hand. His thin, nasal voice was somehow absurdly penetrating as he addressed the chair. Mr. Sutton was apparently, for once, taken by surprise, and stared a moment, as though racking his brain for the name.

“The gentleman from Suffolk, Mr. Heath,” he said, and smiling a little, sat down.

The gentleman from Suffolk, still holding on to his beard, pitched in without preamble.

“We farmers on the back seats don’t often get a chance to be heard, Mr. Speaker,” said he, amidst a general tittering from the front seats. “We come down here without any l’arnin’ of parli’ment’ry law, and before we know what’s happened the session’s over, and we hain’t said nothin’.” (More laughter.) “There’s b’en a good many times when I wanted to say somethin’, and this time I made up my mind I was a-goin’ to—law or no law.”

(Applause, and a general show of interest in the gentleman from Suffolk.) “Naow, Mr. Speaker, I hain’t ag’in’ ‘Uncle Tom’s Cabin.’ It’s a good play, and it’s done an almighty lot of good. And I hain’t sayin’ nothin’ ag’in’ Alvy Hopkins nor his munificence. But I do know there’s a sight of little bills on that desk that won’t be passed if we don’t set to-morrow night—little bills that are big bills for us farmers. That thar woodchuck bill, for one.” (Laughter.) “My constituents want I should have that bill passed. We don’t need a quorum for them bills, but we need time. Naow, Mr. Speaker, I say let all them that wants to go and see ‘Uncle Tom’s Cabin’ go and see it, but let a few of us fellers that has woodchuck bills and other things that we’ve got to get through come down here and pass ’em. You kin put ’em on the docket, and I guess if anything comes along that hain’t jest right for everybody, somebody can challenge a quorum and bust up the session. That’s all.”

The gentleman from Suffolk sat down amidst thunderous applause, and before it died away Mr. Jameson was on his feet, smiling and rubbing his hands together, and was recognized.

“Mr. Speaker,” he said, as soon as he could be heard, “if the gentleman from Suffolk desires to pass woodchuck bills” (renewed laughter), “he can do so as far as I’m concerned. I guess I know where most of the members of this House will be to-morrow

night-" (Cries of 'You're right', and sharp rapping of the gavel.) "Mr. Speaker, I withdraw my resolution."

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“The gentleman from Wantage,” said the Speaker, smiling broadly now, “withdraws his resolution.”

As William Wetherell was returning to the Pelican House, pondering over this incident, he almost ran into a distinguished-looking man walking briskly across Main Street.

“It was Mr. Worthington!” said Cynthia, looking after him.

But Mr. Worthington had a worried look on his face, and was probably too much engrossed in his own thoughts to notice his acquaintances. He had, in fact, just come from the Throne Room, where he had been to remind Jethro that the session was almost over, and to ask him what he meant to do about the Truro Bill. Jethro had given him no satisfaction.

“Duncan and Lovejoy have their people paid to sit there night and day,” Mr. Worthington had said. “We’ve got a bare majority on a full House; but you don’t seem to dare to risk it. What are you going to do about it, Mr. Bass?”

“W-want the bill to pass—don’t you?”

“Certainly,” Mr. Worthington had cried, on the edge of losing his temper.

“L-left it to me—didn’t you?

“Yes, but I’m entitled to know what’s being done. I’m paying for it.”

“H-hain’t paid for it yet—hev you?”

“No, I most assuredly haven’t.”

“B-better wait till you do.”

There was very little satisfaction in this, and Mr. Worthington had at length been compelled to depart, fuming, to the house of his friend the enemy, Mr. Duncan, there to attempt for the twentieth time to persuade Mr. Duncan to call off his dogs who were sitting with such praiseworthy pertinacity in their seats. As the two friends walked on the lawn, Mr. Worthington tried to explain, likewise for the twentieth time, that the extension of the Truro Railroad could in no way lessen the Canadian traffic of the Central, Mr. Duncan’s road. But Mr. Duncan could not see it that way, and stuck to his present ally, Mr. Lovejoy, and refused point-blank to call off his dogs. Business was business.

It is an apparently inexplicable fact, however, that Mr. Worthington and his son Bob were guests at the Duncan mansion at the capital. Two countries may not be allies, but their sovereigns may be friends. In the present instance, Mr. Duncan and Mr. Worthington’s railroads were opposed, diplomatically, but another year might see the

Truro Railroad and the Central acting as one. And Mr. Worthington had no intention whatever of sacrificing Mr. Duncan's friendship. The first citizen of Brampton possessed one quality so essential to greatness—that of looking into the future, and he believed that the time would come when an event of some importance might create a perpetual alliance between himself and Mr. Duncan. In short, Mr. Duncan had a daughter, Janet, and Mr. Worthington, as we know, had a son. And Mr. Duncan, in addition to his own fortune, had married one of the richest heiresses in New England. Prudens futuri, that was Mr. Worthington's motto.

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The next morning Cynthia, who was walking about the town alone, found herself gazing over a picket fence at a great square house with a very wide cornice that stood by itself in the centre of a shade-flecked lawn. There were masses of shrubbery here and there, and a greenhouse, and a latticed summer-house: and Cynthia was wondering what it would be like to live in a great place like that, when a barouche with two shining horses in silver harness drove past her and stopped before the gate. Four or five girls and boys came laughing out on the porch, and one of them, who held a fishing-rod in his hand, Cynthia recognized. Startled and ashamed, she began to walk on as fast as she could in the opposite direction, when she heard the sound of footsteps on the lawn behind her, and her own name called in a familiar voice. At that she hurried the faster; but she could not run, and the picket fence was half a block long, and Bob Worthington had an advantage over her. Of course it was Bob, and he did not scruple to run, and in a few seconds he was leaning over the fence in front of her. Now Cynthia was as red as a peony by this time, and she almost hated him.

“Well, of all people, Cynthia Wetherell!” he cried; “didn’t you hear me calling after you?”

“Yes,” said Cynthia.

“Why didn’t you stop?”

“I didn’t want to,” said Cynthia, glancing at the distant group on the porch, who were watching them. Suddenly she turned to him defiantly. “I didn’t know you were in that house, or in the capital,” she said.

“And I didn’t know you were,” said Bob, upon whose masculine intelligence the meaning of her words was entirely lost. “If I had known it, you can bet I would have looked you up. Where are you staying?”

“At the Pelican House.”

“What!” said Bob, “with all the politicians? How did you happen to go there?”

“Mr. Bass asked my father and me to come down for a few days,” answered Cynthia, her color heightening again. Life is full of contrasts, and Cynthia was becoming aware of some of them.

“Uncle Jethro?” said Bob.

“Yes, Uncle Jethro,” said Cynthia, smiling in spite of herself. He always made her smile.

“Uncle Jethro owns the Pelican House,” said Bob.

“Does he? I knew he was a great man, but I didn’t know how great he was until I came down here.”

Cynthia said this so innocently that Bob repented his flippancy on the spot. He had heard occasional remarks of his elders about Jethro.

“I didn’t mean quite that,” he said, growing red in his turn. “Uncle Jethro—Mr. Bass—is a great man of course. That’s what I meant.”

“And he’s a very good man,” said Cynthia, who understood now that he had spoken a little lightly of Jethro, and resented it.

“I’m sure of it,” said Bob, eagerly. Then Cynthia began to walk on, slowly, and he followed her on the other side of the fence. “Hold on,” he cried, “I haven’t said half the things I want to say—yet.”

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“What do you want to say?” asked Cynthia, still walking. “I have to go.”

“Oh, no, you don’t! Wait just a minute—won’t you?”

Cynthia halted, with apparent unwillingness, and put out her toe between the pickets. Then she saw that there was a little patch on that toe, and drew it in again.

“What do you want to say?” she repeated. “I don’t believe you have anything to say at all.” And suddenly she flashed a look at him that made his heart thump.

“I do—I swear I do!” he protested. “I’m coming down to the Pelican to-morrow morning to get you to go for a walk.”

Cynthia could not but think that the remoteness of the time he set was scarce in keeping with his ardent tone.

“I have something else to do to-morrow morning,” she answered.

“Then I’ll come to-morrow afternoon,” said Bob, instantly.

“Who lives here?” she asked irrelevantly.

“Mr. Duncan. I’m visiting the Duncans.”

At this moment a carryall joined the carriage at the gate. Cynthia glanced at the porch again. The group there had gown larger, and they were still staring. She began to feel uncomfortable again, and moved on slowly.

“Mayn’t I come?” asked Bob, going after her; and scraping the butt of the rod along the palings.

“Aren’t there enough girls here to satisfy you?” asked Cynthia.

“They’re enough—yes,” he said, “but none of ’em could hold a candle to you.”

Cynthia laughed outright.

“I believe you tell them all something like that,” she said.

“I don’t do any such thing,” he retorted, and then he laughed himself, and Cynthia laughed again.

“I like you because you don’t swallow everything whole,” said Bob, “and—well, for a good many other reams.” And he looked into her face with such frank admiration that Cynthia blushed and turned away.

“I don’t believe a word you say,” she answered, and started to walk off, this time in earnest.

“Hold on,” cried Bob. They were almost at the end of the fence by this, and the pickets were sharp and rather high, or he would have climbed them.

Cynthia paused hesitatingly.

“I’ll come at two o’clock to-morrow,” said he; “We’re going on a picnic to-day, to Dalton’s Bend, on the river. I wish I could get out of it.”

Just then there came a voice from the gateway.

“Bob! Bob Worthington!”

They both turned involuntarily. A slender girl with light brown hair was standing there, waving at him.

“Who’s that?” asked Cynthia.

“That?” said Bob, in some confusion, “oh, that’s Janet Duncan.”

“Good-by,” said Cynthia.

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“I’m coming to-morrow,” he called after her, but she did not turn. In a little while she heard the carryall behind her clattering down the street, its passengers laughing and joking merrily. Her face burned, for she thought that they were laughing at her; she wished with all her heart that she had not stopped to talk with him at the palings. The girls, indeed, were giggling as the carryall passed, and she heard somebody call out his name, but nevertheless he leaned out of the seat and waved his hat at her, amid a shout of laughter. Poor Cynthia! She did not look at him. Tears of vexation were in her eyes, and the light of her joy at this visit to the capital flickered, and she wished she were back in Coniston. She thought it would be very nice to be rich, and to live in a great house in a city, and to go on picnics.

The light flickered, but it did not wholly go out. If it has not been shown that Cynthia was endowed with a fair amount of sense, many of these pages have been written in vain. She sat down for a while in the park and thought of the many things she had to be thankful for—not the least of which was Jethro’s kindness. And she remembered that she was to see “Uncle Tom’s Cabin” that evening.

Such are the joys and sorrows of fifteen!

CHAPTER XV

Mr. Amos Cuthbert named it so—our old friend Amos who lives high up in the ether of Town’s End ridge, and who now represents Coniston in the Legislature. He is the same silent, sallow person as when Jethro first took a mortgage on his farm, only his skin is beginning to resemble dried parchment, and he is a trifle more cantankerous. On the morning of that memorable day when, “Uncle Tom’s Cabin” came to the capital, Amos had entered the Throne Room and given vent to his feelings in regard to the gentleman in the back seat who had demanded an evening sitting on behalf of the farmers.

“Don’t that beat all?” cried Amos. “Let them have their darned woodchuck session; there won’t nobody go to it. For cussed, crisscross contrariness, give me a moss-back Democrat from a one-boss, one-man town like Suffolk. I’m a-goin’ to see the show.”

“G-goin’ to the show, be you, Amos?” said Jethro.

“Yes, I be,” answered Amos, bitterly. “I hain’t agoin’ nigh the house to-night.” And with this declaration he departed.

“I wonder if he really is going?” queried Mr. Merrill looking at the ceiling. And then he laughed.

“Why shouldn’t he go?” asked William Wetherell.

Mr. Merrill's answer to this question was a wink, whereupon he, too, departed. And while Wetherell was pondering over the possible meaning of these words the Honorable Alva Hopkins entered, wreathed in smiles, and closed the door behind him.

"It's all fixed," he said, taking a seat near Jethro in the window.

"S-seen your gal—Alvy—seen your gal?"

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Mr. Hopkins gave a glance at Wetherell.

“Will don’t talk,” said Jethro, and resumed his inspection through the lace curtains of what was going on in the street.

“Cassandry’s, got him to go,” said Mr. Hopkins. “It’s all fixed, as sure as Sunday. If it misses fire, then I’ll never mention the governorship again. But if it don’t miss fire,” and the Honorable Alva leaned over and put his hand on Jethro’s knee, “if it don’t miss fire, I get the nomination. Is that right?”

“Y-you’ve guessed it, Alvy.”

“That’s all I want to know,” declared the Honorable Alva; “when you say that much, you never go back on it. And, you can go ahead and give the orders, Jethro. I have to see that the boys get the tickets. Cassandry’s got a head on her shoulders, and she kind of wants to be governor, too.” He got as far as the door, when he turned and bestowed upon Jethro a glance of undoubted tribute. “You’ve done a good many smart things,” said he, “but I guess you never beat this, and never will.”

“H-hain’t done it yet, Alvy,” answered Jethro, still looking out through the window curtains at the ever ganging groups of gentlemen in the street. These groups had a never ceasing interest for Jethro Bass.

Mr. Wetherell didn’t talk, but had he been the most incurable of gossips he felt that he could have done no damage to this mysterious affair, whatever it was. In a certain event, Mr. Hopkins was promised the governorship: so much was plain. And it was also evident that Miss Cassandra Hopkins was in some way to be instrumental. William Wetherell did not like to ask Jethro, but he thought a little of sounding Mr. Merrill, and then he came to the conclusion that it would be wiser for him not to know.

“Er—Will,” said Jethro, presently, “you know Heth Sutton—Speaker Heth Sutton?”

“Yes.”

“Er—wouldn’t mind askin’ him to step in and see me before the session—if he was comin’ by—would you?”

“Certainly not.”

“Er—if he was comin’ by,” said Jethro.

Mr. Wetherell found Mr. Speaker Sutton glued to a pillar in the rotunda below. He had some difficulty in breaking through the throng that pressed around him, and still more in attracting his attention, as Mr. Sutton took no manner of notice of the customary form of placing one’s hand under his elbow and pressing gently up. Summoning up his

courage, Mr. Wetherell tried the second method of seizing him by the buttonhole. He paused in his harangue, one hand uplifted, and turned and glanced at the storekeeper abstractedly.

“Mr. Bass asked me to tell you to drop into Number 7,” said Wetherell, and added, remembering express instructions, “if you were going by.”

Wetherell had not anticipated the magical effect this usual message would have on Mr. Sutton, nor had he thought that so large and dignified a body would move so rapidly. Before the astonished gentlemen who had penned him could draw a breath, Mr. Sutton had reached the stairway and, was mounting it with an agility that did him credit. Five minutes later Wetherell saw the Speaker descending again, the usually impressive quality of his face slightly modified by the twitching of a smile.

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Thus the day passed, and the gentlemen of the Lovejoy and Duncan factions sat, as tight as ever in their seats, and the Truro Franchise bill still slumbered undisturbed in Mr. Chauncey Weed's committee.

At supper there was a decided festal air about the dining room of the Pelican House, the little band of agricultural gentlemen who wished to have a session not being patrons of that exclusive hotel. Many of the Solons had sent home for their wives; that they might do the utmost justice to the Honorable Alva's hospitality. Even Jethro, as he ate his crackers and milk, had a new coat with bright brass buttons, and Cynthia, who wore a fresh gingham which Miss Sukey Kittredge of Coniston had helped to design, so far relented in deference to Jethro's taste as to tie a red bow at her throat.

The middle table under the chandelier was the immediate firmament of Miss Cassandra Hopkins. And there, beside the future governor, sat the president of the "Northwestern" Railroad, Mr. Lovejoy, as the chief of the revolving satellites. People began to say that Mr. Lovejoy was hooked at last, now that he had lost his head in such an unaccountable fashion as to pay his court in public; and it was very generally known that he was to make one of the Honorable Alva's immediate party at the performance of "Uncle Tam's Cabin."

Mr. Speaker Sutton, of course, would have to forego the pleasure of the theatre as a penalty of his high position. Mr. Merrill, who sat at Jethro's table next to Cynthia that evening, did a great deal of joking with the Honorable Heth about having to preside aver a woodchuck session, which the Speaker, so Mr. Wetherell thought, took in astonishingly good part, and seemed very willing to make the great sacrifice which his duty required of him.

After supper Mr. Wetherell took a seat in the rotunda. As an observer of human nature, he had begun to find a fascination in watching the group of politicians there. First of all he encountered Mr. Amos Cuthbert, his little coal-black eyes burning brightly, and he was looking very irritable indeed.

"So you're going to the show, Amos?" remarked the storekeeper, with an attempt at cordiality.

To his bewilderment, Amos turned upon him fiercely.

"Who said I was going to the show?" he snapped.

"You yourself told me."

"You'd ought to know whether I'm a-goin' or not," said Amos, and walked away.

While Mr. Wetherell sat meditating, upon this inexplicable retort, a retired, scholarly looking gentleman with a white beard, who wore spectacles, came out of the door

leading from the barber shop and quietly took a seat beside him. The storekeeper's attention was next distracted by the sight of one who wandered slowly but ceaselessly from group to group, kicking up his heels behind, and halting always in the rear of the speakers. Needless to say that this was our friend Mr. Bijah Bixby, who was following out

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his celebrated tactics of “going along by when they were talkin’ sly.” Suddenly Mr. Bixby’s eye alighted on Mr. Wetherell, who by a stretch of imagination conceived that it expressed both astonishment and approval, although he was wholly at a loss to understand these sentiments. Mr. Bixby winked—Mr. Wetherell was sure of that. But to his surprise, Bijah did not pause in his rounds to greet him.

Mr. Wetherell was beginning to be decidedly uneasy, and was about to go upstairs, when Mr. Merrill came down the rotunda whistling, with his hands in his pockets. He stopped whistling when he spied the storekeeper, and approached him in his usual hearty manner.

“Well, well, this is fortunate,” said Mr. Merrill; “how are you, Duncan? I want you to know Mr. Wetherell. Wetherell writes that weekly letter for the Guardian you were speaking to me about last year. Will, this is Mr. Alexander Duncan, president of the ‘Central.’”

“How do you do, Mr. Wetherell?” said the scholarly gentleman with the spectacles, putting out his hand. “I’m glad to meet you, very glad, indeed. I read your letters with the greatest pleasure.”

Mr. Wetherell, as he took Mr. Duncan’s hand, had a variety of emotions which may be imagined, and need not be set down in particular.

“Funny thing,” Mr. Merrill continued, “I was looking for you, Duncan. It occurred to me that you would like to meet Mr. Wetherell. I was afraid you were in Boston.”

“I have just got back,” said Mr. Duncan.

“I wanted Wetherell to see your library. I was telling him about it.”

“I should be delighted to show it to him,” answered Mr. Duncan. That library, as is well known, was a special weakness of Mr. Duncan’s.

Poor William Wetherell, who was quite overwhelmed by the fact that the great Mr. Duncan had actually read his letters and liked them, could scarcely utter a sensible word. Almost before he realized what had happened he was following Mr. Duncan out of the Pelican House, when the storekeeper was mystified once more by a nudge and another wink from Mr. Bixby, conveying unbounded admiration.

“Why don’t you write a book, Mr. Wetherell?” inquired the railroad president, when they were crossing the park.

“I don’t think I could do it,” said Mr. Wetherell, modestly. Such incense was overpowering, and he immediately forgot Mr. Bixby.

“Yes, you can,” said Mr. Duncan, “only you don’t know it. Take your letters for a beginning. You can draw people well enough, when you try. There was your description of the lonely hill-farm on the spur—I shall always remember that: the gaunt farmer, toiling every minute between sun and sun; the thin, patient woman bending to a task that never charged or lightened; the children growing up and leaving one by one, some to the cities, some to the West, until the old people are left alone in the evening of life—to the sunsets and the storms. Of course you must write a book.”

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Mr. Duncan quoted other letters, and William Wetherell thrilled. Poor man! he had had little enough incense in his time, and none at all from the great. They came to the big square house with the cornice which Cynthia had seen the day before, and walked across the lawn through the open door. William Wetherell had a glimpse of a great drawing-room with high windows, out of which was wafted the sound of a piano and of youthful voice and laughter, and then he was in the library. The thought of one man owning all those books overpowered him. There they were, in stately rows, from the floor to the high ceiling, and a portable ladder with which to reach them.

Mr. Duncan, understanding perhaps something of the storekeeper's embarrassment, proceeded to take down his treasures: first editions from the shelves, and folios and mistrals from drawers in a great iron safe in one corner and laid them on the mahogany desk. It was the railroad president's hobby, and could he find an appreciative guest, he was happy. It need scarcely be said that he found William Wetherell appreciative, and possessed of knowledge of Shaksperiana and other matters that astonished his host as well as pleased him. For Wetherell had found his tongue at last.

After a while Mr. Duncan drew out his watch and gave a start.

"By George!" he exclaimed, "it's after eight o'clock. I'll have to ask you to excuse me to-night, Mr. Wetherell. I'd like to show you the rest of them—can't you come around to-morrow afternoon?"

Mr. Wetherell, who had forgotten his own engagement and "Uncle Tom's Cabin," said he would be happy to come. And they went out together and began to walk toward the State House.

"It isn't often I find a man who knows anything at all about these things," continued Mr. Duncan, whose heart was quite won. "Why do you bury yourself in Coniston?"

"I went there from Briton for my health," said the storekeeper.

"Jethro Bass lives there, doesn't he" said Mr. Duncan, with a laugh. But I suppose you don't know anything about politics."

"I know nothing at all," said Mr. Wetherell, which was quite true. He had been in dreamland, but now the fact struck him again, with something of a shock, that this mild-mannered gentleman was one of those who had been paying certain legislators to remain in their seats. Wetherell thought of speaking to Mr. Duncan of his friendship with Jethro Bass, but the occasion passed.

"I wish to heaven I didn't have to know anything about politics," Mr. Duncan was saying; "they disgust me. There's a little matter on now, about an extension of the Truro Railroad to Harwich, which wouldn't interest you, but you can't conceive what a

nuisance it has been to watch that House day and night, as I've had to. It's no joke to have that townsman of yours; Jethro Bass, opposed to you. I won't say anything against him, for he many be a friend of yours, and I have to use him sometimes myself."

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Mr. Duncan sighed. “It’s all very sordid and annoying. Now this evening, for instance, when we might have enjoyed ourselves with those books, I’ve’ got to go to the House, just because some backwoods farmers want to talk about woodchucks. I suppose it’s foolish,” said Mr. Duncan; “but Bass has tricked us so often that I’ve got into the habit of being watchful. I should have been here twenty minutes ago.”

By this time they had come to the entrance of the State House, and Wetherell followed Mr. Duncan in, to have a look at the woodchuck session himself. Several members hurried by and up the stairs, some of them in their Sunday black; and the lobby above seemed, even to the storekeeper’s unpractised eye, a trifle active for a woodchuck session. Mr. Duncan muttered something, and quickened his gait a little on the steps that led to the gallery. This place was almost empty. They went down to the rail, and the railroad president cast his eye over the House.

“Good God!” he said sharply, “there’s almost a quorum here.” He ran his eye over the members. “There is a quorum here.”

Mr. Duncan stood drumming nervously with his fingers on the rail, scanning the heads below. The members were scattered far and wide through the seats, like an army in open order, listening in silence to the droning voice of the clerk. Moths burned in the gas flames, and June bugs hummed in at the high windows and tilted against the walls. Then Mr. Duncan’s finger nails whitened as his thin hands clutched the rail, and a sense of a pending event was upon Wetherell. Slowly he realized that he was listening to the Speaker’s deep voice.

“’The Committee on Corporations, to whom was referred House Bill Number 109, entitled, ’An Act to extend the Truro Railroad to Harwich, having considered the same, report the same with the following resolution: Resolved, that the bill ought to pass. Chauncey Weed, for the Committee.’”

The Truro Franchise! The lights danced, and even a sudden weakness came upon the storekeeper. Jethro’s trick! The Duncan and Lovejoy representatives in the theatre, the adherents of the bill here! Wetherell saw Mr. Duncan beside him, a tense figure leaning on the rail, calling to some one below. A man darted up the centre, another up the side aisle. Then Mr. Duncan flashed at William Wetherell from his blue eye such a look of anger as the storekeeper never forgot, and he, too, was gone. Tingling and perspiring, Wetherell leaned out over the railing as the Speaker rapped calmly for order. Hysteric laughter, mingled with hoarse cries, ran over the House, but the Honorable Heth Sutton did not even smile.

A dozen members were on their feet shouting to the chair. One was recognized, and that man Wetherell perceived with amazement to be Mr. Jameson of Wantage, adherent

of Jethro's—he who had moved to adjourn for "Uncle Tom's Cabin"! A score of members crowded into the aisles, but the Speaker's voice again rose above the tumult.

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“The doorkeepers will close the doors! Mr. Jameson of Wantage moves that the report of the Committee be accepted, and on this motion a roll-call is ordered.”

The doorkeepers, who must have been inspired, had already slammed the doors in the faces of those seeking wildly to escape. The clerk already had the little, short-legged desk before him and was calling the roll with incredible rapidity. Bewildered and excited as Wetherell was, and knowing as little of parliamentary law as the gentleman who had proposed the woodchuck session, he began to form some sort of a notion of Jethro’s generalship, and he saw that the innocent rural members who belonged to Duncan and Lovejoy’s faction had tried to get away before the roll-call, destroy the quorum, and so adjourn the House. These, needless to say, were not parliamentarians, either. They had lacked a leader, they were stunned by the suddenness of the onslaught, and had not moved quickly enough. Like trapped animals, they wandered blindly about for a few moments, and then sank down anywhere. Each answered the roll-call sullenly, out of necessity, for every one of them was a marked man. Then Wetherell remembered the two members who had escaped, and Mr. Duncan, and fell to calculating how long it would take these to reach Fosters Opera House, break into the middle of an act, and get out enough partisans to come back and kill the bill. Mr. Wetherell began to wish he could witness the scene there, too, but something held him here, shaking with excitement, listening to each name that the clerk called.

Would the people at the theatre get back in time?

Despite William Wetherell’s principles, whatever these may have been, he was so carried away that he found himself with his watch in his hand, counting off the minutes as the roll-call went on. Fosters Opera House was some six squares distant, and by a liberal estimate Mr. Duncan and his advance guard ought to get back within twenty minutes of the time he left. Wetherell was not aware that people were coming into the gallery behind him; he was not aware that one sat at his elbow until a familiar voice spoke, directly into his ear.

“Er—Will—held Duncan pretty tight—didn’t you? He’s a hard one to fool, too. Never suspected a mite, did he? Look out for your watch!”

Mr. Bixby seized it or it would have fallen. If his life had depended on it, William Wetherell could not have spoken a word to Mr. Bixby then.

“You done well, Will, sure enough,” that gentleman continued to whisper. “And Alvy’s gal done well, too—you understand. I guess she’s the only one that ever snarled up Al Lovejoy so that he didn’t know where he was at. But it took a fine, delicate touch for her job and yours, Will. Godfrey, this is the quickest roll-call I ever seed! They’ve got halfway through Truro County. That fellow can talk faster than a side-show, ticket-seller at a circus.”

The clerk was, indeed, performing prodigies of pronunciation. When he reached Wells County, the last, Mr. Bixby so far lost his habitual sang froid as to hammer on the rail with his fist.

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“If there hain’t a quorum, we’re done for,” he said. “How much time has gone away? Twenty minutes! Godfrey, some of ’em may break loose and git here is five minutes!”

“Break loose?” Wetherell exclaimed involuntarily.

Mr. Bixby screwed up his face.

“You understand. Accidents is liable to happen.”

Mr. Wetherell didn’t understand in the least, but just then the clerk reached the last name on the roll; an instant of absolute silence, save for the June-bugs, followed, while the assistant clerk ran over his figures deftly and handed them to Mr. Sutton, who leaned forward to receive them.

“One hundred and twelve gentlemen have voted in the affirmative and forty-eight in the negative, and the report of the Committee is accepted.”

“Ten more’n a quorum!” ejaculated Mr. Bixby, in a voice of thanksgiving, as the turmoil below began again. It seemed as though every man in the opposition was on his feet and yelling at the chair: some to adjourn; some to indefinitely postpone; some demanding roll-calls; others swearing at these—for a division vote would have opened the doors. Others tried to get out, and then ran down the aisles and called fiercely on the Speaker to open the doors, and threatened him. But the Honorable Heth Sutton did not lose his head, and it may be doubted whether he ever appeared to better advantage than at that moment. He had a voice like one of the Clovelly bulls that fed in his own pastures in the valley, and by sheer bellowing he got silence, or something approaching it,—the protests dying down to a hum; had recognised another friend of the bill, and was putting another question.

“Mr. Gibbs of Wareham moves that the rules of the House be so far suspended that this bill be read a second and third time by its title, and be put upon its final passage at this time. And on this motion,” thundered Mr. Sutton, above the tide of rising voices, “the yeas and nays are called for. The doorkeepers will keep the doors shut.”

“Abbey of Ashburton.”

The nimble clerk had begun on the roll almost before the Speaker was through, and checked off the name. Bijah Bixby mopped his brow with a blue pocket-handkerchief.

“My God,” he said, “what a risk Jethro’s took! they can’t git through another roll-call. Jest look at Heth! Ain’t he carryin’ it magnificent? Hain’t as ruffled as I be. I’ve knowed him ever sence he wahn’t no higher’n that desk. Never would have b’en in politics if it hadn’t b’en for me. Funny thing, Will—you and I was so excited we never thought to look at the clock. Put up your watch. Godfrey, what’s this?”

The noise of many feet was heard behind them. Men and women were crowding breathlessly into the gallery.

“Didn’t take it long to git noised araound,” said Mr. Bixby. “Say, Will, they’re bound to have got at ’em in the thea’tre. Don’t see how they held ’em off, c-cussed if I do.”

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The seconds ticked into minutes, the air became stifling, for now the front of the gallery was packed. Now, if ever, the fate of the Truro Franchise hung in the balance, and, perhaps, the rule of Jethro Bass. And now, as in the distance, came a faint, indefinable stir, not yet to be identified by Wetherell's ears as a sound, but registered somewhere in his brain as a warning note. Bijah Bixby, as sensitive as he, straightened up to listen, and then the whispering was hushed. The members below raised their heads, and some clutched the seats in front of them and looked up at the high windows. Only the Speaker sat like a wax statue of himself, and glanced neither to the right nor to the left.

"Harkness of Truro," said the clerk.

"He's almost to Wells County again," whispered Bijah, excitedly. "I didn't callate he could do it. Will?"

"Yes?"

"Will—you hear somethin'?"

A distant shout floated with the night breeze in at the windows; a man on the floor got to his feet and stood straining: a commotion was going on at the back of the gallery, and a voice was heard crying out:—

"For the love of God, let me through!"

Then Wetherell turned to see the crowd at the back parting a little, to see a desperate man in a gorgeous white necktie fighting his way toward the rail. He wore no hat, his collar was wilted, and his normally ashen face had turned white. And, strangest of all, clutched tightly in his hand was a pink ribbon.

"It's Al Lovejoy," said Bijah, laconically.

Unmindful of the awe-stricken stares he got from those about him when his identity became known, Mr. Lovejoy gained the rail and shoved aside a man who was actually making way for him. Leaning far out, he scanned the house with inarticulate rage while the roll-call went monotonously on. Some of the members looked up at him and laughed; others began to make frantic signs, indicative of helplessness; still others telegraphed him obvious advice about reenforcements which, if anything, increased his fury. Mr. Bixby was now fanning himself with the blue handkerchief.

"I hear 'em!" he said, "I hear 'em, Will!"

And he did. The unmistakable hum of the voices of many men and the sound of feet on stone flagging shook the silent night without. The clerk read off the last name on the roll.

“Tompkins of Ulster.”

His assistant lost no time now. A mistake would have been fatal, but he was an old hand. Unmindful of the rumble on the wooden stairs below, Mr. Sutton took the list with an admirable deliberation.

“One hundred and twelve gentlemen have voted in the affirmative, forty-eight in the negative, the rules of the House are suspended, and” (the clerk having twice mumbled the title of the bill) “the question is: Shall the bill pass? As many as are of opinion that the bill pass will say Aye, contrary minded No.”

Feet were in the House corridor now, and voices rising there, and noises that must have been scuffling—yes, and beating of door panels. Almost every member was standing, and it seemed as if they were all shouting,—“personal privilege,” “fraud,” “trickery,” “open the doors.” Bijah was slowly squeezing the blood out of William Wetherell’s arm.

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“The doorkeepers has the keys in their pockets!” Mr. Bixby had to shout, for once.

Even then the Speaker did not flinch. By a seeming miracle he got a semblance of order, recognized his man, and his great voice rang through the hall and drowned all other sounds.

“And on this question a roll-call is ordered. The doorkeepers will close the doors!”

Then, as in reaction, the gallery trembled with a roar of laughter. But Mr. Sutton did not smile. The clerk scratched off the names with lightning rapidity, scarce waiting for the answers. Every man’s color was known, and it was against the rules to be present and fail to vote. The noise in the corridors grew louder, some one dealt a smashing kick on a panel, and Wetherell ventured to ask Mr. Bixby if he thought the doors would hold.

“They can break in all they’ve a mind to now,” he chuckled; “the Truro Franchise is safe.”

“What do you mean?” Wetherell demanded excitedly.

“If a member hain’t present when a question is put, he can’t git into a roll-call,” said Bijah.

The fact that the day was lost was evidently brought home to those below, for the strife subsided gradually, and finally ceased altogether. The whispers in the gallery died down, the spectators relayed a little. Lovejoy alone remained tense, though he had seated himself on a bench, and the hot anger in which he had come was now cooled into a vindictiveness that set the hard lines of his face even harder. He still clutched the ribbon. The last part of that famous roll-call was conducted so quietly that a stranger entering the House would have suspected nothing unusual. It was finished in absolute silence.

“One hundred and twelve gentlemen have voted in the affirmative, forty-eight in the negative, and the bill passes. The House will attend to the title of the bill.”

“An act to extend the Truro Railroad to Harwich,” said the clerk, glibly.

“Such will be the title of the bill unless otherwise ordered by the House,” said Mr. Speaker Sutton. “The doorkeepers will open the doors.”

Somebody moved to adjourn, the motion was carried, and thus ended what has gone down to history as the Woodchuck Session. Pandemonium reigned. One hundred and forty belated members fought their way in at the four entrances, and mingled with them were lobbyists of all sorts and conditions, residents and visitors to the capital, men and women to whom the drama of “Uncle Tom’s Cabin” was as nothing to that of the Truro Franchise Bill. It was a sight to look down upon. Fierce wrangles began in a score of

places, isolated personal remarks rose above the din, but your New Englander rarely comes to blows; in other spots men with broad smiles seized others by the hands and shook them violently, while Mr. Speaker Sutton seemed in danger of suffocation by his friends. His enemies, for the moment, could get nowhere near him. On this scene Mr. Bijah Bixby gazed with pardonable pleasure.

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“Guess there wahn’t a mite of trouble about the river towns,” he said, “I had ’em in my pocket. Will, let’s amble round to the theatre. We ought to git in two acts.”

William Wetherell went. There is no need to go into the psychology of the matter. It may have been numbness; it may have been temporary insanity caused by the excitement of the battle he had witnessed, for his brain was in a whirl; or Mr. Bixby may have hypnotized him. As they walked through the silent streets toward the Opera House, he listened perforce to Mr. Bixby’s comments upon some of the innumerable details which Jethro had planned and quietly carried out while sitting, in the window of the Throne Room. A great light dawned on William Wetherell, but too late.

Jethro’s trusted lieutenants (of whom, needless to say, Mr. Bixby was one) had been commanded to notify such of their supporters whose fidelity and secrecy could be absolutely depended upon to attend the Woodchuck Session; and, further to guard against surprise, this order had not gone out until the last minute (hence Mr. Amos Cuthbert’s conduct). The seats of these members at the theatre had been filled by accommodating townspeople and visitors. Forestalling a possible vote on the morrow to recall and reconsider, there remained some sixty members whose loyalty was unquestioned, but whose reputation for discretion was not of the best. So much for the parliamentary side of the affair, which was a revelation of generalship and organization to William Wetherell. By the time he had grasped it they were come in view of the lights of Fosters Opera House, and they perceived, among a sprinkling of idlers, a conspicuous and meditative gentleman leaning against a pillar. He was ludicrously tall and ludicrously thin, his hands were in his trousers pockets, and the skirts of his Sunday broadcloth coat hung down behind him awry. One long foot was crossed over the other and rested on the point of the toe, and his head was tilted to one side. He had, on the whole, the appearance of a rather mournful stork. Mr. Bixby approached him gravely, seized him by the lower shoulder, and tilted him down until it was possible to speak into his ear. The gentleman apparently did not resent this, although he seemed in imminent danger of being upset.

“How be you, Peleg? Er—you know Will?”

“No,” said the gentleman.

Mr. Bixby seized Mr. Wetherell under the elbow, and addressed himself to the storekeeper’s ear.

“Will, I want you to shake hands with Senator Peleg Hartington, of Brampton. This is Will Wetherell, Peleg,—from Coniston—you understand.”

The senator took one hand from his pocket.

“How be you?” he said. Mr. Bixby was once more pulling down on his shoulder.

“H-haow was it here?” he demanded.

“Almighty funny,” answered Senator Hartington, sadly, and waved at the lobby. “There wahn’t standin’ room in the place.”

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“Jethro Bass Republican Club come and packed the entrance,” explained Mr. Bixby with a wink. “You understand, Will? Go on, Peleg.”

“Sidewalk and street, too,” continued Mr. Hartington, slowly. “First come along Ball of Towles, hollerin’ like blazes. They crumpled him all up and lost him. Next come old man Duncan himself.”

“Will kep’ Duncan,” Mr. Bixby interjected.

“That was wholly an accident,” exclaimed Mr. Wetherell, angrily.

“Will wahn’t born in the country,” said Mr. Bixby.

Mr. Hartington bestowed on the storekeeper a mournful look, and continued:—

“Never seed Duncan sweatin’ before. He didn’t seem to grasp why the boys was there.”

“Didn’t seem to understand,” put in Mr. Bixby, sympathetically.

“‘For God’s sake, gentlemen,’ says he, ‘let me in! The Truro Bill!’ ’The Truro Bill hain’t in the theatre, Mr. Duncan,’ says Dan Everett. Cussed if I didn’t come near laughin’. ‘That’s “Uncle Tom’s Cabin,” Mr. Duncan,’ says Dan. ‘You’re a dam fool,’ says Duncan. I didn’t know he was profane. ‘Make room for Mr. Duncan,’ says Dan, ‘he wants to see the show.’ ’I’m a-goin’ to see you in jail for this, Everett,’ says Duncan. They let him push in about half a rod, and they swallowed him. He was makin’ such a noise that they had to close the doors of the theatre—so’s not to disturb the play-actors.”

“You understand,” said Mr. Bixby to Wetherell. Whereupon he gave another shake to Mr. Hartington, who had relapsed into a sort of funereal meditation.

“Well,” resumed that personage, “there was some more come, hollerin’ about the Truro Bill. Not many. Guess they’ll all have to git their wimmen-folks to press their clothes to-morrow. Then Duncan wanted to git out again, but ’twan’t exactly convenient. Callated he was suffocatin’—seemed to need air. Little mite limp when he broke loose, Duncan was.”

The Honorable Peleg stopped again, as if he were overcome by the recollection of Mr. Duncan’s plight.

“Er—er—Peleg!”

Mr. Hartington started.

“What’d they do?—what’d they do?”

“Do?”

“How’d they git notice to ’em?”

“Oh,” said Mr. Hartington, “cussed if that wuhn’t funny. Let’s see, where was I? After awhile they went over t’other side of the street, talkin’ sly, waitin’ for the act to end. But goldarned if it ever did end.”

For once Mr. Bixby didn’t seem to understand.

“D-didn’t end?”

“No,” explained Mr. Hartington; “seems they hitched a kind of nigger minstrel show right on to it—banjos and thingumajigs in front of the curtain while they was changin’ scenes, and they hitched the second act right on to that. Nobody come out of the theatre at all. Funny notion, wahn’t it?”

Mr. Bixby’s face took on a look of extreme cunning. He smiled broadly and poked Mr. Wetherell in an extremely sensitive portion of his ribs. On such occasions the nasal quality of Bijah’s voice seemed to grow.

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“You see?” he said.

“Know that little man, Gibbs, don’t ye?” inquired Mr. Hartington.

“Airley Gibbs, hain’t it? Runs a livery business daown to Rutgers, on Lovejoy’s railroad,” replied Mr. Bixby, promptly. “I know him. Knew old man Gibbs well’s I do you. Mean cuss.”

“This Airley’s smart—wahn’t quite smart enough, though. His bright idea come a little mite late. Hunted up old Christy, got the key to his law office right here in the Duncan Block, went up through the skylight, clumb down to the roof of Randall’s store next door, shinned up the lightnin’ rod on t’other side, and stuck his head plump into the Opery House window.”

“I want to know!” ejaculated Mr. Bixby.

“Somethin’ terrible pathetic was goin’ on on the stage,” resumed Mr. Hartington, “the folks didn’t see him at first,—they was all cryin’ and everythin’ was still, but Airley wahn’t affected. As quick as he got his breath he hollered right out loud’s he could: ’The Truro Bill’s up in the House, boys. We’re skun if you don’t git thar quick.’ Then they tell me’ the lightnin’ rod give way; anyhow, he came down on Randall’s gravel roof considerable hard, I take it.”

Mr. Hartington, apparently, had an aggravating way of falling into mournful revery and of forgetting his subject. Mr. Bixby was forced to jog him again.

“Yes, they did,” he said, “they did. They come out like the theatre was afire. There was some delay in gettin’ to the street, but not much—not much. All the Republican Clubs in the state couldn’t have held ’em then, and the profanity they used wahn’t especially edifyin’.”

“Peleg’s a deacon—you understand,” said Mr. Bixby. “Say, Peleg, where was Al Lovejoy?”

“Lovejoy come along with the first of ’em. Must have hurried some—they tell me he was settin’ way down in front alongside of Alvy Hopkins’s gal, and when Airley hollered out she screeched and clutched on to Al, and Al said somethin’ he hadn’t ought to and tore off one of them pink gew-gaws she was covered with. He was the maddest man I ever see. Some of the club was crowded inside, behind the seats, standin’ up to see the show. Al was so anxious to git through he hit Si Dudley in the mouth—injured him some, I guess. Pity, wahn’t it?”

“Si hain’t in politics, you understand,” said Mr. Bixby. “Callate Si paid to git in there, didn’t he, Peleg?”

“Callate he did,” assented Senator Hartington.

A long and painful pause followed. There seemed, indeed, nothing more to be said. The sound of applause floated out of the Opera House doors, around which the remaining loiterers were clustered.

“Goin’ in, be you, Peleg?” inquired Mr. Bixby.

Mr. Hartington shook his head.

“Will and me had a notion to see somethin’ of the show,” said Mr. Bixby, almost apologetically. “I kep’ my ticket.”

“Well,” said Mr. Hartington, reflectively, “I guess you’ll find some of the show left. That hain’t b’en hurt much, so far as I can ascertain.”

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The next afternoon, when Mr. Isaac D. Worthington happened to be sitting alone in the office of the Truro Railroad at the capital, there came a knock at the door, and Mr. Bijah Bixby entered. Now, incredible as it may seem, Mr. Worthington did not know Mr. Bixby—or rather, did not remember him. Mr. Worthington had not had at that time much of an experience in politics, and he did not possess a very good memory for faces.

Mr. Bixby, who had, as we know, a confidential and winning manner, seated himself in a chair very close to Mr. Worthington—somewhat to that gentleman's alarm. "How be you?" said Bijah, "I-I've got a little bill here—you understand."

Mr. Worthington didn't understand, and he drew his chair away from Mr. Bixby's.

"I don't know anything about it, sir," answered the president of the Truro Railroad, indignantly; "this is neither the manner nor the place to present a bill. I don't want to see it."

Mr. Bixby moved his chair up again. "Callate you will want to see this bill, Mr. Worthington," he insisted, not at all abashed. "Jethro Bass sent it—you understand—it's engrossed."

Whereupon Mr. Bixby drew from his capacious pocket a roll, tied with white ribbon, and pressed it into Mr. Worthington's hands. It was the Truro Franchise Bill.

It is safe to say that Mr. Worthington understood.

CHAPTER XVI

There are certain instruments used by scientists so delicate that they have to be wrapped in cotton wool and kept in ductless places, and so sensitive that the slightest shock will derange them. And there are certain souls which cannot stand the jars of life—souls created to register thoughts and sentiments too fine for those of coarser construction. Such was the soul of the storekeeper of Coniston. Whether or not he was one of those immortalized in the famous Elegy, it is not for us to say. A celebrated poet who read the letters to the Guardian—at Miss Lucretia Penniman's request—has declared Mr. Wetherell to have been a genius. He wrote those letters, as we know, after he had piled his boxes and rolled his barrels into place; after he had added up the columns in his ledger and recorded, each week, the small but ever increasing deficit which he owed to Jethro Bass. Could he have been removed from the barrels and the ledgers, and the debts and the cares and the implications, what might we have had from his pen? That will never be known.

We left him in the lobby of the Opera House, but he did not go in to see the final act of "Uncle Tom's Cabin." He made his way, alone, back to the hotel, slipped in by a side

entrance, and went directly to his room, where Cynthia found him, half an hour later, seated by the open window in the dark.

“Aren’t you well, Dad?” she asked anxiously. “Why didn’t you come to see the play?”

“I—I was detained Cynthia,” he said. “Yes—I am well.”

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She sat down beside him and felt his forehead and his hands, and the events of the evening which were on her lips to tell him remained unspoken.

“You ought not to have left Coniston,” she said; “the excitement is too much for you. We will go back tomorrow.”

“Yes, Cynthia, we will go back to-morrow.”

“In the morning?”

“On the early train,” said Wetherell, “and now you must go to sleep.”

“I am glad,” said Cynthia, as she kissed him good night. “I have enjoyed it here, and I am grateful to Uncle Jethro for bringing us, but—but I like Coniston best.”

William Wetherell could have slept but a few hours. When he awoke the sparrows were twittering outside, the fresh cool smells of the morning were coming in at his windows, and the sunlight was just striking across the roofs through the green trees of the Capitol Park. The remembrance of a certain incident of the night before crept into his mind, and he got up, and drew on his clothes and thrust his few belongings into the carpet-bag, and knocked on Cynthia’s door. She was already dressed, and her eyes rested searchingly on his face.

“Dad, you aren’t well. I know it,” she said.

But he denied that he was not.

Her belongings were in a neat little bundle under her arm. But when she went to put them in the bag she gave an exclamation, knelt down, took everything out that he had packed, and folded each article over again with amazing quickness. Then she made a rapid survey of the room lest she had forgotten anything, closed the bag, and they went out and along the corridor. But when Wetherell turned to go down the stairs, she stopped him.

“Aren’t you going to say goodby to Uncle Jethro?”

“I—I would rather go on and get in the train, Cynthia,” he said. “Jethro will understand.”

Cynthia was worried, but she did not care to leave him; and she led him, protesting, into the dining room. He had a sinking fear that they might meet Jethro there, but only a few big-boned countrymen were scattered about, attended by sleepy waitresses. Lest Cynthia might suspect how his head was throbbing, Wetherell tried bravely to eat his breakfast. He did not know that she had gone out, while they were waiting, and written a note to Jethro, explaining that her father was ill, and that they were going back to

Coniston. After breakfast, when they went to the desk, the clerk stared at them in astonishment.

“Going, Mr. Wetherell?” he exclaimed.

“I find that I have to get back,” stammered the storekeeper. “Will you tell me the amount of my bill?”

“Judge Bass gave me instructions that he would settle that.”

“It is very kind of Mr. Bass,” said Wetherell, “but I prefer to pay it myself.”

The man hesitated.

“The judge will be very angry, Mr. Wetherell.”

“Kindly give me the bill.”

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The clerk made it out and handed it over in silence. Wetherell had in his pocket the money from several contributions to the Guardian, and he paid him. Then they set out for the station, bought their tickets and hurried past the sprinkling of people there. The little train for Truro was standing under the sheds, the hissing steam from the locomotive rising perpendicular in the still air of the morning, and soon they were settled in one of the straight-backed seats. The car was almost empty, for few people were going up that day, and at length, after what, seemed an eternity of waiting, they started, and soon were in the country once more in that wonderful Truro valley with its fruit trees and its clover scents; with its sparkling stream that tumbled through the passes and mirrored between green meadow-banks the blue and white of the sky. How hungrily they drank in the freshness of it.

They reached Truro village at eleven. Outside the little tavern there, after dinner, the green stage was drawn up; and Tom the driver cracked his long whip over the Morgan leaders and they started, swaying in the sand ruts and jolting over the great stones that cropped out of the road. Up they climbed, through narrow ways in the forest—ways hedged with alder and fern and sumach and wild grape, adorned with oxeye daisies and tiger lilies, and the big purple flowers which they knew and loved so well. They passed, too, wild lakes overhung with primeval trees, where the iris and the waterlily grew among the fallen trunks and the water-fowl called to each other across the blue stretches. And at length, when the sun was beginning visibly to fall, they came out into an open cut on the western side and saw again the long line of Coniston once more against the sky.

“Dad,” said Cynthia, as she gazed, “don’t you love it better than any other place in the world?”

He did. But he could not answer her.

An hour later, from the hilltops above Isaac Worthington’s mills, they saw the terraced steeple of Brampton church, and soon the horses were standing with drooping heads and wet sides in front of Mr. Sherman’s tavern in Brampton Street; and Lem Hallowell, his honest face aglow with joy, was lifting Cynthia out of the coach as if she were a bundle of feathers.

“Upon my word,” he cried, “this is a little might sudden! What’s the matter with the capital, Will? Too wicked and sophisticated down thar to suit ye?” By this time, Wetherell, too, had reached the ground, and as Lem Hallowell gazed into his face the laughter in his own died away and gave place to a look of concern. “Don’t wonder ye come back,” he said, “you’re as white as Moses’s hoss.”

“He isn’t feeling very well, Lem;” said Cynthia.

“Jest tuckered, that’s all,” answered Lem; “you git him right into the stage, Cynthy, I won’t be long. Hurry them things off, Tom,” he called, and himself seized a huge crate from the back of the coach and flung it on his shoulder. He had his cargo on in a jiffy, clucked to his horses, and they turned into the familiar road to Coniston just as the sun was dipping behind the south end of the mountain.

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“They’ll be surprised some, and disappointed some,” said Lem, cheerily; “they was kind of plannin’ a little celebration when you come back, Will—you and Cynthy. Amandy Hatch was a-goin’ to bake a cake, and the minister was callatin’ to say some word of welcome. Wahn’t goin’ to be anything grand—jest homelike. But you was right to come if you was tuckered. I guess Cynthy fetched you. Rias he kep’ store and done it well,—brisker’n I ever see him, Rias was. Wait till I put some of them things back, and make you more comfortable, Will.”

He moved a few parcels and packages from Wetherell’s feet and glanced at Cynthia as he did so. The mountain cast its vast blue shadow over forest and pasture, and above the pines the white mist was rising from Coniston Water—rising in strange shapes. Lem’s voice seemed to William Wetherell to have given way to a world-wide silence, in the midst of which he sought vainly for Cynthia and the stage driver. Most extraordinary of all, out of the silence and the void came the checker-paned windows of the store at Coniston, then the store itself, with the great oaks bending over it, then the dear familiar faces,—Moses and Amandy, Eph Prescott limping toward them, and little Rias Richardson in an apron with a scoop shovel in his hand, and many others. They were not smiling at the storekeeper’s return—they looked very grave. Then somebody lifted him tenderly from the stage and said:—

“Don’t you worry a mite, Cynthy. Jest tuckered, that’s all.”

William Wetherell was “just tuckered.” The great Dr. Coles, authority on pulmonary troubles, who came all the way from Boston, could give no better verdict than that. It was Jethro Bass who had induced Dr. Coles to come to Coniston—much against the great man’s inclination, and to the detriment of his patients: Jethro who, on receiving Cynthia’s note, had left the capital on the next train and had come to Coniston, and had at once gone to Boston for the specialist.

“I do not know why I came,” said the famous physician to Dr. Abraham Rowell of Tarleton, “I never shall know. There is something about that man Jethro Bass which compels you to do his will. He has a most extraordinary personality. Is this storekeeper a great friend of his?”

“The only intimate friend he had in the world,” answered Dr. Rowell; “none of us could ever understand it. And as for the girl, Jethro Bass worships her.”

“If nursing could cure him, I’d trust her to do it. She’s a natural-born nurse.”

The two physicians were talking in low tones in the little garden behind the store when Jethro came out of the doorway.

“He looks as if he were suffering too,” said the Boston physician, and he walked toward Jethro and laid a hand upon his shoulders. “I give him until winter, my friend,” said Dr. Coles.

Jethro Bass sat down on the doorstep—on that same millstone where he had talked with Cynthia many years before—and was silent for a long while. The doctor was used to scenes of sorrow, but the sight of this man’s suffering unnerved him, and he turned from it.

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“D-doctor?” said Jethro, at last.

The doctor turned again: “Yes?” he said.

“D-doctor—if Wetherell hadn’t b’en to the capital would he have lived—if he hadn’t been to the capital?”

“My friend,” said Dr. Coles, “if Mr. Wetherell had always lived in a warm house, and had always been well fed, and helped over the rough places and shielded from the storms, he might have lived longer. It is a marvel to me that he has lived so long.”

And then the doctor went way, back to Boston. Many times in his long professional life had the veil been lifted for him—a little. But as he sat in the train he said to himself that in this visit to the hamlet of Coniston he had had the strangest glimpse of all. William Wetherell rallied, as Dr. Coles had predicted, from that first sharp attack, and one morning they brought up a reclining chair which belonged to Mr. Satterlee, the minister, and set it in the window. There, in the still days of the early autumn, Wetherell looked down upon the garden he had grown to love, and listened to the song of Coniston Water. There Cynthia, who had scarcely left his side, read to him from Keats and Shelley and Tennyson—yet the thought grew on her that he did not seem to hear. Even that wonderful passage of Milton’s, beginning “So sinks the day-star in the ocean bed,” which he always used to beg her to repeat, did not seem to move him now.

The neighbors came and sat with him, but he would not often speak. Cheery Lem Hallowell and his wife, and Cousin Ephraim, to talk about the war, hobbling slowly up the stairs—for rheumatism had been added to that trouble of the Wilderness bullet now, and Ephraim was getting along in years; and Rias Richardson stole up in his carpet slippers; and Moses, after his chores were done, and Amandy with her cakes and delicacies, which he left untouched—though Amandy never knew it. Yes, and Jethro came. Day by day he would come silently into the room, and sit silently for a space, and go as silently out of it. The farms were neglected now on Thousand Acre Hill. William Wetherell would take his hand, and speak to him, but do no more than that.

There were times when Cynthia leaned over him, listening as he breathed to know whether he slept or were awake. If he were not sleeping, he would speak her name: he repeated it often in those days, as though the sound of it gave him comfort; and he would fall asleep with it on his lips, holding her hand, and thinking, perhaps, of that other Cynthia who had tended and nursed and shielded him in other days. Then she would steal down the stairs to Jethro on the doorstep: to Jethro who would sit there for hours at a time, to the wonder and awe of his neighbors. Although they knew that he loved the storekeeper as he loved no other man, his was a grief that they could not understand.

Cynthia used to go to Jethro in the garden. Sorrow had brought them very near together; and though she had loved him before, now he had become her reliance and her refuge. The first time Cynthia saw him; when the worst of the illness had passed and the strange and terrifying apathy had come, she had hidden her head on his shoulder and wept there. Jethro kept that coat, with the tear stains on it, to his dying day, and never wore it again.

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“Sometimes—sometimes I think if he hadn’t gone to the capital, Cynthy, this mightn’t hev come,” he said to her once.

“But the doctor said that didn’t matter, Uncle Jethro,” she answered, trying to comfort him. She, too, believed that something had happened at the capital.

“N-never spoke to you about anything there—n-never spoke to you, Cynthia?”

“No, never,” she said. “He—he hardly speaks at all, Uncle Jethro.”

One bright morning after the sun had driven away the frost, when the sumacs and maples beside Coniston Water were aflame with red, Bias Richardson came stealing up the stairs and whispered something to Cynthia.

“Dad,” she said, laying down her book, “it’s Mr. Merrill. Will you see him?”

William Wetherell gave her a great fright. He started up from his pillows, and seized her wrist with a strength which she had not thought remained in his fingers.

“Mr. Merrill!” he cried—“Mr. Merrill here!”

“Yes,” answered Cynthia, agitatedly, “he’s downstairs—in the store.”

“Ask him to come up,” said Wetherell, sinking back again, “ask him to come up.”

Cynthia, as she stood in the passage, was of two minds about it. She was thoroughly frightened, and went first to the garden to ask Jethro’s advice. But Jethro, so Milly Skinner said, had gone off half an hour before, and did not know that Mr. Merrill had arrived. Cynthia went back again to her father.

“Where’s Mr. Merrill?” asked Wetherell.

“Dad, do you think you ought to see him? He—he might excite you.”

“I insist upon seeing him, Cynthia.”

William Wetherell had never said anything like that before. But Cynthia obeyed him, and presently led Mr. Merrill into the room. The kindly little railroad president was very serious now. The wasted face of the storekeeper, enhanced as it was by the beard, gave Mr. Merrill such a shock that he could not speak for a few moments—he who rarely lacked for cheering words on any occasion. A lump rose in his throat as he went over and stood by the chair and took the sick man’s hand.

“I am glad you came, Mr. Merrill,” said Wetherell, simply, “I wanted to speak to you. Cynthia, will you leave us alone for a few minutes?”

Cynthia went, troubled and perplexed, wondering at the change in him. He had had something on his mind—now she was sure of it—something which Mr. Merrill might be able to relieve.

It was Mr. Merrill who spoke first when she was gone.

“I was coming up to Brampton,” he said, “and Tom Collins, who drives the Truro coach, told me you were sick. I had not heard of it.”

Mr. Merrill, too, had something on his mind, and did not quite know how to go on. There was in William Wetherell, as he sat in the chair with his eyes fixed on his visitor’s face, a dignity which Mr. Merrill had not seen before—had not thought the man might possess.

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“I was coming to see you, anyway,” Mr. Merrill said.

“I did you a wrong—though as God judges me, I did not think of it at the time. It was not until Alexander Duncan spoke to me last week that I thought of it at all.”

“Yes,” said Wetherell.

“You see,” continued Mr. Merrill wiping his brow, for he found the matter even more difficult than he had imagined, “it was not until Duncan told me how you had acted in his library that I guessed the truth—that I remembered myself how you had acted. I knew that you were not mixed up in politics, but I also knew that you were an intimate friend of Jethro’s, and I thought that you had been let into the secret of the woodchuck session. I don’t defend the game of politics as it is played, Mr. Wetherell, but all of us who are friends of Jethro’s are generally willing to lend a hand in any little manoeuvre that is going on, and have a practical joke when we can. It was not until I saw you sitting there beside Duncan that the idea occurred to me. It didn’t make a great deal of difference whether Duncan or Lovejoy got to the House or not, provided they didn’t learn of the matter too early, because some of their men had been bought off that day. It suited Jethro’s sense of humor to play the game that way—and it was very effective. When I saw you there beside Duncan I remembered that he had spoken about the Guardian letters, and the notion occurred to me to get him to show you his library. I have explained to him that you were innocent. I—I hope you haven’t been worrying.”

William Wetherell sat very still for a while, gazing out of the window, but a new look had come into his eyes.

“Jethro Bass did not know that you—that you had used me?” he asked at length.

“No,” replied Mr. Merrill thickly, “no. He didn’t know a thing about it—he doesn’t know it now, I believe.”

A smile came upon Wetherell’s face, but Mr. Merrill could not look at it.

“You have made me very happy,” said the storekeeper, tremulously. “I—I have no right to be proud—I have taken his money—he has supported my daughter and myself all these years. But he had never asked me to—to do anything, and I liked to think that he never would.”

Mr. Merrill could not speak. The tears were streaming down his cheeks.

“I want you to promise me, Mr. Merril!” he went on presently, “I want you to promise me that you will never speak to Jethro, of this, or to my daughter, Cynthia.”

Mr. Merrill merely nodded his head in assent. Still he could not speak.

“They might think it was this that caused my death. It was not. I know very well that I am worn out, and that I should have gone soon in any case. And I must leave Cynthia to him. He loves her as his own child.”

William Wetherell, his faith in Jethro restored, was facing death as he had never faced life. Mr. Merrill was greatly affected.

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“You must not speak of dying, Wetherell,” said he, brokenly. “Will you forgive me?”

“There is nothing to forgive, now that you have explained matters, Mr. Merrill” said the storekeeper, and he smiled again. “If my fibre had been a little tougher, this thing would never have happened. There is only one more request I have to make. And that is, to assure Mr. Duncan, from me, that I did not detain him purposely.”

“I will see him on my way to Boston,” answered Mr. Merrill.

Then Cynthia was called. She was waiting anxiously in the passage for the interview to be ended, and when she came in one glance at her father’s face told her that he was happier. She, too, was happier.

“I wish you would come every day, Mr. Merrill” she said, when they descended into the garden after the three had talked awhile. “It is the first time since he fell ill that he seems himself.”

Mr. Merrill’s answer was to take her hand and pat it. He sat down on the millstone and drew a deep breath of that sparkling air and sighed, for his memory ran back to his own innocent boyhood in the New England country. He talked to Cynthia until Jethro came.

“I have taken a fancy to this girl, Jethro,” said the little railroad president, “I believe I’ll steal her; a fellow can’t have too many of ’em, you know. I’ll tell you one thing,—you won’t keep her always shut up here in Coniston. She’s much too good to waste on the desert air.” Perhaps Mr. Merrill, too, had been thinking of the Elegy that morning. “I don’t mean to run down Coniston it’s one of the most beautiful places I ever saw. But seriously, Jethro, you and Wetherell ought to send her to school in Boston after a while. She’s about the age of my girls, and she can live in my house: Ain’t I right?”

“D-don’t know but what you be, Steve,” Jethro answered slowly.

“I am right,” declared Mr. Merrill “you’ll back me in this, I know it. Why, she’s like your own daughter. You remember what I say. I mean it.—What are you thinking about, Cynthia?”

“I couldn’t leave Dad and Uncle Jethro,” she said.

“Why, bless your soul,” said Mr. Merrill “bring Dad along. We’ll find room for him. And I guess Uncle Jethro will get to Boston twice a month if you’re there.”

And Mr. Merrill got into the buggy with Mr. Sherman and drove away to Brampton, thinking of many things.

“S-Steve’s a good man,” said Jethro. “C-come up here from Brampton to see your father—did he?”

“Yes,” answered Cynthia, “he is very kind.” She was about to tell Jethro what a strange difference this visit had made in her father’s spirits, but some instinct kept her silent. She knew that Jethro had never ceased to reproach himself for inviting Wetherell to the capital, and she was sure that something had happened there which had disturbed her father and brought on that fearful apathy. But the apathy was dispelled now, and she shrank from giving Jethro pain by mentioning the fact.

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He never knew, indeed, until many years afterward, what had brought Stephen Merrill to Coniston. When Jethro went up the stairs that afternoon, he found William Wetherell alone, looking out over the garden with a new peace and contentment in his eyes. Jethro drew breath when he saw that look, as if a great load had been lifted from his heart.

“F-feelin’ some better to-day, Will?” he said.

“I am well again, Jethro,” replied the storekeeper, pressing Jethro’s hand for the first time in months.

“S-soon be, Will,” said Jethro, “s-soon be.”

Wetherell, who was not speaking of the welfare of the body, did not answer.

“Jethro,” he said presently, “there is a little box lying in the top of my trunk over there in the corner. Will you get it for me.”

Jethro rose and opened the rawhide trunk and handed the little rosewood box to his friend. Wetherell took it and lifted the lid reverently, with that same smile on his face and far-off look in his eyes, and drew out a small daguerreotype in a faded velvet frame. He gazed at the picture a long time, and then he held it out to Jethro; and Jethro looked at it, and his hand trembled.

It was a picture of Cynthia Ware. And who can say what emotions it awoke in Jethro’s heart? She was older than the Cynthia he had known, and yet she did not seem so. There was the same sweet, virginal look in the gray eyes, and the same exquisite purity in the features. He saw her again—as if it were yesterday—walking in the golden green light under the village maples, and himself standing in the tannery door; he saw the face under the poke bonnet on the road to Brampton, and heard the thrush singing in the woods. And—if he could only blot out that scene from his life!—remembered her, a transformed Cynthia,—remembered that face in the lantern-light when he had flung back the hood that shaded it; and that hair which he had kissed, wet, then, from the sleet. Ah, God, for that briefest of moments she had been his!

So he stared at the picture as it lay in the palm of his hand, and forgot him who had been her husband. But at length he started, as from a dream, and gave it back to Wetherell, who was watching him. Her name had never been mentioned between the two men, and yet she had been the one woman in the world to both.

“It is strange,” said William Wetherell, “it is strange that I should have had but two friends in my life, and that she should have been one and you the other. She found me destitute and brought me back to life and married me, and cared for me until she died. And after that—you cared for me.”

“You—you mustn’t think of that, Will, ’twahn’t much what I did—no more than any one else would hev done!”

“It was everything,” answered the storekeeper, simply; “each of you came between me and destruction. There is something that I have always meant to tell you, Jethro,—-something that it may be a comfort for you to know. Cynthia loved you.”

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Jethro Bass did not answer. He got up and stood in the window, looking out.

“When she married me,” Wetherell continued steadily, “she told me that there was one whom she had never been able to drive from her heart. And one summer evening, how well I recall it!—we were walking under the trees on the Mall and we met my old employer, Mr. Judson, the jeweller. He put me in mind of the young countryman who had come in to buy a locket, and I asked her if she knew you. Strange that I should have remembered your name, wasn’t it? It was then that she led me to a bench and confessed that you were the man whom she could not forget. I used to hate you then—as much as was in me to hate. I hated and feared you when I first came to Coniston. But now I can tell you—I can even be happy in telling you.”

Jethro Bass groaned. He put his hand to his throat as though he were stifling. Many, many years ago he had worn the locket there. And now? Now an impulse seized him, and he yielded to it. He thrust his hand in his coat and drew out a cowhide wallet, and from the wallet the oval locket itself. There it was, tarnished with age, but with that memorable inscription still legible,—“Cynthy, from Jethro”; not Cynthia, but Cynthy. How the years fell away as he read it! He handed it in silence to the storekeeper, and in silence went to the window again. Jethro Bass was a man who could find no outlet for his agony in speech or tears.

“Yes,” said Wetherell, “I thought you would have kept it. Dear, dear, how well I remember it! And I remember how I patronized you when you came into the shop. I believed I should live to be something in the world, then. Yes, she loved you, Jethro. I can die more easily now that I have told you—it has been on my mind all these years.”

The locket fell open in William Wetherell’s hand, for the clasp had become worn with time, and there was a picture of little Cynthia within: of little Cynthia,—not so little now,—a photograph taken in Brampton the year before. Wetherell laid it beside the daguerreotype.

“She looks like her,” he said aloud; “but the child is more vigorous, more human—less like a spirit. I have always thought of Cynthia Ware as a spirit.”

Jethro turned at the words, and came and stood looking over Wetherell’s shoulder at the pictures of mother and daughter. In the rosewood box was a brooch and a gold ring—-Cynthia Ware’s wedding ring—and two small slips of yellow paper. William Wetherell opened one of these, disclosing a little braid of brown hair. He folded the paper again and laid it in the locket, and handed that to Jethro.

“It is all I have to give you,” he said, “but I know that you will cherish it, and cherish her, when I am gone. She—she has been a daughter to both of us.”

“Yes,” said Jethro, “I will.”

William Wetherell lived but a few days longer. They laid him to rest at last in the little ground which Captain Timothy Prescott had hewn out of the forest with his axe, where Captain Timothy himself lies under his slate headstone with the quaint lettering of bygone days.—That same autumn Jethro Bass made a pilgrimage to Boston, and now Cynthia Ware sleeps there, too, beside her husband, amid the scenes she loved so well.

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CONISTON

BOOK III

CHAPTER I

One day, in the November following William Wetherell's death, Jethro Bass astonished Coniston by moving to the little cottage in the village which stood beside the disused tannery, and which had been his father's. It was known as the tannery house. His reasons for this step, when at length discovered, were generally commended: they were, in fact, a disinclination to leave a girl of Cynthia's tender age alone on Thousand Acre Hill while he journeyed on his affairs about the country. The Rev. Mr. Satterlee, gaunt, red-faced, but the six feet of him a man and a Christian, from his square-toed boots to the bleaching yellow hair around his temples, offered to become her teacher. For by this time Cynthia had exhausted the resources of the little school among the birches.

The four years of her life in the tannery house which are now briefly to be chronicled were, for her, full of happiness and peace. Though the young may sorrow, they do not often mourn. Cynthia missed her father; at times, when the winds kept her wakeful at night, she wept for him. But she loved Jethro Bass and served him with a devotion that filled his heart with strange ecstasies—yes, and forebodings. In all his existence he had never known a love like this. He may have imagined it once, back in the bright days of his youth; but the dreams of its fulfilment had fallen far short of the exquisite touch of the reality in which he now spent his days at home. In summer, when she sat, in the face of all the conventions of the village, reading under the butternut tree before the house, she would feel his eyes upon her, and the mysterious yearning in them would startle her. Often during her lessons with Mr. Satterlee in the parlor of the parsonage she would hear a noise outside and perceive Jethro leaning against the pillar. Both Cynthia and Mr. Satterlee knew that he was there, and both, by a kind of tacit agreement, ignored the circumstance.

Cynthia, in this period, undertook Jethro's education, too. She could have induced him to study the making of Latin verse by the mere asking. During those days which he spent at home, and which he had grown to value beyond price, he might have been seen seated on the ground with his back to the butternut tree while Cynthia read aloud from the well-worn books which had been her father's treasures, books that took on marvels of meaning from her lips. Cynthia's powers of selection were not remarkable at this period, and perhaps it was as well that she never knew the effect of the various works upon the hitherto untamed soul of her listener. Milton and Tennyson and Longfellow awoke in him by their very music troubled and half-formed regrets; Carlyle's "Frederick the Great" set up tumultuous imaginings; but the "Life of Jackson" (as did the

story of Napoleon long ago) stirred all that was masterful in his blood. Unlettered as he was, Jethro had a power which often marks the American of action—a singular grasp of the application of any sentence or paragraph to his own life; and often, about this time, he took away the breath of a judge or a senator by flinging at them a chunk of Carlyle or Parton.

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It was perhaps as well that Cynthia was not a woman at this time, and that she had grown up with him, as it were. His love, indeed, was that of a father for a daughter; but it held within it as a core the revived love of his youth for Cynthia, her mother. Tender as were the manifestations of this love, Cynthia never guessed the fires within, for there was in truth something primeval in the fierceness of his passion. She was his now—his alone, to cherish and sweeten the declining years of his life, and when by a chance Jethro looked upon her and thought of the suitor who was to come in the fulness of her years, he burned with a hatred which it is given few men to feel. It was well for Jethro that these thoughts came not often.

Sometimes, in the summer afternoons, they took long drives through the town behind Jethro's white horse on business. "Jethro's gal," as Cynthia came to be affectionately called, held the reins while Jethro went in to talk to the men folk. One August evening found Cynthia thus beside a poplar in front of Amos Cuthbert's farmhouse, a poplar that shimmered green-gold in the late afternoon, and from the buggy-seat Cynthia looked down upon a thousand purple hilltops and mountain peaks of another state. The view aroused in the girl visions of the many wonders which life was to hold, and she did not hear the sharp voice beside her until the woman had spoken twice. Jethro came out in the middle of the conversation, nodded to Mrs. Cuthbert, and drove off.

"Uncle Jethro," asked Cynthia, presently, "what is a mortgage?"

Jethro struck the horse with the whip, an uncommon action with him, and the buggy was jerked forward sharply over the boulders.

"Er—who's b'en talkin' about mortgages, Cynthy?" he demanded.

"Mrs. Cuthbert said that when folks had mortgage held over them they had to take orders whether they liked them or not. She said that Amos had to do what you told him because there was a mortgage. That isn't so is it?"

Jethro did not speak. Presently Cynthia laid her hand over his.

"Mrs. Cuthbert is a spiteful woman," she said. "I know the reason why people obey you—it's because you're so great. And Daddy used to tell me so."

A tremor shook Jethro's frame and the hand on which hers rested, and all the way down the mountain valleys to Coniston village he did not speak again. But Cynthia was used to his silences, and respected them.

To Ephraim Prescott, who, as the days went on, found it more and more difficult to sew harness on account of his rheumatism, Jethro was not only a great man but a hero. For Cynthia was vaguely troubled at having found one discontent. She was wont to

entertain Ephraim on the days when his hands failed him, when he sat sunning himself before his door; and she knew that he was honest.

“Who’s b’en talkin’ to you, Cynthia?” he cried. “Why, Jethro’s the biggest man I know, and the best. I don’t like to think where some of us would have b’en if he hadn’t given us a lift.”

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“But he has enemies, Cousin Eph,” said Cynthia, still troubled. “What great man hain’t?” exclaimed the soldier. “Jethro’s enemies hain’t worth thinkin’ about.”

The thought that Jethro had enemies was very painful to Cynthia, and she wanted to know who they were that she might show them a proper contempt if she met them. Lem Hallowell brushed aside the subject with his usual bluff humor, and pinched her cheek and told her not to trouble her head; Amanda Hatch dwelt upon the inherent weakness in the human race, and the Rev. Mr. Satterlee faced the question once, during a history lesson. The nation’s heroes came into inevitable comparison with Jethro Bass. Was Washington so good a man? and would not Jethro have been as great as the Father of his Country if he had had the opportunities?

The answers sorely tried Mr. Satterlee’s conscience, albeit he was not a man of the world. It set him thinking. He liked Jethro, this man of rugged power whose word had become law in the state. He knew best that side of him which Cynthia saw; and—if the truth be told—as a native of Coniston Mr. Satterlee felt in the bottom of his heart a certain pride in Jethro. The minister’s opinions well represented the attitude of his time. He had not given thought to the subject—for such matters had came to be taken for granted. A politician now was a politician, his ways and standards set apart from those of other citizens, and not to be judged by men without the pale of public life. Mr. Satterlee in his limited vision did not then trace the matter to its source, did not reflect that Jethro Bass himself was almost wholly responsible in that state for the condition of politics and politicians. Coniston was proud of Jethro, prouder of him than ever since his last great victory in the Legislature, which brought the Truro Railroad through to Harwich and settled their townsman more firmly than ever before in the seat of power. Every statesman who drove into their little mountain village and stopped at the tannery house made their blood beat faster. Senators came, and representatives, and judges, and governors, “to git their orders,” as Rias Richardson briefly put it, and Jethro could make or unmake them at a word. Each was scanned from the store where Rias now reigned supreme, and from the harness shop across the road. Some drove away striving to bite from their lips the tell-tale smile which arose in spite of them; others tried to look happy, despite the sentence of doom to which they had listened.

Jethro Bass was indeed a great man to make such as these tremble or rejoice. When he went abroad with Cynthia awheel or afoot, some took off their hats—an unheard-of thing in Coniston. If he stopped at the store, they scanned his face for the mood he was in before venturing their remarks; if he lingered for a moment in front of the house of Amanda Hatch, the whole village was advised of the circumstance before nightfall.

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Two personages worthy of mention here visited the tannery house during the years that Cynthia lived with Jethro. The Honorable Heth Sutton drove over from Clovelly attended by his prime minister, Mr. Bijah Bixby. The Honorable Heth did not attempt to conceal the smile with which he went away, and he stopped at the store long enough to enable Rias to produce certain refreshments from depths unknown to the United States Internal Revenue authorities. Mr. Sutton shook hands with everybody, including Jake Wheeler. Well he might. He came to Coniston a private citizen, and drove away to all intents and purposes a congressman: the darling wish of his life realized after heaven knows how many caucuses and conventions of disappointment, when Jethro had judged it expedient for one reason or another that a north countryman should go. By the time the pair reached Brampton, Chamberlain Bixby was introducing his chief as Congressman Sutton, and by this title he was known for many years to come.

Another day, when the snow lay in great billows on the ground and filled the mountain valleys, when the pines were rusty from the long winter, two other visitors drove to Coniston in a two-horse sleigh. The sun was shining brightly, the wind held its breath, and the noon-day warmth was almost like that of spring. Those who know the mountain country will remember the joy of many such days. Cynthia, standing in the sun on the porch, breathing deep of the pure air, recognized, as the sleigh drew near, the somewhat portly gentleman driving, and the young woman beside him regally clad in furs who looked patronizingly at the tannery house as she took the reins. The young woman was Miss Cassandra Hopkins, and the portly gentleman, the Honorable Alva himself, patron of the drama, who had entered upon his governorship and now wished to be senator.

“Jethro Bass home?” he called out.

“Mr. Bass is home,” answered Cynthia. The girl in the sleigh murmured something, laughing a little, and Cynthia flushed. Mr. Hopkins gave a somewhat peremptory knock at the door and was admitted by Millicent Skinner, but Cynthia stood staring at Cassandra in the sleigh, some instinct warning her of a coming skirmish.

“Do you live here all the year round?”

“Of course,” said Cynthia.

Miss Cassandra shrugged as though that were beyond her comprehension.

“I’d die in a place like this,” she said. “No balls, or theatres. Doesn’t your father take you around the state?”

“My father’s dead,” said Cynthia.

“Oh! Your name’s Cynthia Wetherell, isn’t it? You know Bob Worthington, don’t you? He’s gone to Harvard now, but he was a great friend of mine at Andover.”

Cynthia didn’t answer. It would not be fair to say that she felt a pang, though it might add to the romance of this narrative. But her dislike for the girl in the sleigh decidedly increased. How was she, in her inexperience, to know that the radiant beauty in furs was what the boys at Phillips Andover called an “old stager.”

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“So you live with Jethro Bass,” was Miss Cassandra’s next remark. “He’s rich enough to take you round the state and give you everything you want.”

“I have everything I want,” replied Cynthia.

“I shouldn’t call living here having everything I wanted,” declared Miss Hopkins, with a contemptuous glance at the tannery house.

“I suppose you wouldn’t,” said Cynthia.

Miss Hopkins was nettled. She was out of humor that day, besides she shared some of her father’s political ambition. If he went to Washington, she went too.

“Didn’t you know Jethro Bass was rich?” she demanded, imprudently. “Why, my father gave twenty thousand dollars to be governor, and Jethro Bass must have got half of it.”

Cynthia’s eyes were of that peculiar gray which, lighted by love or anger, once seen, are never forgotten. One hand was on the dashboard of the cutter, the other had seized the seat. Her voice was steady, and the three words she spoke struck Miss Hopkins with startling effect.

Miss Hopkins’s breath was literally taken away, and for once she found no retort. Let it be said for her that this was a new experience with a new creature. A demure country girl turn into a wildcat before her very eyes! Perhaps it was as well for both that the door of the house opened and the Honorable Alva interrupted their talk, and without so much as a glance at Cynthia he got hurriedly into the sleigh and drove off. When Cynthia turned, the points of color still high in her cheeks and the light still ablaze in her eyes, she surprised Jethro gazing at her from the porch, and some sorrow she felt rather than beheld stopped the confession on her lips. It would be unworthy of her even to repeat such slander, and the color surged again into her face for very shame of her anger. Cassandra Hopkins had not been worthy of it.

Jethro did not speak, but slipped his hand into hers, and thus they stood for a long time gazing at the snow fields between the pines on the heights of Coniston.

The next summer, was the first which the painter—pioneer of summer visitors there—-spent at Coniston. He was an unsuccessful painter, who became, by a process which he himself does not to-day completely understand, a successful writer of novels. As a character, however, he himself confesses his inadequacy, and the chief interest in him for the readers of this narrative is that he fell deeply in love with Cynthia Wetherell at nineteen. It is fair to mention in passing that other young men were in love with Cynthia at this time, notably Eben Hatch—history repeating itself. Once, in a moment of madness, Eben confessed his love, the painter never did: and he has to this day a delicious memory which has made Cynthia the heroine of many of his stories. He

boarded with Chester Perkins, and he was humored by the village as a harmless but amiable lunatic.

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The painter had never conceived that a New England conscience and a temper of no mean proportions could dwell together in the body of a wood nymph. When he had first seen Cynthia among the willows by Coniston Water, he had thought her a wood nymph. But she scolded him for his impropriety with so unerring a choice of words that he fell in love with her intellect, too. He spent much of his time to the neglect of his canvases under the butternut tree in front of Jethro's house trying to persuade Cynthia to sit for her portrait; and if Jethro himself had not overheard one of these arguments, the portrait never would have been painted. Jethro focussed a look upon the painter.

"Er—painter-man, be you? Paint Cynthy's picture?"

"But I don't want to be painted, Uncle Jethro. I won't be painted!"

"H-how much for a good picture? Er—only want the best—only want the best."

The painter said a few things, with pardonable heat, to the effect—well, never mind the effect. His remarks made no impression whatever upon Jethro.

"Er——paint the picture—paint the picture, and then we'll talk about the price. Er—wait a minute."

He went into the house, and they heard him lumbering up the stairs. Cynthia sat with her back to the artist, pretending to read, but presently she turned to him.

"I'll never forgive you—never, as long as I live," she cried, "and I won't be painted!"

"N-not to please me, Cynthy?" It was Jethro's voice.

Her look softened. She laid down the book and went up to him on the porch and put her hand on his shoulder.

"Do you really want it so much as all that, Uncle Jethro?" she said.

"Callate I do, Cynthy," he answered. He held a bundle covered with newspaper in his hand, he looked down at Cynthia.

He seated himself on the edge of the porch and for the moment seemed lost in revery. Then he began slowly to unwrap the newspaper from the bundle: there were five layers of it, but at length he disclosed a bolt of cardinal cloth.

"Call this to mind, Cynthy?"

"Yes," she answered with a smile.

“H-how’s this for the dress, Mr. Painter-man?” said Jethro, with a pride that was ill-concealed.

The painter started up from his seat and took the material in his hands and looked at Cynthia. He belonged to a city club where he was popular for his knack of devising costumes, and a vision of Cynthia as the daughter of a Doge of Venice arose before his eyes. Wonder of wonders, the daughter of a Doge discovered in a New England hill village! The painter seized his pad and pencil and with a few strokes, guided by inspiration, sketched the costume then and there and held it up to Jethro, who blinked at it in astonishment. But Jethro was suspicious of his own sensations.

“Er—well—Godfrey—g-guess that’ll do.” Then came the involuntary: “W-wouldn’t a-thought you had it in you. How about it, Cynthy?” and he held it up for her inspection.

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“If you are pleased, it’s all I care about, Uncle Jethro,” she answered, and then, her face suddenly flushing, “You must promise me on your honor that nobody in Coniston shall know about it, ’Mr. Painter-man’.”

After this she always called him “Mr. Painter-man,”—when she was pleased with him.

So the cardinal cloth was come to its usefulness at last. It was inevitable that Sukey Kittredge, the village seamstress, should be taken into confidence. It was no small thing to take Sukey into confidence, for she was the legitimate successor in more ways than one of Speedy Bates, and much of Cynthia and the artist’s ingenuity was spent upon devising a form of oath which would hold Sukey silent. Sukey, however, got no small consolation from the sense of the greatness of the trust confided in her, and of the uproar she could make in Coniston if she chose. The painter, to do him justice, was the real dressmaker, and did everything except cut the cloth and sew it together. He sent to friends of his in the city for certain paste jewels and ornaments, and one day Cynthia stood in the old tannery shed—hastily transformed into a studio—before a variously moved audience. Sukey, having adjusted the last pin, became hysterical over her handiwork, Millicent Skinner stared openmouthed, words having failed her for once, and Jethro thrust his hands in his pockets in a quiet ecstasy of approbation.

“A-always had a notion that cloth’d set you off, Cynthy,” said he, “er—next time I go to the state capital you come along—g-guess it’ll surprise ’em some.”

“I guess it would, Uncle Jethro,” said Cynthia, laughing.

Jethro postponed two political trips of no small importance to be present at the painting of that picture, and he would sit silently by the hour in a corner of the shed watching every stroke of the brush. Never stood Doge’s daughter in her jewels and seed pearls amidst stranger surroundings,—the beam, and the centre post around which the old white horse had toiled in times gone by, and all the piled-up, disused machinery of forgotten days. And never was Venetian lady more unconscious of her environment than Cynthia.

The portrait was of the head and shoulders alone, and when he had given it the last touch, the painter knew that, for once in his life, he had done a good thing. Never before; perhaps, had the fire of such inspiration been given him. Jethro, who expressed himself in terms (for him) of great enthusiasm, was for going to Boston immediately to purchase a frame commensurate with the importance of such a work of art, but the artist had his own views on that subject and sent to New York for this also.

The day after the completion of the picture a rugged figure in rawhide boots and coonskin cap approached Chester Perkins’s house, knocked at the door, and inquired for the “Painter-man.” It was Jethro. The “Painter-man” forthwith went out into the rain behind the shed, where a somewhat curious colloquy took place.

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“G-guess I’m willin’ to pay you full as much as it’s worth,” said Jethro, producing a cowhide wallet. “Er—what figure do you allow it comes to with the frame?”

The artist was past taking offence, since Jethro had long ago become for him an engrossing study.

“I will send you the bill for the frame, Mr. Bass,” he said, “the picture belongs to Cynthia.”

“Earn your livin’ by paintin’, don’t you—earn your livin’?”

The painter smiled a little bitterly.

“No,” he said, “if I did, I shouldn’t be—alive. Mr. Bass, have you ever done anything the pleasure of doing which was pay enough, and to spare?”

Jethro looked at him, and something very like admiration came into the face that was normally expressionless.

He put up his wallet a little awkwardly, and held out his hand more awkwardly.

“You be more of a feller than I thought for,” he said, and strode off through the drizzle toward Coniston. The painter walked slowly to the kitchen, where Chester Perkins and his wife were sitting down to supper.

“Jethro got a mortgage on you, too?” asked Chester.

The artist had his reward, for when the picture was hung at length in the little parlor of the tannery house it became a source of pride to Coniston second only to Jethro himself.

CHAPTER II

Time passes, and the engines of the Truro Railroad are now puffing in and out of the yards of Worthington’s mills in Brampton, and a fine layer of dust covers the old green stage which has worn the road for so many years over Truro Gap. If you are ever in Brampton, you can still see the stage, if you care to go into the back of what was once Jim Sanborn’s livery stable, now owned by Mr. Sherman of the Brampton House.

Conventions and elections had come and gone, and the Honorable Heth Sutton had departed triumphantly to Washington, cheered by his neighbors in Clovelly. Chamberlain Bixby was left in charge there, supreme. Who could be more desirable as a member of Congress than Mr. Sutton, who had so ably served his party (and Jethro) by holding the House against the insurgents in the matter of the Truro Bill? Mr. Sutton

was, moreover, a gentleman, an owner of cattle and land, a man of substance whom lesser men were proud to mention as a friend—a very hill-Rajah with stock in railroads and other enterprises, who owed allegiance and paid tribute alone to the Great Man of Coniston.

Mr. Sutton was one who would make himself felt even in the capital of the United States—felt and heard. And he had not been long in the Halls of Congress before he made a speech which rang under the very dome of the Capitol. So said the Brampton and Harwich papers, at least, though rivals and detractors of Mr. Sutton declared that they could find no matter in it which related to the subject of a bill, but that is neither here nor there. The oration began with a lengthy tribute to the resources and history of his state, and ended by a declaration that the speaker was in Congress at no man's bidding, but as the servant of the common people of his district.

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Under the lamp of the little parlor in the tannery house, Cynthia (who has now arrived at the very serious age of nineteen) was reading the papers to Jethro and came upon Mr. Sutton's speech. There were four columns of it, but Jethro seemed to take delight in every word; and portions of the noblest parts of it, indeed, he had Cynthia read over again. Sometimes, in the privacy of his home, Jethro was known to chuckle, and to Cynthia's surprise he chuckled more than usual that evening.

"Uncle Jethro," she said at length, when she had laid the paper down, "I thought that you sent Mr. Sutton to Congress."

Jethro leaned forward.

"What put that into your head, Cynthy?" he asked.

"Oh," answered the girl, "everybody says so,—Moses Hatch, Rias, and Cousin Eph. Didn't you?"

Jethro looked at her, as she thought, strangely.

"You're too young to know anything about such things, Cynthy," he said, "too young."

"But you make all the judges and senators and congressmen in the state, I know you do. Why," exclaimed Cynthia, indignantly, "why does Mr. Sutton say the people elected him when he owes everything to you?"

Jethro, arose abruptly and flung a piece of wood into the stove, and then he stood with his back to her. Her instinct told her that he was suffering, though she could not fathom the cause, and she rose swiftly and drew him down into the chair beside her.

"What is it?" she said anxiously. "Have you got rheumatism, too, like Cousin Eph? All old men seem to have rheumatism."

"No, Cynthy, it hain't rheumatism," he managed to answer; "wimmen folks hadn't ought to mix up in politics. They—they don't understand 'em, Cynthy."

"But I shall understand them some day, because I am your daughter—now that—now that I have only you, I am your daughter, am I not?"

"Yes, yes," he answered huskily, with his hand on her hair.

"And I know more than most women now," continued Cynthia, triumphantly. "I'm going to be such a help to you soon—very soon. I've read a lot of history, and I know some of the Constitution by heart. I know why old Timothy Prescott fought in the Revolution—it was to get rid of kings, wasn't it, and to let the people have a chance? The people can always be trusted to do what is right, can't they, Uncle Jethro?"

Jethro was silent, but Cynthia did not seem to notice that. After a space she spoke again:—“I’ve been thinking it all out about you, Uncle Jethro.”

“A-about me?”

“Yes, I know why you are able to send men to Congress and make judges of them. It’s because the people have chosen you to do all that for them—you are so great and good.”

Jethro did not answer.

Although the month was March, it was one of those wonderful still nights that sometimes come in the mountain-country when the wind is silent in the notches and the stars seem to burn nearer to the earth. Cynthia awoke and lay staring for an instant at the red planet which hung over the black and ragged ridge, and then she arose quickly and knocked at the door across the passage.

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“Are you ill, Uncle Jethro?”

“No,” he answered, “no, Cynthy. Go to bed. Er—I was just thinkin’—thinkin’, that’s all, Cynthy.”

Though all his life he had eaten sparingly, Cynthia noticed that he scarcely touched his breakfast the next morning, and two hours later he went unexpectedly to the state capital. That day, too, Coniston was clothed in clouds, and by afternoon a wild March snowstorm was sweeping down the face of the mountain, piling against doorways and blocking the roads. Through the storm Cynthia fought her way to the harness shop, for Ephraim Prescott had taken to his bed, bound hand and foot by rheumatism.

Much of that spring Ephraim was all but helpless, and Cynthia spent many days nursing him and reading to him. Meanwhile the harness industry languished. Cynthia and Ephraim knew, and Coniston guessed, that Jethro was taking care of Ephraim, and strong as was his affection for Jethro the old soldier found dependence hard to bear. He never spoke of it to Cynthia, but he used to lie and dream through the spring days of what he might have done if the war had not crippled him. For Ephraim Prescott, like his grandfather, was a man of action—a keen, intelligent American whose energy, under other circumstances, might have gone toward the making of the West. Ephraim, furthermore, had certain principles which some in Coniston called cranks; for instance, he would never apply for a pension, though he could easily have obtained one. Through all his troubles, he held grimly to the ideal which meant more to him than ease and comfort,—that he had served his country for the love of it.

With the warm weather he was able to be about again, and occasionally to mend a harness, but Doctor Rowell shook his head when Jethro stopped his buggy in the road one day to inquire about Ephraim. Whereupon Jethro went on to the harness shop. The inspiration, by the way, had come from Cynthia.

“Er—Ephraim, how’d you like to, be postmaster? H-haven’t any objections to that kind of a job, hev you?”

“Why no,” said Ephraim. “We hain’t agoin’ to hev a post-office at Coniston—air we?”

“H-how’d you like to be postmaster at Brampton?” demanded Jethro, abruptly.

Ephraim dropped the trace he was shaving.

“Postmaster at Brampton!” he exclaimed.

“H-how’d you like it?” said Jethro again.

“Well,” said Ephraim, “I hain’t got any objections.”

Jethro started out of the shop, but paused again at the door.

“W-won’t say nothin’ about it, will you, Eph?” he inquired.

“Not till I git it,” answered Ephraim. The sorrows of three years were suddenly lifted from his shoulders, and for an instant Ephraim wanted to dance until he remembered the rheumatism and the Wilderness leg. Suddenly a thought struck him, and he hobbled to the door and called out after Jethro’s retreating figure. Jethro returned.

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“Well?” he said, “well?”

“What’s the pay?” said Ephraim, in a whisper.

Jethro named the sum instantly, also in a whisper.

“You don’t tell me!” said Ephraim, and sank stupefied into the chair in front of the shop, where lately he had spent so much of his time.

Jethro chuckled twice on his way home: he chuckled twice again to Cynthia’s delight at supper, and after supper he sent Millicent Skinner to find Jake Wheeler. Jake as usual, was kicking his heels in front of the store, talking to Rias and others about the coming Fourth of July celebration at Brampton. Brampton, as we know, was famous for its Fourth of July celebrations. Not neglecting to let it be known that Jethro had sent for him, Jake hurried off through the summer twilight to the tannery house, bowed ceremoniously to Cynthia under the butternut tree, and discovered Jethro behind the shed. It was usually Jethro’s custom to allow the other man to begin the conversation, no matter how trivial the subject—a method which had commended itself to Mr. Bixby and other minor politicians who copied him. And usually the other man played directly into Jethro’s hands. Jake Wheeler always did, and now, to cover the awkwardness of the silence, he began on the Brampton celebration.

“They tell me Heth Sutton’s a-goin’ to make the address—seems prouder than ever sence he went to Congress. I guess you’ll tell him what to say when the time comes, Jethro.”

“Er—goin’ to Clovelly after wool this week, Jake?”

“I kin go to-morrow,” said Jake, scenting an affair.

“Er—goin’ to Clovelly after wool this week, Jake?”

Jake reflected. He saw it was expedient that this errand should not smell of haste.

“I was goin’ to see Cutter on Friday,” he answered.

“Er—if you should happen to meet Heth—”

“Yes,” interrupted Jake.

“If by chance you should happen to meet Heth, or Bije” (Jethro knew that Jake never went to Clovelly without a conference with one or the other of these personages, if only to be able to talk about it afterward at the store), “er—what would you say to ’em?”

“Why,” said Jake, scratching his head for the answer, “I’d tell him you was at Coniston.”

“Think we’ll have rain, Jake?” inquired Jethro, blandly.

Jake wended his way back to the store, filled with renewed admiration for the great man. Jethro had given him no instructions whatever, could deny before a jury if need be that he had sent him (Jake) to Clovelly to tell Heth Sutton to come to Coniston for instructions on the occasion of his Brampton speech. And Jake was filled with a mysterious importance when he took his seat once more in the conclave.

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Jake Wheeler, although in many respects a fool, was one of the most efficient pack of political hounds that the state has ever known. By six o'clock on Friday morning he was descending a brook valley on the Clovelly side of the mountain, and by seven was driving between the forest and river meadows of the Rajah's domain, and had come in sight of the big white house with its somewhat pretentious bay-windows and Gothic doorway; it might be dubbed the palace of these parts. The wide river flowed below it, and the pastures so wondrously green in the morning sun were dotted with fat cattle and sheep. Jake was content to borrow a cut of tobacco from the superintendent and wonder aimlessly around the farm until Mr. Sutton's family prayers and breakfast were accomplished. We shall not concern ourselves with the message or the somewhat lengthy manner in which it was delivered. Jake had merely dropped in by accident, but the Rajah listened coldly while he picked his teeth, said he didn't know whether he was going to Brampton or not—hadn't decided; didn't know whether he could get to Coniston or not—his affairs were multitudinous now. In short, he set Jake to thinking deeply as his horse walked up the western heights of Coniston on the return journey. He had, let it be repeated, a sure instinct once his nose was fairly on the scent, and he was convinced that a war of great magnitude was in the air, and he; Jake Wheeler, was probably the first in all the elate to discover it! His blood leaped at the thought.

The hill-Rajah's defiance, boiled down, could only mean one thing,—that somebody with sufficient power and money was about to lock horns with Jethro Bass. Not for a moment did Jake believe that, for all his pomp and circumstance, the Honorable Heth Sutton was a big enough man to do this. Jake paid to the Honorable Heth all the outward respect that his high position demanded, but he knew the man through and through. He thought of the Honorable Heth's reform speech in Congress, and laughed loudly in the echoing woods. No, Mr. Sutton was not the man to lead a fight. But to whom had he promised his allegiance? This question puzzled Mr. Wheeler all the way home, and may it be said finally for many days thereafter. He slid into Coniston in the dusk, big with impending events, which he could not fathom. As to giving Jethro the careless answer of the hill-Rajah, that was another matter.

The Fourth of July came at last, nor was any contradiction made in the Brampton papers that the speech of the Honorable Heth Sutton had been cancelled. Instead, advertisements appeared in the 'Brampton Clarion' announcing the fact in large letters. When Cynthia read this advertisement to Jethro, he chuckled again. They were under the butternut tree, for the evenings were long now.

"Will you take me to Brampton, Uncle Jethro?" said she, letting fall the paper on her lap.

"W-who's to get in the hay?" said Jethro.

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“Hay on the Fourth of July!” exclaimed Cynthia, “why, that’s—sacrilege! You’d much better come and hear Mr. Sutton’s speech—it will do you good.”

Cynthia could see that Jethro was intensely amused, for his eyes had a way of snapping on such occasions when he was alone with her. She was puzzled and slightly offended, because, to tell the truth, Jethro had spoiled her.

“Very well, then,” she said, “I’ll go with the Painter-man.”

Jethro came and stood over her, his expression the least bit wistful.

“Er—Cynthy,” he said presently, “hain’t fond of that Painter-man, be you?”

“Why, yes,” said Cynthia, “aren’t you?”

“He’s fond of you,” said Jethro, “sh-shouldn’t be surprised if he was in love with you.”

Cynthia looked up at him, the corners of her mouth twitching, and then she laughed. The Rev. Mr. Satterlee, writing his Sunday sermon in his study, heard her and laid down his pen to listen.

“Uncle Jethro,” said Cynthia, “sometimes I forget that you’re a great, wise man, and I think that you are just a silly old goose.”

Jethro wiped his face with his blue cotton handkerchief.

“Then you hain’t a-goin’ to marry the Painter-man?” he said.

“I’m not going to marry anybody,” cried Cynthia, contritely; “I’m going to live with you and take care of you all my life.”

On the morning of the Fourth, Cynthia drove to Brampton with the Painter-man, and when he perceived that she was dreaming, he ceased to worry her with his talk. He liked her dreaming, and stole many glances at her face of which she knew nothing at all. Through the cool and fragrant woods, past the mill-pond stained blue and white by the sky, and scented clover fields and wayside flowers nodding in the morning air—-Cynthia saw these things in the memory of another journey to Brampton. On that Fourth her father had been with her, and Jethro and Ephraim and Moses and Amanda Hatch and the children. And how well she recalled, too, standing amidst the curious crowd before the great house which Mr. Worthington had just built.

There are weeks and months, perhaps, when we do not think of people, when our lives are full and vigorous, and then perchance a memory will bring them vividly before us—-so vividly that we yearn for them. There rose before Cynthia now the vision of a boy as he stood on the Gothic porch of the house, and how he had come down to the

wondering country people with his smile and his merry greeting, and how he had cajoled her into lingering in front of the meeting-house. Had he forgotten her? With just a suspicion of a twinge, Cynthia remembered that Janet Duncan she had seen at the capital, whom she had been told was the heiress of the state. When he had graduated from Harvard, Bob would, of course, marry her. That was in the nature of things.

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To some the great event of that day in Brampton was to be the speech of the Honorable Heth Sutton in the meeting-house at eleven; others (and this party was quite as numerous) had looked forward to the base-ball game between Brampton and Harwich in the afternoon. The painter would have preferred to walk up meeting-house hill with Cynthia, and from the cool heights look down upon the amphitheatre in which the town was built. But Cynthia was interested in history, and they went to the meeting-house accordingly, where she listened for an hour and a half to the patriotic eloquence of the representative. The painter was glad to see and hear so great a man in the hour of his glory, though so much as a fragment of the oration does not now remain in his memory. In size, in figure, in expression, in the sonorous tones of his voice, Mr. Sutton was everything that a congressman should be. "The people," said Isaac D. Worthington in presenting him, "should indeed be proud of such an able and high-minded representative." We shall have cause to recall that word high-minded.

Many persons greeted Cynthia outside the meetinghouse, for the girl seemed genuinely loved by all who knew her—too much loved, her companion thought, by certain spick-and-span young men of Brampton. But they ate the lunch Cynthia had brought, far from the crowd, under the trees by Coniston Water. It was she who proposed going to the base-ball game, and the painter stifled a sigh and acquiesced. Their way brought them down Brampton Street, past a house with great iron dogs on the lawn, so imposing and cityfied that he hung back and asked who lived there.

"Mr. Worthington," answered Cynthia, making to move on impatiently.

Her escort did not think much of the house, but it interested him as the type which Mr. Worthington had built. On that same Gothic porch, sublimely unconscious of the covert stares and subdued comments of the passers-by, the first citizen himself and the Honorable Heth Sutton might be seen. Mr. Worthington, whose hawklike look had become more pronounced, sat upright, while the Honorable Heth, his legs crossed, filled every nook and cranny of an arm-chair, and an occasional fragrant whiff from his cigar floated out to those on the tar sidewalk. Although the pedestrians were but twenty feet away, what Mr. Worthington said never reached them; but the Honorable Heth on public days carried his voice of the Forum around with him.

"Come on," said Cynthia, in one of those startling little tempers she was subject to; "don't stand there like an idiot."

Then the voice of Mr. Sutton boomed toward them.

"As I understand, Worthington," they heard him say, "you want me to appoint young Wheelock for the Brampton post-office." He stuck his thumb into his vest pocket and recrossed his legs "I guess it can be arranged."

When the painter at last overtook Cynthia the jewel paints he had so often longed to catch upon a canvas were in her eyes. He fell back, wondering how he could so greatly have offended, when she put her hand on his sleeve.

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“Did you hear what he said about the Brampton postoffice?” she cried.

“The Brampton post-office?” he repeated; dazed.

“Yes,” said Cynthia; “Uncle Jethro has promised it to Cousin Ephraim, who will starve without it. Did you hear this man say he would give it to Mr. Wheelock?”

Here was a new Cynthia, aflame with emotions on a question of politics of which he knew nothing. He did, understand, however, her concern for Ephraim Prescott, for he knew that she loved the soldier. She turned from the painter now with a gesture which he took to mean that his profession debarred him from such vital subjects, and she led the way to the fair-grounds. There he meekly bought tickets, and they found themselves hurried along in the eager crowd toward the stand.

The girl was still unaccountably angry over that mysterious affair of the post-office, and sat with flushed cheeks staring out on the green field, past the line of buggies and carryalls on the farther side to the southern shoulder of Coniston towering, above them all. The painter, already, beginning to love his New England folk, listened to the homely chatter about him, until suddenly a cheer starting in one corner ran like a flash of gunpowder around the field, and eighteen young men trotted across the turf. Although he was not a devotee of sport, he noticed that nine of these, as they took their places on the bench, wore blue,—the Harwich Champions. Seven only of those scattering over the field wore white; two young gentlemen, one at second base and the other behind the batter, wore gray uniforms with crimson stockings, and crimson piping on the caps, and a crimson H embroidered on the breast—a sight that made the painter’s heart beat a little faster, the honored livery of his own college.

“What are those two Harvard men doing here?” he asked.

Cynthia, who was leaning forward, started, and turned to him a face which showed him that his question had been meaningless. He repeated it.

“Oh,” said she, “the tall one, burned brick-red like an Indian, is Bob Worthington.”

“He’s a good type,” the artist remarked.

“You’re right, Mister, there hain’t a finer young feller anywhere,” chimed in Mr. Dodd, a portly person with a tuft of yellow beard on his chin. Mr. Dodd kept the hardware store in Brampton.

“And who,” asked the painter, “is the bullet-headed little fellow, with freckles and short red hair, behind the bat?”

“I don’t know,” said Cynthia, indifferently.

“Why,” exclaimed Mr. Dodd, with just a trace of awe in his voice, “that’s Somers Duncan, son of Millionaire Duncan down to the capital. I guess,” he added, “I guess them two will be the richest men in the state some day. Duncan come up from Harvard with Bob.”

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In a few minutes the game was in full swing, Brampton against Harwich, the old rivalry in another form. Every advantage on either side awoke thundering cheers from the partisans; beribboned young women sprang to their feet and waved the Harwich blue at a home run, and were on the verge of tears when the Brampton pitcher struck out their best batsman. But beyond the facts that the tide was turning in Brampton's favor; that young Mr. Worthington stopped a ball flying at a phenomenal speed and batted another at a still more phenomenal speed which was not stopped; that his name and Duncan's were mingled generously in the cheering, the painter remembered little of the game. The exhibition of human passions which the sight of it drew from an undemonstrative race: the shouting, the comments wrung from hardy spirits off their guard, the joy and the sorrow,—such things interested him more. High above the turmoil Coniston, as through the ages, looked down upon the scene impassive.

He was aroused from these reflections by an incident. Some one had leaped over the railing which separated the stand from the field and stood before Cynthia,—a tanned and smiling young man in gray and crimson. His honest eyes were alight with an admiration that was unmistakable to the painter—perhaps to Cynthia also, for a glow that might have been of annoyance or anger, and yet was like the color of the mountain sunrise, answered in her cheek. Mr. Worthington reached out a large brown hand and seized the girl's as it lay on her lap.

"Hello, Cynthia," he cried, "I've been looking for you all day. I thought you might be here. Where were you?"

"Where did you look?" answered Cynthia, composedly, withdrawing her hand.

"Everywhere," said Bob, "up and down the street, all through the hotel. I asked Lem Hallowell, and he didn't know where you were. I only got here last night myself."

"I was in the meeting-house," said Cynthia.

"The meeting-house!" he echoed. "You don't mean to tell me that you listened to that silly speech of Sutton's?"

This remark, delivered in all earnestness, was the signal for uproarious laughter from Mr. Dodd and others sitting near by, attending earnestly to the conversation.

Cynthia bit her lip.

"Yes, I did," she said; "but I'm sorry now."

"I should think you would be," said Bob; "Sutton's a silly, pompous old fool. I had to sit through dinner with him. I believe I could represent the district better myself."

"By gosh!" exploded Mr. Dodd, "I believe you could!"

But Bob paid no attention to him. He was looking at Cynthia.

“Cynthia, you’ve grown up since I saw you,” he said. “How’s Uncle Jethro.

“He’s well—thanks,” said Cynthia, and now she was striving to put down a smile.

“Still running the state?” said Bob. “You tell him I think he ought to muzzle Sutton. What did he send him down to Washington for?”

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“I don’t know,” said Cynthia.

“What are you going to do after the game?” Bob demanded.

“I’m going home of course,” said Cynthia.

His face fell.

“Can’t you come to the house for supper and stay for the fireworks?” he begged pleadingly. “We’d be mighty glad to have your friend, too.”

Cynthia introduced her escort.

“It’s very good of you, Bob,” she said, with that New England demureness which at times became her so well, “but we couldn’t possibly do it. And then I don’t like Mr. Sutton.”

“Oh, hang him!” exclaimed Bob. He took a step nearer to her. “Won’t you stay this once? I have to go West in the morning.”

“I think you are very lucky,” said Cynthia.

Bob scanned her face searchingly, and his own fell.

“Lucky!” he cried, “I think it’s the worst thing that ever happened to me. My father’s so hard-headed when he gets his mind set—he’s making me do it. He wants me to see the railroads and the country, so I’ve got to go with the Duncans. I wanted to stay—” He checked himself, “I think it’s a blamed nuisance.”

“So do I,” said a voice behind him.

It was not the first time that Mr. Somers Duncan had spoken, but Bob either had not heard him or pretended not to. Mr. Duncan’s freckled face smiled at them from the top of the railing, his eyes were on Cynthia’s face, and he had been listening eagerly. Mr. Duncan’s chief characteristic, beyond his freckles, was his eagerness—a quality probably amounting to keenness.

“Hello,” said Bob, turning impatiently, “I might have known you couldn’t keep away. You’re the cause of all my troubles—you and your father’s private car.”

Somers became apologetic.

“It isn’t my fault,” he said; “I’m sure I hate going as much as you do. It’s spoiled my summer, too.”

Then he coughed and looked at Cynthia.

“Well,” said Bob, “I suppose I’ll have to introduce you. This,” he added, dragging his friend over the railing, “is Mr. Somers Duncan.”

“I’m awfully glad to meet you, Miss. Wetherell,” said Somers, fervently; “to tell you the truth, I thought he was just making up yarns.”

“Yarns?” repeated Cynthia, with a look that set Mr. Duncan floundering.

“Why, yes,” he stammered. “Worthy said that you were up here, but I thought he was crazy the way he talked—I didn’t think—”

“Think what?” inquired Cynthia, but she flushed a little.

“Oh, rot, Somers!” said Bob, blushing furiously under his tan; “you ought never to go near a woman—you’re the darndest fool with ’em I ever saw.”

This time even the painter laughed outright, and yet he was a little sorrowful, too, because he could not be even as these youths. But Cynthia sat serene, the eternal feminine of all the ages, and it is no wonder that Bob Worthington was baffled as he looked at her. He lapsed into an awkwardness quite as bad as that of his friend.

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“I hope you enjoyed the game,” he said at last, with a formality that was not at all characteristic.

Cynthia did not seem to think it worth while to answer this, so the painter tried to help him out.

“That was a fine stop you made, Mr. Worthington,” he said; “wasn’t it, Cynthia?”

“Everybody seemed to think so,” answered Cynthia, cruelly; “but if I were a man and had hands like that” (Bob thrust them in his pockets), “I believe I could stop a ball, too.”

Somers laughed uproariously.

“Good-by,” said Bob, with uneasy abruptness, “I’ve got to go into the field now. When can I see you?”

“When you get back from the West—perhaps,” said Cynthia.

“Oh,” cried Bob (they were calling him), “I must see you to-night!” He vaulted over the railing and turned. “I’ll come back here right after the game,” he said; “there’s only one more inning.”

“We’ll come back right after the game,” repeated Mr. Duncan.

Bob shot one look at him,—of which Mr. Duncan seemed blissfully unconscious,—and stalked off abruptly to second base.

The artist sat pensive for a few moments, wondering at the ways of women, his sympathies unaccountably enlisted in behalf of Mr. Worthington.

“Weren’t you a little hard on him?” he said.

For answer Cynthia got to her feet.

“I think we ought to be going home,” she said.

“Going home!” he ejaculated in amazement.

“I promised Uncle Jethro I’d be there for supper,” and she led the way out of the grand stand.

So they drove back to Coniston through the level evening light, and when they came to Ephraim Prescott’s harness shop the old soldier waved at them cheerily from under the big flag which he had hung out in honor of the day. The flag was silk, and incidentally

Ephraim's most valued possession. Then they drew up before the tannery house, and Cynthia leaped out of the buggy and held out her hand to the painter with a smile.

"It was very good of you to take me," she said.

Jethro Bass, rugged, uncouth, in rawhide boots and swallowtail and coonskin cap, came down from the porch to welcome her, and she ran toward him with an eagerness that started the painter to wondering afresh over the contrasts of life. What, he asked himself, had Fate in store for Cynthia Wetherell?

CHAPTER III

"H-have a good time, Cynthy?" said Jethro, looking down into her face. Love had wrought changes in Jethro; mightier changes than he suspected, and the girl did not know how zealous were the sentries of that love, how watchful they were, and how they told him often and again whether her heart, too, was smiling.

"It was very gay," said Cynthia.

"P-painter-man gay?" inquired Jethro.

Cynthia's eyes were on the orange line of the sunset over Coniston, but she laughed a little, indulgently.

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“Cynthy?”

“Yes.”

“Er—that Painter-man hain’t such a bad fellow—w-why didn’t you ask him in to supper?”

“I’ll give you three guesses,” said Cynthia, but she did not wait for them. “It was because I wanted to be alone with you. Milly’s gone out, hasn’t she?”

“G-gone a-courtin’,” said Jethro.

She smiled, and went into the house to see whether Milly had done her duty before she left. It was characteristic of Cynthia not to have mentioned the subject which was agitating her mind until they were seated on opposite sides of the basswood table.

“Uncle Jethro,” she said, “I thought you told Mr. Sutton to give Cousin Eph the Brampton post-office? Do you trust Mr. Sutton?” she demanded abruptly.

“Er—why?” said Jethro. “Why?”

“Because I don’t,” she answered with conviction; “I think he’s a big fraud. He must have deceived you, Uncle Jethro. I can’t see why you ever sent him to Congress.”

Although Jethro was in no mood for mirth, he laughed in spite of himself, for he was an American. His lifelong habit would have made him defend Heth to any one but Cynthia.

“’D you see Heth, Cynthy?” he asked. “Yes,” replied the girl, disgustedly, “I should say I did, but not to speak to him. He was sitting on Mr. Worthington’s porch, and I heard him tell Mr. Worthington he would give the Brampton post-office to Dave Wheelock. I don’t want you to think that I was eavesdropping,” she added quickly; “I couldn’t help hearing it.”

Jethro did not answer.

“You’ll make him give the post-office to Cousin Eph, won’t you, Uncle Jethro?”

“Yes;” said Jethro, very simply, “I will.” He meditated awhile, and then said suddenly, “W-won’t speak about it—will you, Cynthy?”

“You know I won’t,” she answered.

Let it not be thought by any chance that Coniston was given over to revelry and late hours, even on the Fourth of July. By ten o’clock the lights were out in the tannery house, but Cynthia was not asleep. She sat at her window watching the shy moon peeping over Coniston ridge, and she was thinking, to be exact, of how much could

happen in one short day and how little in a long month. She was aroused by the sound of wheels and the soft beat of a horse's hoofs on the dirt road: then came stifled laughter, and suddenly she sprang up alert and tingling. Her own name came floating to her through the darkness.

The next thing that happened will be long remembered in Coniston. A tentative chord or two from a guitar, and then the startled village was listening with all its might to the voices of two young men singing "When I first went up to Harvard"—probably meant to disclose the identity of the serenaders, as if that were necessary! Coniston, never having listened to grand opera, was entertained and thrilled, and thought the rendering of the song better on the whole than the church choir could have done it, or even the quartette that sung at the Brampton celebrations behind the flowers. Cynthia had her own views on the subject.

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There were five other songs—Cynthia remembers all of them, although she would not confess such a thing. “Naughty, naughty Clara,” was another one; the other three were almost wholly about love, some treating it flippantly, others seriously—this applied to the last one, which had many farewells in it. Then they went away, and the crickets and frogs on Coniston Water took up the refrain.

Although the occurrence was unusual,—it might almost be said epoch-making,—Jethro did not speak of it until they had reached the sparkling heights of Thousand Acre Hill the next morning. Even then he did not look at Cynthia.

“Know who that was last night, Cynthy?” he inquired, as though the matter were a casual one.

“I believe,” said Cynthia heroically, “I believe it was a boy named Somers Duncan-and Bob Worthington.”

“Er—Bob Worthington,” repeated Jethro, but said nothing more.

Of course Coniston, and presently Brampton, knew that Bob Worthington had serenaded Cynthia—and Coniston and Brampton talked. It is noteworthy that (with the jocular exceptions of Ephraim and Lem Hallowell) they did not talk to the girl herself. The painter had long ago discovered that Cynthia was an individual. She had good blood in her: as a mere child she had shouldered the responsibility of her father; she had a natural aptitude for books—a quality reverenced in the community; she visited, as a matter of habit; the sick and the unfortunate; and lastly (perhaps the crowning achievement) she had bound Jethro Bass, of all men, with the fetters of love. Of course I have ended up by making her a paragon, although I am merely stating what people thought of her. Coniston decided at once that she was to marry the heir to the Brampton Mills.

But the heir had gone West, and as the summer wore on, the gossip died down. Other and more absorbing gossip took its place: never distinctly formulated, but whispered; always wishing for more definite news that never came. The statesmen drove out from Brampton to the door of the tannery house, as usual, only it was remarked by astute observers and Jake Wheeler that certain statesmen did not come who had been in the habit of coming formerly. In short, those who made it a custom to observe such matters felt vaguely a disturbance of some kind. The organs of the people felt it, and became more guarded in their statements. What no one knew, except Jake and a few in high places, was that a war of no mean magnitude was impending.

There were three men in the State—and perhaps only three—who realized from the first that all former political combats would pale in comparison to this one to come. Similar wars had already started in other states, and when at length they were fought out another twist had been given to the tail of a long-suffering Constitution; political history

in the United States had to be written from an entirely new and unforeseen standpoint, and the unsuspecting people had changed masters.

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This was to be a war of extermination of one side or the other. No quarter would be given or asked, and every weapon hitherto known to politics would be used. Of the three men who realized this, and all that would happen if one side or the other were victorious, one was Alexander Duncan, another Isaac D. Worthington, and the third was Jethro Bass.

Jethro would never have been capable of being master of the state had he not foreseen the time when the railroads, tired of paying tribute, would turn and try to exterminate the boss. The really astonishing thing about Jethro's foresight (known to few only) was that he perceived clearly that the time would come when the railroads and other aggregations of capital would exterminate the boss, or at least subserviate him. This alone, the writer thinks, gives him some right to greatness. And Jethro Bass made up his mind that the victory of the railroads, in his state at least, should not come in his day. He would hold and keep what he had fought all his life to gain.

Jethro knew, when Jake Wheeler failed to bring him a message back from Clovelly, that the war had begun, and that Isaac D. Worthington, commander of the railroad forces in the field, had captured his pawn, the hill-Rajah. By getting through to Harwich, the Truro had made a sad muddle in railroad affairs. It was now a connecting link; and its president, the first citizen of Brampton, a man of no small importance in the state. This fact was not lost upon Jethro, who perceived clearly enough the fight for consolidation that was coming in the next Legislature.

Seated on an old haystack on Thousand Acre Hill, that sits in turn on the lap of Coniston, Jethro smiled as he reflected that the first trial of strength in this mighty struggle was to be over (what the unsuspecting world would deem a trivial matter) the postmastership of Brampton. And Worthington's first move in the game would be to attempt to capture for his faction the support of the Administration itself.

Jethro thought the view from Thousand Acre Hill, especially in September, to be one of the sublimest efforts of the Creator. It was September, first of the purple months in Coniston, not the red-purple of the Maine coast, but the blue-purple of the mountain, the color of the bloom on the Concord grape. His eyes, sweeping the mountain from the notch to the granite ramp of the northern buttress, fell on the weather-beaten little farmhouse in which he had lived for many years, and rested lovingly on the orchard, where the golden early apples shone among the leaves. But Jethro was not looking at the apples.

"Cynthy," he called out abruptly, "h-how'd you like to go to Washington?"

"Washington!" exclaimed Cynthia. "When?"

"N-now—to-morrow." Then he added uneasily, "C-can't you get ready?"

Cynthia laughed.

“Why, I’ll go to-night, Uncle Jethro,” she answered.

“Well,” he said admiringly, “you hain’t one of them clutterin’ females. We can get some finery for you in New York, Cynthy. D-don’t want any of them town ladies to put you to shame. Er—not that they would,” he added hastily—“not that they would.”

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Cynthia climbed up beside him on the haystack.

“Uncle Jethro,” she said solemnly, “when you make a senator or a judge, I don’t interfere, do I?”

He looked at her uneasily, for there were moments when he could not for the life of him make out her drift.

“N-no,” he assented, “of course not, Cynthy.”

“Why is it that I don’t interfere?”

“I callate,” answered Jethro, still more uneasily, “I callate it’s because you’re a woman.”

“And don’t you think,” asked Cynthia, “that a woman ought to know what becomes her best?”

Jethro reflected, and then his glance fell on her approvingly.

“G-guess you’re right, Cynthy,” he said. “I always had some success in dressin’ up Listy, and that kind of set me up.”

On such occasions he spoke of his wife quite simply. He had been genuinely fond of her, although she was no more than an episode in his life. Cynthia smiled to herself as they walked through the orchard to the place where the horse was tied, but she was a little remorseful. This feeling, on the drive homeward, was swept away by sheer elation at the prospect of the trip before her. She had often dreamed of the great world beyond Coniston, and no one, not even Jethro, had guessed the longings to see it which had at times beset her. Often she had dropped her book to summon up a picture of what a great city was like, to reconstruct the Boston of her early childhood. She remembered the Mall, where she used to walk with her father, and the row of houses where the rich dwelt, which had seemed like palaces. Indeed, when she read of palaces, these houses always came to her mind. And now she was to behold a palace even greater than these,—and the house where the President himself dwelt. But why was Jethro going to Washington?

As if in answer to the question, he drove directly to the harness shop instead of to the tannery house. Ephraim greeted them from within with a cheery hail, and hobbled out and stood between the wheels of the buggy.

“That bridle bust again?” he inquired.

“Er—Ephraim,” said Jethro, “how long since you b’en away from Coniston—how long?”

Ephraim reflected.

“I went to Harwich with Moses before that bad spell I had in March,” he answered.

Cynthia smiled from pure happiness, for she began to see the drift of things now.

“H-how long since you’ve b’en in foreign parts?” said Jethro.

“’Sixty-five,” answered Ephraim, with astonishing promptness.

“Er—like to go to Washington with us to-morrow like to go to Washington?”

Ephraim gasped, even as Cynthia had.

“Washin’ton!” he ejaculated.

“Cynthy and I was thinkin’ of takin’ a little trip,” said Jethro, almost apologetically, “and we kind of thought we’d like to have you with us. Didn’t we, Cynthy? Er—we might see General Grant,” he added meaningly.

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Ephraim was a New Englander, and not an adept in expressing his emotions. Both Cynthia and Jethro felt that he would have liked to have said something appropriate if he had known how. What he actually said was:—"What time to-morrow?"

"C-callate to take the nine o'clock from Brampton," said Jethro.

"I'll report for duty at seven," said Ephraim, and it was then he squeezed the hand that he found in his. He watched them calmly enough until they had disappeared in the barn behind the tannery house, and then his thoughts became riotous. Rumors had been rife that summer, prophecies of changes to come, and the resignation of the old man who had so long been postmaster at Brampton was freely discussed—or rather the matter of his successor. As the months passed, Ephraim had heard David Wheelock mentioned with more and more assurance for the place. He had had many nights when sleep failed him, but it was characteristic of the old soldier that he had never once broached the subject since Jethro had spoken to him two months before. Ephraim had even looked up the law to see if he was eligible, and found that he was, since Coniston had no post-office, and was within the limits of delivery of the Brampton office.

The next morning Coniston was treated to a genuine surprise. After loading up at the store, Lem Hallowell, instead of heading for Brampton, drove to the tannery house, left his horses standing as he ran in, and presently emerged with a little cowhide trunk that bore the letter W. Following the trunk came a radiant Cynthia, following Cynthia, Jethro Bass in a stove-pipe hat, with a carpetbag, and hobbling after Jethro, Ephraim Prescott, with another carpet-bag. It was remarked in the buzz of query that followed the stage's departure that Ephraim wore the blue suit and the army hat with a cord around it which he kept for occasions. Coniston longed to follow them, in spirit at least, but even Milly Skinner did not know their destination.

Fortunately we can follow them. At Brampton station they got into the little train that had just come over Truro Pass, and steamed, with many stops, down the valley of Coniston Water until it stretched out into a wide range of shimmering green meadows guarded by blue hills veiled in the morning haze. Then, bustling Harwich, and a wait of half an hour until the express from the north country came thundering through the Gap; then a five-hours' journey down the broad river that runs southward between the hills, dinner in a huge station amidst a pleasant buzz of excitement and the ringing of many bells. Then into another train, through valleys and factory towns and cities until they came, at nightfall, to the metropolis itself.

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Cynthia will always remember the awe with which that first view of New York inspired her, and Ephraim confessed that he, too, had felt it, when he had first seen the myriad lights of the city after the long, dusty ride from the hills with his regiment. For all the flags and bunting it had held in ’61, Ephraim thought that city crueller than war itself. And Cynthia thought so too, as she clung to Jethro’s arm between the carriages and the clanging street-cars, and looked upon the riches and poverty around her. There entered her soul that night a sense of that which is the worst cruelty of all—the cruelty of selfishness. Every man going his own pace, seeking to gratify his own aims and desires, unconscious and heedless of the want with which he rubs elbows. Her natural imagination enhanced by her life among the hills, the girl peopled the place in the street lights with all kinds of strange evil-doers of whose sins she knew nothing, adventurers, charlatans, alert cormorants, who preyed upon the unwary. She shrank closer to Ephraim from a perfumed lady who sat next to her in the car, and was thankful when at last they found themselves in the corridor of the Astor House standing before the desk.

Hotel clerks, especially city ones, are supernatural persons. This one knew Jethro, greeted him deferentially as Judge Bass, and dipped the pen in the ink and handed it to him that he might register. By half-past nine Cynthia was dreaming of Lem Hallowell and Coniston, and Lem was driving a yellow street-car full of queer people down the road to Brampton.

There were few guests in the great dining room when they breakfasted at seven the next morning. New York, in the sunlight, had taken on a more kindly expression, and those who were near by smiled at them and seemed full of good-will. Persons smiled at them that day as they walked the streets or stood spellbound before the shop windows, and some who saw them felt a lump rise in their throats at the memories they aroused of forgotten days: the three seemed to bring the very air of the hills with them into that teeming place, and many who, had come to the city with high hopes, now in the shackles of drudgery; looked after them. They were a curious party, indeed: the straight, dark girl with the light in her eyes and the color in her cheeks; the quaint, rugged figure of the elderly man in his swallow-tail and brass buttons and square-toed, country boots; and the old soldier hobbling along with the aid of his green umbrella, clad in the blue he had loved and suffered for. Had they remained until Sunday, they might have read an amusing account of their visit,—of Jethro’s suppers of crackers and milk at the Astor House, of their progress along Broadway. The story was not lacking in pathos, either, and in real human feeling, for the young reporter who wrote it had come, not many years before, from the hills himself. But by that time they had accomplished another marvellous span in their journey, and were come to Washington itself.

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CHAPTER IV

Cynthia was deprived, too, of that thrilling first view of the capital from the train which she had pictured, for night had fallen when they reached Washington likewise. As the train slowed down, she leaned a little out of the window and looked at the shabby houses and shabby streets revealed by the flickering lights in the lamp-posts. Finally they came to a shabby station, were seized upon by a grinning darky hackman, who would not take no for an answer, and were rattled away to the hotel. Although he had been to Washington but once in his life before, as a Lincoln elector, Jethro was greeted as an old acquaintance by this clerk also.

“Glad to see you, Judge,” said he, genially. “Train late? You’ve come purty nigh, missin’ supper.”

A familiar of great men, the clerk was not offended when he got no response to his welcome. Cynthia and Ephraim, intent on getting rid of some of the dust of their journey, followed the colored hallboy up the stairs. Jethro stood poring over the register, when a distinguished-looking elderly gentleman with a heavy gray beard and eyes full of shrewdness and humor paused at the desk to ask a question.

“Er—Senator?”

The senator (for such he was, although he did not represent Jethro’s state) turned and stared, and then held out his hand with unmistakable warmth.

“Jethro Bass,” he exclaimed, “upon my word! What are you doing in Washington?”

Jethro took the hand, but he did not answer the question.

“Er—Senator—when can I see the President?”

“Why,” answered the senator, somewhat taken aback, “why, to-night, if you like. I’m going to the White House in a few minutes and I think I can arrange it.”

“T-to-morrow afternoon—t-to-morrow afternoon?”

The senator cast his eye over the swallow-tail coat and stove-pipe hat tilted back, and laughed.

“Thunder!” he exclaimed, “you haven’t changed a bit. I’m beginning to look like an old man; but that milk-and-crackers diet seems to keep you young, Jethro. I’ll fix it for to-morrow afternoon.”

“W-what time—two?”

“Well, I’ll fix it for two to-morrow afternoon. I never could understand you, Jethro; you don’t do things like other men. Do I smell gunpowder? What’s up now—what do you want to see Grant about?”

Jethro cast his eye around the corridor, where a few men were taking their ease after supper, and looked at the senator mysteriously.

“Any place where we can talk?” he demanded.

“We can go into the writing room and shut the door,” answered the senator, more amused than ever.

When Cynthia came downstairs, Jethro was standing with the gentleman in the corridor leading to the dining room, and she heard the gentleman say as he took his departure: —“I haven’t forgotten what you did for us in ’70, Jethro. I’ll go right along and see to it now.”

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Cynthia liked the gentleman's looks, and rightly surmised that he was one of the big men of the nation. She was about to ask Jethro his name when Ephraim came limping along and put the matter out of her mind, and the three went into the almost empty dining room. There they were served with elaborate attention by a darky waiter who had, in some mysterious way, learned Jethro's name and title. Cynthia reflected with pride that Jethro, too, was one of the nation's great men, who could get anything he wanted simply by coming to the capital and asking for it.

Ephraim was very much excited on finding himself in Washington, the sight of the place reviving in his mind a score of forgotten incidents of the war. After supper they found seats in a corner of the corridor, where a number of people were scattered about, smoking and talking. It did not occur to Jethro or Cynthia, or even to Ephraim, that these people were all of the male sex, and on the other hand the guests of the hotel were apparently used once in a while to see a lady from the country seated there. At any rate, Cynthia was but a young girl, and her two companions, however unusual their appearance, were clearly most respectable. Jethro, his hands in his pockets and his hat tilted, sat on the small of his back rapt in meditation; Cynthia, her head awhirl, looked around her with sparkling eyes; while Ephraim was smoking a cigar he had saved for just such a festal occasion. He did not see the stout man with the button and corded hat until he was almost on top of him.

"Eph Prescott, I believe!" exclaimed the stout one. "How be you, Comrade?"

Heedless of his rheumatism, Ephraim sprang to his feet and dropped the cigar, which the stout one picked up with much difficulty.

"Well," said Ephraim, in a voice that shook with unwonted emotion, "you kin skin me if it ain't Amasy Beard!" His eye travelled around Amasa's figure. "Wouldn't a-knowed you, I swan, I wouldn't. Why, when I seen you last, Amasy, your stomach was havin' all it could do to git hold of your backbone."

Cynthia laughed outright, and even Jethro sat up and smiled.

"When was it?" said Amasa, still clinging on to Ephraim's hand and incidentally to the cigar, which Ephraim had forgotten; "Beaver Creek, wahn't it?"

"July 10, 1863," said Ephraim, instantly.

Gradually they reached a sitting position, the cigar was restored to its rightful owner, and Mr. Beard was introduced, with some ceremony, to Cynthia and Jethro. From Beaver Creek they began to fight the war over again, backward and forward, much to Cynthia's edification, when her attention was distracted by the entrance of a street band of wind instruments. As the musicians made their way to another corner and began tuning up, she glanced mischievously at Jethro, for she knew his peculiarities by heart.

One of these was a most violent detestation of any but the best music. He had often given her this excuse, laughingly, for not going to meeting in Coniston. How he had come by his love for good music, Cynthia never knew—he certainly had not heard much of it.

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Suddenly a great volume of sound filled the corridor, and the band burst forth into what many supposed to be “The Watch on the Rhine.” Some people were plainly delighted; the veterans, once recovered from their surprise, shouted their reminiscences above the music, undismayed; Jethro held on to himself until the refrain, when he began to squirm, and as soon as the tune was done and the scattering applause had died down, he reached over and grabbed Mr. Amasa Beard by the knee. Mr. Beard did not immediately respond, being at that moment behind logworks facing a rebel charge; he felt vaguely that some one was trying to distract his attention, and in some lobe of his brain was registered the fact that that particular knee had gout in it. Jethro increased the pressure, and then Mr. Beard abandoned his logworks and swung around with a snort of pain.

“H-how much do they git for that noise—h-how much do they git?”

Mr. Beard tenderly lifted the hand from his knee and stared at Jethro with his mouth open, like a man aroused from a bad dream.

“Who? What noise?” he demanded.

“The Dutchmen,” said Jethro. “H-how much do they git for that noise?”

“Oh!” Mr. Beard glanced at the band and began to laugh. He thought Jethro a queer customer, no doubt, but he was a friend of Comrade Prescott’s. “By gum!” said Mr. Beard, “I thought for a minute a rebel chain-shot had took my leg off. Well, sir, I guess that band gets about two dollars. They’ve come in here every evening since I’ve been at the hotel.”

“T-two dollars? Is that the price? Er—you say two dollars is their price?”

“Thereabouts,” answered Mr. Beard, uneasily. Veteran as he was, Jethro’s appearance and earnestness were a little alarming.

“You say two dollars is their price?”

“Thereabouts,” shouted Mr. Beard, seating himself on the edge of his chair.

But Jethro paid no attention to him. He rose, unfolding by degrees his six feet two, and strode diagonally across the corridor toward the band leader. Conversation was hushed at the sight of his figure, a titter ran around the walls, but Jethro was oblivious to these things. He drew a great calfskin wallet from an inside pocket of his coat, and the band leader, a florid German, laid down his instrument and made an elaborate bow. Jethro waited until the man had become upright and then held out a two-dollar bill.

“Is that about right for the performance?” he said “is that about right?”

“Ja, mein Herr,” said the man, nodding vociferously.

“I want to pay what’s right—I want to pay what’s right,” said Jethro.

“I thank you very much, sir,” said the leader, finding his English, “you haf pay for all.”

“P-paid for everything—everything to-night?” demanded Jethro.

The leader spread out his hands.

“You haf pay for one whole evening,” said he, and bowed again.

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“Then take it, take it,” said Jethro, pushing the bill into the man’s palm; “but don’t you come back to-night—don’t you come back to-night.”

The amazed leader stared at Jethro—and words failed him. There was something about this man that compelled him to obey, and he gathered up his followers and led the way silently out of the hotel. Roars of laughter and applause arose on all sides; but Jethro was as one who heard them not as he made his way back to his seat again.

“You did a good job, my friend,” said Mr. Beard, approvingly. “I’m going to take Eph Prescott down the street to see some of the boys. Won’t you come, too?”

Mr. Beard doubtless accepted it as one of the man’s eccentricities that Jethro did not respond to him, for without more ado he departed arm in arm with Ephraim. Jethro was looking at Cynthia, who was staring toward the desk at the other end of the corridor, her face flushed, and her fingers closed over the arms of her chair. It never occurred to Jethro that she might have been embarrassed.

“W-what’s the matter, Cynthy?” he asked, sinking into the chair beside her.

Her breath caught sharply, but she tried to smile at him. He did not discover what was the matter until long afterward, when he recalled that evening to mind. Jethro was a man used to hotel corridors, used to sitting in an attitude that led the unsuspecting to believe he was half asleep; but no person of note could come or go whom he did not remember. He had seen the distinguished party arrive at the desk, preceded by a host of bell-boys with shawls and luggage. On the other hand, some of the distinguished party had watched the proceeding of paying off the band with no little amusement. Miss Janet Duncan had giggled audibly, her mother had smiled, while her father and Mr. Worthington had pretended to be deeply occupied with the hotel register. Somers was not there. Bob Worthington laughed heartily with the rest until his eye, travelling down the line of Jethro’s progress, fell on Cynthia, and now he was striding across the floor toward them. And even in the horrible confusion of that moment Cynthia had a vagrant thought that his clothes had an enviable cut and became him remarkably.

“Well, of all things, to find you here!” he cried; “this is the best luck that ever happened. I am glad to see you. I was going to steal away to Brampton for a couple of days before the term opened, and I meant to look you up there. And Mr. Bass,” said Bob, turning to Jethro, “I’m glad to see you too.”

Jethro looked at the young man and smiled and held out his hand. It was evident that Bob was blissfully unaware that hostilities between powers of no mean magnitude were about to begin; that the generals themselves were on the ground, and that he was holding treasonable parley with the enemy. The situation appealed to Jethro, especially as he glanced at the backs of the two gentlemen facing the desk. These backs seemed to him full of expression. “Th-thank you, Bob, th-thank you,” he answered.

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“I like the way you fixed that band,” said Bob; “I haven’t laughed as much for a year. You hate music, don’t you? I hope you’ll forgive that awful noise we made outside of your house last July, Mr. Bass.”

“You—you make that noise, Bob, you—you make that?”

“Well,” said Bob, “I’m afraid I did most of it. There was another fellow that helped some and played the guitar. It was pretty bad,” he added, with a side glance at Cynthia, “but it was meant for a compliment.”

“Oh,” said she, “it was meant for a compliment, was it?”

“Of course,” he answered, glad of the opportunity to turn his attention entirely to her. “I was for slipping away right after supper, but my father headed us off.”

“Slipping away?” repeated Cynthia.

“You see, he had a kind of a reception and fireworks afterward. We didn’t get away till after nine, and then I thought I’d have a lecture when I got home.”

“Did you?” asked Cynthia.

“No,” said Bob, “he didn’t know where I’d been.”

Cynthia felt the blood rush to her temples, but by habit and instinct she knew when to restrain herself.

“Would it have made any difference to him where you had been?” she asked calmly enough.

Bob had a presentiment that he was on dangerous ground. This new and self-possessed Cynthia was an enigma to him—certainly a fascinating enigma.

“My father world have thought I was a fool to go off serenading,” he answered, flushing. Bob did not like a lie; he knew that his father would have been angry if he had heard he had gone to Coniston; he felt, in the small of his back, that his father was angry mow, and guessed the reason.

She regarded him gravely as he spoke, and then her eyes left his face and became fixed upon an object at the far end of the corridor. Bob turned in time to see Janet Duncan swing on her heel and follow her mother up the stairs. He struggled to find words to tide over what he felt was an awkward moment.

“We’ve had a fine trip;” he said, “though I should much rather have stayed at home. The West is a wonderful country, with its canons and mountains and great stretches of

plain. My father met us in Chicago, and we came here. I don't know why, because Washington's dead at this time of the year. I suppose it must be on account of politics." Looking at Jethro with a sudden inspiration, "I hadn't thought of that."

Jethro had betrayed no interest in the conversation. He was seated, as usual, on the small of his back. But he saw a young man of short stature, with a freckled face and close-cropped, curly red hair, come into the corridor by another entrance; he saw Isaac D. Worthington draw him aside and speak to him, and he saw the young man coming towards them.

"How do you do, Miss Wetherell?" cried the young man joyously, while still ten feet away, "I'm awfully glad to see you, upon my word; I am. How long are you going to be in Washington?"

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“I don’t know, Mr. Duncan,” answered Cynthia.

“Did Worthy know you were here?” demanded Mr. Duncan, suspiciously.

“He did when he saw me,” said Cynthia, smiling.

“Not till then?” asked Mr. Duncan. “Say, Worthy; your father wants to see you right away. I’m going to be in Washington a day or two—will you go walking with me to-morrow morning, Miss Wetherell?”

“She’s going walking with me,” said Bob, not in the best of tempers.

“Then I’ll go along,” said Mr. Duncan, promptly.

By this time Cynthia got up and was holding out her hand to Bob Worthington. “I’m not going walking with either of you,” she said “I have another engagement. And I think I’ll have to say good night, because I’m very tired.”

“When can I see you?” Both the young men asked the question at once.

“Oh, you’ll have plenty of chances,” she answered, and was gone.

The young men looked at each other somewhat blankly; and then down at Jethro, who did not seem to know that they were there, and then they made their way toward the desk. But Isaac D. Worthington and his friends had disappeared.

A few minutes later the distinguished-looking senator with whom Jethro had been in conversation before supper entered the hotel. He seemed preoccupied, and heedless of the salutations he received; but when he caught sight of Jethro he crossed the corridor rapidly and sat down beside him. Jethro did not move. The corridor was deserted now, save for the two.

“Bass,” began the senator, “what’s the row up in your state?”

“H-haven’t heard of any row,” said Jethro.

“What did you come to Washington for?” demanded the senator, somewhat sharply.

“Er—vacation,” said Jethro, “vacation—to show my gal, Cynthy, the capital.”

“Now see here, Bass,” said the senator, “I don’t forget what happened in ’70. I don’t object to wading through a swarm of bees to get a little honey for a friend, but I think I’m entitled to know why he wants it.”

“G-got the honey?” asked Jethro.

The senator took off his hat and wiped his brow, and then he stole a look at Jethro, with apparently barren results.

“Jethro,” he said, “people say you run that state of yours right up to the handle. What’s all this trouble about a two-for-a-cent postmastership?”

“H-haven’t heard of any trouble,” said Jethro.

“Well, there is trouble,” said the senator, losing patience at last. “When I told Grant you were here and mentioned that little Brampton matter to him,—it didn’t seem much to me,—the bees began to fly pretty thick, I can tell you. I saw right away that somebody had been stirring ’em up. It looks to me, Jethro,” said the senator gravely, “it looks to me as if you had something of a rebellion on your hands.”

“W-what’d Grant say?” Jethro inquired.

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“Well, he didn’t say a great deal—he isn’t much of a talker, you know, but what he did say was to the point. It seems that your man, Prescott, doesn’t come from Brampton, in the first place, and Grant says that while he likes soldiers, he hasn’t any use for the kind that want to lie down and make the government support ’em. I’ll tell you what I found out. Worthington and Duncan wired the President this morning, and they’ve gone up to the White House now. They’ve got a lot of railroad interests back of them, and they’ve taken your friend Sutton into camp; but I managed to get the President to promise not to do anything until he saw you tomorrow afternoon at two.”

Jethro sat silent so long that the senator began to think he wasn’t going to answer him at all. In his opinion, he had told Jethro some very grave facts.

“W-when are you going to see the President again?” said Jethro, at last.

“To-morrow morning,” answered the senator; “he wants me to walk over with him to see the postmaster-general, who is sick in bed.”

“What time do you leave the White House?—”

“At eleven,” said the senator, very much puzzled.

“Er—Grant ever pay any attention to an old soldier on the street?”

The senator glanced at Jethro, and a twinkle came into his eye.

“Sometimes he has been known to,” he answered.

“You—you ever pay any attention to an old soldier on the street?”

Then the senator’s eyes began to snap.

“Sometimes I have been known to.”

“Er—suppose an old soldier was in front of the White House at eleven o’clock—an old soldier with a gal suppose?”

The senator saw the point, and took no pains to restrain his admiration.

“Jethro,” he said, slapping him on the shoulder, “I’m willing to bet a few thousand dollars you’ll run your state for a while yet.”

CHAPTER V

“Heard you say you was goin’ for a walk this morning, Cynthy,” Jethro remarked, as they sat at breakfast the next morning.

“Why, of course,” answered Cynthia, “Cousin Eph and I are going out to see Washington, and he is to show me the places that he remembers.” She looked at Jethro appealingly. “Aren’t you coming with us?” she asked.

“M-meet you at eleven, Cynthy,” he said.

“Eleven!” exclaimed Cynthia in dismay, “that’s almost dinner-time.”

“M-meet you in front of the White House at eleven,” said Jethro, “plumb in front of it, under a tree.”

By half-past seven, Cynthia and Ephraim with his green umbrella were in the street, but it would be useless to burden these pages with a description of all the sights they saw, and with the things that Ephraim said about them, and incidentally about the war. After New York, much of Washington would then have seemed small and ragged to any one who lacked ideals and a national sense, but Washington was to Cynthia

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as Athens to a Greek. To her the marble Capitol shining on its hill was a sacred temple, and the great shaft that struck upward through the sunlight, though yet unfinished, a fitting memorial to him who had led the barefoot soldiers of the colonies through ridicule to victory. They looked up many institutions and monument, they even had time to go to the Navy Yard, and they saved the contemplation of the White House till the last. The White House, which Cynthia thought the finest and most graceful mansion in all the world, in its simplicity and dignity, a fitting dwelling for the chosen of the nation. Under the little tree which Jethro had mentioned, Ephraim stood bareheaded before the walls which had sheltered Lincoln, which were now the home of the greatest of his captains, Grant: and wondrous emotions played upon the girl's spirit, too, as she gazed. They forgot the present in the past and the future, and they did not see the two gentlemen who had left the portico some minutes before and were now coming toward them along the sidewalk.

The two gentlemen, however, slowed their steps involuntarily at a sight which was uncommon, even in Washington. The girl's arm was in the soldier's, and her face, which even in repose had a true nobility, now was alight with an inspiration that is seen but seldom in a lifetime. In marble, could it have been wrought by a great sculptor, men would have dreamed before it of high things.

The two, indeed, might have stood for a group, the girl as the spirit, the man as the body which had risked and suffered all for it, and still held it fast. For the honest face of the soldier reflected that spirit as truly as a mirror.

Ephraim was aroused from his thoughts by Cynthia nudging his arm. He started, put on his hat, and stared very hard at a man smoking a cigar who was standing before him. Then he stiffened and raised his hand in an involuntary salute. The man smiled. He was not very tall, he had a closely trimmed light beard that was growing a little gray, he wore a soft hat something like Ephraim's, a black tie on a white pleated shirt, and his eyeglasses were pinned to his vest. His eyes were all kindness.

"How do you do, Comrade?" he said, holding out his hand.

"General," said Ephraim, "Mr. President," he added, correcting himself, "how be you?" He shifted the green umbrella, and shook the hand timidly but warmly.

"General will do," said the President, with a smiling glance at the tall senator beside him, "I like to be called General."

"You've growed some older, General," said Ephraim, scanning his face with a simple reverence and affection, "but you hain't changed so much as I'd a thought since I saw you whittlin' under a tree beside the Lacy house in the Wilderness."

“My duty has changed some,” answered the President, quite as simply. He added with a touch of sadness, “I liked those days best, Comrade.”

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“Well, I guess!” exclaimed Ephraim, “you’re general over everything now, but you’re not a mite bigger man to me than you was.”

The President took the compliment as it was meant.

“I found it easier to run an army than I do to run a country,” he said.

Ephraim’s blue eyes flamed with indignation.

“I don’t take no stock in the bull-dogs and the gold harness at Long Branch and—and all them lies the dratted newspapers print about you,”—Ephraim hammered his umbrella on the pavement as an expression of his feelings,—“and what’s more, the people don’t.”

The President glanced at the senator again, and laughed a little, quietly.

“Thank you; Comrade,” he said.

“You’re a plain, common man,” continued Ephraim, paying the highest compliment known to rural New England; “the people think a sight of you, or they wouldn’t hev chose you twice, General.”

“So you were in the Wilderness?” said the President, adroitly changing the subject.

“Yes, General. I was pressed into orderly duty the first day—that’s when I saw you whittlin’ under the tree, and you didn’t seem to have no more consarn than if it had been a company drill. Had a cigar then, too. But the second day; May the 6th, I was with the regiment. I’ll never forget that day,” said Ephraim, warming to the subject, “when we was fightin’ Ewell up and down the Orange Plank Road, playin’ hide-and-seek with the Johnnies in the woods. You remember them woods, General?”

The President nodded, his cigar between his teeth. He looked as though the scene were coming back to him.

“Never seen such woods,” said Ephraim, “scrub oak and pine and cedars and young stuff springin’ up until you couldn’t see the length of a company, and the Rebs jumpin’ and hollerin’ around and shoutin’ every which way. After a while a lot of them saplings was mowed off clean by the bullets, and then the woods caught afire, and that was hell.”

“Were you wounded?” asked the President, quickly.

“I was hurt some, in the hip,” answered Ephraim.

“Some!” exclaimed Cynthia, “why, you have walked lame ever since.” She knew the story by heart, but the recital of it never failed to stir her blood! They carried him out just

as he was going to be burned up, in a blanket hung from rifles, and he was in the hospital nine months, and had to come home for a while."

"Cynthy," said Ephraim in gentle reproof, "I callate the General don't want to hear that."

Cynthia flushed, but the President looked at her with an added interest.

"My dear young lady," he said, "that seems to me the vital part of the story. If I remember rightly," he added, turning again to Ephraim, the Fifth Corps was on the Orange turnpike. What brigade were you in?"

"The third brigade of the First Division," answered Ephraim.

"Griffin's," said the President. "There were several splendid New England regiments in that brigade. I sent them with Griffin to help Sheridan at Five Forks."

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“I was thar too,” cried Ephraim.

“What!” said the President, “with the lame hip?”

“Well, General, I went back, I couldn’t help it. I couldn’t stay away from the boys—just couldn’t. I didn’t limp as bad then as I do now. I wahn’t much use anywhere else, and I had l’arned to fight. Five Forks!” exclaimed Ephraim. “I call that day to mind as if it was yesterday. I remember how the boys yelled when they told us we was goin’ to Sheridan. We got started about daylight, and it took us till four o’clock in the afternoon to git into position. The woods was just comin’ a little green, and the white dogwoods was bloomin’ around. Sheridan, he galloped up to the line with that black horse of his’n and hollered out, ’Come on, boys, go in at a clean, jump or You won’t ketch one of ’em.’ You know how men, even veterans like that Fifth Corps, sometimes hev to be pushed into a fight. There was a man from a Maine regiment got shot in the head fust thing. ‘I’m killed,’ said he. ‘Oh, no, you’re not,’ says Sheridan, ’pickup your gun and go for ’em.’ But he was killed. Well, we went for ’em through all the swamps and briers and everything, and Sheridan, thar in front, had got the battle-flag and was rushin’ round with it swearin’ and prayin’ and shoutin’, and the first thing we knowed he’d jumped his horse clean over their logworks and landed right on top of the Johnnie’s.”

“Yes,” said the President, “that was Sheridan, sure enough.”

“Mr. President,” said the senator, who stood by wonderingly while General Grant had lost himself in this conversation, “do you realize what time it is?”

“Yes, yes,” said the President, “we must go on. What was your rank, Comrade?”

“Sergeant, General.”

“I hope you have got a good pension for that hip,” said the President, kindly. It may be well to add that he was not always so incautious, but this soldier bore the unmistakable stamp of simplicity and sincerity on his face.

Ephraim hesitated.

“He never would ask for a pension, General,” said Cynthia.

“What!” exclaimed the President in real astonishment, “are you so rich as all that?” and he glanced at the green umbrella.

“Well, General,” said Ephraim, uncomfortably, “I never liked the notion of gittin’ paid for it. You see, I was what they call a war-Democrat.”

“Good Lord!” said the President, but more to himself. “What do you do now?”

“I callate to make harness,” answered Ephraim.

“Only he can’t make it any more on account of his rheumatism, Mr. President,” Cynthia put in.

“I think you might call me General, too,” he said, with the grace that many simple people found inherent in him. “And may I ask your name, young lady?”

“Cynthia Wetherell—General,” she said smiling.

“That sounds more natural,” said the President, and then to Ephraim, “Your daughter?”

“I couldn’t think more of her if she was,” answered Ephraim; “Cynthy’s pulled me through some tight spells. Her mother was my cousin, General. My name’s Prescott—-Ephraim Prescott.”

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“Ephraim Prescott!” ejaculated the President, sharply, taking his cigar from his mouth, “Ephraim Prescott!”

“Prescott—that’s right—Prescott, General,” repeated Ephraim, sorely puzzled by these manifestations of amazement.

“What did you come to Washington for?” asked the President.

“Well, General, I kind of hate to tell you—I didn’t intend to mention that. I guess I won’t say nothin’ about it,” he added, “we’ve had such a sociable time. I’ve always b’en a little mite ashamed of it, General, ever since ’twas first mentioned.”

“Good Lord!” said the President again, and then he looked at Cynthia. “What is it, Miss Cynthia?” he asked.

It was now Cynthia’s turn to be a little confused.

“Uncle Jethro—that is, Mr. Bass” (the President nodded), “went to Cousin Eph when he couldn’t make harness any more and said he’d give him the Brampton post-office.”

The President’s eyes met the senator’s, and both gentlemen laughed. Cynthia bit her lip, not seeing any cause for mirth in her remark, while Ephraim looked uncomfortable and mopped the perspiration from his brow.

“He said he’d give it to him, did he?” said the President. “Is Mr. Bass your uncle?”

“Oh, no, General,” replied Cynthia, “he’s really no relation. He’s done everything for me, and I live with him since my father died. He was going to meet us here,” she continued, looking around hurriedly, “I’m sure I can’t think what’s kept him.”

“Mr. President, we are half an hour late already,” said the senator, hurriedly.

“Well, well,” said the President, “I suppose I must go. Good-by, Miss Cynthia,” said he, taking the girl’s hand warmly. “Good-by, Comrade. If ever you want to see General Grant, just send in your name. Good-by.”

The President lifted his hat politely to Cynthia and passed. He said something to the senator which they did not hear, and the senator laughed heartily. Ephraim and Cynthia watched them until they were out of sight.

“Godfrey!” exclaimed Ephraim, “they told me he was hard to talk to. Why, Cynthy, he’s as simple as a child.”

“I’ve always thought that all great men must be simple,” said Cynthia; “Uncle Jethro is.”

“To think that the President of the United States stood talkin’ to us on the sidewalk for half an hour,” said Ephraim, clutching Cynthia’s arm. “Cynthy, I’m glad we didn’t press that post-office matter it was worth more to me than all the post-offices in the Union to have that talk with General Grant.”

They waited some time longer under the tree, happy in the afterglow of this wonderful experience. Presently a clock struck twelve.

“Why, it’s dinner-time, Cynthy,” said Ephraim. “I guess Jethro haint’ a-comin’—must hev b’en delayed by some of them politicians.”

“It’s the first time I ever knew him to miss an appointment,” said Cynthia, as they walked back to the hotel.

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Jethro was not in the corridor, so they passed on to the dining room and looked eagerly from group to group. Jethro was not there, either, but Cynthia heard some one laughing above the chatter of the guests, and drew back into the corridor. She had spied the Duncans and the Worthingtons making merry by themselves at a corner table, and it was Somers's laugh that she heard. Bob, too, sitting next to Miss Duncan, was much amused about something. Suddenly Cynthia's exaltation over the incident of the morning seemed to leave her, and Bob Worthington's words which she had pondered over in the night came back to her with renewed force. He did not find it necessary to steal away to see Miss Duncan. Why should he have "stolen away" to see her? Was it because she was a country girl, and poor? That was true; but on the other hand, did she not live in the sunlight, as it were, of Uncle Jethro's greatness, and was it not an honor to come to his house and see any one? And why had Mr. Worthington turned hid back on Jethro, and sent for Bob when he was talking to them? Cynthia could not understand these things, and her pride was sorely wounded by them.

"Perhaps Jethro's in his room," suggested Ephraim.

And indeed they found him there seated on the bed, poring over some newspapers, and both in a breath demanded where he had been. Ephraim did not wait for an answer.

"We seen General Grant, Jethro," he cried; "while we was waitin' for you under the tree he come up and stood talkin' to us half an hour. Full half an hour, wahn't it, Cynthy?"

"Oh, yes," answered Cynthia, forgetting her own grievance at the recollection; "only it didn't seem nearly that long."

"W-want to know!" exclaimed Jethro, in astonishment, putting down his paper. "H-how did it happen?"

"Come right up and spoke to us," said Ephraim, in a tone he might have used to describe a miracle, "jest as if he was common folk. Never had a more sociable talk with anybody. Why, there was times when I clean forgot he was President of the United States. The boys won't believe it when we git back at Coniston."

And Ephraim, full of his subject, began to recount from the beginning the marvellous affair, occasionally appealing to Cynthia for confirmation. How he had lived over again the Wilderness and Five Forks; how the General had changed since he had seen him whittling under a tree; how the General had asked about his pension.

"D-didn't mention the post-office, did you, Ephraim?"

"Why, no," replied Ephraim, "I didn't like to exactly. You see, we was havin' such a good time I didn't want to spoil it, but Cynthy—"

“I told the President about it, Uncle Jethro; I told him how sick Cousin Eph had been, and that you were going to give him the postmastership because he couldn’t work any more with his hands.”

The training of a lifetime had schooled Jethro not to betray surprise.

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“K-kind of mixin’ up in politics, hain’t you, Cynthy? P-President say he’d give you the postmastership, Eph?” he asked.

“He didn’t say nothin’ about it, Jethro,” answered Ephraim slowly; “I callate he has other views for the place, and he was too kind to come right out with ’em and spoil our mornin’. You see, Jethro, I wahn’t only a sergeant, and Brampton’s gittin’ to be a big town.”

“But, surely,” cried Cynthia, who could scarcely wait for him to finish, “surely you’re going to give Cousin Eph the post-office, aren’t you, Uncle Jethro? All you have to do is to tell the President that you want it for him. Why, I had an idea that we came down for that.”

“Now, Cynthy,” Ephraim put in, deprecatingly.

“Who else would get the post-office?” asked Cynthia. “Surely you’re not going to let Mr. Sutton have it for Dave Wheelock!”

“Er—Cynthy,” said Jethro, slyly, “w-what’d you say to me once about interferin’ with women’s fixin’s?”

Cynthia saw the point. She perceived also that the mazes of politics were not to be understood by a young woman, of even by an old soldier. She laughed and seized Jethro’s hands and pulled him from the bed.

“We won’t get any dinner unless we hurry,” she said.

When they reached the dining room she was relieved to discover that the party in the corner had gone.

In the afternoon there were many more sights to be viewed, but they were back in the hotel again by half-past four, because Ephraim’s Wilderness leg had its limits of endurance. Jethro (though he had not mentioned the fact to them) had gone to the White House.

It was during the slack hours that our friend the senator, whose interest in the matter of the Brampton post office out-weighed for the present certain grave problems of the Administration in which he was involved, hurried into the Willard Hotel, looking for Jethro Bass. He found him without much trouble in his usual attitude, occupying one of the chairs in the corridor.

“Well,” exclaimed the senator, with a touch of eagerness he did not often betray, “did you see Grant? How about your old soldier? He’s one of the most delightful characters I ever met—simple as a child,” and he laughed at the recollection. “That was a

masterstroke of yours, Bass, putting him under that tree with that pretty girl. I doubt if you ever did anything better in your life. Did they tell you about it?"

"Yes," said Jethro, "they told me about it."

"And how about Grant? What did he say to you?"

"W-well, I went up there and sent in my card. D-didn't have to wait a great while, as I was pretty early, and soon he came in, smokin' a black cigar, head bent forward a little. D-didn't ask me to sit down, and what talkin' we did we did standin'. D-didn't ask me what he could do for me, what I wanted, or anything else, but just stood there, and I stood there. F-fust

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time in my life I didn't know how to commerce or what to say; looked—looked at me—-didn't take his eye off me. After a while I got started, somehow; told him I was there to ask him to appoint Ephraim Prescott to the Brampton postoffice—t-told him all about Ephraim from the time he was locked in the cradle—never was so hard put that I could remember. T-told him how Ephraim shook butternuts off my fathers tree—for all I know. T-told him all about Ephraim's war record—leastways all I could call to mind—and, by Godfrey! before I got through, I wished I'd listened to more of it. T-told him about Ephraim's Wilderness bullets—t-told him about Ephraim's rheumatism,—how it bothered him when he went to bed and when he got up again."

If Jethro had glanced at his companion, he would have seen the senator was shaking with silent and convulsive laughter.

"All the time I talked to him I didn't see a muscle move in his face," Jethro continued, "so I started in again, and he looked—looked—looked right at me. W-wouldn't wink—don't think he winked once while I was in that room. I watched him as close as I could, and I watched to see if a muscle moved or if I was makin' any impression. All he would do was to stand there and look—look—look. K-kept me there ten minutes and never opened his mouth at all. Hardest man to talk to I ever met—never see a man before but what I could get him to say somethin', if it was only a cuss word. I got tired of it after a while, made up my mind that I had found one man I couldn't move. Then what bothered me was to get out of that room. If I'd a had a Bible I believe I'd a read it to him. I didn't know what to say, but I did say this after a while:—"'W-well, Mr. President, I guess I've kept you long enough—g-guess you're a pretty busy man. H-hope you'll give Mr. Prescott that postmastership. Er—er good-by.'

"'Wait, sir,' he said.

"'Yes,' I said, 'I-I'll wait.'

"Thought you was goin' to give him that postmastership, Mr. Bass,' he said."

At this point the senator could not control his mirth, and the empty corridor echoed his laughter.

"By thunder! what did you say to that?"

"Er—I said, 'Mr. President, I thought I was until a while ago.'

"'And when did you change your mind?' says he."

Then he laughed a little—not much—but he laughed a little.

"'I understand that your old soldier lives within the limits of the delivery of the Brampton office,' said he."

"'That's correct, Mr. President,' said I."

"'Well,' said he, 'I will app'int him postmaster at Brampton, Mr. Bass.'"

"'When?' said I."

Then he laughed a little more.

"I'll have the app'intment sent to your hotel this afternoon,' said he."

"'Then I said to him, 'This has come out full better than I expected, Mr. President. I'm much obliged to you.' He didn't say nothin' more, so I come out."

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“Grant didn’t say anything about Worthington or Duncan, did he?” asked the senator, curiously, as he rose to go.

“G-guess I’ve told you all he said,” answered Jethro; “’twahn’t a great deal.”

The senator held out his hand.

“Bass,” he said, laughing, “I believe you came pretty near meeting your match. But if Grant’s the hardest man in the Union to get anything out of, I’ve a notion who’s the second.” And with this parting shot the senator took his departure, chuckling to himself as he went.

As has been said, there were but few visitors in Washington at this time, and the hotel corridor was all but empty. Presently a substantial-looking gentleman came briskly in from the street, nodding affably to the colored porters and bell-boys, who greeted him by name. He wore a flowing Prince Albert coat, which served to dignify a growing portliness, and his coal-black whiskers glistened in the light. A voice, which appeared to come from nowhere in particular, brought the gentleman up standing.

“How be you, Heth?”

It may not be that Mr. Sutton’s hand trembled, but the ashes of his cigar fell to the floor. He was not used to visitations, and for the instant, if the truth be told, he was not equal to looking around.

“Like Washington, Heth—like Washington?”

Then Mr. Sutton turned. His presence of mind, and that other presence of which he was so proud, seemed for the moment to have deserted him.

“S-stick pretty close to business, Heth, comin’ down here out of session time. S-stick pretty close to business, don’t you, since the people sent you to Congress?”

Mr. Sutton might have offered another man a cigar or a drink, but (as is well known) Jethro was proof against tobacco or stimulants.

“Well,” said the Honorable Heth, catching his breath and making a dive, “I am surprised to see you, Jethro,” which was probably true.

“Th-thought you might be,” said Jethro. “Er—glad to see me, Heth—glad to see me?”

As has been recorded, it is peculiarly difficult to lie to people who are not to be deceived.

“Why, certainly I am,” answered the Honorable Heth, swallowing hard, “certainly I am, Jethro. I meant to have got to Coniston this summer, but I was so busy—”

“Peoples’ business, I understand. Er—hear you’ve gone in for high-minded politics, Heth—r-read a highminded speech of yours—two high-minded speeches. Always thought you was a high-minded man, Heth.”

“How did you like those speeches, Jethro?” asked Mr. Sutton, striving as best he might to make some show of dignity.

“Th-thought they was high-minded,” said Jethro.

Then there was a silence, for Mr. Sutton could think of nothing more to say. And he yearned to depart with a great yearning, but something held him there.

“Heth,” said Jethro after a while, “you was always very friendly and obliging. You’ve done a great many favors for me in your life.”

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“I’ve always tried to be neighborly, Jethro,” said Mr. Sutton, but his voice sounded a little husky even to himself.

“And I may have done one or two little things for you, Heth,” Jethro continued, “but I can’t remember exactly. Er—can you remember, Heth.”

Mr. Sutton was trying with becoming nonchalance to light the stump of his cigar. He did not succeed this time. He pulled himself together with a supreme effort.

“I think we’ve both been mutually helpful, Jethro,” he said, “mutually helpful.”

“Well,” said Jethro, reflectively, “I don’t know as I could have put it as well as that—-there’s somethin’ in being an orator.”

There was another silence, a much longer one. The Honorable Heth threw his butt away, and lighted another cigar. Suddenly, as if by magic, his aplomb returned, and in a flash of understanding he perceived the situation. He saw himself once more as the successful congressman, the trusted friend of the railroad interests, and he saw Jethro as a discredited boss. He did not stop to reflect that Jethro did not act like a discredited boss, as a keener man might have done. But if the Honorable Heth had been a keener man, he would not have been at that time a congressman. Mr. Sutton accused himself of having been stupid in not grasping at once that the tables were turned, and that now he was the one to dispense the gifts.

“K-kind of fortunate you stopped to speak to me, Heth. N-now I come to think of it, I hev a little favor to ask of you.”

“Ah!” exclaimed Mr. Sutton, blowing out the smoke; “of course anything I can do, Jethro—anything in reason.”

“W-wouldn’t ask a high-minded man to do anything he hadn’t ought to,” said Jethro; “the fact is, I’d like to git Eph Prescott appointed at the Brampton post-office. You can fix that, Heth—can’t you—you can fix that?”

Mr. Sutton stuck his thumb into his vest pocket and cleared his throat.

“I can’t tell you how sorry I am not to oblige you, Jethro, but I’ve arranged to give that post-office to Dave Wheelock.”

“A-arranged it, hev You—a-arranged it?”

“Why, yes,” said Mr. Sutton, scarcely believing his own ears. Could it be possible that he was using this patronizingly kind tone to Jethro Bass?

“Well, that’s too bad,” said Jethro; “g-got it all fixed, hev you?”

“Practically,” answered Mr. Sutton, grandly; “indeed, I may go as far as to say that it is as certain as if I had the appointment here in my pocket. I’m sorry not to oblige you, Jethro; but these are matters which a member of Congress must look after pretty closely.” He held out his hand, but Jethro did not appear to see it,—he had his in his pockets. “I’ve an important engagement,” said the Honorable Heth, consulting a large gold watch. “Are you going to be in Washington long?”

“G-guess I’ve about got through, Heth—g-guess I’ve about got through,” said Jethro.

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“Well, if you have time and there’s any other little thing, I’m in Room 29,” said Mr. Sutton, as he put his foot on the stairway.

“T-told Worthington you got that app’intment for Wheelock—t-told Worthington?” Jethro called out after him.

Mr. Sutton turned and waved his cigar and smiled in acknowledgment of this parting bit of satire. He felt that he could afford to smile. A few minutes later he was ensconced on the sofa of a private sitting room reviewing the incident, with much gusto, for the benefit of Mr. Isaac D. Worthington and Mr. Alexander Duncan. Both of these gentlemen laughed heartily, for the Honorable Heth Sutton knew the art of telling a story well, at least, and was often to be seen with a group around him in the lobbies of Congress.

CHAPTER VI

About five o’clock that afternoon Ephraim was sitting in his shirt-sleeves by the window of his room, and Cynthia was reading aloud to him an article (about the war, of course) from a Washington paper, which his friend, Mr. Beard, had sent him. There was a knock at the door, and Cynthia opened it to discover a colored hall-boy with a roll in his hand.

“Mistah Ephum Prescott?” he said.

“Yes,” answered Ephraim, “that’s me.”

Cynthia shut the door and gave him the roll, but Ephraim took it as though he were afraid of its contents.

“Guess it’s some of them war records from Amasy,” he said.

“Oh, Cousin Eph,” exclaimed Cynthia, excitedly, “why don’t you open it? If you don’t I will.”

“Guess you’d better, Cynthy,” and he held it out to her with a trembling hand.

Cynthia did open it, and drew out a large document with seals and printing and signatures.

“Cousin Eph,” she cried, holding it under his nose, “Cousin Eph, you’re postmaster of Brampton!”

Ephraim looked at the paper, but his eyes swam, and he could only make out a dancing, bronze seal.

“I want to know!” he exclaimed. “Fetch Jethro.”

But Cynthia had already flown on that errand. Curiously enough, she ran into Jethro in the hall immediately outside of Ephraim’s door. Ephraim got to his feet; it was very difficult for him to realize that his troubles were ended, that he was to earn his living at last. He looked at Jethro, and his eyes filled with tears. “I guess I can’t thank you as I’d ought to, Jethro,” he said, “leastways, not now.”

“I’ll thank him for you, Cousin Eph,” said Cynthia. And she did.

“D-don’t thank me,” said Jethro, “I didn’t have much to do with it, Eph. Thank the President.”

Ephraim did thank the President, in one of the most remarkable letters, from a literary point of view, ever received at the White House. For the art of literature largely consists in belief in what one is writing, and Ephraim’s letter had this quality of sincerity, and no lack of vividness as well. He spent most of the evening in composing it.

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Cynthia, too, had received a letter that day—a letter which she had read several times, now with a smile, and again with a pucker of the forehead which was meant for a frown. “Dear Cynthia,” it said. “Where do you keep yourself? I am sure you would not be so cruel if you knew that I was aching to see you.” Aching! Cynthia repeated the word, and remembered the glimpse she had had of him in the dining room with Miss Janet Duncan. “Whenever I have been free” (Cynthia repeated this also, somewhat ironically, although she conceded it the merit of frankness), “Whenever I have been free, I have haunted the corridors for a sight of you. Think of me as haunting the hotel desk for an answer to this, telling me when I can see you—and where. P.S. I shall be around all evening.” And it was signed, “Your friend and playmate, R. Worthington.”

It is a fact—not generally known—that Cynthia did answer the letter—twice. But she sent neither answer. Even at that age she was given to reflection, and much as she may have approved of the spirit of the letter, she liked the tone of it less. Cynthia did not know a great deal of the world, it is true, but the felt instinctively that something was wrong when Bob resorted to such means of communication. And she was positively relieved, or thought that she was, when she went down to supper and discovered that the table in the corner was empty.

After supper Ephraim had his letter to write, and Jethro wished to sit in the corridor. But Cynthia had learned that the corridor was not the place for a girl, so she explained—to Jethro that he would find her in the parlor if he wanted her, and that she was going there to read. That parlor Cynthia thought a handsome room, with its high windows and lace curtains, its long mirrors and marble-topped tables. She established herself under a light, on a sofa in one corner, and sat, with the book on her lap watching the people who came and went. She had that delicious sensation which comes to the young when they first travel—the sensation of being a part of the great world; and she wished that she knew these people, and which were the great, and which the little ones. Some of them looked at her intently, she thought too intently, and at such times she pretended to read. She was aroused by hearing some one saying:—“Isn’t this Miss Wetherell?”

Cynthia looked up and caught her breath, for the young lady who had spoken was none other than Miss Janet Duncan herself. Seen thus startlingly at close range, Miss Duncan was not at all like what Cynthia had expected—but then most people are not. Janet Duncan was, in fact, one of those strange persons who do not realize the picture which their names summon up. She was undoubtedly good-looking; her hair, of a more golden red than her brother’s, was really wonderful; her neck was slender; and she had a strange, dreamy face that fascinated Cynthia, who had never seen anything like it.

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She put down her book on the sofa and got up, not without a little tremor at this unexpected encounter.

“Yes, I’m Cynthia Wetherell,” she replied.

To add to her embarrassment, Miss Duncan seized both her hands impulsively and gazed into her face.

“You’re really very beautiful,” she said. “Do you know it?”

Cynthia’s only answer to this was a blush. She wondered if all city girls were like Miss Duncan.

“I was determined to come up and speak to you the first chance I had,” Janet continued. “I’ve been making up stories about you.”

“Stories!” exclaimed Cynthia, drawing away her hands.

“Romances,” said Miss Duncan—“real romances. Sometimes I think I’m going to be a novelist, because I’m always weaving stories about people that I see people who interest me, I mean. And you look as if you might be the heroine of a wonderful romance.”

Cynthia’s breath was now quite taken away.

“Oh,” she said, “I—had never thought that I looked like that.”

“But you do,” said Miss Duncan; “you’ve got all sorts of possibilities in your face—you look as if you might have lived for ages.”

“As old as that?” exclaimed Cynthia, really startled.

“Perhaps I don’t express myself very well” said the other, hastily; “I wish you could see what I’ve written about you already. I can do it so much better with pen and ink. I’ve started quite a romance already.”

“What is it?” asked Cynthia, not without interest.

“Sit down on the sofa and I’ll tell you,” said Miss Duncan; “I’ve done it all from your face, too. I’ve made you a very poor girl brought up by peasants, only you are really of a great family, although nobody knows it. A rich duke sees you one day when he is hunting and falls in love with you, and you have to stand a lot of suffering and persecution because of it, and say nothing. I believe you could do that,” added Janet, looking critically at Cynthia’s face.

“I suppose I could if I had to,” said Cynthia, “but I shouldn’t like it.”

“Oh, it would do you good,” said Janet; “it would ennoble your character. Not that it needs it,” she added hastily. “And I could write another story about that quaint old man who paid the musicians to go away, and who made us all laugh so much.”

Cynthia’s eye kindled.

“Mr. Bass isn’t a quaint old man,” she said; “he’s the greatest man in the state.”

Miss Duncan’s patronage had been of an unconscious kind. She knew that she had offended, but did not quite realize how.

“I’m so sorry,” she cried, “I didn’t mean to hurt you. You live with him, don’t you—-Coniston?”

“Yes,” replied Cynthia, not knowing whether to laugh or cry.

“I’ve heard about Coniston. It must be quite a romance in itself to live all the year round in such a beautiful place and to make your own clothes. Yours become you very well,” said Miss Duncan, “although I don’t know why. They’re not at all in style, and yet they give you quite an air of distinction. I wish I could live in Coniston for a year, anyway, and write a book about you. My brother and Bob Worthington went out there one night and serenaded you, didn’t they?”

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“Yes,” said Cynthia, that peculiar flash coming into her eyes again, “and I think it was very foolish of them.”

“Do you?” exclaimed Miss Duncan, in surprise; “I wish somebody would serenade me. I think it was the most romantic thing Bob ever did. He’s wild about you, and so is Somers they have both told me so in confidence.”

Cynthia’s face was naturally burning now.

“If it were true,” she said, “they wouldn’t have told you about it.”

“I suppose that’s so,” said Miss Duncan, thoughtfully, “only you’re very clever to have seen it. Now that I know you, I think you a more remarkable person than ever. You don’t seem at all like a country girl, and you don’t talk like one.”

Cynthia laughed outright. She could not help liking Janet Duncan, mere flesh and blood not being proof against such compliments.

“I suppose it’s because my father was an educated man,” she said; “he taught me to read and speak when I was young.”

“Why, you are just like a person out of a novel! Who was your father?”

“He kept the store at Coniston,” answered Cynthia, smiling a little sadly. She would have liked to have added that William Wetherell would have been a great man if he had had health, but she found it difficult to give out confidences, especially when they were in the nature of surmises.

“Well,” said Janet, stoutly, “I think that is more like a story than ever. Do you know,” she continued, “I saw you once at the state capital outside of our grounds the day Bob ran after you. That was when I was in love with him. We had just come back from Europe then, and I thought he was the most wonderful person I had ever seen.”

If Cynthia had felt any emotion from this disclosure, she did not betray it. Janet, moreover, was not looking for it.

“What made you change your mind?” asked Cynthia, biting her lip.

“Oh, Bob hasn’t the temperament,” said Janet, making use of a word that she had just discovered; “he’s too practical—he never does or says the things you want him to. He’s just been out West with us on a trip, and he was always looking at locomotives and brakes and grades and bridges and all such tiresome things. I should like to marry a poet,” said Miss Duncan, dreamily; “I know they want me to marry Bob, and Mr. Worthington wants it. I’m sure, of that. But he wouldn’t at all suit me.”

If Cynthia had been able to exercise an equal freedom of speech, she might have been impelled to inquire what young Mr. Worthington's views were in the matter. As it was, she could think of nothing appropriate to say, and just then four people entered the room and came towards them. Two of these were Janet's mother and father, and the other two were Mr. Worthington, the elder, and the Honorable Heth Sutton. Mrs. Duncan, whom Janet did not at all resemble was a person who naturally commanded attention. She had strong features, and a very decided, though not disagreeable, manner.

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“I couldn’t imagine what had become of you, Janet,” she said, coming forward and throwing off her lace shawl. “Whom have you found—a school friend?”

“No, Mamma,” said Janet, “this is Cynthia Wetherell.” “Oh,” said Mrs. Duncan, looking very hard at Cynthia in a near-sighted way, and, not knowing in the least who she was; “you haven’t seen Senator and Mrs. Meade, have you, Janet? They were to be here at eight o’clock.”

“No,” said Janet, turning again to Cynthia and scarcely hearing the question.

“Janet hasn’t seen them, Dudley,” said Mrs. Duncan, going up to Mr. Worthington, who was pulling his chop whiskers by the door. “Janet has discovered such a beautiful creature,” she went on, in a voice which she did not take the trouble to lower. “Do look at her, Alexander. And you, Mr. Sutton—who are such a bureau of useful information, do tell me who she is. Perhaps she comes from your part of the country—her name’s Wetherell.”

“Wetherell? Why, of course I know her,” said Mr. Sutton, who was greatly pleased because Mrs. Duncan had likened him to an almanac: greatly pleased this evening in every respect, and even the diamond in his bosom seemed to glow with a brighter fire. He could afford to be generous to-night, and he turned to Mr. Worthington and laughed knowingly. “She’s the ward of our friend Jethro,” he explained.

“What is she?” demanded Mrs. Duncan, who knew and cared nothing about politics, a country girl, I suppose.”

“Yes,” replied Mr. Sutton, “a country girl from a little village not far from Clovelly. A good girl, I believe, in spite of the atmosphere in which she has been raised.”

“It’s really wonderful, Mr. Sutton, how you seem to know every one in your district, including the women and children,” said the lady; “but I suppose you wouldn’t be where you are if you didn’t.”

The Honorable Heth cleared his throat.

“Wetherell,” Mr. Duncan was saying, staring at Cynthia through his spectacles, “where have I heard that name?”

He must suddenly have remembered, and recalled also that he and his ally Worthington had been on opposite sides in the Woodchuck Session, for he sat down abruptly beside the door, and remained there for a while. For Mr. Duncan had never believed Mr. Merrill’s explanation concerning poor William Wetherell’ s conduct.

“Pretty, ain’t she?” said Mr. Sutton to Mr. Worthington. “Guess she’s more dangerous than Jethro, now that we’ve clipped his wings a little.” The congressman had heard of Bob’s infatuation.

Isaac D. Worthington, however, was in a good humor this evening and was moved by a certain curiosity to inspect the girl. Though what he had seen and heard of his son’s conduct with her had annoyed him, he did not regard it seriously.

“Aren’t you going to speak to your constituent, Mr. Sutton?” said Mrs. Duncan, who was bored because her friends had not arrived; “a congressman ought to keep on the right side of the pretty girls, you know.”

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It hadn't occurred to the Honorable Heth to speak to his constituent. The ways of Mrs. Duncan sometimes puzzled him, and he could not see why that lady and her daughter seemed to take more than a passing interest in the girl. But if they could afford to notice her, certainly he could; so he went forward graciously and held out his hand to Cynthia; interrupting Miss Duncan in the middle of a discourse upon her diary.

"How do you do, Cynthia?" said Mr. Sutton. Had he been in Coniston, he would have said, "How be you?"

Cynthia took the hand, but did not rise, somewhat to Mr. Sutton's annoyance. A certain respect was due to a member of Congress and the Rajah of Clovelly.

"How do you do, Mr. Sutton?" said Cynthia, very coolly.

"I like her," remarked Mrs. Duncan to Mr. Worthington.

"This is a splendid trip for you, eh, Cynthia?" Mr. Sutton persisted, with a praiseworthy determination to be pleasant.

"It has turned out to be so, Mr. Sutton," replied Cynthia. This was not precisely the answer Mr. Sutton expected, and to tell the truth, he didn't know quite what to make of it.

"A great treat to see Washington and New York, isn't it?" said Mr. Sutton, kindly, "a great treat for a Coniston girl. I suppose you came through New York and saw the sights?"

"Is there another way to get to Washington?" asked Cynthia.

Mrs. Duncan nudged Mr. Worthington and drew a little nearer, while Mr. Sutton began to wish he had not been lured into the conversation. Cynthia had been very polite, but there was something in the quiet manner in which the girl's eyes were fixed upon him that made him vaguely uneasy. He could not back out with dignity, and he felt himself on the verge of becoming voluble. Mr. Sutton prided himself on never being voluble.

"Why, no," he answered, "we have to go to New York to get anywhere in these days." There was a slight pause. "Uncle Jethro taking you and Mr. Prescott on a little pleasure trip?" He had not meant to mention Jethro's name, but he found himself, to his surprise, a little at a loss for a subject.

"Well, partly a pleasure trip. It's always a pleasure for Uncle Jethro to do things for others," said Cynthia, quietly, "although people do not always appreciate what he does for them."

The Honorable Heth coughed. He was now very uncomfortable, indeed. How much did this astounding young person know, whom he had thought so innocent?

“I didn’t discover he was in town until I ran across him in the corridor this evening. Should have liked to have introduced him to some of the Washington folks—some of the big men, although not many of ’em are here,” Mr. Sutton ran on, not caring to notice the little points of light in Cynthia’s eyes. (The idea of Mr. Sutton introducing Uncle Jethro to anybody!) “I haven’t seen Ephraim Prescott. It must be a great treat for him, too, to get away on a little trip and see his army friends. How is he?”

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“He’s very happy,” said Cynthia.

“Happy!” exclaimed Mr. Sutton. “Oh, yes, of course, Ephraim’s always happy, in spite of his troubles and his rheumatism. I always liked Ephraim Prescott.”

Cynthia did not answer this remark at all, and Mr. Sutton suspected strongly that she did not believe it, therefore he repeated it.

“I always liked Ephraim. I want you to tell Jethro that I’m downright sorry I couldn’t get him that Brampton postmastership.”

“I’ll tell him that you are sorry, Mr. Sutton,” replied Cynthia, gravely, “but I don’t think it’ll do any good.”

Not do any good!—What did the girl mean? Mr. Sutton came to the conclusion that he had been condescending enough, that somehow he was gaining no merit in Mrs. Duncan’s eyes by this kindness to a constituent. He buttoned up his coat rather grandly.

“I hope you won’t misunderstand me, Cynthia,” he said. “I regret extremely that my sense of justice demanded that I should make David Wheelock postmaster at Brampton, and I have made him so.”

It was now Cynthia’s turn to be amazed.

“But,” she exclaimed, “but Cousin Ephraim is postmaster of Brampton.”

Mr. Sutton started violently, and that part of his face not hidden by his whiskers seemed to pale, and Mr: Worthington, usually self-possessed, took a step forward and seized him by the arm.

“What does this mean, Sutton?” he said.

Mr. Sutton pulled himself together, and glared at Cynthia.

“I think you are mistaken,” said he, “the congressman of the district usually arranges these matters, and the appointment will be sent to Mr. Wheelock to-morrow.”

“But Cousin Ephraim already has the appointment,” said Cynthia; “it was sent to him this afternoon, and he is up in his room now writing to thank the President for it.”

“What in the world’s the matter?” cried Mrs. Duncan, in astonishment.

Cynthia’s simple announcement had indeed caused something of a panic among the gentlemen present. Mr. Duncan had jumped up from his seat beside the door, and Mr.

Worthington, his face anything but impassive, tightened his hold on the congressman's arm.

"Good God, Sutton!" he exclaimed, "can this be true?"

As for Cynthia, she was no less astonished than Mrs. Duncan. by the fact that these rich and powerful gentlemen were so excited over a little thing like the postmastership of Brampton. But Mr. Sutton laughed; it was not hearty, but still it might have passed muster for a laugh.

"Nonsense," he exclaimed, making a fair attempt to regain his composure, "the girl's got it mixed up with something else—she doesn't know what she's talking about."

Mrs. Duncan thought the girl did look uncommonly as if she knew what she was talking about, and Mr. Duncan and Mr. Worthington had some such impression, too, as they stared at her. Cynthia's eyes flashed, but her voice was no louder than before.

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“I am used to being believed, Mr. Sutton,” she said, “but here’s Uncle Jethro himself. You might ask him.”

They all turned in amazement, and one, at least, in trepidation, to perceive Jethro Bass standing behind them with his hands in his pockets, as unconcerned as though he were under the butternut tree in Coniston.

“How be you, Heth?” he said. “Er—still got that appointment p-practically in your pocket?”

“Uncle Jethro,” said Cynthia, “Mr. Sutton does not believe me when I tell him that Cousin Ephraim has been made postmaster of Brampton. He would like to have you tell him whether it is so or not.”

But this, as it happened, was exactly what the Honorable Heth did not want to have Jethro tell him. How he got out of the parlor of the Willard House he has not to this day a very clear idea. As a matter of fact, he followed Mr. Worthington and Mr. Duncan, and they made their exit by the farther door. Jethro did not appear to take any notice of their departure.

“Janet,” said Mrs. Duncan, “I think Senator and Mrs. Meade must have gone to our sitting room.” Then, to Cynthia’s surprise, the lady took her by the hand. “I can’t imagine what you’ve done, my dear,” she said pleasantly, “but I believe that you are capable of taking care of yourself, and I like you.”

Thus it will be seen that Mrs. Duncan was an independent person. Sometimes heiresses are apt to be.

“And I like you, too,” said Janet, taking both of Cynthia’s hands, “and I hope to see you very, very often.”

Jethro looked after them.

“Er—the women folks seem to have some sense,” he said. Then he turned to Cynthia. “B-be’n havin’ some fun with Heth, Cynthy?” he inquired.

“I haven’t any respect for Mr. Sutton,” said Cynthia, indignantly; “it serves him right for presuming to think that he could give a post-office to any one.”

Jethro made no remark concerning this presumption on the part of the congressman of the district. Cynthia’s indignation against Mr. Sutton was very real, and it was some time before she could compose herself sufficiently to tell Jethro what had happened. His enjoyment as he listened may be imagined but presently he forgot this, and became aware that something really troubled her.

“Uncle Jethro,” she asked suddenly, “why do they treat me as they do?”

He did not answer at once. This was because of a pain around his heart—had she known it. He had felt that pain before.

“H-how do they treat you, Cynthy?”

She hesitated. She had not yet learned to use the word patronize in the social sense, and she was at a loss to describe the attitude of Mrs. Duncan and her daughter, though her instinct had registered it. She was at a loss to account for Mr. Worthington’s attitude, too. Mr. Sutton’s she bitterly resented.

“Are they your enemies?” she demanded.

Jethro was in real distress.

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“If they are,” she continued, “I won’t speak to them again. If they can’t treat me as—as your daughter ought to be treated, I’ll turn my back on them. I am—I am just like your daughter—am I not, Uncle Jethro?”

He put out his hand and seized hers roughly, and his voice was thick with suffering.

“Yes, Cynthy,” he said, “you—you’re all I’ve got in the world.”

She squeezed his hand in return.

“I know it, Uncle Jethro,” she cried contritely, “I oughtn’t to have troubled you by asking. You—you have done everything for me, much more than I deserve. And I shan’t be hurt after this when people are too small to appreciate how good you are, and how great.”

The pain tightened about Jethro’s heart—tightened so sharply that he could not speak, and scarcely breathe because of it. Cynthia picked up her novel, and set the bookmark.

“Now that Cousin Eph is provided for, let’s go back to Coniston, Uncle Jethro.” A sudden longing was upon her for the peaceful life in the shelter of the great ridge, and she thought of the village maples all red and gold with the magic touch of the frosts. “Not that I haven’t enjoyed my trip,” she added; “but we are so happy there.”

He did not look at her, because he was afraid to.

“C-Cynthy,” he said, after a little pause, “th-thought we’d go to Boston.”

“Boston, Uncle Jethro!”

“Er—to-morrow—at one—to-morrow—like to go to Boston?”

“Yes,” she said thoughtfully, “I remember parts of it. The Common, where I used to walk with Daddy, and the funny old streets that went uphill. It will be nice to go back to Coniston that way—over Truro Pass in the train.”

That night a piece of news flashed over the wires to New England, and the next morning a small item appeared in the Newcastle Guardian to the effect that one Ephraim Prescott had bean appointed postmaster at Brampton. Copied in the local papers of the state, it caused some surprise in Brampton, to be sure, and excitement in Coniston. Perhaps there were but a dozen men, however, who saw its real significance, who knew through this item that Jethro Bass was still supreme—that the railroads had failed to carry this first position in their war against him.

It was with a light heart the next morning that Cynthia, packed the little leather trunk which had been her father’s. Ephraim was in the corridor regaling his friend, Mr. Beard, with that wonderful encounter with General Grant which sounded so much like a Fifth

Reader anecdote of a chance meeting with royalty. Jethro's room was full of visiting politicians. So Cynthia, when she had finished her packing, went out to walk about the streets alone, scanning the people who passed her, looking at the big houses, and wondering who lived in them. Presently she found herself, in the middle of the morning, seated on a bench in a little park, surrounded by colored mammies and children playing in the paths. It

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seemed a long time since she had left the hills, and this glimpse of cities had given her many things to think and dream about. Would she always live in Coniston? Or was her future to be cast among those who moved in the world and helped to sway it? Cynthia felt that she was to be of these, though she could not reason why, and she told herself that the feeling was foolish. Perhaps it was that she knew in the bottom of her heart that she had been given a spirit and intelligence to cope with a larger life than that of Coniston. With a sense that such imaginings were vain, she tried to think what the would do if she were to become a great lady like Mrs. Duncan.

She was aroused from these reflections by a distant glimpse, through the trees, of Mr. Robert Worthington. He was standing quite alone on the edge of the park, his hands in his pockets, staring at the White House. Cynthia half rose, and then sat down and looked at him again. He wore a light gray, loose-fitting suit and a straw hat, and she could not but acknowledge that there was something stalwart and clean and altogether appealing in him. She wondered, indeed, why he now failed to appeal to Miss Duncan, and she began to doubt the sincerity of that young lady's statements. Bob certainly was not romantic, but he was a man—or would be very soon.

Cynthia sat still, although her impulse was to go away. She scarcely analyzed her feeling of wishing to avoid him. It may not be well, indeed, to analyze them on paper too closely. She had an instinct that only pain could come from frequent meetings, and she knew now what but a week ago was a surmise, that he belonged to the world of which she had been dreaming—Mrs. Duncan's world. Again, there was that mysterious barrier between them of which she had seen so many evidences. And yet she sat still on her bench and looked at him.

Presently he turned, slowly, as if her eyes had compelled his. She sat still—it was too late, then. In less than a minute he was standing beside her, looking down at her with a smile that had in it a touch of reproach.

"How do you do, Mr. Worthington?" said Cynthia, quietly.

"Mr. Worthington!" he cried, "you haven't called me that before. We are not children any more," she said.

"What difference does that make?"

"A great deal," said Cynthia, not caring to define it.

"Cynthia," said Mr. Worthington, sitting down on the beach and facing her, "do you think you've treated me just right?"

"Of course I do," she said, "or I should have treated you differently."

Bob ignored such quibbling.

“Why did you run away from that baseball game in Brampton? And why couldn’t you have answered my letter yesterday, if it were only a line? And why have you avoided me here in Washington?”

It is very difficult to answer for another questions which one cannot answer for one’s self.

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“I haven’t avoided you,” said Cynthia.

“I’ve been looking for you all over town this morning,” said Bob, with pardonable exaggeration, “and I believe that idiot Somers has, too.”

“Then why should you call him an idiot?” Cynthia flashed.

Bob laughed.

“How you do catch a fellow up!” said he; admiringly. “We both found out you’d gone out for a walk alone.”

“How did you find it out?”

“Well,” said Bob, hesitating, “we asked the colored doorkeeper.”

“Mr. Worthington,” said Cynthia, with an indignation that made him quail, “do you think it right to ask a doorkeeper to spy on my movements?”

“I’m sorry, Cynthia,” he gasped, “I—I didn’t think of it that way—and he won’t tell. Desperate cases require desperate remedies, you know.”

But Cynthia was not appeased.

“If you wanted to see me,” she said, “why didn’t you send your card to my room, and I would have come to the parlor.”

“But I did send a note, and waited around all day.”

How was she to tell him that it was to the tone of the note she objected—to the hint of a clandestine meeting? She turned the light of her eyes full upon him.

“Would you have been content to see me in the parlor?” she asked. “Did you mean to see me there?”

“Why, yes,” said he; “I would have given my head to see you anywhere, only—”

“Only what?”

“Duncan might have came in and spoiled it.”

“Spoiled what?”

Bob fidgeted.

“Look here, Cynthia,” he said, “you’re not stupid—far from it. Of course you know a fellow would rather talk to you alone.”

“I should have been very glad to have seen Mr. Duncan, too.”

“You would, would you!” he exclaimed. “I shouldn’t have thought that.”

“Isn’t he your friend?” asked Cynthia.

“Oh, yes,” said Bob, “and one of the best in the world. Only—I shouldn’t have thought you’d care to talk to him.” And he looked around for fear the vigilant Mr. Duncan was already in the park and had discovered them. Cynthia smiled, and immediately became grave again.

“So it was only on Mr. Duncan’s account that you didn’t ask me to come down to the parlor?” she said.

Bob was in a quandary. He was a truthful person, and he had learned something of the world through his three years at Cambridge. He had seen many young women, and many kinds of them. But the girl beside him was such a mixture of innocence and astuteness that he was wholly at a loss how to deal with her—how to parry her searching questions.

“Naturally—I wanted to have you all to myself,” he said; “you ought to know that.”

Cynthia did not commit herself on this point. She wished to go mercilessly to the root of the matter, but the notion of what this would imply prevented her. Bob took advantage of her silence.

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“Everybody who sees you falls a victim, Cynthia,” he went on; “Mrs. Duncan and Janet lost their hearts. You ought to have heard them praising you at breakfast.” He paused abruptly, thinking of the rest of that conversation, and laughed. Bob seemed fated to commit himself that day. “I heard the way you handled Heth Sutton,” he said, plunging in. “I’ll bet he felt as if he’d been dropped out of the third-story window,” and Bob laughed again. “I’d have given a thousand dollars to have been there. Somers and I went out to supper with a classmate who lives in Washington, in that house over there,” and he pointed casually to one of the imposing mansions fronting on the park. “Mrs. Duncan said she’d never heard anybody lay it on the way you did. I don’t believe you half know what happened, Cynthia. You made a ten-strike.”

“A ten-strike?” she repeated.

“Well,” he said, “you not only laid out Heth, but my father and Mr. Duncan, too. Mrs. Duncan laughed at ’em—she isn’t afraid of anything. But they didn’t say a word all through breakfast. I’ve never seen my father so mad. He ought to have known better than to run up against Uncle Jethro.”

“How did they run up against Uncle Jethro?” asked Cynthia, now keenly interested.

“Don’t you know?” exclaimed Bob, in astonishment.

“No,” said Cynthia, “or I shouldn’t have asked.”

“Didn’t Uncle Jethro tell you about it?”

“He never tells me anything about his affairs,” she answered.

Bob’s astonishment did not wear off at once. Here was a new phase, and he was very hard put. He had heard, casually, a good deal of abuse of Jethro and his methods in the last two days.

“Well,” he said, “I don’t know anything about politics. I don’t know myself why father and Mr. Duncan were so eager for this post-mastership. But they were. And I heard them say something about the President going back on them when they had telegraphed from Chicago and come to see him here. And maybe they didn’t let Heth in for it. It seems Uncle Jethro only had to walk up to the White House. They ought to have sense enough to know that he runs the state. But what’s the use of wasting time over this business?” said Bob. “I told you I was going to Brampton before the term begins just to see you, didn’t I?”

“Yes, but I didn’t believe you,” said Cynthia.

“Why not?” he demanded.

“Because it’s my nature, I suppose,” she replied.

This was too much for Bob, exasperated though he was, and he burst into laughter.

“You’re the queerest girl I’ve ever known,” he said.

Not a very original remark.

“That must be saying a great deal,” she answered.

“Why?”

“You must have known many.”

“I have,” he admitted, “and none of ’em, no matter how much they’d knocked about, were able to look out for themselves any better than you.”

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“Not even Cassandra Hopkins?” Cynthia could not resist saying. She saw that she had scored; his expressions registered his sensations so accurately.

“What do you know about her?” he said.

“Oh,” said Cynthia, mysteriously, “I heard that you were very fond of her at Andover.”

Bob could not help pluming himself a little. He thought the fact that she had mentioned the matter a flaw in Cynthia’s armor, as indeed it was. And yet he was not proud of the Cassandra Hopkins episode in his career.

“Cassandra is one of the institutions at Andover,” said he; “most fellows have to take a course in Cassandra to complete their education.”

“Yours seems to be very complete,” Cynthia retorted.

“Great Scott!” he exclaimed, looking at her, “no wonder you made mince-meat of the Honorable Heth. Where did you learn it all, Cynthia?”

Cynthia did not know. She merely wondered where she would be if she hadn’t learned it. Something told her that if it were not for this anchor she would be drifting out to sea: might, indeed, soon be drifting out to sea in spite of it. It was one thing for Mr. Robert Worthington, with his numerous resources, to amuse himself with a girl in her position; it would be quite another thing for the girl. She got to her feet and held out her hand to him.

“Good-by,” she said.

“Good-by?”

“We are leaving Washington at one o’clock, and Uncle Jethro will be worried if I am not in time for dinner.”

“Leaving at one! That’s the worst luck I’ve had yet. But I’m going back to the hotel myself.”

Cynthia didn’t see how she was to prevent him walking with her. She would not have admitted to herself that she had enjoyed this encounter, since she was trying so hard not to enjoy it. So they started together out of the park. Bob, for a wonder, was silent awhile, glancing now and then at her profile. He knew that he had a great deal to say, but he couldn’t decide exactly what it was to be. This is often the case with young men in his state of mind: in fact, to be paradoxical again, he might hardly be said at this time to have had a state of mind. He lacked both an attitude and a policy.

“If you see Duncan before I do, let me know,” he remarked finally.

Cynthia bit her lip. “Why should I?” she asked.

“Because we’ve only got five minutes more alone together, at best. If we see him in time, we can go down a side street.”

“I think it would be hard to get away from Mr. Duncan if we met him—even if we wanted to,” she said, laughing outright.

“You don’t know how true that is,” he replied, with feeling.

“That sounds as though you’d tried it before.”

He paid no attention to this thrust.

“I shan’t see you again till I get to Brampton,” he said; “that will be a whole week. And then,” he ventured to look at her, “I shan’t see you until the Christmas holidays. You might be a little kind, Cynthia. You know I’ve—I’ve always thought the world of you. I don’t know how I’m going to get through the three months without seeing you.”

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“You managed to get through a good many years,” said Cynthia, looking at the pavement.

“I know,” he said; “I was sent away to school and college, and our lives separated.”

“Yes, our lives separated,” she assented.

“And I didn’t know you were going to be like—like this,” he went on, vaguely enough, but with feeling.

“Like what?”

“Like—well, I’d rather be with you and talk to you than any girl I ever saw. I don’t care who she is,” Bob declared, “or how much she may have traveled.” He was running into deep water. “Why are you so cold, Cynthia?” “Why can’t you be as you used to be? You used to like me well enough.”

“And I like you now,” answered Cynthia. They were very near the hotel by this time.

“You talk as if you were ten years older than I,” he said, smiling plaintively.

She stopped and turned to him, smiling. They had reached the steps.

“I believe I am, Bob,” she replied. “I haven’t seen much of the world, but I’ve seen something of its troubles. Don’t be foolish. If you’re coming to Brampton just to see me, don’t come. Good-by.” And she gave him her hand frankly.

“But I will come to Brampton,” he cried, taking her hand and squeezing it. “I’d like to know why I shouldn’t come.”

As Cynthia drew her hand away a gentleman came out of the hotel, paused for a brief moment by the door and stared at them, and then passed on without a word or a nod of recognition. It was Mr. Worthington. Bob looked after his father, and then glanced at Cynthia. There was a trifle more color in her cheeks, and her head was raised a little, and her eyes were fixed upon him gravely.

“You should know why not,” she said, and before he could answer her she was gone into the hotel. He did not attempt to follow her, but stood where she had left him in the sunlight.

He was aroused by the voice of the genial colored doorkeeper.

“Wal, suh, you found the lady, Mistah Wo’thington. Thought you would, suh. T’other young gentleman come in while ago—looked as if he was feelin’ powerful bad, Mistah Wo’thington.”

CHAPTER VII

When they reached Boston, Cynthia felt almost as if she were home again, and Ephraim declared that he had had the same feeling when he returned from the war. Though it be the prosperous capital of New England, it is a city of homes, and the dwellers of it have held stanchly to the belief of their forefathers that the home is the very foundation-rock of the nation. Held stanchly to other beliefs, too: that wealth carries with it some little measure of responsibility. The stranger within the gates of that city feels that if he falls, a heedless world will not go charging over his body: that a helping hand will be stretched out,—a helping and a wise hand that will inquire into the circumstances of his fall—but still a human hand.

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They were sitting in the parlor of the Tremont House that morning with the sun streaming in the windows, waiting for Ephraim.

“Uncle Jethro,” Cynthia asked, abruptly, “did you ever know my mother?”

Jethro started, and looked at her quickly.

“W-why, Cynthy?” he asked.

“Because she grew up in Coniston,” answered Cynthia. “I never thought of it before, but of course you must have known her.”

“Yes, I knew her,” he said.

“Did you know her well?” she persisted.

Jethro got up and went over to the window, where he stood with his back toward her.

“Yes, Cynthy,” he answered at length.

“Why haven’t you ever told me about her?” asked Cynthia. How was she to know that her innocent questions tortured him cruelly; that the spirit of the Cynthia who had come to him in the tannery house had haunted him all his life, and that she herself, a new Cynthia, was still that spirit? The bygone Cynthia had been much in his thoughts since they came to Boston.

“What was she like?”

“She—she was like you, Cynthy,” he said, but he did not turn round. “She was a clever woman, and a good woman, and—a lady, Cynthy.”

The girl said nothing for a while, but she tingled with pleasure because Jethro had compared her to her mother. She determined to try to be like that, if he thought her so.

“Uncle Jethro,” she said presently, “I’d like to go to see the house where she lived.”

“Er—Ephraim knows it,” said Jethro.

So when Ephraim came the three went over the hill; past the State House which Bulfinch set as a crown on the crest of it looking over the sweep of the Common, and on into the maze of quaint, old-world streets on the slope beyond: streets with white porticos, and violet panes in the windows. They came to an old square hidden away on a terrace of the hill, and after that the streets grew narrower and dingier. Ephraim, whose memory never betrayed him, hobbled up to a shabby house in the middle of one of these blocks and rang the bell.

“Here’s where I found Will when I come back from the war,” he said, and explained the matter in full to the slatternly landlady who came to the door. She was a good-natured woman, who thought her boarder would not mind, and led the way up the steep stairs to the chamber over the roofs where Wetherell and Cynthia had lived and hoped and worked together; where he had written those pages by which, with the aid of her loving criticism, he had thought to become famous. The room was as bare now as it had been then, and Ephraim, poking his stick through a hole in the carpet, ventured the assertion that even that had not been changed. Jethro, staring out over the chimney tops, passed his hand across his eyes. Cynthia Ware had come to this!

“I found him right here in that bed,” Ephraim was saying, and he poked the bottom boards, too. “The same bed. Had a shack when I saw him. Callate he wouldn’t have lived two months if the war hadn’t bust up and I hadn’t come along.”

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“Oh, Cousin Eph!” exclaimed Cynthia.

The old soldier turned and saw that there were tears in her eyes. But, stranger than that, Cynthia saw that there were tears in his own. He took her gently by the arm and led her down the stairs again, she supporting him, and Jethro following.

That same morning, Jethro, whose memory was quite as good as Ephraim’s, found a little shop tucked away in Cornhill which had been miraculously spared in the advance of prosperity. Mr. Judson’s name, however, was no longer in quaint lettering over the door. Standing before it, Jethro told the story in his droll way, of a city clerk and a country bumpkin, and Cynthia and Ephraim both laughed so heartily that the people who were passing turned round to look at them and laughed too. For the three were an unusual group, even in Boston. It was not until they were seated at dinner in the hotel, Ephraim with his napkin tucked under his chin, that Jethro gave them the key to the characters in this story.

“And who was the locket for, Uncle Jethro?” demanded Cynthia.

Jethro, however, shook his head, and would not be induced to tell.

They were still so seated when Cynthia perceived coming toward them through the crowded dining roam a merry, middle-aged gentleman with a bald head. He seemed to know everybody in the room, for he was kept busy nodding right and left at the tables until he came to theirs. He was Mr. Merrill who had come to see her father in Coniston, and who had spoken so kindly to her on that occasion.

“Well, well, well,” he said; “Jethro, you’ll be the death of me yet. ‘Don’t write-send,’ eh? Well, as long as you sent word you were here, I don’t complain. So you licked ’em again, eh—down in Washington? Never had a doubt but what you would. Is this the new postmaster? How are you, Mr. Prescott—and Cynthia—a young lady! Bless my soul,” said Mr. Merrill, looking her over as he shook her hand. “What have you done to her, Jethro? What kind of beauty powder do they use in Coniston?”

Mr. Merrill took the seat next to her and continued to talk, scattering his pleasantries equally among the three, patting her arm when her own turn came. She liked Mr. Merrill very much; he seemed to her (as, indeed, he was) honest and kind-hearted. Cynthia was not lacking in a proper appreciation of herself—that may have been discovered. But she was puzzled to know why this gentleman should make it a point to pay such particular attention to a young country girl. Other railroad presidents whom she could name had not done so. She was thinking of these things, rather than listening to Mr. Merrill’s conversation, when the sound of Mr. Worthington’s name startled her.

“Well, Jethro,” Mr. Merrill was saying, “you certainly nipped this little game of Worthington’s in the bud. Thought he’d take you in the rear by going to Washington, did

he? Ha, ha! I'd like to know how you did it. I'll get you to tell me to-night—see if I don't. You're all coming in to supper to-night, you know, at seven o'clock."

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Ephraim laid down his knife and fork for the first time. Were the wonders of this journey never to cease? And Jethro, once in his life, looked nervous.

“Er—er—Cyn’thy’ll go, Steve—Cynthy’ll go.”

“Yes, Cynthy’ll go,” laughed Mr. Merrill, “and you’ll go, and Ephraim’ll go.” Although he by no means liked everybody, as would appear at first glance, Mr. Merrill had a way of calling people by their first names when he did fancy them.

“Er—Steve,” said Jethro, “what would your wife say if I was to drink coffee out of my saucer?”

“Let’s see,” said Mr. Merrill grave for once. “What’s the punishment for that in my house? I know what she’d do if you didn’t drink it. What do you think she’d do, Cynthy?”

“Ask him what was the matter with it,” said Cynthia, promptly.

“Well, Cynthy,” said he, “I know why these old fellows take you round with ’em. To take care of ’em, eh? They’re not fit to travel alone.”

And so it was settled, after much further argument, that they were all to sup at Mr. Merrill’s house, Cynthia stoutly maintaining that she would not desert them. And then Mr. Merrill, having several times repeated the street and number, went, back to his office. There was much mysterious whispering between Ephraim and Jethro in the hotel parlor after dinner, while Cynthia was turning over the leaves of a magazine, and then Ephraim proposed going out to see the sights.

“Where’s Uncle Jethro going?” she asked.

“He’ll meet us,” said Ephraim, promptly, but his voice was not quite steady.

“Oh, Uncle Jethro!” cried Cynthia, “you’re trying to get out of it. You remember you promised to meet us in Washington.”

“Guess he’ll keep this app’intment,” said Ephraim, who seemed to be full of a strange mirth that bubbled over, for he actually winked at Jethro. Cynthia’s mind flew to Bunker Bill and the old North Church, but they went first to Faneuil Hall. Presently they found themselves among the crowd in Washington Street, where Ephraim confessed the trepidation which he felt over the coming supper party: a trepidation greater, so he declared many times, than he had ever experienced before any of his battles in the war. He stopped once or twice in the eddy of the crowd to glance up at the numbers; and finally came to a halt before the windows of a large dry-goods store.

“I guess I ought to buy a new shirt for this occasion, Cynthy,” he said, staring hard at the articles of apparel displayed there: “Let’s go in.”

Cynthia laughed outright, since Ephraim could not by any chance have worn any of the articles in question.

“Why, Cousin Ephraim,” she exclaimed, “you can’t buy gentlemen’s things here.”

“Oh, I guess you can,” said Ephraim, and hobbled confidently in at the doorway. There we will leave him for a while conversing in an undertone with a floor-walker, and follow Jethro. He, curiously enough, had some fifteen minutes before gone in at the same doorway, questioned the same floor-walker, and he found himself in due time walking amongst a bewildering lot of models on the third floor, followed by a giggling saleswoman.

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“What kind of a dress do you want, sir?” asked the saleslady,—for we are impelled to call her so.

“S-silk cloth,” said Jethro.

“What shades of silk would you like, sir?”

“Shades? shades? What do you mean by shades?”

“Why, colors,” said the saleslady, giggling openly.

“Green,” said Jethro, with considerable emphasis.

The saleslady clapped her hand over her mouth and led the way to another model.

“You don’t call that green—do you? That’s not green enough.”

They inspected another dress, and then another and another,—not all of them were green,—Jethro expressing very decided if not expert views on each of them. At last he paused before two models at the far end of the room, passing his hand repeatedly over each as he had done so often with the cattle of Coniston.

“These two pieces same kind of goods?” he demanded.

“Yes.”

“Er-this one is a little shinier than that one?”

“Perhaps the finish is a little higher,” ventured the saleslady.

“Sh-shinier,” said Jethro.

“Yes, shinier, if you please to call it so.”

“W-what would you call it?”

By this time the saleslady had become quite hysterical, and altogether incapable of performing her duties. Jethro looked at her for a moment in disgust, and in his predicament cast around for another to wait on him. There was no lack of these, at a safe distance, but they all seemed to be affected by the same mania. Jethro’s eye alighted upon the back of another customer. She was, apparently, a respectable-looking lady of uncertain age, and her own attention was so firmly fixed in the contemplation of a model that she had not remarked the merriment about her, nor its cause. She did not see Jethro, either, as he strode across to her. Indeed, her first intimation of his presence was a dig in her arm. The lady turned, gave a gasp of

amazement at the figure confronting her, and proceeded to annihilate it with an eye that few women possess.

“H-how do, Ma’am,” he said. Had he known anything about the appearance of women in general, he might have realized that he had struck a tartar. This lady was at least sixty-five, and probably unmarried. Her face, though not at all unpleasant, was a study in character-development: she wore ringlets, a peculiar bonnet of a bygone age, and her clothes had certain eccentricities which, for, lack of knowledge, must be omitted. In short, the lady was no fool, and not being one she glanced at the giggling group of saleswomen and—wonderful to relate—they stopped giggling. Then she looked again at Jethro and gave him a smile. One of superiority, no doubt, but still a smile.

“How do you do, sir?”

“T-trying to buy a silk cloth gown for a woman. There’s two over here I fancied a little. Er—thought perhaps you’d help me.”

“Where are the dresses?” she demanded abruptly.

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Jethro led the way in silence until they came to the models. She planted herself in front of them and looked them over swiftly but critically.

“What is the age of the lady?”

“W-what difference does that make?” said Jethro, whose instinct was against committing himself to strangers.

“Difference!” she exclaimed sharply, “it makes a considerable difference. Perhaps not to you, but to the lady. What coloring is she?”

“C-coloring? She’s white.”

His companion turned her back on him.

“What size is she?”

“A-about that size,” said Jethro, pointing to a model.

“About! about!” she ejaculated, and then she faced him. “Now look here, my friend,” she said vigorously, “there’s something very mysterious about all this. You look like a good man, but you may be a very wicked one for all I know. I’ve lived long enough to discover that appearances, especially where your sex is concerned, are deceitful. Unless you are willing to tell me who this lady is for whom you are buying silk dresses, and what your relationship is to her, I shall leave you. And mind, no evasions. I can detect the truth pretty well when I hear it.”

Unexpected as it was, Jethro gave back a step or two before this onslaught of feminine virtue, and the movement did not tend to raise him in the lady’s esteem. He felt that he would rather face General Grant a thousand times than this person. She was, indeed, preparing to sweep away when there came a familiar tap-tap behind them on the bare floor, and he turned to behold Ephraim hobbling toward them with the aid of his green umbrella, Cynthia by his side.

“Why, it’s Uncle Jethro,” cried Cynthia, looking at him and the lady in astonishment, and then with equal astonishment at the models. “What in the world are you doing here?” Then a light seemed to dawn on her.

“You frauds! So this is what you were whispering about! This is the way Cousin Ephraim buys his shirts!”

“C-Cynthy,” said Jethro, apologetically, “d-don’t you think you ought to have a nice city dress for that supper party?”

“So you’re ashamed of my country clothes, are you?” she asked gayly.

“W-want you to have the best, Cynthy,” he replied. “I-I-meant to have it all chose and bought when you come, but I got into a kind of argument with this lady.”

“Argument!” exclaimed the lady. But she did not seem displeased. She had been staring very fixedly at Cynthia. “My dear,” she continued kindly, “you look like some one I used to know a long, long time ago, and I’ll be glad to help you. Your uncle may be sensible enough in other matters, but I tell him frankly he is out of place here. Let him go away and sit down somewhere with the other gentleman, and we’ll get the dress between us, if he’ll tell us how much to pay.”

“P-pay anything, so’s you get it,” said Jethro.

“Uncle Jethro, do you really want it so much?”

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It must not be thought that Cynthia did not wish for a dress, too. But the sense of dependence on Jethro and the fear of straining his purse never quite wore off. So Jethro and Ephraim took to a bench at some distance, and at last a dress was chosen —not one of the gorgeous models Jethro had picked out, but a pretty, simple, girlish gown which Cynthia herself had liked and of which the lady highly approved. Not content with helping to choose it, the lady must satisfy herself that it fit, which it did perfectly. And so Cynthia was transformed into a city person, though her skin glowed with a health with which few city people are blessed.

“My dear,” said the lady, still staring at her, “you look very well. I should scarcely have supposed it.” Cynthia took the remark in good part, for she thought the lady a character, which she was. “I hope you will remember that we women were created for a higher purpose than mere beauty. The Lord gave us brains, and meant that we should use them. If you have a good mind, as I believe you have, learn to employ it for the betterment of your sex, for the time of our emancipation is at hand.” Having delivered this little lecture, the lady continued to stare at her with keen eyes. “You look very much like someone I used to love when I was younger. What is your name.”

“Cynthia Wetherell.”

“Cynthia Wetherell? Was your mother Cynthia Ware, from Coniston?”

“Yes,” said Cynthia, amazed.

In an instant the strange lady had risen and had taken Cynthia in her embrace, new dress and all.

“My dear,” she said, “I thought your face had a familiar look. It was your mother I knew and loved. I’m Miss Lucretia Penniman.”

Miss Lucretia Penniman! Could this be, indeed, the authoress of the “Hymn to Coniston,” of whom Brampton was so proud? The Miss Lucretia Penniman who sounded the first clarion note for the independence of American women, the friend of Bryant and Hawthorne and Longfellow? Cynthia had indeed heard of her. Did not all Brampton point to the house which had held the Social Library as to a shrine?

“Cynthia,” said Miss Lucretia, “I have a meeting now of a girls’ charity to which I must go, but you will come to me at the offices of the Woman’s Hour to-morrow morning at ten. I wish to talk to you about your mother and yourself.”

Cynthia promised, provided they did not leave for Coniston earlier, and in that event agreed to write. Whereupon Miss Lucretia kissed her again and hurried off to her meeting. On the way back to the Tremont House Cynthia related excitedly the whole circumstance to Jethro and Ephraim. Ephraim had heard of Miss Lucretia, of course.

Who had not? But he did not read the Woman's Hour. Jethro was silent. Perhaps he was thinking of that fresh summer morning, so long ago, when a girl in a gig had overtaken him in the canon made by the Brampton road through the woods. The girl had worn a poke bonnet, and was returning a book to this same Miss Lucretia Penniman's Social Library. And the book was the "Life of Napoleon Bonaparte."

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“Uncle Jethro, shall we still be in Boston to-morrow morning?” Cynthia asked.

He roused himself. “Yes,” he said, “yes.” “When are you going home?”

He did not answer this simple question, but countered. “Hain’t you enjoyin’ yourself, Cynthy?”

“Of course I am,” she declared. But she thought it strange that he would not tell her when they would be in Coniston.

Ephraim did buy a new shirt, and also (in view of the postmastership in his packet) a new necktie, his old one being slightly frayed.

The grandeur of the approaching supper party and the fear of Mrs. Merrill hung very heavy over him; nor was Jethro’s mind completely at rest. Ephraim even went so far as to discuss the question as to whether Mr. Merrill had not surpassed his authority in inviting him, and full expected to be met at the door by that gentleman uttering profuse apologies, which Ephraim was quite prepared and willing to take in good faith.

Nothing of the kind happened, however. Mr. Merrill’s railroad being a modest one, his house was modest likewise. But Ephraim thought it grand enough, and yet acknowledged a homelike quality in its grandeur. He began by sitting on the edge of the sofa and staring at the cut-glass chandelier, but in five minutes he discovered with a shock of surprise that he was actually leaning back, describing in detail how his regiment had been cheered as they marched through Boston. And incredible as it may seem, the person whom he was entertaining in this manner was Mrs. Stephen Merrill herself. Mrs. Merrill was as tall as Mr. Merrill was short. She wore a black satin dress with a big cameo brooch pinned at her throat, her hair was gray, and her face almost masculine until it lighted up with a wonderfully sweet smile. That smile made Ephraim and Jethro feel at home; and Cynthia, too, who liked Mrs. Merrill the moment she laid eyes on her.

Then there were the daughters, Jane and Susan, who welcomed her with a hospitality truly amazing for city people. Jane was big-boned like her mother, but Susan was short and plump and merry like her father. Susan talked and laughed, and Jane sat and listened and smiled, and Cynthia could not decide which she liked the best. And presently they all went into the dining room to supper, where there was another chandelier over the table. There was also real silver, which shone brilliantly on the white cloth—but there was nothing to eat.

“Do tell us another story, Mr. Prescott,” said Susan, who had listened to his last one.

The sight of the table, however, had for the moment upset Ephraim, “Get Jethro to tell you how he took dinner with Jedge Binney,” he said.

This suggestion, under the circumstances, might not have been a happy one, but its lack of appropriateness did not strike Jethro either. He yielded to the demand.

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“Well,” he said, “I supposed I was goin’ to set down same as I would at home, where we put the vittles on the table. W-wondered what I was goin’ to eat—wahn’t nothin’ but a piece of bread on the table. S-sat there and watched ’em—nobody ate anything. Presently I found out that Binney’s wife ran her house same as they run hotels. Pretty soon a couple of girls come in and put down some food and took it away again before you had a chance. A-after a while we had coffee, and when I set my cup on the table, I noticed Mis’ Binney looked kind of cross and began whisperin’ to the girls. One of ’em fetched a small plate and took my cup and set it on the plate. That was all right. I used the plate.

“Well, along about next summer Binney had to come to Coniston to see me on a little matter and fetched his wife. Listy, my wife, was alive then. I’d made up my mind that if I could ever get Mis’ Binney to eat at my place I would, so I asked ’em to stay to dinner. When we set down, I said: ‘Now, Mis’ Binney, you and the Judge take right hold, and anything you can’t reach, speak out and we’ll wait on you.’ And Mis’ Binney?’

“Yes,” she said. She was a little mite scared, I guess. B-begun to suspect somethin’.”

“Mis’ Binney,” said I, “y-you can set your cup and sarcer where you’ve a mind to.’ O-ought to have heard the Judge laugh. Says he to his wife: ’Fanny, I told you Jethro’d get even with you some time for that sarcer business.’”

This story, strange as it may seem, had a great success at Mr. Merrill’s table. Mr. Merrill and his daughter Susan shrieked with laughter when it was finished, while Mrs. Merrill and Jane enjoyed themselves quite as much in their quiet way. Even the two neat Irish maids, who were serving the supper very much as poor Mis’ Binney’s had been served, were fain to leave the dining room abruptly, and one of them disgraced herself at sight of Jethro when she came in again, and had to go out once mare. Mrs. Merrill insisted that Jethro should pour out his coffee in what she was pleased to call the old-fashioned way. All of which goes to prove that table-silver and cut glass chandeliers do not invariably make their owners heartless and inhospitable. And Ephraim, whose plan of campaign had been to eat nothing to speak of and have a meal when he got back to the hotel, found that he wasn’t hungry when he arose from the table.

There was much bantering of Jethro by Mr. Merrill, which the ladies did not understand—talk of a mighty coalition of the big railroads which was to swallow up the little railroads. Fortunately, said Mr. Merrill, humorously, fortunately they did not want his railroad. Or unfortunately, which was it? Jethro didn’t know. He never laughed at anybody’s jokes. But Cynthia, who was listening with one ear while Susan talked into the other, gathered that Jethro had been struggling with the railroads, and was sooner or later to engage in a mightier struggle with them. How, she asked herself in her innocence, was any one, even Uncle Jethro, to struggle with a railroad? Many other people in these latter days have asked themselves that very question.

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All together the evening at Mr. Merrill's passed off so quickly and so happily that Ephraim was dismayed when he discovered that it was ten o'clock, and he began to make elaborate apologies to the ladies. But Jethro and Mr. Merrill were still closeted together in the dining room: once Mrs. Merrill had been called to that conference, and had returned after a while to take her place quietly again among the circle of Ephraim's listeners. Now Mr. Merrill came out of the dining room alone.

"Cynthia," he said, and his tone was a little more grave than usual, "your Uncle Jethro wants to speak to you."

Cynthia rose, with a sense of something in the air which concerned her, and went into the dining room. Was it the light falling from above that brought out the lines of his face so strongly? Cynthia did not know, but she crossed the room swiftly and sat down beside him.

"What is it, Uncle Jethro?"

"C-Cynthy," he said, putting his hand over hers on the table, "I want you to do something for me er—for me," he repeated, emphasizing the last word.

"I'll do anything in the world for you, Uncle Jethro," she answered; "you know that. What—what is it?"

"L-like Mr. Merrill, don't you?" "Yes, indeed."

"L-like Mrs. Merrill—like the gals—don't you?" "Very much," said Cynthia, perplexedly.

"Like 'em enough to—to live with 'em a winter?"

"Live with them a winter!"

"C-Cynthy, I want you should stay in Boston this winter and go to a young ladies' school."

It was out. He had said it, though he never quite knew where he had found the courage.

"Uncle Jethro!" she cried. She could only look at him in dismay, but the tears came into her eyes and sparkled.

"You—you'll be happy here, Cynthy. It'll be a change for you. And I shan't be so lonesome as you'd think. I'll—I'll be busy this winter, Cynthy."

"You know that I wouldn't leave you, Uncle Jethro," she said reproachfully. "I should be lonesome, if you wouldn't. You would be lonesome—you know you would be."

“You’ll do this for me, Cynthy. S-said you would, didn’t you—said you would?”

“Why do you want me to do this?”

“W-want you to go to school for a winter, Cynthy. Shouldn’t think I’d done right by you if I didn’t.”

“But I have been to school. Daddy taught me a lot, and Mr. Satterlee has taught me a great deal more. I know as much as most girls of my age, and I will study so hard in Coniston this winter, if that is what you want. I’ve never neglected my lessons, Uncle Jethro.”

“Tain’t book-larnin’—’tain’t what you’d get in book larnin’ in Boston, Cynthy.”

“What, then?” she asked.

“Well,” said Jethro, “they’d teach you to be a lady, Cynthy.”

“A lady!”

“Your father come of good people, and—and your mother was a lady. I’m only a rough old man, Cynthy, and I don’t know much about the ways of fine folks. But you’ve got it in ye, and I want you should be equal to the best of ’em: You can. And I shouldn’t die content unless I’d felt that you’d had the chance. Er—Cynthy—will you do it for me?”

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She was silent a long while before she turned to him, and then the tears were running very swiftly down her cheeks.

“Yes, I will do it for you,” she answered. “Uncle Jethro, I believe you are the best man, in the world.”

“D-don’t say that, Cynthy—d-don’t say that,” he exclaimed, and a sharp agony was in his voice. He got to his feet and went to the folding doors and opened them. “Steve!” he called, “Steve!”

“S-says she’ll stay, Steve.”

Mr. Merrill had come in, followed by his wife. Cynthia saw them but dimly through her tears. And while she tried to wipe the tears away she felt Mrs. Merrill’s arm about her, and heard that lady say:—“We’ll try to make you very happy, my dear, and send you back safely in the spring.”

CHAPTER VIII

An attempt will be made in these pages to set down such incidents which alone may be vital to this chronicle, now so swiftly running on. The reasons why Mr. Merrill was willing to take Cynthia into his house must certainly be clear to the reader. In the first place, he was under very heavy obligations to Jethro Bass for many favors; in the second place, Mr. Merrill had a real affection for Jethro, which, strange as it may seem to some, was quite possible; and in the third place, Mr. Merrill had taken a fancy to Cynthia, and he had never forgotten the unintentional wrong he had done William Wetherell. Mr. Merrill was a man of impulses, and generally of good impulses. Had he not himself urged upon Jethro the arrangement, it would never have come about. Lastly, he had invited Cynthia to his house that his wife might inspect her, and Mrs. Merrill’s verdict had been instant and favorable—a verdict not given in words. A single glance was sufficient, for these good people so understood each other that Mrs. Merrill had only to raise her eyes to her husband’s, and this she did shortly after the supper party began; while she was pouring the coffee, to be exact. Thus the compact that Cynthia was to spend the winter in their house was ratified.

There was, first of all, the parting with Jethro and the messages with which he and Ephraim were laden for the whole village and town of Coniston. It was very hard, that parting, and need not be dwelt upon. Ephraim waved his blue handkerchief as the train pulled out, but Jethro stood on the platform, silent and motionless: more eloquent in his sorrow—so Mr. Merrill thought—than any human being he had ever known. Mr. Merrill wondered if Jethro’s sorrow were caused by this parting alone; he believed it was not, and suddenly guessed at the true note of it. Having come by chance upon the answer to the riddle, Mr. Merrill stood still with his hand on the carriage door and marvelled that

he had not seen it all sooner. He was a man to take to heart the troubles of his friends. A subtle change had indeed come over Jethro, and he was not the same man Mr. Merrill had known for many years. Would others, the men with whom Jethro contended and the men he commanded, mark this change? And what effect would it have on the conflict for the mastery of a state which was to be waged from now on?

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“Father,” said his daughter Susan, “if you don’t get in and close the door, we’ll drive off and leave you standing on the sidewalk.”

Thus Cynthia went to her new friends in their own carriage. Mrs. Merrill was goodness itself, and loved the girl for what she was. How, indeed, was she to help loving her? Cynthia was scrupulous in her efforts to give no trouble, and yet she never had the air of a dependent or a beneficiary; but held her head high, and when called upon gave an opinion as though she had a right to it. The very first morning Susan, who was prone to be late to breakfast, came down in a great state of excitement and laughter.

“What do you think Cynthia’s done, Mother?” she cried. “I went into her room a while ago, and it was all swept and aired, and she was making up the bed.”

“That’s an excellent plan,” said Mrs. Merrill, “tomorrow morning you three girls will have a race to see who makes up her room first.”

It is needless to say that the race at bed-making never came off, Susan and Jane having pushed Cynthia into a corner as soon as breakfast was over, and made certain forcible representations which she felt bound to respect, and a treaty was drawn up and faithfully carried out, between the three, that she was to do her own room if necessary to her happiness. The chief gainer by the arrangement was the chambermaid.

Odd as it may seem, the Misses Merrill lived amicably enough with Cynthia. It is a difficult matter to force an account of the relationship of five people living in one house into a few pages, but the fact that the Merrills had large hearts makes this simpler. There are few families who can accept with ease the introduction of a stranger into their midst, even for a time, and there are fewer strangers who can with impunity be introduced. The sisters quarrelled among themselves as all sisters will, and sometimes quarrelled with Cynthia. But oftener they made her the arbiter of their disputes, and asked her advice on certain matters. Especially was this true of Susan, whom certain young gentlemen from Harvard College called upon more or less frequently, and Cynthia had all of Susan’s love affairs—including the current one—by heart in a very short time.

As for Cynthia, there were many subjects on which she had to take the advice of the sisters. They did not criticise the joint creations of herself and Miss Sukey Kittredge as frankly as Janet Duncan had done; but Jethro had left in Mrs. Merrill’s hands a certain sufficient sum for new dresses for Cynthia, and in due time the dresses were got and worn. To do them justice, the sisters were really sincere in their rejoicings over the very wonderful transformation which they had been chiefly instrumental in effecting.

It is not a difficult task to praise a heroine, and one that should be indulged in but charily. But let some little indulgence be accorded this particular heroine by reason of the life she had led, and the situation in which she now found herself: a poor Coniston

girl, dependent on one who was not her father, though she loved him as a father; beholden to these good people who dwelt in a world into which she had no reasonable expectations of entering, and which, to tell the truth, she now feared.

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It was inevitable that Cynthia should be brought into contact with many friends and relations of the family. Some of these noticed and admired her; others did neither; others gossiped about Mrs. Merrill behind her back at her own dinners and sewing circles and wondered what folly could have induced her to bring the girl into her house. But Mrs. Merrill, like many generous people who do not stop to calculate a kindness, was always severely criticised.

And then there were Jane's and Susan's friends, in and out of Miss Sadler's school. For Mrs. Merrill's influence had been sufficient to induce Miss Sadler to take Cynthia as a day scholar with her own daughters. This, be it known, was a great concession on the part of Miss Sadler, who regarded Cynthia's credentials as dubious enough; and her young ladies were inclined to regard them so, likewise. Some of these young ladies came from other cities,—New York and Philadelphia and elsewhere,—and their fathers and mothers were usually people to be mentioned as a matter of course—were, indeed, frequently so mentioned by Miss Sadler, especially when a visitor called at the school.

"Isabel, I saw that your mother sailed for Europe yesterday," or, "Sally, your father tells me he is building a gallery for his collection." Then to the visitor, "You know the Broke house in Washington Square, of course."

Of course the visitor did. But Sally or Isabel would often imitate Miss Sadler behind her back, showing how well they understood her snobbishness.

Miss Sadler was by no means the type which we have come to recognize in the cartoons as the Boston school ma'am. She was a little, round person with thin lips and a sharp nose all out of character with her roundness, and bright eyes like a bird's. To do her justice, so far as instruction went, her scholars were equally well cared for, whether they hailed from Washington Square or Washington Court House. There were, indeed, none from such rural sorts of places—except Cynthia. But Miss Sadler did not take her hand on the opening day—or afterward—and ask her about Uncle Jethro. Oh, no. Miss Sadler had no interest for great men who did not sail for Europe or add picture galleries on to their houses. Cynthia laughed, a little bitterly, perhaps, at the thought of a picture gallery being added to the tannery house. And she told herself stoutly that Uncle Jethro was a greater man than any of the others, even if Miss Sadler did not see fit to mention him. So she had her first taste of a kind of wormwood that is very common in the world though it did not grow in Coniston.

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For a while after Cynthia's introduction to the school she was calmly ignored by many of the young ladies there, and once openly—snubbed, to use the word in its most disagreeable sense. Not that she gave any of them any real cause to snub her. She did not intrude her own affairs upon them, but she was used to conversing kindly with the people about her as equals, and for this offence; on the third day, Miss Sally Broke snubbed her. It is hard not to make a heroine of Cynthia, not to be able to relate that she instantly put Miss Sally's nose out of joint. Susan Merrill tried to do that, and failed signally, for Miss Sally's nose was not easily dislodged. Susan fought more than one of Cynthia's battles. As a matter of fact, Cynthia did not know that she had been affronted until that evening. She did not tell her friends how she spent the night yearning fiercely for Coniston and Uncle Jethro, at times weeping for them, if the truth be told; how she had risen before the dawn to write a letter, and to lay some things in the rawhide trunk. The letter was never sent, and the packing never finished. Uncle Jethro wished her to stay and to learn to be a lady, and stay she would, in spite of Miss Broke and the rest of them. She went to school the next day, and for many days and weeks thereafter, and held communion with the few alone who chose to treat her pleasantly. Unquestionably this is making a heroine of Cynthia.

If young men are cruel in their schools, what shall be written of young women? It would be better to say that both are thoughtless. Miss Sally Broke, strange as it may seem, had a heart, and many of the other young ladies whose fathers sailed for Europe and owned picture galleries; but these young ladies were absorbed, especially after vacation, in affairs of which a girl from Coniston had no part. Their friends were not her friends, their amusements not her amusements, and their talk not her talk. But Cynthia watched them, as was her duty, and gradually absorbed many things which are useful if not essential—outward observances of which the world takes cognizance, and which she had been sent there by Uncle Jethro to learn. Young people of Cynthia's type and nationality are the most adaptable in the world.

Before the December snows set in Cynthia had made one firm friend, at least, in Boston; outside of the Merrill family. That friend was Miss Lucretia Penniman, editress of the Woman's Hour. Miss Lucretia lived in the queerest and quaintest of the little houses tucked away under the hill, with the back door a story higher than the fronts an arrangement which in summer enabled the mistress to walk out of her sitting-room windows into a little walled garden. In winter that sitting room was the sunniest, cosiest room in the city, and Cynthia spent many hours there, reading or listening to the wisdom that fell from the lips of Miss Lucretia or her guests. The sitting room had uneven, yellow-white panelling that fairly shone with enamel, mahogany bookcases filled with authors who had chosen to comply with Miss Lucretia's somewhat rigorous censorship; there was a table laden with such magazines as had to do with the uplifting of a sex, a delightful wavy floor covered with a rose carpet; and, needless to add, not a pin or a pair of scissors out of place in the whole apartment.

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There is no intention of enriching these pages with Miss Lucretia's homilies. Their subject-matter may be found in the files of the Woman's Hour. She did not always preach, although many people will not believe this statement. Miss Lucretia, too, had a heart, though she kept it hidden away, only to be brought out on occasions when she was sure of its appreciation, and she grew strangely interested in this self-contained girl from Coniston whose mother she had known. Miss Lucretia understood Cynthia, who also was the kind who kept her heart hidden, the kind who conceal their troubles and sufferings because they find it difficult to give them out. So Miss Lucretia had Cynthia to take supper with her at least once in the week, and watched her quietly, and let her speak of as much of her life as she chose—which was not much, at first. But Miss Lucretia was content to wait, and guessed at many things which Cynthia did not tell her, and made some personal effort, unknown to Cynthia, to find out other things. It will be said that she had designs on the girl. If so, they were generous designs; and perhaps it was inevitable that Miss Lucretia should recognize in every young woman of spirit and brains a possible recruit for the cause.

It has now been shown in some manner and as briefly as possible how Cynthia's life had changed, and what it had become. We have got her partly through the winter, and find her still dreaming of the sparkling snow on Coniston and of the wind whirling it on clear, cold days like smoke among the spruces; of Uncle Jethro sitting by his stove through the long evenings all alone; of Rias in his store and Moses Hatch and Lem Hallowell, and Cousin Ephraim in his new post-office. Uncle Jethro wrote for the first time in his life—letters: short letters, but in his own handwriting, and deserving of being read for curiosity's sake if there were time. The wording was queer enough and guarded enough, but they were charged with a great affection which clung to them like lavender.

And Cynthia kept them every one, and read them over on such occasions when she felt that she could not live another minute out of sight of her mountain.

Such was the state of affairs one gray afternoon in December when Cynthia, who was sitting in Mrs. Merrill's parlor, suddenly looked up from her book to discover that two young men were in the room. The young men were apparently quite as much surprised as she, and the parlor maid stood grinning behind them.

"Tell Miss Susan and Miss Jane, Ellen," said Cynthia, preparing to depart. One of the young men she recognized from a photograph on Susan's bureau. He was, for the time being, Susan's. His name, although it does not matter much, was Morton Browne, and he would have been considerably astonished if he had guessed how much of his history Cynthia knew. It was Mr. Browne's habit to take Susan for a walk as often as propriety permitted, and on such occasions he generally brought along a good-natured classmate to take care of Jane. This, apparently, was one of the occasions. Mr. Browne was tall and dark and generally good-looking, while his friends were usually distinguished for their good nature.

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Mr. Browne stood between her and the door and looked at her rather fixedly. Then he said:—“Excuse me.”

A great many friendships, and even love affairs, have been inaugurated by just such an opening.

“Certainly,” said Cynthia, and tried to pass out. But Mr. Browne had no intention of allowing her to do so if he could help it.

“I hope I am not intruding,” he said politely.

“Oh, no,” answered Cynthia, wondering how she could get by him.

“Were you waiting for Miss Merrill?”

“Oh, no,” said Cynthia again.

The other young man turned his back and became absorbed in the picture of a lion getting ready to tear a lady to pieces. But Mr. Browne was of that mettle which is not easily baffled in such matters. He introduced himself, and desired to know whom he had the honor of addressing. Cynthia could not but enlighten him. Mr. Browne was greatly astonished, and showed it.

“So you are the mysterious young lady who has been staying here in the house this winter,” he exclaimed, as though it were a marvellous thing. “I have heard Miss Merrill speak of you. She admires you very much. Is it true that you come from—Coniston?”

“Yes,” she said.

“Let me see—where is Coniston?” inquired Mr. Browne.

“Do you know where Brampton is?” asked Cynthia. “Coniston is near Brampton.”

“Brampton!” exclaimed Mr. Browne, “I have a classmate who comes from Brampton—-Bob Worthington—You must know Bob, then.”

Yes, Cynthia knew Mr. Worthington.

“His father’s got a mint of money, they say. I’ve been told that old Worthington was the whole show up in those parts. Is that true?”

“Not quite,” said Cynthia.

Not quite! Mr. Morton Browne eyed her in surprise, and from that moment she began to have decided possibilities. Just then Jane and Susan entered arrayed for the walk, but

Mr. Browne showed himself in no hurry to depart: began to speak, indeed, in a deprecating way about the weather, appealed to his friend, Mr. King, if it didn't look remarkably like rain, or hail, or snow. Susan sat down, Jane sat down, Mr. Browne and his friend prepared to sit down when Cynthia moved toward the door.

"You're not going, Cynthia!" cried Susan, in a voice that may have had a little too much eagerness in it. "You must stay and help us entertain Mr. Browne." (Mr. King, apparently, was not to be entertained.) "We've tried so hard to make her come down when people called, Mr. Browne, but she never would."

Cynthia was not skilled in the art of making excuses. She hesitated for one, and was lost. So she sat down, as far from Mr. Browne as possible, next to Jane. In a few minutes Mr. Browne was seated beside her, and how he accomplished this manoeuvre Cynthia could not have said, so skilfully and gradually was it done. For lack of a better subject he chose Mr. Robert Worthington. Related, for Cynthia's

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delectation, several of Bob's escapades in his freshman year: silly escapades enough, but very bold and daring and original they sounded to Cynthia, who listened (if Mr. Browne could have known it) with almost breathless interest, and forgot all about poor Susan talking to Mr. King. Did Mr. Worthington still while away his evenings stealing barber poles and being chased around Cambridge by irate policemen? Mr. Browne laughed at the notion. O dear, no! seniors never descended to that. Had not Miss Wetherell heard the song wherein seniors were designated as grave and reverend? Yes, Miss Wetherell had heard the song. She did not say where, or how. Mr. Worthington, said his classmate, had become very serious-minded this year. Was captain of the base-ball team and already looking toward the study of law.

"Study law!" exclaimed Cynthia, "I thought he would go into his father's mills."

"Do you know Bob very well?" asked Mr. Browne.

She admitted that she did not.

"He's been away from Brampton a good deal, of course," said Mr. Browne, who seemed pleased by her admission. To do him justice, he would not undermine a classmate, although he had other rules of conduct which might eventually require a little straightening out. "Worthy's a first-rate fellow, a little quick-tempered, perhaps, and inclined to go his own way. He's got a good mind, and he's taken to using it lately. He has come pretty near being suspended once or twice."

Cynthia wanted to ask what "suspended" was. It sounded rather painful. But at this instant there was the rattle of a latch key at the door, and Mr. Merrill walked in.

"Well, well," he said, spying Cynthia, "so you have got Cynthia to come down and entertain the young men at last."

"Yes," said Susan, "we have got Cynthia to come down at last."

Susan did not go to Cynthia's room that night to chat, as usual, and Mr. Morton Browne's photograph was mysteriously removed from the prominent position it had occupied. If Susan had carried out a plan which she conceived in a moment of folly of placing that photograph on Cynthia's bureau, there would undoubtedly have been a quarrel. Cynthia's own feelings—seeing that Mr. Browne had not dazzled her—were not—enviable.

But she held her peace, which indeed was all she could do, and the next time Mr. Browne called, though he took care to mention her name particularly at the door, she would not go down to entertain him: though Susan implored and Jane appealed, she would not go down. Mr. Browne called several times again, with the same result.

Cynthia was inexorable—she would have none of him. Then Susan forgave her. There was no quarrel, indeed, but there was a reconciliation, which is the best part of a quarrel. There were tears, of Susan's shedding; there was a character-sketch of Mr. Browne, of Susan's drawing, and that gentleman flitted lightly out of Susan's life.

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Some ten days subsequent to this reconciliation Ellen, the parlor maid, brought up a card to Cynthia's room. The card bore the name of Mr. Robert Worthington. Cynthia stared at it, and bent it in her fingers, while Ellen explained how the gentleman had begged that she might see him. To tell the truth, Cynthia had wondered more than once why he had not come before, and smiled when she thought of all the assurances of undying devotion she had heard in Washington. After all, she reflected, why should she not see him—once? He might give her news of Brampton and Coniston. Thus willingly deceiving herself, she told Ellen that she would go down: much to the girl's delight, for Cynthia was a favorite in the house.

As she entered the parlor Mr. Worthington was standing in the window. When he turned and saw her he started to come forward in his old impetuous way, and stopped and looked at her in surprise. She herself did not grasp the reason for this.

"Can it be possible," he said, "can it be possible that this is my friend from the country?" And he took her hand with the greatest formality, pressed it the least little bit, and released it. "How do you do, Miss Wetherell? Do you remember me?"

"How do you do—Bob," she answered, laughing in spite of herself at his banter. "You haven't changed, anyway."

"It was Mr. Worthington in Washington," said he. "Now it is 'Bob' and 'Miss Wetherell.' Rank patronage! How did you do it, Cynthia?"

"You are like all men," said Cynthia, "you look at the clothes, and not the woman. They are not very fine clothes; but if they were much finer, they wouldn't change me."

"Then it must be Miss Sadler."

"Miss Sadler would willingly change me—if she could," said Cynthia, a little bitterly. "How did you find out I was at Miss Sadler's?"

"Morton Browne told me yesterday," said Bob. "I felt like punching his head."

"What did he tell you?" she asked with some concern.

"He said that you were here, visiting the Merrills, among other things, and said that you knew me."

The "other things" Mr. Browne had said were interesting, but flippant. He had seen Bob at a college club and declared that he had met a witch of a country girl at the Merrills. He couldn't make her out, because she had refused to see him every time he called again. He had also repeated Cynthia's remark about Bob's father not being quite the biggest man in his part of the country, and ventured the surmise that she was the daughter of a rival mill owner.

“Why didn’t you let me know you were in Boston?” said Bob, reproachfully.

“Why should I?” asked Cynthia, and she could not resist adding, “Didn’t you find it out when you went to Brampton—to see me?”

“Well,” said he, getting fiery red, “the fact is—I didn’t go to Brampton.”

“I’m glad you were sensible enough to take my advice, though I suppose that didn’t make any difference. But—from the way you spoke, I should have thought nothing could have kept you away.”

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“To tell you the truth,” said Bob, “I’d promised to visit a fellow named Broke in my class, who lives in New York. And I couldn’t get out of it. His sister, by the way, is in Miss Sadler’s. I suppose you know her. But if I’d thought you’d see me, I should have gone to Brampton, anyway. You were so down on me in Washington.”

“It was very good of you to take the trouble to come to see me here. There must be a great many girls in Boston you have to visit.”

He caught the little note of coolness in her voice. Cynthia was asking herself whether, if Mr. Browne had not seen fit to give a good report of her, he would have come at all. He would have come, certainly. It is to be hoped that Bob Worthington’s attitude up to this time toward Cynthia has been sufficiently defined by his conversation and actions. There had been nothing serious about it. But there can be no question that Mr. Browne’s openly expressed admiration had enhanced her value in his eyes.

“There’s no girl in Boston that I care a rap for,” he said.

“I’m relieved to hear it,” said Cynthia, with feeling.

“Are you really?”

“Didn’t you expect me to be, when you said it?”

He laughed uncomfortably.

“You’ve learned more than one thing since you’ve been in the city,” he remarked, “I suppose there are a good many fellows who come here all the time.”

“Yes, there are,” she said demurely.

“Well,” he remarked, “you’ve changed a lot in three months. I always thought that, if you had a chance, there’d be no telling where you’d end up.”

“That doesn’t sound very complimentary,” said Cynthia. She had, indeed, changed. “In what terrible place do you think I’ll end up?”

“I suppose you’ll marry one of these Boston men.”

“Oh,” she laughed, “that wouldn’t be so terrible, would it?”

“I believe you’re engaged to one of ’em now,” he remarked, looking very hard at her.

“If you believed that, I don’t think you would say it,” she answered.

“I can’t make you out. You used to be so frank with me, and now you’re not at all so. Are you going to Coniston for the holidays?”

Her face fell at the question.

“Oh, Bob,” she cried, surprising him utterly by a glimpse of the real Cynthia, “I wish I were—I wish I were! But I don’t dare to.”

“Don’t dare to?”

“If I went, I should’ never come back—never. I should stay with Uncle Jethro. He’s so lonesome up there, and I’m so lonesome down here, without him. And I promised him faithfully I’d stay a whole winter at school in Boston.”

“Cynthia,” said Bob, in a strange voice as he leaned toward her, “do you—do you care for him as much as all that?”

“Care for him?” she repeated.

“Care for—for Uncle Jethro?”

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“Of course I care for him,” she cried, her eyes flashing at the thought. “I love him better than anybody in the world. Certainly no one ever had better reason to care for a person. My father failed when he came to Coniston—he was not meant for business, and Uncle Jethro took care of him all his life, and paid his debts. And he has taken care of me and given me everything that a girl could wish. Very few people know what a fine character Uncle Jethro has,” continued Cynthia, carried away as she was by the pent-up flood of feeling within her. “I know what he has done for others, and I should love him for that even if he never had done anything for me.”

Bob was silent. He was, in the first place, utterly amazed at this outburst, revealing as it did a depth of passionate feeling in the girl which he had never suspected, and which thrilled him. It was unlike her, for she was usually so self-repressed; and, being unlike her, accentuated both sides of her character the more.

But what was he to say of the defence of Jethro Bass? Bob was not a young man who had pondered much over the problems of life, because these problems had hitherto never touched him. But now he began to perceive, dimly, things that might become the elements of a tragedy, even as Mr. Merrill had perceived them some months before. Could a union endure between so delicate a creature as the girl before him and Jethro Bass? Could Cynthia ever go back to him again, and live with him happily, without seeing many things which before were hidden by reason of her youth and innocence?

Bob had not been nearly four years at college without learning something of the world; and it had not needed the lecture from his father, which he got upon leaving Washington, to inform him of Jethro’s political practices. He had argued soundly with his father on that occasion, having the courage to ask Mr. Worthington in effect whether he did not sanction his underlings to use the same tools as Jethro used. Mr. Worthington was righteously angry, and declared that Jethro had inaugurated those practices in the state, and had to be fought with his own weapons. But Mr. Worthington had had the sense at that time not to mention Cynthia’s name. He hoped and believed that that affair was not serious, and merely a boyish fancy—as indeed it was.

It remains to be said, however, that the lecture had not been without its effect upon Bob. Jethro Bass, after all, was—Jethro Bass. All his life Bob had heard him familiarly and jokingly spoken of as the boss of the state, and had listened to the tales, current in all the country towns, of how Jethro had outwitted this man or that. Some of them were not refined tales. Jethro Bass as the boss of the state—with the tolerance with which the public in general regard politics—was one thing. Bob was willing to call him “Uncle Jethro,” admire his great strength and shrewdness, and declare that the men he had outwitted had richly deserved it. But Jethro Bass as the ward of Cynthia Wetherell was quite another thing.

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It was not only that Cynthia had suddenly and inevitably become a lady. That would not have mattered, for such as she would have borne Coniston and the life of Coniston cheerfully. But Bob reflected, as he walked back to his rooms in the dark through the snow-laden streets, that Cynthia, young though she might be, possessed principles from which no love would sway her a hair's breadth. How, indeed, was she to live with Jethro once her eyes were opened?

The thought made him angry, but returned to him persistently during the days that followed,—in the lecture room, in the gymnasium, in his own study, where he spent more time than formerly. By these tokens it will be perceived that Bob, too, had changed a little. And the sight of Cynthia in Mrs. Merrill's parlor had set him to thinking in a very different manner than the sight of her in Washington had affected him. Bob had managed to shift the subject from Jethro, not without an effort, though he had done it in that merry, careless manner which was so characteristic of him. He had talked of many things,—his college life, his friends,—and laughed at her questions about his freshman escapades. But when at length, at twilight, he had risen to go, he had taken both her hands and looked down into her face with a very different expression than she had seen him wear before—a much more serious expression, which puzzled her. It was not the look of a lover, nor yet that of a man who imagines himself in love. With either of these her instinct would have told her how to deal. It was more the look of a friend, with much of the masculine spirit of protection in it.

"May I come to see you again?" he asked.

Gently she released her hands, and she did not answer at once. She went to the window, and stared across the sloping street at the grilled railing before the big house opposite, thinking. Her reason told her that he should not come, but her spirit rebelled against that reason. It was a pleasure to see him, so she freely admitted to herself. Why should she not have that pleasure? If the truth be told, she had argued it all out before, when she had wondered whether he would come. Mrs. Merrill, she thought, would not object to his coming. But—there was the question she had meant to ask him.

"Bob," she said, turning to him, "Bob, would your father want you to come?"

It was growing dark, and she could scarcely see his face. He hesitated, but he did not attempt to evade the question.

"No, he would not," he answered. And added, with a good deal of force and dignity: "I am of age, and can choose my own friends. I am my own master. If he knew you as I knew you, he would look at the matter in a different light."

Cynthia felt that this was not quite true. She smiled a little sadly.

“I am afraid you don’t know me very well, Bob.” He was about to protest, but she went on, bravely, “Is it because he has quarrelled with Uncle Jethro?”

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“Yes,” said Bob. She was making it terribly hard for him, sparing indeed neither herself nor him.

“If you come here to see me, it will cause a quarrel between you and your father. I—I cannot do that.”

“There is nothing wrong in my seeing you,” said Bob, stoutly; “if he cares to quarrel with me for that, I cannot help it. If the people I choose for my friends are good people, he has no right to an objection, even though he is my father.”

Cynthia had never come so near real admiration for him as at that moment.

“No, Bob, you must not come,” she said. “I will not have you quarrel with him on my account.”

“Then I will quarrel with him on my own account,” he had answered. “Good-by. You may expect me this day week.”

He went into the hall to put on his overcoat. Cynthia stood still on the spot of the carpet where he had left her. He put his head in at the door.

“This day week,” he said.

“Bob, you must not come,” she answered. But the street door closed after him as he spoke.

CHAPTER IX

“You must not come.” Had Cynthia made the prohibition strong enough? Ought she not to have said, “If you do come, I will not see you?” Her knowledge of the motives of the men and women in the greater world was largely confined to that which she had gathered from novels—not trashy novels, but those by standard authors of English life. And many another girl of nineteen has taken a novel for a guide when she has been suddenly confronted with the first great problem outside of her experience. Somebody has declared that there are only seven plots in the world. There are many parallels in English literature to Cynthia’s position,—so far as she was able to define that position,—the wealthy young peer, the parson’s or physician’s daughter, and the worldly, inexorable parents who had other plans.

Cynthia was, of course, foolish. She would not look ahead, yet there was the mirage in the sky when she allowed herself to dream. It can truthfully be said that she was not in love with Bob Worthington. She felt, rather than knew, that if love came to her the feeling she had for Jethro Bass—strong though that was—would be as nothing to it.

The girl felt the intensity of her nature, and shrank from it when her thoughts ran that way, for it frightened her.

“Mrs. Merrill” she said, a few days later, when she found herself alone with that lady, “you once told me you would have no objection if a friend came to see me here.”

“None whatever, my dear,” answered Mrs. Merrill. “I have asked you to have your friends here.”

Mrs. Merrill knew that a young man had called on Cynthia. The girls had discussed the event excitedly, had teased Cynthia about it; they had discovered, moreover, that the young man had not been a tiller of the soil or a clerk in a country store. Ellen, with the enthusiasm of her race, had painted him in glowing colors—but she had neglected to read the name on his card.

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“Bob Worthington came to see me last week, and he wants to come again. He lives in Brampton,” Cynthia explained, “and is at Harvard College.”

Mrs. Merrill was decidedly surprised. She went on with her sewing, however, and did not betray the fact. She knew of Dudley Worthington as one of the richest and most important men in his state; she had heard her husband speak of him often; but she had never meddled with politics and railroad affairs.

“By all means let him come, Cynthia,” she replied.

When Mr. Merrill got home that evening she spoke of the matter to him.

“Cynthia is a strange character,” she said. “Sometimes I can’t understand her—she seems so much older than our girls, Stephen. Think of her keeping this to herself for four days!”

Mr. Merrill laughed, but he went off to a little writing room he had and sat for a long time looking into the glowing coals. Then he laughed again. Mr. Merrill was a philosopher. After all, he could not forbid Dudley Worthington’s son coming to his house, nor did he wish to.

That same evening Cynthia wrote a letter and posted it. She found it a very difficult letter to write, and almost as difficult to drop into the mail-box. She reflected that the holidays were close at hand, and then he would go to Brampton and forget, even as he had forgotten before. And she determined when Wednesday afternoon came around that she would take a long walk in the direction of Brookline. Cynthia loved these walks, for she sadly missed the country air,—and they had kept the color in her cheeks and the courage in her heart that winter. She had amazed the Merrill girls by the distances she covered, and on more than one occasion she had trudged many miles to a spot from which there was a view of Blue Hills. They reminded her faintly of Coniston.

Who can speak or write with any certainty of the feminine character, or declare what unexpected twists perversity and curiosity may give to it? Wednesday afternoon came, and Cynthia did not go to Brookline. She put on her coat, and took it off again. Would he dare to come in the face of the mandate he had received? If he did come, she wouldn’t see him. Ellen had received her orders.

At four o’clock the doorbell rang, and shortly thereafter Ellen appeared, simpering and apologetic enough, with a card. She had taken the trouble to read it this time. Cynthia was angry, or thought she was, and her cheeks were very red.

“I told you to excuse me, Ellen. Why did you let him in?”

“Miss Cynthia, darlin’,” said Ellen, “if it was made of flint I was, wouldn’t he bring the tears out of me with his wheedlin’ an’ coaxin’? An’ him such a fine young gintleman!

And whin he took to commandin' like, sure I couldn't say no to him at all at all. 'Take the card to her, Ellen,' he says—didn't he know me name!—'an' if she says she won't see me, thin I won't trouble her more.' Thim were his words, Miss."

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There he was before the fire, his feet slightly apart and his hands in his pockets, waiting for her. She got a glimpse of him standing thus, as she came down the stairs. It was not the attitude of a culprit. Nor did he bear the faintest resemblance to a culprit as he came up to her in the doorway. The chief recollection she carried away of that moment was that his teeth were very white and even when he smiled. He had the impudence to smile. He had the impudence to seize one of her hands in his, and to hold aloft a sheet of paper in the other.

“What does this mean?” said he.

“What do you thick it means?” retorted Cynthia, with dignity.

“A summons to stay away,” said Bob, thereby more or less accurately describing it. “What would you have thought of me if I had not come?”

Cynthia was not prepared for any such question as this. She had meant to ask the questions herself. But she never lacked for words to protect herself.

“I’ll tell you what I think of you for coming, Bob, for insisting upon seeing me as you did,” she said, remembering with shame Ellen’s account of that proceeding. “It was very unkind and very thoughtless of you.”

“Unkind?” Thus she succeeded in putting him on the defensive.

“Yes, unkind, because I know it is best for you not to come to see me, and you know it, and yet you will not help me when I try to do what is right. I shall be blamed for these visits,” she said. The young ladies in the novels always were. But it was a serious matter for poor Cynthia, and her voice trembled a little. Her troubles seemed very real.

“Who will blame you?” asked Bob, though he knew well enough. Then he added, seeing that she did not answer: “I don’t at all agree with you that it is best for me not to see you. I know of nobody in the world it does me more good to see than yourself. Let’s sit down and talk it all over,” he said, for she still remained standing uncompromisingly by the door.

The suspicion of a smile came over Cynthia’s face. She remembered how Ellen had been wheedled. Her instinct told her that now was the time to make a stand or never.

“It wouldn’t do any good, Bob,” she replied, shaking her head; “we talked it all over last week.”

“Not at all,” said he, “we only touched upon a few points last week. We ought to thrash it out. Various aspects of the matter have occurred to me which I ought to call to your attention.”

He could not avoid this bantering tone, but she saw that he was very much in earnest too. He realized the necessity of winning; likewise, and he had got in and meant to stay.

“I don’t want to argue,” said Cynthia. “I’ve thought it all out.”

“So have I,” said Bob. “I haven’t thought of anything else, to speak of. And by the way,” he declared, shaking the envelope, “I never got a colder and more formal letter in my life. You must have taken it from one of Miss Sadler’s copy books.”

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“I’m sorry I haven’t been able to equal the warmth of your other correspondents,” said Cynthia, smiling at the mention of Miss Sadler.

“You’ve got a good many degrees yet to go,” he replied.

“I have no idea of doing so,” said Cynthia.

If Cynthia had lured him there, and had carefully thought out a plan of fanning his admiration into a flame, she could not have done better than to stand obstinately by the door. Nothing appeals to a man like resistance—resistance for a principle appealed to Bob, although he did not care a fig about that particular principle. In his former dealings with young women—and they had not been few—the son of Dudley Worthington had encountered no resistance worth the mentioning. He looked at the girl before him, and his blood leaped at the thought of a conquest over her. She was often demure, but behind that demureness was firmness: she was mistress of herself, and yet possessed a marvellous vitality.

“And now,” said Cynthia, “don’t you think you had better go?”

Go! He laughed outright. Never! He would sit down under that fortress, and some day he meant to scale the walls. Like John Paul Jones, he had not yet begun to fight. But he did not sit down just yet, because Cynthia remained standing.

“I’m here now,” he said, “what’s the good of going away? I might as well stay the rest of the afternoon.”

“You will find a photograph album on the table,” said Cynthia, “with pictures of all the Merrill family and their friends and relations.”

In spite of the threat this remark conveyed, he could not help laughing at it. Mrs. Merrill in her sitting room heard the laugh, and felt that she would like Bob Worthington.

“It’s a heavy album, Cynthia,” he said; “perhaps you would hold up one side of it.”

It was Cynthia’s turn to laugh. She could not decide whether he were a man or a boy. Sometimes, she had to admit, he was very much of a man.

“Where are you going?” he cried.

“Upstairs, of course,” she answered.

This was really alarming. But fate thrust a final weapon into his hands.

“All right,” said he, “I’ll look at the album. What time does Mr. Merrill get home?”

“About six,” answered Cynthia. “Why?”

“When he comes,” said Bob, “I shall put on my most disconsolate expression. He’ll ask me what I’m doing, and I’ll tell him you went upstairs at half-past four and haven’t come down. He’ll sympathize, I’ll bet anything.”

Whether Bob were really capable of doing this, Cynthia could not tell. She believed he was. Perhaps she really did not intend to go upstairs just then. To his intense relief she seated herself on a straight-backed chair near the door, although she had the air of being about to get up again at any minute. It was not a surrender, not at all—but a parley, at least.

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“I really want to talk to you seriously, Bob,” she said, and her voice was serious. “I like you very much—I always have—and I want you to listen seriously. All of us have friends. Some people—you, for instance—have a great many. We have but one father.” Her voice failed a little at the word. “No friend can ever be the same to you as your father, and no friendship can make up what his displeasure will cost you. I do not mean to say that I shan’t always be your friend, for I shall be.”

Young men seldom arrive at maturity by gradual steps—something sets them thinking, a week passes, and suddenly the world has a different aspect. Bob had thought much of his father during that week, and had considered their relationship very carefully. He had a few precious memories of his mother before she had been laid to rest under that hideous and pretentious monument in the Brampton hill cemetery. How unlike her was that monument! Even as a young boy, when on occasions he had wandered into the cemetery, he used to stand before it with a lump in his throat and bitter resentment in his heart, and once he had shaken his fist at it. He had grown up out of sympathy with his father, but he had never until now began to analyze the reasons for it. His father had given him everything except that communion of which Cynthia spoke so feelingly. Mr. Worthington had acted according to his lights: of all the people in the world he thought first of his son. But his thoughts and care had been alone of what the son would be to the world: how that son would carry on the wealth and greatness of Isaac D. Worthington.

Bob had known this before, but it had had no such significance for him then as now. He was by no means lacking in shrewdness, and as he had grown older he had perceived clearly enough Mr. Worthington’s reasons for throwing him socially with the Duncans. Mr. Worthington had never been a plain-spoken man, but he had as much as told his son that it was decreed that he should marry the heiress of the state. There were other plans connected with this. Mr. Worthington meant that his son should eventually own the state itself, for he saw that the man who controlled the highways of a state could snap his fingers at governor and council and legislature and judiciary: could, indeed, do more—could own them even more completely than Jethro Bass now owned them, and without effort. The dividends would do the work: would canvass the counties and persuade this man and that with sufficient eloquence. By such tokens it will be seen that Isaac D. Worthington is destined to become great, though the greatness will be akin to that possessed by those gentlemen who in past ages had built castles across the highway between Venice and the North Sea. All this was in store for Bob Worthington, if he could only be brought to see it. These things would be given him, if he would but confine his worship to the god of wealth.

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We are running ahead, however, of Bob's reflections in Mr. Merrill's parlor in Mount Vernon Street, and the ceremony of showing him the cities of his world from Brampton hill was yet to be gone through. Bob knew his father's plans only in a general way, but in the past week he had come to know his father with a fair amount of thoroughness. If Isaac D. Worthington had but chosen a worldly wife, he might have had a more worldly son. As it was, Bob's thoughts were a little bitter when Cynthia spoke of his father, and he tried to think instead what his mother would have him do. He could not, indeed, speak of Mr. Worthington's shortcomings as he understood them, but he answered Cynthia vigorously enough—even if his words were not as serious as she desired.

"I tell you I am old enough to judge for myself, Cynthia," said he, "and I intend to judge for myself. I don't pretend to be a paragon of virtue, but I have a kind of a conscience which tells me when I am doing wrong, if I listen to it. I have not always listened to it. It tells me I'm doing right now, and I mean to listen to it."

Cynthia could not but think there was very little self-denial attached to this. Men are not given largely to self-denial.

"It is easy enough to listen to your conscience when you think it impels you to do that which you want to do, Bob," she answered, laughing at his argument in spite of herself.

"Are you wicked?" he demanded abruptly.

"Why, no, I don't think I am," said Cynthia, taken aback. But she corrected herself swiftly, perceiving his bent. "I should be doing wrong to let you come here."

He ignored the qualification.

"Are you vain and frivolous?"

She remembered that she had looked in the glass before she had come down to him, and bit her lip.

"Are you given over to idle pursuits, to leading young men from their occupations and duties?"

"If you've come here to recite the Blue Laws," said she, laughing again, "I have something better to do than to listen to them."

"Cynthia," he cried, "I'll tell you what you are. I'll draw your character for you, and then, if you can give me one good reason why I should not associate with you, I'll go away and never come back."

"That's all very well," said Cynthia, "but suppose I don't admit your qualifications for drawing my character. And I don't admit them, not for a minute."

“I will draw it,” said he, standing up in front of her. “Oh, confound it!”

This exclamation, astonishing and out of place as it was, was caused by a ring at the doorbell. The ring was followed by a whispering and giggling in the hall, and then by the entrance of the Misses Merrill into the parlor. Curiosity had been too strong for them. Susan was human, and here was the opportunity for a little revenge. In justice to her, she meant the revenge to be very slight.

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“Well, Cynthia, you should have come to the concert,” she said; “it was fine, wasn’t it, Jane? Is this Mr. Worthington? How do you do. I’m Miss Susan Merrill, and this is Miss Jane Merrill.” Susan only intended to stay a minute, but how was Bob to know that? She was tempted into staying longer. Bob lighted the gas, and she inspected him and approved. Her approval increased when he began to talk to her in his bantering way, as if he had known her always. Then, when she was fully intending to go, he rose to take his leave.

“I’m awfully glad to have met you at last,” he said to Susan, “I’ve heard so much about you.” His leave-taking of Jane was less effusive, and then he turned to Cynthia and took her hand. “I’m going to Brampton on Friday,” he said, “for the holidays. I wish you were going.”

“We couldn’t think of letting her go, Mr. Worthington,” cried Susan, for the thought of the hills had made Cynthia incapable of answering. “We’re only to have her for one short winter, you know.”

“Yes, I know,” said Mr. Worthington, gravely. “I’ll see old Ephraim, and tell him you’re well, and what a marvel of learning, you’ve become. And—and I’ll go to Coniston if that will please you.”

“Oh, no, Bob, you mustn’t do anything of the kind,” answered Cynthia, trying to keep back the tears. “I—I write to Uncle Jethro very often. Good-by. I hope you will enjoy your holidays.”

“I’m coming to see you the minute I get back and tell you all about everybody,” said he.

How was she to forbid him to come before Susan and Jane! She could only be silent.

“Do come, Mr. Worthington,” said Susan, warmly, wondering at Cynthia’s coldness and, indeed, misinterpreting it. “I am sure she will be glad to see you. And we shall always make you welcome, at any rate.”

As soon as he was out of the door, Susan became very repentant, and slipped her hand about Cynthia’s waist.

“We shouldn’t have come in at all if we had known he would go so soon, indeed we shouldn’t, Cynthia.” And seeing that Cynthia was still silent, she added: “I wouldn’t do such a mean thing, Cynthia, I really wouldn’t. Won’t you believe me and forgive me?”

Cynthia scarcely heard her at first. She was thinking of Coniston mountain, and how the sun had just set behind it. The mountain would be ultramarine against the white fields, and the snow on the hill pastures to the east stained red as with wine. What would she not have given to be going back to-morrow—yes, with Bob. She confessed

—though startled by the very boldness of the thought—that she would like to be going there with Bob. Susan's appeal brought her back to Boston and the gas-lit parlor.

"Forgive you, Susan! There's nothing to forgive. I wanted him to go."

"You wanted him to go?" repeated Susan, amazed. She may be pardoned if she did not believe this, but a glance at Cynthia's face scarcely left a room for doubt. "Cynthia Wetherell, you're the strangest girl I've ever known in all my life. If I had a—a friend" (Susan had another word on her tongue) "if I had such a friend as Mr. Worthington, I shouldn't be in a hurry to let him leave me. Of course," she added, "I shouldn't let him know it."

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Cynthia's heart was very heavy during the next few days, heavier by far than her friends in Mount Vernon Street imagined. They had grown to love her almost as one of themselves, and because of the sympathy which comes of such love they guessed that her thoughts would be turning homeward at Christmastide. At school she had listened, perforce, to the festival plans of thirty girls of her own age; to accounts of the probable presents they were to receive, the cost of some of which would support a family in Coniston for several months; to arrangements for visits, during which there were to be theatre-parties and dances and other gaieties. Cynthia could not help wondering, as she listened in silence to this talk, whether Uncle Jethro had done wisely in sending her to Miss Sadler's; whether she would not have been far happier if she had never known about such things.

Then came the last day of school, which began with leave-takings and embraces. There were not many who embraced Cynthia, though, had she known it, this was largely her own fault. Poor Cynthia! how was she to know it? Many more of them than she imagined would have liked to embrace her had they believed that the embrace would be returned. Secretly they had grown to admire this strange, dark girl, who was too proud to bend for the good opinion of any one—even of Miss Sally Broke. Once during the term Cynthia had held some of them—in the hollow of her hand, and had incurred the severe displeasure of Miss Sadler by refusing to tell what she knew of certain mischief-makers.

Now, Miss Sadler was going about among them in the school parlor saying good-by, sending particular remembrance to such of the fathers and mothers as she thought worthy of that honor; kissing some, shaking, hands with all. It was then that a dramatic incident occurred—dramatic for a girls' school, at least. Cynthia deliberately turned her back on Miss Sadler and looked out of the window. The chatter in the room was hushed, and for a moment a dangerous wrath flamed in Miss Sadler's eyes. Then she passed on with a smile, to send most particular messages to the mother of Miss Isabel Burrage.

Some few moments afterward Cynthia felt a touch on her arm, and turned to find herself confronted by Miss Sally Broke. Unfortunately there is not much room for Miss Broke in this story, although she may appear in another one yet to be written. She was extremely good-looking, with real golden hair and mischievous blue eyes. She was, in brief, the leader of Miss Sadler's school.

"Cynthia," she said, "I was rude to you when you first came here, and I'm sorry for it. I want to beg your pardon." And she held out her hand.

There was a moment's suspense for those watching to see if Cynthia would take it. She did take it.

“I’m sorry, too,” said Cynthia, simply, “I couldn’t see what I’d done to offend you. Perhaps you’ll explain now.”

Miss Broke blushed violently, and for an instant looked decidedly uncomfortable. Then she burst into laughter,—merry, irresistible laughter that carried all before it.

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“I was a snob, that’s all,” said she, “just a plain, low down snob. You don’t understand what that means, because you’re not one.” (Cynthia did understand,) “But I like you, and I want you to be my friend. Perhaps when I get to know you better, you will come home with me sometime for a visit.”

Go home with her for a visit to that house in Washington Square with the picture gallery!

“I want to say that I’d give my head to have been able to turn my back on Miss Sadler as you did,” continued Miss Broke; “if you ever want a friend, remember Sally Broke.”

Some of Cynthia’s trouble, at least, was mitigated by this episode; and Miss Broke having led the way, Miss Broke’s followers came shyly, one by one, with proffers of friendship. To the good-hearted Merrill girls the walk home that day was a kind of a triumphal march, a victory over Miss Sadler and a vindication of their friend. Mrs. Merrill, when she heard of it, could not find it in her heart to reprove Cynthia. Miss Sadler had got her just deserts. But Miss Sadler was not a person who was likely to forget such an incident. Indeed, Mrs. Merrill half expected to receive a note before the holidays ended that Cynthia’s presence was no longer desired at the school. No such note came, however.

If one had to be away from home on Christmas, there could surely be no better place to spend that day than in the Merrill household. Cynthia remembers still, when that blessed season comes around, how each member of the family vied with the others to make her happy; how they showered presents on her, and how they strove to include her in the laughter and jokes at the big family dinner. Mr. Merrill’s brother was there with his wife, and Mrs. Merrill’s aunt and her husband, and two broods of cousins. It may be well to mention that the Merrill relations, like Sally Broke, had overcome their dislike for Cynthia.

There were eatables from Coniston on that board. A turkey sent by Jethro for which, Mr. Merrill declared, the table would have to be strengthened; a saddle of venison—Lem Hallowell having shot a deer on the mountain two Sundays before; and mince-meat made by Amanda Hatch herself. Other presents had come to Cynthia from the hills: a gorgeous copy of Mr. Longfellow’s poems from Cousin Ephraim, and a gold locket from Uncle Jethro. This locket was the precise counterpart (had she but known it) of a silver one bought at Mr. Judson’s shop many years before, though the inscription “Cynthy, from Uncle Jethro,” was within. Into the other side exactly fitted that daguerreotype of her mother which her father had given her when he died. The locket had a gold chain with a clasp, and Cynthia wore it hidden beneath her gown-too intimate a possession to be shown.

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There was still another and very mysterious present, this being a huge box of roses, addressed to Miss Cynthia Wetherell, which was delivered on Christmas morning. If there had been a card, Susan Merrill would certainly have found it. There was no card. There was much pretended speculation on the part of the Merrill girls as to the sender, sly reference to Cynthia's heightened color, and several attempts to pin on her dress a bunch of the flowers, and Susan declared that one of them would look stunning in her hair. They were put on the dining-room table in the centre of the wreath of holly, and under the mistletoe which hung from the chandelier. Whether Cynthia surreptitiously stole one has never been discovered.

So Christmas came and went: not altogether unhappily, deferring for a day at least the knotty problems of life. Although Cynthia accepted the present of the roses with such magnificent unconcern, and would not make so much as a guess as to who sent them, Mr. Robert Worthington was frequently in her thoughts. He had declared his intention of coming to Mount Vernon Street as soon as the holidays ended, and had been cordially invited by Susan to do so. Cynthia took the trouble to procure a Harvard catalogue from the library, and discovered that he had many holidays yet to spend. She determined to write another letter, which he would find in his rooms when he returned. Just what terrible prohibitory terms she was to employ in that letter Cynthia could not decide in a moment, nor yet in a day, or a week. She went so far as to make several drafts, some of which she destroyed for the fault of leniency, and others for that of severity. What was she to say to him? She had expended her arguments to no avail. She could wound him, indeed, and at length made up her mind that this was the only resource left her, although she would thereby wound herself more deeply. When she had arrived at this decision, there remained still more than a week in which to compose the letter.

On the morning after New Year's, when the family were assembled around the breakfast table, Mrs. Merrill remarked that her husband was neglecting a custom which had been his for many years.

"Didn't the newspaper come, Stephen?" she asked.

Mr. Merrill had read it.

"Read it!" repeated his wife, in surprise, "you haven't been down long enough to read a column."

"It was full of trash," said Mr. Merrill, lightly, and began on his usual jokes with the girls. But Mrs. Merrill was troubled. She thought his jokes not as hearty as they were wont to be, and disquieting surmises of business worries filled her mind. The fact that he beckoned her into his writing room as soon as breakfast was over did not tend to allay her suspicions. He closed and locked the door after her, and taking the paper from a drawer in his desk bade her read a certain article in it.

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The article was an arraignment of Jethro Bass—and a terrible arraignment indeed. Step by step it traced his career from the beginning, showing first of all how he had debauched his own town of Coniston; how, enlarging on the same methods, he had gradually extended his grip over the county and finally over the state; how he had bought and sold men for his own power and profit, deceived those who had trusted in him, corrupted governors and legislators, congressmen and senators, and even justices of the courts: how he had trafficked ruthlessly in the enterprises of the people. Instance upon instance was given, and men of high prominence from whom he had received bribes were named, not the least important of these being the Honorable Alva Hopkins of Gosport.

Mrs. Merrill looked up from the paper in dismay.

“It’s copied from the Newcastle Guardian,” she said, for lack of immediate power to comment. “Isn’t the Guardian the chief paper in that state?”

“Yes, Worthington’s bought it, and he instigated the article, of course. I’ve been afraid of this for a long time, Carry,” said Mr. Merrill, pacing up and down. “There’s a bigger fight than they’ve ever had coming on up there, and this is the first gun. Worthington, with Duncan behind him, is trying to get possession of and consolidate all the railroads in the western part of that state. If he succeeds, it will mean the end of Jethro’s power. But he won’t succeed.”

“Stephen,” said his wife, “do you mean to say that Jethro Bass will try to defeat this consolidation simply to keep his power?”

“Well, my dear,” answered Mr. Merrill, still pacing, “two wrongs don’t make a right, I admit. I’ve known these things a long time, and I’ve thought about them a good deal. But I’ve had to run along with the tide, or give place to another man who would; and—-and starve.”

Mrs. Merrill’s eyes slowly filled with tears.

“Stephen,” she began, “do you mean to say—?” There she stopped, utterly unable to speak. He ceased his pacing and sat down beside her and took her hand.

“Yes, my dear, I mean to say I’ve submitted to these things. God knows whether I’ve been right or wrong, but I have. I’ve often thought I’d be happier if I resigned my office as president of my road and became a clerk in a store. I don’t attempt to excuse myself, Carry, but my sin has been in holding on to my post. As long as I remain president I have to cope with things as I find them.”

Mr. Merrill spoke thickly, for the sight of his wife’s tears wrung his heart.

“Stephen,” she said, “when we were first married and you were a district superintendent, you used to tell me everything.”

Stephen Merrill was a man, and a good man, as men go. How was he to tell her the degrees by which he had been led into his present situation? How was he to explain that these degrees had been so gradual that his conscience had had but a passing wrench here and there? Politics being what they were, progress and protection had to be obtained in accordance with them, and there was a duty to the holders of bonds and stocks.

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His wife had a question on her lips, a question for which she had to summon all her courage. She chose that form for it which would hurt him least.

“Mr. Worthington is going to try to change these things?”

Mr. Merrill roused himself at the words, and his eyes flashed. He became a different man.

“Change them!” he cried bitterly, “change them for the worse, if he can. He will try to wrest the power from Jethro Bass. I don’t defend him. I don’t defend myself. But I like Jethro Bass. I won’t deny it. He’s human, and I like him, and whatever they say about him I know that he’s been a true friend to me. And I tell you as I hope for happiness here and hereafter, that if Worthington succeeds in what he is trying to do, if the railroads win in this fight, there will be no mercy for the people of that state. I’m a railroad man myself, though I have no interest in this affair. My turn may come later. Will come later, I suppose. Isaac D. Worthington has a very little heart or soul or mercy himself; but the corporation which he means to set up will have none at all. It will grind the people and debase them and clog their progress a hundred times more than Jethro Bass has done. Mark my words, Carry. I’m running ahead of the times a little, but I can see it all as clearly as if it existed now.”

Mrs. Merrill went about her duties that morning with a heavy heart, and more than once she paused to wipe away a tear that would have fallen on the linen she was sorting. At eleven o’clock the doorbell rang, and Ellen appeared at the entrance to the linen closet with a card in her hand. Mrs. Merrill looked at it with a, flurry of surprise. It read:—

Miss Lucretia Penniman

The Woman’s Hour

CHAPTER X

It was certainly affinity that led Miss Lucretia to choose the rosewood sofa of a bygone age, which was covered with horsehair. Miss Lucretia’s features seemed to be constructed on a larger and more generous principle than those of women are nowadays. Her face was longer. With her curls and her bonnet and her bombazine,—-which she wore in all seasons,—she was in complete harmony with the sofa. She had thrown aside the storm cloak which had become so familiar to pedestrians in certain parts of Boston.

“My dear Miss Penniman,” said Mrs. Merrill, “I am delighted and honored. I scarcely hoped for such a pleasure. I have so long admired you and your work, and I have heard Cynthia speak of you so kindly.”

“It is very good of you to say so, Mrs. Merrill” answered Miss Lucretia, in her full, deep voice. It was by no means an unpleasant voice. She settled herself, though she sat quite upright, in the geometrical centre of the horsehair sofa, and cleared her throat. “To be quite honest with you, Mrs. Merrill,” she continued, “I came upon particular errand, though I believe it would not be a perversion of the truth if I were to add that I have had for a month past every intention of paying you a friendly call.”

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Good Mrs. Merrill's breath was a little taken away by this extremely scrupulous speech. She also began to feel a misgiving about the cause of the visit, but she managed to say something polite in reply.

"I have come about Cynthia," announced Miss Lucretia, without further preliminaries.

"About Cynthia?" faltered Mrs. Merrill.

Miss Lucretia opened a reticule at her waist and drew forth a newspaper clipping, which she unfolded and handed to Mrs. Merrill.

"Have you seen this?" she demanded.

Mrs. Merrill took it, although she guessed very well what it was, glanced at it with a shudder, and handed it back.

"Yes, I have read it," she said.

"I have come to ask you, Mrs. Merrill" said Miss Lucretia, "if it is true."

Here was a question, indeed, for the poor lady to answer! But Mrs. Merrill was no coward.

"It is partly true, I believe."

"Partly?" said Miss Lucretia, sharply.

"Yes, partly," said Mrs. Merrill, rousing herself for the trial; "I have never yet seen a newspaper article which was wholly true."

"That is because newspapers are not edited by women," observed Miss Lucretia. "What I wish you to tell me, Mrs. Merrill, is this: how much of that article is true, and how much of it is false?"

"Really, Miss Penniman," replied Mrs. Merrill, with spirit, "I don't see why you should expect me to know."

"A woman should take an intelligent interest in her husband's affairs, Mrs. Merrill. I have long advocated it as an entering wedge."

"An entering wedge!" exclaimed Mrs. Merrill, who had never read a page of the Woman's Hour.

“Yes. Your husband is the president of a railroad, I believe, which is largely in that state. I should like to ask him whether these statements are true in the main. Whether this Jethro Bass is the kind of man they declare him to be.”

Mrs. Merrill was in a worse quandary than ever. Her own spirits were none too good, and Miss Lucretia’s eye, in its search for truth, seemed to pierce into her very soul. There was no evading that eye. But Mrs. Merrill did what few people would have had the courage or good sense to do.

“That is a political article, Miss Penniman,” she said, “inspired by a bitter enemy of Jethro Bass, Mr, Worthington, who has bought the newspaper from which it was copied. For that reason, I was right in saying that it is partly true. You nor I, Miss Penniman, must not be the judges of any man or woman, for we know nothing of their problems or temptations. God will judge them. We can only say that they have acted rightly or wrongly according to the light that is in us. You will find it difficult to get a judgment of Jethro Bass that is not a partisan judgment, and yet I believe that that article is in the main a history of the life of Jethro Bass. A partisan history, but still a history. He has unquestionably committed many of the acts of which he is accused.”

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Here was talk to make the author of the “Hymn to Coniston” sit up, if she hadn’t been sitting up already.

“And don’t you condemn him for those acts?” she gasped.

“Ah,” said Mrs. Merrill, thinking of her own husband. Yesterday she would certainly have condemned. Jethro Bass. But now! “I do not condemn anybody, Miss Penniman.”

Miss Lucretia thought this extraordinary, to say the least.

“I will put the question in another way, Mrs. Merrill,” said she. “Do you think this Jethro Bass a proper guardian for Cynthia Wetherell?”

To her amazement Mrs. Merrill did not give her an instantaneous answer to this question. Mrs. Merrill was thinking of Jethro’s love for the girl, manifold evidences of which she had seen, and her heart was filled with a melting pity. It was such a love, Mrs. Merrill knew, as is not given to many here below. And there was Cynthia’s love for him. Mrs. Merrill had suffered that morning thinking of this tragedy also.

“I do not think he is a proper guardian for her, Miss Penniman.”

It was then that the tears came to Mrs. Merrill’s eyes for there is a limit to all human endurance. The sight of these caused a remarkable change in Miss Lucretia, and she leaned forward and seized Mrs. Merrill’s arm.

“My dear,” she cried, “my dear, what are we to do? Cynthia can’t go back to that man. She loves him, I know, she loves him as few girls are capable of loving. But when she, finds out what he is! When she finds out how he got the money to support her father!” Miss Lucretia fumbled in her reticule and drew forth a handkerchief and brushed her own eyes—eyes which a moment ago were so piercing. “I have seen many young women,” she continued; “but I have known very few who were made of as fine a fibre and who have such principles as Cynthia Wetherell.”

“That is very true,” assented Mrs. Merrill too much cast down to be amazed by this revelation of Miss Lucretia’s weakness.

“But what are we to do?” insisted that lady; “who is to tell her what he is? How is it to be kept from her, indeed?”

“Yes,” said Mrs. Merrill, “there will be more, articles. Mr. Merrill says so. It seems there is to be a great political struggle in that state.”

“Precisely,” said Miss Lucretia, sadly. “And whoever tells the girl will forfeit her friendship. I—I am very fond of her,” and here she applied again to the reticule.

“Whom would she believe?” asked Mrs. Merrill, whose estimation of Miss Lucretia was increasing by leaps and bounds.

“Precisely,” agreed Miss Lucretia. “But she must hear about it sometime.”

“Wouldn’t it be better to let her hear?” suggested Mrs. Merrill; “we cannot very well soften that shock: I talked the matter over a little with Mr. Merrill, and he thinks that we must take time over it, Miss Penniman. Whatever we do, we must not act hastily.”

“Well,” said Miss Lucretia, “as I said, I am very fond of the girl, and I am willing to do my duty, whatever it may be. And I also wished to say, Mrs. Merrill, that I have thought about another matter very carefully. I am willing to provide for the girl. I am getting too old to live alone. I am getting too old, indeed, to do my work properly, as I used to do it. I should like to have her to live with me.”

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“She has become as one of my own daughters,” said Mrs. Merrill. Yet she knew that this offer of Miss Lucretia’s was not one to be lightly set aside, and that it might eventually be the best solution of the problem. After some further earnest discussion it was agreed between them that the matter was, if possible, to be kept from Cynthia for the present, and when Miss Lucretia departed Mrs. Merrill promised her an early return of her call.

Mrs. Merrill had another talk with her husband, which lasted far into the night. This talk was about Cynthia alone, and the sorrow which threatened her. These good people knew that it would be no light thing to break the faith of such as she, and they made her troubles their own.

Cynthia little guessed as she exchanged raillery with Mr. Merrill the next morning that he had risen fifteen minutes earlier than usual to search his newspaper through. He would read no more at breakfast, so he declared in answer to his daughters’ comments; it was a bad habit which did not agree with his digestion. It was something new for Mr. Merrill to have trouble with his digestion.

There was another and scarcely less serious phase of the situation which Mr. and Mrs. Merrill had yet to discuss between them—a phase of which Miss Lucretia Penniman knew nothing.

The day before Miss Sadler’s school was to reopen nearly a week before the Harvard term was to commence—a raging, wet snowstorm came charging in from the Atlantic. Snow had no terrors for a Coniston person, and Cynthia had been for her walk. Returning about five o’clock, she was surprised to have the door opened for her by Susan herself.

“What a picture you are in those furs!” she cried, with an intention which for the moment was lost upon Cynthia. “I thought you would never come. You must have walked to Dedham this time. Who do you think is here? Mr. Worthington.”

“Mr. Worthington!”

“I have been trying to entertain him, but I am afraid I have been a very poor substitute. However, I have persuaded him to stay for supper.”

“It needed but little persuasion,” said Bob, appearing in the doorway. All the snowstorms of the wide Atlantic could not have brought such color to her cheeks. Cynthia, for all her confusion at the meeting, had not lost her faculty of observation. He seemed to have changed again, even during the brief time he had been absent. His tone was grave.

“He needs to be cheered up, Cynthia,” Susan went on, as though reading her thoughts. “I have done my best, without success. He won’t confess to me that he has come back to make up some of his courses. I don’t mind owning that I’ve got to finish a theme to be handed in tomorrow.”

With these words Susan departed, and left them standing in the hall together. Bob took hold of Cynthia’s jacket and helped her off with it. He could read neither pleasure nor displeasure in her face, though he searched it anxiously enough. It was she who led the way into the parlor and seated herself, as before, on one of the uncompromising, straight-backed chairs. Whatever inward tremors the surprise of this visit had given her, she looked at him clearly and steadily, completely mistress of herself, as ever.

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“I thought your holidays did not end until next week,” she said.

“They do not.”

“Then why are you here?”

“Because I could not stay away, Cynthia,” he answered. It was not the manner in which he would have said it a month ago. There was a note of intense earnestness in his voice—now, and to it she could make no light reply. Confronted again with an unexpected situation, she could not decide at once upon a line of action.

“When did you leave Brampton?” she asked, to gain time. But with the words her thoughts flew to the hill country.

“This morning,” he said, “on the early train. They have three feet of snow up there.” He, too, seemed glad of a respite from something. “They’re having a great fuss in Brampton about a new teacher for the village school. Miss Goddard has got married. Did you know Miss Goddard, the lanky one with the glasses?”

“Yes,” said Cynthia, beginning to be amused at the turn the conversation was taking.

“Well, they can’t find anybody smart enough to replace Miss Goddard. Old Ezra Graves, who’s on the prudential committee, told Ephraim they ought to get you. I was in the post-office when they were talking about it. Just see what a reputation for learning you have in Brampton!”

Cynthia was plainly pleased by the compliment.

“How is Cousin Eph?” she asked.

“Happy as a lark,” said Bob, “the greatest living authority in New England on the Civil War. He’s made the post-office the most popular social club I ever saw. If anybody’s missing in Brampton, you can nearly always find them in the post-office. But I smiled at the notion of your being a school ma’am.”

“I don’t see anything so funny about it,” replied Cynthia, smiling too. “Why shouldn’t I be? I should like it.”

“You were made for something different,” he answered quietly.

It was a subject she did not choose to discuss with him, and dropped her lashes before the plainly spoken admiration in his eyes. So a silence fell between them, broken only by the ticking of the agate clock on the mantel and the music of sleigh-bells in a distant street. Presently the sleigh-bells died away, and it seemed to Cynthia that the sound of her own heartbeats must be louder than the ticking of the clock. Her tact had suddenly

deserted her; without reason, and she did not dare to glance again at Bob as he sat under the lamp. That minute—for it was a full minute—was charged with a presage which she could not grasp. Cynthia's instincts were very keen. She understood, of course, that he had cut short his holiday to come to see her, and she might have dealt with him had that been all. But—through that sixth sense with which some women are endowed—she knew that something troubled him. He, too, had never yet been at a loss for words.

The silence forced him to speak first, and he tried to restore the light tone to the conversation.

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“Cousin Ephraim gave me a piece of news,” he said. “Ezra Graves got it, too. He told us you were down in Boston at a fashionable school. Cousin Ephraim knows a thing or two. He says he always callated you were cut out for a fine lady.”

“Bob,” said Cynthia, nerving herself for the ordeal, “did you tell Cousin Ephraim you had seen me?”

“I told him and Ezra that I had been a constant and welcome visitor at this house.”

“Did, you tell your father that you had seen me?”

This was too serious a question to avoid.

“No, I did not. There was no reason why I should have.”

“There was every reason,” said Cynthia, “and you know it. Did you tell him why you came to Boston to-day?”

“No.”

“Why does he think you came?”

“He doesn’t think anything about it,” said Bob. “He went off to Chicago yesterday to attend a meeting of the board of directors of a western railroad.”

“And so,” she said reproachfully, “you slipped off as soon as his back was turned. I would not have believed that of you, Bob. Do you think that was fair to him or me?”

Bob Worthington sprang to his feet and stood over her. She had spoken to a boy, but she had aroused a man, and she felt an amazing thrill at the result. The muscles in his face tightened, and deepened the lines about his mouth, and a fire was lighted about his eyes.

“Cynthia,” he said slowly, “even you shall not speak to me like that. If I had believed it were right, if I had believed that it would have done any good to you or me, I should have told my father the moment I got to Brampton. In affairs of this kind—in a matter of so much importance in my life,” he continued, choosing his words carefully, “I am likely to know whether I am doing right or wrong. If my mother were alive, I am sure that she would approve of this—this friendship.”

Having got so far, he paused. Cynthia felt that she was trembling, as though the force and feeling that was in him had charged her also.

“I did not intend to come so soon,” he went on, “but—I had a reason for coming. I knew that you did not want me.”

“You know that that is not true, Bob,” she faltered. His next words brought her to her feet.

“Cynthia,” he said, in a voice shaken by the intensity of his passion, “I came because I love you better than all the world—because I always will love you so. I came to protect you, and care for you whatever happens. I did not mean to tell you so, now. But it cannot matter, Cynthia!”

He seized her, roughly indeed, in his arms, but his very roughness was a proof of the intensity of his love. For an instant she lay palpitating against him, and as long as he lives he will remember the first exquisite touch of her firm but supple figure and the marvellous communion of her lips. A current from the great store that was in her, pent up and all unknown, ran through him, and then she had struggled out of his arms and fled, leaving him standing alone in the parlor.

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It is true that such things happen, and no man or woman may foretell the day or the hour thereof. Cynthia fled up the stairs, miraculously arriving unnoticed at her own room, and locked the door and flung herself on the bed.

Tears came—tears of shame, of joy, of sorrow, of rejoicing, of regret; tears that burned, and yet relieved her, tears that pained while they comforted. Had she sinned beyond the pardon of heaven, or had she committed a supreme act of right? One moment she gloried in it, and the next upbraided herself bitterly. Her heart beat with tumult, and again seemed to stop. Such, though the words but faintly describe them, were her feelings, for thoughts were still to emerge out of chaos. Love comes like a flame to few women, but so it came to Cynthia Wetherell, and burned out for a while all reason.

Only for a while. Generations which had practised self-restraint were strong in her—-generations accustomed, too, to thinking out, so far as in them lay, the logical consequences of their acts; generations ashamed of these very instants when nature has chosen to take command. After a time had passed, during which the world might have shuffled from its course, Cynthia sat up in the darkness. How was she ever to face the light again? Reason had returned.

So she sat for another space, and thought of what she had done—thought with a surprising calmness now which astonished her. Then she thought of what she would do, for there was an ordeal still to be gone through. Although she shrank from it, she no longer lacked the courage to endure it. Certain facts began to stand out clearly from the confusion. The least important and most immediate of these was that she would have to face him, and incidentally face the world in the shape of the Merrill family, at supper. She rose mechanically and lighted the gas and bathed her face and changed her gown. Then she heard Susan's voice at the door.

"Cynthia, what in the world are you doing?"

Cynthia opened the door and the sisters entered. Was it possible that they did not read her terrible secret in her face? Apparently not. Susan was busy commenting on the qualities and peculiarities of Mr. Robert Worthington, and showering upon Cynthia a hundred questions which she answered she knew not how; but neither Susan nor Jane, wonderful as it may seem, betrayed any suspicion. Did he send the flowers? Cynthia had not asked him. Did he want to know whether she read the newspapers? He had asked Susan that, before Cynthia came. Susan was ready to repeat the whole of her conversation with him. Why did he seem so particular about newspapers? Had he notions that girls ought not to read them?

The significance of Bob's remarks about newspapers was lost upon Cynthia then. Not till afterward did she think of them, or connect them with his unexpected visit. Then the supper bell rang, and they went downstairs.

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The reader will be spared Mr. Worthington's feelings after Cynthia left him, although they were intense enough, and absorbing and far-reaching enough. He sat down on a chair and buried his head in his hands. His impulse had been to leave the house and return again on the morrow, but he remembered that he had been asked to stay for supper, and that such a proceeding would cause comment. At length he got up and stood before the fire, his thoughts still above the clouds, and it was thus that Mr. Merrill found him when he entered.

"Good evening," said that gentleman, genially, not knowing in the least who Bob was, but prepossessed in his favor by the way he came forward and shook his hand and looked him clearly in the eye.

"I'm Robert Worthington, Mr. Merrill" said he.

"Eh!" Mr. Merrill gasped, "eh! Oh, certainly, how do you do, Mr. Worthington?" Mr. Merrill would have been polite to a tax collector or a sheriff. He separated the office from the man, which ought not always to be done. "I'm glad to see you, Mr. Worthington. Well, well, bad storm, isn't it? I had an idea the college didn't open until next week."

"Mr. Worthington's going to stay for supper, Papa," said Susan, entering.

"Good!" cried Mr. Merrill. "Capital! You won't miss the old folks after supper, will you, girls? Your mother wants me to go to a whist party."

"It can't be helped, Carry," said Mr. Merrill to his wife, as they walked up the hill to a neighbor's that evening.

"He's in love with Cynthia," said Mrs. Merrill, somewhat sadly; "it's as plain as the nose on your face, Stephen."

"That isn't very plain. Suppose he is! You can dam a mountain stream, but you can't prevent it reaching the sea, as we used to say when I was a boy in Edmundton. I like Bob," said Mr. Merrill, with his usual weakness for Christian names, "and he isn't any more like Dudley Worthington than I am. If you were to ask me, I'd say he couldn't do a better thing than marry Cynthia."

"Stephen!" exclaimed Mrs. Merrill. But in her heart she thought so, too. "What will Mr. Worthington say when he hears the young man has been coming to our house to see her?"

Mr. Merrill had been thinking of that very thing, but with more amusement than concern.

To return to Mr. Merrill's house, the three girls and the one young man were seated around the fire, and their talk, Merrill as it had begun, was becoming minute by minute more stilted. This was largely the fault of Susan, who would not be happy until she had

taken Jane upstairs and left Mr. Worthington and Cynthia together. This matter had been arranged between the sisters before supper. Susan found her opening at last, and upbraided Jane for her unfinished theme; Jane, having learned her lesson well, accused Susan. But Cynthia, who saw through the ruse, declared that both themes were finished. Susan, naturally indignant at such ingratitude, denied this. The manoeuvre, in short, was executed very clumsily and very obviously, but executed nevertheless—the sisters marching out of the room under a fire of protests. The reader, too, will no doubt think it a very obvious manoeuvre, but some things are managed badly in life as well as in books.

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Cynthia and Bob were left alone: left, moreover, in mortal terror of each other. It is comparatively easy to open the door of a room and rush into a lady's arms if the lady be willing and alone. But to be abandoned, as Susan had abandoned them, and with such obvious intent, creates quite a different atmosphere. Bob had dared to hope for such an opportunity: had made up his mind during supper, while striving to be agreeable, just what he would do if the opportunity came. Instead, all he could do was to sit foolishly in his chair and look at the coals, not so much as venturing to turn his head until the sound of footsteps had died away on the upper floors. It was Cynthia who broke the silence and took command—a very different Cynthia from the girl who had thrown herself on the bed not three hours before. She did not look at him, but stared with determination into the fire.

"Bob, you must go," she said.

"Go!" he cried. Her voice loosed the fetters of his passion, and he dared to seize the band that lay on the arm of her chair. She did not resist this.

"Yes, you must go. You should not have stayed for supper."

"Cynthia," he said, "how can I leave you? I will not leave you."

"But you can and must," she replied.

"Why?" he asked, looking at her in dismay.

"You know the reason," she answered.

"Know it?" he cried. "I know why I should stay. I know that I love you with my whole heart and soul. I know that I love you as few men have ever loved—and that you are the one woman among millions who can inspire such a love."

"No, Bob, no," she said, striving hard to keep her head, withdrawing her hand that it might not betray the treason of her lips. Aware, strange as it may seem, of the absurdity of the source of what she was to say, for a trace of a smile was about her mouth as she gazed at the coals. "You will get over this. You are not yet out of college, and many such fancies happen there."

For the moment he was incapable of speaking, incapable of finding an answer sufficiently emphatic. How was he to tell her of the rocks upon which his love was built?

How was he to declare that the very perils which threatened her had made a man of him, with all of a man's yearning to share these perils and shield her from them? How was he to speak at all of those perils? He did not declaim, yet when he spoke, an enduring sincerity which she could not deny was in his voice.

“You know in your heart that what you say is not true, Cynthia. Whatever happens, I shall always love you.”

Whatever happens: She shuddered at the words, reminding her as they did of all her vague misgivings and fears.

“Whatever happens!” she found herself repeating them involuntarily.

“Yes, whatever happens I will love you truly and faithfully. I will never desert you, never deny you, as long as I live. And you love me, Cynthia,” he cried, “you love me, I know it.”

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“No, no,” she answered, her breath coming fast. He was on his feet now, dangerously near her, and she rose swiftly to avoid him.

She turned her head, that he might not read the denial in her eyes; and yet had to look at him again, for he was coming toward her quickly. “Don’t touch me,” she said, “don’t touch me.”

He stopped, and looked at her so pitifully that she could scarce keep back her tears.

“You do love me,” he repeated.

So they stood for a moment, while Cynthia made a supreme effort to speak calmly.

“Listen, Bob,” she said at last, “if you ever wish to see me again, you must do as I say. You must write to your father, and tell him what you have done and—and what you wish to do. You may come to me and tell me his answer, but you must not come to me before.” She would have said more, but her strength was almost gone. Yes, and more would have implied a promise or a concession. She would not bind herself even by a hint. But of this she was sure: that she would not be the means of wrecking his opportunities. “And now—you must go.”

He stayed where he was, though his blood leaped within him, his admiration and respect for the girl outran his passion. Robert Worthington was a gentleman.

“I will do as you say, Cynthia,” he answered, “but I am doing it for you. Whatever my father’s reply may be will not change my love or my intentions. For I am determined that you shall be my wife.”

With these words, and one long, lingering look, he turned and left her. He had lacked the courage to speak of his father’s bitterness and animosity. Who will blame him? Cynthia thought none the less of him for not telling her. There was, indeed, no need now to describe Dudley Worthington’s feelings.

When the door had closed she stoke to the window, and listened to his footfalls in the snow until she heard them no more.

CONISTON

BOOK IV

CHAPTER XI

The next morning Cynthia's heart was heavy as she greeted her new friends at Miss Sadler's school. Life had made a woman of her long ago, while these girls had yet been in short dresses, and now an experience had come to her which few, if any, of these could ever know. It was of no use for her to deny to herself that she loved Bob Worthington—loved him with the full intensity of the strong nature that was hers. To how many of these girls would come such a love? and how many would be called upon to make such a renunciation as hers had been? No wonder she felt out of place among them, and once more the longing to fly away to Coniston almost overcame her. Jethro would forgive her, she knew, and stretch out his arms to receive her, and understand that some trouble had driven her to him.

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She was aroused by some one calling her name—some one whose voice sounded strangely familiar. Cynthia was perhaps the only person in the school that day who did not know that Miss Janet Duncan had entered it. Miss Sadler certainly knew it, and asked Miss Duncan very particularly about her father and mother and even her brother. Miss Sadler knew, even before Janet's unexpected arrival, that Mr. and Mrs. Duncan had come to Boston after Christmas, and had taken a large house in the Back Bay in order to be near their son at Harvard. Mrs. Duncan was, in fact, a Bostonian, and more at home there than at any other place.

Miss Sadler observed with a great deal of astonishment the warm embrace that Janet bestowed on Cynthia. The occurrence started in Miss Sadler a train of thought, as a result of which she left the drawing-room where these reunions were held, and went into her own private study to write a note. This she addressed to Mrs. Alexander Duncan, at a certain number on Beacon Street, and sent it out to be posted immediately. In the meantime, Janet Duncan had seated herself on the sofa beside Cynthia, not having for an instant ceased to talk to her. Of what use to write a romance, when they unfolded themselves so beautifully in real life! Here was the country girl she had seen in Washington already in a fine way to become the princess, and in four months! Janet would not have thought it possible for any one to change so much in such a time. Cynthia listened, and wondered what language Miss Duncan would use if she knew how great and how complete that change had been. Romances, Cynthia thought sadly, were one thing to theorize about and quite another thing to endure—and smiled at the thought. But Miss Duncan had no use for a heroine without a heartache.

It is not improbable that Miss Janet Duncan may appear with Miss Sally Broke in another volume. The style of her conversation is known, and there is no room to reproduce it here. She, too, had a heart, but she was a young woman given to infatuations, as Cynthia rightly guessed. Cynthia must spend many afternoons at her house—lunch with her, drive with her. For one omission Cynthia was thankful: she did not mention Bob Worthington's name. There was the romance under Miss Duncan's nose, and she did not see it. It is frequently so with romancers.

Cynthia's impassiveness, her complete poise, had fascinated Miss Duncan with the others. Had there been nothing beneath that exterior, Janet would never have guessed it, and she would have been quite as happy. Cynthia saw very clearly that Mr. Worthington or no other man or woman could force Bob to marry Janet.

The next morning, in such intervals as her studies permitted, Janet continued her attentions to Cynthia. That same morning she had brought a note from her father to Miss Sadler, of the contents of which Janet knew nothing. Miss Sadler retired into her study to read it, and two newspaper clippings fell out of it under the paper-cutter. This was the note:—

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"My *dear miss Sadler*:

"Mrs. Duncan has referred your note to me, and I enclose two clippings which speak for themselves. Miss Wetherell, I believe, stands in the relation of ward to the person to whom they refer, and her father was a sort of political assistant to this person. Although, as you say, we are from that part of the country (Miss Sadler bad spoken of the Duncans as the people of importance there), it was by the merest accident that Miss Wetherell's connection with this Jethro Bass was brought to my notice.

"Sincerely yours,

"*Alexander Duncan*."

It is pleasant to know that there were people in the world who could snub Miss Sadler; and there could be no doubt, from the manner in which she laid the letter down and took up the clippings, that Miss Sadler felt snubbed: equally, there could be no doubt that the revenge would fall on other shoulders than Mr. Duncan's. And when Miss Sadler proceeded to read the clippings, her hair would have stood on end with horror had it not been so efficiently plastered down. Miss Sadler seized her pen, and began a letter to Mrs. Merrill. Miss Sadler's knowledge of the proprieties—together with other qualifications—had made her school what it was. No Cynthia Wetherells had ever before entered its sacred portals, or should again.

The first of these clippings was the article containing the arraignment of Jethro Bass which Mr. Merrill had shown to his wife, and which had been the excuse for Miss Penniman's call. The second was one which Mr. Duncan had clipped from the Newcastle Guardian of the day before, and gave, from Mr. Worthington's side, a very graphic account of the conflict which was to tear the state asunder. The railroads were tired of paying toll to the chief of a band of thieves and cutthroats, to a man who had long throttled the state which had nourished him, to—in short,—to Jethro Bass. Miss Sadler was not much interested in the figures and metaphors of political compositions. Right had found a champion—the article continued—in Mr. Isaac D. Worthington of Brampton, president of the Truro Road and owner of large holdings elsewhere. Mr. Worthington, backed by other respectable property interests, would fight this monster of iniquity to the death, and release the state from his thraldom. Jethro Bass, the article alleged, was already about his abominable work—had long been so—as in mockery of that very vigilance which is said to be the price of liberty. His agents were busy in every town of the state, seeing to it that the slaves of Jethro Bass should be sent to the next legislature.

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And what was this system which he had built up among these rural communities? It might aptly be called the System of Mortgages. The mortgage—dread name for a dreadful thing—was the chief weapon of the monster. Even as Jethro Bass held the mortgages of Coniston and Tarleton and round about, so his lieutenants held mortgages in every town and hamlet of the state, What was a poor farmer to do—? His choice was not between right and wrong, but between a roof over the heads of his wife and children and no roof. He must vote for the candidate of Jethro Bass end corruption or become a homeless wanderer. How the gentleman and his other respectable backers were to fight the system the article did not say. Were they to buy up all the mortgages? As a matter of fact, they intended to buy up enough of these to count, but to mention this would be to betray the methods of Mr. Worthington's reform. The first bitter frontier fighting between the advance cohorts of the new giant and the old—the struggle for the caucuses and the polls—had begun. Miss Sadler cared but little and understood less of all this matter. She lingered over the sentences which described Jethro Bass as a monster of iniquity, as a pariah with whom decent men would have no intercourse, and in the heat of her passion that one who had touched him had gained admittance to the most exclusive school for young ladies in the country she wrote a letter.

Miss Sadler wrote the letter, and three hours later tore it up and wrote another and more diplomatic one. Mrs. Merrill, though not by any means of the same importance as Mrs. Duncan, was not a person to be wantonly offended, and might—knowing nothing about the monster—in the goodness of her heart have taken the girl into her house. Had it been otherwise, surely Mrs. Merrill would not have had the effrontery! She would give Mrs. Merrill a chance. The bell of release from studies was ringing as she finished this second letter, and Miss Sadler in her haste forgot to enclose the clippings. She ran out in time to intercept Susan Merrill at the door, and to press into her hands the clippings and the note, with a request to take both to her mother.

Although the Duncans dined in the evening, the Merrills had dinner at half-past one in the afternoon, when the girls returned from school. Mr. Merrill usually came home, but he had gone off somewhere for this particular day, and Mrs. Merrill had a sewing circle. The girls sat down to dinner alone. When they got up from the table, Susan suddenly remembered the note which she had left in her coat pocket. She drew out the clippings with it.

"I wonder what Miss Sadler is sending mamma clippings for," she said. "Why, Cynthia, they're about your uncle. Look!"

And she handed over the article headed "Jethro Bass." Jane, who had quicker intuitions than her sister, would have snatched it from Cynthia's hand, and it was a long time before Susan forgave herself for her folly. Thus Miss Sadler had her revenge.

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It is often mercifully ordained that the mightiest blows of misfortune are tempered for us. During the winter evenings in Coniston, Cynthia had read little newspaper attacks on Jethro, and scorned them as the cowardly devices of enemies. They had been, indeed, but guarded and covert allusions—grimaces from a safe distance. Cynthia's first sensation as she read was anger—anger so intense as to send all the blood in her body rushing to her head. But what was this? "Right had found a champion at last" in—in Isaac D. Worthington! That was the first blow, and none but Cynthia knew the weight of it. It sank but slowly into her consciousness, and slowly the blood left her face, slowly but surely: left it at length as white as the lace curtain of the window which she clutched in her distress. Words which somebody had spoken were ringing in her ears. Whatever happens! "Whatever happens I will never desert you, never deny you, as long as I live." This, then, was what he had meant by newspapers, and why he had come to her!

The sisters, watching her, cried out in dismay. There was no need to tell them that they were looking on at a tragedy, and all the love and sympathy in their hearts went out to her.

"Cynthia! Cynthia! What is it?" cried Susan, who, thinking she would faint, seized her in her arms. "What have I done?"

Cynthia did not faint, being made of sterner substance. Gently, but with that inexorable instinct of her kind which compels them to look for reliance within themselves even in the direst of extremities, Cynthia released herself from Susan's embrace and put a hand to her forehead.

"Will you leave me here a little while—alone?" she said.

It was Jane now who drew Susan out and shut the door of the parlor after them. In utter misery they waited on the stairs while Cynthia fought out her battle for herself.

When they were gone she sank down into the big chair under the reading lamp—the very chair in which he had sat only two nights before. She saw now with a terrible clearness the thing which for so long had been but a vague premonition of disaster, and for a while she forgot the clippings. And when after a space the touch of them in her hand brought them back to her remembrance, she lacked the courage to read them through. But not for long. Suddenly her fear of them gave place to a consuming hatred of the man who had inspired these articles: of Isaac D. Worthington, for she knew that he must have inspired them. And then she began again to read them.

Truth, though it come perverted from the mouth of an enemy, has in itself a note to which the soul responds, let the mind deny as vehemently as it will. Cynthia read, and as she read her body was shaken with sobs, though the tears came not. Could it be

true? Could the least particle of the least of these fearful insinuations be true? Oh, the treason of those whispers in a voice that was surely not her own, and

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yet which she could not hush! Was it possible that such things could be printed about one whom she had admired and respected above all men—nay, whom she had so passionately adored from childhood? A monster of iniquity, a pariah! The cruel, bitter calumny of those names! Cynthia thought of his goodness and loving kindness and his charity to her and to many others. His charity! The dreaded voice repeated that word, and sent a thought that struck terror into her heart: Whence had come the substance of that charity? Then came another word—mortgage. There it was on the paper, and at sight of it there leaped out of her memory a golden-green poplar shimmering against the sky and the distant blue billows of mountains in the west. She heard the high-pitched voice of a woman speaking the word, and even then it had had a hateful sound, and she heard herself asking, “Uncle Jethro, what is a mortgage?” He had struck his horse with the whip.

Loyal though the girl was, the whispers would not hush, nor the doubts cease to assail her. What if ever so small a portion of this were true? Could the whole of this hideous structure, tier resting upon tier, have been reared without something of a foundation? Fiercely though she told herself she would believe none of it, fiercely though she hated Mr. Worthington, fervently though she repeated aloud that her love for Jethro and her faith in him had not changed, the doubts remained. Yet they remained unacknowledged.

An hour passed. It was a thing beyond belief that one hour could have held such a store of agony. An hour passed, and Cynthia came dry-eyed from the parlor. Susan and Jane, waiting to give her comfort when she was recovered a little from this unknown but overwhelming affliction, were fain to stand mute when they saw her to pay a silent deference to one whom sorrow had lifted far above them and transfigured. That was the look on Cynthia’s face. She went up the stairs, and they stood in the hall not knowing what to do, whispering in awe-struck voices. They were still there when Cynthia came down again, dressed for the street. Jane seized her by the hand.

“Where are you going, Cynthia?” she asked.

“I shall be back by five,” said Cynthia.

She went up the hill, and across to old Louisburg Square, and up the hill again. The weather had cleared, the violet-paned windows caught the slanting sunlight and flung it back across the piles of snow. It was a day for wedding-bells. At last Cynthia came to a queerly fashioned little green door that seemed all askew with the slanting street, and rang the bell, and in another moment was standing on the threshold of Miss Lucretia Penniman’s little sitting room. To Miss Lucretia, at her writing table, one glance was sufficient. She rose quickly to meet the girl, kissed her unresponsive cheek, and led her

to a chair. Miss Lucretia was never one to beat about the bush, even in the gravest crisis.

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“You have read the articles,” she said.

Read them! During her walk hither Cynthia had been incapable of thought, but the epithets and arraignments and accusations, the sentences and paragraphs, wars printed now, upon her brain, never, she believed, to be effaced. Every step of the way she had been unconsciously repeating them.

“Have you read them?” asked Cynthia.

“Yes, my dear.”

“Has everybody read them?” Did the whole world, then, know of her shame?

“I am glad you came to me, my dear,” said Miss Lucretia, taking her hand. “Have you talked of this to any one else?”

“No,” said Cynthia, simply.

Miss Lucretia was puzzled. She had not looked for apathy, but she did not know all of Cynthia’s troubles. She wondered whether she had misjudged the girl, and was misled by her attitude.

“Cynthia,” she said, with a briskness meant to hide emotion for Miss Lucretia had emotions, “I am a lonely old woman, getting too old, indeed, to finish the task of my life. I went to see Mrs. Merrill the other day to ask her if she would let you come and live with me. Will you?”

Cynthia shook her head.

“No, Miss Lucretia, I cannot,” she answered.

“I won’t press it on you now,” said Miss Lucretia.

“I cannot, Miss Lucretia. I’m going to Coniston.”

“Going to Coniston!” exclaimed Miss Lucretia.

The name of that place—magic name, once so replete with visions of happiness and content—seemed to recall Cynthia’s spirit from its flight. Yes, the spirit was there, for it flashed in her eyes as she turned and looked into Miss Lucretia’s face.

“Are these the articles you read?” she asked; taking the clippings from her muff.

Miss Lucretia put on her spectacles.

“I have seen both of them,” she said.

“And do you believe what they say about—about Jethro Bass?”

Poor Miss Lucretia! For once in her life she was at a loss. She, too, paid a deference to that face, young as it was. She had robbed herself of sleep trying to make up her mind what she would say upon such an occasion if it came. A wonderful virgin faith had to be shattered, and was she to be the executioner? She loved the girl with that strange, intense affection which sometimes comes to the elderly and the lonely, and she had prayed that this cup might pass from her. Was it possible that it was her own voice using very much the same words for which she had rebuked Mrs. Merrill?

“Cynthia,” she said, “those articles were written by politicians, in a political controversy. No such articles can ever be taken literally.”

“Miss Lucretia, do you believe what it says about Jethro Bass?” repeated Cynthia.

How was she to avoid those eyes? They pierced into, her soul, even as her own had pierced into Mrs. Merrill’s. Oh, Miss Lucretia, who pride yourself on your plain speaking, that you should be caught quibbling! Miss Lucretia blushed for the first time in many, years, and into her face came the light of battle.

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“I am a coward, my dear. I deserve your rebuke. To the best of my knowledge and belief, and so far as I can judge from the inquiries I have undertaken, Jethro Bass has made his living and gained and held his power by the methods described in those articles.”

Miss Lucretia took off her spectacles and wiped them. She had committed a fine act of courage.

Cynthia stood up.

“Thank you,” she said, “that is what I wanted to know.”

“But—” cried Miss Lucretia, in amazement and apprehension, “but what are you going to do?”

“I am going to Coniston,” said Cynthia, “to ask him if those things are true.”

“To ask him!”

“Yes. If he tells me they are true, then I shall believe them.”

“If he tells you?” Miss Lucretia gasped. Here was a courage of which she had not reckoned. “Do you think he will tell you?”

“He will tell me, and I shall believe him, Miss Lucretia.”

“You are a remarkable girl, Cynthia,” said Miss Lucretia, involuntarily. Then she paused for a moment. “Suppose he tells you they are true? You surely can’t live with him again, Cynthia.”

“Do you suppose I am going to desert him, Miss Lucretia?” she asked. “He loves me, and—and I love him.” This was the first time her voice had faltered. “He kept my father from want and poverty, and he has brought me up as a daughter. If his life has been as you say, I shall make my own living!”

“How?” demanded Miss Lucretia, the practical part of her coming uppermost.

“I shall teach school. I believe I can get a position, in a place where I can see him often. I can break his heart, Miss Lucretia, I—I can bring sadness to myself, but I will not desert him.”

Miss Lucretia stared at her for a moment, not knowing what to say or do. She perceived that the girl had a spirit as strong as her own: that her plans were formed, her mind made up, and that no arguments could change her.

“Why did you come to me?” she asked irrelevantly.

“Because I thought that you would have read the articles, and I knew if you had, you would have taken the trouble to inform yourself of the world’s opinion.”

Again Miss Lucretia stared at her.

“I will go to Coniston with you,” she said, “at least as far as Brampton.”

Cynthia’s face softened a little at the words.

“I would rather go alone, Miss Lucretia,” she answered gently, but with the same firmness. “I—I am very grateful to you for your kindness to me in Boston. I shall not forget it—or you. Good-by, Miss Lucretia.”

But Miss Lucretia, sobbing openly, gathered the girl in her arms and pressed her. Age was coming on her indeed, that she should show such weakness. For a long time she could not trust herself to speak, and then her words were broken. Cynthia must come to her at the first sign of doubt or trouble: this, Miss Lucretia’s house, was to be a refuge in any storm that life might send—and Miss Lucretia’s heart. Cynthia promised, and when she went out at last through the little door her own tears were falling, for she loved Miss Lucretia.

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Cynthia was going to Coniston. That journey was as fixed, as inevitable, as things mortal can be. She would go to Coniston unless she perished on the way. No loving entreaties, no fears of Mrs. Merrill or her daughters, were of any avail. Mrs. Merrill too, was awed by the vastness of the girl's sorrow, and wondered if her own nature were small by comparison. She had wept, to be sure, at her husband's confession, and lain awake over it in the night watches, and thought of the early days of their marriage.

And then, Mrs. Merrill told herself, Cynthia would have to talk with Mr. Merrill. How was he to come unscathed out of that? There was pain and bitterness in that thought, and almost resentment against Cynthia, quivering though she was with sympathy for the girl. For Mrs. Merrill, though the canker remained, had already pardoned her husband and had asked the forgiveness of God for that pardon. On other occasions, in other crisis, she had waited and watched for him in the parlor window, and to-night she was at the door before his key was in the lock, while he was still stamping the snow from his boots. She drew him into the room and told him what had happened.

"Oh, Stephen," she cried, "what are you going to say to her?"

What, indeed? His wife had sorrowed, but she had known the obstacles and perils by which he had been beset. But what was he to say to Cynthia? Her very name had grown upon him, middle-aged man of affairs though he was, until the thought of it summoned up in his mind a figure of purity, and of the strength which was from purity. He would not have believed it possible that the country girl whom they had taken into their house three months before should have wrought such an influence over them all.

Even in the first hour of her sorrow which she had spent that afternoon in the parlor, Cynthia had thought of Mr. Merrill. He could tell her whether those accusations were true or false, for he was a friend of Jethro's. Her natural impulse—the primeval one of a creature which is hurt—had been to hide herself; to fly to her own room, and perhaps by nightfall the courage would come to her to ask him the terrible questions. He was a friend of Jethro's. An illuminating flash revealed to her the meaning of that friendship—if the accusations were true. It was then she had thought of Miss Lucretia Penniman, and somehow she had found the courage to face the sunlight and go to her. She would spare Mr. Merrill.

But had she spared him? Sadly the family sat down to supper without her, and after supper Mr. Merrill sent a message to his club that he could not attend a committee meeting there that evening. He sat with his wife in the little writing room, he pretending to read and she pretending to sew, until the silence grew too oppressive, and they spoke of the matter that was in their hearts. It was one of the bitterest evenings in Mr. Merrill's life, and there is no need to linger on it. They talked earnestly of Cynthia, and of her future. But they both knew why she did not come down to them.

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“So she is really going to Coniston,” said Mr. Merrill.

“Yes,” answered Mrs. Merrill, “and I think she is doing right, Stephen.”

Mr. Merrill groaned. His wife rose and put her hand on his shoulder.

“Come, Stephen,” she said gently, “you will see her in the morning.

“I will go to Coniston with her,” he said.

“No,” replied Mrs. Merrily “she wants to go alone. And I believe it is best that she should.”

CHAPTER XII

Great afflictions generally bring in their train a host of smaller sorrows, each with its own little pang. One of these sorrows had been the parting with the Merrill family. Under any circumstance it was not easy for Cynthia to express her feelings, and now she had found it very difficult to speak of the gratitude and affection which she felt. But they understood—dear, good people that they were: no eloquence was needed with them. The ordeal of breakfast over, and the tearful “God bless you, Miss Cynthia,” of Ellen the parlor-maid, the whole family had gone with her to the station. For Susan and Jane had spent their last day at Miss Sadler’s school.

Mr. Merrill had sent for the conductor and bidden him take care of Miss Wetherell, and recommend her in his name to a conductor on the Truro Road. The man took off his cap to Mr. Merrill and called him by name and promised. It was a dark day, and long after the train had pulled out Cynthia remembered the tearful faces of the family standing on the damp platform of the station. As they fled northward through the flat river-meadows, the conductor would have liked to talk to her of Mr. Merrill; there were few employees on any railroad who did not know the genial and kindly president of the Grand Gulf and sympathize with his troubles. But there was a look on the girl’s face that forbade intrusion. Passengers stared at her covertly, as though fascinated by that look, and some tried to fathom it. But her eyes were firmly fixed upon a point far beyond their vision. The car stopped many times, and flew on again, but nothing seemed to break her absorption.

At last she was aroused by the touch of the conductor on her sleeve. The people were beginning to file out of the car, and the train was under the shadow of the snow-covered sheds in the station of the state capital. Cynthia recognized the place, though it was cold and bare and very different in appearance from what it had been on the summer’s evening when she had come into it with her father. That, in effect, had been her first glimpse of the world, and well she recalled the thrill it had given her. The joy of such

things was gone now, the rapture of holidays and new sights. These were over, so she told herself. Sorrow had quenched the thrills forever.

The kind conductor led her to the eating room, and when she would not eat his concern drew greater than ever. He took a strange interest in this young lady who had such a face and such eyes. He pointed her out to his friend the Truro conductor, and gave him some sandwiches and fruit which he himself had bought, with instructions to press them on her during the afternoon.

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Cynthia could not eat. She hated this place, with its memories. Hated it, too, as a mart where men were bought and sold, for the wording of those articles ran in her head as though some priest of evil were chanting them in her ears. She did not remember then the sweeter aspect of the old town, its pretty homes set among their shaded gardens—-homes full of good and kindly people. State House affairs were far removed from most of these, and the sickness and corruption of the body politic. And this political corruption, had she known it, was no worse than that of the other states in the wide Union: not so bad, indeed, as many, though this was small comfort. No comfort at all to Cynthia, who did not think of it.

After a while she rose and followed the new conductor to the Truro train, glad to leave the capital behind her. She was going to the hills—to the mountains. They, in truth, could not change, though the seasons passed over them, hot and cold, wet and dry. They were immutable in their goodness. Presently she saw them, the lower ones: the waters of the little stream beside her broke the black bonds of ice and raced over the rapids; the engine was puffing and groaning on the grade. Then the sun crept out, slowly, from the indefinable margin of vapor that hung massed over the low country.

Yes, she had come to the hills. Up and up climbed the train, through the little white villages in the valley nooks, banked with whiter snow; through the narrow gorges,—-sometimes hanging over them,—under steep granite walls seared with ice-filled cracks, their brows hung with icicles.

Truro Pass is not so high as the Brenner, but it has a grand, wild look in winter, remote as it is from the haunts of men. A fitting refuge, it might be, for a great spirit heavy with the sins of the world below. Such a place might have been chosen, in the olden time, for a monastery—a gray fastness built against the black forest over the crag looking down upon the green clumps of spruces against the snow. Some vague longing for such a refuge was in Cynthia's heart as she gazed upon that silent place, and then the waters had already begun to run westward—the waters of Tumble Down brook, which flowed into Coniston Water above Brampton. The sun still had more than two hours to go on its journey to the hill crests when the train pulled into Brampton station. There were but a few people on the platform, but the first face she saw as she stepped from the car was Lem Hallowell's. It was a very red face, as we know, and its owner was standing in front of the Coniston stage, on runners now. He stared at her for an instant, and no wonder, and then he ran forward with outstretched hands.

"Cynthy—Cynthy Wetherell!" he cried. "Great Godfrey!"

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He got so far, he seized her hands, and then he stopped, not knowing why. There were many more ejaculations and welcomes and what not on the end of his tongue. It was not that she had become a lady—a lady of a type he had never before seen. He meant to say that, too, in his own way, but he couldn't. And that transformation would have bothered Lem but little. What was the change, then? Why was he in awe of her—he, Lem Hallowell, who had never been in awe of any one? He shook his head, as though openly confessing his inability to answer that question. He wanted to ask others, but they would not come.

"Lem," she said, "I am so glad you are here."

"Climb right in, Cynthy. I'll get the trunk." There it lay, the little rawhide one before him on the boards, and he picked it up in his bare hands as though it had been a paper parcel. It was a peculiarity of the stage driver that he never wore gloves, even in winter, so remarkable was the circulation of his blood. After the trunk he deposited, apparently with equal ease, various barrels and boxes, and then he jumped in beside Cynthia, and they drove down familiar Brampton Street, as wide as a wide river; past the meeting-house with the terraced steeple; past the postoffice,—Cousin Ephraim's postoffice,—-where Lem gave her a questioning look—but she shook her head, and he did not wait for the distribution of the last mail that day; past the great mansion of Isaac D. Worthington, where the iron mastiffs on the lawn were up to their muzzles in snow. After that they took the turn to the right, which was the road to Coniston.

Well-remembered road, and in winter or summer, Cynthia knew every tree and farmhouse beside it. Now it consisted of two deep grooves in the deep snow; that was all, save for a curving turnout here and there for team to pass team. Well-remembered scene! How often had Cynthia looked upon it in happier days! Such a crust was on the snow as would bear a heavy man; and the pasture hillocks were like glazed cakes in the window of a baker's shop. Never had the western sky looked so yellow through the black columns of the pine trunks. A lonely, beautiful road it was that evening.

For a long time the silence of the great hills was broken only by the sweet jingle of the bells on the shaft. Many a day, winter and summer, Lem had gone that road alone, whistling, and never before heeding that silence. Now it seemed to symbolize a great sorrow: to be in subtle harmony with that of the girl at his side. What that sorrow was he could not guess. The good man yearned to comfort her, and yet he felt his comfort too humble to be noticed by such sorrow. He longed to speak, but for the first time in his life feared the sound of his own voice. Cynthia had not spoken since she left the station, had not looked at him, had not asked for the friends and neighbors whom she had loved so well—had not asked for Jethro! Was there any sorrow on earth to be felt like that? And was there one to feel it?

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At length, when they reached the great forest, Lem Hallowell knew that he must speak or cry aloud. But what would be the sound of his voice—after such an age of disuse? Could he speak at all? Broken and hoarse and hideous though the sound might be, he must speak. And hoarse and broken it was. It was not his own, but still it was a voice.

“Folks—folks’ll be surprised to see you, Cynthy.”

No, he had not spoken at all. Yes, he had, for she answered him.

“I suppose they will, Lem.”

“Mighty glad to have you back, Cynthy. We think a sight of you. We missed you.”

“Thank you, Lem.”

“Jethro hain’t lookin’ for you by any chance, be he?

“No,” she said. But the question startled her. Suppose he had not been at home! She had never once thought of that. Could she have borne to wait for him?

After that Lem gave it up. He had satisfied himself as to his vocal powers, but he had not the courage even to whistle. The journey to Coniston was faster in the winter, and at the next turn of the road the little village came into view. There it was, among the snows. The pain in Cynthia’s heart, so long benumbed, quickened when she saw it. How write of the sharpness of that pain to those who have never known it? The sight of every gable brought its agony,—the store with the checker-paned windows, the harness shop, the meeting-house, the white parsonage on its little hill. Rias Richardson ran out of the store in his carpet slippers, bareheaded in the cold, and gave one shout. Lem heeded him not; did not stop there as usual, but drove straight to the tannery house and pulled up under the butternut tree. Milly Skinner ran out on the porch, and gave one long look, and cried:—

“Good Lord, it’s Cynthy!”

“Where’s Jethro?” demanded Lem.

Milly did not answer at once. She was staring at Cynthia.

“He’s in the tannery shed,” she said, “choppin’ wood.” But still she kept her eyes on Cynthia’s face. “I’ll fetch him.”

“No,” said Cynthia, “I’ll go to him there.”

She took the path, leaving Millicent with her mouth open, too amazed to speak again, and yet not knowing why.

In the tannery shed! Would Jethro remember what happened there almost six and thirty years before? Would he remember how that other Cynthia had come to him there, and what her appeal had been?

Cynthia came to the doors. One of these was open now—both had been closed that other evening against the storm of sleet—and she caught a glimpse of him standing on the floor of chips and bark—tan-bark no more. Cynthia caught a glimpse of him, and love suddenly welled up into her heart as waters into a spring after a drought. He had not seen her, not heard the sound of the sleigh-bells. He was standing with his foot upon the sawbuck and the saw across his knee, he was staring at the woodpile, and there was stamped upon his face a look which no man or woman had ever seen there, a look of utter loneliness and desolation, a look as of a soul condemned to wander forever through the infinite, cold spaces between the worlds—alone.

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Cynthia stopped at sight of it. What had been her misery and affliction compared to this? Her limbs refused her, though she knew not whether she would have fled or rushed into his arms. How long she stood thus, and he stood, may not be said, but at length he put down his foot and took the saw from his knee, his eyes fell upon her, and his lips spoke her name.

“Cynthy!”

Speechless, she ran to him and flung her arms about his neck, and he dropped the saw and held her tightly—even as he had held that other Cynthia in that place in the year gone by. And yet not so. Now he clung to her with a desperation that was terrible, as though to let go of her would be to fall into nameless voids beyond human companionship and love. But at last he did release her, and stood looking down into her face, as if seeking to read a sentence there.

And how was she to pronounce that sentence! Though her faith might be taken away, her love remained, and grew all the greater because he needed it. Yet she knew that no subterfuge or pretence would avail her to hide why she had come. She could not hide it. It must be spoken out now, though death was preferable.

And he was waiting. Did he guess? She could not tell. He had spoken no word but her name. He had expressed no surprise at her appearance, asked no reasons for it. Superlatives of suffering or joy or courage are hard to convey—words fall so far short of the feeling. And Cynthia’s pain was so far beyond tears.

“Uncle Jethro,” she said, “yesterday something—something happened. I could not stay in Boston any longer.”

He nodded.

“I had to come to you. I could not wait.”

He nodded again.

“I—I read something.” To take a white-hot iron and sear herself would have been easier than this.

“Yes,” he said.

She felt that the look was coming again—the look which she had surprised in his face. His hands dropped lifelessly from her shoulders, and he turned and went to the door, where he stood with his back to her, silhouetted against the eastern sky all pink from the reflection of sunset. He would not help her. Perhaps he could not. The things were true. There had been a grain of hope within her, ready to sprout.

“I read two articles from the Newcastle Guardian about you—about your life.”

“Yes,” he said. But he did not turn.

“How you had—how you had earned your living. How you had gained your power,” she went on, her pain lending to her voice an exquisite note of many modulations.

“Yes—Cynthy,” he said, and still stared at the eastern sky.

She took two steps toward him, her arms outstretched, her fingers opening and closing. And then she stopped.

“I would believe no one,” she said, “I will believe no one—until—unless you tell me. Uncle Jethro,” she cried in agony, “Uncle Jethro, tell me that those things are not true!”

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She waited a space, but he did not stir. There was no sound, save the song of Coniston Water under the shattered ice.

“Won’t you speak to me?” she whispered. “Won’t you tell me that they are not true?”

His shoulders shook convulsively. O for the right to turn to her and tell her that they were lies! He would have bartered his soul for it. What was all the power in the world compared to this priceless treasure he had lost? Once before he had cast it away, though without meaning to. Then he did not know the eternal value of love—of such love as those two women had given him. Now he knew that it was beyond value, the one precious gift of life, and the knowledge had come too late. Could he have saved his life if he had listened to that other Cynthia?

“Won’t you tell me that they are not true?”

Even then he did not turn to her, but he answered. Curious to relate, though his heart was breaking, his voice was steady—steady as it always had been.

“I—I’ve seen it comin’, Cynthy,” he said. “I never knowed anything I was afraid of before—but I was afraid of this. I knowed what your notions of right and wrong was—your—-your mother had them. They’re the principles of good people. I—I knowed the day would come when you’d ask, but I wanted to be happy as long as I could. I hain’t been happy, Cynthy. But you was right when you said I’d tell you the truth. S-so I will. I guess them things which you speak about are true—the way I got where I am, and the way I made my livin’. They—they hain’t put just as they’d ought to be, perhaps, but that’s the way I done it in the main.”

It was thus that Jethro Bass met the supreme crisis of his life. And who shall say he did not meet it squarely and honestly? Few men of finer fibre and more delicate morals would have acquitted themselves as well. That was a Judgment Day for Jethro; and though he knew it not, he spoke through Cynthia to his Maker, confessing his faults freely and humbly, and dwelling on the justness of his punishment; putting not forward any good he may have done; nor thinking of it; nor seeking excuse because of the light that was in him. Had he been at death’s door in the face of nameless tortures, no man could have dragged such a confession from him. But a great love had been given him, and to that love he must speak the truth, even at the cost of losing it.

But he was not to lose it. Even as he was speaking a thrill of admiration ran through Cynthia, piercing her sorrow. The superb strength of the man was there in that simple confession, and it is in the nature of woman to admire strength. He had fought his fight, and gained, and paid the price without a murmur, seeking no palliation. Cynthia had not come to that trial—so bitter for her—as a judge. If the reader has seen youth and innocence sitting in the seat of justice, with age and experience at the bar, he has mistaken Cynthia. She came to Coniston inexorable, it is true, because hers was a

nature impelled to do right though it perish. She did not presume to say what Jethro's lights and opportunities might have been. Her own she knew, and by them she must act accordingly.

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When he had finished speaking, she stole silently to his side and slipped her hand in his. He trembled violently at her touch.

“Uncle Jethro,” she said in a low tone, “I love you.”

At the words he trembled more violently still.

“No, no, Cynthy,” he answered thickly, “don’t say that—I—I don’t expect it, Cynthy, I know you can’t—’twouldn’t be right, Cynthy. I hain’t fit for it.”

“Uncle Jethro,” she said, “I love you better than I have ever loved you in my life.”

Oh, how welcome were the tears! and how human! He turned, pitifully incredulous, wondering that she should seek by deceit to soften the blow; he saw them running down her cheeks, and he believed. Yes, he believed, though it seemed a thing beyond belief. Unworthy, unfit though he were, she loved him. And his own love as he gazed at her, sevenfold increased as it had been by the knowledge of losing her, changed in texture from homage to worship—nay, to adoration. His punishment would still be heavy; but whence had come such a wondrous gift to mitigate it?

“Oh, don’t you believe me?” she cried, “can’t you see that it is true?”

And yet he could only hold her there at arm’s length with that new and strange reverence in his face. He was not worthy to touch her, but still she loved him.

The flush had faded from the eastern sky, and the faintest border of yellow light betrayed the ragged outlines of the mountain as they walked together to the tannery house.

Millicent, in the kitchen, was making great preparations—for Millicent. Miss Skinner was a person who had hitherto laid it down as a principle of life to pay deference or do honor to no human made of mere dust, like herself. Millicent’s exception; if Cynthia had thought about it, was a tribute of no mean order. Cynthia, alas, did not think about it: she did not know that, in her absence, the fire had not been lighted in the evening, Jethro supping on crackers and milk and Milly partaking of the evening meal at home. Moreover, Miss Skinner had an engagement with a young man. Cynthia saw the fire, and threw off her sealskin coat which Mr. and Mrs. Merrill had given her for Christmas, and took down the saucepan from the familiar nail on which it hung. It was a miraculous fact, for which she did not attempt to account, that she was almost happy: happy, indeed, in comparison to that which had been her state since the afternoon before. Millicent snatched the saucepan angrily from her hand.

“What be you doin’, Cynthy?” she demanded.

Such was Miss Skinner's little way of showing deference. Though deference is not usually vehement, Miss Skinner's was very real, nevertheless.

"Why, Milly, what's the matter?" exclaimed Cynthia, in astonishment.

"You hain't a-goin' to do any cookin', that's all," said Milly, very red in the face.

"But I've always helped," said Cynthia. "Why not?"

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Why not? A tribute was one thing, but to have to put the reasons for that tribute, into words was quite another.

“Why not?” cried Milly, “because you hain’t a-goin’ to, that’s all.”

Strange deference! But Cynthia turned and looked at the girl with a little, sad smile of comprehension and affection. She took her by the shoulders and kissed her.

Whereupon a most amazing thing happened—Millicent burst into tears—wild, ungovernable tears they were.

“Because you hain’t a-goin’ to,” she repeated, her words interspersed with violent sobs. “You go ’way, Cynthy,” she cried, “git out!”

“Milly,” said Cynthia, shaking her head, “you ought to be ashamed of yourself.” But they were not words of reproof. She took a little lamp from the shelf, and went up the narrow stairs to her own room in the gable, where Lemuel had deposited the rawhide trunk.

Though she had had nothing all day, she felt no hunger, but for Milly’s sake she tried hard to eat the supper when it came. Before it had fairly begun Moses Hatch had arrived, with Amandy and Eben; and Rias Richardson came in, and other neighbors, to say a word of welcome to hear (if the truth be not too disparaging to their characters) the reasons for her sudden appearance, and such news of her Boston experiences as she might choose to give them. They had learned from Lem Hallowell that Cynthia had returned a lady: a real lady, not a sham one who relied on airs and graces, such as had come to Coniston the summer before to look for a summer place on the painter’s recommendation. Lem was not a gossip, in the disagreeable sense of the term, and he had not said a word to his neighbors of his feelings on that terrible drive from Brampton. Knowing that some blow had fallen upon Cynthia, he would have spared her these visits if he could. But Lem was wise and kind, so he merely said that she had returned a lady.

And they had found a lady. As they stood or sat around the kitchen (Eben and Rias stood), Cynthia talked to them—about Coniston: rather, be it said, that they talked about Coniston in answer to her questions. The sledding had been good; Moses had hauled so many thousand feet of lumber to Brampton; Sam Price’s woman (she of Harwich) had had a spell of sciatica; Chester Perkins’s bull had tossed his brother-in-law, come from Iowy on a visit, and broke his leg; yes, Amandy guessed her dyspepsy was somewhat improved since she had tried Graham’s Golden Remedy—it made her feel real lighthearted; Eben (blushing furiously) was to have the Brook Farm in the spring; there was a case of spotted fever in Tarleton.

Yes, Lem Hallowell had been right, Cynthia was a lady, but not a mite stuck up. What was the difference in her? Not her clothes, which she wore as if she had been used to

them all her life. Poor Cynthia, the clothes were simple enough. Not her manner, which was as kind and sweet as ever. What was it that compelled their talk about themselves, that made them refrain from asking those questions about Boston, and why she had come back? Some such query was running in their minds as they talked, while Jethro, having finished his milk and crackers, sat silent at the end of the table with his eyes upon her. He rose when Mr. Satterlee came in.

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Mr. Satterlee looked at her, and then he went quietly across the room and kissed her. But then Mr. Satterlee was the minister. Cynthia thought his hair a little thinner and the lines in his face a little deeper. And Mr. Satterlee thought perhaps he was the only one of the visitors who guessed why she had come back. He laid his thin hand on her head, as though in benediction, and sat down beside her.

“And how is the learning, Cynthia?” he asked.

Now, indeed, they were going to hear something at last. An intuition impelled Cynthia to take advantage of that opportunity.

“The learning has become so great, Mr. Satterlee,” she said, “that I have come back to try to make some use of it. It shall be wasted no more.”

She did not dare to look at Jethro, but she was aware that he had sat down abruptly. What sacrifice will not a good woman make to ease the burden of those whom she loves! And Jethro’s burden would be heavy enough. Such a woman will speak almost gayly, though her heart be heavy. But Cynthia’s was lighter now than it had been.

“I was always sure you would not waste your learning, Cynthia,” said Mr. Satterlee, gravely; “that you would make the most of the advantages God has given you.”

“I am going to try, Mr. Satterlee. I cannot be content in idleness. I was wasting time in Boston, and I—I was not happy so far away from you all—from Uncle Jethro. Mr. Satterlee, I am going to teach school. I have always wanted to, and now I have made up my mind to do it.”

This was Jethro’s punishment. But had she not lightened it for him a little by choosing this way of telling him that she could not eat his bread or partake of his bounty? Though by reason of that bounty she was what she was, she could not live and thrive on it longer, coming as it did from such a source. Mr. Satterlee might perhaps surmise the truth, but the town and village would think her ambition a very natural one, certainly no better time could have been chosen to announce it.

“To teach school.” She was sure now that Mr. Satterlee knew and approved, and perceived something, at least, of her little ruse. He was a man whose talents fitted him for a larger flock than he had at Coniston, but he possessed neither the graces demanded of city ministers nor the power of pushing himself. Never was a more retiring man. The years she had spent in his study had not gone for nothing, for he who has cherished the bud can predict what the flower will be, and Mr. Satterlee knew her spiritually better than any one else in Coniston. He had heard of her return, and had walked over to the tannery house, full of fears, the remembrance of those expressions of simple faith in Jethro coming back to his mind. Had the revelation which he had so long expected come at last? and how had she taken it? would it embitter her? The

good man believed that it would not, and now he saw that it had not, and rejoiced accordingly.

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“To teach school,” he said. “I expected that you would wish to, Cynthia. It is a desire that most of us have, who like books and what is in them. I should have taught school if I had not become a minister. It is a high calling, and an absorbing one, to develop the minds of the young.” Mr. Satterlee was often a little discursive, though there was reason for it on this occasion, and Moses Hatch half closed his eyes and bowed his head a little out of sheer habit at the sound of the minister’s voice. But he raised it suddenly at the next words. “I was in Brampton yesterday, and saw Mr. Graves, who is on the prudential committee of that district. You may not have heard that Miss Goddard has left. They have not yet succeeded in filling her place, and I think it more than likely that you can get it.”

Cynthia glanced at Jethro, but the habit of years was so strong in him that he gave no sign.

“Do you think so, Mr. Satterlee?” she said gratefully. “I had heard of the place, and hoped for it, because it is near enough for me to spend the Saturdays and Sundays with Uncle Jethro. And I meant to go to Brampton tomorrow to see about it.”

“I will go with you,” said the minister; “I have business in Brampton to-morrow.” He did not mention that this was the business.

When at length they had all departed, Jethro rose and went about the house making fast the doors, as was his custom, while Cynthia sat staring through the bars at the dying embers in the stove. He knew now, and it was inevitable that he should know, what she had made up her mind to do. It had been decreed that she, who owed him everything, should be made to pass this most dreadful of censures upon his whole life. Oh, the cruelty of that decree!

How, she mused, would it affect him? Had the blow been so great that he would relinquish those practices which had become a lifelong habit with him? Would he (she caught her breath at this thought) would he abandon that struggle with Isaac D. Worthington in which he was striving to maintain the mastery of the state by those very practices? Cynthia hated Mr. Worthington. The term is not too strong, and it expresses her feeling. But she would have got down on her knees on the board floor of the kitchen that very night and implored Jethro to desist from that contest, if she could. She remembered how, in her innocence, she had believed that the people had given Jethro his power,—in those days when she was so proud of that very power,—now she knew that he had wrested it from them. What more supreme sacrifice could he make than to relinquish it! Ah, there was a still greater sacrifice that Jethro was to make, had she known it.

He came and stood over her by the stove, and she looked up into his face with these yearnings in her eyes. Yes, she would have thrown herself on her knees, if she could. But she could not. Perhaps he would abandon that struggle. Perhaps—perhaps his

heart was broken. And could a man with a broken heart still fight on? She took his hand and pressed it against her face, and he felt that it was wet with her tears.

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“B-better go to bed now, Cynthy,” he said; “m-must be worn out—m-must be worn out.”

He stooped and kissed her on the forehead. It was thus that Jethro Bass accepted his sentence.

CHAPTER XIII

At sunrise, in that Coniston hill-country, it is the western hills which are red; and a distant hillock on the meadow farm which was soon to be Eden’s looked like the daintiest conical cake with pink icing as Cynthia surveyed the familiar view the next morning. There was the mountain, the pastures on the lower slopes all red, too, and higher up the dark masses of bristling spruce and pine and hemlock mottled with white where the snow-covered rocks showed through.

Sunrise in January is not very early, and sunrise at any season is not early for Coniston. Cynthia sat at her window, and wondered whether that beautiful landscape would any longer be hers. Her life had grown up on it; but now her life had changed. Would the beauty be taken from it, too? Almost hungrily she gazed at the scene. She might look upon it again—many times, perhaps—but a conviction was strong in her that its daily possession would now be only a memory.

Mr. Satterlee was as good as his word, for he was seated in the stage when it drew up at the tannery house, ready to go to Brampton. And as they drove away Cynthia took one last look at Jethro standing on the porch. It seemed to her that it had been given her to feel all things, and to know all things: to know, especially, this strange man, Jethro Bass, as none other knew him, and to love him as none other loved him. The last severe wrench was come, and she had left him standing there alone in the cold, divining what was in his heart as though it were in her own. How worthless was this mighty power which he had gained, how hateful, when he could not bestow the smallest fragment of it upon one whom he loved? Someone has described hell as disqualification in the face of opportunity. Such was Jethro’s torment that morning as he saw her drive away, the minister in the place where he should have been, at her side, and he, Jethro Bass, as helpless as though he had indeed been in the pit among the flames. Had the prudential committee at Brampton promised the appointment ten times over, he might still have obtained it for her by a word. And he must not speak even that word. Who shall say that a large part of the punishment of Jethro Bass did not come to him in the life upon this earth.

Some such thoughts were running in Cynthia’s head as they jingled away to Brampton that dazzling morning. Perhaps the stage driver, too, who knew something of men and things and who meddled not at all, had made a guess at the situation. He thought that Cynthia’s spirits seemed lightened a little, and he meant to lighten them more; so he

joked as much as his respect for his passengers would permit, and told the news of Brampton. Not the least of the

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news concerned the first citizen of that place. There was a certain railroad in the West which had got itself much into Congress, and much into the newspapers, and Isaac D. Worthington had got himself into that railroad: was gone West, it was said on that business, and might not be back for many weeks. And Lem Hallowell remembered when Mr. Worthington was a slim-cheated young man wandering up and down Coniston Water in search of health. Good Mr. Satterlee, thinking this a safe subject, allowed himself to be led into a discussion of the first citizen's career, which indeed had something fascinating in it.

Thus they jingled into Brampton Street and stopped before the cottage of Judge Graves—a courtesy title. The judge himself came to the door and bestowed a pronounced bow on the minister, for Mr. Satterlee was honored in Brampton. Just think of what Ezra Graves might have looked like, and you have him. He greeted Cynthia, too, with a warm welcome—for Ezra Graves,—and ushered them into a best parlor which was reserved for ministers and funerals and great occasions in general, and actually raised the blinds. Then Mr. Satterlee, with much hemming and hawing, stated the business which had brought them, while Cynthia looked out of the window.

Mr. Graves sat and twirled his lean thumbs. He went so far as to say that he admired a young woman who scorned to live in idleness, who wished to impart the learning with which she had been endowed. Fifteen applicants were under consideration for the position, and the prudential committee had so far been unable to declare that any of them were completely qualified. (It was well named, that prudential committee?) Mr. Graves, furthermore, volunteered that he had expressed a wish to Colonel Prescott (Oh, Ephraim, you too have got a title with your new honors!), to Colonel Prescott and others, that Miss Wetherell might take the place. The middle term opened on the morrow, and Miss Bruce, of the Worthington Free Library, had been induced to teach until a successor could be appointed, although it was most inconvenient for Miss Bruce.

Could Miss Wetherell start in at once, provided the committee agreed? Cynthia replied that she would like nothing better. There would be an examination before Mr. Errol, the Brampton Superintendent of Schools. In short, owing to the pressing nature of the occasion, the judge would take the liberty of calling the committee together immediately. Would Mr. Satterlee and Miss Wetherell make themselves at home in the parlor?

It very frequently happens that one member of a committee is the brain, and the other members form the body of it. It was so in this case. Ezra Graves typified all of prudence there was about it, which, it must be admitted, was a great deal. He it was who had weighed in the balance the fifteen applicants and found them wanting. Another member of the committee was that comfortable Mr. Dodd, with the tuft of yellow beard, the hardware dealer whom we have

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seen at the baseball game. Mr. Dodd was not a person who had opinions unless they were presented to him from certain sources, and then he had been known to cling to them tenaciously. It is sufficient to add that, when Cynthia Wetherell's name was mentioned to him, he remembered the girl to whom Bob Worthington had paid such marked attentions on the grand stand. He knew literally nothing else about Cynthia. Judge Graves, apparently, knew all about her; this was sufficient, at that time, for Mr. Dodd; he was sick and tired of the whole affair, and if, by the grace of heaven, an applicant had been sent who conformed with Judge Graves's multitude of requirements, he was devoutly thankful. The other member, Mr. Hill, was a feed and lumber dealer, and not a very good one, for he was always in difficulties; certain scholarly attainments were attributed to him, and therefore he had been put on the committee. They met in Mr. Dodd's little office back of the store, and in five minutes Cynthia was a schoolmistress, subject to examination by Mr. Errol.

Just a word about Mr. Errol. He was a retired lawyer, with some means, who took an interest in town affairs to occupy his time. He had a very delicate wife, whom he had been obliged to send South at the beginning of the winter. There she had for a while improved, but had been taken ill again, and two days before Cynthia's appointment he had been summoned to her bedside by a telegram. Cynthia could go into the school, and her examination would take place when Mr. Errol returned.

All this was explained by the judge when, half an hour after he had left them, he returned to the best parlor. Miss Wetherell would, then, be prepared to take the school the following morning. Whereupon the judge shook hands with her, and did not deny that he had been instrumental in the matter.

"And, Mr. Satterlee, I am so grateful to you," said Cynthia, when they were in the street once more.

"My dear Cynthia, I did nothing," answered the minister, quite bewildered by the quick turn affairs had taken; "it is your own good reputation that got you the place."

Nevertheless Mr. Satterlee had done his share in the matter. He had known Mr. Graves for a long time, and better than any other person in Brampton. Mr. Graves remembered Cynthia Ware, and indeed had spoken to Cynthia that day about her mother. Mr. Graves had also read poor William Wetherell's contributions to the Newcastle Guardian, and he had not read that paper since they had ceased. From time to time Mr. Satterlee had mentioned his pupil to the judge, whose mind had immediately flown to her when the vacancy occurred. So it all came about.

"And now," said Mr. Satterlee, "what will you do, Cynthia? We've got the good part of a day to arrange where you will live, before the stage returns."

“I won’t go back to-night, I think,” said Cynthia, turning her head away; “if you would be good enough to tell Uncle Jethro to send my trunk and some other things.”

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“Perhaps that is just as well,” assented the minister, understanding perfectly. “I have thought that Miss Bruce might be glad to board you,” he continued, after a pause. “Let us go to see her.”

“Mr. Satterlee,” said Cynthia, “would you mind if we went first to see Cousin Ephraim?”

“Why, of course, we must see Ephraim,” said Mr. Satterlee, briskly. So they walked on past the mansion of the first citizen, and the new block of stores which the first citizen had built, to the old brick building which held the Brampton post-office, and right through the door of the partition into the sanctum of the postmaster himself, which some one had nicknamed the Brampton Club. On this occasion the postmaster was seated in his shirt sleeves by the stove, alone, his listeners being conspicuously absent. Cynthia, who had caught a glimpse of him through the little mail-window, thought he looked very happy and comfortable.

“Great Tecumseh!” he cried,—an exclamation he reserved for extraordinary occasions, “if it hain’t Cynthy!”

He started to hobble toward her, but Cynthia ran to him.

“Why,” said he, looking at her closely after the greeting was over, “you be changed, Cynthy. Mercy, I don’t know as I’d have dared done that if I’d seed you first. What have you b’en doin’ to yourself? You must have seed a whole lot down there in Boston. And you’re a full-blown lady, too.”

“Oh, no, I’m not, Cousin Eph,” she answered, trying to smile.

“Yes, you be,” he insisted, still scrutinizing her, vainly trying to account for the change. Tact, as we know, was not Ephraim’s strong point. Now he shook his head. “You always was beyond me. Got a sort of air about you, and it grows on you, too. Wouldn’t be surprised,” he declared, speaking now to the minister, “wouldn’t be a mite surprised to see her in the White House, some day.”

“Now, Cousin Eph,” said Cynthia, coloring a little, “you mustn’t talk nonsense. What have you done with your coat? You have no business to go without it with your rheumatism.”

“It hain’t b’en so bad since Uncle Sam took me over again, Cynthy,” he answered, “with nothin’ to do but sort letters in a nice hot room.” The room was hot, indeed. “But where did you come from?”

“I grew tired of being taught, Cousin Eph. I—I’ve always wanted to teach. Mr. Satterlee has been with me to see Mr. Graves, and they’ve given me Miss Goddard’s place. I’m coming to Brampton to live, to-day.”

“Great Tecumseh!” exclaimed Ephraim again, overpowered by the yews. “I want to know! What does Jethro say to that?”

“He—he is willing,” she replied in a low voice.

“Well,” said Ephraim, “I always thought you’d come to it. It’s in the blood, I guess—-teachin’. Your mother had it too. I’m kind of sorry for Jethro, though, so I be. But I’m glad for myself, Cynthy. So you’re comin’ to Brampton to live with me!

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“I was going to ask Miss Bruce to take me in,” said Cynthia.

“No you hain’t, anything of the kind,” said Ephraim, indignantly. “I’ve got a little house up the street, and a room all ready for you.”

“Will you let me share expenses, Cousin Eph?”

“I’ll let you do anything you want,” said he, “so’s you come. Don’t you think she’d ought to come and take care of an old man, Mr. Satterlee?”

Mr. Satterlee turned. He had been contemplating, during this conversation, a life-size print of General Grant under two crossed flags, that was hung conspicuously on the wall.

“I do not think you could do better, Cynthia,” he answered, smiling. The minister liked Ephraim, and he liked a little joke, occasionally. He felt that one would not be, particularly out of place just now; so he repeated, “I do not think you could do better than to accept the offer of Colonel Prescott.”

Ephraim grew very red, as was his wont when twitted about his new title. He took things literally.

“I hain’t a colonel, no more than you be, Mr. Satterlee. But the boys down here will have it so.”

Three days later, by the early train which leaves the state capital at an unheard-of hour in the morning, a young man arrived in Brampton. His jaw seemed squarer than ever to the citizens who met the train out of curiosity, and to Mr. Dodd, who was expecting a pump; and there was a set look on his face like that of a man who is going into a race or a fight. Mr. Dodd, though astonished, hastened toward him.

“Well, this is unexpected, Bob,” said he. “How be you? Harvard College failed up?”

For Mr. Dodd never let slip a chance to assure a member of the Worthington family of his continued friendship.

“How are you, Mr. Dodd?” answered Bob, nodding at him carelessly, and passing on. Mr. Dodd did not dare to follow. What was young Worthington doing in Brampton, and his father in the West on that railroad business? Filled with curiosity, Mr. Dodd forgot his pump, but Bob was already striding into Brampton Street, carrying his bag. If he had stopped for a few moments with the hardware dealer, or chatted with any of the dozen people who bowed and stared at him, he might have saved himself a good deal of trouble. He turned in at the Worthington mansion, and rang the bell, which was answered by Sarah, the housemaid.

“Mr. Bob!” she exclaimed.

“Where’s Mrs. Holden?” he asked.

Mrs. Holden was the elderly housekeeper. She had gone, unfortunately, to visit a bereaved relative; unfortunately for Bob, because she, too, might have told him something.

“Get me some breakfast, Sarah. Anything,” he commanded, “and tell Silas to hitch up the black trotters to my cutter.”

Sarah, though in consternation, did as she was bid. The breakfast was forthcoming, and in half an hour Silas had the black trotters at the door. Bob got in without a word, seized the reins, the cutter flew down Brampton Street (observed by many of the residents thereof) and turned into the Coniston road. Silas said nothing. Silas, as a matter of fact, never did say anything. He had been the Worthington coachman for five and twenty years, and he was known in Brampton as Silas the Silent. Young Mr. Worthington had no desire to talk that morning.

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The black trotters covered the ten miles in much quicker time than Lem Hallowell could do it in his stage, but the distance seemed endless to Bob. It was not much more than half an hour after he had left Brampton Street, however, that he shot past the store, and by the time Rias Richardson in his carpet slippers reached the platform the cutter was in front of the tannery house, and the trotters, with their sides smoking, were pawing up the snow under the butternut tree.

Bob leaped out, hurried up the path, and knocked at the door. It was opened by Jethro Bass himself!

“How do you do, Mr. Bass,” said the young man, gravely, and he held out his hand. Jethro gave him such a scrutinizing look as he had given many a man whose business he cared to guess, but Bob looked fearlessly into his eyes. Jethro took his hand.

“C-come in,” he said.

Bob went into that little room where Jethro and Cynthia had spent so many nights together, and his glance flew straight to the picture on the wall,—the portrait of Cynthia Wetherell in crimson and seed pearls, so strangely set amidst such surroundings. His glance went to the portrait, and his feet followed, as to a lodestone. He stood in front of it for many minutes, in silence, and Jethro watched him. At last he turned.

“Where is she?” he asked.

It was a queer question, and Jethro’s answer was quite as lacking in convention.

“G-gone to Brampton—gone to Brampton.”

“Gone to Brampton! Do you mean to say—? What is she doing there?” Bob demanded.

“Teachin’ school,” said Jethro; “g-got Miss Goddard’s place.”

Bob did not reply for a moment. The little schoolhouse was the only building in Brampton he had glanced at as he came through. Mrs. Merrill had told him that she might take that place, but he had little imagined she was already there on her platform facing the rows of shining little faces at the desks. He had deemed it more than possible that he might see Jethro at Coniston, but he had not taken into account that which he might say to him. Bob had, indeed, thought of nothing but Cynthia, and of the blow that had fallen upon her. He had tried to realize the, multiple phases of the situation which confronted him. Here was the man who, by the conduct of his life, had caused the blow; he, too, was her benefactor; and again, this same man was engaged in the bitterest of conflicts with his father, Isaac D. Worthington, and it was this conflict which had precipitated that blow. Bob could not have guessed, by looking at Jethro Bass, how great was the sorrow which had fallen upon him. But Bob knew that Jethro

hated his father, must hate him now, because of Cynthia, with a hatred given to few men to feel. He thought that Jethro would crush Mr. Worthington and ruin him if he could; and Bob believed he could.

What was he to say? He did not fear Jethro, for Bob Worthington had courage enough; but these things were running in his mind, and he felt the power of the man before him, as all men did. Bob went to the window and came back again. He knew that he must speak.

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“Mr. Bass,” he said at last, “did Cynthia ever mention me to you?”

“No,” said Jethro.

“Mr. Bass, I love her. I have told her so, and I have asked her to be my wife.”

There was no need, indeed, to have told Jethro this. The shock of that revelation had come to him when he had seen the trotters, had been confirmed when the young man had stood before the portrait. Jethro’s face might have twitched when Bob stood there with his back to him.

Jethro could not speak. Once more there had come to him a moment when he would not trust his voice to ask a question. He dreaded the answer, though none might have surmised this. He knew Cynthia. He knew that, when she had given her heart, it was for all time. He dreaded the answer; because it might mean that her sorrow was doubled.

“I believe,” Bob continued painfully, seeing that Jethro would say nothing, “I believe that Cynthia loves me. I should not dare to say it or to hope it, without reason. She has not said so, but—” the words were very hard for him, yet he stuck manfully to the truth; “but she told me to write to my father and let him know what I had done, and not to come back to her until I had his answer. This,” he added, wondering that a man could listen to such a thing without a sign, “this was before—before she had any idea of coming home.”

Yes, Cynthia, did love him. There was no doubt about it in Jethro’s mind. She would not have bade Bob write to his father if she had not loved him. Still Jethro did not speak, but by some intangible force compelled Bob to go on.

“I shall write to my father as soon as he comes back from the West, but I wish to say to you, Mr. Bass, that whatever his answer contains, I mean to marry Cynthia. Nothing can shake me from that resolution. I tell you this because my father is fighting you, and you know what he will say.” (Jethro knew Dudley Worthington well enough to appreciate that this would make no particular difference in his opposition to the marriage except to make that opposition more vehement.) “And because you do not know me,” continued Bob. “When I say a thing, I mean it. Even if my father cuts me off and casts me out, I will marry Cynthia. Good-by, Mr. Bass.”

Jethro took the young man’s hand again. Bob imagined that he even pressed it—a little—something he had never done before.

“Good-by, Bob.”

Bob got as far as the door.

“Er—go back to Harvard, Bob?”

“I intend to, Mr. Bass.”

“Er—Bob?”

“Yes?”

“D-don’t quarrel with your father—don’t quarrel with your father.”

“I shan’t be the one to quarrel, Mr. Bass.”

“Bob—hain’t you pretty young—pretty young?”

“Yes,” said Bob, rather unexpectedly, “I am.” Then he added, “I know my own mind.”

“P-pretty young. Don’t want to get married yet awhile—do you?”

“Yes, I do,” said Bob, “but I suppose I shan’t be able to.”

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“Er—wait awhile, Bob. Go back to Harvard. W-wouldn’t write that letter if I was you.”

“But I will. I’ll not have him think I’m ashamed of what I’ve done. I’m proud of it, Mr. Bass.”

In the eyes of Coniston, which had been waiting for his reappearance, Bob Worthington jumped into the sleigh and drove off. He left behind him Jethro Bass, who sat in his chair the rest of the morning with his head bent in revery so deep that Millicent had to call him twice to his simple dinner. Bob left behind him, too, a score of rumors, sprung full grown into life with his visit. Men and women an incredible distance away heard them in an incredible time: those in the village found an immediate pretext for leaving their legitimate occupation and going to the store, and a gathering was in session there when young Mr. Worthington drove past it on his way back. Bob thought little about the rumors, and not thinking of them it did not occur to him that they might affect Cynthia. The only person then in Coniston whom he thought about was Jethro Bass. Bob decided that his liking for Jethro had not diminished, but rather increased; he admired Jethro for the advice he had given, although he did not mean to take it. And for the first time he pitied him.

Bob did not know that rumor, too, was spreading in Brampton. He had his dinner in the big walnut dining room all alone, and after it he smoked his father’s cigars and paced up and down the big hall, watching the clock. For he could not go to her in the school hours. At length he put on his hat and hurried out, crossing the park-like enclosure in the middle of the street; bowed at by Mr. Dodd, who always seemed to be on hand, and others, and nodding absently in return. Concealment was not in Bob Worthington’s nature. He reached the post-office, where the partition door was open, and he walked right into a comparatively full meeting of the Brampton Club. Ephraim sat in their midst, and for once he was not telling war stories. He was silent. And the others fell suddenly silent, too, at Bob’s entrance.

“How do you do, Mr. Prescott?” he said, as Ephraim struggled to his feet. “How is the rheumatism?”

“How be you, Mr. Worthington?” said Ephraim; “this is a kind of a surprise, hain’t it?” Ephraim was getting used to surprises. “Well, it is good-natured of you to come in and shake hands with an old soldier.”

“Don’t mention it, Mr. Prescott,” answered honest Bob, a little abashed, “I should have done so anyway, but the fact is, I wanted to speak to you a moment in private.”

“Certain,” said Ephraim, glancing helplessly around him, “jest come out front.” That space, where the public were supposed to be, was the only private place in the Brampton post-office. But the members of the Brampton Club could take a hint, and

with one consent began to make excuses. Bob knew them all from boyhood and spoke to them all. Some of them ventured to ask him if Harvard had bust up.

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“Where does Cynthia-live?” he demanded, coming straight to the point.

Ephraim stared at him for a moment in a bewildered fashion, and then a light began to dawn on him.

“Lives with me,” he answered. He was quite as ashamed, for Bob’s sake, as if he himself had asked the question, and he went on talking to cover that embarrassment. “It’s made some difference, too, sence she come. House looks like a different place. Afore she, come I cooked with a kit, same as I used to in the harness shop. I l’arned it in the army. Cynthy’s got a stove.”

It was not the way Ephraim would have gone about a love affair, had he had one. Sam Price’s were the approved methods in that section of the country, though Sam had overdone them somewhat. It was an unheard-of thing to ask a man right out like that where a girl lived.

“Much obliged,” said Bob, and was gone. Ephraim raised his hands in despair, and hobbled to the little window to get a last look at him. Where were the proprieties in these days? The other aspect of the affair, what Mr. Worthington would think of it when he returned, did not occur to the innocent mind of the old soldier until people began to talk about it that afternoon. Then it worried him into another attack of rheumatism.

Half of Brampton must have seen Bob Worthington march up to the little yellow house which Ephraim had rented from John Billings. It had four rooms around the big chimney in the middle, and that was all. Simple as it was, an architect would have said that its proportions were nearly perfect. John Billings had it from his Grandfather Post, who built it, and though Brampton would have laughed at the statement, Isaac D. Worthington’s mansion was not to be compared with it for beauty. The old cherry furniture was still in it, and the old wall papers and the panelling in the little room to the right which Cynthia had made into a sitting room.

Half of Brampton, too, must have seen Cynthia open the door and Bob walk into the entry. Then the door was shut. But it had been held open for an appreciable time, however,—while you could count twenty,—because Cynthia had not the power to close it. For a while she could only look into his eyes, and he into hers. She had not seen him coming, she had but answered the knock. Then, slowly, the color came into her cheeks, and she knew that she was trembling from head to foot.

“Cynthia,” he said, “mayn’t I come in?”

She did not answer, for fear her voice would tremble, too. And she could not send him away in the face of all Brampton. She opened the door a little wider, a very little, and he went in. Then she closed it, and for a moment they stood facing each other in the entry, which was lighted only by the fan-light over the door, Cynthia with her back against the

wall. He spoke her name again, his voice thick with the passion which had overtaken him like a flood at the sight of her—a passion to seize her in his arms, and cherish and comfort and protect her forever and ever. All this he felt and more as he looked into her face and saw the traces of her great sorrow there. He had not thought that that face could be more beautiful in its strength and purity, but it was even so.

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“Cynthia-my love!” he cried, and raised his arms. But a look as of a great fear came into her eyes, which for one exquisite moment had yielded to his own; and her breath came quickly, as though she were spent—as indeed she was. So far spent that the wall at her back was grateful.

“No!” she said; “no—you must not—you must not—you must not!” Again and again she repeated the words, for she could summon no others. They were a mandate—had he guessed it—to herself as to him. For the time her brain refused its functions, and she could think of nothing but the fact that he was there, beside her, ready to take her in his arms. How she longed to fly into them, none but herself knew—to fly into them as into a refuge secure against the evil powers of the world. It was not reason that restrained her then, but something higher in her, that restrained him likewise. Without moving from the wall she pushed open the door of the sitting room.

“Go in there,” she said.

He went in as she bade him and stood before the flickering logs in the wide and shallow chimney-place—logs that seemed to burn on the very hearth itself, and yet the smoke rose unerring into the flue. No stove had ever desecrated that room. Bob looked into the flames and waited, and Cynthia stood in the entry fighting this second great battle which had come upon her while her forces were still spent with that other one. Woman in her very nature is created to be sheltered and protected; and the yearning in her, when her love is given, is intense as nature itself to seek sanctuary in that love. So it was with Cynthia leaning against the entry wall, her arms full length in front of her, and her hands clasped as she prayed for strength to withstand the temptation. At last she grew calmer, though her breath still came deeply, and she went into the sitting room.

Perhaps he knew, vaguely, why she had not followed him at once. He had grown calmer himself, calmer with that desperation which comes to a man of his type when his soul and body are burning with desire for a woman. He knew that he would have to fight for her with herself. He knew now that she was too strong in her position to be carried by storm, and the interval had given him time to collect himself. He did not dare at first to look up from the logs, for fear he should forget himself and be defeated instantly.

“I have been to Coniston, Cynthia,” he said.

“Yes.”

“I have been to Coniston this morning, and I have seen Mr. Bass, and I have told him that I love you, and that I will never give you up. I told you so in Boston, Cynthia,” he said; “I knew that this this trouble would come to you. I would have given my life to have saved you from it—from the least part of it. I would have given my life to have been able to say ‘it shall not touch you.’ I saw it flowing in like a great sea between you

and me, and yet I could not tell you of it. I could not prepare you for it. I could only tell you that I would never give you up, and I can only repeat that now."

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“You must, Bob,” she answered, in a voice so low that it was almost a whisper; “you must give me up.”

“I would not,” he said, “I would not if the words were written on all the rocks of Coniston Mountain. I love you.”

“Hush,” she said gently. “I have to say some things to you. They will be very hard to say, but you must listen to them.”

“I will listen,” he said doggedly; “but they will not affect my determination.”

“I am sure you do not wish to drive me away from Brampton,” she continued, in the same low voice, “when I have found a place to earn my living near-near Uncle Jethro.”

These words told him all he had suspected—almost as much as though he had been present at the scene in the tannery shed in Coniston. She knew now the life of Jethro Bass, but he was still “Uncle Jethro” to her. It was even as Bob had supposed,—that her affection once given could not be taken away.

“Cynthia,” he said, “I would not by an act or a word annoy or trouble you. If you bade me, I would go to the other side of the world to-morrow. You must know that. But I should come back again. You must know, that, too. I should come back again for you.”

“Bob,” she said again, and her voice faltered a very little now, “you must know that I can never be your wife.”

“I do not know it,” he exclaimed, interrupting her vehemently, “I will not know it.”

“Think,” she said, “think! I must say what I, have to say, however it hurts me. If it had not been for—for your father, those things never would have been written. They were in his newspaper, and they express his feelings toward—toward Uncle Jethro.”

Once the words were out, she marvelled that she had found the courage to pronounce them.

“Yes,” he said, “yes, I know that, but listen—”

“Wait,” she went on, “wait until I have finished. I am not speaking of the pain I had when I read these things, I—I am not speaking of the truth that may be in them—I have learned from them what I should have known before, and felt, indeed, that your father will never consent to—to a marriage between us.”

“And if he does not,” cried Bob, “if he does not, do you think that I will abide by what he says, when my life’s happiness depends upon you, and my life’s welfare? I know that you are a good woman, and a true woman, that you will be the best wife any man could

have. Though he is my father, he shall not deprive me of my soul, and he shall not take my life away from me."

As Cynthia listened she thought that never had words sounded sweeter than these—no, and never would again. So she told herself as she let them run into her heart to be stored among the treasures there. She believed in his love—believed in it now with all her might. (Who, indeed, would not?) She could not demean herself now by striving to belittle it or doubt its continuance, as she had in Boston. He was young, yes; but he would never be any older than this, could never love again like this. So much was given her, ought she not to be content? Could she expect more?

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She understood Isaac Worthington, now, as well as his son understood him. She knew that, if she were to yield to Bob Worthington, his father would disown and disinherit him. She looked ahead into the years as a woman will, and allowed herself for the briefest of moments to wonder whether any happiness could thrive in spite of the violence of that schism—any happiness for him. She would be depriving him of his birthright, and it may be that those who are born without birthrights often value them the most. Cynthia saw these things, and more, for those who sit at the feet of sorrow soon learn the world's ways. She saw herself pointed out as the woman whose designs had beggared and ruined him in his youth, and (agonizing and revolting thought!) the name of one would be spoken from whom she had learned such craft. Lest he see the scalding tears in her eyes, she turned away and conquered them. What could she do? Where should she hide her love that it might not be seen of men? And how, in truth, could she tell him these things?

"Cynthia," he went on, seeing that she did not answer, and taking heart, "I will not say a word against my father. I know you would not respect me if I did. We are different, he and I, and find happiness in different ways." Bob wondered if his father had ever found it. "If I had never met you and loved you, I should have refused to lead the life my father wishes me to lead. It is not in me to do the things he will ask. I shall have to carve out my own life, and I feel that I am as well able to do it as he was. Percy Broke, a classmate of mine and my best friend, has a position for me in a locomotive works in which his father is largely interested. We are going in together, the day after we graduate; it is all arranged, and his father has agreed. I shall work very hard, and in a few years, Cynthia, we shall be together, never to part again. Oh, Cynthia," he cried, carried away by the ecstasy of this dream which he had, summoned up, "why do you resist me? I love you as no man has ever loved," he exclaimed, with scornful egotism and contempt of those who had made the world echo with that cry through the centuries, "and you love me! Ah, do you think I do not see it—cannot feel it? You love me—tell me so."

He was coming toward her, and how was she to prevent his taking her by storm? That was his way, and well she knew it. In her dreams she had felt herself lifted and borne off, breathless in his arms, to Elysium. Her breath was going now, her strength was going, and yet she made him pause by the magic of a word. A concession was in that word, but one could not struggle so piteously and concede nothing.

"Bob," she said, "do you love me?"

Love her! If there was a love that acknowledged no bounds, that was confined by no superlatives, it was his. He began to speak, but she interrupted him with a wild passion that was new to her. As he sat in the train on his way back to Cambridge through the darkening afternoon, the note of it rang in his ears and gave him hope—yes, and through many months afterward.

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“If you love me I beg, I implore, I beseech you in the name of that love—for your, sake and my sake, to leave me. Oh, can you not see why you must go?”

He stopped, even as he had before in the parlor in Mount Vernon Street. He could but stop in the face of such an appeal—and yet the blood beat in his head with a mad joy.

“Tell me that you love me,—once,” he cried,—“once, Cynthia.”

“Do-do not ask me,” she faltered. “Go.”

Her words were a supplication, not a command. And in that they were a supplication he had gained a victory. Yes, though she had striven with all her might to deny, she had bade him hope. He left her without so much as a touch of the hand, because she had wished it. And yet she loved him! Incredible fact! Incredible conjury which made him doubt that his feet touched the snow of Brampton Street, which blotted, as with a golden glow, the faces and the houses of Brampton from his sight. He saw no one, though many might have accosted him. That part of him which was clay, which performed the menial tasks of his being, had kindly taken upon itself to fetch his bag from the house to the station, and to board the train.

Ah, but Brampton had seen him!

CHAPTER XIV

Great events, like young Mr. Worthington’s visit to Brampton, are all very well for a while, but they do not always develop with sufficient rapidity to satisfy the audiences of the drama. Seven days were an interlude quite long enough in which to discuss every phase and bearing of this opening scene, and after that the play in all justice ought to move on. But there it halted—for a while—and the curtain obstinately refused to come up. If the inhabitants of Brampton had only known that the drama, when it came, would be well worth waiting for, they might have been less restless.

It is unnecessary to enrich the pages of this folio with all the footnotes and remarks of, the sages of Brampton. These can be condensed into a paragraph of two—and we can ring up the curtain when we like on the next scene, for which Brampton had to wait considerably over a month. There is to be no villain in this drama with the face of an Abbe Maury like the seven cardinal sins. Comfortable looking Mr. Dodd of the prudential committee, with his chin-tuft of yellow beard, is cast for the part of the villain, but will play it badly; he would have been better suited to a comedy part.

Young Mr. Worthington left Brampton on the five o’clock train, and at six Mr. Dodd met his fellow-member of the committee, Judge Graves.

“Called a meetin’?” asked Mr. Dodd, pulling the yellow tuft.

“What for?” said the judge, sharply.

“What be you a-goin’ to do about it?” said Mr. Dodd.

“Do about what?” demanded the judge, looking at the hardware dealer from under his eyebrows.

Mr. Dodd knew well enough that this was not ignorance on the part of Mr. Graves, whose position in the matter dad been very well defined in the two sentences he had spoken. Mr. Dodd perceived that the judge was trying to get him to commit himself, and would then proceed to annihilate him. He, Levi Dodd, had no intention of walking into such a trap.

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“Well,” said he, with a final tug at the tuft, “if that’s the way you feel about it.”

“Feel about what?” said the judge, fiercely.

“Callate you know best,” said Mr. Dodd, and passed on up the street. But he felt the judge’s gimlet eyes boring holes in his back. The judge’s position was very fine, no doubt for the judge. All of which tends to show that Levi Dodd had swept his mind, and that it was ready now for the reception of an opinion.

Six weeks or more, as has been said, passed before the curtain rose again, but the snarling trumpets of the orchestra played a fitting prelude. Cynthia’s feelings and Cynthia’s life need not be gone into during this interval knowing her character, they may well be imagined. They were trying enough, but Brampton had no means of guessing them. During the weeks she came and went between the little house and the little school, putting all the strength that was in her into her duties. The Prudential Committee, which sometimes sat on the platform, could find no fault with the performance of these duties, or with the capability of the teacher, and it is not going too far to state that the children grew to love her better than Miss Goddard had been loved. It may be declared that children are the fittest citizens of a republic, because they are apt to make up their own minds on any subject without regard to public opinion. It was so with the scholars of Brampton village lower school: they grew to love the new teacher, careless of what the attitude of their elders might be, and some of them could have been seen almost any day walking home with her down the street.

As for the attitude of the elders—there was none. Before assuming one they had thought it best, with characteristic caution, to await the next act in the drama. There were ladies in Brampton whose hearts prompted them, when they called on the new teacher, to speak a kindly word of warning and advice; but somehow, when they were seated before her in the little sitting room of the John Billings house, their courage failed them. There was something about this daughter of the Coniston storekeeper and ward of Jethro Bass that made them pause. So much for the ladies of Brampton. What they said among themselves would fill a chapter, and more.

There was, at this time, a singular falling-off in the attendance of the Brampton Club. Ephraim sat alone most of the day in his Windsor chair by the stove, pretending to read newspapers. But he did not mention this fact to Cynthia. He was more lonesome than ever on the Saturdays and Sundays which she spent with Jethro Bass.

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Jethro Bass! It is he who might be made the theme of the music of the snarling trumpets. What was he about during those six weeks? That is what the state at large was beginning to wonder, and the state at large was looking on at a drama, too. A rumor reached the capital and radiated thence to every city and town and hamlet, and was followed by other rumors like confirmations. Jethro Bass, for the first time in a long life of activity, was inactive: inactive, too, at this most critical period of his career, the climax of it, with a war to be waged which for bitterness and ferocity would have no precedent; with the town meetings at hand, where the frontier fighting was to be done, and no quarter given. Lieutenants had gone to Coniston for further orders and instructions, and had come back without either. Achilles was sulking in the tannery house—some said a broken Achilles. Not a word could be got out of him, or the sign of an intention. Jake Wheeler moped through the days in Rias Richardson's store, too sore at heart to speak to any man, and could have wept if tears had been a relief to him. No more blithe errands over the mountain to Clovelly and elsewhere, though Jake knew the issue now and itched for the battle, and the vassals of the hill-Rajah under a jubilant Bijah Bixby were arming cap-a-pie. Lieutenant-General-and-Senator Peleg Hartington of Brampton, in his office over the livery stable, shook his head like a mournful stork when questioned by brother officers from afar. Operations were at a standstill, and the sinews of war relaxed. Rural givers of mortgages, who had not had the opportunity of selling them or had feared to do so, began (mirabile dictu) to express opinions. Most ominous sign of all—the proprietor of the Pelican Hotel had confessed that the Throne Room had not been engaged for the coming session.

Was it possible that Jethro Bass lay crushed under the weight of the accusations which had been printed, and were still being printed, in the Newcastle Guardian? He did not answer them, or retaliate in other newspapers, but Jethro Bass had never made use of newspapers in this way. Still, nothing ever printed about him could be compared with those articles. Had remorse suddenly overtaken him in his old age? Such were the questions people we're asking all over the state—people, at least, who were interested in politics, or in those operations which went by the name of politics: yes, and many private citizens—who had participated in politics only to the extent of voting for such candidates as Jethro in his wisdom had seen fit to give them, read the articles and began to say that boss domination was at an end. A new era was at hand, which they fondly (and very properly) believed was to be a golden era. It was, indeed, to be a golden era—until things got working; and then the gold would cease. The Newcastle Guardian, with unconscious irony, proclaimed the golden era; and declared that its columns, even in other days and under other ownership, had upheld the wisdom of Jethro Bass. And he was still a wise man, said the Guardian, for he had had sense enough to give up the fight.

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Had he given up the fight? Cynthia fervently hoped and prayed that he had, but she hoped and prayed in silence. Well she knew, if the event in the tannery shed had not made him abandon his affairs, no appeal could do so. Her happiest days in this period were the Saturdays and Sundays spent with him in Coniston, and as the weeks went by she began to believe that the change, miraculous as it seemed, had indeed taken place. He had given up his power. It was a pleasure that made the weeks bearable for her. What did it matter—whether he had made the sacrifice for the sake of his love for her? He had made it.

On these Saturdays and Sundays they went on long drives together over the hills, while she talked to him of her life in Brampton or the books she was reading, and of those she had chosen for him to read. Sometimes they did not turn homeward until the delicate tracery of the branches on the snow warned them of the rising moon. Jethro was often silent for hours at a time, but it seemed to Cynthia that it was the silence of peace—of a peace he had never known before. There came no newspapers to the tannery house now: during the mid-week he read the books of which she had spoken William Wetherell's books; or sat in thought, counting, perhaps; the days until she should come again. And the boy of those days for him was more pathetic than much that is known to the world as sorrow.

And what did Coniston think? Coniston, indeed, knew not what to think, when, little by little, the great men ceased to drive up to the door of the tannery house, and presently came no more. Coniston sank then from its proud position as the real capital of the state to a lonely hamlet among the hills. Coniston, too, was watching the drama, and had had a better view of the stage than Brampton, and saw some reason presently for the change in Jethro Bass. Not that Mr. Satterlee told, but such evidence was bound, in the end, to speak for itself. The Newcastle Guardian had been read and debated at the store—debated with some heat by Chester Perkins and other mortgagors; discussed, nevertheless, in a political rather than a moral light. Then Cynthia had returned home; her face had awed them by its sorrow, and she had begun to earn her own living. Then the politicians had ceased to come. The credit belongs to Rias Richardson for hawing been the first to piece these three facts together, causing him to burn his hand so severely on the stove that he had to carry it bandaged in soda for a week. Cynthia Wetherell had reformed Jethro.

Though the village loved and revered Cynthia, Coniston as a whole did not rejoice in that reform. The town had fallen from its mighty estate, and there were certain envious ones who whispered that it had remained for a young girl who had learned city ways to twist Jethro around her finger; that she had made him abandon his fight with Isaac D. Worthington because Mr. Worthington had a son—but there is no use writing such scandal. Stripped of his power—even though he stripped himself—Jethro began to lose their respect, a trait tending to prove that the human race may have had wolves for ancestors as well as apes. People had small opportunity, however, of showing a lack of respect to his person, for in these days he noticed no one and spoke to none.

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When the lion is crippled, the jackals begin to range. A jackal reconnoitered the lair to see how badly the lion was crippled, and conceived with astounding insolence the plan of capturing the lion's quarry. This jackal, who was an old one, well knew how to round up a quarry, and fled back over the hills to consult with a bigger jackal, his master. As a result, two days before March town-meeting day, Mr. Bijah Bixby paid a visit to the Harwich bank and went among certain Coniston farmers looking over the sheep, his clothes bulging out in places when he began, and seemingly normal enough when he had finished. History repeats itself, even among lions and jackals. Thirty-six years before there had been a town-meeting in Coniston and a surprise. Established Church, decent and orderly selectmen and proceedings had been toppled over that day, every outlying farm sending its representative through the sleet to do it. And now retribution was at hand. This March-meeting day was mild, the grass showing a green color on the south slopes where the snow had melted, and the outlying farmers drove through mud-holes up to the axles. Drove, albeit, in procession along the roads, grimly enough, and the sheds Jock Hallowell had built around the meeting-house could not hold the horses; they lined the fences and usurped the hitching posts of the village street, and still they came. Their owners trooped with muddy boots into the meeting-house, and when the moderator rapped for order the Chairman of the Board of Selectmen, Jethro Bass, was not in his place; never, indeed, would be there again. Six and thirty years he had been supreme in that town—long enough for any man. The beams and king posts would know him no more. Mr. Amos Cuthbert was elected Chairman, not without a gallant and desperate but unsupported fight of a minority led by Mr. Jake Wheeler, whose loyalty must be taken as a tribute to his species. Farmer Cuthbert was elected, and his mortgage was not foreclosed! Had it been, there was more money in the Harwich bank.

There was no telegraph to Coniston in these days, and so Mr. Sam Price, with his horse in a lather, might have been seen driving with unseemly haste toward Brampton, where in due time he arrived. Half an hour later there was excitement at Newcastle, sixty-five miles away, in the office of the Guardian, and the next morning the excitement had spread over the whole state.

Jethro Bass was dethroned in Coniston—discredited in his own town!

And where was Jethro? Did his heart ache, did he bow his head as he thought of that supremacy, so hardly won, so superbly held, gone forever? Many were the curious eyes on the tannery house that day, and for days after, but its owner gave no signs of concern. He read and thought and chopped wood in the tannery shed as usual. Never, I believe, did man, shorn of power, accept his lot more quietly. His struggle was over, his battle was fought, a greater peace than he had ever thought to hope for was won.

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For the opinion and regard of the world he had never cared. A greater reward awaited him, greater than any knew—the opinion and regard and the praise of one whom he loved beyond all the world. On Friday she came to him, on Friday at sunset, for the days were growing longer, and that was the happiest sunset of his life. She said nothing as she raised her face to his and kissed him and clung to him in the little parlor, but he knew, and he had his reward. So much for earthly power Cynthia brought the little rawhide trunk this time, and came to Coniston for the March vacation—a happy two weeks that was soon gone. Happy by comparison, that is, with what they both had suffered, and a haven of rest after the struggle and despair of the wilderness. The bond between them had, in truth, never been stronger, for both the young girl and the old man had denied themselves the thing they held most dear. Jethro had taken refuge and found comfort in his love. But Cynthia! Her greatest love had now been bestowed elsewhere.

If there were letters for the tannery house, Milly Skinner, who made it a point to meet the stage, brought them. And there were letters during Cynthia's sojourn,—many of them, bearing the Cambridge postmark. One evening it was Jethro who laid the letter on the table beside her as she sat under the lamp. He did not look at her or speak, but she felt that he knew her secret—felt that he deserved to have from her own lips what he had been too proud—yes—and too humble to ask. Whose sympathy could she be sure of, if not of his? Still she had longed to keep this treasure to herself. She took the letter in her hand.

"I do not answer them, Uncle Jethro, but—I cannot prevent his writing them," she faltered. She did not confess that she kept them, every one, and read them over and over again; that she had grown, indeed, to look forward to them as to a sustenance. "I—I do love him, but I will not marry him."

Yes, she could be sure of Jethro's sympathy, though he could not express it in words. Yet she had not told him for this. She had told him, much as the telling had hurt her, because she feared to cut him more deeply by her silence.

It was a terrible moment for Jethro, and never had he desired the gift of speech as now. Had it not been for him; Cynthia might have been Robert Worthington's wife. He sat down beside her and put his hand over hers that lay on the letter in her lap. It was the only answer he could make, but perhaps it was the best, after all. Of what use were words at such a time!

Four days afterward, on a Monday morning, she went back to Brampton to begin the new term.

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That same Monday a circumstance of no small importance took place in Brampton—-nothing less than the return, after a prolonged absence in the West and elsewhere, of its first citizen. Isaac D. Worthington was again in residence. No bells were rung, indeed, and no delegation of citizens as such, headed by the selectmen, met him at the station; and other feudal expressions of fealty were lacking. No staff flew Mr. Worthington's arms; nevertheless the lord of Brampton was in his castle again, and Brampton felt that he was there. He arrived alone, wearing the silk hat which had become habitual with him now, and stepping into his barouche at the station had been driven up Brampton Street behind his grays, looking neither to the right nor left. His reddish chop whiskers seemed to cling a little more closely to his face than formerly, and long years of compression made his mouth look sterner than ever. A hawk-like man, Isaac Worthington, to be reckoned with and feared, whether in a frock coat or in breastplate and mail.

His seneschal, Mr. Flint, was awaiting him in the library. Mr. Flint was large and very ugly, big-boned, smooth-shaven, with coarse features all askew, and a large nose with many excrescences, and thick lips. He was forty-two. From a foreman of the mills he had risen, step by step, to his present position, which no one seemed able to define. He was, indeed, a seneschal. He managed the mills in his lord's absence, and—if the truth be told—in his presence; knotty questions of the Truro Railroad were brought to Mr. Flint and submitted to Mr. Worthington, who decided them, with Mr. Flint's advice; and, within the last three months, Mr. Flint had invaded the realm of politics, quietly, as such a man would, under the cover of his patron's name and glory. Mr. Flint it was who had bought the Newcastle Guardian, who went occasionally to Newcastle and spoke a few effective words now and then to the editor; and, if the truth will out, Mr. Flint had largely conceived that scheme about the railroads which was to set Mr. Worthington on the throne of the state, although the scheme was not now being carried out according to Mr. Flint's wishes. Mr. Flint was, in a sense, a Bismarck, but he was not as yet all powerful. Sometimes his august master or one of his fellow petty sovereigns would sweep Mr. Flint's plans into the waste basket, and then Mr. Flint would be content to wait. To complete the character sketch, Mr. Flint was not above hanging up his master's hat and coat, Which he did upon the present occasion, and went up to Mr. Worthington's bedroom to fetch a pocket handkerchief out of the second drawer. He even knew where the handkerchiefs were kept. Lucky petty sovereigns sometimes possess Mr. Flints to make them emperors.

The august personage seated himself briskly at his desk.

"So that scoundrel Bass is actually discredited at last," he said, blowing his nose in the pocket handkerchief Mr. Flint had brought him. "I lose patience when I think how long we've stood the rascal in this state. I knew the people would rise in their indignation when they learned the truth about him."

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Mr. Flint did not answer this. He might have had other views.

“I wonder we did not think of it before,” Mr. Worthington continued. “A very simple remedy, and only requiring a little courage and—and—” (Mr. Worthington was going to say money, but thought better of it) “and the chimera disappears. I congratulate you, Flint.”

“Congratulate yourself,” said Mr. Flint; “that would not have been my way.”

“Very well, I congratulate myself,” said the august personage, who was in too good a humor to be put out by the rejection of a compliment. “You remember what I said: the time was ripe, just publish a few biographical articles telling people what he was, and Jethro Bass would snuff out like a candle. Mr. Duncan tells me the town-meeting results are very good all over the state. Even if we hadn’t knocked out Jethro Bass, we’d have a fair majority for our bill in the next legislature.”

“You know Bass’s saying,” answered Mr. Flint, “You can hitch that kind of a hoss, but they won’t always stay hitched.”

“I know, I know,” said Mr. Worthington; “don’t croak, Flint. We can buy more hitch ropes, if necessary. Well, what’s the outlay up to the present? Large, I suppose. Well, whatever it is, it’s small compared to what we’ll get for it.” He laughed a little and rubbed his hands, and then he remembered that capacity in which he stood before the world. Yes, and he stood before himself in the same capacity. Isaac Worthington may have deceived himself, but he may or may not have been a hero to his seneschal. “We have to fight fire with fire,” he added, in a pained voice. “Let me see the account.”

“I have tabulated the expense in the different cities and towns,” answered Mr. Flint; “I will show you the account in a little while. The expenses in Coniston were somewhat greater than the size of the town justified, perhaps. But Sutton thought—”

“Yes, yes,” interrupted Mr. Worthington, “if it had cost as much to carry Coniston as Newcastle, it would have been worth it—for the moral effect alone.”

Moral effect! Mr. Flint thought of Mr. Bixby with his bulging pockets going about the hills, and smiled at the manner in which moral effects are sometimes obtained.

“Any news, Flint?”

No news yet, Mr. Flint might have answered. In a few minutes there might be news, and plenty of it, for it lay ready to be hatched under Mr. Worthington’s eye. A letter in the bold and upright hand of his son was on the top of the pile, placed there by Mr. Flint himself, who had examined Mr. Worthington’s face closely when he came in to see how much he might know of its contents. He had decided that Mr. Worthington was in too good a humor to know anything of them. Mr. Flint had not steamed the letter open, and

read the news; but he could guess at them pretty shrewdly, and so could have the biggest fool in Brampton. That letter contained the opening scene of the next act in the drama.

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Mr. Worthington cut the envelope and began to read, and while he did so Mr. Flint, who was not afraid of man or beast, looked at him. It was a manly and straight forward letter, and Mr. Worthington, no matter what his opinions on the subject were, should have been proud of it. Bob announced, first of all, that he was going to marry Cynthia Wetherell; then he proceeded with praiseworthy self-control (for a lover) to describe Cynthia's character and attainments: after which he stated that Cynthia had refused him—twice, because she believed that Mr. Worthington would oppose the marriage, and had declared that she would never be the cause of a breach between father and son. Bob asked for his father's consent, and hoped to have it, but he thought it only right to add that he had given his word and his love, and did not mean to retract either. He spoke of his visit to Brampton, and explained that Cynthia was teaching school there, and urged his father to see her before he made a decision. Mr. Worthington read it through to the end, his lips closing tighter and tighter until his mouth was but a line across his face. There was pain in the face, too, the kind of pain which anger sends, and which comes with the tottering of a pride that is false. Of what gratification now was the overthrow of Jethro Bass?

He stared at the letter for a moment after he had finished it, and his face grew a dark red. Then he seized the paper and tore it slowly, deliberately, into bits.

Dudley Worthington was not thinking then—not he!—of the young man in the white beaver who had called at the Social Library many years before to see a young woman whose name, too, had been Cynthia.—He was thinking, in fact, for he was a man to think in anger, whether it were not possible to remove this Cynthia from the face of the earth—at least to a place beyond his horizon and that of his son. Had he worn the chain mail instead of the frock coat he would have had her hung outside the town walls.

"Good God!" he exclaimed. And the words sounded profane indeed as he fixed his eyes upon Mr. Flint. "You knew that Robert had been to Brampton."

"Yes," said Flint, "the whole village knew it."

"Good God!" cried Mr. Worthington again, "why was I not informed of this? Why was I not warned of this? Have I no friends? Do you pretend to look after my interests and not take the trouble to write me on such a subject."

"Do you think I could have prevented it?" asked Mr. Flint, very calmly.

"You allow this—this woman to come here to Brampton and teach school in a place where she can further her designs? What were you about?"

"When the prudential committee appointed her, nothing of this was known, Mr. Worthington."

“Yes, but now—now! What are you doing, what are they doing to allow her to remain? Who are on that committee?”

Mr. Flint named the men. They had been reelected, as usual, at the recent town-meeting. Mr. Errol, who had also been reelected, had returned but had not yet issued the certificate or conducted the examination.

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“Send for them, have them here at once,” commanded Mr. Worthington, without listening to this.

“If you take my advice, you will do nothing of the kind,” said Mr. Flint, who, as usual, had the whole situation at his fingers’ ends. He had taken the trouble to inform himself about the girl, and he had discovered, shrewdly enough, that she was the kind which might be led, but not driven. If Mr. Flint’s advice had been listened to, this story might have had quite a different ending. But Mr. Flint had not reached the stage where his advice was always listened to, and he had a maddened man to deal with now. At that moment, as if fate had determined to intervene, the housemaid came into the room.

“Mr. Dodd to see you, sir,” she said.

“Show him in,” shouted Mr. Worthington; “show him in!”

Mr. Dodd was not a man who could wait for a summons which he had felt in his bones was coming. He was ordinarily, as we have seen, officious. But now he was thoroughly frightened. He had seen the great man in the barouche as he drove past the hardware store, and he had made up his mind to go up at once, and have it over with. His opinions were formed now, He put a smile on his face when he was a foot outside of the library door.

“This is a great pleasure, Mr. Worthington, a great pleasure, to see you back,” he said, coming forward. “I callated—”

But the great man sat in his chair, and made no attempt to return the greeting.

“Mr. Dodd, I thought you were my friend,” he said.

Mr. Dodd went all to pieces at this reception.

“So I be, Mr. Worthington—so I be,” he cried. “That’s why I’m here now. I’ve b’en a friend of yours ever since I can remember—never fluctuated. I’d rather have chopped my hand off than had this happen—so I would. If I could have foreseen what she was, she’d never have had the place, as sure as my name’s Levi Dodd.”

If Mr. Dodd had taken the trouble to look at the seneschal’s face, he would have seen a well-defined sneer there.

“And now that you know what she is,” cried Mr. Worthington, rising and smiting the pile of letters on his desk, “why do you keep her there an instant?”

Mr. Dodd stopped to pick up the letters, which had flown over the floor. But the great man was now in the full tide of his anger.

“Never mind the letters,” he shouted; “tell me why you keep her there.”

“We callated we’d wait and see what steps you’d like taken,” said the trembling townsman.

“Steps! Steps! Good God! What kind of man are you to serve in such a place when you allow the professed ward of Jethro Bass—of Jethro Bass, the most notoriously depraved man in this state, to teach the children of this town. Steps! How soon can you call your committee together?”

“Right away,” answered Mr. Dodd, breathlessly. He would have gone on to exculpate himself, but Mr. Worthington’s inexorable finger was pointing at the door.

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“If you are a friend of mine,” said that gentleman, “and if you have any regard for the fair name of this town, you will do so at once.”

Mr. Dodd departed precipitately, and Mr. Worthington began to pace the room, clasping his hands now in front of him, now behind him, in his agony: repeating now and again various appellations which need not be printed here, which he applied in turn to the prudential committee, to his son, and to Cynthia Wetherell.

“I’ll run her out of Brampton,” he said at last.

“If you do,” said Mr. Flint, who had been watching him apparently unmoved, “you may have Jethro Bass on your back.”

“Jethro Bass?” shouted Mr. Worthington, with a laugh that was not pleasant to hear, “Jethro Bass is as dead as Julius Caesar.”

It was one thing for Mr. Dodd to promise so readily a meeting of the committee, and quite another to decide how he was going to get through the affair without any more burns and scratches than were absolutely necessary. He had reversed the usual order, and had been in the fire—now he was going to the frying-pan. He stood in the street for some time, pulling at his tuft, and then made his way to Mr. Jonathan Hill’s feed store. Mr. Hill was reading “Sartor Resartus” in his little office, the temperature of which must have been 95, and Mr. Dodd was perspiring when he got there.

“It’s come,” said Mr. Dodd, sententiously.

“What’s come?” inquired Mr. Hill, mildly.

“Isaac D.’s come, that’s what,” said Mr. Dodd. “I hain’t b’en sleepin’ well of nights, lately. I can’t think what we was about, Jonathan, puttin’ that girl in the school. We’d ought to’ve knowed she wahn’t fit.”

“What’s the matter with her?” inquired Mr. Hill.

“Matter with her!” exclaimed his fellow-committeeman, “she lives with Jethro Bass—-she’s his ward.”

“Well, what of it?” said Mr. Hill, who never bothered himself about gossip or newspapers, or indeed about anything not between the covers of a book, except when he couldn’t help it.

“Good God!” exclaimed Mr. Dodd, “he’s the most notorious, depraved man in the state. Hain’t we got to look out for the fair name of Brampton?”

Mr. Hill sighed and closed his book.

“Well,” he said; “I’d hoped we were through with that. Let’s go up and see what Judge Graves says about it.”

“Hold on,” said Mr. Dodd, seizing the feed dealer by the coat, “we’ve got to get it fixed in our minds what we’re goin’ to do, first. We can’t allow no notorious people in our schools. We’ve got to stand up to the jedge, and tell him so. We app’inted her on his recommendation, you know.”

“I like the girl,” replied Mr. Hill. “I don’t think we ever had a better teacher. She’s quiet, and nice appearin’, and attends to her business.”

Mr. Dodd pulled his tuft, and cocked his head.

“Mr. Worthington holds a note of yours, don’t he, Jonathan?”

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Mr. Hill reflected. He said he thought perhaps Mr. Worthington did.

“Well,” said Mr. Dodd, “I guess we might as well go along up to the jedge now as any time.”

But when they got there Mr. Dodd’s knock was so timid that he had to repeat it before the judge came to the door and peered at them over his spectacles.

“Well, gentlemen, what can I do for you?” he asked, severely, though he knew well enough. He had not been taken by surprise many times during the last forty years. Mr. Dodd explained that they wished a little meeting of the committee. The judge ushered them into his bedroom, the parlor being too good for such an occasion.

“Now, gentlemen,” said he, “let us get down to business. Mr. Worthington arrived here to-day, he has seen Mr. Dodd, and Mr. Dodd has seen Mr. Hill. Mr. Worthington is a political opponent of Jethro Bass, and wishes Miss Wetherell dismissed. Mr. Dodd and Mr. Hill have agreed, for various reasons which I will spare you, that Miss Wetherell should be dismissed. Have I stated the case, gentlemen, or have I not?”

Mr. Graves took off his spectacles and wiped them, looking from one to the other of his very uncomfortable fellow-members. Mr. Hill did not attempt to speak; but Mr. Dodd, who was not sure now that this was not the fire and the other the frying-pan, pulled at his tuft until words came to him.

“Jedge,” he said finally, “I must say I’m a mite surprised. I must say your language is unwarranted.”

“The truth is never unwarranted,” said the judge.

“For the sake of the fair name of Brampton,” began Mr. Dodd, “we cannot allow—”

“Mr. Dodd,” interrupted the judge, “I would rather have Mr. Worthington’s arguments from Mr. Worthington himself, if I wanted them at all. There is no need of prolonging this meeting. If I were to waste my breath until six o’clock, it would be no use. I was about to say that your opinions were formed, but I will alter that, and say that your minds are fixed. You are determined to dismiss Miss Wetherell. Is it not so?”

“I wish you’d hear me, Jedge,” said Mr. Dodd, desperately.

“Will you kindly answer me yes or no to that question,” said the judge; “my time is valuable.”

“Well, if you put it that way, I guess we are agreed that she hadn’t ought to stay. Not that I’ve anything against her personally—”

“All right,” said the judge, with a calmness that made them tremble. They had never bearded him before. “All right, you are two to one and no certificate has been issued. But I tell you this, gentlemen, that you will live to see the day when you will bitterly regret this injustice to an innocent and a noble woman, and Isaac D. Worthington will live to regret it. You may tell him I said so. Good day, gentlemen.”

They rose.

“Jedge,” began Mr. Dodd again, “I don’t think you’ve been quite fair with us.”

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“Fair!” repeated the judge, with unutterable scorn. “Good day, gentlemen.” And he slammed the door behind them.

They walked down the street some distance before either of them spoke.

“Goliah,” said Mr. Dodd, at last, “did you ever hear such talk? He’s got the drattedest temper of any man I ever knew, and he never callates to make a mistake. It’s a little mite hard to do your duty when a man talks that way.”

“I’m not sure we’ve done it,” answered Mr. Hill.

“Not sure!” ejaculated the hardware dealer, for he was now far enough away from the judge’s house to speak in his normal tone, “and she connected with that depraved—”

“Hold on,” said Mr. Hill, with an astonishing amount of spirit for him, “I’ve heard that before.”

Mr. Dodd looked at him, swallowed the wrong way and began to choke.

“You hain’t wavered, Jonathan?” he said, when he got his breath.

“No, I haven’t,” said Mr. Hill, sadly; “but I wish to hell I had.”

Mr. Dodd looked at him again, and began to choke again. It was the first time he had known Jonathan Hill to swear.

“You’re a-goin’ to stick by what you agreed—by your principles?”

“I’m going to stick by my bread and butter,” said Mr. Hill, “not by my principles. I wish to hell I wasn’t.”

And so saying that gentleman departed, cutting diagonally across the street through the snow, leaving Mr. Dodd still choking and pulling at his tuft. This third and totally-unexpected shaking-up had caused him to feel somewhat deranged internally, though it had not altered the opinions now so firmly planted in his head. After a few moments, however, he had collected himself sufficiently to move on once more, when he discovered that he was repeating to himself, quite unconsciously, Mr. Hill’s profanity “I wish to hell I wasn’t.” The iron mastiffs glaring at him angrily out of the snow banks reminded him that he was in front of Mr. Worthington’s door, and he thought he might as well go in at once and receive the great man’s gratitude. He certainly deserved it. But as he put his hand on the bell Mr. Worthington himself came out of the house, and would actually have gone by without noticing Mr. Dodd if he had not spoken.

“I’ve got that little matter fixed, Mr. Worthington,” he said, “called the committee, and we voted to discharge the—the young woman.” No, he did not deliver Judge Graves’s message.

“Very well, Mr. Dodd,” answered the great man, passing on so that Mr. Dodd was obliged to follow him in order to hear, “I’m glad you’ve come to your senses at last. Kindly step into the library and tell Miss Bruce from me that she may fill the place to-morrow.”

“Certain,” said Mr. Dodd, with his hand to his chin. He watched the great man turn in at his bank in the new block, and then he did as he was bid.

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By the time school was out that day the news had leaped across Brampton Street and spread up and down both sides of it that the new teacher had been dismissed. The story ran fairly straight—there were enough clews, certainly. The great man's return, the visit of Mr. Dodd, the call on Judge Graves, all had been marked. The fiat of the first citizen had gone forth that the ward of Jethro Bass must be got rid of; the designing young woman who had sought to entrap his son must be punished for her amazing effrontery.

Cynthia came out of school happily unaware that her name was on the lips of Brampton: unaware, too, that the lord of the place had come into residence that day. She had looked forward to living in the same town with Bob's father as an evil which was necessary to be borne, as one of the things which are more or less inevitable in the lives of those who have to make their own ways in the world. The children trooped around her, and the little girls held her hand, and she talked and laughed with them as she came up the street in the eyes of Brampton,—came up the street to the block of new buildings where the bank was. Stepping out of the bank, with that businesslike alertness which characterized him, was the first citizen—none other. He found himself entangled among the romping children and—horror of horrors he bumped into the schoolmistress herself! Worse than this, he had taken off his hat and begged her pardon before he looked at her and realized the enormity of his mistake. And the schoolmistress had actually paid no attention to him, but with merely heightened color had drawn the children out of his way and passed on without a word. The first citizen, raging inwardly, but trying to appear unconcerned, walked rapidly back to his house. On the street of his own town, before the eyes of men, he had been snubbed by a school-teacher. And such a schoolteacher!

Mr. Worthington, as he paced his library burning with the shame of this occurrence, remembered that he had had to glance at her twice before it came over him who she was. His first sensation had been astonishment. And now, in spite of his bitter anger, he had to acknowledge that the face had made an impression on him—a fact that only served to increase his rage. A conviction grew upon him that it was a face which his son, or any other man, would not be likely to forget. He himself could not forget it.

In the meantime Cynthia had reached her home, her cheeks still smarting, conscious that people had stared at her. This much, of course, she knew—that Brampton believed Bob Worthington to be in love with her: and the knowledge at such times made her so miserable that the thought of Jethro's isolation alone deterred her from asking Miss Lucretia Penniman for a position in Boston. For she wrote to Miss Lucretia about her life and her reading, as that lady had made her promise to do. She sat down now at the cherry chest of drawers that was also a desk, to write: not to pour out her troubles, for she never had done that,—but to calm her mind by drawing little character sketches of her pupils. But she had only written the words, "My dear Miss Lucretia," when she looked out of the window and saw Judge Graves coming up the path, and ran to open the door for him.

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“How do you do, Judge?” she said, for she recognized Mr. Graves as one of her few friends in Brampton. “I have sent to Boston for the new reader, but it has not come.”

The judge took her hand and pressed it and led her into the little sitting room. His face was very stern, but his eyes, which had flung fire at Mr. Dodd, looked at her with a vast compassion. Her heart misgave her.

“My dear,” he said,—it was long since the judge had called any woman “my dear,”—“I have bad news for you. The committee have decided that you cannot teach any longer in the Brampton school.”

“Oh, Judge,” she answered, trying to force back the tears which would come, “I have tried so hard. I had begun to believe that I could fill the place.”

“Fill the place!” cried the judge, startling her with his sudden anger. “No woman in the state can fill it better than you.”

“Then why am I dismissed?” she asked breathlessly.

The judge looked at her in silence, his blue lips quivering. Sometimes even he found it hard to tell the truth. And yet he had come to tell it, that she might suffer less. He remembered the time when Isaac D. Worthington had done him a great wrong.

“You are dismissed,” he said, “because Mr. Worthington has come home, and because the two other members of the committee are dogs and cowards.” Mr. Graves never minced matters when he began, and his voice shook with passion. “If Mr. Errol had examined you, and you had your certificate, it might have been different. Errol is not a sycophant. Worthington does not hold his mortgage.”

“Mortgage!” exclaimed Cynthia. The word always struck terror to her soul.

“Mr. Worthington holds Mr. Hill’s mortgage,” said Mr. Graves, more than ever beside himself at the sight of her suffering. “That man’s tyranny is not to be borne. We will not give up, Cynthia. I will fight him in this matter if it takes my last ounce of strength, so help me God!”

Mortgage! Cynthia sank down in the chair by the desk. In spite of the misery the news had brought, the thought that his father, too, who was fighting Jethro Bass as a righteous man, dealt in mortgages and coerced men to do his will, was overwhelming. So she sat for a while staring at the landscape on the old wall paper.

“I will go to Coniston to-night,” she said at last.

“No,” cried the judge, seizing her shoulder in his excitement, “no. Do you think that I have been your friend—that I am your friend?”

“Oh, Judge Graves—”

“Then stay here, where you are. I ask it as a favor to me. You need not go to the school to-morrow—indeed, you cannot. But stay here for a day or two at least, and if there is any justice left in a free country, we shall have it. Will you stay, as a favor to me?”

“I will stay, since you ask it,” said Cynthia. “I will do what you think right.”

Her voice was firmer than he expected—much firmer. He glanced at her quickly, with something very like admiration in his eye.

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“You are a good woman, and a brave woman,” he said, and with this somewhat surprising tribute he took his departure instantly.

Cynthia was left to her thoughts, and these were harassing and sorrowful enough. One idea, however, persisted through them all. Mr. Worthington, whose power she had lived long enough in Brampton to know, was an unjust man and a hypocrite. That thought was both sweet and bitter: sweet, as a retribution; and bitter, because he was Bob’s father. She realized, now, that Bob knew these things, and she respected and loved him the more, if that were possible, because he had refrained from speaking of them to her. And now another thought came, and though she put it resolutely from her, persisted. Was she not justified now in marrying him? The reasoning was false, so she told herself. She had no right to separate Bob from his father, whatever his father might be. Did not she still love Jethro Bass? Yes, but he had renounced his ways. Her heart swelled gratefully as she spoke the words to herself, and she reflected that he, at least, had never been a hypocrite.

Of one thing she was sure, now. In the matter of the school she had right on her side, and she must allow Judge Graves to do whatever he thought proper to maintain that right. If Isaac D. Worthington’s character had been different, this would not have been her decision. Now she would not leave Brampton in disgrace, when she had done nothing to merit it. Not that she believed that the judge would prevail against such mighty odds. So little did she think so that she fell, presently, into a despondency which in all her troubles had not overtaken her—the despondency which comes even to the pure and the strong when they feel the unjust strength of the world against them. In this state her eyes fell on the letter she had started to Miss Lucretia Penniman, and in desperation she began to write.

It was a short letter, reserved enough, and quite in character. It was right that she should defend herself, which she did with dignity, saying that she believed the committee had no fault to find with her duties, but that Mr. Worthington had seen fit to bring influence to bear upon them because of her connection with Jethro Bass.

It was not the whole truth, but Cynthia could not bring herself to write of that other reason. At the end she asked, very simply, if Miss Lucretia could find her something to do in Boston in case her dismissal became certain. Then she put on her coat, and walked to the postoffice to post the letter, for she resolved that there could be no shame without reason for it. There was a little more color in her cheeks, and she held her head high, preparing to be slighted. But she was not slighted, and got more salutations, if anything, than usual. She was, indeed, in the right not to hide her head, and policy alone would have forbade it, had Cynthia thought of policy.

CHAPTER XV

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Public opinion is like the wind—it bloweth where it listeth. It whistled around Brampton the next day, whirling husbands and wives apart, and families into smithereens. Brampton had a storm all to itself—save for a sympathetic storm raging in Coniston—-and all about a school-teacher.

Had Cynthia been a certain type of woman, she would have had all the men on her side and all of her own sex against her. It is a decided point to be recorded in her favor that she had among her sympathizers as many women as men. But the excitement of a day long remembered in Brampton began, for her, when a score or more of children assembled in front of the little house, tramping down the snow on the grass plots, shouting for her to come to school with them. Children give no mortgages, or keep no hardware stores.

Cynthia, trying to read in front of the fire, was all in a tremble at the sound of the high-pitched little voices she had grown to love, and she longed to go out and kiss them, every one. Her nature, however, shrank from any act which might appear dramatic or sensational. She could not resist going to the window and smiling at them, though they appeared but dimly—little dancing figures in a mist. And when they shouted, the more she shook her head and put her finger to her lips in reproof and vanished from their sight. Then they trooped sadly on to school, resolved to make matters as disagreeable as possible for poor Miss Bruce, who had not offended in any way.

Two other episodes worthy of a place in this act of the drama occurred that morning, and one had to do with Ephraim. Poor Ephraim! His way had ever been to fight and ask no questions, and in his journey through the world he had gathered but little knowledge of it. He had limped home the night before in a state of anger of which Cynthia had not believed him capable, and had reappeared in the sitting room in his best suit of blue.

“Where are you going, Cousin Eph?” Cynthia had asked suspiciously.

“Never you mind, Cynthy.”

“But I do mind,” she said, catching hold of his sleeve. “I won’t let you go until you confess.”

“I’m a-goin’ to tell Isaac Worthington what I think of him, that’s whar I’m a-goin’,” cried Ephraim “what I always hev thought of him sence he sent a substitute to the war an’ acted treasonable here to home talkin’ ag’in’ Lincoln.”

“Oh, Cousin Eph, you mustn’t,” said Cynthia, clinging to him with all her strength in her dismay. It had taken every whit of her influence to persuade him to relinquish his purpose. Cynthia knew very well that Ephraim meant to lay hands on Mr. Worthington, and it would indeed have been a disastrous hour for the first citizen if the old soldier had

ever got into his library. Cynthia pointed out, as best she might, that it would be an evil hour for her, too, and that her cause would be greatly injured by such a proceeding; she knew very well that it would ruin Ephraim, but he would not have listened to such an argument.

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The next thing he wished to do was to go to Coniston and rouse Jethro. Cynthia's heart stood still when he proposed this, for it touched upon her greatest fear,—which had impelled her to go to Coniston. But she had hoped and believed that Jethro, knowing her feelings, would do nothing—since for her sake he had chosen to give up his power. Now an acute attack of rheumatism had come to her rescue, and she succeeded in getting Ephraim off to bed, swathed in bandages.

The next morning he had insisted upon hobbling away to the postoffice, where in due time he was discovered by certain members of the Brampton Club nailing to the wall a new engraving of Abraham Lincoln, and draping it with a little silk flag he had bought in Boston. By which it will be seen that a potion of the Club were coming back to their old haunt. This portion, it may be surmised, was composed of such persons alone as were likely to be welcomed by the postmaster. Some of these had grievances against Mr. Worthington or Mr. Flint; others, in more prosperous circumstances, might have been moved by envy of these gentlemen; still others might have been actuated largely by righteous resentment at what they deemed oppression by wealth and power. These members who came that morning comprised about one-fourth of those who formerly had been in the habit of dropping in for a chat, and their numbers were a fair indication of the fact that those who from various motives took the part of the schoolteacher in Brampton were as one to three.

It is not necessary to repeat their expressions of indignation and sympathy. There was a certain Mr. Gamaliel Ives in the town, belonging to an old Brampton family, who would have been the first citizen if that other first citizen had not, by his rise to wealth and power, so completely overshadowed him. Mr. Ives owned a small mill on Coniston Water below the town. He fairly bubbled over with civic pride, and he was an authority on all matters pertaining to Brampton's history. He knew the "Hymn to Coniston" by heart. But we are digressing a little. Mr. Ives, like that other Gamaliel of old, had exhorted his fellow-townsmen to wash their hands of the controversy. But he was an intimate of Judge Graves, and after talking with that gentleman he became a partisan overnight; and when he had stopped to get his mail he had been lured behind the window by the debate in progress. He was in the midst of some impromptu remarks when he recognized a certain brisk step behind him, and Isaac D. Worthington himself entered the sanctum!

It must be explained that Mr. Worthington sometimes had an important letter to be registered which he carried to the postoffice with his own hands. On such occasions—-though not a member of the Brampton Club—he walked, as an overlord will, into any private place he chose, and recognized no partitions or barriers. Now he handed the letter (addressed to a certain person in Cambridge, Massachusetts) to the postmaster.

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“You will kindly register that and give me a receipt, Mr. Prescott,” he said.

Ephraim turned from his contemplation of the features of the martyred President, and on his face was something of the look it might have worn when he confronted his enemies over the log-works at Five Forks. No, for there was a vast contempt in his gaze now, and he had had no contempt for the Southerners, and would have shaken hands with any of them the moment the battle was over. Mr. Worthington, in spite of himself, recoiled a little before that look, fearing, perhaps, physical violence.

“I hain’t a-goin’ to hurt you, Mr. Worthington,” Ephraim said, “but I am a-goin’ to ask you to git out in front, and mighty quick. If you hev any business with the postmaster, there’s the window,” and Ephraim pointed to it with his twisted finger. “I don’t allow nobody but my friends here, Mr. Worthington, and people I respect.”

Mr. Worthington looked—well, eye-witnesses give various versions as to how he looked. All agree that his lip trembled; some say his eyes watered: at any rate, he quailed, stood a moment undecided, and then swung on his heel and walked to the partition door. At this safe distance he turned.

“Mr. Prescott,” he said, his voice quivering with passion and perhaps another emotion, “I will make it my duty to report to the postmaster-general the manner in which this office is run. Instead of attending to your business, you make the place a resort for loafers and idlers. Good morning, sir.”

Ten minutes later Mr. Flint himself came to register the letter. But it was done at the window, and the loafers and idlers were still there.

The curtain had risen again, indeed, and the action was soon fast enough for the most impatient that day. No sooner had the town heard with bated breath of the expulsion of the first citizen from the inner sanctuary of the post-office, than the news of another event began to go the rounds. Mr. Worthington had other and more important things to think about than minor postmasters, and after his anger and—yes, and momentary fear had subsided, he forgot the incident except to make a mental note to remember to deprive Mr. Prescott of his postmastership, which he believed could be done readily enough now that Jethro Bass was out of the way. Then he had stepped into the bank, which he had come to regard as his own bank, as he regarded most institutions in Brampton. He had, in the old days, been president of it, as we know. He stepped into the bank, and then—he stepped out again.

Most people have experienced that sickly feeling of the diaphragm which sometimes comes from a sadden shock. Mr. Worthington had it now as he hurried up the street, and he presently discovered that he was walking in the direction opposite to that of his own home. He crossed the street, made a pretence of going into Mr. Goldthwaite’s drug store, and hurried back again. When he reached his own library, he found Mr. Flint busy

there at his desk. Mr. Flint rose. Mr. Worthington sat down and began to pull the papers about in a manner which betrayed to his seneschal (who knew every mood of his master) mental perturbation.

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“Flint,” he said at last, striving his best for an indifferent accent, “Jethro Bass is here—I ran across him just now drawing money in the bank.”

“I could have told you that this morning,” answered Mr. Flint. “Wheeler, who runs errands for him in Coniston, drove him in this morning, and he’s been with Peleg Hartington for two hours over Sherman’s livery stable.”

An interval of silence followed, during which Mr. Worthington shuffled with his letters and pretended to read them.

“Graves has called a mass meeting to-night, I understand,” he remarked in the same casual way. “The man’s a demagogue, and mad as a loon. I believe he sent back one of our passes once, didn’t he? I suppose Bass has come in to get Hartington to work up the meeting. They’ll be laughed out of the town hall, or hissed out.”

“I guess you’ll find Bass has come down for something else,” said Mr. Flint, looking up from a division report.

“What do you mean?” demanded Mr. Worthington, changing his attitude to one of fierceness. But he was well aware that whatever tone he took with his seneschal, he never fooled him.

“I mean what I told you yesterday,” said Flint, “that you’ve stirred up the dragon.”

Even Mr. Flint did not know how like a knell his words sounded in Isaac Worthington’s ears.

“Nonsense!” he cried, “you’re talking nonsense, Flint. We maimed him too thoroughly for that. He hasn’t power enough left to carry his own town.”

“All right,” said the seneschal.

“What do you mean by that?” said his master, with extreme irritation.

“I mean what I said yesterday, that we haven’t maimed him at all. He had his own reasons for going into his hole, and he never would have come out again if you hadn’t goaded him. Now he’s out, and we’ll have to step around pretty lively, I can tell you, or he’ll maim us.”

All of which goes to show that Mr. Flint had some notion of men and affairs. He became, as may be predicted, the head of many material things in later days, and he may sometime reappear in company with other characters in this story.

The sickly feeling in Mr. Worthington’s diaphragm had now returned.

“I think you will find you are mistaken, Flint,” he said, attempting dignity now. “Very much mistaken.”

“Very well,” said Flint, “perhaps I am. But I believe you’ll find he left for the capital on the eleven o’clock, and if you take the trouble to inquire from Bedding you will probably learn that the Throne Room is bespoken for the session.”

All of that which Mr, Flint had predicted turned out to be true. The dragon had indeed waked up. It all began with the news Milly Skinner had got from the stage driver, imparted to Jethro as he sat reading about Hiawatha. And terrible indeed had been that awakening. This dragon did not bellow and roar and lash his tail when he was roused, but he stood up, and there seemed to emanate from him a fire which frightened poor Milly Skinner, upset though she was by the news of Cynthia’s dismissal. O, wondrous and paradoxical might of love, which can tame the most powerful of beasts, and stir them again into furies by a touch!

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Coniston was the first to tremble, as though the forces stretching themselves in the tannery house were shaking the very ground, and the name of Jethro Bass took on once more, as by magic, a terrible meaning. When Vesuvius is silent, pygmies may make faces on the very lip of the crater, and they on the slopes forget the black terror of the fiery hail. Jake Wheeler himself, loyal as he was, did not care to look into the crater now that he was summoned; but a force pulled him all the way to the tannery house. He left behind him an awe-stricken gathering at the store, composed of inhabitants who had recently spoken slightingly of the volcano.

We are getting a little mixed in our metaphors between lions and dragons and volcanoes, and yet none of them are too strong to represent Jethro Bass when he heard that Isaac Worthington had had the teacher dismissed from Brampton lower school. He did not stop to reason then that action might distress her. The beast in him awoke again; the desire for vengeance on a man whom he had hated most of his life, and who now had dared to cause pain to the woman whom he loved with all his soul, and even idolize, was too great to resist. He had no thought of resisting it, for the waters of it swept over his soul like the Atlantic over a lost continent. He would crush Isaac Worthington if it took the last breath from his body.

Jake went to the tannery house and received his orders—orders of which he made a great mystery afterward at the store, although they consisted simply of directions to be prepared to drive Jethro to Brampton the next morning. But the look of the man had frightened Jake. He had never seen vengeance so indelibly written on that face, and he had never before realized the terrible power of vengeance. Mr. Wheeler returned from that meeting in such a state of trepidation that he found it necessary to accompany Rias to a certain keg in the cellar; after which he found his tongue. His description of Jethro's appearance awed his hearers, and Jake declared that he would not be in Isaac Worthington's shoes for all of Isaac Worthington's money. There were others right here in Coniston, Jake hinted, who might now find it convenient to emigrate to the far West.

Jethro's face had not changed when Jake drove him out of Coniston the next morning. Good Mr. Satterlee saw it, and felt that the visit he had wished to make would have been useless; Mr. Amos Cuthbert and Mr. Sam Price saw it, from a safe distance within the store, and it is a fact that Mr. Price seriously thought of taking Mr. Wheeler's advice about a residence in the West; Mr. Cuthbert, of a sterner nature, made up his mind to be hung and quartered. A few minutes before Jethro walked into his office over the livery stable, Senator Peleg Hartington would have denied, with that peculiar and mournful scorn of which he was master, that Jethro Bass could ever again have any influence over him. Peleg was, indeed, at that moment preparing, in his own way, to make overtures to the party of Isaac D. Worthington. Jethro walked into the office, leaving Jake below with Mr. Sherman; and Senator Hartington was very glad he had not made the overtures. And when he accompanied Jethro to the station when he left for the capital, the senator felt that the eyes of men were upon him.

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And Cynthia? Happily, Cynthia passed the day in ignorance that Jethro had gone through Brampton. Ephraim, though he knew of it, did not speak of it when he came home to his dinner; Mr. Graves had called, and informed her of the meeting in the town hall that night.

“It is our only chance,” he said obdurately, in answer to her protests. “We must lay the case before the people of Brampton. If they have not the courage to right the wrong, and force your reinstatement through public opinion, there is nothing more to be done.”

To Cynthia, the idea of having a mass meeting concerning herself was particularly repellent.

“Oh, Judge Graves!” she cried, “if there isn’t any other way, please drop the matter. There are plenty of teachers who will—be acceptable to everybody.”

“Cynthia,” said the judge, “I can understand that this publicity is very painful to you. I beg you to remember that we are contending for a principle. In such cases the individual must be sacrificed to the common good.”

“But I cannot go to the meeting—I cannot.”

“No,” said the judge; “I don’t think that will be necessary.”

After he was gone, she could think of nothing but the horror of having her name—yes, and her character—discussed in that public place; and it seemed to her, if she listened, she could hear a clatter of tongues throughout the length of Brampton Street, and that she must fain stop her ears or go mad. The few ladies who called during the day out of kindness or curiosity, or both, only added to her torture. She was not one who could open her heart to acquaintances: the curious ones got but little satisfaction, and the kind ones thought her cold, and they did not perceive that she was really grateful for their little attentions. Gratitude, on such occasions, does not always consist in pouring out one’s troubles in the laps of visitors.

So the visitors went home, wondering whether it were worth while after all to interest themselves in the cause of such a self-contained and self-reliant young woman. In spite of all her efforts, Cynthia had never wholly succeeded in making most of the Brampton ladies believe that she did not secretly deem herself above them. They belonged to a reserved race themselves; but Cynthia had a reserve which was even different from their own.

As night drew on the predictions of Mr. Worthington seemed likely to be fulfilled, and it looked as if Judge Graves would have a useless bill to pay for gas in the new town hall. The judge had never been a man who could compel a following, and he had no magnetism with which to lead a cause: the town tradesmen, especially those in the new

brick block, would be chary as to risking the displeasure of their best customer. At half-past seven Mr. Graves: came in, alone, and sat on the platform staring grimly at his gas. Is there a lecturer, or, a playwright, or a politician, who has not, at one time or another, been in the judge's place? Who cannot sympathize with him as he watched the thin and hesitating stream of people out of the corner of his eye as they came in at the door? The judge despised them with all his soul, but it is human nature not to wish to sit in a hall or a theatre that is three-quarters empty.

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At sixteen minutes to eight a mild excitement occurred, an incident of some significance which served to detain many waverers. Senator Peleg Hartington walked up the aisle, and the judge rose and shook him by the hand, and as Deacon Hartington he was invited to sit on the platform. The senator's personal influence was not to be ignored; and it had sufficed to carry his district in the last election against the Worthington forces, in spite of the abdication of Jethro Bass. Mr. Page, the editor of the Clarion, Senator Hartington's organ, was also on the platform. But where was Mr. Ives? Where was that Gamaliel who had been such a warm partisan in the postoffice that morning?

"Saw him outside the hall—wahn't but ten minutes ago," said Deacon Hartington, sadly; "thought he was a-comin' in."

Eight o'clock came, and no Mr. Ives; ten minutes past—fifteen minutes past. If the truth must be told, Mr. Ives had been on the very threshold of the hall, and one glance at the poor sprinkling of people there had decided him. Mr. Ives had a natural aversion to being laughed at, and as he walked back on the darker side of the street he wished heartily that he had stuck to his original Gamaliel-advocacy of no interference, of allowing the Supreme Judge to decide. Such opinions were inevitably just, Mr. Ives was well aware, though not always handed down immediately. If he were to humble the first citizen, Mr. Ives reflected that a better opportunity might present itself. The whistle of the up-train served to strengthen his resolution, for he was reminded thereby that his mill often had occasion to ask favors of the Truro Railroad.

In the meantime it was twenty minutes past eight in the town hall, and Mr. Graves had not rapped for order. Deacon Hartington sat as motionless as a stork on the borders of a glassy lake at sunrise, the judge had begun seriously to estimate the gas bill, and Mr. Page had chewed up the end of a pencil. There was one, at least, in the audience of whom the judge could be sure. A certain old soldier in blue sat uncompromisingly on the front bench with his hands crossed over the head of his stick; but the ladies and gentlemen nearest the door were beginning to vanish, one by one, silently as ghosts, when suddenly the judge sat up. He would have rubbed his eyes, had he been that kind of a man. Four persons had entered the hall—he was sure of it—and with no uncertain steps as if frightened by its emptiness. No, they came boldly. And after them trooped others, and still others were heard in the street beyond, not whispering, but talking in the unmistakable tones of people who had more coming behind them. Yes, and more came. It was no illusion, or delusion: there they were filling the hall as if they meant to stay, and buzzing with excitement. The judge was quivering with excitement now, but he, too, was only a spectator of the drama. And what a drama, with a miracle-play for Brampton!

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Mr. Page rose from his chair and leaned over the edge of the platform that something might be whispered in his ear. The news, whatever it was, was apparently electrifying, and after the first shock he turned to impart it to Mr. Graves; but turned too late, for the judge had already rapped for order and was clearing his throat. He could not account for this extraordinary and unlooked-for audience, among whom he spied many who had thought it wiser not to protest against the dictum of the first citizen, and many who had professed to believe that the teacher's connection with Jethro Bass was a good and sufficient reason for dismissal. The judge was prepared to take advantage of the tide, whatever its cause.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he said, "I take the liberty of calling this meeting to order. And before a chairman be elected, I mean to ask your indulgence to explain my purposes in requesting the use of this hall to-night. In our system of government, the inalienable and most precious gift—"

Whatever the gift was, the judge never explained. He paused at the words, and repeated them, and stopped altogether because no one was paying any attention to him. The hall was almost full, the people had risen, with a hum, and as one man had turned toward the door. Mr. Gamaliel Ives was triumphantly marching down the aisle, and with him was—well, another person. Nay, personage would perhaps be the better word.

Let us go back for a moment. There descended from that train of which we have heard the whistle a lady with features of no ordinary moulding, with curls and a string bonnet and a cloak that seemed strangely to harmonize with the lady's character. She had the way of one in authority, and Mr. Sherman himself ran to open the door of his only closed carriage, and the driver galloped off with her all the way to the Brampton House. Once there, the lady seized the pen as a soldier seizes the sword, and wrote her name in most uncompromising characters on the register, Miss Lucretia Penniman, Boston. Then she marched up to her room.

Miss Lucretia Penniman, author of the "Hymn to Coniston," in the reflected glory of whose fame Brampton had shone for thirty years! Whose name was lauded and whose poem was recited at every Fourth of July celebration, that the very children might learn it and honor its composer! Stratford-on-Avon is not prouder of Shakespeare than Brampton of Miss Lucretia, and now she was come back, unheralded, to her birthplace. Mr. Raines, the clerk, looked at the handwriting on the book, and would not believe his own sight until it was vouched for by sundry citizens who had followed the lady from the station—on foot. And then there was a to-do.

Send for Mr. Gamaliel Ives; send for Miss Bruce, the librarian; send for Mr. Page, editor of the Clarion, and notify the first citizen. He, indeed, could not be sent for, but had he known of her coming he would undoubtedly have had her met at the portals and

presented with the keys in gold. Up and down the street flew the news which overshadowed and blotted out all other, and the poor little school-teacher was forgotten.

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One of these notables was at hand, though he did not deserve to be. Mr. Gamaliel Ives sent up his card to Miss Lucretia, and was shown deferentially into the parlor, where he sat mopping his brow and growing hot and cold by turns. How would the celebrity treat him? The celebrity herself answered the question by entering the room in such stately manner as he had expected, to the rustle of the bombazine. Whereupon Mr. Ives bounced out of his chair and bowed, though his body was not formed to bend that way.

“Miss Penniman,” he exclaimed, “what an honor for Brampton! And what a pleasure, the greater because so unexpected! How cruel not to have given us warning, and we could have greeted you as your great fame deserves! You could never take time from your great duties to accept the invitations of our literary committee, alas! But now that you are here, you will find a warm welcome, Miss Penniman. How long it has been—-thirty years,—you see I know it to a day, thirty years since you left us. Thirty years, I may say, we have kept burning the vestal fire in your worship, hoping for this hour.”

Miss Lucretia may have had her own ideas about the propriety of the reference to the vestal fire.

“Gamaliel,” she said sharply, “straighten up and don’t talk nonsense to me. I’ve had you on my knee, and I knew your mother and father.”

Gamaliel did straighten up, as though Miss Lucretia had applied a lump of ice to the small of his back. So it is when the literary deities, vestal or otherwise, return to their Stratfords. There are generally surprises in store for the people they have had on their knees, and for others.

“Gamaliel,” said Miss Lucretia, “I want to see the prudential committee for the village district.”

“The prudential committee!” Mr. Ives fairly shrieked the words in his astonishment.

“I tried to speak plainly,” said Miss Lucretia. “Who are on that committee?”

“Ezra Graves,” said Mr. Ives, as though mechanically compelled, for his head was spinning round. “Ezra Graves always has run it, until now. But he’s in the town hall.”

“What’s he doing there?”

Mr. Ives was no fool. Some inkling of the facts began to shoot through his brain, and he saw his chance.

“He called a mass meeting to protest against the dismissal of a teacher.”

“Gamaliel,” said Miss Lucretia, “you will conduct me to that meeting. I will get my cloak.”

Mr. Ives wasted no time in the interval, and he fairly ran out into the office. Miss Lucretia Penniman was in town, and would attend the mass meeting. Now, indeed, it was to be a mass meeting. Away flew the tidings, broadcast, and people threw off their carpet slippers and dressing gowns, and some who had gone to bed got up again. Mr. Dodd heard it, and changed his shoes three times, and his intentions three times three. Should he go, or should he not? Already he heard in imagination the first distant note of the populace, and he was not of the metal to defend a Bastille or a Louvre for his royal master with the last drop of his blood.

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In the meantime Gamaliel Ives was conducting Miss Lucretia toward, the town hall, and speaking in no measured tones of indignation of the cringing, truckling qualities of that very Mr. Dodd. The injustice to Miss Wetherell, which Mr. Ives explained as well as he could, made his blood boil: so he declared.

And note we are back again at the meeting, when the judge, with his hand on his Adam's apple, is pronouncing the word "gift." Mr. Ives is triumphantly marching down the aisle, escorting the celebrity of Brampton to the platform, and quite aware of the heart burnings of his fellow-citizens on the benches. And Miss Lucretia, with that stern composure with which celebrities accept public situations, follows up the steps as of right and takes the chair he assigns her beside the chairman. The judge, still grasping his Adam's apple, stares at the newcomer in amazement, and recognizes her in spite of the years, and trembles. Miss Lucretia Penniman! Blucher was not more welcome to Wellington, or Lafayette to Washington, than was Miss Lucretia to Ezra Graves as he turned his back on the audience and bowed to her deferentially. Then he turned again, cleared his throat once more to collect his senses, and was about to utter the familiar words, "We have with us tonight," when they were taken out of his mouth—taken out of his mouth by one who had in all conscience stolen enough thunder for one man,—Mr. Gamaliel Ives.

"Mr. Chairman," said Mr. Ives, taking a slight dropping of the judge's lower jaw for recognition, "and ladies and gentlemen of Brampton. It is our great good fortune to have with us to-night, most unexpectedly, one of whom Brampton is, and for many years has been, justly proud." (Cheers.) "One whose career Brampton has followed with a mother's eyes and with a mother's heart. One who has chosen a broader field for the exercise of those great powers with which Nature endowed her than Brampton could give. One who has taken her place among the luminaries of literature of her time." (Cheers.) "One who has done more than any other woman of her generation toward the uplifting of the sex which she honors." (Cheers and clapping of hands.) "And one who, though her lot has fallen among the great, has not forgotten the home of her childhood. For has she not written those beautiful lines which we all know by heart?

> 'Ah, Coniston! Thy lordly form I see
> Before mine eyes in exile drear.'

"Mr. Chairman and fellow-townsmen and women, I have the extreme honor of introducing to you one whom we all love and revere, the author of the 'Hymn to Coniston,' the editor of the Woman's Hour, Miss Lucretia Penniman.'" (Loud and long-continued applause.)

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Well might Brampton be proud, too, of Gamaliel Ives, president of its literary club, who could make such a speech as this on such short notice. If the truth be told, the literary club had sent Miss Lucretia no less than seven invitations, and this was the speech Mr. Ives had intended to make on those seven occasions. It was unquestionably a neat speech, and Judge Graves or no other chairman should cheat him out of making it. Mr. Ives, with a wave of his hand toward the celebrity, sat down by no means dissatisfied with himself. What did he care how the judge glared. He did not see how stiffly Miss Lucretia sat in her chair. She could not take him on her knee then, but she would have liked to.

Miss Lucretia rose, and stood quite as stiffly as she had sat, and the judge rose, too. He was very angry, but this was not the time to get even with Mr. Ives. As it turned out, he did not need to bother about getting even.

“Ladies and gentlemen,” said he, “in the absence of any other chairman I take pleasure in introducing to you Miss Lucretia Penniman.”

More applause was started, but Miss Lucretia put a stop to it by the lifting of a hand. Then there was a breathless silence. Then she cast her eyes around the hall, as though daring any one to break that silence, and finally they rested upon Mr. Ives.

“Mr. Chairman,” she said, with an inclination toward the judge, “my friends—for I hope you will be my friends when I have finished” (Miss Lucretia made it quite clear by her tone that it entirely depended upon them whether they would be or not), “I understood when I came here that this was to be a mass meeting to protest against an injustice, and not a feast of literature and oratory, as Gamaliel Ives seems to suppose.”

She paused, and when the first shock of amazement was past an audible titter ran through the audience, and Mr. Ives squirmed visibly.

“Am I right, Mr. Chairman?” asked Miss Lucretia.

“You are unquestionably right, Miss Penniman,” answered the chairman, rising, “unquestionably.”

“Then I will proceed,” said Miss Lucretia. “I wrote the Hymn to Coniston’ many years ago, when I was younger, and yet it is true that I have always remembered Brampton with kindly feelings. The friends of our youth are dear to us. We look indulgently upon their failings, even as they do on ours. I have scanned the faces here in the hall to-night, and there are some that have not changed beyond recognition in thirty years. Ezra Graves I remember, and it is a pleasure to see him in that chair.” (Mr. Graves inclined his head, reverently. None knew how the inner man exulted.) “But there was one who was often in Brampton in those days,” Miss Lucretia continued, “whom we all loved and with whom we found no fault, and I confess that when I have thought of

Brampton I have oftenest thought of her. Her name," said Miss Lucretia, her hand now in the reticule, "her name was Cynthia Ware."

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There was a decided stir among the audience, and many leaned forward to catch every word.

“Even old people may have an ideal,” said Miss Lucretia, “and you will forgive me for speaking of mine. Where should I speak of it, if not in this village, among those who knew her and among their children? Cynthia Ware, although she was younger than I, has been my ideal, and is still. She was the daughter of the Rev. Samuel Ware of Coniston, and a descendant of Captain Timothy Prescott, whom General Stark called ’Honest Tim.’ She was, to me, all that a woman should be, in intellect, in her scorn of all that is ignoble and false, and in her loyalty to her friends.” Here the handkerchief came out of the reticule. “She went to Boston to teach school, and some time afterward I was offered a position in New York, and I never saw her again. But she married in Boston a man of learning and literary attainments, though his health was feeble and he was poor, William Wetherell.” (Another stir.) “Mr. Wetherell was a gentleman—Cynthia Ware could have married no other—and he came of good and honorable people in Portsmouth. Very recently I read a collection of letters which he wrote to the Newcastle Guardian, which some of you may know. I did not trust my own judgment as to those letters, but I took them to an author whose name is known wherever English is spoken, but which I will not mention. And the author expressed it as his opinion, in writing to me, that William Wetherell was undoubtedly a genius of a high order, and that he would have been so recognized if life had given him a chance. Mr. Wetherell, after his wife died, was taken in a dying condition to Coniston, where he was forced, in order to earn his living, to become the storekeeper there. But he took his books with him, and found time to write the letters of which I have spoken, and to give his daughter an early education such as few girls have.

“My friends, I am rejoiced to see that the spirit of justice and the sense of right are as strong in Brampton as they used to be—strong enough to fill this town hall to overflowing because a teacher has been wrongly—yes, and iniquitously—dismissed from the lower school.” (Here there was a considerable stir, and many wondered whether Miss Lucretia was aware of the irony in her words.) “I say wrongly and iniquitously, because I have had the opportunity in Boston this winter of learning to know and love that teacher. I am not given to exaggeration, my friends, and when I tell you that I know her, that her character is as high and pure as her mother’s, I can say no more. I am here to tell you this to-night because I do not believe you know her as I do. During the seventy years I have lived I have grown to have but little faith in outward demonstration, to believe in deeds and attainments rather than expressions. And as for her fitness to teach, I believe that even the prudential committee could find no fault with that.” (I wonder whether Mr. Dodd was in the back of the hall.) “I can find no fault with it. I am constantly called upon to recommend teachers, and I tell you I should have no hesitation in sending Cynthia Wetherell to a high school, young as she is.”

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“And now, my friends, why was she dismissed? I have heard the facts, though not from her. Cynthia Wetherell does not know that I have come to Brampton, unless somebody has told her, and did not know that I was coming. I have heard the facts, and I find it difficult to believe that so great a wrong could be attempted against a woman, and if the name of Cynthia Wetherell had meant no more to me than the letters in it I should have travelled twice as far as Brampton, old as I am, to do my utmost to right that wrong. I give you my word of honor that I have never been so indignant in my life. I do not come here to stir up enmities among you, and I will mention no more names. I prefer to believe that the prudential committee of this district has made a mistake, the gravity of which they must now realize, and that they will reinstate Cynthia Wetherell to-morrow. And if they should not of their own free will, I have only to look around this meeting to be convinced that they will be compelled to. Compelled to, my friends, by the sense of justice and the righteous indignation of the citizens of Brampton.”

Miss Lucretia sat down, her strong face alight with the spirit that was in her. Not the least of the compelling forces in this world is righteous anger, and when it is exercised by a man or a woman whose life has been a continual warfare against the pests of wrong, it is well-nigh irresistible. While you could count five seconds the audience sat silent, and then began such tumult and applause as had never been seen in Brampton—all started, so it is said, by an old soldier in the front row with his stick. Isaac D. Worthington, sitting alone in the library of his mansion, heard it, and had no need to send for Mr. Flint to ask what it was, or who it was had fired the Third Estate. And Mr. Dodd heard it. He may have been in the hall, but now he sat at home, seeing visions of the lantern, and he would have fled to the palace had he thought to get any sympathy from his sovereign. No, Mr. Dodd did not hold the Bastille or even fight for it. Another and a better man gave up the keys, for heroes are sometimes hidden away in meek and retiring people who wear spectacles and have a stoop to their shoulders. Long before the excitement died away a dozen men were on their feet shouting at the chairman, and among them was the tall, stooping man with spectacles. He did not shout, but Judge Graves saw him and made up his mind that this was the man to speak. The chairman raised his hand and rapped with his gavel, and at length he had obtained silence.

“Ladies and gentlemen,” he said, “I am going to recognize Mr. Hill of the prudential committee, and ask him to step up on the platform.”

There fell another silence, as absolute as the first, when Mr. Hill walked down the aisle and climbed the steps. Indeed, people were stupefied, for the feed dealer was a man who had never opened his mouth in town-meeting; who had never taken an initiative of any kind; who had allowed other men to take advantage of him, and had never resented it. And now he was going to speak. Would he defend the prudential committee, or would he declare for the teacher? Either course, in Mr. Hill’s case, required courage, and he had never been credited with any. If Mr. Hill was going to speak at all, he was going to straddle.

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He reached the platform, bowed irresolutely to the chairman, and then stood awkwardly with one knee bent, peering at his audience over his glasses. He began without any address whatever.

“I want to say,” he began in a low voice, “that I had no intention of coming to this meeting. And I am going to confess—I am going to confess that I was afraid to come.” He raised his voice a little defiantly a the words, and paused. One could almost hear the people breathing. “I was afraid to come for fear that I should do the very thing I am going to do now. And yet I was impelled to come. I want to say that my conscience has not been clear since, as a member of the prudential committee, I gave my consent to the dismissal of Miss Wetherell. I know that I was influenced by personal and selfish considerations which should have had no weight. And after listening to Miss Penniman I take this opportunity to declare, of my own free will, that I will add my vote to that of Judge Graves to reinstate Miss Wetherell.”

Mr. Hill bowed slightly, and was about to descend the steps when the chairman, throwing parliamentary dignity to the winds, arose and seized the feed dealer’s hand. And the people in the hall almost as one man sprang to their feet and cheered, and some—Ephraim Prescott among these—even waved their hats and shouted Mr. Hill’s name. A New England audience does not frequently forget itself, but there were few present who did not understand the heroism of the man’s confession, who were not carried away by the simple and dramatic dignity of it. He had no need to mention Mr. Worthington’s name, or specify the nature of his obligations to that gentleman. In that hour Jonathan Hill rose high in the respect of Brampton, and some pressed into the aisle to congratulate him on his way back to his seat. Not a few were grateful to him for another reason. He had relieved the meeting of the necessity of taking any further action: of putting their names, for instance, in their enthusiasm to a paper which the first citizen might see.

Judge Graves, whose sense of a climax was acute, rapped for order.

“Ladies and gentlemen,” he said, in a voice not wholly free from emotion, “you will all wish to pay your respects to the famous lady, who is with us. I see that the Rev. Mr. Sweet is present, and I suggest that we adjourn, after he has favored us with a prayer.”

As the minister came forward, Deacon Hartington dropped his head and began to flutter his eyelids. The Rev. Mr. Sweet prayed, and so was brought to an end the most exciting meeting ever held in Brampton town hall.

But Miss Lucretia did not like being called “a famous lady.”

CHAPTER XVI

While Miss Lucretia was standing, unwillingly enough, listening to the speeches that were poured into her ear by various members of the audience, receiving the incense and myrrh to which so great a celebrity was entitled, the old soldier hobbled away to his little house as fast as his three legs would carry him. Only one event in his life had eclipsed this in happiness—the interview in front of the White House. He rapped on the window with his stick, thereby frightening Cynthia half out of her wits as she sat musing sorrowfully by the fire.

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“Cousin Ephraim,” she said, taking off his corded hat, “what in the world’s the matter with you?”

“You’re a schoolmarm again, Cynthy.”

“Do you mean to say?”

“Miss Lucretia Penniman done it.”

“Miss Lucretia Penniman!” Cynthia began to think his rheumatism was driving him out of his mind.

“You bet. ‘Long toward the openin’ of the engagement there wahn’t scarcely anybody thar but me, and they was a-goin’. But they come fast enough when they l’arned she was in town, and she blew ’em up higher’n the Petersburg crater. Great Tecumseh, there’s a woman! Next to General Grant, I’d sooner shake her hand than anybody’s livin’.”

“Do you mean to say that Miss Lucretia is in Brampton and spoke at the mass meeting?”

“Spoke!” exclaimed Ephraim, “callate she did—some. Tore ’em all up. They’d a hung Isaac D. Worthington or Levi Dodd if they’d a had ’em thar.”

Cynthia, striving to be calm herself, got him into a chair and took his stick and straightened out his leg, and then Ephraim told her the story, and it lost no dramatic effect in his telling. He would have talked all night. But at length the sound of wheels was heard in the street, Cynthia flew to the door, and a familiar voice came out of the darkness.

“You need not wait, Gamaliel. No, thank you, I think I will stay at the hotel.”

Gamaliel was still protesting when Miss Lucretia came in and seized Cynthia in her arms, and the door was closed behind her.

“Oh, Miss Lucretia, why did you come?” said Cynthia, “if I had known you would do such a thing, I should never have written that letter. I have been sorry to-day that I did write it, and now I’m sorrier than ever.”

“Aren’t you glad to see me?” demanded Miss Lucretia.

“Miss Lucretia!”

“What are friends for?” asked Miss Lucretia, patting her hand. “If you had known how I wished to see you, Cynthia, and I thought a little trip would be good for such a provincial

Bostonian as I am. Dear, dear, I remember this house. It used to belong to Gabriel Post in my time, and right across from it was the Social Library, where I have spent so many pleasant hours with your mother. And this is Ephraim Prescott. I thought it was, when I saw him sitting in the front row, and I think he must have been very lonesome there at one time."

"Yes, ma'am," said Ephraim, giving her his gnarled fingers; "I was just sayin' to Cynthy that I'd ruther shake your hand than anybody's livin' exceptin' General Grant."

"And I'd rather shake yours than the General's," said Miss Lucretia, for the Woman's Hour had taken the opposition side in a certain recent public question concerning women.

"If you'd a fit with him, you wouldn't say that, Miss Lucrety."

"I haven't a word to say against his fighting qualities," she replied.

"Guess the General might say the same of you," said Ephraim. "If you'd a b'en a man, I callate you'd a come out of the war with two stars on your shoulder. Godfrey, Miss Lucrety, you'd ought to've b'en a man."

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“A man!” cried Miss Lucretia, “and ‘stars on my shoulder’! I think this kind of talk has gone far enough, Ephraim Prescott.”

“Cousin Eph,” said Cynthia, laughing, “you’re no match for Miss Lucretia, and it’s long past your bedtime.”

“A man!” repeated Miss Lucretia, after he had retired, and after Cynthia had tried to express her gratitude and had been silenced. They sat side by side in front of the chimney. “I suppose he meant that as a compliment. I never yet saw the man I couldn’t back down, and I haven’t any patience with a woman who gives in to them.” Miss Lucretia poked vigorously a log which had fallen down, as though that were a man, too, and she was putting him back in his proper place.

Cynthia, strange to say, did not reply to this remark.

“Cynthia,” said Miss Lucretia, abruptly, “you don’t mean to say that you are in love!”

Cynthia drew a long breath, and grew as red as the embers.

“Miss Lucretia!” she exclaimed, in astonishment and dismay.

“Well,” Miss Lucretia said, “I should have thought you could have gotten along, for a while at least, without anything of that kind. My dear,” she said leaning toward Cynthia, “who is he?”

Cynthia turned away. She found it very hard to speak of her troubles, even to Miss Lucretia, and she would have kept this secret even from Jethro, had it been possible.

“You must let him know his place,” said Miss Lucretia, “and I hope he is in some degree worthy of you.”

“I do not intend to marry him,” said Cynthia, with head still turned away.

It was now Miss Lucretia who was silent.

“I came near getting married once,” she said presently, with characteristic abruptness.

“You!” cried Cynthia, looking around in amazement.

“You see, I am franker than you, my dear—though I never told any one else. I believe you can keep a secret.”

“Of course I can. Who—was it anyone in Brampton, Miss Lucretia?” The question was out before Cynthia realized its import. She was turning the tables with a vengeance.

“It was Ezra Graves,” said Miss Lucretia.

“Ezra Graves!” And then Cynthia pressed Miss Lucretia’s hand in silence, thinking how strange it was that both of them should have been her champions that evening.

Miss Lucretia poked the fire again.

“It was shortly after that, when I went to Boston, that I wrote the ’Hymn to Coniston.’ I suppose we must all be fools once or twice, or we should not be human.”

“And—weren’t you ever—sorry?” asked Cynthia.

Again there was a silence.

“I could not have done the work I have had to do in the world if I had married. But I have often wondered whether that work was worth the while. Such a feeling must come over all workers, occasionally. Yes,” said Miss Lucretia, “there have been times when I have been sorry, my dear, though I have never confessed it to another soul. I am telling you this for your own good—not mine. If you have the love of a good man, Cynthia, be careful what you do with it.”

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The tears had come into Cynthia's eyes.

"I should have told you, Miss Lucretia," she faltered. "If I could have married him, it would have been easier."

"Why can't you marry him?" demanded Miss Lucretia, sharply—to hide her own emotion.

"His name," said Cynthia, "is Bob Worthington:"

"Isaac Worthington's son?"

"Yes."

Another silence, Miss Lucretia being utterly unable to say anything for a space.

"Is he a good man?"

Cynthia was on the point of indignant-protest, but she stopped herself in time.

"I will tell you what he has done," she answered, "and then you shall judge for yourself."

And she told Miss Lucretia, simply, all that Bob had done, and all that she herself had done.

"He is like his mother, Sarah Hollingsworth; I knew her well," said Miss Lucretia. "If Isaac Worthington were a man, he would be down on his knees begging you to marry his son. He tried hard enough to marry your own mother."

"My mother!" exclaimed Cynthia, who had never believed that rumor.

"Yes," said Miss Lucretia, "and you may thank your stars he didn't succeed. I mistrusted him when he was a young man, and now I know that he hasn't changed. He is a coward and a hypocrite."

Cynthia could not deny this.

"And yet," she said, after a moment's silence, "I am sure you will say that I have been right. My own conscience tells me that it is wrong to deprive Bob of his inheritance, and to separate him from his father, whatever his father—may be."

"We shall see what happens in five years," said Miss Lucretia.

"Five years!" said Cynthia, in spite of herself.

“Jacob served seven for Rachel,” answered Miss Lucretia; “that period is scarcely too short to test a man, and you are both young.”

“No,” said Cynthia, “I cannot marry him, Miss Lucretia. The world would accuse me of design, and I feel that I should not be happy. I am sure that he would never reproach me, even if things went wrong, but—the day might come when—when he would wish that it had been otherwise.”

Miss Lucretia kissed her.

“You are very young, my dear,” she repeated, “and none of us may say what changes time may bring forth. And now I must go.”

Cynthia insisted upon walking with her friend down the street to the hotel—an undertaking that was without danger in Brampton. And it was only a step, after all. A late moon floated in the sky, throwing in relief the shadow of the Worthington mansion against the white patches of snow. A light was still burning in the library.

The next morning after breakfast Miss Lucretia appeared at the little house, and informed Cynthia that she would walk to school with her.

“But I have not yet been notified by the Committee,” said Cynthia. There was a knock at the door, and in walked Judge Ezra Graves. Miss Lucretia may have blushed, but it is certain that Cynthia did. Never had she seen the judge so spick and span, and he wore the broadcloth coat he usually reserved for Sundays. He paused at the threshold, with his hand on his Adam’s apple.

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“Good morning, ladies,” he said, and looked shyly at Miss Lucretia and cleared his throat, and spoke with the elaborate decorum he used on occasions, “Miss Penniman, I wish to thank you again for your noble action of last evening.”

“Don’t ‘Miss Penniman’ me, Ezra Graves,” retorted Miss Lucretia; “the only noble action I know of was poor Jonathan Hill’s—unless it was paying for the gas.”

This was the way in which Miss Lucretia treated her lover after thirty years! Cynthia thought of what the lady had said to her a few hours since, by this very fire, and began to believe she must have dreamed it. Fires look very differently at night—and sometimes burn brighter then. The judge parted his coat tails, and seated himself on the wooden edge of a cane-bottomed chair.

“Lucretia,” he said, “you haven’t changed.”

“You have, Ezra,” she replied, looking at the Adam’s apple.

“I’m an old man,” said Ezra Graves.

Cynthia could not help thinking that he was a very different man, in Miss Lucretia’s presence, than when at the head of the prudential committee.

“Ezra,” said Miss Lucretia, “for a man you do very well.”

The judge smiled.

“Thank you, Lucretia,” said he. He seemed to appreciate the full extent of the compliment.

“Judge Graves,” said Cynthia, “I can tell you how good you are, at least, and thank you for your great kindness to me, which I shall never forget.”

She took his withered hands from his knees and pressed them. He returned the pressure, and then searched his coat tails, found a handkerchief, and blew his nose violently.

“I merely did my duty, Miss Wetherell,” he said. “I would not wilfully submit to a wrong.”

“You called me Cynthia yesterday.”

“So I did,” he answered, “so I did.” Then he looked at Miss Lucretia.

“Ezra,” said that lady, smiling a little, “I don’t believe you have changed, after all.”

What she meant by that nobody knows.

“I had thought, Cynthia,” said the judge, “that it might be more comfortable for you to have me go to the school with you. That is the reason for my early call.”

“Judge Graves, I do appreciate your kindness,” said Cynthia; “I hope you won’t think I’m rude if I say I’d rather go alone.”

“On the contrary, my dear,” replied the judge, “I think I can understand and esteem your feeling in the matter, and it shall be as you wish.”

“Then I think I had better be going,” said Cynthia. The judge rose in alarm at the words, but she put her hand on his shoulder. “Won’t you sit down and stay,” she begged, “you haven’t seen Miss Lucretia for how many years,—thirty, isn’t it?”

Again he glanced at Miss Lucretia, uncertainly. “Sit down, Ezra,” she commanded, “and for goodness’ sake don’t be afraid of the cane bottom. You won’t go through it. I should like to talk to you, and most of the gossips of our day are dead. I shall stay in Brampton to-day, Cynthia, and eat supper with you here this evening.”

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Cynthia, as she went out of the door, wondered what they would talk about. Then she turned toward the school. It was not the March wind that burned her cheeks; as she thought of the mass meeting the night before, which was all about her, she wished she might go to school that morning through the woods and pasture lots rather than down Brampton Street. What—what would Bob say when he heard of the meeting? Would he come again to Brampton? If he did, she would run away to Boston with Miss Lucretia. Every day it had been a trial to pass the Worthington house, but she could not cross the wide street to avoid it. She hurried a little, unconsciously, when she came to it, for there was Mr. Worthington on the steps talking to Mr. Flint. How he must hate her now, Cynthia reflected! He did not so much as look up when she passed.

The other citizens whom she met made up for Mr. Worthington's coldness, and gave her a hearty greeting, and some stopped to offer their congratulations. Cynthia did not pause to philosophize: she was learning to accept the world as it was, and hurried swiftly on to the little schoolhouse. The children saw her coming, and ran to meet her and escorted her triumphantly in at the door. Of their welcome she could be sure. Thus she became again teacher of the lower school.

How the judge and Miss Lucretia got along that morning, Cynthia never knew. Miss Lucretia spent the day in her old home, submitting to hero-worship, and attended an evening party in her honor at Mr. Gamaliel Ives's house—a mansion not so large as the first citizen's, though it had two bay-windows and was not altogether unimposing. The first citizen, needless to say, was not there, but the rest of the elite attended. Mr. Ives will tell you all about the entertainment if you go to Brampton, but the real reason Miss Lucretia consented to go was to please Lucy Baird, who was Gamaliel's wife, and to chat with certain old friends whom she had not seen. The next morning she called at the school to bid Cynthia good-by, and to whisper something in her ear which made her very red before all the scholars. She shook her head when Miss Lucretia said it, for it had to do with an incident in the 29th chapter of Genesis.

While Jonathan Hill was being made a hero of in the little two-by-four office of the feed store the morning after the mass meeting (though nobody offered to take over his mortgage), Mr. Dodd was complaining to his wife of shooting pains, and "callated" he would stay at home that day.

"Shootin' fiddlesticks!" said Mrs. Dodd. "Get along down to the store and face the music, Levi Dodd. You'd have had shootin' pains if you'd a went to the meetin'."

"I might stop by at Mr. Worthington's house and explain how powerless I was—"

"For goodness' sake git out, Levi. I guess he knows how powerless you are with your shootin' pains. If you only could forget Isaac D. Worthington for three minutes, you wouldn't have 'em."

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Mr. Dodd's two clerks saw him enter the store by the back door and he was very much interested in the new ploughs which were piled up in crates outside of it. Then he disappeared into his office and shut the door, and supposedly became very much absorbed in book-keeping. If any one called, he was out—any one. Plenty of people did call, but he was not disturbed—until ten o'clock. Mr. Dodd had a very sensitive ear, and he could often recognize a man by his step, and this man he recognized.

"Where's Mr. Dodd?" demanded the owner of the step, indignantly.

"He's out, Mr. Worthington. Anything I can do for you, Mr. Worthington?"

"You can tell him to come up to my house the moment he comes in."

Unfortunately Mr. Dodd in the office had got into a strained position. He found it necessary to move a little; the day-book fell heavily to the floor, and the perspiration popped out all over his forehead. Come out, Levi Dodd. The Bastille is taken, but there are other fortresses still in the royal hands where you may be confined.

"Who's in the office?"

"I don't know, sir," answered the clerk, winking at his companion, who was sorting nails.

In three strides the great man had his hand on the office door and had flung it open, disclosing the culprit cowering over the day-book on the floor.

"Mr. Dodd," cried the first citizen, "what do you mean by—?"

Some natures, when terrified, are struck dumb. Mr. Dodd's was the kind which bursts into speech.

"I couldn't help it, Mr. Worthington," he cried, "they would have it. I don't know what got into 'em. They lost their senses, Mr. Worthington, plumb lost their senses. If you'd a b'en there, you might have brought 'em to. I tried to git the floor, but Ezry Graves—"

"Confound Ezra Graves, and wait till I have done, can't you," interrupted the first citizen, angrily. "What do you mean by putting a bath-tub into my house with the tin loose, so that I cut my leg on it?"

Mr. Dodd nearly fainted from sheer relief.

"I'll put a new one in to-day, right now," he gasped.

"See that you do," said the first citizen, "and if I lose my leg, I'll sue you for a hundred thousand dollars."

“I was a-goin’ to explain about them losin’ their heads at the mass meetin’—”

“Damn their heads!” said the first citizen. “And yours, too,” he may have added under his breath as he stalked out. It was not worth a swing of the executioner’s axe in these times of war. News had arrived from the state capital that morning of which Mr. Dodd knew nothing. Certain feudal chiefs from the North Country, of whose allegiance Mr. Worthington had felt sure, had obeyed the summons of their old sovereign, Jethro Bass, and had come South to hold a conclave under him at the Pelican. Those chiefs of the North Country, with their clans behind them as one man, what a power they were in

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the state! What magnificent qualities they had, in battle or strategy, and how cunning and shrewd was their generalship! Year after year they came down from their mountains and fought shoulder to shoulder, and year after year they carried back the lion's share of the spoils between them. The great South, as a whole, was powerless to resist them, for there could be no lasting alliance between Harwich and Brampton and Newcastle and Gosport. Now their king had come back, and the North Country men were rallying again to his standard. No wonder that Levi Dodd's head, poor thing that it was, was safe for a while.

"Organize what you have left, and be quick about it," said Mr. Flint, when the news had come, and they sat in the library planning a new campaign in the face of this evident defection. There was no time to cry over spilt milk or reinstated school-teachers. The messages flew far and wide to the manufacturing towns to range their guilds into line for the railroads. The seneschal wrote the messages, and sent the summons to the sleek men of the cities, and let it be known that the coffers were full and not too tightly sealed, that the faithful should not lack for the sinews of war. Mr. Flint found time, too, to write some carefully worded but nevertheless convincing articles for the Newcastle Guardian, very damaging to certain commanders who had proved unfaithful.

"Flint," said Mr. Worthington, when they had worked far into the night, "if Bass beats us, I'm a crippled man."

"And if you postpone the fight now that you have begun it? What then?"

The answer, Mr. Worthington knew, was the same either way. He did not repeat it. He went to his bed, but not to sleep for many hours, and when he came down to his breakfast in the morning, he was in no mood to read the letter from Cambridge which Mrs. Holden had put on his plate. But he did read it, with what anger and bitterness may be imagined. There was the ultimatum,—respectful, even affectionate, but firm. "I know that you will, in all probability, disinherit me as you say, and I tell you honestly that I regret the necessity of quarrelling with you more than I do the money. I do not pretend to say that I despise money, and I like the things that it buys, but the woman I love is more to me than all that you have."

Mr. Worthington laid the letter down, and there came irresistibly to his mind something that his wife had said to him before she died, shortly after they had moved into the mansion. "Dudley, how happy we used to be together before we were rich!" Money had not been everything to Sarah Worthington, either. But now no tender wave of feeling swept over him as he recalled those words. He was thinking of what weapon he had to prevent the marriage beyond that which was now useless—disinheritance. He would disinherit Bob, and that very day. He would punish his son to the utmost of his power

for marrying the ward of Jethro Bass. He wondered bitterly, in case a certain event occurred, whether he would have much to alienate.

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When Mr. Flint arrived, fresh as usual in spite of the work he had accomplished and the cigars he had smoked the night before, Mr. Worthington still had the letter in his hand, and was pacing his library floor, and broke into a tirade against his son.

“After all I have done for him, building up for him a position and a fortune that is only surpassed by young Duncan’s, to treat me in this way, to drag down the name of Worthington in the mire. I’ll never forgive him. I’ll send for Dixon and leave the money for a hospital in Brampton. Can’t you suggest any way out of this, Flint?”

“No,” said Flint, “not now. The only chance you have is to ignore the thing from now on. He may get tired of her—I’ve known such things to happen.”

“When she hears that I’ve disinherited him, she will get tired of him,” declared Mr. Worthington.

“Try it and see, if you like,” said Flint.

“Look here, Flint, if the woman has a spark of decent feeling, as you seem to think, I’ll send for her and tell her that she will ruin Robert if she marries him.” Mr. Worthington always spoke of his son as “Robert.”

“You ought to have thought of that before the mass meeting. Perhaps it would have done some good then.”

“Because this Penniman woman has stirred people up—is that what you mean? I don’t care anything about that. Money counts in the long run.”

“If money counted with this school-teacher, it would be a simple matter. I think you’ll find it doesn’t.”

“I’ve known you to make some serious mistakes,” snapped Mr. Worthington.

“Then why do you ask for my advice?”

“I’ll send for her, and appeal to her better nature,” said Mr. Worthington, with an unconscious and sublime irony.

Flint gave no sign that he heard. Mr. Worthington seated himself at his desk, and after some thought wrote on a piece of note-paper the following lines: “My dear Miss Wetherell, I should be greatly obliged if you would find it convenient to call at my house at eight o’clock this evening,” and signed them, “Sincerely Yours.” He sealed them up in an envelope and addressed it to Miss Wetherell, at the schoolhouse; and handed it to Mr. Flint. That gentleman got as far as the door, and then he hesitated and turned.

“There is just one way out of this for you, that I can see, Mr. Worthington,” he said. “It’s a desperate measure, but it’s worth thinking about.”

“What’s that?”

It took some courage for Mr. Flint, to make the suggestion. “The girl’s a good girl, well educated, and by no means bad looking. Bob might do a thousand times worse. Give your consent to the marriage, and Jethro Bass will go back to Coniston.”

It was wisdom such as few lords get from their seneschals, but Isaac D. Worthington did not so recognize it. His anger rose and took away his breath as he listened to it.

“I will never give my consent to it, never—do you hear?—never. Send that note!” he cried.

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Mr. Flint walked out, sent the note, and returned and took his place silently at his own table. He was a man of concentration, and he put his mind on the arguments he was composing to certain political leaders. Mr. Worthington merely pretended to work as he waited for the answer to come back. And presently, when it did come back, he tore it open and read it with an expression not often on his lips. He flung the paper at Mr. Flint.

“Read that,” he said.

This is what Mr. Flint read: “Miss Wetherell begs to inform Mr. Isaac D. Worthington that she can have no communication or intercourse with him whatsoever.”

Mr. Flint handed it back without a word. His opinion of the school-teacher had risen mightily, but he did not say so. Mr. Worthington took the note, too, without a word. Speech was beyond him, and he crushed the paper as fiercely as he would have liked to have crushed Cynthia, had she been in his hands.

One accomplishment which Cynthia had learned at Miss Sadler’s school was to write a letter in the third person, Miss Sadler holding that there were occasions when it was beneath a lady’s dignity to write a direct note. And Cynthia, sitting at her little desk in the schoolhouse during her recess, had deemed this one of the occasions. She could not bring herself to write, “My dear Mr. Worthington.” Her anger, when the note had been handed to her, was for the moment so great that she could not go on with her classes; but she had controlled it, and compelled Silas to stand in the entry until recess, when she sat with her pen in her hand until that happy notion of the third person occurred to her. And after Silas had gone she sat still; though trembling a little at intervals, picturing with some satisfaction Mr. Worthington’s appearance when he received her answer. Her instinct told her that he had received his son’s letter, and that he had sent for her to insult her. By sending for her, indeed, he had insulted her irrevocably, and that is why she trembled.

Poor Cynthia! her troubles came thick and fast upon her in those days. When she reached home, there was the letter which Ephraim had left on the table addressed in the familiar, upright handwriting, and when Cynthia saw it, she caught her hand sharply at her breast, as if the pain there had stopped the beating of her heart. Well it was for Bob’s peace of mind that he could not see her as she read it, and before she had come to the end there were drops on the sheets where the purple ink had run. How precious would have been those drops to him! He would never give her up. No mandate or decree could separate them—nothing but death. And he was happier now so he told her—than he had been for months: happy in the thought that he was going out into the world to win bread for her, as became a man. Even if he had not her to strive for, he saw now that such was the only course for him. He could not conform.

It was a manly letter,—how manly Bob himself never knew. But Cynthia knew, and she wept over it and even pressed it to her lips—for there was no one to see. Yes, she

loved him as she would not have believed it possible to love, and she sat through the afternoon reading his words and repeating them until it seemed that he were there by her side, speaking them. They came, untrammelled and undefiled, from his heart into hers.

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And now that he had quarrelled with his father for her sake, and was bent with all the determination of his character upon making his own way in the world, what was she to do? What was her duty? Not one letter of the twoscore she had received (so she kept their count from day to day)—not one had she answered. His faith had indeed been great. But she must answer this: must write, too, on that subject of her dismissal, lest it should be wrongly told him. He was rash in his anger, and fearless; this she knew, and loved him for such qualities as he had.

She must stay in Brampton and do her work,—so much was clearly her duty, although she longed to flee from it. And at last she sat down and wrote to him. Some things are too sacred to be set forth on a printed page, and this letter is one of those things. Try as she would, she could not find it in her heart at such a time to destroy his hope,—or her own. The hope which she would not acknowledge, and the love which she strove to conceal from him seeped up between the words of her letter like water through grains of sand. Words, indeed, are but as grains of sand to conceal strong feelings, and as Cynthia read the letter over she felt that every line betrayed her, and knew that she could compose no lines which would not.

She said nothing of the summons which she had received that morning, or of her answer; and her account of the matter of the dismissal and reinstatement was brief and dignified, and contained no mention of Mr. Worthington's name or agency. It was her duty, too, to rebuke Bob for the quarrel with his father, to point out the folly of it, and the wrong, and to urge him as strongly as she could to retract, though she felt that all this was useless. And then—then came the betrayal of hope. She could not ask him never to see her again, but she did beseech him for her sake, and for the sake of that love which he had declared, not to attempt to see her: not for a year, she wrote, though the word looked to her like eternity. Her reasons, aside from her own scruples, were so obvious, while she taught in Brampton, that she felt that he would consent to banishment—until the summer holidays in July, at least: and then she would be in Coniston,—and would have had time to decide upon future steps. A reprieve was all she craved,—a reprieve in which to reflect, for she was in no condition to reflect now. Of one thing she was sure, that it would not be right at this time to encourage him although she had a guilty feeling that the letter had given him encouragement in spite of all the prohibitions it contained. "If, in the future years," thought Cynthia, as she sealed the envelope, "he persists in his determination, what then?" You, Miss Lucretia, of all people in the world, have planted the seeds with your talk about Genesis!

The letter was signed "One who will always remain your friend, Cynthia Wetherell." And she posted it herself.

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When Ephraim came home to supper that evening, he brought the Brampton Clarion, just out, and in it was an account of Miss Lucretia Penniman's speech at the mass meeting, and of her visit, and of her career. It was written in Mr. Page's best vein, and so laudatory was it that we shall have to spare Miss Lucretia in not repeating it here: yes, and omit the encomiums, too, on the teacher of the Brampton lower school. Mr. Worthington was not mentioned, and for this, at least, Cynthia drew along breath of relief, though Ephraim was of the opinion that the first citizen should have been scored as he deserved, and held up to the contempt of his fellow-townsmen. The dismissal of the teacher, indeed, was put down to a regrettable misconception on the part of "one of the prudential committee," who had confessed his mistake in "a manly and altogether praiseworthy speech." The article was as near the truth, perhaps, as the Clarions may come on such matters—which is not very near. Cynthia would have been better pleased if Mr. Page had spared his readers the recital of her qualities, and she did not in the least recognize the paragon whom Miss Lucretia had befriended and defended. She was thankful that Mr. Page did pot state that the celebrity had come up from Boston on her account. Miss Penniman had been "actuated by a sudden desire to see once more the beauties of her old home, to look into the faces of the old friends who had followed her career with such pardonable pride." The speech of the president of the literary club, you may be sure, was printed in full, for Mr. Ives himself had taken the trouble to write it out for the editor—by request, of course.

Cynthia turned over the sheet, and read many interesting items: one concerning the beauty and fashion and intellect which attended the party at Mr. Gamaliel Ives's; in the Clovelly notes she saw that Miss Judy Hatch, of Coniston, was visiting relatives there; she learned the output of the Worthington Mills for the past week. Cynthia was about to fold up the paper and send it to Miss Lucretia, whom she thought it would amuse, when her eyes were arrested by the sight of a familiar name.

> "Jethro Bass come to life again.
> From the State Tribune."

That was the heading. "One of the greatest political surprises in many years was the arrival in the capital on Wednesday of Judge Bass, whom it was thought, had permanently retired from politics. This, at least, seems to have been the confident belief of a faction in the state who have at heart the consolidation of certain lines of railroads. Judge Bass was found by a Tribune reporter in the familiar Throne Room at the Pelican, but, as usual, he could not be induced to talk for publication. He was in conference throughout the afternoon with several well-known leaders from the North Country. The return of Jethro Bass to activity seriously complicates the railroad situation, and many prominent politicians are freely

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predicting to-night that, in spite of the town-meeting returns, the proposed bill for consolidation will not go through. Judge Bass is a man of such remarkable personality that he has regained at a stroke much of the influence that he lost by the sudden and unaccountable retirement which electrified the state some months since. His reappearance, the news of which was the one topic in all political centres yesterday, is equally unaccountable. It is hinted that some action on the part of Isaac D. Worthington has brought Jethro Bass to life. They are known to be bitter enemies, and it is said that Jethro Bass has but one object in returning to the field—to crush the president of the Truro Railroad. Another theory is that the railroads and interests opposed to the consolidation have induced Judge Bass to take charge of their fight for them. All indications point to the fiercest struggle the state has ever seen in June, when the Legislature meets. The Tribune, whose sentiments are well known to be opposed to the iniquity of consolidation, extends a hearty welcome to the judge. No state, we believe, can claim a party leader of a higher order of ability than Jethro Bass."

Cynthia dropped the paper in her lap, and sat very still. This, then, was what happened when Jethro had heard of her dismissal—he had left Coniston without writing her a word and passed through Brampton without seeing her. He had gone back to that life which he had abandoned for her sake; the temptation had been too strong, the desire for vengeance too great. He had not dared to see her. And yet the love for her which had been strong enough to make him renounce the homage of men, and even incur their ridicule, had incited him to this very act of vengeance.

What should she do now, indeed? Had those peaceful and happy Saturdays and Sundays in Coniston passed away forever? Should she follow him to the capital and appeal to him? Ah no, she felt that were a useless pain to them both. She believed, now, that he had gone away from her for all time, that the veil of limitless space was set between, them. Silently she arose,—so silently that Ephraim, dozing by the fire, did not awake. She went into her own room and wept, and after many hours fell into a dreamless sleep of sheer exhaustion.

The days passed, and the weeks; the snow ran from the brown fields, and melted at length even in the moist crotches under the hemlocks of the northern slopes; the robin and bluebird came, the hillsides were mottled with exquisite shades of green, and the scent of fruit blossom and balm of Gilead was in the air. June came as a maiden and grew into womanhood. But Jethro Bass did not return to Coniston.

CHAPTER XVII

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The legends which surround the famous war which we are about to touch upon are as dim as those of Troy or Tuscany. Decorous chronicles and biographies and monographs and eulogies exist, bound in leather and stamped in gold, each lauding its own hero: chronicles written in really beautiful language, and high-minded and noble, out of which the heroes come unstained. Horatius holds the bridge, and not a dent in his armor; and swims the Tiber without getting wet or muddy. Castor and Pollux fight in the front rank at Lake Regillus, in the midst of all that gore and slaughter, and emerge all white and pure at the end of the day—but they are gods.

Out of the classic wars to which we have referred sprang the great Roman Republic and Empire, and legend runs into authentic and written history. Just so, parva componere magnis, out of the cloud-wrapped conflicts of the five railroads of which our own Gaul is composed, emerged one imperial railroad, authentically and legally written down on the statute books, for all men to see. We cannot go behind that statute except to collect the legends and write homilies about the heroes who held the bridges.

If we were not in mortal terror of the imperial power, and a little fearful, too, of tiring our readers, we would write out all the legends we have collected of this first fight for consolidation, and show the blood, too.

In the statute books of a certain state may be found a number of laws setting forth the various things that a railroad or railroads may do, and on the margin of these pages is invariably printed a date, that being the particular year in which these laws were passed. By a singular coincidence it is the very year at which we have now arrived in our story. We do not intend to give a map of the state, or discuss the merits or demerits of the consolidation of the Central and the Northwestern and the Truro railroads. Such discussions are not the province of a novelist, and may all be found in the files of the Tribune at the State Library. There were, likewise, decisions without number handed down by the various courts before and after that celebrated session,—opinions on the validity of leases, on the extension of railroads, on the rights of individual stockholders—all dry reading enough.

At the risk of being picked to pieces by the corporation lawyers who may read these pages, we shall attempt to state the situation and with all modesty and impartiality—for we, at least, hold no brief. When Mr. Isaac D. Worthington obtained that extension of the Truro Railroad (which we have read about from the somewhat verdant point of view of William Wetherell), that railroad then formed a connection with another road which ran northward from Harwich through another state, and with which we have nothing to do. Having previously purchased a line to the southward from the capital, Mr. Worthington's railroad was in a position to compete with Mr. Duncan's (the "Central")

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for Canadian traffic, and also to cut into the profits of the “Northwestern,” Mr. Lovejoy’s road. In brief, the Truro Railroad found itself very advantageously placed, as Mr. Worthington and Mr. Flint had foreseen. There followed a period of bickering and recrimination, of attempts of the other two railroads to secure representation in the Truro directorate, of suits and injunctions and appeals to the Legislature and I know not what else—in all of which affairs Mr. Bijah Bixby and other gentlemen we could name found both pleasure and remuneration.

Oh, that those halcyon days of the little wars would come again, when a captain could ride out almost any time at the held of his band of mercenaries and see honest fighting and divide honest spoils! There was much knocking about of men and horses, but very little bloodshed, so we are told. Mr. Bixby will sit on the sunny side of his barns in Clovelly and tell you stories of that golden period with tears in his eyes, when he went to conventions with a pocketful of proxies from the river towns, and controlled in the greatest legislative year of all a “block” which included the President of the Senate, for which he got the fabulous sum of——. He will tell you, but I won’t. Mr. Bixby’s occupation is gone now. We have changed all that, and we are ruled from imperial Rome. If you don’t do right, they cut off your (political) head, and it is of no use to run away, because there is no one to run to.

It was Isaac D. Worthington—or shall we say Mr. Flint?—who was responsible for this pernicious change for the worse, who conceived the notion of leasing for the Truro the Central and the Northwestern,—thus making one railroad out of the three. If such a gigantic undertaking could be got through, Mr. Worthington very rightly deemed that the other railroads of the state would eventually fall like ripe fruit into their caps—owning the ground under the tree, as they would. A movement, which we need not go unto, was first made upon the courts, and for a while adverse decisions came down like summer rain. A genius by the name of Jethro Bass had for many years presided (in the room of the governor and council at the State House) at the political birth of justices of the Supreme Court. None of them actually wore livery, but we have seen one of them—-along time ago—in a horse blanket. None of them were favorable to the plans of Mr. Worthington and Mr. Duncan.

We have listened to the firing on the skirmish lines for a long time, and now the real battle is at hand. It is June, and the Legislature is meeting, and Bijah Bixby has come down to the capital at the head of his regiment of mercenaries, of which Mr. Sutton is the honorary colonel; the clans are here from the north, well quartered and well fed; the Throne Room, within the sacred precincts of which we have been before, is occupied. But there is another headquarters now, too, in the Pelican House—a Railroad Room; larger than the Throne Room, with a bath-room leading out of it. Another old friend of ours, Judge Abner Parkinson of Harwich, he who gave the sardonic laugh when Sam Price applied for the post of road agent, may often be seen in that Railroad Room from

now on. The fact is that the judge is about to become famous far beyond the confines of Harwich; for he, and none other, is the author of the Consolidation Bill itself.

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Mr. Flint is the generalissimo of the allied railroads, and sits in his headquarters early and late, going over the details of the campaign with his lieutenants; scanning the clauses of the bill with Judge Parkinson for the last time, and giving orders to the captains of mercenaries as to the disposition of their forces; writing out passes for the deserving and the true. For these latter, also, and for the wavering there is a claw-hammer on the marble-topped mantel wielded by Mr. Bijah Bixby, pro tem chief of staff—or of the hammer, for he is self-appointed and very useful. He opens the mysterious packing cases which come up to the Railroad Room thrice a week, and there is water to be had in the bath-room—and glasses. Mr. Bixby also finds time to do some of the scouting about the rotunda and lobbies, for which he is justly celebrated, and to drill his regiment every day. The Honorable Heth Sutton, M.C.,—who held the bridge in the Woodchuck Session,—is there also, sitting in a corner, swelled with importance, smoking big Florizel cigars which come from—somewhere. There are, indeed, many great and battle-scarred veterans who congregate in that room—too numerous and great to mention; and saunterers in the Capitol Park opposite know when a council of war is being held by the volumes of smoke which pour out of the window, just as the Romans are made cognizant by the smoking of a chimney of when another notable event takes place.

Who, then, are left to frequent the Throne Room? Is that ancient seat of power deserted, and does Jethro Bass sit there alone behind the curtains, in his bitterness, thinking of other bright June days that are gone?

Of all those who had been amazed when Jethro Bass suddenly emerged from his retirement and appeared in the capital some months before, none were more thunderstruck than certain gentlemen who had been to Coniston repeatedly, but in vain, to urge him to make this very fight. The most important of these had been Mr. Balch, president of the “Down East” Road, and the representatives of two railroads of another state. They had at last offered Jethro fabulous sums to take charge of their armies in the field—sums, at least, that would seem fabulous to many people, and had seemed so to them. When they heard that the lion had roused and shaken himself and had unaccountably come forth of his own accord, they hastened to the state capital to renew their offers. Another shock, but of a different kind, was in store for them. Mr. Balch had not actually driven the pack-mules, laden with treasure, to the door of the Pelican House, where Jethro might see them from his window; but he requested a private audience, and it was probably accidental that the end of his personal check-book protruded a little from his pocket. He was a big, coarse-grained man, Mr. Balch, who had once been a brakeman, and had risen by what is known as horse sense to the presidency of his road. There was a wonderful sunset beyond the Capitol, but Mr. Balch did not talk about the sunset, although Jethro was watching it from behind the curtains.

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“If you are willing to undertake this fight against consolidation,” said Mr. Balch, “we are ready to talk business with you.”

“D-don’t know what you’re going to, do,” answered Jethro; “I’m going to prevent consolidation, if I can.”

“All right,” said Balch, smiling. He regarded this reply as one of Jethro’s delicate euphemisms. “We’re prepared to give that same little retainer.”

Jethro did not look up. Mr. Balch went to the table and seized a pen and filled out a check for an amount that shall be nameless.

“I have made it payable to bearer, as usual,” he said, and he handed it to Jethro.

Jethro took it, and absently tore it into little pieces, and threw the pieces on the floor. Mr. Balch watched him in consternation. He began to think the report that Jethro had reached his second childhood was true.

“What in Halifax are you doing, Bass?” he cried.

“W-want to stop this consolidation, don’t you—want’ to stop it?”

“Certainly I do.”

“G-goin’ to do all you can to stop it hain’t you?”

“Certainly I am.”

“I-I’ll help you,” said Jethro.

“Help us!” exclaimed Balch. “Great Scott, we want you to take charge of it.”

“I-I’ll do all I can, but I won’t guarantee it—w-won’t guarantee it,” said Jethro.

“We don’t ask you to guarantee it. If you’ll do all you can, that’s enough. You won’t take a retainer?”

“W-won’t take anything,” said Jethro.

“You mean to say you don’t want anything for your for your time and your services if the bill is defeated?”

“T-that’s about it, Ed. Little p-private matter with both of us. You don’t want consolidation, and I don’t. I hain’t offered to give you a retainer—have I?”

“No,” said the astounded Mr. Balch. He scratched his head and fingered the leaves of his check-book. The captains over the tens and the captains over the hundreds would want little retainers—and who was to pay these? “How about the boys?” asked Mr. Balch.

“S-still got the same office in the depot—hain’t you, Ed, s-same office?”

“Yes.”

“G-guess the boys hev b’en there before,” said Jethro.

Mr. Balch went away, meditating upon those sayings, and took the train for Boston. If he had waked up of a fine morning to find himself at the head of some benevolent and charitable organization, instead of the “Down East” Railroad, he could not have been more astonished than he had been at the unaccountable change of heart of Jethro Bass. He did not know what to make of it, and told his colleagues so; and at first they feared one of two things,—treachery or lunacy. But a little later a rumor reached Mr. Balch’s ears that Jethro’s hatred of Isaac D. Worthington was at the bottom of his reappearance in public life, although Jethro himself never mentioned Mr. Worthington’s name. Jethro sat in the Throne Room, consulting, directing day after day, and when the Legislature assembled, “the boys” began to call at Mr. Balch’s office. But Mr. Balch never again broached the subject of money to Jethro Bass.

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We have to sing the song of sixpence for the last time in these pages; and as it is an old song now, there will be no encores. If you can buy one member of the lower house for ten dollars, how many members can you buy for fifty? It was no such problem in primary arithmetic that Mr. Balch and his associates had to solve—theirs was in higher mathematics, in permutations and combinations, and in least squares. No wonder the old campaigners speak with tears in their eyes of the days of that ever memorable summer. There were spoils to be picked up in the very streets richer than the sack of the thirty cities; and as the session wore on it is affirmed by men still living that money rained down in the Capitol Park and elsewhere like manna from the skies, if you were one of a chosen band. If you were, all you had to do was to look in your vest pockets when you took your clothes off in the evening and extract enough legal tender to pay your bill at the Pelican for a week. Mr. Lovejoy having been overheard one day to make a remark concerning the diet of hogs, the next morning certain visitors to the capital were horrified to discover trails of corn leading from the Pelican House to their doorways. Men who had never seen a receiving teller opened bank accounts. No, it was not a problem in simple arithmetic, and Mr. Balch and Mr. Flint, and even Mr. Duncan and Mr. Worthington, covered whole sheets with figures during the stifling days in July. Some men are so valuable that they can be bought twice, or even three times, and they make figuring complicated.

Jethro Bass did no calculating. He sat behind the curtains, and he must have kept the figures in his head.

The battle had closed in earnest, and for twelve long, sultry weeks it raged with unabated fierceness. Consolidation had a terror for the rural mind, and the state Tribune skilfully played its stream upon the constituents of those gentlemen who stood tamely at the Worthington hitching-posts, and the constituents flocked to the capital; that able newspaper, too, found space to return, with interest, the attacks of Mr. Worthington's organ, the Newcastle Guardian. These amenities are much too personal to reproduce here, now that the smoke of battle has rolled away. An epic could be written upon the conflict, if there were space: Canto One, the first position carried triumphantly, though at some expense, by the Worthington forces, who elect the Speaker. That had been a crucial time before the town meetings, when Jethro abdicated. The Worthington Speaker goes ahead with his committees, and it is needless to say that Mr. Chauncey Weed is not made Chairman of the Committee on Corporations. As an offset to this, the Jethro forces gain on the extreme right, where the Honorable Peleg Hartington is made President of the Senate, *etc*.

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For twelve hot weeks, with a public spirit which is worthy of the highest praise, the Committee sit in their shirt sleeves all day long and listen to arguments for and against consolidation; and ask learned questions that startle rural witnesses; and smoke big Florizel cigars (a majority of them). Judge Abner Parkinson defends his bill, quoting from the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence and the Bible; a celebrated lawyer from the capital riddles it, using the same authorities, and citing the Federalist and the Golden Rule in addition. The Committee sit open-minded, listening with laudable impartiality; it does not become them to arrive at a hasty decision on a question of such magnitude. In the meantime the House passes an important bill dealing with the bounty on hedgehogs, and there are several card games going on in the cellar, where it is cool.

The governor of the state is a free lance, and may be seen any afternoon walking through the park, consorting with no one. He may be recognized even at a distance by his portly figure, his silk hat, and his dignified mien. Yes, it is an old and valued friend, the Honorable Alva Hopkins, patron of the drama, and sometimes he has a beautiful young woman (still unattached) by his side. He lives in a suite of rooms at the Pelican. It is a well-known fact (among Mr. Worthington's supporters) that the Honorable Alva promised in January, when Mr. Bass retired, to sign the Consolidation Bill, and that he suddenly became open-minded in March, and has remained open-minded ever since, listening gravely to arguments, and giving much study to the subject. He is an executive now, although it is the last year of his term, and of course he is never seen either in the Throne Room or the Railroad Room. And besides, he may become a senator.

August has come, and the forces are spent and panting, and neither side dares to risk the final charge. The reputation of Jethro Bass is at stake. Should he risk and lose, he must go back to Coniston a beaten man, subject to the contempt of his neighbors and his state. People do not know that he has nothing now to go back to, and that he cares nothing for contempt. As he sits in his window day after day he has only one thought and one wish,—to ruin Isaac D. Worthington. And he will do it if he can. Those who know—and among them is Mr. Balch himself—say that Jethro has never conducted a more masterly campaign than this, and that all the others have been mere childish trials of strength compared to it. So he sits there through those twelve weeks while the session slips by, while his opponents grumble, and while even his supporters, eager for the charge, complain. The truth is that in all the years of his activity be has never had such an antagonist as Mr. Flint. Victory hangs in the balance, and a false move will throw it to either side.

Victory hangs now, to be explicit, upon two factors. The first and most immediate of these is a certain canny captain of many wars whose regiment is still at the disposal of either army—for a price, a regiment which has hitherto remained strictly neutral. And what a regiment it is! A block of river towns and a senator, and not a casualty since they

marched boldly into camp twelve weeks ago. Mr. Batch is getting very much worried about this regiment, and beginning to doubt Jethro's judgment.

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“I tell you, Bass,” he said one evening, “if you allow him to run around loose much longer, we’re lost, that’s all there is to it!” (Mr. Batch referred to the captain in question.) “They’ll buy up his block at his figure—see, if they don’t. They’re getting desperate. Don’t you think I’d better bid him in?”

“B-bid him in if you’ve a mind to; Ed.”

“Look here, Jethro,” said Mr. Batch, savagely biting off the end of a cigar, “I’m beginning to think you don’t care a continental about this business. Which side are you on, anyway?” The heat and the length and the uncertainty of the struggle were telling on the nerves of the railroad president. “You sit there from morning till night and won’t say anything; and now, when there’s only one block out, you won’t give the word to buy it.”

“N-never told you to buy anything, did I—Ed?”

“No,” answered Mr. Batch, “you haven’t. I don’t know what the devil’s got into you.”

“D-done all the payin’ without consultin’ me, hain’t you, Ed?”

“Yes; I have. What are you driving at?”

“D-done it if I hadn’t b’en here, wouldn’t you?”

“Yes, and more too,” said Mr. Batch.

“W-wouldn’t make much difference to you if I wasn’t here—would it?”

“Great Scott, Jethro, what do you mean?” cried the railroad president, in genuine alarm; “you’re not going to pull out, are you?”

“W-wouldn’t make much odds if I did—would it, Ed?”

“The devil it wouldn’t!” exclaimed Mr. Balch. “If you pulled out, we’d lose the North Country, and Peleg, and Gosport, and nobody can tell which way Alva Hopkins will swing. I guess you know what he’ll do—you’re so d—d secretive I can’t tell whether you do or not. If you pulled out, they’d have their bill on Friday.”

“H-hain’t under any obligations to you, Ed—am I?”

“No,” said Mr. Batch, “but I don’t see why you keep harping on that.”

“J-dust wanted to have it clear,” said Jethro, and relapsed into silence.

There was a fireproof carpet on the Throne Room, and Mr. Batch flung down his cigar and stamped on it and went out. No wonder he could not understand Jethro’s sudden

scruples about money and obligations—about railroad money, that is. Jethro was spending some of his own, but not in the capital, and in a manner which was most effective. In short, at the very moment when Mr. Batch stamped on his cigar, Jethro had the victory in his hands—only he did not choose to say so. He had had a mysterious telegram that day from Harwich, signed by Chauncey Weed, and Mr. Weed himself appeared at the door of Number 7, fresh from his travels, shortly after Mr. Batch had gone out of it. Mr. Weed closed the door gently, and locked it, and sat down in a rocking chair close to Jethro and put his hand over his mouth. We cannot hear what Mr. Weed is saying. All is mystery here, and in order to preserve that mystery we shall delay for a little the few words which will explain Mr. Weed's successful mission.

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Mr. Batch, angry and bewildered, descended into the rotunda, where he shortly heard two astounding pieces of news. The first was that the Honorable Heth Sutton had abandoned the Florizel cigars and had gone home to Clovelly. The second; that Mr. Bijah Bixby had resigned the claw-hammer and had ceased to open the packing cases in the Railroad Room. Consternation reigned in that room, so it was said (and this was true). Mr. Worthington and Mr. Duncan and Mr. Lovejoy were closeted there with Mr. Flint, and the door was locked and the transom shut, and smoke was coming out of the windows.

Yes, Mr. Bijah Bixby is the canny captain of whom Mr. Balch spoke: he it is who owns that block of river towns, intact, and the one senator. Impossible! We have seen him opening the packing cases, we have seen him working for the Worthington faction for the last two years. Mr. Bixby was very willing to open boxes, and to make himself useful and agreeable; but it must be remembered that a good captain of mercenaries owes a sacred duty to his followers. At first Mr. Flint had thought he could count on Mr. Bixby; after a while he made several unsuccessful attempts to talk business with him; a particularly difficult thing to do, even for Mr. Flint, when Mr. Bixby did not wish to talk business. Mr. Balch had found it quite as difficult to entice Mr. Bixby away from the boxes and the Railroad Room. The weeks drifted on, until twelve went by, and then Mr. Bixby found himself, with his block of river towns and one senator, in the incomparable position of being the arbiter of the fate of the Consolidation Bill in the House and Senate. No wonder Mr. Balch wanted to buy the services of that famous regiment at any price!

But Mr. Bixby, for once in his life, had waited too long.

When Mr. Balch, rejoicing, but not a little indignant at not having been taken into confidence, ascended to the Throne Room after supper to question Jethro concerning the meaning of the things he had heard, he found Senator Peleg Hartington seated mournfully on the bed, talking at intervals, and Jethro listening.

“Come up and eat out of my hand,” said the senator.

“Who?” demanded Mr. Balch.

“Bije,” answered the senator.

“Great Scott, do you mean to say you’ve got Bixby?” exclaimed the railroad president. He felt as if he would like to shake the senator, who was so deliberate and mournful in his answers. “What did you pay him?”

Mr. Hartington appeared shocked by the question.

“Guess Heth Sutton will settle with him,” he said.

“Heth Sutton! Why the—why should Heth pay him?”

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“Guess Heth’d like to make him a little present, under the circumstances. I was goin’ through the barber shop,” Mr. Hartington continued, speaking to Jethro and ignoring the railroad president, “and I heard somebody whisperin’ my name. Sound came out of that little shampoo closet; went in there and found Bije. ‘Peleg,’ says he, right into my ear, ’tell Jethro it’s all right—you understand. We want Heth to go back—break his heart if he didn’t—you understand. If I’d knowed last winter Jethro meant business, I wouldn’t hev’ helped Gus Flint out. Tell Jethro he can have ‘em—you know what I mean.’ Bije waited a little mite too long,” said the senator, who had given a very fair imitation of Mr. Bixby’s nasal voice and manner.

“Well, I’m d—d!” ejaculated Mr. Balch, staring at Jethro. “How did you work it?”

“Sent Chauncey through the deestrict,” said Mr. Hartington.

Mr. Chauncey Weed had, in truth, gone through a part of the congressional district of the Honorable Heth Sutton with a little leather bag. Mr. Weed had been able to do some of his work (with the little leather bag) in the capital itself. In this way Mr. Bixby’s regiment, Sutton was the honorary colonel, had been attacked in the rear and routed. Here was to be a congressional convention that autumn, and a large part of Mr. Sutton’s district lay in the North Country, which, as we have seen, was loyal to Jethro to the back bone. The district, too, was largely rural, and therefore anti-consolidation, and the inability of the Worthington forces to get their bill through had made it apparent that Jethro Bass was as powerful as ever. Under these circumstances it had not been very difficult for a gentleman of Mr. Chauncey Weed’s powers of persuasion to induce various lieutenants in the district to agree to send delegates to the coming convention who would be conscientiously opposed to Mr. Sutton’s renomination: hence the departure from the capital of Mr. Sutton; hence the generous offer of Mr. Bixby to put his regiment at the disposal of Mr. Bass—free of charge.

The second factor on which victory hung (we can use the past tense now) was none other than his Excellency Alva Hopkins, governor of the state. The bill would never get to his Excellency now—so people said; would never get beyond that committee who had listened so patiently to the twelve weeks of argument. These were only rumors, after all, for the rotunda never knows positively what goes on in high circles; but the rotunda does figuring, too, when at length the problem is reduced to a simple equation, with Bijah Bixby as x. If it were true that Bijah had gone over to Jethro Bass, the Consolidation Bill was dead.

CHAPTER XVIII

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When Jethro Bass walked out of the hotel that evening men looked at him, and made way for him, but none spoke to him. There was something in his face that forbade speech. He was a great man once more—a greater man than ever; and he had, if the persistent rumors were true, accomplished an almost incomprehensible feat, even for Jethro Bass. There was another reason, too, why they stared at him. In all those twelve weeks of that most trying of all sessions he had not once gone into the street, and he had been less than ever common in the eyes of men. Twice a day he had descended to the dining room for a simple meal—that was all; and fewer had gained entrance to Room Number 7 this session than ever before.

There is a river that flows by the capital, a wide and gentle river bordered by green meadows and fringed with willows; higher up, if you go far enough, a forest comes down to the water on the western side. Jethro walked through the hooded bridge, and up the eastern bank until he could see the forest like a black band between the orange sky and the orange river, and there he sat down upon a fallen log on the edge of the bank. But Jethro was thinking of another scene,—of a granite-ribbed pasture on Coniston Mountain that swings in limitless space, from either end of which a man may step off into eternity. William Wetherell, in one of his letters, had described that place as the Threshold of the Nameless Worlds, and so it had seemed to Jethro in the years of his desolation. He was thinking of it now, even as it had been in his mind that winter's evening when Cynthia had come to Coniston and had surprised him with that look of terrible loneliness on his face.

Yes, and he was thinking of Cynthia. When, indeed, had he not been thinking of her? How many tunes had he rehearsed the events in the tannery house—for they were the events of his life now. The triumphs over his opponents and enemies fell away, and the pride of power. Such had not been his achievements. She had loved him, and no man had reached a higher pinnacle than that.

Why he had forfeited that love for vengeance, he could not tell. The embers of a man's passions will suddenly burst into flame, and he will fiddle madly while the fire burns his soul. He had avenged her as well as himself; but had he avenged her, now that he held Isaac Worthington in his power? By crushing him, had he not added to her trouble and her sorrow? She had confessed that she loved Isaac Worthington's son, and was not he (Jethro) widening the breach between Cynthia and the son by crushing the father? Jethro had not thought of this. But he had thought of her, night and day, as he had sat in his room directing the battle. Not a day had passed that he had not looked for a letter, hoping against hope. If she had written to him once, if she had come to him once, would he have desisted? He could not say—the fires of hatred had burned so fiercely, and still burned so fiercely, that he clenched his fists when it came over him that Isaac Worthington was at last in his power.

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A white line above the forest was all that remained of the sunset when he rose up and took from his coat a silver locket and opened it and held it to the fading light. Presently he closed it again, and walked slowly along the river bank toward the little city twinkling on its hill. He crossed the hooded bridge and climbed the slope, stopping for a moment at a little stationery shop; he passed through the groups which were still loudly discussing this thing he had done, and gained his room and locked the door. Men came to it and knocked and got no answer. The room was in darkness, and the night breeze stirred among the trees in the park and blew in at the window.

At last Jethro got up and lighted the gas and paused at the centre table. He was to violate more than one principle of his life that night, though not without a struggle; and he sat for a long while looking at the blank paper before him. Then he wrote, and sealed the letter—which contained three lines—and pulled the bell cord. The call was answered by a messenger who had been far many years in the service of the Pelican House, and who knew many secrets of the gods. The man actually grew pale when he saw the address on the envelope which was put in his hand and read the denomination of the crisp note under it that was the price of silence.

“F-find the gentleman and give it to him yourself. Er—John?”

“Yes, Mr. Bass?”

“If you don’t find him, bring it—back.”

When the man had gone, Jethro turned down the gas and went again to his chair by the window. For a while voices came up to him from the street, but at length the groups dispersed, one by one; and a distant clock boomed out eleven solemn strokes. Twice the clock struck again, at the half-hour and midnight, and the noises in the house—the banging of doors and the jangling of keys and the hurrying of feet in the corridors—were hushed. Jethro took no thought of these or of time, and sat gazing at the stars in the depths of the sky above the capital dome until a shadow emerged from the black mass of the trees opposite and crossed the street. In a few minutes there were footsteps in the corridor,—stealthy footsteps—and a knock on the door. Jethro got up and opened it, and closed it again and locked it. Then he turned up the gas.

“S-sit down,” he said, and nodded his head toward the chair by the table.

Isaac Worthington laid his silk hat on the table, and sat down. He looked very haggard and worn in that light, very unlike the first citizen who had entered Brampton in triumph on his return from the West not many months before. The long strain of a long fight, in which he had risked much for which he had labored a life to gain, had told on him, and there were crow’s-feet at the corners of, his eyes, and dark circles under them. Isaac Worthington had never lost before, and to destroy the fruits of such a man’s ambition is to destroy the man. He was not as young as he had once been. But now, in the very

hour of defeat, hope had rekindled the fire in the eyes and brought back the peculiar, tight-lipped, mocking smile to the mouth. An hour ago, when he had been pacing Alexander Duncan's library, the eyes and the mouth had been different.

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Long habit asserts itself at the strangest moments. Jethro Bass took his seat by the window, and remained silent. The clock tolled the half-hour after midnight.

“You wanted to see me,” said Mr. Worthington, finally.

Jethro nodded, almost imperceptibly.

“I suppose,” said Mr. Worthington, slowly, “I suppose you are ready to sell out.” He found it a little difficult to control his voice.

“Yes,” answered Jethro, “r-ready to sell out.”

Mr. Worthington was somewhat taken aback by this simple admission. He glanced at Jethro sitting motionless by the window, and in his heart he feared him: he had come into that room when the gas was low, afraid. Although he would not confess it to himself, he had been in fear of Jethro Bass all his life, and his fear had been greater than ever since the March day when Jethro had left Coniston. And could he have known, now, the fires of hatred burning in Jethro’s breast, Isaac Worthington would have been in terror indeed.

“What have you got to sell?” he demanded sharply.

“G-guess you know, or you wouldn’t have come here.”

“What proof have I that you have it to sell?”

Jethro looked at him for an instant.

“M-my word,” he said.

Isaac Worthington was silent for a while: he was striving to calm himself, for an indefinable something had shaken him. The strange stillness of the hour and the stranger atmosphere which seemed to surround this transaction filled him with a nameless dread. The man in the window had been his lifelong enemy: more than this, Jethro Bass, was not like ordinary men—his ways were enshrouded in mystery, and when he struck, he struck hard. There grew upon Isaac Worthington a sense that this midnight hour was in some way to be the culmination of the long years of hatred between them.

He believed Jethro: he would have believed him even if Mr. Flint had not informed him that afternoon that he was beaten, and bitterly he wished he had taken Mr. Flint’s advice many months before. Denunciation sprang to his lips which he dared not utter. He was beaten, and he must pay—the pound of flesh. Isaac Worthington almost thought it would be a pound of flesh.

“How much do you want?” he said.

Again Jethro looked at him.

“B-biggest price you can pay,” he answered.

“You must have made up your mind what you want. You’ve had time enough.”

“H-have made up my mind,” said Jethro.

“Make your demand,” said Mr. Worthington, “and I’ll give you my answer.”

“B-biggest price you can pay,” said Jethro, again.

Mr. Worthington’s nerves could stand it no longer.

“Look here,” he cried, rising in his chair, “if you’ve brought me here to trifle with me, you’ve made a mistake. It’s your business to get control of things that belong to other people, and sell them out. I am here to buy. Nothing but necessity brings me here, and nothing but necessity will keep me here a moment longer than I have to stay to finish this abominable affair. I am ready to pay you twenty thousand dollars the day that bill becomes a law.”

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This time Jethro did not look at him.

“P-pay me now,” he said.

“I will pay you the day the bill becomes a law. Then I shall know where I stand.”

Jethro did not answer this ultimatum in any manner, but remained perfectly still looking out of the window. Mr. Worthington glanced at him, twice, and got his fingers on the brim of his hat, but he did not pick it up. He stood so for a while, knowing full well that if he went out of that room his chance was gone. Consolidation might come in other years, but he, Isaac Worthington, would not be a factor in it.

“You don’t want a check, do you?” he said at last.

“No—d-don’t want a check.”

“What in God’s name do you want? I haven’t got twenty thousand dollars in currency in my pocket.”

“Sit down, Isaac Worthington,” said Jethro.

Mr. Worthington sat down—out of sheer astonishment, perhaps.

“W-want the consolidation—don’t you? Want it bad—don’t you?”

Mr. Worthington did, not answer. Jethro stood over him now, looking down at him from the other side of the narrow table.

“Know Cynthy Wetherell?” he said.

Then Isaac Worthington understood that his premonitions had been real. The pound of flesh was to be demanded, but strangely enough, he did not yet comprehend the nature of it.

“I know that there is such a person,” he answered, for his pride would not permit him to say more.

“W-what do you know about her?”

Isaac Worthington was bitterly angry—the more so because he was helpless, and could not question Jethro’s right to ask. What did he know about her? Nothing, except that she had intrigued to marry his son. Bob’s letter had described her, to be sure, but he could not be expected to believe that: and he had not heard Miss Lucretia Penniman’s speech. And yet he could not tell Jethro that he knew nothing about her, for he was shrewd enough to perceive the drift of the next question.

“Kn-know anything against her?” said Jethro.

Mr. Worthington leaned back in his chair.

“I can’t see what Miss Wetherell has to do with the present occasion,” he replied.

“H-had her dismissed by the prudential committee had her dismissed—didn’t you?”

“They chose to act as they saw fit.”

“T-told Levi Dodd to dismiss her—didn’t you?”

That was a matter of common knowledge in Brampton, having leaked out through Jonathan Hill.

“I must decline to discuss this,” said Mr. Worthington.

“W-wouldn’t if I was you.”

“What do you mean?”

“What I say. T-told Levi Dodd to dismiss her, didn’t you?”

“Yes, I did.” Isaac Worthington had lost in self-esteem by not saying so before.

“Why? Wahn’t she honest? Wahn’t she capable? Wahn’t she a lady?”

“I can’t say that I know anything against Miss Wetherell’s character, if that’s what you mean.”

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“F-fit to teach—wahn’t she—fit to teach?”

“I believe she has since qualified before Mr. Errol.”

“Fit to teach—wahn’t fit to marry your son—was she?”

Isaac Worthington clutched the table and started from his chair. He grew white to his lips with anger, and yet he knew that he must control himself.

“Mr. Bass,” he said, “you have something to sell, and I have something to buy—if the price is not ruinous. Let us confine ourselves to that. My affairs and my son’s affairs are neither here nor there. I ask you again, how much do you want for this Consolidation Bill?”

“N-no money will buy it.”

“What!”

“C-consent to this marriage, c-consent to this marriage.” There was yet room for Isaac Worthington to be amazed, and for a while he stared up at Jethro, speechless.

“Is that your price?” he asked at last.

“Th-that’s my price,” said Jethro.

Isaac Worthington got up and went to the window and stood looking out above the black mass of trees at the dome outlined against the star-flecked sky. At first his anger choked him, and he could not think; he had just enough reason left not to walk out of the door. But presently habit asserted itself in him, too, and he began to reflect and calculate in spite of his anger. It is strange that memory plays so small a part in such a man. Before he allowed his mind to dwell on the fearful price, he thought of his ambitions gratified; and yet he did not think then of the woman to whom he had once confided those ambitions—the woman who was the girl’s mother. Perhaps Jethro was thinking of her.

It may have been—I know not—that Isaac Worthington wondered at this revelation of the character of Jethro Bass, for it was a revelation. For this girl’s sake Jethro was willing to forego his revenge, was willing at the end of his days to allow the world to believe that he had sold out to his enemy, or that he had been defeated by him.

But when he thought of the marriage, Isaac Worthington ground his teeth. A certain sentiment which we may call pride was so strong in him that he felt ready to make almost any sacrifice to prevent it. To hinder it he had quarrelled with his son, and driven him away, and threatened disinheritance. The price was indeed heavy—the heaviest he could pay. But the alternative—was not that heavier? To relinquish his dream of power,

to sink for a while into a crippled state; for he had spent large sums, and one of those periodical depressions had come in the business of the mills, and those Western investments were not looking so bright now.

So, with his hands opening and closing in front of him, Isaac Worthington fought out his battle. A terrible war, that, between ambition and pride—a war to the knife. The issue may yet have been undecided when he turned round to Jethro with a sneer which he could not resist.

“Why doesn’t she marry him without my consent?”

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In a moment Mr. Worthington knew he had gone too far. A certain kind of an eye is an incomparable weapon, and armed men have been cowed by those who possess it, though otherwise defenceless. Jethro Bass had that kind of an eye.

“G-guess you wouldn’t understand if I was to tell you,” he said.

Mr. Worthington walked to the window again, perhaps to compose himself, and then came back again.

“Your proposition is,” he said at length, “that if I give my consent to this marriage, we are to have Bixby and the governor, and the Consolidation Bill will become a law. Is that it?”

“Th-that’s it,” said Jethro, taking his accustomed seat.

“And this consent is to be given when the bill becomes a law?”

“Given now. T-to-night.”

Mr. Worthington took another turn as far as the door, and suddenly came and stood before Jethro.

“Well, I consent.”

Jethro nodded toward the table.

“Er—pen and paper there,” he said.

“What do you want me to do?” demanded Mr. Worthington.

“W-write to Bob—write to Cynthy. Nice letters.”

“This is carrying matters with too high a hand, Mr. Bass. I will write the letters to-morrow morning.” It was intolerable that he, the first citizen of Brampton, should have to submit to such humiliation.

“Write ’em now. W-want to see ’em.”

“But if I give you my word they will be written and sent to you to-morrow afternoon?”

“T-too late,” said Jethro; “sit down and write ’em now.”

Mr. Worthington went irresolutely to the table, stood for a minute, and dropped suddenly into the chair there. He would have given anything (except the realization of his ambitions) to have marched out of the room and to have slammed the door behind him. The letter paper and envelopes which Jethro had bought stood in a little pile, and Mr. Worthington picked up the pen. The clock struck two as he wrote the date, as though to

remind him that he had written it wrong. If Flint could see him now! Would Flint guess? Would anybody guess? He stared at the white paper, and his rage came on again like a gust of wind, and he felt that he would rather beg in the streets than write such a thing. And yet—and yet he sat there. Surely Jethro Bass must have known that he could have taken no more exquisite vengeance than this, to compel a man—and such a man—to sit down in the white heat of passion—and write two letters of forgiveness! Jethro sat by the window, to all appearances oblivious to the tortures of his victim.

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He who has tried to write a note—the simplest note when his mind was harassed, will understand something of Isaac Worthington's sensations. He would no sooner get an inkling of what his opening sentence was to be than the flames of his anger would rise and sweep it away. He could not even decide which letter he was to write first: to his son, who had defied him and who (the father knew in his heart) condemned him? or to the schoolteacher, who was responsible for all his misery; who—Mr. Worthington believed—had taken advantage of his son's youth by feminine wiles of no mean order so as to gain possession of him. I can almost bring myself to pity the first citizen of Brampton as he sits there with his pen poised over the paper, and his enemy waiting to read those tender epistles of forgiveness which he has yet to write. The clock has almost got round to the half-hour again, and there is only the date—and a wrong one at that.

"My dear Miss Wetherell,—Circumstances (over which I have no control?)"—ought he not to call her Cynthia? He has to make the letter credible in the eyes of the censor who sits by the window. "My dear Miss Wetherell, I have come to the conclusion"—two sheets torn up, or thrust into Mr. Worthington's pocket. By this time words have begun to have a colorless look. "My dear Miss Wetherell,—Having become convinced of the sincere attachment which my son Robert has for you, I am writing him to-night to give my full consent to his marriage. He has given me to understand that you have hitherto persistently refused to accept him because I have withheld that consent, and I take this opportunity of expressing my admiration of this praiseworthy resolution on your part." (If this be irony, it is sublime! Perhaps Isaac Worthington has a little of the artist in him, and now that he is in the heat of creation has forgotten the circumstances under which he is composing.) "My son's happiness and career in life are of such moment to me that, until the present, I could not give my sanction to what I at first regarded as a youthful fancy. Now that, my son, for your sake, has shown his determination and ability to make his own way in the world," (Isaac Worthington was not a little proud of this) "I have determined that it is wise to withdraw my opposition, and to recall Robert to his proper place, which is near me. I am sure that my feelings in this matter will be clear to you, and that you will look with indulgence upon any acts of mine which sprang from a natural solicitation for the welfare and happiness of my only child. I shall be in Brampton in a day or two, and I shall at once give myself the pleasure of calling on you. Sincerely yours, Isaac D. Worthington."

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Perhaps a little formal and pompous for some people, but an admirable and conciliatory letter for the first citizen of Brampton. Written under such trying circumstances, with I know not how many erasures and false starts, it is little short of a marvel in art: neither too much said, nor too little, for a relenting parent of Mr. Worthington's character, and I doubt whether Talleyrand or Napoleon or even Machiavelli himself could have surpassed it. The second letter, now that Mr. Worthington had got into the swing, was more easily written. "My dear Robert" (it said), "I have made up my mind to give my consent to your marriage to Miss Wetherell, and I am ready to welcome you home, where I trust I shall see you shortly. I have not been unimpressed by the determined manner in which you have gone to work for yourself, but I believe that your place is in Brampton, where I trust you will show the same energy in learning to succeed me in the business which I have founded there as you have exhibited in Mr. Broke's works. Affectionately, your Father."

A very creditable and handsome letter for a forgiving father. When Mr. Worthington had finished it, and had addressed both the envelopes, his shame and vexation had, curious to relate, very considerably abated. Not to go too deeply into the somewhat contradictory mental and cardiac processes of Mr. Worthington, he had somehow tricked himself by that magic exercise of wielding his pen into thinking that he was doing a noble and generous action: into believing that in the course of a very few days—or weeks, at the most, he would have recalled his erring son and have given Cynthia his blessing. He would, he told himself, have been forced eventually to yield when that paragon of inflexibility, Bob, dictated terms to him at the head of the locomotive works. Better let the generosity be on his (Mr. Worthington's) side. At all events, victory had never been bought more cheaply. Humiliation, in Mr. Worthington's eyes, had an element of publicity in it, and this episode had had none of that element; and Jethro Bass, moreover, was a highwayman who had held a pistol to his head. In such logical manner he gradually bolstered up again his habitual poise and dignity. Next week, at the latest, men would point to him as the head of the largest railroad interests in the state.

He pushed back his chair, and rose, merely indicating the result of his labors by a wave of his hand. And he stood in the window as Jethro Bass got up and went to the table. I would that I had a pen able to describe Jethro's sensations when he read them. Unfortunately, he is a man with few facial expressions. But I believe that he was artist enough himself to appreciate the perfections of the first citizen's efforts. After a much longer interval than was necessary for their perusal, Mr. Worthington turned.

"G-guess they'll do," said Jethro, as he folded them up. He was too generous not to indulge, for once, in a little well-deserved praise. "Hain't underdone it, and hain't overdone it a mite hev you? M-man of resource. Callate you couldn't hev beat that if you was to take a week to it."

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“I think it only fair to tell you,” said Mr. Worthington, picking up his silk hat, “that in those letters I have merely anticipated a very little my intentions in the matter. My son having proved his earnestness, I was about to consent to the marriage of my own accord.”

“G-goin’ to do it anyway—was you?”

“I had so determined.”

“A-always thought you was high-minded,” said Jethro.

Mr. Worthington was on the point of giving a tart reply to this, but restrained himself.

“Then I may look upon the matter as settled?” he said. “The Consolidation Bill is to become a law?”

“Yes,” said Jethro, “you’ll get your bill.” Mr. Worthington had got his hand on the knob of the door when Jethro stopped him with a word. He had no facial expressions, but he had an eye, as we have seen—an eye that for the second time appeared terrible to his visitor. “Isaac Worthington,” he said, “a-act up to it. No trickery—or look out—look out.”

Then, the incident being closed so far as he was concerned, Jethro went back to his chair by the window, but it is to be recorded that Isaac Worthington did not answer him immediately. Then he said:—

“You seem to forget that you are talking to a gentleman.”

“That’s so,” answered Jethro, “so you be.”

He sat where he was long after the sky had whitened and the stars had changed from gold to silver and gone out, and the sunlight had begun to glance upon the green leaves of the park. Perhaps he was thinking of the life he had lived, which was spent now: of the men he had ruled, of the victories he had gained from that place which would know him no more. He had won the last and the greatest of his victories there, compared to which the others had indeed been as vanities. Perhaps he looked back over the highway of his life and thought of the woman whom he had loved, and wondered what it had been if she had trod it by his side. Who will judge him? He had been what he had been; and as the Era was, so was he. Verily, one generation passeth away, and another generation cometh.

When Mr. Isaac Worthington arrived at Mr. Duncan’s house, where he was staying, at three o’clock in the morning, he saw to his surprise light from the library windows lying in bars across the lawn under the trees. He found Mr. Duncan in that room with Somers, his son, who had just returned from a seaside place, and they were discussing a very grave event. Miss Janet Duncan had that day eloped with a gentleman who—to judge from the photograph Somers held—was both handsome and romantic-looking.

He had long hair and burning eyes, and a title not to be then verified, and he owned a castle near some place on the peninsula of Italy not on the map.

CHAPTER XIX

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We are back in Brampton, owning, as we do, an annual pass over the Truro Railroad. Cynthia has been there all the summer, and as it is now the first of September, her school has begun again. I do not by any means intend to imply that Brampton is not a pleasant place to spend the summer: the number of its annual visitors is a refutation of that; but to Cynthia the season had been one of great unhappiness. Several times Lem Hallowell had stopped the stage in front of Ephraim's house to beg her to go to Coniston, and Mr. Satterlee had come himself; but she could not have borne to be there without Jethro. Nor would she go to Boston, though urged by Miss Lucretia; and Mrs. Merrill and the girls had implored her to join them at a seaside place on the Cape.

Cynthia had made a little garden behind Ephraim's house, and she spent the summer there with her flowers and her books, many of which Lem had fetched from Coniston. Ephraim loved to sit there of an evening and smoke his pipe and chat with Ezra Graves and the neighbors who dropped in. Among these were Mr. Gamaliel Ives, who talked literature with Cynthia; and Lucy Baird, his wife, who had taken Cynthia under her wing. I wish I had time to write about Lucy Baird. And Mr. Jonathan Hill came—his mortgage not having been foreclosed, after all. When Cynthia was alone with Ephraim she often read to him,—generally from books of a martial flavor,—and listened with an admirable hypocrisy to certain narratives which he was in the habit of telling.

They never spoke of Jethro. Ephraim was not a casuist, and his sense of right and wrong came largely through his affections. It is safe to say that he never made an analysis of the sorrow which he knew was afflicting the girl, but he had had a general and most sympathetic understanding of it ever since the time when Jethro had gone back to the capital; and Ephraim never brought home his Guardian or his Clarion now, but read them at the office, that their contents might not disturb her.

No wonder that Cynthia was unhappy. The letters came, almost every day, with the postmark of the town in New Jersey where Mr. Broke's locomotive works were; and she answered them now (but oh, how scrupulously!), though not every day. If the waters of love rose up through the grains of sand, it was, at least, not Cynthia's fault. Hers were the letters of a friend. She was reading such and such a book—had he read it? And he must not work too hard. How could her letters be otherwise when Jethro Bass, her benefactor, was at the capital working to defeat and perhaps to ruin Bob's father? when Bob's father had insulted and persecuted her? She ought not to have written at all; but the lapses of such a heroine are very rare, and very dear.

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Yes, Cynthia's life was very bitter that summer, with but little hope on the horizon of it. Her thoughts were divided between Bob and Jethro. Many a night she lay awake resolving to write to Jethro, even to go to him, but when morning came she could not bring herself to do so. I do not think it was because she feared that he might believe her appeal would be made in behalf of Bob's father. Knowing Jethro as she did, she felt that it would be useless, and she could not bear to make it in vain; if the memory of that evening in the tannery shed would not serve, nothing would serve. And again—he had gone to avenge her.

It was inevitable that she should hear tidings from the capital. Isaac Worthington's own town was ringing with it. And as week after week of that interminable session went by, the conviction slowly grew upon Brampton that its first citizen had been beaten by Jethro Bass. Something of Mr. Worthington's affairs was known: the mills, for instance, were not being run to their full capacity. And then had come the definite news that Mr. Worthington was beaten, a local representative having arrived straight from the rotunda. Cynthia overheard Lem Hallowell telling it to Ephraim, and she could not for the life of her help rejoicing, though she despised herself for it. Isaac Worthington was humbled now, and Jethro had humbled him to avenge her. Despite her grief over his return to that life, there was something to compel her awe and admiration in the way he had risen and done this thing after men had fallen from him. Her mother had had something of these same feelings, without knowing why.

People who had nothing but praise for him before were saying hard things about Isaac Worthington that night. When the baron is defeated, the serfs come out of their holes in the castle rock and fling their curses across the moat. Cynthia slept but little, and was glad when the day came to take her to her scholars, to ease her mind of the thoughts which tortured it.

And then, when she stopped at the post-office to speak to Ephraim on her way homeward in the afternoon, she heard men talking behind the partition, and she stood, as one stricken, listening beside the window. Other tidings had come in the shape of a telegram. The first rumor had been false. Brampton had not yet received the details, but the Consolidation Bill had gone into the House that morning, and would be a law before the week was out. A part of it was incomprehensible to Cynthia, but so much she had understood. She did not wait to speak to Ephraim, and she was going out again when a man rushed past her and through the partition door. Cynthia paused instinctively, for she recognized him as one of the frequenters of the station and a bearer of news.

"Jethro's come home, boys," he shouted; "come in on the four o'clock, and went right off to Coniston. Guess he's done for, this time, for certain. Looks it. By Godfrey, he looks eighty! Callate his day's over, from the way the boys talked on the train."

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Cynthia lingered to hear no more, and went out, dazed, into the September sunshine: Jethro beaten, and broken, and gone to Coniston. Resolution came to her as she walked. Arriving home, she wrote a little note and left it on the table for Ephraim; and going out again, ran by the back lane to Mr. Sherman's livery stable behind the Brampton House, and in half an hour was driving along that familiar road to Coniston, alone; for she had often driven Jethro's horses, and knew every turn of the way. And as she gazed at the purple mountain through the haze and drank in the sweet scents of the year's fulness, she was strangely happy. There was the village green in the cool evening light, and the flagstaff with its tip silvered by the departing sun. She waved to Rias and Lem and Moses at the store, but she drove on to the tannery house, and hitched the horse at the rough granite post, and went in, and through the house, softly, to the kitchen.

Jethro was standing in the doorway, and did not turn. He may have thought she was Millicent Skinner. Cynthia could see his face. It was older, indeed, and lined and worn, but that fearful look of desolation which she had once surprised upon it, and which she in that instant feared to see, was not there. Jethro's soul was at peace, though Cynthia could not understand why it was so. She stole to him and flung her arms about his neck, and with a cry he seized her and held her against him for I know not how long. Had it been possible to have held her there always, he would never have let her go. At last he looked down into her tear-wet face, into her eyes that were shining with tears.

"D-done wrong, Cynthy."

Cynthia did not answer that, for she remembered how she, too, had exulted when she had believed him to have accomplished Isaac Worthington's downfall. Now that he had failed, and she was in his arms, it was not for her to judge—only to rejoice.

"Didn't look for you to come back—didn't expect it."

"Uncle Jethro!" she faltered. Love for her had made him go, and she would not say that, either.

"D-don't hate me, Cynthy—don't hate me?"

She shook her head.

"Love me—a little?"

She reached up her hands and brushed back his hair, tenderly, from his forehead. Such—a loving gesture was her answer.

"You are going to stay here always, now," she said, in a low voice, "you are never going away again."

“G-goin’ to stay always,” he answered. Perhaps he was thinking of the hillside clearing in the forest—who knows! “You’ll come-sometime, Cynthy—sometime?”

“I’ll come every Saturday and Sunday, Uncle Jethro,” she said, smiling up at him. “Saturday is only two days away, now. I can hardly wait.”

“Y-you’ll come sometime?”

“Uncle Jethro, do you think I’ll be away from you, except—except when I have to?”

“C-come and read to me—won’t you—come and read?”

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“Of course I will!”

“C-call to mind the first book you read to me, Cynthy?”

“It was ‘Robinson Crusoe,’” she said.

“‘R-Robinson Crusoe.’ Often thought of that book. Know some of it by heart. R-read it again, sometime, Cynthy?”

She looked up at him a little anxiously. His eyes were on the great hill opposite, across Coniston Water.

“I will, indeed, Uncle Jethro, if we can find it,” she answered.

“Guess I can find it,” said Jethro. “R-remember when you saw him makin’ a ship?”

“Yes,” said Cynthia, “and I had my feet in the pool.”

The book had made a profound impression upon Jethro, partly because Cynthia had first read it to him, and partly for another reason. The isolation of Crusoe; depicted by Defoe’s genius, had been comparable to his own isolation, and he had pondered upon it much of late. Yes, and upon a certain part of another book which he had read earlier in life: Napoleon had ended his days on St. Helena.

They walked out under the trees to the brook-side and stood listening to the tinkling of the cowbells in the wood lot beyond. The light faded early on these September evenings, and the smoky mist had begun to rise from the water when they turned back again. The kitchen windows were already growing yellow, and through them the faithful Millicent could be seen bustling about in her preparations for supper. But Cynthia, having accomplished her errand, would not go in. She could not have borne to have any one drive back with her to Brampton then, and she must not be late upon the road.

“I will come Friday evening, Uncle Jethro,” she said, as she kissed him and gave one last, lingering look at his face. Had it been possible, she would not have left him, and on her way to Brampton through the gathering darkness she mused anxiously upon that strange calmness he had shown after defeat.

She drove her horse on to the floor of Mr. Sherman’s stable, that gentleman himself gallantly assisting her to alight, and walked homeward through the lane. Ephraim had not yet returned from the postoffice, which did not close until eight, and Cynthia smiled when she saw the utensils of his cooking-kit strewn on the hearth. In her absence he invariably unpacked and used it, and of course Cynthia at once set herself to cleaning and packing it again. After that she got her own supper—a very simple affair—and was putting the sitting room to rights when Ephraim came thumping in.

“Well, I swan!” he exclaimed when he saw her. “I didn’t look for you to come back so soon, Cynthy. Put up the kit—hev you?” He stood in front of the fireplace staring with apparent interest at the place where the kit had been, and added in a voice which he strove to make quite casual, “How be Jethro?”

“He looks older, Cousin Eph,” she answered, after a pause, “and I think he is very tired. But he seems he seems more tranquil and contented than I hoped to find him.”

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“I want to know,” said Ephraim. “I am glad to hear it. Glad you went up, Cynthy—you done right to go.

“I’d have gone with you, if you’d only told me. I’ll git a chance to go up Sunday.”

There was an air of repressed excitement about the veteran which did not escape Cynthia. He held two letters in his hand, and, being a postmaster, he knew the handwriting on both. One had come from that place in New Jersey, and drew no comment. But the other! That one had been postmarked at the capital, and as he had sat at his counter at the post-office waiting for closing time he bad turned it over and over with many ejaculations and futile guesses. Past master of dissimulation that he was, he had made up his mind—if he should find Cynthia at home—to lay the letters indifferently on the table and walk into his bedroom. This campaign he now proceeded to carry out.

Cynthia smiled again when he was gone, and shook her head and picked up the letters: Bob’s was uppermost and she read that first, without a thought of the other one. And she smiled as she read for Bob had had a promotion. He was not yet at the head of the locomotive works, he hastened to add, for fear that Cynthia might think that Mr. Broke had resigned the presidency in his favor; and Cynthia never failed to laugh at these little facetious asides. He was now earning the princely sum of ninety dollars a month—not enough to marry on, alas! On Saturday nights he and Percy Broke scrubbed as much as possible of the grime from their hands and faces and went to spend Sunday at Elberon, the Broke place on the Hudson; from whence Miss Sally Broke, if she happened to be at home, always sent Cynthia her love. As Cynthia is still a heroine, I shall not describe how she felt about Sally Broke’s love. There was plenty of Bob’s own in the letter. Cynthia would got have blamed him if he bad fallen in love with Miss Broke. It seemed to her little short of miraculous that, amidst such surroundings, he could be true to her.

After a period which was no briefer than that usually occupied by Bob’s letters, Cynthia took the other one from her lap, and stared at it in much perplexity before she tore it open. We have seen its contents over Mr. Worthington’s shoulder, and our hearts will not stop beating—as Cynthia’s did. She read it twice before the full meaning of it came to her, and after that she could not well mistake it,—the language being so admirable in every way. She sat very still for a long while, and presently she heard Ephraim go out. But Cynthia did not move. Mr. Worthington relented and Bob recalled! The vista of happiness suddenly opened up, widened and widened until it was too bright for Cynthia’s vision, and she would compel her mind to dwell on another prospect,—that of the father and son reconciled. Although her temples throbbed, she tried to analyze the letter. It implied that Mr. Worthington had allowed Bob to remain away on a sort of probation; it implied that it had been dictated by a strong paternal love mingled with a strong paternal justice. And then there was the appeal to her: “You will look with indulgence upon any acts of mine which sprang from a natural solicitation for the

welfare and happiness of my only child." A terrible insight is theirs to whom it is given to love as Cynthia loved.

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Suddenly there came a knock which frightened her, for her mind was running on swiftly from point to point: had, indeed, flown as far as Coniston by now, and she was thinking of that strange look of peace on Jethro's face which had troubled her. One letter she thrust into her dress, but the other she laid aside, and her knees trembled under her as she rose and went into the entry and raised the latch and opened the door. There was a moon, and the figure in the frock coat and the silk hat was the one which she expected to see. The silk hat came off very promptly.

"I hope I am not disturbing you, Miss Wetherell," said the owner of it.

"No," answered Cynthia, faintly.

"May I come in?"

Cynthia held open the door a little wider, and Mr. Worthington walked in. He seemed very majestic and out of place in the little house which Gabriel Post had built, and he carried into it some of the atmosphere of the walnut and high ceilings of his own mansion. His manner of laying his hat, bottom up, on the table, and of unbuttoning his coat, subtly indicated the honor which he was conferring upon the place. And he eyed Cynthia, standing before him in the lamplight, with a modification of the hawk-like look which was meant to be at once condescending and conciliatory. He did not imprint a kiss upon her brow, as some prospective fathers-in-law would have done. But his eyes, perhaps involuntarily, paid a tribute to her personal appearance which heightened her color. She might not, after all, be such a discredit to the Worthington family.

"Won't you sit down?" she asked.

"Thank you, Cynthia," he said; "I hope I may now be allowed to call you Cynthia?"

She did not answer him, but sat down herself, and he followed her example; with his eyes still upon her.

"You have doubtless received my letter," began Mr. Worthington. "I only arrived in Brampton an hour ago, but I thought it best to come to you at once, under the circumstances."

"Yes," replied Cynthia, "I received the letter."

"I am glad," said Mr. Worthington. He was beginning to be a little taken aback by her calmness and her apparent absence of joy. It was scarcely the way in which a school-teacher should receive the advances of the first citizen, come to give a gracious consent to her marriage with his son. Had he known it, Cynthia was anything but calm. "I am glad," he said, "because I took pains to explain the exact situation in that letter, and to set forth my own sentiments. I hope you understood them."

“Yes, I understood them,” said Cynthia, in a low tone.

This was enigmatical, to say the least. But Mr. Worthington had come with such praiseworthy intentions that he was disposed to believe that the girl was overwhelmed by the good fortune which had suddenly overtaken her. He was therefore disposed to be a little conciliatory.

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“My conduct may have appeared harsh to you,” he continued. “I will not deny that I opposed the matter at first. Robert was still in college, and he has a generous, impressionable nature which he inherits from his poor mother—the kind of nature likely to commit a rash act which would ruin his career. I have since become convinced that he has—ahem—inherited likewise a determination of purpose and an ability to get on in the world which I confess I had underestimated. My friend, Mr. Broke, has written me a letter about him, and tells me that he has already promoted him.”

“Yes,” said Cynthia.

“You hear from him?” inquired Mr. Worthington, giving her a quick glance.

“Yes,” said Cynthia, her color rising a little.

“And yet,” said Mr. Worthington, slowly, “I have been under the impression that you have persistently refused to marry him.”

“That is true,” she answered.

“I cannot refrain from complimenting you, Cynthia, upon such rare conduct,” said he. “You will be glad to know that it has contributed more than anything else toward my estimation of your character, and has strengthened me in my resolution that I am now doing right. It may be difficult for you to understand a father’s feelings. The complete separation from my only son was telling on me severely, and I could not forget that you were the cause of that separation. I knew nothing about you, except—” He hesitated, for she had turned to him.

“Except what?” she asked.

Mr. Worthington coughed. Mr. Flint had told him, that very morning, of her separation from Jethro, and of the reasons which people believed had caused it. Unfortunately, we have not time to go into that conversation with Mr. Flint, who had given a very good account of Cynthia indeed. After all (Mr. Worthington reflected), he had consented to the marriage, and there was no use in bringing Jethro’s name into the conversation. Jethro would be forgotten soon.

“I will not deny to You that I had other plans for my son,” he said. “I had hoped that he would marry a daughter of a friend of mine. You must be a little indulgent with parents, Cynthia,” he added with a little smile, “we have our castles in the air, too. Sometimes, as in this case, by a wise provision of providence they go astray. I suppose you have heard of Miss Duncan’s marriage.”

“No,” said Cynthia.

“She ran off with a worthless Italian nobleman. I believe, on the whole,” he said, with what was an extreme complaisance for the first citizen, “that I have reason to congratulate myself upon Robert’s choice. I have made inquiries about you, and I find that I have had the pleasure of knowing your mother, whom I respected very much. And your father, I understand, came of very good people, and was forced by circumstances to adopt the means of livelihood he did. My attention has been called to the letters he wrote to the Guardian, which I hear have been highly praised by competent critics, and I have ordered a set of them for the files of the library. You yourself, I find, are highly thought of in Brampton” (a, not unimportant factor, by the way); “you have been splendidly educated, and are a lady. In short, Cynthia, I have come to give my formal consent to your engagement to my son Robert.”

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“But I am not engaged to him,” said Cynthia.

“He will be here shortly, I imagine,” said Mr. Worthington.

Cynthia was trembling more than ever by this time. She was very angry, and she had found it very difficult to repress the things which she had been impelled to speak. She did not hate Isaac Worthington now—she despised him. He had not dared to mention Jethro, who had been her benefactor, though he had done his best to have her removed from the school because of her connection with Jethro.

“Mr. Worthington,” she said, “I have not yet made up my mind whether I shall marry your son.”

To say that Mr. Worthington’s breath was taken away when he heard these words would be to use a mild expression. He doubted his senses.

“What?” he exclaimed, starting forward, “what do you mean?”

Cynthia hesitated a moment. She was not frightened, but she was trying to choose her words without passion.

“I refused to marry him,” she said, “because you withheld your consent, and I did not wish to be the cause of a quarrel between you. It was not difficult to guess your feelings toward me, even before certain things occurred of which I will not speak. I did my best, from the very first, to make Bob give up the thought of marrying me, although I loved and honored him. Loving him as I do, I do not want to be the cause of separating him from his father, and of depriving him of that which is rightfully his. But something was due to myself. If I should ever make up my mind to marry him,” continued Cynthia, looking at Mr. Worthington steadfastly, “it will not be because your consent is given or withheld.”

“Do you tell me this to my face?” exclaimed Mr. Worthington, now in a rage himself at such unheard-of presumption.

“To your face,” said Cynthia, who got more self-controlled as he grew angry. “I believe that that consent, which you say you have given freely, was wrung from you.”

It was unfortunate that the first citizen might not always have Mr. Flint by him to restrain and caution him. But Mr. Flint could have no command over his master’s sensations, and anger and apprehension goaded Mr. Worthington to indiscretion.

“Jethro Bass told you this!” he cried out.

“No,” Cynthia answered, not in the least surprised by the admission, “he did not tell me—but he will if I ask him. I guessed it from your letter. I heard that he had come back to-day, and I went to Coniston to see him, and he told me—he had been defeated.”

Tears came into her eyes at the remembrance of the scene in the tannery house that afternoon, and she knew now why Jethro’s face had worn that look of peace. He had made his supreme sacrifice—for her. No, he had told her nothing, and she might never have known. She sat thinking of the magnitude of this thing Jethro had done, and she ceased to speak, and the tears coursed down her cheeks unheeded.

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Isaac Worthington had a habit of clutching things when he was in a rage, and now he clutched the arms of the chair. He had grown white. He was furious with her, furious with himself for having spoken that which might be construed into a confession. He had not finished writing the letters before he had stood self-justified, and he had been self-justified ever since. Where now were these arguments so wonderfully plausible? Where were the refutations which he had made ready in case of a barely possible need? He had gone into the Pelican House intending to tell Jethro of his determination to agree to the marriage. That was one. He had done so—that was another—and he had written the letters that Jethro might be convinced of his good will. There were still more, involving Jethro's character for veracity and other things. Summoning these, he waited for Cynthia to have done speaking, but when she had finished—he said nothing. He looked a her, and saw the tears on her face, and he saw that she had completely forgotten his presence.

For the life of him, Isaac Worthington could not utter a word. He was a man, as we know, who did not talk idly, and he knew that Cynthia would not hear what he said; and arguments and denunciations lose their effect when repeated. Again, he knew that she would not believe him. Never in his life had Isaac Worthington been so ignored, so put to shame, as by this school-teacher of Brampton. Before, self-esteem and sophistry had always carried him off between them; sometimes, in truth, with a wound—the wound had always healed. But he had a feeling, to-night, that this woman had glanced into his soul, and had turned away from it. As he looked at her the texture of his anger changed; he forgot for the first time that which he had been pleased to think of as her position in life, and he feared her. He had matched his spirit against hers.

Before long the situation became intolerable to him, for Cynthia still sat silent. She was thinking of how she had blamed Jethro for going back to that life, even though his love for her had made him do it. But Isaac Worthington did not know of what she was thinking—he thought only of himself and his predicament. He could not remain, and yet he could not go—with dignity. He who had come to bestow could not depart like a whipped dog.

Suddenly a fear transfixed him: suppose that this woman, from whom he could not hide the truth, should tell his son what he had done. Bob would believe her. Could he, Isaac Worthington, humble his pride and ask her to keep her suspicions to herself? He would then be acknowledging that they were more than suspicions. If he did so, he would have to appear to forgive her in spite of what she had said to him. And Bob was coming home. Could he tell Bob that he had changed his mind and withdrawn his consent to the marriage? There world be the reason, and again Bob would believe her. And again, if he withdrew his consent, there was Jethro to reckon with. Jethro must have a weapon still, Mr. Worthington thought, although he could not imagine what it might be. As Isaac Worthington sat there, thinking, it grew clear, to him at last that there was but one exit out of a, very desperate situation.

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He glanced at Cynthia again, this time appraisingly. She had dried her eyes, but she made no effort to speak. After all, she would make such a wife for his son as few men possessed. He thought of Sarah Hollingsworth. She had been a good woman, but there had been many times when he had deplored—especially in his travels the lack of other qualities in his wife. Cynthia, he thought, had these qualities,—so necessary for the wife of one who would succeed to power—though whence she had got them Isaac Worthington could not imagine. She would become a personage; she was a woman of whom they had no need to be ashamed at home or abroad. Having completed these reflections, he broke the silence.

“I am sorry that you should have been misled into thinking such a thing as you have expressed, Cynthia,” he said, “but I believe that I can understand something of the feelings which prompted you. It is natural that you should have a resentment against me after everything that has happened. It is perhaps natural, too, that I should lose my temper under the circumstances. Let us forget it. And I trust that in the future we shall grow into the mutual respect and affection which our nearer relationship will demand.”

He rose, and took up his hat, and Cynthia rose too. There was something very fine, he thought, about her carriage and expression as she stood in front of him.

“There is my hand,” he said,—“will you take it?”

“I will take it,” Cynthia answered, “because you are Bob’s father.”

And then Mr. Worthington went away.

CHAPTER XX

I am able to cite one notable instance, at least, to disprove the saying a part of which is written above, and I have yet to hear of a case in which a gentleman ever hesitated a single instant on account of the first letter of a lady’s last name. I know, indeed, of an occasion when locomotives could not go fast enough, when thirty miles an hour seemed a snail’s pace to a young main who sat by the open window of a train that crept northward on a certain hazy September morning up the beautiful valley of a broad river which we know.

It was after three o’clock before he caught sight of the familiar crest of Farewell Mountain, and the train ran into Harwich. How glad he was to see everybody there, whether he knew them or not! He came near hugging the conductor of the Truro accommodation; who, needless to say, did not ask him for a ticket, or even a pass. And then the young man went forward and almost shook the arms off of the engineer and the fireman, and climbed into the cab, and actually drove the engine himself as far as Brampton, where it arrived somewhat ahead of schedule, having taken some of the

curves and bridges at a speed a little beyond the law. The engineer was richer by five dollars, and the son of a railroad president is a privileged character, anyway.

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Yes, here was Brampton, and in spite of the haze the sun had never shone so brightly on the terraced steeple of the meeting-house. He leaped out of the cab almost before the engine had stopped, and beamed upon everybody on the platform,—even upon Mr. Dodd, who chanced to be there. In a twinkling the young man is in Mr. Sherman's hack, and Mr. Sherman galloping his horse down Brampton Street, the young man with his head out of the window, smiling; grinning would be a better word. Here are the iron mastiffs, and they seem to be grinning, too. The young man flings open the carriage door and leaps out, and the door is almost broken from its hinges by the maple tree. He rushes up the steps and through the hall, and into the library, where the first citizen and his seneschal are sitting.

"Hello, Father, you see I didn't waste any time," he cried; grasping his father's hand in a grip that made Mr. Worthington wince. "Well, you are a trump, after all. We're both a little hot-headed, I guess, and do things we're sorry for,—but that's all over now, isn't it? I'm sorry. I might have known you'd come round when you found out for yourself what kind of a girl Cynthia was. Did you ever see anybody like her?"

Mr. Flint turned his back, and started to walk out of the room.

"Don't go, Flint, old boy," Bob called out, seizing Mr. Flint's hand, too. "I can't stay but a minute, now. How are you?"

"All right, Bob," answered Mr. Flint, with a curious, kindly look in his eyes that was not often there. "I'm glad to see you home. I have to go to the bank."

"Well, Father," said Bob, "school must be out, and I imagine you know where I'm going. I just thought I'd stop in to—to thank you, and get a benediction."

"I am very happy to have you back, Robert," replied Mr. Worthington, and it was true. It would have been strange indeed if some tremor of sentiment had not been in his voice and some gleam of pride in his eye as he looked upon his son.

"So you saw her, and couldn't resist her," said Bob. "Wasn't that how it happened?"

Mr. Worthington sat down again at the desk, and his hand began to stray among the papers. He was thinking of Mr. Flint's exit.

"I do not arrive at my decisions quite in that way, Robert," he answered.

"But you have seen her?"

"Yes, I have seen her."

There was a hesitation, an uneasiness in his father's tone for which Bob could not account, and which he attributed to emotion. He did not guess that this hour of supreme joy could hold for Isaac Worthington another sensation.

"Isn't she the finest girl in the world?" he demanded. "How does she seem? How does she look?"

"She looks extremely well," said Mr. Worthington, who had now schooled his voice. "In fact, I am quite ready to admit that Cynthia Wetherell possesses the qualifications necessary for your wife. If she had not, I should never have written you."

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Bob walked to the window.

“Father;” he said, speaking with a little difficulty, “I can’t tell you how much I appreciate your—your coming round. I wanted to do the right thing, but I just couldn’t give up such a girl as that.”

“We shall let bygones be bygones, Robert,” answered Mr. Worthington, clearing his throat.

“She never would have me without your consent. By the way,” he cried, turning suddenly, “did she say she’d have me now?”

“I believe,” said Mr. Worthington, clearing his throat again, “I believe she reserved her decision.”

“I must be off,” said Bob, “she goes to Coniston on Fridays. I’ll drive her out. Good-by, Father.”

He flew out of the room, ran into Mrs. Holden, whom he astonished by saluting on the cheek, and astonished even more by asking her to tell Silas to drive his black horses to Gabriel Post’s house—as the cottage was still known in Brampton. And having hastily removed some of the cinders, he flew out of the door and reached the park-like space in the middle of Brampton Street. Then he tried to walk decorously, but it was hard work. What if she should not be in?

The door and windows of the little house were open that balmy afternoon, and the bees were buzzing among the flowers which Cynthia had planted on either side of the step. Bob went up the path, and caught a glimpse of her through the entry standing in the sitting room. She was, indeed, waiting for the Coniston stage, and she did not see him. Shall I destroy the mental image of the reader who has known her so long by trying to tell what she looked like? Some heroines grow thin and worn by the troubles which they are forced to go through. Cynthia was not this kind of a heroine. She was neither tall nor short, and the dark blue gown which she wore set off (so Bob thought) the curves of her figure to perfection. Her face had become a little more grave—yes, and more noble; and the eyes and mouth had an indescribable, womanly sweetness.

He stood for a moment outside the doorway gazing at her; hesitating to desecrate that revery, which seemed to him to have a touch of sadness in it. And then she turned her head, slowly, and saw him, and her lips parted, and a startled look came into her eyes, but she did not move. He came quickly into the room and stopped again, quivering from head to foot with the passion which the sight of her never failed to unloose within him. Still she did not speak, but her lip trembled, and the love leaping in his eyes kindled a yearning in hers,—a yearning she was powerless to resist. He may by that strange power have drawn her toward him—he never knew. Neither of them could have given

evidence on that marvellous instant when the current bridged the space between them. He could not say whether this woman whom he had seized by force before had shown alike vitality in her surrender. He only knew that her arms were woven about his neck, and that the kiss of which he had dreamed was again on his lips, and that he felt once more her wonderful, supple body pressed against his, and her heart beating, and her breast heaving. And he knew that the strength of the love in her which he had gained was beyond estimation.

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Thus for a time they swung together in ethereal space, breathless with the motion of their flight. The duration of such moments is—in words—limitless. Now he held her against him, and again he held her away that his eyes might feast upon hers until she dropped her lashes and the crimson tide flooded into her face and she hid it again in the refuge she had longed for,—murmuring his name. But at last, startled by some sound without and so brought back to earth, she led him gently to the window at the side and looked up at him searchingly. He was tanned no longer.

“I was afraid you had been working too hard,” she said.

“So you do love me?” was Bob’s answer to this remark.

Cynthia smiled at him with her eyes: gravely, if such a thing may be said of a smile.

“Bob, how can you ask?”

“Oh, Cynthia,” he cried, “if you knew what I have been through, you wouldn’t have held out, I know it. I began to think I should never have you.”

“But you have me now,” she said, and was silent.

“Why do you look like that?” he asked.

She smiled up at him again.

“I, too, have suffered, Bob,” she said. “And I have thought of you night and day.”

“God bless you, sweetheart,” he cried, and kissed her again,—many times. “It’s all right now, isn’t it? I knew my father would give his consent when he found out what you were.”

The expression of pain which had troubled him crossed her face again, and she put her hand on his shoulder.

“Listen, dearest,” she said, “I love you. I am doing this for you. You must understand that.”

“Why, yes, Cynthia, I understand it—of course I do,” he answered, perplexed. “I understand it, but I don’t deserve it.”

“I want you to know,” she continued in a low voice, “that I should have married you anyway. I—I could not have helped it.”

“Cynthia!”

“If you were to go back to the locomotive works’ tomorrow, I would marry you.”

“On ninety dollars a month?” exclaimed Bob.

“If you wanted me,” she said.

“Wanted you! I could live in a log cabin with you the rest of my life.”

She drew down his face to hers, and kissed him.

“But I wished you to be reconciled with your father,” she said; “I could not bear to come between you. You—you are reconciled, aren’t you?”

“Indeed, we are,” he said.

“I am glad, Bob,” she answered simply. “I should not have been happy if I had driven you away from the place where you should be, which is your home.”

“Wherever you are will be my home; sweetheart,” he said, and pressed her to him once more.

At length, looking past his shoulder into the street, she saw Lem Hallowell pulling up the Brampton stage before the door.

“Bob,” she said, “I must go to Coniston and see Uncle Jethro. I promised him.”

Bob’s answer was to walk into the entry, where he stood waving the most joyous of greetings at the surprised stage driver.

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“I guess you won’t get anybody here, Lem,” he called out.

“But, Bob,” protested Cynthia, from within, afraid to show her face just then, “I have to go, I promised. And—and I want to go,” she added when he turned.

“I’m running a stage to Coniston to-day myself, Lem,” said he “and I’m going to steal your best passenger.”

Lemuel immediately flung down his reins and jumped out of the stage and came up the path and into the entry, where he stood confronting Cynthia.

“Hev you took him, Cynthy?” he demanded.

“Yes, Lem,” she answered, “won’t you congratulate me?”

The warm-hearted stage driver did congratulate her in a most unmistakable manner.

“I think a sight of her, Bob,” he said after he had shaken both of Bob’s hands and brushed his own eyes with his coat sleeve. “I’ve knowed her so long—” Whereupon utterance failed him, and he ran down the path and jumped into his stage again and drove off.

And then Cynthia sent Bob on an errand—not a very long one, and while he was gone, she sat down at the table and tried to realize her happiness, and failed. In less than ten minutes Bob had come back with Cousin Ephraim, as fast as he could hobble. He flung his arms around her, stick and all, and he was crying. It is a fact that old soldiers sometimes cry. But his tears did not choke his utterance.

“Great Tecumseh!” said Cousin Ephraim, “so you’ve went and done it, Cynthy. Siege got a little mite too hot. I callated she’d capitulate in the end, but she held out uncommon long.”

“That she did,” exclaimed Bob, feelingly.

“I—I was tellin’ Bob I hain’t got nothin’ against him,” continued Ephraim.

“Oh, Cousin Eph,” said Cynthia, laughing in spite of herself, and glancing at Bob, “is that all you can say?”

“Cousin Eph’s all right,” said Bob, laughing too. “We understand each other.”

“Callate we do,” answered Ephraim. “I’ll go so far as to say there hain’t nobody I’d ruther see you marry. Guess I’ll hev to go back to the kit, now. What’s to become of the old pensioner, Cynthy?”

“The old pensioner needn’t worry,” said Cynthia.

Then drove up Silas the Silent, with Bob’s buggy and his black trotters. All of Brampton might see them now; and all of Brampton did see them. Silas got out,—his presence not being required,—and Cynthia was helped in, and Bob got in beside her, and away they went, leaving Ephraim waving his stick after them from the doorstep.

It is recorded against the black trotters that they made very poor time to Coniston that day, though I cannot discover that either of them was lame. Lem Hallowell, who was there nearly an hour ahead of them, declares that the off horse had a bunch of branches in his mouth. Perhaps Bob held them in on account of the scenery that September afternoon. Incomparable scenery! I doubt if two lovers of the renaissance

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ever wandered through a more wondrous realm of pleasance—to quote the words of the poet. Spots in it are like a park, laid out by that peerless landscape gardener, nature: dark, symmetrical pine trees on the sward, and maples in the fulness of their leaf, and great oaks on the hillsides, and, coppices; and beyond, the mountain, the evergreens massed like cloud-shadows on its slopes; and all-trees and coppice and mountain—flattened by the haze until they seemed woven in the softest of blues and blue greens into one exquisite picture of an ancient tapestry. I, myself, have seen these pictures in that country, and marvelled.

So they drove on through that realm, which was to be their realm, and came all too soon to Coniston green. Lem Hallowell had spread the well-nigh incredible news, that Cynthia Wetherell was to marry the son of the mill-owner and railroad president of Brampton, and it seemed to Cynthia that every man and woman and child of the village was gathered at the store. Although she loved them, every one, she whispered something to Bob when she caught sight of that group on the platform, and he spoke to the trotters. Thus it happened that they flew by, and were at the tannery house before they knew it; and Cynthia, all unaided, sprang out of the buggy and ran in, alone. She found Jethro sitting outside of the kitchen door with a volume on his knee, and she saw that the print of it was large, and she knew that the book was “Robinson Crusoe.”

Cynthia knelt down on the grass beside him and caught his hands in hers.

“Uncle Jethro,” she said, “I am going to marry Bob Worthington.”

“Yes, Cynthy,” he answered. And taking the initiative for the first time in his life, he stooped down and kissed her.

“I knew—you would be happy—in my happiness,” she said, the tears brimming in her eyes.

“N-never have been so happy, Cynthy,—never have.”

“Uncle Jethro, I never will desert you. I shall always take care of you.”

“R-read to me sometimes, Cynthy—r-read to me?”

But she could not answer him. She was sobbing on the pages of that book he had given her—long ago.

I like to dwell on happiness, and I am reluctant to leave these people whom I have grown to love. Jethro Bass lived to take Cynthia’s children down by the brook and to show them the pictures, at least, in that wonderful edition of “Robinson Crusoe.” He would never depart from the tannery house, but Cynthia went to him there, many times

a week. There is a spot not far from the Coniston road, and five miles distant alike from Brampton and Coniston, where Bob Worthington built his house, and where he and Cynthia dwelt many years; and they go there to this day, in the summer-time. It stands in the midst of broad lands, and the ground in front of it slopes down to Coniston Water, artificially widened here by a stone dam into a little lake. From the balcony of the summer-house which overhangs the lake there is a wonderful view of Coniston Mountain, and Cynthia Worthington often sits there with her sewing or her book, listening to the laughter of her children, and thinking, sometimes, of bygone days.

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AFTERWORD

The reality of the foregoing pages has to the author, at least, become so vivid that he regrets the necessity of having to add an afterword. Every novel is, to some extent, a compound of truth and fiction, and he has done his best to picture conditions as they were, and to make the spirit of his book true. Certain people who were living in St. Louis during the Civil War have been mentioned as the originals of characters in “The Crisis,” and there are houses in that city which have been pointed out as fitting descriptions in that novel. An author has, frequently, people, houses, and localities in mind when he writes; but he changes them, sometimes very materially, in the process of literary construction.

It is inevitable, perhaps, that many people of a certain New England state will recognize Jethro Bass. There are different opinions extant concerning the remarkable original of this character; ardent defenders and detractors of his are still living, but all agree that he was a strange man of great power. The author disclaims any intention of writing a biography of him. Some of the things set down in this book he did, and others he did not do. Some of the anecdotes here related concerning him are, in the main, true, and for this material the author acknowledges his indebtedness particularly to Colonel Thomas B. Cheney of Ashland, New Hampshire, and to other friends who have helped him. Jethro Bass was typical of his Era, and it is of the Era that this book attempts to treat.

Concerning the locality where Jethro Bass was born and lived, it will and will not be recognized. It would have been the extreme of bad taste to have put into these pages any portraits which might have offended families or individuals, and in order that it may be known that the author has not done so he has written this Afterword. Nor has he particularly chosen for the field of this novel a state of which he is a citizen, and for which he has a sincere affection. The conditions here depicted, while retaining the characteristics of the locality, he believes to be typical of the Era over a large part of the United States.

Many of the Puritans who came to New England were impelled to emigrate from the old country, no doubt, by an aversion to pulling the forelock as well as by religious principles, and the spirit of these men prevailed for a certain time after the Revolution was fought. Such men lived and ruled in Coniston before the rise of Jethro Bass.

Self-examination is necessary for the moral health of nations as well as men, and it is the most hopeful of signs that in the United States we are to-day going through a period of self-examination.

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We shall do well to ascertain the causes which have led us gradually to stray from the political principles laid down by our forefathers for all the world to see. Some of us do not even know what those principles were. I have met many intelligent men, in different states of the Union, who could not even repeat the names of the senators who sat for them in Congress. Macaulay said, in 1852, “We now know, by the clearest of all proof, that universal suffrage, even united with secret voting, is no security, against the establishment of arbitrary power.” To quote James Russell Lowell, writing a little later: “We have begun obscurely to recognize that . . . popular government is not in itself a panacea, is no better than any other form except as the virtue and wisdom of the people make it so.”

As Americans, we cannot but believe that our political creed goes down in its foundations to the solid rock of truth. One of the best reasons for our belief lies in the fact that, since 1776, government after government has imitated our example. We have, by our very existence and rise to power, made any decided retrogression from these doctrines impossible. So many people have tried to rule themselves, and are still trying, that one begins to believe that the time is not far distant when the United States, once the most radical, will become the most conservative of nations.

Thus the duty rests to-day, more heavily than ever, upon each American citizen to make good to the world those principles upon which his government was built. To use a figure suggested by the calamity which has lately befallen one of the most beloved of our cities, there is a theory that earthquakes are caused by a necessary movement on the part of the globe to regain its axis. Whether or not the theory be true, it has its political application. In America to-day we are trying—whatever the cost—to regain the true axis established for us by the founders of our Republic.

HARLAKENDEN *house*, May 7, 1906.

PG EDITOR’S BOOKMARKS:

Books she had known from her earliest infancy
But I wanted to be happy as long as I could
Curiosity as a factor has never been given its proper weight
Even old people may have an ideal
Every novel is, to some extent, a compound of truth and fiction
Fond of her, although she was no more than an episode in his life
Giant pines that gave many a mast to King George’s navy
Had exhausted the resources of the little school
He hain’t be’n eddicated a great deal
Life had made a woman of her long ago
Not that I’ve anything against her personally—
Pious belief in democracy, with a firmer determination to get on top

Riddle he could not solve—one that was best left alone
Stray from the political principles laid down by our forefathers
That which is the worst cruelty

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of all—the cruelty of selfishness
The home is the very foundation-rock of the nation
The old soldier found dependence hard to bear
The one precious gift of life
They don't take notice of him, because he don't say much
Though his heart was breaking, his voice was steady
We know nothing of their problems or temptations

THE INSIDE OF THE CUP

By Winston Churchill

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THE INSIDE OF THE CUP

Volume 1.

CHAPTER I

THE WARING PROBLEMS

I

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With few exceptions, the incidents recorded in these pages take place in one of the largest cities of the United States of America, and of that portion called the Middle West, —a city once conservative and provincial, and rather proud of these qualities; but now outgrown them, and linked by lightning limited trains to other teeming centers of the modern world: a city overtaken, in recent years, by the plague which has swept our country from the Atlantic to the Pacific—Prosperity. Before its advent, the Goodriches and Gores, the Warings, the Prestons and the Atterburys lived leisurely lives in a sleepy quarter of shade trees and spacious yards and muddy macadam streets, now passed away forever. Existence was decorous, marriage an irrevocable step, wives were wives, and the Authorized Version of the Bible was true from cover to cover. So Dr. Gilman preached, and so they believed.

Sunday was then a day essentially different from other days—you could tell it without looking at the calendar. The sun knew it, and changed the quality of his light the very animals, dogs and cats and horses, knew it: and most of all the children knew it, by Sunday school, by Dr. Gilman's sermon, by a dizzy afternoon connected in some of their minds with ceramics and a lack of exercise; by a cold tea, and by church bells. You were not allowed to forget it for one instant. The city suddenly became full of churches, as though they had magically been let down from heaven during Saturday night. They must have been there on week days, but few persons ever thought of them.

Among the many church bells that rang on those bygone Sundays was that of St. John's, of which Dr. Gilman, of beloved memory, was rector. Dr. Gilman was a saint, and if you had had the good luck to be baptized or married or buried by him, you were probably fortunate in an earthly as well as heavenly sense. One has to be careful not to deal exclusively in superlatives, and yet it is not an exaggeration to say that St. John's was the most beautiful and churchly edifice in the city, thanks chiefly to several gentlemen of sense, and one gentleman, at least, of taste—Mr. Horace Bentley. The vicissitudes of civil war interrupted its building; but when, in 1868, it stood completed, its stone unsoiled as yet by factory smoke, its spire delicately pointing to untainted skies, its rose window glowing above the porch, citizens on Tower Street often stopped to gaze at it diagonally across the vacant lot set in order by Mr. Thurston Gore, with the intent that the view might be unobstructed.

Little did the Goodriches and Gores, the Warings and Prestons and Atterburys and other prominent people foresee the havoc that prosperity and smoke were to play with their residential plans! One by one, sooty commerce drove them out, westward, conservative though they were, from the paradise they had created; blacker and blacker grew the gothic facade of St. John's; Thurston Gore departed, but leased his

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corner first for a goodly sum, his ancestors being from Connecticut; leased also the vacant lot he had beautified, where stores arose and hid the spire from Tower Street. Cable cars moved serenely up the long hill where a panting third horse had been necessary, cable cars resounded in Burton Street, between the new factory and the church where Dr. Gilman still preached of peace and the delights of the New-Jerusalem. And before you could draw your breath, the cable cars had become electric. Gray hairs began to appear in the heads of the people Dr. Gilman had married in the ’60’s and their children were going East to College.

II

In the first decade of the twentieth century, Asa, Waring still clung to the imposing, early Victorian mansion in Hamilton Street. It presented an uncompromising and rather scornful front to the sister mansions with which it had hitherto been on intimate terms, now fast degenerating into a shabby gentility, seeking covertly to catch the eye of boarders, but as yet refraining from open solicitation. Their lawns were growing a little ragged, their stone steps and copings revealing cracks.

Asa Waring looked with a stern distaste upon certain aspects of modern life. And though he possessed the means to follow his friends and erstwhile neighbours into the newer paradise five miles westward, he had successfully resisted for several years a formidable campaign to uproot him. His three married daughters lived in that clean and verdant district surrounding the Park (spelled with a capital), while Evelyn and Rex spent most of their time in the West End or at the Country Clubs. Even Mrs. Waring, who resembled a Roman matron, with her wavy white hair parted in the middle and her gentle yet classic features, sighed secretly at times at the unyielding attitude of her husband, although admiring him for it. The grandchildren drew her.

On the occasion of Sunday dinner, when they surrounded her, her heart was filled to overflowing.

The autumn sunlight, reddened somewhat by the slight haze of smoke, poured in at the high windows of the dining-room, glinted on the silver, and was split into bewildering colors by the prisms of the chandelier. Many precious extra leaves were inserted under the white cloth, and Mrs. Waring’s eyes were often dimmed with happiness as she glanced along the ranks on either side until they rested on the man with whom she had chosen to pass her life. Her admiration for him had gradually grown into hero-worship. His anger, sometimes roused, had a terrible moral quality that never failed to thrill her, and the Loyal Legion button on his black frock coat seemed to her an epitome of his character. He sat for the most part silent, his remarkable, penetrating eyes, lighting under his grizzled brows, smiling at her, at the children, at the grandchildren. And

sometimes he would go to the corner table, where the four littlest sat, and fetch one back to perch on his knee and pull at his white, military mustache.

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It was the children's day. Uproar greeted the huge white cylinder of ice-cream borne by Katie, the senior of the elderly maids; uproar greeted the cake; and finally there was a rush for the chocolates, little tablets wrapped in tinfoil and tied with red and blue ribbon. After that, the pandemonium left the dining-room, to spread itself over the spacious house from the basement to the great playroom in the attic, where the dolls and blocks and hobby-horses of the parental generation stoically awaited the new.

Sometimes a visitor was admitted to this sacramental feat, the dearest old gentleman in the world, with a great, high bridged nose, a slight stoop, a kindling look, and snow white hair, though the top of his head was bald. He sat on Mrs. Waring's right, and was treated with the greatest deference by the elders, and with none at all by the children, who besieged him. The bigger ones knew that he had had what is called a history; that he had been rich once, with a great mansion of his own, but now he lived on Dalton Street, almost in the slums, and worked among the poor. His name was Mr. Bentley.

He was not there on the particular Sunday when this story opens, otherwise the conversation about to be recorded would not have taken place. For St. John's Church was not often mentioned in Mr. Bentley's presence.

"Well, grandmother," said Phil Goodrich, who was the favourite son-in-law, "how was the new rector to-day?"

"Mr. Hodder is a remarkable young man, Phil," Mrs. Waring declared, "and delivered such a good sermon. I couldn't help wishing that you and Rex and Evelyn and George had been in church."

"Phil couldn't go," explained the unmarried and sunburned Evelyn, "he had a match on of eighteen holes with me."

Mrs. Waring sighed.

"I can't think what's got into the younger people these days that they seem so indifferent to religion. Your father's a vestryman, Phil, and I believe it has always been his hope that you would succeed him. I'm afraid Rex won't succeed his father," she added, with a touch of regret and a glance of pride at her husband. "You never go to church, Rex. Phil does."

"I got enough church at boarding-school to last me a lifetime, mother," her son replied. He was slightly older than Evelyn, and just out of college. "Besides, any heathen can get on the vestry—it's a financial board, and they're due to put Phil on some day. They're always putting him on boards."

His mother looked a little distressed.

"Rex, I wish you wouldn't talk that way about the Church—"

“I’m sorry, mother,” he said, with quick penitence. “Mr. Langmaid’s a vestryman, you know, and they’ve only got him there because he’s the best corporation lawyer in the city. He isn’t exactly what you’d call orthodox. He never goes.”

“We are indebted to Mr. Langmaid for Mr. Hodder.” This was one of Mr. Waring’s rare remarks.

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Eleanor Goodrich caught her husband's eye, and smiled.

"I wonder why it is," she said, "that we are so luke-warm about church in these days? I don't mean you, Lucy, or Laureston," she added to her sister, Mrs. Grey. "You're both exemplary." Lucy bowed ironically. "But most people of our ages with whom we associate. Martha Preston, for instance. We were all brought up like the children of Jonathan Edwards. Do you remember that awful round-and-round feeling on Sunday afternoons, Sally, and only the wabbly Noah's Ark elephant to play with, right in this house? instead of *that*!" There was a bump in the hall without, and shrieks of laughter. "I'll never forget the first time it occurred to me—when I was reading Darwin—that if the ark were as large as Barnum's Circus and the Natural History Museum put together, it couldn't have held a thousandth of the species on earth. It was a blow."

"I don't know what we're coming to," exclaimed Mrs. Waring gently.

"I didn't mean to be flippant, mother," said Eleanor penitently, "but I do believe the Christian religion has got to be presented in a different way, and a more vital way, to appeal to a new generation. I am merely looking facts in the face."

"What is the Christian religion?" asked Sally's husband, George Bridges, who held a chair of history in the local flourishing university. "I've been trying to find out all my life."

"You couldn't be expected to know, George," said his wife. "You were brought up an Unitarian, and went to Harvard."

"Never mind, professor," said Phil Goodrich, in a quizzical, affectionate tone. "Take the floor and tell us what it isn't."

George Bridges smiled. He was a striking contrast in type to his square-cut and vigorous brother-in-law; very thin, with slightly protruding eyes the color of the faded blue glaze of ancient pottery, and yet humorous.

"I've had my chance, at any rate. Sally made me go last Sunday and hear Mr. Hodder."

"I can't see why you didn't like him, George," Lucy cried. "I think he's splendid."

"Oh, I like him," said Mr. Bridges.

"That's just it!" exclaimed Eleanor. "I like him. I think he's sincere. And that first Sunday he came, when I saw him get up in the pulpit and wave that long arm of his, all I could think of was a modern Savonarola. He looks one. And then, when he began to preach, it was maddening. I felt all the time that he could say something helpful, if he only would. But he didn't. It was all about the sufficiency of grace,—whatever that may be. He didn't explain it. He didn't give me one notion as to how to cope a little better with

the frightful complexities of the modern lives we live, or how to stop quarrelling with Phil when he stays at the office and is late for dinner."

"Eleanor, I think you're unjust to him," said Lucy, amid the laughter of the men of the family. "Most people in St. John's think he is a remarkable preacher."

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“So were many of the Greek sophists,” George Bridges observed.

“Now if it were only dear old Doctor Gilman,” Eleanor continued, “I could sink back into a comfortable indifference. But every Sunday this new man stirs me up, not by what he says, but by what he is. I hoped we’d get a rector with modern ideas, who would be able to tell me what to teach my children. Little Phil and Harriet come back from Sunday school with all sorts of questions, and I feel like a hypocrite. At any rate, if Mr. Hodder hasn’t done anything else, he’s made me want to know.”

“What do you mean by a man of modern ideas, Eleanor?” inquired Mr. Bridges, with evident relish.

Eleanor put down her coffee cup, looked at him helplessly, and smiled.

“Somebody who will present Christianity to me in such a manner that it will appeal to my reason, and enable me to assimilate it into my life.”

“Good for you, Nell,” said her husband, approvingly. “Come now, professor, you sit up in the University’ Club all Sunday morning and discuss recondite philosophy with other learned agnostics, tell us what is the matter with Mr. Hodder’s theology. That is, if it will not shock grandmother too much.”

“I’m afraid I’ve got used to being shocked, Phil,” said Mrs. Waring, with her quiet smile.

“It’s unfair,” Mr. Bridges protested, “to ask a prejudiced pagan like me to pronounce judgment on an honest parson who is labouring according to his lights.”

“Go on, George. You shan’t get out of it that way.”

“Well,” said George, “the trouble is, from the theological point of view, that your parson is preaching what Auguste Sabatier would call a diminished and mitigated orthodoxy.”

“Great heavens!” cried Phil. “What’s that?”

“It’s neither fish, flesh, nor fowl, nor good red herring,” the professor declared. “If Mr. Hodder were cornered he couldn’t maintain that he, as a priest, has full power to forgive sins, and yet he won’t assert that he hasn’t. The mediaeval conception of the Church, before Luther’s day, was consistent, at any rate, if you once grant the premises on which it was based.”

“What premises?”

“That the Almighty had given it a charter, like an insurance company, of a monopoly of salvation on this portion of the Universe, and agreed to keep his hands off. Under this conception, the sale of indulgences, masses for the soul, and temporal power are

perfectly logical —inevitable. Kings and princes derive their governments from the Church. But if we once begin to doubt the validity of this charter, as the Reformers did, the whole system flies to pieces, like sticking a pin into a soap bubble.

“That is the reason why—to change the figure—the so-called Protestant world has been gradually sliding down hill ever since the Reformation. The great majority of men are not willing to turn good, to renounce the material and sensual rewards under their hands without some definite and concrete guaranty that, if they do so, they are going, to be rewarded hereafter. They demand some sort of infallibility. And when we let go of the infallibility of the Church, we began to slide toward what looked like a bottomless pit, and we clutched at the infallibility of the Bible. And now that has begun to roll.

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“What I mean by a mitigated orthodoxy is this: I am far from accusing Mr. Hodder of insincerity, but he preaches as if every word of the Bible were literally true, and had been dictated by God to the men who held the pen, as if he, as a priest, held some supernatural power that could definitely be traced, through what is known as the Apostolic Succession, back to Peter.”

“Do you mean to say, George,” asked Mrs. Waring, with a note of pain in her voice, “that the Apostolic Succession cannot be historically proved?”

“My dear mother,” said George, “I hope you will hold me innocent of beginning this discussion. As a harmless professor of history in our renowned University (of which we think so much that we do not send our sons to it) I have been compelled by the children whom you have brought up to sit in judgment on the theology of your rector.”

“They will leave us nothing!” she sighed.

“Nothing, perhaps, that was invented by man to appeal to man’s superstition and weakness. Of the remainder—who can say?”

“What,” asked Mrs. Waring, “do they say about the Apostolic Succession?”

“Mother is as bad as the rest of us,” said Eleanor.

“Isn’t she, grandfather?”

“If I had a house to rent,” said Mr. Bridges, when the laughter had subsided, “I shouldn’t advertise five bath rooms when there were only two, or electricity when there was only gas. I should be afraid my tenants might find it out, and lose a certain amount of confidence in me. But the orthodox churches are running just such a risk to-day, and if any person who contemplates entering these churches doesn’t examine the premises first, he refrains at his own cost.

“The situation in the early Christian Church is now a matter of history, and he who runs may read. The first churches, like those of Corinth and Ephesus and Rome, were democracies: no such thing as a priestly line to carry on a hierarchy, an ecclesiastical dynasty, was dreamed of. It may be gathered from the gospels that such an idea was so far from the mind of Christ that his mission was to set at naught just such another hierarchy, which then existed in Israel. The Apostles were no more bishops than was John the Baptist, but preachers who travelled from place to place, like Paul. The congregations, at Rome and elsewhere, elected their own ‘presbyteri, episcopoi’ or overseers. It is, to say the least, doubtful, and it certainly cannot be proved historically, that Peter ever was in Rome.”

“The professor ought to have a pulpit of his own,” said Phil.

There was a silence. And then Evelyn, who had been eating quantities of hothouse grapes, spoke up.

“So far as I can see, the dilemma in which our generation finds itself is this,—we want to know what there is in Christianity that we can lay hold of. We should like to believe, but, as George says, all our education contradicts the doctrines that are most insisted upon. We don’t know where to turn. We have the choice of going to people like George, who know a great deal and don’t believe anything, or to clergymen like Mr. Hodder, who demand that we shall violate the reason in us which has been so carefully trained.”

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“Upon my word, I think you’ve put it rather well, Evelyn,” said Eleanor, admiringly.

“In spite of personalities,” added Mr. Bridges.

“I don’t see the use of fussing about it,” proclaimed Laureston Grey, who was the richest and sprucest of the three sons-in-law. “Why can’t we let well enough alone?”

“Because it isn’t well enough,” Evelyn replied. “I want the real thing or nothing. I go to church once a month, to please mother. It doesn’t do me any good. And I don’t see what good it does you and Lucy to go every Sunday. You never think of it when you’re out at dinners and dances during the week. And besides,” she added, with the arrogance of modern youth, “you and Lucy are both intellectually lazy.”

“I like that from you, Evelyn,” her sister flared up.

“You never read anything except the sporting columns and the annual rules of tennis and golf and polo.”

“Must everything be reduced to terms?” Mrs. Waring gently lamented. “Why can’t we, as Laury suggests, just continue to trust?”

“They are the more fortunate, perhaps, who can, mother,” George Bridges answered, with more of feeling in his voice than he was wont to show. “Unhappily, truth does not come that way. If Roger Bacon and Galileo and Newton and Darwin and Harvey and the others had ‘just trusted,’ the world’s knowledge would still remain as stationary as it was during the thousand-odd years the hierarchy of the Church was supreme, when theology was history, philosophy, and science rolled into one. If God had not meant man to know something of his origin differing from the account in Genesis, he would not have given us Darwin and his successors. Practically every great discovery since the Revival we owe to men who, by their very desire for truth, were forced into opposition to the tremendous power of the Church, which always insisted that people should ‘just trust,’ and take the mixture of cosmogony and Greek philosophy, tradition and fable, paganism, Judaic sacerdotalism, and temporal power wrongly called spiritual dealt out by this same Church as the last word on science, philosophy, history, metaphysics, and government.”

“Stop!” cried Eleanor. “You make me dizzy.”

“Nearly all the pioneers to whom we owe our age of comparative enlightenment were heretics,” George persisted. “And if they could have been headed off, or burned, most of us would still be living in mud caves at the foot of the cliff on which stood the nobleman’s castle; and kings would still be kings by divine decree, scientists—if there were any —workers in the black art, and every phenomenon we failed to understand, a miracle.”

“I choose the United States of America,” ejaculated Evelyn.

“I gather, George,” said Phil Goodrich, “that you don’t believe in miracles.”

“Miracles are becoming suspiciously fewer and fewer. Once, an eclipse of the sun was enough to throw men on their knees because they thought it supernatural. If they were logical they’d kneel today because it has been found natural. Only the inexplicable phenomena are miracles; and after a while—if the theologians will only permit us to finish the job —there won’t be any inexplicable phenomena. Mystery, as I believe William James puts it may be called the more-to-be-known.”

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“In taking that attitude, George, aren’t you limiting the power of God?” said Mrs. Waring.

“How does it limit the power of God, mother,” her son-in-law asked, “to discover that he chooses to work by laws? The most suicidal tendency in religious bodies today is their mediaeval insistence on what they are pleased to call the supernatural. Which is the more marvellous—that God can stop the earth and make the sun appear to stand still, or that he can construct a universe of untold millions of suns with planets and satellites, each moving in its orbit, according to law; a universe wherein every atom is true to a sovereign conception? And yet this marvel of marvels—that makes God in the twentieth century infinitely greater than in the sixteenth—would never have been discovered if the champions of theology had had their way.”

Mrs. Waring smiled a little.

“You are too strong for me, George,” she said, “but you mustn’t expect an old woman to change.”

“Mother, dear,” cried Eleanor, rising and laying her hand on Mrs. Waring’s cheek, “we don’t want you to change. It’s ourselves we wish to change, we wish for a religious faith like yours, only the same teaching which gave it to you is powerless for us. That’s our trouble. We have only to look at you,” she added, a little wistfully, “to be sure there is something—something vital in Christianity, if we could only get at it, something that does not depend upon what we have been led to believe is indispensable. George, and men like him, can only show the weakness in the old supports. I don’t mean that they aren’t doing the world a service in revealing errors, but they cannot reconstruct.”

“That is the clergyman’s business,” declared Mr. Bridges. “But he must first acknowledge that the old supports are worthless.”

“Well,” said Phil, “I like your rector, in spite of his anthropomorphism —perhaps, as George would say, because of it. There is something manly about him that appeals to me.”

“There,” cried Eleanor, triumphantly, “I’ve always said Mr. Hodder had a spiritual personality. You feel—you feel there is truth shut up inside of him which he cannot communicate. I’ll tell you who impresses me in that way more strongly than any one else—Mr. Bentley. And he doesn’t come to church any more.”

“Mr. Bentley,” said her, mother, “is a saint. Your father tried to get him to dinner to-day, but he had promised those working girls of his, who live on the upper floors of his house, to dine with them. One of them told me so. Of course he will never speak of his kindnesses.”

“Mr. Bentley doesn’t bother his head about theology,” said Sally. “He just lives.”

“There’s Eldon Parr,” suggested George Bridges, mentioning the name of the city’s famous financier; “I’m told he relieved Mr. Bentley of his property some twenty-five years ago. If Mr. Hodder should begin to preach the modern heresy which you desire, Mr Parr might object. He’s very orthodox, I’m told.”

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“And Mr. Parr,” remarked the modern Evelyn, sententiously, “pays the bills, at St. John’s. Doesn’t he, father?”

“I fear he pays a large proportion of them,” Mr. Waring admitted, in a serious tone.

“In these days,” said Evelyn, “the man who pays the bills is entitled to have his religion as he likes it.”

“No matter how he got the money to pay them,” added Phil.

“That suggests another little hitch in the modern church which will have to be straightened out,” said George Bridges.

“’Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess.’”

“Why, George, you of all people quoting the Bible!” Eleanor exclaimed.

“And quoting it aptly, too,” said Phil Goodrich.

“I’m afraid if we began on the scribes and Pharisees, we shouldn’t stop with Mr. Parr,” Asa Wiring observed, with a touch of sadness.

“In spite of all they say he has done, I can’t help feeling sorry for him,” said Mrs. Waring. “He must be so lonely in that huge palace of his beside the Park, his wife dead, and Preston running wild around the world, and Alison no comfort. The idea of a girl leaving her father as she did and going off to New York to become a landscape architect!”

“But, mother,” Evelyn pleaded, “I can’t see why a woman shouldn’t lead her own life. She only has one, like a man. And generally she doesn’t get that.”

Mrs. Waring rose.

“I don’t know what we’re coming to. I was taught that a woman’s place was with her husband and children; or, if she had none, with her family. I tried to teach you so, my dear.”

“Well,” said Evelyn, “I’m here yet. I haven’t Alison’s excuse. Cheer up, mother, the world’s no worse than it was.”

“I don’t know about that,” answered Mrs. Waring.

“Listen!” ejaculated Eleanor.

Mrs. Waring's face brightened. Sounds of mad revelry came down from the floor above.

CHAPTER II

MR. LANGMAID'S MISSION

I

Looking back over an extraordinary career, it is interesting to attempt to fix the time when a name becomes a talisman, and passes current for power. This is peculiarly difficult in the case of Eldon Parr. Like many notable men before him, nobody but Mr. Parr himself suspected his future greatness, and he kept the secret. But if we are to search what is now ancient history for a turning-point, perhaps we should find it in the sudden acquisition by him of the property of Mr. Bentley.

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The transaction was a simple one. Those were the days when gentlemen, as matters of courtesy, put their names on other gentlemen's notes; and modern financiers, while they might be sorry for Mr. Bentley, would probably be unanimous in the opinion that he was foolish to write on the back of Thomas Garrett's. Mr. Parr was then, as now, a business man, and could scarcely be expected to introduce philanthropy into finance. Such had been Mr. Bentley's unfortunate practice. And it had so happened, a few years before, for the accommodation of some young men of his acquaintance that he had invested rather generously in Grantham mining stock at twenty-five cents a share, and had promptly forgotten the transaction. To cut a long story short, in addition to Mr. Bentley's house and other effects, Mr. Parr became the owner of the Grantham stock, which not long after went to one hundred dollars. The reader may do the figuring.

Where was some talk at this time, but many things had happened since. For example, Mr. Parr had given away great sums in charity. And it may likewise be added in his favour that Mr. Bentley was glad to be rid of his fortune. He had said so. He deeded his pew back to St. John's, and protesting to his friends that he was not unhappy, he disappeared from the sight of all save a few. The rising waters of Prosperity closed over him. But Eliza Preston, now Mrs. Parr, was one of those who were never to behold him again,—in this world, at least.

She was another conspicuous triumph in that career we are depicting. Gradual indeed had been the ascent from the sweeping out of a store to the marrying of a Preston, but none the less sure inevitable. For many years after this event, Eldon Parr lived modestly in what was known as a "stone-front" house in Ransome Street, set well above the sidewalk, with a long flight of yellow stone steps leading to it; steps scrubbed with Sapoho twice a week by a negro in rubber boots. There was a stable with a tarred roof in the rear, to be discerned beyond the conventional side lawn that was broken into by the bay window of the dining-room. There, in that house, his two children were born: there, within those inartistic walls, Eliza Preston lived a life that will remain a closed book forever. What she thought, what she dreamed, if anything, will never be revealed. She did not, at least, have neurasthenia, and for all the world knew, she may have loved her exemplary and successful husband, with whom her life was as regular as the Strasburg clock. She breakfasted at eight and dined at seven; she heard her children's lessons and read them Bible stories; and at half past ten every Sunday morning, rain or shine, walked with them and her husband to the cars on Tower Street to attend service at St. John's, for Mr. Parr had scruples in those days about using the carriage on the Sabbath.

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She did not live, alas, to enjoy for long the Medicean magnificence of the mansion facing the Park, to be a companion moon in the greater orbit. Eldon Part's grief was real, and the beautiful English window in the south transept of the church bears witness to it. And yet it cannot be said that he sought solace in religion, so apparently steeped in it had he always been. It was destiny that he should take his place on the vestry; destiny, indeed, that he should ultimately become the vestry as well as the first layman of the diocese; unobtrusively, as he had accomplished everything else in life, in spite of Prestons and Warings, Atterburys, Goodriches, and Gores. And he was wont to leave his weighty business affairs to shift for themselves while he attended the diocesan and general conventions of his Church.

He gave judiciously, as becomes one who holds a fortune in trust, yet generously, always permitting others to help, until St. John's was a very gem of finished beauty. And, as the Rothschilds and the Fuggera made money for grateful kings and popes, so in a democratic age, Eldon Parr became the benefactor of an adulatory public. The university, the library, the hospitals, and the parks of his chosen city bear witness.

II

For forty years, Dr. Gilman had been the rector of St. John's. One Sunday morning, he preached his not unfamiliar sermon on the text, "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face," and when the next Sunday dawned he was in his grave in Winterbourne Cemetery, sincerely mourned within the parish and without. In the nature of mortal things, his death was to be expected: no less real was the crisis to be faced At the vestry meeting that followed, the problem was tersely set forth by Eldon Parr, his frock coat tightly buttoned about his chest, his glasses in his hand.

"Gentlemen," he said, "we have to fulfil a grave responsibility to the parish, to the city, and to God. The matter of choosing a rector to-day, when clergymen are meddling with all sorts of affairs which do not concern them, is not so simple as it was twenty years ago. We have, at St. John's, always been orthodox and dignified, and I take it to be the sense of this vestry that we remain so. I conceive it our duty to find a man who is neither too old nor too young, who will preach the faith as we received it, who is not sensational, and who does not mistake socialism for Christianity."

By force of habit, undoubtedly, Mr. Parr glanced at Nelson Langmaid as he sat down. Innumerable had been the meetings of financial boards at which Mr. Parr had glanced at Langmaid, who had never failed to respond. He was that sine qua non of modern affairs, a corporation lawyer,—although he resembled a big and genial professor of Scandinavian extraction. He wore round, tortoise-shell spectacles, he had a high, dome-like forehead, and an ample light brown beard which he stroked from time to time. It is probable that he did not believe in the immortality of the soul.

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His eyes twinkled as he rose.

“I don’t pretend to be versed in theology, gentlemen, as you know,” he said, and the entire vestry, even Mr. Parr, smiled. For vestries, in spite of black coats and the gravity of demeanour which first citizens are apt to possess, are human after all. “Mr. Parr has stated, I believe; the requirements, and I agree with him that it is not an easy order to fill. You want a parson who will stick to his last, who will not try experiments, who is not too high or too low or too broad or too narrow, who has intellect without too much initiative, who can deliver a good sermon to those who can appreciate one, and yet will not get the church uncomfortably full of strangers and run you out of your pews. In short, you want a level-headed clergyman about thirty-five years old who will mind his own business”

The smiles on the faces of the vestry deepened. The ability to put a matter thus humorously was a part of Nelson Langmaid’s power with men and juries.

“I venture to add another qualification,” he continued, “and that is virility. We don’t want a bandbox rector. Well, I happen to have in mind a young man who errs somewhat on the other side, and who looks a little like a cliff profile I once saw on Lake George of George Washington or an Indian chief, who stands about six feet two. He’s a bachelor —if that’s a drawback. But I am not at all sure he can be induced to leave his present parish, where he has been for ten years.”

“I am,” announced Wallis Plimpton, with his hands in his pockets, “provided the right man tackles him.”

III

Nelson Langmaid’s most notable achievement, before he accomplished the greater one of getting a new rector for St. John’s, had been to construct the “water-tight box” whereby the Consolidated Tractions Company had become a law-proof possibility. But his was an esoteric reputation, —the greater fame had been Eldon Parr’s. Men’s minds had been dazzled by the breadth of the conception of scooping all the street-car lines of the city, long and short, into one big basket, as it were; and when the stock had been listed in New York, butcher and baker, clerk and proprietor, widow and maid, brought out their hoardings; the great project was discussed in clubs, cafes, and department stores, and by citizens hanging on the straps of the very cars that were to be consolidated—-golden word! Very little appeared about Nelson Langmaid, who was philosophically content. But to Mr. Parr, who was known to dislike publicity, were devoted pages in the Sunday newspapers, with photographs of the imposing front of his house in Park Street, his altar and window in St. John’s, the Parr building, and even of his private car, Antonia.

Later on, another kind of publicity, had come. The wind had whistled for a time, but it turned out to be only a squall. The Consolidated Tractions Company had made the voyage for which she had been constructed, and thus had fulfilled her usefulness; and the cleverest of the rats who had mistaken her for a permanent home scurried ashore before she was broken up.

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All of which is merely in the nature of a commentary on Mr. Langmaid's genius. His reputation for judgment—which by some is deemed the highest of human qualities—-was impaired; and a man who in his time had selected presidents of banks and trust companies could certainly be trusted to choose a parson—particularly if the chief requirements were not of a spiritual nature. . .

A week later he boarded an east-bound limited train, armed with plenary powers.

His destination was the hill town where he had spent the first fifteen years of his life, amid the most striking of New England landscapes, and the sight of the steep yet delicately pastoral slopes never failed to thrill him as the train toiled up the wide valley to Bremerton. The vision of these had remained with him during the years of his toil in the growing Western city, and embodied from the first homesick days an ideal to which he hoped sometime permanently to return. But he never had. His family had shown a perversity of taste in preferring the sea, and he had perforce been content with a visit of a month or so every other summer, accompanied usually by his daughter, Helen. On such occasions, he stayed with his sister, Mrs. Whitely.

The Whitely mills were significant of the new Bremerton, now neither village nor city, but partaking of the characteristics of both. French Canadian might be heard on the main square as well as Yankee; and that revolutionary vehicle, the automobile, had inspired there a great brick edifice with a banner called the Bremerton House. Enterprising Italians had monopolized the corners with fruit stores, and plate glass and asphalt were in evidence. But the hills looked down unchanged, and in the cool, maple-shaded streets, though dotted with modern residences, were the same demure colonial houses he had known in boyhood.

He was met at the station by his sister, a large, matronly woman who invariably set the world whizzing backward for Langmaid; so completely did she typify the contentment, the point of view of an age gone by. For life presented no more complicated problems to the middle-aged Mrs. Whitely than it had to Alice Langmaid.

"I know what you've come for, Nelson," she said reproachfully, when she greeted him at the station. "Dr. Gilman's dead, and you want our Mr. Hodder. I feel it in my bones. Well, you can't get him. He's had ever so many calls, but he won't leave Bremerton."

She knew perfectly well, however, that Nelson would get him, although her brother characteristically did not at once acknowledge his mission. Alice Whitely had vivid memories of a childhood when he had never failed to get what he wanted; a trait of his of which, although it had before now caused her much discomfort, she was secretly inordinately proud. She was, therefore, later in the day not greatly surprised to find herself supplying her brother with arguments. Much as they admired and loved Mr. Hodder, they had always realized that he could not remain buried in Bremerton. His talents demanded a wider field.

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“Talents!” exclaimed Langmaid, “I didn’t know he had any.”

“Oh, Nelson, how can you say such a thing, when you came to get him!” exclaimed his sister.”

“I recommended him because I thought he had none,” Langmaid declared.

“He’ll be a bishop some day—every one says so,” said Mrs. Whitely, indignantly.

“That reassures me,” said her brother.

“I can’t see why they sent you—you hardly ever go to church,” she cried. “I don’t mind telling you, Nelson, that the confidence men place in you is absurd.”

“You’ve said that before,” he replied. “I agree with you. I’m not going on my judgment—but on yours and Gerald’s, because I know that you wouldn’t put up with anything that wasn’t strictly all-wool orthodox.”

“I think you’re irreverent,” said his sister, “and it’s a shame that the canons permit such persons to sit on the vestry . . . .”

“Gerald,” asked Nelson Langmaid of his brother-in-law that night, after his sister and the girls had gone to bed, “are you sure that this young man’s orthodox?”

“He’s been here for over ten years, ever since he left the seminary, and he’s never done or said anything radical yet,” replied the mill owner of Bremerton. “If you don’t want him, we’d be delighted to have him stay. We’re not forcing him on you, you know. What the deuce has got into you? You’ve talked to him for two hours, and you’ve sat looking at him at the dinner table for another two. I thought you were a judge of men.”

Nelson Langmaid sat silent.

“I’m only urging Hodder to go for his own good,” Mr. Whitely continued. “I can take you to dozens of people to-morrow morning who worship him, —people of all sorts; the cashier in the bank, men in the mills, the hotel clerk, my private stenographer—he’s built up that little church from nothing at all. And you may write the Bishop, if you wish.”

“How has he built up the church?” Langmaid demanded

“How? How does any clergyman buildup a church

“I don’t know,” Langmaid confessed. “It strikes me as quite a tour de force in these days. Does he manage to arouse enthusiasm for orthodox Christianity?”

“Well,” said Gerard Whitely, “I think the service appeals. We’ve made it as beautiful as possible. And then Mr. Hodder goes to see these people and sits up with them, and they tell him their troubles. He’s reformed one or two rather bad cases. I suppose it’s the man’s personality.”

Ah! Langmaid exclaimed, “now you’re talking!”

“I can’t see what you’re driving at,” confessed his brother-in-law. “You’re too deep for me, Nelson.”

If the truth be told, Langmaid himself did not quits see. On behalf of the vestry, he offered next day to Mr. Hodder the rectorship of St. John’s and that offer was taken under consideration; but there was in the lawyer’s mind no doubt of the acceptance, which, in the course of a fortnight after he had returned to the West, followed.

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By no means a negligible element in Nelson Langmaid's professional success had been his possession of what may called a sixth sense, and more than once, on his missions of trust, he had listened to its admonitory promptings.

At times he thought he recognized these in his conversation with the Reverend John Hodder at Bremerton,—especially in that last interview in the pleasant little study of the rectory overlooking Bremerton Lake. But the promptings were faint, and Langmaid out of his medium. He was not choosing the head of a trust company.

He himself felt the pull of the young clergyman's personality, and instinctively strove to resist it: and was more than ever struck by Mr. Hodder's resemblance to the cliff sculpture of which he had spoken at the vestry meeting.

He was rough-hewn indeed, with gray-green eyes, and hair the color of golden sand: it would not stay brushed. It was this hair that hinted most strongly of individualism, that was by no means orthodox. Langmaid felt an incongruity, but he was fascinated; and he had discovered on the rector's shelves evidences of the taste for classical authors that he himself possessed. Thus fate played with him, and the two men ranged from Euripides to Horace, from Horace to Dante and Gibbon. And when Hodder got up to fetch this or that edition, he seemed to tower over the lawyer, who was a big man himself.

Then they discussed business, Langmaid describing the parish, the people, the peculiar situation in St. John's caused by Dr. Gilman's death, while Hodder listened. He was not talkative; he made no promises; his reserve on occasions was even a little disconcerting; and it appealed to the lawyer from Hodder as a man, but somehow not as a clergyman. Nor did the rector volunteer any evidences of the soundness of his theological or political principles.

He gave Langmaid the impression—though without apparent egotism—that by accepting the call he would be conferring a favour on St. John's; and this was when he spoke with real feeling of the ties that bound him to Bremerton. Langmaid felt a certain deprecation of the fact that he was not a communicant.

For the rest, if Mr. Hodder were disposed to take himself and his profession seriously, he was by no means lacking in an appreciation of Langmaid s humour . . . .

The tempering of the lawyer's elation as he returned homeward to report to Mr. Parr and the vestry may be best expressed by his own exclamation, which he made to himself:

"I wonder what that fellow would do if he ever got started!" A parson was, after all, a parson, and he had done his best.

IV

A high, oozing note of the brakes, and the heavy train came to a stop. Hodder looked out of the window of the sleeper to read the sign ‘Marcion’ against the yellow brick of the station set down in the prairie mud, and flanked by a long row of dun-colored freight cars backed up to a factory.

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The factory was flimsy, somewhat resembling a vast greenhouse with its multitudinous windows, and bore the name of a firm whose offices were in the city to which he was bound.

“We ’most in now, sah,” the negro porter volunteered. “You kin see the smoke yondah.”

Hodder’s mood found a figure in this portentous sign whereby the city’s presence was betrayed to travellers from afar,—the huge pall seemed an emblem of the weight of the city’s sorrows; or again, a cloud of her own making which shut her in from the sight of heaven. Absorbed in the mad contest for life, for money and pleasure and power she felt no need to lift her eyes beyond the level of her material endeavours.

He, John Hodder, was to live under that cloud, to labour under it. The mission on which he was bound, like the prophets of old, was somehow to gain the ears of this self-absorbed population, to strike the fear of the eternal into their souls, to convince them that there was Something above and beyond that smoke which they ignored to their own peril.

Yet the task, at this nearer view, took on proportions overwhelming—so dense was that curtain at which he gazed. And to-day the very skies above it were leaden, as though Nature herself had turned atheist. In spite of the vigour with which he was endowed, in spite of the belief in his own soul, doubts assailed him of his ability to cope with this problem of the modern Nineveh—at the very moment when he was about to realize his matured ambition of a great city parish.

Leaning back on the cushioned seat, as the train started again, he reviewed the years at Bremerton, his first and only parish. Hitherto (to his surprise, since he had been prepared for trials) he had found the religious life a primrose path. Clouds had indeed rested on Bremerton’s crests, but beneficent clouds, always scattered by the sun. And there, amid the dazzling snows, he had on occasions walked with God.

His success, modest though it were, had been too simple. He had loved the people, and they him, and the pang of homesickness he now experienced was the intensest sorrow he had known since he had been among them. Yes, Bremerton had been for him (he realized now that he had left it) as near an approach to Arcadia as this life permits, and the very mountains by which it was encircled had seemed effectively to shut out those monster problems which had set the modern world outside to seething. Gerald Whitely’s thousand operatives had never struck; the New York newspapers, the magazines that discussed with vivid animus the corporation-political problems in other states, had found Bremerton interested, but unmoved; and Mrs. Whitely, who was a trustee of the library, wasted her energy in deploring the recent volumes on economics, sociology, philosophy, and religion that were placed on the shelves. If Bremerton read them—and a portion of Bremerton did—no difference was apparent in the attendance at

Hodder's church. The Woman's Club discussed them strenuously, but made no attempt to put their doctrines into practice.

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Hodder himself had but glanced at a few of them, and to do him justice this abstention had not had its root in cowardice. His life was full —his religion “worked.” And the conditions with which these books dealt simply did not exist for him. The fact that there were other churches in the town less successful than his own (one or two, indeed, virtually starving) he had found it simple to account for in that their denominations had abandoned the true conception of the Church, and were logically degenerating into atrophy. What better proof of the barrenness of these modern philosophical and religious books did he need than the spectacle of other ministers—who tarried awhile on starvation salaries —reading them and preaching from them?

He, John Hodder, had held fast to the essential efficacy of the word of God as propounded in past ages by the Fathers. It is only fair to add that he did so without pride or bigotry, and with a sense of thankfulness at the simplicity of the solution (ancient, in truth!) which, apparently by special grace, had been vouchsafed him. And to it he attributed the flourishing condition in which he had left the Church of the Ascension at Bremerton.

“We’ll never get another rector like you,” Alice Whitely had exclaimed, with tears in her eyes, as she bade him good-by. And he had rebuked her. Others had spoken in a similar strain, and it is a certain tribute to his character to record that the underlying hint had been lost on Hodder. His efficacy, he insisted, lay in the Word.

Hodder looked at his watch, only to be reminded poignantly of the chief cause of his heaviness of spirit, for it represented concretely the affections of those whom he had left behind; brought before him vividly the purple haze of the Bremerton valley, and the garden party, in the ample Whitely grounds, which was their tribute to him. And he beheld, moving from the sunlight to shadow, the figure of Rachel Ogden. She might have been with him now, speeding by his side into the larger life!

In his loneliness, he seemed to be gazing into reproachful eyes. Nothing had passed between them. It, was he who had held back, a fact that in the retrospect caused him some amazement. For, if wifehood were to be regarded as a profession, Rachel Ogden had every qualification. And Mrs. Whitely’s skilful suggestions had on occasions almost brought him to believe in the reality of the mirage,—never quite.

Orthodox though he were, there had been times when his humour had borne him upward toward higher truths, and he had once remarked that promising to love forever was like promising to become President of the United States.

One might achieve it, but it was independent of the will. Hodder’s ideals—if he had only known—transcended the rubric. His feeling for Rachel Ogden had not been lacking in tenderness, and yet he had recoiled from marriage merely for the sake of getting a wife, albeit one with easy qualification. He shrank instinctively from the humdrum, and

sought the heights, stormy though these might prove. As yet he had not analyzed this craving.

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This he did know—for he had long ago torn from his demon the draperies of disguise—-that women were his great temptation. Ordination had not destroyed it, and even during those peaceful years at Bremerton he had been forced to maintain a watchful guard. He had a power over women, and they over him, that threatened to lead him constantly into wayside paths, and often he wondered what those who listened to him from the pulpit would think if they guessed that at times, he struggled with suggestion even now. Yet, with his hatred of compromises, he had scorned marriage.

The yoke of Augustine! The caldron of unholy loves! Even now, as he sat in the train, his mind took its own flight backward into that remoter past that was still a part of him: to secret acts of his college days the thought of which made him shudder; yes, and to riots and revels. In youth, his had been one of those boiling, contagious spirits that carry with them, irresistibly, tamer companions. He had been a leader in intermittent raids into forbidden spheres; a leader also in certain more decorous pursuits—if athletics may be so accounted; yet he had capable of long periods of self-control, for a cause. Through it all a spark had miraculously been kept alive. . . .

Popularity followed him from the small New England college to the Harvard Law School. He had been soberer there, marked as a pleader, and at last the day arrived when he was summoned by a great New York lawyer to discuss his future. Sunday intervened. Obeying a wayward impulse, he had gone to one of the metropolitan churches to hear a preacher renowned for his influence over men. There is, indeed, much that is stirring to the imagination in the spectacle of a mass of human beings thronging into a great church, pouring up the aisles, crowding the galleries, joining with full voices in the hymns. What drew them? He himself was singing words familiar since childhood, and suddenly they were fraught with a startling meaning!

> “Fill me, radiancy divine,
> Scatter all my unbelief!”

Visions of the Crusades rose before him, of a friar arousing France, of a Maid of Orleans; of masses of soiled, war-worn, sin-worn humanity groping towards the light. Even after all these ages, the belief, the hope would not down.

Outside, a dismal February rain was falling, a rain to wet the soul. The reek of damp clothes pervaded the gallery where he sat surrounded by clerks and shop girls, and he pictured to himself the dreary rooms from which they had emerged, drawn by the mysterious fire on that altar. Was it a will-o’-the-wisp? Below him, in the pews, were the rich. Did they, too, need warmth?

Then came the sermon, “I will arise and go to my father.”

After the service, far into the afternoon, he had walked the wet streets heedless of his direction, in an exaltation that he had felt before, but never with such intensity. It

seemed as though he had always wished to preach, and marvelled that the perception had not come to him sooner. If the man to whom he had listened could pour the light into the dark corners of other men's souls, he, John Hodder, felt the same hot spark within him,—despite the dark corners of his own!

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At dusk he came to himself, hungry, tired, and wet, in what proved to be the outskirts of Harlem. He could see the place now: the lonely, wooden houses, the ramshackle saloon, the ugly, yellow gleam from the street lamps in a line along the glistening pavement; beside him, a towering hill of granite with a real estate sign, “This lot for sale.” And he had stood staring at it, thinking of the rock that would have to be cut away before a man could build there,—and so read his own parable.

How much rock would have to be cut away, how much patient chipping before the edifice of which he had been dreaming could be reared! Could he ever do it? Once removed, he would be building on rock. But could he remove it? . . . To help revive a faith, a dying faith, in a material age, —that indeed were a mission for any man! He found his way to an elevated train, and as it swept along stared unseeing at the people who pushed and jostled him. Still under the spell, he reached his room and wrote to the lawyer thanking him, but saying that he had reconsidered coming to New York. It was not until he had posted the letter, and was on his way back to Cambridge that he fully realized he had made the decision of his life.

Misgivings, many of them, had come in the months that followed, misgivings and struggles, mocking queries. Would it last? There was the incredulity and amazement of nearest friends, who tried to dissuade him from so extraordinary a proceeding. Nobody, they said, ever became a parson in these days; nobody, at least, with his ability. He was throwing himself away. Ethics had taken the place of religion; intelligent men didn’t go to church. And within him went on an endless debate. Public opinion made some allowance for frailties in other professions; in the ministry, none: he would be committing himself to be good the rest of his life, and that seemed too vast an undertaking for any human.

The chief horror that haunted him was not failure,—for oddly enough he never seriously distrusted his power, it was disaster. Would God give him the strength to fight his demon? If he were to gain the heights, only to stumble in the sight of all men, to stumble and fall.

Seeming echoes of the hideous mockery of it rang in his ears: where is the God that this man proclaimed? he saw the newspaper headlines, listened in imagination to cynical comments, beheld his name trailed through the soiled places of the cities, the shuttlecock of men and women. “To him that overcometh, to him will I give of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and upon the stone a new name written, which no one knoweth but he that receiveth it.” Might he ever win that new name, eat of the hidden manna of a hidden power, become the possessor of the morning star?

Unless there be in the background a mother, no portrait of a man is complete. She explains him, is his complement. Through good mothers are men conceived of God: and with God they sit, forever yearning, forever reaching out, helpless except for him:

with him, they have put a man into the world. Thus, into the Supreme Canvas, came the Virgin.

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John Hodder's mother was a widow, and to her, in the white, gabled house which had sheltered stern ancestors, he travelled in the June following his experience. Standing under the fan-light of the elm-shaded doorway, she seemed a vision of the peace wherein are mingled joy and sorrow, faith and tears! A tall, quiet woman, who had learned the lesson of mothers,—how to wait and how to pray, how to be silent with a clamouring heart.

She had lived to see him established at Bremerton, to be with him there awhile . . . .

He awoke from these memories to gaze down through the criss-cross of a trestle to the twisted, turbid waters of the river far below. Beyond was the city. The train skirted for a while the hideous, soot-stained warehouses that faced the water, plunged into a lane between humming factories and clothes-draped tenements, and at last glided into semi-darkness under the high, reverberating roof of the Union Station.

CHAPTER III

THE PRIMROSE PATH

I

Nelson Langmaid's extraordinary judgment appeared once more to be vindicated.

There had been, indeed, a critical, anxious moment, emphasized by the agitation of bright feminine plumes and the shifting of masculine backs into the corners of the pews. None got so far as to define to themselves why there should be an apparent incompatibility between ruggedness and orthodoxy—but there were some who hoped and more who feared. Luther had been orthodox once, Savonarola also: in appearance neither was more canonical than the new rector.

His congregation, for the most part, were not analytical. But they felt a certain anomaly in virility proclaiming tradition. It took them several Sundays to get accustomed to it.

To those who had been used for more than a quarter of a century to seeing old Dr. Gilman's gentle face under the familiar and faded dove of the sounding-board, to the deliberation of his walk, and the hesitation of his manner, the first impression of the Reverend John Hodder was somewhat startling. They felt that there should be a leisurely element in religion. He moved across the chancel with incredible swiftness, his white surplice flowing like the draperies of a moving Victory, wasted no time with the pulpit lights, announced his text in a strong and penetrating, but by no means unpleasing voice, and began to speak with the certainty of authority.

Here, in an age when a new rector had, ceased to be an all-absorbing topic in social life, was a new and somewhat exhilarating experience. And it may be privately confessed that there were some who sat in St. John's during those first weeks of his incumbency who would indignantly have repudiated the accusation that they were not good churchmen and churchwomen, and who nevertheless had queer sensations in listening to ancient doctrines set forth with Emersonian conviction. Some were courageous enough to ask themselves, in the light of this forceful presentation, whether they really did believe them as firmly as they supposed they had.

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Dear old Dr. Gilman had been milder—much milder as the years gained upon him. And latterly, when he had preached, his voice had sounded like the unavailing protest of one left far behind, who called out faintly with unheeded warnings. They had loved him: but the modern world was a busy world, and Dr. Gilman did not understand it. This man was different. Here was what the Church taught, he said, and they might slight it at their peril!

It is one thing to believe one's self orthodox, and quite another to have that orthodoxy so definitely defined as to be compelled, whether or no, to look it squarely in the face and own or disown it. Some indeed, like Gordon Atterbury, stood the test; responded to the clarion call for which they had been longing. But little Everett Constable, who also sat on the vestry, was a trifle uncomfortable in being reminded that absence from the Communion Table was perilous, although he would have been the last to deny the efficacy of the Sacrament.

The new rector was plainly not a man who might be accused of policy in pandering to the tastes of a wealthy and conservative flock. But if, in the series of sermons which lasted from his advent until well after Christmas, he had deliberately consulted their prejudices, he could not have done better. It is true that he went beyond the majority of them, but into a region which they regarded as preeminently safe,—a region the soil of which was traditional. To wit: St. Paul had left to the world a consistent theology. Historical research was ignored rather than condemned. And it might reasonably have been gathered from these discourses that the main proofs of Christ's divinity lay in his Virgin Birth, his miracles, and in the fact that his body had risen from the grave, had been seen by many, and even touched. Hence unbelief had no excuse. By divine commission there were bishops, priests, and deacons in the new hierarchy, and it was through the Apostolic Succession that he, their rector, derived his sacerdotal powers. There were, no doubt, many obscure passages in the Scripture, but men's minds were finite; a catholic acceptance was imperative, and the evils of the present day —a sufficiently sweeping statement—were wholly due to deplorable lapses from such acceptance. The Apostolic teaching must be preserved, since it transcended all modern wanderings after truth. Hell, though not definitely defined in terms of flames, was no less a state of torture (future, by implication) of which fire was but a faint symbol. And he gave them clearly to understand that an unbaptized person ran no inconsiderable risk. He did not declare unqualifiedly that the Church alone had the power to save, but such was the inference.

II

It was entirely fitting, no doubt, when the felicitations of certain of the older parishioners on his initial sermon were over, that Mr. Hodder should be carried westward to lunch with the first layman of the diocese. But Mr. Parr, as became a person of his responsibility, had been more moderate in his comment. For he had seen, in his day,

many men whose promise had been unfulfilled. Tightly buttoned, silk hatted, upright, he sat in the corner of his limousine, the tasselled speaking-tube in his hand, from time to time cautioning his chauffeur.

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“Carefully!” he cried. “I’ve told you not to drive so fast in this part of town. I’ve never got used to automobiles,” he remarked to Hodder, “and I formerly went to church in the street-cars, but the distances have grown so great—and I have occasionally been annoyed in them.”

Hodder was not given to trite acquiescence. His homely composure belied the alertness of his faculties; he was striving to adapt himself to the sudden broadening and quickening of the stream of his life, and he felt a certain excitement—although he did not betray it—in the presence of the financier. Much as he resented the thought, it was impossible for him not to realize that the man’s pleasure and displeasure were important; for, since his arrival, he had had delicate reminders of this from many sources. Recurrently, it had caused him a vague uneasiness, hinted at a problem new to him. He was jealous of the dignity of the Church, and he seemed already to have detected in Mr. Parr’s manner a subtle note of patronage. Nor could Hodder’s years of provincialism permit him to forget that this man with whom he was about to enter into personal relations was a capitalist of national importance.

The neighbourhood they traversed was characteristic of our rapidly expanding American cities. There were rows of dwelling houses, once ultra-respectable, now slatternly, and lawns gone grey; some of these houses had been remodelled into third-rate shops, or thrown together to make manufacturing establishments: saloons occupied all the favourable corners. Flaming posters on vacant lots announced, pictorially, dubious attractions at the theatres. It was a wonderful Indian summer day, the sunlight soft and melting; and the smoke which continually harassed this district had lifted a little, as though in deference to the Sabbath.

Hodder read the sign on a lamp post, Dalton Street. The name clung in his memory.

“We thought, some twenty years ago, of moving the church westward,” said Mr. Parr, “but finally agreed to remain where we were.”

The rector had a conviction on this point, and did not hesitate to state it without waiting to be enlightened as to the banker’s views.

“It would seem to me a wise decision,” he said, looking out of the window, and wholly absorbed in the contemplation of the evidences of misery and vice, “with this poverty at the very doors of the church.”

Something in his voice impelled Eldon Parr to shoot a glance at his profile.

“Poverty is inevitable, Mr. Hodder,” he declared. “The weak always sink.”

Hodder's reply, whatever it might have been, was prevented by the sudden and unceremonious flight of both occupants toward the ceiling of the limousine, caused by a deep pit in the asphalt.

"What are you doing, Gratton?" Mr. Parr called sharply through the tube.

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Presently, the lawns began to grow brighter, the houses more cheerful, and the shops were left behind. They crossed the third great transverse artery of the city (not so long ago, Mr. Parr remarked, a quagmire), now lined by hotels and stores with alluring displays in plate glass windows and entered a wide boulevard that stretched westward straight to the great Park. This boulevard the financier recalled as a country road of clay. It was bordered by a vivid strip, of green; a row of tall and graceful lamp posts, like sentinels, marked its course; while the dwellings, set far back on either side, were for the most part large and pretentious, betraying in their many tentative styles of architecture the reaching out of a commercial nation after beauty. Some, indeed, were simple of line and restful to the trained eye.

They came to the wide entrance of the Park, so wisely preserved as a breathing place for future generations. A slight haze had gathered over the rolling forests to the westward; but this haze was not smoke. Here, in this enchanting region, the autumn sunlight was undiluted gold, the lawns, emerald, and the red gravel around the statesman's statue glistening. The automobile quickly swung into a street that skirted the Park,—if street it might be called, for it was more like a generous private driveway, —flanked on the right by fences of ornamental ironwork and high shrubbery that concealed the fore yards of dominating private residences which might: without great exaggeration, have been called palaces.

"That's Ferguson's house," volunteered Mr. Parr, indicating a marble edifice with countless windows. "He's one of your vestrymen, you know. Ferguson's Department Store." The banker's eyes twinkled a little for the first time. "You'll probably find it convenient. Most people do. Clever business man, Ferguson."

But the rector was finding difficulty in tabulating his impressions.

They turned in between two posts of a gateway toward a huge house of rough granite. And Hodder wondered whether, in the swift onward roll of things, the time would come when this, too, would have been deemed ephemeral. With its massive walls and heavy, red-tiled roof that sloped steeply to many points, it seemed firmly planted for ages to come. It was surrounded, yet not hemmed in, by trees of a considerable age. His host explained that these had belonged to the original farm of which all this Park Street property had made a part.

They alighted under a porte-cochere with a glass roof.

"I'm sorry," said Mr. Parr, as the doors swung open and he led the way into the house, "I'm sorry I can't give you a more cheerful welcome, but my son and daughter, for their own reasons, see fit to live elsewhere."

Hodder's quick ear detected in the tone another cadence, and he glanced at Eldon Parr with a new interest . . . .

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Presently they stood, face to face, across a table reduced to its smallest proportions, in the tempered light of a vast dining-room, an apartment that seemed to symbolize the fortress-like properties of wealth. The odd thought struck the clergyman that this man had made his own Tower of London, had built with his own hands the prison in which he was to end his days. The carved oaken ceiling, lofty though it was, had the effect of pressing downward, the heavy furniture matched the heavy walls, and even the silent, quick-moving servants had a watchful air.

Mr. Parr bowed his head while Hodder asked grace. They sat down.

The constraint which had characterized their conversation continued, yet there was a subtle change in the attitude of the clergyman. The financier felt this, though it could not be said that Hodder appeared more at his ease: his previous silences had been by no means awkward. Eldon Parr liked self-contained men. But his perceptions were as keen as Nelson Langmaid's, and like Langmaid, he had gradually become conscious of a certain baffling personality in the new rector of St. John's. From time to time he was aware of the grey-green eyes curiously fixed on him, and at a loss to account for their expression. He had no thought of reading in it an element of pity. Yet pity was nevertheless in the rector's heart, and its advent was emancipating him from the limitations of provincial inexperience.

Suddenly, the financier launched forth on a series of shrewd and searching questions about Bremerton, its church, its people, its industries, and social conditions. All of which Hodder answered to his apparent satisfaction.

Coffee was brought. Hodder pushed back his chair, crossed his knees, and sat perfectly still regarding his host, his body suggesting a repose that did not interfere with his perceptive faculties.

"You don't smoke, Mr. Hodder?"

The rector smiled and shook his head. Mr. Parr selected a diminutive, yellow cigar and held it up.

"This," he said, "has been the extent of my indulgence for twenty years. They are made for me in Cuba."

Hodder smiled again, but said nothing.

"I have had a letter from your former bishop, speaking of you in the highest terms," he observed.

"The bishop is very kind."

Mr. Parr cleared his throat.

“I am considerably older than you,” he went on, “and I have the future of St. John’s very much at heart, Mr. Hodder. I trust you will remember this and make allowances for it as I talk to you.

“I need not remind you that you have a grave responsibility on your shoulders for so young a man, and that St. John’s is the oldest parish in the diocese.”

“I think I realize it, Mr. Parr,” said Hodder, gravely. “It was only the opportunity of a larger work here that induced me to leave Bremerton.”

“Exactly,” agreed the banker. “The parish, I believe, is in good running order—I do not think you will see the necessity for many—ahem—changes. But we sadly needed an executive head. And, if I may say so, Mr. Hodder, you strike me as a man of that type, who might have made a success in a business career.”

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The rector smiled again.

“I am sure you could pay me no higher compliment,” he answered.

For an instant Eldon Parr, as he stared at the clergyman, tightened his lips,—lips that seemed peculiarly formed for compression. Then they relaxed into what resembled a smile. If it were one, the other returned it.

“Seriously,” Mr. Parr declared, “it does me good in these days to hear, from a young man, such sound doctrine as you preach. I am not one of those who believe in making concessions to agnostics and atheists. You were entirely right, in my opinion, when you said that we who belong to the Church—and of course you meant all orthodox Christians—should stand by our faith as delivered by the saints. Of course,” he added, smiling, “I should not insist upon the sublapsarian view of election which I was taught in the Presbyterian Church as a boy.”

Hodder laughed, but did not interrupt.

“On the other hand,” Mr. Parr continued, “I have little patience with clergymen who would make religion attractive. What does it amount to —luring people into the churches on one pretext or another, sugar-coating the pill? Salvation is a more serious matter. Let the churches stick to their own. We have at St. John’s a God-fearing, conservative congregation, which does not believe in taking liberties with sound and established doctrine. And I may confess to you, Mr. Hodder, that we were naturally not a little anxious about Dr. Gilman’s successor, that we should not get, in spite of every precaution, a man tinged with the new and dangerous ideas so prevalent, I regret to say, among the clergy. I need scarcely add that our anxieties have been set at rest.”

“That,” said Hodder, “must be taken as a compliment to the dean of the theological seminary from which I graduated.”

The financier stared again. But he decided that Mr. Hodder had not meant to imply that he, Mr. Parr, was attempting to supersede the dean. The answer had been modest.

“I take it for granted that you and I and all sensible men are happily. agreed that the Church should remain where she is. Let the people come to her. She should be, if I may so express it, the sheet anchor of society, our bulwark against socialism, in spite of socialists who call themselves ministers of God. The Church has lost ground—why? Because she has given ground. The sanctity of private property is being menaced, demagogues are crying out from the house-tops and inciting people against the men who have made this country what it is, who have risked their fortunes and their careers for the present prosperity. We have no longer any right, it seems, to employ whom we will in our factories and our railroads; we are not allowed to regulate our rates, although

the risks were all ours. Even the women are meddling,—they are not satisfied to stay in the homes, where they belong. You agree with me?"

"As to the women," said the rector, "I have to acknowledge that I have never had any experience with the militant type of which you speak."

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“I pray God you may never have,” exclaimed Mr. Parr, with more feeling than he had yet shown.

“Woman’s suffrage, and what is called feminism in general, have never penetrated to Bremerton. Indeed, I must confess to have been wholly out of touch with the problems to which you refer, although of course I have been aware of their existence.”

“You will meet them here,” said the banker, significantly.

“Yes,” the rector replied thoughtfully, “I can see that. I know that the problems here will be more complicated, more modern,—more difficult. And I thoroughly agree with you that their ultimate solution is dependent on Christianity. If I did not believe,—in spite of the evident fact which you point out of the Church’s lost ground, that her future will be greater than her past, I should not be a clergyman.”

The quiet but firm note of faith was, not lost on the financier, and yet was not he quite sure what was to be made of it? He had a faint and fleeting sense of disquiet, which registered and was gone.

“I hope so,” he said vaguely, referring perhaps to the resuscitation of which the rector spoke. He drummed on the table. “I’ll go so far as to say that I, too, think that the structure can be repaired. And I believe it is the duty of the men of influence—all men of influence—to assist. I don’t say that men of influence are not factors in the Church to-day, but I do say that they are not using the intelligence in this task which they bring to bear, for instance, on their business.”

“Perhaps the clergy might help,” Hodder suggested, and added more seriously, “I think that many of them are honestly trying to do so.”

“No doubt of it. Why is it,” Mr. Parr continued reflectively, “that ministers as a whole are by no means the men they were? You will pardon my frankness. When I was a boy, the minister was looked up to as an intellectual and moral force to be reckoned with. I have heard it assigned, as one reason, that in the last thirty years other careers have opened up, careers that have proved much more attractive to young men of ability.”

“Business careers?” inquired the rector.

“Precisely!”

“In other words,” said Hodder, with his curious smile, “the ministry gets the men who can’t succeed at anything else.”

“Well, that’s putting it rather strong,” answered Mr. Parr, actually reddening a little. “But come now, most young men would rather be a railroad president than a bishop,—-wouldn’t they?”

“Most young men would,” agreed Hodder, quickly, “but they are not the young men who ought to be bishops, you’ll admit that.”

The financier, be it recorded to his credit, did not lack appreciation of this thrust, and, for the first time, he laughed with something resembling heartiness. This laughter, in which Hodder joined, seemed suddenly to put them on a new footing—a little surprising to both.

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“Come,” said the financier, rising, “I’m sure you like pictures, and Langmaid tells me you have a fancy for first editions. Would you care to go to the gallery?”

“By all means,” the rector assented.

Their footsteps, as they crossed the hardwood floors, echoed in the empty house. After pausing to contemplate a Millet on the stair landing, they came at last to the huge, silent gallery, where the soft but adequate light fell upon many masterpieces, ancient and modern. And it was here, while gazing at the Corots and Bonheurs, Lawrences, Romneys, Copleys, and Halses, that Hodder’s sense of their owner’s isolation grew almost overpowering Once, glancing over his shoulder at Mr. Parr, he surprised in his eyes an expression almost of pain.

“These pictures must give you great pleasure,” he said.

“Oh,” replied the banker, in a queer voice, “I’m always glad when any one appreciates them. I never come in here alone.”

Hodder did not reply. They passed along to an upstairs sitting-room, which must, Hodder thought, be directly over the dining-room. Between its windows was a case containing priceless curios.

“My wife liked this room,” Mr. Parr explained, as he opened the case. When they had inspected it, the rector stood for a moment gazing out at a formal garden at the back of the house. The stalks of late flowers lay withering, but here and there the leaves were still vivid, and clusters of crimson berries gleamed in the autumn sunshine. A pergola ran down the middle, and through denuded grape-vines he caught a glimpse, at the far end, of sculptured figures and curving marble benches surrounding a pool.

“What a wonderful spot!” he exclaimed.

“My daughter Alison designed it.”

“She must have great talent,” said the rector.

“She’s gone to New York and become a landscape architect,” said his host with a perceptible dryness. “Women in these days are apt to be everything except what the Lord intended them to be.”

They went downstairs, and Hodder took his leave, although he felt an odd reluctance to go. Mr. Parr rang the bell.

“I’ll send you down in the motor,” he said.

“I’d like the exercise of walking,” said the rector. “I begin to miss it already, in the city.”

“You look as if you had taken a great deal of it,” Mr. Parr declared, following him to the door. “I hope you’ll drop in often. Even if I’m not here, the gallery and the library are at your disposal.”

Their eyes met.

“You’re very good,” Hodder replied, and went down the steps and through the open doorway.

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Lost in reflection, he walked eastward with long and rapid strides, striving to reduce to order in his mind the impressions the visit had given him, only to find them too complex, too complicated by unlooked-for emotions. Before its occurrence, he had, in spite of an inherent common sense, felt a little uneasiness over the prospective meeting with the financier. And Nelson Langmaid had hinted, good-naturedly, that it was his, Hodder's, business, to get on good terms with Mr. Parr—otherwise the rectorship of St. John's might not prove abed of roses. Although the lawyer had spoken with delicacy, he had once more misjudged his man—the result being to put Hodder on his guard. He had been the more determined not to cater to the banker.

The outcome of it all had been that the rector left him with a sense of having crossed barriers forbidden to other men, and not understanding how he had crossed them. Whether this incipient intimacy were ominous or propitious, whether there were involved in it a germ (engendered by a radical difference of temperament) capable of developing into future conflict, he could not now decide. If Eldon Parr were Procrustes he, Hodder, had fitted the bed, and to say the least, this was extraordinary, if not a little disquieting. Now and again his thoughts reverted to the garden, and to the woman who had made it. Why had she deserted?

At length, after he had been walking for nearly an hour, he halted and looked about him. He was within a few blocks of the church, a little to one side of Tower Street, the main east and west highway of the city, in the midst of that district in which Mr. Parr had made the remark that poverty was inevitable. Slovenly and depressing at noonday, it seemed now frankly to have flung off its mask. Dusk was gathering, and with it a smoke-stained fog that lent a sickly tinge to the lights. Women slunk by him: the saloons, apparently closed, and many houses with veiled windows betrayed secret and sinister gleams. In the midst of a block rose a tall, pretentious though cheaply constructed building with the words "Hotel Albert" in flaming electric letters above an archway. Once more his eye read Dalton Street on a lamp . . . .

Hodder resumed his walk more slowly, and in a few minutes reached his rooms in the parish house.

CHAPTER IV

SOME RIDDLES OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

I Although he found the complications of a modern city parish somewhat bewildering, the new rector entered into his duties that winter with apostolic zeal. He was aware of limitations and anomalies, but his faith was boundless, his energy the subject of good-natured comment by his vestry and parishioners, whose pressing invitations' to dinners he was often compelled to refuse. There was in John Hodder something indefinable that inflamed curiosity and left it unsatisfied.

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His excuse for attending these dinners, which indeed were relaxing and enjoyable, he found in the obvious duty of getting to know the most important members of his congregation. But invariably he came away from them with an inner sense of having been baffled in this object. With a few exceptions, these modern people seemed to have no time for friendship in the real meaning of the word, no desire to carry a relationship beyond a certain point. Although he was their spiritual pastor, he knew less about most of them at the end of the winter than their butlers and their maids.

They were kind, they were delightful, they were interested in him—he occasionally thought—as a somewhat anachronistic phenomenon. They petted, respected him, and deferred to him. He represented to them an element in life they recognized, and which had its proper niche. What they failed to acknowledge was his point of view—and this he was wise enough not to press at dinner tables and in drawing-rooms—that religion should have the penetrability of ether; that it should be the absorbent of life. He did not have to commit the banality of reminding them of this conviction of his at their own tables; he had sufficient humour and penetration to credit them with knowing it. Nay, he went farther in his unsuspected analysis, and perceived that these beliefs made one of his chief attractions for them. It was pleasant to have authority in a black coat at one's board; to defer, if not to bend to it. The traditions of fashion demanded a clergyman in the milieu, and the more tenaciously he clung to his prerogatives, the better they liked it.

Although they were conscious of a certain pressure, which they gently resisted, they did not divine that the radiating and rugged young man cherished serious designs upon them. He did not expect to transform the world in a day, especially the modern world. He was biding his time, awaiting individual opportunities.

They talked to him of the parish work, congratulated him on the vigour with which he had attacked it, and often declared themselves jealous of it because it claimed too much of him. Dear Dr. Gilman, they said, had had neither the strength nor the perception of 'modern needs; and McCrae, the first assistant clergyman, while a good man, was a plodder and lacking in imagination. They talked sympathetically about the problems of the poor. And some of them—particularly Mrs. Wallis Plimpton were inclined to think Hodder's replies a trifle noncommittal. The trouble, although he did not tell them so, was that he himself had by no means solved the problem. And he felt a certain reluctance to discuss the riddle of poverty over champagne and porcelain.

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Mrs. Plimpton and Mrs. Constable, Mrs. Ferguson, Mrs. Langmaid, Mrs. Larrabbee, Mrs. Atterbury, Mrs. Grey, and many other ladies and their daughters were honorary members of his guilds and societies, and found time in their busy lives to decorate the church, adorn the altar, care for the vestments, and visit the parish house. Some of them did more: Mrs. Larrabbee, for instance, when she was in town, often graced the girls' classes with her presence, which was a little disquieting to the daughters of immigrants: a little disquieting, too, to John Hodder. During the three years that had elapsed since Mr. Larrabbee's death, she had, with characteristic grace and ease, taken up philanthropy; become, in particular, the feminine patron saint of Galt House, non-sectarian, a rescue home for the erring of her sex.

There were, too, in this higher realm of wealth in and out of which Hodder plunged, women like Mrs. Constable (much older than Mrs. Larrabbee) with whom philanthropy and what is known as "church work" had become second nature in a well-ordered life, and who attended with praiseworthy regularity the meetings of charitable boards and committees, not infrequently taking an interest in individuals in Mr. Hodder's classes. With her, on occasions, he did discuss such matters, only to come away from her with his bewilderment deepened.

It was only natural that he should have his moods of depression. But the recurrent flow of his energy swept them away. Cynicism had no place in his militant Christianity, and yet there were times when he wondered whether these good people really wished achievements from their rector. They had the air of saying "Bravo!" and then of turning away. And he did not conceal from himself that he was really doing nothing but labour. The distances were great; and between his dinner parties, classes, services, and visits, he was forced to sit far into the night preparing his sermons, when his brain was not so keen as it might have been. Indeed—and this thought was cynical and out of character—he asked himself on one occasion whether his principal achievement so far had not consisted in getting on unusual terms with Eldon Parr. They were not lacking who thought so, and who did not hesitate to imply it. They evidently regarded his growing intimacy with the banker with approval, as in some sort a supreme qualification for a rector of St. John's, and a proof of unusual abilities. There could be no question, for instance, that he had advanced perceptibly in the estimation of the wife of another of his vestrymen, Mrs. Wallis Plimpton.

The daughter of Thurston Gore, with all her astuteness and real estate, was of a naivete in regard to spiritual matters that Hodder had grown to recognize as impermeable. In an evening gown, with a string of large pearls testing on her firm and glowing neck, she appeared a concrete refutation of the notion of rebirth, the triumph of an unconscious philosophy of material common-sense. However, in parish house affairs, Hodder had found her practical brain of no slight assistance.

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“I think it quite wonderful,” she remarked, on the occasion at which he was the guest of honour in what was still called the new Gore mansion, “that you have come to know Mr. Parr so well in such a short time. How did you do it, Mr. Hodder? Of course Wallis knows him, and sees a great deal of him in business matters. He relies on Wallis. But they tell me you have grown more intimate with him than any one has been since Alison left him.”

There is, in Proverbs or Ecclesiastes, a formula for answering people in accordance with their point of view. The rector modestly disclaimed intimacy. And he curbed his curiosity about Alison for the reason that he preferred to hear her story from another source.

“Oh, but you are intimate!” Mrs. Plimpton protested. “Everybody says so—that Mr. Parr sends for you all the time. What is he like when he’s alone, and relaxed? Is he ever relaxed?” The lady had a habit of not waiting for answers to her questions. “Do you know, it stirs my imagination tremendously when I think of all the power that man has. I suppose you know he has become one of a very small group of men who control this country, and naturally he has been cruelly maligned. All he has to do is to say a word to his secretary, and he can make men or ruin them. It isn’t that he does ruin them—I don’t mean that. He uses his wealth, Wallis says, to maintain the prosperity of the nation! He feels his trusteeship. And he is so generous! He has given a great deal to the church, and now,” she added, “I am sure he will give more.”

Hodder was appalled. He felt helpless before the weight of this onslaught.

“I dare say he will continue to assist, as he has in the past,” he managed to say.

“Of course it’s your disinterestedness,” she proclaimed, examining him frankly. “He feels that you don’t want anything. You always strike me as so splendidly impartial, Mr. Hodder.”

Fortunately, he was spared an answer. Mr. Plimpton, who was wont to apply his gifts as a toastmaster to his own festivals, hailed him from the other end of the table.

And Nelson Langmaid, who had fallen into the habit of dropping into Hodder’s rooms in the parish house on his way uptown for a chat about books, had been struck by the rector’s friendship with the banker.

“I don’t understand how you managed it, Hodder, in such a short time,” he declared. “Mr. Parr’s a difficult man. In all these years, I’ve been closer to him than any one else, and I don’t know him today half as well as you do.”

“I didn’t manage it,” said Hodder, briefly.

“Well,” replied the lawyer, quizzically, “you needn’t eat me up. I’m sure you didn’t do it on purpose. If you had,—to use a Hibernian phrase,—you never would have done it. I’ve seen it tried before. To tell you the truth, after I’d come back from Bremerton, that was the one thing I was afraid of—that you mightn’t get along with him.”

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Hodder himself was at a loss to account for the relationship. It troubled him vaguely, for Mr. Parr was the aggressor; and often at dusk, when Hodder was working under his study lamp, the telephone would ring, and on taking down the receiver he would hear the banker's voice. "I'm alone to-night, Mr. Hodder. Will you come and have dinner with me?"

Had he known it, this was a different method of communication than that which the financier usually employed, one which should have flattered him. If Wallis Plimpton, for instance, had received such a personal message, the fact would not have remained unknown the next day at his club. Sometimes it was impossible for Hodder to go, and he said so; but he always went when he could.

The unwonted note of appeal (which the telephone seemed somehow to enhance) in Mr. Parr's voice, never failed to find a response in the rector's heart, and he would ponder over it as he walked across to Tower Street to take the electric car for the six-mile trip westward.

This note of appeal he inevitably contrasted with the dry, matter-of-fact reserve of his greeting at the great house, which loomed all the greater in the darkness. Unsatisfactory, from many points of view, as these evenings were, they served to keep whetted Hodder's curiosity as to the life of this extraordinary man. All of its vaster significance for the world, its tremendous machinery, was out of his sight.

Mr. Parr seemed indeed to regard the rest of his fellow-creatures with the suspicion at which Langmaid had hinted, to look askance at the amenities people tentatively held out to him. And the private watchman whom Hodder sometimes met in the darkness, and who invariably scrutinized pedestrians on Park Street, seemed symbolic, of this attitude. On rare occasions, when in town, the financier dined out, limiting himself to a few houses.

Once in a long while he attended what are known as banquets, such as those given by the Chamber of Commerce, though he generally refused to speak. Hodder, through Mr. Parr's intervention, had gone to one of these, ably and breezily presided over by the versatile Mr. Plimpton.

Hodder felt not only curiosity and sympathy, but a vexing sense of the fruitlessness of his visits to Park Street. Mr. Parr seemed to like to have him there. And the very fact that the conversation rarely took any vital turn oddly contributed to the increasing permanence of the lien. To venture on any topic relating to the affairs of the day were merely to summon forth the banker's dogmatism, and Hodder's own opinions on such matters were now in a strange and unsettled state. Mr. Parr liked best to talk of his treasures, and of the circumstances during his trips abroad that had led to their acquirement. Once the banker had asked him about parish house matters.

“I’m told you’re working very hard—stirring up McCrae. He needs it.”

“I’m only trying to study the situation,” Hodder replied. “I don’t think you quite do justice to McCrae,” he added; “he’s very faithful, and seems to understand those people thoroughly.”

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Mr. Parr smiled.

“And what conclusions have you come to? If you think the system should be enlarged and reorganized I am willing at any time to go over it with you, with a view to making an additional contribution. Personally, while I have sympathy for the unfortunate, I’m not at all sure that much of the energy and money put into the institutional work of churches isn’t wasted.”

“I haven’t come to any conclusions—yet,” said the rector, with a touch of sadness. “Perhaps I demand too much—expect too much.”

The financier, deep in his leather chair under the shaded light, the tips of his fingers pressed together, regarded the younger man thoughtfully, but the smile lingered in his eyes.

“I told you you would meet problems,” he said.

II

Hodder’s cosmos might have been compared, indeed, to that set forth in the Ptolemaic theory of the ancients. Like a cleverly carved Chinese object of ivory in the banker s collection, it was a system of spheres, touching, concentric, yet separate. In an outer space swung Mr. Parr; then came the scarcely less rarefied atmosphere of the Constables and Atterburys, Fergusons, Plimptons, Langmaids, Prestons, Larrabbees, Greys, and Gores, and then a smaller sphere which claims but a passing mention. There were, in the congregation of St. John’s, a few people of moderate means whose houses or apartments the rector visited; people to whom modern life was increasingly perplexing.

In these ranks were certain maiden ladies and widows who found in church work an outlet to an otherwise circumscribed existence. Hodder met them continually in his daily rounds. There were people like the Bradleys, who rented half a pew and never missed a Sunday; Mr. Bradley, an elderly man whose children had scattered, was an upper clerk in one of Mr. Parr’s trust companies: there were bachelors and young women, married or single, who taught in the Sunday school or helped with the night classes. For the most part, all of these mentioned above belonged to an element that once had had a comfortable and well-recognized place in the community, yet had somehow been displaced. Many of them were connected by blood with more fortunate parishioners, but economic pressure had scattered them throughout new neighbourhoods and suburbs. Tradition still bound them to St. John’s.

With no fixed orbit, the rector cut at random through all of these strata, and into a fourth. Not very far into it, for this apparently went down to limitless depths, the very

contemplation of which made him dizzy. The parish house seemed to float precariously on its surface.

Owing partly to the old-fashioned ideas of Dr. Gilman, and partly to the conservatism of its vestry, the institutionalism of St. John's was by no means up to date. No settlement house, with day nurseries, was maintained in the slums. The parish house, built in the, early nineties, had its gymnasium hall and class and reading rooms, but was not what in these rapidly moving times would be called modern. Presiding over its activities, and seconded by a pale, but earnest young man recently ordained, was Hodder's first assistant, the Reverend Mr. McCrae.

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McCrae was another puzzle. He was fifty and gaunt, with a wide flat forehead and thinning, grey hair, and wore steel spectacles. He had a numerous family. His speech, of which he was sparing, bore strong traces of a Caledonian accent. And this, with the addition of the fact that he was painstaking and methodical in his duties, and that his sermons were orthodox in the sense that they were extremely non-committal, was all that Hodder knew about him for many months. He never doubted, however, the man's sincerity and loyalty.

But McCrae had a peculiar effect on him, and as time went on, his conviction deepened that his assistant was watching him. The fact that this tacit criticism did not seem unkindly did not greatly alleviate the impatience that he felt from time to time. He had formed a higher estimate of McCrae's abilities than that generally prevailing throughout the parish; and in spite of, perhaps because of his attitude, was drawn toward the man. This attitude, as Hodder analyzed it from the expressions he occasionally surprised on his assistant's face, was one of tolerance and experience, contemplating, with a faint amusement and a certain regret, the wasteful expenditure of youthful vitality. Yet it involved more. McCrae looked as if he knew—knew many things that he deemed it necessary for the new rector to find out by experience.

But he was a difficult man to talk to.

If the truth be told, the more Hodder became absorbed in these activities of the parish house, the greater grew his perplexity, the more acute his feeling of incompleteness; or rather, his sense that the principle was somehow fundamentally at fault. Out of the waters of the proletariat they fished, assiduously and benignly, but at random, strange specimens! brought them, as it were, blinking to the light, and held them by sheer struggling. And sometimes, when they slipped away, dived after them. The young curate, Mr. Tompkinson, for the most part did the diving; or, in scriptural language, the searching after the lost sheep.

The results accomplished seemed indeed, as Mr. Parr had remarked, strangely disproportionate to the efforts, for they laboured abundantly. The Italian mothers appeared stolidly appreciative of the altruism of Miss Ramsay, who taught the kindergarten, in taking their charges off their hands for three hours of a morning, and the same might be said of the Jews and Germans and Russians. The newsboys enjoyed the gymnasium and reading-rooms: some of them were drafted into the choir, yet the singing of Te Deums failed somehow to accomplish the miracle of regeneration. The boys, as a rule, were happier, no doubt; the new environments not wholly without results. But the rector was an idealist.

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He strove hard to become their friend, and that of the men; to win their confidence, and with a considerable measure of success. On more than one occasion he threw aside his clerical coat and put on boxing-gloves, and he gave a series of lectures, with lantern slides, collected during the six months he had once spent in Europe. The Irish-Americans and the Germans were the readiest to respond, and these were for the most part young workingmen and youths by no means destitute. When they were out of a place, he would often run across them in the reading-room or sitting among the lockers beside the gymnasium, and they would rise and talk to him cordially and even familiarly about their affairs. They liked and trusted him—on a tacit condition. There was a boundary he might not cross. And the existence of that boundary did not seem to trouble McCrae.

One night as he stood with his assistant in the hall after the men had gone, Hodder could contain himself no longer.

“Look here, McCrae,” he broke out, “these men never come to church—or only a very few of them.”

“No more they do,” McCrae agreed.

“Why don’t they?”

“Ye’ve asked them, perhaps.”

“I’ve spoken to one or two of them,” admitted the rector.

“And what do they tell you?”

Hodder smiled.

“They don’t tell me anything. They dodge.”

“Precisely,” said McCrae.

“We’re not making Christians of them,” said Hodder, beginning to walk up and down. “Why is it?”

“It’s a big question.”

“It is a big question. It’s the question of all questions, it seems to me. The function of the Church, in my opinion, is to make Christians.”

“Try to teach them religion,” said McCrae—he almost pronounced it releegion—“and see what happens. Ye’ll have no classes at all. They only come, the best of them,

because ye let them alone that way, and they get a little decency and society help. It's somewhat to keep them out of the dance-halls and saloons maybe."

"It's not enough," the rector asserted. "You've had a great deal of experience with them. And I want to know why, in your view, more of them don't come into the Church."

"Would ye put Jimmy Flanagan and Otto Bauer and Tony Baldassaro in Mr. Parr's pew?" McCrae inquired, with a slight flavour of irony that was not ill-natured. "Or perhaps Mrs. Larrabbee would make room for them?"

"I've considered that, of course," replied Hodder, thoughtfully, though he was a little surprised that McCrae should have mentioned it. "You think their reasons are social, then,—that they feel the gap. I feel it myself most strongly. And yet none of these men are Socialists. If they were, they wouldn't come here to the parish house."

"They're not Socialists," agreed McCrae.

"But there is room in the back and sides of the church, and there is the early service and the Sunday night service, when the pews are free. Why don't they come to these?"

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“Religion doesn’t appeal to them.”

“Why not?”

“Ye’ve asked me a riddle. All I know is that the minute ye begin to preach, off they go and never come back.”

Hodder, with unconscious fixity, looked into his assistant’s honest face. He had an exasperating notion that McCrae might have said more, if he would.

“Haven’t you a theory?”

“Try yourself,” said McCrae. His manner was abrupt, yet oddly enough, not ungracious.

“Don’t think I’m criticizing,” said the rector, quickly.

“I know well ye’re not.”

“I’ve been trying to learn. It seems to me that we are only accomplishing half our task, and I know that St. John’s is not unique in this respect. I’ve been talking to Andrews, of Trinity, about their poor.”

“Does he give you a remedy?”

“No,” Hodder said. “He can’t see any more than I can why Christianity doesn’t appeal any longer. The fathers and mothers of these people went to church, in the old country and in this. Of course he sees, as you and I do, that society has settled into layers, and that the layers won’t mix. And he seems to agree with me that there is a good deal of energy exerted for a comparatively small return.”

“I understand that’s what Mr. Parr says.”

These references to Mr. Parr disturbed Hodder. He had sometimes wondered, when he had been compelled to speak about his visits to the financier, how McCrae regarded them. He was sure that McCrae did regard them.

“Mr. Parr is willing to be even more generous than he has been,” Hodder said. “The point is, whether it’s wise to enlarge our scope on the present plan. What do you think?”

“Ye can reach more,” McCrae spoke without enthusiasm.

“What’s the use of reaching them, only to touch them? In addition to being helped materially and socially, and kept away from the dance-halls and saloons, they ought to

be fired by the Gospels, to be remade. They should be going out into the highways and byways to bring others into the church."

The Scotchman's face changed a little. For an instant his eyes lighted up, whether in sympathy or commiseration or both, Hodder could not tell.

"I'm with ye, Mr. Hodder, if ye'll show me the way. But oughtn't we to begin at both ends?"

"At both ends?" Hodder repeated.

"Surely. With the people in the pews? Oughtn't we to be firing them, too?"

"Yes," said the rector. "You're right."

He turned away, to feel McCrae's hand on his sleeve.

"Maybe it will come, Mr. Hodder," he said. "There's no telling when the light will strike in."

It was the nearest to optimism he had ever known his assistant to approach.

"McCrae," he asked, "have you ever tried to do anything with Dalton Street?"

"Dalton Street?"

The real McCrae, whom he had seemed to see emerging, retired abruptly, presenting his former baffling and noncommittal exterior.

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“Yes,” Hodder forced himself to go on, and it came to him that he had repeated virtually the same words to Mr. Parr, “it is at our very doors, a continual reproach. There is real poverty in those rooming houses, and I have never seen vice so defiant and shameless.”

“It’s a shifty place, that,” McCrae replied. “They’re in it one day and gone the next, a sort of catch-basin for all the rubbish of the city. I can recall when decent people lived there, and now it’s all light housekeeping and dives and what not.”

“But that doesn’t relieve us of responsibility,” Hodder observed.

“I’m not denying it. I think ye’ll find there’s very little to get hold of.”

Once more, he had the air of stopping short, of being able to say more. Hodder refrained from pressing him.

Dalton Street continued to haunt him. And often at nightfall, as he hurried back to his bright rooms in the parish house from some of the many errands that absorbed his time, he had a feeling of self-accusation as he avoided women wearily treading the pavements, or girls and children plodding homeward through the wet, wintry streets. Some glanced at him with heavy eyes, others passed sullenly, with bent heads. At such moments his sense of helplessness was overpowering. He could not follow them to the dreary dwellings where they lodged.

Eldon Parr had said that poverty was inevitable.

THE INSIDE OF THE CUP

By Winston Churchill

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CHAPTER V

THE RECTOR HAS MORE FOOD FOR THOUGHT

I

Sunday after Sunday Hodder looked upon the same picture, the winter light filtering through emblazoned windows, falling athwart stone pillars, and staining with rich colours the marble of the centre aisle. The organ rolled out hymns and anthems, the voices of the white robed choir echoed among the arches. And Hodder's eye, sweeping over the decorous congregation, grew to recognize certain landmarks: Eldon Parr, rigid at one end of his empty pew; little Everett Constable, comfortably, but always pompously settled at one end of his, his white-haired and distinguished-looking wife at the other. The space between them had once been filled by their children. There was Mr. Ferguson, who occasionally stroked his black whiskers with a prodigious solemnity; Mrs. Ferguson, resplendent and always a little warm, and their daughter Nan, dainty and appealing, her eyes uplifted and questioning.

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The Plimptons, with their rubicund and aggressively healthy offspring, were always in evidence. And there was Mrs. Larrabbee. What between wealth and youth, independence and initiative, a widowhood now emerged from a mourning unexceptionable, an elegance so unobtrusive as to border on mystery, she never failed to agitate any atmosphere she entered, even that of prayer. From time to time, Hodder himself was uncomfortably aware of her presence, and he read in her upturned face an interest which, by a little stretch of the imagination, might have been deemed personal . . . .

Another was Gordon Atterbury, still known as “young Gordon,” though his father was dead, and he was in the vestry. He was unmarried and forty-five, and Mrs. Larrabbee had said he reminded her of a shrivelling seed set aside from a once fruitful crop. He wore, invariably, checked trousers and a black cutaway coat, eyeglasses that fell off when he squinted, and were saved from destruction by a gold chain. No wedding or funeral was complete without him. And one morning, as he joined Mr. Parr and the other gentlemen who responded to the appeal, “Let your light so shine before men,” a strange, ironical question entered the rector’s mind—was Gordon Atterbury the logical product of those doctrines which he, Hodder, preached with such feeling and conviction?

None, at least, was so fervent a defender of the faith, so punctilious in all observances, so constant at the altar rail; none so versed in rubrics, ritual, and canon law; none had such a knowledge of the Church fathers. Mr. Atterbury delighted to discuss them with the rector at the dinner parties where they met; none was more zealous for foreign missions. He was the treasurer of St. John’s.

It should undoubtedly have been a consolation to any rector to possess Mr. Atterbury’s unqualified approval, to listen to his somewhat delphic compliments,—heralded by a clearing of the throat. He represented the faith as delivered to the saints, and he spoke for those in the congregation to whom it was precious. Why was it that, to Hodder, he should gradually have assumed something of the aspect of a Cerberus? Why was it that he incited a perverse desire to utter heresies?

Hodder invariably turned from his contemplation of Gordon Atterbury to the double blaring pew, which went from aisle to aisle. In his heart, he would have preferred the approval of Eleanor Goodrich and her husband, and of Asa Waring. Instinct spoke to him here; he seemed to read in their faces that he failed to strike in them responsive chords. He was drawn to them: the conviction grew upon him that he did not reach them, and it troubled him, as he thought, disproportionately.

He could not expect to reach all. But they were the type to which he most wished to appeal; of all of his flock, this family seemed best to preserve the vitality and ideals of the city and nation. Asa Waring was a splendid, uncompromising survival; his piercing eyes sometimes met Hodder’s across the church, and they held for him a question and

a riddle. Eleanor Goodrich bore on her features the stamp of true nobility of character, and her husband, Hodder knew, was a man among men. In addition to a respected lineage, he possessed an unusual blending of aggressiveness and personal charm that men found irresistible.

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The rector's office in the parish house was a businesslike room on the first floor, fitted up with a desk, a table, straight-backed chairs, and a revolving bookcase. And to it, one windy morning in March, came Eleanor Goodrich. Hodder rose to greet her with an eagerness which, from his kindly yet penetrating glance, she did not suspect.

"Am I interrupting you, Mr. Hodder?" she asked, a little breathlessly.

"Not at all," he said, drawing up a chair. "Won't you sit down?"

She obeyed. There was an awkward pause during which the colour slowly rose to her face.

"I wanted to ask you one or two things," she began, not very steadily. "As perhaps you may know, I was brought up in this church, baptized and confirmed in it. I've come to fear that, when I was confirmed, I wasn't old enough to know what I was doing."

She took a deep breath, amazed at her boldness, for this wasn't in the least how she had meant to begin. And she gazed at the rector anxiously. To her surprise, he did not appear to be inordinately shocked.

"Do you know any better now?" he asked.

"Perhaps not," she admitted. "But the things of which I was sure at that time I am not sure of now. My faith is—is not as complete."

"Faith may be likened to an egg, Mrs. Goodrich," he said. "It must be kept whole. If the shell is chipped, it is spoiled."

Eleanor plucked up her courage. Eggs, she declared, had been used as illustrations by conservatives before now.

Hodder relieved her by smiling in ready appreciation.

"Columbus had reference to this world," he said. "I was thinking of a more perfect cue."

"Oh!" she cried, "I dare say there is a more perfect one. I should hate to think there wasn't—but I can't imagine it. There's nothing in the Bible in the way of description of it to make me really wish to go there. The New Jerusalem is too insipid, too material. I'm sure I'm shocking you, but I must be honest, and say what I feel."

"If some others were as honest," said the rector, "the problems of clergymen would be much easier. And it is precisely because people will not tell us what they feel that we are left in the dark and cannot help them. Of course, the language of St. John about the future is figurative."

“Figurative,—yes,” she consented, “but not figurative in a way that helps me, a modern American woman. The figures, to be of any use, ought to appeal to my imagination—-oughtn’t they? But they don’t. I can’t see any utility in such a heaven—it seems powerless to enter as a factor into my life.”

“It is probable that we are not meant to know anything about the future.”

“Then I wish it hadn’t been made so explicit. Its very definiteness is somehow—-stultifying. And, Mr. Hodder, if we were not meant to know its details, it seems to me that if the hereafter is to have any real value and influence over our lives here, we should know something of its conditions, because it must be in some sense a continuation of this. I’m not sure that I make myself clear.”

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“Admirably clear. But we have our Lord’s example of how to live here.”

“If we could be sure,” said Eleanor, “just what that example meant.”

Hodder was silent a moment.

“You mean that you cannot accept what the Church teaches about his life?” he asked.

“No, I can’t,” she faltered. “You have helped me to say it. I want to have the Church’s side better explained,—that’s why I’m here.” She glanced up at him, hesitatingly, with a puzzled wonder, such a positive, dynamic representative of that teaching did he appear. “And my husband can’t,—so many people I know can’t, Mr. Hodder. Only, some of them don’t mention the fact. They accept it. And you say things with such a certainty—” she paused.

“I know,” he replied, “I know. I have felt it since I have come here more than ever before.” He did not add that he had felt it particularly about her, about her husband: nor did he give voice to his instinctive conviction that he respected and admired these two more than a hundred others whose professed orthodoxy was without a flaw. “What is it in particular,” he asked, troubled, “that you cannot accept? I will do my best to help you.”

“Well—” she hesitated again.

“Please continue to be frank,” he begged.

“I can’t believe in the doctrine of the virgin birth,” she responded in a low voice; “it seems to me so—so material. And I feel I am stating a difficulty that many have, Mr. Hodder. Why should it have been thought necessary for God to have departed from what is really a sacred and sublime fact in nature, to resort to a material proof in order to convince a doubting humanity that Jesus was his Son? Oughtn’t the proof of Christ’s essential God-ship to lie in his life, to be discerned by the spiritual; and wasn’t he continually rebuking those who demanded material proof? The very acceptance of a material proof, it seems to me, is a denial of faith, since faith ceases to have any worth whatever the moment the demand for such proof is gratified. Knowledge puts faith out of the question, for faith to me means a trusting on spiritual grounds. And surely the acceptance of scriptural statements like that of the miraculous birth without investigation is not faith—it is mere credulity. If Jesus had been born in a miraculous way, the disciples must have known it. Joseph must have known it when he heard the answer ‘I must be about my father’s business,’ and their doubts are unexplained.”

“I see you have been investigating,” said the rector.

“Yes,” replied Eleanor, with an unconscious shade of defiance, “people want to know, Mr. Dodder,—they want to know the truth. And if you consider the preponderance of the

evidence of the Gospels themselves—my brother-in-law says—you will find that the miraculous birth has very little to stand on. Take out the first two chapters of Matthew and Luke, and the rest of the four Gospels practically contradict it. The genealogies differ, and they both trace through Joseph."

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“I think people suffer in these days from giving too much weight to the critics of Christianity,” said the rector, “from not pondering more deeply on its underlying truths. Do not think that I am accusing you of superficiality, Mrs. Goodrich; I am sure you wish to go to the bottom, or else you would be satisfied with what you have already read and heard.”

“I do,” she murmured.

“And the more one reflects on the life of our Lord, the more one is convinced that the doctrine of the virgin birth is a vital essential; without it Christianity falls to pieces. Let us go at the matter the other way round. If we attribute to our Lord a natural birth, we come at once to the dilemma of having to admit that he was merely an individual human person,—in an unsurpassed relationship with God, it is true, but still a human person. That doctrine makes Christ historical, some one to go back to, instead of the ever-present, preexistent Son of God and mankind. I will go as far as to assert that if the virgin birth had never been mentioned in the Gospels, it would nevertheless inevitably have become a fundamental doctrine of the Christian faith. Such a truth is too vast, too far-reaching to have been neglected, and it has a much higher significance than the mere record of a fact. In spite of the contradictions of science, it explains as nothing else can the mystery of the divinity as well as the humanity of the Saviour.”

Eleanor was unconvinced. She felt, as she listened, the pressure of his sincerity and force, and had to strive to prevent her thoughts from becoming confused.

“No, Mr. Hodder, I simply can’t see any reason for resorting to a physical miracle in order to explain a spiritual mystery. I can see why the ancients demanded a sign of divinity as it were. But for us it has ceased even to be that. It can’t be proved. You ask me, in the face of overwhelming evidence against it, to teach my children that the Incarnation depends on it, but when they grow up and go to college and find it discredited they run the risk of losing everything else with it. And for my part, I fail utterly to see why, if with God all things are possible, it isn’t quite as believable, as we gather from St. Mark’s Gospel, that he incarnated himself in one naturally born. If you reach the conclusion that Jesus was not a mere individual human person, you reach it through the contemplation of his life and death.”

“Then it isn’t the physical miracle you object to, especially?” he asked.

“It’s the uselessness of it, for this age,” she exclaimed. “I think clergymen don’t understand the harm it is doing in concentrating the attention on such a vulnerable and non-essential point. Those of us who are striving to reorganize our beliefs and make them tenable, do not bother our heads about miracles. They may be true, or may not, or some of them may be. We are beginning to see that the virgin birth does not add anything to Christ. We are beginning to see that perfection and individuality are not

incompatible,—one is divine, and the other human. And isn't it by his very individuality that we are able to recognize Jesus to-day?"

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“You have evidently thought and read a great deal,” Dodder said, genuinely surprised. “Why didn’t you come to me earlier?”

Eleanor bit her lip. He smiled a little.

“I think I can answer that for you,” he went on; “you believe we are prejudiced,—I’ve no doubt many of us are. You think we are bound to stand up for certain dogmas, or go down, and that our minds are consequently closed. I am not blaming you,” he added quickly, as she gave a sign of protest, “but I assure you that most of us, so far as my observation has gone, are honestly trying to proclaim the truth as we see it.”

“Insincerity is the last thing I should have accused you of, Mr. Hodder,” she said flushing. “As I told you, you seem so sure.”

“I don’t pretend to infallibility, except so far as I maintain that the Church is the guardian of certain truths which human experience has verified. Let me ask you if you have thought out the difference your conception of the Incarnation;—the lack of a patently divine commission, as it were,—makes in the doctrine of grace?”

“Yes, I have,” she answered, “a little. It gives me more hope. I cannot think I am totally depraved. I do not believe that God wishes me to think so. And while I am still aware of the distance between Christ’s perfection and my own imperfection, I feel that the possibility is greater of lessening that distance. It gives me more self-respect, more self-reliance. George Bridges says that the logical conclusion of that old doctrine is what philosophers call determinism—Calvinistic predestination. I can’t believe in that. The kind of grace God gives me is the grace to help myself by drawing force from the element of him in my soul. He gives me the satisfaction of developing.”

“Of one thing I am assured, Mrs. Goodrich,” Hodder replied, “that the logical result of independent thinking is anarchy. Under this modern tendency toward individual creeds, the Church has split and split again until, if it keeps on, we shall have no Church at all to carry on the work of our Lord on earth. History proves that to take anything away from the faith is to atrophy, to destroy it. The answer to your arguments is to be seen on every side, atheism, hypocrisy, vice, misery, insane and cruel grasping after wealth. There is only one remedy I can see,” he added, inflexibly, yet with a touch of sadness, “believe.”

“What if we can’t believe?” she asked.

“You can.” He spoke with unshaken conviction.

“You can if you make the effort, and I am sure you will. My experience is that in the early stages of spiritual development we are impervious to certain truths. Will you

permit me to recommend to you certain books dealing with these questions in a modern way?”

“I will read them gladly,” she said, and rose.

“And then, perhaps, we may have another talk,” he added, looking down at her. “Give my regards to your husband.”

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Yet, as he stood in the window looking after her retreating figure, there gradually grew upon him a vague and uncomfortable feeling that he had not been satisfactory, and this was curiously coupled with the realization that the visit had added a considerable increment to his already pronounced liking for Eleanor Goodrich. She was, paradoxically, his kind of a person—such was the form the puzzle took. And so ably had she presented her difficulties that, at one point of the discussion, it had ironically occurred to him to refer her to Gordon Atterbury. Mr. Atterbury's faith was like an egg, and he took precious care not to have it broken or chipped.

Hodder found himself smiling. It was perhaps inevitable that he began at once to contrast Mrs. Goodrich with other feminine parishioners who had sought him out, and who had surrendered unconditionally. They had evinced an equally disturbing tendency,—a willingness to be overborne. For had he not, indeed, overborne them? He could not help suspecting these other ladies of a craving for the luxury of the confessional. One thing was certain,—he had much less respect for them than for Eleanor Goodrich . . . .

That afternoon he sent her the list of books. But the weeks passed, and she did not come back. Once, when he met her at a dinner of Mrs. Preston's, both avoided the subject of her visit, both were conscious of a constraint. She did not know how often, unseen by her, his eyes had sought her out from the chancel. For she continued to come to church as frequently as before, and often brought her husband.

II

One bright and boisterous afternoon in March, Hodder alighted from an electric car amid a swirl of dust and stood gazing for a moment at the stone gate-houses of that 'rus in urbe', Waverley Place, and at the gold block-letters written thereon, "No Thoroughfare." Against those gates and their contiguous grill the rude onward rush of the city had beaten in vain, and, baffled, had swept around their serene enclosure, westward.

Within, a silvery sunlight lit up the grass of the island running down the middle, and in the beds the softening earth had already been broken by the crocus sheaves. The bare branches of the trees swayed in the gusts. As Hodder penetrated this hallowed precinct he recognized, on either hand, the residences of several of his parishioners, each in its ample allotted space: Mrs. Larrabbee's; the Laureston Greys'; Thurston Gore's, of which Mr. Wallis Plimpton was now the master,—Mr. Plimpton, before whose pertinacity the walls of Jericho had fallen; and finally the queer, twisted Richardson mansion of the Everett Constables, whither he was bound, with its recessed doorway and tiny windows peeping out from under mediaeval penthouses.

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He was ushered into a library where the shades were already drawn, where a-white-clothed tea-table was set before the fire, the red rays dancing on the silver tea-kettle. On the centre-table he was always sure to find, neatly set in a rack, the books about which the world was talking, or rather would soon begin to talk; and beside them were ranged magazines; French, English, and American, Punch, the Spectator, the Nation, the 'Revue des deux Mondes'. Like the able general she was, Mrs. Constable kept her communications open, and her acquaintance was by no means confined to the city of her nativity. And if a celebrity were passing through, it were pretty safe, if in doubt, to address him in her care.

Hodder liked and admired her, but somehow she gave him the impression of having attained her ascendancy at a price, an ascendancy which had apparently been gained by impressing upon her environment a new note —literary, aesthetic, cosmopolitan. She held herself, and those she carried with her, abreast of the times, and he was at a loss to see how so congenial an effort could have left despite her sweetness—the little mark of hardness he discerned, of worldliness. For she was as well born as any woman in the city, and her husband was a Constable. He had inherited, so the rector had been informed, one of those modest fortunes that were deemed affluence in the eighties. His keeping abreast of the times was the enigma, and Hodder had often wondered how financial genius had contrived to house itself in the well-dressed, gently pompous little man whose lack of force seemed at times so painfully evident. And yet he was rated one of the rich men of the city, and his name Hodder had read on many boards with Mr. Parr's!

A person more versed in the modern world of affairs than the late rector of Bremerton would not have been so long in arriving at the answer to this riddle. Hodder was astute, he saw into people more than they suspected, but he was not sophisticated.

He stood picturing, now, the woman in answer to whose summons he had come. With her finely chiselled features, her abundant white hair, her slim figure and erect carriage she reminded him always of a Vigee Lebrun portrait. He turned at the sound of her voice behind him.

"How good of you to come, Mr. Hodder, when you were so busy," she said, taking his hand as she seated herself behind the tea-kettle. "I wanted the chance to talk to you, and it seemed the best way. What is that you have, Soter's book?"

"I pinked it up on the table," he explained.

"Then you haven't read it? You ought to. As a clergyman, it would interest you. Religion treated from the economic side, you know, the effect of lack of nutrition on character. Very unorthodox, of course."

“I find that I have very little time to read,” he said. “I sometimes take a book along in the cars.”

“Your profession is not so leisurely as it once was, I often think it such a pity. But you, too, are paying the penalty of complexity.” She smiled at him sympathetically. “How is Mr. Parr? I haven’t seen him for several weeks.”

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“He seemed well when I saw him last,” replied Hodder.

“He’s a wonderful man; the amount of work he accomplishes without apparent effort is stupendous.” Mrs. Constable cast what seemed a tentative glance at the powerful head, and handed him his tea. “I wanted to talk to you about Gertrude,” she said.

He looked unenlightened.

“About my daughter, Mrs. Warren. She lives in New York, you know —on Long Island.”

Then he had remembered something he had heard.

“Yes,” he said.

“She met you, at the Fergusons’, just for a moment, when she was out here last autumn. What really nice and simple people the Fergusons are, with all their money!”

“Very nice indeed,” he agreed, puzzled.

“I have been sorry for them in the past,” she went on evenly. “They had rather a hard time—perhaps you may have heard. Nobody appreciated them. They were entombed, so to speak, in a hideous big house over on the South Side, which fortunately burned down, and then they bought in Park Street, and took a pew in St. John’s. I suppose the idea of that huge department store was rather difficult to get used to. But I made up my mind it was nonsense to draw the line at department stores, especially since Mr. Ferguson’s was such a useful and remarkable one, so I went across and called. Mrs. Ferguson was so grateful, it was almost pathetic. And she’s a very good friend—she came here everyday when Genevieve had appendicitis.”

“She’s a good woman,” the rector said.

“And Nan,—I adore Nan, everybody adores Nan. She reminds me of one of those exquisite, blue-eyed dolls her father imports. Now if I were a bachelor, Mr. Hodder—!” Mrs. Constable left the rest to his imagination.

He smiled.

“I’m afraid Miss Ferguson has her own ideas.” Running through Hodder’s mind, a troubled current, were certain memories connected with Mrs. Warren. Was she the divorced daughter, or was she not?

“But I was going to speak to you about Gertrude. She’s had such a hard time, poor dear, my heart has bled for her.” There was a barely perceptible tremor in Mrs. Constable’s voice. “All that publicity, and the inevitable suffering connected with it! And

no one can know the misery she went through, she is so sensitive. But now, at last, she has a chance for happiness—the real thing has come."

"The real thing!" he echoed.

"Yes. She's going to marry a splendid man, Eldridge Sumner. I know the family well. They have always stood for public spirit, and this Mr. Summer, although he is little over thirty, was chairman of that Vice Commission which made such a stir in New York a year ago. He's a lawyer, with a fine future, and they're madly in love. And Gertrude realizes now, after her experience, the true values in life. She was only a child when she married Victor Warren."

"But Mr. Warren," Hodder managed to say, "is still living."

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“I sometimes wonder, Mr. Hodder,” she went on hurriedly, “whether we can realize how different the world is today from what it was twenty years ago, until something of this kind is actually brought home to us. I shall never forget how distressed, how overwhelmed Mr. Constable and I were when Gertrude got her divorce. I know that they are regarding such things differently in the East, but out here!—We never dreamed that such a thing could happen to us, and we regarded it as a disgrace. But gradually—” she hesitated, and looked at the motionless clergyman —“gradually I began to see Gertrude’s point of view, to understand that she had made a mistake, that she had been too young to comprehend what she was doing. Victor Warren had been ruined by money, he wasn’t faithful to her, but an extraordinary thing has happened in his case. He’s married again, and Gertrude tells me he’s absurdly happy, and has two children.”

As he listened, Hodder’s dominating feeling was amazement that such a course as her daughter had taken should be condoned by this middle-aged lady, a prominent member of his congregation and the wife of a vestryman, who had been nurtured and steeped in Christianity. And not only that: Mrs. Constable was plainly defending a further step, which in his opinion involved a breach of the Seventh Commandment! To have invaded these precincts, the muddy, turbulent river of individualism had risen higher than he would have thought possible . . . .

“Wait!” she implored, checking his speech,—she had been watching him with what was plainly anxiety, “don’t say anything yet. I have a letter here which she wrote me—at the time. I kept it. Let me read a part of it to you, that you may understand more fully the tragedy of it.”

Mrs. Constable thrust her hand into her lap and drew forth a thickly covered sheet.

“It was written just after she left him—it is an answer to my protest,” she explained, and began to read:

“I know I promised to love Victor, mother, but how can one promise to do a thing over which one has no control? I loved him after he stopped loving me. He wasn’t a bit suited to me—I see that now—he was attracted by the outside of me, and I never knew what he was like until I married him. His character seemed to change completely; he grew morose and quick-tempered and secretive, and nothing I did pleased him. We led a cat-and-dog life. I never let you know—and yet I see now we might have got along in any other relationship. We were very friendly when we parted, and I’m not a bit jealous because he cares for another woman who I can see is much better suited to him.

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"'I can't honestly regret leaving him, and I'm not conscious of having done anything wrong. I don't want to shock you, and I know how terribly you and father must feel, but I can see now, somehow, that I had to go through this experience, terrible as it was, to find myself. If it were thirty years ago, before people began to be liberal in such matters, I shudder to think what might have become of me. I should now be one of those terrible women between fifty and sixty who have tried one frivolity and excess after another—but I'm not coming to that! And my friends have really been awfully kind, and supported me—even Victor's family. Don't, don't think that I'm not respectable! I know how you look at such things.'" Mrs. Constable closed the letter abruptly.

"I did look at such things in that way," she added, "but I've changed. That letter helped to change me, and the fact that it was Gertrude who had been through this. If you only knew Gertrude, Mr. Hodder, you couldn't possibly think of her as anything but sweet and pure."

Although the extent of Hodder's acquaintance with Mrs. Warren had been but five minutes, the letter had surprisingly retouched to something like brilliancy her faded portrait, the glow in her cheeks, the iris blue in her eyes. He recalled the little shock he had experienced when told that she was divorced, for her appeal had lain in her very freshness, her frank and confiding manner. She was one of those women who seem to say, "Here I am, you can't but like me:" And he had responded—he remembered that—he had liked her. And now her letter, despite his resistance, had made its appeal, so genuinely human was it, so honest, although it expressed a philosophy he abhorred.

Mrs. Constable was watching him mutely, striving to read in his grave eyes the effect of her pleadings.

"You are telling me this, Mrs. Constable—why?" he asked.

"Because I wished you to know the exact situation before I asked you, as a great favour to me, to Mr. Constable, to—to marry her in St. John's. Of course," she went on, controlling her rising agitation, and anticipating a sign of protest, "we shouldn't expect to have any people, ——and Gertrude wasn't married in St. John's before; that wedding was at Passumset our seashore place. Oh, Mr. Hodder, before you answer, think of our feelings, Mr. Constable's and mine! If you could see Mr. Constable, you would know how he suffers—this thing has upset him more than the divorce. His family have such pride. I am so worried about him, and he doesn't eat anything and looks so haggard. I told him I would see you and explain and that seemed to comfort him a little. She is, after all, our child, and we don't want to feel, so far as our church is concerned, that she is an Ishmaelite; we don't want to have the spectacle of her having to go around, outside, to find a clergyman—that would be too dreadful! I know how strict, how unflinching you are, and I admire you for it. But this is a special case."

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She paused, breathing deeply, and Hodder gazed at her with pity. What he felt was more than pity; he was experiencing, indeed, but with a deeper emotion, something of that same confusion of values into which Eleanor Goodrich's visit had thrown him. At the same time it had not escaped his logical mind that Mrs. Constable had made her final plea on the score of respectability.

"It gives me great pain to have to refuse you," he said gently.

"Oh, don't," she said sharply, "don't say that! I can't have made the case clear. You are too big, too comprehending, Mr. Hodder, to have a hard-and-fast rule. There must be times—extenuating circumstances—and I believe the canons make it optional for a clergyman to marry the innocent person."

"Yes, it is optional, but I do, not believe it should be. The question is left to the clergyman's' conscience. According to my view, Mrs. Constable, the Church, as the agent of God, effects an indissoluble bond. And much as I should like to do anything in my power for you and Mr. Constable, you have asked the impossible,—believing as I do, there can be no special case, no extenuating circumstance. And it is my duty to tell you it is because people to-day are losing their beliefs that we have this lenient attitude toward the sacred things. If they still held the conviction that marriage is of God, they would labour to make it a success, instead of flying apart at the first sign of what they choose to call incompatibility."

"But surely," she said, "we ought not to be punished for our mistakes! I cannot believe that Christ himself intended that his religion should be so inelastic, so hard and fast, so cruel as you imply. Surely there is enough unhappiness without making more. You speak of incompatibility —but is it in all cases such an insignificant matter? We are beginning to realize in these days something of the effects of character on character,—-deteriorating effects, in many instances. With certain persons we are lifted up, inspired to face the battle of life and overcome its difficulties. I have known fine men and women whose lives have been stultified or ruined because they were badly mated. And I cannot see that the character of my own daughter has deteriorated because she has got a divorce from a man with whom she was profoundly out of sympathy—of harmony. On the contrary, she seems more of a person than she was; she has clearer, saner views of life; she has made her mistake and profited by it. Her views changed—Victor Warren's did not. She began to realize that some other woman might have an influence over his life—she had none, simply because he did not love her. And love is not a thing we can compel."

"You are making it very hard for me, Mrs. Constable," he said. "You are now advocating an individualism with which the Church can have no sympathy. Christianity teaches us that life is probationary, and if we seek to avoid the trials sent us, instead of overcoming them, we find ourselves farther than ever from any solution. We have to stand by our mistakes. If marriage is to be a mere trial of compatibility, why go through a ceremony

than which there is none more binding in human and divine institutions? One either believes in it, or one does not. And, if belief be lacking, the state provides for the legalization of marriages."

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“Oh!” she exclaimed.

“If persons wish to be married in church in these days merely because it is respectable, if such be their only reason, they are committing a great wrong. They are taking an oath before God with reservations, knowing that public opinion will release them if the marriage does not fulfil their expectations.”

For a moment she gazed at him with parted lips, and pressing her handkerchief to her eyes began silently to cry. The sudden spectacle, in this condition, of a self-controlled woman of the world was infinitely distressing to Hodder, whose sympathies were even more sensitive than (in her attempt to play upon them) she had suspected. . . She was aware that he had got to his feet, and was standing beside her, speaking with an oddly penetrating tenderness.

“I did not mean to be harsh,” he said, “and it is not that I do not understand how you feel. You have made my duty peculiarly difficult.”

She raised up to him a face from which the mask had fallen, from which the illusory look of youth had fled. He turned away. . . And presently she began to speak again; in disconnected sentences.

“I so want her to be happy—I cannot think, I will not think that she has wrecked her life—it would be too unjust, too cruel. You cannot know what it is to be a woman!”

Before this cry he was silent.

“I don’t ask anything of God except that she shall have a chance, and it seems to me that he is making the world better—less harsh for women.”

He did not reply. And presently she looked up at him again, steadfastly now, searchingly. The barriers of the conventions were down, she had cast her pride to the winds. He seemed to read in her a certain relief.

“I am going to tell you something, Mr. Hodder, which you may think strange, but I have a reason for saying it. You are still a young man, and I feel instinctively that you have an unusual career before you. You interested me the first time you stepped into the pulpit of St. John’s —and it will do me good to talk to you, this once, frankly. You have reiterated to-day, in no uncertain terms, doctrines which I once believed, which I was brought up to think infallible. But I have lived since then, and life itself has made me doubt them.

“I recognize in you a humanity, a sympathy and breadth which you are yourself probably not aware of, all of which is greater than the rule which you so confidently apply to fit all cases. It seems to me that Christ did not intend us to have such rules. He went beyond them, into the spirit.

“Under the conditions of society—of civilization to-day, most marriages are merely a matter of chance. Even judgment cannot foresee the development of character brought about by circumstances, by environment. And in many marriages I have known about intimately both the man and the woman have missed the most precious thing that life can give something I cannot but think—God intends us to have. You see,”—she smiled at him sadly—“I am still a little of an idealist.

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“I missed—the thing I am talking about, and it has been the great sorrow of my life—not only on my account, but on my husband’s. And so far as I am concerned, I am telling you the truth when I say I should have been content to have lived in a log cabin if—if the gift had been mine. Not all the money in the world, nor the intellect, nor the philanthropy—the so-called interests of life, will satisfy me for its denial. I am a disappointed woman, I sometimes think a bitter woman. I can’t believe that life is meant to be so. Those energies have gone into ambition which should have been absorbed by—by something more worth while.

“And I can see so plainly now that my husband would have been far, far happier with another kind of woman. I drew him away from the only work he ever enjoyed—his painting. I do not say he ever could have been a great artist, but he had a little of the divine spark, in his enthusiasm at least—in his assiduity. I shall never forget our first trip abroad, after we were married—he was like a boy in the galleries, in the studios. I could not understand it then. I had no real sympathy with art, but I tried to make sacrifices, what I thought were Christian sacrifices. The motive power was lacking, and no matter how hard I tried, I was only half-hearted, and he realized it instinctively—no amount of feigning could deceive him. Something deep in me, which was a part of my nature, was antagonistic, stultifying to the essentials of his own being. Of course neither of us saw that then, but the results were not long in developing. To him, art was a sacred thing, and it was impossible for me to regard it with equal seriousness. He drew into himself,—closed up, as it were,—no longer discussed it. I was hurt. And when we came home he kept on in business—he still had his father’s affairs to look after—but he had a little workroom at the top of the house where he used to go in the afternoon . . . .

“It was a question which one of us should be warped,—which personality should be annihilated, so to speak, and I was the stronger. And as I look back, Mr. Hodder, what occurred seems to me absolutely inevitable, given the ingredients, as inevitable as a chemical process. We were both striving against each other, and I won—at a tremendous cost. The conflict, one might say, was subconscious, instinctive rather than deliberate. My attitude forced him back into business, although we had enough to live on very comfortably, and then the scale of life began to increase, luxuries formerly unthought of seemed to become necessities. And while it was still afar off I saw a great wave rolling toward us, the wave of that new prosperity which threatened to submerge us, and I seized the buoy fate had placed in our hands,—or rather, by suggestion, I induced my husband to seize it—his name.

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“I recognized the genius, the future of Eldon Parr at a time when he was not yet independent and supreme, when association with a Constable meant much to him. Mr. Parr made us, as the saying goes. Needless to say; money has not brought happiness, but a host of hard, false ambitions which culminated in Gertrude’s marriage with Victor Warren. I set my heart on the match, helped it in every, way, and until now nothing but sorrow has come of it. But my point—is this,—I see so clearly, now that it is too late, that two excellent persons may demoralize each other if they are ill-mated. It may be possible that I had the germs of false ambition in me when I was a girl, yet I was conscious only of the ideal which is in most women’s hearts . . . .

“You must not think that I have laid my soul bare in the hope of changing your mind in regard to Gertrude. I recognize clearly, now, that that is impossible. Oh, I know you do not so misjudge me,” she added, reading his quick protest in his face.

“Indeed, I cannot analyze my reasons for telling you something of which I have never spoken to any one else.”

Mrs. Constable regarded him fixedly. “You are the strongest reason. You have somehow drawn it out of me . . . . And I suppose I wish some one to profit by it. You can, Mr. Hodder,—I feel sure of that. You may insist now that my argument against your present conviction of the indissolubility of marriage is mere individualism, but I want you to think of what I have told you, not to answer me now. I know your argument by heart, that Christian character develops by submission, by suffering, that it is the woman’s place to submit, to efface herself. But the root of the matter goes deeper than that. I am far from deploring sacrifice, yet common-sense tells us that our sacrifice should be guided by judgment, that foolish sacrifices are worse than useless. And there are times when the very limitations of our individuality —necessary limitation’s for us—prevent our sacrifices from counting.

“I was wrong, I grant you, grievously wrong in the course I took, even though it were not consciously deliberate. But if my husband had been an artist I should always have remained separated from his real life by a limitation I had no power to remove. The more I tried, the more apparent my lack of insight became to him, the more irritated he grew. I studied his sketches, I studied masterpieces, but it was all hopeless. The thing wasn’t in me, and he knew it wasn’t. Every remark made him quiver.

“The Church, I think, will grow more liberal, must grow more liberal, if it wishes to keep in touch with people in an age when they are thinking out these questions for themselves. The law cannot fit all cases, I am sure the Gospel can. And sometimes women have an instinct, a kind of second sight into persons, Mr. Hodder. I cannot explain why I feel that you have in you elements of growth which will eventually bring you more into sympathy with the point of view I have set forth, but I do feel it.”

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Hodder did not attempt to refute her—she had, indeed, made discussion impossible. She knew his arguments, as she had declared, and he had the intelligence to realize that a repetition of them, on his part, would be useless. She brought home to him, as never before, a sense of the anomalistic position of the Church in these modern days, of its appallingly lessened weight even with its own members. As a successor of the Apostles, he had no power over this woman, or very little; he could neither rebuke her, nor sentence her to penance. She recognized his authority to marry her daughter, to baptize her daughter's children, but not to interfere in any way with her spiritual life. It was as a personality he had moved her—a personality apparently not in harmony with his doctrine. Women had hinted at this before. And while Mrs. Constable had not, as she perceived, shaken his conviction, the very vividness and unexpectedness of a confession from her—had stirred him to the marrow, had opened doors, perforce, which he, himself had marked forbidden, and given him a glimpse beyond before he could lower his eyes. Was there, after all, something in him that responded in spite of himself?

He sat gazing at her, his head bent, his strong hands on the arms of the chair.

"We never can foresee how we may change," he answered, a light in his eyes that was like a smile, yet having no suggestion of levity. And his voice—despite his disagreement—maintained the quality of his sympathy. Neither felt the oddity, then, of the absence of a jarring note. "You may be sure, at least, of my confidence, and of my gratitude for what you have told me."

His tone belied the formality of his speech. Mrs. Constable returned his gaze in silence, and before words came again to either, a step sounded on the threshold and Mr. Constable entered.

Hodder looked at him with a new vision. His face was indeed lined and worn, and dark circles here under his eyes. But at Mrs. Constable's "Here's Mr. Hodder, dear," he came forward briskly to welcome the clergyman.

"How do you do?" he said cordially. "We don't see you very often."

"I have been telling Mr. Hodder that modern rectors of big parishes have far too many duties," said his wife.

And after a few minutes of desultory conversation, the rector left.

CHAPTER VI

"*Watchman*, *what of the night*?"

It was one of those moist nights of spring when the air is pungent with the odour of the softened earth, and the gentle breaths that stirred the curtains in Mr. Parr's big dining-room wafted, from the garden, the perfumes of a revived creation,—delicious, hothouse smells. At intervals, showers might be heard pattering on the walk outside. The rector of St. John's was dining with his great parishioner.

Here indeed were a subject for some modern master, a chance to picture for generations to come an aspect of a mighty age, an age that may some day be deemed but a grotesque and anomalistic survival of a more ancient logic; a gargoyle carved out of chaos, that bears on its features a resemblance to the past and the future.

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Our scene might almost be mediaeval with its encircling gloom, through which the heavy tapestries and shadowy corners of the huge apartment may be dimly made out. In the center, the soft red glow of the candles, the gleaming silver, the shining cloth, the Church on one side—and what on the other? No name given it now, no royal name, but still Power. The two are still in apposition, not yet in opposition, but the discerning may perchance read a prophecy in the salient features of the priest.

The Man of Power of the beginning of the twentieth century demands a subtler analysis, presents an enigma to which the immortal portraits of forgotten Medicis and Capets give no clew. Imagine, if you can, a Lorenzo or a Grand Louis in a tightly-buttoned frock coat! There must be some logical connection between the habit and the age, since crimson velvet and gold brocade would have made Eldon Parr merely ridiculous.

He is by no means ridiculous, yet take him out of the setting and put him in the street, and you might pass him a dozen times without noticing him. Nature, and perhaps unconscious art, have provided him with a protective exterior; he is the colour of his jungle. After he has crippled you —if you survive—you will never forget him. You will remember his eye, which can be unsheathed like a rapier; you will recall his lips as the expression of a relentless negative. The significance of the slight bridge on the narrow nose is less easy to define. He is neither tall nor short; his face is clean-shaven, save for scanty, unobtrusive reddish tufts high on the cheeks; his hair is thin.

It must be borne in mind, however, that our rector did not see him in his jungle, and perhaps in the traditional nobility of the lion there is a certain truth. An interesting biography of some of the powerful of this earth might be written from the point of view of the confessor or the physician, who find something to love, something to pity, and nothing to fear—thus reversing the sentiments of the public.

Yet the friendship between John Hodder and Eldon Parr defied any definite analysis on the rector's part, and was perhaps the strangest—and most disquieting element that had as yet come into Hodder's life. The nature of his intimacy with the banker, if intimacy it might be called, might have surprised his other parishioners if they could have been hidden spectators of one of these dinners. There were long silences when the medium of communication, tenuous at best, seemed to snap, and the two sat gazing at each other as from mountain peaks across impassable valleys. With all the will in the world, their souls lost touch, though the sense in the clergyman of the other's vague yearning for human companionship was never absent. It was this yearning that attracted Hodder, who found in it a deep pathos.

After one of these intervals of silence, Eldon Parr looked up from his claret.

"I congratulate you, Hodder, on the stand you took in regard to Constable's daughter," he said.

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“I didn’t suppose it was known,” answered the rector, in surprise.

“Constable told me. I have reason to believe that he doesn’t sympathize with his wife in her attitude on this matter. It’s pulled him down, —you’ve noticed that he looks badly?”

“Yes,” said the rector. He did not care to discuss the affair; he had hoped it would not become known; and he shunned the congratulations of Gordon Atterbury, which in such case would be inevitable. And in spite of the conviction that he had done his duty, the memory of his talk with Mrs. Constable never failed to make him, uncomfortable.

Exasperation crept into Mr. Pares voice.

“I can’t think what’s got into women in these times—at Mrs. Constable’s age they ought to know better. Nothing restrains them. They have reached a point where they don’t even respect the Church. And when that happens, it is serious indeed. The Church is the governor on our social engine, and it is supposed to impose a restraint upon the lawless.”

Hodder could not refrain from smiling a little at the banker’s conception.

“Doesn’t that reduce the Church somewhere to the level of the police force?” he asked.

“Not at all,” said Eldon Parr, whose feelings seemed to be rising. “I am sorry for Constable. He feels the shame of this thing keenly, and he ought to go away for a while to one of these quiet resorts. I offered him my car. Sometimes I think that women have no morals. At any rate, this modern notion of giving them their liberty is sheer folly. Look what they have done with it! Instead of remaining at home, where they belong, they are going out into the world and turning it topsy-turvy. And if a man doesn’t let them have a free hand, they get a divorce and marry some idiot who will.”

Mr. Parr pushed back his chair and rose abruptly, starting for the door. The rector followed him, forcibly struck by the unusual bitterness in his tone.

“If I have spoken strongly, it is because I feel strongly,” he said in a strange, thickened voice. “Hodder, how would you like to live in this house—alone?”

The rector looked down upon him with keen, comprehending eyes, and saw Eldon Parr as he only, of all men, had seen him. For he himself did not understand his own strange power of drawing forth the spirit from its shell, of compelling the inner, suffering thing to reveal itself.

“This poison,” Eldon Parr went on unevenly, “has eaten into my own family. My daughter, who might have been a comfort and a companion, since she chose not to marry, was carried away by it, and thought it incumbent upon her to have a career of her own. And now I have a choice of thirty rooms, and not a soul to share them with.

Sometimes, at night, I make up my mind to sell this house. But I can't do it—something holds me back, hope, superstition, or whatever you've a mind to call it. You've never seen all of the house, have you?" he asked.

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The rector slowly shook his head, and the movement might have been one that he would have used in acquiescence to the odd whim of a child. Mr. Parr led the way up the wide staircase to the corridor above, traversing chamber after chamber, turning on the lights.

“These were my wife’s rooms,” he said, “they are just as she left them. And these my daughter Alison’s, when she chooses to pay me a visit. I didn’t realize that I should have to spend the last years of my life alone. And I meant, when I gave my wife a house, to have it the best in the city. I spared nothing on it, as you see, neither care nor money. I had the best architect I could find, and used the best material. And what good is it to me? Only a reminder—of what might have been. But I’ve got a boy, Hodder,—I don’t know whether I’ve ever spoken of him to you—Preston. He’s gone away, too. But I’ve always had the hope that he might come back and get decently married, and live, here. That’s why I stay. I’ll show you his picture.”

They climbed to the third floor, and while Mr. Parr way searching for the electric switch, a lightning flash broke over the forests of the park, prematurely revealing the room. It was a boy’s room, hung with photographs of school and college crews and teams and groups of intimates, with deep window seats, and draped pennons of Harvard University over the fireplace. Eldon Parr turned to one of the groups on the will, the earliest taken at school.

“There he is,” he said, pointing out a sunny little face at the bottom, a boy of twelve, bareheaded, with short, crisping yellow hair, smiling lips and laughing eyes. “And here he is again,” indicating another group. Thus he traced him through succeeding years until they came to those of college.

“There he is,” said the rector. “I think I can pick him out now.”

“Yes; that’s Preston,” said his father, staring hard at the picture. The face had developed, the body had grown almost to man’s estate, but the hint of crispness was still in the hair, the mischievous laughter in the eyes. The rector gazed earnestly at the face, remembering his own boyhood, his own youth, his mind dwelling, too, on what he had heard of the original of the portrait. What had happened to the boy, to bring to naught the fair promise of this earlier presentment?

He was aroused by the voice of Eldon Parr, who had sunk into one of the leather chairs.

“I can see him now,” he was saying, “as he used to come running down that long flight of stone steps in Ransome Street to meet me when I came home. Such laughter! And once, in his eagerness, he fell and cut his forehead. I shall never forget how I felt. And when I picked him up he tried to laugh still, with the tears rolling down his face. You know the way a child’s breath catches, Hodder? He was always laughing. And how he

used to cling to me, and beg me to take him out, and show such an interest in everything! He was a bright boy,

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a remarkable child, I thought, but I suppose it was my foolishness. He analyzed all he saw, and when he used to go off in my car, Brennan, the engineer, would always beg to have him in the cab. And such sympathy! He knew in an instant when I was worried. I had dreams of what that boy would become, but I was too sure of it. I went on doing other things—there were so many things, and I was a slave to them. And before I knew it, he'd gone off to school. That was the year I moved up here, and my wife died. And after that, all seemed to go wrong. Perhaps I was too severe; perhaps they didn't understand him at boarding-school; perhaps I didn't pay enough attention to him. At any rate, the first thing I knew his whole nature seemed to have changed. He got into scrape after scrape at Harvard, and later he came within an ace of marrying a woman.

"He's my weakness to-day. I can say no to everybody in the world but to him, and when I try to remember him as he used to come down those steps on Ransome Street . . . .

"He never knew how much I cared—that what I was doing was all for him, building for him, that he might carry on my work. I had dreams of developing this city, the great Southwest, and after I had gone Preston was to bring them to fruition.

"For some reason I never was able to tell him all this—as I am telling you. The words would not come. We had grown apart. And he seemed to think—God knows why!—he seemed to think I disliked him. I had Langmaid talk to him, and other men I trusted—tell him what an unparalleled opportunity he had to be of use in the world. Once I thought I had him started straight and then a woman came along—off the streets, or little better. He insisted on marrying her and wrecking his life, and when I got her out of the way, as any father would have done, he left me. He has never forgiven me. Most of the time I haven't even the satisfaction of knowing were he is—London, Paris, or New York. I try not to think of what he does. I ought to cut him off,—I can't do it—I can't do it, Hodder—he's my one weakness still. I'm afraid—he'd sink out of sight entirely, and it's the one hold I have left on him."

Eldon Parr paused, with a groan that betokened not only a poignant sorrow, but also something of relief—for the tortures of not being able to unburden himself had plainly become intolerable. He glanced up and met the compassionate eyes of the rector, who stood leaning against the mantel.

"With Alison it was different," he said. "I never understood her—even when she was a child—and I used to look at her and wonder that she could be my daughter. She was moody, intense, with a yearning for affection I've since sometimes thought—she could not express. I did not feel the need of affection in those days, so absorbed was I in building up, —so absorbed and driven, you might say. I suppose I must accept my punishment as just. But the child was always distant with me, and I always remember

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her in rebellion; a dark little thing with a quivering lip, hair awry, and eyes that flashed through her tears. She would take any amount of punishment rather than admit she had been in the wrong. I recall she had once a fox terrier that never left her, that fought all the dogs in the neighbourhood and destroyed the rugs and cushions in the house. I got rid of it one summer when she was at the sea, and I think she never forgave me. The first question she asked when she came home was for that dog—Mischief, his name was—for Mischief. I told her what I had done. It took more courage than I had thought. She went to her room, locked herself in, and stayed there, and we couldn't get her to come out for two days; she wouldn't even eat.

"Perhaps she was jealous of Preston, but she never acknowledged it. When she was little she used once in a while to come shyly and sit on my lap, and look at me without saying anything. I hadn't the slightest notion what was in the child's mind, and her reserve increased as she grew older. She seemed to have developed a sort of philosophy of her own even before she went away to school, and to have certain strongly defined tastes. She liked, for instance, to listen to music, and for that very reason would never learn to play. We couldn't make her, as a child.

"Bad music, she said, offended her. She painted, she was passionately fond of flowers, and her room was always filled with them. When she came back from school to live with me, she built a studio upstairs. After the first winter, she didn't care to go out much. By so pronounced a character, young men in general were not attracted, but there were a few who fell under a sort of spell. I can think of no other words strong enough, and I used to watch them when they came here with a curious interest. I didn't approve of all of them. Alison would dismiss them or ignore them or be kind to them as she happened to feel, yet it didn't seem to make any difference. One I suspect she was in love with —a fellow without a cent.

"Then there was Bedloe Hubbell. I have reason enough to be thankful now that she didn't care for him. They've made him president, you know, of this idiotic Municipal League, as they call it. But in those days he hadn't developed any nonsense, he was making a good start at the bar, and was well off. His father was Elias Hubbell, who gave the Botanical Garden to the city. I wanted her to marry Gordon Atterbury. He hung on longer than any of them—five or six years; but she wouldn't hear of it. That was how the real difference developed between us, although the trouble was deep rooted, for we never really understood each other. I had set my heart on it, and perhaps I was too dictatorial and insistent. I don't know. I meant the best for her, God knows . . . . Gordon never got over it. It dried him up." . . . . Irritation was creeping back into the banker's voice.

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“Then it came into Alison’s head that she wanted to ’make something of her life,’—as she expressed it. She said she was wasting herself, and began going to lectures with a lot of faddish women, became saturated with these nonsensical ideas about her sex that are doing so much harm nowadays. I suppose I was wrong in my treatment from the first. I never knew how to handle her, but we grew like flint and steel. I’ll say this for her, she kept quiet enough, but she used to sit opposite me at the table, and I knew all the time what she was thinking of, and then I’d break out. Of course she’d defend herself, but she had her temper under better control than I. She wanted to go away for a year or two and study landscape gardening, and then come back and establish herself in an office here. I wouldn’t listen to it. And one morning, when she was late to breakfast, I delivered an ultimatum. I gave her a lecture on a woman’s place and a woman’s duty, and told her that if she didn’t marry she’d have to stay here and live quietly with me, or I’d disinherit her.”

Hodder had become absorbed in this portrait of Alison Parr, drawn by her father with such unconscious vividness.

“And then?” he asked.

In spite of the tone of bitterness in which he had spoken, Eldon Parr smiled. It was a reluctant tribute to his daughter.

“I got an ultimatum in return,” he said. “Alison should have been a man.” His anger mounted quickly as he recalled the scene. “She said she had thought it all out: that our relationship had become impossible; that she had no doubt it was largely her fault, but that was the way she was made, and she couldn’t change. She had, naturally, an affection for me as her father, but it was very plain we couldn’t get along together: she was convinced that she had a right to individual freedom,—as she spoke of it,—to develop herself. She knew, if she continued to live with me on the terms I demanded, that her character would deteriorate. Certain kinds of sacrifice she was capable of, she thought, but what I asked would be a useless one. Perhaps I didn’t realize it, but it was slavery. Slavery!” he repeated, “the kind of slavery her mother had lived . . . .”

He took a turn around the room.

“So far as money was concerned, she was indifferent to it. She had enough from her mother to last until she began to make more. She wouldn’t take any from me in any case. I laughed, yet I have never been so angry in my life. Nor was it wholly anger, Hodder, but a queer tangle of feelings I can’t describe. There was affection mixed up in it—I realized afterward—but I longed to take her and shake her and lock her up until she should come to her senses: I couldn’t. I didn’t dare. I was helpless. I told her to go. She didn’t say anything more, but there was a determined look in her eyes when she kissed me as I left for the office. I spent a miserable day. More than once I made up my

mind to go home, but pride stopped me. I really didn't think she meant what she said. When I got back to the house in the afternoon she had left for New York.

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“Then I began to look forward to the time when her money would give out. She went to Paris with another young woman, and studied there, and then to England. She came back to New York, hired an apartment and a studio, and has made a success.”

The rector seemed to detect an unwilling note of pride at the magic word.

“It isn’t the kind of success I think much of, but it’s what she started out to do. She comes out to see me, once in a while, and she designed that garden.”

He halted in front of the clergyman.

“I suppose you think it’s strange, my telling you this,” he said. “It has come to the point,” he declared vehemently, “where it relieves me to tell somebody, and you seem to be a man of discretion and common-sense.”

Hodder looked down into Mr. Parr’s face, and was silent. Perhaps he recognized, as never before, the futility of the traditional words of comfort, of rebuke. He beheld a soul in torture, and realized with sudden sharpness how limited was his knowledge of the conditions of existence of his own time. Everywhere individualism reared its ugly head, everywhere it seemed plausible to plead justification; and once more he encountered that incompatibility of which Mrs. Constable had spoken! He might blame the son, blame the daughter, yet he could not condemn them utterly . . . . One thing he saw clearly, that Eldon Parr had slipped into what was still, for him, a meaningless hell.

The banker’s manner suddenly changed, reverted to what it had been. He arose.

“I’ve tried to do my duty as I saw it, and it comes to this—that we who have spent the best years of our lives in striving to develop this country have no thanks from our children or from any one else.”

With his hand on the electric switch, he faced Hodder almost defiantly as he spoke these words, and suddenly snapped off the light, as though the matter admitted of no discussion. In semi-darkness they groped down the upper flight of stairs . . . .

CHAPTER VII

THE KINGDOMS OF THE WORLD

I

When summer arrived, the birds of brilliant plumage of Mr. Hodder’s flock arose and flew lightly away, thus reversing the seasons. Only the soberer ones came fluttering into the cool church out of the blinding heat, and settled here and there throughout the

nave. The ample Mr. Bradley, perspiring in an alpaca coat, took up the meagre collection on the right of the centre aisle; for Mr. Parr, properly heralded, had gone abroad on one of those periodical, though lonely tours that sent anticipatory shivers of delight down the spines of foreign picture-dealers. The faithful Gordon Atterbury was worshipping at the sea, and even Mr. Constable and Mr. Plimpton, when recalled to the city by financial cares, succumbed to the pagan influence of the sun, and were usually to be found on Sunday mornings on the wide veranda of the country club, with glasses containing liquid and ice beside them, and surrounded by heaps of newspapers.

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To judge by St. John's, the city was empty. But on occasions, before he himself somewhat tardily departed,—drawn thither by a morbid though impelling attraction, Hodder occasionally walked through Dalton Street of an evening. If not in St. John's, summer was the season in Dalton Street. It flung open its doors and windows and moved out on the steps and the pavements, and even on the asphalt; and the music of its cafes and dance-halls throbbed feverishly through the hot nights. Dalton Street resorted neither to country club nor church.

Mr. McCrae, Hodder's assistant, seemed to regard these annual phenomena with a grim philosophy,—a relic, perhaps, of the Calvinistic determinism of his ancestors. He preached the same indefinite sermons, with the same imperturbability, to the dwindled congregations in summer and the enlarged ones in winter. But Hodder was capable of no such resignation —if resignation it were, for the self-contained assistant continued to be an enigma; and it was not without compunction that he left, about the middle of July, on his own vacation. He was tired, and yet he seemed to have accomplished nothing in this first year of the city parish whereof he had dreamed. And it was, no doubt, for that very reason that he was conscious of a depressing exhaustion as his train rolled eastward over that same high bridge that spanned the hot and muddy waters of the river. He felt a fugitive. In no months since he had left the theological seminary, had he seemingly accomplished so little; in no months had he had so magnificent an opportunity.

After he had reached the peaceful hills at Bremerton—where he had gone on Mrs. Whitely's invitation—he began to look back upon the spring and winter as a kind of mad nightmare, a period of ceaseless, distracted, and dissipated activity, of rushing hither and thither with no results. He had been aware of invisible barriers, restricting, hemming him in on all sides. There had been no time for reflection; and now that he had a breathing space, he was unable to see how he might reorganize his work in order to make it more efficient.

There were other perplexities, brought about by the glimpses he had had into the lives and beliefs—or rather unbeliefs—of his new parishioners. And sometimes, in an unwonted moment of pessimism, he asked himself why they thought it necessary to keep all that machinery going when it had so little apparent effect on their lives? He sat wistfully in the chancel of the little Bremerton church and looked into the familiar faces of those he had found in it when he came to it, and of those he had brought into it, wondering why he had been foolish enough to think himself endowed for the larger work. Here, he had been a factor, a force in the community, had entered into its life and affections. What was he there?

Nor did it tend to ease his mind that he was treated as one who has passed on to higher things.

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“I was afraid you’d work too hard,” said Mrs. Whitely, in her motherly way. “I warned you against it, Mr. Hodder. You never spared yourself, but in a big city parish it’s different. But you’ve made such a success, Nelson tells me, and everybody likes you there. I knew they would, of course. That is our only comfort in losing you, that you have gone to the greater work. But we do miss you.”

II

The air of Bremerton, and later the air of Bar Harbor had a certain reviving effect. And John Hodder, although he might be cast down, had never once entertained the notion of surrender. He was inclined to attribute the depression through which he had passed, the disappointment he had undergone as a just punishment for an overabundance of ego,—only Hodder used the theological term for the same sin. Had he not, after all, laboured largely for his own glory, and not Gods? Had he ever forgotten himself? Had the idea ever been far from his thoughts that it was he, John Hodder, who would build up the parish of St. John’s into a living organization of faith and works? The curious thing was that he had the power, and save in moments of weariness he felt it in him. He must try to remember always that this power was from God. But why had he been unable to apply it?

And there remained disturbingly in his memory certain phrases of Mrs. Constable’s, such as “elements of growth.”

He would change, she had said; and he had appeared to her as one with depths. Unsuspected depths—pockets that held the steam, which was increasing in pressure. At Bremerton, it had not gathered in the pockets, he had used it all—all had counted; but in the feverish, ceaseless activity of the city parish he had never once felt that intense satisfaction of emptying himself, nor, the sweet weariness that follows it. His seemed the weariness of futility. And introspection was revealing a crack—after so many years—in that self that he had believed to be so strongly welded. Such was the strain of the pent-up force. He recognized the danger-signal. The same phenomenon had driven him into the Church, where the steam had found an outlet—until now. And yet, so far as his examination went, he had not lost his beliefs, but the power of communicating them to others.

Bremerton, and the sight of another carrying on the work in which he had been happy, weighed upon him, and Bar Harbor offered distraction. Mrs. Larrabbee had not hesitated to remind him of his promise to visit her. If the gallery of portraits of the congregation of St. John’s were to be painted, this lady’s, at the age of thirty, would not be the least interesting. It would have been out of place in no ancestral hall, and many of her friends were surprised, after her husband’s death, that she did not choose one wherein to hang it. She might have. For she was the quintessence of that feminine product of our

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country at which Europe has never ceased to wonder, and to give her history would no more account for her than the process of manufacture explains the most delicate of scents. Her poise, her quick detection of sham in others not so fortunate, her absolute conviction that all things were as they ought to be; her charity, her interest in its recipients; her smile, which was kindness itself; her delicate features, her white skin with its natural bloom; the grace of her movements, and her hair, which had a different color in changing lights—such an ensemble is not to be depicted save by a skilled hand.

The late Mr. Larrabbee's name was still printed on millions of bright labels encircling cubes of tobacco, now manufactured by a Trust. However, since the kind that entered Mrs. Larrabbee's house, or houses, was all imported from Egypt or Cuba, what might have been in the nature of an unpleasant reminder was remote from her sight, and she never drove into the northern part of the city, where some hundreds of young women bent all day over the cutting-machines. To enter too definitely into Mrs. Larrabbee's history, therefore, were merely to be crude, for she is not a lady to caricature. Her father had been a steamboat captain—once an honoured calling in the city of her nativity—a devout Presbyterian who believed in the most rigid simplicity. Few who remembered the gaucheries of Captain Corington's daughter on her first presentation to his family's friends could recognize her in the cosmopolitan Mrs. Larrabbee. Why, with New York and London at her disposal, she elected to remain in the Middle West, puzzled them, though they found her answer, "that she belonged there," satisfying Grace Larrabbee's cosmopolitanism was of that apperception that knows the value of roots, and during her widowhood she had been thrusting them out. Mrs. Larrabbee followed by "of" was much more important than just Mrs. Larrabbee. And she was, moreover, genuinely attached to her roots.

Her girlhood shyness—rudeness, some called it, mistaking the effect for the cause—-had refined into a manner that might be characterized as 'difficile', though Hodder had never found her so. She liked direct men; to discover no guile on first acquaintance went a long way with her, and not the least of the new rector's social triumphs had been his simple conquest.

Enveloped in white flannel, she met his early train at the Ferry; an unusual compliment to a guest, had he but known it, but he accepted it as a tribute to the Church.

"I was so afraid you wouldn't come," she said, in a voice that conveyed indeed more than a perfunctory expression. She glanced at him as he sat beside her on the cushions of the flying motor boat, his strange eyes fixed upon the blue mountains of the island whither they were bound, his unruly hair fanned by the wind.

"Why?" he asked, smiling at the face beneath the flying veil.

“You need the rest. I believe in men taking their work seriously, but not so seriously as you do.”

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She was so undisguisedly glad to see him that he could scarcely have been human if he had not responded. And she gave him, in that fortnight, a glimpse of a life that was new and distracting: at times made him forget —and he was willing to forget—the lower forms of which it was the quintessence,—the factories that hummed, the forges that flung their fires into the night in order that it might exist; the Dalton Streets that went without. The effluvia from hot asphalt bore no resemblance to the salt-laden air that rattled the Venetian blinds of the big bedroom to which he was assigned. Her villa was set high above the curving shore, facing a sheltered terrace-garden resplendent in its August glory; to seaward, islands danced in the haze; and behind the house, in the sunlight, were massed spruces of a brilliant arsenic green with purple cones. The fluttering awnings were striped cardinal and white.

Nature and man seemed to have conspired to make this place vividly unreal, as a toy village comes painted from the shop. There were no half-tones, no poverty—in sight, at least; no litter. On the streets and roads, at the casino attached to the swimming-pool and at the golf club were to be seen bewildering arrays of well-dressed, well-fed women intent upon pleasure and exercise. Some of them gave him glances that seemed to say, “You belong to us,” and almost succeeded in establishing the delusion. The whole effect upon Hodder, in the state of mind in which he found himself, was reacting, stimulating, disquieting. At luncheons and dinners, he was what is known as a “success”—always that magic word.

He resisted, and none so quick as women to scent resistance. His very unbending attitude aroused their inherent craving for rigidity in his profession; he was neither plastic, unctuous, nor subservient; his very homeliness, redeemed by the eyes and mouth, compelled their attention. One of them told Mrs. Larrabbee that that rector of hers would “do something.”

But what, he asked himself, was he resisting? He was by no means a Puritan; and while he looked upon a reasonable asceticism as having its place in the faith that he professed, it was no asceticism that prevented a more complete acquiescence on his part in the mad carnival that surrounded him.

“I’m afraid you don’t wholly approve of Bar Harbor,” his hostess remarked; one morning.

“At first sight, it is somewhat staggering to the provincial mind,” he replied.

She smiled at him, yet with knitted brows.

“You are always putting me off—I never can tell what you think. And yet I’m sure you have opinions. You think these people frivolous, of course.”

“Most of them are so,” he answered, “but that is a very superficial criticism. The question is, why are they so? The sight of Bar Harbor leads a stranger to the reflection

that the carnival mood has become permanent with our countrymen, and especially our countrywomen."

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“The carnival mood,” she repeated thoughtfully, “yes, that expresses it. We are light, we are always trying to get away from ourselves, and sometimes I wonder whether there are any selves to get away from. You ought to atop us,” she added, almost accusingly, “to bring us to our senses.”

“That’s just it,” he agreed, “why don’t we? Why can’t we?”

“If more clergymen were like you, I think perhaps you might.”

His tone, his expression, were revelations.

“I—!” he exclaimed sharply, and controlled himself. But in that moment Grace Larrabbee had a glimpse of the man who had come to arouse in her an intense curiosity. For an instant a tongue of the fires of Vulcan had shot forth, fires that she had suspected.

“Aren’t you too ambitious?” she asked gently. And again, although she did not often blunder, she saw him wince. “I don’t mean ambitious for yourself. But surely you have made a remarkable beginning at St. John’s. Everybody admires and respects you, has confidence in you. You are so sure of yourself,” she hesitated a moment, for she had never ventured to discuss religion with him, “of your faith. Clergymen ought not to be apologetic, and your conviction cannot fail, in the long run, to have its effect.”

“Its effect,—on what?” he asked.

Mrs. Larrabbee was suddenly, at sea. And she prided herself on a lack of that vagueness generally attributed to her sex.

“On—on everything. On what we were talking about,—the carnival feeling, the levity, on the unbelief of the age. Isn’t it because the control has been taken off?”

He saw an opportunity to slip into smoother waters.

“The engine has lost its governor?”

“Exactly!” cried Mrs. Larrabbee. “What a clever simile!”

“It is Mr. Pares,” said Hodder. “Only he was speaking of other symptoms, Socialism, and its opposite, individualism,—not carnivalism.”

“Poor man,” said Mrs. Larrabbee, accepting the new ground as safer, yet with a baffled feeling that Hodder had evaded her once more, “he has had his share of individualism and carnivalism. His son Preston was here last month, and was taken out to the yacht every night in an unspeakable state. And Alison hasn’t been what might be called a blessing.”

“She must be unusual,” said the rector, musingly.

“Oh, Alison is a Person. She has become quite the fashion, and has more work than she can possibly attend to. Very few women with her good looks could have done what she has without severe criticism, and something worse, perhaps. The most extraordinary thing about her is her contempt for what her father has gained, and for conventionalities. It always amuses me when I think that she might have been the wife of Gordon Atterbury. The Goddess of Liberty linked to—what?”

Hodder thought instinctively of the Church. But he remained silent.

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“As a rule, men are such fools about the women they wish to marry,” she continued. “She would have led him a dance for a year or two, and then calmly and inexorably left him. And there was her father, with all his ability and genius, couldn’t see it either, but fondly imagined that Alison as Gordon Atterbury’s wife, would magically become an Atterbury and a bourgeoise, see that the corners were dusted in the big house, sew underwear for the poor, and fast in Lent.”

“And she is happy—where she is?” he inquired somewhat naively.

“She is self-sufficient,” said Mrs. Larrabbee, with unusual feeling, “and that is just what most women are not, in these days. Oh, why has life become such a problem? Sometimes I think, with all that I have, I’m not, so well off as one of those salesgirls in Ferguson’s, at home. I’m always searching for things to do—nothing is thrust on me. There are the charities—Galt House, and all that, but I never seem to get at anything, at the people I’d like to help. It’s like sending money to China. There is no direct touch any more. It’s like seeing one’s opportunities through an iron grating.”

Hodder started at the phrase, so exactly had she expressed his own case.

“Ah,” he said, “the iron grating bars the path of the Church, too.”

And just what was the iron grating?

They had many moments of intimacy during that fort night, though none in which the plumb of their conversation descended to such a depth. For he was, as she had said, always “putting her off.” Was it because he couldn’t satisfy her craving? give her the solution for which—he began to see—she thirsted? Why didn’t that religion that she seemed outwardly to profess and accept without qualification—the religion he taught set her at rest? show her the path?

Down in his heart he knew that he feared to ask.

That Mrs. Larrabbee was still another revelation, that she was not at rest, was gradually revealed to him as the days passed. Her spirit, too, like his own, like ’Mrs Constable’s, like Eldon Parr’s, like Eleanor Goodrich’s, was divided against itself; and this phenomenon in Mrs. Larrabbee was perhaps a greater shock to him, since he had always regarded her as essentially in equilibrium. One of his reasons, indeed, —in addition to the friendship that had grown up between them,—for coming to visit her had been to gain the effect of her poise on his own. Poise in a modern woman, leading a modern life. It was thus she attracted him. It was not that he ignored her frivolous side; it was nicely balanced by the other, and that other seemed growing. The social, she accepted at what appeared to be its own worth. Unlike Mrs. Plimpton, for instance, she was so innately a lady that she had met with no resistance in the Eastern watering places, and her sense of values had remained the truer for it.

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He did not admire her the less now he had discovered that the poise was not so adjusted as he had thought it, but his feeling about her changed, grew more personal, more complicated. She was showing an alarming tendency to lean on him at a time when he was examining with some concern his own supports. She possessed intelligence and fascination, she was a woman whose attentions would have flattered and disturbed any man with a spark of virility, and Hodder had constantly before his eyes the spectacle of others paying her court. Here were danger-signals again!

Mrs. Plaice, a middle-aged English lady staying in the house, never appeared until noon. Breakfast was set out in the tiled and sheltered loggia, where they were fanned by the cool airs of a softly breathing ocean. The world, on these mornings, had a sparkling unreality, the cold, cobalt sea stretching to sun-lit isles, and beyond, the vividly painted shore,—the setting of luxury had never been so complete. And the woman who sat opposite him seemed, like one of her own nectarines, to be the fruit that crowned it all.

Why not yield to the enchantment? Why rebel, when nobody else complained? Were it not more simple to accept what life sent in its orderly course instead of striving for an impossible and shadowy ideal? Very shadowy indeed! And to what end were his labours in that smoky, western city, with its heedless Dalton Streets, which went their inevitable ways? For he had the choice.

To do him justice, he was slow in arriving at a realization that seemed to him so incredible, so preposterous. He was her rector! And he had accepted, all unconsciously, the worldly point of view as to Mrs. Larrabbee,—that she was reserved for a worldly match. A clergyman's wife! What would become of the clergyman? And yet other clergymen had married rich women, despite the warning of the needle's eye.

She drove him in her buckboard to Jordan's Pond, set, like a jewel in the hills, and even to the deep, cliff bordered inlet beyond North East, which reminded her, she said, of a Norway fiord. And sometimes they walked together through wooded paths that led them to beetling shores, and sat listening to the waves crashing far below. Silences and commonplaces became the rule instead of the eager discussions with which they had begun,—on such safer topics as the problem of the social work of modern churches. Her aromatic presence, and in this setting, continually disturbed him: nature's perfumes, more definable, —exhalations of the sea and spruce,—mingled with hers, anaesthetics compelling lethargy. He felt himself drowning, even wished to drown, —-and yet strangely resisted.

"I must go to-morrow," he said.

"To-morrow—why? There is a dinner, you know, and Mrs. Waterman wished so particularly to meet you."

He did not look at her. The undisguised note of pain found an echo within him. And this was Mrs. Larrabbee!

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“I am sorry, but I must,” he told her, and she may not have suspected the extent to which the firmness was feigned.

“You have promised to make other visits? The Fergusons,—they said they expected you.”

“I’m going west—home,” he said, and the word sounded odd.

“At this season! But there is nobody in church, at least only a few, and Mr. McCrae can take care of those—he always does. He likes it.”

Hodder smiled in spite of himself. He might have told her that those outside the church were troubling him. But he did not, since he had small confidence in being able to bring them in.

“I have been away too long, I am getting spoiled,” he replied, with an attempt at lightness. He forced his eyes to meet hers, and she read in them an unalterable resolution.

“It is my opinion you are too conscientious, even for a clergyman,” she said, and now it was her lightness that hurt. She protested no more. And as she led the way homeward through the narrow forest path, her head erect, still maintaining this lighter tone, he wondered how deeply she had read him; how far her intuition had carried her below the surface; whether she guessed the presence of that stifled thing in him which was crying feebly for life; whether it was that she had discovered, or something else? He must give it the chance it craved. He must get away—he must think. To surrender now would mean destruction. . .

Early the next morning, as he left the pier in the motor boat, he saw a pink scarf waving high above him from the loggia. And he flung up his hand in return. Mingled with a faint sense of freedom was intense sadness.

CHAPTER VIII

THE LINE OF LEAST RESISTANCE

From the vantage point of his rooms in the parish house, Hodder reviewed the situation. And despite the desires thronging after him in his flight he had the feeling of once who, in the dark, has been very near to annihilation. What had shaken him most was the revelation of an old enemy which, watching its chance, had beset him at the first opportunity; and at a time when the scheme of life, which he flattered himself to have solved forever, was threatening once more to resolve itself into fragments. He had, as if by a miracle, escaped destruction in some insidious form.

He shrank instinctively from an analysis of the woman in regard to whom his feelings were, so complicated, and yet by no means lacking in tenderness. But as time went on, he recognized more and more that she had come into his life at a moment when he was peculiarly vulnerable. She had taken him off his guard. That the brilliant Mrs. Larrabbee should have desired him—or what she believed was him—was food enough for thought, was an indication of an idealism in her nature that he would not have suspected. From a worldly point of view, the marriage would have commended itself to none of her friends. Yet Hodder

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perceived clearly that he could not have given her what she desired, since the marriage would have killed it in him. She offered him the other thing. Once again he had managed somehow to cling to his dream of what the relationship between man and woman should be, and he saw more and more distinctly that he had coveted not only the jewel, but its setting. He could not see her out of it—she faded. Nor could he see himself in it.

Luxury,—of course,—that was what he had spurned. Luxury in contrast to Dalton Street, to the whirring factories near the church which discharged, at nightfall, their quotas of wan women and stunted children. And yet here he was catering to luxury, providing religion for it! Religion!

Early in November he heard that Mrs. Larrabbee had suddenly decided to go abroad without returning home. . . .

That winter Hodder might have been likened to a Niagara for energy; an unharnessed Niagara—such would have been his own comment. He seemed to turn no wheels, or only a few at least, and feebly. And while the spectacle of their rector's zeal was no doubt an edifying one to his parishioners, they gave him to understand that they would have been satisfied with less. They admired, but chided him gently; and in February Mr. Parr offered to take him to Florida. He was tired, and it was largely because he dreaded the reflection inevitable in a period of rest, that he refused. . . . And throughout these months, the feeling recurred, with increased strength, that McCrae was still watching him, —the notion persisted that his assistant held to a theory of his own, if he could but be induced to reveal it. Hodder refrained from making the appeal. Sometimes he was on the point of losing patience with this enigmatic person.

Congratulations on the fact that his congregation was increasing brought him little comfort, since a cold analysis of the newcomers who were renting pews was in itself an indication of the lack of that thing he so vainly sought. The decorous families who were now allying themselves with St. John's did so at the expense of other churches either more radical or less fashionable. What was it he sought? What did he wish? To fill the church to overflowing with the poor and needy as well as the rich, and to enter into the lives of all. Yet at a certain point he met a resistance that was no less firm because it was baffling. The Word, on his lips at least, seemed to have lost it efficacy. The poor heeded it not, and he preached to the rich as from behind a glass. They went on with their carnival. Why this insatiate ambition on his part in an age of unbelief? Other clergymen, not half so fortunate, were apparently satisfied; or else—from his conversation with them—either oddly optimistic or resigned. Why not he?

It was strange, in spite of everything, that hope sprang up within him, a recurrent geyser.

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Gradually, almost imperceptibly, he found himself turning more and more towards that line of least resistance which other churches were following, as the one Modern Solution,—institutional work. After all, in the rescuing of bodies some method might yet be discovered to revive the souls. And there were the children! Hodder might have been likened to an explorer, seeking a direct path when there was none—a royal road. And if this were oblique it offered, at least, a definite outlet for his energy.

Such was, approximately, the state of his mind early in March when Gordon Atterbury came back from a conference in New York on institutional work, and filled with enthusiasm. St. John's was incredibly behind the times, so he told Hodder, and later the vestry. Now that they had, in Mr. Hodder, a man of action and ability—ahem! there was no excuse for a parish as wealthy as St. John's, a parish with their opportunities, considering the proximity of Dalton Street neighbourhood, not enlarging and modernizing the parish house, not building a settlement house with kindergartens, schools, workshops, libraries, a dispensary and day nurseries. It would undoubtedly be an expense—and Mr. Atterbury looked at Mr. Parr, who drummed on the vestry table. They would need extra assistants, deaconesses, trained nurses, and all that. But there were other churches in the city that were ahead of St. John's—a reproach —ahem!

Mr. Parr replied that he had told the rector that he stood ready to contribute to such a scheme when he, the rector; should be ready to approve it. And he looked at Mr. Hodder.

Mr. Hodder said he had been considering the matter ever since his arrival. He had only one criticism of institutional work, that in his observation it did not bring the people whom it reached into the Church in any great numbers. Perhaps that were too much to ask, in these days. For his part he would willingly assume the extra burden, and he was far from denying the positive good such work accomplished through association and by the raising of standards.

Mr. Ferguson declared his readiness to help. Many of his salesgirls, he said, lived in this part of the city, and he would be glad to do anything in his power towards keeping them out of the dance-halls and such places.

A committee was finally appointed consisting of Mr. Parr, Mr. Atterbury, and the rector, to consult architects and to decide upon a site.

Hodder began a correspondence with experts in other cities, collected plans, pamphlets, statistics; spent hours with the great child-specialist, Dr. Jarvis, and with certain clergymen who believed in institutionalism as the hope of the future.

But McCrae was provokingly non-committal.

“Oh, they may try it,” he assented somewhat grudgingly, one day when the rector had laid out for his inspection the architects’ sketch for the settlement house. “No doubt it will help many poor bodies along.”

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“Is there anything else?” the rector asked, looking searchingly at his assistant.

“It may as well be that,” replied McCrae.

The suspicion began to dawn on Hodder that the Scotch man’s ideals were as high as his own. Both of them, secretly, regarded the new scheme as a compromise, a yielding to the inevitable . . . .

Mr. Ferguson’s remark that an enlarged parish house and a new settlement house might help to keep some of the young women employed in his department store out of the dance-halls interested Hodder, who conceived the idea of a dance-hall of their own. For the rector, in the course of his bachelor shopping, often resorted to the emporium of his vestryman, to stand on the stairway which carried him upward without lifting his feet, to roam, fascinated, through the mazes of its aisles, where he invariably got lost, and was rescued by suave floor-walkers or pert young women in black gowns and white collars and cuffs. But they were not all pert—there were many characters, many types. And he often wondered whether they did not get tired standing on their feet all day long, hesitating to ask them; speculated on their lives—flung as most of them were on a heedless city, and left to shift for themselves. Why was it that the Church which cared for Mr. Ferguson’s soul was unable to get in touch with, or make an appeal to, those of his thousand employees?

It might indeed have been said that Francis Ferguson cared for his own soul, as he cared for the rest of his property, and kept it carefully insured,—somewhat, perhaps, on the principle of Pascal’s wager. That he had been a benefactor to his city no one would deny who had seen the facade that covered a whole block in the business district from Tower to Vine, surmounted by a red standard with the familiar motto, “When in doubt, go to Ferguson’s.” At Ferguson’s you could buy anything from a pen-wiper to a piano or a Paris gown; sit in a cool restaurant in summer or in a palm garden in winter; leave your baby—if you had one—in charge of the most capable trained nurses; if your taste were literary, mull over the novels in the Book Department; if you were stout, you might be reduced in the Hygiene Department, unknown to your husband and intimate friends. In short, if there were any virtuous human wish in the power of genius to gratify, Ferguson’s was the place. They, even taught you how to cook. It was a modern Aladdin’s palace: and, like everything else modern, much more wonderful than the original. And the soda might be likened to the waters of Trevi,—to partake of which is to return.

“When in doubt, go to Ferguson!” Thus Mrs. Larrabbee and other ladies interested in good works had altered his motto. He was one of the supporters of Galt House, into which some of his own young saleswomen had occasionally strayed; and none, save Mr. Parr alone, had been so liberal in his gifts. Holder invariably found it difficult to reconcile the unassuming man, whose conversation was so commonplace, with the

titanic genius who had created Ferguson's; nor indeed with the owner of the imposing marble mansion at Number 5, Park Street.

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The rector occasionally dined there. He had acquired a real affection for Mrs. Ferguson, who resembled a burgomaster's wife in her evening gowns and jewels, and whose simple social ambitions had been gratified beyond her dreams. Her heart had not shrunken in the process, nor had she forgotten her somewhat heterogeneous acquaintances in the southern part of the city. And it was true that when Gertrude Constable had nearly died of appendicitis, it was on this lady's broad bosom that Mrs. Constable had wept. Mrs. Ferguson had haunted the house, regardless of criticism, and actually quivering with sympathy. Her more important dinner parties might have been likened to ill-matched fours-in-hand, and Holder had sometimes felt more of pity than of amusement as she sat with an expression of terror on her face, helplessly watching certain unruly individuals taking their bits in their teeth and galloping madly downhill. On one occasion, when he sat beside her, a young man, who shall be nameless, was suddenly heard to remark in the midst of an accidental lull:

"I never go to church. What's the use? I'm afraid most of us don't believe in hell any more."

A silence followed: of the sort that chills. And the young man, glancing down the long board at the clergyman, became as red as the carnation in his buttonhole, and in his extremity gulped down more champagne.

"Things are in a dreadful state nowadays!" Mrs. Ferguson gasped to a paralyzed company, and turned an agonized face to Holder. "I'm so sorry," she said, "I don't know why I asked him to-night, except that I have to have a young man for Nan, and he's just come to the city, and I was sorry for him. He's very promising in a business way; he's in Mr. Plimpton's trust company."

"Please don't let it trouble you." Holder turned and smiled a little, and added whimsically: "We may as well face the truth."

"Oh, I should expect you to be good about it, but it was unpardonable," she cried . . . .

In the intervals when he gained her attention he strove, by talking lightly of other things, to take her mind off the incident, but somehow it had left him strangely and—he felt—-disproportionately depressed, —although he had believed himself capable of facing more or less philosophically that condition which the speaker had so frankly expressed. Yet the remark, somehow, had had an illuminating effect like a flashlight, revealing to him the isolation of the Church as never before. And after dinner, as they were going to the smoking-room, the offender accosted him shamefacedly.

"I'm awfully sorry, Mr. Holder," he stammered.

That the tall rector's regard was kindly did not relieve his discomfort. Hodder laid a hand on his shoulder.

“Don’t worry about it,” he answered, “I have only one regret as to what you said—that it is true.”

The other looked at him curiously.

“It’s mighty decent of you to take it this way,” he laid. Further speech failed him.

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He was a nice-looking young man, with firm white teeth, and honesty was written all over his boyish face. And the palpable fact that his regret was more on the clergyman's account than for the social faux pas drew Holder the more, since it bespoke a genuineness of character.

He did not see the yearning in the rector's eyes as he turned away. . . Why was it they could not be standing side by side, fighting the same fight? The Church had lost him, and thousands like him, and she needed them; could not, indeed, do without them.

Where, indeed, were the young men? They did not bother their heads about spiritual matters any more. But were they not, he asked himself, franker than many of these others, the so-called pillars of the spiritual structure?

Mr. Plimpton accosted him. "I congratulate you upon the new plans, Mr. Hodder,—-they're great," he said. "Mr. Parr and our host are coming down handsomely, eh? When we get the new settlement house we'll have a plant as up-to-date as any church in the country. When do you break ground?"

"Not until autumn, I believe," Hodder replied. "There are a good many details to decide upon yet."

"Well, I congratulate you."

Mr. Plimpton was forever congratulating.

"Up-to-date"—"plant"! More illuminating words, eloquent of Mr. Plimpton's ideals. St. John's down at the heels, to be brought up to the state of efficiency of Mr. Plimpton's trust company! It was by no means the first time he had heard modern attributes on Mr. Plimpton's lips applied to a sacred institution, but to-night they had a profoundly disquieting effect. To-night, a certain clairvoyance had been vouchsafed him, and he beheld these men, his associates and supporters, with a detachment never before achieved.

They settled in groups about the room, which was square and high, and panelled in Italian walnut, with fluted pilasters,—the capitals of which were elaborately carved. And Hodder found himself on a deep leather sofa in a corner engaged in a desultory and automatic conversation with Everett Constable. Mr. Plimpton, with a large cigar between his lips, was the radiating centre of one of the liveliest groups, and of him the rector had fallen into a consideration, piecing together bits of information that hitherto had floated meaninglessly in his mind. It was Mrs. Larrabbee who had given character to the career of the still comparatively youthful and unquestionably energetic president of the Chamber of Commerce by likening it to a great spiral, starting somewhere in outer regions of twilight, and gradually drawing nearer to the centre, from which he had

never taken his eyes. At the centre were Eldon Parr and Charlotte Gore. Wallis Plimpton had made himself indispensable to both.

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His campaign for the daughter of Thurston Gore had been comparable to one of the great sieges of history, for Mr. Plimpton was a laughing-stock when he sat down before that fortress. At the end of ten years, Charlotte had capitulated, with a sigh of relief, realizing at last her destiny. She had become slightly stout, revealing, as time went on, no wrinkles—a proof that the union was founded on something more enduring than poetry: Statesmanship—that was the secret! Step by step, slowly but surely, the memoranda in that matrimonial portfolio were growing into accomplished facts; all events, such as displacements of power, were foreseen; and the Plimptons, like Bismarck, had only to indicate, in case of sudden news, the pigeonhole where the plan of any particular campaign was filed.

Mrs. Larrabbee's temptation to be witty at the expense of those for whom she had no liking had led Hodder to discount the sketch. He had not disliked Mr. Plimpton, who had done him many little kindnesses. He was good-natured, never ruffled, widely tolerant, hail-fellow-well-met with everybody, and he had enlivened many a vestry meeting with his stories. It were hypercritical to accuse him of a lack of originality. And if by taking thought, he had arrived, from nowhere, at his present position of ease and eminence, success had not turned to ashes in his mouth. He fairly exhaled well-being, happiness, and good cheer. Life had gone well with him, he wished the same to others.

But to-night, from his corner, Hodder seemed to see Mr. Plimpton with new eyes. Not that he stood revealed a villain, which he was far from being; it was the air of sophistication, of good-natured if cynical acceptance of things as they were—and plenty good enough, too!—that jarred upon the rector in his new mood, and it was made manifest to him as never before why his appeals from the pulpit had lacked efficacy. Mr. Plimpton didn't want the world changed! And in this desire he represented the men in that room, and the majority of the congregation of St. John's. The rector had felt something of this before, and it seemed to him astonishing that the revelation had not come to him sooner. Did any one of them, in his heart, care anything for the ideals and aspirations of the Church?

As he gazed at them through the gathering smoke they had become strangers, receded all at once to a great distance. . . . Across the room he caught the name, Bedloe Hubbell, pronounced with peculiar bitterness by Mr. Ferguson. At his side Everett Constable was alert, listening.

"Ten years ago," said a stout Mr. Varnum, the President of the Third National Bank, "if you'd told me that that man was to become a demagogue and a reformer, I wouldn't have believed you. Why, his company used to take rebates from the L. & G., and the Southern—I know it." He emphasized the statement with a blow on the table that made the liqueur glasses dance. "And now, with his Municipal League, he's going to clean up the city, is he? Put in a reform mayor. Show up what he calls the Consolidated Tractions Company scandal. Pooh!"

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“You got out all right, Varnum. You won’t be locked up,” said Mr. Plimpton, banteringly.

“So did you,” retorted Varnum.

“So did Ferguson, so did Constable.”

“So did Eldon Parr,” remarked another man, amidst a climax of laughter.

“Langmaid handled that pretty well.”

Hodder felt Everett Constable fidget.

“Bedloe’s all right, but he’s a dreamer,” Mr. Plimpton volunteered.

“Then I wish he’d stop dreaming,” said Mr. Ferguson, and there was more laughter, although he had spoken savagely.

“That’s what he is, a dreamer,” Varnum ejaculated. “Say, he told George Carter the other day that prostitution wasn’t necessary, that in fifty years we’d have largely done away with it. Think of that, and it’s as old as Sodom and Gomorrah!”

“If Hubbell had his way, he’d make this town look like a Connecticut hill village—he’d drive all the prosperity out of it. All the railroads would have to abandon their terminals—there’d be no more traffic, and you’d have to walk across the bridge to get a drink.”

“Well,” said Mr. Plimpton, “Tom Beatty’s good enough for me, for a while.”

Beatty, Hodder knew, was the “boss,” of the city, with headquarters in a downtown saloon.

“Beatty’s been maligned,” Mr. Varnum declared. “I don’t say he’s a saint, but he’s run the town pretty well, on the whole, and kept the vice where it belongs, out of sight. He’s made his pile, but he’s entitled to something we all are. You always know where you stand with Beatty. But say, if Hubbell and his crowd—”

“Don’t worry about Bedloe,—he’ll get called in, he’ll come home to roost like the rest of them,” said Mr. Plimpton, cheerfully. “The people can’t govern themselves,—only Bedloe doesn’t know it. Some day he’ll find it out.” . . .

The French window beside him was open, and Hodder slipped out, unnoticed, into the warm night and stood staring at the darkness. His one desire had been to get away, out of hearing, and he pressed forward over the tiled pavement until he stumbled against a stone balustrade that guarded a drop of five feet or so to the lawn below. At the same time he heard his name called.

“Is that you, Mr. Hodder?”

He started. The voice had a wistful tremulousness, and might almost have been the echo of the leaves stirring in the night air. Then he perceived, in a shaft of light from one of the drawing-room windows near by, a girl standing beside the balustrade; and as she came towards him, with tentative steps, the light played conjurer, catching the silvery gauze of her dress and striking an aura through the film of her hair.

“It’s Nan Ferguson,” she said.

“Of course,” he exclaimed, collecting himself. “How stupid of me not to have recognized you!”

“I’m so glad you came out,” she went on impulsively, yet shyly, “I wanted to tell you how sorry I was that that thing happened at the table.”

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“I like that young man,” he said.

“Do you?” she exclaimed, with unexpected gratitude. So do I. He really isn’t—so bad as he must seem.”

“I’m sure of it,” said the rector, laughing.

“I was afraid you’d think him wicked,” said Nan. “He works awfully hard, and he’s sending a brother through college. He isn’t a bit like—some others I know. He wants to make something of himself. And I feel responsible, because I had mother ask him to-night.”

He read her secret. No doubt she meant him to do so.

“You know we’re going away next week, for the summer—that is, mother and I,” she continued. “Father comes later. And I do hope you’ll make us a visit, Mr. Hodder—we were disappointed you couldn’t come last year.” Nan hesitated, and thrusting her hand into her gown drew forth an envelope and held it out to him. “I intended to give you this to-night, to use—for anything you thought best.”

He took it gravely. She looked up at him.

“It seems so little—such a selfish way of discharging one’s obligations, just to write out a cheque, when there is so much trouble in the world that demands human kindness as well as material help. I drove up Dalton Street yesterday, from downtown. You know how hot it was! And I couldn’t help thinking how terrible it is that we who have everything are so heedless of all that misery. The thought of it took away all my pleasure.

“I’d do something more, something personal, if I could. Perhaps I shall be able to, next winter. Why is it so difficult for all of us to know what to do?”

“We have taken a step forward, at any rate, when we know that it is difficult,” he said.

She gazed up at him fixedly, her attention caught by an indefinable something in his voice, in his smile, that thrilled and vaguely disturbed her. She remembered it long afterwards. It suddenly made her shy again; as if, in faring forth into the darkness, she had come to the threshold of a mystery, of a revelation withheld; and it brought back the sense of adventure, of the palpitating fear and daring with which she had come to meet him.

“It is something to know,” she repeated, half comprehending. The scraping of chairs within alarmed her, and she stood ready to fly.

“But I haven’t thanked you for this,” he said, holding up the envelope. “It may be that I shall find some one in Dalton Street—”

“Oh, I hope so,” she faltered, breathlessly, hesitating a moment. And then she was gone, into the house.

THE INSIDE OF THE CUP

By Winston Churchill

Volume 3.

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CHAPTER IX

THE DIVINE DISCONTENT

I

It was the last Sunday in May, and in another week the annual flight to the seashore and the mountains would have begun again. The breezes stealing into the church through the open casements wafted hither and thither the odours of the chancel flowers, and mingled with those fainter and subtler perfumes set free by the rustling of summer gowns.

As on this day he surveyed his decorous and fashionable congregation, Hodder had something of that sense of extremity which the great apostle to the Gentiles himself must have felt when he stood in the midst of the Areopagus and made his vain yet sublime appeal to Athenian indifference and luxury. “And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent.” . . Some, indeed, stirred uneasily as the rector paused, lowering their eyes before the intensity of his glance, vaguely realizing that the man had flung the whole passion of his being into the appeal.

Heedlessness—that was God’s accusation against them, against the age. Materialism, individualism! So absorbed were they in the pursuit of wealth, of distraction, so satisfied with the current philosophy, so intent on surrounding themselves with beautiful things and thus shutting out the sterner view, that they had grown heedless of the divine message. How few of them availed themselves of their spiritual birthright to renew their lives at the altar rail! And they had permitted their own children to wander away . . . . Repent!

There was a note of desperation in his appeal, like that of the hermit who stands on a mountain crag and warns the gay and thoughtless of the valley of the coming avalanche. Had they heard him at last? There were a few moments of tense silence, during which he stood gazing at them. Then he raised his arm in benediction, gathered up his surplice, descended the pulpit steps, and crossed swiftly the chancel . . . .

He had, as it were, turned on all the power in a supreme effort to reach them. What if he had failed again? Such was the misgiving that beset him, after the service, as he got out of his surplice, communicated by some occult telepathy . . . . Mr. Parr was awaiting him, and summoning his courage, hope battling against intuition, he opened the door into the now empty church and made his way toward the porch, where the sound of voices warned him that several persons were lingering. The nature of their congratulations confirmed his doubts. Mrs. Plimpton, resplendent and looking less robust than usual in one of her summer Paris gowns, greeted him effusively.

“Oh, Mr. Hodder, what a wonderful sermon!” she cried. “I can’t express how it made me feel—so delinquent! Of course that is exactly the effect you wished. And I was just telling Wallis I was so glad I waited until Tuesday to go East, or I should have missed it. You surely must come on to Hampton and visit us, and preach it over again in our little stone church there, by the sea. Good-by and don’t forget! I’ll write you, setting the date, only we’d be glad to have you any time.”

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“One of the finest I ever heard—if not the finest,” Mr. Plimpton declared, with a kind of serious ‘empressement’, squeezing his hand.

Others stopped him; Everett Constable, for one, and the austere Mrs. Atterbury. Hodder would have avoided the ever familiar figure of her son, Gordon, in the invariable black cutaway and checked trousers, but he was standing beside Mr. Parr.

“Ahem! Why, Mr. Hodder,” he exclaimed, squinting off his glasses, “that was a magnificent effort. I was saying to Mr. Parr that it isn’t often one hears a sermon nowadays as able as that, and as sound. Many clergymen refrain from preaching them, I sometimes think, because they are afraid people won’t like them.”

“I scarcely think it’s that,” the rector replied, a little shortly. “We’re afraid people won’t heed them.”

He became aware, as he spoke, of a tall young woman, who had cast an enigmatic glance first at Gordon Atterbury, and then at himself.

“It was a good sermon,” said Mr. Parr. “You’re coming to lunch, Hodder?”

The rector nodded. “I’m ready when you are,” he answered.

“The motor’s waiting,” said the banker, leading the way down the steps to the sidewalk, where he turned. “Alison, let me introduce Mr. Hodder. This is my daughter,” he added simply.

This sudden disclosure of the young woman’s identity had upon Hodder a certain electric effect, and with it came a realization of the extent to which—from behind the scenes, so to speak—she had gradually aroused him to a lively speculation. She seemed to have influenced, to a greater or less degree, so many lives with which he had come into touch! Compelled persons to make up their minds about her! And while he sympathized with Eldon Parr in his abandonment, he had never achieved the full condemnation which he felt—an impartial Christian morality would have meted out.

As he uttered the conventional phrase and took her hand, he asked himself whether her personality justified his interest. Her glance at Gordon Atterbury in the midst of that gentleman’s felicitations on the sermon had been expressive, Hodder thought, of veiled amusement slightly tinctured with contempt; and he, Hodder, felt himself to have grown warm over it. He could not be sure that Alison Parr had not included, in her inner comment, the sermon likewise, on which he had so spent himself. What was she doing at church? As her eyes met his own, he seemed to read a challenge. He had never encountered a woman—he decided—who so successfully concealed her thought, and at the same time so incited curiosity about it.

The effect of her reappearance on Gordon Atterbury was painfully apparent, and Mrs. Larrabbee's remark, "that he had never got over it," recurred to Hodder. He possessed the virtue of being faithful, at least, in spite of the lady's apostasy, and he seemed to be galvanized into a tenfold nervousness as he hustled after them and handed her, with the elaborate attention little men are apt to bestow upon women, into the motor.

Page 1700

“Er—how long shall you be here, Alison?” he asked. “I don’t know,” she answered, not unkindly, but with a touch of indifference.

“You treat us shamefully,” he informed her, “upon my word! But I’m coming to call.”

“Do,” said Alison. Hodder caught her eye again, and this time he was sure that she surprised in him a certain disdain of Mr. Atterbury’s zeal. Her smile was faint, yet unmistakable.

He resented it. Indeed, it was with a well-defined feeling of antagonism that he took his seat, and this was enhanced as they flew westward, Mr. Parr wholly absorbed with the speaking trumpet, energetically rebuking at every bounce. In the back of the rector’s mind lay a weight, which he identified, at intervals, with what he was now convinced was the failure of his sermon. . . Alison took no part in the casual conversation that began when they reached the boulevard and Mr. Parr abandoned the trumpet, but lay back in silence and apparently with entire comfort in a corner of the limousine.

At the lunch-table Mr. Parr plunged into a discussion of some of the still undecided details of the new settlement house, in which, as the plan developed, he had become more and more interested. He had made himself responsible, from time to time, for additional sums, until the original estimate had been almost doubled. Most of his suggestions had come from Hodder, who had mastered the subject with a thoroughness that appealed to the financier: and he had gradually accepted the rector’s idea of concentrating on the children. Thus he had purchased an adjoining piece of land that was to be a model playground, in connection with the gymnasium and swimming-pool. The hygienic department was to be all that modern science could desire.

“If we are going to do the thing,” the banker would, remark, “we may as well do it thoroughly; we may as well be leaders and not followers.”

So, little by little, the scheme had grown to proportions that sometimes appalled the rector when he realized how largely he had been responsible for the additions,—in spite of the lukewarmness with which he had begun. And yet it had occasionally been Mr. Parr who, with a sweep of his hand, had added thousands to a particular feature: thus the dance-hall had become, in prospect, a huge sun-parlour at the top of the building, where the children were to have their kindergartens and games in winter; and which might be shaded and opened up to the breezes in summer. What had reconciled Hodder to the enterprise most of all, however, was the chapel —in the plan a beautiful Gothic church—whereby he hoped to make the religious progress keep pace with the social. Mr. Parr was decidedly in sympathy with this intention, and referred to it now.

“I was much impressed by what you said in your sermon to-day as to the need of insisting upon authority in religious matters,” he declared, “and I quite agree that we should have a chapel of some size at the settlement house for that reason. Those

people need spiritual control. It's what the age needs. And when I think of some of the sermons printed in the newspapers to-day, and which are served up as Christianity, there is only one term to apply to them—they are criminally incendiary."

Page 1701

“But isn’t true Christianity incendiary, in your meaning of the word?”

It was Alison who spoke, in a quiet and musical voice that was in striking contrast to the tone of Mr. Parr, which the rector had thought unusually emphatic. It was the first time she had shown an inclination to contribute to the talk. But since Hodder had sat down at the table her presence had disturbed him, and he had never been wholly free from an uncomfortable sense that he was being measured and weighed.

Once or twice he had stolen a glance at her as she sat, perfectly at ease, and asked himself whether she had beauty, and it dawned upon him little by little that the very proportion she possessed made for physical unobtrusiveness. She was really very tall for a woman. At first he would have said her nose was straight, when he perceived that it had a delicate hidden curve; her eyes were curiously set, her dark hair parted in the middle, brought down low on each side of the forehead and tied in a Grecian knot. Thus, in truth, he observed, were seemingly all the elements of the classic, even to the firm yet slender column of the neck. How had it eluded him?

Her remark, if it astonished Hodder, had a dynamic effect on Eldon Parr. And suddenly the rector comprehended that the banker had not so much been talking to him as through him; had been, as it were, courting opposition.

“What do you mean by Christianity being incendiary?” he demanded.

“Incendiary, from your point of view—I made, the qualification,” Alison replied, apparently unmoved by his obvious irritation. “I don’t pretend to be a Christian, as you know, but if there is one element in Christianity that distinguishes it, it is the brotherhood of man. That’s pure nitroglycerin, though it’s been mixed with so much sawdust. Incendiary is a mild epithet. I never read the sermons you refer to; I dare say they’re crude, but they’re probably attempts to release an explosive which would blow your comfortable social system and its authority into atoms.”

Hodder, who had listened in amazement, glanced at the banker. He had never before heard him opposed, or seen him really angry.

“I’ve heard that doctrine,” cried Mr. Parr. “Those who are dissatisfied with things as they are because they have been too stupid or too weak or self-indulgent to rise, find it easy to twist the principles of Christianity into revolutionary propaganda. It’s a case of the devil quoting Scripture. The brotherhood of man! There has never been an age when philanthropy and organized charity were on such a scale as to-day.”

A certain gallant, indomitable ring crept into Alison’s voice; she did not seem in the least dismayed or overborne.

Page 1702

“But isn’t that just where most so-called Christians make their mistake?” she asked. “Philanthropy and organized charity, as they exist to-day, have very little to do with the brotherhood of man. Mightn’t it be you who are fooling yourselves instead of the incendiaries fooling themselves So long as you can make yourselves believe that this kind of charity is a logical carrying out of the Christian principles, so long are your consciences satisfied with the social system which your class, very naturally, finds so comfortable and edifying. The weak and idiotic ought to be absurdly grateful for what is flung to them, and heaven is gained in the throwing. In this way the rich inevitably become the elect, both here and hereafter, and the needle’s eye is widened into a gap.”

There was on Mr. Parr’s lips a smile not wholly pleasant to see. Indeed, in the last few minutes there had been revealed to Hodder a side of the banker’s character which had escaped him in the two years of their acquaintance.

“I suppose,” said Mr. Parr, slowly, drumming on the table, “you would say that of the new settlement house of St. John’s, whereby we hope to raise a whole neighbourhood.”

“Yes, I should,” replied Alison, with spirit. “The social system by which you thrive, and which politically and financially you strive to maintain, is diametrically opposed to your creed, which is supposed to be the brotherhood of man. But if that were really your creed, you would work for it politically and financially. You would see that your Church is trying to do infinitesimally what the government, but for your opposition, might do universally. Your true creed is the survival of the fittest. You grind these people down into what is really an economic slavery and dependence, and then you insult and degrade them by inviting them to exercise and read books and sing hymns in your settlement house, and give their children crackers and milk and kindergartens and sunlight! I don’t blame them for not becoming Christians on that basis. Why, the very day I left New York a man over eighty, who had been swindled out of all he had, rather than go to one of those Christian institutions deliberately forged a check and demanded to be sent to the penitentiary. He said he could live and die there with some self-respect.”

“I might have anticipated that you would ultimately become a Socialist, Alison,” Mr. Parr remarked—but his voice trembled.

“I don’t know whether I’m a Socialist or an Anarchist,” she answered. Hodder thought be detected a note of hopelessness in her voice, and the spirit in it ebbed a little. Not only did she seem indifferent to her father’s feeling—which incidentally added fuel to it—but her splendid disregard of him, as a clergyman, had made an oddly powerful appeal. And her argument! His feelings, as he listened to this tremendous arraignment of Eldon Parr by his daughter, are not easily to be described.

Page 1703

To say that she had compelled him, the rector of St. John's, at last to look in the face many conditions which he had refused to recognize would be too definite a statement. Nevertheless, some such thing had occurred. Refutations sprang to his lips, and died there, though he had no notion of uttering them. He saw that to admit her contentions would be to behold crumble into ruins the structure that he had spent a life in rearing; and yet something within him responded to her words—they had the passionate, convincing ring of truth.

By no means the least of their disturbing effects was due to the fact that they came as a climax to, as a fulfilment of the revelation he had had at the Fergusons', when something of the true nature of Mr. Plimpton and others of his congregation had suddenly been laid bare. And now Hodder looked at Eldon Parr to behold another man from the one he had known, and in that moment realized that their relationship could never again be the same. . . Were his sympathies with the daughter?

"I don't know what I believe," said Alison, after a pause. "I've ceased trying to find out. What's the use!" She appeared now to be addressing no one in particular.

A servant entered with a card, and the banker's hand shook perceptibly as he put down his claret and adjusted his glasses.

"Show him into my office upstairs, and tell him I'll see him at once," he said, and glanced at the rector. But it was Alison whom he addressed. "I must leave Mr. Hodder to answer your arguments," he added, with an attempt at lightness; and then to the rector: "Perhaps you can convince her that the Church is more sinned against than sinning, and that Christians are not such terrible monsters after all. You'll excuse me?"

"Certainly." Hodder had risen.

II

"Shall we have coffee in the garden?" Alison asked. "It's much nicer outside this time of year."

For an instant he was at a loss to decide whether to accede, or to make an excuse and leave the house. Wisdom seemed to point to flight. But when he glanced at her he saw to his surprise that the mood of abstraction into which she had fallen still held her; that the discussion which had aroused Eldon Parr to such dramatic anger had left her serious and thoughtful. She betrayed no sense of triumph at having audaciously and successfully combated him, and she appeared now only partially to be aware of Hodder's presence. His interest, his curiosity mounted suddenly again, overwhelming

once more the antagonism which he had felt come and go in waves; and once more his attempted classification of her was swept away. She had relapsed into an enigma.

“I like the open air,” he answered, “and I have always wished to see the garden. I have admired it from the windows.”

“It’s been on my mind for some years,” she replied, as she led the way down a flight of steps into the vine-covered pergola. “And I intend to change parts of it while I am out here. It was one of my first attempts, and I’ve learned more since.”

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“You must forgive my ignorant praise,” he said, and smiled. “I have always thought it beautiful: But I can understand that an artist is never satisfied.”

She turned to him, and suddenly their eyes met and held in a momentary, electric intensity that left him warm and agitated. There was nothing coquettish in the glance, but it was the first distinct manifestation that he was of consequence. She returned his smile, without levity.

“Is a clergyman ever satisfied?” she asked.

“He ought not to be,” replied Hodder, wondering whether she had read him.

“Although you were so considerate, I suppose you must have thought it presumptuous of me to criticize your, profession, which is religion.”

“Religion, I think, should be everybody’s,” he answered quietly.

She made no reply. And he entered, as into another world, the circular arbour in which the pergola ended, so complete in contrast was its atmosphere to that of the house. The mansion he had long since grown to recognize as an expression of the personality of its owner, but this classic bower was as remote from it as though it were in Greece. He was sensitive to beauty, yet the beauty of the place had a perplexing quality, which he felt in the perfect curves of the marble bench, in the marble basin brimming to the tip with clear water,—the surface of which, flecked with pink petals, mirrored the azure sky through the leafy network of the roof. In one green recess a slender Mercury hastily adjusted his sandal.

Was this, her art, the true expression of her baffling personality? As she had leaned back in the corner of the automobile she had given him the impression of a languor almost Oriental, but this had been startlingly dispelled at the lunch-table by the revelation of an animation and a vitality which had magically transformed her. But now, as under the spell of a new encompassment of her own weaving, she seemed to revert to her former self, sinking, relaxed, into a wicker lounge beside the basin, one long and shapely hand in the water, the other idle in her lap. Her eyes, he remarked, were the contradiction in her face. Had they been larger, and almond-shaped, the illusion might have been complete. They were neither opaque nor smouldering,—but Western eyes, amber-coloured, with delicately stencilled rays and long lashes. And as they gazed up at him now they seemed to reflect, without disclosing the flitting thoughts behind them. He felt antagonism and attraction in almost equal degree —the situation transcended his experience.

“You don’t intend to change this?” he asked, with an expressive sweep of his hand.

“No,” she said, “I’ve always liked it. Tell me what you feel about it.”

He hesitated.

“You resent it,” she declared.

“Why do you say that?” he demanded quickly.

“I feel it,” she answered calmly, but with a smile.

“‘Resent’ would scarcely be the proper word,” he contended, returning her smile, yet hesitating again.

Page 1705

“You think it pagan,” she told him.

“Perhaps I do,” he answered simply, as though impressed by her felicitous discovery of the adjective.

Alison laughed.

“It’s pagan because I’m pagan, I suppose.”

“It’s very beautiful—you have managed to get an extraordinary atmosphere,” he continued, bent on doing himself an exact justice. But I should say, if you pressed me, that it represents to me the deification of beauty to the exclusion of all else. You have made beauty the Alpha and Omega.”

“There is nothing else for me,” she said.

The coffee-tray arrived and was deposited on a wicker table beside her. She raised herself on an elbow, filled his cup and handed it to him.

“And yet,” he persisted, “from the manner in which you spoke at the table—”

“Oh, don’t imagine I haven’t thought? But thinking isn’t—believing.”

“No,” he admitted, with a touch of sadness, “you are right. There were certain comments you made on the Christian religion—”

She interrupted him again.

“As to the political side of it, which is Socialism, so far as I can see. If there is any other side, I have never been able to discover it. It seems to me that if Christians were logical, they should be Socialists. The brotherhood of man, cooperation—all that is Socialism, isn’t it? It’s opposed to the principle of the survival of the fittest, which so many of these so-called Christians practise. I used to think, when I came back from Paris, that I was a Socialist, and I went to a lot of their meetings in New York, and to lectures. But after a while I saw there was something in Socialism that didn’t appeal to me, something smothering,—a forced cooperation that did not leave one free. I wanted to be free, I’ve been striving all my life to be free,” she exclaimed passionately, and was silent an instant, inspecting him. “Perhaps I owe you an apology for speaking as I did before a clergyman—especially before an honest one.”

He passed over the qualification with a characteristic smile.

“Oh, if we are going to shut our ears to criticism we’d better give up being clergymen,” he answered. “I’m afraid there is a great deal of truth in what you said.”

“That’s generous of you!” she exclaimed, and thrilled him with the tribute. Nor was the tribute wholly in the words: there had come spontaneously into her voice an exquisite, modulated note that haunted him long after it had died away . . . .

“I had to say what I thought,” she continued earnestly; “I stood it as long as I could. Perhaps you didn’t realize it, but my father was striking at me when he referred to your sermon, and spiritual control —and in other things he said when you were talking about the settlement-house. He reserves for himself the right to do as he pleases, but insists that those who surround him shall adopt the subserviency which he thinks proper for the rest of the world. If he were a Christian himself, I shouldn’t mind it so much.”

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Hodder was silent. The thought struck him with the force of a great wind.

“He’s a Pharisee,” Alison went on, following the train of her thought. “I remember the first time I discovered that—it was when I was reading the New Testament carefully, in the hope of finding something in Christianity I might take hold of. And I was impressed particularly by the scorn with which Christ treated the Pharisees. My father, too, if he had lived in those days, would have thought Christ a seditious person, an impractical, fanatical idealist, and would have tried to trip him up with literal questions concerning the law. His real and primary interest—is in a social system that benefits himself and his kind, and because this is so, he, and men like him, would have it appear that Christianity is on the side of what they term law and order. I do not say that they are hypocritical, that they reason this out. They are elemental; and they feel intuitively that Christianity contains a vital spark which, if allowed to fly, would start a conflagration beyond their control. The theologians have helped them to cover the spark with ashes, and naturally they won’t allow the ashes to be touched, if they can help it.”

She lay very still.

The rector had listened to her, at first with amazement, then with more complicated sensations as she thus dispassionately discussed the foremost member of his congregation and the first layman of the diocese, who was incidentally her own father. In her masterly analysis of Eldon Parr, she had brought Hodder face to face with the naked truth, and compelled him to recognize it. How could he attempt to refute it, with honesty?

He remembered Mr. Parr’s criticism of Alison. There had been hardness in that, though it were the cry of a lacerated paternal affection. In that, too, a lack of comprehension, an impotent anger at a visitation not understood, a punishment apparently unmerited. Hodder had pitied him then—he still pitied him. In the daughter’s voice was no trace of resentment. No one, seemingly, could be farther removed from him (the rector of St. John’s) in her opinions and views of life, than Allison Parr; and yet he felt in her an undercurrent, deep and strong, which moved him strangely, strongly, irresistibly; he recognized a passionate desire for the truth, and the courage to face it at any cost, and a capacity for tenderness, revealed in flashes.

“I have hurt you,” she exclaimed. “I am sorry.”

He collected himself.

“It is not you who have hurt me,” he replied. “Reflections on the contradictions and imperfections of life are always painful. And since I have been here, I have seen a great deal of your father.”

“You are fond of him!”

He hesitated. It was not an ordinary conversation they were dealing with realities, and he had a sense that vital issues were at stake. He had, in that moment, to make a revaluation of his sentiments for the financier—to weigh the effect of her indictment.

Page 1707

“Yes,” he answered slowly, “I am fond of him. He has shown me a side of himself, perhaps, that other men have not seen,—and he is very lonely.”

“You pity him.” He started at her word. “I guessed that from an expression that crossed your face when we were at the table. But surely you must have observed the incongruity of his relationship with your Church! Surely, in preaching as you did this morning against materialism, individualism, absorption in the pursuit of wealth, you must have had my father in mind as the supreme example! And yet he listened to you as serenely as though he had never practised any of these things!

“Clergymen wonder why Christianity doesn’t make more progress to-day; well, what strikes the impartial observer who thinks about the subject at all, as one reason, is the paralyzing inconsistency of an alliance between those who preach the brotherhood of man and those who are opposed to it. I’ve often wondered what clergymen would say about it, if they were frank—only I never see any clergymen.”

He was strongly agitated. He did not stop—strangely enough—to reflect how far they had gone, to demand by what right she brought him to the bar, challenged the consistency of his life. For she had struck, with a ruthless precision, at the very core of his trouble, revealed it for what it was.

“Yes,” he said, “I can see how we may be accused of inconsistency, and with much justice.”

His refusal to excuse and vindicate himself impressed her as no attempt at extenuation could have done. Perhaps, in that moment, her quick instinct divined something of his case, something of the mental suffering he strove to conceal. Contrition shone in her eyes.

“I ought not to have said that,” she exclaimed gently. “It is so easy for outsiders to criticize those who are sincere—and I am sure you are. We cannot know all the perplexities. But when we look at the Church, we are puzzled by that—which I have mentioned—and by other things.”

“What other things?” he demanded.

She hesitated in her turn.

“I suppose you think it odd, my having gone to church, feeling as I do,” she said. “But St. John’s is now the only place vividly associated with my mother. She was never at home here, in this house. I always go at least once when I am out here. And I listened to your sermon intently.”

“Yes.”

“I wanted to tell you this: you interested me as I had not been interested since I was twenty, when I made a desperate attempt to become a Christian—and failed. Do you know how you struck me? It was as a man who actually had a great truth which he was desperately trying to impart, and could not. I have not been in a church more than a dozen times in the last eight years, but you impressed me as a man who felt something—whatever it is.”

He did not speak.

Page 1708

“But why,” she cried, “do you insist on what you cell authority? As a modern woman who has learned to use her own mind, I simply can’t believe, if the God of the universe is the moral God you assert him to be, that he has established on earth an agency of the kind you infer, and delegated to it the power of life and death over human souls. Perhaps you do not go so far, but if you make the claim at all you must make it in its entirety. There is an idea of commercialism, of monopoly in that conception which is utterly repugnant to any one who tries to approach the subject with a fresh mind, and from an ideal point of view. And religion must be idealism—mustn’t it?

“Your ancient monks and saints weren’t satisfied until they had settled every detail of the invisible world, of the past and future. They mapped it out as if it were a region they had actually explored, like geographers. They used their reason, and what science they had, to make theories about it which the churches still proclaim as the catholic and final truth. You forbid us to use our reason. You declare, in order to become Christians, that we have to accept authoritative statements. Oh, can’t you see that an authoritative statement is just what an ethical person doesn’t want? Belief—faith doesn’t consist in the mere acceptance of a statement, but in something much higher—if we can achieve it. Acceptance of authority is not faith, it is mere credulity, it is to shirk the real issue. We must believe, if we believe at all, without authority. If we knew, there would be no virtue in striving. If I choose a God,” she added, after a pause, “I cannot take a consensus of opinion about him,—he must be my God.”

Hodder did not speak immediately. Strange as it may seem, he had never heard the argument, and the strength of it, reenforced by the extraordinary vitality and earnestness of the woman who had uttered it, had a momentary stunning effect. He sat contemplating her as she lay back among the cushions, and suddenly he seemed to see in her the rebellious child of which her father had spoken. No wonder Eldon Parr had misunderstood her, had sought to crush her spirit! She was to be dealt with in no common way, nor was the consuming yearning he discerned in her to be lightly satisfied.

“The God of the individualist,” he said at length—musingly, not accusingly.

“I am an individualist,” she admitted simply. “But I am at least logical in that philosophy, and the individualists who attend the churches to-day are not. The inconsistency of their lives is what makes those of us who do not go to church doubt the efficacy of their creed, which seems to have no power to change them. The majority of people in St. John’s are no more Christians than I am. They attend service once a week, and the rest of the time they are bent upon getting all they can of pleasure and profit for themselves. Do you wonder that those who consider this spectacle come inevitably to the conclusion that either Christianity is at fault, is outworn, or else that it is presented in the wrong way?”

Page 1709

The rector rose abruptly, walked to the entrance of the arbour, and stood staring out across the garden. Presently he turned and came back and stood over her.

“Since you ask me,” he said slowly, “I do not wonder at it.”

She raised her eyes swiftly.

“When you speak like that,” she exclaimed with an enthusiasm that stirred him, despite the trouble of his mind, “I cannot think of you as a clergyman,—but as a man. Indeed,” she added, in the surprise of her discovery, “I have never thought of you as a clergyman —even when I first saw you this morning. I could not account then for a sense of duality about you that puzzled me. Do you always preach as earnestly as that?”

“Why?”

“I felt as if you were throwing your whole soul into the effort-=oh, I felt it distinctly. You made some of them, temporarily, a little uncomfortable, but they do not understand you, and you didn’t change them. It seemed to me you realized this when Gordon Atterbury spoke to you. I tried to analyze the effect on myself—if it had been in the slightest degree possible for my reason to accept what you said you might, through sheer personality, have compelled me to reconsider. As it was, I found myself resisting you.”

With his hands clasped behind him, he paced across the arbour and back again.

“Have you ever definitely and sincerely tried to put what the Church teaches into practice?” he asked.

“Orthodox Christianity? penance, asceticism, self-abnegation—repression —falling on my knees and seeking a forgiveness out of all proportion to the trespass, and filled with a sense of total depravity? If I did that I should lose myself—the only valuable thing I’ve got.”

Hodder, who had resumed his pacing, glanced at her involuntarily, and fought an inclination to agree with her.

“I see no one upon whom I can rely but myself,” she went on with the extraordinary energy she was able to summon at will, “and I am convinced that self-sacrifice—at least, indiscriminate, unreasoning self-sacrifice—is worse than useless, and to teach it is criminal ignorance. None of the so-called Christian virtues appeals to me: I hate humility. You haven’t it. The only happiness I can see in the world lies in self-expression, and I certainly shouldn’t find that in sewing garments for the poor.

“The last thing that I could wish for would be immortality as orthodox Christianity depicts it! And suppose I had followed the advice of my Christian friends and remained here, where they insisted my duty was, what would have happened to me? In a senseless

self-denial I should gradually have, withered into a meaningless old maid, with no opinions of my own, and no more definite purpose in life than to write checks for charities. Your Christianity commands that women shall stay at home, and declares that they are not entitled to seek their own salvation, to have any place in affairs, or to meddle with the realm of the intellect. Those forbidden gardens are reserved for the lordly sex. St. Paul, you say, put us in our proper place some twenty centuries ago, and we are to remain there for all time."

Page 1710

He felt sweeping through him the reverse current of hostility.

“And what I preach,” he asked, “has tended to confirm you in such a mean conception of Christianity?”

Her eye travelled over the six feet of him—the kindling, reflecting eye of the artist; it rested for a moment on the protesting locks of his hair, which apparently could not be cut short enough to conform; on the hands, which were strong and sinewy; on the wide, tolerant mouth, with its rugged furrows, on the breadth and height of the forehead. She lay for a moment, inert, considering.

“What you preach—yes,” she answered, bravely meeting his look. “What you are—no. You and your religion are as far apart as the poles. Oh, this old argument, the belief that has been handed down to the man, the authority with which he is clothed, and not the man himself! How can one be a factor in life unless one represents something which is the fruit of actual, personal experience? Your authority is for the weak, the timid, the credulous,—for those who do not care to trust themselves, who run for shelter from the storms of life to a ‘papier-mache’ fortress, made to look like rock. In order to preach that logically you should be a white ascetic, with a well-oiled manner, a downcast look lest you stumble in your pride; lest by chance you might do something original that sprang out of your own soul instead of being an imitation of the saints. And if your congregation took your doctrine literally, I can see a whole army of white, meek Christians. But you are not like that. Can’t you see it for yourself?” she exclaimed.

“Can’t you feel that you are an individual, a personality, a force that might be put to great uses? That will be because you are open-minded, because there is room in you for growth and change?”

He strove with all his might to quell the inner conflagration which she had fanned into leaping flames. Though he had listened before to doubt and criticism, this woman, with her strange shifting moods of calm and passion, with her bewildering faculty of changing from passive to active resistance, her beauty (once manifest, never to be forgotten), her unique individuality that now attracted, now repelled, seemed for the moment the very incarnation of the forces opposed to him and his religion. Holder, as he looked at her, had a flash of fierce resentment that now, of all times, she should suddenly have flung herself across his path. For she was to be reckoned with. Why did he not tell her she was an egoist? Why didn’t he speak out, defend his faith, denounce her views as prejudiced and false?

“Have I made you angry?” he heard her say. “I am sorry.”

It was the hint of reproach in her tone to which the man in him instantly responded. And what he saw now was his portrait she had painted. The thought came to him: was he

indeed greater, more vital than the religion he professed? God forbid! Did he ring true, and it false?

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She returned his gaze. And gradually, under her clear olive skin, he saw the crimson colour mounting higher . . . . She put forth her hand, simply, naturally, and pressed his own, as though they had been friends for a lifetime . . . .

CHAPTER X

THE MESSENGER IN THE CHURCH

I

The annual scourge of summer had descended pitilessly upon the city once more, enervating, depressing, stagnating, and people moved languidly in the penetrating heat that steamed from the pores of the surrounding river bottoms.

The rector of St. John's realized that a crisis had come in his life, —a crisis he had tried to stave off in vain. And yet there was a period during which he pursued his shrunken duties as though nothing had happened to him; as a man who has been struck in battle keeps on, loath to examine, to acknowledge the gravity of his wound; fearing to, perhaps. Sometimes, as his mind went back to the merciless conflict of his past, his experience at the law school, it was the unchaining of that other man he dreaded, the man he believed himself to have finally subdued. But night and day he was haunted by the sorrowful and reproachful face of Truth.

Had he the courage, now, to submit the beliefs which had sustained him all these years to Truth's inexorable inspection? Did he dare to turn and open those books which she had inspired,—the new philosophies, the historical criticisms which he had neglected and condemned, which he had flattered himself he could do without,—and read of the fruit of Knowledge? Twice, thrice he had hesitated on the steps of the big library, and turned away with a wildly beating heart.

Day by day the storm increased, until from a cloud on the horizon it grew into a soul-shaking tempest. Profoundly moved Parr's he had been on that Sunday afternoon, in Eldon Parr's garden, he had resolutely resolved to thrust the woman and the incident from his mind, to defer the consideration of the questions she had raised—grave though they were—to a calmer period. For now he was unable to separate her, to eliminate the emotion—he was forced to acknowledge—the thought of her aroused, from the problems themselves. Who was she? At moments he seemed to see her shining, accusing, as Truth herself, and again as a Circe who had drawn him by subtle arts from his wanderings, luring him to his death; or, at other times, as the mutinous daughter of revolt. But when he felt, in memory, the warm touch of her hand, the old wildness of his nature responded, he ceased to speculate or care, and he longed only to crush and

subdue her by the brute power of the man in him. For good or bad, she had woven her spell.

Here was the old, elemental, twofold contest, carnal and spiritual, thoroughly revived! . . .

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He recalled, in his musings, the little theological school surrounded by southern woods and fields, where he had sometime walked under autumn foliage with the elderly gentleman who had had such an influence on his life—the dean. Mild-mannered and frail, patient in ordinary converse, —a lion for the faith. He would have died for it as cheerfully as any martyr in history. By the marvels of that faith Holder had beheld, from his pew in the chapel, the little man transformed. He knew young men, their perplexities and temptations, and he dealt with them personally, like a father. Holder's doubts were stilled, he had gained power of his temptations and peace for his soul, and he had gone forth inspired by the reminder that there was no student of whom the dean expected better things. Where now were the thousands of which he had dreamed, and which he was to have brought into the Church? . . .

Now, he asked himself, was it the dean, or the dean's theology through which his regeneration had come? Might not the inherent goodness of the dean be one thing, and his theology quite another? Personality again! He recalled one of the many things which Alison Parr had branded on his memory,—"the belief, the authority in which the man is clothed, and not the man!" The dean's God had remained silent on the subject of personality. Or, at the best, he had not encouraged it; and there were —Hodder could not but perceive—certain contradictions in his character, which were an anomalistic blending of that of the jealous God of Moses and of the God of Christ. There must be continuity—God could not change. Therefore the God of infinite love must retain the wrath which visited sins of the fathers on the children, which demanded sacrifice, atonement,—an exact propitiation for his anger against mankind. An innocent life of sorrow and suffering!

And again, "You and your religion are as far apart as the poles!" Had he, Hodder, outgrown the dean's religion, or had it ever been his own? Was there, after all, such a thing as religion? Might it not be merely a figment of the fertile imagination of man? He did not escape the terror of this thought when he paused to consider his labour of the past two years and the vanity of its results. And little by little the feeling grew upon him, such being the state of his mind, that he ought not to continue, for the present at least, to conduct the services. Should he resign, or go away for a while to some quiet place before he made such a momentous decision? There was no one to whom he could turn; no layman, and no clergyman; not even the old bishop, whom he had more than once mentally accused of being, too broad and too tolerant! No, he did not wish a clergyman's solution. The significance of this thought flashed through him—that the world itself was no longer seeking clergymen's solutions. He must go off alone, and submit his faith to the impartial test.

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It was in a vigil of the night, when he lay in the hot darkness, unable to sleep, that he came at length to this resolve. And now that he had cut the knot he was too just to blame Alison Parr for having pointed out —with what often had seemed a pitiless cruelty —something of which he had had a constantly growing perception yet had continually sought to evade. And he reviewed, as the church bells recorded the silent hours, how, little by little, his confidence had crumbled before the shocks of the successive revelations—some of them so slight that they had passed unnoticed: comparisons, inevitably compelled; Dalton Street; the confessions of Eleanor Goodrich and Mrs. Constable; Mr. Plimpton and his views of life—Eldon Parr! Even the slamming of the carriage doors in Burton Street had had a significance!

Might it not prove that this woman had let fall into the turbid waters of his soul the drop that was to clear them forever? He would go away. He would not see her again.

Over the sleeping city, unapprehended, stole the dawn.

He arose, but instead of falling on his knees he went to the window and lifted his face to the whitening sky . . . . Slowly out of the obscurity of the earth's shadow emerged the vague outlines of familiar things until they stood sharply material, in a silence as of death. A sparrow twittered, and suddenly the familiar, soot-grimed roofs were bathed in light, and by a touch made beautiful . . . .

Some hours later the city was wide awake. And Hodder, bathed and dressed, stood staring down from his study window into the street below, full now of young men and girls; some with set faces, hurrying, intent, others romping and laughing as they dodged the trucks and trolley cars; all on their way to the great shoe factory around the corner, the huge funnels of which were belching forth smoke into the morning air. The street emptied, a bell rang, a whistle blew, the hum of distant machinery began . . . .

II

Later that morning Hodder sat in his study. The shutters were closed, and the intensity of the tropical glare without was softened and diffused by the slanting green slats. His eye wandered over the long and comfortable room which had been his sanctuary in the feverish days of his ministry, resting affectionately on the hospitable chairs, the wide fireplace before which he had been wont to settle himself on winter nights, and even on the green matting—a cooling note in summer. And there, in the low cases along the walls, were the rows of his precious books,—his one hobby and extravagance. He had grown to love the room. Would he ever come back to it?

A step sounded in the hall, a knock, and the well-known gaunt form and spectacled face of McCrae appeared in the doorway.

“Ye wished to see me?” he asked.

“McCrae,” said the rector, “I am going off for a while.”

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His assistant regarded him a moment in silence. Although Hodder had no intention of explaining his reasons, he had a curious conviction that it were superfluous to do so, that McCrae had guessed them.

“Why shouldn’t ye? There’s but a handful left to preach to in this weather.”

“I wouldn’t go, in this sudden way, if it were not imperative,” Hodder added, trying to speak calmly.

“Why shouldn’t ye?” McCrae repeated, almost fiercely.

Hodder smiled in spite of himself.

“There’s no reason,” he said, “except the added work put on you without warning, and in this heat.”

“Ye’ll not need to worry,” his assistant assured him, “the heat’s nothing to me.” McCrae hesitated, and then demanded abruptly, “Ye’ll not be visiting?”

The question took Hodder by surprise.

“No,” he answered quickly, and not quite steadily, and hesitated in his turn, “I shan’t be visiting.”

“It’s a rest ye need, I’ve been wanting to say it.” McCrae took a step forward, and for a moment it seemed as though he were at last about to break the bonds of his reserve. Perhaps he detected an instinctive shrinking on the rector’s part. At any rate, there was another instant of silence, in which the two men faced each other across the desk, and McCrae held out his hand. “Good luck to ye,” he said, as Hodder took it, “and don’t have the pariah on your mind. Stay till ye’re rested, and come back to us.”

He left the room abruptly. Hodder remained motionless, looking after him, and then, moved apparently by a sudden impulse, started toward the door,—only to halt and turn before he got to it. Almost he had opened his lips to call his assistant back. He could not do it—the moment had come and fled when it might have been possible. Did this man hide, under his brusqueness and brevity of speech, the fund of wisdom and the wider sympathy and understanding he suspected? Hodder could have vouched for it, and yet he had kept his own counsel. And he was struck suddenly by the significance of the fact, often remarked, that McCrae in his brief and common-sense and by no means enlivening sermons had never once referred in any way to doctrine or dogma!

He spent half an hour in collecting and bestowing in two large valises such articles as his simple needs would demand, and then set out for a railroad office in the business portion of the city, where he bought his ticket and berth. Then, after a moment of irresolution on the threshold of the place, he turned to the right, thrusting his way

through the sluggish crowds on Tower Street until he came to the large bookstore where he had been want to spend, from time to time, some of his leisure moments. A clerk recognized him, and was about to lead the way to the rear, where the precious editions were kept, when Hodder stopped him.

In casting about for a beginning in his venture over unknown seas, there had naturally come into his mind three or four works which were anathema to the orthodox; one of which, in seven volumes, went back to his seminary days, and had been the subject of a ringing, denunciatory sermon by the dean himself. Three of them were by Germans of established reputations, another by a professor of the University of Paris. The habit of years is strong.

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And though he knew that many clergymen read these books, Hodder found it impossible to overcome a nervous sense of adventure,—nay (knowing his resolution), of apostasy, almost of clandestine guilt when he mentioned them. And it seemed to him that the face of the clerk betrayed surprise. One of the works was not in stock; he would send the others that afternoon. Mr. Hodder would take them? They made a formidable parcel, but a little handle was supplied and the rector hurried out, swinging himself on a Tower Street car.

It must not be thought that the whole of what is called modern criticism was new to Hodder. This would indeed be too much of a reflection on the open-mindedness of the seminary from which he had graduated. But he found himself, now, pondering a little cynically on that “open-mindedness”; on that concession—if it had been a concession—to the methods of science. There had been in truth a course of lectures on this subject; but he saw now, very clearly, what a concerted effort had been put forward in the rest of the teaching to minimize and discredit it. Even the professor who gave the lectures had had the air of deploring them. Here it is, but on the whole one would better let it alone,—such was the inference. And he had let it alone, through all these years.

In the seminary, too, volumes by semi-learned clergymen had been thrust into his hands, efforts which Hodder recalled now, in spite of his mental state, with a smile. These invariably championed the doctrine of the virgin birth as the pillar on which the Incarnation depended. A favourite argument declared that although the Gospel texts in regard to it might be proven untrustworthy, the miraculous birth must have happened anyway! And one of these clerical authors whom he had more recently read, actually had had the audacity to turn the weapons of the archenemy, science, back upon itself. The virgin birth was an established fact in nature, and had its place in the social economy of the bee. And did not parthenogenesis occur in the silk moth?

In brief, the conclusion impressed upon him by his seminary instruction was this: that historical criticism had corrected some ideas and put some things in their right place. What these things were remained sufficiently vague. But whenever it attacked a cherished dogma it was, on general principles, wrong.

Once again in his cool study, he cut the cord with a trembling hand, and while he was eating the lunch his housekeeper had prepared, dipped into one of the larger volumes. As he read again the critical disproofs he felt an acute, almost physical pain, as though a vital part of him were being cut away, as his mind dwelt upon those beautiful legends to which he had so often turned, and which had seemed the very fountain of his faith. Legends! . . . .

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He closed the book. The clock on the mantel struck three; his train was to leave at five. He rose and went down into the silent church he had grown to love, seating himself in one of the carved stalls of the choir, his eye lingering in turn on each beautiful object: on the glowing landscape in the window in memory of Eliza Parr, portraying the delectable country, with the bewildered yet enraptured faces of the pilgrims in the foreground; on the graceful, shining lectern, the aspiring arches, the carved marble altar behind the rail, and above it the painting of the Christ on the cross.

The hours of greatest suffering are the empty hours. 'Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?' The hours when the mysterious sustaining and driving force is withdrawn, and a lassitude and despair comes over us like that of a deserted child: the hours when we feel we have reached the limit of service, when our brief span of usefulness is done. Had God brought him, John Hodder, to the height of the powers of his manhood only to abandon him, to cast him adrift on the face of the waters—led him to this great parish, with all its opportunities, only that he might fail and flee?

He sat staring at the face of the Man on the cross. Did he, in his overwrought state, imagine there an expression he had never before remarked, or had the unknown artist of the seventies actually risen above the mediocrity of the figure in his portrayal of the features of the Christ? The rector started, and stared again. There was no weakness in the face, no meekness, no suggestion of the conception of the sacrificed Lamb, no hint of a beatific vision of opening heavens—and yet no accusation, no despair. A knowing—that were nearer—a knowing of all things through the experiencing of all things, the suffering of all things. For suffering without revelation were vain, indeed! A perfected wisdom that blended inevitably with a transcendent love. Love and wisdom were one, then? To reach comprehension through conquering experience was to achieve the love that could exclaim, "they know not what they do!"

Human or divine? Man or God? Hodder found himself inwardly repeating the words, the controversy which had raged for nineteen hundred years, and not yet was stilled. Perfection is divine. Human! Hodder repeated the word, as one groping on the threshold of a great discovery . . . .

III

He was listening—he had for a long time been listening to a sound which had seemed only the natural accompaniment of the drama taking place in his soul, as though some inspired organist were expressing in exquisite music the undercurrent of his agony. Only gradually did he become aware that it arose from the nave of the church, and, turning, his eyes fell upon the bowed head and shoulders of a woman kneeling in one of the pews. She was sobbing.

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His movement, he recalled afterward, did not come of a conscious volition, as he rose and descended the chancel steps and walked toward her; he stood for what seemed a long time on the white marble of the aisle looking down on her, his heart wrung by the violence of her grief, which at moments swept through her like a tempest. She seemed still young, but poverty had marked her with unmistakable signs. The white, blue-veined hands that clung to the railing of the pew were thin; and the shirtwaist, though clean, was cheap and frayed. At last she rose from her knees and raised a tear-stained face to his, staring at him in a dumb bewilderment.

“Can I do anything for you?” he said gently, “I am the rector here.” She did not answer, but continued to stare uncomprehendingly. He sat down beside her in the pew.

“You are in trouble,” he said. “Will you let me try to help you?” A sob shook her—the beginning of a new paroxysm. He waited patiently until it was over. Suddenly she got rather wildly and unsteadily to her feet.

“I must go!” she cried. “Oh, God, what would I do if—if he wasn’t there?”

Hodder rose too. She had thrust herself past him into the aisle, but if he had not taken her arm she would have fallen. Thus they went together to the door of the church, and out into the white, burning sunlight. In spite of her weakness she seemed actually to be leading him, impelled by a strange force and fled down the steps of the porch to the sidewalk. And there she paused, seeing him still beside her. Fortunately he had his hat in his hand.

“Where are you going?” she asked.

“To take you home,” he replied firmly, “you ought not to go alone.”

A look of something like terror came into her eyes.

“Oh, no!” she protested, with a vehemence that surprised him. “I am strong. Oh, thank you, sir,—but I can go alone. It’s Dicky—my little boy. I’ve never left him so long. I had gone for the medicine and I saw the church. I used to go to church, sir, before we had our troubles—and I just went in. It suddenly came over me that God might help me—-the doctor can do nothing.”

“I will go with you,” he said.

She ceased to resist, as one submitting to the fatality of a superior will.

The pavements that afternoon, as Hodder and the forlorn woman left the cool porticoes of St. John’s, were like the floor of a stone oven, and the work horses wore little bonnets over their heads. Keeping to the shady side, the rector and his companion crossed Tower Street with its trolley cars and its awninged stores, and came to that depressing

district which had reproached him since the first Sunday of his ministry when he had traversed it with Eldon Parr. They passed the once prosperous houses, the corner saloons pandering to two vices, decked with the flamboyant signs of the breweries. The trees were dying along the asphalt and in the yards, the iron fences broken here and there, the copings stained with rust and soot. Hodder's thoughts might have been likened to the heated air that simmered above the bricks.

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They were in Dalton Street! She seemed to have forgotten his presence, her pace quickened as she turned into a gate and flew up a flight of dirty stone steps, broken and sagging. Hodder took in, subconsciously, that the house was a dingy grey, of three stories and a Mansard roof, with a bay window on the yard side, and a fly-blown sign, “Rooms to Rent” hanging in one window. Across the street, on a lot that had once held a similar dignified residence, was the yellow brick building of the “Albert Hotel,” and next door, on the east, a remodelled house of “apartments” with speaking tubes in the doorway.

The woman led him up another flight of steps to the open door of the house, through a hallway covered with a ragged carpet, where a dilapidated walnut hat-rack stood, up the stairs, threading a dark passage that led into a low-ceiled, stifling room at the very back. A stout, slatternly person in a wrapper rose as they entered, but the mother cast herself down beside the lounge where the child was. Hodder had a moment of fear that she was indeed too late, so still the boy lay, so pathetically wan was the little face and wasted the form under the cotton nightgown. The mother passed her hand across his forehead.

“Dicky!” she whispered fearfully, “Dicky!”

He opened his eyes and smiled at her; feebly.

The, stout woman, who had been looking on with that intensity of sympathy of which the poor are capable, began waving gently the palm-leaf fan. She was German.

“He is so good, is Dicky. He smile at me when I fan him—once, twice. He complains not at all.”

The mother took the fan from her, hand.

“Thank you for staying with him, Mrs. Breitmann. I was gone longer than I expected.” The fact that the child still lived, that she was again in his presence, the absorbing act of caring for him seemed to have calmed her.

“It is nothing, what I do,” answered Mrs. Breitmann, and turned away reluctantly, the tears running on her cheeks. “When you go again, I come always, Mrs. Garvin. Ach!”

Her exclamation was caused by the sight of the tall figure and black coat of the rector, and as she left the room, Mrs. Garvin turned. And he noticed in her eyes the same expression of dread they had held when she had protested against his coming.

“Please don’t think that I’m not thankful—” she faltered.

“I am not offering you charity,” he said. “Can you not take from other human beings what you have accepted from this woman who has just left?”

“Oh, sir, it isn’t that!” she cried, with a look of trust, of appeal that was new, “I would do anything—I will do anything. But my husband—he is so bitter against the church, against ministers! If he came home and found you here—”

“I know—many people feel that way,” he assented, “too many. But you cannot let a prejudice stand in the way of saving the boy’s life, Mrs. Garvin.”

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“It is more than that. If you knew, sir—”

“Whatever it is,” he interrupted, a little sternly, “it must not interfere. I will talk to your husband.”

She was silent, gazing at him now questioningly, yet with the dawning hope of one whose strength is all but gone, and who has found at last a stronger to lean upon.

The rector took the fan from her arrested hand and began to ply it.

“Listen, Mrs. Garvin. If you had come to the church half an hour later, I should have been leaving the city for a place far distant.”

“You were going away? You stayed on my account?”

“I much prefer to stay, if I can be of any use, and I think I can. I am sure I can. What is the matter with the child?”

“I don’t know, sir—he just lies there listless and gets thinner and thinner and weaker and weaker. Sometimes he feels sick, but not often. The doctor don’t seem to know.”

What doctor have you?”

“His name is Welling. He’s around the corner.”

“Exactly,” said the rector. “This is a case for Dr. Jarvis, who is the best child specialist in the city. He is a friend of mine, and I intend to send for him at once. And the boy must go to a hospital—”

“Oh, I couldn’t, sir.”

He had a poignant realization of the agony behind the cry. She breathed quickly through her parted lips, and from the yearning in her tired eyes —as she gazed at the poor little form—he averted his glance.

“Now, Mrs. Garvin, you must be sensible,” he said. “This is no place for a sick child. And it is such a nice little hospital, the one I have in mind, and so many children get well and strong there,” he added, cheerfully.

“He wouldn’t hear of it.” Hodder comprehended that she was referring to her husband. She added inconsequently: “If I let him go, and he never came back! Oh, I couldn’t do it—I couldn’t.”

He saw that it was the part of wisdom not to press her, to give her time to become accustomed to the idea. Come back—to what? His eye wandered about the room, that

bespoke the last shifts of poverty, for he knew that none but the desperate were driven to these Dalton Street houses, once the dwellings of the well-to-do, and all the more pitiful for the contrast. The heated air reeked with the smell of stale cooking. There was a gas stove at one side, a linoleum-covered table in the centre, littered with bottles, plates, and pitchers, a bed and chairs which had known better days, new obviously bruised and battered by many enforced movings. In one corner was huddled a little group of toys.

He was suddenly and guiltily aware that the woman had followed his glance.

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“We had them in Alder Street,” she said. “We might have been there yet, if we hadn’t been foolish. It’s a pretty street, sir—perhaps you know it—you take the Fanshawe Avenue cars to Sherman Heights. The air is like the country there, and all the houses are new, and Dicky had a yard to play in, and he used to be so healthy and happy in it. . . We were rich then,—not what you’d call rich,” she added apologetically, “but we owned a little home with six rooms, and my husband had a good place as bookkeeper in a grocery house, and every year for ten years we put something by, and the boy came. We never knew how well off we were, until it was taken away from us, I guess. And then Richard—he’s my husband—put his savings into a company—he thought it was so safe, and we were to get eight per cent—and the company failed, and he fell sick and lost his place, and we had to sell the house, and since he got well again he’s been going around trying for something else. Oh, he’s tried so hard,—every day, and all day long. You wouldn’t believe it, sir. And he’s so proud. He got a job as porter, but he wasn’t able to hold it—he wasn’t strong enough. That was in April. It almost broke my heart to see him getting shabby—he used to look so tidy. And folks don’t want you when you’re shabby.” . . .

There sprang to Hodder’s mind a sentence in a book he had recently read: “Our slums became filled with sick who need never have been sick; with derelicts who need never have been abandoned.”

Suddenly, out of the suffocating stillness of the afternoon a woman’s voice was heard singing a concert-hall air, accompanied by a piano played with vigour and abandon. And Hodder, following the sound, looked out across the grimy yard—to a window in the apartment house opposite.

“There’s that girl again,” said the mother, lifting her head. “She does sing nice, and play, poor thing! There was a time when I wouldn’t have wanted to listen. But Dicky liked it so . . . . It’s the very tune he loved. He don’t seem to hear it now. He don’t even ask for Mr. Bentley any more.”

“Mr. Bentley?” the rector repeated. The name was somehow familiar to him.

The piano and the song ceased abruptly, with a bang.

“He lives up the street here a way—the kindest old gentleman you ever saw. He always has candy in his pockets for the children, and it’s a sight to see them follow him up and down the sidewalk. He takes them to the Park in the cars on Saturday afternoons. That was all Dicky could think about at first—would he be well enough to go with Mr. Bentley by Saturday? And he was forever asking me to tell Mr. Bentley he was sick. I saw the old gentleman on the street to-day, and I almost went up to him. But I hadn’t the courage.”

The child moaned, stirred, and opened his eyes, gazing at them feverishly, yet without seeming comprehension. She bent over him, calling his name . . . . Hodder thrust the fan into her hand, and rose.

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“I am going to telephone Dr. Jarvis,” he said, “and then I shall come back, in order to be here when he arrives.”

She looked up at him.

“Oh, thank you, sir,—I guess it’s for the best—”

Her voice died away, and the rector, seeking for the cause, saw that a man had entered the room. He walked up to the couch and stood for a moment staring moodily at the child, while the woman watched him, transfixed.

“Richard!” she said.

He paid no attention to her. She turned to Hodder. “This is my husband, sir. . . . Richard, I went into the church—just for a moment—I—I couldn’t help it, and this gentleman—the minister—came home with me. He wanted to—he thought I was sick. And now he’s going out to get the best doctor in the city for Dicky.”

The man turned suddenly and confronted the rector.

“Why don’t you let him die, you and your church people?” he asked. “You’ve done your worst to kill him.”

The woman put her hand fearfully, imploringly on the man’s arm.

“Richard!” she whispered.

But as Hodder glanced from the derelict beside him a wave of comprehension passed through him that swept him clean of indignation, of resentment. And this man had been prosperous and happy!

“There is but one way to save the boy’s life, Mr. Garvin,” he said, “and that is to put him in charge of Dr. Jarvis.”

The man made no reply, but went over to the window, staring out into the yard. There was something vaguely ominous in his attitude. The rector watched him a moment, and then turned to the mother.

“You must not lose hope,” he told her.

She looked at him with terror-stricken eyes that sought to be grateful. He had picked up his hat from a corner of the littered table, and started to leave, when Garvin, by a sudden movement, planted himself in the doorway. Whether he had been drinking, or whether he were merely crazed by misfortune and the hopeless search in the heat for employment, and by lack of proper nourishment, Hodder could not say. There was a

light in his eyes like that in a wounded animal's; and although he was thin and slight, he had the concentrated power of desperation.

"Say, what church do you come from?" he demanded.

"From St. John's," said the rector.

"Eldon Parr's church?"

Hodder started, in spite of himself, at the name.

"Mr. Parr is a member of the congregation."

"Come off! He owns it and runs it, the same as he does everything else in this town. Maybe you don't think I read the Sunday papers. Say, I was respectable once, and had a good place. You wouldn't believe it, would you?"

Hodder hesitated. There was obviously no way to pass the man except by using physical force.

"If you have anything to say to me, Mr. Garvin, I shall be glad to talk to you later. You must not stop me now," he said with a touch of severity.

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“You’ll listen to me, right here and now,” cried Garvin. “If you think I am going to let Eldon Parr’s minister, or any one else belonging to him, save that boy’s life, you’ve got another guess comin’. That’s all. I’d rather have him die—d’ye hear? I’d rather have him die.”

The woman behind them whimpered . . . . The name was ringing like a knell in Hodder’s head—Eldon Parr! Coming, as it had, like a curse from the lips of this wretched, half-demented creature, it filled his soul with dismay. And the accusation had in it the profound ring of truth. He was Eldon Parr’s minister, and it was Eldon Parr who stood between him and his opportunity.

“Why do you speak of Mr. Parr?” he asked, though the question cost him a supreme effort.

“Why do I speak of him? My God, because he ruined me. If it hadn’t been for him, damn him, I’d have a home, and health and happiness to-day, and the boy would be well and strong instead of lying there with the life all but gone out of him. Eldon Parr did for me, and now he’s murdered my son—that’s why I mention him.”

In the sudden intensity of his feeling, Hodder seized Garvin by the arms —arms that were little more than skin and bone. The man might be crazed, he might be drunk: that he believed what he was saying there could be no question. He began to struggle violently, but the rector was strong.

“Be still,” he commanded. And suddenly, overcome less by the physical power than by the aspect of the clergyman, an expression of bewilderment came into his eyes, and he was quiet. Hodder dropped his arms. “I do not intend to go until I hear what you have to say. It would be useless, at any rate, since your child’s life is at stake. Tell me how Mr. Parr has ruined you.”

Garvin stared at him, half in suspicion, half in amazement.

“I guess you never knew of his ruining anybody, did you?” he demanded sullenly. “Well, I’ll tell you all right, and you can go and tell him. He won’t care much—he’s used to it by this time, and he gets square with God by his churches and charities. Did you ever hear of a stock called Consolidated Tractions?”

Consolidated Tractions! In contrast to the sordid misery and degradation of this last refuge of the desperate Hodder saw the lofty, panelled smoking room at Francis Ferguson’s, and was listening again to Wallis Plimpton’s cynical amusement as to how he and Everett Constable and Eldon Parr himself had “gat out” before the crash; “got out” with all the money of the wretch who now stood before him! His parishioners! his Christians! Oh God!

The man was speaking in his shrill voice.

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“Well, I was a Traction sucker, all right, and I guess you wouldn’t have to walk more than two blocks to find another in this neighbourhood. You think Eldon Parr’s a big, noble man, don’t you? You’re proud to run his church, ain’t you? You wouldn’t believe there was a time when I thought he was a big man, when I was kind of proud to live in the same city with him. She’ll tell you how I used to come home from the store and talk about him after supper, and hope that the kid there would grow up into a financier like Eldon Parr. The boys at the store talked about him: he sort of laid hold on our imaginations with the library he gave, and Elmwood Park, and the picture of the big organ in your church in the newspapers—and sometimes, Mary and me and the boy, in the baby carriage, on Sunday afternoons we used to walk around by his house, just to look at it. You couldn’t have got me to believe that Eldon Parr would put his name to anything that wasn’t straight.

“Then Consolidated Tractions came along, with Parr’s, name behind it. Everybody was talking about it, and how it was payin’ eight per cent. from the start, and extra dividends and all, and what a marvel of finance it was. Before the kid came, as soon as I married her, we began to save up for him. We didn’t go to the theatres or nothing. Well, I put it all, five thousand dollars, into Consolidated. She’ll tell you how we sat up half the night after we got the first dividend talking about how we’d send the kid to college, and after we went to bed we couldn’t sleep. It wasn’t more than a year after that we began to hear things—and we couldn’t sleep for sure, and the dividends stopped and the stock tumbled. Even then I wouldn’t believe it of him, that he’d take poor people’s money that way when he had more than he knew what to do with. I made up my mind if I went down to see him and told him about it, he’d make it right. I asked the boss for an hour off, and headed for the Parr building—I’ve been there as much as fifty times since—but he don’t bother with small fry. The clerks laugh when they see me comin’ . . . I got sick worryin’, and when I was strong enough to be around they’d filled my job at the grocery, and it wasn’t long before we had to move out of our little home in Alder Street. We’ve been movin’ ever since,” he cried, and tears of weakness were in his eyes, “until we’ve come to this, and we’ll have to get out of here in another week. God knows where we’ll go then.”

Hodder shuddered.

“Then I found out how he done it—from a lawyer. The lawyer laughed at me, too. Say, do you wonder I ain’t got much use for your church people? Parr got a corporation lawyer named Langmaid—he’s another one of your millionnaire crooks—to fix it up and get around the law and keep him out of jail. And then they had to settle with Tim Beatty for something like three hundred thousand. You know who Beatty is—he owns this city—his saloon’s around here on Elm Street. All the crooks had

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to be squared. Say," he demanded aggressively, "are Parr and Langmaid any better than Beatty, or any of the hold-up men Beatty covers? There's a street-walker over there in those flats that's got a million times more chance to get to heaven—if there is any—than those financiers, as they call 'emselves —I ain't much on high finance, but I've got some respect for a second story man now—he takes some risks! I'll tell you what they did, they bought up the short car lines that didn't pay and sold 'em to themselves for fifty times as much as they were worth; and they got controlling interests in the big lines and leased 'em to themselves with dividends guaranteed as high as eighteen per cent. They capitalized the Consolidated for more millions than a little man like me can think of, and we handed 'em our money because we thought they were honest. We thought the men who listed the stock on the Exchange were honest. And when the crash came, they'd got away with the swag, like any common housebreakers. There were dummy directors, and a dummy president. Eldon Parr didn't have a share —sold out everything when she went over two hundred, but you bet he kept his stock in the leased lines, which guarantee more than they earn. He cleaned up five million, they say.... My money—the money that might give that boy fresh air, and good doctors ....Say, you believe in hell, don't you? You tell Eldon Parr to keep his charity,—he can't send any of it in here. And you'd better go back to that church of his and pray to keep his soul out of hell." . . .

His voice, which had risen even to a higher pitch, fell silent. And all at once, without warning, Garvin sank, or rather tumbled upon the bed, sobbing in a way that was terrible to see. The wife stole across the room, sat down beside him, and laid her hand on his shoulder. . . .

In spite of the intensity of his own anguish, Hodder was conscious of a curious detachment; and for months afterward particular smells, the sight of a gasoline stove, a certain popular tune gave him a sharp twinge of pain. The acid distilling in his soul etched the scene, the sounds, the odours forever in his memory: a stale hot wind from the alley rattled the shutter-slats, and blew the door to; the child stirred; and above the strident, irregular weeping rose main, in ironical contrast, the piano and the voice across the yard. In that glimpse he had into the heart of life's terrible mystery he momentarily understood many things: he knew that behind the abandon of the woman's song was the same terror which reigned in the room in which he stood . . . .

There were voices in the passageway without, a woman saying in a German accent,—-
"It is here, sir."

There was a knock at the door . . . .

CHAPTER XI

THE LOST PARISHIONER

I

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Hodder opened the door. In the dingy passageway he perceived a tall figure which immediately turned out to be that of an old gentleman. In spite of the heat, he wore a long coat and an old-fashioned, high collar, a black tie, under which was exposed a triangle of immaculate, pleated linen. In one hand he held a gold-headed stick, a large tall hat of which the silk nap was a little rubbed, a string sustaining a parcel, the brown paper wrapping of which was soaked: in the other, a manila bag containing lemons.

His head was bent forward a little, the high dome of it was bald, but the white hair clustered thickly behind the temples. The face was clean-shaven, the cheeks touched with red, the nose high and dominating, distinctly philanthropic. And the blue eyes rested on the clergyman with a benevolence unfeigned.

“Good afternoon, sir,” the old gentleman said; “I am told Mrs. Garvin lives here.”

Before the rector could reply Mrs. Garvin herself stood between them.

“It’s Mr. Bentley!” she exclaimed.

“I fear I’m intruding, ma’am,” he said. “But some of Dicky’s little friends have just informed me that he is ill, and I have taken the liberty of calling to inquire.”

Mr. Bentley entered the room,—simple words to express that which was in some sort an event. He laid his parcels on the table, his hat and stick on a chair, and stood looking down in silence at the thin little form on the couch. Presently he turned.

“I’m afraid he’s very ill, ma’am,” he said gently. “You have your own doctor, no doubt. But if you will permit me, as a friend, to make a suggestion, we have in the city one of the best child specialists in the United States, who is never weary of curing these little ones,—Dr. Jarvis, and I shall be happy to ask him to come and see Dicky.”

Mrs. Garvin glanced at Hodder, who came forward.

“I was just about to telephone for Dr. Jarvis, Mr. Bentley, when you arrived. I am Mr. Hodder, of St. John’s.”

“How do you do, sir?” The kindly eyes, alight with a gentle flame, rested upon the rugged figure of the rector. “I am glad that you, too, agree that Dr. Jarvis is advisable, Mr. Hodder.”

There was a sound from the bed. Garvin had got to his feet and was staring wildly, with reddened lids.

“Are you Horace Bentley?” he demanded.

“That is my name, sir,” Mr. Bentley replied. His expression of surprise was only momentary. And in all his life Hodder had never beheld a greater contrast in human beings than between that gracious and courtly old man and the haggard, unkempt, unshaved, and starving outcast facing him. Something like a film came over Garvin’s eyes.

“He ruined you, too, twenty years back—Eldon Parr did for you, too. Oh, I know his record, I’ve followed his trail—he got all the Grantham stock that would have made you a millionnaire!”

“Ah,” replied Mr. Bentley, smiling to humour him, “that’s something I have no wish to be, sir,—a millionaire.” He met the frightened gaze of the wife. “Good day, ma’am. If you will allow me, I’ll come to-morrow morning to learn what Dr. Jarvis will have had to say. Have courage, ma’am, have courage. You may have faith in Dr. Jarvis.”

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The poor woman was incapable of speech. Mr. Bentley picked up his hat and stick.

“I’ve taken the liberty of bringing Dicky a little ice and a few lemons.” His eyes rested again on the couch by the window. Then he turned to Garvin, who stood mutely, staring. “Good evening, sir,” he said. “We must look for the best.”

II

They went down the stairs of the shabby and battered house, stairs by the side of which holes had been knocked through the faded wall-paper—scars of frequent movings. The sound and smell of frying came out of the open door of what once had been the parlour, and on the front steps a little girl darted past them with a pitcher of beer. When they reached the sidewalk Mr. Bentley halted.

“If you were intending to telephone Dr. Jarvis, Mr. Hodder, there is a public station in the drug store just above here. I know that clergymen are busy persons, and I am passing it, if you are pressed for time.”

“My only concern is to get Jarvis here,” said the rector. “If I may go with you—”

Once again in the hot sunlight, reaction had set in. Hodder was suddenly unstrung, and the kindly old gentleman beside him seemed for the instant the only fixture in a chaotic universe. It was not until later reflection that he realized Mr. Bentley might, by an intuitive sympathy, a depth of understanding, have drained something of his state, since the incidents which followed were to be accounted for on no other grounds. In such elemental moments the frail conventions are swept away: Mr. Bentley, whoever he might be, was no longer a stranger; and it seemed wholly natural to be walking with him up the street, to hear him saying, —not with perfunctory politeness but in a tone that was itself an invitation,—“With pleasure, sir, we’ll go together. And let us trust that the doctor will be at home.”

Nor did Hodder stop to wonder, then, why Mr. Bentley should have sought in his conversation to dissipate something of the hideous blackness of a tragedy which must have moved him profoundly. How fortunate, he declared, that they should have arrived before it was too late! For it was plain to be seen that these Garvins were good people who had been broken by adversity . . . . The boy had struck him particularly—a lovable, merry little fellow whose clothes, Mr. Bentley observed, were always neatly mended, betokening a mother with self-respect and character. He even spoke of Garvin: adversity, worry, the heat, constant brooding over a happier past and an uncertain future—was it surprising that the poor man’s mind had become unhinged? They must make some plan for Garvin, said Mr. Bentley, get the man and his wife into the country for a while amongst kindly people. This might no doubt be arranged....

“Here we are, sir.”

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The familiar smell of drugs, the sound of the trickling water in the soda fountain roused Hodder to reality, to action, and he hurried into the telephone booth, fumbled in the dog-eared book, got Dr. Jarvis's number and called it. An eternity seemed to elapse before he had a reply, heard his coin jangling in the bog, recognized the voice of the great doctor's secretary. Yes, the doctor was in would he speak to Mr. Hodder, of St. John's? . . . An interval, during which Hodder was suddenly struck with this designation of himself. Was he still of St. John's, then? An aeon might have elapsed since he had walked down the white marble of its aisle toward the crouching figure in the pew. He was not that man, but another—and still Mr. Hodder, of St. John's. . . . Then he heard the specialist say, "Hello, Mr. Hodder, what can I do for you?" Heard his own voice in reply, explaining the case. Could the doctor find time? The doctor could: he was never too busy to attend to the poor,—though he did not say so: he would be there—by half-past six. The rector hung up the receiver, opened the door of the booth and mopped his brow, for the heat was stifling.

"The doctor will go," he explained in answer to Mr. Bentley's inquiring look.

"Now, sir," said the old gentleman, when they were out of the store, "we have done all that we can for the time being. I do not live far from here. Perhaps you would give me the pleasure of taking supper with me, if you have no other engagement."

No other engagement! Not until then did Hodder remember his empty rooms in the parish house, and the train which was to have borne him away from all this already speeding northward. He accepted gratefully, nor did he pause to speculate upon the mystery by which the stream of his life seemed so suddenly to have been diverted. He had, indeed, no sense of mystery in the presence of this splendidly sane, serene old man, any more than the children who ran after him from the dingy yards and passages, calling his name, clinging to the skirts of his coat. These accepted him simply as an anomalous fact in their universe, grinned at his pleasantries, and held up grimy little hands for the kidney-shaped candy beans he drew forth from his capacious pockets. In the intervals he reminisced to the rector about the neighbourhood.

"It seems but a short while ago when the trees met overhead—magnificent trees they were. The asphalt and the soot killed them. And there were fruit trees in that yard"—he pointed with his stick to a littered sun parched plot adjoining a battered mansion—"all pink and white with blossoms in the spring. Mr. Hadley lived there—one of our forgotten citizens. He is dead and gone now and his family scattered. That other house, where the boy lies, belonged to Mr. Villars, a relation of the Atterbury family, and I can recall very well a little girl with a pink sash and a white dress who used to come running out to meet me with flowers in her hands. Incredible as it may seem, she picked them in that yard. I thought of her as I went in, how fresh and happy she used to be, and what a different place this was for children then. She must have some of her own by this time."

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The character of the street had changed to what might be called shabby-genteel, and they stopped before a three-story brick house—one of a row—that showed signs of scrupulous care. The steps were newly scrubbed, the woodwork neatly painted.

“This is where I live, sir,” said Mr. Bentley, opening the door with a latchkey and leading the way into a high room on the right, darkened and cool, and filled with superb, old-fashioned rosewood furniture. It was fitted up as a library, with tall shelves reaching almost to the ceiling.

An old negro appeared, dressed in a swallow-tailed coat. His hair was as white as his master’s, and his face creased with age.

“Sam,” said Mr. Bentley, “I have brought home a gentleman for supper.”

“Yassah, Misteh Ho’ace. I was jest agwine to open up de blin’s.”

He lifted the wire screens and flung back the shutters, beamed on the rector as he relieved him of his hat, and noiselessly retired. Curiosity, hitherto suppressed by more powerful feelings, awoke in Hodder speculations which ordinarily would have been aroused before: every object in the room bespoke gentility, was eloquent of a day when wealth was honoured and respected: photographs, daguerreotypes in old-fashioned frames bore evidence of friendships of the past, and over the marble mantel hung a portrait of a sweet-faced woman in the costume of the thirties, whose eyes reminded Hodder of Mr. Bentley’s. Who was she?

Hodder wondered. Presently he found himself before a photograph on the wall beyond, at which he had been staring unconsciously.

“Ah, you recognize it,” said Mr. Bentley.

“St. John’s!”

“Yes,” Mr. Bentley repeated, “St. John’s.” He smiled at Hodder’s glance of bewilderment, and put his hand on the younger man’s arm. “That picture was taken before you were born, sir, I venture to say—in 1869. I am very fond of it, for it gives the church in perspective, as you see. That was Mr. Gore’s house”—he indicated a square, heavily corniced mansion—“where the hotel now stands, and that was his garden, next the church, where you see the trees above the wall.”

The rector turned again and looked at his host, who, was gazing at the picture thoughtfully.

“I ought to have remembered,” he said. “I have seen your name in the church records, sir, and I have heard Mr. Waring speak of you.”

“My dear Mr. Hodder, there is no reason why you should have known me. A great many years have passed since I was a parishioner of St. John’s —a great many years.”

“But it was you,” the rector began, uncertainly, and suddenly spoke with conviction, “it was you who chose the architect, who did more than other men to make the church what it is.”

“Whatever I may have done,” replied Mr. Bentley, with simple dignity, “has brought its reward. To this day I have not ceased to derive pleasure from it, and often I go out of my way, through Burton Street, although the view is cramped. And sometimes,” he added, with the hint of a twinkle in his eye, “I go in. This afternoon is not the first time I have seen you, Mr. Hodder.”

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“But—?” said the rector. He stared at the other’s face, and the question died on his lips.

“You wonder why I am no longer a parishioner. The time came when I could not afford to be.” There was no hint of reproach in his voice, of bitterness. He spoke regretfully, indeed, but as one stating an incontrovertible fact. “I lost my fortune, I could not keep my pew, so I deeded it back to the church. My old friends, Mrs. Dimock and Asa Waring, and others, too, were very kind. But I could not accept their hospitality.”

Hodder bowed his head in silence. What thundered indictment of the Church of Christ could have been as severe, as wholly condemning as these few words so dispassionately uttered by the man beside him?

The old darky entered, and announced supper.

Hodder had lost his way, yet a hand had been held out to him, and he seized it. With a sense of being led, psychically as well as physically, he followed Mr. Bentley into a large bedroom, where a high, four-posted bed lifted a pleated canopy toward the ceiling. And after he had washed his hands they entered a dining-room looking out upon a little yard in the rear, which had been transformed into a garden. Roses, morning glories, and nasturtiums were growing against the walls; a hose lay coiled upon the path; the bricks, baked during the day, were splashed with water; the leaves and petals were wet, and the acrid odour of moist earth, mingling with perfumes, penetrated the room. Hodder paused in the window.

“Sam keeps our flowers alive,” he heard Mr. Bentley say, “I don’t know how.”

“I scrubs ’em, sah,” said Sam. “Yassah, I washes ’em like chilluns.”

He found himself, at Mr. Bentley’s request, asking grace, the old darky with reverently bent head standing behind his master; sitting down at a mahogany table that reflected like a mirror the few pieces of old silver, to a supper of beaten biscuits that burned one’s fingers, of ’broiled chicken and coffee, and sliced peaches and cream. Mr. Bentley was talking of other days—not so long gone by when the great city had been a village, or scarcely more. The furniture, it seemed, had come from his own house in what was called the Wilderness Road, not far from the river banks, over the site of which limited trains now rolled on their way eastward toward the northernmost of the city’s bridges. He mentioned many names, some remembered, some forgotten, like his own; dwelt on pleasures and customs gone by forever.

“A little while after I moved in here, I found that one old man could not fill the whole of this house, so I let the upper floors,” he explained, smilingly. “Some day I must introduce you to my tenants, Mr. Hodder.”

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By degrees, as Hodder listened, he became calm. Like a child, he found himself distracted, talking, asking questions: and the intervals grew longer between the recurrent surges of fear when the memory rose before him of the events of the day,—of the woman, the child, and the man: of Eldon Parr and this deed he had done; hinting, as it did, of closed chambers of other deeds yet to be opened, of countless, hidden miseries still to be revealed: when he heard once more the tortured voice of the banker, and the question: "How would you like to live in this house —alone?" In contrast, now he beheld the peace in the face of the man whose worldly goods Eldon Parr had taken, and whom he had driven out of the church. Surely, this man had found a solution! . . . What was it?

Hodder thought of the child, of the verdict of Dr. Jarvis, but he lingered on, loth to leave, —if the truth be told—afraid to leave; drawing strength from his host's calm, wondering as to the source of it, as to the life which was its expression; longing, yet not presuming, to question. The twilight deepened, and the old darky lit a lamp and led the way back to the library.

"Sam," said Mr. Bentley, "draw up the armchair for Mr. Hodder beside the window. It is cooler there."

"I ought to go," Hodder said. "I ought to see how the child is. Jarvis will have been there by this time, and there may be necessaries—"

"Jarvis will have attended to that," Mr. Bentley replied. "Sit down, Mr. Hodder. I am not sure that, for the present, we have not done all in this case that is humanly possible."

"You mean," said the rector, "that they will accept nothing from me." It came from him, spontaneously, like a cry. He had not meant to say it. "I don't blame them. I don't blame them for losing their faith in God and man, in the Church. I ought to have seen it before, but I was blind, incredibly blind—until it struck me in the face. You saw it, sir, and you left a church from which the poor are thrust out, which refuses to heed the first precept of its Master."

"I saw it," answered Mr. Bentley, "but I could do nothing. Perhaps you can do—-something."

"Ah!" Hodder exclaimed sharply, "why do you say that? The Church is paralyzed, chained. How can she reach these wretched people who are the victims of the ruthless individualism and greed of those who control her? You know—that man, Mr. Bentley." (Hodder could not bring himself to pronounce Eldon Parr's name.) "I had an affection for him, I pitied him, because he suffers—"

"Yes," echoed Mr. Bentley, "he suffers."

Hodder was momentarily arrested by the sadness of his tone.

“But he doesn’t know why he suffers—he cannot be made to see,” the rector went on. “And he is making others suffer,—hideously, while he imagines himself a Christian. He is the Church to that miserable, hopeless wretch we saw to-day, and to hundreds of the same kind whom he has driven to desperation. And I—who am supposed to be the vicar of God—I am powerless. They have a contempt for me, a just contempt. They thrust me out of their doors, bid me to return and minister to their oppressors. You were right to leave, and I should have left long since.”

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He had not spoken with violence, or with a lack of control. He seemed rather to have regained a mastery of himself, and felt as a man from whom the shackles have been struck, proclaiming his freedom. Mr. Bentley's eyes lighted in involuntary response as he gazed at the figure and face before him. He pressed his hands together.

"If you will forgive a curiosity, Mr. Hodder, that is somewhat due to my interest in a church with which I have many precious associations, may I ask if this is a sudden determination on your part?"

"No," Hodder said. "I have known ever since I came here that something was wrong, but at first I couldn't see it, and after that I wouldn't see it. That is about what happened, as I look back on it.

"But the farther in I went," Hodder continued, "the more tangled and bewildered I became. I was hypnotized, I think," he added with a gesture,—"hypnotized, as a man is who never takes his eyes from a pattern. I wanted to get at this neighbourhood—Dalton Street—I mean, and finally I agreed to the establishment of a settlement house over here, to be paid for largely by Eldon Parr and Francis Ferguson. I couldn't see the folly of such an undertaking—the supreme irony of it, until—until it was pointed out to me." He hesitated; the remembrance of Alison Parr ran through him, a thread of pain. "And even then I tried to dodge the issue, I tried to make myself believe that good might flow out of evil; that the Church, which is supposed to be founded on the highest ideal ever presented to man, might compromise and be practical, that she might accept money which had been wrung from a trusting public by extortion, by thinly disguised thievery such as this Consolidated Tractions Company fraud, and do good with it! And at last I made up my mind to go away, to-day, to a quiet place where I might be alone, and reflect, when by a singular circumstance I was brought into contact with this man, Garvin. I see now, clearly enough, that if I had gone, I should never have come back."

"And you still intend to go?" Mr. Bentley asked.

Hodder leaned his elbow against the mantel. The lamplight had a curious effect on Mr. Bentley's face.

"What can I do?" he demanded. The question was not aimed directly at his host—it was in the nature of a renewed appeal to a tribunal which had been mute, but with which he now seemed vaguely aware of a certain contact. "Even supposing I could bring myself to accept the compromise —now that I see it clearly, that the end justifies the means—-what good could I accomplish? You saw what happened this afternoon—the man would have driven me out if, it hadn't been for you. This whole conception of charity is a crime against civilization—I had to have that pointed out to me, too,—this system of legalized or semi-legalized robbery and the distribution of largesse to the victims. The Church is doing wrong, is stultifying herself in encouraging it. She should set her face rigidly against it, stand for morality and justice and Christianity in government, not for

pauperizing. It is her mission to enlighten these people, all people—to make them self-respecting, to give them some notion of the dignity of their souls and their rights before God and man."

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“Aren’t you yourself suggesting,” said Mr. Bentley, “the course which will permit you to remain?”

Hodder was silent. The thought struck him with tremendous force. Had he suggested it? And how—why? Could it be done? Could he do it or begin it?

“We have met at last in a singular way,” he heard Mr. Bentley going on, “in a way that has brushed aside the conventions, in a way—I am happy to say—that has enabled you to give me your confidence. And I am an old man,—that has made it easier. I saw this afternoon, Mr. Hodder, that you were troubled, although you tried to hide it.”

“I knew that you saw it,” Hodder said.

“Nor was it difficult for me to guess something of the cause of it. The same thing has troubled me.”

“You?”

“Yes,” Mr. Bentley answered. “I left St. John’s, but the habits and affections of a lifetime are not easily severed. And some time before I left it I began to have visions of a future for it. There was a question, many years ago, as to whether a new St. John’s should not be built in the West End, on a site convenient to the parishioners, and this removal I opposed. Mr. Waring stood by me. We foresaw the day when this district would be—-what it is now—the precarious refuge of the unfortunate in the battle of life, of just such unhappy families as the Garvins, of miserable women who sell themselves to keep alive. I thought of St. John’s, as you did, as an oasis in a desert of misery and vice. At that time I, too, believed in the system of charities which you have so well characterized as pauperizing.”

“And now?”

Mr. Bentley smiled, as at a reminiscence.

“My eyes were opened,” he replied, and in these simple words summed up and condemned it all. “They are craving bread, and we fling them atones. I came here. It was a house I owned, which I saved from the wrecks, and as I look back upon what the world would call a misfortune, sir, I can see that it was a propitious event, for me. The street ‘ran down,’ as the saying goes. I grew gradually to know these people, my new neighbours, largely through their children, and I perceived many things I had not dreamed of—before then. I saw how the Church was hampered, fettered; I saw why they disliked and distrusted it.”

“And yet you still believed that it had a mission?” Hodder interrupted. He had been listening with rapt attention.

“I still believed it,” said Mr. Bentley. “My conception of that mission changed, grew, and yet it seemed further and further from fulfilment. And then you came to St. John’s.”

“I!” The cry was involuntary.

“You,” Mr. Bentley repeated. “Sometimes,” he added whimsically, “I go there, as I have told you. I saw you, I heard you preach. I talked to my friend Waring about you. I saw that your eyes were not opened, but I think I had a certain presentiment, for which I do not pretend to account, that they would be opened.”

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“You mean,” said the rector, “that if I believe in the mission of the Church as I have partially stated it here tonight, I—should stay and fight for it.”

“Precisely,” Mr. Bentley replied.

There was a note of enthusiasm, almost of militancy in the old gentleman’s tone that surprised and agitated Hodder. He took a turn up and down the room before he answered.

“I ought to tell you that the view I expressed a moment ago is new to me. I had not thought of it before, and it is absolutely at variance with any previous ideas I have held. I can see that it must involve, if carried to its logical conclusion, a change in the conception of Christianity I have hitherto held.”

He was too intent upon following up the thought to notice Mr. Bentley’s expression of assent.

“And suppose,” he asked, “I were unable to come to any conclusion? I will be frank, Mr. Bentley, and confess to you that at present I cannot see my way. You have heard me preach—you know what my beliefs have been. They are shattered. And, while I feel that there is some definite connection between the view of the Church which I mentioned and her message to the individual, I do not perceive it clearly. I am not prepared at present to be the advocate of Christianity, because I do not know what Christianity is. I thought I knew.

“I shall have to begin all over again, as though I had never taken orders, submit to a thorough test, examine the evidence impartially. It is the only way. Of this much I am sure, that the Church as a whole has been engaged in a senseless conflict with science and progressive thought, that she has insisted upon the acceptance of facts which are in violation of reason and which have nothing to do with religion. She has taught them to me—made them, in fact, a part of me. I have clung to them as long as I can, and in throwing them over I don’t know where I shall land.”

His voice was measured, his words chosen, yet they expressed a withering indignation and contempt which were plainly the culmination of months of bewilderment—now replaced by a clear-cut determination.

“I do not blame any individual,” he continued, “but the system by which clergymen are educated.

“I intend to stay here, now, without conducting any services, and find out for myself what the conditions are here in Dalton Street. You know those people, Mr. Bentley, you understand them, and I am going to ask you to help me. You have evidently solved the problem.”

Mr. Bentley rose. And he laid a hand, which was not quite steady, on the rector's shoulder.

"Believe me, sir," he replied, "I appreciate something of what such a course must mean to you—a clergyman." He paused, and a look came upon his face, a look that might scarce have been called a smile—Hodder remembered it as a glow—reminiscent of many things. In it a life was summed ups in it understanding, beneficence, charity, sympathy, were all expressed, yet seemingly blended into one. "I do not know what my testimony may be worth to you, my friend, but I give it freely. I sometimes think I have been peculiarly fortunate. But I have lived a great many years, and the older I get and the more I see of human nature the firmer has grown my conviction of its essential nobility and goodness."

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Hodder marvelled, and was silent.

“You will come here, often,—every day if you can. There are many men and women, friends of mine, whom I should like you to know, who would like to know you.”

“I will, and thank you,” Hodder answered. Words were inadequate for the occasion . . . .

CHAPTER XII

THE WOMAN OF THE SONG

On leaving Mr. Bentley, Hodder went slowly down Dalton Street, wondering that mere contact with another human being should have given him the resolution to turn his face once again toward the house whither he was bound. And this man had given him something more. It might hardly have been called faith; a new courage to fare forth across the Unknown—that was it; hope, faint but revived.

Presently he stopped on the sidewalk, looked around him, and read a sign in glaring, electric letters, Hotel Albert. Despite the heat, the place was ablaze with lights. Men and women were passing, pausing—going in. A motor, with a liveried chauffeur whom he remembered having seen before, was standing in front of the Rathskeller. The nightly carousal was beginning.

Hodder retraced his steps, crossed the street diagonally, came to the dilapidated gate he remembered so well, and looked up through the dusk at the house. If death had entered it, there was no sign: death must be a frequent visitor hereabouts. On the doorsteps he saw figures outlined, slatternly women and men in shirt-sleeves who rose in silence to make way for him, staring at him curiously. He plunged into the hot darkness of the hall, groped his way up the stairs and through the passage, and hesitated. A single gas jet burned low in the stagnant air, and after a moment he made out, by its dim light, a woman on her knees beside the couch, mechanically moving the tattered palm-leaf over the motionless little figure. The child was still alive. He drew a deep breath, and entered; at the sound of his step Mrs. Garvin suddenly started up.

“Richard!” she cried, and then stood staring at the rector. “Have you seen my husband, sir? He went away soon after you left.”

Hodder, taken by surprise, replied that he had not. Her tone, her gesture of anxiety he found vaguely disquieting.

“The doctor has been here?” he asked.

“Yes,” she answered absently. “I don’t know where he can be—Richard. He didn’t even wait to see the doctor. And he thinks so much of Dicky, sir, he sits here of an evening—”

Hodder sat down beside her, and taking the palm-leaf from her hand, began himself to fan the child. Something of her misgiving had communicated itself to him.

“Don’t worry,” he said. “Remember that you have been through a great deal, and it is natural that you should be overwrought. Your husband feels strongly. I don’t blame him. And the sight of me this afternoon upset him. He has gone out to walk.”

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“Richard is proud,” she answered simply. “He used to say he’d rather die than take charity—and now he’s come to it. And it’s—that man, sir, who’s got on his brain, and changed him. He wasn’t always like this, but now he can’t seem to think of anything else. He wakes up in the night . . . . And he used to have such a sweet nature—you wouldn’t have known him . . . and came home so happy in the evenings in Alder Street, often with a little fruit, or something he’d bought for us, and romp with Dicky in the yard, and I’d stand and laugh at them. Even after we’d lost our money, when he was sick that time, he didn’t feel this way. It grew on him when he couldn’t get work, and then he began to cut things out of the papers about Mr. Parr. And I have sometimes thought that that’s kept him from getting work. He talks about it, and people don’t know what to make of him. They don’t know how hard he’d try if they’d give him something.”. . . .

“We shall find something,” said the rector, striving to throw into his voice confidence and calm. He did not dare to look at her, but continued to move the fan.

The child stirred a little. Mrs. Garvin put out her hand.

“Yes, the doctor was here. He was very kind. Oh, sir,” she exclaimed, “I hope you won’t think us ungrateful—and that Mr. Bentley won’t. Dr. Jarvis has hopes, sir,—he says—I forget the name he called it, what Dicky has. It’s something uncommon. He says it was—brought on by the heat, and want of food—good food. And he’s coming himself in the morning to take him out to that hospital beyond the park—in an automobile, sir. I was just thinking what a pity it is Dicky wouldn’t realize it. He’s always wanted to ride in one.” Suddenly her tears flowed, unheeded, and she clung to the little hand convulsively. “I don’t know what I shall do without him, Sir, I don’t . . . . I’ve always had him . . . and when he’s sick, among strangers.” . . .

The rector rose to the occasion.

“Now, Mrs. Garvin,” he said firmly, “you must remember that there is only one way to save the boy’s life. It will be easy to get you a room near the hospital, where you can see him constantly.”

“I know—I know, sir. But I couldn’t leave his father, I couldn’t leave Richard.” She looked around distractedly. “Where is he?”

“He will come back presently,” said the rector. “If not, I will look for him.”

She did not reply, but continued to weep in silence. Suddenly, above the confused noises of the night, the loud notes of a piano broke, and the woman whose voice he had heard in the afternoon began once more with appalling vigour to sing. The child moaned.

Mrs. Garvin started up hysterically.

“I can’t stand it—I can’t stand her singing that now,” she sobbed.

Thirty feet away, across the yard, Hodder saw the gleaming window from which the music came. He got to his feet. Another verse began, with more of the brazen emphasis of the concert-hall singer than ever. He glanced at the woman beside him, irresolutely.

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“I’ll speak to her,” he said.

Mrs. Garvin did not appear to hear him, but flung herself down beside the lounge. As he seized his hat and left the room he had the idea of telephoning for a nurse, when he almost ran into some one in the upper hall, and recognized the stout German woman, Mrs. Breitmann.

“Mrs. Garvin”—he said, “she ought not to be left—”

“I am just now going,” said Mrs. Breitmann. “I stay with her until her husband come.”

Such was the confidence with which, for some reason, she inspired him, that he left with an easier mind.

It was not until the rector had arrived at the vestibule of the apartment house next door that something—of the difficulty and delicacy of the errand he had undertaken came home to him. Impulse had brought him thus far, but now he stood staring helplessly at a row of bells, speaking tubes, and cards. Which, for example, belonged to the lady whose soprano voice pervaded the neighbourhood? He looked up and down the street, in the vain hope of finding a messenger. The song continued: he had promised to stop it. Hodder accused himself of cowardice.

To his horror, Hodder felt stealing over him, incredible though it seemed after the depths through which he had passed, a faint sense of fascination in the adventure. It was this that appalled him—this tenacity of the flesh,—which no terrors seemed adequate to drive out. The sensation, faint as it was, unmanned him. There were still many unexplored corners in his soul.

He turned, once more contemplated the bells, and it was not until then he noticed that the door was ajar. He pushed it open, climbed the staircase, and stood in the doorway of what might be called a sitting room, his eyes fixed on a swaying back before an upright piano against the wall; his heart seemed to throb with the boisterous beat of the music. The woman’s hair, in two long and heavy plaits falling below her waist, suddenly fascinated him. It was of the rarest of russet reds. She came abruptly to the end of the song.

“I beg your pardon—” he began.

She swung about with a start, her music dropping to the floor, and stared at him. Her tattered blue kimono fell away at her elbows, her full throat was bare, and a slipper she had kicked off lay on the floor beside her. He recoiled a little, breathing deeply. She stared at him.

“My God, how you scared me!” she exclaimed. Evidently a second glance brought to her a realization of his clerical costume. “Say, how did you get in here?”

“I beg your pardon,” he said again, “but there is a very sick child in the house next door and I came to ask you if you would mind not playing any more to-night.”

She did not reply at once, and her expression he found unsolvable. Much of it might be traced to a life which had contracted the habit of taking nothing on trust, a life which betrayed itself in unmistakable traces about the eyes. And Hodder perceived that the face, if the stamp of this expression could have been removed, was not unpleasing, although indulgence and recklessness were beginning to remould it.

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“Quit stringin’ me,” she said.

For a moment he was at a loss. He gathered that she did not believe him, and crossed to the open window.

“If you will come here,” he said, “I will show you the room where he lies. We hope to be able to take him to the hospital to-morrow.” He paused a moment, and added: “He enjoyed your music very much when he was better.”

The comment proved a touchstone.

“Say,” she remarked, with a smile that revealed a set of surprisingly good teeth, “I can make the box talk when I get a-goin’. There’s no stopping me this side of grand opera, —that’s no fable. I’m not so bad for an enginoo, am I?”

Thus directly appealed to, in common courtesy he assented.

“No indeed,” he said.

“That’s right,” she declared. “But the managers won’t have it at any price. Those jays don’t know anything, do they? They’ve only got a dream of what the public wants. You wouldn’t believe it, but I’ve sung for ’em, and they threw me out. You wouldn’t believe it, would you?”

“I must own,” said the rector, “that I have never had any experience with managers.”

She sat still considering him from the piano stool, her knees apart, her hands folded in her lap. Mockery came into her eyes.

“Say, what did you come in here for, honest injun?” she demanded.

He was aware of trying to speak sternly, and of failing. To save his life he could not, then, bring up before himself the scene in the little back room across the yard in its full terror and reality, reproduce his own feelings of only a few minutes ago which had impelled him hither. A month, a year might have elapsed. Every faculty was now centred on the woman in front of him, and on her life.

“Why do you doubt me?” he asked.

She continued to contemplate him. Her eyes were strange, baffling, smouldering, yellow-brown, shifting, yet not shifty: eyes with a history. Her laugh proclaimed both effrontery and uneasiness.

“Don’t get huffy,” she said. “The kid’s sick—that’s on the level, is it? You didn’t come ’round to see me?” The insinuation was in her voice as well as in her words. He did not resent it, but felt an odd thrill of commingled pity and—fear.

“I came for the reason I have given you,” he replied; and added, more gently: “I know it is a good deal to ask, but you will be doing a great kindness. The mother is distracted. The child, as I told you, will be taken to the hospital in the morning.”

She reached out a hand and closed the piano softly.

“I guess I can hold off for to-night,” she said. “Sometimes things get kind of dull—you know, when there’s nothing doing, and this keeps me lively. How old is the kid?”

“About nine,” he estimated.

“Say, I’m sorry.” She spoke with a genuineness of feeling that surprised him. He went slowly, almost apologetically toward the door.

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“Good night,” he said, “and thank you.”

Her look halted him.

“What’s your hurry?” she demanded.

“I’m sorry,” he said hastily, “but I must be going.” He was, in truth, in a panic to leave.

“You’re a minister, ain’t you?”

“Yes,” he said.

“I guess you don’t think much of me, do you?” she demanded.

He halted abruptly, struck by the challenge, and he saw that this woman had spoken not for herself, but for an entire outlawed and desperate class. The fact that the words were mocking and brazen made no difference; it would have been odd had they not been so. With a shock of surprise he suddenly remembered that his inability to reach this class had been one of the causes of his despair! And now? With the realization, reaction set in, an overpowering feeling of weariness, a desire—for rest—for sleep. The electric light beside the piano danced before his eyes, yet he heard within him a voice crying out to him to stay. Desperately tired though he was, he must not leave now. He walked slowly to the table, put his hat on it and sat down in a chair beside it.

“Why do you say that?” he asked.

“Oh, cut it out!” said the woman. “I’m on to you church folks.” She laughed. “One of ’em came in here once, and wanted to pray. I made a monkey of him.”

“I hope,” said the rector, smiling a little, “that is not the reason why you wish me to stay.”

She regarded him doubtfully.

“You’re not the same sort,” she announced at length.

“What sort was he?”

“He was easy,—old enough to know better—most of the easy ones are. He marched in sanctimonious as you please, with his mouth full of salvation and Bible verses.” She laughed again at the recollection.

“And after that,” said the rector, “you felt that ministers were a lot of hypocrites.”

“I never had much opinion of ’em,” she admitted, “nor of church people, either,” she added, with emphasis.

“There’s Ferguson, who has the department store,—he’s ‘way up’ in church circles. I saw him a couple of months ago, one Sunday morning, driving to that church on Burton Street, where all the rich folks go. I forget the name—”

“St. John’s,” he supplied. He had got beyond surprise.

“St. John’s—that’s it. They tell me he gives a lot of money to it —money that he steals from the girls he hires. Oh, yes, he’ll get to heaven—I don’t think.”

“How do you mean that he steals money from the girls?”

“Say, you are innocent—ain’t you! Did you ever go down to that store? Do you know what a floorwalker is? Did you ever see the cheap guys hanging around, and the young swells waiting to get a chance at the girls behind the counters? Why do you suppose so many of ’em take to the easy life? I’ll put you next—because Ferguson don’t pay ’em enough to live on. That’s why. He makes ’em sign a paper, when he hires ’em, that they live at home, that they’ve got some place to eat and sleep, and they sign it all right. That’s to square up Ferguson’s conscience. But say, if you think a girl can support herself in this city and dress on what he pays, you’ve got another guess comin’.”

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There rose up before him, unsummoned, the image of Nan Ferguson, in all her freshness and innocence, as she had stood beside him on the porch in Park Street. He was somewhat astonished to find himself defending his parishioner.

“May it not be true, in order to compete with other department stores, that Mr. Ferguson has to pay the same wages?” he said.

“Forget it. I guess you know what Galt House is? That’s where women like me can go when we get all played out and there’s nothing left in the game—it’s on River Street. Maybe you’ve been there.”

Hodder nodded.

“Well,” she continued, “Ferguson pays a lot of money to keep that going, and gets his name in the papers. He hands over to the hospitals where some of us die—and it’s all advertised. He forks out to the church. Now, I put it to you, why don’t he sink some of that money where it belongs—in living wages? Because there’s nothing in it for him —-that’s why.”

The rector looked at her in silence. He had not suspected her of so much intellect. He glanced about the apartment, at the cheap portiere flung over the sofa; at the gaudy sofa cushions, two of which bore the names and colours of certain colleges. The gas log was almost hidden by dried palm leaves, a cigarette stump lay on the fender; on the mantel above were several photographs of men and at the other side an open door revealed a bedroom.

“This is a nice place, ain’t it?” she observed. “I furnished it when I was on velvet—-nothing was too good for me. Money’s like champagne when you take the cork out, it won’t keep. I was rich once. It was lively while it lasted,” she added, with a sigh: “I’ve struck the down trail. I oughtn’t, by rights, to be here fooling with you. There’s nothing in it.” She glanced at the clock. “I ought to get busy.”

As the realization of her meaning came to him, he quivered.

“Is there no way but that?” he asked, in a low voice.

“Say, you’re not a-goin’ to preach, are you?”

“No,” he answered, “God forbid! I was not asking the question of you.”

She stared at him.

“Of who, then?”

He was silent.

“You’ve left me at the station. But on the level, you don’t seem to know much, that’s a fact. You don’t think the man who owns these flats is in it for charity, do you? ‘Single ladies,’ like me, have to give up. And then there are other little grafts that wouldn’t interest you. What church do you come from anyway?”

“You mentioned it a little while ago.”

“St. John’s!” She leaned back against the piano and laughed unrestrainedly. “That’s a good one, to think how straight I’ve been talking to you.”

“I’m much obliged to you,” he said.

Again she gazed at him, now plainly perplexed.

“What are you giving me?”

“I mean what I say,” he answered. “I am obliged to you for telling me things I didn’t know. And I appreciate—your asking me to stay.”

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She was sitting upright now, her expression changed, her breath came more rapidly, her lips parted as she gazed at him.

“Do you know,” she said, “I haven’t had anybody speak to me like that for four years.” Her voice betrayed excitement, and differed in tone, and she had cast off unconsciously the vulgarity of speech. At that moment she seemed reminiscent of what she must once have been; and he found himself going through an effort at reconstruction.

“Like what?” he asked.

“Like a woman,” she answered vehemently.

“My name is John Hodder,” he said, “and I live in the parish house, next door to the church. I should like to be your friend, if you will let me. If I can be of any help to you now, or at any other time, I shall feel happy. I promise not to preach,” he added.

She got up abruptly, and went to the window. And when she turned to him again, it was with something of the old bravado.

“You’d better leave me alone, I’m no good;” she said. “I’m much obliged to you, but I don’t want any charity or probation houses in mine. And honest work’s a thing of the past for me—even if I could get a job. Nobody would have me. But if they would, I couldn’t work any more. I’ve got out of the hang of it.” With a swift and decisive movement she crossed the room, opened a cabinet on the wall, revealing a bottle and glasses.

“So you’re bent upon going—downhill?” he said.

“What can you do to stop it?” she retorted defiantly, “Give me religion ——I guess you’d tell me. Religion’s all right for those on top, but say, it would be a joke if I got it. There ain’t any danger. But if I did, it wouldn’t pay room-rent and board.”

He sat mute. Once more the truth overwhelmed, the folly of his former optimism arose to mock him. What he beheld now, in its true aspect, was a disease of that civilization he had championed. . .

She took the bottle from the cupboard and laid it on the table.

“What’s the difference?” she demanded. “It’s all over in a little while, anyway. I guess you’d tell me there was a hell. But if that’s so, some of your church folks’ll broil, too. I’ll take my chance on it, if they will.” She looked at him, half in defiance, half in friendliness, across the table. “Say, you mean all right, but you’re only wastin’ time here. You can’t do me any good, I tell you, and I’ve got to get busy.”

“May we not at least remain friends?” he asked, after a moment.

Her laugh was a little harsh.

“What kind of friendship would that be? You, a minister, and me a woman on the town?”

“If I can stand it, I should think you might.”

“Well, I can’t stand it,” she answered.

He got up, and held out his hand. She stood seemingly irresolute, and then took it.

“Good night,” he said.

“Good night,” she repeated nonchalantly.

As he went out of the door she called after him:

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“Don’t be afraid I’ll worry the kid!”

The stale odour of cigarette smoke with which the dim corridor was charged intoxicated, threatened to overpower him. It seemed to be the reek of evil itself. A closing door had a sinister meaning. He hurried; obscurity reigned below, the light in the lower hall being out; fumbled for the door-knob, and once in the street took a deep breath and mopped his brow; but he had not proceeded half a block before he hesitated, retraced his steps, reentered the vestibule, and stooped to peer at the cards under the speaking tubes. Cheaply printed in large script, was the name of the tenant of the second floor rear,—-*miss Kate Marcy*. . . .

In crossing Tower Street he was frightened by the sharp clanging of a great electric car that roared past him, aflame with light. His brain had seemingly ceased to work, and he stumbled at the curb, for he was very tired. The events of the day no longer differentiated themselves in his mind but lay, a composite weight, upon his heart. At length he reached the silent parish house, climbed the stairs and searched in his pocket for the key of his rooms. The lock yielded, but while feeling for the switch he tripped and almost fell over an obstruction on the floor.

The flooding light revealed his travelling-bags, as he had piled them, packed and ready to go to the station.

THE INSIDE OF THE CUP

By Winston Churchill

Volume 4.

XIII. *Winterbourne*
XIV. A *Saturday afternoon*
XV. *The crucible*
XVI. *Amid the encircling gloom*

CHAPTER XIII

WINTERBOURNE

I

Hodder fell asleep from sheer exhaustion, awaking during the night at occasional intervals to recall chimerical dreams in which the events of the day before were reflected, but caricatured and distorted. Alison Parr was talking to the woman in the flat,

and both were changed, and yet he identified both: and on another occasion he saw a familiar figure surrounded by romping, ragged children—a figure which turned out to be Eldon Parr's!

Finally he was aroused by what seemed a summons from the unknown—the prolonged morning whistle of the shoe factory. For a while he lay as one benumbed, and the gradual realization that ensued might be likened to the straining of stiffened wounds. Little by little he reconstructed, until the process became unbearable, and then rose from his bed with one object in mind,—to go to Horace Bentley. At first—he seized upon the excuse that Mr. Bentley would wish to hear the verdict of Dr. Jarvis, but immediately abandoned it as dishonest, acknowledging the true reason, that in all the —world the presence of this one man alone might assuage in some degree the terror in his soul. For the first time in his life, since childhood, he knew a sense of utter dependence upon another human being. He felt no shame, would make no explanation for his early visit.

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He turned up Tower, deliberately avoiding Dalton Street in its lower part, reached Mr. Bentley's door. The wrinkled, hospitable old darky actually seemed to radiate something of the personality with which he had so long been associated, and Hodder was conscious of a surge of relief, a return of confidence at sight of him. Yes, Mr. Bentley was at home, in the dining room. The rector said he would wait, and not disturb him.

"He done tole me to bring you out, sah, if you come," said Sam.

"He expects me?" exclaimed Hodder, with a shock of surprise.

"That's what he done tole me, sah, to ax you kindly for to step out when you come."

The sun was beginning to penetrate into the little back yard, where the flowers were still glistening with the drops of their morning bath; and Mr. Bentley sat by the window reading his newspaper, his spectacles on his nose, and a great grey cat rubbing herself against his legs. He rose with alacrity.

"Good morning, sir," he said, and his welcome implied that early morning visits were the most common and natural of occurrences. "Sam, a plate for Mr. Hodder. I was just hoping you would come and tell me what Dr. Jarvis had said about the case."

But Hodder was not deceived. He believed that Mr. Bentley understood perfectly why he had come, and the knowledge of the old gentleman's comprehension curiously added to his sense of refuge. He found himself seated once more at the mahogany table, permitting Sam to fill his cup with coffee.

"Jarvis has given a favourable report, and he is coming this morning himself, in an automobile, to take the boy out to the hospital."

"That is like Jarvis," was Mr. Bentley's comment. "We will go there, together, after breakfast, if convenient for you," he added.

"I hoped you would," replied the rector. "And I was going to ask you a favour. I have a check, given me by a young lady to use at my discretion, and it occurred to me that Garvin might be willing to accept some proposal from you." He thought of Nan Ferguson, and of the hope he lead expressed of finding some one in Dalton Street.

"I have been considering the matter," Mr. Bentley said. "I have a friend who lives on the trolley line a little beyond the hospital, a widow. It is like the country there, you know, and I think Mrs. Bledsoe could be induced to take the Garvins. And then something can be arranged for him. I will find an opportunity to speak to him this morning."

Hodder sipped his coffee, and looked out at the morning-glories opening to the sun.

“Mrs. Garvin was alone last night. He had gone out shortly after we left, and had not waited for the doctor. She was greatly worried.”

Hodder found himself discussing these matters on which, an hour before, he had feared to permit his mind to dwell. And presently, not without feeling, but in a manner eliminating all account of his personal emotions, he was relating that climactic episode of the woman at the piano. The old gentleman listened intently, and in silence.

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“Yes,” he said, when the rector had finished, “that is my observation. Most of them are driven to the life, and held in it, of course, by a remorseless civilization. Individuals may be culpable, Mr. Hodder—are culpable. But we cannot put the whole responsibility on individuals.”

“No,” Hodder assented, “I can see that now.” He paused a moment, and as his mind dwelt upon the scene and he saw again the woman standing before him in bravado, the whole terrible meaning of her life and end flashed through him as one poignant sensation. Her dauntless determination to accept the consequence of her acts, her willingness to look her future in the face, cried out to him in challenge.

“She refused unconditionally,” he said.

Mr. Bentley seemed to read his thought, divine his appeal.

“We must wait,” he answered.

“Do you think?—” Hodder began, and stopped abruptly.

“I remember another case, somewhat similar,” said Mr. Bentley. “This woman, too, had the spirit you describe—we could do nothing with her. We kept an eye on her—or rather Sally Grover did—she deserves credit —and finally an occasion presented itself.”

“And the woman you speak of was—rehabilitated?” Hodder asked. He avoided the word “saved.”

“Yes, sir. It was one of the fortunate cases. There are others which are not so fortunate.”

Hodder nodded.

“We are beginning to recognize that we are dealing, in, many instances, with a disease,” Mr. Bentley went on. “I am far from saying that it cannot be cured, but sometimes we are forced to admit that the cure is not within our power, Mr. Hodder.”

Two thoughts struck the rector simultaneously, the: revelation of what might be called a modern enlightenment in one of Mr. Bentley’s age, an indication of uninterrupted growth, of the sense of continued youth which had impressed him from the beginning; and, secondly, an intimation from the use of the plural pronoun we, of an association of workers (informal, undoubtedly) behind Mr. Bentley. While he was engaged in these speculations the door opened.

“Heah’s Miss Sally, Marse Ho’ace,” said Sam.

“Good morning, Sally,” said Mr. Bentley, rising from the table with his customary courtesy, “I’m glad you came in. Let me introduce Mr. Hodder, of St. John’s.”

Miss Grover had capability written all over her. She was a young woman of thirty, slim to spareness, simply dressed in a shirtwaist and a dark blue skirt; alert, so distinctly American in type as to give a suggestion of the Indian. Her quick, deep-set eyes searched Hodder’s face as she jerked his hand; but her greeting was cordial, and, matter-of-fact. She stimulated curiosity.

“Well, Sally, what’s the news?” Mr. Bentley asked.

“Gratz, the cabinet-maker, was on the rampage again, Mr. Bentley. His wife was here yesterday when I got home from work, and I went over with her. He was in a beastly state, and all the niggers and children in the neighbourhood, including his own, around the shop. Fusel oil, labelled whiskey,” she explained, succinctly.

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“What did you do?”

“Took the bottle away from him,” said Miss Grower. The simplicity of this method, Holder thought, was undeniable. “Stayed there until he came to. Then I reckon I scared him some.”

“How?” Mr. Bentley smiled.

“I told him he’d have to see you. He’d rather serve three months than do that—said so. I reckon he would, too,” she declared grimly. “He’s better than he was last year, I think.” She thrust her hand in the pocket of her skirt and produced some bills and silver, which she counted. “Here’s three thirty-five from Sue Brady. I told her she hadn’t any business bothering you, but she swears she’d spend it.”

“That was wrong, Sally.”

Miss Grower tossed her head.

“Oh, she knew I’d take it, well enough.”

“I imagine she did,” Mr. Bentley replied, and his eyes twinkled. He rose and led the way into the library, where he opened his desk, produced a ledger, and wrote down the amount in a fine hand.

“Susan Brady, three dollars and thirty-five cents. I’ll put it in the savings bank to-day. That makes twenty-two dollars and forty cents for Sue. She’s growing rich.”

“Some man’ll get it,” said Sally.

“Sally,” said Mr. Bentley, turning in his chair, “Mr. Holder’s been telling me about a rather unusual woman in that apartment house just above Fourteenth Street, on the south side of Dalton.”

“I think I know her—by sight,” Sally corrected herself. She appealed. to Holder. “Red hair, and lots of it—I suppose a man would call it auburn. She must have been something of a beauty, once.”

The rector assented, in some astonishment.

“Couldn’t do anything with her, could you? I reckoned not. I’ve noticed her up and down Dalton Street at night.”

Holder was no longer deceived by her matter-of-fact tone.

“I’ll tell you what, Mr. Holder,” she went on, energetically, “there’s not a particle of use running after those people, and the sooner you find it out the less worry and trouble you give yourself.”

“Mr. Holder didn’t run after her, Sally,” said Mr. Bentley, in gentle reproof.

Holder smiled.

“Well,” said Miss Grower, “I’ve had my eye on her. She has a history —most of ’em have. But this one’s out of the common. When they’re brazen like that, and have had good looks, you can nearly always tell. You’ve. got to wait for something to happen, and trust to luck to be on the spot, or near it. It’s a toss-up, of course. One thing is sure, you can’t make friends with that kind if they get a notion you’re up to anything.”

“Sally, you must remember—” Mr. Bentley began.

Her tone became modified. Mr. Bentley was apparently the only human of whom she stood in awe.

“All I meant was,” she said, addressing the rector, “that you’ve got to run across ’em in some natural way.”

“I understood perfectly, and I agree with you,” Holder replied. “I have come, quite recently, to the same conclusion myself.”

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She gave him a penetrating glance, and he had to admit, inwardly, that a certain satisfaction followed Miss Grower's approval.

"Mercy, I have to be going," she exclaimed, glancing at the black marble clock on the mantel. "We've got a lot of invoices to put through to-day. See you again, Mr. Holder." She jerked his hand once more. "Good morning, Mr. Bentley."

"Good morning, Sally."

Mr. Bentley rose, and took his hat and gold-headed stick from the rack in the hall.

"You mustn't mind Sally," he said, when they had reached the sidewalk. "Sometimes her brusque manner is not understood. But she is a very extraordinary woman."

"I can see that," the rector assented quickly, and with a heartiness that dispelled all doubt of his liking for Miss Grower. Once more many questions rose to his lips, which he suppressed, since Mr. Bentley volunteered no information. Hodder became, in fact, so lost in speculation concerning Mr. Bentley's establishment as to forget the errand on which—they were bound. And Sally Grower's words, apropos of the woman in the flat, seemed but an energetic driving home of the severe lessons of his recent experiences. And how blind he had been, he reflected, not to have seen the thing for himself! Not to have realized the essential artificiality of his former method of approach! And then it struck him that Sally Grower herself must have had a history.

Mr. Bentley, too, was preoccupied.

Presently, in the midst of these thoughts, Hodder's eyes were arrested by a crowd barring the sidewalk on the block ahead; no unusual sight in that neighbourhood, and yet one which aroused in him sensations of weakness and nausea. Thus were the hidden vice and suffering of these sinister places occasionally brought to light, exposed to the curious and morbid stares of those whose own turn might come on the morrow. It was only by degrees he comprehended that the people were gathered in front of the house to which they were bound. An ambulance was seen to drive away: it turned into the aide street in front of them.

"A city ambulance!" the rector exclaimed.

Mr. Bentley did not reply.

The murmuring group which overflowed the uneven brick pavement to the asphalt was characteristic: women in calico, drudges, women in wrappers, with sleepy, awestricken faces; idlers, men and boys who had run out of the saloons, whose comments were more audible and caustic, and a fringe of children ceaselessly moving on the outskirts. The crowd parted at their approach, and they reached the gate, where a burly policeman, his helmet in his hand, was standing in the morning sunlight mopping his

face with a red handkerchief. He greeted Mr. Bentley respectfully, by name, and made way for them to pass in.

“What is the trouble, Ryan?” Mr. Bentley asked.

“Suicide, sir,” the policeman replied. “Jumped off the bridge this morning. A tug picked him up, but he never came to—the strength wasn’t in him. Sure it’s all wore out he was. There was a letter on him, with the home number, so they knew where to fetch him. It’s a sad case, sir, with the woman in there, and the child gone to the hospital not an hour ago.”

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“You mean Garvin?” Mr. Bentley demanded.

“It’s him I mean, sir.”

“We’d like to go in,” said Mr. Bentley. “We came to see them.”

“You’re welcome, air, and the minister too. It’s only them I’m holdin’ back,” and the policeman shook his stick at the people.

Mr. Bentley walked up the steps, and took off his hat as he went through the battered doorway. Hodder followed, with a sense of curious faces staring at them from the thresholds as they passed; they reached the upper passage, and the room, and paused: the shutters were closed, the little couch where the child had been was empty. On the bed lay a form —covered with a sheet, and beside it a woman kneeling, shaken by sobs, ceaselessly calling a name . . . .

A stout figure, hitherto unperceived, rose from a corner and came silently toward them —Mrs. Breitmann. She beckoned to them, and they followed her into a room on the same floor, where she told them what she knew, heedless of the tears coursing ceaselessly down her cheeks.

It seemed that Mrs. Garvin had had a premonition which she had not wholly confided to the rector. She had believed her husband never would come back; and early in the morning, in spite of all that Mrs. Breitmann could do, had insisted at intervals upon running downstairs and scanning the street. At half past seven Dr. Jarvis had come and himself carried down the child and put him in the back of his automobile. The doctor had had a nurse with him, and had begged the mother to accompany them to the hospital, saying that he would send her back. But she would not be persuaded to leave the house. The doctor could not wait, and had finally gone off with little. Dicky, leaving a powder with Mrs. Breitmann for the mother. Then she had become uncontrollable.

“Ach, it was terrible!” said the kind woman. “She was crazy, yes—she was not in her mind. I make a little coffee, but she will not touch it. All those things about her home she would talk of, and how good he was, and how she lofed him more again than the child.

“Und then the wheels in the street, and she makes a cry and runs to see —I cannot hold her . . . .”

“It would be well not to disturb her for a while,” said Mr. Bentley, seating himself on one of the dilapidated chairs which formed apart of the German woman’s meagre furniture. “I will remain here if you, Mr. Hodder, will make the necessary arrangements for the funeral. Have you any objections, sir?”

“Not at all,” replied the rector, and left the house, the occupants of which had already returned to the daily round of their lives: the rattle of dishes and the noise of voices were heard in the ‘ci devant’ parlour, and on the steps he met the little waif with the pitcher of beer; in the street the boys who had gathered around the ambulance were playing baseball. Hodder glanced up, involuntarily, at the window of the woman he had visited the night before, but it was empty. He hurried along the littered sidewalks to the drug store, where he telephoned an undertaker; and then, as an afterthought, telephoned the hospital. The boy had arrived, and was seemingly no worse for the journey.

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All this Hodder performed mechanically. Not until he was returning—not, indeed, until he entered the house did the whiff of its degrading, heated odours bring home to him the tragedy which it held, and he grasped the banister on the stairs. The thought that shook him now was of the cumulative misery of the city, of the world, of which this history on which he had stumbled was but one insignificant incident. But he went on into Mrs. Breitmann's room, and saw Mr. Bentley still seated where he had left him. The old gentleman looked up at him.

"Mrs. Breitmann and I are agreed, Mr. Hodder, that Mrs. Garvin ought not to remain in there. What do you think?"

"By all means, no," said the rector.

The German woman burst into a soliloquy of sympathy that became incoherent.

"She will not leave him,—nein—she will not come. . . ."

They went, the three of them, to the doorway of the death chamber and stood gazing at the huddled figure of the woman by the bedside. She had ceased to cry out: she was as one grown numb under torture; occasionally a convulsive shudder shook her. But when Mrs. Breitmann touched her, spoke to her, her grief awoke again in all its violence, and it was more by force than persuasion that she was finally removed. Mrs. Breitmann held one arm, Mr. Bentley another, and between them they fairly carried her out, for she was frail indeed.

As for Hodder, something held him back—some dread that he could not at once define. And while he groped for it, he stood staring at the man on the bed, for the hand of love had drawn back the sheet from the face. The battle was over of this poor weakling against the world; the torments of haunting fear and hate, of drink and despair had triumphed. The sight of the little group of toys brought up the image of the home in Alder Street as the wife had pictured it. Was it possible that this man, who had gone alone to the bridge in the night, had once been happy, content with life, grateful for it, possessed of a simple trust in his fellow-men—in Eldon Parr? Once more, unsummoned, came the memory of that evening of rain and thunder in the boy's room at the top of the great horse in Park Street. He had pitied Eldon Parr then. Did he now?

He crossed the room, on tiptoe, as though he feared to wake once more this poor wretch to his misery and hate, Gently he covered again the face with the sheet.

Suddenly he knew the reason of his dread,—he had to face the woman! He was a minister of Christ, it was his duty to speak to her, as he had spoken to others in the hour of sorrow and death, of the justice and goodness of the God to whom she had prayed in the church. What should he say, now? In an agony of spirit, he sat down on the little couch beside the window and buried his face in his hands. The sight of poor Garvin's

white and wasted features, the terrible contrast between this miserable tenement and the palace with its unseen pictures and

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porcelains and tapestries, brought home to him with indescribable poignancy his own predicament. He was going to ask this woman to be comforted by faith and trust in the God of the man who had driven her husband to death! He beheld Eldon Parr in his pew complacently worshipping that God, who had rewarded him with riches and success—-beheld himself as another man in his white surplice acquiescing in that God, preaching vainly . . . .

At last he got to his feet, went out of the room, reached the doorway of that other room and looked in. Mr. Bentley sat there; and the woman, whose tears had ceased to flow, was looking up into his face.

II

“The office ensuing,” says the Book of Common Prayer, meaning the Burial of the Dead, “is not to be used for any Unbaptized adult, any who die excommunicate, or who have laid violent hands on themselves.”

Hodder had bought, with a part of Nan Ferguson’s money, a tiny plot in a remote corner of Winterbourne Cemetery. And thither, the next morning, the body of Richard Garvin was taken.

A few mourners had stolen into the house and up the threadbare stairs into the miserable little back room, somehow dignified as it had never been before, and laid their gifts upon the coffin. An odd and pitiful assortment they were—mourners and gifts: men and women whose only bond with the man in life had been the bond of misery; who had seen him as he had fared forth morning after morning in the hopeless search for work, and slunk home night after night bitter and dejected; many of whom had listened, jeeringly perhaps, to his grievance against the world, though it were in some sort their own. Death, for them, had ennobled him. The little girl whom Hodder had met with the pitcher of beer came tiptoeing with a wilted bunch of pansies, picked heaven knows where; stolen, maybe, from one of the gardens of the West End. Carnations, lilies of the valley, geraniums even—such were the offerings scattered loosely on the lid until a woman came with a mass of white roses that filled the room with their fragrance, —a woman with burnished red hair. Hodder started as he recognized her; her gaze was a strange mixture of effrontery and —something else; sorrow did not quite express it. The very lavishness of her gift brought to him irresistibly the reminder of another offering. . . . . She was speaking.

“I don’t blame him for what he done—I’d have done it, too, if I’d been him. But say, I felt kind of bad when I heard it, knowing about the kid, and all. I had to bring something—”

Instinctively Hodder surmised that she was in doubt as to the acceptance of her flowers. He took them from her hand, and laid them at the foot of the coffin.

“Thank you,” he said, simply.

She stared at him a moment with the perplexity she had shown at times on the night he visited her, and went out. . .

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Funerals, if they might be dignified by this name, were not infrequent occurrences in Dalton Street, and why this one should have been looked upon as of sufficient importance to collect a group of onlookers at the gate it is difficult to say. Perhaps it was because of the seeming interest in it of the higher powers—for suicide and consequent widows and orphans were not unknown there. This widow and this orphan were to be miraculously rescued, were to know Dalton Street no more. The rector of a fashionable church, of all beings, was the agent in the miracle. Thus the occasion was tinged with awe. As for Mr. Bentley, his was a familiar figure, and had been remarked in Dalton Street funerals before.

They started, the three mourners, on the long drive to the cemetery, through unfrequented streets lined with mediocre dwellings, interspersed with groceries and saloons—short cuts known only to hearse drivers: they traversed, for some distance, that very Wilderness road where Mr. Bentley's old-fashioned mansion once had stood on its long green slope, framed by ancient trees; the Wilderness road, now paved with hot blocks of granite over which the carriage rattled; spread with car tracks, bordered by heterogeneous buildings of all characters and descriptions, bakeries and breweries, slaughter houses and markets, tumble-down shanties, weedy corner lots and "refreshment-houses" that announced "Lager Beer, Wines and Liquors." At last they came to a region which was neither country nor city, where the road-houses were still in evidence, where the glass roofs of greenhouses caught the burning rays of the sun, where yards filled with marble blocks and half-finished tombstones appeared, and then they turned into the gates of Winterbourne.

Like the city itself, there was a fashionable district in Winterbourne: unlike the city, this district remained stationary. There was no soot here, and if there had been, the dead would not have minded it. They passed the Prestons and the Parrs; the lots grew smaller, the tombstones less pretentious; and finally they came to an open grave on a slope where the trees were still young, and where three men of the cemetery force lifted the coffin from the hearse—Richard Garvin's pallbearers.

John Hodder might not read the service, but there was none to tell him that the Gospel of John was not written for this man. He stood an the grass beside the grave, and a breeze from across the great river near by stirred the maple leaves above his head. "I am the resurrection and the life, saith the Lord; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." Nor was there any canon to forbid the words of Paul: "It is sown in corruption; it is raised in in corruption; it is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body."

They laid the flowers on the fresh earth, even the white roses, and then they drove back to the city.

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CHAPTER XIV

A SATURDAY AFTERNOON

I

The sight of a certain old gentleman as he walked along the shady side of Twenty-second Street about two o'clock on a broiling Saturday afternoon in midsummer was one not easily to be forgotten. A younger man, tall and vigorous, clad in a thin suit of blue serge, walked by his side. They were followed by a shouting troop of small boys who overran the pavements, and some of whom were armed with baseball bats. The big trolley car was hailed by a dozen dirty little hands.

Even the grumpy passengers were disarmed. The conductor took Mr. Bentley's bill deprecatingly, as much as to say that the newly organized Traction Company—just out of the receivers' hands—were the Moloch, not he, and rang off the fares under protest. And Mr. Bentley, as had been his custom for years, sat down and took off his hat, and smiled so benignly at those around him that they immediately began to talk, to him. It was always irresistible, this desire to talk to Mr. Bentley. If you had left your office irritated and out of sorts, your nerves worn to an edge by the uninterrupted heat, you invariably got off at your corner feeling better. It was Phil Goodrich who had said that Horace Bentley had only to get on a Tower Street car to turn it into a church. And if he had chosen to establish that 'dernier cri' of modern civilization where ladies go who have 'welt-schmerz' without knowing why, —a sanitarium, he might have gained back again all the money he had lost in giving his Grantham stock to Eldon Parr.

Like the Pied Piper of Hamelin, he could have emptied Dalton Street of its children. In the first place, there was the irresistible inducement to any boy to ride several miles on a trolley without having this right challenged by the irate guardian of the vehicle, without being summarily requested to alight at twenty-five miles an hour: in the second place, there was the soda water and sweet biscuit partaken of after the baseball game in that pavilion, more imposing in one's eyes than the Taj Mahal. Mr. Bentley would willingly have taken all Dalton Street. He had his own 'welt-schmerz', though he did not go to a sanitarium to cure it; he was forced to set an age limit of ten, and then establish a high court of appeal; for there were boys whose biographies, if they are ever written, will be as hazy as those of certain world-wide celebrities who might be mentioned concerning the date and exact spot of the entrance of their heroes into the light. The solemn protestations, the tears, the recrimination even, brought pangs to the old gentleman's heart, for with all the will in the world he had been forced in the nature of things, to set a limit.

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This limit had recently been increased by the unlooked-for appearance on these excursions of the tall man in the blue serge suit, whose knowledge of the national game and of other matters of vital import to youth was gratifying if sometimes disconcerting; who towered, an unruffled Gulliver, over their Lilliputian controversies, in which bats were waved and fists brought into play and language used on the meaning of which the Century dictionary is silent. On one former occasion, indeed, Mr. Bentley had found moral suasion, affection, and veneration of no avail, and had had to invoke the friendly aid of a park policeman to quell one of these incipient riots. To Mr. Bentley baseball was as a sealed book. The tall man's justice, not always worthy of the traditions of Solomon, had in it an element of force. To be lifted off the ground by strong arms at the moment you are about to dust the home plate with your adversary is humiliating, but effective. It gradually became apparent that a decision was a decision. And one Saturday this inexplicable person carried in his hand a mysterious package which, when opened, revealed two pairs of diminutive boxing gloves. They instantly became popular.

By the time they had made the accidental and somewhat astounding discovery that he was a parson, they were willing to overlook it; in view, perhaps, of his compensating accomplishments. Instead of advising them to turn the other cheek, he taught them uppercuts, feints, and jabs, and on the proof of this unexpected acquaintance with a profession all of them openly admired, the last vestige of reserve disappeared. He was accepted without qualifications.

II

Although the field to which they resorted was not in the most frequented section of the park, pedestrians often passed that way, and sometimes lingered. Thus, towards the close of a certain Saturday in July, a young woman walked out of the wood path and stood awhile gazing intently at the active figure striding among the diminutive, darting forms. Presently, with an amused expression, she turned her head to discover Mr. Bentley, who sat on a green bench under a tree, his hat and stick on the grass beside him. She was unaware that he had been looking at her.

"Aren't they having a good time!" she said, and the genuine thrill in her voice betrayed a rare and unmistakable pleasure.

"Ah," replied Mr. Bentley, smiling back at her, "you like to see them, too. Most persons do. Children are not meant for the city, my dear young lady, their natural home is in the woods and fields, and these little fellows are a proof of it. When they come out here, they run wild. You perceive," he added with a twinkle, as an expletive of unquestionable vigour was hurled across the diamond, "they are not always so polite as they might be."

The young woman smiled again, but the look she gave him was a puzzled one. And then, quite naturally, she sank, down on the grass, on the other side of Mr. Bentley's hat, watching the game for a while in silence.

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“What a tyrant!” she exclaimed. Another uproar had been quelled, and two vigorously protesting runners sent back to their former bases.

“Oh, a benevolent tyrant,” Mr. Bentley corrected her. “Mr. Hodder has the gift of managing boys,—he understands them. And they require a strong hand. His generation has had the training which mine lacked. In my day, at college, we worked off our surplus energy on the unfortunate professors, and we carried away chapel bells and fought with the townspeople.”

It required some effort, she found, to imagine this benevolent looking old gentleman assaulting professors.

“Nowadays they play baseball and football, and box!” He pointed to the boxing gloves on the grass. “Mr. Hodder has taught them to settle their differences in that way; it is much more sensible.”

She picked off the white clover-tops.

“So that is Mr. Hodder, of St. John’s,” she said.

“Ah, you know him, then?”

“I’ve met him,” she answered quietly. “Are these children connected with his church?”

“They are little waifs from Dalton Street and that vicinity,” said Mr. Bentley. “Very few of them, I should imagine, have ever been inside of a church.”

She seemed surprised.

“But—is it his habit to bring them out here?” The old gentleman beamed on her, perhaps with the hint of a smile at her curiosity.

“He has found time for it, this summer. It is very good of him.”

She refrained from comment on this remark, falling into reflection, leaning back, with one hand outstretched, on the grass. The game went on vociferously, the shrill lithe voices piercing the silence of the summer afternoon. Mr. Bentley’s eyes continued to rest on her.

“Tell me,” he inquired, after a while, “are you not Alison Parr?”

She glanced up at him, startled. “Yes.”

“I thought so, although I have not seen you since you were a little girl. I knew your mother very well indeed, but it is too much to expect you to remember me, after all this time. No doubt you have forgotten my name. I am Mr. Bentley.”

“Mr. Bentley!” she cried, sitting upright and gazing at him. “How stupid of me not to have known you! You couldn’t have been any one else.”

It was the old gentleman’s turn to start. She rose impulsively and sat down on the bench beside him, and his hand trembled as he laid it in hers.

“Yes, my dear, I am still alive. But surely you cannot remember me, Alison?”

The old look of almost stubborn honesty he recalled in the child came into her eyes.

“I do—and I don’t,” she said, perplexed. “It seemed to me as if I ought to have recognized you when I came up, and yet I hadn’t the slightest notion who you were. I knew you were somebody.”

He shook his head, but did not speak.

“But you have always been a fact in my existence—that is what I want to say,” she went on. “It must be possible to remember a person and not recognize him, that is what I feel. I can remember you coming to our house in Ransome Street, and how I looked forward to your visits. And you used to have little candy beans in your pockets,” she cried. “Have you now?”

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His eyes were a little dimmed as he reached, smilingly, into the skirts of a somewhat shiny but scrupulously brushed coat and produced a brightly colored handful. She took one, and put it in her mouth:

“Oh,” she said, “how good they were—Isn’t it strange how a taste brings back events? I can remember it all as if it were yesterday, and how I used to sit on your knee, and mother would tell me not to bother you.”

“And now—you are grown,” he said.

“Something more than grown,” she smiled. “I was thirty-one in May. Tell me,” she asked, choosing another of the beans which he still absently held, “do you get them for these?” And she nodded toward the Dalton Street waifs.

“Yes,” he said, “they are children, too.”

“I can remember,” she said, after a pause, “I can remember my mother speaking of you to me the year she died. I was almost grown, then. It was after we had moved up to Park Street, and her health had already begun to fail. That made an impression on me, but I have forgotten what she said—it was apropos of some recollection. No—it was a photograph —she was going over some old things.” Alison ceased speaking abruptly, for the pain in Mr. Bentley’s remarkable grey eyes had not escaped her. What was it about him? Why could she not recall? Long-forgotten, shadowy episodes of the past tormented her, flitted provokingly through her mind—ungrasped: words dropped in her presence which had made their impression, but the gist of which was gone. Why had Mr. Bentley ceased coming to the house? So strongly did she feel his presence now that the thought occurred to her,—perhaps her mother had not wished her to forget him!

“I did not suspect,” she heard him saying, “that you would go out into the world and create the beautiful gardens of which I have heard. But you had no lack of spirit in those days, too.”

“I was a most disagreeable child, perverse,—cantankerous—I can hear my mother saying it! As for the gardens—they have given me something to do, they have kept me out of mischief. I suppose I ought to be thankful, but I still have the rebellious streak when I see what others have done, what others are doing, and I sometimes wonder what right I ever had to think that I might create something worth while.”

He glanced at her quickly as she sat with bent head.

“Others put a higher value on what you have done.”

“Oh, they don’t know—” she exclaimed.

If something were revealed to him by her tone, he did not betray it, but went on cheerfully.

“You have been away a long time, Alison. It must interest you to come back, and see the changes in our Western civilization. We are moving very rapidly—in certain directions,” he corrected himself.

She appraised his qualification.

“In certain directions,—yes. But they are little better in the East. I have scarcely been back,” she added, “since I went to Paris to study. I have often thought I should like to return and stay awhile, only —I never seemed to get time. Now I am going over a garden for my father which was one of my first efforts, and which has always reproached me.”

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“And you do not mind the heat?” he asked. “Those who go East to live return to find our summers oppressive.”

“Oh, I’m a salamander, I think,” Alison laughed.

Thus they sat chatting, interrupted once or twice by urchins too small to join in the game, who came running to Mr. Bentley and stood staring at Alison as at a being beyond the borders of experience: and she would smile at them quite as shyly,—-children being beyond her own. Her imagination was as keen, as unspoiled as a child’s, and was stimulated by a sense of adventure, of the mystery which hung about this fine old gentleman who betrayed such sentiment for a mother whom she had loved and admired and still secretly mourned. Here, if there had been no other, was a compelling bond of sympathy . . . .

The shadows grew longer, the game broke up. And Hodder, surrounded by an argumentative group keeping pace with him, came toward them from the field; Alison watched him curiously as he turned this way and that to answer the insistent questions with which he was pelted, and once she saw him stride rapidly after a dodging delinquent and seize him by the collar amidst piercing yells of approval, and derision for the rebel.

“It’s remarkable how he gets along with them,” said Mr. Bentley, smiling at the scene. “Most of them have never known what discipline is.”

The chorus approached. And Hodder, recognizing her, dropped the collar he held: A young woman conversing with Mr. Bentley—was no unusual sight, —he had made no speculations as to this one’s identity. He left the boys, and drew near.

“You know Miss Parr, I believe,” the old gentleman said.

Hodder took her hand. He had often tried to imagine his feelings if he should meet her again: what he should do and say,—what would be their footing. And now he had no time to prepare . . . .

“It is so strange,” she said, with that note of wonder at life in her voice which he recalled so well, “that I should have come across Mr. Bentley here after so many years. How many years, Mr. Bentley?”

“Ah, my dear,” he protested, “my measurements would not be yours.”

“It is better for both of us not to say, Alison declared, laughingly.

“You knew Mr. Bentley?” asked Hodder, astonished.

“He was a very dear friend of my mother’s, although I used to appropriate him when he came to our house. It was when we lived in Ransome Street, ages ago. But I don’t think Mr. Bentley has grown a bit older.”

“He is one of the few who have found the secret of youth,” said the rector.

But the old gentleman had moved off into the path, or perhaps it would be more accurate to say that he was carried off by the swarm which clustered around him, two smaller ones tugging at his hand, and all intent upon arriving at the soda-water pavilion near the entrance. They had followed him with their eyes, and they saw him turn around and smile at them, helplessly. Alison presented a perplexed face to Hodder.

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“Does he bring them here,—or you?” she asked.

“I—” he hesitated. “Mr. Bentley has done this every Saturday afternoon for years,” he said, “I am merely one of them.”

She looked at him quickly. They had started to follow, in the cool path beneath the forest trees. Restraint fell upon them, brought about by the memory of the intimacy of their former meeting, further complicated on Hodder’s part by his new attitude toward her father, and his finding her in the company, of all persons, of Mr. Bentley. Unuttered queries pressed on the minds of both.

“Tell me about Mr. Bentley,” she said.

Hodder hesitated.

“I scarcely know where to begin,” he replied, yet smiling at the characteristic abruptness of her question. The modulations of her voice revealed again the searching, inquisitive spirit within her, and his responded to the intensity of the interest in Mr. Bentley.

“Begin anywhere.”

“Anywhere?” he repeated, seeking to gain time.

“Yes—anywhere,” she said impatiently.

“Well, he lives in Dalton Street, if you recall what kind of a place that is” (she nodded), “and he is known from one end of it to the other.”

“I see what he is—he is the most extraordinary person I have ever known. Just to talk to him gives one such a queer feeling of—of dissatisfaction with one’s self, and seeing him once more seems to have half revived in me a whole series of dead memories. And I have been trying to think, but it is all so tantalizing. There is some mystery about him,” she insisted. “He disappeared suddenly, and my mother never mentioned him but once afterward, but other persons have spoken of him since—I forget who. He was so well known, and he used to go to St. John’s.”

“Yes, he used to go to St. John’s.”

“What happened to him—do you know? The reason he stopped coming to our house was some misunderstanding with my father, of course. I am positive my mother never changed her feelings toward him.”

“I can only tell you what he has told me, which is all I know —authoritatively,” Hodder replied. How could he say to her that her father had ruined Mr. Bentley? Indeed, with a woman of her fearlessness and honesty—and above all, her intuition,—he felt the

cruelty of his position keenly. Hodder did not relish half truths; and he felt that, however scant his intercourse in the future might be with Alison Parr, he would have liked to have kept it on that basis of frankness in which it had begun. But the exact stage of disillusionment she had reached in regard to Eldon Parr was unknown to him, and he feared that a further revelation might possibly sever the already precarious tie between father and daughter.

He recounted, therefore, that Mr. Bentley had failed; and how he had before that given much of his estate away in charity, how he had been unable to keep his pew in St. John's, and had retired to the house in Dalton Street.

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For some moments after he had finished Alison did not reply.

“What is his number in Dalton Street?” she asked.

Hodder informed her.

He could not read in her face whether she suspected that he could have told her more. And in spite of an inordinate, human joy in being again in her presence, his desire to hide from her that which had taken place within him, and the inability he felt to read his future, were instinctive: the more so because of the very spontaneity they had achieved at their first meeting. As a man, he shrank from confessing to her, however indirectly, the fact that she herself was so vital an element in his disillusionment. For the conversation in the garden had been the immediate cause of the inner ferment ending in his resolution to go away, and had directed him, by logical steps, to the encounter in the church with Mrs. Garvin.

“You have not yet finished the garden?” he asked. “I imagined you back in the East by this time.”

“Oh, I am procrastinating,” she replied. “It is a fit of sheer laziness. I ought to be elsewhere, but I was born without a conscience. If I had one I should try to quiet it by reminding it that I am fulfilling a long-delayed promise—I am making a garden for Mrs. Larrabbee. You know her, of course, since she is a member of your congregation.”

“Yes, I know her,” he assented. And his mind was suddenly filled with vivid colour,—-cobalt seas, and arsenic-green spruces with purple cones, cardinal-striped awnings that rattled in the salt breeze, and he saw once more the panorama of the life which had passed from him and the woman in the midst of it. And his overwhelming thought was of relief that he had somehow escaped. In spite of his unhappiness now, he would not have gone back. He realized for the first time that he had been nearer annihilation then than to-day.

“Grace isn’t here to bother me with the ideas she has picked up in Europe and catalogued,” Alison continued.

“Catalogued!” Hodder exclaimed, struck by the pertinency of the word.

“Yes. Did you ever know anybody who had succeeded half so well in piecing together and absorbing into a harmonized whole all the divergent, artificial elements that enter into the conventional world to-day? Her character might be called a triumph of synthesis. For she has actually achieved an individuality—that is what always surprises me when I think of her. She has put the puzzle picture together, she has become a person.”

He remembered, with a start, that this was the exact word Mrs. Larrabbee had used about Alison Parr. If he had searched the world, he could not have found a greater contrast than that between these two women. And when she spoke again, he was to be further struck by her power of logical insight.

“Grace wants me because she thinks I have become the fashion—for the same reason that Charlotte Plimpton wants me. Only there is this difference—Grace will know the exact value of what I shall have done. Not that she thinks me a Le Notre”—Alison laughed—“What I mean is, she sees behind, she sees why it is fashionable to have a garden, since she has worked out the values of that existence. But there!” Alison added, with a provocative touch that did not escape him, “I am picking your parishioners to pieces again.”

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“You have more right than I,” he replied, “they have been your friends since childhood.”

“I thought you had gone away,” she said.

“Why?” he demanded. Had she been to church again?

“My father told me before he left that you were to take a cruise with him on the yacht he has chartered.”

“He wrote me from New York—I was unable to go,” Hodder said slowly.

He felt her gaze upon him, but resolutely refused to meet it. . . . They walked on in silence until they came to the more open spaces near the edge of the Park, thronged that Saturday evening by crowds which had sought the, city’s breathing space. Perfect trees cast long, fantastic shadows across the lawns, fountains flung up rainbows from the midst of lakes; children of the tenements darted hither and thither, rolled and romped on the grass; family parties picnicked everywhere, and a very babel of tongues greeted the ear—the languages of Europe from Sweden to Italy.

Suddenly an exclamation from her aroused and thrilled him.

“Isn’t it wonderful how happy they are, and with what simple pleasures they are satisfied! I often come over here on Saturdays and Sundays, just to talk to them.”

“Talk to them!” he echoed stupidly. “In their own languages?”

“Oh, I know a little German and Italian, though I can’t lay claim to Czech,” she answered gayly. “Why are you so surprised that I should possess such modest accomplishments?”

“It’s not the accomplishments.” He hesitated.

“No. You are surprised that I should be interested in humanity.” She stood facing him. “Well, I am,” she said, half humorously, half defiantly. “I believe I am more interested in human beings than in anything else in the world—when they are natural, as these people are and when they will tell one their joys and their troubles and their opinions.”

“Enthusiasm, self-assertion, had as usual, transformed her, and he saw the colour glowing under her olive skin. Was she accusing him of a lack of frankness?

“And why,” he asked, collecting himself, “did you think—” he got no further.

“It’s because you have an idea that I’m a selfish Epicurean, if that isn’t tautology—-because I’m interested in a form of art, the rest of the world can go hang. You have a prejudice against artists. I wish I really were one, but I’m not.”

This speech contained so many surprises for him that he scarcely knew how to answer it.

“Give me a little time,” he begged, “and perhaps I’ll get over my prejudices. The worst of them, at any rate. You are helping me to do so.” He tried to speak lightly, but his tone was more serious in the next sentence. “It seems to me personally that you have proved your concern for your fellow-creatures.”

Her colour grew deeper, her manner changed.

“That gives me the opportunity to say something I have hoped to say, ever since I saw you. I hoped I should see you again.”

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“You are not going away soon?” he exclaimed.

The words were spoken before he grasped their significance.

“Not at once. I don’t know how long I shall stay,” she answered hurriedly, intent upon what was in her mind. “I have thought a great deal about what I said to you that afternoon, and I find it more than ever difficult to excuse myself. I shan’t attempt to. I merely mean to ask you to forgive me.”

“There is nothing to forgive,” he assured her, under the influence of the feeling she had aroused.

“It’s nice of you to say so, and to take it as you did—nicer than I can express. I am afraid I shall never learn to appreciate that there may be other points of view toward life than my own. And I should have realized and sympathized with the difficulties of your position, and that you were doing the best under the circumstances.”

“No,” he exclaimed, “don’t say that! Your other instinct was the truer one, if indeed you have really changed it—I don’t believe you have.” He smiled at her again. “You didn’t hurt my feelings, you did me a service. I told you so at the time, and I meant it. And, more than that, I understood.”

“You understood—?”

“You were not criticizing me, you were—what shall I say?—merely trying to iron out some of the inconsistencies of life. Well, you helped me to iron out some of the inconsistencies of my own. I am profoundly grateful.”

She gazed at him, puzzled. But he did not, he could not enlighten her. Some day she would discover what he meant.

“If so, I am glad,” she said, in a low voice.

They were standing in the midst of the crowd that thronged around the pavilion. An urchin caught hold of the rector’s coat.

“Here he is! Say, Mr. Hodder, ain’t you going to have any sody?”

“Certainly we are,” he replied, returning Alison’s faint smile . . . . In the confusion that followed he caught a glimpse of her talking to Mr. Bentley; and later, after he had taken her hand, his eyes followed her figure wending its way in the evening light through the groups toward Park Street, and he saw above the tree-tops the red tiled roof of the great house in which she was living, alone.

CHAPTER XV

THE CRUCIBLE

I

For better or worse John Hodder had flung his treasured beliefs into the crucible, and one by one he watched them crumble and consume away. None but his own soul knew what it cost him to make the test; and some times, in the early stages of it, he would cast down his book under the lamp and walk for hours in the night. Curiosity, and the despair of one who is lost impelled him to persist.

It had been said of him that he had a talent for the law, and he now discovered that his mind, once freed, weighed the evidence with a pitiless logic, paid its own tribute—-despite the anguish of the heart —to the pioneers of truth whose trail it followed into the Unknown, who had held no Mystery more sacred than Truth itself, who had dared to venture into the nothingness between the whirling worlds.

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He considered them, those whirling worlds, at night. Once they had been the candles of Jehovah, to light the path of his chosen nation, to herald the birth of his Son. And now? How many billions of blind, struggling creatures clung to them? Where now was this pin-point of humanity, in the midst of an appalling spectacle of a grinding, remorseless nature?

And that obscure Event on which he had staked his hopes? Was He, as John had written, the First Born of the Universe, the Word Incarnate of a system that defied time and space, the Logos of an outworn philosophy? Was that Universe conscious, as Berkeley had declared, or the blind monster of substance alone, or energy, as some modern scientists brutally and triumphantly maintained? Where was the Spirit that breathed in it of hope?

Such were some of the questions that thronged for solution. What was mind, what spirit? an attenuated vapour of the all-pervading substance?

He could not permit himself to dwell on these thoughts—madness lay that way. Madness, and a watching demon that whispered of substance, and sought to guide his wanderings in the night. Hodder clung to the shell of reality, to the tiny panorama of the visible and the finite, to the infinitesimal gropings that lay recorded before him on the printed page. Let him examine these first, let him discover—despite the price—what warrant the mind of man (the only light now vouchsafed to him in his darkness) gave him to speculate and to hope concerning the existence of a higher, truer Reality than that which now tossed and wounded him. It were better to know.

Scarcely had the body been lifted from the tree than the disputes commenced, the adulterations crept in. The spontaneity, the fire and zeal of the self-sacrificing itinerant preachers gave place to the paralyzing logic then pervading the Roman Empire, and which had sent its curse down the ages to the modern sermon; the geometrical rules of Euclid were made to solve the secrets of the universe. The simple faith of the cross which had inspired the martyr along the bloody way from Ephesus to the Circus at Rome was formalized by degrees into philosophy: the faith of future ages was settled by compromises, by manipulation, by bribery in Councils of the Church which resembled modern political conventions, and in which pagan Emperors did not hesitate to exert their influence over the metaphysical bishops of the factions. Recriminations, executions, murders—so the chronicles ran.

The prophet, the idealist disappeared, the priest with his rites and ceremonies and sacrifices, his power to save and damn, was once more in possession of the world.

The Son of Man was degraded into an infant in his mother's arms. An unhealthy, degenerating asceticism, drawn from pagan sources, began with the monks and anchorites of Egypt and culminated in the spectacle of Simeon's pillar. The mysteries of Eleusis, of Attis, Mithras, Magna Mater and Isis developed into Christian sacraments—-

the symbol became the thing itself. Baptism the confession of the new life, following the customs of these cults, became initiation; and from the same superstitious origins, the repellent materialistic belief that to eat of the flesh and drink of the blood of a god was to gain immortality: immortality of the body, of course.

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Ah, when the superstitions of remote peoples, the fables and myths, were taken away; when the manufactured history and determinism of the Israelites from the fall of man to the coming of that Messiah, whom the Jews crucified because he failed to bring them their material Kingdom, were discredited; when the polemic and literal interpretations of evangelists had been rejected, and the pious frauds of tampering monks; when the ascetic Buddhism was removed; the cults and mysteries, the dogmas of an ancient naive philosophy discarded; the crude science of a Ptolemy who conceived the earth as a flat terrestrial expanse and hell as a smoking pit beneath proved false; the revelation of a Holy City of jasper and gold and crystal, the hierarchy with its divine franchise to save and rule and conquer,—when all these and more were eliminated from Christianity, what was left?

Hodder surveyed the ruins. And his mind recalled, that Sunday of rain in New York which had been the turning-point in his life, when he had listened to the preacher, when he had walked the streets unmindful of the wet, led on by visions, racked by fears. And the same terror returned to him now after all the years of respite, tenfold increased, of falling in the sight of man from the topmost tower.

What was to become of him, now that the very driving power of life was gone? Where would he go? to what might he turn his hand, since all were vanity and illusion? Careers meant nothing, had any indeed been possible to a man forty, left staring at stark reality after the rainbow had vanished. Nineveh had mocked and conquered him who had thought himself a conqueror. Self flew back and swung on its central pivot and took command. His future, his fate, what was to become of him. Who else now was to be considered? And what was to restrain him from reaching out his hand to pluck the fruit which he desired? . . .

II

What control from the Unknown is this which now depresses and now releases the sensitive thing called the soul of man, and sends it upward again until the green light of hope shines through the surface water? He might have grown accustomed, Holder thought, to the obscurity of the deeps; in which, after a while, the sharp agony of existence became dulled, the pressure benumbing. He was conscious himself, at such times, of no inner recuperation. Something drew him up, and he would find himself living again, at length to recognize the hand if not to comprehend the power.

The hand was Horace Bentley's.

What was the source of that serenity which shone on the face of his friend? Was it the light of faith? Faith in—what? Humanity, Mr. Bentley had told him on that first evening when they had met: faith in a world filled with cruelties, disillusionments, lies, and cheats! On what Authority was it based? Holder never asked, and no word of theology

ever crossed Mr. Bentley's lips; not by so much as a sign did he betray any knowledge he may have had of the drama taking place in Holder's soul; no comment escaped him on the amazing anomalies of the life the rector was leading, in the Church but not of it.

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It was only by degrees Holder came to understand that no question would be asked, and the frequency of his visits to Dalton Street increased. He directed his steps thither sometimes hurriedly, as though pursued, as to a haven from a storm. And a haven it was indeed! At all hours of the day he came, and oftener in the night, in those first weeks, and if Mr. Bentley were not at home the very sight of the hospitable old darky brought surging up within him a sense of security, of, relief; the library itself was filled with the peace of its owner. How many others had brought their troubles here, had been lightened on the very threshold of this sanctuary!

Gradually Hodder began to realize something of their numbers. Gradually, as he was drawn more and more into the network of the relationships of this extraordinary man,—-nay, as he inevitably became a part of that network,—a period of bewilderment ensued. He found himself involved, and quite naturally, in unpremeditated activities, running errands, forming human ties on a human basis. No question was asked, no credentials demanded or rejected. Who he was made no difference —he was a friend of Horace Bentley's. He had less time to read, less time to think, to scan the veil of his future.

He had run through a score of volumes, critical, philosophical, scientific, absorbing their contents, eagerly anticipating their conclusions; filled, once he had begun, with a mania to destroy, a savage determination to leave nothing,—to level all . . . .

And now, save for the less frequent relapsing moods, he had grown strangely unconcerned about his future, content to live in the presence of this man; to ignore completely the aspects of a life incomprehensible to the few, besides Mr. Bentley, who observed it.

What he now mostly felt was relief, if not a faint self-congratulation that he had had the courage to go through with it, to know the worst. And he was conscious even, at times, of a faint reviving sense of freedom he had not known since the days at Bremerton. If the old dogmas were false, why should he regret them? He began to see that, once he had suspected their falsity, not to have investigated were to invite decay; and he pictured himself growing more unctuous, apologetic, plausible. He had, at any rate, escaped the more despicable fate, and if he went to pieces now it would be as a man, looking the facts in the face,—not as a coward and a hypocrite.

Late one afternoon, when he dropped in at Mr. Bentley's house, he was informed by Sam that a lady was awaiting Mr. Bentley in the library. As Hodder opened the door he saw a tall, slim figure of a woman with her back toward him. She was looking at the photographs on the mantel.

It was Alison Parr!

He remembered now that she had asked for Mr. Bentley's number, but it had never occurred to him that he might one day find her here. And as she turned he surprised in

her eyes a shyness he had never seen in them before. Thus they stood gazing at each other a moment before either spoke.

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“Oh, I thought you were Mr. Bentley,” she said.

“Have you been waiting long?” he asked.

“Three quarters of an hour, but I haven’t minded it. This is such an interesting room, with its pictures and relics and books. It has a soothing effect, hasn’t it? To come here is like stepping out of the turmoil of the modern world into a peaceful past.”

He was struck by the felicity of her description.

“You have been here before?” he asked.

“Yes.” She settled herself in the armchair; and Hodder, accepting the situation, took the seat beside her. “Of course I came, after I had found out who Mr. Bentley was. The opportunity to know him again—was not to be missed.”

“I can understand that,” he assented.

“That is, if a child can even be said to know such a person as Mr. Bentley. Naturally, I didn’t appreciate him in those days—children merely accept, without analyzing. And I have not yet been able to analyze,—I can only speculate and consider.”

Her enthusiasm never failed to stir and excite Hodder. Nor would he have thought it possible that a new value could be added to Mr. Bentley in his eyes. Yet so it was.

He felt within him, as she spoke, the quickening of a stimulus.

“When I came in a little while ago,” Alison continued, “I found a woman in black, with such a sweet, sad face. We began a conversation. She had been through a frightful experience. Her husband had committed suicide, her child had been on the point of death, and she says that she lies awake nights now thinking in terror of what might have happened to her if you and Mr. Bentley hadn’t helped her. She’s learning to be a stenographer. Do you remember her?—her name is Garvin.”

“Did she say—anything more?” Hodder anxiously demanded.

“No,” said Alison, surprised by his manner, “except that Mr. Bentley had found her a place to live, near the hospital, with a widow who was a friend of his. And that the child was well, and she could look life in the face again. Oh, it is terrible to think that people all around us are getting into such straits, and that we are so indifferent to it!”

Hodder did not speak at once. He was wondering, now that she had renewed her friendship with Mr. Bentley, whether certain revelations on her part were not inevitable . . . .

She was regarding him, and he was aware that her curiosity was aflame. Again he wondered whether it were curiosity or—interest.

“You did not tell me, when we met in the Park, that you were no longer at St. John’s.”

Did Mr. Bentley tell you?”

“No. He merely said he saw a great deal of you. Martha Preston told me. She is still here, and goes to church occasionally. She was much surprised to learn that you were in the city.

“I am still living in the parish house,” he said. “I am—taking my vacation.”

“With Mr. Bentley?” Her eyes were still on his face.

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“With Mr. Bentley,” he replied.

He had spoken without bitterness. Although there had indeed been bitterness in his soul, it passed away in the atmosphere of Mr. Bentley’s house. The process now taking place in him was the same complication of negative and positive currents he had felt in her presence before. He was surprised to find that his old antipathy to agnosticism held over, in her case; to discover, now, that he was by no means, as yet, in view of the existence of Horace Bentley, to go the full length of unbelief! On the other hand, he saw that she had divined much of what had happened to him, and he felt radiating from her a sympathetic understanding which seemed almost a claim. She had a claim, although he could not have said of what it was constituted. Their personal relationship bore responsibilities. It suddenly came over him, in fact, that the two persons who in all the world were nearest him were herself and Mr. Bentley! He responded, scarce knowing why he did so, to the positive current.

“With Mr. Bentley,” he repeated, smiling, and meeting her eyes, “I have been learning something about the actual conditions of life in a modern city.”

She bent a little toward him in one of those spontaneous movements that characterized her.

“Tell me—what is his life?” she asked. “I have seen so little of it, and he has told me nothing himself. At first, in the Park, I saw only a kindly old gentleman, with a wonderful, restful personality, who had been a dear friend of my mother’s. I didn’t connect those boys with him. But since then—since I have been here twice, I have seen other things which make me wonder how far his influence extends.” She paused.

“I, too, have wondered,” said the rector, thoughtfully. “When I met him, I supposed he were merely living in simple relationships with his neighbours here in Dalton Street, but by degrees I have discovered that his relationships are as wide as the city itself. And they have grown naturally—by radiation, as it were. One incident has led to another, one act of kindness to another, until now there seems literally no end to the men and women with whom he is in personal touch, who are ready to do anything in their power for him at any time. It is an institution, in fact, wholly unorganized, which in the final analysis is one man. And there is in it absolutely nothing of that element which has come to be known as charity.”

Alison listened with parted lips.

“To give you an example,” he went on, gradually be coming fired by his subject, by her absorption, “since you have mentioned Mrs. Garvin, I will tell you what happened in that case. It is typical of many. It was a question of taking care of this woman, who was worn out and crushed, until she should recover sufficiently to take care of herself. Mr. Bentley did not need any assistance from me to get the boy into the hospital—Dr. Jarvis

worships him. But the mother. I might possibly have got her into an institutional home—Mr. Bentley did better than that, far better. On the day of the funeral we went directly from the cemetery to the house of a widow who owns a little fruit farm beyond the Park. Her name is Bledsoe, and it is not an exaggeration to say that her house, small as it is, contains an endowed room always at Mr. Bentley's disposal.

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“Mrs. Garvin is there now. She was received as a friend, as a guest —not as an inmate, a recipient of charity. I shall never forget how that woman ran out in the sun when she saw us coming, how proud she was to be able to do this thing, how she ushered us into the little parlour, that was all swept and polished, and how naturally and warmly she welcomed the other woman, dazed and exhausted, and took her hat and veil and almost carried her up the stairs. And later on I found out from Miss Grower, who lives here, Mrs. Bledsoe’s history. Eight or nine years ago her husband was sent to prison for forgery, and she was left with four small children, on the verge of a fate too terrible to mention. She was brought to Mr. Bentley’s attention, and he started her in life.

“And now Mrs. Garvin forms another link to that chain, which goes on growing. In a month she will be earning her own living as stenographer for a grain merchant whom Mr. Bentley set on his feet several years ago. One thing has led to the next. And—I doubt if any neighbourhood could be mentioned, north or south or west, or even in the business portion of the city itself, where men and women are not to be found ready and eager to do anything in their power for him. Of course there have been exceptions, what might be called failures in the ordinary terminology of charity, but there are not many.”

When he had finished she sat quite still, musing over what he had told her, her eyes alight.

“Yes, it is wonderful,” she said at length, in a low voice. “Oh, I can believe in that, making the world a better place to live in, making people happier. Of course every one cannot be like Mr. Bentley, but all may do their share in their own way. If only we could get rid of this senseless system of government that puts a premium on the acquisition of property! As it is, we have to depend on individual initiative. Even the good Mr. Bentley does is a drop in the ocean compared to what might be done if all this machinery—-which has been invented, if all these discoveries of science, by which the forces of an indifferent nature have been harnessed, could be turned to the service of all mankind. Think of how many Mrs. Garvins, of how many Dalton Streets there are in the world, how many stunted children working in factories or growing up into criminals in the slums! I was reading a book just the other day on the effect of the lack of nutrition on character. We are breeding a million degenerate citizens by starving them, to say nothing of the effect of disease and bad air, of the constant fear of poverty that haunts the great majority of homes. There is no reason why that fear should not be removed, why the latest discoveries in medicine and science should not be at the disposal of all.”

The genuineness of her passion was unmistakable. His whole being responded to it.

“Have you always felt like this?” he asked. Like what?”

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“Indignant—that so many people were suffering.”

His question threw her into reflection.

“Why, no,” she answered, at length, “I never thought——I see what you mean. Four or five years ago, when I was going to socialist lectures, my sense of all this—inequality, injustice was intellectual. I didn’t get indignant over it, as I do now when I think of it.”

“And why do you get indignant now?”

“You mean,” she asked, “that I have no right to be indignant, since I do nothing to attempt to better conditions?—”

“Not at all,” Hodder disavowed. “Perhaps my question is too personal, but I didn’t intend it to be. I was merely wondering whether any event or series of events had transformed a mere knowledge of these conditions into feeling.”

“Oh!” she exclaimed, but not in offence. Once more she relapsed into thought. And as he watched her, in silence, the colour that flowed and ebbed in her cheeks registered the coming and going of memories; of incidents in her life hidden from him, arousing in the man the torture of jealousy. But his faculties, keenly alert, grasped the entire field; marked once more the empirical trait in her that he loved her unflinching willingness to submit herself to an experiment.

“I suppose so,” she replied at length, her thoughts naturally assuming speech. “Yes, I can see that it is so. Yet my experience has not been with these conditions with which Mr. Bentley, with which you have been brought in contact, but with the other side—with luxury. Oh, I am sick of luxury! I love it, I am not at all sure that I could do without it, but I hate it, too, I rebel against it. You can’t understand that.”

“I think I can,” he answered her.

“When I see the creatures it makes,” she cried, “I hate it. My profession has brought me in such close contact with it that I rebelled at last, and came out here very suddenly, just to get away from it in the mass. To renew my youth, if I could. The gardens were only an excuse. I had come to a point where I wanted to be quiet, to be alone, to think, and I knew my father would be going away. So much of my girlhood was spent in that Park that I know every corner of it, and I—obeyed the impulse. I wanted to test it.”

“Yes,” he said, absorbed.

“I might have gone to the mountains or the sea, but some one would have come and found me, and I should have been bound again—on the wheel. I shouldn’t have had the strength to resist. But here—have you ever felt,” she demanded, “that you craved a particular locality at a certain time?”

He followed her still.

“That is how I felt. These associations, that Park, the thought of my girlhood, of my mother, who understood me as no one else has since, assumed a certain value. New York became unbearable. It is just there, in the very centre of our modern civilization, that one sees the crudest passions. Oh, I have often wondered whether a man, however disillusioned, could see New York as a woman sees it when the glamour is gone. We are the natural prey of the conqueror still. We dream of independence—”

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She broke off abruptly.

This confession, with the sudden glimpse it gave him of the fires within her that would not die down, but burned now more fiercely than ever, sent the blood to his head. His face, his temples, were hot with the fierceness of his joy in his conviction that she had revealed herself to him. Why she had done so, he could not say. . . This was the woman whom the world thought composed; who had triumphed over its opposition, compelled it to bow before her; who presented to it that self-possessed, unified personality by which he had been struck at their first meeting. Yet, paradoxically, the personality remained,—was more elusive than before. A thousand revelations, he felt, would not disclose it.

He was no nearer to solving it now. . Yet the fires burned! She, too, like himself, was aflame and unsatisfied! She, too, had tasted success, and had revolted!

“But I don’t get anywhere,” she said wearily. “At times I feel this ferment, this anger that things are as they are, only to realize what helpless anger it is. Why not take the world as it appears and live and feel, instead of beating against the currents?”

“But isn’t that inconsistent with what you said awhile ago as to a new civilization?” Hodder asked.

“Oh, that Utopia has no reality for me. I think it has, at moments, but it fades. And I don’t pretend to be consistent. Mr. Bentley lives in a world of his own; I envy him with all my heart, I love and admire him, he cheers and soothes me when I am with him. But I can’t see—whatever he sees. I am only aware of a remorseless universe grinding out its destinies. We Anglo-Saxons are fond of deceiving ourselves about life, of dressing it up in beautiful colours, of making believe that it actually contains happiness. All our fiction reflects this—that is why I never cared to read English or American novels. The Continental school, the Russians, the Frenchmen, refuse to be deluded. They are honest.”

“Realism, naturalism,” he mused, recalling a course in philosophy, “one would expect the Russian, in the conditions under which he lives, possessing an artistic temperament combined with a paralysis of the initiative and a sense of fate, to write in that way. And the Frenchmen, Renan, Zola, and the others who have followed, are equally deterministic, but viewing the human body as a highly organized machine with which we may amuse ourselves by registering its sensations. These literatures are true in so far as they reflect the characteristics of the nations from which they spring. That is not to say that the philosophies of which they are the expressions are true. Nor is it to admit that such a literature is characteristic of the spirit of America, and can be applied without change to our life and atmosphere. We have yet, I believe, to develop our own literature; which will come gradually as we find ourselves.”

“Find ourselves?” she repeated.

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“Yes. Isn’t that what we are trying to do? We are not determinists or fatalists, and to condemn us to such a philosophy would be to destroy us. We live on hope. In spite of our apparent materialism, we are idealists. And is it not possible to regard nature as governed by laws—remorseless, if you like the word—and yet believe, with Kant and Goethe, that there is an inner realm? You yourself struggle—you cling to ideals.”

“Ideals!” she echoed. “Ideals are useless unless one is able to see, to feel something beyond this ruthless mechanism by which we are surrounded and hemmed in, to have some perception of another scheme. Why struggle, unless we struggle for something definite? Oh, I don’t mean heavenly rewards. Nothing could be more insipid and senseless than the orthodox view of the hereafter. I am talking about a scheme of life here and now.”

“So am I,” answered Hodder. “But may there not be a meaning in this very desire we have to struggle against the order of things as it appears to us?”

“A meaning?”

“A little while ago you spoke of your indignation at the inequalities and injustices of the world, and when I asked you if you had always felt this, you replied that this feeling had grown upon you. My question is this: whether that indignation would be present at all if it were not meant to be turned into action.”

“You believe that an influence is at work, an influence that impels us against our reason?”

“I should like to think so,” he said. “Why should so many persons be experiencing such a feeling to-day, persons who, like yourself, are the beneficiaries of our present system of privilege? Why should you, who have every reason to be satisfied, materially, with things as they are, be troubling yourself with thoughts of others who are less-fortunate? And why should we have the spectacle, today, of men and women all over this country in social work, in science and medicine and politics, striving to better conditions while most of them might be much more comfortable and luxurious letting well enough alone?”

“But it’s human to care,” she objected.

“Ah—human!” he said, and was silent. “What do we mean by human, unless it is the distinguishing mark of something within us that the natural world doesn’t possess? Unless it is the desire and willingness to strive for a larger interest than the individual interest, work and suffer for others? And you spoke of making people happier. What do you mean by happiness? Not merely the possession of material comforts, surely. I grant you that those who are overworked and underfed, who are burning with the consciousness of wrongs, who have no outlook ahead, are essentially hopeless and

miserable. But by ‘happiness’ you, mean something more than the complacency and contentment which clothing and food might bring, and the removal of the economic fear, —and even the restoration of self-respect.”

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“That their lives should be fuller!” she exclaimed.

“That drudgery and despair should be replaced by interest and hope,” he went on, “slavery by freedom. In other words, that the whole attitude toward life should be changed, that life should appear a bright thing rather than a dark thing, that labour should be willing vicarious instead of forced and personal. Otherwise, any happiness worth having is out of the question.”

She was listening now with parted lips, apparently unconscious of the fixity of her gaze.

“You mean it is a choice between that or nothing,” she said, in a low voice. “That there is no use in lifting people out of the treadmill —and removing the terror of poverty unless you can give them something more—than I have got.”

“And something more—than I have got,”—he was suddenly moved to reply...

Presently, while the silence still held between them, the door opened and startled them into reality. Mr. Bentley came in.

The old gentleman gave no sign, as they rose to meet him, of a sense of tension in the atmosphere he had entered—yet each felt—somehow, that he knew. The tension was released. The same thought occurred to both as they beheld the peaceful welcome shining in his face, “Here is what we are seeking. Why try to define it?”

“To think that I have been gossiping with Mrs. Meyer, while you were waiting for me!” he said. “She keeps the little florist’s shop at the corner of Tower Street, and she gave me these. I little guessed what good use I should have for them, my dear.”

He held out to her three fragrant, crimson roses that matched the responsive colour in her cheeks as she thanked him and pinned them on her gown. He regarded her an instant.

“But I’m sure Mr. Hodder has entertained you,” Mr. Bentley turned, and laid his hand on the rector’s shoulder.

“Most successfully,” said Alison, cutting short his protest. And she smiled at Hodder, faintly.

CHAPTER XVI

AMID THE ENCIRCLING GLOOM

I

Hodder, in spite of a pressing invitation to remain for supper, had left them together. He turned his face westward, in the opposite direction from the parish house, still under the spell of that moment of communion which had lasted—he knew not how long, a moment of silent revelation to them both. She, too, was storm-tossed! She, too, who had fared forth so gallantly into life, had conquered only to be beaten down—to lose her way.

This discovery strained the very fibres of his being. So close he had been to her—so close that each had felt, simultaneously, complete comprehension of the other, comprehension that defied words, overbore disagreements. He knew that she had felt it. He walked on at first in a bewildered ecstasy, careless of aught else save that in a moment they two had reached out in the darkness and touched hands. Never had his experience known such communion, never had a woman meant what this woman meant, and yet he could not define that meaning. What need of religion, of faith in an unseen order when this existed? To have this woman in the midst of chaos would be enough!

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Faith in an unseen order! As he walked, his mind returned to the argument by which he had sought to combat her doubts—and his own. Whence had the argument come? It was new to him—he had never formulated it before—that pity and longing and striving were a justification and a proof. Had she herself inspired, by some unknown psychological law, this first attempt of his to reform the universe, this theory which he had rather spoken than thought? Or had it been the knowledge of her own longing, and his desire to assuage it? As twilight fell, as his spirits ebbed, he could not apply it now—it meant nothing to him, evaded him, there was in it no solace. To regain his footing once more, to climb again without this woman whom he needed, and might not have! Better to fall, to be engulfed. . . The vision of her, tall and straight, with the roses on her breast, tortured him.

Thus ecstasy ebbed to despondency. He looked around him in the fading day, to find himself opposite the closed gates of the Botanical Gardens, in the southwestern portion of the city . . . . An hour later he had made his way back to Dalton Street with its sputtering blue lights and gliding figures, and paused for a moment on the far sidewalk to gaze at Mr. Bentley's gleaming windows. Should he go in? Had that personality suddenly lost its power over him? How strange that now he could see nothing glowing, nothing inspiring within that house,—only a kindly old man reading a newspaper!

He walked on, slowly, to feel stealing on him that desperate longing for adventure which he had known so well in his younger days. And he did not resist. The terror with which it had once inspired him was gone, or lingered only in the form of a delicious sense of uncertainty and anticipation. Anything might happen to him—anything would be grateful; the thought of his study in the parish house was unbearable; the Dalton Street which had mocked and repelled him suddenly became alluring with its champaigns of light and inviting stretches of darkness. In the block ahead, rising out of the night like a tower blazing with a hundred beacons, Hodder saw a hotel, heard the faint yet eager throbbing of music, beheld silhouetted figures flitting from automobiles and carriages across the white glare of the pavement,—figures of men and women.

He hastened his steps, the music grew louder and louder in his ears, he gained the ornamental posts crowned by their incandescent globes, made his way through the loiterers, descended the stone steps of the restaurant, and stood staring into it as at a blurred picture. The band crashed a popular two-step above the mingled voices and laughter. He sat down at a vacant table near the door, and presently became aware that a waiter had been for some time at his elbow.

"What will you have, sir?"

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Then he remembered that he had not eaten, discovered that he was hungry, and ordered some sandwiches and beer. Still staring, the figures began to differentiate themselves, although they all appeared, somehow, in perpetual motion; hurrying, though seated. It was like gazing at a quivering cinematograph. Here and there ribbons of smoke curled upward, adding volume to the blue cloud that hung over the tables, which in turn was dissipated in spots by the industrious electric fans. Everywhere he looked he met the glances of women; even at the table next him, they were not so absorbed in their escorts as to be able to resist flinging him covert stares between the shrieks of laughter in which they intermittently indulged. The cumulative effect of all these faces was intoxicating, and for a long time he was unable to examine closely any one group. What he saw was a composite woman with flushed cheeks and soliciting eyes, becomingly gowned and hatted—to the masculine judgment. On the walls, heavily frescoed in the German style, he read, in Gothic letters:

> "Wer liebt nicht Wein, Weib, and Gesang,
> Er bleibt ein Narr sein Leben lang."

The waiter brought the sandwiches and beer, yet he did not eat. In the middle distance certain figures began insistently to stand out,—figures of women sitting alone wherever he looked he met a provoking gaze. One woman, a little farther away than the rest, seemed determinedly bent on getting a nod of recognition, and it was gradually borne in upon Hodder's consciousness that her features were familiar. In avoiding her eyes he studied the men at the next table,—or rather one of them, who loudly ordered the waiters about, who told brief anecdotes that were uproariously applauded; whose pudgy, bejewelled fingers were continually feeling for the bottle in the ice beside his chair, or nudging his companions with easy familiarity; whose little eyes, set in a heavy face, lighted now and again with a certain expression . . . . .

Suddenly Hodder pushed back his chair and got to his feet, overcome by a choking sensation like that of being, asphyxiated by foul gases. He must get out at once, or faint. What he had seen in the man's eyes had aroused in him sheer terror, for it was the image of something in his own soul which had summarily gained supremacy and led him hither, unresisting, to its own abiding-place. In vain he groped to reconstruct the process by which that other spirit—which he would fain have believed his true spirit—-had been drugged and deadened in its very flight.

He was aware, as he still stood uncertainly beside the table, of the white-aproned waiter looking at him, and of some one else!—the woman whose eyes had been fastened on him so persistently. She was close beside him, speaking to him.

"Seems to me we've met before."

He looked at her, at first uncomprehendingly, then with a dawning realization of her identity. Even her name came to him, unexpectedly, —Kate Marcy,—the woman in the flat!

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“Ain’t you going to invite me to have some supper?” she whispered eagerly, furtively, as one accustomed to be rebuffed, yet bold in spite of it. “They’ll throw me out if they think I’m accosting you.”

How was it that, a moment ago, she had appeared to him mysterious, inviting? At this range he could only see the paint on her cheeks, the shadows under her burning eyes, the shabby finery of her gown. Her wonderful bronze hair only made the contrast more pitiful. He acted automatically, drawing out for her the chair opposite his own, and sat down again.

“Say, but I’m hungry!” she exclaimed, pulling off her gloves. She smiled at him, wanly, yet with a brazen coquettishness become habit.

“Hungry!” he repeated idly.

“I guess you’d be, if you’d only had a fried egg and a cup of coffee to-day, and nothing last night.”

He pushed over to her, hastily, with a kind of horror, the plate of sandwiches. She began eating them ravenously; but presently paused, and thrust them back toward him. He shook his head.

“What’s the matter with you?” she demanded.

“Nothing,” he replied.

“You ordered them, didn’t you? Ain’t you eating anything?”

“I’m not hungry,” he said.

She continued eating awhile without comment. And he watched her as one fascinated, oblivious to his surroundings, in a turmoil of thought and emotion.

“I’m dry,” she announced meaningly.

He hesitated a moment, and then gave her the bottle of beer. She made a wry face as she poured it out.

“Have they run out of champagne?” she inquired.

This time he did not hesitate. The women of his acquaintance, at the dinner parties he attended, drank champagne. Why should he refuse it to this woman? A long-nosed, mediaeval-looking waiter was hovering about, one of those bizarre, battered creatures who have long exhausted the surprises of life, presiding over this amazing situation with all the sang froid of a family butler. Hodder told him to bring champagne.

“What kind, sir?” he asked, holding out a card.

“The best you have.”

The woman stared at him in wonder.

“You’re what an English Johnny I know would call a little bit of all right!” she declared with enthusiastic approval.

“Since you are hungry,” he went on, “suppose you have something more substantial than sandwiches. What would you like?”

She did not answer at once. Amazement grew in her eyes, amazement and a kind of fear.

“Quit joshing!” she implored him, and he found it difficult to cope with her style of conversation. For a while she gazed helplessly at the bill of fare.

“I guess you’ll think it’s funny,” she said hesitatingly, “but I feel just like a good beefsteak and potatoes. Bring a thick one, Walter.”

The waiter sauntered off.

“Why should I think it strange?” Hodder asked.

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“Well, if you knew how many evenings I’ve sat up there in my room and thought what I’d order if I ever again got hold of some rich guy who’d loosen up. There ain’t any use trying to put up a bluff with you. Nothing was too good for me once, caviar, pate de foie gras” (her pronunciation is not to be imitated), “chicken casserole, peach Melba, filet of beef with mushrooms,—I’ve had ’em all, and I used to sit up and say I’d hand out an order like that. You never do what you think you’re going to do in this life.”

The truth of this remark struck him with a force she did not suspect; stung him, as it were, into a sense of reality.

“And now,” she added pathetically, “all t want is a beefsteak! Don’t that beat you?”

She appeared so genuinely surprised at this somewhat contemptible trick fate had played her that Hodder smiled in spite of himself.

“I didn’t recognize you at first in that get-up,” she observed, looking at his blue serge suit. “So you’ve dropped the preacher business, have you? You’re wise, all right.”

“Why do you say that?” he asked.

“Didn’t I tell you when you came ’round that time that you weren’t like the rest of ’em? You’re too human.”

Once more the word, and on her lips, startled him.

“Some of the best men I have ever known, the broadest and most understanding men, have been clergymen,” he found himself protesting.

“Well, they haven’t dropped in on me. The only one I ever saw that measured up to something like that was you, and now you’ve chucked it.”

Had he, as she expressed the matter, “chucked it”? Her remark brought him reluctantly, fearfully, remorselessly—agitated and unprepared as he was—face to face with his future.

“You were too good for the job,” she declared. “What is there in it? There ain’t nobody converted these days that I can see, and what’s the use of gettin’ up and preach into a lot of sapheads that don’t know what religion is? Sure they don’t.”

“Do you?” he asked.

“You’ve called my bluff.” She laughed. “Say, do *you*?” If there was anything in it you’d have kept on preachin’ to that bunch and made some of ’em believe they was headed for hell; you’d have made one of ’em that owns the flat house I live in, who gets fancy

rents out of us poor girls, give it up. That's a nice kind of business for a church member, ain't it?"

"Owns the house in which you live!"

"Sure." She smiled at him compassionately, pitying his innocence and ignorance. "Now I come to think of it, I guess he don't go to your church,—it's the big Baptist church on the boulevard. But what's the difference?"

"None," said Hodder, despondently.

She regarded him curiously.

"You remember when you dropped in that night, when the kid was sick?"

He nodded.

"Well, now you ain't in the business any more, I may as well tell you you kind of got in on me. I was sorry for you—honest, I was. I couldn't believe at first you was on the level, but it didn't take me long to see that they had gold-bricked you, too. I saw you weren't wise to what they were."

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“You thought—” he began and paused dumfounded.

“Why not?” she retorted. “It looked easy to me,—your line. How was I to know at first that they had you fooled? How was I to know you wasn’t in the game?”

“The game?”

“Say, what else is it but a game? You must be on now, ain’t you? Why. do they put up to keep the churches going? There ain’t any coupons coming out of ’em.

“Maybe some of these millionaires think they can play all the horses and win,—get into heaven and sell gold bricks on the side. But I guess most of ’em don’t think about heaven. They just use the church for a front, and take in strangers in the back alley,—-downtown.”

Hodder was silent, overwhelmed by the brutal aptness of her figures. Nor did he take the trouble of a defence, of pointing out that hers was not the whole truth. What really mattered—he saw—was what she and those like her thought. Such minds were not to be disabused by argument; and indeed he had little inclination for it then.

“There’s nothing in it.”

By this expression he gathered she meant life. And some hidden impulse bade him smile at her.

“There is this,” he answered.

She opened her mouth, closed it and stared at him, struck by his expression, striving uneasily to fathom hidden depths in his remark.

“I don’t get on to you,” she said lamely. “I didn’t that other time. I never ran across anybody like you.”

He tried to smile again.

“You mustn’t mind me,” he answered.

They fell into an oasis of silence, surrounded by mad music and laughter. Then came the long-nosed waiter carrying the beefsteak aloft, followed by a lad with a bucket of ice, from which protruded the green and gold neck of a bottle. The plates were put down, the beefsteak carved, the champagne opened and poured out with a flourish. The woman raised her glass.

“Here’s how!” she said, with an attempt at gayety. And she drank to him. “It’s funny how I ran across you again, ain’t it?” She threw back her head and laughed.

He raised his glass, tasted the wine, and put it down again. A sheet of fire swept through him.

“What’s the matter with it? Is it corked?” she demanded. “It goes to the right spot with me.”

“It seems very good,” he said, trying to smile, and turning to the food on his plate. The very idea of eating revolted him—and yet he made the attempt: he had a feeling, ill defined, that consequences of vital importance depended upon this attempt, on his natural acceptance of the situation. And, while he strove to reduce the contents of his plate, he racked his brain for some subject of conversation. The flamboyant walls of the room pressed in on every side; comment of that which lay within their limits was impossible,—but he could not, somehow, get beyond them. Was there in the whole range of life one easy topic which they might share in common? Yet a bond existed between this woman and himself—a bond of which he now became aware, and which seemed strangely to grow stronger as the minutes passed and no words were spoken. Why was it that she, too, to whom speech came so easily, had fallen dumb? He began to long for some remark, however disconcerting. The tension increased.

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She put down her knife and fork. Tears sprang into her eyes,—tears of anger, he thought.

“Say, it’s no use trying to put up a bluff with me,” she cried.

“Why do you say that?” he asked.

“You know what I mean, all right. What did you come in here for, anyway?”

“I don’t know—I couldn’t tell you,” he answered.

The very honesty of his words seemed, for an instant, to disconcert her; and she produced a torn lace handkerchief, which she thrust in her eyes.

“Why can’t you leave me alone?” she demanded. “I’m all right.”

If he did not at once reply, it was because of some inner change which had taken place in himself; and he seemed to see things, suddenly, in their true proportions. He no longer feared a scene and its consequences. By virtue of something he had cast off or taken on, he was aware of a newly acquired mastery of the situation, and by a hidden and unconscious process he had managed to get at the real woman behind the paint: had beaten down, as it were without a siege, her defences. And he was incomparably awed by the sight of her quivering, frightened self.

Her weeping grew more violent. He saw the people at the next table turn and stare, heard the men laughing harshly. For the spectacle was evidently not an uncommon one here. She pushed away her unfinished glass, gathered up her velvet bag and rose abruptly.

“I guess I ain’t hungry after all,” she said, and started toward the door. He turned to the waiter, who regarded him unmoved, and asked for a check.

“I’ll get it,” he said.

Hodder drew out a ten dollar bill, and told him to keep the change. The waiter looked at him. Some impulse moved him to remark, as he picked up the rector’s hat:

“Don’t let her put it over you, sir.”

Hodder scarcely heard him. He hurried up the steps and gained the pavement, and somewhere in the black shadows beyond the arc-lights he saw her disappearing down the street. Careless of all comment he hastened on, overtook her, and they walked rapidly side by side. Now and again he heard a sob, but she said nothing. Thus they came to the house where the Garvins had lived, and passed it, and stopped in front of the dimly lighted vestibule of the flats next door. In drawing the key from her bag she

dropped it: he picked it up and put it in the lock himself. She led the way without comment up the darkened stairs, and on the landing produced another key, opened the door of her rooms, fumbled for the electric button, and suddenly the place was flooded with light. He glanced in, and recoiled.

II

Oddly enough, the first thing he noticed in the confusion that reigned was the absence of the piano. Two chairs were overturned, and one of them was broken; a siphon of vichy lay on the floor beside a crushed glass and two or three of the cheap ornaments that had been swept off the mantel and broken on the gaudy tiles of the hearth. He glanced at the woman, who had ceased crying, and stood surveying the wreckage with the calmness, the philosophic nonchalance of a class that comes to look upon misfortune as inevitable.

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“They didn’t do a thing to this place, did they?” was her comment. “There was two guys in here to-night who got a notion they were funny.”

Hodder had thought to have fathomed all the horrors of her existence, but it was not until he looked into this room that the bottomless depths of it were brought home to him. Could it be possible that the civilization in which he lived left any human being so defenceless as to be at the mercy of the ghouls who had been here? The very stale odours of the spilled whiskey seemed the material expression of the essence of degraded souls; for a moment it overpowered him. Then came the imperative need of action, and he began to right one of the chairs. She darted forward.

“Cut it out!” she cried. “What business have you got coming in here and straightening up? I was a fool to bring you, anyway.”

It was in her eyes that he read her meaning, and yet could not credit it. He was abashed—ashamed; nay, he could not define the feeling in his breast. He knew that what he read was the true interpretation of her speech, for in some manner—he guessed not how—she had begun to idealize him, to feel that the touch of these things defiled him.

“I believe I invited myself,” he answered, with attempted cheerfulness. Then it struck him, in his predicament, that this was precisely what others had done!

“When you asked me a little while ago whether I had left the Church, I let you think I had. I am still connected with St. John’s, but I do not know how long I shall continue to be.”

She was on her knees with dustpan and whiskbroom, cleaning up the fragments of glass on the stained carpet. And she glanced up at him swiftly, divininglу.

“Say—you’re in trouble yourself, ain’t you?”

She got up impulsively, spilling some of the contents of the pan. A subtle change had come in her, and under the gallantly drooping feathers of her hat he caught her eye—-the human eye that so marvellously reflects the phases of the human soul: the eye which so short a time before hardily and brazenly had flashed forth its invitation, now actually shone with fellowship and sympathy. And for a moment this look was more startling, more appalling than the other; he shrank from it, resented it even more. Was it true that they had something in common? And if so, was it sin or sorrow, or both?

“I might have known,” she said, staring at him. In spite of his gesture of dissent, he saw that she was going over the events of the evening from her new point of view.

“I might have known, when we were sitting there in Harrods, that you were up against it, too, but I couldn’t think of anything but the way I was fixed. The agent’s been here twice this week for the rent, and I was kind of desperate for a square meal.”

Hodder took the dustpan from her hand, and flung its contents into the fireplace.

“Then we are both fortunate,” he said, “to have met each other.”

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“I don’t see where you come in,” she told him.

He turned and smiled at her.

“Do you remember when I was here that evening about two months ago I said I should like to be your friend? Well, I meant it. And I have often hoped, since then, that some circumstance might bring us together again. You seemed to think that no friendship was possible between us, but I have tried to make myself believe that you said so because you didn’t know me.”

“Honest to God?” she asked. “Is that on the level?”

“I only ask for an opportunity to prove it,” he replied, striving to speak naturally. He stooped and laid the dustpan on the hearth. “There! Now let’s sit down.”

She sank on the sofa, her breast rising and falling, her gaze dumbly fixed on him, as one under hypnosis. He took the rocker.

“I have wanted to tell you how grateful Mrs. Garvin, the boy’s mother —was for the roses you brought. She doesn’t know who sent them, but I intend to tell her, and she will thank you herself. She is living out in the country. And the boy—you would scarcely recognize him.”

“I couldn’t play the piano for a week after—that thing happened.” She glanced at the space where the instrument had stood.

“You taught yourself to play?” he asked.

“I had music lessons.”

“Music lessons?”

“Not here—before I left home—up the State, in a little country town, —Madison. It seems like a long time ago, but it’s only seven years in September. Mother and father wanted all of us children to know a little more than they did, and I guess they pinched a good deal to give us a chance. I went a year to the high school, and then I was all for coming to the city—I couldn’t stand Madison, there wasn’t anything going on. Mother was against it,—said I was too good-looking to leave home. I wish I never had. You wouldn’t believe I was good-looking once, would you?”

She spoke dispassionately, not seeming to expect assent, but Hodder glanced involuntarily at her wonderful crown of hair. She had taken off her hat. He was thinking of the typical crime of American parents,—and suddenly it struck him that her speech had changed, that she had dropped the suggestive slang of the surroundings in which she now lived.

“I was a fool to come, but I couldn’t see it then. All I could think of was to get away to a place where something was happening. I wanted to get into Ferguson’s—everybody in Madison knew about Ferguson’s, what a grand store it was,—but I couldn’t. And after a while I got a place at the embroidery counter at Pratt’s. That’s a department store, too, you know. It looked fine, but it wasn’t long before I fell wise to a few things.” (She relapsed into slang occasionally.) “Have you ever tried to stand on your feet for nine hours, where you couldn’t sit down for a minute? Say, when Florry Kinsley and me—-she was the girl I roomed with —would get home at night, often we’d just lie down and laugh and cry, we were so tired, and our feet hurt so. We were too used up sometimes to get up and cook supper on the little stove we had. And sitting around a back bedroom all evening was worse than Madison. We’d go out, tired as we were, and walk the streets.”

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He nodded, impressed by the fact that she did not seem to be appealing to his sympathy. Nor, indeed, did she appear—in thus picking up the threads of her past—to be consciously accounting for her present. She recognized no causation there.

“Say, did you ever get to a place where you just had to have something happen? When you couldn’t stand bein’ lonely night after night, when you went out on the streets and saw everybody on the way to a good time but you? We used to look in the newspapers for notices of the big balls, and we’d take the cars to the West End and stand outside the awnings watching the carriages driving up and the people coming in. And the same with the weddings. We got to know a good many of the swells by sight. There was Mrs. Larrabbee,”—a certain awe crept into her voice—“and Miss Ferguson—she’s sweet—-and a lot more. Some of the girls used to copy their clothes and hats, but Florry and me tried to live honest. It was funny,” she added irrelevantly, “but the more worn out we were at night, the more we’d want a little excitement, and we used to go to the dance-halls and keep going until we were ready to drop.”

She laughed at the recollection.

“There was a floorwalker who never let me alone the whole time I was at Pratt’s—he put me in mind of a pallbearer. His name was Selkirk, and he had a family in Westerly, out on the Grade Suburban . . . . Some of the girls never came back at all, except to swagger in and buy expensive things, and tell us we were fools to work. And after a while I noticed Florry was getting discouraged. We never had so much as a nickel left over on Saturdays and they made us sign a paper, when they hired us, that we lived at home. It was their excuse for paying us six dollars a week. They do it at Ferguson’s, too. They say they can get plenty of girls who do live at home. I made up my mind I’d go back to Madison, but I kept putting it off, and then father died, and I couldn’t!

“And then, one day, Florry left. She took her things from the room when I was at the store, and I never saw her again. I got another roommate. I couldn’t afford to pay for the room alone. You wouldn’t believe I kept straight, would you?” she demanded, with a touch of her former defiance. “I had plenty of chances better than that floorwalker. But I knew I was good looking, and I thought if I could only hold out I might get married to some fellow who was well fixed. What’s the matter?”

Hodder’s exclamation had been involuntary, for in these last words she had unconsciously brought home to him the relentless predicament in the lives of these women. She had been saving herself—for what? A more advantageous, sale!

“It’s always been my luck,” she went on reflectingly, “that when what I wanted to happen did happen, I never could take advantage of it. It was just like that to-night, when you handed me out the bill of fare, and I ordered beefsteak. And it was like that when—-when he came along —I didn’t do what I thought I was going to do. It’s terrible to fall in

love, isn't it? I mean the real thing. I've read in books that it only comes once, and I guess it's so."

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Fortunately she seemed to expect no answer to this query. She was staring at the wall with unseeing eyes.

“I never thought of marrying him, from the first. He could have done anything with me—he was so good and generous—and it was him I was thinking about. That’s love, isn’t it? Maybe you don’t believe a woman like me knows what love is. You’ve got a notion that goin’ downhill, as I’ve been doing, kills it, haven’t you? I Wish to God it did—but it don’t: the ache’s there, and sometimes it comes in the daytime, and sometimes at night, and I think I’ll go crazy. When a woman like me is in love there isn’t anything more terrible on earth, I tell you. If a girl’s respectable and good it’s bad enough, God knows, if she can’t have the man she wants; but when she’s like me—it’s hell. That’s the only way I can describe it. She feels there is nothing about her that’s clean, that he wouldn’t despise. There’s many a night I wished I could have done what Garvin did, but I didn’t have the nerve.”

“Don’t say that!” he commanded sharply.

“Why not? It’s the best way out.”

“I can see how one might believe it to be,” he answered. Indeed, it seemed that his vision had been infinitely extended, that he had suddenly come into possession of the solution of all the bewildered, despairing gropings of the human soul. Only awhile ago, for instance, the mood of self-destruction had been beyond his imagination: tonight he understood it, though he still looked upon it with horror. And he saw that his understanding of her—or of any human being—could never be of the intellect. He had entered into one of those astounding yet simple relationships wherein truth, and truth alone, is possible. He knew that such women lied, deceived themselves; he could well conceive that the image of this first lover might have become idealized in her vicissitudes; that the memories of the creature-comforts, of first passion, might have enhanced as the victim sank. It was not only because she did not attempt to palliate that he believed her.

“I remember the time I met him,—it was only four years ago last spring, but it seems like a lifetime. It was Decoration Day, and it was so beautiful I went out with another girl to the Park, and we sat on the grass and looked at the sky and wished we lived in the country. He was in an automobile; I never did know exactly how it happened,—we looked at each other, and he slowed up and came back and asked us to take a ride. I had never been in one of those things—but that wasn’t why I went, I guess. Well, the rest was easy. He lost his head, and I was just as bad. You wouldn’t believe me if I told you how rich he was: it scared me when I found out about him, and he was so handsome and full of fun and spirits, and generous! I never knew anybody like him. Honest, I never expected he’d want to marry me. He didn’t at first,—it was only after a while. I never asked him to, and

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when he began to talk about it I told him it would cut him off from his swell friends, and I knew his father might turn him loose. Oh, it wasn't the money! Well, he'd get mad all through, and say he never got along with the old man, and that his friends would have to take me, and he couldn't live without me. He said he would have me educated, and bought me books, and I tried to read them. I'd have done anything for him. He'd knocked around a good deal since he'd been to Harvard College,—he wasn't what you'd call a saint, but his heart was all right. And he changed, too, I could see it. He said he was going to make something out of himself.

"I didn't think it was possible to be so happy, but I had a feeling all along, inside of me, that it couldn't come off. I had a little flat in Rutger Street, over on the south side, and everything in the world I wanted. Well, one day, sure enough, the bell rang and I opened the door, and there stood a man with side whiskers staring at me, and staring until I was frightened to death. I never saw such eyes as he had. And all of a sudden I knew it was his father.

"'Is this Miss Marcy?'" he said.

"I couldn't say anything at all, but he handed me his card and smiled, I'll never forget how he smiled—and came right in and sat down. I'd heard of that man all my life, and how much money he'd made, and all that. Why, up in Madison folks used to talk about him—" she checked herself suddenly and stared at Hodder in consternation. "Maybe you know him!" she exclaimed. "I never thought!"

"Maybe I do," he assented wearily. In the past few moments suspicion had become conviction.

"Well—what difference does it make—now? It's all over, and I'm not going to bother him. I made up my mind I wouldn't, on account of him, you understand. I never fell that low—thank God!"

Hodder nodded. He could not speak . . . . The woman seemed to be living over again that scene, in her imagination.

"I just couldn't realize who it was sitting there beside me, but if I hadn't known it wouldn't have made any difference. He could have done anything with me, anyway, and he knew how to get at me. He said, now that he'd seen me, that he was sure I was a good girl at the bottom and loved his son, and that I wouldn't want to ruin the boy when he had such a big future ahead of him. I wouldn't have thought, to look at the man, that he could have been so gentle. I made a fool of myself and cried, and told him I'd go away and never see his son any more—that I'd always been against marrying him. Well, he almost had tears in his eyes when he thanked me and said I'd never regret it, and he

pulled an envelope out of his pocket. I said I wouldn't take any money, and gave it back to him. I've always been sorry since that I didn't make him take it back—it never did anything but harm to me. But he had his way. He laid it on the table and said he wouldn't feel right, and took my hand—and I just didn't care.

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“Well, what do you think I did after he’d gone? I went and played a piece on the piano,—and I never can bear to hear that ragtime to this day. I couldn’t seem to feel anything. And after a while I got up and opened the envelope—it was full of crackly new hundred dollar bills —thirty of ’em, and as I sat there staring at ’em the pain came on, like a toothache, in throbs, getting worse all the time until I just couldn’t stand it. I had a notion of sending the money back even then, but I didn’t. I didn’t know how to do it,—-and as I told you, I wasn’t able to care much. Then I remembered I’d promised to go away, and I had to have some money for that, and if I didn’t leave right off I wouldn’t have the strength to do it. I hadn’t even thought where to go: I couldn’t think, so I got dressed and went down to the depot anyway. It was one of those bright, bitter cold winter days after a thaw when the icicles are hanging everywhere. I went inside and walked up and down that long platform under the glass roof. My, it was cold in there! I looked over all the signs, and made up my mind I’d go to Chicago.

“I meant to work, I never meant to spend the money, but to send it back. I’d put it aside—and then I’d go and take a little. Say, it was easy not to work—and I didn’t care what happened to me as long as I wasn’t going to see him again. Well, I’m not trying to smooth it over, I suppose there was something crooked about me from the start, but I just went clean to hell with that money, and when I heard he’d gone away, I came back here.”

“Something crooked!” The words rang in Hodder’s ears, in his very soul. How was he or any man to estimate, to unravel the justice from the injustice, to pass upon the merit of this woman’s punishment? Here again, in this vitiated life, was only to be seen the remorseless working of law—cause and effect. Crooked! Had not the tree been crooked from the beginning—incapable of being straightened? She had herself naively confessed it. Was not the twist ingrained? And if so, where was the salvation he had preached? There was good in her still,—but what was “good”? . . . He took no account of his profound compassion.

What comfort could he give her, what hope could he hold out that the twist, now gnarled and knotted, might be removed, that she might gain peace of soul and body and the “happiness” of which he had talked with Alison Parr? . . . He raised his eyes, to discover that the woman’s were fixed upon him, questioningly.

“I suppose I was a fool to tell you,” she said, with a shade of her old bitterness; “it can’t do any good.” Her next remark was startlingly astute. “You’ve found out for yourself, I guess, that all this talk about heaven and hell and repentance don’t amount to anything. Hell couldn’t be any worse than I’ve been through, no matter how hot it is. And heaven!” She laughed, burst into tears, and quickly dried them. “You know the man I’ve been talking about, that bought me off. I didn’t intend to tell you, but I see you can’t help knowing—Eldon Parr. I don’t say he didn’t do right from his way of looking at things,—-but say, it wasn’t exactly Christian, was it?”

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“No,” he said, “it wasn’t.” He bowed his head, and presently, when he raised it again, he caught something in her look that puzzled and disturbed him—an element of adoration.

“You’re white through and through,” she said, slowly and distinctly.

And he knew not how to protest.

“I’ll tell you something,” she went on, as one who has made a discovery. “I liked you the first time you came in here—that night—when you wanted me to be friends; well, there was something that seemed to make it impossible then. I felt it, if you didn’t.” She groped for words. “I can’t explain what it was, but now it’s gone. You’re different. I think a lot more of you. Maybe it’s because of what you did at Harrod’s, sitting down with me and giving me supper when I was so hungry, and the champagne. You weren’t ashamed of me.”

“Good God, why should I have been!” he exclaimed.

“You! Why shouldn’t you?” she cried fiercely.

“There’s hardly a man in that place that wouldn’t have been. They all know me by sight—and some of ’em better. You didn’t see ’em grinning when I came up to you, but I did. My God—it’s awful—it’s awful I....” She burst into violent weeping, long deferred.

He took her hand in his, and did not speak, waiting for the fit to spend itself . . . . And after a while the convulsive shudders that shook her gradually ceased.

“You must trust me,” he said. “The first thing tomorrow I’m going to make arrangements for you to get out of these rooms. You can’t stay here any longer.”

“That’s sure,” she answered, trying to smile. “I’m broke. I even owe the co—the policeman.”

“The policeman!”

“He has to turn it in to Tom Beatty and the politicians”

Beatty! Where had he heard the name? Suddenly it came to him that Beatty was the city boss, who had been eulogized by Mr. Plimpton!

“I have some good friends who will be glad to help you to get work—and until you do get work. You will have to fight—but we all have to fight. Will you try?”

“Sure, I’ll try,” she answered, in a low voice.

Her very tone of submission troubled him. And he had a feeling that, if he had demanded, she would have acquiesced in anything.

“We’ll talk it over to-morrow,” he went on, clinging to his note of optimism. “We’ll find out what you can do easiest, to begin with.”

“I might give music lessons,” she suggested.

The remark increased his uneasiness, for he recognized in it a sure symptom of disease—a relapse into what might almost have been called levity, blindness to the supreme tragedy of her life which but a moment before had shaken and appalled her. He shook his head bravely.

“I’m afraid that wouldn’t do—at first.”

She rose and went into the other room, returning in a few moments with a work basket, from which she drew a soiled and unfinished piece of embroidery.

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“There’s a bureau cover I started when I was at Pratt’s,” she said, as she straightened it over her knees. “It’s a copy of an expensive one. I never had the patience to finish it, but one of the sales-ladies there, who was an expert, told me it was pretty good: She taught me the stitch, and I had a notion at that time I might make a little money for dresses and the theatre. I was always clever with my hands.”

“The very thing!” he said, with hopeful emphasis. “I’m sure I can get you plenty of it to do. And I’ll come back in the morning.”

He gave it back to her, and as she was folding it his glance fell on a photograph in the basket.

“I kept it, I don’t know why,” he heard her say; “I didn’t have the heart to burn it.”

He started recovered himself, and rose.

“I’ll go to see the agent the first thing to-morrow,” he said. “And then—you’ll be ready for me? You trust me?”

“I’d do anything for you,” was her tremulous reply.

Her disquieting, submissive smile haunted him as he roped his way down the stairs to the street, and then the face in the photograph replaced it—the laughing eyes, the wilful, pleasure—loving mouth he had seen in the school and college pictures of Preston Parr.

THE INSIDE OF THE CUP

By Winston Churchill

Volume 5.

XVII. *Reconstruction*
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CHAPTER XVII

RECONSTRUCTION

I

Life had indeed become complicated, paradoxical. He, John Hodder, a clergyman, rector of St. John's by virtue of not having resigned, had entered a restaurant of ill repute, had ordered champagne for an abandoned woman, and had no sense of sin when he awoke the next morning! The devil, in the language of orthodox theology, had led him there. He had fallen under the influence of the tempter of his youth, and all in him save the carnal had been blotted out.

More paradoxes! If the devil had not taken possession of him and led him there, it were more than probable that he could never have succeeded in any other way in getting on a footing of friendship with this woman, Kate Marcy. Her future, to be sure, was problematical. Here was no simple, sentimental case he might formerly have imagined, of trusting innocence betrayed, but a mixture of good and evil, selfishness and unselfishness. And she had, in spite of all, known the love which effaces self! Could the disintegration, in her case, be arrested?

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Gradually Hodder was filled with a feeling which may be called amazement because, although his brain was no nearer to a solution than before, he was not despondent. For a month he had not permitted his mind to dwell on the riddle; yet this morning he felt stirring within him a new energy for which he could not account, a hope unconnected with any mental process! He felt in touch, once more, faintly but perceptibly, with something stable in the chaos. In bygone years he had not seen the chaos, but the illusion of an orderly world, a continual succession of sunrises, 'couleur de rose', from the heights above Bremerton. Now were the scales fallen from his eyes; now he saw the evil, the injustice, the despair; felt, in truth, the weight of the sorrow of it all, and yet that sorrow was unaccountably transmuted, as by a chemical process, into something which for the first time had a meaning—he could not say what meaning. The sting of despair had somehow been taken out of it, and it remained poignant!

Not on the obsession of the night before, when he had walked down Dalton Street and beheld it transformed into a realm of adventure, but upon his past life did he look back now with horror, upon the even tenor of those days and years in the bright places. His had been the highroad of a fancied security, from which he had feared to stray, to seek his God across the rough face of nature, from black, forgotten capons to the flying peaks in space. He had feared reality. He had insisted upon gazing at the universe through the coloured glasses of an outworn theology, instead of using his own eyes.

So he had left the highroad, the beaten way of salvation many others had deserted, had flung off his spectacles, had plunged into reality, to be scratched and battered, to lose his way. Not until now had something of grim zest come to him, of an instinct which was the first groping of a vision, as to where his own path might lie. Through what thickets and over what mountains he knew not as yet—nor cared to know. He felt resistance, whereas on the highroad he had felt none. On the highroad his cry had gone unheeded and unheard, yet by holding out his hand in the wilderness he had helped another, bruised and bleeding, to her feet! Salvation, Let it be what it might be, he would go on, stumbling and seeking, through reality.

Even this last revelation, of Eldon Parr's agency in another tragedy, seemed to have no further power to affect him. . . Nor could Hodder think of Alison as in blood-relationship to the financier, or even to the boy, whose open, pleasure-loving face he had seen in the photograph.

II

A presage of autumn was in the air, and a fine, misty rain drifted in at his windows as he sat at his breakfast. He took deep breaths of the moisture, and it seemed to water and revive his parching soul. He found himself, to his surprise, surveying with equanimity the pile of books in the corner which had led him to the conviction of the emptiness of the universe—but the universe was no longer empty! It was cruel, but a warring force

was at work in it which was not blind, but directed. He could not say why this was so, but he knew it, he felt it, sensed its energy within him as he set out for Dalton Street.

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He was neither happy nor unhappy, but in equilibrium, walking with sure steps, and the anxiety in which he had fallen asleep the night before was gone: anxiety lest the woman should have fled, or changed her mind, or committed some act of desperation.

In Dalton Street a thin coat of yellow mud glistened on the asphalt, but even the dreariness of this neighbourhood seemed transient. He rang the bell of the flat, the door swung open, and in the hall above a woman awaited him. She was clad in black.

“You wouldn’t know me, would you?” she inquired. “Say, I scarcely know myself. I used to wear this dress at Pratt’s, with white collars and cuffs and—well, I just put it on again. I had it in the bottom of my trunk, and I guessed you’d like it.”

“I didn’t know you at first,” he said, and the pleasure in his face was her reward.

The transformation, indeed, was more remarkable than he could have believed possible, for respectability itself would seem to have been regained by a costume, and the abundance of her remarkable hair was now repressed. The absence of paint made her cheeks strangely white, the hollows under the eyes darker. The eyes themselves alone betrayed the woman of yesterday; they still burned.

“Why,” he exclaimed, looking around him, “you have been busy, haven’t you?”

“I’ve been up since six,” she told him proudly. The flat had been dismantled of its meagre furniture, the rug was rolled up and tied, and a trunk strapped with rope was in the middle of the floor. Her next remark brought home to him the full responsibility of his situation. She led him to the window, and pointed to a spot among the drenched weeds and rubbish in the yard next door. “Do you see that bottle? That’s the first thing I did—-flung it out there. It didn’t break,” she added significantly, “and there are three drinks in it yet.”

Once more he confined his approval to his glance.

“Now you must come and have some breakfast,” he said briskly. “If I had thought about it I should have waited to have it with you.”

“I’m not hungry.” In the light of his new knowledge, he connected her sudden dejection with the sight of the bottle.

“But you must eat. You’re exhausted from all this work. And a cup of coffee will make all the difference in the world.”

She yielded, pinning on her hat. And he led her, holding the umbrella over her, to a restaurant in Tower Street, where a man in a white cap and apron was baking cakes behind a plate-glass window. She drank the coffee, but in her excitement left the rest of the breakfast almost untasted.

“Say,” she asked him once, “why are you doing this?”

“I don’t know,” he answered, “except that it gives me pleasure.”

“Pleasure?”

“Yes. It makes me feel as if I were of some use.”

She considered this.

“Well,” she observed, reviled by the coffee, “you’re the queerest minister I ever saw.”

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When they had reached the pavement she asked him where they were going.

“To see a friend of mine, and a friend of yours,” he told her. “He does net live far from here.”

She was silent again, acquiescing. The rain had stopped, the sun was peeping out furtively through the clouds, the early loiterers in Dalton Street stared at them curiously. But Hodder was thinking of that house whither they were bound with a new gratitude, a new wonder that it should exist. Thus they came to the sheltered vestibule with its glistening white paint, its polished name plate and doorknob. The grinning, hospitable darky appeared in answer to the rector’s ring.

“Good morning, Sam,” he said; “is Mr. Bentley in?”

Sam ushered them ceremoniously into the library, and gate Marcy gazed about her with awe, as at something absolutely foreign to her experience: the New Barrington Hotel, the latest pride of the city, recently erected at the corner of Tower and Jefferson and furnished in the French style, she might partially have understood. Had she been marvellously and suddenly transported and established there, existence might still have evinced a certain continuity. But this house! . .

Mr. Bentley rose from the desk in the corner.

“Oh, it’s you, Hodder,” he said cheerfully, laying his hand on the rector’s arm. “I was just thinking about you.”

“This is Miss Marcy, Mr. Bentley,” Hodder said.

Mr. Bentley took her hand and led her to a chair.

“Mr. Hodder knows how fond I am of young women,” he said. “I have six of them upstairs,—so I am never lonely.”

Mr. Bentley did not appear to notice that her lips quivered.

Hodder turned his eyes from her face. “Miss Marcy has been lonely,” he explained, “and I thought we might get her a room near by, where she might see them often. She is going to do embroidery.”

“Why, Sally will know of a room,” Mr. Bentley replied. “Sam!” he called.

“Yessah—yes, Mistah Ho’ace.” Sam appeared at the door.

“Ask Miss Sally to come down, if she’s not busy.”

Kate Marcy sat dumbly in her chair, her hands convulsively clasping its arms, her breast heaving stormily, her face becoming intense with the effort of repressing the wild emotion within her: emotion that threatened to strangle her if resisted, or to sweep her out like a tide and drown her in deep waters: emotion that had no one mewing, and yet summed up a life, mysteriously and overwhelmingly aroused by the sight of a room, and of a kindly old gentleman who lived in it!

Mr. Bentley took the chair beside her.

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“Why, I believe it’s going to clear off, after all,” he exclaimed. “Sam predicted it, before breakfast. He pretends to be able to tell by the flowers. After a while I must show you my flowers, Miss Marcy, and what Dalton Street can do by way of a garden—Mr. Hodder could hardly believe it, even when he saw it.” Thus he went on, the tips of his fingers pressed together, his head bent forward in familiar attitude, his face lighted, speaking naturally of trivial things that seemed to suggest themselves; and careful, with exquisite tact that did not betray itself, to address both. A passing automobile startled her with the blast of its horn. “I’m afraid I shall never get accustomed to them,” he lamented. “At first I used to be thankful there were no trolley cars on this street, but I believe the automobiles are worse.”

A figure flitted through the hall and into the room, which Hodder recognized as Miss Grower’s. She reminded him of a flying shuttle across the warp of Mr. Bentley’s threads, weaving them together; swift, sure, yet never hurried or flustered. One glance at the speechless woman seemed to suffice her for a knowledge of the situation.

“Mr. Hodder has brought us a new friend and neighbour, Sally,—Miss Kate Marcy. She is to have a room near us, that we may see her often.”

Hodder watched Miss Grower’s procedure with a breathless interest.

“Why, Mrs. McQuillen has a room—across the street, you know, Mr. Bentley.”

Sally perched herself on the edge of the armchair and laid her hand lightly on Kate Marcy’s.

Even Sally Grover was powerless to prevent the inevitable, and the touch of her hand seemed the signal for the release of the pent-up forces. The worn body, the worn nerves, the weakened will gave way, and Kate Marcy burst into a paroxysm of weeping that gradually became automatic, convulsive, like a child’s. There was no damming this torrent, once released. Kindness, disinterested friendship, was the one unbearable thing.

“We must bring her upstairs,” said Sally Grover, quietly, “she’s going to pieces.”

Hodder helping, they fairly carried her up the flight, and laid her on Sally Grover’s own bed.

That afternoon she was taken to Mrs. McQuillen’s.

The fiends are not easily cheated. And during the nights and days that followed even Sally Grower, whose slight frame was tireless, whose stoicism was amazing, came out of the sick room with a white face and compressed lips. Tossing on the mattress, Kate Marcy enacted over again incident after incident of her past life, events natural to an existence which had been largely devoid of self-pity, but which now, clearly enough,

tested the extreme limits of suffering. Once more, in her visions, she walked the streets, wearily measuring the dark, empty blocks, footsore, into the smaller hours of the night; slyly, insinuatingly, pathetically offering herself—all she possessed—to the hovering beasts of prey. And even these rejected her, with gibes, with obscene jests that sprang to her lips and brought a shudder to those who heard.

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Sometimes they beheld flare up fitfully that mysterious thing called the human spirit, which all this crushing process had not served to extinguish. She seemed to be defending her rights, whatever these may have been! She expostulated with policemen. And once, when Hodder was present, she brought back vividly to his mind that first night he had seen her, when she had defied him and sent him away. In moments she lived over again the careless, reckless days when money and good looks had not been lacking, when rich food and wines had been plentiful. And there were other events which Sally Grower and the good-natured Irishwoman, Mrs. McQuillen, not holding the key, could but dimly comprehend. Education, environment, inheritance, character—what a jumble of causes! What Judge was to unravel them, and assign the exact amount of responsibility?

There were other terrible scenes when, more than semiconscious, she cried out piteously for drink, and cursed them for withholding it. And it was in the midst of one of these that an incident occurred which made a deep impression upon young Dr. Giddings, hesitating with his opiates, and assisting the indomitable Miss Grower to hold his patient. In the midst of the paroxysm Mr. Bentley entered and stood over her by the bedside, and suddenly her struggles ceased. At first she lay intensely still, staring at him with wide eyes of fear. He sat down and took her hand, and spoke to her, quietly and naturally, and her pupils relaxed. She fell into a sleep, still clinging to his fingers.

It was Sally who opposed the doctor's wish to send her to a hospital.

"If it's only a question of getting back her health, she'd better die," she declared. "We've got but one chance with her, Dr. Giddings, to keep her here. When she finds out she's been to a hospital, that will be the end of it with her kind. We'll never get hold of her again. I'll take care of Mrs. McQuillen."

Doctor Giddings was impressed by this wisdom.

"You think you have a chance, Miss Grower?" he asked. He had had a hospital experience.

Miss Grower was wont to express optimism in deeds rather than words.

"If I didn't think so, I'd ask you to put a little more in your hypodermic next time," she replied.

And the doctor went away, wondering . . . .

Drink! Convalescence brought little release for the watchers. The fiends would retire, pretending to have abandoned the field, only to swoop down again when least expected. There were periods of calm when it seemed as though a new and bewildered personality were emerging, amazed to find in life a kindly thing, gazing at the world as

one new-born. And again, Mrs. McQuillen or Ella Finley might be seen running bareheaded across the street for Miss Grower. Physical force was needed, as the rector discovered on one occasion; physical force, and something more, a dauntlessness that kept Sally Grower in the room after the other women had fled in terror. Then remorse, despondency, another fear . . . .

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As the weeks went by, the relapses certainly became fewer. Something was at work, as real in its effects as the sunlight, but invisible. Hodder felt it, and watched in suspense while it fought the beasts in this woman, rending her frame in anguish. The frame might succumb, the breath might leave it to moulder, but the struggle, he knew, would go until the beasts were conquered. Whence this knowledge?—for it was knowledge.

On the quieter days of her convalescence she seemed, indeed, more Madonna than Magdalen as she sat against the pillows, her red-gold hair lying in two heavy plaits across her shoulders, her cheeks pale; the inner, consuming fires that smouldered in her eyes died down. At such times her newly awakened innocence (if it might be called such—pathetic innocence, in truth!) struck awe into Hodder; her wonder was matched by his own. Could there be another meaning in life than the pursuit of pleasure, than the weary effort to keep the body alive?

Such was her query, unformulated. What animated these persons who had struggled over her so desperately, Sally Grower, Mr. Bentley, and Hodder himself? Thus her opening mind. For she had a mind.

Mr. Bentley was the chief topic, and little by little he became exalted into a mystery of which she sought the explanation.

“I never knew anybody like him,” she would exclaim.

“Why, I’d seen him on Dalton Street with the children following him, and I saw him again that day of the funeral. Some of the girls I knew used to laugh at him. We thought he was queer. And then, when you brought me to him that morning and he got up and treated me like a lady, I just couldn’t stand it. I never felt so terrible in my life. I just wanted to die, right then and there. Something inside of me kept pressing and pressing, until I thought I would die. I knew what it was to hate myself, but I never hated myself as I have since then.

“He never says anything about God, and you don’t, but when he comes in here he seems like God to me. He’s so peaceful,—he makes me peaceful. I remember the minister in Madison,—he was a putty-faced man with indigestion,—and when he prayed he used to close his eyes and try to look pious, but he never fooled me. He never made me believe he knew anything about God. And don’t think for a minute he’d have done what you and Miss Grower and Mr. Bentley did! He used to cross the street to get out of the way of drunken men—he wouldn’t have one of them in his church. And I know of a girl he drove out of town because she had a baby and her sweetheart wouldn’t marry her. He sent her to hell. Hell’s here—isn’t it?”

These sudden remarks of hers surprised and troubled him. But they had another effect, a constructive effect. He was astonished, in going over such conversations afterwards, to discover that her questions and his efforts to answer them in other than theological

terms were both illuminating and stimulating. Sayings in the Gospels leaped out in his mind, fired with new meanings; so simple, once perceived, that he was amazed not to have seen them before. And then he was conscious of a palpitating joy which left in its wake a profound thankfulness. He made no attempt as yet to correlate these increments, these glimpses of truth into a system, but stored them preciously away.

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He taxed his heart and intellect to answer her sensible and helpfully, and thus found himself avoiding the logic, the Greek philosophy, the outworn and meaningless phrases of speculation; found himself employing (with extraordinary effect upon them both) the simple words from which many of these theories had been derived. "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." What she saw in Horace Bentley, he explained, was God. God wished us to know how to live, in order that we might find happiness, and therefore Christ taught us that the way to find happiness was to teach others how to live,—once we found out. Such was the meaning of Christ's Incarnation, to teach us how to live in order that we might find God and happiness. And Hodder translated for her the word Incarnation.

Now, he asked, how were we to recognize God, how might we know how he wished us to live, unless we saw him in human beings, in the souls into which he had entered? In Mr. Bentley's soul? Was this too deep?

She pondered, with flushed face.

"I never had it put to me like that," she said, presently. "I never could have known what you meant if I hadn't seen Mr. Bentley."

Here was a return flash, for him. Thus, teaching he taught. From this germ he was to evolve for himself the sublime truth that the world grown better, not through automatic, soul-saving machinery, but by Personality.

On another occasion she inquired about "original sin;"—a phrase which had stuck in her memory since the stormings of the Madison preacher. Here was a demand to try his mettle.

"It means," he replied after a moment, "that we are all apt to follow the selfish, animal instincts of our matures, to get all we can for ourselves without thinking of others, to seek animal pleasures. And we always suffer for it."

"Sure," she agreed. "That's what happened to me."

"And unless we see and know some one like Mr. Bentley," he went on, choosing his words, "or discover for ourselves what Christ was, and what he tried to tell us, we go on 'suffering, because we don't see any way out. We suffer because we feel that we are useless, that other persons are doing our work."

"That's what hell is!" She was very keen. "Hell's here," she repeated.

"Hell may begin here, and so may heaven," he answered.

"Why, he's in heaven now!" she exclaimed, "it's funny I never thought of it before." Of course she referred to Mr. Bentley.

Thus; by no accountable process of reasoning, he stumbled into the path which was to lead him to one of the widest and brightest of his vistas, the secret of eternity hidden in the Parable of the Talents! But it will not do to anticipate this matter . . . .

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The divine in this woman of the streets regenerated by the divine in her fellow-creatures, was gasping like a new-born babe for breath. And with what anxiety they watched her! She grew strong again, went with Sally Drover and the other girls on Sunday excursions to the country, applied herself to her embroidery with restless zeal for days, only to have it drop from her nerveless fingers. But her thoughts were uncontrollable, she was drawn continually to the edge of that precipice which hung over the waters whence they had dragged her, never knowing when the vertigo would seize her. And once Sally Drover, on the alert for just such an occurrence, pursued her down Dalton Street and forced her back . . .

Justice to Miss Drover cannot be done in these pages. It was she who bore the brunt of the fierce resentment of the reincarnated fiends when the other women shrank back in fear, and said nothing to Mr. Bentley or Hodder until the incident was past. It was terrible indeed to behold this woman revert—almost in the twinkling of an eye—to a vicious wretch crazed for drink, to feel that the struggle had to be fought all over again. Unable to awe Sally Drover's spirit, she would grow piteous.

"For God's sake let me go—I can't stand it. Let me go to hell—that's where I belong. What do you bother with me for? I've got a right."

Once the doctor had to be called. He shook his head but his eye met Miss Grower's, and he said nothing.

"I'll never be able to pull out, I haven't got the strength," she told Hodder, between sobs. "You ought to have left me be, that was where I belonged. I can't stand it, I tell you. If it wasn't for that woman watching me downstairs, and Sally Grower, I'd have had a drink before this. It ain't any use, I've got so I can't live without it—I don't want to live."

And then remorse, self-reproach, despair,—almost as terrible to contemplate. She swore she would never see Mr. Bentley again, she couldn't face him.

Yet they persisted, and gained ground. She did see Mr. Bentley, but what he said to her, or she to him, will never be known. She didn't speak of it . . . .

Little by little her interest was aroused, her pride in her work stimulated. None was more surprised than Hodder when Sally Grower informed him that the embroidery was really good; but it was thought best, for psychological reasons, to discard the old table-cover with its associations and begin a new one. On occasional evenings she brought her sewing over to Mr. Bentley's, while Sally read aloud to him and the young women in the library. Miss Grower's taste in fiction was romantic; her voice (save in the love passages, when she forgot herself) sing-song, but new and unsuspected realms were opened up for Kate Marcy, who would drop her work and gaze wide-eyed out of the window, into the darkness.

And it was Sally who must be given credit for the great experiment, although she took Mr. Bentley and Hodder into her confidence. On it they staked all. The day came, at last, when the new table-cover was finished. Miss Grower took it to the Woman's Exchange, actually sold it, and brought back the money and handed it to her with a smile, and left her alone.

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An hour passed. At the end of it Kate Marcy came out of her room, crossed the street, and knocked at the door of Mr. Bentley's library. Hodder happened to be there.

"Come in," Mr. Bentley said.

She entered, breathless, pale. Her eyes, which had already lost much of the dissipated look, were alight with exaltation. Her face bore evidence of the severity of the hour of conflict, and she was perilously near to tears. She handed Mr. Bentley the money.

"What's this, Kate?" he asked, in his kindly way.

"It's what I earned, sir," she faltered. "Miss Grower sold the table-cover. I thought maybe you'd put it aside for me, like you do for the others.

"I'll take good care of it," he said.

"Oh, sir, I don't ever expect to repay you, and Miss Grower and Mr. Hodder!

"Why, you are repaying us," he replied, cutting her short, "you are making us all very happy. And Sally tells me at the Exchange they like your work so well they are asking for more. I shouldn't have suspected," he added, with a humorous glance at the rector, "that Mr. Hodder knew so much about embroidery."

He rose, and put the money in his desk,—such was his genius for avoiding situations which threatened to become emotional.

"I've started another one," she told them, as she departed.

A few moments later Miss Grower appeared.

"Sally," said Mr. Bentley, "you're a wise woman. I believe I've made that remark before. You have managed that case wonderfully."

"There was a time," replied Miss Grower, thoughtfully, when it looked pretty black. We've got a chance with her now, I think."

"I hope so. I begin to feel so," Mr. Bentley declared.

"If we succeed," Miss Grower went on, "it will be through the heart. And if we lose her again, it will be through the heart."

Hodder started at this proof of insight.

"You know her history, Mr. Hodder?" she asked.

"Yes," he said.

“Well, I don’t. And I don’t care to. But the way to get at Kate Marcy, light as she is in some respects, is through her feelings. And she’s somehow kept ’em alive. We’ve got to trust her, from now on—that’s the only way. And that’s what God does, anyhow.”

This was one of Miss Grover’s rare references to the Deity.

Turning over that phrase in his mind, Hodder went slowly back towards the parish house. God trusted individuals—even such as Kate Marcy. What did that mean? Individual responsibility! He repeated it. Was the world on that principle, then? It was as though a search-light were flung ahead of him and he saw, dimly, a new order—a new order in government and religion. And, as though spoken by a voice out of the past, there sounded in his ears the text of that sermon which had so deeply moved him, “I will arise and go to my Father.”

The church was still open, and under the influence of the same strange excitement which had driven him to walk in the rain so long ago, he entered and went slowly up the marble aisle. Through the gathering gloom he saw the figure on the cross. And as he stood gazing at it, a message for which he had been waiting blazed up within him.

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He would not leave the Church!

CHAPTER XVIII

THE RIDDLE OF CAUSATION

I

In order to portray this crisis in the life of Kate Marcy, the outcome of which is still uncertain, other matters have been ignored.

How many persons besides John Hodder have seemed to read—in crucial periods—a meaning into incidents having all the outward appearance of accidents! What is it that leads us to a certain man or woman at a certain time, or to open a certain book? Order and design? or influence?

The night when he had stumbled into the cafe in Dalton Street might well have been termed the nadir of Hodder's experience. His faith had been blotted out, and, with it had suddenly been extinguished all spiritual sense, The beast had taken possession. And then, when it was least expected,—nay, when despaired of, had come the glimmer of a light; distant, yet clear. He might have traced the course of his disillusionment, perhaps, but cause and effect were not discernible here.

They soon became so, and in the weeks that followed he grew to have the odd sense of a guiding hand on his shoulder,—such was his instinctive interpretation of it, rather than the materialistic one of things ordained. He might turn, in obedience to what seemed a whim, either to the right or left, only to recognize new blazes that led him on with surer step; and trivial accidents became events charged with meaning. He lived in continual wonder.

One broiling morning, for instance, he gathered up the last of the books whose contents he had a month before so feverishly absorbed, and which had purged him of all fallacies. At first he had welcomed them with a fierce relief, sucked them dry, then looked upon them with loathing. Now he pressed them gratefully, almost tenderly, as he made his way along the shady side of the street towards the great library set in its little park.

He was reminded, as he passed from the blinding sunlight into the cool entrance hall, with its polished marble stairway and its statuary, that Eldon Parr's munificence had made the building possible: that some day Mr. Parr's bust would stand in that vestibule with that of Judge Henry Goodrich—Philip Goodrich's grandfather—and of other men who had served their city and their commonwealth.

Upstairs, at the desk, he was handing in the volumes to the young woman whose duty it was to receive them when he was hailed by a brisk little man in an alpaca coat, with a skin like brown parchment.

“Why, Mr. Hodder,” he exclaimed cheerfully, with a trace of German accent, “I had an idea you were somewhere on the cool seas with our friend, Mr. Parr. He spoke, before he left, of inviting you.”

It had been Eldon Parr, indeed, who had first brought Hodder to the library, shortly after the rector’s advent, and Mr. Engel had accompanied them on a tour of inspection; the financier himself had enjoined the librarian to “take good care” of the clergyman. Mr. Waring, Mr. Atterbury; and Mr. Constable were likewise trustees. And since then, when talking to him, Hodder had had a feeling that Mr. Engel was not unconscious of the aura —if it may be called such—of his vestry.

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Mr. Engel picked up one of the books as it lay on the counter, and as he read the title his face betrayed a slight surprise.

“Modern criticism!” he exclaimed.

“You have found me out,” the rector acknowledged, smiling.

“Came into my room, and have a chat,” said the librarian, coaxingly.

It was a large chamber at the corner of the building, shaded by awnings, against which brushed the branches of an elm which had belonged to the original park. In the centre of the room was a massive oak desk, one whole side of which was piled high with new volumes.

“Look there,” said the librarian, with a quick wave of his hand, “those are some which came in this week, and I had them put here to look over. Two-thirds of ’em on religion, or religious philosophy. Does that suggest anything to you clergymen?”

“Do many persons read them, Mr. Engel?” said the rector, at length.

“Read them!” cried Mr. Engel, quizzically. “We librarians are a sort of weather-vanes, if people only knew enough to consult us. We can hardly get a sufficient number of these new religious books the good ones, I mean—to supply the demand. And the Lord knows what trash is devoured, from what the booksellers tell me. It reminds me of the days when this library was down on Fifth Street, years ago, and we couldn’t supply enough Darwins and Huxleys and Spencers and popular science generally. That was an agnostic age. But now you’d be surprised to see the different kinds of men and women who come demanding books on religion —all sorts and conditions. They’re beginning to miss it out of their lives; they want to know. If my opinion’s worth anything, I should not hesitate to declare that we’re on the threshold of a greater religious era than the world has ever seen.”

Hodder thrust a book back into the pile, and turned abruptly, with a manner that surprised the librarian. No other clergyman to whom he had spoken on this subject had given evidence of this strong feeling, and the rector of St. John’s was the last man from whom he would have expected it.

“Do you really think so?” Hodder demanded.

“Why, yes,” said Mr. Engel, when he had recovered from his astonishment. “I’m sure of it. I think clergymen especially—if you will pardon me —are apt to forget that this is a reading age. That a great many people who used to get what instruction they had—-ahem—from churches, for instance, now get it from books. I don’t want to say anything to offend you, Mr. Hodder—”

“You couldn’t,” interrupted the rector. He was equally surprised at the discovery that he had misjudged Mr. Engel, and was drawn towards him now with a strong sympathy and curiosity.

“Well,” replied Mr. Engel, “I’m glad to hear you say that.” He restrained a gasp. Was this the orthodox Mr. Hodder of St. John’s?

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“Why,” said Hodder, sitting down, “I’ve learned, as you have, by experience. Only my experience hasn’t been so hopeful as yours—that is, if you regard yours as hopeful. It would be hypocritical of me not to acknowledge that the churches are losing ground, and that those who ought to be connected with them are not. I am ready to admit that the churches are at fault. But what you tell me of people reading these books gives me more courage than I have had for—for some time.”

“Is it so!” ejaculated the little man, relapsing into the German idiom of his youth.

“It is,” answered the rector, with an emphasis not to be denied. “I wish you would give me your theory about this phenomenon, and speak frankly.”

“But I thought—” the bewildered librarian began. “I saw you had been reading those books, but I thought—”

“Naturally you did,” said Holder, smiling. His personality, his ascendency, his poise, suddenly felt by the other, were still more confusing. “You thought me a narrow, complacent, fashionable priest who had no concern as to what happened outside the walls of his church, who stuck obstinately to dogmas and would give nothing else a hearing. Well, you were right.”

“Ah, I didn’t think all that,” Mr. Engel protested, and his parchment skin actually performed the miracle of flushing. “I am not so stupid. And once, long ago when I was young, I was going to be a minister myself.”

“What prevented you?” asked Holder, interested.

“You want me to be frank—yes, well, I couldn’t take the vows.” The brown eyes of the quiet, humorous, self-contained and dried-up custodian of the city’s reading flamed up. “I felt the call,” he exclaimed. “You may not credit it to look at me now, Mr. Hodder. They said to me, ’here is what you must swear to believe before you can make men and women happier and more hopeful, rescue them from sin and misery!’ You know what it was.”

Hodder nodded.

“It was a crime. It had nothing to do with religion. I thought it over for a year—I couldn’t. Oh, I have since been thankful. I can see now what would have happened to me—I should have had fatty degeneration of the soul.”

The expression was not merely forcible, it was overwhelming. It brought up before Holder’s mind, with sickening reality, the fate he had himself escaped. Fatty degeneration of the soul!

The little man, seeing the expression on the rector's face, curbed his excitement, and feared he had gone too far.

"You will pardon me!" he said penitently, "I forget myself. I did not mean all clergymen."

"I have never heard it put so well," Holder declared. "That is exactly what occurs in many cases."

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“Yes, it is that,” said Engel, still puzzled, but encouraged, eyeing the strong face of the other. “And they lament that the ministry hasn’t more big men. Sometimes they get one with the doctrinal type of mind —a Newman—but how often? And even a Newman would be of little avail to-day. It is Eucken who says that the individual, once released from external authority, can never be turned back to it. And they have been released by the hundreds of thousands ever since Luther’s time, are being freed by the hundreds of thousands to-day. Democracy, learning, science, are releasing them, and no man, no matter how great he may be, can stem that tide. The able men in the churches now—-like your Phillips Brooks, who died too soon—are beginning to see this. They are those who developed after the vows of the theological schools were behind them. Remove those vows, and you will see the young men come. Young men are idealists, Mr. Hodder, and they embrace other professions where the mind is free, and which are not one whit better paid than the ministry.

“And what is the result,” he cried, “of the senseless insistence on the letter instead of the spirit of the poetry of religion? Matthew Arnold was a thousand times right when he inferred that Jesus Christ never spoke literally and yet he is still being taken literally by most churches, and all the literal sayings which were put into his mouth are maintained as Gospel truth! What is the result of proclaiming Christianity in terms of an ancient science and theology which awaken no quickening response in the minds and hearts of to-day? That!” The librarian thrust a yellow hand towards the pile of books. “The new wine has burst the old skin and is running all over the world. Ah, my friend, if you could only see, as I do, the yearning for a satisfying religion which exists in this big city! It is like a vacuum, and those books are rushing to supply it. I little thought,” he added dreamily, “when I renounced the ministry in so much sorrow that one day I should have a church of my own. This library is my church, and men and women of all creeds come here by the thousands. But you must pardon me. I have been carried away—I forgot myself.”

“Mr. Engel,” replied the rector, “I want you to regard me as one of your parishioners.”

The librarian looked at him mutely, and the practical, desiccated little person seemed startlingly transformed into a mediaeval, German mystic.

“You are a great man, Mr. Hodder,” he said. “I might have guessed it.”

It was one of the moments when protest would have been trite, superfluous. And Hodder, in truth, felt something great swelling within him, something that was not himself, and yet strangely was. But just what—in view of his past strict orthodoxy and limited congregation —Mr. Engel meant, he could not have said. Had the librarian recognized, without confession on his part, the change in him? divined his future intentions?

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“It is curious that I should have met you this morning, Mr. Engel,” he said. “I expressed surprise when you declared this was a religious age, because you corroborated something I had felt, but of which I had no sufficient proof. I felt that a great body of unsatisfied men and women existed, but that I was powerless to get in touch with them; I had discovered that truth, as you have so ably pointed out, is disguised and distorted by ancient dogmas; and that the old Authority, as you say, no longer carries weight.”

“Have you found the new one?” Mr. Engel demanded.

“I think I have,” the rector answered calmly, “it lies in personality. I do not know whether you will agree with me that the Church at large has a future, and I will confess to you that there was a time when I thought she had not. I see now that she has, once given to her ministers that freedom to develop of which you speak. In spite of the fact that truth has gradually been revealed to the world by what may be called an Apostolic Succession of Personalities,—Augustine, Dante, Francis of Assisi, Luther, Shakespeare, Milton, and our own Lincoln and Phillips Brooks,—to mention only a few, —the Church as a whole has been blind to it. She has insisted upon putting the individual in a straitjacket, she has never recognized that growth is the secret of life, that the clothes of one man are binding on another.”

“Ah, you are right—a thousand times right,” cried the librarian. “You have read Royce, perhaps, when he says, ’This mortal shall put on individuality—’”

“No,” said the rector, outwardly cool, but inwardly excited by the coruscation of this magnificent paraphrase of Paul’s sentence, by the extraordinary turn the conversation had taken. “I am ashamed to own that I have not followed the development of modern philosophy. The books I have just returned, on historical criticism,” he went on, after a moment’s hesitation, “infer what my attitude has been toward modern thought. We were made acquainted with historical criticism in the theological seminary, but we were also taught to discount it. I have discounted it, refrained from reading it,—until now. And yet I have heard it discussed in conferences, glanced over articles in the reviews. I had, you see, closed the door of my mind. I was in a state where arguments make no impression.”

The librarian made a gesture of sympathetic assent, which was also a tribute to the clergyman’s frankness.

“You will perhaps wonder how I could have lived these years in an atmosphere of modern thought and have remained uninfluenced. Well, I have recently been wondering—myself.” Hodder smiled. “The name of Royce is by no means unfamiliar to me, and he taught at Harvard when I was an undergraduate. But the prevailing philosophy of that day among the students was naturalism. I represent a revolt from it. At the seminary I imbibed a certain amount of religious philosophy—but

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I did not continue it, as thousands of my more liberal fellow-clergymen have done. My religion 'worked' during the time, at least, I remained in my first parish. I had no interest in reconciling, for instance, the doctrine of evolution with the argument for design. Since I have been here in this city," he added, simply, "my days have been filled with a continued perplexity—when I was not too busy to think. Yes, there was an unacknowledged element of fear in my attitude, though I comforted myself with the notion that opinions, philosophical and scientific, were in a state of flux."

"Yes, yes," said Mr. Engel, "I comprehend. But, from the manner in which you spoke just now, I should have inferred that you have been reading modern philosophy—that of the last twenty years. Ah, you have something before you, Mr. Hodder. You will thank God, with me, for that philosophy. It has turned the tide, set the current running the other way. Philosophy is no longer against religion, it is with it. And if you were to ask me to name one of the greatest religious teachers of our age, I should answer, William James. And there is Royce, of whom I spoke,—one of our biggest men. The dominant philosophies of our times have grown up since Arnold wrote his 'Literature and Dogma,' and they are in harmony with the quickening social spirit of the age, which is a religious spirit—a Christian spirit, I call it. Christianity is coming to its own. These philosophies, which are not so far apart, are the flower of the thought of the centuries, of modern science, of that most extraordinary of discoveries, modern psychology. And they are far from excluding religion, from denying the essential of Christ's teachings. On the other hand, they grant that the motive-power of the world is spiritual.

"And this," continued Mr. Engel, "brings me to another aspect of authority. I wonder if it has struck you? In mediaeval times, when a bishop spoke ex cathedra, his authority, so far as it carried weight, came from two sources. First, the supposed divine charter of the Church to save and damn. That authority is being rapidly swept away. Second, he spoke with all the weight of the then accepted science and philosophy. But as soon as the new science began to lay hold on people's minds, as —for instance—when Galileo discovered that the earth moved instead of the sun (and the pope made him take it back), that second authority began to crumble too. In the nineteenth century science had grown so strong that the situation looked hopeless. Religion had apparently irrevocably lost that warrant also, and thinking men not spiritually inclined, since they had to make a choice between science and religion, took science as being the more honest, the more certain.

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“And now what has happened? The new philosophies have restored your second Authority, and your first, as you properly say, is replaced by the conception of Personality. Personality is nothing but the rehabilitation of the prophet, the seer. Get him, as Hatch says, back into your Church. The priests with their sacrifices and automatic rites, the logicians, have crowded him out. Why do we read the Old Testament at all? Not for the laws of the Levites, not for the battles and hangings, but for the inspiration of the prophets. The authority of the prophet comes through personality, the source of which is in what Myers calls the infinite spiritual world—in God. It was Christ’s own authority.

“And as for your other authority, your ordinary man, when he reads modern philosophy, says to himself, this does not conflict with science? But he gets no hint, when he goes to most churches, that there is, between the two, no real quarrel, and he turns away in despair. He may accept the pragmatism of James, the idealism of Royce, or even what is called neo realism. In any case, he gains the conviction that a force for good is at worn in the world, and he has the incentive to become part of it..... But I have given you a sermon!”

“For which I can never be sufficiently, grateful,” said Hodder, with an earnestness not to be mistaken.

The little man’s eyes rested admiringly, and not without emotion, on the salient features of the tall clergyman. And when he spoke again, it was in acknowledgment of the fact that he had read Hodder’s purpose.

“You will have opposition, my friend. They will fight you—some persons we know. They do not wish—what you and I desire. But you will not surrender—I knew it.” Mr. Engel broke off abruptly, and rang a bell on his desk. “I will make out for you a list. I hope you may come in again, often. We shall have other talks,—yes? I am always here.”

Then it came to pass that Hodder carried back with him another armful of books. Those he had brought back were the Levellers of the False. These were the Builders of the True.

II

Hodder had known for many years that the writings of Josiah Royce and of William James had “been in the air,” so to speak, and he had heard them mentioned at dinner parties by his more intellectual parishioners, such as Mrs. Constable and Martha Preston. Now he was able to smile at his former attitude toward these moderns, whose perusal he had deprecated as treason to the saints! And he remembered his horror on having listened to a fellow-clergyman discuss with calmness the plan of the “Varieties of Religious Experiences.” A sacrilegious dissection of the lives of these very saints! The

scientific process, the theories of modern psychology applied with sang-froid to the workings of God in the human soul! Science he had regarded as the proclaimed enemy of religion, and in these days of the apotheosis of science not even sacred things were spared.

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Now Hodder saw what the little librarian had meant by an authority restored. The impartial method of modern science had become so firmly established in the mind of mankind by education and reading that the ancient unscientific science of the Roman Empire, in which orthodox Christianity was clothed, no longer carried authority. In so far as modern science had discovered truth, religion had no quarrel with it. And if theology pretended to be the science of religion, surely it must submit to the test of the new science! The dogged clinging to the archaic speculations of apologists, saints, and schoolmen had brought religion to a low ebb indeed.

One of the most inspiring books he read was by an English clergyman of his own Church whom he had formerly looked upon as a heretic, with all that the word had once implied. It was a frank yet reverent study of the self-consciousness of Christ, submitting the life and teachings of Jesus to modern criticism and the scientific method. And the Saviour's divinity, rather than being lessened, was augmented. Hodder found it infinitely refreshing that the so-called articles of Christian belief, instead of being put first and their acceptance insisted upon, were made the climax of the investigation.

Religion, he began to perceive, was an undertaking, are attempt to find unity and harmony of the soul by adopting, after mature thought, a definite principle in life. If harmony resulted,—if the principle worked, it was true. Hodder kept an open mind, but he became a pragmatist so far. Science, on the other hand, was in a sphere by herself, and need have no conflict with religion; science was not an undertaking, but an impartial investigation by close observation of facts in nature. Her object was to discover truths by these methods alone. She had her theories, indeed, but they must be submitted to rigorous tests. This from a book by Professor Perry, an advocate of the new realism.

On the other hand there were signs that modern science, by infinitesimal degrees, might be aiding in the solution of the Mystery . . . .

But religion, Hodder saw, was trusting. Not credulous, silly trusting, but thoughtful trusting, accepting such facts as were definitely known. Faith was trusting. And faith without works was dead simply because there could be no faith without works. There was no such thing as belief that did not result in act.

A paragraph which made a profound impression on Hodder at that time occurs in James's essay, "Is life worth living?"

"Now-what do I mean by I trusting? Is the word to carry with it license to define in detail an invisible world, and to authorize and excommunicate those whose trust is different? . . Our faculties of belief were not given us to make orthodoxies and heresies withal; they were given us to live by. And to trust our religions demands men first of all to live in the light of them, and to act as if the invisible world which they suggest were real. It is a fact of human nature that man can live and die by the help of a sort of faith that goes without a single dogma and definition."

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Yet it was not these religious philosophies which had saved him, though the stimulus of their current had started his mind revolving like a motor. Their function, he perceived now, was precisely to compel him to see what had saved him, to reenforce it with the intellect, with the reason, and enable him to save others. The current set up,—by a thousand suggestions of which he made notes,—a personal construction, coordination, and he had the exhilaration of feeling, within him, a creative process all his own. Behold a mystery 'a paradox'—one of many. As his strength grew greater day by day, as his vision grew clearer, he must exclaim with Paul: "Yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me!"

He, Hodder, was but an instrument transmitting power. And yet—oh paradox!—the instrument continued to improve, to grow stronger, to develop individuality and personality day by day! Life, present and hereafter, was growth, development, the opportunity for service in a cause. To cease growing was to die.

He perceived at last the form all religion takes is that of consecration to a Cause,—one of God's many causes. The meaning of life is to find one's Cause, to lose one's self in it. His was the liberation of the Word,—now vouchsafed to him; the freeing of the spark from under the ashes. The phrase was Alison's. To help liberate the Church, fan into flame the fire which was to consume the injustice, the tyranny, the selfishness of the world, until the Garvins, the Kate Marcys, the stunted children, and anaemic women were no longer possible.

It was Royce who, in one illuminating sentence, solved for him the puzzle, pointed out whence his salvation had come. "For your cause can only be revealed to you through some presence that first teaches you to love the unity of the spiritual life. . . You must find it in human shape."

Horace Bentley!

He, Hodder, had known this, but known it vaguely, without sanction. The light had shone for him even in the darkness of that night in Dalton Street, when he thought to have lost it forever. And he had awakened the next morning, safe,—safe yet bewildered, like a half drowned man on warm sands in the sun.

"The will of the spiritual world, the divine will, revealed in man." What sublime thoughts, as old as the Cross itself, yet continually and eternally new!

III

There was still another whose face was constantly before him, and the reflection of her distressed yet undaunted soul,—Alison Parr. The contemplation of her courage, of her determination to abide by nothing save the truth, had had a power over him that he

might not estimate, and he loved her as a man loves a woman, for her imperfections. And he loved her body and her mind.

One morning, as he walked back from Mrs. Bledsoe's through an unfrequented, wooded path of the Park, he beheld her as he had summoned her in his visions. She was sitting motionless, gazing before her with clear eyes, as at the Fates. . .

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She started on suddenly perceiving him, but it was characteristic of her greeting that she seemed to feel no surprise at the accident which had brought them together.

“I am afraid,” he said, smiling, “that I have broken in on some profound reflections.”

She did not answer at once, but looked up at him, as he stood over her, with one of her strange, baffling gazes, in which there was the hint of a welcoming smile.

“Reflection seems to be a circular process with me,” she answered. “I never get anywhere—like you.”

“Like me!” he exclaimed, seating himself on the bench. Apparently their intercourse, so long as it should continue, was destined to be on the basis of intimacy in which it had begun. It was possible at once to be aware of her disturbing presence, and yet to feel at home in it.

“Like you, yes,” she said, continuing to examine him. “You’ve changed remarkably.”

In his agitation, at this discovery of hers he again repeated her words.

“Why, you seem happier, you look happier. It isn’t only that, I can’t explain how you impress me. It struck me when you were talking to Mr. Bentley the other day. You seem to see something you didn’t see when I first met you, that you didn’t see the first time we were at Mr. Bentley’s together. Your attitude is fixed—directed. You have made a decision of some sort—a momentous one, I rather think.”

“Yes,” he replied, “you are right. It’s more than remarkable that you should have guessed it.”

She remained silent

“I have decided,” he found himself saying abruptly, “to continue in the Church.”

Still she was silent, until he wondered whether she would answer him. He had often speculated to himself how she would take this decision, but he could make no surmise from her expression as she stared off into the wood. Presently she turned her head, slowly, and looked into his face. Still she did not speak.

“You are wondering how I can do it,” he said.

“Yes,” she acknowledged, in a low voice.

“I should like you to know—that is why I spoke of it. You have never asked me, and I have never told you that the convictions I formerly held I lost. And with them, for a while, went everything. At least so I believed.”

“I knew it,” she answered, “I could see that, too.”

“When I argued with you, that afternoon,—the last time we talked together alone,—I was trying to convince myself, and you—” he hesitated, “—that there was something. The fact that you could not seem to feel it stimulated me.”

He read in her eyes that she understood him. And he dared not, nor did he need to emphasize further his own intense desire that she should find a solution of her own.

“I wish you to know what I am telling you for two reasons,” he went on. “It was you who spoke the words that led to the opening of my eyes to the situation into which I had been drifting for two years, who compelled me to look upon the inconsistencies and falsities which had gradually been borne in upon me. It was you, I think, who gave me the courage to face this situation squarely, since you possess that kind of courage yourself.”

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“Oh, no,” she cried. “You would have done it anyway.”

He paused a moment, to get himself in hand.

“For this reason, I owed it to you to speak—to thank you. I have realized, since that first meeting, that you became my friend then, and that you spoke as a friend. If you had not believed in my sincerity, you would not have spoken. I wish you to know that I am fully aware and grateful for the honour you did me, and that I realize it is not always easy for you to speak so—to any one.”

She did not reply.

“There is another reason for my telling you now of this decision of mine to remain a clergyman,” he continued. “It is because I value your respect and friendship, and I hope you will believe that I would not take this course unless I saw my way clear to do it with sincerity.”

“One has only to look at you to see that you are sincere,” she said gently, with a thrill in her voice that almost unmanned him. “I told you once that I should never have forgiven myself if I had wrecked your life. I meant it. I am very glad.”

It was his turn to be silent.

“Just because I cannot see how it would be possible to remain in the Church after one had been—emancipated, so to speak,”—she smiled at him,—“is no reason why you may not have solved the problem.”

Such was the superfine quality of her honesty. Yet she trusted him! He was made giddy by a desire, which he fought down, to justify himself before her. His eye beheld her now as the goddess with the scales in her hand, weighing and accepting with outward calm the verdict of the balance . . . . Outward calm, but inner fire.

“It makes no difference,” she pursued evenly, bent on choosing her words, “that I cannot personally understand your emancipation, that mine is different. I can only see the preponderance of evil, of deception, of injustice—it is that which shuts out everything else. And it’s temperamental, I suppose. By looking at you, as I told you, I can see that your emancipation is positive, while mine remains negative. You have somehow regained a conviction that the good is predominant, that there is some purpose in the universe.”

He assented. Once more she relapsed into thought, while he sat contemplating her profile. She turned to him again with a tremulous smile.

“But isn’t a conviction that the good is predominant, that there is a purpose in the universe, a long way from the positive assertions in the Creeds?” she asked. “I

remember, when I went through what you would probably call disintegration, and which seemed to me enlightenment, that the Creeds were my first stumbling-blocks. It seemed wrong to repeat them."

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“I am glad you spoke of this,” he replied gravely. “I have arrived at many answers to that difficulty—which did not give me the trouble I had anticipated. In the first place, I am convinced that it was much more of a difficulty ten, twenty, thirty years ago than it is to-day. That which I formerly thought was a radical tendency towards atrophy, the drift of the liberal party in my own Church and others, as well as that which I looked upon with some abhorrence as the free-thinking speculation of many modern writers, I have now come to see is reconstruction. The results of this teaching of religion in modern terms are already becoming apparent, and some persons are already beginning to see that the Creeds express certain elemental truths in frankly archaic language. All this should be explained in the churches and the Sunday schools,—is, in fact, being explained in some, and also in books for popular reading by clergymen of my own Church, both here and in England. We have got past the critical age.”

She followed him closely, but did not interrupt.

“I do not mean to say that the Creeds are not the sources of much misunderstanding, but in my opinion they do not constitute a sufficient excuse for any clergyman to abandon his Church on account of them. Indeed there are many who interpret them by modern thought—which is closer to the teachings of Christ than ancient thought—-whose honesty cannot be questioned. Personally, I think that the Creeds either ought to be taken out of the service; or changed, or else there should be a note inserted in the service and catechism definitely permitting a liberal interpretation which is exactly what so many clergymen, candidly, do now.

“When I was ordained a deacon, and then a priest, I took vows which would appear to be literally conflicting. Compelled to choose between these vows, I accept that as supreme which I made when I affirmed that I would teach nothing which I should be persuaded might not be concluded and affirmed by the Scripture. The Creeds were derived from the Scripture —not the Scripture from the Creeds. As an individual among a body of Christians I am powerless to change either the ordinal vows or the Creeds, I am obliged to wait for the consensus of opinion. But if, on the whole, I can satisfy my conscience in repeating the Creeds and reading the service, as other honest men are doing—if I am convinced that I have an obvious work to do in that Church, it would be cowardly for me to abandon that work.”

Her eyes lighted up.

“I see what you mean,” she said, “by staying in you can do many things that you could not do, you can help to bring about the change, by being frank. That is your point of view. You believe m the future of the Church.”

“I believe in an universal, Christian organization,” he replied.

“But while stronger men are honest,” she objected, “are not your ancient vows and ancient Creeds continually making weaker men casuists?”

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“Undoubtedly,” he agreed vigorously, and thought involuntarily of Mr. Engel’s phrased fatty degeneration of the soul. “Yet I can see the signs, on all sides, of a gradual emancipation, of which I might be deemed an example.” A smile came into his eyes, like the sun on a grey-green sea.

“Oh, you could never be a casuist!” she exclaimed, with a touch of vehemence. “You are much too positive. It is just that note, which is characteristic of so many clergymen, that note of smoothing-over and apology, which you lack. I could never feel it, even when you were orthodox. And now—” words failed her as she inspected his ruggedness.

“And now,” he took her up, to cover his emotion, “now I am not to be classified!”

Still examining him, she reflected on this.

“Classified?” Isn’t it because you’re so much of an individual that one fails to classify you? You represent something new to my experience, something which seems almost a contradiction—an emancipated Church.”

“You imagined me out of the Church,—but where?” he demanded.

“That’s just it,” she wondered intimately, “where? When I try, I can see no other place for you. Your place as in the pulpit.”

He uttered a sharp exclamation, which she did not heed.

“I can’t imagine you doing institutional work, as it is called,—you’re not fitted for it, you’d be wasted in it. You gain by the historic setting of the Church, and yet it does not absorb you. Free to preach your convictions, unfettered, you will have a power over people that will be tremendous. You have a very strong personality.”

She set his heart, his mind, to leaping by this unexpected confirmation on her part of his hopes, and yet the man in him was intent upon the woman. She had now the air of detached judgment, while he could not refrain from speculating anxiously on the effect of his future course on her and on their intimate relationship. He forbore from thinking, now, of the looming events which might thrust them apart,—put a physical distance between them,—his anxiety was concerned with the possible snapping of the thread of sympathy which had bound them. In this respect, he dreaded her own future as much as his own. What might she do? For he felt, in her, a potential element of desperation; a capacity to commit, at any moment, an irretrievable act.

“Once you have made your ideas your own,” she mused, “you will have the power of convincing people.”

“And yet—”

“And yet”—she seized his unfinished sentence, “you are not at all positive of convincing me. I’ll give you the credit of forbearing to make proselytes.” She smiled at him.

Thus she read him again.

“If you call making proselytes a desire to communicate a view of life which gives satisfaction—” he began, in his serious way.

“Oh, I want to be convinced!” she exclaimed, penitently, “I’d give anything to feel as you feel. There’s something lacking in me, there must be, and I have only seen the disillusionizing side. You infer that the issue of the Creeds will crumble,—preach the new, and the old will fall away of itself. But what is the new? How, practically, do you deal with the Creeds? We have got off that subject.”

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“You wish to know?” he asked.

“Yes—I wish to know.”

“The test of any doctrine is whether it can be translated into life, whether it will make any difference to the individual who accepts it. The doctrines expressed in the Creeds must stand or fall by the test. Consider, for instance, the fundamental doctrine in the Creeds, that of the Trinity, which has been much scoffed at. A belief in God, you will admit, has an influence on conduct, and the Trinity defines the three chief aspects of the God in whom Christians believe. Of what use to quarrel with the word Person if God be conscious? And the character of God has an influence on conduct. The ancients deemed him wrathful, jealous, arbitrary, and hence flung themselves before him and propitiated him. If the conscious God of the universe be good, he is spoken of as a Father. He is as once, in this belief, Father and Creator. And inasmuch as it is known that the divine qualities enter into man, and that one Man, Jesus, whose composite portrait—it is agreed—could not have been factitiously invented, was filled with them, we speak of God in man as the Son. And the Spirit of God that enters into the soul of man, transforming, inspiring, and driving him, is the Third Person, so-called. There is no difficulty so far, granted the initial belief in a beneficent God.

“If we agree that life has a meaning, and, in order to conform to the purpose of the Spirit of the Universe, must be lived in one way, we certainly cannot object to calling that right way of living, that decree of the Spirit, the Word.

“The Incarnate Word, therefore, is the concrete example of a human being completely filled with the Spirit, who lives a perfect life according to its decree. Ancient Greek philosophy called this decree, this meaning of life, the Logos, and the Nicene Creed is a confession of faith in that philosophy. Although this creed is said to have been, scandalously forced through the council of Nicaea by an emperor who had murdered his wife and children, and who himself was unbaptized, against a majority of bishops who would, if they had dared Constantine’s displeasure, have given the conscience freer play, to-day the difficulty has, practically disappeared. The creed is there in the prayer book, and so long as it remains we are at liberty to interpret the ancient philosophy in which it is written—and which in any event could not have been greatly improved upon at that time—in our own modern way, as I am trying to explain it to you.

“Christ was identified with the Logos, or Word, which must have had a meaning for all time, before and after its, complete revelation. And this is what the Nicene Creed is trying to express when it says, ‘Begotten of his Father before all worlds.’ In other words, the purpose which Christ revealed always existed. The awkward expression of the ancients, declaring that he ‘came down’ for our salvation (enlightenment) contains a fact

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we may prove by experience, if we accept the meaning he put upon existence, and adopt this meaning as our scheme of life. But we: must first be quite clear, as: to this meaning. We may and do express all this differently, but it has a direct bearing on life. It is the doctrine of the Incarnation. We begins to perceive through it that our own incarnations mean something, and that our task is to discover what they do mean—-what part in the world purpose we are designed to play here.

“Incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary is an emphasis on the fact that man born of woman may be divine. But the ignorant masses of the people of the Roman Empire were undoubtedly incapable of grasping a theory of the Incarnation put forward in the terms of Greek philosophy; while it was easy for them, with their readiness to believe in nature miracles, to accept the explanation of Christ’s unique divinity as due to actual, physical generation by the Spirit. And the wide belief in the Empire in gods born in this way aided such a conception. Many thousands were converted to Christianity when a place was found in that religion for a feminine goddess, and these abandoned the worship of Isis, Demeter, and Diana for that of the Virgin Mary. Thus began an evolution which is still going on, and we see now that it was impossible that the world should understand at once the spiritual meaning of life as Christ taught it—that material facts merely symbolize the divine. For instance, the Gospel of John has been called the philosophical or spiritual gospel. And in spite of the fact that it has been assailed and historically discredited by modern critics, for me it serves to illuminate certain truths of Christ’s message and teaching that the other Gospels do not. Mark, the earliest Gospel, does not refer to the miraculous birth. At the commencements of Matthew and Luke you will read of it, and it is to be noted that the rest of these narratives curiously and naively contradict it. Now why do we find the miraculous birth in these Gospels if it had not been inserted in order to prove, in a manner acceptable to simple and unlettered minds, the Theory of the Incarnation, Christ’s preexistence? I do not say the insertion was deliberate. And it is difficult for us moderns to realize the polemic spirit in which the Gospels were written. They were clearly not written as history. The concern of the authors, I think, was to convert their readers to Christ.

“When we turn to John, what do we find? In the opening verses of this Gospel the Incarnation is explained, not by a virgin birth, but in a manner acceptable to the educated and spiritually-minded, in terms of the philosophy of the day. And yet how simply! ’In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.’ I prefer John’s explanation.

“It is historically true that, in the earlier days when the Apostles’ Creed was put forth, the phrase ‘born of they Virgin Mary’ was inserted for the distinct purpose of laying stress on the humanity of Christ, and to controvert the assertion of the Gnostic sect that he was not born at all, but appeared in the world in some miraculous way.

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“Thus to-day, by the aid of historical research, we are enabled to regard the Creeds in the light of their usefulness to life. The myth of the virgin birth probably arose through the zeal of some of the writers of the Gospels to prove that the prophecy of Isaiah predicted the advent of the Jewish Messiah who should be born of a virgin. Modern scholars are agreed that the word Olmah which Isaiah uses does not mean virgin, but young woman. There is quite a different Hebrew word for ‘virgin.’ The Jews, at the time the Gospels were written, and before, had forgotten their ancient Hebrew. Knowing this mistake, and how it arose, we may repeat the word Virgin Mary in the sense used by many early Christians, as designating the young woman who was the mother of Christ.

“I might mention one or two other phrases, archaic and obscure. ‘The Resurrection of the Body’ may refer to the phenomenon of Christ’s reappearance after death, for which modern psychology may or may not account. A little reflection, however, convinces one that the phenomenon did take place in some manner, or else, I think, we should never have heard of Christ. You will remember that the Apostles fled after his death on the cross, believing what he had told them was all only a dream. They were human, literal and cowardly, and they still needed some kind of inner, energizing conviction that the individuality persisted after death, that the solution of human life was victory over it, in order to gain the courage to go out and preach the Gospel and face death themselves. And it was Paul who was chiefly instrumental in freeing the message from the narrow bounds of Palestine and sending it ringing down the ages to us. The miracle doesn’t lie in what Paul saw, but in the whole man transformed, made incandescent, journeying tirelessly to the end of his days up and down the length and breadth of the empire, labouring, as he says, more abundantly than they all. It is idle to say that the thing which can transform a man’s entire nature and life is not a reality.”

She had listened, motionless, as under the spell of his words. Self-justification, as he proceeded, might easily have fused itself into a desire to convince her of the truth of his beliefs. But he was not deceived, he knew her well enough to understand, to feel the indomitable spirit of resistance in her. Swayed she could be, but she would mot easily surrender.

“There is another phrase,” she said after a moment, “which I have never heard explained, ‘descended into hell.’”

“It was merely a matter of controverting those who declared Christ was taken from the cross before he died. In the childish science of the time, to say that one descended into hell was to affirm that he was actually dead, since the souls of the departed were supposed to go at once to hell. Hell and heaven were definite places. To say that Christ ascended to heaven and sat on the right hand of the Father is to declare one’s faith that his responsible work in the spiritual realm continues.”

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“And the Atonement? doesn’t that imply a sacrifice of propitiation?”

“Atonement may be pronounced At-one-ment,” Hodder replied. “The old idea, illustrated by a reference to the sacrifice of the ancients, fails to convey the truth to modern minds. And moreover, as I have inferred, these matters had to be conveyed in symbols until mankind were prepared to grasp the underlying spiritual truths which Christ sought to convey. Orthodox Christianity has been so profoundly affected by the ancient Jewish religion that the conception of God as wrathful and jealous—a God wholly outside—has persisted to our times. The Atonement means union with the Spirit of the Universe through vicarious suffering, and experience teaches us that our own sufferings are of no account unless they be for a cause, for the furtherance of the design of the beneficent Spirit which is continually at work. Christ may be said to have died for humanity because he had to suffer death itself in order to reveal the complete meaning of life. You once spoke to me about the sense of sin —of being unable to feel it.”

She glanced at him quickly, but did not speak.

“There is a theory concerning this,” he continued, “which has undoubtedly helped many people, and which may be found in the writings of certain modern psychologists. It is that we have a conscious, or lower, human self, and a subconscious, or better self. This subconscious self stretches down, as it were, into the depths of the universe and taps the source of spiritual power. And it is through the subconscious self that every man is potentially divine. Potentially, because the conscious self has to reach out by an effort of the will to effect this union with the spiritual in the subconscious, and when it is effected, it comes from the response of the subconscious. Apparently from without, as a gift, and therefore, in theological language, it is called grace. This is what is meant by being born again, the incarnation of the Spirit in the conscious, or human. The two selves are no longer divided, and the higher self assumes control,—takes the reins, so to speak.

“It is interesting, as a theory. And the fact that it has been seriously combated by writers who deny such a function of the subconscious does not at all affect the reality of the experience.

“Once we have had a vision of the true meaning of life a vision which stirs the energies of our being, what is called ‘a sense of sin’ inevitably follows. It is the discontent, the regret, in the light of a higher knowledge, for the: lost opportunities, for a past life which has been uncontrolled by any unifying purpose, misspent in futile undertakings, wasted, perhaps, in follies and selfish caprices which have not only harmed ourselves but others. Although we struggle, yet by habit, by self-indulgence, by lack of a sustained purpose, we have formed a character from which escape seems hopeless. And we realize

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that in order to change ourselves, an actual regeneration of the will is necessary. For awhile, perchance, we despair of this. The effort to get out of the rut we have made for ourselves seems of no avail. And it is not, indeed, until we arrive, gradually or otherwise, and through a proper interpretation of the life of Christ, at the conviction that we may even never become useful in the divine scheme that we have a sense of what is called 'the forgiveness of sins.' This conviction, this grace, this faith to embark on the experiment accomplishes of itself the revival of the will, the rebirth which we had thought impossible. We discover our task, high or humble,—our cause. We grow marvellously at one with God's purpose, and we feel that our will is acting in the same direction as his. And through our own atonement we see the meaning of that other Atonement which led Christ to the Cross. We see that our conviction, our grace, has come through him, and how he died for our sins."

"It's quite wonderful how logical and simple you make it, how thoroughly you have gone into it. You have solved it for yourself—and you will solve it for others many others."

She rose, and he, too, got to his feet with a medley of feelings. The path along which they walked was already littered with green acorns. A gray squirrel darted ahead of them, gained a walnut and paused, quivering, halfway up the trunk, to gaze back at them. And the glance she presently gave him seemed to partake of the shyness of the wild thing.

"Thank you for explaining it to me," she said.

"I hope you don't think—" he began.

"Oh, it isn't that!" she cried, with unmistakable reproach. "I asked you —I made you tell me. It hasn't seemed at all like—the confessional," she added, and smiled and blushed at the word. "You have put it so nicely, so naturally, and you have given me so much to think about. But it all depends—doesn't it?—upon whether one can feel the underlying truth of which you spoke in the first place; it rests upon a sense of the prevailing goodness of things. It seems to me cruel that what is called salvation, the solution of the problem of life, should depend upon an accidental discovery. We are all turned loose with our animal passions and instincts, of self-preservation, by an indifferent Creator, in a wilderness, and left to find our way out as best we can. You answer that Christ showed us the way. There are elements in his teaching I cannot accept—-perhaps because I have been given a wrong interpretation of them. I shall ask you more questions some day.

"But even then," she continued, "granted that Christ brought the complete solution, as you say, why should so many millions have lived and died, before and after his coming,

who had suffered so, and who had never heard of him? That is the way my reason works, and I can't help it. I would help it if I could."

"Isn't it enough," he asked, "to know that a force is at work combating evil,—even if you are not yet convinced that it is a prevailing force? Can you not trust that it will be a prevailing force, if your sympathies are with it, without demanding a revelation of the entire scheme of the universe? Of what use is it to doubt the eternal justice?"

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“Oh, use!” she cried, “I grant you its uselessness. Doubt seems an ingrained quality. I can’t help being a fatalist.”

“And yet you have taken your life in your own hands,” he reminded her, gently.

“Only to be convinced of its futility,” she replied.

Again, momentarily thrust back into himself, he wondered jealously once more what the disillusionments had been of that experience from before which she seemed, at times, ready to draw back a little the veil.

“A sense of futility is a sense of incompleteness,” he said, “and generally precedes a sense of power.”

“Ah, you have gained that! Yet it must always have been latent in you —you make one feel it. But now!” she exclaimed, as though the discovery had just dawned on her, “now you will need power, now you will have to fight as you have never fought in your life.”

He found her enthusiasm as difficult to withstand as her stoicism.

“Yes, I shall have to fight,” he admitted. Her partisanship was sweet.

“When you tell them what you have told me,” she continued, as though working it out in her own mind, “they will never submit to it, if they can help it. My father will never submit to it. They will try to put you out, as a heretic,—won’t they?”

“I have an idea that they will,” he conceded, with a smile.

“And won’t they succeed? Haven’t they the power?”

“It depends,—in the first place, on whether the bishop thinks me a heretic.”

“Have you asked him?”

“No.”

“But can’t they make you resign?”

“They can deprive me of my salary.”

She did not press this.

“You mustn’t think me a martyr,” he pleaded, in a lighter tone.

She paid no heed to this protest, but continued to regard him with a face lighted by enthusiasm.

“Oh, that’s splendid of you!” she cried. “You are going to speak the truth as you see it, and let them do their worst. Of course, fundamentally, it isn’t merely because they’re orthodox that they won’t like it, although they’ll say so, and perhaps think so. It will be because if you have really found the truth—they will instinctively, fear its release. For it has a social bearing, too—hasn’t it?—although you haven’t explained that part of it.”

“It has a distinct social bearing,” he replied, amazed at the way her mind flew forward and grasped the entire issue, in spite of the fact that her honesty still refused to concede his premises. Such were the contradictions in her that he loved. And, though she did not suspect it, she had in her the Crusader’s spirit. “I have always remembered what you once said, that many who believed themselves Christians had an instinctive feeling that there is a spark in Christianity which, if allowed to fly, would start a conflagration beyond their control. And that they had covered the spark with ashes. I, too,” he added whimsically, “was buried under the ashes.”

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“And the spark,” she demanded, “is not Socialism—their nightmare?”

“The spark is Christianity itself—but I am afraid they will not be able to distinguish it from Socialism. The central paradox in Christianity consists in the harmonizing of the individual and socialistic spirit, and this removes it as far from the present political doctrine of socialism as it is possible to be. Christianity, looked at from a certain viewpoint,—and I think the proper viewpoint,—is the most individualistic of religions, since its basic principle is the development of the individual into an autonomous being.”

They stood facing each other on an open stretch of lawn. The place was deserted. Through the trees, in the near distance, the sightless front of the Ferguson mansion blazed under the September sun.

“Individualistic!” she repeated, as though dazed by the word applied to the religion she had discarded. “I can’t understand. Do you think I ever can understand?” she asked him, simply.

“It seems to me you understand more than you are willing to give yourself credit for,” he answered seriously. “You don’t take into account your attitude.”

“I see what you mean—a willingness to take the right road, if I can find it. I am not at all sure that I want to take it. But you must tell me more—more of what you have discovered. Will you?”

He just hesitated. She herself appeared to acknowledge no bar to their further intimacy—why should he?

“I will tell you all I know,” he said.

Suddenly, as if by a transference of thought, she voiced what he had in mind.

“You are going to tell them the truth about themselves!” she exclaimed. “—That they are not Christians!”

His silence was an admission.

“You must see,” he told her, after the moment they had looked into each other’s faces, “that this is the main reason why I must stay at St. John’s, in the Church, if I conscientiously can.”

“I see. The easier course would be to resign, to have scruples. And you believe there is a future for the Church.”

“I believe it,” he assented.

She still held his eyes.

“Yes, it is worth doing. If you see it that way it is more worth doing than anything else. Please don’t think,” she said, “that I don’t appreciate why you have told me all this, why you have given me your reasons. I know it hasn’t been easy. It’s because you wish me to have faith in you for my own sake, not for yours. And I am grateful.”

“And if that faith is justified, as you will help to justify it, that it may be transferred to a larger sphere,” he answered.

She gave him her hand, but did not reply.

CHAPTER XIX

MR. GOODRICH BECOMES A PARTISAN

I

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In these days of his preparation, she haunted him continually. In her he saw typified all those who possessed the: divine discontent, the yearning unsatisfied,—the fatalists and the dreamers. And yet she seemed to have risen through instinct to share the fire of his vision of religion revealed to the countless ranks of strugglers as the hidden motive-power of the world, the impetus of scientist, statesman, artist, and philanthropist! They had stood together on the heights of the larger view, whence the whole of the battle-line lay disclosed.

At other and more poignant moments he saw her as waving him bravely on while he steamed out through towering seas to safety. The impression was that of smiling at her destiny. Had she fixed upon it? and did she linger now only that she might inspire him in his charge? She was capable, he knew, of taking calmly the irrevocable step, of accepting the decree as she read it. The thought tortured, the desire to save her from herself obsessed him; with true clairvoyance she had divined him aright when she had said that he wished her to have faith in him for her own sake. Could he save her in spite of herself? and how? He could not see her, except by chance. Was she waiting until he should have crossed the bar before she should pay some inexorable penalty of which he knew nothing?

Thus he speculated, suffered, was at once cast down and lifted up by the thought of her. To him, at least, she was one of those rare and dauntless women, the red stars of history, by whom the Dantes and Leonardos are fired to express the inexpressible, and common clay is fused and made mad: one of those women who, the more they reveal, become the more inscrutable. Divinely inarticulate, he called her; arousing the passion of the man, yet stirring the sublimer efforts of the god.

What her feelings toward him, whether she loved him as a woman loves a man he could not say, no man being a judge in the supreme instance. She beheld him emancipated, perhaps, from what she might have called the fetters of an orthodoxy for which she felt an instinctive antagonism; but whether, though proclaiming himself free, the fact of his continuation in the ministry would not of itself set up in her a reaction, he was unable to predict. Her antipathy to forms, he saw, was inherent. Her interest —her fascinated absorption, it might be called—in his struggle was spiritual, indeed, but it also had mixed in it the individualistic zeal of the nonconformist. She resented the trammels of society; though she suffered from her efforts to transcend them. The course he had determined upon appeared to her as a rebellion not only against a cut-and-dried state of mind, but also against vested privilege. Yet she had in her, as she confessed, the craving for what privilege brings in the way of harmonious surroundings. He loved her for her contradictions.

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Thus he was utterly unable to see what the future held for him in the way of continued communion with her, to evolve any satisfactory theory as to why she remained in the city. She had told him that the gardens were an excuse. She had come, by her own intimation, to reflect, to decide some momentous question. Marriage? He found this too agitating to dwell upon, summoning, as it did, conjectures of the men she might have known; and it was perhaps natural, in view of her attitude, that he could only think of such a decision on her part as surrender.

That he had caught and held her attention, although by no conscious effort of his own, was clear to him. But had he not merely arrested her? Would she not presently disappear, leaving only in his life the scarlet thread which she had woven into it for all time? Would he not fail to change, permanently, the texture of hers?

Such were his hopes and fears concerning her, and they were mingled inextricably with other hopes and fears which had to do with the great venture of his life. He dwelt in a realm of paradoxes, discovered that exaltation was not incompatible with anxiety and dread. He had no thought of wavering; he had achieved to an extent he would not have believed possible the sense of consecration which brings with it indifference to personal fortunes, and the revelation of the inner world, and yet he shrank from the wounds he was about to receive—and give. Outwardly controlled, he lived in the state of intense excitement of the leader waiting for the time to charge.

II

The moment was at hand. September had waned, the nights were cooling, his parishioners were returning from the East. One of these was Eleanor Goodrich, whom he met on a corner, tanned and revived from her long summer in Massachusetts. She had inherited the kindly shrewdness of glance characteristic of gentlefolk, the glance that seeks to penetrate externals in its concern for the well-being of those whom it scrutinizes. And he was subtly aware, though she greeted him cordially, that she felt a change in him without being able to account for it.

“I hear you have been here all summer,” she said reproachfully. “Mother and father and all of us were much disappointed that you did not come to us on the Cape.”

“I should have come, if it had been possible,” he replied. “It seems to have done you a world of good.”

“Oh, I!” She seemed slightly embarrassed, puzzled, and did not look at him. “I am burned as disgracefully as Evelyn. Phil came on for a month.

“He tells me he hasn’t seen you, but that isn’t surprising, for he hasn’t been to church since June—and he’s a vestryman now, too.”

She was in mourning for her father-in-law, who had died in the spring. Phil Goodrich had taken his place. Eleanor found the conversation, somehow, drifting out of her control. It was not at all what she would have desired to say. Her colour heightened.

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“I have not been conducting the services, but I resume them next Sunday,” said the rector. “I ought to tell you,” he went on, regarding her, “in view of the conversation we have had, that I have changed my mind concerning a great many things we have talked about—although I have not spoken of this as yet to any of the members of the congregation.”

She was speechless, and could only stare at him blankly.

“I mean,” he continued, with a calmness that astonished her afterwards, “that I have changed my whole conception as to the functions and future of the Church, that I have come to your position, that we must make up our minds for ourselves, and not have them made up for us. And that we must examine into the truth of all statements, and be governed accordingly.”

Her attitude was one of mingled admiration, concern, and awe. And he saw that she had grasped something of the complications which his course was likely to bring about.

“But you are not going to leave us!” she managed to exclaim.

“Not if it is possible to remain,” he said, smiling.

“I am so glad.” She was still overpowered by the disclosure. “It is good of you to tell me. Do you mind my telling Phil?”

“Not at all,” he assured her.

“Will you forgive me,” she asked, after a slight pause during which she had somewhat regained her composure, “if I say that I always thought, or rather hoped you would change? that your former beliefs seemed so—unlike you?”

He continued to smile at her as she stepped forward to take the car.

“I’ll have to forgive you,” he answered, “because you were right—”

She was still in such a state of excitement when she arrived down town that she went direct to her husband’s law office.

“I like this!” he exclaimed, as, unannounced, she opened the door of his sanctuary. “You might have caught me with one of those good-looking clients of mine.”

“Oh, Phil!” she cried, “I’ve got such a piece of news, I couldn’t resist coming to tell you. I met Mr. Hodder—and he’s changed.”

“Changed!” Phil repeated, looking up at her flushed face beside him. Instead of a law-book, he flung down a time table in which he had been investigating the trains to a quail

shooting club in the southern part of the state: The transition to Mr. Hodder was, therefore, somewhat abrupt. "Why, Nell, to look at you, I thought it could be nothing else than my somewhat belated appointment to the United States Supreme Court. How has Hodder changed? I always thought him pretty decent."

"Don't laugh at me," she begged, "it's really serious—and no one knows it yet. He said I might tell you. Do you remember that talk we had at father's, when he first came, and we likened him to a modern Savonarola?"

"And George Bridges took the floor, and shocked mother and Lucy and Laureston," supplied Phil.

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“I don’t believe mother really was as much shocked as she appeared to be,” said Eleanor. “At any rate, the thing that had struck us—you and me—was that Mr. Hodder looked as though he could say something helpful, if he only would. And then I went to see him afterwards, in the parish house—you remember?—after we had been reading modern criticism together, and he told me that the faith which had come down from the fathers was like an egg? It couldn’t be chipped. I was awfully disappointed—and yet I couldn’t help liking him, he was so honest. And the theological books he gave me to read—which were so mediaeval and absurd! Well, he has come around to our point of view. He told me so himself.”

“But what is our point of view, Nell?” her husband asked, with a smile. “Isn’t it a good deal like Professor Bridges’, only we’re not quite so learned? We’re just ordinary heathens, as far as I can make out. If Hodder has our point of view, he ought to go into the law or a trust company.”

“Oh, Phil!” she protested, “and you’re on the vestry! I do believe in Something, and so do you.”

“Something,” he observed, “is hardly a concrete and complete theology.”

“Why do you make me laugh,” she reproached him, “when the matter is so serious? What I’m trying to tell you is that I’m sure Mr. Hodder has worked it out. He’s too sincere to remain in the Church and not have something constructive and satisfying. I’ve always said that he seemed to have a truth shut up inside of him which he could not communicate. Well, now he looks as though he were about to communicate it, as though he had discovered it. I suppose you think me silly, but you’ll grant, whatever Mr. Hodder may be, he isn’t silly. And women can feel these things. You know I’m not given to sentimentality, but I was never so impressed by the growth in any personality as I was this morning by his. He seems to have become himself, as I always imagined him. And, Phil, he was so fine! He’s absolutely incapable of posing, as you’ll admit, and he stood right up and acknowledged that he’d been wrong in our argument. He hasn’t had the services all summer, and when he resumes them next Sunday I gathered that he intends to make his new position clear.”

Mr. Goodrich thrust his hands in his pockets and gave a low whistle.

“I guess I won’t go shooting Saturday, after all,” he declared. “I wouldn’t miss Hodder’s sermon for all the quail in Harrington County.”

“It’s high time you did go to church,” remarked Eleanor, contemplating, not without pride, her husband’s close-cropped, pugnacious head.

Your judgments are pretty sound, Nell. I'll do you that credit. And I've always owned up that Hodder would be a fighter if he ever got started. It's written all over him. What's more, I've a notion that some of our friends are already a little suspicious of him."

"You mean Mr. Parr?" she asked, anxiously.

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“No, Wallis Plimpton.”

“Oh!” she exclaimed, with disdain in her voice.

“Mr. Parr only got back yesterday, and Wallis told me that Hodder had refused to go on a yachting trip with him. Not only foolishness, but high treason.” Phil smiled. “Plimpton’s the weather-vane, the barometer of that crowd—he feels a disturbance long before it turns up—he’s as sensitive as the stock market.”

“He is the stock market,” said Eleanor.

“It’s been my opinion,” Phil went on reflectively, “that they’ve all had just a trace of uneasiness about Hodder all along, an idea that Nelson Langmaid slipped up for the first time in his life when he got him to come. Oh, the feeling’s been dormant, but it existed. And they’ve been just a little afraid that they couldn’t handle him if the time ever came. He’s not their type. When I saw Plimpton at the Country Club the other day he wondered, in that genial, off-hand manner of his, whether Hodder would continue to be satisfied with St. John’s. Plimpton said he might be offered a missionary diocese. Oh we’ll have a fine old row.”

“I believe,” said Eleanor, “that that’s the only thing that interests you.”

“Well, it does please me,” he admitted, when I think of Gordon Atterbury and Everett Constable and a few others,—Eldon Parr,—who believe that religion ought to be kept archaic and innocuous, served in a form that won’t bother anybody. By the way, Nell, do you remember the verse the Professor quoted about the Pharisees, and cleansing the outside of the cup and platter?”

“Yes,” she answered, “why?”

“Well—Hodder didn’t give you any intimation as to what he intended to do about that sort of thing, did he?”

“What sort of thing?”

“About the inside of Eldon Parr’s cup,—so to speak. And the inside of Wallis Plimpton’s cup, and Everett Constable’s cup, and Ferguson’s cup, and Langmaid’s. Did it ever strike you that, in St. John’s, we have the sublime spectacle of Eldon Parr, the Pharisee in chief, conducting the Church of Christ, who, uttered that denunciation? That’s what George Bridges meant. There’s something rather ironical in such a situation, to say the least.”

“I see,” said Eleanor, thoughtfully.

“And what’s more, it’s typical,” continued Phil, energetically, “the big Baptist church on the Boulevard is run by old Sedges, as canny a rascal as you could find in the state. The inside of has cup has never been touched, though he was once immersed in the Mississippi, they say, and swallowed a lot of water.”

“Oh, Phil!”

“Hodder’s been pretty intimate with Eldon Parr—that always puzzled me,” Phil went on. “And yet I’m like you, I never doubted Hodder’s honesty. I’ve always been curious to know what would happen when he found out the kind of thing Eldon Parr is doing every day in his life, making people stand and deliver in the interest of what he would call National Prosperity. Why, that fellow, Funk, they sent to the penitentiary the other day for breaking into the Addicks’ house isn’t a circumstance to Eldon Parr. He’s robbed his tens of thousands, and goes on robbing them right along. By the way, Mr. Parr took most of Addicks’ money before Funk got his silver.”

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“Phil, you have such a ridiculous way of putting things! But I suppose it’s true.”

“True! I should say it was! There was Mr. Bentley—that was mild. And there never was a hold-up of a western express that could compare to the Consolidated Tractions. Some of these big fellows have the same kind of brain as the professional thieves. Well, they are professional thieves —what’s the use of mincing matters! They never try the same game twice. Mr. Parr’s getting ready to make another big haul right now. I know, because Plimpton said as much, although he didn’t confide in me what this particular piece of rascality is. He knows better.” Phil Goodrich looked grim.

“But the law?” exclaimed his wife.

“There never was a law that Nelson Langmaid couldn’t drive a horse and carriage through.”

“And Mr. Langmaid’s one of the nicest men I know!”

“What I wonder,” mused Phil, “is whether this is a mere doctrinal revolt on Hodder’s part, or whether he has found out a few things. There are so many parsons in these days who don’t seem to see any inconsistency in robbing several thousand people to build settlement houses and carved marble altars, and who wouldn’t accept a Christmas box from a highwayman. But I’ll do Hodder the justice to say he doesn’t strike me as that kind. And I have an idea that Eldon Parr and Wallis Plimpton and the rest know he isn’t, know that he’d be a Tartar if he ever get started, and that’s what makes them uneasy.”

“Then it isn’t his change of religious opinions they would care about?” said Eleanor.

“Oh, I don’t say that Eldon Parr won’t try to throw him out if he questions the faith as delivered by the Saints.”

“Phil, what a way of putting it!”

“Any indication of independence, any approach to truth would be regarded as dangerous,” Phil continued. And of course Gordon Atterbury and others we could mention, who think they believe in the unchipped egg theory, will be outraged. But it’s deeper than that. Eldon Parr will give orders that Hodder’s to go.”

“Give orders?”

“Certainly. That vestry, so far as Mr. Parr is concerned, is a mere dummy board of directors. He’s made Langmaid, and Plimpton, and even Everett Constable, who’s the son of an honourable gentleman, and ought to know better. And he can ruin them by snapping his fingers. He can even make the financial world too hot for Ferguson. I’ll say this for Gordon Atterbury, that Mr. Parr can’t control him, but he’s got a majority

without him, and Gordon won't vote for a heretic. Who are left, except father-in-law Waring and myself?"

"He can't control either of you!" said Eleanor, proudly.

"When it comes to that, Nell—we'll move into Canada and buy a farm."

"But can he hurt you, Phil—either of you?" she asked, after a moment.

"I'd like to see him try it," Phil Goodrich declared

And his wife thought, as she looked at him, that she would like to see Mr. Parr try it, too.

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III

Phil Goodrich had once said that Mr. Plimpton's translation of the national motto E pluribus unum, was "get together," and it was true that not the least of Mr. Plimpton's many gifts was that of peace making. Such was his genius that he scented trouble before it became manifest to the world, and he stoutly declared that no difference of opinion ever existed between reasonable men that might not be patched up before the breach became too wide—provided that a third reasonable man contributed his services. The qualifying word "reasonable" is to be noted. When Mr. Bedloe Hubbell had undertaken, in the name of Reform, to make a witch's cauldron of the city's politics, which Mr. Beatty had hitherto conducted so smoothly from the back room of his saloon, Mr. Plimpton had unselfishly offered his services. Bedloe Hubbell, although he had been a playmate of Mr. Plimpton's wife's, had not proved "reasonable," and had rejected with a scorn only to be deemed fanatical the suggestion that Mr. Hubbell's interests and Mr. Beatty's interests need not clash, since Mr. Hubbell might go to Congress! And Mr. Plimpton was the more hurt since the happy suggestion was his own, and he had had no little difficulty in getting Mr. Beatty to agree to it.

Yet Mr. Plimpton's career in the ennobling role of peacemaker had, on the whole, been crowned with such success as to warrant his belief in the principle. Mr. Parr, for instance,—in whose service, as in that of any other friend, Mr. Plimpton was always ready to act—had had misunderstandings with eminent financiers, and sometimes with United States Senators. Mr. Plimpton had made many trips to the Capitol at Washington, sometimes in company with Mr. Langmaid, sometimes not, and on one memorable occasion had come away smiling from an interview with the occupant of the White House himself.

Lest Mr. Plimpton's powers of premonition seem supernatural, it may be well to reveal the comparative simplicity of his methods. Genius, analyzed, is often disappointing, Mr. Plimpton's was selective and synthetic. To illustrate in a particular case, he had met Mr. Parr in New York and had learned that the Reverend Mr. Hodder had not only declined to accompany the banker on a yachting trip, but had elected to remain in the city all summer, in his rooms in the parish house, while conducting no services. Mr. Parr had thought this peculiar. On his return home Mr. Plimpton had one day dropped in to see a Mr. Gaines, the real estate agent for some of his property. And Mr. Plimpton being hale-fellow-well-met, Mr. Gaines had warned him jestingly that he would better not let his parson know that he owned a half interest in a certain hotel in Dalton Street, which was leased at a profitable rate.

If Mr. Plimpton felt any uneasiness, he did not betray it. And he managed to elicit from the agent, in an entirely casual and jovial manner, the fact that Mr. Hodder, a month or so before, had settled the rent of a woman for a Dalton Street flat, and had been curious

to discover the name of the owner. Mr. Gaines, whose business it was to recognize everybody, was sure of Mr. Hodder, although he had not worn clerical clothes.

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Mr. Plimpton became very thoughtful when he had left the office. He visited Nelson Langmaid in the Parr Building. And the result of the conference was to cause Mr. Langmaid to recall, with a twinge of uneasiness, a certain autumn morning in a room beside Bremerton Lake when he had been faintly yet distinctly conscious of the, admonitory whisperings of that sixth sense which had saved him on other occasions.

“Dash it!” he said to himself, after Mr. Plimpton had departed, and he stood in the window and gazed across at the flag on the roof of ‘Ferguson’s.’ “It would serve me right for meddling in this parson business. Why did I take him away from Jerry Whitely, anyhow?”

It added to Nelson Langmaid’s discomfort that he had a genuine affection, even an admiration for the parson in question. He might have known by looking at the man that he would wake up some day,—such was the burden of his lament. And there came to him, ironically out of the past, the very words of Mr. Parr’s speech to the vestry after Dr. Gilman’s death, that succinct list of qualifications for a new rector which he himself, Nelson Langmaid, had humorously and even more succinctly epitomized. Their “responsibility to the parish, to the city, and to God” had been to find a rector “neither too old nor too young, who would preach the faith as we received it, who was not sensational, and who did not mistake Socialism for Christianity.” At the “Socialism” a certain sickly feeling possessed the lawyer, and he wiped beads of perspiration from his dome-like forehead.

He didn’t pretend to be versed in theology—so he had declared—and at the memory of these words of his the epithet “ass,” self applied, passed his lips. “You want a parson who will stick to his last, not too high or too low or too broad or too narrow, who has intellect without too much initiative . . . and will not get the church uncomfortably full of strangers and run you out of your pews.” Thus he had capped the financier. Well, if they had caught a tartar, it served him, Nelson Langmaid, right. He recalled his talk with Gerald Whitely, and how his brother-in-law had lost his temper when they had got on the subject of personality . . . .

Perhaps Wallis Plimpton could do something. Langmaid’s hopes of this were not high. It may have been that he had suspicions of what Mr. Plimpton would have called Hodder’s “reasonableness.” One thing was clear—that Mr. Plimpton was frightened. In the sanctuaries, the private confessionals of high finance (and Nelson Langmaid’s office may be called so), the more primitive emotions are sometimes exhibited.

“I don’t see what business it is of a clergyman, or of any one else, whether I own property in Dalton Street,” Mr. Plimpton had said, as he sat on the edge of the lawyer’s polished mahogany desk. “What does he expect us to do,—allow our real estate to remain unproductive merely for sentimental reasons? That’s like a parson, most of ’em haven’t got any more common sense than that. What right has he got to go nosing around Dalton Street? Why doesn’t he stick to his church?”

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“I thought you fellows were to build him a settlement house there,” Langmaid observed.

“On the condition that he wouldn’t turn socialist.”

“You’d better have stipulated it in the bond,” said the lawyer, who could not refrain, even at this solemn moment, from the temptation of playing upon Mr. Plimpton’s apprehensions. “I’m afraid he’ll make it his business, Wallis, to find out whether you own anything in Dalton Street. I’ll bet he’s got a list of Dalton Street property in his pocket right now.”

Mr. Plimpton groaned.

“Thank God I don’t own any of it!” said Langmaid.

“What the deuce does he intend to do?” the other demanded.

“Read it out in church,” Langmaid suggested. “It wouldn’t sound pretty, Wallis, to be advertised in the post on Monday morning as owning that kind of a hotel.”

“Oh, he’s a gentleman,” said Mr. Plimpton, “he wouldn’t do anything as low as that!”

“But if he’s become a socialist?” objected Langmaid.

“He wouldn’t do it,” his friend reiterated, none too confidently. “I shouldn’t be surprised if he made me resign from the vestry and forced me to sell my interest. It nets me five thousand a year.”

“What is the place?” Langmaid asked sympathetically, “Harrod’s?”

Mr. Plimpton nodded.

“Not that I am a patron,” the lawyer explained somewhat hastily. “But I’ve seen the building, going home.”

“It looks to me as if it would burn down some day, Wallis.”

“I wish it would,” said Mr. Plimpton.

“If it’s any comfort to you—to us,” Langmaid went on, after a moment, “Eldon Parr owns the whole block above Thirteenth, on the south side —bought it three years ago. He thinks the business section will grow that way.”

“I know,” said Mr. Plimpton, and they looked at each other.

The name predominant in both minds had been mentioned.

“I wonder if Hodder really knows what he’s up against.” Mr. Plimpton sometimes took refuge in slang.

“Well, after all, we’re not sure yet that he’s ‘up against anything,’” replied Langmaid, who thought the time had come for comfort. “It may all be a false alarm. There’s no reason, after all, why a Christian clergyman shouldn’t rescue women in Dalton Street, and remain in the city to study the conditions of the neighbourhood where his settlement house is to be. And just, because you or I would not be able to resist an invitation to go yachting with Eldon Parr, a man might be imagined who had that amount of moral courage.”

“That’s just it. Hodder seems to me, now I come to think of it, just the kind of John Brown type who wouldn’t hesitate to get into a row with Eldon Parr if he thought it was right, and pull down any amount of disagreeable stuff about our ears.”

“You’re mixing your heroes, Wallis,” said Langmaid.

“I can’t help it. You’d catch it, too, Nelson. What in the name of sense possessed you to get such a man?”

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This being a question the lawyer was unable to answer, the conversation came to another pause. And it was then that Mr. Plimpton's natural optimism reasserted itself.

"It isn't done,—the thing we're afraid of, that's all," he proclaimed, after a turn or two about the room. "Hodder's a gentleman, as I said, and if he feels as we suspect he does he'll resign like a gentleman and a Christian. I'll have a talk with him—oh, you can trust me! I've got an idea. Gordon Atterbury told me the other day there is a vacancy in a missionary diocese out west, and that Hodder's name had been mentioned, among others, to the bishops for the place. He'd make a rattling missionary bishop, you know, holding services in saloons and knocking men's heads together for profanity, and he boxes like a professional. Now, a word from Eldon Parr might turn the trick. Every parson wants to be a bishop."

Langmaid shook his head.

"You're getting out of your depths, my friend. The Church isn't Wall Street. And missionary bishops aren't chosen to make convenient vacancies."

"I don't mean anything crude," Mr. Plimpton protested. "But a word from the chief layman of a diocese like this, a man who never misses a General Convention, and does everything handsomely, might count,—particularly if they're already thinking of Hodder. The bishops would never suspect we wanted to get rid of him."

"Well," said Langmaid, "I advise you to go easy, all along the line."

"Oh, I'll go easy enough," Mr. Plimpton assented, smiling. "Do you remember how I pulled off old Senator Matthews when everybody swore he was dead set on voting for an investigation in the matter of those coal lands Mr. Parr got hold of in his state?"

"Matthews isn't Hodder, by a long shat," said Langmaid. "If you ask me my opinion, I'll tell you frankly that if Hodder has made up his mind to stay in St. John's a ton of dynamite and all the Eldon Parrs in the nation can't get him out."

"Can't the vestry make him resign?" asked Mr. Plimpton, uncomfortably.

"You'd better, go home and study your canons, my friend. Nothing short of conviction for heresy can do it, if he doesn't want to go."

"You wouldn't exactly call him a heretic," Mr. Plimpton said ruefully.

"Would you know a heretic if you saw one?" demanded Langmaid.

"No, but my wife would, and Gordon Atterbury and Constable would, and Eldon Parr. But don't let's get nervous."

“Well, that’s sensible at any rate,” said Langmaid . . . .

So Mr. Plimpton had gone off optimistic, and felt even more so the next morning after he had had his breakfast in the pleasant dining room of the Gore Mansion, of which he was now master. As he looked out through the open window at the sunshine in the foliage of Waverley Place, the prospect of his being removed from that position of dignity and influence on the vestry of St. John’s, which he had achieved, with others, after so much walking around the walls, seemed remote. And he reflected with satisfaction upon the fact that his wife, who was his prime minister, would be home from the East that day. Two heads were better than one, especially if one of the two were Charlotte Gore’s. And Mr. Plimpton had often reflected upon the loss to the world, and the gain to himself, that she was a woman.

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It would not be gallant to suggest that his swans were geese.

IV

The successful navigation of lower Tower Street, at noonday, required presence of mind on the part of the pedestrian. There were currents and counter-currents, eddies and backwaters, and at the corner of Vine a veritable maelstrom through which two lines of electric cars pushed their way, east and weft, north and south, with incessant clanging of bells; followed by automobiles with resounding horns, trucks and delivery wagons with wheels reverberating on the granite. A giant Irish policeman, who seemed in continual danger of a violent death, and wholly indifferent to it, stood between the car tracks and halted the rush from time to time, driving the people like sheep from one side to the other. Through the doors of Ferguson's poured two conflicting streams of humanity, and wistful groups of young women, on the way from hasty lunches, blocked the pavements and stared at the finery behind the plate-glass windows.

The rector, slowly making his way westward, permitted himself to be thrust hither and thither, halted and shoved on again as he studied the faces of the throng. And presently he found himself pocketed before one of the exhibits of feminine interest, momentarily helpless, listening to the admiring and envious chorus of a bevy of diminutive shop-girls on the merits of a Paris gown. It was at this moment that he perceived, pushing towards him with an air of rescue, the figure of his vestryman, Mr. Wallis Plimpton.

"Well, well, well!" he cried, as he seized Hodder by the arm and pulled him towards the curb. "What are you doing herein the marts of trade? Come right along with me to the Eyrie, and we'll have something, to eat."

The Eyrie was a famous lunch club, of limited membership, at the top of the Parr Building, where financial affairs of the first importance were discussed and settled.

Hodder explained that he had lunched at half-past twelve.

"Well, step into my office a minute. It does me good, to see you again, upon my word, and I can't let you get by without a little pow-wow."

Mr. Plimpton's trust company, in Vine Street, resembled a Greek temple. Massive but graceful granite columns adorned its front, while within it was partitioned off with polished marble and ornamental grills. In the rear, guarded by the desks and flanked by the compartments of various subordinates, was the president's private sanctum, and into this holy of holies Mr. Plimpton led the way with the simple, unassuming genial air of the high priest of modern finance who understands men. The room was eloquent almost to affectation of the system and order of great business, inasmuch as it betrayed not the least sign of a workshop. On the dark oak desk were two leather-bound books

and a polished telephone. The walls were panelled, there was a stone fireplace with andirons set, a deep carpet spread over the tessellated floor, and three leather-padded armchairs, one of which Mr. Plimpton hospitably drew forward for the rector. He then produced a box of cigars.

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“You don’t smoke, Mr. Hodder. I always forget. That’s the way you manage to keep yourself in such good shape.” He drew out a gold match box and seated himself with an air of gusto opposite his guest. “And you haven’t had a vacation, they tell me.”

“On the contrary,” said the rector, “McCrae has taken the services all summer.”

“But you’ve been in the city!” Mr. Plimpton exclaimed, puffing at his cigar.

“Yes, I’ve been in the city.”

“Well, well, I’ll bet you haven’t been idle. Just between us, as friends, Mr. Hodder, I’ve often wondered if you didn’t work too hard —there’s such a thing as being too conscientious, you know. And I’ve an idea that the rest of the vestry think so. Mr. Parr, for instance. We know when we’ve got a good thing, and we don’t want to wear you out. Oh, we can appreciate your point of view, and admire it. But a little relaxation—-eh? It’s too bad that you couldn’t have seen your way to take that cruise—Mr. Parr was all cut up about it. I guess you’re the only man among all of us fairly close to him, who really knows him well,” said Mr. Plimpton, admiringly. “He thinks a great deal of you, Mr. Hodder. By the way, have you seen him since he got back?”

“No,” Hodder answered.

“The trip did him good. I thought he was a little seedy in the spring —didn’t you? Wonderful man! And when I think how he’s slandered and abused it makes me hot. And he never says anything, never complains, lives up there all alone, and takes his medicine. That’s real patriotism, according to my view. He could retire to-morrow —but he keeps on—why? Because he feels the weight of a tremendous responsibility on his shoulders, because he knows if it weren’t for him and men like him upon whom the prosperity of this nation depends, we’d have famine and anarchy on our hands in no time. And look what he’s done for the city, without ostentation, mind you! He never blows his own horn-never makes a speech. And for the Church! But I needn’t tell you. When this settlement house and chapel are finished, they’ll be coming out here from New York to get points. By the way, I meant to have written you. Have our revised plans come yet? We ought to break ground in November, oughtn’t we?”

“I intend to lay my views on that matter before the vestry at the next meeting, the rector said.

“Well,” declared Mr. Plimpton, after a scarcely perceptible pause, “I’ve no doubt they’ll be worth listening to. If I were to make a guess,” he continued, with a contemplative smile, blowing a thin stream of smoke towards the distant ceiling, “I should bet that you have spent your summer looking over the ground. I don’t say that you have missed your vocation, Mr. Hodder, but I don’t mind telling you that for a clergyman, for a man absorbed in spiritual matters, a man who can preach the sermons you preach, you’ve

got more common-sense and business thoroughness than any one I have ever run across in your profession.”

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“Looking over the ground?” Hodder repeated, ignoring the compliment.

“Sure,” said Mr. Plimpton, smiling more benignly than ever. “You mustn’t be modest about it. Dalton Street. And when that settlement house is built, I’ll guarantee it will be run on a business basis. No nonsense.”

“What do you mean by nonsense?” Hodder asked. He did not make the question abrupt, and there was even the hint of a smile in his eyes, which Mr. Plimpton found the more disquieting.

“Why, that’s only a form of speech. I mean you’ll be practical, efficient, that you’ll get hold of the people of that neighbourhood and make ’em see that the world isn’t such a bad place after all, make ’em realize that we in St. John’s want to help ’em out. That you won’t make them more foolishly discontented than they are, and go preaching socialism to them.”

“I have no intention of preaching socialism,” said Hodder. But he laid a slight emphasis on the word which sent a cold shiver down Mr. Plimpton’s spine, and made him wonder whether there might not be something worse than socialism.

“I knew you wouldn’t,” he declared, with all the heartiness he could throw into his voice. “I repeat, you’re a practical, sensible man. I’ll yield to none in my belief in the Church as a moral, uplifting, necessary spiritual force in our civilization, in my recognition of her high ideals, but we business men, Mr. Hodder,—as—I am sure you must agree, —have got to live, I am sorry to say, on a lower plane. We’ve got to deal with the world as we find it, and do our little best to help things along. We can’t take the Gospel literally, or we should all be ruined in a day, and swamp everybody else. You understand me?

“I understand you,” said the rector.

Mr. Plimpton’s cigar had gone out. In spite of himself, he had slipped from the easy-going, casual tone into one that was becoming persuasive, apologetic, strenuous. Although the day was not particularly warm, he began to perspire a little; and he repeated the words over to himself, “I understand you.” What the deuce did the rector know? He had somehow the air of knowing everything—more than Mr. Plimpton did. And Mr. Plimpton was beginning to have the unusual and most disagreeable feeling of having been weighed in the balance and found wanting. He glanced at his guest, who sat quite still, the head bent a trifle, the disturbing gray eyes fixed contemplatively an him—accusingly. And yet the accusation did not seem personal with the clergyman, whose eyes were nearly the medium, the channels of a greater, an impersonal Ice. It was true that the man had changed. He was wholly baffling to Mr. Plimpton, whose sense of alarm increased momentarily into an almost panicky feeling as he remembered what Langmaid had said. Was this inscrutable rector of St. John’s gazing, knowingly, at the half owner of Harrods Hotel in Dalton Street, who couldn’t take the Gospel literally?

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There was evidently no way to find out at once, and suspense would be unbearable, in vain he told himself that these thoughts were nonsense, the discomfort persisted, and he had visions of that career in which he had become one of the first citizens and the respected husband of Charlotte Gore clashing down about his ears. Why? Because a clergyman should choose to be quixotic, fanatical? He did not took quixotic, fanatical, Mr. Plimpton had to admit,—but a good deal saner than he, Mr. Plimpton, must have appeared at that moment. His throat was dry, and he didn't dare to make the attempt to relight his cigar.

"There's nothing like getting together—keeping in touch with people, Mr. Hodder," he managed to say. "I've been out of town a good deal this summer—putting on a little flesh, I'm sorry to admit. But I've been meaning to drop into the parish house and talk over those revised plans with you. I will drop in—in a day or two. I'm interested in the work, intensely interested, and so is Mrs. Plimpton. She'll help you. I'm sorry you can't lunch with me."

He had the air, now, of the man who finds himself disagreeably and unexpectedly closeted with a lunatic; and his language, although he sought to control it, became even a trifle less coherent.

"You must make allowances for us business men, Mr. Hodder. I mean, of course, we're sometimes a little lax in our duties—in the summer, that is. Don't shoot the pianist, he's doing his—ahem! You know the story.

"By the way, I hear great things of you; I'm told it's on the cards that you're to be made a bishop."

"Oh," answered the rector, "there are better men mentioned than I!"

"I want you to know this," said his vestryman, as he seized Hodder's hand, "much as we value you here, bitterly as we should hate to lose you, none of us, I am sure, would stand in the way of such a deserved advancement."

"Thank you, Mr. Plimpton," said the rector.

Mr. Plimpton watched the vigorous form striding through the great chamber until it disappeared. Then he seized his hat and made his way as rapidly as possible through the crowds to the Parr Building. At the entrance of the open-air roof garden of the Eyrie he ran into Nelson Langmaid.

"You're the very man I'm after," said Mr. Plimpton, breathlessly. "I stopped in your office, and they said you'd gone up."

“What’s the matter, Wallis?” inquired the lawyer, tranquilly. “You look as if you’d lost a couple of bonds.”

I’ve just seen Hodder, and he is going to do it.”

“Do what?”

“Sit down here, at this table in the corner, and I’ll tell you.”

For a practical man, it must be admitted that Mr. Plimpton had very little of the concrete to relate. And it appeared on cross-examination by Mr. Langmaid, who ate his cold meat and salad with an exasperating and undiminished appetite—that the only definite thing the rector had said was that he didn’t intend to preach socialism. This was reassuring.

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“Reassuring!” exclaimed Mr. Plimpton, whose customary noonday hunger was lacking, “I wish you could have heard him say it!”

“The wicked,” remarked the lawyer, “flee when no man pursueth. Don’t shoot the pianist!” Langmaid set down his beer, and threw back his head and laughed. “If I were the Reverend Mr. Hodder, after such an exhibition as you gave, I should immediately have suspected the pianist of something, and I should have gone off by myself and racked my brains and tried to discover what it was. He’s a clever man, and if he hasn’t got a list of Dalton Street property now he’ll have one by to-morrow, and the story of some of your transactions with Tom Beatty and the City Council.”

“I believe you’d joke in the electric chair,” said Mr. a Plimpton, resentfully. “I’ll tell you this,—and my experience backs me up, —if you can’t get next to a man by a little plain talk, he isn’t safe. I haven’t got the market sense for nothing, and I’ll give you this tip, Nelson,—it’s time to stand from under. Didn’t I warn you fellows that Bedloe Hubbell meant business long before he started in? and this parson can give Hubbell cards and spades. Hodder can’t see this thing as it is. He’s been thinking, this summer. And a man of that kind is downright dangerous when he begins to think. He’s found out things, and he’s put two and two together, and he’s the uncompromising type. He has a notion that the Gospel can be taken literally, and I could feel all the time I was talking to him he thought I was a crook.”

“Perhaps he was right,” observed the lawyer.

“That comes well from you,” Mr. Plimpton retorted.

“Oh, I’m a crook, too,” said Langmaid. “I discovered it some time ago. The difference between you and me, Wallis, is that I am willing to acknowledge it, and you’re not. The whole business world, as we know it, is crooked, and if we don’t cut other people’s throats, they’ll cut ours.”

“And if we let go, what would happen to the country?” his companion demanded.

Langmaid began to shake with silent laughter.

“Your solicitude about the country, Wallis, is touching. I was brought up to believe that patriotism had an element of sacrifice in it, but I can’t see ours. And I can’t imagine myself, somehow, as a Hercules bearing the burden of our Constitution. From Mr. Hodder’s point of view, perhaps,—and I’m not sure it isn’t the right one, the pianist is doing his damnedest, to the tune of—Dalton Street. We might as well look this thing in the face, my friend. You and I really don’t believe in another world, or we shouldn’t be taking so much trouble to make this one as we’d like to have it.”

“I never expected to hear you talk this way,” said Mr. Plimpton.

“Well, it’s somewhat of a surprise to me,” the lawyer admitted.

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“And I don’t think you put it fairly,” his friend contended. “I never can tell when you are serious, but this is damned serious. In business we have to deal with crooks, who hold us up right and left, and if we stood back you know as well as I do that everything would go to pot. And if we let the reformers have their way the country would be bedlam. We’d have anarchy and bloodshed, revolution, and the people would be calling us, the strong men, back in no time. You can’t change human nature. And we have a sense of responsibility—we support law and order and the Church, and found institutions, and give millions away in charity.”

The big lawyer listened to this somewhat fervent defence of his order with an amused smile, nodding his head slightly from side to side.

“If you don’t believe in it,” demanded Mr. Plimpton, why the deuce don’t you drop it?”

“It’s because of my loyalty,” said Langmaid. “I wouldn’t desert my pals. I couldn’t bear, Wallis, to see you go to the guillotine without me.”

Mr. Plimpton became unpleasantly silent.

“Well, you may think it’s a joke,” he resumed, after a moment, “but there will be a guillotine if we don’t look out. That confounded parson is getting ready to spring something, and I’m going to give Mr. Parr a tip. He’ll know how to handle him. He doesn’t talk much, but I’ve got an idea, from one or two things he let drop, that he’s a little suspicious of a change in Hodder. But he ought to be waived.”

“You’re in no condition to talk to Mr. Parr, or to anyone else, except your wife, Walks,” Langmaid said. “You’d better go home, and let me see Mr. Parr. I’m responsible for Mr. Hodder, anyway.”

“All right,” Mr. Plimpton agreed, as though he had gained some shred of comfort from this thought. “I guess you’re in worse than any of us.”

THE INSIDE OF THE CUP

By Winston Churchill

Volume 6.

XX. *The arraignment*
XXI. *Alison goes to church*
XXII. *Which say to the seers*, *see not*!

CHAPTER XX

THE ARRAIGNMENT

I

Looking backward, Hodder perceived that he had really come to the momentous decision of remaining at St. John's in the twilight of an evening when, on returning home from seeing Kate Marcy at Mr. Bentley's he had entered the darkening church. It was then that his mission had appeared to him as a vision. Every day, afterward, his sense and knowledge of this mission had grown stronger.

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To his mind, not the least of the trials it was to impose upon him, and one which would have to be dealt with shortly, was a necessary talk with his assistant, McCrae. If their relationship had from the beginning been unusual and unsatisfactory, adjectives would seem to defy what it had become during the summer. What did McCrae think of him? For Hodder had, it will be recalled, bidden his assistant good-by—and then had remained. At another brief interview, during which McCrae had betrayed no surprise, uttered no censure or comment, Hodder had announced his determination to remain in the city, and to take no part in the services. An announcement sufficiently astounding. During the months that followed, they had met, at rare intervals, exchanged casual greetings, and passed on. And yet Hodder had the feeling, more firmly planted than ever, that McCrae was awaiting, with an interest which might be called suspense, the culmination of the process going on within him.

Well, now that he had worked it out, now that he had reached his decision, it was incumbent upon him to tell his assistant what that decision was. Hodder shrank from it as from an ordeal. His affection for the man, his admiration for McCrae's faithful, untiring, and unrecognized services had deepened. He had a theory that McCrae really liked him—would even sympathize with his solution; yet he procrastinated. He was afraid to put his theory to the test. It was not that Hodder feared that his own solution was not the right one, but that McCrae might not find it so: he was intensely concerned that it should also be McCrae's solution—the answer, if one liked, to McCrae's mute and eternal questionings. He wished to have it a fruition for McCrae as well as for himself; since theoretically, at least, he had pierced the hard crust of his assistant's exterior, and conceived him beneath to be all suppressed fire. In short, Hodder wished to go into battle side by side with McCrae. Therein lay his anxiety.

Another consideration troubled him—McCrae's family, dependent on a rather meagre salary. His assistant, in sustaining him in the struggle he meant to enter, would be making even a greater sacrifice than himself. For Hodder had no illusions, and knew that the odds against him were incalculable. Whatever, if defeated, his own future might be, McCrae's was still more problematical and tragic.

The situation, when it came, was even more difficult than Hodder had imagined it, since McCrae was not a man to oil the wheels of conversation. In silence he followed the rector up the stairs and into his study, in silence he took the seat at the opposite side of the table. And Hodder, as he hesitated over his opening, contemplated in no little perplexity and travail the gaunt and non-committal face before him:

"McCrae," he began at length, "you must have thought my conduct this summer most peculiar. I wish to thank you, first of all, for the consideration you have shown me, and to tell you how deeply I appreciate your taking the entire burden of the work of the parish."

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McCrae shook his head vigorously, but did not speak.

“I owe it to you to give you some clew to what happened to me,” the rector continued, “although I have an idea that you do not need much enlightenment on this matter. I have a feeling that you have somehow been aware of my discouragement during the past year or so, and of the causes of it. You yourself hold ideals concerning the Church which you have not confided to me. Of this I am sure. I came here to St. John’s full of hope and confidence, gradually to lose both, gradually to realise that there was something wrong with me, that in spite of all my efforts I was unable to make any headway in the right direction. I became perplexed, dissatisfied—the results were so meagre, so out of proportion to the labour. And the very fact that those who may be called our chief parishioners had no complaint merely added to my uneasiness. That kind of success didn’t satisfy me, and I venture to assume it didn’t satisfy you.”

Still McCrae made no sign.

“Finally I came to what may be termed a double conclusion. In the first place, I began to see more and more clearly that our modern civilization is at fault, to perceive how completely it is conducted on the materialistic theory of the survival of the fittest rather than that of the brotherhood of man, and that those who mainly support this church are, consciously or not, using it as a bulwark for the privilege they have gained at the expense of their fellow-citizens. And my conclusion was that Christianity must contain some vital germ which I had somehow missed, and which I must find if I could, and preach and release it. That it was the release of this germ these people feared unconsciously. I say to you, at the risk of the accusation of conceit, that I believed myself to have a power in the pulpit if I could only discover the truth.”

Hodder thought he detected, as he spoke these words, a certain relaxation of the tension.

“For a while, as the result of discouragement, of cowardice, I may say, of the tearing-down process of the theological structure—built of debris from many ruins on which my conception of Christianity rested, I lost all faith. For many weeks I did not enter the church, as you yourself must know. Then, when I had given up all hope, through certain incidents and certain persona, a process of reconstruction began. In short, through no virtue which I can claim as my own, I believe I have arrived at the threshold of an understanding of Christianity as our Lord taught it and lived it. And I intend to take the pulpit and begin to preach it.

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“I am deeply concerned in regard to yourself as to what effect my course may have on you. And I am not you to listen to me with a view that you should see your way clear to support me McCrae, but rather that you should be fully apprised of my new belief and intentions. I owe this to you, for your loyal support in the pest. I shall go over with you, later, if you care to listen, my whole position. It may be called the extreme Protestant position, and I use protestant, for want of a better word, to express what I believe is Paul’s true as distinguished from the false of his two inconsistent theologies. It was this doctrine of Paul’s of redemption by faith, of reacting grace by an inevitable spiritual law —of rebirth, if you will—that Luther and the Protestant reformers revived and recognized, rightly, as the vital element of Christ’s teachings, although they did not succeed in separating it wholly from the dross which clung to it. It is the leaven which has changed governments, and which in the end, I am firmly convinced, will make true democracy inevitable. And those who oppose democracy inherently dread its workings.

“I do not know your views, but it is only fair to add at this time that I no longer believe in the external and imposed authority of the Church in the sense in which I formerly accepted it, nor in the virgin birth, nor in certain other dogmas in which I once acquiesced. Other clergymen of our communion have proclaimed, in speech and writing, their disbelief in these things. I have satisfied my conscience as they have, and I mean to make no secret of my change. I am convinced that not one man or woman in ten thousand to-day who has rejected Christianity ever knew what Christianity is. The science and archaic philosophy in which Christianity has been swaddled and hampered is discredited, and the conclusion is drawn that Christianity itself must be discredited.”

“Ye’re going to preach all this?” McCrae demanded, almost fiercely.

“Yes,” Hodder replied, still uncertain as to his assistant’s attitude, “and more. I have fully reflected, and I am willing to accept all the consequences. I understand perfectly, McCrae, that the promulgation alone of the liberal orthodoxy of which I have spoken will bring me into conflict with the majority of the vestry and the congregation, and that the bishop will be appealed to. They will say, in effect, that I have cheated them, that they hired one man and that another has turned up, whom they never would have hired. But that won’t be the whole story. If it were merely a question of doctrine, I should resign. It’s deeper than that, more sinister.” Hodder doubled up his hand, and laid it on the table. “It’s a matter,” he said, looking into McCrae’s eyes, “of freeing this church from those who now hold it in chains. And the two questions, I see clearly now, the doctrinal and the economic, are so interwoven as to be inseparable. My former, ancient presentation of Christianity left men and women cold. It did not draw them into this church and send them out again fired with the determination to bring religion into everyday life, resolved to do their part in the removal of the injustices and cruelties with which we are surrounded, to bring Christianity into government, where it belongs. Don’t misunderstand me I’m not going to preach politics, but religion.”

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“I don’t misunderstand ye,” answered McCrae. He leaned a little forward, staring at the rector from behind his steel spectacles with a glance which had become piercing.

“And I am going to discourage a charity which is a mockery of Christianity,” Hodder went on, “the spectacle of which turns thousands of men and women in sickening revolt against the Church of Christ to-day. I have discovered, at last, how some of these persons have made their money, and are making it. And I am going to let them know, since they have repudiated God in their own souls, since they have denied the Christian principle of individual responsibility, that I, as the vicar of God, will not be a party to the transaction of using the Church as a means of doling out ill-gotten gains to the poor.”

“Mr. Parr!” McCrae exclaimed.

“Yes,” said the rector, slowly, and with a touch of sadness, “since you have mentioned him, Mr. Parr. But I need not say that this must go no farther. I am in possession of definite facts in regard to Mr. Parr which I shall present to him when he returns.”

“Ye’ll tell him to his face?”

“It is the only way.”

McCrae had risen. A remarkable transformation had come over the man, —he was reminiscent, at that moment, of some Covenanter ancestor going into battle. And his voice shook with excitement.

“Ye may count on me, Mr. Hodder,” he cried. “These many years I’ve waited, these many years I’ve seen what ye see now, but I was not the man. Aye, I’ve watched ye, since the day ye first set foot in this church. I knew what was going on inside of ye, because it was just that I felt myself. I hoped—I prayed ye might come to it.”

The sight of this taciturn Scotchman, moved in this way, had an extraordinary effect on Hodder himself, and his own emotion was so inexpressibly stirred that he kept silence a moment to control it. This proof of the truth of his theory in regard to McCrae he found overwhelming.

“But you said nothing, McCrae,” he began presently. “I felt all along that you knew what was wrong—if you had only spoken.”

“I could not,” said McCrae. “I give ye my word I tried, but I just could not. Many’s the time I wanted to—but I said to myself, when I looked at you, ‘wait, it will come, much better than ye can say it.’ And ye have made me see more than I saw, Mr. Hodder,—-already ye have. Ye’ve got the whole thing in ye’re eye, and I only had a part of it. It’s because ye’re the bigger man of the two.”

“You thought I’d come to it?” demanded Hodder, as though the full force of this insight had just struck him.

“Well,” said McCrae, “I hoped. It seemed, to look at ye, ye’r true nature—what was by rights inside of ye. That’s the best explaining I can do. And I call to mind that time ye spoke about not making the men in the classes Christians—that was what started me to thinking.”

“And you asked me,” returned the rector, “how welcome some of them would be in Mr. Parr’s Pew.”

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“Ah, it worried me,” declared the assistant, with characteristic frankness, “to see how deep ye were getting in with him.”

Hodder did not reply to this. He had himself risen, and stood looking at McCrae, filled with a new thought.

“There is one thing I should like to say to you—which is very difficult, McCrae, but I have no doubt you see the matter as clearly as I do. In making this fight, I have no one but myself to consider. I am a single man—”

“Yell not need to go on,” answered McCrae, with an odd mixture of sternness and gentleness in his voice. “I’ll stand and fall with ye, Mr. Hodder. Before I ever thought of the Church I learned a trade, as a boy in Scotland. I’m not a bad carpenter. And if worse comes to worse, I’ve an idea I can make as much with my hands as I make in the ministry.”

The smile they exchanged across the table sealed the compact between them.

II

The electric car which carried him to his appointment with the financier shot westward like a meteor through the night. And now that the hour was actually at hand, it seemed to Hodder that he was absurdly unprepared to meet it. New and formidable aspects, hitherto unthought of, rose in his mind, and the figure of Eldon Parr loomed to Brobdingnagian proportions as he approached it. In spite of his determination, the life-blood of his confidence ebbed, a sense of the power and might of the man who had now become his adversary increased; and that apprehension of the impact of the great banker’s personality, the cutting edge with the vast achievements wedged in behind it, each adding weight and impetus to its momentum the apprehension he had felt in less degree on the day of the first meeting, and which had almost immediately evaporated—surged up in him now. His fear was lest the charged atmosphere of the banker’s presence might deflect his own hitherto clear perception of true worth. He dreaded, once in the midst of those disturbing currents, a bungling presentation of the cause which inspired him, and which he knew to be righteousness itself.

Suddenly his mood shifted, betraying still another weakness, and he saw Eldon Parr, suddenly, vividly—more vividly, indeed, than ever before—in the shades of the hell of his loneliness. And pity welled up, drowning the image of incarnate greed and selfishness and lust for wealth and power: The unique pathos of his former relationship with the man reasserted itself, and Hodder was conscious once more of the dependence which Eldon Parr had had on his friendship. During that friendship he, Hodder, had never lost the sense of being the stronger of the two, of being leaned upon: leaned upon by a man whom the world feared and hated, and whom he had

been enable to regard with anything but compassion and the unquestionable affection which sprang from it. Appalled by this transition, he alighted from the car, and stood for a moment alone in the darkness gazing at the great white houses that rose above the dusky outline of shrubbery and trees.

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At any rate, he wouldn't find that sense of dependence to-night. And it steeled him somewhat to think, as he resumed his steps, that he would meet now the other side, the hard side hitherto always turned away. Had he needed no other warning of this, the answer to his note asking for an appointment would have been enough,—a brief and formal communication signed by the banker's secretary. . .

"Mr. Parr is engaged just at present, sir," said the servant who opened the door. "Would you be good enough to step into the library?"

Hardly had he entered the room when he heard a sound behind him, and turned to confront Alison. The thought of her, too, had complicated infinitely his emotions concerning the interview before him, and the sight of her now, of her mature beauty displayed in evening dress, of her white throat gleaming whiter against the severe black of her gown, made him literally speechless. Never had he accused her of boldness, and now least of all. It was the quality of her splendid courage that was borne in upon him once more above the host of other feelings and impressions, for he read in her eyes a knowledge of the meaning of his visit.

They stood facing each other an appreciable moment.

"Mr. Langmaid is with him now," she said, in a low voice.

"Yes," he answered.

Her eyes still rested on his face, questioningly, appraisingly, as though she were seeking to estimate his preparedness for the ordeal before him, his ability to go through with it successfully, triumphantly. And in her mention of Langmaid he recognized that she had meant to sound a note of warning. She had intimated a consultation of the captains, a council of war. And yet he had never spoken to her of this visit. This proof of her partisanship, that she had come to him at the crucial instant, overwhelmed him.

"You know why I am here?" he managed to say. It had to do with the extent of her knowledge.

"Oh, why shouldn't I?" she cried, "after what you have told me. And could you think I didn't understand, from the beginning, that it meant this?"

His agitation still hampered him. He made a gesture of assent.

"It was inevitable," he said.

"Yes, it' was inevitable," she assented, and walked slowly to the mantel, resting her hand on it and bending her head. "I felt that you would not shirk it, and yet I realize how painful it must be to you."

“And to you,” he replied quickly.

“Yes, and to me. I do not know what you know, specifically,—I have never sought to find out things, in detail. That would be horrid. But I understand—in general—I have understood for many years.” She raised her head, and flashed him a glance that was between a quivering smile and tears. “And I know that you have certain specific information.”

He could only wonder at her intuition.

“So far as I am concerned, it is not for the world,” he answered.

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“Oh, I appreciate that in you!” she exclaimed. “I wished you to know it. I wished you to know,” she added, a little unsteadily, “how much I admire you for what you are doing. They are afraid of you—they will crush you if they can.”

He did not reply.

“But you are going to speak the truth,” she continued, her voice low and vibrating, “that is splendid! It must have its effect, no matter what happens.”

“Do you feel that?” he asked, taking a step toward her.

“Yes. When I see you, I feel it, I think.” . . .

Whatever answer he might have made to this was frustrated by the appearance of the figure of Nelson Langmaid in the doorway. He seemed to survey them benevolently through his spectacles.

“How are you, Hodder? Well, Alison, I have to leave without seeing anything of you—-you must induce your father not to bring his business home with him. Just a word,” he added to the rector, “before you go up.”

Hodder turned to Alison. “Good night,” he said.

The gentle but unmistakable pressure of her hand he interpreted as the pinning on him of the badge of her faith. He was to go into battle wearing her colours. Their eyes met.

“Good night,” she answered . . . .

In the hall the lawyer took his arm.

“What’s the trouble, Hodder?” he asked, sympathetically.

Hodder, although on his guard, was somewhat taken aback by the directness of the onslaught.

“I’m afraid, Mr. Langmaid,” the rector replied, “that it would take me longer to tell you than the time at your disposal.”

“Dear me,” said the lawyer, “this is too bad. Why didn’t you come to me? I am a good friend of yours, Hodder, and there is an additional bond between us on my sister’s account. She is extremely fond of you, you know. And I have a certain feeling of responsibility for you,—I brought you here.”

“You have always been very kind, and I appreciate it,” Hodder replied. “I should be sorry to cause you any worry or annoyance. But you must understand that I cannot share the responsibility of my acts with any one.”

“A little advice from an old legal head is sometimes not out of place. Even Dr. Gilman used to consult me. I hope you will bear in mind how remarkably well you have been getting along at St. John’s, and what a success you’ve made.”

“Success!” echoed the rector.

Either Mr. Langmaid read nothing in his face, or was determined to read nothing.

“Assuredly,” he answered, benignly. “You have managed to please everybody, Mr. Parr included,—and some of us are not easy to please. I thought I’d tell you this, as a friend, as your first friend in the parish. Your achievement has been all the more remarkable, following, as you did, Dr. Gilman. Now it would greatly distress me to see that state of things disturbed, both for your sake and others. I thought I would just give you a hint, as you are going to see Mr. Parr, that he is in rather a nervous state. These so-called political reformers have upset the market and started a lot of legal complications that’s why I’m here to-night. Go easy with him. I know you won’t do anything foolish.”

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The lawyer accompanied this statement with a pat, but this time he did not succeed in concealing his concern.

“That depends on one’s point of view,” Hodder returned, with a smile. “I do not know how you have come to suspect that I am going to disturb Mr. Parr, but what I have to say to him is between him and me.”

Langmaid took up his hat from the table, and sighed.

“Drop in on me sometime,” he said, “I’d like to talk to you—Hodder heard a voice behind him, and turned. A servant was standing there.

“Mr. Parr is ready to see you, sir,” he said.

The rector followed him up the stairs, to the room on the second floor, half office, half study, where the capitalist transacted his business when at home.

III

Eldon Parr was huddled over his desk reading a typewritten document; but he rose, and held out his hand, which Hodder took.

“How are you, Mr. Hodder? I’m sorry to have kept you waiting, but matters of some legal importance have arisen on which I was obliged to make a decision. You’re well, I hope.” He shot a glance at the rector, and sat down again, still holding the sheets. “If you will excuse me a moment longer, I’ll finish this.”

“Certainly,” Hodder replied.

“Take a chair,” said Mr. Parr, “you’ll find the evening paper beside you.”

Hodder sat down, and the banker resumed his perusal of the document, his eye running rapidly over the pages, pausing once in a while to scratch out a word or to make a note on the margin. In the concentration of the man on the task before him the rector read a design, an implication that the affairs of the Church were of a minor importance: sensed, indeed, the new attitude of hostility, gazed upon the undiscovered side, the dangerous side before which other men had quailed. Alison’s words recurred to him, “they are afraid of you, they will crush you if they can.” Eldon Parr betrayed, at any rate, no sign of fear. If his mental posture were further analyzed, it might be made out to contain an intimation that the rector, by some act, had forfeited the right to the unique privilege of the old relationship.

Well, the fact that the banker had, in some apparently occult manner, been warned, would make Hodder’s task easier—or rather less difficult. His feelings were even more

complicated than he had anticipated. The moments of suspense were trying to his nerves, and he had a shrewd notion that this making men wait was a favourite manoeuvre of Eldon Parr's; nor had he underrated the benumbing force of that personality. It was evident that the financier intended him to open the battle, and he was —as he had expected—finding it difficult to marshal the regiments of his arguments. In vain he thought of the tragedy of Garvin . . . . The thing was more complicated. And behind this redoubtable and sinister Eldon Parr he saw, as it were, the wraith of that: other who had once confessed the misery of his loneliness. . . .

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At last the banker rang, sharply, the bell on his desk. A secretary entered, to whom he dictated a telegram which contained these words: "Langmaid has discovered a way out." It was to be sent to an address in Texas. Then he turned in his chair and crossed his knees, his hand fondling an ivory paper-cutter. He smiled a little.

"Well, Mr. Hodder," he said.

The rector, intensely on his guard, merely inclined his head in recognition that his turn had come.

"I was sorry," the banker continued, after a perceptible pause,—that you could not see your way clear to have come with me on the cruise."

"I must thank you again," Hodder answered, "but I felt—as I wrote you —that certain matters made it impossible for me to go."

"I suppose you had your reasons, but I think you would have enjoyed the trip. I had a good, seaworthy boat—I chartered her from Mr. Lieber, the president of the Continental Zinc, you know. I went as far as Labrador. A wonderful coast, Mr. Hodder."

"It must be," agreed the rector. It was clear that Mr. Parr intended to throw upon him the onus of the first move. There was a silence, brief, indeed, but long enough for Hodder to feel more and more distinctly the granite hardness which the other had become, to experience a rising, reenforcing anger. He went forward, steadily but resolutely, on the crest of it. "I have remained in the city," he continued, "and I have had the opportunity to discover certain facts of which I have hitherto been ignorant, and which, in my opinion, profoundly affect the welfare of the church. It is of these I wished to speak to you."

Mr. Parr waited.

"It is not much of an exaggeration to say that ever since I came here I have been aware that St. John's, considering the long standing of the parish, the situation of the church in a thickly populated district, is not fulfilling its mission. But I have failed until now to perceive the causes of that inefficiency."

"Inefficiency?" The banker repeated the word.

"Inefficiency," said Hodder. "The reproach, the responsibility is largely mine, as the rector, the spiritual, head of the parish. I believe I am right when I say that the reason for the decision, some twenty years ago, to leave the church where it is, instead of selling the property and building in the West End, was that it might minister to the poor in the neighbourhood, to bring religion and hope into their lives, and to exert its influence towards eradicating the vice and misery which surround it."

“But I thought you had agreed,” said Mr. Parr, coldly, “that we were to provide for that in the new chapel and settlement house.”

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“For reasons which I hope to make plain to you, Mr. Parr,” Hodder replied, “those people can never be reached, as they ought to be reached, by building that settlement house. The principle is wrong, the day is past when such things can be done—in that way.” He laid an emphasis on these words. “It is good, I grant you, to care for the babies and children of the poor, it is good to get young women and men out of the dance-halls, to provide innocent amusement, distraction, instruction. But it is not enough. It leaves the great, transforming thing in the lives of these people untouched, and it will forever remain untouched so long as a sense of wrong, a continually deepening impression of an unchristian civilization upheld by the Church herself, exists. Such an undertaking as that settlement house—I see clearly now—is a palliation, a poultice applied to one of many sores, a compromise unworthy of the high mission of the Church. She should go to the root of the disease. It is her first business to make Christians, who, by amending their own lives, by going out individually and collectively into the life of the nation, will gradually remove these conditions.”

Mr. Parr sat drumming on the table. Hodder met his look.

“So you, too, have come to it,” he said.

“Have come to what?”

“Socialism.”

Hodder, in the state of clairvoyance in which he now surprisingly found himself, accurately summed up the value and meaning of the banker’s sigh.

“Say, rather,” he replied, “that I have come to Christianity. We shall never have what is called socialism until there is no longer any necessity for it, until men, of their owe free will, are ready to renounce selfish, personal ambition and power and work for humanity, for the state.”

Mr. Parr’s gesture implied that he cared not by what name the thing was called, but he still appeared strangely, astonishingly calm;—Hodder, with all his faculties acute, apprehended that he was dangerously calm. The man who had formerly been his friend was now completely obliterated, and he had the feeling almost of being about to grapple, in mortal combat, with some unknown monster whose tactics and resources were infinite, whose victims had never escaped. The monster was in Eldon Parr—that is how it came to him. The waxy, relentless demon was aroused. It behooved him, Hodder, to step carefully . . . .

“That is all very fine, Mr. Hodder, very altruistic, very Christian, I’ve no doubt-but the world doesn’t work that way.” (These were the words borne in on Hodder’s consciousness.) “What drives the world is the motive furnished by the right of acquiring

and holding property. If we had a division to-day, the able men would come out on top next year."

The rector shook his head. He remembered, at that moment, Horace Bentley.

"What drives the world is a far higher motive, Mr. Parr, the motive with which have been fired the great lights of history, the motive of renunciation and service which is transforming governments, which is gradually making the world a better place in which to live. And we are seeing men and women imbued with it, rising in ever increasing numbers on every side to-day."

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“Service!” Eldon Parr had seized upon the word as it passed and held it. “What do you think my life has been? I suppose,” he said, with a touch of intense bitterness, “that you, too, who six months ago seemed as reasonable a man as I ever met, have joined in the chorus of denunciators. It has become the fashion to-day, thanks to your socialists, reformers, and agitators, to decry a man because he is rich, to take it for granted that he is a thief and a scoundrel, that he has no sense of responsibility for his country and his fellow-men. The glory, the true democracy of this nation, lies in its equal opportunity for all. They take no account of that, of the fact that each has had the same chance as his fellows. No, but they cry out that the man who, by the sweat of his brow, has earned wealth ought to divide it up with the lazy and the self-indulgent and the shiftless.

“Take my case, for instance,—it is typical of thousands. I came to this city as a boy in my teens, with eight dollars in my pocket which I had earned on a farm. I swept the floor, cleaned the steps, moved boxes and ran errands in Gabriel Parker’s store on Third Street. I was industrious, sober, willing to do anything. I fought, I tell you every inch of my way. As soon as I saved a little money I learned to use every ounce of brain I possessed to hold on to it. I trusted a man once, and I had to begin all over again. And I discovered, once for all, if a man doesn’t look out for himself, no one will.

“I don’t pretend that I am any better than any one else, I have had to take life as I found it, and make the best of it. I conformed to the rules of the game; I soon had sense enough knocked into me to understand that the conditions were not of my making. But I’ll say this for myself,” Eldon Parr leaned forward over the blotter, “I had standards, and I stuck by them. I wanted to be a decent citizen, to bring up my children in the right way. I didn’t squander my money, when I got it, on wine and women, I respected other men’s wives, I supported the Church and the institutions of the city. I too even I had my ambitions, my ideals —and they were not entirely worldly ones. You would probably accuse me of wishing to acquire only the position of power which I hold. If you had accepted my invitation to go aboard the yacht this summer, it was my intention to unfold to you a scheme of charities which has long been forming in my mind, and which I think would be of no small benefit to the city where I have made my fortune. I merely mention this to prove to you that I am not unmindful, in spite of the circumstances of my own life, of the unfortunates whose mental equipment is not equal to my own.”

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By this “poor boy” argument which—if Hodder had known—Mr. Parr had used at banquets with telling effect, the banker seemed to regain perspective and equilibrium, to plant his feet once more on the rock of the justification of his life, and from which, by a somewhat extraordinary process he had not quite understood, he had been partially shaken off. As he had proceeded with his personal history, his manner had gradually become one of the finality of experience over theory, of the forbearance of the practical man with the visionary. Like most successful citizens of his type, he possessed in a high degree the faculty of creating sympathy, of compelling others to accept —-temporarily, at least—his point of view. It was this faculty, Hodder perceived, which had heretofore laid an enchantment upon him, and it was not without a certain wonder that he now felt himself to be released from the spell.

The perceptions of the banker were as keen, and his sense of security was brief. Somehow, as he met the searching eye of the rector, he was unable to see the man as a visionary, but beheld—and, to do him justice—felt a twinge of respect for an adversary worthy of his steel.

He, who was accustomed to prepare for clouds when they were mere specks on his horizon, paused even now to marvel why he had not dealt with this. Here was a man—-a fanatic, if he liked—but still a man who positively did not fear him, to whom his wrath and power were as nothing! A new and startling and complicated sensation—but Eldon Parr was no coward. If he had, consciously or unconsciously, formerly looked upon the clergyman as a dependent, Hodder appeared to be one no more. The very ruggedness of the man had enhanced, expanded—as it were—until it filled the room. And Hodder had, with an audacity unparalleled in the banker’s experience arraigned by implication his whole life, managed to put him on the defensive.

“But if that be your experience,” the rector said, “and it has become your philosophy, what is it in you that impels you to give these large sums for the public good?”

“I should suppose that you, as a clergyman, might understand that my motive is a Christian one.”

Hodder sat very still, but a higher light came into his eyes.

“Mr. Parr,” he replied, “I have been a friend of yours, and I am a friend still. And what I am going to tell you is not only in the hope that others may benefit, but that your own soul may be saved. I mean that literally—your own soul. You are under the impression that you are a Christian, but you are not and never have been one. And you will not be one until your whole life is transformed, until you become a different man. If you do not change, it is my duty to warn you that the sorrow and suffering, the uneasiness which you now know, and which drive you on, in search of distraction, to adding useless sums of money to your fortune —this suffering, I say, will become intensified. You will die in the knowledge of it, and live on after, in the knowledge of it.”

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In spite of himself, the financier drew back before this unexpected blast, the very intensity of which had struck a chill of terror in his inmost being. He had been taken off his guard,—for he had supposed the day long past—if it had ever existed—when a spiritual rebuke would upset him; the day long past when a minister could pronounce one with any force. That the Church should ever again presume to take herself seriously had never occurred to him. And yet—the man had denounced him in a moment of depression, of nervous irritation and exasperation against a government which had begun to interfere with the sacred liberty of its citizens, against political agitators who had spurred that government on. The world was mad. No element, it seemed, was now content to remain in its proper place. His voice, as he answered, shook with rage,—all the greater because the undaunted sternness by which it was confronted seemed to reduce it to futility.

“Take care!” he cried, “take care! You, nor any other man, clergyman or no clergyman, have any right to be the judge of my conduct.”

“On the contrary,” said Holder, “if your conduct affects the welfare, the progress, the reputation of the church of which I am rector, I have the right. And I intend to exercise it. It becomes my duty, however painful, to tell you, as a member of the Church, wherein you have wronged the Church and wronged yourself.”

He didn’t raise his tone, and there was in it more of sorrow than of indignation. The banker turned an ashen gray . . A moment elapsed before he spoke, a transforming moment. He suddenly became ice.

“Very well,” he said. “I can’t pretend to account for these astounding views you have acquired—and I am using a mild term. Let me say this: (he leaned forward a little, across the desk) I demand that you be specific. I am a busy man, I have little time to waste, I have certain matters—before me which must be attended to to-night. I warn you that I will not listen any longer to vague accusations.”

It was Holder’s turn to marvel. Did Eldon Purr, after all; have no sense of guilt? Instantaneously, automatically, his own anger rose.

“You may be sure, Mr. Parr, that I should not be here unless I were prepared to be specific. And what I am going to say to you I have reserved for your ear alone, in the hope that you will take it to heart, while it is not yet too late, said amend your life accordingly.”

Eldon Parr shifted slightly. His look became inscrutable, was riveted on the rector.

“I shall call your attention first to a man of whom you have probably never heard. He is dead now—he threw himself into the river this summer, with a curse on his lips—I am afraid—a curse against you. A few years ago he lived happily with his wife and child in

a little house on the Grade Suburban, and he had several thousand dollars as a result of careful saving and systematic self-denial.

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“Perhaps you have never thought of the responsibilities of a great name. This man, like thousands of others in the city, idealized you. He looked up to you as the soul of honour, as a self-made man who by his own unaided efforts—as you yourself have just pointed out—rose from a poor boy to a position of power and trust in the community. He saw you a prominent layman in the Church of God. He was dazzled by the brilliancy of your success, inspired by a civilization which—gave such opportunities. He recognized that he himself had not the brains for such an achievement,—his hope and love and ambition were centred in his boy.”

At the word Eldon Parr’s glance was suddenly dulled by pain. He tightened his lips.

“That boy was then of a happy, merry disposition, so the mother says, and every summer night as she cooked supper she used to hear him laughing as he romped in the yard with his father. When I first saw him this summer, it was two days before his father committed suicide. The child was lying, stifled with the heat, in the back room of one of those desolate lodging houses in Dalton Street, and his little body had almost wasted away.

“While I was there the father came in, and when he saw me he was filled with fury. He despised the Church, and St. John’s above all churches, because you were of it; because you who had given so generously to it had wrecked his life. You had shattered his faith in humanity, his ideal. From a normal, contented man he had deteriorated into a monomaniac whom no one would hire, a physical and mental wreck who needed care and nursing. He said he hoped the boy would die.

“And what had happened? The man had bought, with all the money he had in the world, Consolidated Tractions. He had bought it solely because of his admiration for your ability, his faith in your name. It was inconceivable to him that a man of your standing, a public benefactor, a supporter of church and charities, would permit your name to be connected with any enterprise that was not sound and just. Thousands like Garvin lost all they had, while you are still a rich man. It is further asserted that you sold out all your stock at a high price, with the exception of that in the leased lines, which are guaranteed heavy dividends.”

“Have you finished?” demanded Eldon Parr.

“Not quite, on this subject,” replied the rector. “Two nights after that, the man threw himself in the river. His body was pulled out by men on a tugboat, and his worthless stock certificate was in his pocket. It is now in the possession of Mr. Horace Bentley. Thanks to Mr. Bentley, the widow found a temporary home, and the child has almost recovered.”

Hodder paused. His interest had suddenly become concentrated upon the banker’s new demeanour, and he would not have thought it within the range of possibility that a

man could listen to such a revelation concerning himself without the betrayal of some feeling. But so it was,—Eldon Parr had been coldly attentive, save for the one scarcely perceptible tremor when the boy was mentioned. His interrogatory gesture gave the very touch of perfection to this attitude, since it proclaimed him to have listened patiently to a charge so preposterous that a less reasonable man would have cut it short.

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“And what leads you to suppose,” he inquired, “that I am responsible in this matter? What leads you to infer that the Consolidated Tractions Company was not organized in good faith? Do you think that business men are always infallible? The street-car lines of this city were at sixes and sevens, fighting each other; money was being wasted by poor management. The idea behind the company was a public-spirited one, to give the citizens cheaper and better service, by a more modern equipment, by a wider system of transfer. It seems to me, Mr. Hodder, that you put yourself in a more quixotic position than the so-called reformers when you assume that the men who organize a company in good faith are personally responsible for every share of stock that is sold, and for the welfare of every individual who may buy the stock. We force no one to buy it. They do so at their own risk. I myself have thousands of dollars of worthless stock in my safe. I have never complained.”

The full force of Hodder’s indignation went into his reply.

“I am not talking about the imperfect code of human justice under which we live, Mr. Parr,” he cried. “This is not a case in which a court of law may exonerate you, it is between you and your God. But I have taken the trouble to find out, from unquestioned sources, the truth about the Consolidated Tractions Company—I shall not go into the details at length—they are doubtless familiar to you. I know that the legal genius of Mr. Langmaid, one of my vestry, made possible the organization of the company, and thereby evaded the plain spirit of the law of the state. I know that one branch line was bought for two hundred and fifty thousand dollars, and capitalized for three millions, and that most of the others were scandalously over-capitalized. I know that while the coming transaction was still a secret, you and other, gentlemen connected with the matter bought up large interests in other lines, which you proceeded to lease to yourselves at guaranteed dividends which these lines do not earn. I know that the first large dividend was paid out of capital. And the stock which you sold to poor Garvin was so hopelessly watered that it never could have been anything but worthless. If, in spite of these facts, you do not deem yourself responsible for the misery which has been caused, if your conscience is now clear, it is my duty to tell you that there is a higher bar of justice.”

The intensity of the fire of the denunciation had, indeed, a momentary yet visible effect in the banker’s expression. Whatever the emotions thus lashed to self-betrayal, anger, hatred,—fear, perhaps, Hodder could not detect a trace of penitence; and he was aware, on the part of the other, of a supreme, almost spasmodic effort for self-control. The constitutional reluctance of Eldon Parr to fight openly could not have been more clearly demonstrated.

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“Because you are a clergyman, Mr. Hodder,” he began, “because you are the rector of St. John’s, I have allowed you to say things to me which I would not have permitted from any other man. I have tried to take into account your point of view, which is naturally restricted, your pardonable ignorance of what business men, who wish to do their duty by Church and State, have to contend with. When you came to this parish you seemed to have a sensible, a proportional view of things; you were content to confine your activities to your own sphere, content not to meddle with politics and business, which you could, at first hand, know nothing about. The modern desire of clergymen to interfere in these matters has ruined the usefulness of many of them.

“I repeat, I have tried to be patient. I venture to hope, still, that this extraordinary change in you may not be permanent, but merely the result of a natural sympathy with the weak and unwise and unfortunate who are always to be found in a complex civilization. I can even conceive how such a discovery must have shocked you, temporarily aroused your indignation, as a clergyman, against the world as it is—and, I may add, as it has always been. My personal friendship for you, and my interest in your future welfare impel me to make a final appeal to you not to ruin a career which is full of promise.”

The rector did not take advantage of the pause. A purely psychological curiosity hypnotized him to see how far the banker would go in his apparent generosity.

“I once heard you say, I believe, in a sermon, that the Christian religion is a leaven. It is the leaven that softens and ameliorates the hard conditions of life, that makes our relations with our fellow-men bearable. But life is a contest, it is war. It always has been, and always will be. Business is war, commerce is war, both among nations and individuals. You cannot get around it. If a man does not exterminate his rivals they will exterminate him. In other days churches were built and endowed with the spoils of war, and did not disdain the money. To-day they cheerfully accept the support and gifts of business men. I do not accuse them of hypocrisy. It is a recognition on their part that business men, in spite of hard facts, are not unmindful of the spiritual side of life, and are not deaf to the injunction to help others. And when, let me ask you, could you find in the world’s history more splendid charities than are around us to-day? Institutions endowed for medical research, for the conquest of deadly diseases? libraries, hospitals, schools—men giving their fortunes for these things, the fruits of a life’s work so laboriously acquired? Who can say that the modern capitalist is not liberal, is not a public benefactor?

Page 1844

“I dislike being personal, but you have forced it upon me. I dislike to refer to what I have already done in the matter of charities, but I hinted to you awhile ago of a project I have conceived and almost perfected of gifts on a much larger scale than I have ever attempted.” The financier stared at him meaningly. “And I had you in mind as one of the three men whom I should consult, whom I should associate with myself in the matter. We cannot change human nature, but we can better conditions by wise giving. I do not refer now to the settle ment house, which I am ready to help make and maintain as the best in the country, but I have in mind a system to be carried out with the consent and aid of the municipal government, of play-grounds, baths, parks, places of recreation, and hospitals, for the benefit of the people, which will put our city in the very forefront of progress. And I believe, as a practical man, I can convince you that the betterment which you and I so earnestly desire can be brought about in no other way. Agitation can only result in anarchy and misery for all.”

Hodder’s wrath, as he rose from his chair, was of the sort that appears incredibly to add to the physical stature,—the bewildering spiritual wrath which is rare indeed, and carries all before it.

“Don’t tempt me, Mr. Parr!” he said. “Now that I know the truth, I tell you frankly I would face poverty and persecution rather than consent to your offer. And I warn you once more not to flatter yourself that existence ends here, that you will, not be called to answer for every wrong act you have committed in accumulating your fortune, that what you call business is an affair of which God takes no account. What I say may seem foolishness to you, but I tell you, in the words of that Foolishness, that it will not profit you to gain the whole world and lose your own soul. You remind me that the Church in old time accepted gifts from the spoils of war, and I will add of rapine and murder. And the Church to-day, to repeat your own parallel, grows rich with money wrongfully got. Legally? Ah, yes, legally, perhaps. But that will not avail you. And the kind of church you speak of—to which I, to my shame, once consented—Our Lord repudiates. It is none of his. I warn you, Mr. Parr, in his Name, first to make your peace with your brothers before you presume to lay another gift on the altar.”

During this withering condemnation of himself Eldon Parr sat motionless, his face grown livid, an expression on it that continued to haunt Hodder long afterwards. An expression, indeed, which made the banker almost unrecognizable.

“Go,” he whispered, his hand trembling visibly as he pointed towards the door. “Go—I have had enough of this.”

Page 1845

“Not until I have said one thing more,” replied the rector, undaunted. “I have found the woman whose marriage with your son you prevented, whom you bought off and started on the road to hell without any sense of responsibility. You have made of her a prostitute and a drunkard. Whether she can be rescued or not is problematical. She, too, is in Mr. Bentley’s care, a man upon whom you once showed no mercy. I leave Garvin, who has gone to his death, and Kate Marcy and Horace Bentley to your conscience, Mr. Parr. That they are representative of many others, I do not doubt. I tell you solemnly that the whole meaning of life is service to others, and I warn you, before it is too late, to repent and make amends. Gifts will not help you, and charities are of no avail.”

At the reference to Kate Marcy Eldon Parr’s hand dropped to his side. He seemed to have physical difficulty in speaking.

“Ah, you have found that woman!” He leaned an elbow on the desk, he seemed suddenly to have become weary, spent, old. And Hodder, as he watched him, perceived—that his haggard look was directed towards a photograph in a silver frame on the table—a photograph of Preston Parr. At length he broke the silence.

“What would you have had me do?” he asked. “Permit my son to marry a woman of the streets, I suppose. That would have been Christianity, according to your notion. Come now, what world you have done, if your son had been in question?”

A wave of pity swept over the rector.

“Why,” he said, why did you have nothing but cruelty in your heart, and contempt for her? When you saw that she was willing, for the love of the son whom you loved, to give up all that life meant to her, how could you destroy her without a qualm? The crime you committed was that you refused to see God in that woman’s soul, when he had revealed himself to you. You looked for wile, for cunning, for self-seeking,—and they were not there. Love had obliterated them. When you saw how meekly she obeyed you, and agreed to go away, why did you not have pity? If you had listened to your conscience, you would have known what to do.

“I do not say that you should not have opposed the marriage—then. Marriage is not to be lightly entered into. From the moment you went to see her you became responsible for her. You hurled her into the abyss, and she has come back to haunt you. You should have had her educated and cared for—she would have submitted, to any plan you proposed. And if, after a sensible separation, you became satisfied as to her character and development, and your son still wished to marry her, you should have withdrawn your objections.

“As it is, and in consequence of your act, you have lost your son. He left you then, and you have no more control over him.”

“Stop!” cried Eldon Parr, “for God’s sake stop! I won’t stand any more of this. I will not listen to criticism of my life, to strictures on my conduct from you or any other man.” He reached for a book on the corner of his desk—a cheque book.—“You’ll want money for these people, I suppose,” he added brutally. “I will give it, but it must be understood that I do not recognize any right of theirs to demand it.”

Page 1846

For a moment Holder did not trust himself to reply. He looked down across the desk at the financier, who was fumbling with the leaves.

“They do not demand it, Mr. Parr,” he answered, gently. “And I have tried to make it plain to you that you have lost the right to give it. I expected to fail in this. I have failed.”

“What do you mean?” Eldon Parr let the cheque book close.

“I mean what I said,” the rector replied. “That if you would save your soul you must put an end, to-morrow, to the acquisition of money, and devote the rest of your life to an earnest and sincere attempt to make just restitution to those you have wronged. And you must ask the forgiveness of God for your sins. Until you do that, your charities are abominations in his sight. I will not trouble you any longer, except to say that I shall be ready to come to you at any time my presence may be of any help to you.”

The banker did not speak . . . . With a single glance towards the library Holder left the house, but paused for a moment outside to gaze back at it, as it loomed in the darkness against the stars.

CHAPTER XXI

ALISON GOES TO CHURCH

I

On the following Sunday morning the early light filtered into Alison’s room, and she opened her strong eyes. Presently she sprang from her bed and drew back the curtains of the windows, gazing rapturously into the crystal day. The verdure of the Park was freshened to an incredible brilliancy by the dew, a thin white veil of mist was spread over the mirror of the waters, the trees flung long shadows across the turf.

A few minutes later she was out, thrilled by the silence, drawing in deep, breaths of the morning air; lingering by still lakes catching the blue of the sky—a blue that left its stain upon the soul; as the sun mounted she wandered farther, losing herself in the wilderness of the forest.

At eight o’clock, when she returned, there were signs that the city had awakened. A mounted policeman trotted past her as she crossed a gravel drive, and on the tree-flecked stretches, which lately had been empty as Eden, human figures were scattered. A child, with a sailboat that languished for lack of wind, stared at her, first with fascination and wonder in his eyes, and then smiled at her tentatively. She returned the smile with a start.

Children had stared at her like that before now, and for the first time in her life she asked herself what the look might mean. She had never really been fond of them: she had never, indeed, been brought much in contact with them. But now, without warning, a sudden fierce yearning took possession of her: surprised and almost frightened, she stopped irresistibly and looked back at the thin little figure crouched beside the water, to discover that his widened eyes were still upon her. Her own lingered on him shyly, and thus for a moment she hung in doubt whether to flee or stay, her heart throbbing as though she were on the brink of some unknown and momentous adventure. She took a timid step.

Page 1847

“What’s your name?” she asked.

The boy told her.

“What’s yours?” he ventured, still under the charm.

“Alison.”

He had never heard of that name, and said so. They deplored the lack of wind. And presently, still mystified, but gathering courage, he asked her why she blushed, at which her colour deepened.

“I can’t help it,” she told him.

“I like it,” the boy said.

Though the grass was still wet, she got down on her knees in her white skirt, the better to push the boat along the shore: once it drifted beyond their reach, and was only rescued by a fallen branch discovered with difficulty.

The arrival of the boy’s father, an anaemic-looking little man, put an end to their play. He deplored the condition of the lady’s dress.

“It doesn’t matter in the least,” she assured him, and fled in a mood she did not attempt to analyze. Hurrying homeward, she regained her room, bathed, and at half past eight appeared in the big, formal dining-room, from which the glare of the morning light was carefully screened. Her father insisted on breakfasting here; and she found him now seated before the white table-cloth, reading a newspaper. He glanced up at her critically.

“So you’ve decided to honour me this morning,” he said.

“I’ve been out in the Park,” she replied, taking the chair opposite him. He resumed his reading, but presently, as she was pouring out the coffee, he lowered the paper again.

“What’s the occasion to-day?” he asked.

“The occasion?” she repeated, without acknowledging that she had instantly grasped his implication. His eyes were on her gown.

“You are not accustomed, as a rule, to pay much deference to Sunday.”

“Doesn’t the Bible say, somewhere,” she inquired, “that the Sabbath was made for man? Perhaps that may be broadened after a while, to include woman.”

“But you have never been an advocate, so far as I know, of women taking advantage of their opportunity by going to Church.”

“What’s the use,” demanded Alison, “of the thousands of working women spending the best part of the day in the ordinary church, when their feet and hands and heads are aching? Unless some fire is kindled in their souls, it is hopeless for them to try to obtain any benefit from religion—so-called—as it is preached to them in most churches.”

“Fire in their souls!” exclaimed the banker.

“Yes. If the churches offered those who might be leaders among their fellows a practical solution of existence, kindled their self-respect, replaced a life of drudgery by one of inspiration—that would be worth while. But you will never get such a condition as that unless your pulpits are filled by personalities, instead of puppets who are all cast in one mould, and who profess to be there by divine right.”

“I am glad to see at least that you are taking an interest in religious matters,” her father observed, meaningly.

Page 1848

Alison coloured. But she retorted with spirit.

“That is true of a great many persons to-day who are thinking on the subject. If Christianity is a solution of life, people are demanding of the churches that they shall perform their function, and show us how, and why, or else cease to encumber the world.”

Eldon Parr folded up his newspaper.

“So you are going to Church this morning,” he said.

“Yes. At what time will you be ready?”

“At quarter to eleven. But if you are going to St. John’, you will have to start earlier. I’ll order a car at half past ten.”

“Where are you going?” She held her breath, unconsciously, for the answer.

“To Calvary,” he replied coldly, as he rose to leave the room. “But I hesitate to ask you to come,—I am afraid you will not find a religion there that suits you.”

For a moment she could not trust herself to speak. The secret which, ever since Friday evening, she had been burning to learn was disclosed . . . Her father had broken with Mr. Hodder!

“Please don’t order the motor for me,” she said. “I’d rather go in the street cars.”

She sat very still in the empty room, her face burning.

Characteristically, her father had not once mentioned the rector of St. John’s, yet had contrived to imply that her interest in Hodder was greater than her interest in religion. And she was forced to admit, with her customary honesty, that the implication was true.

The numbers who knew Alison Parr casually thought her cold. They admired a certain quality in her work, but they did not suspect that that quality was the incomplete expression of an innate idealism capable of being fanned into flame,—for she was subject to rare but ardent enthusiasms which kindled and transformed her incredibly in the eyes of the few to whom the process had been revealed. She had had even a longer list of suitors than any one guessed; men who—usually by accident—had touched the hidden spring, and suddenly beholding an unimagined woman, had consequently lost their heads. The mistake most of them had made (for subtlety in such affairs is not a masculine trait) was the failure to recognize and continue to present the quality in them which had awakened her. She had invariably discovered the feet of clay.

Thus disillusion had been her misfortune—perhaps it would be more accurate to say her fortune. She had built up, after each invasion, her defences more carefully and solidly than before, only to be again astonished and dismayed by the next onslaught, until at length the question had become insistent—the question of an alliance for purposes of greater security. She had returned to her childhood home to consider it, frankly recognizing it as a compromise, a fall . . . .

Page 1849

And here, in this sanctuary of her reflection, and out of a quarter on which she had set no watch, out of a wilderness which she had believed to hold nothing save the ruined splendours of the past, had come one who, like the traditional figures of the wilderness, had attracted her by his very uncouthness and latent power. And the anomaly he presented in what might be called the vehemence of his advocacy of an outworn orthodoxy, in his occupation of the pulpit of St. John's, had quickened at once her curiosity and antagonism. It had been her sudden discovery, or rather her instinctive suspicion of the inner conflict in him which had set her standard fluttering in response. Once more (for the last time—something whispered—now) she had become the lady of the lists; she sat on her walls watching, with beating heart and straining eyes, the closed helm of her champion, ready to fling down the revived remnant of her faith as prize or forfeit. She had staked all on the hope that he would not lower his lance. . . . .

Saturday had passed in suspense . . . . And now was flooding in on her the certainty that he had not failed her; that he had, with a sublime indifference to a worldly future and success, defied the powers. With indifference, too, to her! She knew, of course, that he loved her. A man with less of greatness would have sought a middle way . . . .

When, at half past ten, she fared forth into the sunlight, she was filled with anticipation, excitement, concern, feelings enhanced and not soothed by the pulsing vibrations of the church bells in the softening air. The swift motion of the electric car was grateful. . . But at length the sight of familiar landmarks, old-fashioned dwellings crowded in between the stores and factories of lower Tower Street, brought back recollections of the days when she had come this way, other Sunday mornings, and in a more leisurely public vehicle, with her mother. Was it possible that she, Alison Parr, were going to church now? Her excitement deepened, and she found it difficult to bring herself to the realization that her destination was a church—the church of her childhood. At this moment she could only think of St. John's as the setting of the supreme drama.

When she alighted at the corner of Burton Street there was the well-remembered, shifting group on the pavement in front of the church porch. How many times, in the summer and winter, in fair weather and cloudy, in rain and sleet and snow had she approached that group, as she approached it now! Here were the people, still, in the midst of whom her earliest associations had been formed, changed, indeed,-but yet the same. No, the change was in her, and the very vastness of that change came as a shock. These had stood still, anchored to their traditions, while she —had she grown? or merely wandered? She had searched, at least, and seen. She had once accepted them—if indeed as a child it could have been said of her that she accepted anything; she had been unable then, at any rate, to bring forward any comparisons.

Page 1850

Now she beheld them, collectively, in their complacent finery, as representing a force, a section of the army blocking the heads of the passes of the world's progress, resting on their arms, but ready at the least uneasy movement from below to man the breastworks, to fling down the traitor from above, to fight fiercely for the solidarity of their order. And Alison even believed herself to detect, by something indefinable in their attitudes as they stood momentarily conversing in lowered voices, an aroused suspicion, an uneasy anticipation. Her imagination went so far as to apprehend, as they greeted her unwonted appearance, that they read in it an addition to other vague and disturbing phenomena. Her colour was high.

"Why, my dear," said Mrs. Atterbury, "I thought you had gone back to New York long ago!"

Beside his mother stood Gordon—more dried up, it seemed, than ever. Alison recalled him, as on this very spot, a thin, pale boy in short trousers, and Mrs. Atterbury a beautiful and controlled young matron associated with St. John's and with children's parties. She was wonderful yet, with her white hair and straight nose, her erect figure still slight. Alison knew that Mrs. Atterbury had never forgiven her for rejecting her son—or rather for being the kind of woman who could reject him.

"Surely you haven't been here all summer?"

Alison admitted it, characteristically, without explanations.

"It seems so natural to see you here at the old church, after all these years," the lady went on, and Alison was aware that Mrs. Atterbury questioned—or rather was at a loss for the motives which had led such an apostate back to the fold. "We must thank Mr. Hodder, I suppose. He's very remarkable. I hear he is resuming the services to-day for the first time since June."

Alison was inclined to read a significance into Mrs. Atterbury's glance at her son, who was clearing his throat.

"But—where is Mr. Parr?" he asked. "I understand he has come back from his cruise."

"Yes, he is back. I came without—him——as you see."

She found a certain satisfaction in adding to the mystification, to the disquietude he betrayed by fidgeting more than usual.

"But—he always comes when he is in town. Business—I suppose—ahem!"

"No," replied Alison, dropping her bomb with cruel precision, "he has gone to Calvary."

The agitation was instantaneous.

“To Calvary!” exclaimed mother and son in one breath.

“Why?” It was Gordon who demanded. “A—a special occasion there—a bishop or something?”

“I’m afraid you must ask him,” she said.

She was delayed on the steps, first by Nan Ferguson, then by the Laureston Greys, and her news outdistanced her to the porch. Charlotte Plimpton looking very red and solid, her eyes glittering with excitement, blocked her way.

“Alison?” she cried, in the slightly nasal voice that was a Gore inheritance, “I’m told your father’s gone to Calvary! Has Mr. Hodder offended him? I heard rumours—Wallis seems to be afraid that something has happened.”

Page 1851

“He hasn’t said anything about it to me, Charlotte,” said Alison, in quiet amusement, “but then he wouldn’t, you know. I don’t live here any longer, and he has no reason to think that I would be interested in church matters.”

“But—why did you come?” Charlotte demanded, with Gore naivete.

Alison smiled.

“You mean—what was my motive?”

Charlotte actually performed the miracle of getting redder. She was afraid of Alison—-much more afraid since she had known of her vogue in the East. When Alison had put into execution the astounding folly (to the Gore mind) of rejecting the inheritance of millions to espouse a profession, it had been Charlotte Plimpton who led the chorus of ridicule and disapproval. But success, to the Charlotte Plimptons, is its own justification, and now her ambition (which had ramifications) was to have Alison “do” her a garden. Incidentally, the question had flashed through her mind as to how much Alison’s good looks had helped towards her triumph in certain shining circles.

“Oh, of course I didn’t mean that,” she hastened to deny, although it was exactly what she had meant. Her curiosity unsatisfied—and not likely to be satisfied at once, she shifted abruptly to the other burning subject. “I was so glad when I learned you hadn’t gone. Grace Larrabbee’s garden is a dream, my dear. Wallis and I stopped there the other day and the caretaker showed it to us. Can’t you make a plan for me, so that I may begin next spring? And there’s something else I wanted to ask you. Wallis and I are going to New York the end of the month. Shall you be there?”

“I don’t know,” said Alison, cautiously.

“We want so much to see one or two of your gardens on Long Island, and especially the Sibleys’, on the Hudson. I know it will be late in the season,—but don’t you think you could take us, Alison? And I intend to give you a dinner. I’ll write you a note. Here’s Wallis.”

“Well, well, well,” said Mr. Plimpton, shaking Alison’s hand. “Where’s father? I hear he’s gone to Calvary.”

Alison made her escape. Inside the silent church, Eleanor Goodrich gave her a smile and a pressure of welcome. Beside her, standing behind the rear pew, were Asa Waring and—Mr. Bentley! Mr. Bentley returned to St. John’s!

“You have come!” Alison whispered.

He understood her. He took her hand in his and looked down into her upturned face.

“Yes, my dear,” he said, “and my girls have come Sally Grover and the others, and some friends from Dalton Street and elsewhere.”

The news, the sound of this old gentleman’s voice and the touch of his hand suddenly filled her with a strange yet sober happiness. Asa Waring, though he had not overheard, smiled at her too, as in sympathy. His austere face was curiously illuminated, and she knew instinctively that in some way he shared her happiness. Mr. Bentley had come back! Yes, it was an augury. From childhood she had always admired Asa Waring, and now she felt a closer tie . . . .

Page 1852

She reached the pew, hesitated an instant, and slipped forward on her knees. Years had gone by since she had prayed, and even now she made no attempt to translate into words the intensity of her yearning—for what? Hodder's success, for one thing,—and by success she meant that he might pursue an unfaltering course. True to her temperament, she did not look for the downfall of the forces opposed to him. She beheld him persecuted, yet unyielding, and was thus lifted to an exaltation that amazed. . . If he could do it, such a struggle must sorely have an ultimate meaning! Thus she found herself, trembling, on the borderland of faith. . .

She arose, bewildered, her pulses beating. And presently glancing about, she took in that the church was fuller than she ever remembered having seen it, and the palpitating suspense she felt seemed to pervade, as it were, the very silence. With startling abruptness, the silence was broken by the tones of the great organ that rolled and reverberated among the arches; distant voices took up the processional; the white choir filed past,—first the treble voices of the boys, then the deeper notes of the—men,—-turned and mounted the chancel steps, and then she saw Hodder. Her pew being among the first, he passed very near her. Did he know she would be there? The sternness of his profile told her nothing. He seemed at that moment removed, set apart, consecrated—this was the word that came to her, and yet she was keenly conscious of his presence.

Tingling, she found herself repeating, inwardly, two, lines of the hymn

> "Lay hold on life, and it shall be
> Thy joy and crown eternally."

"Lay hold on life!"

The service began,—the well-remembered, beautiful appeal and prayers which she could still repeat, after a lapse of time, almost by heart; and their music and rhythm, the simple yet magnificent language in which. they were clothed—her own language—-awoke this morning a racial instinct strong in her,—she had not known how strong. Or was it something in Hodder's voice that seemed to illumine the ancient words with a new meaning? Raising her eyes to the chancel she studied his head, and found in it still another expression of that race, the history of which had been one of protest, of development of its own character and personality. Her mind went back to her first talk with him, in the garden, and she saw how her intuition had recognized in him then the spirit of a people striving to assert itself.

She stood with tightened lips, during the Apostles' Creed, listening to his voice as it rose, strong and unfaltering, above the murmur of the congregation.

At last she saw him swiftly crossing the chancel, mounting the pulpit steps, and he towered above her, a dominant figure, his white surplice sharply outlined against the

dark stone of the pillar. The hymn died away, the congregation sat down. There was a sound in the church, expectant, presaging, like the stirring of leaves at the first breath of wind, and then all was silent.

Page 1853

II

He had preached for an hour—longer, perhaps. Alison could not have said how long. She had lost all sense of time.

No sooner had the text been spoken, “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God,” than she seemed to catch a fleeting glimpse of an hitherto unimagined Personality. Hundreds of times she had heard those words, and they had been as meaningless to her as to Nicodemus. But now—now something was brought home to her of the magnificent certainty with which they must first have been spoken, of the tone and bearing and authority of him who had uttered them. Was Christ like that? And could it be a Truth, after all, a truth only to be grasped by one who had experienced it?

It was in vain that man had tried to evade this, the supreme revelation of Jesus Christ, had sought to substitute ceremonies and sacrifices for spiritual rebirth. It was in vain that the Church herself had, from time to time, been inclined to compromise. St. Paul, once the strict Pharisee who had laboured for the religion of works, himself had been reborn into the religion of the Spirit. It was Paul who had liberated that message of rebirth, which the world has been so long in grasping, from the narrow bounds of Palestine and sent it ringing down the ages to the democracies of the twentieth century.

And even Paul, though not consciously inconsistent, could not rid himself completely of that ancient, automatic, conception of religion which the Master condemned, but had on occasions attempted fruitlessly to unite the new with the old. And thus, for a long time, Christianity had been wrongly conceived as history, beginning with what to Paul and the Jews was an historical event, the allegory of the Garden of Eden, the fall of Adam, and ending with the Jewish conception of the Atonement. This was a rationalistic and not a spiritual religion.

The miracle was not the vision, whatever its nature, which Saul beheld on the road to Damascus. The miracle was the result of that vision, the man reborn. Saul, the persecutor of Christians, become Paul, who spent the rest of his days, in spite of persecution and bodily infirmities, journeying tirelessly up and down the Roman Empire, preaching the risen Christ, and labouring more abundantly than they all! There was no miracle in the New Testament more wonderful than this.

The risen Christ! Let us not trouble ourselves about the psychological problems involved, problems which the first century interpreted in its own simple way. Modern, science has taught us this much, at least, that we have by no means fathomed the limits even of a transcendent personality. If proofs of the Resurrection and Ascension were demanded, let them be spiritual proofs, and there could be none more convincing than

the life of the transformed Saul, who had given to the modern, western world the message of salvation . . . .

Page 1854

That afternoon, as Alison sat motionless on a distant hillside of the Park, gazing across the tree-dotted, rolling country to the westward, she recalled the breathless silence in the church when he had reached this point and paused, looking down at the congregation. By the subtle transmission of thought, of feeling which is characteristic at dramatic moments of bodies of people, she knew that he had already contrived to stir them to the quick. It was not so much that these opening words might have been startling to the strictly orthodox, but the added fact that Hodder had uttered them. The sensation in the pews, as Alison interpreted it and exulted over it, was one of bewildered amazement that this was their rector, the same man who had preached to them in June. Like Paul, of whom he spoke, he too was transformed, had come to his own, radiating a new power that seemed to shine in his face.

Still agitated, she considered that discourse now in her solitude, what it meant for him, for her, for the Church and civilization that a clergyman should have had the courage to preach it. He himself had seemed unconscious of any courage; had never once—she recalled—been sensational. He had spoken simply, even in the intensest moments of denunciation. And she wondered now how he had managed, without stripping himself, without baring the intimate, sacred experiences of his own soul, to convey to them, so nobly, the change which had taken place in him....

He began by referring to the hope with which he had come to St. John's, and the gradual realization that the church was a failure—a dismal failure when compared to the high ideal of her Master. By her fruits she should be known and judged. From the first he had contemplated, with a heavy heart, the sin and misery at their very gates. Not three blocks distant children were learning vice in the streets, little boys of seven and eight, underfed and anaemic, were driven out before dawn to sell newspapers, little girls thrust forth to haunt the saloons and beg, while their own children were warmed and fed. While their own daughters were guarded, young women in Dayton Street were forced to sell themselves into a life which meant slow torture, inevitable early death. Hopeless husbands and wives were cast up like driftwood by the cruel, resistless flood of modern civilization—the very civilization which yielded their wealth and luxury. The civilization which professed the Spirit of Christ, and yet was pitiless.

He confessed to them that for a long time he had been blind to the truth, had taken the inherited, unchristian view that the disease which caused vice and poverty might not be cured, though its ulcers might be alleviated. He had not, indeed, clearly perceived and recognized the disease. He had regarded Dalton Street in a very special sense as a reproach to St. John's, but now he saw that all such neighbourhoods were in reality a reproach to the city, to the state, to the

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nation. True Christianity and Democracy were identical, and the congregation of St. John's, as professed Christians and citizens, were doubly responsible, inasmuch as they not only made no protest or attempt to change a government which permitted the Dalton Streets to exist, but inasmuch also as,—directly or indirectly,—they derived a profit from conditions which were an abomination to God. It would be but an idle mockery for them to go and build a settlement house, if they did not first reform their lives.

Here there had been a decided stir among the pews. Hodder had not seemed to notice it.

When he, their rector, had gone to Dalton Street to invite the poor and wretched into God's Church, he was met by the scornful question: "Are the Christians of the churches any better than we? Christians own the grim tenements in which we live, the saloons and brothels by which we are surrounded, which devour our children. Christians own the establishments which pay us starvation wages; profit by politics, and take toll from our very vice; evade the laws and reap millions, while we are sent to jail. Is their God a God who will lift us out of our misery and distress? Are their churches for the poor? Are not the very pews in which they sit as closed to us as their houses?"

"I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot. I would thou wert cold or hot."

One inevitable conclusion of such a revelation was that he had not preached to them the vital element of Christianity. And the very fact that his presentation of religion had left many indifferent or dissatisfied was proof-positive that he had dwelt upon non-essentials, laid emphasis upon the mistaken interpretations of past ages. There were those within the Church who were content with this, who—like the Pharisees of old—-welcomed a religion which did not interfere with their complacency, with their pursuit of pleasure and wealth, with their special privileges; welcomed a Church which didn't raise her voice against the manner of their lives—against the order, the Golden Calf which they had set up, which did not accuse them of deliberately retarding the coming of the Kingdom of God.

Ah, that religion was not religion, for religion was a spiritual, not a material affair. In that religion, vainly designed by man as a compromise between God and Mammon, there was none of the divine discontent of the true religion of the Spirit, no need of the rebirth of the soul. And those who held it might well demand, with Nicodemus and the rulers of the earth, "How can these things be?"

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And there were others who still lingered in the Church, perplexed and wistful, who had come to him and confessed that the so-called catholic acceptance of divine truths, on which he had hitherto dwelt, meant nothing to them. To these, in particular, he owed a special reparation, and he took this occasion to announce a series of Sunday evening sermons on the Creeds. So long as the Creeds remained in the Prayer Book it was his duty to interpret them in terms not only of modern thought, but in harmony with the real significance of the Person and message of Jesus Christ. Those who had come to him questioning, he declared, were a thousand times right in refusing to accept the interpretations of other men, the consensus of opinion of more ignorant ages, expressed in an ancient science and an archaic philosophy.

And what should be said of the vast and ever increasing numbers of those not connected with the Church, who had left it or were leaving it? and of the less fortunate to whose bodily wants they had been ministering in the parish house, for whom it had no spiritual message, and who never entered its doors? The necessity of religion, of getting in touch with, of dependence on the Spirit of the Universe was inherent in man, and yet there were thousands—nay, millions in the nation to-day in whose hearts was an intense and unsatisfied yearning, who perceived no meaning in life, no Cause for which to work, who did not know what Christianity was, who had never known what it was, who wist not where to turn to find out. Education had brought many of them to discern, in the Church's teachings, an anachronistic medley of myths and legends, of theories of schoolmen and theologians, of surviving pagan superstitions which could not be translated into life. They saw, in Christianity, only the adulterations of the centuries. If any one needed a proof of the yearning people felt, let him go to the bookshops, or read in the publishers' lists to-day the announcements of books on religion. There was no supply where there was no demand.

Truth might no longer be identified with Tradition, and the day was past when councils and synods might determine it for all mankind. The era of forced acceptance of philosophical doctrines and dogmas was past, and that of freedom, of spiritual rebirth, of vicarious suffering, of willing sacrifice and service for a Cause was upon them. That cause was Democracy. Christ was uniquely the Son of God because he had lived and suffered and died in order to reveal to the world the meaning of this life and of the hereafter—the meaning not only for the individual, but for society as well. Nothing might be added to or subtracted from that message—it was complete.

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True faith was simply trusting—trusting that Christ gave to the world the revelation of God's plan. And the Saviour himself had pointed out the proof: "If any man do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak for myself." Christ had repeatedly rebuked those literal minds which had demanded material evidence: true faith spurned it, just as true friendship, true love between man and man, true trust scorned a written bond. To paraphrase St. James's words, faith without trust is dead—because faith without trust is impossible. God is a Spirit, only to be recognized in the Spirit, and every one of the Saviour's utterances were—not of the flesh, of the man—but of the Spirit within him. "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father;" and "Why callest thou me good? none is good save one, that is, God." The Spirit, the Universal Meaning of Life, incarnate in the human Jesus.

To be born again was to overcome our spiritual blindness, and then, and then only, we might behold the spirit shining in the soul of Christ. That proof had sufficed for Mark, had sufficed for the writer of the sublime Fourth Gospel, had sufficed for Paul. Let us lift this wondrous fact, once and for all, out of the ecclesiastical setting and incorporate it into our lives. Nor need the hearts of those who seek the Truth, who fear not to face it, be troubled if they be satisfied, from the Gospels, that the birth of Jesus was not miraculous. The physical never could prove the spiritual, which was the real and everlasting, which no discovery in science or history can take from us. The Godship of Christ rested upon no dogma, it was a conviction born into us with the new birth. And it becomes an integral part of our personality, our very being.

The secret, then, lay in a presentation of the divine message which would convince and transform and electrify those who heard it to action—a presentation of the message in terms which the age could grasp. That is what Paul had done, he had drawn his figures boldly from the customs of the life of his day, but a more or less intimate knowledge of these ancient customs were necessary before modern men and women could understand those figures and parallels. And the Church must awake to her opportunities, to her perception of the Cause. . . .

What, then, was the function, the mission of the Church Universal? Once she had laid claim to temporal power, believed herself to be the sole agency of God on earth, had spoken ex cathedra on philosophy, history, theology, and science, had undertaken to confer eternal bliss and to damn forever. Her members, and even her priests, had gone from murder to mass and from mass to murder, and she had engaged in cruel wars and persecutions to curtail the liberties of mankind. Under that conception religion was a form of insurance of the soul. Perhaps a common, universal belief had been necessary in the dark ages before the sublime

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idea of education for the masses had come; but the Church herself —through ignorance —had opposed the growth of education, had set her face sternly against the development of the individual, which Christ had taught, the privilege of man to use the faculties of the intellect which God had bestowed upon him. He himself, their rector, had advocated a catholic acceptance, though much modified from the mediaeval acceptance, —one that professed to go behind it to an earlier age. Yes, he must admit with shame that he had been afraid to trust where God trusted, had feared to confide the working out of the ultimate Truth of the minds of the millions.

The Church had been monarchical in form, and some strove stubbornly and blindly to keep her monarchical. Democracy in government was outstripping her. Let them look around, to-day, and see what was happening in the United States of America. A great movement was going on to transfer actual participation in government from the few to the many, —a movement towards true Democracy, and that was precisely what was about to happen in the Church. Her condition at present was one of uncertainty, transition—she feared to let go wholly of the old, she feared to embark upon the new. Just as the conservatives and politicians feared to give up the representative system, the convention, so was she afraid to abandon the synod, the council, and trust to man.

The light was coming slowly, the change, the rebirth of the Church by gradual evolution. By the grace of God those who had laid the foundations of the Church in which he stood, of all Protestantism, had built for the future. The racial instinct in them had asserted itself, had warned them that to suppress freedom in religion were to suppress it in life, to paralyze that individual initiative which was the secret of their advancement.

The new Church Universal, then, would be the militant, aggressive body of the reborn, whose mission it was to send out into the life of the nation transformed men and women who would labour unremittingly for the Kingdom of God. Unity would come—but unity in freedom, true Catholicity. The truth would gradually pervade the masses—be wrought out by them. Even the great evolutionary forces of the age, such as economic necessity, were acting to drive divided Christianity into consolidation, and the starving churches of country villages were now beginning to combine.

No man might venture to predict the details of the future organization of the united Church, although St. Paul himself had sketched it in broad outline: every worker, lay and clerical, labouring according to his gift, teachers, executives, ministers, visitors, missionaries, healers of sick and despondent souls. But the supreme function of the Church was to inspire—to inspire individuals to willing service for the cause, the Cause of Democracy, the fellowship of mankind. If she failed to inspire, the Church would wither and perish. And therefore she must revive again the race of inspirers, prophets, modern Apostles to whom this gift was given, going on their rounds, awaking cities and arousing whole country-sides.

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But whence—it might be demanded by the cynical were the prophets to come? Prophets could not be produced by training and education; prophets must be born. Reborn,—that was the word. Let the Church have faith. Once her Cause were perceived, once her whole energy were directed towards its fulfilment, the prophets would arise, out of the East and out of the West, to stir mankind to higher effort, to denounce fearlessly the shortcomings and evils of the age. They had not failed in past ages, when the world had fallen into hopelessness, indifference, and darkness. And they would not fail now.

Prophets were personalities, and Phillips Brooks himself a prophet—had defined personality as a conscious relationship with God. “All truth,” he had said, “comes to the world through personality.” And down the ages had come an Apostolic Succession of personalities. Paul, Augustine, Francis, Dante, Luther, Milton,—yes, and Abraham Lincoln, and Phillips Brooks, whose Authority was that of the Spirit, whose light had so shone before men that they had glorified the Father which was in heaven; the current of whose Power had so radiated, in ever widening circles, as to make incandescent countless other souls.

And which among them would declare that Abraham Lincoln, like Stephen, had not seen his Master in the sky?

The true prophet, the true apostle, then, was one inspired and directed by the Spirit, the laying on of hands was but a symbol,—the symbol of the sublime truth that one personality caught fire from another. Let the Church hold fast to that symbol, as an acknowledgment, a reminder of a supreme mystery. Tradition had its value when it did not deteriorate into superstition, into the mechanical, automatic transmission characteristic of the mediaeval Church, for the very suggestion of which Peter had rebuked Simon in Samaria. For it would be remembered that Simon had said: “Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost.”

The true successor to the Apostles must be an Apostle himself.

Jesus had seldom spoken literally, and the truths he sought to impress upon the world had of necessity been clothed in figures and symbols,—for spiritual truths might be conveyed in no other way. The supreme proof of his Godship, of his complete knowledge of the meaning of life was to be found in his parables. To the literal, material mind, for example, the parable of the talents was merely an unintelligible case of injustice.... What was meant by the talents? They were opportunities for service. Experience taught us that when we embraced one opportunity, one responsibility, the acceptance of it invariably led to another, and so the servant who had five talents, five opportunities, gained ten. The servant who had two gained two more. But the servant of whom only one little service was asked refused that, and was cast into outer darkness, to witness another performing the task which should have been his. Hell,

here and hereafter, was the spectacle of wasted opportunity, and there is no suffering to compare to it.

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The crime, the cardinal sin was with those who refused to serve, who shut their eyes to the ideal their Lord had held up, who strove to compromise with Jesus Christ himself, to twist and torture his message to suit their own notions as to how life should be led; to please God and Mammon at the same time, to bind Christ's Church for their comfort and selfish convenience. Of them it was written, that they shut up the Kingdom of Heaven against men; for they neither go in themselves, neither suffer them that are entering to go in. Were these any better than the people who had crucified the Lord for his idealism, and because he had not brought them the material Kingdom for which they longed?

That servant who had feared to act, who had hid his talent in the ground, who had said unto his lord, "I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hadst not sown," was the man without faith, the atheist who sees only cruelty and indifference in the order of things, who has no spiritual sight. But to the other servants it was said, "Thou halt been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things. Enter thou into the joy of thy lord."

The meaning of life, then, was service, and by life our Lord did not mean mere human existence, which is only a part of life. The Kingdom of heaven is a state, and may begin here. And that which we saw around us was only one expression of that eternal life—a medium to work through, towards God. All was service, both here and hereafter, and he that had not discovered that the joy of service was the only happiness worth living for could have no conception of the Kingdom. To those who knew, there was no happiness like being able to say, "I have found my place in God's plan, I am of use." Such was salvation . . . .

And in the parable of the Prodigal Son may be read the history of what are known as the Protestant nations. What happens logically when the individual is suddenly freed from the restraint of external authority occurred when Martin Luther released the vital spark of Christianity, which he got from Paul, and from Christ himself—the revelation of individual responsibility, that God the Spirit would dwell, by grace, in the individual soul. Ah, we had paid a terrible yet necessary price for freedom. We had wandered far from the Father, we had been reduced to the very husks of individualism, become as swine. We beheld around us, to-day, selfishness, ruthless competition, as great contrasts between misery and luxury as in the days of the Roman Empire. But should we, for that reason, return to the leading-strings of authority? Could we if we would? A little thought ought to convince us that the liberation of the individual could not be revoked, that it had forever destroyed the power of authority to carry conviction. To go back to the Middle Ages would be to deteriorate and degenerate. No, we must go on. . . .

Page 1861

Luther's movement, in religion, had been the logical forerunner of democracy, of universal suffrage in government, the death-knell of that misinterpretation of Christianity as the bulwark of monarchy and hierarchy had been sounded when he said, "Ich kann nicht anders!" The new Republic founded on the western continent had announced to the world the initiation of the transfer of Authority to the individual soul. God, the counterpart of the King, the ruler in a high heaven of a flat terrestrial expanse, outside of the world, was now become the Spirit of a million spheres, the indwelling spirit in man. Democracy and the religion of Jesus Christ both consisted in trusting the man—yes, and the woman—whom God trusts. Christianity was individualism carried beyond philosophy into religion, and the Christian, the ideal citizen of the democracy, was free since he served not because he had to, but because he desired to of his own will, which, paradoxically, is God's will. God was in politics, to the confusion of politicians; God in government. And in some greater and higher sense than we had yet perceived, the saying 'vox populi vox dei' was eternally true. He entered into the hearts of people and moved them, and so the world progressed. It was the function of the Church to make Christians, until—when the Kingdom of God should come—the blending should be complete. Then Church and State would be identical, since all the members of the one would be the citizens of the other . . . .

"I will arise and go to my father." Rebirth! A sense of responsibility, of consecration. So we had come painfully through our materialistic individualism, through our selfish Protestantism, to a glimpse of the true Protestantism—Democracy.

Our spiritual vision was glowing clearer. We were beginning to perceive that charity did not consist in dispensing largesse after making a fortune at the expense of one's fellow-men; that there was something still wrong in a government that permits it. It was gradually becoming plain to us, after two thousand years, that human bodies and souls rotting in tenements were more valuable than all the forests on all the hills; that government, Christian government, had something to do with these.

We should embody, in government, those sublime words of the Master, "Suffer little children to come unto me." And the government of the future would care for the little children. We were beginning to do it. Here, as elsewhere, Christianity and reason went hand in hand, for the child became the man who either preyed on humanity and filled the prisons and robbed his fellows, or else grew into a useful, healthy citizen. It was nothing less than sheer folly as well as inhuman cruelty to let the children sleep in crowded, hot rooms, reeking with diseases, and run wild throughout the long summer, learning vice in the city streets. And we still had slavery—economic slavery—yes, and the more horrible slavery of women and young girls in vice—as much a concern of government as the problem which had confronted it in 1861 . . . . We were learning that there was something infinitely more sacred than property . . . .

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And now Alison recalled, only to be thrilled again by an electric sensation she had never before experienced with such intensity, the look of inspiration on the preacher's face as he closed. The very mists of the future seemed to break before his importuning gaze, and his eyes seemed indeed to behold, against the whitening dawn of the spiritual age he predicted, the slender spires of a new Church sprung from the foundations of the old. A Church, truly catholic, tolerant, whose portals were wide in welcome to all mankind. The creative impulse, he had declared, was invariably religious, the highest art but the expression of the mute yearnings of a people, of a race. Thus had once arisen, all over Europe, those wonderful cathedrals which still cast their spell upon the world, and art to-day would respond—was responding —to the unutterable cravings of mankind, would strive once more to express in stone and glass and pigment what nations felt. Generation after generation would labour with unflagging zeal until the art sculptured fragment of the new Cathedral—the new Cathedral of Democracy —pointed upward toward the blue vault of heaven. Such was his vision —God the Spirit, through man reborn, carrying out his great Design . . .

CHAPTER XXII

"*Which say to the seers*, *see not*"

I

As Alison arose from her knees and made her way out of the pew, it was the expression on Charlotte Plimpton's face which brought her back once more to a sense of her surroundings; struck her, indeed, like a physical blow. The expression was a scandalized one. Mrs. Plimpton had moved towards her, as if to speak, but Alison hurried past, her exaltation suddenly shattered, replaced by a rising tide of resentment, of angry amazement against a materialism so solid as to remain unshaken by the words which had so uplifted her. Eddies were forming in the aisle as the people streamed slowly out of the church, and snatches of their conversation, in undertones, reached her ears.

"I should never have believed it!"

"Mr. Hodder, of all men. . ."

"The bishop!"

Outside the swinging doors, in the vestibule, the voices were raised a little, and she found her path blocked.

"It's incredible!" she heard Gordon Atterbury saying to little Everett Constable, who was listening gloomily.

“Sheer Unitarianism, socialism, heresy.”

His attention was forcibly arrested by Alison, in whose cheeks bright spots of colour burned. He stepped aside, involuntarily, apologetically, as though he had instinctively read in her attitude an unaccountable disdain. Everett Constable bowed uncertainly, for Alison scarcely noticed them.

“Ahem!” said Gordon, nervously, abandoning his former companion and joining her, “I was just saying, it’s incredible—”

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She turned on him.

“It is incredible,” she cried, “that persons who call themselves Christians cannot recognize their religion when they hear it preached.”

He gave back before her, visibly, in an astonishment which would have been ludicrous but for her anger. He had never understood her—such had been for him her greatest fascination;—and now she was less comprehensible than ever. The time had been when he would cheerfully have given over his hope of salvation to have been able to stir her. He had never seen her stirred, and the sight of her even now in this condition was uncomfortably agitating. Of all things, an heretical sermon would appear to have accomplished this miracle!

“Christianity!” he stammered.

“Yes, Christianity.” Her voice tingled. “I don’t pretend to know much about it, but Mr. Hodder has at least made it plain that it is something more than dead dogmas, ceremonies, and superstitions.”

He would have said something, but her one thought was to escape, to be alone. These friends of her childhood were at that moment so distasteful as to have become hateful. Some one laid a hand upon her arm.

“Can’t we take you home, Alison? I don’t see your motor.”

It was Mrs. Constable.

“No, thanks—I’m going to walk,” Alison answered, yet something in Mrs. Constable’s face, in Mrs. Constable’s voice, made her pause. Something new, something oddly sympathetic. Their eyes met, and Alison saw that the other woman’s were tired, almost haggard—yet understanding.

“Mr. Hodder was right—a thousand times right, my dear,” she said.

Alison could only stare at her, and the crimson in the bright spots of her cheeks spread over her face. Why had Mrs. Constable supposed that she would care to hear the sermon praised? But a second glance put her in possession of the extraordinary fact that Mrs. Constable herself was profoundly moved.

“I knew he would change,” she went on, “I have seen for some time that he was too big a man not to change. But I had no conception that he would have such power, and such courage, as he has shown this morning. It is not only that he dared to tell us what we were—smaller men might have done that, and it is comparatively easy to denounce. But he has the vision to construct, he is a seer himself—he has really made me see what Christianity is. And as long as I live I shall never forget those closing sentences.”

“And now?” asked Alison. “And now what will happen?”

Mrs. Constable changed colour. Her tact, on which she prided herself, had deserted her in a moment of unlooked-for emotion.

“Oh, I know that my father and the others will try to put him out—but can they?” Alison asked.

It was Mrs. Constable’s turn to stare. The head she suddenly and impulsively put forth trembled on Alison’s wrist.

“I don’t know, Alison—I’m afraid they can. It is too terrible to think about. . . . And they can’t—they won’t believe that many changes are coming, that this is but one of many signs. . . Do come and see me.”

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Alison left her, marvelling at the passage between them, and that, of all persons in the congregation of St. John's, the lightning should have struck Mrs. Constable. . .

Turning to the right on Burton Street, she soon found herself walking rapidly westward through deserted streets lined by factories and warehouses, and silent in the Sabbath calm . . . . She thought of Hodder, she would have liked to go to him in that hour . . . .

In Park Street, luncheon was half over, and Nelson Langmaid was at the table with her father. The lawyer glanced at her curiously as she entered the room, and his usual word of banter, she thought, was rather lame. The two went on, for some time, discussing a railroad suit in Texas. And Alison, as she hurried through her meal, leaving the dishes almost untouched, scarcely heard them. Once, in her reverie, her thoughts reverted to another Sunday when Hodder had sat, an honoured guest, in the chair which Mr. Langmaid now occupied . . . .

It was not until they got up from the table that her father turned to her.

"Did you have a good sermon?" he asked.

It was the underlying note of challenge to which she responded.

"The only good sermon I have ever heard."

Their eyes met. Langmaid looked down at the tip of his cigar.

"Mr. Hodder," said Eldon Parr, "is to be congratulated."

II

Hodder, when the service was over, had sought the familiar recess in the robing-room, the words which he himself had spoken still ringing in his ears. And then he recalled the desperate prayer with which he had entered the pulpit, that it might be given him in that hour what to say: the vivid memories of the passions and miseries in Dalton Street, the sudden, hot response of indignation at the complacency confronting him. His voice had trembled with anger . . . . He remembered, as he had paused in his denunciation of these who had eyes and saw not, meeting the upturned look of Alison Parr, and his anger had turned to pity for their blindness—which once had been his own; and he had gone on and on, striving to interpret for them his new revelation of the message of the Saviour, to impress upon them the dreadful yet sublime meaning of life eternal. And it was in that moment the vision of the meaning of the evolution of his race, of the Prodigal turning to responsibility—of which he once had had a glimpse—had risen before his eyes in its completeness—the guiding hand of God in history! The Spirit in these complacent souls, as yet unstirred . . . .

So complete, now, was his forgetfulness of self, of his future, of the irrevocable consequences of the step he had taken, that it was only gradually he became aware that some one was standing near him, and with a start he recognized McCrae.

“There are some waiting to speak to ye,” his assistant said.

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“Oh!” Hodder exclaimed. He began, mechanically, to divest himself of his surplice. McCrae stood by.

“I’d like to say a word, first—if ye don’t mind—” he began.

The rector looked at him quickly.

“I’d like just to thank ye for that sermon—I can say no more now,” said McCrae; he turned away, and left the room abruptly.

This characteristic tribute from the inarticulate, loyal Scotchman left him tingling . . . . He made his way to the door and saw the people in the choir room, standing silently, in groups, looking toward him. Some one spoke to him, and he recognized Eleanor Goodrich.

“We couldn’t help coming, Mr. Hodder—just to tell you how much we admire you. It was wonderful, what you said.”

He grew hot with gratitude, with thankfulness that there were some who understood—-and that this woman was among them, and her husband . . . Phil Goodrich took him by the hand.

“I can understand that kind of religion,” he said. “And, if necessary, I can fight for it. I have come to enlist.”

“And I can understand it, too,” added the sunburned Evelyn. “I hope you will let me help.”

That was all they said, but Hodder understood. Eleanor Goodrich’s eyes were dimmed as she smiled an her sister and her husband—a smile that bespoke the purest quality of pride. And it was then, as they made way for others, that the full value of their allegiance was borne in upon him, and he grasped the fact that the intangible barrier which had separated him from them had at last been broken down: His look followed the square shoulders and aggressive, close-cropped head of Phil Goodrich, the firm, athletic figure of Evelyn, who had represented to him an entire class of modern young women, vigorous, athletic, with a scorn of cant in which he secretly sympathized, hitherto frankly untouched by spiritual interests of any sort. She had, indeed, once bluntly told him that church meant nothing to her . . . .

In that little company gathered in the choir room were certain members of his congregation whom, had he taken thought, he would least have expected to see. There were Mr. and Mrs. Bradley, an elderly couple who had attended St. John’s for thirty years; and others of the same unpretentious element of his parish who were finding in modern life an increasingly difficult and bewildering problem. There was little Miss Tallant, an assiduous guild worker whom he had thought the most orthodox of persons;

Miss Ramsay, who taught the children of the Italian mothers; Mr. Carton, the organist, a professed free-thinker, with whom Hodder had had many a futile argument; and Martha Preston, who told him that he had made her think about religion seriously for the first time in her life.

And there were others, types equally diverse. Young men of the choir, and others whom he had never seen, who informed him shyly that they would come again, and bring their friends . . . .

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And all the while, in the background, Hodder had been aware of a familiar face—Horace Bentley's. Beside him, when at length he drew near, was his friend Asa Waring—a strangely contrasted type. The uncompromising eyes of a born leader of men flashed from beneath the heavy white eyebrows, the button of the Legion of Honour gleaming in his well-kept coat seemed emblematic of the fire which in his youth had driven him forth to fight for the honour of his country—a fire still undimmed. It was he who spoke first.

"This is a day I never expected to see, Mr. Hodder," he said, "for it has brought back to this church the man to whom it owes its existence. Mr. Bentley did more, by his labour and generosity, his true Christianity, his charity and his wisdom, for St. John's than any other individual. It is you who have brought him back, and I wish personally to express my gratitude."

Mr. Bentley, in mild reproof, laid his hand upon the t, shoulder of his old friend.

"Ah, Asa," he protested, "you shouldn't say such things."

"Had it not been for Mr. Bentley," Hodder explained, "I should not be here to-day."

Asa Waring pierced the rector with his eye, appreciating the genuine feeling with which these words were spoken. And yet his look contained a question.

"Mr. Bentley," Hodder added, "has been my teacher this summer."

The old gentleman's hand trembled a little on the goldheaded stick.

"It is a matter of more pride to me than I can express, sir, that you are the rector of this church with which my most cherished memories are associated," he said. "But I cannot take any part of the credit you give me for the splendid vision which you have raised up before us to-day, for your inspired interpretation of history, of the meaning of our own times. You have moved me, you have given me more hope and courage than I have had for many a long year—and I thank you, Mr. Hodder. I am sure that God will prosper and guide you in what you have so nobly undertaken."

Mr. Bentley turned away, walking towards the end of the room . . . . Asa Waring broke the silence.

"I didn't know that you knew him, that you had seen what he is doing —what he has done in this city. I cannot trust myself, Mr. Hodder, to speak of Horace Bentley's life. . . I feel too strongly on the subject. I have watched, year by year, this detestable spirit of greed, this lust for money and power creeping over our country, corrupting our people and institutions, and finally tainting the Church itself. You have raised your voice against it, and I respect and honour and thank you for it, the more because you have done it without resorting to sensation, and apparently with no thought of yourself. And,

incidentally, you have explained the Christian religion to me as I have never had it explained in my life.

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“I need not tell you you have made enemies—powerful ones. I can see that you are a man, and that you are prepared for them. They will leave no stone unturned, will neglect no means to put you out and disgrace you. They will be about your ears to-morrow—this afternoon, perhaps. I need not remind you that the outcome is doubtful. But I came here to assure you of my friendship and support in all you hope to accomplish in making the Church what it should be. In any event, what you have done to-day will be productive of everlasting good.”

In a corner still lingered the group which Mr. Bentley had joined. And Hodder, as he made his way towards it, recognized the faces of some of those who composed it. Sally Grower was there, and the young women who lived in Mr. Bentley’s house, and others whose acquaintance he had made during the summer. Mrs. Garvin had brought little Dicky, incredibly changed from the wan little figure he had first beheld in the stifling back room in Dalton Street; not yet robust, but freckled and tanned by the country sun and wind. The child, whom he had seen constantly in the interval, ran forward joyfully, and Hodder bent down to take his hand....

These were his friends, emblematic of the new relationship in which he stood to mankind. And he owed them to Horace Bentley! He wondered, as he greeted them, whether they knew what their allegiance meant to him in this hour. But it sufficed that they claimed him as their own.

Behind them all stood Kate Marcy. And it struck him for the first time, as he gazed at her earnestly, how her appearance had changed. She gave him a frightened, bewildered look, as though she were unable to identify him now with the man she had known in the Dalton Street flat, in the restaurant. She was still struggling, groping, wondering, striving to accustom herself to the higher light of another world.

“I wanted to come,” she faltered. “Sally Grower brought me. . . "

Hodder went back with them to Dalton Street. His new ministry had begun. And on this, the first day of it, it was fitting that he should sit at the table of Horace Bentley, even as on that other Sunday, two years agone, he had gone to the home of the first layman of the diocese, Eldon Parr.

III

The peace of God passes understanding because sorrow and joy are mingled therein, sorrow and joy and striving. And thus the joy of emancipation may be accompanied by a heavy heart. The next morning, when Hodder entered his study, he sighed as his eye fell upon the unusual pile of letters on his desk, for their writers had once been his friends. The inevitable breach had come at last.

Page 1868

Most of the letters, as he had anticipated, were painful reading. And the silver paper-cutter with which he opened the first had been a Christmas present from Mrs. Burlingame, who had penned it, a lady of signal devotion to the church, who for many years had made it her task to supply and arrange the flowers on the altar. He had amazed and wounded her—she declared—inexpressibly, and she could no longer remain at St. John's—for the present, at least. A significant addition. He dropped the letter, and sat staring out of the window . . . presently arousing himself, setting himself resolutely to the task of reading the rest.

In the mood in which he found himself he did not atop to philosophize on the rigid yet sincere attitude of the orthodox. His affection for many of them curiously remained, though it was with some difficulty he strove to reconstruct a state of mind with which he had once agreed. If Christianity were to sweep on, these few unbending but faithful ones must be sacrificed: such was the law. . . Many, while repudiating his new beliefs—or unbeliefs!—added, to their regrets of the change in him, protestations of a continued friendship, a conviction of his sincerity. Others like Mrs. Atterbury, were frankly outraged and bitter. The contents of one lilac-bordered envelope brought to his eyes a faint smile. Did he know—asked the sender of this—could he know the consternation he had caused in so many persons, including herself? What was she to believe? And wouldn't he lunch with her on Thursday?

Mrs. Ferguson's letter brought another smile—more thoughtful. Her incoherent phrases had sprung from the heart, and the picture rose before him of the stout but frightened, good-natured lady who had never accustomed herself to the enjoyment of wealth and luxury. Mr. Ferguson was in such a state, and he must please not tell her husband that she had written. Yet much in his sermon had struck her as so true. It seemed wrong to her to have so much, and others so little! And he had made her remember many things in her early life she had forgotten. She hoped he would see Mr. Ferguson, and talk to him. . . .

Then there was Mrs. Constable's short note, that troubled and puzzled him. This, too, had in it an undercurrent of fear, and the memory came to him of the harrowing afternoon he had once spent with her, when she would have seemed to have predicted the very thing which had now happened to him. And yet not that thing. He divined instinctively that a maturer thought on the subject of his sermon had brought on an uneasiness as the full consequences of this new teaching had dawned upon her consequences which she had not foreseen when she had foretold the change. And he seemed to read between the lines that the renunciation he demanded was too great. Would he not let her come and talk to him? . . .

Miss Brewer, a lady of no inconsiderable property, was among those who told him plainly that if he remained they would have to give up their pews. Three or four communications were even more threatening. Mr. Alpheus Gore, Mrs. Plimpton's brother, who at five and forty had managed to triple his share of the Gore inheritance,

wrote that it would be his regretful duty to send to the bishop an Information on the subject of Mr. Hodder's sermon.

Page 1869

There were, indeed, a few letters which he laid, thankfully, in a pile by themselves. These were mostly from certain humble members of his parish who had not followed their impulses to go to him after the service, or from strangers who had chanced to drop into the church. Some were autobiographical, such as those of a trained nurse, a stenographer, a hardware clerk who had sat up late Sunday night to summarize what that sermon had meant to him, how a gray and hopeless existence had taken on a new colour. Next Sunday he would bring a friend who lived in the same boarding house . . . . Hodder read every word of these, and all were in the same strain: at last they could perceive a meaning to religion, an application of it to such plodding lives as theirs . . . .

One or two had not understood, but had been stirred, and were coming to talk to him. Another was filled with a venomous class hatred. . . .

The first intimation he had of the writer of another letter seemed from the senses rather than the intellect. A warm glow suffused him, mounted to his temples as he stared at the words, turned over the sheet, and read at the bottom the not very legible signature. The handwriting, by no means classic, became then and there indelibly photographed on his brain, and summed up for him the characteristics, the warring elements in Alison Parr. "All afternoon," she wrote, "I have been thinking of your sermon. It was to me very wonderful—it lifted me out of myself. And oh, I want so much to believe unreservedly what you expressed so finely, that religion is democracy, or the motive power behind democracy—the service of humanity by the reborn. I understand it intellectually. I am willing to work for such a Cause, but there is something in me so hard that I wonder if it can dissolve. And then I am still unable to identify that Cause with the Church as at present constituted, with the dogmas and ceremonies that still exist. I am too thorough a radical to have your patience. And I am filled with rage—I can think of no milder word—on coming in contact with the living embodiments of that old creed, who hold its dogmas so precious. 'Which say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophesy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits.'"

"You see, I have been reading Isaiah, and when I came to that paragraph it seemed so appropriate. These people have always existed. And will they not always continue to exist? I wish I could believe, wholly and unreservedly, that this class, always preponderant in the world, could be changed, diminished—done away with in a brighter future! I can, at least, sympathize with Isaiah's wrath.

"What you said of the longing, the yearning which exists to-day amongst the inarticulate millions moved me most—and of the place of art in religion, to express that yearning. Religion the motive power of art, and art, too, service. 'Consider the lilies of the field.' You have made it, at least, all-comprehensive, have given me a new point of view for which I can never be sufficiently grateful—and at a time when I needed it desperately. That you have dared to do what you have done has been and will be an inspiration, not

only to myself, but to many others. This, is a longer letter, I believe, than I have ever written in my life. But I wanted you to know."

Page 1870

He reread it twice, pondering over its phrases. “A new point of view.... at a time when I needed it desperately.” It was not until then that he realized the full intensity of his desire for some expression from her since the moment he had caught sight of her in the church. But he had not been prepared for the unreserve, the impulsiveness with which she had actually written. Such was his agitation that he did not heed, at first, a knock on the door, which was repeated. He thrust the letter inside his coat as the janitor of the parish house appeared.

“There is a gentleman to see you, sir, in the office,” he said.

Hodder went down the stairs. And he anticipated, from the light yet nervous pacing that he heard on the bare floor, that the visitor was none other than his vestryman, Mr. Gordon Atterbury. The sight of the gentleman’s spruce figure confirmed the guess.

“Good morning, Mr. Atterbury,” he said as he entered.

Mr. Atterbury stopped in his steps, as if he had heard a shot.

“Ah—good morning, Mr. Hodder. I stopped in on my way to the office.”

“Sit down,” said the rector.

Mr. Atterbury sat down, but with the air of a man who does so under protest, who had not intended to. He was visibly filled and almost quivering with an excitement which seemed to demand active expression, and which the tall clergyman’s physical calm and self-possession seemed to augment. For a moment Mr. Atterbury stared at the rector as he sat behind his desk. Then he cleared his throat.

“I thought of writing to you, Mr. Hodder. My mother, I believe, has done so. But it seemed to me, on second thought, better to come to you direct.”

The rector nodded, without venturing to remark on the wisdom of the course.

“It occurred to me,” Mr. Atterbury went on, “that possibly some things I wish to discuss might—ahem be dispelled in a conversation. That I might conceivably have misunderstood certain statements in your sermon of yesterday.”

“I tried,” said the rector, “to be as clear as possible.”

“I thought you might not fully have realized the effect of what you said. I ought to tell you, I think, that as soon as I reached home I wrote out, as accurately as I could from memory, the gist of your remarks. And I must say frankly, although I try to put it mildly, that they appear to contradict and controvert the doctrines of the Church.”

“Which doctrines?” Hodder asked.

Gordon Atterbury sputtered.

“Which doctrines?” he repeated. “Can it be possible that you misunderstand me? I might refer you to those which you yourself preached as late as last June, in a sermon which was one of the finest and most scholarly efforts I ever heard.”

“It was on that day, Mr. Atterbury,” replied the rector, with a touch of sadness in his voice, “I made the discovery that fine and scholarly efforts were not Christianity.”

Page 1871

“What do you mean?” Mr. Atterbury demanded.

“I mean that they do not succeed in making Christians.”

“And by that you imply that the members of your congregation, those who have been brought up and baptized and confirmed in this church, are not Christians?”

“I am sorry to say a great many of them are not,” said the rector.

“In other words, you affirm that the sacrament of baptism is of no account.”

“I affirm that baptism with water is not sufficient.”

“I’m afraid that this is very grave,” Mr. Hodder.

“I quite agree with you,” replied the rector, looking straight at his vestryman.

“And I understood,—” the other went on, clearing his throat once more, “I think I have it correctly stated in my notes, but I wish to be quite clear, that you denied the doctrine of the virgin birth.”

Hodder made a strong effort to control himself.

“What I have said I have said,” he answered, “and I have said it in the hope that it might make some impression upon the lives of those to whom I spoke. You were one of them, Mr. Atterbury. And if I repeat and amplify my meaning now, it must be understood that I have no other object except that of putting you in the way of seeing that the religion of Christ is unique in that it is dependent upon no doctrine or dogma, upon no external or material sign or proof or authority whatever. I am utterly indifferent to any action you may contemplate taking concerning me. Read your four Gospels carefully. If we do not arrive, through contemplation of our Lord’s sojourn on this earth, of his triumph over death, of his message—which illuminates the meaning of our lives here—at that inner spiritual conversion of which he continually speaks, and which alone will give us charity, we are not Christians.”

“But the doctrines of the Church, which we were taught from childhood to believe? The doctrines which you once professed, and of which you have now made such an unlooked-for repudiation!”

“Yes, I have changed,” said the rector, gazing seriously at the twitching figure of his vestryman, “I was bound, body and soul, by those very doctrines.” He roused himself. “But on what grounds do you declare, Mr. Atterbury,” he demanded, somewhat sternly, “that this church is fettered by an ancient and dogmatic conception of Christianity? Where are you to find what are called the doctrines of the Church? What may be heresy in one diocese is not so in another, and I can refer to you volumes written by

ministers of this Church, in good standing, whose published opinions are the same as those I expressed in my sermon of yesterday. The very cornerstone of the Church is freedom, but many have yet to discover this, and we have held in our Communion men of such divergent views as Dr. Pusey and Phillips Brooks. Mr. Newman, in his Tract Ninety, which was sincerely written, showed that the Thirty-nine Articles were

Page 1872

capable of almost any theological interpretation. From what authoritative source are we to draw our doctrines? In the baptismal service the articles of belief are stated to be in the Apostles' Creed, but nowhere—in this Church is it defined how their ancient language is to be interpreted. That is wisely left to the individual. Shall we interpret the Gospels by the Creeds, which in turn purport to be interpretations of the Gospels? Or shall we draw our conclusions as to what the Creeds may mean to us by pondering on the life of Christ, and striving to do his will? 'The letter killeth, but the Spirit maketh alive.'"

Hodder rose, and stood facing his visitor squarely. He spoke slowly, and the fact that he made no gesture gave all the more force to his words.

"Hereafter, Mr. Atterbury," he added, "so long as I am rector of this church, I am going to do my best to carry out the spirit of Christ's teaching—to make Christians. And there shall be no more compromise, so far as I can help it."

Gordon Atterbury had grown very pale. He, too, got to his feet.

"I—I cannot trust myself to discuss this matter with you any further, Mr. Hodder. I feel too deeply—too strongly on the subject. I do not pretend to account for this astonishing transformation in your opinions. Up to the present I have deemed St. John's fortunate—peculiarly fortunate, in having you for its rector. I am bound to say I think you have not considered, in this change of attitude on your part, those who have made St. John's what it is, who through long and familiar association are bound to it by a thousand ties,—those who, like myself, have what may be called a family interest in this church. My father and mother were married here, I was baptized here. I think I may go so far as to add, Mr. Hodder, that this is our church, the church which a certain group of people have built in which to worship God, as was their right. Nor do I believe we can be reproached with a lack of hospitality or charity. We maintain this parish house, with its clubs; and at no small inconvenience to ourselves we have permitted the church to remain in this district. There is no better church music in this city, and we have a beautiful service in the evening at which, all pews are free. It is not unreasonable that we should have something to say concerning the doctrine to be preached here, that we should insist that that doctrine be in accordance with what we have always believed was the true doctrine as received by this Church."

Up to this point Mr. Atterbury had had a feeling that he had not carried out with much distinction the programme which he had so carefully rehearsed on the way to the parish house. Hodder's poise had amazed and baffled him—he had expected to find the rector on the defensive. But now, burning anew with a sense of injustice, he had a sense at last of putting his case strongly.

The feeling of triumph, however, was short lived. Hodder did not reply at once. So many seconds, indeed, went by that Mr. Atterbury began once more to grow slightly nervous under the strange gaze to which he was subjected. And when the clergyman' spoke there was no anger in his voice, but a quality—a feeling which was disturbing, and difficult to define.

Page 1873

“You are dealing now, Mr. Atterbury,” he said, “with the things of Caesar, not of God. This church belongs to God—not to you. But you have consecrated it to him. His truth, as Christ taught it, must not be preached to suit any man’s convenience. When you were young you were not taught the truth—neither was I. It was mixed with adulterations which obscured and almost neutralized it. But I intend to face it now, and to preach it, and not the comfortable compromise which gives us the illusion that we are Christians because we subscribe to certain tenets, and permits us to neglect our Christian duties.

“And since you have spoken of charity, let me assure you that there is no such thing as charity without the transforming, personal touch. It isn’t the bread or instruction or amusement we give people vicariously, but the effect of our gift—even if that gift be only a cup of cold water—in illuminating and changing their lives. And it will avail any church little to have a dozen settlement houses while her members acquiesce in a State which refuses to relieve her citizens from sickness and poverty. Charity bends down only to lift others up. And with all our works, our expenditure and toil, how many have we lifted up?”

Gordon Atterbury’s indignation got the better of him. For he was the last man to behold with patience the shattering of his idols.

“I think you have cast an unwarranted reflection on those who have built and made this church what it is, Mr. Hodder,” he exclaimed. “And that you will find there are in it many—a great many earnest Christians who were greatly shocked by the words you spoke yesterday, who will not tolerate any interference with their faith. I feel it my duty to speak frankly, Mr Hodder, disagreeable though it be, in view of our former relations. I must tell you that I am not alone in the opinion that you should resign. It is the least you can do, in justice to us, in justice to yourself. There are other bodies—I cannot call them churches—which doubtless would welcome your liberal, and I must add atrophying, interpretation of Christianity. And I trust that reflection will convince you of the folly of pushing this matter to the extreme. We should greatly deplore the sensational spectacle of St. John’s being involved in an ecclesiastical trial, the unpleasant notoriety into which it would bring a church hitherto untouched by that sort of thing. And I ought to tell you that I, among others, am about to send an Information to the bishop.”

Gordon Atterbury hesitated a moment, but getting no reply save an inclination of the head, took up his hat.

“Ahem—I think that is all I have to say, Mr. Hodder. Good morning.”

Even then Hodder did not answer, but rose and held open the door. As he made his exit under the strange scrutiny of the clergyman’s gaze the little vestryman was plainly

uncomfortable. He cleared his throat once more, halted, and then precipitately departed.

Page 1874

Hodder went to the window and thoughtfully watched the hurrying figure of Mr. Atterbury until it disappeared, almost skipping, around the corner . . . . The germ of truth, throughout the centuries, had lost nothing of its dynamic potentialities. If released and proclaimed it was still powerful enough to drive the world to insensate anger and opposition....

As he stood there, lost in reflection, a shining automobile drew up at the curb, and from it descended a firm lady in a tight-fitting suit whom he recognized as Mrs Wallis Plimpton. A moment later she had invaded the office—for no less a word may be employed to express her physical aggressiveness, the glowing health which she radiated.

“Good morning, Mr. Hodder,” she said, seating herself in one of the straight-backed chairs. “I have been so troubled since you preached that sermon yesterday, I could scarcely sleep. And I made up my mind I’d come to you the first thing this morning. Mr. Plimpton and I have been discussing it. In fact, people are talking of nothing else. We dined with the Laureston Greys last night, and they, too, were full of it.” Charlotte Plimpton looked at him, and the flow of her words suddenly diminished. And she added, a little lamely for her, “Spiritual matters in these days are so difficult, aren’t they?”

“Spiritual matters always were difficult, Mrs. Plimpton,” he said.

“I suppose so,” she assented hurriedly, with what was intended for a smile. “But what I came to ask you is this—what are we to teach our children?”

“Teach them the truth,” the rector replied.

“One of the things which troubled me most was your reference to modern criticism,” she went on, recovering her facility. “I was brought up to believe that the Bible was true. The governess—Miss Standish, you know, such a fine type of Englishwoman—reads the children Bible stories every Sunday evening. They adore them, and little Wallis can repeat them almost by heart—the pillar of cloud by day, Daniel in the lions’ den, and the Wise Men from the East. If they aren’t true, some one ought to have told us before now.”

A note of injury had crept into her voice.

“How do you feel about these things yourself?” Holder inquired.

“How do I feel? Why, I have never thought about them very much—they were there, in the Bible!”

“You were taught to believe them?”

“Of course,” she exclaimed, resenting what seemed a reflection on the Gore orthodoxy.

“Do they in any manner affect your conduct?”

“My conduct?” she repeated. “I don’t know what you mean. I was brought up in the church, and Mr. Plimpton has always gone, and we are bringing up the children to go. Is that what you mean?”

“No,” Hodder answered, patiently, “that is not what I mean. I ask whether these stories in any way enter into your life, become part of you, and tend to make you a more useful woman?”

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“Well—I have never considered them in that way,” she replied, a little perplexed.

“Do you believe in them yourself?”

“Why—I don’t know,—I’ve never thought. I don’t suppose I do, absolutely—not in those I have mentioned.”

“And you think it right to teach things to your children which you do not yourself believe?”

“How am I to decide?” she demanded.

“First by finding out yourself what you do believe,” he replied, with a touch of severity.

“Mr. Hodder!” she cried in a scandalized voice, “do you mean to say that I, who have been brought up in this church, do not know what Christianity is.”

He looked at her and shook his head.

“You must begin by being honest with yourself,” he went on, not heeding her shocked expression. “If you are really in earnest in this matter, I should be glad to help you all I can. But I warn you there is no achievement in the world more difficult than that of becoming a, Christian. It means a conversion of your whole being something which you cannot now even imagine. It means a consuming desire which,—I fear,—in consideration of your present mode of life, will be difficult to acquire.”

“My present mode of life!” she gasped.

“Precisely,” said the rector. He was silent, regarding, her. There was discernible not the slightest crack of crevice in the enamel of this woman’s worldly armour.

For the moment her outraged feelings were forgotten. The man had fascinated her. To be told, in this authoritative manner, that she was wicked was a new and delightful experience. It brought back to her the real motive of her visit, which had in reality been inspired not only by the sermon of the day before, but by sheer curiosity.

“What would you have me do?” she demanded.

“Find yourself.”

“Do you mean to say that I am not—myself?” she asked, now completely bewildered.

“I mean to say that you are nobody until you achieve conviction.”

For Charlotte Plimpton, nee Gore, to be told in her own city, by the rector of her own church that she was nobody was an event hitherto inconceivable! It was perhaps as extraordinary that she did not resent. it. Curiosity still led her on.

“Conviction?” she repeated. “But I have conviction, Mr. Hodder. I believe in the doctrines of the Church.”

“Belief!” he exclaimed, and checked himself strongly. “Conviction through feeling. Not until then will you find what you were put in the world for.”

“But my husband—my children? I try to do my duty.”

“You must get a larger conception of it,” Hodder replied.

“I suppose you mean,” she declared, “that I am to spend the rest of my life in charity.”

“How you would spend the rest of your life would be revealed to you,” said the rector.

It was the weariness in his tone that piqued her now, the intimation that he did not believe in her sincerity—had not believed in it from the first. The life-long vanity of a woman used to be treated with consideration, to be taken seriously, was aroused. This extraordinary man had refused to enter into the details which she inquisitively craved.

Page 1876

Charlotte Plimpton rose.

“I shall not bother you any longer at present, Mr. Hodder,” she said sweetly. “I know you must have, this morning especially, a great deal to trouble you.”

He met her scrutiny calmly.

“It is only the things we permit to trouble us that do so, Mrs. Plimpton,” he replied. “My own troubles have arisen largely from a lack of faith on the part of those whom I feel it is my duty to influence.”

It was then she delivered her parting shot, which she repeated, with much satisfaction, to her husband that evening. She had reached the door. “Was there a special service at Calvary yesterday?” she asked innocently, turning back.

“Not that I know of.”

“I wondered. Mr. Parr was there; I’m told—and he’s never been known to desert St. John’s except on the rarest occasions. But oh, Mr. Hodder, I must congratulate you on your influence with Alison. When she has been out here before she never used to come to church at all.”

THE INSIDE OF THE CUP

By Winston Churchill

Volume 7.

XXIII. *The choice*
XXIV. *The vestry meets*
XXV. “*Rise*, *crowned with light*!”
XXVI. *The current of life*

CHAPTER XXIII

THE CHOICE

I

Pondering over Alison’s note, he suddenly recalled and verified some phrases which had struck him that summer on reading Harnack’s celebrated History of Dogma, and around these he framed his reply. “To act as if faith in eternal life and in the living Christ

was the simplest thing in the world, or a dogma to which one has to submit, is irreligious. . . It is Christian to pray that God would give the Spirit to make us strong to overcome the feelings and the doubts of nature. . . Where this faith, obtained in this way, exists, it has always been supported by the conviction that the Man lives who brought life and immortality to light. To hold fast this faith is the goal of life, for only what we consciously strive for is in this matter our own. What we think we possess is very soon lost."

"The feelings and the doubts of nature!" The Divine Discontent, the striving against the doubt that every honest soul experiences and admits. Thus the contrast between her and these others who accepted and went their several ways was brought home to him.

He longed to talk to her, but his days were full. Yet the very thought of her helped to bear him up as his trials, his problems accumulated; nor would he at any time have exchanged them for the former false peace which had been bought (he perceived more and more clearly) at the price of compromise.

Page 1877

The worst of these trials, perhaps, was a conspicuous article in a newspaper containing a garbled account of his sermon and of the sensation it had produced amongst his fashionable parishioners. He had refused to see the reporter, but he had been made out a hero, a socialistic champion of the poor. The black headlines were nauseating; and beside them, in juxtaposition, were pen portraits of himself and of Eldon Parr. There were rumours that the banker had left the church until the recalcitrant rector should be driven out of it; the usual long list of Mr. Parr's benefactions was included, and certain veiled paragraphs concerning his financial operations. Mr. Ferguson, Mr. Plimpton, Mr. Constable, did not escape,—although they, too, had refused to be interviewed . . . .

The article brought to the parish house a bevy of reporters who had to be fought off, and another batch of letters, many of them from ministers, in approval or condemnation.

His fellow-clergymen called, some to express sympathy and encouragement, more of them to voice in person indignant and horrified protests. Dr. Annesley of Calvary—a counterpart of whose rubicund face might have been found in the Council of Trent or in mediaeval fish-markets —pronounced his anathemas with his hands folded comfortably over his stomach, but eventually threw to the winds every vestige of his ecclesiastical dignity . . . .

Then there came a note from the old bishop, who was traveling. A kindly note, withal, if non-committal,—to the effect that he had received certain communications, but that his physician would not permit him to return for another ten days or so. He would then be glad to see Mr. Holder and talk with him.

What would the bishop do? Holder's relations with him had been more than friendly, but whether the bishop's views were sufficiently liberal to support him in the extreme stand he had taken he could not surmise. For it meant that the bishop, too, must enter into a conflict with the first layman of his diocese, of whose hospitality he had so often partaken, whose contributions had been on so lordly a scale. The bishop was in his seventieth year, and had hitherto successfully fought any attempt to supply him with an assistant,—coadjutor or suffragan.

At such times the fear grew upon Hodder that he might be recommended for trial, forced to abandon his fight to free the Church from the fetters that bound her: that the implacable hostility of his enemies would rob him of his opportunity.

Thus ties were broken, many hard things were said and brought to his ears. There were vacancies in the classes and guilds, absences that pained him, silences that wrung him. . . .

Of all the conversations he held, that with Mrs. Constable was perhaps the most illuminating and distressing. As on that other occasion, when he had gone to her, this

visit was under the seal of confession, unknown to her husband. And Hodder had been taken aback, on seeing her enter his office, by the very tragedy in her face—the tragedy he had momentarily beheld once before. He drew up a chair for her, and when she had sat down she gazed at him some moments without speaking.

Page 1878

“I had to come,” she said; “there are some things I feel I must ask you. For I have been very miserable since I heard you on Sunday.”

He nodded gently.

“I knew that you would change your views—become broader, greater. You may remember that I predicted it.”

“Yes,” he said.

“I thought you would grow more liberal, less bigoted, if you will allow me to say so. But I didn’t anticipate—” she hesitated, and looked up at him again.

“That I would take the extreme position I have taken,” he assisted her.

“Oh, Mr. Hodder,” she cried impulsively, “was it necessary to go so far? and all at once. I am here not only because I am miserable, but I am concerned on your account. You hurt me very much that day you came to me, but you made me your friend. And I wonder if you really understand the terrible, bitter feeling you have aroused, the powerful enemies you have made by speaking so—so unreservedly?”

“I was prepared for it,” he answered. “Surely, Mrs. Constable, once I have arrived at what I believe to be the truth, you would not have me temporize?”

She gave him a wan smile.

“In one respect, at least, you have not changed,” she told him. “I am afraid you are not the temporizing kind. But wasn’t there,—mayn’t there still be a way to deal with this fearful situation? You have made it very hard for us—for them. You have given them no loophole of escape. And there are many, like me, who do not wish to see your career ruined, Mr. Hodder.”

“Would you prefer,” he asked, “to see my soul destroyed? And your own?”

Her lips twitched.

“Isn’t there any other way but that? Can’t this transformation, which you say is necessary and vital, come gradually? You carried me away as I listened to you, I was not myself when I came out of the church. But I have been thinking ever since. Consider my husband, Mr. Hodder,” her voice faltered. “I shall not mince matters with you—I know you will not pretend to misunderstand me. I have never seen him so upset since since that time Gertrude was married. He is in a most cruel position. I confessed to you once that Mr. Parr had made for us all the money we possess. Everett is fond of you, but if he espouses your cause, on the vestry, we shall be ruined.”

Hodder was greatly moved.

“It is not my cause, Mrs. Constable,” he said.

“Surely, Christianity is not so harsh and uncompromising as that! And do you quite do justice to—to some of these men? There was no one to tell them the wrongs they were committing—if they were indeed wrongs. Our civilization is far from perfect.”

Page 1879

“The Church may have been remiss, mistaken,” the rector replied. “But the Christianity she has taught, adulterated though it were, has never condoned the acts which have become commonplace in modern finance. There must have been a time, in the life of every one of these men, when they had to take that first step against which their consciences revolted, when they realized that fraud and taking advantage of the ignorant and weak were wrong. They have deliberately preferred gratification in this life to spiritual development—if indeed they believe in any future whatsoever. For ‘whosoever will save his life shall lose it’ is as true to-day as it ever was. They have had their choice—they still have it.”

“I am to blame,” she cried. “I drove my husband to it, I made him think of riches, it was I who cultivated Mr. Parr. And oh, I suppose I am justly punished. I have never been happy for one instant since that day.”

He watched her, pityingly, as she wept. But presently she raised her face, wonderingly.

“You do believe in the future life after—after what you have been through?”

“I do,” he answered simply.

“Yes—I am sure you do. It is that, what you are, convinces me you do. Even the remarkable and sensible explanation you gave of it when you interpreted the parable of the talents is not so powerful as the impression that you yourself believe after thinking it out for yourself —not accepting the old explanations. And then,” she added, with a note as of surprise, “you are willing to sacrifice everything for it!”

“And you?” he asked. “Cannot you, too, believe to that extent?”

“Everything?” she repeated. “It would mean—poverty. No—God help me —I cannot face it. I have become too hard. I cannot do without the world. And even if I could! Oh, you cannot know what you ask Everett, my husband—I must say it, you make me tell you everything—is not free. He is little better than a slave to Eldon Parr. I hate Eldon Parr,” she added, with startling inconsequence.

“If I had only known what it would lead to when I made Everett what he is! But I knew nothing of business, and I wanted money, position to satisfy my craving at the loss of—-that other thing. And now I couldn’t change my husband if I would. He hasn’t the courage, he hasn’t the vision. What there was of him, long ago, has been killed—and I killed it. He isn’t—anybody, now.”

She relapsed again into weeping.

“And then it might not mean only poverty—it might mean disgrace.”

“Disgrace!” the rector involuntarily took up the word.

“There are some things he has done,” she said in a low voice, “which he thought he was obliged to do which Eldon Parr made him do.”

“But Mr. Parr, too—?” Hodder began.

“Oh, it was to shield Eldon Parr. They could never be traced to him. And if they ever came out, it would kill my husband. Tell me,” she implored, “what can I do? What shall I do? You are responsible. You have made me more bitterly unhappy than ever.”

Page 1880

“Are you willing,” he asked, after a moment, “to make the supreme renunciation? to face poverty, and perhaps disgrace, to save your soul and others?”

“And—others?”

“Yes. Your sacrifice would not, could not be in vain. Otherwise I should be merely urging on you the individualism which you once advocated with me.”

“Renunciation.” She pronounced the word questioningly. “Can Christianity really mean that—renunciation of the world? Must we take it in the drastic sense of the Church of the early centuries-the Church of the Martyrs?”

“Christianity demands all of us, or nothing,” he replied. “But the false interpretation of renunciation of the early Church has cast its blight on Christianity even to our day. Oriental asceticism, Stoicism, Philo and other influences distorted Christ’s meaning. Renunciation does not mean asceticism, retirement from the world, a denial of life. And the early Christian, since he was not a citizen, since he took the view that this mortal existence was essentially bad and kept his eyes steadfastly fixed on another, was the victim at once of false philosophies and of the literal messianic prophecies of the Jews, which were taken over with Christianity. The earthly kingdom which was to come was to be the result of some kind of a cataclysm. Personally, I believe our Lord merely used the Messianic literature as a convenient framework for his spiritual Kingdom of heaven, and that the Gospels misinterpret his meaning on this point.

“Renunciation is not the withdrawal from, the denial of life, but the fulfilment of life, the submission to the divine will and guidance in order that our work may be shown us. Renunciation is the assumption, at once, of heavenly and earthly citizenship, of responsibility for ourselves and our fellow-men. It is the realization that the other world, the inner, spiritual world, is here, now, and that the soul may dwell in it before death, while the body and mind work for the coming of what may be called the collective kingdom. Life looked upon in that way is not bad, but good,—not meaningless, but luminous.”

She had listened hungrily, her eyes fixed upon his face.

“And for me?” she questioned.

“For you,” he answered, leaning forward and speaking with a conviction that shook her profoundly, “if you make the sacrifice of your present unhappiness, of your misery, all will be revealed. The labour which you have shirked, which is now hidden from you, will be disclosed, you will justify your existence by taking your place as an element of the community. You will be able to say of yourself, at last, ‘I am of use.’”

“You mean—social work?”

The likeness of this to Mrs. Plimpton's question struck him. She had called it "charity." How far had they wandered in their teaching from the Revelation of the Master, since it was as new and incomprehensible to these so-called Christians as to Nicodemus himself!

Page 1881

“All Christian work is social, Mrs. Constable, but it is founded on love. ‘Thou shaft love thy neighbour as thyself.’ You hold your own soul precious, since it is the shrine of God. And for that reason you hold equally precious your neighbour’s soul. Love comes first, as revelation, as imparted knowledge, as the divine gist of autonomy—self-government. And then one cannot help working, socially, at the task for which we are made by nature most efficient. And in order to discover what that task is, we must wait.”

“Why did not some one tell me this, when I was young?” she asked—not speaking to him. “It seems so simple.”

“It is simple. The difficult thing is to put it into practice—the most difficult thing in the world. Both courage and faith are required, faith that is content to trust as to the nature of the reward. It is the wisdom of foolishness. Have you the courage?”

She pressed her hands together.

“Alone—perhaps I should have. I don’t know. But my husband! I was able to influence him to his destruction, and now I am powerless. Darkness has closed around me. He would not—he will not listen to me.”

“You have tried?”

“I have attempted to talk to him, but the whole of my life contradicts my words. He cannot see me except as, the woman who drove him into making money. Sometimes I think he hates me.”

Hodder recalled, as his eyes rested on her compassionately, the sufferings of that other woman in Dalton Street.

“Would you have me desert him—after all these years?” she whispered. “I often think he would be happier, even now.”

“I would have you do nothing save that which God himself will reveal to you. Go home, go into the church and pray—pray for knowledge. I think you will find that you are held responsible for your husband. Pray that that which you have broken, you may mend again.”

“Do you think there is a chance?”

Hodder made a gesture.

“God alone can judge as to the extent of his punishments.”

She got to her feet, wearily.

“I feel no hope—I feel no courage, but—I will try. I see what you mean—that my punishment is my powerlessness.”

He bent his head.

“You are so strong—perhaps you can help me.”

“I shall always be ready,” he replied.

He escorted her down the steps to the dark blue brougham with upstanding, chestnut horses which was waiting at the curb. But Mrs. Constable turned to the footman, who held open the door.

“You may stay here awhile,” she said to him, and gave Hodder her hand....

She went into the church . . . .

II

Page 1882

Asa Waring and his son-in-law, Phil Goodrich, had been to see Hodder on the subject of the approaching vestry meeting, and both had gone away not a little astonished and impressed by the calmness with which the rector looked forward to the conflict. Others of his parishioners, some of whom were more discreet in their expressions of sympathy, were no less surprised by his attitude; and even his theological adversaries, such as Gordon Atterbury, paid him a reluctant tribute. Thanks, perhaps, to the newspaper comments as much as to any other factor, in the minds of those of all shades of opinion in the parish the issue had crystallized into a duel between the rector and Eldon Parr. Bitterly as they resented the glare of publicity into which St. John's had been dragged, the first layman of the diocese was not beloved; and the fairer-minded of Hodder's opponents, though appalled, were forced to admit in their hearts that the methods by which Mr. Parr had made his fortune and gained his ascendency would not bear scrutiny . . . . Some of them were disturbed, indeed, by the discovery that there had come about in them, by imperceptible degrees, in the last few years a new and critical attitude towards the ways of modern finance: moat of them had an uncomfortable feeling that Hodder was somehow right,—a feeling which they sought to stifle when they reflected upon the consequences of facing it. For this would mean a disagreeable shaking up of their own lives. Few of them were in a position whence they might cast stones at Eldon Parr . . . .

What these did not grasp was the fact that that which they felt stirring within them was the new and spiritual product of the dawning twentieth century—the Social Conscience. They wished heartily that the new rector who had developed this disquieting personality would peacefully resign and leave them to the former, even tenor of their lives. They did not for one moment doubt the outcome of his struggle with Eldon Parr. The great banker was known to be relentless, his name was synonymous with victory. And yet, paradoxically, Hodder compelled their inner sympathy and admiration! . . .

Some of them, who did not attempt peremptorily to choke the a processes made the startling discovery that they were not, after all, so shocked by his doctrines as they had at first supposed. The trouble was that they could not continue to listen to him, as formerly, with comfort.... One thing was certain, that they had never expected to look forward to a vestry meeting with such breathless interest and anxiety. This clergyman had suddenly accomplished the surprising feat of reviving the Church as a burning, vital factor in the life of the community! He had discerned her enemy, and defied his power . . . .

As for Hodder, so absorbed had he been by his experiences, so wrung by the human contacts, the personal problems which he had sought to enter, that he had actually given no thought to the battle before him until the autumn afternoon, heavy with smoke, had settled down into darkness. The weather was damp and cold, and he sat musing on the ordeal now abruptly confronting him before his study fire when he heard a step behind him. He turned to recognize, by the glow of the embers, the heavy figure of Nelson Langmaid.

Page 1883

“I hope I’m not disturbing you, Hodder,” he said. “The janitor said you were in, and your door is open.”

“Not at all,” replied the rector, rising. As he stood for a moment facing the lawyer, the thought of their friendship, and how it had begun in the little rectory overlooking the lake at Bremerton, was uppermost in his mind,—yes, and the memory of many friendly, literary discussions in the same room where they now stood, of pleasant dinners at Langmaid’s house in the West End, when the two of them had often sat talking until late into the nights.

“I must seem very inhospitable,” said Hodder. “I’ll light the lamp—it’s pleasanter than the electric light.”

The added illumination at first revealed the lawyer in his familiar aspect, the broad shoulders, the big, reddish beard, the dome-like head, —the generous person that seemed to radiate scholarly benignity, peace, and good-will. But almost instantly the rector became aware of a new and troubled, puzzled glance from behind the round spectacles. . .”

“I thought I’d drop in a moment on my way up town—” he began. And the note of uncertainty in his voice, too, was new. Hodder drew towards the fire the big chair in which it had been Langmaid’s wont to sit, and perhaps it was the sight of this operation that loosed the lawyer’s tongue.

“Confound it, Hodder!” he exclaimed, “I like you—I always have liked you. And you’ve got a hundred times the ability of the average clergyman. Why in the world did you have to go and make all this trouble?”

By so characteristic a remark Hodder was both amused and moved. It revealed so perfectly the point of view and predicament of the lawyer, and it was also an expression of an affection which the rector cordially, returned . . . . Before answering, he placed his visitor in the chair, and the deliberation of the act was a revelation of the unconscious poise of the clergyman. The spectacle of this self-command on the brink of such a crucial event as the vestry meeting had taken Langmaid aback more than he cared to show. He had lost the old sense of comradeship, of easy equality; and he had the odd feeling of dealing with a new man, at once familiar and unfamiliar, who had somehow lifted himself out of the everyday element in which they heretofore had met. The clergyman had contrived to step out of his, Langmaid’s, experience: had actually set him—who all his life had known no difficulty in dealing with men—to groping for a medium of communication . . . .

Hodder sat down on the other side of the fireplace. He, too, seemed to be striving for a common footing.

“It was a question of proclaiming the truth when at last I came to see it, Langmaid. I could not help doing what I did. Matters of policy, of a false consideration for individuals could not enter into it. If this were not so, I should gladly admit that you had a just grievance, a peculiar right to demand why I had not remained the strictly orthodox person whom you induced to come here. You had every reason to congratulate yourself that you were getting what you doubtless would call a safe man.”

Page 1884

“I’ll admit I had a twinge of uneasiness after I came home,” Langmaid confessed.

Hodder smiled at his frankness.

“But that disappeared.”

“Yes, it disappeared. You seemed to suit ’em so perfectly. I’ll own up, Hodder, that I was a little hurt that you did not come and talk to me just before you took the extraordinary—before you changed your opinions.”

“Would it have done any good?” asked the rector, gently. “Would you have agreed with me any better than you do now? I am perfectly willing, if you wish, to discuss with you any views of mine which you may not indorse. And it would make me very happy, I assure you, if I could bring you to look upon the matter as I do.”

This was a poser. And whether it were ingenuous, or had in it an element of the scriptural wisdom of the serpent, Langmaid could not have said. As a lawyer, he admired it.

“I wasn’t in church, as usual,—I didn’t hear the sermon,” he replied. “And I never could make head or tail of theology—I always told you that. What I deplore, Hodder, is that you’ve contrived to make a hornets’ nest out of the most peaceful and contented congregation in America. Couldn’t you have managed to stick to religion instead of getting mixed up with socialism?”

“So you have been given the idea that my sermon was socialistic?” the rector said.

“Socialistic and heretical,—it seems. Of course I’m not much of an authority on heresy, but they claim that you went out of your way to knock some of their most cherished and sacred beliefs in the head.”

“But suppose I have come to the honest conclusion that in the first place these so-called cherished beliefs have no foundation in fact, and no influence on the lives of the persons who cherished them, no real connection with Christianity? What would you have me do, as a man? Continue to preach them for the sake of the lethargic peace of which you speak? leave the church paralyzed, as I found it?”

“Paralyzed! You’ve got the most influential people in the city.”

Hodder regarded him for a while without replying.

“So has the Willesden Club,” he said.

Langmaid laughed a little, uncomfortably.

“If Christianity, as one of the ancient popes is said to have remarked, were merely a profitable fable,” the rector continued, “there might be something in your contention that St. John’s, as a church, had reached the pinnacle of success. But let us ignore the spiritual side of this matter as non-vital, and consider it from the practical side. We have the most influential people in the city, but we have not their children. That does not promise well for the future. The children get more profit out of the country clubs. And then there is another question: is it going to continue to be profitable? Is it as profitable now as it was, say, twenty years ago?

“You’ve got out of my depth,” said Nelson Langmaid.

Page 1885

“I’ll try to explain. As a man of affairs, I think you will admit, if you reflect, that the return of St. John’s, considering the large amount of money invested, is scarcely worth considering. And I am surprised that as astute a man as Mr. Pair has not been able to see this long ago. If we clear all the cobwebs away, what is the real function of this church as at present constituted? Why this heavy expenditure to maintain religious services for a handful of people? Is it not, when we come down to facts, an increasingly futile effort to bring the influences of religion—of superstition, if you will—to bear on the so-called lower classes in order that they may remain contented with their lot, with that station and condition in the world where—it is argued—it has pleased God to call them? If that were not so, in my opinion there are very few of the privileged classes who would invest a dollar in the Church. And the proof of it is that the moment a clergyman raises his voice to proclaim the true message of Christianity they are up in arms with the cry of socialism. They have the sense to see that their privileges are immediately threatened.

“Looking at it from the financial side, it would be cheaper for them to close up their churches. It is a mere waste of time and money, because the influence on their less fortunate brethren in a worldly sense has dwindled to nothing. Few of the poor come near their churches in these days. The profitable fable is almost played out.”

Hodder had spoken without bitterness, yet his irony was by no means lost on the lawyer. Langmaid, if the truth be told, found himself for the moment in the unusual predicament of being at a loss, for the rector had put forward with more or less precision the very cynical view which he himself had been clever enough to evolve.

“Haven’t they the right,” he asked, somewhat lamely to demand the kind of religion they pay for?”

“Provided you don’t call it religion,” said the rector.

Langmaid smiled in spite of himself.

“See here, Hodder,” he said, “I’ve always confessed frankly that I knew little or nothing about religion. I’ve come here this evening as your friend, without authority from anybody,” he added significantly, “to see if this thing couldn’t somehow be adjusted peaceably, for your sake as well as others’. Come, you must admit there’s a grain of justice in the contention against you. When I went on to Bremerton to get you I had no real reason for supposing that these views would develop. I made a contract with you in all good faith.”

“And I with you,” answered the rector. “Perhaps you do not realize, Langmaid, what has been the chief factor in developing these views.”

The lawyer was silent, from caution.

“I must be frank with you. It was the discovery that Mr. Parr and others of my chief parishioners were so far from being Christians as to indulge, while they supported the Church of Christ, in operations like that of the Consolidated Tractions Company, wronging their fellow-men and condemning them to misery and hate. And that you, as a lawyer, used your talents to make that operation possible.”

Page 1886

“Hold on!” cried Langmaid, now plainly agitated. “You have no right—you can know nothing of that affair. You do not understand business.”

“I’m afraid,” replied the rector, sadly, “that I understand one side of it only too well.”

“The Church has no right to meddle outside of her sphere, to dictate to politics and business.”

“Her sphere,” said Holder,—is the world. If she does not change the world by sending out Christians into it, she would better close her doors.”

“Well, I don’t intend to quarrel with you, Holder. I suppose it can’t be helped that we look at these things differently, and I don’t intend to enter into a defence of business. It would take too long, and it wouldn’t help any.” He got to his feet. “Whatever happens, it won’t interfere with our personal friendship, even if you think me a highwayman and I think you a—”

“A fanatic,” Holder supplied. He had risen, too, and stood, with a smile on his face, gazing at the lawyer with an odd scrutiny.

“An idealist, I was going to say,” Langmaid answered, returning the smile, “I’ll admit that we need them in the world. It’s only when one of them gets in the gear-box . . . .”

The rector laughed. And thus they stood, facing each other.

“Langmaid,” Holder asked, “don’t you ever get tired and disgusted with the Juggernaut car?”

The big lawyer continued to smile, but a sheepish, almost boyish expression came over his face. He had not credited the clergyman with so much astuteness.

“Business, nowadays, is—business, Holder. The Juggernaut car claims us all. It has become-if you will permit me to continue to put my similes into slang—the modern band wagon. And we lawyers have to get on it, or fall by the wayside.”

Holder stared into the fire.

“I appreciate your motive in coming here,” he said, at length, “and I do you the justice of believing it was friendly, that the fact that you are, in a way, responsible for me to—to the congregation of St. John’s did not enter into it. I realize that I have made matters particularly awkward for you. You have given them in me, and in good faith, something they didn’t bargain for. You haven’t said so, but you want me to resign. On the one hand, you don’t care to see me tilting at the windmills, or, better, drawing down on my head the thunderbolts of your gods. On the other hand, you are just a little afraid for your gods. If the question in dispute were merely an academic one, I’d accommodate

you at once. But I can't. I've thought it all out, and I have made up my mind that it is my clear duty to remain here and, if I am strong enough, wrest this church from the grip of Eldon Parr and the men whom he controls.

Page 1887

“I am speaking plainly, and I understand the situation thoroughly. You will probably tell me, as others have done, that no one has ever opposed Eldon Parr who has not been crushed. I go in with my eyes open, I am willing to be crushed, if necessary. You have come here to warn me, and I appreciate your motive. Now I am going to warn you, in all sincerity and friendship. I may be beaten, I may be driven out. But the victory will be mine nevertheless. Eldon Parr and the men who stand with him in the struggle will never recover from the blow I shall give them. I shall leave them crippled because I have the truth on my side, and the truth is irresistible. And they shall not be able to injure me permanently. And you, I regret deeply to say, will be hurt, too. I beg you, for no selfish reason, to consider again the part you intend to play in this affair.”

Such was the conviction, such the unlooked-for fire with which the rector spoke that Langmaid was visibly shaken and taken aback in spite of himself.

“Do you mean,” he demanded, when he had caught his breath, “that you intend to attack us publicly?”

“Is that the only punishment you can conceive of?” the rector asked. The reproach in his voice was in itself a denial.

“I beg your pardon, Hodder,” said the lawyer, quickly. “And I am sure you honestly believe what you say, but—”

“In your heart you, too, believe it, Langmaid. The retribution has already begun. Nevertheless you will go on—for a while.” He held out his hand, which Langmaid took mechanically. “I bear you no ill-will. I am sorry that you cannot yet see with sufficient clearness to save yourself.”

Langmaid turned and picked up his hat and stick and left the room without another word. The bewildered, wistful look which had replaced the ordinarily benign and cheerful expression haunted Hodder long after the lawyer had gone. It was the look of a man who has somehow lost his consciousness of power.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE VESTRY MEETS

At nine o’clock that evening Hodder stood alone in the arched vestry room, and the sight of the heavy Gothic chairs ranged about the long table brought up memories of comfortable, genial meetings prolonged by chat and banter.... The noise of feet, of subdued voices beside the coat room in the corridor, aroused him. All of the vestry would seem to have arrived at once.

He regarded them with a detached curiosity as they entered, reading them with a new insight. The trace of off-handedness in Mr. Plimpton's former cordiality was not lost upon him—an intimation that his star had set. Mr. Plimpton had seen many breaches healed—had healed many himself. But he had never been known as a champion of lost causes.

"Well, here we are, Mr. Hodder, on the stroke," he remarked. "As a vestry, I think we're entitled to the first prize for promptness. How about it, Everett?"

Page 1888

Everett Constable was silent.

“Good evening, Mr. Hodder,” he said. He did not offer to shake hands, as Mr. Plimpton had done, but sat down at the far end of the table. He looked tired and worn; sick, the rector thought, and felt a sudden swelling of compassion for the pompous little man whose fibre was not as tough as that of these other condottieri: as Francis Ferguson’s, for instance, although his soft hand and pink and white face framed in the black whiskers would seem to belie any fibre whatever.

Gordon Atterbury hemmed and hawed,—“Ah, Mr. Hodder,” and seated himself beside Mr. Constable, in a chair designed to accommodate a portly bishop. Both of them started nervously as Asa Waring, holding his head high, as a man should who has kept his birthright, went directly to the rector.

“I’m glad to see you, Mr. Hodder,” he said, and turning defiantly, surveyed the room. There was an awkward silence. Mr. Plimpton edged a little nearer. The decree might have gone forth for Mr. Hodder’s destruction, but Asa Waring was a man whose displeasure was not to be lightly incurred.

“What’s this I hear about your moving out of Hamilton Place, Mr. Waring? You’d better come up and take the Spaulding lot, in Waverley, across from us.”

“I am an old man, Mr. Plimpton,” Asa Waring replied. “I do not move as easily as some other people in these days.”

Everett Constable produced his handkerchief and rubbed his nose violently. But Mr. Plimpton was apparently undaunted.

“I have always said,” he observed, “that there was something very fine in your sticking to that neighbourhood after your friends had gone. Here’s Phil!”

Phil Goodrich looked positively belligerent, and as he took his stand on the other side of Hodder his father-in-law smiled at him grimly. Mr. Goodrich took hold of the rector’s arm.

“I missed one or two meetings last spring, Mr. Hodder,” he said, “but I’m going to be on hand after this. My father, I believe, never missed a vestry meeting in his life. Perhaps that was because they used to hold most of ’em at his house.”

“And serve port and cigars, I’m told,” Mr. Plimpton put in.

“That was an inducement, Wallis, I’ll admit,” answered Phil. “But there are even greater inducements now.”

In view of Phil Goodrich's well-known liking for a fight, this was too pointed to admit of a reply, but Mr. Plimpton was spared the attempt by the entrance of. Nelson Langmaid. The lawyer, as he greeted them, seemed to be preoccupied, nor did he seek to relieve the tension with his customary joke. A few moments of silence followed, when Eldon Parr was seen to be standing in the doorway, surveying them.

"Good evening, gentlemen," he said coldly, and without more ado went to his customary chair, and sat down in it. Immediately followed a scraping of other chairs. There was a dominating quality about the man not to be gainsaid.

Page 1889

The rector called the meeting to order . . . .

During the routine business none of the little asides occurred which produce laughter. Every man in the room was aware of the intensity of Eldon Parr's animosity, and yet he betrayed it neither by voice, look, or gesture. There was something uncanny in this self-control, this sang froid with which he was wont to sit at boards waiting unmoved for the time when he should draw his net about his enemies, and strangle them without pity. It got on Langmaid's nerves—hardened as he was to it. He had seen many men in that net; some had struggled, some had taken their annihilation stoically; honest merchants, freebooters, and brigands. Most of them had gone out, with their families, into that precarious border-land of existence in which the to-morrows are ever dreaded.

Yet here, somehow, was a different case. Langmaid found himself going back to the days when his mother had taken him to church, and he could not bear to look at, Hodder. Since six o'clock that afternoon—had his companions but known it—he had passed through one of the worst periods of his existence. . . .

After the regular business had been disposed of a brief interval was allowed, for the sake of decency, to ensue. That Eldon Parr would not lead the charge in person was a foregone conclusion. Whom, then, would he put forward? For obvious reasons, not Wallis Plimpton or Langmaid, nor Francis Ferguson. Hodder found his, glance unconsciously fixed upon Everett Constable, who, moved nervously and slowly pushed back his chair. He was called upon, in this hour and in the church his father had helped to found, to make the supreme payment for the years of financial prosperity. Although a little man, with his shoulders thrown back and his head high, he generally looked impressive when he spoke, and his fine features and clear-cut English contributed to the effect. But now his face was strained, and his voice seemed to lack command as he bowed and mentioned the rector's name. Eldon Parr sat back.

"Gentlemen," Mr. Constable began, "I feel it my duty to say something this evening, something that distresses me. Like some of you who are here present, I have been on this vestry for many years, and my father was on it before me. I was brought up under Dr. Gilman, of whom I need not speak. All here, except our present rector, knew him. This church, St. John's, has been a part—a—large part—of my life. And anything that seems to touch its welfare, touches me.

"When Dr. Gilman died, after so many years of faithful service, we faced a grave problem,—that of obtaining a young man of ability, an active man who would be able to assume the responsibilities of a large and growing parish, and at the same time carry on its traditions, precious to us all; one who believed in and preached, I need scarcely add, the accepted doctrines of the Church, which we have been taught to think are sacred and necessary to salvation. And in the discovery of the Reverend Mr. Hodder, we had reason to congratulate ourselves and the parish. He was all that we had hoped for, and more. His sermons were at once a pleasure and an instruction.

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“I wish to make it clear,” he continued, “that in spite of the pain Mr. Hodder’s words of last Sunday have given me, I respect and honour him still, and wish him every success. But, gentlemen, I think it is plain to all of you that he has changed his religious convictions. As to the causes through which that change has come about, I do not pretend to know. To say the least, the transition is a startling one, one for which some of us were totally unprepared. To speak restrainedly, it was a shock—a shock which I shall remember as long as I live.

“I need not go into the doctrinal question here, except to express my opinion that the fundamental facts of our religion were contradicted. And we have also to consider the effect of this preaching on coming generations for whom we are responsible. There are, no doubt, other fields for Mr. Hodder’s usefulness. But I think it may safely be taken as a principle that this parish has the right to demand from the pulpit that orthodox teaching which suits it, and to which it has been accustomed. And I venture further to give it as my opinion—to put it mildly that others have been as disturbed and shocked as I. I have seen many, talked with many, since Sunday. For these reasons, with much sorrow and regret, I venture to suggest to the vestry that Mr. Hodder resign as our rector. And I may add what I believe to be the feeling of all present, that we have nothing but good will for him, although we think we might have been informed of what he intended to do.

“And that in requesting him to resign we are acting for his own good as well as our own, and are thus avoiding a situation which threatens to become impossible,—one which would bring serious reflection on him and calamity on the church. We already, in certain articles in the newspapers, have had an indication of the intolerable notoriety we may expect, although I hold Mr. Hodder innocent in regard to those articles. I am sure he will have the good sense to see this situation as I see it, as the majority of the parish see it.”

Mr. Constable sat down, breathing hard. He had not looked at the rector during the whole of his speech, nor at Eldon Parr. There was a heavy silence, and then Philip Goodrich rose, square, clean-cut, aggressive.

“I, too, gentlemen, have had life-long association with this church,” he began deliberately. “And for Mr. Hodder’s sake I am going to give you a little of my personal history, because I think it typical of thousands of men of my age all over this country. It was nobody’s fault, perhaps, that I was taught that the Christian religion depended on a certain series of nature miracles and a chain of historical events, and when I went East to school I had more of this same sort of instruction. I have never, perhaps, been overburdened with intellect, but the time arrived nevertheless when I began to think for myself. Some of the older boys went once, I remember, to the rector of the school—a dear old man—and frankly stated our troubles. To use a modern expression, he stood pat on everything. I do not say it was a consciously criminal act, he probably saw no way out himself. At any rate, he made us all agnostics at one stroke.

Page 1891

“What I learned in college of science and history and philosophy merely confirmed me in my agnosticism. As a complete system for the making of atheists and materialists, I commend the education which I received. If there is any man here who believes religion to be an essential factor in life, I ask him to think of his children or grandchildren before he comes forward to the support of Mr. Constable.

“In that sermon which he preached last Sunday, Mr. Hodder, for the first time in my life, made Christianity intelligible to me. I want him to know it. And there are other men and women in that congregation who feel as I do. Gentlemen, there is nothing I would not give to have had Christianity put before me in that simple and inspiring way when I was a boy. And in my opinion St. John’s is more fortunate to-day than it ever has been in its existence. Mr. Hodder should have an unanimous testimonial of appreciation from this vestry for his courage. And if the vote requesting him to resign prevails, I venture to predict that there is not a man on this vestry who will not live to regret it.”

Phil Goodrich glared at Eldon Parr, who remained unmoved.

“Permit me to add,” he said, “that this controversy, in other respects than doctrine, is more befitting to the Middle Ages than to the twentieth century, when this Church and other denominations are passing resolutions in their national conventions with a view to unity and freedom of belief.”

Mr. Langmaid, Mr. Plimpton, and Mr. Constable sat still. Mr. Ferguson made no move. It was Gordon Atterbury who rushed into the breach, and proved that the extremists are allies of doubtful value.

He had, apparently, not been idle since Sunday, and was armed cap-a pie with time-worn arguments that need not be set down. All of which went to show that Mr. Goodrich had not referred to the Middle Ages in vain. For Gordon Atterbury was a born school-man. But he finished by declaring, at the end of twenty minutes (much as he regretted the necessity of saying it), that Mr. Hodder’s continuance as rector would mean the ruin of the church in which all present took such a pride. That the great majority of its members would never submit to what was so plainly heresy.

It was then that Mr. Plimpton gathered courage to pour oil on the waters. There was nothing, in his opinion, he remarked smilingly, in his function as peacemaker, to warrant anything but the most friendly interchange of views. He was second to none in his regard for Mr. Hodder, in his admiration for a man who had the courage of his convictions. He had not the least doubt that Mr. Hodder did not desire to remain in the parish when it was so apparent that the doctrines which he now preached were not acceptable to most of those who supported the church. And he added (with sublime magnanimity) that he wished Mr. Hodder the success which he was sure he deserved, and gave him every assurance of his friendship.

Page 1892

Asa Waring was about to rise, when he perceived that Hodder himself was on his feet. And the eyes of every man, save one, were fixed on him irresistibly. The rector seemed unaware of it. It was Philip Goodrich who remarked to his father-in-law, as they walked home afterwards, of the sense he had had at that moment that there were just two men in the room,—Hodder and Eldon Parr. All the rest were ciphers; all had lost, momentarily, their feelings of partisanship and were conscious only of these two intense, radiating, opposing centres of force; and no man, oddly enough, could say which was the stronger. They seemingly met on equal terms. There could not be the slightest doubt that the rector did not mean to yield, and yet they might have been puzzled if they had asked themselves how they had read the fact in his face or manner. For he betrayed neither anger nor impatience.

No more did the financier reveal his own feelings. He still sat back in his chair, unmoved, in apparent contemplation. The posture was familiar to Langmaid.

Would he destroy, too, this clergyman? For the first time in his life, and as he looked at Hodder, the lawyer wondered. Hodder did not defend himself, made no apologies. Christianity was not a collection of doctrines, he reminded them,—but a mode of life. If anything were clear to him, it was that the present situation was not, with the majority of them, a matter of doctrines, but of unwillingness to accept the message and precept of Jesus Christ, and lead Christian lives. They had made use of the doctrines as a stalking-horse.

There was a stir at this, and Hodder paused a moment and glanced around the table. But no one interrupted.

He was fully aware of his rights, and he had no intention of resigning. To resign would be to abandon the work for which he was responsible, not to them, but to God. And he was perfectly willing—nay, eager to defend his Christianity before any ecclesiastical court, should the bishop decide that a court was necessary. The day of freedom, of a truer vision was at hand, the day of Christian unity on the vital truths, and no better proof of it could be brought forward than the change in him. In his ignorance and blindness he had hitherto permitted compromise, but he would no longer allow those who made only an outward pretence of being Christians to direct the spiritual affairs of St. John's, to say what should and what should not be preached. This was to continue to paralyze the usefulness of the church, to set at naught her mission, to alienate those who most had need of her, who hungered and thirsted after righteousness, and went away unsatisfied.

He had hardly resumed his seat when Everett Constable got up again. He remarked, somewhat unsteadily, that to prolong the controversy would be useless and painful to all concerned, and he infinitely regretted the necessity of putting his suggestion that the rector resign in the form of a resolution . . . . The vote was taken. Six men raised their

hands in favour of his resignation—Nelson Langmaid among them: two, Asa Waring and Philip Goodrich, were against it. After announcing the result, Hodder rose.

Page 1893

“For the reason I have stated, gentlemen, I decline to resign,” he said. “I stand upon my canonical rights.”

Francis Ferguson arose, his voice actually trembling with anger. There is something uncanny in the passion of a man whose life has been ordered by the inexorable rules of commerce, who has been wont to decide all questions from the standpoint of dollars and cents. If one of his own wax models had suddenly become animated, the effect could not have been more startling.

In the course of this discussion, he declared, Mr. Hodder had seen fit to make grave and in his opinion unwarranted charges concerning the lives of some, if not all, of the gentlemen who sat here. It surprised him that these remarks had not been resented, but he praised a Christian forbearance on the part of his colleagues which he was unable to achieve. He had no doubt that their object had been to spare Mr. Hodder’s feelings as much as possible, but Mr. Hodder had shown no disposition to spare their own. He had outraged them, Mr. Ferguson thought,—wantonly so. He had made these preposterous and unchristian charges an excuse for his determination to remain in a position where his usefulness had ceased.

No one, unfortunately, was perfect in this life,—not even Mr. Hodder. He, Francis Ferguson, was far from claiming to be so. But he believed that this arraignment of the men who stood highest in the city for decency, law, and order, who supported the Church, who revered its doctrines, who tried to live Christian lives, who gave their time and their money freely to it and to charities, that this arraignment was an arrogant accusation and affront to be repudiated. He demanded that Mr. Hodder be definite. If he had any charges to make, let him make them here and now.

The consternation, the horror which succeeded such a stupid and unexpected tactical blunder on the part of the usually astute Mr. Ferguson were felt rather than visually discerned. The atmosphere might have been described as panicky. Asa Waring and Phil Goodrich smiled as Wallis Plimpton, after a moment’s hush, scrambled to his feet, his face pale, his customary easiness and nonchalance now the result of an obvious effort. He, too, tried to smile, but swallowed instead as he remembered his property in Dalton Street . . . . Nelson Langmaid smiled, in spite of himself. . . Mr. Plimpton implored his fellow-members not to bring personalities into the debate, and he was aware all the while of the curious, pitying expression of the rector. He breathed a sigh of relief at the opening words of Hodder, who followed him.

“Gentlemen,” he said, “I have no intention of being personal, even by unanimous consent. But if Mr. Ferguson will come to me after this meeting I shall have not the least objection to discussing this matter with him in so far as he himself is concerned. I can only assure you now that I have not spoken without warrant.”

There was, oddly enough, no acceptance of this offer by Mr. Ferguson. Another silence ensued, broken, at last, by a voice for which they had all been unconsciously waiting; a voice which, though unemotional, cold, and matter-of-fact, was nevertheless commanding, and long accustomed to speak with an overwhelming authority. Eldon Parr did not rise.

Page 1894

“Mr. Hodder,” he said, “in one respect seems to be under the delusion that we are still in the Middle Ages, instead of the twentieth century, since he assumes the right to meddle with the lives of his parishioners, to be the sole judge of their actions. That assumption will not, be tolerated by free men. I, for one, gentlemen, do not, propose to have a socialist for the rector of the church which I attend and support. And I maintain the privilege of an American citizen to set my own standards, within the law, and to be the sole arbitrar of those standards.”

“Good!” muttered Gordon Atterbury. Langmaid moved uncomfortably.

“I shall not waste words,” the financier continued. “There is in my mind no question that we are justified in demanding from our rector the Christian doctrines to which we have given our assent, and which are stated in the Creeds. That they shall be subject to the whims of the rector is beyond argument. I do not pretend to, understand either, gentlemen, the nature of the extraordinary change that has taken place in the rector of St. John’s. I am not well versed m psychology. I am incapable of flights myself. One effect of this change is an attitude on which reasonable considerations would seem to have no effect.

“Our resources, fortunately, are not yet at an end. It has been my hope, on account of my former friendship with Mr. Hodder, that an ecclesiastical trial might not be necessary. It now seems inevitable. In the meantime, since Mr. Hodder has seen fit to remain in spite of our protest, I do not intend to enter this church. I was prepared, gentlemen, as some of you no doubt know, to spend a considerable sum in adding to the beauty of St. John’s and to the charitable activities of the parish. Mr. Hodder has not disapproved of my gifts in the past, but owing to his present scruples concerning my worthiness, I naturally hesitate to press the matter now.” Mr. Parr indulged in the semblance of a smile. “I fear that he must take the responsibility of delaying this benefit, with the other responsibilities he has assumed.”

His voice changed. It became sharper.

“In short, I propose to withhold all contributions for whatever purpose from this church while Mr. Hodder is rector, and I advise those of you who have voted for his resignation to do the same. In the meantime, I shall give my money to Calvary, and attend its services. And I shall offer further a resolution—which I am informed is within our right—to discontinue Mr. Hodder’s salary.”

There was that in the unparalleled audacity of Eldon Parr that compelled Hodder’s unwilling admiration. He sat gazing at the financier during this speech, speculating curiously on the inner consciousness of the man who could utter it. Was it possible that he had no sense of guilt? Even so, he had shown a remarkable astuteness in relying on the conviction that he (Hodder) would not betray what he knew.

Page 1895

He was suddenly aware that Asa Waring was standing beside him.

“Gentlemen,” said Mr. Waring, “I have listened to this discussion as long as I can bear it with patience. Had I been told of it, I should have thought it incredible that the methods of the money changers should be applied to the direction and control of the house of God. In my opinion there is but one word which is suitable for what has passed here to-night, and the word is persecution. Perhaps I have lived too long I have lived to see honourable, upright men deprived of what was rightfully theirs, driven from their livelihood by the rapacity of those who strive to concentrate the wealth and power of the nation into their hands. I have seen this power gathering strength, stretching its arm little by little over the institutions I fought to preserve, and which I cherish over our politics, over our government, yes, and even over our courts. I have seen it poisoning the business honour in which we formerly took such a pride, I have seen it reestablishing a slavery more pernicious than that which millions died to efface. I have seen it compel a subservience which makes me ashamed, as an American, to witness.”

His glance, a withering moral scorn, darted from under the grizzled eyebrows and alighted on one man after another, and none met it. Everett Constable coughed, Wallis Plimpton shifted his position, the others sat like stones. Asa Waring was giving vent at last to the pent-up feelings of many years.

“And now that power, which respects nothing, has crept into the sanctuary of the Church. Our rector recognizes it, I recognize it,—there is not a man here who, in his heart, misunderstands me. And when a man is found who has the courage to stand up against it, I honour him with all my soul, and a hope that was almost dead revives in me. For there is one force, and one force alone, able to overcome the power of which I speak, —the Spirit of Christ. And the mission of the Church is to disseminate that spirit. The Church is the champion on which we have to rely, or give up all hope of victory. The Church must train the recruits. And if the Church herself is betrayed into the hands of the enemy, the battle is lost.

“If Mr. Hodder is forced out of this church, it would be better to lock the doors. St. John’s will be held up, and rightfully, to the scorn of the city. All the money in the world will not save her. Though crippled, she has survived one disgrace, when she would not give free shelter to the man who above all others expressed her true spirit, when she drove Horace Bentley from her doors after he had been deprived of the fortune which he was spending for his fellow-men. She will not survive another.

“I have no doubt Mr. Parr’s motion to take from Mr. Hodder his living will go through. And still I urge him not to resign. I am not a rich man, even when such property as I have is compared to moderate fortunes of these days, but I would pay his salary willingly out of my own pocket rather than see him go . . . .

Page 1896

“I call the attention of the Chairman,” said Eldon Parr, after a certain interval in which no one had ventured to speak, “to the motion before the vestry relating to the discontinuance of Mr. Hodder’s salary.”

It was then that the unexpected happened. Gordon Atterbury redeemed himself. His respect for Mr. Waring, he said, made him hesitate to take issue with him.

He could speak for himself and for a number of people in the congregation when he reiterated his opinion that they were honestly shocked at what Mr. Hodder had preached, and that this was his sole motive in requesting Mr. Hodder to resign. He thought, under the circumstances, that this was a matter which might safely be left with the bishop. He would not vote to deprive Mr. Hodder of his salary.

The motion was carried by a vote of five to three. For Eldon Parr well knew that his will needed no reenforcement by argument. And this much was to be said for him, that after he had entered a battle he never hesitated, never under any circumstances reconsidered the probable effect of his course.

As for the others, those who had supported him, they were cast in a less heroic mould. Even Francis Ferguson. As between the devil and the deep sea, he was compelled, with as good a grace as possible, to choose the devil. He was utterly unable to contemplate the disaster which might ensue if certain financial ties, which were thicker than cables, were snapped. But his affection for the devil was not increased by thus being led into a charge from which he would willingly have drawn back. Asa Waring might mean nothing to Eldon Parr, but he meant a great deal to Francis Ferguson, who had by no means forgotten his sensations of satisfaction when Mrs. Waring had made her first call in Park Street on Francis Ferguson’s wife. He left the room in such a state of absent-mindedness as actually to pass Mr. Parr in the corridor without speaking to him.

The case of Wallis Plimpton was even worse. He had married the Gores, but he had sought to bind himself with hoops of steel to the Warings. He had always secretly admired that old Roman quality (which the Goodriches —their connections—shared) of holding fast to their course unmindful and rather scornful of influence which swayed their neighbours. The clan was sufficient unto itself, satisfied with a moderate prosperity and a continually increasing number of descendants. The name was unstained. Such are the strange incongruities in the hearts of men, that few realized the extent to which Wallis Plimpton had partaken of the general hero-worship of Phil Goodrich. He had assiduously cultivated his regard, at times discreetly boasted of it, and yet had never been sure of it. And now fate, in the form of his master, Eldon Parr had ironically compelled him at one stroke to undo the work of years. As soon as the meeting broke up, he crossed the room.

“I can’t tell you how much I regret this, Phil,” he said. “Charlotte has very strong convictions, you know, and so have I. You can understand, I am sure, how certain articles of belief might be necessary to one person, and not to another.”

Page 1897

“Yes,” said Phil, “I can understand. We needn’t mention the articles, Wallis.” And he turned his back.

He never knew the pain he inflicted. Wallis Plimpton looked at the rector, who stood talking to Mr. Waring, and for the first time in his life recoiled from an overture.

Something in the faces of both men warned him away.

Even Everett Constable, as they went home in the cars together, was brief with him, and passed no comments when Mr. Plimpton recovered sufficiently to elaborate on the justification of their act, and upon the extraordinary stand taken by Phil Goodrich and Mr. Waring.

“They might have told us what they were going to do.”

Everett Constable eyed him.

“Would it have made any difference, Plimpton?” he demanded.

After that they rode in silence, until they came to a certain West End corner, where they both descended. Little Mr. Constable’s sensations were, if anything, less enviable, and he had not Mr. Plimpton’s recuperative powers. He had sold that night, for a mess of pottage, the friendship and respect of three generations. And he had fought, for pay, against his own people.

And lastly, there was Langmaid, whose feelings almost defy analysis. He chose to walk through the still night the four miles—that separated him from his home. And he went back over the years of his life until he found, in the rubbish of the past, a forgotten and tarnished jewel. The discovery pained him. For that jewel was the ideal he had carried away, as a youth, from the old law school at the bottom of Hamilton Place, —a gift from no less a man than the great lawyer and public-spirited citizen, Judge Henry Goodrich —Philip Goodrich’s grandfather, whose seated statue marked the entrance of the library. He, Nelson Langmaid, —had gone forth from that school resolved to follow in the footsteps of that man,—but somehow he missed the path. Somehow the jewel had lost its fire. There had come a tempting offer, and a struggle—just one: a readjustment on the plea that the world had changed since the days of Judge Goodrich, whose uncompromising figure had begun to fade: an exciting discovery that he, Nelson Langmaid, possessed the gift of drawing up agreements which had the faculty of passing magically through the meshes of the Statutes. Affluence had followed, and fame, and even that high office which the Judge himself had held, the Presidency of the State Bar Association. In all that time, one remark, which he had tried to forget, had cut him to the quick. Bedloe Hubbell had said on the political platform that Langmaid got one hundred thousand dollars a year for keeping Eldon Parr out of jail.

Once he stopped in the street, his mind suddenly going back to the action of the financier at the vestry meeting.

“Confound him!” he said aloud, “he has been a fool for once. I told him not to do it.”

He stood at last in the ample vestibule of his house, singling out his latch-key, when suddenly the door opened, and his daughter Helen appeared.

Page 1898

“Oh, dad,” she cried, “why are you so-late? I’ve been watching for you. I know you’ve let Mr. Hodder stay.”

She gazed at him with widened eyes.

“Don’t tell me that you’ve made him resign. I can’t—I won’t believe it.”

“He isn’t going to resign, Helen,” Langmaid replied, in an odd voice.

“He—he refused to.”

CHAPTER XXV

“*Rise*, *crowned with light*!”

I

The Church of St. John’s, after a peaceful existence of so many years, had suddenly become the stage on which rapid and bewildering dramas were played: the storm-centre of chaotic forces, hitherto unperceived, drawn from the atmosphere around her. For there had been more publicity, more advertising. “The Rector of St. John’s will not talk”—such had been one headline: neither would the vestry talk. And yet, despite all this secrecy, the whole story of the suspension of Hodder’s salary was in print, and an editorial (which was sent to him) from a popular and sensational journal, on “tainted money,” in which Hodder was held up to the public as a martyr because he refused any longer to accept for the Church ill-gotten gains from Consolidated Tractions and the like.

This had opened again the floodgates of the mails, and it seemed as though every person who had a real or fancied grievance against Eldon Parr had written him. Nor did others of his congregation escape. The press of visitors at the parish house suddenly increased once more, men and women came to pour into his ears an appalling aeries of confessions; wrongs which, like Garvin’s, had engendered bitter hatreds; woes, temptations, bewilderments. Hodder strove to keep his feet, sought wisdom to deal patiently with all, though at times he was tried to the uttermost. And he held steadfastly before his mind the great thing, that they did come. It was what he had longed for, prayed for, despaired of. He was no longer crying in the empty wilderness, but at last in touch-in natural touch with life: with life in all its sorrow, its crudity and horror. He had contrived, by the grace of God, to make the connection for his church.

That church might have been likened to a ship sailing out of the snug harbour in which she had lain so long to range herself gallantly beside those whom she had formerly beheld, with complacent cowardice, fighting her fight: young men and women, enlisted under other banners than her own, doing their part in the battle of the twentieth century

for humanity. Her rector was her captain. It was he who had cut her cables, quelled, for a time at least, her mutineers; and sought to hearten those of her little crew who wavered, who shrank back appalled as they realized something of the immensity of the conflict in which her destiny was to be wrought out.

Page 1899

To carry on the figure, Philip Goodrich might have been deemed her first officer. He, at least, was not appalled, but grimly conscious of the greatness of the task to which they had set their hands. The sudden transformation of conservative St. John's was no more amazing than that of the son of a family which had never been without influence in the community. But that influence had always been conservative. And Phil Goodrich had hitherto taken but a listless interest in the church of his fathers. Fortune had smiled upon him, trusts had come to him unsought. He had inherited the family talent for the law, the freedom to practise when and where he chose. His love of active sport had led him into many vacations, when he tramped through marsh and thicket after game, and at five and forty there was not an ounce of superfluous flesh on his hard body. In spite of his plain speaking, an overwhelming popularity at college had followed him to his native place, and no organization, sporting or serious, was formed in the city that the question was not asked, "What does Goodrich think about it?"

His whole-souled enlistment in the cause of what was regarded as radical religion became, therefore, the subject of amazed comment in the many clubs he now neglected. The "squabble" in St. John's, as it was generally referred to, had been aired in the press, but such was the magic in a name made without conscious effort that Phil Goodrich's participation in the struggle had a palpably disarming effect: and there were not a few men who commonly spent their Sunday mornings behind plate-glass windows, surrounded by newspapers, as well as some in the athletic club (whose contests Mr. Goodrich sometimes refereed) who went to St. John's out of curiosity and who waited, afterwards, for an interview with Phil or the rector. The remark of one of these was typical of others. He had never taken much stock in religion, but if Goodrich went in for it he thought he'd go and look it over.

Scarcely a day passed that Phil did not drop in at the parish house.... And he set himself, with all the vigour of an unsquandered manhood, to help Hodder to solve the multitude of new problems by which they were beset.

A free church was a magnificent ideal, but how was it to be carried on without an Eldon Parr, a Ferguson, a Constable, a Mrs. Larrabbee, or a Gore who would make up the deficit at the end of the year? Could weekly contributions, on the envelope system, be relied upon, provided the people continued to come and fill the pews of absent and outraged parishioners? The music was the most expensive in the city, although Mr. Taylor, the organist, had come to the rector and offered to cut his salary in half, and to leave that in abeyance until the finances could be adjusted. And his example had been followed by some of the high-paid men in the choir. Others had offered to sing without pay. And there were the expenses of the parish house, an alarming sum now Eldon Parr had withdrawn: the salaries of the assistants. Hodder, who had saved a certain sum in past years, would take nothing for the present . . . . Asa Waring and Phil Goodrich borrowed on their own responsibility . . .

Page 1900

II

Something of the overwhelming nature of the forces Hodder had summoned was visibly apparent on that first Sunday after what many had called his apostasy. Instead of the orderly, sprucely-dressed groups of people which were wont to linger in greetings before the doors of St. John's, a motley crowd thronged the pavement and streamed into the church, pressing up the aisles and invading the sacred precincts where decorous parishioners had for so many years knelt in comfort and seclusion. The familiar figure of Gordon Atterbury was nowhere to be seen, and the Atterbury pew was occupied by shop-girls in gaudy hats. Eldon Parr's pew was filled, Everett Constable's, Wallis Plimpton's; and the ushers who had hastily been mustered were awestricken and powerless. Such a resistless invasion by the hordes of the unknown might well have struck with terror some of those who hitherto had had the courage to standup loyally in the rector's support. It had a distinct flavour of revolution: contained, for some, a grim suggestion of a time when that vague, irresponsible, and restless monster, the mob, would rise in its might and brutally and inexorably take possession of all property.

Alison had met Eleanor Goodrich in Burton Street, and as the two made their way into the crowded vestibule they encountered Martha Preston, whose husband was Alison's cousin, in the act of flight.

"You're not going in!" she exclaimed.

"Of course we are."

Mrs. Preston stared at Alison in amazement.

"I didn't know you were still here," she said, irrelevantly. "I'm pretty liberal, my dear, as you know,—but this is more than I can stand. Look at them!" She drew up her skirts as a woman brushed against her. "I believe in the poor coming to church, and all that, but this is mere vulgar curiosity, the result of all that odious advertising in the newspapers. My pew is filled with them. If I had stayed, I should have fainted. I don't know what to think of Mr. Hodder."

"Mr. Hodder is not to blame for the newspapers," replied Alison, warmly. She glanced around her at the people pushing past, her eyes shining, her colour high, and there was the ring of passion in her voice which had do Martha Preston a peculiarly disquieting effect. "I think it's splendid that they are here at all! I don't care what brought them."

Mrs. Preston stared again. She was a pretty, intelligent woman, at whose dinner table one was sure to hear the discussion of some "modern problem": she believed herself to be a socialist. Her eyes sought Eleanor Goodrich's, who stood by, alight with excitement.

“But surely you, Eleanor-you’re not going in! You’ll never be able to stand it, even if you find a seat. The few people we know who’ve come are leaving. I just saw the Allan Pendletons.”

“Have you seen Phil?” Eleanor asked.

“Oh, yes, he’s in there, and even he’s helpless. And as I came out poor Mr. Bradley was jammed up against the wall. He seemed perfectly stunned . . . .”

Page 1901

At this moment they were thrust apart. Eleanor quivered as she was carried through the swinging doors into the church.

“I think you’re right,” she whispered to Alison, “it is splendid. There’s something about it that takes hold of me, that carries one away. It makes me wonder how it can be guided —what will come of it?”

They caught sight of Phil pushing his way towards them, and his face bore the set look of belligerency which Eleanor knew so well, but he returned her smile. Alison’s heart warmed towards him.

“What do you think of this?” he demanded. “Most of our respectable friends who dared to come have left in a towering rage—to institute lawsuits, probably. At tiny rate, strangers are not being made to wait until ten minutes after the service begins. That’s one barbarous custom abolished.”

“Strangers seem to have taken matters in their own hands for once” Eleanor smiled. “We’ve made up our minds to stay, Phil, even if we have to stand.”

“That’s the right spirit,” declared her husband, glancing at Alison, who had remained silent, with approval and by no means a concealed surprise. “I think I know of a place where I can squeeze you in, near Professor Bridges and Sally, on the side aisle.”

“Are George and Sally here?” Eleanor exclaimed.

“Hodder,” said Phil, “is converting the heathen. You couldn’t have kept George away. And it was George who made Sally stay!”

Presently they found themselves established between a rawboned young workingman who smelled strongly of soap, whose hair was plastered tightly against his forehead, and a young woman who leaned against the wall. The black in which she was dressed enhanced the whiteness and weariness of her face, and she sat gazing ahead of her, apparently unconscious of those who surrounded her, her hands tightly folded in her lap. In their immediate vicinity, indeed, might have been found all the variety of type seen in the ordinary street car. And in truth there were some who seemed scarcely to realize they were not in a public vehicle. An elaborately dressed female in front of them, whose expansive hat brushed her neighbours, made audible comments to a stout man with a red neck which was set in a crease above his low collar.

“They tell me Eldon Parr’s pew has a gold plate on it. I wish I knew which it was. It ain’t this one, anyway, I’ll bet.”

“Say, they march in in this kind of a church, don’t they?” some one said behind them.

Eleanor, with her lips tightly pressed, opened her prayer book. Alison's lips were slightly parted as she gazed about her, across the aisle. Her experience of the Sunday before, deep and tense as it had been, seemed as nothing compared to this; the presence of all these people stimulated her inexpressibly, fired her; and she felt the blood pulsing through her body as she contrasted this gathering with the dignified, scattered congregation she had known. She scarcely recognized the church itself . . . She speculated on the homes from which these had come, and the motives which had brought them.

Page 1902

For a second the perfume of the woman in front, mingling with other less definable odours, almost sickened her, evoking suggestions of tawdry, trivial, vulgar lives, fed on sensation and excitement; but the feeling was almost immediately swept away by a renewed sense of the bigness of the thing which she beheld,—of which, indeed, she was a part. And her thoughts turned more definitely to the man who had brought it all about. Could he control it, subdue it? Here was Opportunity suddenly upon him, like a huge, curving, ponderous wave. Could he ride it? or would it crush him remorselessly?

Sensitive, alert, quickened as she was, she began to be aware of other values: of the intense spiritual hunger in the eyes of the woman in black, the yearning of barren, hopeless existences. And here and there Alison's look fell upon more prosperous individuals whose expressions proclaimed incredulity, a certain cynical amusement at the spectacle: others seemed uneasy, as having got more than they had bargained for, deliberating whether to flee . . . and then, just as her suspense was becoming almost unbearable, the service began. . . .

How it had been accomplished, the thing she later felt, was beyond the range of intellectual analysis. Nor could she have told how much later, since the passage of time had gone unnoticed. Curiosities, doubts, passions, longings, antagonisms—all these seemed—as the most natural thing in the world—to have been fused into one common but ineffable emotion. Such, at least, was the impression to which Alison startlingly awoke. All the while she had been conscious of Hodder, from the moment she had heard his voice in the chancel; but somehow this consciousness of him had melted, imperceptibly, into that of the great congregation, once divided against itself, which had now achieved unity of soul.

The mystery as to how this had been effected was the more elusive when she considered the absence of all methods which might have been deemed revivalistic. Few of those around her evinced a familiarity with the historic service. And then occurred to her his explanation of personality as the medium by which all truth is revealed, by which the current of religion, the motive power in all history, is transmitted. Surely this was the explanation, if it might be called one! That tingling sense of a pervading spirit which was his,—and yet not his. He was the incandescent medium, and yet, paradoxically, gained in identity and individuality and was inseparable from the thing itself.

She could not see him. A pillar hid the chancel from her view.

The service, to which she had objected as archaic, became subordinate, spiritualized, dominated by the personality. Hodder had departed from the usual custom by giving out the page of the psalter: and the verses, the throbbing responses which arose from every corner of the church, assumed a new significance, the vision of the ancient seer revived. One verse he read resounded with prophecy.

Page 1903

“Thou shalt deliver me from the strivings of the people: and thou shalt make me the head of the heathen.”

And the reply:

“A people whom I have not known shall serve me.”

The working-man next to Alison had no prayer-book. She thrust her own into his hand, and they read from it together . . . .

When they came to the second hymn the woman in front of her had wonderfully shed her vulgarity. Her voice—a really good one—poured itself out:

> “See a long race thy spacious courts adorn,
> See future sons, and daughters yet unborn,
> In crowding ranks on every side arise,
> Demanding life, impatient for the skies.”

Once Alison would have been critical of the words She was beyond that, now. What did it matter, if the essential Thing were present?

The sermon was a surprise. And those who had come for excitement, for the sensation of hearing a denunciation of a class they envied and therefore hated, and nevertheless strove to imitate, were themselves rebuked. Were not their standards the same? And if the standard were false, it followed inevitably that the life was false also.

Hodder fairly startled these out of their preconceived notions of Christianity. Let them shake out of their minds everything they had thought it to mean, churchgoing, acceptance of creed and dogma, contributive charity, withdrawal from the world, rites and ceremonies: it was none of these.

The motive in the world to-day was the acquisition of property; the motive of Christianity was absolutely and uncompromisingly opposed to this. Shock their practical sense as it might, Christianity looked forward with steadfast faith to a time when the incentive to amass property would be done away with, since it was a source of evil and a curse to mankind. If they would be Christians, let them face that. Let them enter into life, into the struggles going on around them to-day against greed, corruption, slavery, poverty, vice and crime. Let them protest, let them fight, even as Jesus Christ had fought and protested. For as sure as they sat there the day would come when they would be called to account, would be asked the question—what had they done to make the United States of America a better place to live in?

There were in the Apostolic writings and tradition misinterpretations of life which had done much harm. Early Christianity had kept its eyes fixed on another world, and had ignored this: had overlooked the fact that every man and woman was put here to do a

particular work. In the first epistle of Peter the advice was given, “submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake.” But Christ had preached democracy, responsibility, had foreseen a millennium, the fulfilment of his Kingdom, when all men, inspired by the Spirit, would make and keep in spirit the ordinances of God.

Before they could do God’s work and man’s work they must first be awakened, filled with desire. Desire was power. And he prayed that some of them, on this day, would receive that desire, that power which nothing could resist. The desire which would lead each and every one to the gates of the Inner World which was limitless and eternal, filled with dazzling light . . . .

Page 1904

Let them have faith then. Not credulity in a vague God they could not imagine, but faith in the Spirit of the Universe, humanity, in Jesus Christ who had been the complete human revelation of that Spirit, who had suffered and died that man might not live in ignorance of it. To doubt humanity,—such was the Great Refusal, the sin against the Holy Ghost, the repudiation of the only true God!

After a pause, he spoke simply of his hope for St. John's. If he remained here his ambition was that it would be the free temple of humanity, of Jesus Christ, supported not by a few, but by all,—each in accordance with his means. Of those who could afford nothing, nothing would be required. Perhaps this did not sound practical, nor would it be so if the transforming inspiration failed. He could only trust and try, hold up to them the vision of the Church as a community of willing workers for the Kingdom . . .

III

After the service was over the people lingered in the church, standing in the pews and aisles, as though loath to leave. The woman with the perfume and the elaborate hat was heard to utter a succinct remark.

"Say, Charlie, I guess he's all right. I never had it put like that."

The thick-necked man's reply was inaudible.

Eleanor Goodrich was silent and a little pale as she pressed close to Alison. Her imagination had been stretched, as it were, and she was still held in awe by the vastness of what she had heard and seen. Vaster even than ever,—so it appeared now,—demanding greater sacrifices than she had dreamed of. She looked back upon the old as at receding shores.

Alison, with absorbed fascination, watched the people; encountered, here and there, recognitions from men and women with whom she had once danced and dined in what now seemed a previous existence. Why had they come? and how had they received the message? She ran into a little man, a dealer in artists' supplies who once had sold her paints and brushes, who stared and bowed uncertainly. She surprised him by taking his hand.

"Did you like it?" she asked, impulsively.

"It's what I've been thinking for years, Miss Parr," he responded, "thinking and feeling. But I never knew it was Christianity. And I never thought—" he stopped and looked at her, alarmed.

"Oh," she said, "I believe in it, too—or try to."

She left him, mentally gasping . . . . Without, on the sidewalk, Eleanor Goodrich was engaged in conversation with a stockily built man, inclined to stoutness; he had a brown face and a clipped, bristly mustache. Alison paused involuntarily, and saw him start and hesitate as his clear, direct gaze met her own.

Bedloe Hubbell was one of those who had once sought to marry her. She recalled him as an amiable and aimless boy; and after she had gone East she had received with incredulity and then with amusement the news of his venture into altruistic politics. It was his efficiency she had doubted, not his sincerity. Later tidings, contemptuous and eventually irritable utterances of her own father, together with accounts in the New York newspapers of his campaign, had convinced her in spite of herself that Bedloe Hubbell had actually shaken the seats of power. And somehow, as she now took him in, he looked it.

Page 1905

His transformation was one of the signs, one of the mysteries of the times. The ridicule and abuse of the press, the opposition and enmity of his childhood friends, had developed the man of force she now beheld, and who came forward to greet her.

“Alison!” he exclaimed. He had changed in one sense, and not in another. Her colour deepened as the sound of his voice brought back the lapsed memories of the old intimacy. For she had been kind to him, kinder than to any other; and the news of his marriage—to a woman from the Pacific coast—had actually induced in her certain longings and regrets. When the cards had reached her, New York and the excitement of the life into which she had been weakly, if somewhat unwittingly, drawn had already begun to pall.

“I’m so glad to see you,” she told him. “I’ve heard—so many things. And I’m very much in sympathy with what you’re doing.”

They crossed the street, and walked away from the church together. She had surprised him, and made him uncomfortable.

“You’ve been away so long,” he managed to say, “perhaps you do not realize—”

“Oh, yes, I do,” she interrupted. “I am on the other side, on your side. I thought of writing you, when you nearly won last autumn.”

“You see it, too?” he exclaimed.

“Yes, I’ve changed, too. Not so much as you,” she added, shyly. “I always had a certain sympathy, you know, with the Robin Hoods.”

He laughed at her designation, both pleased and taken aback by her praise. . . But he wondered if she knew the extent of his criticism of her father.

“That rector is a wonderful man,” he broke out, irrelevantly. “I can’t get over’ him—I can’t quite grasp the fact that he exists, that he has dared to do what he has done.”

This brought her colour back, but she faced him bravely. You think he is wonderful, then?”

“Don’t you?” he demanded.

She assented. “But I am curious to know why you do. Somehow, I never thought of—-you—”

“As religious,” he supplied. “And you? If I remember rightly—”

“Yes,” she interrupted, “I revolted, too. But Mr. Hodder puts it so —it makes one wonder.”

“He has not only made me wonder,” declared Bedloe Hubbell, emphatically, “I never knew what religion was until I heard this man last Sunday.”

“Last Sunday!”

“Until then, I hadn’t been inside of a church for fifteen years,—except to get married. My wife takes the children, occasionally, to a Presbyterian church near us.”

“And why, did you go then?” she asked.

“I am a little ashamed of my motive,” he confessed. “There were rumours —I don’t pretend to know how they got about—” he hesitated, once more aware of delicate ground. “Wallis Plimpton said something to a man who told me. I believe I went out of sheer curiosity to hear what Hodder would have to say. And then, I had been reading, wondering whether there were anything in Christianity, after all.”

Page 1906

“Yes?” she said, careless now as to what cause he might attribute her eagerness. “And he gave you something?”

It was then she grasped the truth that this sudden renewed intimacy was the result of the impression Hodder had left upon the minds of both.

“He gave me everything,” Bedloe Hubbell replied. “I am willing to acknowledge it freely. In his explanation of the parable of the Prodigal Son, he gave me the clew to our modern times. What was for me an inextricable puzzle has become clear as day. He has made me understand, at last, the force which stirred me, which goaded me until I was fairly compelled to embark in the movement which the majority of our citizens still continue to regard as quixotic. I did not identify that force with religion, then, and when I looked back on the first crazy campaign we embarked upon, with the whole city laughing at me and at the obscure and impractical personnel we had, there were moments when it seemed incomprehensible folly. I had nothing to gain, and everything to lose by such a venture. I was lazy and easy-going, as you know. I belonged to the privileged class, I had sufficient money to live in comparative luxury all my days, I had no grudge against these men whom I had known all my life.”

“But it must have had some beginning,” said Alison.

“I was urged to run for the city council, by these very men.” Bedloe Hubbell smiled at the recollection. “They accuse me now of having indulged once in the same practice, for which I am condemning them. Our company did accept rebates, and we sought favours from the city government. I have confessed it freely on the platform. Even during my first few months in the council what may be called the old political practices seemed natural to me. But gradually the iniquity of it all began to dawn on me, and then I couldn’t rest until I had done something towards stopping it.

“At length I began to see,” he continued, “that education of the masses was to be our only preserver, that we should have to sink or swim by that. I began to see, dimly, that this was true for other movements going on to-day. Now comes Hodder with what I sincerely believe is the key. He compels men like me to recognize that our movements are not merely moral, but religious. Religion, as yet unidentified, is the force behind these portentous stirrings of politics in our country, from sea to sea. He aims, not to bring the Church into politics, but to make her the feeder of these movements. Men join them to-day from all motives, but the religious is the only one to which they may safely be trusted. He has rescued the jewel from the dust-heap of tradition, and holds it up, shining, before our eyes.”

Alison looked at her companion.

“That,” she said, “is a very beautiful phrase.”

Bedloe Hubbell smiled queerly.

“I don’t know why I’m telling you all this. I can’t usually talk about it. But the sight of that congregation this morning, mixed as it was, and the way he managed to weld it together.”

Page 1907

“Ah, you noticed that!” she exclaimed sharply.

“Noticed it!”

“I know. It was a question of feeling it.”

There was a silence.

“Will he succeed?” she asked presently.

“Ah,” said Bedloe Hubbell, “how is it possible to predict it? The forces against him are tremendous, and it is usually the pioneer who suffers. I agree absolutely with his definition of faith, I have it. And the work he has done already can never be undone. The time is ripe, and it is something that he has men like Phil Goodrich behind him, and Mr. Waring. I’m going to enlist, and from now on I intend to get every man and woman upon whom I have any influence whatever to go to that church . . . .” A little later Alison, marvelling, left him.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE CURRENT OF LIFE

I

The year when Hodder had gone east—to Bremerton and Bar Harbor, he had read in the train a magazine article which had set fire to his imagination. It had to do with the lives of the men, the engineers who dared to deal with the wild and terrible power of the western hills, who harnessed and conquered roaring rivers, and sent the power hundreds of miles over the wilderness, by flimsy wires, to turn the wheels of industry and light the dark places of the cities. And, like all men who came into touch with elemental mysteries, they had their moments of pure ecstasy, gaining a tingling, intenser life from the contact with dynamic things; and other moments when, in their struggle for mastery, they were buffeted about, scorched, and almost overwhelmed.

In these days the remembrance of that article came back to Hodder. It was as though he, too, were seeking to deflect and guide a force —the Force of forces. He, too, was buffeted, scorched, and bruised, at periods scarce given time to recover himself in the onward rush he himself had started, and which he sought to control. Problems arose which demanded the quick thinking of emergency. He, too, had his moments of reward, the reward of the man who is in touch with reality.

He lived, from day to day, in a bewildering succession of encouragements and trials, all unprecedented. If he remained at St. John’s, an entire new organization would be

necessary . . . . He did not as yet see it clearly; and in the meantime, with his vestry alienated, awaiting the bishop's decision, he could make no definite plans, even if he had had the leisure. Wholesale desertions had occurred in the guilds and societies, the activities of which had almost ceased. Little Tomkinson, the second assistant, had resigned; and McCrae, who worked harder than ever before, was already marked, Hodder knew, for dismissal if he himself were defeated.

And then there was the ever present question of money. It remained to be seen whether a system of voluntary offerings were practicable. For Hodder had made some inquiries into the so-called "free churches," only to discover that there were benefactors behind them, benefactors the Christianity of whose lives was often doubtful.

Page 1908

One morning he received in the mail the long-expected note from the bishop, making an appointment for the next day. Hodder, as he read it over again, smiled to himself. . . He could gather nothing of the mind of the writer from the contents.

The piece of news which came to him on the same morning swept completely the contemplations of the approaching interview from his mind. Sally Grover stopped in at the parish house on her way to business.

“Kate Marcy’s gone,” she announced, in her abrupt fashion.

“Gone!” he exclaimed, and stared at her in dismay. “Gone where?”

“That’s just it,” said Miss Grover. “I wish I knew. I reckon we’d got into the habit of trusting her too much, but it seemed the only way. She wasn’t in her room last night, but Ella Finley didn’t find it out until this morning, and she ran over scared to death, to tell us about it.”

Involuntarily the rector reached for his hat.

“I’ve sent out word among our friends in Dalton Street,” Sally continued. An earthquake could not have disturbed her outer, matter-of-fact calmness. But Hodder was not deceived: he knew that she was as profoundly grieved and discouraged as himself. “And I’ve got old Gratz, the cabinet-maker, on the job. If she’s in Dalton Street, he’ll find her.”

“But what—?” Hodder began.

Sally threw up her hands.

“You never can tell, with that kind. But it sticks in my mind she’s done something foolish.”

“Foolish?”

Sally twitched, nervously.

“Somehow I don’t think it’s a spree—but as I say, you can’t tell. She’s full of impulses. You remember how she frightened us once before, when she went off and stayed all night with the woman she used to know in the flat house, when she heard she was sick?”

Hodder nodded.

“You’ve inquired there?”

“That woman went to the hospital, you know. She may be with another one. If she is, Gratz ought to find her. . . You know there was a time, Mr. Hodder, when I didn’t have much hope that we’d pull her through. But we got hold of her through her feelings. She’d do anything for Mr. Bentley —she’d do anything for you, and the way she stuck to that embroidery was fine. I don’t say she was cured, but whenever she’d feel one of those fits coming on she’d let us know about it, and we’d watch her. And I never saw one of that kind change so. Why, she must be almost as good looking now as she ever was.”

“You don’t think she has done anything—desperate?” asked Hodder, slowly.

Sally comprehended.

“Well—somehow I don’t. She used to say if she ever got drunk again she’d never come back. But she didn’t have any money—she’s given Mr. Bentley every cent of it. And we didn’t have any warning. She was as cheerful as could be yesterday morning, Mrs. McQuillen says.”

“It might not do any harm to notify the police,” replied Hodder, rising. “I’ll go around to headquarters now.”

Page 1909

He was glad of the excuse for action. He could not have sat still. And as he walked rapidly across Burton Street he realized with a pang how much his heart had been set on Kate Marcy's redemption. In spite of the fact that every moment of his time during the past fortnight had been absorbed by the cares, responsibilities, and trials thrust upon him, he reproached himself for not having gone oftener to Dalton Street. And yet, if Mr. Bentley and Sally Grower had been unable to foresee and prevent this, what could he have done?

At police headquarters he got no news. The chief received him deferentially, sympathetically, took down Kate Marcy's description, went so far as to remark, sagely, that too much mustn't be expected of these women, and said he would notify the rector if she were found. The chief knew and admired Mr. Bentley, and declared he was glad to meet Mr. Hodder. . . Hodder left, too preoccupied to draw any significance from the nature of his welcome. He went at once to Mr. Bentley's.

The old gentleman was inclined to be hopeful, to take Sally Grower's view of the matter. . He trusted, he said, Sally's instinct. And Hodder came away less uneasy, not a little comforted by a communion which never failed to fortify him, to make him marvel at the calmness of that world in which his friend lived, a calmness from which no vicarious sorrow was excluded. And before Hodder left, Mr. Bentley had drawn from him some account of the more recent complexities at the church. The very pressure of his hand seemed to impart courage.

"You won't stay and have dinner with me?"

The rector regretfully declined.

"I hear the bishop has returned," said Mr. Bentley, smiling.

Hodder was surprised. He had never heard Mr. Bentley speak of the bishop. Of course he must know him.

"I have my talk with him to-morrow."

Mr. Bentley said nothing, but pressed his hand again . . . .

On Tower Street, from the direction of the church, he beheld a young man and a young woman approaching him absorbed in conversation. Even at a distance both seemed familiar, and presently he identified the lithe and dainty figure in the blue dress as that of the daughter of his vestryman, Francis Ferguson. Presently she turned her face, alight with animation, from her companion, and recognized him.

"It's Mr. Hodder!" she exclaimed, and was suddenly overtaken with a crimson shyness. The young man seemed equally embarrassed as they stood facing the rector.

“I’m afraid you don’t remember me, Mr. Hodder,” he said. “I met you at Mr. Ferguson’s last spring.”

Then it came to him. This was the young man who had made the faux pas which had caused Mrs. Ferguson so much consternation, and who had so manfully apologized afterwards. His puzzled expression relaxed into a smile, and he took the young man’s hand.

“I was going to write to you,” said Nan, as she looked up at the rector from under the wide brim of her hat. “Our engagement is to be announced Wednesday.”

Page 1910

Hodder congratulated them. There was a brief silence, when Nan said tremulously:

“We’re coming to St. John’s!”

“I’m very glad,” Hodder replied, gravely. It was one of those compensating moments, for him, when his tribulations vanished; and the tributes of the younger generation were those to which his heart most freely responded. But the situation, in view of the attitude of Francis Ferguson, was too delicate to be dwelt upon.

“I came to hear you last Sunday, Mr. Hodder,” the young man volunteered, with that mixture of awkwardness and straightforwardness which often characterize his sex and age in referring to such matters. “And I had an idea of writing you, too, to tell you how much I liked what you said. But I know you must have had many letters. You’ve made me think.”

He flushed, but met the rector’s eye. Nan stood regarding him with pride.

“You’ve made me think, too,” she added. “And we intend to pitch in and help you, if we can be of any use.”

He parted from them, wondering. And it was not until he had reached the parish house that it occurred to him that he was as yet unenlightened as to the young man’s name . . . .

His second reflection brought back to his mind Kate Mercy, for it was with a portion of Nan Ferguson’s generous check that her board had been paid. And he recalled the girl’s hope, as she had given it to him, that he would find some one in Dalton Street to help . . . .

II

There might, to the mundane eye, have been an element of the ridiculous in the spectacle of the rector of St. John’s counting his gains, since he had chosen—with every indication of insanity—to bring the pillars of his career crashing down on his own head. By no means the least, however, of the treasures flung into his lap was the tie which now bound him to the Philip Goodriches, which otherwise would never have been possible. And as he made his way thither on this particular evening, a renewed sense came upon him of his emancipation from the dreary, useless hours he had been wont to spend at other dinner tables. That existence appeared to him now as the glittering, feverish unreality of a nightmare filled with restless women and tired men who drank champagne, thus gradually achieving—by the time cigars were reached—an artificial vivacity. The caprice and superficiality of the one sex, the inability to dwell upon or even penetrate a serious subject, the blindness to what was going on around them; the materialism, the money standard of both, were nauseating in the retrospect.

How, indeed, had life once appeared so distorted to him, a professed servant of humanity, as to lead him in the name of duty into that galley?

Such was the burden of his thought when the homelike front of the Goodrich house greeted him in the darkness, its enshrouded windows gleaming with friendly light. As the door opened, the merry sound of children's laughter floated down the stairs, and it seemed to Hodder as though a curse had been lifted. . . . The lintel of this house had been marked for salvation, the scourge had passed it by: the scourge of social striving which lay like a blight on a free people.

Page 1911

Within, the note of gentility, of that instinctive good taste to which many greater mansions aspired in vain, was sustained. The furniture, the pictures, the walls and carpets were true expressions of the individuality of master and mistress, of the unity of the life lived together; and the rector smiled as he detected, in a corner of the hall, a sturdy but diminutive hobby-horse—here the final, harmonious touch. There was the sound of a scuffle, treble shrieks of ecstasy from above, and Eleanor Goodrich came out to welcome him.

“Its Phil,” she told him in laughing despair, “he upsets all my discipline, and gets them so excited they don’t go to sleep for hours...”

Seated in front of the fire in the drawing-room, he found Alison Parr. Her coolness, her radiancy, her complete acceptance of the situation, all this and more he felt from the moment he touched her hand and looked into her face. And never had she so distinctly represented to him the mysterious essence of fate. Why she should have made the fourth at this intimate gathering, and whether or not she was or had been an especial friend of Eleanor Goodrich he did not know. There was no explanation....

A bowl of superb chrysanthemums occupied the centre of the table. Eleanor lifted them off and placed them on the sideboard.

“I’ve got used to looking at Phil,” she explained, “and craning is so painful.”

The effect at first was to increase the intensity of the intimacy. There was no reason—-he told himself—why Alison’s self-possession should have been disturbed; and as he glanced at her from time to time he perceived that it was not. So completely was she mistress of herself that presently he felt a certain faint resentment rising within him,—yet he asked himself why she should not have been. It was curious that his imagination would not rise, now, to a realization of that intercourse on which, at times, his fancy had dwelt with such vividness. The very interest, the eagerness with which she took part in their discussions seemed to him in the nature of an emphatic repudiation of any ties to him which might have been binding.

All this was only, on Hodder’s part, to be aware of the startling discovery as to how strong his sense of possession had been, and how irrational, how unwarranted.

For he had believed himself, as regarding her, to have made the supreme renunciation of his life. And the very fact that he had not consulted, could not consult her feelings and her attitude made that renunciation no less difficult. All effort, all attempt at achievement of the only woman for whom he had ever felt the sublime harmony of desire—the harmony of the mind and the flesh—was cut off.

To be here, facing her again in such close proximity, was at once a pleasure and a torture. And gradually he found himself yielding to the pleasure, to the illusion of

permanency created by her presence. And, when all was said, he had as much to be grateful for as he could reasonably have wished; yes, and more. The bond (there was a bond, after all!) which united them was unbreakable. They had forged it together. The future would take care of itself.

Page 1912

The range of the conversation upon which they at length embarked was a tacit acknowledgment of a relationship which now united four persons who, six months before, would have believed themselves to have had nothing in common. And it was characteristic of the new interest that it transcended the limits of the parish of St. John's, touched upon the greater affairs to which that parish—if their protest prevailed—would now be dedicated. Not that the church was at once mentioned, but subtly implied as now enlisted,—and emancipated henceforth from all ecclesiastical narrowness . . . . The amazing thing by which Hodder was suddenly struck was the naturalness with which Alison seemed to fit into the new scheme. It was as though she intended to remain there, and had abandoned all intention of returning to the life which apparently she had once permanently and definitely chosen....

Bedloe Hubbell's campaign was another topic. And Phil had observed, with the earnestness which marked his more serious statements, that it wouldn't surprise him if young Carter, Hubbell's candidate for mayor, overturned that autumn the Beatty machine.

"Oh, do you think so!" Alison exclaimed with exhilaration.

"They're frightened and out of breath," said Phil, "they had no idea that Bedloe would stick after they had licked him in three campaigns. Two years ago they tried to buy him off by offering to send him to the Senate, and Wallis Plimpton has never got through his head to this why he refused."

Plimpton's head, Eleanor declared dryly, was impervious to a certain kind of idea.

"I wonder if you know, Mr. Hodder, what an admirer Mr. Hubbell is of yours?" Alison asked. "He is most anxious to have a talk with you."

Hodder did not know.

"Well," said Phil, enthusiastically, to the rector, "that's the best tribute you've had yet. I can't say that Bedloe was a more unregenerate heathen than I was, but he was pretty bad."

This led them, all save Hodder, into comments on the character of the congregation the Sunday before, in the midst of which the rector was called away to the telephone. Sally Grover had promised to let him know whether or not they had found Kate Marcy, and his face was grave when he returned . . . . He was still preoccupied, an hour later, when Alison arose to go.

"But your carriage isn't here," said Phil, going to the window.

"Oh, I preferred to, walk," she told him, "it isn't far."

III

A blood-red October moon shed the fulness of its light on the silent houses, and the trees, still clinging to leaf, cast black shadows across the lawns and deserted streets. The very echoes of their footsteps on the pavement seemed to enhance the unreality of their surroundings: Some of the residences were already closed for the night, although the hour was not late, and the glow behind the blinds of the others was nullified by the radiancy from above. To Hodder, the sense of their isolation had never been more complete.

Page 1913

Alison, while repudiating the notion that an escort were needed in a neighbourhood of such propriety and peace, had not refused his offer to accompany her. And Hodder felt instinctively, as he took his place beside her, a sense of climax. This situation, like those of the past, was not of his own making. It was here; confronting him, and a certain inevitable intoxication at being once, more alone with her prevented him from forming any policy with which to deal with it. He might either trust himself, or else he might not. And as she said, the distance was not great. But he could not help wondering, during those first moments of silence, whether she comprehended the strength of the temptation to which she subjected him . . . .

The night was warm. She wore a coat, which was open, and from time to time he caught the gleam of the moonlight on the knotted pearls at her throat. Over her head she had flung, mantilla-like, a black lace scarf, the effect of which was, in the soft luminosity encircling her, to add to the quality of mystery never exhausted. If by acquiescing in his company she had owned to a tie between them, the lace shawl falling over the tails of her dark hair and framing in its folds her face, had somehow made her once more a stranger. Nor was it until she presently looked up into his face with a smile that this impression was, if not at once wholly dissipated, at least contradicted.

Her question, indeed, was intimate.

“Why did you come with me?”

“Why?” he repeated, taken aback.

“Yes. I’m sure you have something you wish to do, something which particularly worries you.”

“No,” he answered, appraising her intuition of him, “there is nothing I can do, to-night. A young woman in whom Mr. Bentley is interested, in whom I am interested, has disappeared. But we have taken all the steps possible towards finding her.”

“It was nothing—more serious, then? That, of course, is serious enough. Nothing, I mean, directly affecting your prospects of remaining—where you are?”

“No,” he answered. He rejoiced fiercely that she should have asked him. The question was not bold, but a natural resumption of the old footing “Not that I mean to imply,” he added, returning her smile, “that those prospects’ are in any way improved.”

“Are they any worse?” she said.

“I see the bishop to-morrow. I have no idea what position he will take. But even if he should decide not to recommend me for trial many difficult problems still remain to be solved.”

“I know. It’s fine,” she continued, after a moment, “the way you are going ahead as if there were no question of your not remaining; and getting all those people into the church and influencing them as you did when they had come for all sorts of reasons. Do you remember, the first time I met you, I told you I could not think of you as a clergyman. I cannot now—less than ever.”

Page 1914

“What do you think of me as?” he asked.

“I don’t know,” she considered. “You are unlike any person I have ever known. It is curious that I cannot now even think of St. John’s as a church. You have transformed it into something that seems new. I’m afraid I can’t describe what I mean, but you have opened it up, let in the fresh air, rid it of the musty and deadening atmosphere which I have always associated with churches. I wanted to see you, before I went away,” she went on steadily, “and when Eleanor mentioned that you were coming to her house to-night, I asked her to invite me. Do you think me shameless?”

The emphasis of his gesture was sufficient. He could not trust himself to speak.

“Writing seemed so unsatisfactory, after what you had done for me, and I never can express myself in writing. I seem to congeal.”

“After what I have done for you!” he exclaimed: “What can I have done?”

“You have done more than you know,” she answered, in a low voice. “More, I think, than I know. How are such things to be measured, put into words? You have effected some change in me which defies analysis, a change of attitude,—to attempt to dogmatize it would ruin it. I prefer to leave it undefined—not even to call it an acquisition of faith. I have faith,” she said, simply, “in what you have become, and which has made you dare, superbly, to cast everything away. . . It is that, more than anything you have said. What you are.”

For the instant he lost control of himself.

“What you are,” he replied. “Do you realize—can you ever realize what your faith in me has been to me?”

She appeared to ignore this.

“I did not mean to say that you have not made many things clear, which once were obscure, as I wrote you. You have convinced me that true belief, for instance, is the hardest thing in the world, the denial of practically all these people, who profess to believe, represent. The majority of them insist that humanity is not to be trusted. . .”

They had reached, in an incredibly brief time, the corner of Park Street.

“When are you leaving?” he asked, in a voice that sounded harsh in his own ears.

“Come!” she said gently, “I’m not going in yet, for a while.”

The Park lay before them, an empty, garden filled with checquered light and shadows under the moon. He followed her across the gravel, glistening with dew, past the statue

of the mute statesman with arm upraised, into pastoral stretches—a delectable country which was theirs alone. He did not take it in, save as one expression of the breathing woman at his side. He was but partly conscious of a direction he had not chosen. His blood throbbed violently, and a feeling of actual physical faintness was upon him. He was being led, helplessly, all volition gone, and the very idea of resistance became chimerical . . . .

There was a seat under a tree, beside a still lake burnished by the moon. It seemed as though he could not bear the current of her touch, and yet the thought of its removal were less bearable . . . For she had put her own hand out, not shyly, but with a movement so fraught with grace, so natural that it was but the crowning bestowal.

Page 1915

“Alison!” he cried, “I can’t ask it of you. I have no right—”

“You’re not asking it,” she answered. “It is I who am asking it.”

“But I have no future—I may be an outcast to-morrow. I have nothing to offer you.” He spoke more firmly now, more commandingly.

“Don’t you see, dear, that it is just because your future as obscure that I can do this? You never would have done it, I know,—and I couldn’t face that. Don’t you understand that I am demanding the great sacrifice?”

“Sacrifice!” he repeated. His fingers turned, and closed convulsively on hers.

“Yes, sacrifice,” she said gently. “Isn’t it the braver thing?”

Still he failed to catch her meaning.

“Braver,” she explained, with her wonderful courage, “braver if I love you, if I need you, if I cannot do without you.”

He took her in his arms, crushing her to him in his strength, in one ineffable brief moment finding her lips, inhaling the faint perfume of her smooth akin. Her lithe figure lay passively against him, in marvellous, unbelievable surrender.

“I see what you mean,” he said, at length, “I should have been a coward. But I could not be sure that you loved me.”

So near was her face that he could detect, even under the obscurity of the branches, a smile.

“And so I was reduced to this! I threw my pride to the winds,” she whispered. “But I don’t care. I was determined, selfishly, to take happiness.”

“And to give it,” he added, bending down to her. The supreme quality of its essence was still to be doubted, a bright star-dust which dazzled him, to evaporate before his waking eyes. And, try as he would, he could not realize to the full depth the boy of contact with a being whom, by discipline, he had trained his mind to look upon as the unattainable. They had spoken of the future, yet in these moments any consideration of it was blotted out. . . It was only by degrees that he collected himself sufficiently to be able to return to it. . . Alison took up the thread.

“Surely,” she said, “sacrifice is useless unless it means something, unless it be a realization. It must be discriminating. And we should both of us have remained incomplete if we had not taken—this. You would always, I think, have been the one man for me,—but we should have lost touch.” He felt her tremble. “And I needed you.

I have needed you all my life—one in whom h might have absolute faith. That is my faith, of which I could not tell you awhile ago. Is it—sacrilegious?"

She looked up at him. He shook his head, thinking of his own. It seemed the very distillation of the divine. "All my life," she went on, "I have been waiting for the one who would risk everything. Oh, if you had faltered the least little bit, I don't know what I should have done. That would have destroyed what was left of me, put out, I think, the flickering fire that remained, instead of fanning it into flame. You cannot know how I watched you, how I prayed! I think it was prayer—I am sure it was. And it was because you did not falter, because you risked all, that you gained me. You have gained only what you yourself made, more than I ever was, more than I ever expected to be."

Page 1916

“Alison!” he remonstrated, “you mustn’t say that.”

She straightened up and gazed at him, taking one of his hands in her lithe fingers.

“Oh, but I must! It is the truth. I felt that you cared—women are surer in such matters than men. I must conceal nothing from you—nothing of my craftiness. Women are crafty, you know. And suppose you fail? Ah, I do not mean failure—you cannot fail, now. You have put yourself forever beyond failure. But what I mean is, suppose you were compelled to leave St. John’s, and I came to you then as I have come now, and begged to take my place beside you? I was afraid to risk it. I was afraid you would not take me, even now, to-night. Do you realize how austere you are at times, how you have frightened me?”

“That I should ever have done that!” he said.

“When I looked at you in the pulpit you seemed so far from me, I could scarcely bear it. As if I had no share in you, as if you had already gone to a place beyond, where I could not go, where I never could. Oh, you will take me with you, now,—you won’t leave me behind!”

To this cry every fibre of his soul responded. He had thought himself, in these minutes, to have known all feelings, all thrills, but now, as he gathered her to him again, he was to know still another, the most exquisite of all. That it was conferred upon him to give this woman protection, to shield and lift her, inspire her as she inspired him—this consciousness was the most exquisite of all, transcending all conception of the love of woman. And the very fulness of her was beyond him. A lifetime were insufficient to exhaust her . . . .

“I wanted to come to you now, John. I want to share your failure, if it comes—all your failures. Because they will be victories—don’t you see? I have never been able to achieve that kind of victory—real victory, by myself. I have always succumbed, taken the baser, the easier thing.” Her cheek was wet. “I wasn’t strong enough, by myself, and I never knew the stronger one . . . .

“See what my trust in you has been! I knew that you would not refuse me in spite of the fact that the world may misunderstand, may sneer at your taking me. I knew that you were big enough even for that, when you understood it, coming from me. I wanted to be with you, now, that we might fight it out together.”

“What have I done to deserve so priceless a thing?” he asked.

She smiled at him again, her lip trembling.

“Oh, I’m not priceless, I’m only real, I’m only human—human and tired. You are so strong, you can’t know how tired. Have you any idea why I came out here, this

summer? It was because I was desperate—because I had almost decided to marry some one else."

She felt him start.

"I was afraid of it;" he said.

"Were you? Did you think, did you wonder a little about me?" There was a vibrant note of triumph to which he reacted. She drew away from him. a little. "Perhaps, when you know how sordid my life has been, you won't want me."

Page 1917

“Is—Is that your faith, Alison?” he demanded. “God forbid! You have come to a man who also has confessions to make.”

“Oh, I am glad. I want to know all of you—all, do you understand? That will bring us even closer together. And it was one thing I felt about you in the beginning, that day in the garden, that you had had much to conquer—more than most men. It was a part of your force and of your knowledge of life. You were not a sexless ascetic who preached a mere neutral goodness. Does that shock you?”

He smiled in turn.

“I went away from here, as I once told you, full of a high resolution not to trail the honour of my art—if I achieved art—in the dust. But I have not only trailed my art—I trailed myself. In New York I became contaminated, —the poison of the place, of the people with whom I came in contact, got into my blood. Little by little I yielded—I wanted so to succeed, to be able to confound those who had doubted and ridiculed me! I wasn’t content to wait to deny myself for the ideal. Success was in the air. That was the poison, and I only began to realize it after it was too late.

“Please don’t think I am asking pity—I feel that you must know. From the very first my success—which was really failure—began to come in the wrong way. As my father’s daughter I could not be obscure. I was sought out, I was what was called picturesque, I suppose. The women petted me, although some of them hated me, and I had a fascination for a certain kind of men—the wrong kind. I began going to dinners, house parties, to recognize, that advantages came that way . . . . It seemed quite natural. It was what many others of my profession tried to do, and they envied me my opportunities.

“I ought to say, in justice to myself, that I was not in the least cynical about it. I believed I was clinging to the ideal of art, and that all I wanted was a chance. And the people I went with had the same characteristics, only intensified, as those I had known here. Of course I was actually no better than the women who were striving frivolously to get away from themselves, and the men who were fighting to get money. Only I didn’t know it.

“Well, my chance came at last. I had done several little things, when an elderly man who is tremendously rich, whose name you would recognize if I mentioned it, gave me an order. For weeks, nearly every day, he came to my studio for tea, to talk over the plans. I was really unsophisticated then—but I can see now—well, that the garden was a secondary consideration . . . . And the fact that I did it for him gave me a standing I should not otherwise have had . . . . Oh, it is sickening to look back upon, to think what an idiot I was in how little I saw....

Page 1918

“That garden launched me, and I began to have more work than I could do. I was conscientious about it tried—tried to make every garden better than the last. But I was a young woman, unconventionally living alone, and by degrees the handicap of my sex was brought home to me. I did not feel the pressure at first, and then—I am ashamed to say—it had in it an element of excitement, a sense of power. The poison was at work. I was amused. I thought I could carry it through, that the world had advanced sufficiently for a woman to do anything if she only had the courage. And I believed I possessed a true broadness of view, and could impress it, so far as I was concerned, on others . . . .

“As I look back upon it all, I believe my reputation for coldness saved me, yet it was that very reputation which increased the pressure, and sometimes I was fairly driven into a corner. It seemed to madden some men—and the disillusionments began to come. Of course it was my fault —I don’t pretend to say it wasn’t. There were many whom, instinctively, I was on my guard against, but some I thought really nice, whom I trusted, revealed a side I had not suspected. That was the terrible thing! And yet I held to my ideal, tattered as it was. . . "

Alison was silent a moment, still clinging to his hand, and when she spoke again it was with a tremor of agitation.

“It is hard, to tell you this, but I wish you to know. At last I met a man, comparatively young, who was making his own way in New York, achieving a reputation as a lawyer. Shall I tell you that I fell in love with him? He seemed to bring a new freshness into my life when I was beginning to feel the staleness of it. Not that I surrendered at once, but the reservations of which I was conscious at the first gradually disappeared—or rather I ignored them. He had charm, a magnificent self-confidence, but I think the liberality of the opinions he expressed, in regard to women, most appealed to me. I was weak on that side, and I have often wondered whether he knew it. I believed him incapable of a great refusal.

“He agreed, if I consented to marry him, that I should have my freedom —freedom to live in my own life and to carry on my profession. Fortunately, the engagement was never announced, never even suspected. One day he hinted that I should return to my father for a month or two before the wedding . . . . The manner in which he said it suddenly turned me cold. Oh,” Alison exclaimed, “I was quite willing to go back, to pay my father a visit, as I had done nearly every year, but—how can I tell you?—he could not believe that I had definitely given up-my father’s money . . . .

“I sat still and looked at him, I felt as if I were frozen, turned to stone. And after a long while, since I would not speak to him, he went out. . . Three months later he came back and said that I had misunderstood him, that he couldn’t live without me. I sent him away.... Only the other day he married Amy Grant, one of my friends . . . .

Page 1919

“Well, after that, I was tired—so tired! Everything seemed to go out of life. It wasn’t that I loved him any longer,—all had been crushed. But the illusion was gone, and I saw myself as I was. And for the first time in my life I felt defenceless, helpless. I wanted refuge. Did you ever hear of Jennings Howe?”

“The architect?”

Alison nodded. “Of course you must have—he is so well known. He has been a widower for several years. He liked my work, saw its defects, and was always frank about them, and I designed a good many gardens in connection with his houses. He himself is above all things an artist, and he fell into the habit of coming to my studio and giving me friendly advice, in the nicest way. He seemed to understand that I was going through some sort of a crisis. He called it ‘too much society.’ And then, without any warning, he asked me to marry him.

“That is why I came out here—to think it over. I didn’t love him, and I told him so, but I respected him.

“He never compromised in his art, and I have known him over and over to refuse houses because certain conditions were stipulated. To marry him was an acknowledgment of defeat. I realized that. But I had come to the extremity where I wanted peace—peace and protection. I wanted to put myself irrevocably beyond the old life, which simply could not have gone on, and I saw myself in the advancing years becoming tawdry and worn, losing little by little what I had gained at a price.

“So I came here—to reflect, to see, as it were, if I could find something left in me to take hold of, to build upon, to begin over again, perhaps, by going back to the old associations. I could think of no better place, and I knew that my father would, be going away after a few weeks, and that I should be lone, yet with an atmosphere back of me, —my old atmosphere. That was why I went to church the first Sunday, in order to feel more definitely that atmosphere, to summon up more completely the image of my mother. More and more, as the years have passed, I have thought of her in moments of trouble. I have recovered her as I never had hoped to do in Mr. Bentley. Isn’t it strange,” she exclaimed wonderingly, “that he should have come into both our lives, with such an influence, at this time?”

“And then I met you, talked to you that afternoon in the garden. Shall I make a complete confession? I wrote to Jennings Howe that very week that I could not marry him.”

“You knew!” Hodder exclaimed: “You knew then?”

“Ah, I can’t tell what I knew—or when. I knew, after I had seen you, that I couldn’t marry him! Isn’t that enough?”

He drew in his breath deeply.

“I should be less than a man if I refused to take you, Alison. And—no matter what happens, I can and will find some honest work to support you. But oh, my dear, when I think of it, the nobility and generosity of what you have done appalls me.”

Page 1920

“No, no!” she protested, “you mustn’t say that! I needed you more than you need me. And haven’t we both discovered the world, and renounced it? I can at least go so far as to say that, with all my heart. And isn’t marriage truer and higher when man and wife start with difficulties and problems to solve together? It is that thought that brings me the greatest joy, that I may be able to help you . . . . Didn’t you need me, just a little?”

“Now that I have you, I am unable to think of the emptiness which might have been. You came to me, like Beatrice, when I had lost my way in the darkness of the wood. And like Beatrice, you showed me the path, and hell and heaven.”

“Oh, you would have found the path without me. I cannot claim that. I saw from the first that you were destined to find it. And, unlike Beatrice, I too was lost, and it was you who lifted me up. You mustn’t idealize me.” . . . She stood up. “Come!” she said. He too stood, gazing at her, and she lifted her hands to his shoulders . . . . They moved out from under the tree and walked for a while in silence across the dew-drenched grass, towards Park Street. The moon, which had ridden over a great space in the sky, hung red above the blackness of the forest to the west.

“Do you remember when we were here together, the day I met Mr. Bentley? And you never would have spoken!”

“How could I, Alison?” he asked.

“No, you couldn’t. And yet—you would have let me go!”

He put his arm in hers, and drew her towards him.

“I must talk to your father,” he said, “some day—soon. I ought to tell him—of our intentions. We cannot go on like this.”

“No,” she agreed, “I realize it. And I cannot stay, much longer, in Park Street. I must go back to New York, until you send for me, dear. And there are things I must do. Do you know, even though I antagonize him so—my father, I mean—even though he suspects and bitterly resents any interest in you, my affection for you, and that I have lingered because of you, I believe, in his way, he has liked to have me here.”

“I can understand it,” Hodder said.

“It’s because you are bigger than I, although he has quarrelled with you so bitterly. I don’t know what definite wrongs he has done to other persons. I don’t wish to know. I don’t ask you to tell me what passed between you that night. Once you said that you had an affection for him —that he was lonely. He is lonely. In these last weeks, in spite of his anger, I can see that he suffers terribly. It is a tragedy, because he will never give in.”

“It is a tragedy.” Hodder’s tone was agitated.

“I wonder if he realizes a little” she began, and paused. “Now that Preston has come home—”

“Your brother?” Hodder exclaimed.

“Yes. I forgot to tell you. I don’t know why he came,” she faltered. “I suppose he has got into some new trouble. He seems changed. I can’t describe it now, but I will tell you about it . . . . It’s the first time we’ve all three been together since my mother died, for Preston wasn’t back from college when I went to Paris to study . . . .”

Page 1921

They stood together on the pavement before the massive house, fraught with so many and varied associations for Hodder. And as he looked up at it, his eye involuntarily rested upon the windows of the boy's room where Eldon Parr had made his confession. Alison startled him by pronouncing his name, which came with such unaccustomed sweetness from her lips. "You will write me to-morrow," she said, "after you have seen the bishop?"

"Yes, at once. You mustn't let it worry you."

"I feel as if I had cast off that kind of worry forever. It is only —the other worries from which we do not escape, from which we do not wish to escape."

With a wonderful smile she had dropped his hands and gone in at the entrance, when a sound made them turn, the humming of a motor. And even as they looked it swung into Park Street.

"It's a taxicab!" she said. As she spoke it drew up almost beside them, instead of turning in at the driveway, the door opened, and a man alighted.

"Preston!" Alison exclaimed.

He started, turning from the driver, whom he was about to pay. As for Hodder, he was not only undergoing a certain shock through the sudden contact, at such a moment, with Alison's brother: there was an additional shock that this was Alison's brother and Eldon Parr's son. Not that his appearance was shocking, although the well-clad, athletic figure was growing a trifle heavy, and the light from the side lamps of the car revealed dissipation in a still handsome face. The effect was a subtler one, not to be analyzed, and due to a multitude of preconceptions.

Alison came forward.

"This is Mr. Hodder, Preston," she said simply.

For a moment Preston continued to stare at the rector without speaking. Suddenly he put out his hand.

"Mr. Hodder, of St. John's?" he demanded.

"Yes," answered Hodder. His surprise deepened to perplexity at the warmth of the handclasp that followed.

A smile that brought back vividly to Hodder the sunny expression of the schoolboy in the picture lightened the features of the man.

"I'm very glad to see you," he said, in a tone that left no doubt of its genuine quality.

“Thank you,” Hodder replied, meeting his eye with kindness, yet with a scrutiny that sought to penetrate the secret of an unexpected cordiality. “I, too, have hoped to see you.”

Alison, who stood by wondering, felt a meaning behind the rector’s words. She pressed his hand as he bade her, once more, good night.

“Won’t you take my taxicab?” asked Preston. “It is going down town anyway.”

“I think I’d better stick to the street cars,” Hodder said. His refusal was not ungraceful, but firm. Preston did not insist.

In spite of the events of that evening, which he went over again and again as the midnight car carried him eastward, in spite of a new-born happiness the actuality of which was still difficult to grasp, Hodder was vaguely troubled when he thought of Preston Parr.

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THE INSIDE OF THE CUP

By Winston Churchill

Volume 8.

XXVII. RETRIBUTION XXVIII. LIGHT

CHAPTER XXVII

RETRIBUTION

I

The Bishop's House was a comfortable, double dwelling of a smooth, bright red brick and large, plate-glass windows, situated in a plot at the western end of Waverley Place. It had been bought by the Diocese in the nineties, and was representative of that transitional period in American architecture when the mansard roof had been repudiated, when as yet no definite types had emerged to take its place. The house had pointed gables, and a tiny and utterly useless porch that served only to darken the front door, made of heavy pieces of wood fantastically curved.

It was precisely ten o'clock in the morning when Hodder rang the bell and was shown into the ample study which he had entered on other and less vital occasions. He found difficulty in realizing that this pleasant room, lined with well-worn books and overlooking a back lawn where the clothes of the episcopal family hung in the yellow autumn sun, was to be his judgment seat, whence he might be committed to trial for heresy.

And this was the twentieth century! The full force of the preposterous fact smote him, and a consciousness of the distance he himself had travelled since the comparatively recent days of his own orthodoxy. And suddenly he was full again of a resentful impatience, not only that he should be called away from his labours, his cares, the strangers who were craving his help, to answer charges of such an absurd triviality, but that the performance of the great task to which he had set his hand, with God's help, should depend upon it. Would his enemies be permitted to drive him out thus easily?

The old bishop came in, walking by the aid of a cane. He smiled at Hodder, who greeted him respectfully, and bidding him sit down, took a chair himself behind his writing table, from whence he gazed awhile earnestly and contemplatively at the rugged features and strong shoulders of the rector of St. John's. The effect of the look was that of a visual effort to harmonize the man with the deed he had done, the stir he had created in the city and the diocese; to readjust impressions.

A hint of humour crept into the bishop's blue eyes, which were watery, yet strong, with heavy creases in the corners. He indicated by a little gesture three bundles of envelopes, bound by rubber bands, on the corner of his blotter.

"Hodder," he said, "see what a lot of trouble you have made for me in my old age! All those are about you."

The rector's expression could not have been deemed stern, but it had met the bishop's look unflinchingly. Now it relaxed into a responding smile, which was not without seriousness.

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“I am sorry, sir,” Hodder answered, “to have caused you any worry—or inconvenience.”

“Perhaps,” said the bishop, “I have had too much smooth sailing for a servant of Christ. Indeed, I have come to that conclusion.”

Hodder did not reply. He was moved, even more by the bishop’s manner and voice than his words. And the opening to their conversation was unexpected. The old man put on his spectacles, and drew from the top of one of the bundles a letter.

“This is from one of your vestrymen, Mr. Gordon Atterbury,” he said, and proceeded to read it, slowly. When he had finished he laid it down.

“Is that, according to your recollection, Mr. Hodder, a fairly accurate summary of the sermon you gave when you resumed the pulpit at the end of the summer?”

“Yes, sir,” answered the rector, “it is surprisingly accurate, with the exception of two or three inferences which I shall explain at the proper moment.”

“Mr. Atterbury is to be congratulated on his memory,” the bishop observed a little dryly. “And he has saved me the trouble of reading more. Now what are the inferences to which you object?”

Hodder stated them. “The most serious one,” he added, “is that which he draws from my attitude on the virgin birth. Mr. Atterbury insists, like others who cling to that dogma, that I have become what he vaguely calls an Unitarian. He seems incapable of grasping my meaning, that the only true God the age knows, the world has ever known, is the God in Christ, is the Spirit in Christ, and is there not by any material proof, but because we recognize it spiritually. And that doctrine and dogma, ancient speculations as to how, definitely, that spirit came to be in Christ, are fruitless and mischievous to-day. Mr. Atterbury and others seem actually to resent my identification of our Lord’s Spirit with the social conscience as well as the individual conscience of our time.”

The bishop nodded.

“Hodder,” he demanded abruptly, leaning forward over his desk, “how did this thing happen?”

“You mean, sir—”

There was, in the bishop’s voice, a note almost pathetic. “Oh, I do not mean to ask you anything you may deem too personal. And God forbid, as I look at you, as I have known you, that I should doubt your sincerity. I am not your inquisitor, but your bishop and your friend, and I am asking for your confidence. Six months ago you were, apparently, one of the most orthodox rectors in the diocese. I recognize that you are not an impulsive, sensational man, and I am all the more anxious to learn from your own lips something of

the influences, of the processes which have changed you, which have been strong enough to impel you to risk the position you have achieved."

By this unlooked-for appeal Hodder was not only disarmed, but smitten with self-reproach at the thought of his former misjudgment and underestimation of the man in whose presence he sat. And it came over him, not only the extent to which, formerly, he had regarded the bishop as too tolerant and easygoing, but the fact that he had arrived here today prepared to find in his superior anything but the attitude he was showing. Considering the bishop's age, Hodder had been ready for a lack of understanding of the step he had taken, even for querulous reproaches and rebuke.

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He had, therefore, to pull himself together, to adjust himself to the unexpected greatness of soul with which he was being received before he began to sketch the misgivings he had felt from the early days of his rectorship of St. John's; the helplessness and failure which by degrees had come over him. He related how it had become apparent to him that by far the greater part of his rich and fashionable congregation were Christians only in name, who kept their religion in a small and impervious compartment where it did not interfere with their lives. He pictured the yearning and perplexity of those who had come to him for help, who could not accept the old explanations, and had gone away empty; and he had not been able to make Christians of the poor who attended the parish house. Finally, trusting in the bishop's discretion, he spoke of the revelations he had unearthed in Dalton Street, and how these had completely destroyed his confidence in the Christianity he had preached, and how he had put his old faith to the test of unprejudiced modern criticism, philosophy, and science. . .

The bishop listened intently, his head bent, his eyes on he rector.

"And you have come out—convinced?" he asked tremulously. "Yes, yes, I see you have. It is enough."

He relapsed into thought, his wrinkled hand lying idly on the table.

"I need not tell you, my friend," he resumed at length, "that a great deal of pressure has been brought to bear upon me in this matter, more than I have ever before experienced. You have mortally offended, among others, the most powerful layman in the diocese, Mr. Parr, who complains that you have presumed to take him to task concerning his private affairs."

"I told him," answered Holder, "that so long as he continued to live the life he leads, I could not accept his contributions to St. John's."

"I am an old man," said the bishop, "and whatever usefulness I have had is almost finished. But if I were young to-day, I should pray God for the courage and insight you have shown, and I am thankful to have lived long enough to have known you. It has, at least, been given one to realize that times have changed, that we are on the verge of a mighty future. I will be frank to say that ten years ago, if this had happened, I should have recommended you for trial. Now I can only wish you Godspeed. I, too, can see the light, my friend. I can see, I think, though dimly, the beginnings of a blending of all sects, of all religions in the increasing vision of the truth revealed in Jesus Christ, stripped, as you say, of dogma, of fruitless attempts at rational explanation. In Japan and China, in India and Persia, as well as in Christian countries, it is coming, coming by some working of the Spirit the mystery of which is beyond us. And nations and men who even yet know nothing of the Gospels are showing a willingness to adopt what is Christ's, and the God of Christ."

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Holder was silent, from sheer inability to speak.

“If you had needed an advocate with me,” the bishop continued, “you could not have had one to whose counsel I would more willingly have listened, than that of Horace Bentley. He wrote asking to come and see me, but I went to him in Dalton Street the day I returned. And it gives me satisfaction, Mr. Holder, to confess to you freely that he has taught me, by his life, more of true Christianity than I have learned in all my experience elsewhere.”

“I had thought,” exclaimed the rector, wonderingly, “that I owed him more than any other man.”

“There are many who think that—hundreds, I should say,” the bishop replied . . . . “Eldon Parr ruined him, drove him from the church.... It is strange how, outside of the church, his influence has silently and continuously grown until it has borne fruit in—this. Even now,” he added after a pause, “the cautiousness, the dread of change which comes with old age might, I think, lead me to be afraid of it if I—didn’t perceive behind it the spirit of Horace Bentley.”

It struck Holder, suddenly, what an unconscious but real source of confidence this thought had likewise been to him. He spoke of it.

“It is not that I wouldn’t trust you,” the bishop went on. “I have watched you, I have talked to Asa Waring, I have read the newspapers. In spite of it all, you have kept your head, you have not compromised the dignity of the Church. But oh, my friend, I beg you to bear in mind that you are launched upon deep waters, that you have raised up many enemies —enemies of Christ—who seek to destroy you. You are still young. And the uncompromising experiment to which you are pledged, of freeing your church, of placing her in the position of power and influence in the community which is rightfully hers, is as yet untried. And no stone will be left unturned to discourage and overcome you. You have faith,—you have made me feel it as you sat here,—a faith which will save you from bitterness in personal defeat. You may not reap the victory, or even see it in your lifetime. But of this I am sure, that you will be able to say, with Paul, ’I have planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase.’ Whatever happens, you may count upon my confidence and support. I can only wish that I were younger, that my arm were stronger, and that I had always perceived the truth as clearly as I see it now.”

Holder had risen involuntarily while these words were being spoken. They were indeed a benediction, and the intensity of his feeling warned him of the inadequacy of any reply. They were pronounced in sorrow, yet in hope, and they brought home to him, sharply, the nobility of the bishop’s own sacrifice.

“And you, sir?” he asked.

“Ah,” answered the bishop, “with this I shall have had my life. I am content. . . .”

“You will come to me again, Hodder? some other day,” he said, after an interval, “that we may talk over the new problems. They are constructive, creative, and I am anxious to hear how you propose to meet them. For one thing, to find a new basis for the support of such a parish. I understand they have deprived you of your salary.”

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“I have enough to live on, for a year or so,” replied the rector, quickly. “Perhaps more.”

“I’m afraid,” said the bishop, with a smile in his old eyes, “that you will need it, my friend. But who can say? You have strength, you have confidence, and God is with you.”

II

Life, as Hodder now grasped it, was a rapidly whirling wheel which gave him no chance to catch up with the impressions and experiences through which it was dragging him. Here, for instance, were two far-reaching and momentous events, one crowding upon the other, and not an hour for reflection, realization, or adjustment! He had, indeed, after his return from the bishop’s, snatched a few minutes to write Alison the unexpected result of that interview. But even as he wrote and rang for a messenger to carry the note to Park Street, he was conscious of an effort to seize upon and hold the fact that the woman he had so intensely desired was now his helpmate; and had, of her own freewill, united herself with him. A strong sense of the dignity of their relationship alone prevented his calling her on the telephone—as it doubtless had prevented her. While she remained in her father’s house, he could not. . .

In the little room next to the office several persons were waiting to see him. But as he went downstairs he halted on the, landing, his hand going to his forehead, a reflex movement significant of a final attempt to achieve the hitherto unattainable feat of imagining her as his wife. If he might only speak to her again—now, this morning! And yet he knew that he needed no confirmation. The reality was there, in the background; and though refusing to come forward to be touched, it had already grafted itself as an actual and vital part of his being, never to be eliminated.

Characteristically perfecting his own ideal, she had come to him in the hour when his horizon had been most obscure. And he experienced now an exultation, though solemn and sacred, that her faith had so far been rewarded in the tidings he now confided to the messenger. He was not, as yet, to be driven out from the task, to be deprived of the talent, the opportunity intrusted to him by Lord—the emancipation of the parish of St. John’s.

The first to greet him, when he entered his office, was one who, unknown to himself, had been fighting the battle of the God in Christ, and who now, thanks to John Hodder, had identified the Spirit as the transforming force. Bedloe Hubbell had come to offer his services to the Church. The tender was unqualified.

“I should even be willing, Mr. Hodder,” he said with a smile, “to venture occasionally into a pulpit. You have not only changed my conception of religion, but you have made it for me something which I can now speak about naturally.”

Hodder was struck by the suggestion.

“Ah, we shall need the laymen in the pulpits, Mr. Hubbell,” he said quickly. “A great spiritual movement must be primarily a lay movement. And I promise you you shall not lack for opportunity.”

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III

At nine o'clock that evening, when a reprieve came, Hodder went out. Anxiety on the score of Kate Marcy, as well as a desire to see Mr. Bentley and tell him of the conversation with the bishop, directed his steps toward Dalton Street. And Hodder had, indeed, an intention of confiding to his friend, as one eminently entitled to it, the news of his engagement to Alison Parr.

Nothing, however, had been heard of Kate. She was not in Dalton Street, Mr. Bentley feared. The search of Gratz, the cabinet-maker, had been fruitless. And Sally Grover had even gone to see the woman in the hospital, whom Kate had befriended, in the hope of getting a possible clew. They sat close together before the fire in Mr. Bentley's comfortable library, debating upon the possibility of other methods of procedure, when a carriage was heard rattling over the pitted asphalt without. As it pulled up at the curb, a silence fell between them. The door-bell rang.

Holder found himself sitting erect, rigidly attentive, listening to the muffled sound of a woman's voice in the entry. A few moments later came a knock at the library door, and Sam entered. The old darky was plainly frightened.

"It's Miss Kate, Marse Ho'ace, who you bin tryin' to fin'," he stammered.

Holder sprang to his feet and made his way rapidly around the table, where he stood confronting the woman in the doorway. There she was, perceptibly swaying, as though the floor under her were rocked by an earthquake. Her handsome face was white as chalk, her pupils widened in terror. It was curious, at such an instant, that he should have taken in her costume,—yet it was part of the mystery. She wore a new, close-fitting, patently expensive suit of dark blue cloth and a small hat, which were literally transforming in their effect, demanding a palpable initial effort of identification.

He seized her by the arm.

"What is it?" he demanded.

"Oh, my God!" she cried. "He—he's out there—in the carriage."

She leaned heavily against the doorpost, shivering . . . . Holder saw Sally Grover coming down the stairs.

"Take her," he said, and went out of the front door, which Sam had left open. Mr. Bentley was behind him.

The driver had descended from the box and was peering into the darkness of the vehicle when he heard them, and turned. At sight of the tall clergyman, an expression of relief came into his face.

“I don’t like the looks of this, sir,” he said. “I thought he was pretty bad when I went to fetch him—”

Holder pushed past him and looked into the carriage. Leaning back, motionless, in the corner of the seat was the figure of a man. For a terrible moment of premonition, of enlightenment, the rector gazed at it.

“They sent for me from a family hotel in Ayers Street,” the driver was explaining. Mr. Bentley’s voice interrupted him.

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“He must be brought in, at once. Do you know where Dr. Latimer’s office is, on Tower Street?” he asked the man. “Go there, and bring this doctor back with you as quickly as possible. If he is not in, get another, physician.”

Between them, the driver and Holder got the burden out of the carriage and up the steps. The light from the hallway confirmed the rector’s fear.

“It’s Preston Parr,” he said.

The next moment was too dreadful for surprise, but never had the sense of tragedy so pierced the innermost depths of Holder’s being as now, when Horace Bentley’s calmness seemed to have forsaken him; and as he gazed down upon the features on the pillow, he wept . . . . Holder turned away. Whatever memories those features evoked, memories of a past that still throbbed with life these were too sacred for intrusion. The years of exile, of uncomplaining service to others in this sordid street and over the wide city had not yet sufficed to allay the pain, to heal the wound of youth. Nay, loyalty had kept it fresh—a loyalty that was the handmaid of faith. . .

The rector softly left the room, only to be confronted with another harrowing scene in the library, where a frantic woman was struggling in Sally Grover’s grasp. He went to her assistance. . . Words of comfort, of entreaty were of no avail,—Kate Marcy did not seem to hear them. Hers, in contrast to that other, was the unmeaning grief, the overwhelming sense of injustice of the child; and with her regained physical strength the two had all they could do to restrain her.

“I will go to him,” she sobbed, between her paroxysms, “you’ve got no right to keep me—he’s mine . . . he came back to me—he’s all I ever had . . . .”

So intent were they that they did not notice Mr. Bentley standing beside them until they heard his voice.

“What she says is true,” he told them. “Her place is in there. Let her go.”

Kate Marcy raised her head at the words, and looked at him a strange, half-comprehending, half-credulous gaze. They released her, helped her towards the bedroom, and closed the door gently behind her. . . The three sat in silence until the carriage was heard returning, and the doctor entered.

The examination was brief, and two words, laconically spoken, sufficed for an explanation—apoplexy, alcohol. The prostrate, quivering woman was left where they had found her.

Dr. Latimer was a friend of Mr. Bentley’s, and betrayed no surprise at a situation which otherwise might have astonished him. It was only when he learned the dead man’s name, and his parentage, that he looked up quickly from his note book.

“The matter can be arranged without a scandal,” he said, after an instant. “Can you tell me something of the circumstances?”

It was Hodder who answered.

“Preston Parr had been in love with this woman, and separated from her. She was under Mr. Bentley’s care when he found her again, I infer, by accident. From what the driver says, they were together in a hotel in Ayers Street, and he died after he had been put in a carriage. In her terror, she was bringing him to Mr. Bentley.”

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The doctor nodded.

“Poor woman!” he said unexpectedly. “Will you be good enough to let Mr: Parr know that I will see him at his house, to-night?” he added, as he took his departure.

IV

Sally Grower went out with the physician, and it was Mr. Bentley who answered the question in the rector’s mind, which he hesitated to ask.

“Mr. Parr must come here,” he said.

As the rector turned, mechanically, to pick up his hat, Mr. Bentley added

“You will come back, Hodder?”

“Since you wish it, sir,” the rector said.

Once in the street, he faced a predicament, but swiftly decided that the telephone was impossible under the circumstances, that there could be no decent procedure without going himself to Park Street. It was only a little after ten. The electric car which he caught seemed to lag, the stops were interminable. His thoughts flew hither and thither. Should he try first to see Alison? He was nearest to her now of all the world, and he could not suffer the thought of her having the news otherwise. Yes, he must tell her, since she knew nothing of the existence of Kate Marcy.

Having settled that,—though the thought of the blow she was to receive lay like a weight on his heart,—Mr. Bentley’s reason for summoning Eldon Parr to Dalton Street came to him. That the feelings of Mr. Bentley towards the financier were those of Christian forgiveness was not for a moment to be doubted: but a meeting, particularly under such circumstances, could not but be painful indeed. It must be, it was, Hodder saw, for Kate Marcy’s sake; yes, and for Eldon Parr’s as well, that he be given this opportunity to deal with the woman whom he had driven away from his son, and ruined.

The moon, which had shed splendours over the world the night before, was obscured by a low-drifting mist as Hodder turned in between the ornamental lamps that marked the gateway of the Park Street mansion, and by some undiscerned thought—suggestion he pictured the heart-broken woman he had left beside the body of one who had been heir to all this magnificence. Useless now, stone and iron and glass, pictures and statuary. All the labour, all the care and cunning, all the stealthy planning to get ahead of others had been in vain! What indeed were left to Eldon Parr! It was he who needed pity,—not the woman who had sinned and had been absolved because of her great love; not the wayward, vice-driven boy who lay dead. The very horror of what Eldon

Parr was now to suffer turned Hodder cold as he rang the bell and listened for the soft tread of the servant who would answer his summons.

The man who flung open the door knew him, and did not conceal his astonishment.

“Will you take my card to Miss Parr,” the rector said, “if she has not retired, and tell her I have a message?”

“Miss Parr is still in the library, sir.”

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“Alone?”

“Yes, sir.” The man preceded him, but before his name had been announced Alison was standing, her book in her hand, gazing at him with startled eyes, his name rising, a low cry, to her lips.

“John!”

He took the book from her, gently, and held her hands.

“Something has happened!” she said. “Tell me—I can bear it.”

He saw instantly that her dread was for him, and it made his task the harder.

It’s your brother, Alison.”

“Preston! What is it? He’s done something——”

Hodder shook his head.

“He died—to-night. He is at Mr. Bentley’s.”

It was like her that she did not cry out, or even speak, but stood still, her hands tightening on his, her breast heaving. She was not, he knew, a woman who wept easily, and her eyes were dry. And he had it to be thankful for that it was given him to be with her, in this sacred relationship, at such a moment. But even now, such was the mystery that ever veiled her soul, he could not read her feelings, nor know what these might be towards the brother whose death he announced.

“I want to tell you, first, Alison, to prepare you,” he said.

Her silence was eloquent. She looked up at him bravely, trustfully, in a way that made him wince. Whatever the exact nature of her suffering, it was too deep for speech. And yet she helped him, made it easier for him by reason of her very trust, once given not to be withdrawn. It gave him a paradoxical understanding of her which was beyond definition.

“You must know—you would have sometime to know that there was a woman he loved, whom he intended to marry—but she was separated from him. She was not what is called a bad woman, she was a working girl. I found her, this summer, and she told me the story, and she has been under the care of Mr. Bentley. She disappeared two or three days ago. Your brother met her again, and he was stricken with apoplexy while with her this evening. She brought him to Mr. Bentley’s house.”

“My father—bought her and sent her away.”

“You knew?”

“I heard a little about it at the time, by accident. I have always remembered it . . . . I have always felt that something like this would happen.”

Her sense of fatality, another impression she gave of living in the deeper, instinctive currents of life, had never been stronger upon him than now. . . . She released his hands.

“How strange,” she said, “that the end should have come at Mr. Bentley’s! He loved my mother—she was the only woman he ever loved.”

It came to Hodder as the completing touch of the revelation he had half glimpsed by the bedside.

“Ah,” he could not help exclaiming, “that explains much.”

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She had looked at him again, through sudden tears, as though divining his reference to Mr. Bentley's grief, when a step make them turn. Eldon Parr had entered the room. Never, not even in that last interview, had his hardness seemed so concretely apparent as now. Again, pity seemed never more out of place, yet pity was Hodder's dominant feeling as he met the coldness, the relentlessness of the glance. The thing that struck him, that momentarily kept closed his lips, was the awful, unconscious timeliness of the man's entrance, and his unpreparedness to meet the blow that was to crush him.

"May I ask, Mr. Hodder," he said, in an unemotional voice, "what you are doing in this house?"

Still Hodder hesitated, an unwilling executioner.

"Father," said Alison, "Mr. Hodder has come with a message."

Never, perhaps, had Eldon Parr given such complete proof of his lack of spiritual intuition. The atmosphere, charged with presage for him, gave him nothing.

"Mr. Hodder takes a strange way of delivering it," was his comment.

Mercy took precedence over her natural directness. She laid her hand gently on his arm. And she had, at that instant, no thought of the long years he had neglected her for her brother.

"It's about—Preston," she said.

"Preston!" The name came sharply from Eldon Parr's lips. "What about him? Speak, can't you?"

"He died this evening," said Alison, simply.

Hodder plainly heard the ticking of the clock on the mantel . . . . And the drama that occurred was the more horrible because it was hidden; played, as it were, behind closed doors. For the spectators, there was only the black wall, and the silence. Eldon Parr literally did nothing, —made no gesture, uttered no cry. The death, they knew, was taking place in his soul, yet the man stood before them, naturally, for what seemed an interminable time . . . .

"Where is he?" he asked.

"At Mr. Bentley's, in Dalton Street." It was Alison who replied again.

Even then he gave no sign that he read retribution in the coincidence, betrayed no agitation at the mention of a name which, in such a connection, might well have struck

the terror of judgment into his heart. They watched him while, with a firm step, he crossed the room and pressed a button in the wall, and waited.

“I want the closed automobile, at once,” he said, when the servant came.

“I beg pardon; sir, but I think Gratton has gone to bed. He had no orders.”

“Then wake him,” said Eldon Parr, “instantly. And send for my secretary.”

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With a glance which he perceived Alison comprehended, Hodder made his way out of the room. He had from Eldon Parr, as he passed him, neither question, acknowledgment, nor recognition. Whatever the banker might have felt, or whether his body had now become a mere machine mechanically carrying on a life-long habit of action, the impression was one of the tremendousness of the man's consistency. A great effort was demanded to summon up the now almost unimaginable experience of his confidence; of the evening when, almost on that very spot, he had revealed to Hodder the one weakness of his life. And yet the effort was not to be, presently, without startling results. In the darkness of the street the picture suddenly grew distinct on the screen of the rector's mind, the face of the banker subtly drawn with pain as he had looked down on it in compassion; the voice with its undercurrent of agony:

"He never knew how much I cared—that what I was doing was all for him, building for him, that he might carry on my work."

V

So swift was the trolley that ten minutes had elapsed, after Hodder's arrival, before the purr of an engine and the shriek of a brake broke the stillness of upper Dalton Street and announced the stopping of a heavy motor before the door. The rector had found Mr. Bentley in the library, alone, seated with bent head in front of the fire, and had simply announced the intention of Eldon Parr to come. From the chair Hodder had unobtrusively chosen, near the window, his eyes rested on the noble profile of his friend. What his thoughts were, Hodder could not surmise; for he seemed again, marvellously, to have regained the outward peace which was the symbol of banishment from the inner man of all thought of self.

"I have prepared her for Mr. Parr's coming," he said to Hodder at length.

And yet he had left her there! Hodder recalled the words Mr. Bentley had spoken, "It is her place." Her place, the fallen woman's, the place she had earned by a great love and a great renunciation, of which no earthly power might henceforth deprive her . . . .

Then came the motor, the ring at the door, the entrance of Eldon Parr into the library. He paused, a perceptible moment, on the threshold as his look fell upon the man whom he had deprived of home and fortune,—yes and of the one woman in the world for them both. Mr. Bentley had risen, and stood facing him. That shining, compassionate gaze should have been indeed a difficult one to meet. Vengeance was the Lord's, in truth! What ordeal that Horace Bentley in anger and retribution might have devised could have equalled this!

And yet Eldon Parr did meet it—with an effort. Hodder, from his corner, detected the effort, though it were barely discernible, and would have passed a scrutiny less rigid,—-

the first outward and visible sign of the lesion within. For a brief instant the banker's eyes encountered Mr. Bentley's look with a flash of the old defiance, and fell, and then swept the room.

Page 1933

“Will you come this way, Mr. Parr?” Mr. Bentley said, indicating the door of the bedroom.

Alison followed. Her eyes, wet with unheeded tears, had never left Mr. Bentley’s face. She put out her hand to him . . . .

Eldon Parr had halted abruptly. He knew from Alison the circumstances in which his son had died, and how he had been brought hither to this house, but the sight of the woman beside the bed fanned into flame his fury against a world which had cheated him, by such ignominious means, of his dearest wish. He grew white with sudden passion.

“What is she doing here?” he demanded.

Kate Marcy, who had not seemed to hear his entrance, raised up to him a face from which all fear had fled, a face which, by its suggestive power, compelled him to realize the absolute despair clutching now at his own soul, and against which he was fighting wildly, hopelessly. It was lying in wait for him, With hideous patience, in the coming watches of the night. Perhaps he read in the face of this woman whom he had condemned to suffer all degradation, and over whom he was now powerless, something which would ultimately save her from the hell now yawning for him; a redeeming element in her grief of which she herself were not as yet conscious, a light shining in the darkness of her soul which in eternity would become luminous. And he saw no light for him—He thrashed in darkness. He had nothing, now, to give, no power longer to deprive. She had given all she possessed, the memorial of her kind which would outlast monuments.

It was Alison who crossed the room swiftly. She laid her hand protectingly on Kate Marcy’s shoulder, and stooped, and kissed her. She turned to her father.

“It is her right,” she said. “He belonged to her, not to us. And we must take her home with us.

“No,” answered Kate Marcy’ “I don’t want to go. I wouldn’t live,” she added with unexpected intensity, “with him.”

“You would live with me,” said Alison.

“I don’t want to live!” Kate Marcy got up from the chair with an energy they had not thought her to possess, a revival of the spirit which had upheld her when she had contended, singly, with a remorseless world. She addressed herself to Eldon Parr. “You took him from me, and I was a fool to let you. He might have saved me and saved himself. I listened to you when you told me lies as to how it would ruin him . . . . Well, —I had him you never did.”

The sudden, intolerable sense of wrong done to her love, the swift anger which followed it, the justness of her claim of him who now lay in the dignity of death clothed her—who in life had been crushed and blotted out—with a dignity not to be gainsaid. In this moment of final self-assertion she became the dominating person in the room, knew for once the birthright of human worth. They watched her in silence as she turned and gave one last, lingering look at the features of the dead; stretched out her hand towards them, but did not touch them . . . and then went slowly towards the door. Beside Alison she stopped.

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“You are his sister?” she said.

“Yes.”

She searched Alison’s face, wistfully.

“I could have loved you.”

“And can you not—still?”

Kate Mercy did not answer the question.

“It is because you understand,” she said. “You’re like those I’ve come to know—here. And you’re like him . . . . I don’t mean in looks. He, too, was good—and square.” She spoke the words a little defiantly, as though challenging the verdict of the world. “And he wouldn’t have been wild if he could have got going straight.”

“I know,” said Alison, in a low voice.

“Yes,” said Kate Mercy, “you look as if you did. He thought a lot of you, he said he was only beginning to find out what you was. I’d like you to think as well of me as you can.”

“I could not think better,” Alison replied.

Kate Mercy shook her head.

“I got about as low as any woman ever got,” she said

“Mr. Hodder will tell you. I want you to know that I wouldn’t marry —your brother,” she hesitated over the name. “He wanted me to—he was mad with me to night, because I wouldn’t—when this happened.”

She snatched her hand free from Alison’s, and fled out of the room, into the hallway.

Eldon Parr had moved towards the bed, seemingly unaware of the words they had spoken. Perhaps, as he gazed upon the face, he remembered in his agony the sunny, smiling child who need to come hurrying down the steps in Ransome Street to meet him.

In the library Mr. Bentley and John Hodder, knowing nothing of her flight, heard the front door close on Kate Marcy forever . . . .

CHAPTER XXVIII

LIGHT

I

Two days after the funeral, which had taken place from Calvary, and not from St. John's, Hodder was no little astonished to receive a note from Eldon Parr's secretary requesting the rector to call in Park Street. In the same mail was a letter from Alison. "I have had," she wrote, "a talk with my father. The initiative was his. I should not have thought of speaking to him of my affairs so soon after Preston's death. It seems that he strongly suspected our engagement, which of course I at once acknowledged, telling him that it was your intention, at the proper time, to speak to him yourself.

"I was surprised when he said he would ask you to call. I confess that I have not an idea of what he intends to say to you, John, but I trust you absolutely, as always. You will find him, already, terribly changed. I cannot describe it—you will see for yourself. And it has all seemed to happen so suddenly. As I wrote you, he sat up both nights, with Preston—he could not be induced to leave the room. And after the first night he was different. He has hardly spoken a word, except when he sent for me this evening, and he eats nothing . . . . And yet, somehow, I do not think that this will be the end. I feel that he will go on living. . . . .

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“I did not realize how much he still hoped about Preston. And on Monday, when Preston so unexpectedly came home, he was happier than I have known him for years. It was strange and sad that he could not see, as I saw, that whatever will power my brother had had was gone. He could not read it in the face of his own son, who was so quick to detect it in all others! And then came the tragedy. Oh, John, do you think we shall ever find that girl again?—I know you are trying but we mustn’t rest until we do. Do you think we ever shall? I shall never forgive myself for not following her out of the door, but, I thought she had gone to you and Mr. Bentley.”

Hodder laid the letter down, and took it up again. He knew that Alison felt, as he felt, that they never would find Kate Marcy . . . . He read on.

“My father wished to speak to me about the money. He has plans for much of it, it appears, even now. Oh. John, he will never understand. I want so much to see you, to talk to you—there are times when I am actually afraid to be alone, and without you. If it be weakness to confess that I need your reassurance, your strength and comfort constantly, then I am weak. I once thought I could stand alone, that I had solved all problems for myself, but I know now how foolish I was. I have been face to face with such dreadful, unimagined things, and in my ignorance I did not conceive that life held such terrors. And when I look at my father, the thought of immortality turns me faint. After you have come here this afternoon there can be no longer any reason why we should not meet, and all the world know it. I will go with you to Mr. Bentley’s.

“Of course I need not tell you that I refused to inherit anything. But I believe I should have consented if I possibly could have done so. It seemed so cruel—I can think of no other word—to have, to refuse at such a moment. Perhaps I have been cruel to him all my life—I don’t know. As I look back upon everything, all our relations, I cannot see how I could have been different. He wouldn’t let me. I still believe to have stayed with him would have been a foolish and useless sacrifice . . . But he looked at me so queerly, as though he, too, had had a glimmering of what we might have been to each other after my mother died. Why is life so hard? And why are we always getting glimpses of things when it is too late? It is only honest to say that if I had it to do all over again, I should have left him as I did.

“It is hard to write you this, but he actually made the condition of my acceptance of the inheritance that I should not marry you. I really do not believe I convinced him that you wouldn’t have me take the money under any circumstances. And the dreadful side of it all was that I had to make it plain to him—after what has happened that my desire to marry you wasn’t the main reason of my refusal. I had to tell him that even though you had not been in question, I couldn’t have taken what he wished to give me, since it had not been honestly made. He asked me why I went on eating the food bought with such money, living under his roof? But I cannot, I will not leave him just yet . . . . It is two o’clock. I cannot write any more to-night.”

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II

The appointed time was at the November dusk, hurried forward nearly an hour by the falling panoply of smoke driven westward over the Park by the wet east wind. And the rector was conducted, with due ceremony, to the office upstairs which he had never again expected to enter, where that other memorable interview had taken place. The curtains were drawn. And if the green-shaded lamp—the only light in the room—had been arranged by a master of dramatic effect, it could not have better served the setting.

In spite of Alison's letter, Holder was unprepared for the ravages a few days had made in the face of Eldon Parr. Not that he appeared older: the impression was less natural, more sinister. The skin had drawn sharply over the cheek-bones, and strangely the eyes both contradicted and harmonized with the transformation of the features. These, too, had changed. They were not dead and lustreless, but gleamed out of the shadowy caverns into which they had sunk, unyielding, indomitable in torment,—eyes of a spirit rebellious in the fumes . . . .

This spirit somehow produced the sensation of its being separated from the body, for the movement of the hand, inviting Holder to seat himself, seemed almost automatic.

"I understand," said Eldon Parr, "that you wish to marry my daughter."

"It is true that I am to marry Alison," Holder answered, "and that I intended, later on, to come to inform you of the fact."

He did not mention the death of Preston. Condolences, under the circumstances, were utterly out of the question.

"How do you propose to support her?" the banker demanded.

"She is of age, and independent of you. You will pardon me if I reply that this is a matter between ourselves," Holder said.

"I had made up my mind that the day she married you I would not only disinherit her, but refuse absolutely, to have anything to do with her."

"If you cannot perceive what she perceives, that you have already by your own life cut her off from you absolutely and that seeing her will not mend matters while you remain relentless, nothing I can say will convince you." Holder did not speak rebukingly. The utter uselessness of it was never more apparent. The man was condemned beyond all present reprieve, at least.

"She left me," exclaimed Eldon Parr, bitterly.

“She left you, to save herself.”

“We need not discuss that.”

“I am far from wishing to discuss it,” Holder replied.

“I do not know why you have asked me to come here, Mr. Parr. It is clear that your attitude has not changed since our last conversation. I tried to make it plain to you why the church could not accept your money. Your own daughter, cannot accept it.”

“There was a time,” retorted the banker, “when you did not refuse to accept it.”

“Yes,” Holder replied, “that is true.” It came to him vividly then that it had been Alison herself who had cast the enlightening gleam which revealed his inconsistency. But he did not defend himself.

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“I can see nothing in all this, Mr. Hodder, but a species of insanity,” said Eldon Parr, and there crept into his tone both querulousness and intense exasperation. “In the first place, you insist upon marrying my daughter when neither she nor you have any dependable means of support. She never spared her criticisms of me, and you presume to condemn me, a man who, if he has neglected his children, has done so because he has spent too much of his time in serving his community and his country, and who has—if I have to say it myself—built up the prosperity which you and others are doing your best to tear down, and which can only result in the spread of misery. You profess to have a sympathy with the masses, but you do not know them as I do. They cannot control themselves, they require a strong hand. But I am not asking for your sympathy. I have been misunderstood all my life, I have become used to ingratitude, even from my children, and from the rector of the church for which I have done more than any other man.”

Hodder stared at him in amazement.

“You really believe that!” he exclaimed.

“Believe it!” Eldon Parr repeated. “I have had my troubles, as heavy bereavements as a man can have. All of them, even this of my son’s death, all the ingratitude and lack of sympathy I have experienced—” (he looked deliberately at Hodder) “have not prevented me, do not prevent me to-day from regarding my fortune as a trust. You have deprived St. John’s, at least so long as you remain there, of some of its benefits, and the responsibility for that is on your own head. And I am now making arrangements to give to Calvary the settlement house which St. John’s should have had.”

The words were spoken with such an air of conviction, of unconscious plausibility, as it were, that it was impossible for Hodder to doubt the genuineness of the attitude they expressed. And yet it was more than his mind could grasp . . . . Horace Bentley, Richard Garvin, and the miserable woman of the streets whom he had driven to destroy herself had made absolutely no impression whatever! The gifts, the benefactions of Eldon Parr to his fellow-men would go on as before!

“You ask me why I sent for you,” the banker went on. “It was primarily because I hoped to impress upon you the folly of marrying my daughter. And in spite of all the injury and injustice you have done me, I do not forget that you were once in a relationship to me which has been unique in my life. I trusted you, I admired you, for your ability, for your faculty of getting on with men. At that time you were wise enough not to attempt to pass comment upon accidents in business affairs which are, if deplorable, inevitable.”

Eldon Parr’s voice gave a momentary sign of breaking.

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“I will be frank with you. My son’s death has led me, perhaps weakly, to make one more appeal. You have ruined your career by these chimerical, socialistic notions you have taken up, and which you mistake for Christianity. As a practical man I can tell you, positively, that St. John’s will run downhill until you are bankrupt. The people who come to you now are in search of a new sensation, and when that grows stale they will fall away. Even if a respectable number remain in your congregation, after this excitement and publicity have died down, I have reason to know that it is impossible to support a large city church on contributions. It has been tried again and again, and failed. You have borrowed money for the Church’s present needs. When that is gone I predict that you will find it difficult to get more.”

This had every indication of being a threat, but Hodder, out of sheer curiosity, did not interrupt. And it was evident that the banker drew a wrong conclusion from his silence, which he may actually have taken for reluctant acquiescence. His tone grew more assertive.

“The Church, Mr. Hodder, cannot do without the substantial business men. I have told the bishop so, but he is failing so rapidly from old age that I might as well not have wasted my breath. He needs an assistant, a suffragan or coadjutor, and I intend to make it my affair to see that he gets one. When I remember him as he was ten years ago, I find it hard to believe that he is touched with these fancies. To be charitable, it is senile decay. He seems to forget what I have done for him, personally, made up his salary, paid his expenses at different times, and no appeal for the diocese to me was ever in vain. But again, I will let that go.

“What I am getting at is this. You have made a mess of the affairs of St. John’s, you have made a mess of your life. I am willing to give you the credit for sincerity. Some of my friends might not be. You want to marry my daughter, and she is apparently determined to marry you. If you are sensible and resign from St. John’s now I will settle on Alison a sufficient sum to allow you both to live in comfort and decency the rest of your lives. I will not have it said of me that I permitted my daughter to become destitute.”

After he had finished, the rector sat for so long a time that the banker nervously shifted in his chair. The clergyman’s look had a cumulative quality, an intensity which seemed to increase as the silence continued. There was no anger in it, no fanaticism. On the contrary, the higher sanity of it was disturbing; and its extraordinary implication—-gradually borne in upon Eldon Parr—was that he himself were not in his right mind. The words, when they came, were a confirmation of this inference.

“It is what I feared, Mr. Parr,” he said. “You are as yet incapable of comprehending.”

“What do you mean?” asked the banker, jerking his hand from the table.

Page 1939

The rector shook his head.

“If this great chastisement with which you have been visited has given you no hint of the true meaning of life, nothing I can say will avail. If you will not yet listen to the Spirit which is trying to make you comprehend, how then will you listen to me? How am I to open your eyes to the paradox of truth, that he who would save his life shall lose it, that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God? If you will not believe him who said that, you will not believe me. I can only beg of you, strive to understand, that your heart many be softened, that your suffering soul may be released.”

It is to be recorded, strangely, that Eldon Parr did not grow angry in his turn. The burning eyes looked out at Hodder curiously, as at a being upon whom the vials of wrath were somehow wasted, against whom the weapons of power were of no account. The fanatic had become a phenomenon which had momentarily stilled passion to arouse interest. . . “Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?”

“Do you mean to say”—such was the question that sprang to Eldon Parr’s lips—“that you take the Bible literally? What is your point of view? You speak about the salvation of souls, I have heard that kind of talk all my life. And it is easy, I find, for men who have never known the responsibilities of wealth to criticize and advise. I regard indiscriminate giving as nothing less than a crime, and I have always tried to be painstaking and judicious. If I had taken the words you quoted at their face value, I should have no wealth to distribute to-day.

“I, too, Mr. Hodder, odd as it may seem to you, have had my dreams—of doing my share of making this country the best place in the world to live in. It has pleased providence to take away my son. He was not fitted to carry on my work,—that is the way—with dreams. I was to have taught him to build up, and to give, as I have given. You think me embittered, hard, because I seek to do good, to interpret the Gospel in my own way. Before this year is out I shall have retired from all active business.

“I intend to spend the rest of my life in giving away the money I have earned—all of it. I do not intend to spare myself, and giving will be harder than earning. I shall found institutions for research of disease, hospitals, playgrounds, libraries, and schools. And I shall make the university here one of the best in the country. What more, may I ask, would you have me do?”

“Ah,” replied the rector, “it is not what I would have you do. It is not, indeed, a question of ‘doing,’ but of seeing.”

“Of seeing?” the banker repeated. “As I say, of using judgment.”

Page 1940

“Judgment, yes, but the judgment which has not yet dawned for you, the enlightenment which is the knowledge of God’s will. Worldly wisdom is a rule of thumb many men may acquire, the other wisdom, the wisdom of the soul, is personal—the reward of revelation which springs from desire. You ask me what I think you should do. I will tell you—but you will not do it, you will be powerless to do it unless you see it for yourself, unless the time shall come when you are willing to give up everything you have held dear in life,—-not your money, but your opinions, the very judgment and wisdom you value, until you have gained the faith which proclaims these worthless, until you are ready to receive the Kingdom of God as a little child. You are not ready, now. Your attitude, your very words, proclaim your blindness to all that has happened you, your determination to carry out, so far as it is left to you, your own will. You may die without seeing.”

Crazy as it all sounded, a slight tremor shook Eldon Parr. There was something in the eyes, in the powerful features of the clergyman that kept him still, that made him listen with a fascination which had he taken cognizance of it—was akin to fear. That this man believed it, that he would impress it upon others, nay, had already done so, the banker did not then doubt.

“You speak of giving,” Hodder continued, “and you have nothing to give —nothing. You are poorer to-day than the humblest man who has seen God. But you have much, you have all to restore.” Without raising his voice, the rector had contrived to put a mighty emphasis on the word. “You speak of the labour of giving, but if you seek your God and haply find him you will not rest night or day while you live until you have restored every dollar possible of that which you have wrongfully taken from others.”

John Hodder rose and raised his arm in effective protest against the interruption Eldon Parr was about to make. He bore him down.

“I know what you are going to say, Mr. Parr,—that it is not practical. That word ‘practical’ is the barrier between you and your God. I tell you that God can make anything practical. Your conscience, the spirit, tortures you to-day, but you have not had enough torture, you still think to escape easily, to keep the sympathy of a world which despises you. You are afraid to do what God would have you do. You have the opportunity, through grace, by your example to leave the world better than you found it, to do a thing of such magnitude as is given to few men, to confess before all that your life has been blind and wicked. That is what the Spirit is trying to teach you. But you fear the ridicule of the other blind men, you have not the faith to believe that many eyes would be opened by your act. The very shame of such a confession, you think, is not to be borne.”

“Suppose I acknowledge, which I do not, your preposterous charge, how would you propose to do this thing?”

Page 1941

“It is very simple,” said the rector, “so far as the actual method of procedure goes. You have only to establish a board of men in whom you have confidence,—a court of claims, so to speak,—to pass upon the validity of every application, not from a business standpoint alone, but from one of a broad justice and equity. And not only that. I should have it an important part of the duties of this board to discover for themselves other claimants who may not, for various reasons, come forward. In the case of the Consolidated Tractions, for instances there are doubtless many men like Garvin who invested their savings largely on the strength of your name. You cannot bring him back to life, restore him to his family as he was before you embittered him, but it would be a comparatively easy matter to return to his widow, with compound interest, the sum which he invested.”

“For the sake of argument,” said Eldon Parr, “what would you do with the innumerable impostors who would overwhelm such a board with claims that they had bought and sold stock at a loss? And that is only one case I could mention.”

“Would it be so dreadful a thing,” asked Hodder, “To run the risk of making a few mistakes? It would not be business, you say. If you had the desire to do this, you would dismiss such an obsession from your brain, you would prefer to err on the aide of justice and mercy. And no matter how able your board, in making restitution you could at best expect to mend only a fraction of the wrongs you have done.”

“I shall waive, for the moment, my contention that the Consolidated Tractions Company, had it succeeded, would greatly have benefited the city. Even if it had been the iniquitous, piratical transaction you suggest, why should I assume the responsibility for all who were concerned in it?”

“If the grace were given you to do this, that question would answer itself,” the rector replied. “The awful sense of responsibility, which you now lack, would overwhelm you.”

“You have made me out a rascal and a charlatan,” said Eldon Parr, “and I have listened’ patiently in my desire to be fair, to learn from your own lips whether there were anything in the extraordinary philosophy you have taken up, and which you are pleased to call Christianity. If you will permit me to be as frank as you have been, it appears to me as sheer nonsense and folly, and if it were put into practice the world would be reduced at once to chaos and anarchy.”

“There is no danger, I am sorry to say, of its being put into practice at once,” said Hodder, smiting sadly.

Page 1942

“I hope not,” answered the banker, dryly. “Utopia is a dream in which those who do the rough work of the world cannot afford to indulge. And there is one more question. You will, no doubt, deride it as practical, but to my mind it is very much to the point. You condemn the business practices in which I have engaged all my life as utterly unchristian. If you are logical, you will admit that no man or woman who owns stock in a modern corporation is, according to your definition, Christian, and, to use your own phrase, can enter the Kingdom of God. I can tell you, as one who knows, that there is no corporation in this country which, in the struggle to maintain itself, is not forced to adopt the natural law of the survival of the fittest, which you condemn. Your own salary, while you had it, came from men who had made the money in corporations. Business is business, and admits of no sentimental considerations. If you can get around that fact, I will gladly bow to your genius. Should you succeed in reestablishing St. John’s on what you call a free basis —and in my opinion you will not—even then the money, you would live on, and which supported the church, would be directly or indirectly derived from corporations.”

“I do not propose to enter into an economics argument with you, Mr. Parr, but if you tell me that the flagrant practices indulged in by those who organized the Consolidated Tractions Company can be excused under any code of morals, any conception of Christianity, I tell you they cannot. What do we see today in your business world? Boards of directors, trusted by stockholders, betraying their trust, withholding information in order to profit thereby, buying and selling stock secretly; stock watering, selling to the public diluted values,—all kinds of iniquity and abuse of power which I need not go into. Do you mean to tell me, on the plea that business is business and hence a department by itself, that deception, cheating, and stealing are justified and necessary? The awakened conscience of the public is condemning you.

“The time is at hand, though neither you nor I may live to see it, when the public conscience itself is beginning to perceive thin higher justice hidden from you. And you are attempting to mislead when you do not distinguish between the men who, for their own gain and power, mismanage such corporations as are mismanaged, and those who own stock and are misled.

“The public conscience of which I speak is the leaven of Christianity at work. And we must be content to work with it, to await its fulfilment, to realize that no one of us can change the world, but can only do his part in making it better. The least we can do is to refuse to indulge in practices which jeopardize our own souls, to remain poor if we cannot make wealth honestly. Say what you will, the Christian government we are approaching will not recognize property, because it is gradually becoming clear that the holding of property delays the Kingdom at which you scoff, giving the man who owns it a power over the body of the man who does not. Property produces slavery, since it compels those who have none to work for those who have.

Page 1943

“The possession of property, or of sufficient property to give one individual an advantage over his fellows is inconsistent with Christianity. Hence it will be done away with, but only when enough have been emancipated to carry this into effect. Hence the saying of our Lord about the needle’s eye—the danger to the soul of him who owns much property.”

“And how about your Christian view of the world as a vale of tears?” Eldon Parr inquired.

“So long as humanity exists, there will always be tears,” admitted the rector. “But it is a false Christianity which does not bid us work for our fellow-men, to relieve their suffering and make the world brighter. It is becoming clear that the way to do this effectively is through communities, cooperation, through nations, and not individuals. And this, if you like, is practical,—so practical that the men like you, who have gained unexampled privilege, fear it more and more. The old Christian misconception, that the world is essentially a bad place, and which has served the ends of your privilege, is going by forever. And the motto of the citizens of the future will be the Christian motto, ‘I am my brother’s keeper.’ The world is a good place because the Spirit is continually working in it, to make it better. And life is good, if only we take the right view of it,—the revealed view.”

“What you say is all very fine,” said Eldon Parr. “And I have heard it before, from the discontented, the socialists. But it does not take into account the one essential element, human nature.”

“On the other hand, your scheme of life fails to reckon with the greater factor, divine nature,” Hodder replied.

“When you have lived as long as I have, perhaps you will think differently, Mr. Hodder.” Eldon Parr’s voice had abruptly grown metallic, as though the full realization had come over him of the severity of the clergyman’s arraignment; the audacity of the man who had ventured to oppose him and momentarily defeated him, who had won the allegiance of his own daughter, who had dared condemn him as an evil-doer and give advice as to his future course. He, Eldon Parr, who had been used to settle the destinies of men! His anger was suddenly at white heat; and his voice, which he strove to control, betrayed it.

“Since you have rejected my offer, which was made in kindness, since you are bent on ruining my daughter’s life as well as your own, and she has disregarded my wishes, I refuse to see either of you, no matter to what straits you may come, as long as I live. That is understood. And she leaves this house to-day, never to enter it again. It is useless to prolong this conversation, I think.”

Page 1944

“Quite useless, as I feared, Mr. Parr. Do you know why Alison is willing to marry me? It is because the strength has been given me to oppose you in the name of humanity, and this in spite of the fact that her love for you to-day is greater than it has ever been before. It is a part of the heavy punishment you have inflicted on yourself that you cannot believe in her purity. You insist on thinking that the time will come when she will return to you for help. In senseless anger and pride you are driving her away from you whom you will some day need. And in that day, should God grant you a relenting heart to make the sign, she will come to you,—but to give comfort, not to receive it. And even as you have threatened me, I will warn you, yet not in anger. Except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God, nor understand the motives of those who would enter into it. Seek and pray for repentance.”

Infuriated though he was, before the commanding yet compassionate bearing of the rector he remained speechless. And after a moment’s pause, Hodder turned and left the room . . . .

III

When Hodder had reached the foot of the stairs, Alison came out to him. The mourning she wore made her seem even taller. In the face upturned to his, framed in the black veil and paler than he had known it, were traces of tears; in the eyes a sad, yet questioning and trustful smile. They gazed at each other an instant, before speaking, in the luminous ecstasy of perfect communion which shone for them, undimmed, in the surrounding gloom of tragedy. And thus, they felt, it would always shine. Of that tragedy of the world’s sin and sorrow they would ever be conscious. Without darkness there could be no light.

“I knew,” she said, reading his tidings, “it would be of no use. Tell me the worst.”

“If you marry me, Alison, your father refuses to see you again. He insists that you leave the house.”

“Then why did he wish to see you?”

“It was to make an appeal. He thinks, of course, that I have made a failure of life, and that if I marry you I shall drag you down to poverty and disgrace.”

She raised her head, proudly.

“But he knows that it is I who insist upon marrying you! I explained it all to him—how I had asked you. Of course he did not understand. He thinks, I suppose, that it is simply an infatuation.”

In spite of the solemnity of the moment, Hodder smiled down at her, touched by the confession.

“That, my dear, doesn’t relieve me of responsibility. I am just as responsible as though I had spoken first, instead of you.”

“But, John, you didn’t—?” A sudden fear made her silent.

He took her hand and pressed it reassuringly.

“Give you up? No, Alison,” he answered simply. “When you came to me, God put you in my keeping.”

She clung to him suddenly, in a passion of relief.

Page 1945

“Oh, I never could give you up, I never would unless you yourself told me to. Then I would do it,—for you. But you won’t ask me, now?”

He put his arm around her shoulders, and the strength of it seemed to calm her.

“No, dear. I would make the sacrifice, ask you to make it, if it would be of any good. As you say, he does not understand. And you couldn’t go on living with him and loving me. That solution is impossible. We can only hope that the time will come when he will realize his need of you, and send for you.”

“And did he not ask you anything more?”

Hodder hesitated. He had intended to spare her that . . . . Her divination startled him.

“I know, I know without your telling me. He offered you money, he consented to our—-marriage if you would give up St. John’s. Oh, how could he,” she cried. “How could he so misjudge and insult you!”

“It is not me he misjudges, Alison, it is mankind, it is God. That is his terrible misfortune.” Hodder released her tenderly. “You must see him—you must tell him that when he needs you, you will come.”

“I will see him now, she said. You will wait for, me?”

“Now?” he repeated, taken aback by her resolution, though it was characteristic.

“Yes, I will go as I am. I can send for my things. My father has given me no choice, no reprieve,—not that I ask one. I have you, dear. I will stay with Mr. Bentley to-night, and leave for New York to-morrow, to do what I have to do—and then you will be ready for me.”

“Yes,” he said, “I shall be ready.”

He lingered in the well-remembered hall . . . . And when at last she came down again her eyes shone bravely through her tears, her look answered the question of his own. There was no need for speech. With not so much as a look behind she left, with him, her father’s house.

Outside, the mist had become a drizzle, and as they went down the walk together beside the driveway she slipped her arm into his, pressing close to his side. Her intuition was perfect, the courage of her love sublime.

“I have you, dear,” she whispered, “never in my life before have I been rich.”

“Alison!”

It was all he could say, but the intensity of his mingled feeling went into the syllables of her name. An impulse made them pause and turn, and they stood looking back together at the great house which loomed the greater in the thickening darkness, its windows edged with glow. Never, as in this moment when the cold rain wet their faces, had the thought of its comfort and warmth and luxury struck him so vividly; yes, and of its terror and loneliness now, of the tortured spirit in it that found no rest.

“Oh, John,” she cried, “if we only could!”

He understood her. Such was the perfect quality of their sympathy that she had voiced his thought. What were rain and cold, the inclemency of the elements to them? What the beauty and the warmth of those great, empty rooms to Eldon Parr? Out of the heaven of their happiness they looked down, helpless, into the horrors of the luxury of hell.

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“It must be,” he answered her, “in God’s good time.”

“Life is terrible!” she said. “Think of what he must have done to suffer so, to be condemned to this! And when I went to him, just now, he wouldn’t even kiss me good-by. Oh, my dear, if I hadn’t had you to take me, what should I have done? . . . It never was a home to me—to any of us. And as I look back now, all the troubles began when we moved into it. I can only think of it as a huge prison, all the more sinister for its costliness.”

A prison! It had once been his own conceit. He drew her gently away, and they walked together along Park Street towards the distant arc-light at the corner which flung a gleaming band along the wet pavement.

“Perhaps it was because I was too young to know what trouble was when we lived in Ransome Street,” she continued. “But I can remember now how sad my mother was at times—it almost seemed as though she had a premonition.” Alison’s voice caught . . . .

The car which came roaring through the darkness, and which stopped protestingly at their corner, was ablaze with electricity, almost filled with passengers. A young man with a bundle changed his place in order that they might sit together in one of the little benches bordering the aisle; opposite them was a laughing, clay-soiled group of labourers going home from work; in front, a young couple with a chubby child. He stood between his parents, facing about, gazing in unembarrassed wonder at the dark lady with the veil. Alison’s smile seemed only to increase the solemnity of his adoration, and presently he attempted to climb over the barrier between them. Hodder caught him, and the mother turned in alarm, recapturing him.

“You mustn’t bother the lady, Jimmy,” she said, when she had thanked the rector. She had dimpled cheeks and sparkling blue eyes, but their expression changed as they fell on Alison’s face, expressing something of the wonder of the child’s.

“Oh, he isn’t bothering me,” Alison protested. “Do let him stand.”

“He don’t make up to everybody,” explained the mother, and the manner of her speech was such a frank tribute that Alison flushed. There had been, too, in the look the quick sympathy for bereavement of the poor.

“Aren’t they nice?” Alison leaned over and whispered to Hodder, when the woman had turned back. “One thing, at least, I shall never regret,—that I shall have to ride the rest of my life in the streetcars. I love them. That is probably my only qualification, dear, for a clergyman’s wife.”

Hodder laughed. “It strikes me,” he said, “as the supreme one.”

They came at length to Mr. Bentley's door, flung open in its usual wide hospitality by Sam. Whatever theist fortunes, they would always be welcome here . . . . But it turned out, in answer to their question, that their friend was not at home.

"No, sah," said Sam, bowing and smiling benignantly, "but he done tole me to say, when you and Miss Alison come, hit was to make no diffunce, dat you bofe was to have supper heah. And I'se done cooked it—yassah. Will you kindly step into the liba'y, suh, and Miss Alison? Dar was a lady 'crost de city, Marse Ho'ace said—yassah."

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“John,” said Alison with a questioning smile, when they were alone before the fire, “I believe he went out on purpose,—don’t you?—just that we might be here alone.”

“He knew we were coming?”

“I wrote him.”

“I think he might be convicted on the evidence,” Hodder agreed. “But—?” His question remained unasked.

Alison went up to him. He had watched her, absorbed and fascinated, as with her round arms gracefully lifted in front of the old mirror she had taken off her hat and veil; smoothing, by a few deft touches, the dark crown of her hair. The unwonted intimacy of the moment, invoking as it did an endless reflection of other similar moments in their future life together, was in its effect overwhelming, bringing with it at last a conviction not to be denied. Her colour rose as she faced him, her lashes fell.

“Did you seriously think, dear, that we could have deceived Mr. Bentley? Then you are not as clever as I thought you. As soon as it happened I sent him a note? that very night. For I felt that he ought to be told first of all.”

“And as usual,” Hodder answered, “you were right.”

Supper was but a continuation of that delicious sense of intimacy. And Sam, beaming in his starched shirt and swallow-tail, had an air of presiding over a banquet of state. And for that matter, none had ever gone away hungry from this table, either for meat or love. It was, indeed, a consecrated meal,—consecrated for being just there. Such was the tact which the old darky had acquired from his master that he left the dishes on the shining mahogany board, and bowed himself out.

“When you wants me, Miss Alison, des ring de bell.”

She was seated upright yet charmingly graceful, behind the old English coffee service which had been Mr. Bentley’s mother’s. And it was she who, by her wonderful self-possession, by the reassuring smile she gave him as she handed him his cup, endowed it all with reality.

“It’s strange,” she said, “but it seems as though I had been doing it all my life, instead of just beginning.”

“And you do it as though you had,” he declared.

“Which is a proof,” she replied, “of the superior adaptability of women.”

He did not deny it. He would not then, in truth, have disputed her wildest statement. . . But presently, after they had gone back into the library and were seated side by side before the coals, they spoke again of serious things, marvelling once more at a happiness which could be tinged and yet unmarred by vicarious sorrow. Theirs was the soberer, profounder happiness of gratitude and wonder, too wise to exult, but which of itself is exalted; the happiness which praises, and passes understanding.

“There are many things I want to say to you, John,” she told him, once, “and they trouble me a little. It is only because I am so utterly devoted to you that I wish you to know me as I am. I have always had queer views, and although much has happened to change me since I have known and loved you, I am not quite sure how much those views have changed. Love,” she added, “plays such havoc with one’s opinions.”

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She returned his smile, but with knitted brows.

“It’s really serious—you needn’t laugh. And it’s only fair to you to let you know the kind of a wife you are getting, before it is too late. For instance, I believe in divorce, although I can’t imagine it for us. One never can, I suppose, in this condition—that’s the trouble. I have seen so many immoral marriages that I can’t think God intends people to live degraded. And I’m sick and tired of the argument that an indissoluble marriage under all conditions is good for society. That a man or woman, the units of society, should violate the divine in themselves for the sake of society is absurd. They are merely setting an example to their children to do the same thing, which means that society in that respect will never get any better. In this love that has come to us we have achieved an ideal which I have never thought to reach. Oh, John, I’m sure you won’t misunderstand me when I say that I would rather die than have to lower it.”

“No,” he answered, “I shall not misunderstand you.”

“Even though it is so difficult to put into words what I mean. I don’t feel that we really need the marriage service, since God has already joined us together. And it is not through our own wills, somehow, but through his. Divorce would not only be a crime against the spirit, it would be an impossibility while we feel as we do. But if love should cease, then God himself would have divorced us, punished us by taking away a priceless gift of which we were not worthy. He would have shut the gates of Eden in our faces because we had sinned against the Spirit. It would be quite as true to say ’whom God has put asunder no man may join together.’ Am I hurting you?”

Her hand was on the arm of his chair, and the act of laying his own on it was an assurance stronger than words. Alison sighed.

“Yes, I believed you would understand, even though I expressed myself badly,—that you would help me, that you have found a solution. I used to regard the marriage service as a compromise, as a lowering of the ideal, as something mechanical and rational put in the place of the spiritual; that it was making the Church, and therefore God, conform to the human notion of what the welfare of society ought to be. And it is absurd to promise to love. We have no control over our affections. They are in God’s hands, to grant or withdraw.

“And yet I am sure—this is new since I have known you—that if such a great love as ours be withdrawn it would be an unpardonable wrong for either of us to marry again. That is what puzzles me—confounds the wisdom I used to have, and which in my littleness and pride I thought so sufficient. I didn’t believe in God, but now I feel him, through you, though I cannot define him. And one of many reasons why I could not believe in Christ was because I took it for granted that he taught, among other things, a continuation of the marriage relation after love had ceased to justify it.”

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Hodder did not immediately reply. Nor did Alison interrupt his silence, but sat with the stillness which at times so marked her personality, her eyes trustfully fixed on him. The current pulsing between them was unbroken. Hodder's own look, as he gazed into the grate, was that of a seer.

"Yes," he said at length, "it is by the spirit and not the letter of our Lord's teaching that we are guided. The Spirit which we draw from the Gospels. And everything written down there that does not harmonize with it is the mistaken interpretation of men. Once the Spirit possesses us truly, we are no longer troubled and confused by texts.

"The alpha and omega of Christ's message is rebirth into the knowledge of that Spirit, and hence submission to its guidance. And that is what Paul meant when he said that it freed us from the law. You are right, Alison, when you declare it to be a violation of the Spirit for a man and woman to live together when love does not exist. Christ shows us that laws were made for those who are not reborn. Laws are the rules of society, to be followed by those who have not found the inner guidance, who live and die in the flesh. But the path which those who live under the control of the Spirit are to take is opened up to them as they journey. If all men and women were reborn we should have the paradox, which only the reborn can understand, of what is best for the individual being best for society, because under the will of the Spirit none can transgress upon the rights and happiness of others. The Spirit would make the laws and rules superfluous.

"And the great crime of the Church, for which she is paying so heavy an expiation, is that her faith wavered, and she forsook the Spirit and resumed the law her Master had condemned. She no longer insisted on that which Christ proclaimed as imperative, rebirth. She became, as you say, a mechanical organization, substituting, as the Jews had done, hard and fast rules for inspiration. She abandoned the Communion of Saints, sold her birthright for a mess of pottage, for worldly, temporal power when she declared that inspiration had ceased with the Apostles, when she failed to see that inspiration is personal, and comes through rebirth. For the sake of increasing her membership, of dominating the affairs of men, she has permitted millions who lived in the law and the flesh, who persisted in forcing men to live by the conventions and customs Christ repudiated, and so stultify themselves, to act in Christ's name. The unpardonable sin against the Spirit is to doubt its workings, to maintain that society will be ruined if it be substituted for the rules and regulations supposed to make for the material comforts of the nations, but which in reality suppress and enslave the weak.

"Nevertheless in spite of the Church, marvellously through the Church the germ of our Lord's message has come down to us, and the age in which we live is beginning to realize its purport, to condemn the Church for her subservient rationalism.

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“Let us apply the rule of the Spirit to marriage. If we examine the ideal we shall see clearly that the marriage-service is but a symbol. Like baptism, it is a worthless and meaningless rite unless the man and the woman have been born again into the Spirit, released from the law. If they are still, as St. Paul would say, in the flesh, let them have, if they wish, a civil permit to live together, for the Spirit can have nothing to do with such an union. True to herself, the Church symbolizes the union of her members, the reborn. She has nothing to do with laws and conventions which are supposedly for the good of society, nor is any union accomplished if those whom she supposedly joins are not reborn. If they are, the Church can neither make it or dissolve it, but merely confirm and acknowledge the work of the Spirit. And every work of the Spirit is a sacrament. Not baptism and communion and marriage only, but every act of life.

“Oh, John,” she exclaimed, her eyes lighting, “I can believe that! How beautiful a thought! I see now what is meant when it is said that man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. That is the hourly guidance which is independent of the law. And how terrible to think that all the spiritual beauty of such a religion should have been hardened into chapter and verse and regulation. You have put into language what I think of Mr. Bentley, —that has acts are sacraments . . . . It is so simple when you explain it this way. And yet I can see why it was said, too, that we must become as children to understand it.”

“The difficult thing,” replied Holder, gravely, “is to retain it, to hold it after we have understood it—even after we have experienced it. To continue to live in the Spirit demands all our effort, all our courage and patience and faith. We cannot, as you say, promise to love for life. But the marriage service, interpreted, means that we will use all our human endeavour, with the help of the Spirit, to remain in what may be called the reborn state, since it is by the Spirit alone that true marriage is sanctified. When the Spirit is withdrawn, man and woman are indeed divorced.

“The words ‘a sense of duty’ belong to moral philosophy and not to religion. Love annuls them. I do not mean to decry them, but the reborn are lifted far above them by the subversion of the will by which our will is submitted to God’s. It is so we develop, and become, as it were, God. And hence those who are not married in the Spirit are not spiritually man and wife. No consecration has taken place, Church or no Church. If rebirth occurs later, to either or both, the individual conscience—which is the Spirit, must decide whether, as regards each other, they are bound or free, and we must stand or fall by that. Men object that this is opening the door to individualism. What they fail to see is that the door is open, wide, to-day and can never again be closed: that the law of the naturally born is losing its power, that the worn-out authority of the Church is being set at naught because that authority was devised by man to keep in check those who were not reborn. The only check to material individualism is spiritual individualism, and the reborn man or woman cannot act to the detriment of his fellow-creatures.”

Page 1951

In her turn she was silent, still gazing at him, her breath coming deeply, for she was greatly moved.

“Yes,” she said simply, “I can see now why divorce between us would be a sacrilege. I felt it, John, but I couldn’t reason it out. It is the consecration of the Spirit that justifies the union of the flesh. For the Spirit, in that sense, does not deny the flesh.”

“That would be to deny life,” Hodder replied.

“I see. Why was it all so hidden!” The exclamation was not addressed to him—she was staring pensively into the fire. But presently, with a swift movement, she turned to him.

“You will preach this, John,—all of it!”

It was not a question, but the cry of a new and wider vision of his task. Her face was transfigured. And her voice, low and vibrating, expressed no doubts. “Oh, I am proud of you! And if they put you out and persecute you I shall always be proud, I shall never know why it was given me to have this, and to live. Do you remember saying to me once that faith comes to us in some human form we love? You are my faith. And faith in you is my faith in humanity, and faith in God.”

Ere he could speak of his own faith in her, in mankind, by grace of which he had been lifted from the abyss, there came a knock at the door. And even as they answered it a deeper knowledge filtered into their hearts.

Horace Bentley stood before them. And the light from his face, that shone down upon them, was their benediction.

AFTERWORD

Although these pages have been published serially, it is with a feeling of reluctance that I send them out into the world, for better or worse, between the covers of a book. They have been written with reverence, and the reading of the proofs has brought back to me vividly the long winters in which I pondered over the matter they contain, and wrote and rewrote the chapters.

I had not thought to add anything to them by way of an afterword. Nothing could be farther from my mind than to pose as a theologian; and, were it not for one or two of the letters I have received, I should have supposed that no reader could have thought of making the accusation that I presumed to speak for any one except myself. In a book of this kind, the setting forth of a personal view of religion is not only unavoidable, but necessary; since, if I wrote sincerely, Mr. Hodder’s solution must coincide with my own —so far as I have been able to work one out. Such as it is, it represents many years of

experience and reflection. And I can only crave the leniency of any trained theologian who may happen to peruse it.

No one realizes, perhaps, the incompleteness of the religious interpretations here presented more keenly than I. More significant, more vital elements of the truth are the rewards of a mind which searches and craves, especially in these days when the fruit of so many able minds lies on the shelves of library and bookshop. Since the last chapter was written, many suggestions have come to me which I should like to have the time to develop for this volume. But the nature of these elements is positive,—I can think of nothing I should care to subtract.

Page 1952

Here, then, so far as what may be called religious doctrine is concerned, is merely a personal solution. We are in an age when the truth is being worked out through many minds, a process which seems to me both Christian and Democratic. Yet a gentleman has so far misunderstood this that he has already accused me, in a newspaper, of committing all the heresies condemned by the Council of Chalcedon,—and more!

I have no doubt that he is right. My consolation must be that I have as company—in some of my heresies, at least—a goodly array of gentlemen who wear the cloth of the orthodox churches whose doctrines he accuses me of denying. The published writings of these clergymen are accessible to all. The same critic declares that my interpretations are without “authority.” This depends, of course; on one’s view of “authority.” But his accusation is true equally against many men who—if my observation be correct—are doing an incalculable service for religion by giving to the world their own personal solutions, interpreting Christianity in terms of modern thought. No doubt these, too, are offending the champions of the Council of Chalcedon.

And does the gentleman, may I ask, ever read the pages of the Hibbert Journal?

Finally, I have to meet a more serious charge, that Mr. Hodder remains in the Church because of “the dread of parting with the old, strong anchorage, the fear of anathema and criticism, the thought of sorrowing and disapproving friends.” Or perhaps he infers that it is I who keep Mr. Hodder in the Church for these personal reasons. Alas, the concern of society is now for those upon whom the Church has lost her hold, who are seeking for a solution they can accept. And the danger to-day is not from the side of heresy. The rector of St. John’s, as a result of his struggle, gained what I believe to be a higher and surer faith than that which he formerly held, and in addition to this the realization of the presence of a condition which was paralyzing the Church’s influence.

One thing I had hoped to make clear, that if Mr. Hodder had left the Church under these circumstances he would have made the Great Refusal. The situation which he faced demanded something of the sublime courage of his Master.

Lastly, may I be permitted to add that it is far from my intention to reflect upon any particular denomination. The instance which I have taken is perhaps a pronounced rather than a particular case of the problem to which I have referred, and which is causing the gravest concern to thoughtful clergymen and laymen of all denominations.

WINSTON CHURCHILL

Santa Barbara, *California*
March 31,1913.

PG EDITOR’S BOOKMARKS:

Page 1953

Absurd to promise to love
Acceptance of authority is not faith, it is mere credulity
Always getting glimpses of things when it is too late
Antipathy to forms
Bad music, she said, offended her
Can't believe in the doctrine of the virgin birth
Clothes of one man are binding on another
Conviction that all things were as they ought to be
Deification of beauty to the exclusion of all else
Economic slavery
Elaborate attention little men are apt to bestow upon women
Even after all these ages, the belief, the hope would not down
Faith may be likened to an egg
Foolish sacrifices are worse than useless
For ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter
Futility of the traditional words of comfort
Genius, analyzed, is often disappointing
God himself would have divorced us
Had a habit of not waiting for answers to her questions
Happiness of gratitude and wonder, too wise to exult
He was what is known as a "success"—always that magic word
Hell's here—isn't it?
How to be silent with a clamouring heart
I see no one upon whom I can rely but myself
I hate humility
I'm always searching for things to do
If Christians were logical, they should be Socialists
Immortality as orthodox Christianity depicts it
Impulse had brought him thus far
Indiscriminate, unreasoning self-sacrifice
Individualism with which the Church can have no sympathy
Intellectually lazy
Know a great deal and don't believe anything
Knowledge puts faith out of the question
Logical result of independent thinking is anarchy
"Love," she added, "plays such havoc with one's opinions"
Luxuries formerly unthought of seemed to become necessities
Material proof, it seems to me, is a denial of faith
Mistaking the effect for the cause
Mixture of awkwardness and straightforwardness
Not given to trite acquiescence
Olmah which Isaiah uses does not mean virgin
Only one regret as to what you said—that it is true

Pleasure? Yes. It makes me feel as if I were of some use
Religion, I think, should be everybody's (profession)
Rule which you so confidently apply to fit all cases
Scandalously forced through the council of Nicaea
Seeking a forgiveness out of all proportion to the trespass
St Paul, you say, put us in our proper place
Success—which was really failure
Sunday was then a day essentially different from other days
The law cannot fit all cases
The weak always sink
The hours of greatest suffering are the empty hours
Thinking isn't—believing
Vagueness generally attributed to her sex
Vividly unreal, as a

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toy village comes painted from the shop
We must believe, if we believe at all, without authority
We are always trying to get away from ourselves
We never can foresee how we may change
We have no control over our affections
When our brief span of usefulness is done
Who had learned the lesson of mothers,—how to wait
Whole conception of charity is a crime against civilization
You and your religion are as far apart as the poles

RICHARD CARVEL

By Winston Churchill

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FOREWORD

My sons and daughters have tried to persuade me to remodel these memoirs of my grandfather into a latter-day romance. But I have thought it wiser to leave them as he wrote them. Albeit they contain some details not of interest to the general public, to my notion it is such imperfections as these which lend to them the reality they bear. Certain it is, when reading them, I live his life over again.

Page 1955

Needless to say, Mr. Richard Carvel never intended them for publication. His first apology would be for his Scotch, and his only defence is that he was not a Scotchman.

The lively capital which once reflected the wit and fashion of Europe has fallen into decay. The silent streets no more echo with the rumble of coaches and gay chariots, and grass grows where busy merchants trod. Stately ball-rooms, where beauty once reigned, are cold and empty and mildewed, and halls, where laughter rang, are silent. Time was when every wide-throated chimney poured forth its cloud of smoke, when every andiron held a generous log,—andirons which are now gone to decorate Mr. Centennial's home in New York or lie with a tag in the window of some curio shop. The mantel, carved in delicate wreaths, is boarded up, and an unsightly stove mocks the gilded ceiling. Children romp in that room with the silver door-knobs, where my master and his lady were wont to sit at cards in silk and brocade, while liveried blacks entered on tiptoe. No marble Cupids or tall Dianas fill the niches in the staircase, and the mahogany board, round which has been gathered many a famous toast and wit, is gone from the dining room.

But Mr. Carvel's town house in Annapolis stands to-day, with its neighbours, a mournful relic of a glory that is past.

Daniel Clapsaddle Carvel.

Calvert house, *Pennsylvania*,
December 21, 1876.

RICHARD CARVEL

CHAPTER I

LIONEL CARVEL, OF CARVEL HALL

Lionel Carvel, Esq., of Carvel Hall, in the county of Queen Anne, was no inconsiderable man in his Lordship's province of Maryland, and indeed he was not unknown in the colonial capitals from Williamsburg to Boston. When his ships arrived out, in May or June, they made a goodly showing at the wharves, and his captains were ever shrewd men of judgment who sniffed a Frenchman on the horizon, so that none of the Carvel tobacco ever went, in that way, to gladden a Gallic heart. Mr. Carvel's acres were both rich and broad, and his house wide for the stranger who might seek its shelter, as with God's help so it ever shall be. It has yet to be said of the Carvels that their guests are hurried away, or that one, by reason of his worldly goods or position, shall be more welcome than another.

I take no shame in the pride with which I write of my grandfather, albeit he took the part of his Majesty and Parliament against the Colonies. He was no palavering turncoat, like

my Uncle Grafton, to cry “God save the King!” again when an English fleet sailed up the bay. Mr. Carvel’s hand was large and his heart was large, and he was respected and even loved by the patriots as a man above paltry subterfuge. He was born at Carvel Hall in the year of our Lord 1696, when the house was, I am told,

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but a small dwelling. It was his father, George Carvel, my great-grandsire, reared the present house in the year 1720, of brick brought from England as ballast for the empty ships; he added on, in the years following, the wide wings containing the ball-room, and the banquet-hall, and the large library at the eastern end, and the offices. But it was my grandfather who built the great stables and the kennels where he kept his beagles and his fleeter hounds. He dearly loved the saddle and the chase, and taught me to love them too. Many the sharp winter day I have followed the fox with him over two counties, and lain that night, and a week after, forsooth, at the plantation of some kind friend who was only too glad to receive us. Often, too, have we stood together from early morning until dark night, waist deep, on the duck points, I with a fowling-piece I was all but too young to carry, and brought back a hundred red-heads or canvas-backs in our bags. He went with unfailing regularity to the races at Annapolis or Chestertown or Marlborough, often to see his own horses run, where the coaches of the gentry were fifty and sixty around the course; where a negro, or a hogshead of tobacco, or a pipe of Madeira was often staked at a single throw. Those times, my children, are not ours, and I thought it not strange that Mr. Carvel should delight in a good main between two cocks, or a bull-baiting, or a breaking of heads at the Chestertown fair, where he went to show his cattle and fling a guinea into the ring for the winner.

But it must not be thought that Lionel Carvel, your ancestor, was wholly unlettered because he was a sportsman, though it must be confessed that books occupied him only when the weather compelled, or when on his back with the gout. At times he would fain have me read to him as he lay in his great four-post bed with the flowered counterpane, from the Spectator, stopping me now and anon at some awakened memory of his youth. He never forgave Mr. Addison for killing stout, old Sir Roger de Coverley, and would never listen to the butler's account of his death. Mr. Carvel, too, had walked in Gray's Inn Gardens and met adventure at Fox Hall, and seen the great Marlborough himself. He had a fondness for Mr. Congreve's Comedies, many of which he had seen acted; and was partial to Mr. Gay's Trivia, which brought him many a recollection. He would also listen to Pope. But of the more modern poetry I think Mr. Gray's Elegy pleased him best. He would laugh over Swift's gall and wormwood, and would never be brought by my mother to acknowledge the defects in the Dean's character. Why? He had once met the Dean in a London drawing-room, when my grandfather was a young spark at Christ Church, Oxford. He never tired of relating that interview. The hostess was a very great lady indeed, and actually stood waiting for a word with his Reverence, whose whim it was rather to talk to the young provincial. He was a forbidding figure, in his black gown and periwig, so my grandfather said, with a piercing blue eye and shaggy brow. He made the mighty to come to him, while young Carvel stood between laughter and fear of the great lady's displeasure.

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“I knew of your father,” said the Dean, “before he went to the colonies. He had done better at home, sir. He was a man of parts.”

“He has done indifferently well in Maryland, sir,” said Mr. Carvel, making his bow.

“He hath gained wealth, forsooth,” says the Dean, wrathfully, “and might have had both wealth and fame had his love for King James not turned his head. I have heard much of the colonies, and have read that doggerel ‘Sot Weed Factor’ which tells of the gluttonous life of ease you lead in your own province. You can have no men of mark from such conditions, Mr. Carvel. Tell me,” he adds contemptuously, “is genius honoured among you?”

“Faith, it is honoured, your Reverence,” said my grandfather, “but never encouraged.”

This answer so pleased the Dean that he bade Mr. Carvel dine with him next day at Button’s Coffee House, where they drank mulled wine and old sack, for which young Mr. Carvel paid. On which occasion his Reverence endeavoured to persuade the young man to remain in England, and even went so far as to promise his influence to obtain him preferment. But Mr. Carvel chose rather (wisely or not, who can judge?) to come back to Carvel Hall and to the lands of which he was to be master, and to play the country squire and provincial magnate rather than follow the varying fortunes of a political party at home. And he was a man much looked up to in the province before the Revolution, and sat at the council board of his Excellency the Governor, as his father had done before him, and represented the crown in more matters than one when the French and savages were upon our frontiers.

Although a lover of good cheer, Mr. Carvel was never intemperate. To the end of his days he enjoyed his bottle after dinner, nay, could scarce get along without it; and mixed a punch or a posset as well as any in our colony. He chose a good London-brewed ale or porter, and his ships brought Madeira from that island by the pipe, and sack from Spain and Portugal, and red wine from France when there was peace. And puncheons of rum from Jamaica and the Indies for his people, holding that no gentleman ever drank rum in the raw, though fairly supportable as punch.

Mr. Carvel’s house stands in Marlborough Street, a dreary mansion enough. Praised be Heaven that those who inherit it are not obliged to live there on the memory of what was in days gone by. The heavy green shutters are closed; the high steps, though stoutly built, are shaky after these years of disuse; the host of faithful servants who kept its state are nearly all laid side by side at Carvel Hall. Harvey and Chess and Scipio are no more. The kitchen, whither a boyish hunger oft directed my eyes at twilight, shines not with the welcoming gleam of yore. Chess no longer prepares the dainties which astonished Mr. Carvel’s guests, and which he alone could cook. The coach still stands in the stables where Harvey left it, a lumbering relic of those lumbering times when methinks there was more of goodwill and less of haste in the world. The great brass

knocker, once resplendent from Scipio's careful hand, no longer fantastically reflects the guest as he beats his tattoo, and Mr. Peale's portrait of my grandfather is gone from the dining-room wall, adorning, as you know, our own drawing-room at Calvert House.

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I shut my eyes, and there comes to me unbidden that dining-room in Marlborough Street of a gray winter's afternoon, when I was but a lad. I see my dear grandfather in his wig and silver-laced waistcoat and his blue velvet coat, seated at the head of the table, and the precise Scipio has put down the dumb-waiter filled with shining cut-glass at his left hand, and his wine chest at his right, and with solemn pomp driven his black assistants from the room. Scipio was Mr. Carvel's butler. He was forbid to light the candles after dinner. As dark grew on, Mr. Carvel liked the blazing logs for light, and presently sets the decanter on the corner of the table and draws nearer the fire, his guests following. I recall well how jolly Governor Sharpe, who was a frequent visitor with us, was wont to display a comely calf in silk stocking; and how Captain Daniel Clapsaddle would spread his feet with his toes out, and settle his long pipe between his teeth. And there were besides a host of others who sat at that fire whose names have passed into Maryland's history,—Whig and Tory alike. And I remember a tall slip of a lad who sat listening by the deep-recessed windows on the street, which somehow are always covered in these pictures with a fine rain. Then a coach passes,—a mahogany coach emblazoned with the Manners's coat of arms, and Mistress Dorothy and her mother within. And my young lady gives me one of those demure bows which ever set my heart agoing like a smith's hammer of a Monday.

CHAPTER II

SOME MEMORIES OF CHILDHOOD

A traveller who has all but gained the last height of the great mist-covered mountain looks back over the painful crags he has mastered to where a light is shining on the first easy slope. That light is ever visible, for it is Youth.

After nigh fourscore and ten years of life that Youth is nearer to me now than many things which befell me later. I recall as yesterday the day Captain Clapsaddle rode to the Hall, his horse covered with sweat, and the reluctant tidings of Captain Jack Carvel's death on his lips. And strangely enough that day sticks in my memory as of delight rather than sadness. When my poor mother had gone up the stairs on my grandfather's arm the strong soldier took me on his knee, and drawing his pistol from his holster bade me snap the lock, which I was barely able to do. And he told me wonderful tales of the woods beyond the mountains, and of the painted men who tracked them; much wilder and fiercer they were than those stray Nanticokes I had seen from time to time near Carvel Hall. And when at last he would go I clung to him, so he swung me to the back of his great horse Ronald, and I seized the bridle in my small hands. The noble beast, like his master, loved a child well, and he cantered off lightly at the captain's whistle, who cried "bravo" and ran by my side lest I should fall. Lifting me off at length he kissed me and bade me not to annoy my mother, the tears in his eyes again. And leaping on Ronald was away for the ferry with never so much as a look behind, leaving me standing in the road.

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And from that time I saw more of him and loved him better than any man save my grandfather. He gave me a pony on my next birthday, and a little hogskin saddle made especially by Master Wythe, the London saddler in the town, with a silver-mounted bridle. Indeed, rarely did the captain return from one of his long journeys without something for me and a handsome present for my mother. Mr. Carvel would have had him make his home with us when we were in town, but this he would not do. He lodged in Church Street, over against the Coffee House, dining at that hostelry when not bidden out, or when not with us. He was much sought after. I believe there was scarce a man of note in any of the colonies not numbered among his friends. 'Twas said he loved my mother, and could never come to care for any other woman, and he promised my father in the forests to look after her welfare and mine. This promise, you shall see, he faithfully kept.

Though you have often heard from my lips the story of my mother, I must for the sake of those who are to come after you, set it down here as briefly as I may. My grandfather's bark 'Charming Sally', Captain Stanwix, having set out from Bristol on the 15th of April, 1736, with a fair wind astern and a full cargo of English goods below, near the Madeiras fell in with foul weather, which increased as she entered the trades. Captain Stanwix being a prudent man, shortened sail, knowing the harbour of Funchal to be but a shallow bight in the rock, and worse than the open sea in a southeaster. The third day he hove the Sally to; being a stout craft and not overladen she weathered the gale with the loss of a jib, and was about making topsails again when a full-rigged ship was descried in the offing giving signals of distress. Night was coming on very fast, and the sea was yet running too high for a boat to live, but the gallant captain furled his topsails once more to await the morning. It could be seen from her signals that the ship was living throughout the night, but at dawn she foundered before the Sally's boats could be put in the water; one of them was ground to pieces on the falls. Out of the ship's company and passengers they picked up but five souls, four sailors and a little girl of two years or thereabouts. The men knew nothing more of her than that she had come aboard at Brest with her mother, a quiet, delicate lady who spoke little with the other passengers. The ship was 'La Favourite du Roy', bound for the French Indies.

Captain Stanwix's wife, who was a good, motherly person, took charge of the little orphan, and arriving at Carvel Hall delivered her to my grandfather, who brought her up as his own daughter. You may be sure the emblem of Catholicism found upon her was destroyed, and she was baptized straightway by Doctor Hilliard, my grandfather's chaplain, into the Established Church. Her clothes were of the finest quality, and her little handkerchief had worked into the corner of it a coronet, with the initials "E

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de T" beside it. Around her neck was that locket with the gold chain which I have so often shown you, on one side of which is the miniature of the young officer in his most Christian Majesty's uniform, and on the other a yellow-faded slip of paper with these words: "Elle est la mienne, quoiqu'elle ne porte pas mou nom." "She is mine, although she does not bear my name."

My grandfather wrote to the owners of 'La Favourite du Roy', and likewise directed his English agent to spare nothing in the search for some clew to the child's identity. All that he found was that the mother had been entered on the passenger-list as Madame la Farge, of Paris, and was bound for Martinico. Of the father there was no trace whatever. The name "la Farge" the agent, Mr. Dix, knew almost to a certainty was assumed, and the coronet on the handkerchief implied that the child was of noble parentage. The meaning conveyed by the paper in the locket, which was plainly a clipping from a letter, was such that Mr. Carvel never showed it to my mother, and would have destroyed it had he not felt that some day it might aid in solving the mystery. So he kept it in his strongbox, where he thought it safe from prying eyes. But my Uncle Grafton, ever a deceitful lad, at length discovered the key and read the paper, and afterwards used the knowledge he thus obtained as a reproach and a taunt against my mother. I cannot even now write his name without repulsion.

This new member of the household was renamed Elizabeth Carvel, though they called her Bess, and of a course she was greatly petted and spoiled, and ruled all those about her. As she grew from childhood to womanhood her beauty became talked about, and afterwards, when Mistress Carvel went to the Assembly, a dozen young sparks would crowd about the door of her coach, and older and more serious men lost their heads on her account.

Her devotion to Mr. Carvel was such, however, that she seemed to care but little for the attention she received, and she continued to grace his board and entertain his company. He fairly worshipped her. It was his delight to surprise her with presents from England, with rich silks and brocades for gowns, for he loved to see her bravely dressed. The spinet he gave her, inlaid with ivory, we have still. And he caused a chariot to be made for her in London, and she had her own horses and her groom in the Carvel livery.

People said it was but natural that she should fall in love with Captain Jack, my father. He was the soldier of the family, tall and straight and dashing. He differed from his younger brother Grafton as day from night. Captain Jack was open and generous, though a little given to rash enterprise and madcap adventure. He loved my mother from a child. His friend Captain Clapsaddle loved her too, and likewise Grafton, but it soon became evident that she would marry Captain Jack or nobody. He was my grandfather's favourite, and though Mr. Carvel had wished him more

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serious, his joy when Bess blushingly told him the news was a pleasure to see. And Grafton turned to revenge; he went to Mr. Carvel with the paper he had taken from the strong-box and claimed that my mother was of spurious birth and not fit to marry a Carvel. He afterwards spread the story secretly among the friends of the family. By good fortune little harm arose therefrom, since all who knew my mother loved her, and were willing to give her credit for the doubt; many, indeed, thought the story sprang from Grafton's jealousy and hatred. Then it was that Mr. Carvel gave to Grafton the estate in Kent County and bade him shift for himself, saying that he washed his hands of a son who had acted such a part.

But Captain Clapsaddle came to the wedding in the long drawing-room at the Hall and stood by Captain Jack when he was married, and kissed the bride heartily. And my mother cried about this afterwards, and said that it grieved her sorely that she should have given pain to such a noble man.

After the blow which left her a widow, she continued to keep Mr. Carvel's home. I recall her well, chiefly as a sad and beautiful woman, stately save when she kissed me with passion and said that I bore my father's look. She drooped like the flower she was, and one spring day my grandfather led me to receive her blessing and to be folded for the last time in those dear arms. With a smile on her lips she rose to heaven to meet my father. And she lies buried with the rest of the Carvels at the Hall, next to the brave captain, her husband.

And so I grew up with my grandfather, spending the winters in town and the long summers on the Eastern Shore. I loved the country best, and the old house with its hundred feet of front standing on the gentle slope rising from the river's mouth, the green vines Mr. Carvel had fetched from England all but hiding the brick, and climbing to the angled roof; and the velvet green lawn of silvery grass brought from England, descending gently terrace by terrace to the waterside, where lay our pungies and barges. There was then a tiny pillared porch framing the front door, for our ancestors never could be got to realize the Maryland climate, and would rarely build themselves wide verandas suitable to that colony. At Carvel Hall we had, to be sure, the cool spring house under the willows for sultry days, with its pool dished out for bathing; and a trellised arbour, and octagonal summer house with seats where my mother was wont to sit sewing while my grandfather dreamed over his pipe. On the lawn stood the oaks and walnuts and sycamores which still cast their shade over it, and under them of a summer's evening Mr. Carvel would have his tea alone; save oftentimes when a barge would come swinging up the river with ten velvet-capped blacks at the oars, and one of our friendly neighbours—Mr. Lloyd or Mr. Bordley, or perchance little Mr. Manners —-would stop for a long evening with him. They seldom came without their ladies and children. What romps we youngsters had about the old place whilst our elders talked their politics.

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In childhood the season which delighted me the most was spring. I would count the days until St. Taminas, which, as you knew, falls on the first of May. And the old custom was for the young men to deck themselves out as Indian bucks and sweep down on the festivities around the Maypole on the town green, or at night to surprise the guests at a ball and force the gentlemen to pay down a shilling, and sometimes a crown apiece, and the host to give them a bowl of punch. Then came June. My grandfather celebrated his Majesty's birthday in his own jolly fashion, and I had my own birthday party on the tenth. And on the fifteenth, unless it chanced upon a Sunday, my grandfather never failed to embark in his pinnace at the Annapolis dock for the Hall. Once seated in the stern between Mr. Carvel's knees, what rapture when at last we shot out into the blue waters of the bay and I thought of the long summer of joy before me. Scipio was generalissimo of these arrangements, and was always at the dock punctually at ten to hand my grandfather in, a ceremony in which he took great pride, and to look his disapproval should we be late. As he turned over the key of the town house he would walk away with a stern dignity to marshal the other servants in the horse-boat.

One fifteenth of June two children sat with bated breath in the pinnace, —Dorothy Manners and myself. Mistress Dolly was then as mischievous a little baggage as ever she proved afterwards. She was coming to pass a week at the Hall, her parents, whose place was next to ours, having gone to Philadelphia on a visit. We rounded Kent Island, which lay green and beautiful in the flashing waters, and at length caught sight of the old windmill, with its great arms majestically turning, and the cupola of Carvel House shining white among the trees; and of the upper spars of the shipping, with sails neatly furled, lying at the long wharves, where the English wares Mr. Carvel had commanded for the return trips were unloading. Scarce was the pinnace brought into the wind before I had leaped ashore and greeted with a shout the Hall servants drawn up in a line on the green, grinning a welcome. Dorothy and I scampered over the grass and into the cool, wide house, resting awhile on the easy sloping steps within, hand in hand. And then away for that grand tour of inspection we had been so long planning together. How well I recall that sunny afternoon, when the shadows of the great oaks were just beginning to lengthen. Through the greenhouses we marched, monarchs of all we surveyed, old Porphery, the gardener, presenting Mistress Dolly with a crown of orange blossoms, for which she thanked him with a pretty courtesy her governess had taught her. Were we not king and queen returned to our summer palace? And Spot and Silver and Song and Knipe, the wolf-hound, were our train, though not as decorous as rigid etiquette demanded, since they were forever running after the butterflies. On we went through the stiff, box-bordered walks of

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the garden, past the weather-beaten sundial and the spinning-house and the smoke-house to the stables. Here old Harvey, who had taught me to ride Captain Daniel's pony, is equerry, and young Harvey our personal attendant; old Harvey smiles as we go in and out of the stalls rubbing the noses of our trusted friends, and gives a gruff but kindly warning as to Cassandra's heels. He recalls my father at the same age.

Jonas Tree, the carpenter, sits sunning himself on his bench before the shop, but mysteriously disappears when he sees us, and returns presently with a little ship he has fashioned for me that winter, all complete with spars and sails, for Jonas was a shipwright on the Severn in the old country before he came as a king's passenger to the new. Dolly and I are off directly to the backwaters of the river, where the new boat is launched with due ceremony as the Conqueror, his Majesty's latest ship-of-the-line. Jonas himself trims her sails, and she sets off right gallantly across the shallows, heeling to the breeze for all the world like a real man-o'-war. Then the King would fain cruise at once against the French, but Queen Dorothy must needs go with him. His Majesty points out that when fighting is to be done, a ship of war is no place for a woman, whereat her Majesty stamps her little foot and throws her crown of orange blossoms from her, and starts off for the milk-house in high dudgeon, vowing she will play no more.

And it ends as it ever will end, be the children young or old, for the French pass from his Majesty's mind and he runs after his consort to implore forgiveness, leaving poor Jonas to take care of the Conqueror.

How short those summer days? All too short for the girl and boy who had so much to do in them. The sun rising over the forest often found us peeping through the blinds, and when he sank into the bay at night we were still running, tired but happy, and begging patient Hester for half an hour more.

"Lawd, Marse Dick," I can hear her say, "you an' Miss Dolly's been on yo' feet since de dawn. And so's I, honey."

And so we had. We would spend whole days on the wharves, all bustle and excitement, sometimes seated on the capstan of the Sprightly Bess or perched in the nettings of the Oriole, of which ship old Stanwix was now captain. He had grown gray in Mr. Carvel's service, and good Mrs. Stanwix was long since dead. Often we would mount together on the little horse Captain Daniel had given me, Dorothy on a pillion behind, to go with my grandfather to inspect the farm. Mr. Starkie, the overseer, would ride beside us, his fowling-piece slung over his shoulder and his holster on his hip; a kind man and capable, and unlike Mr. Evans, my Uncle Grafton's overseer, was seldom known to use his firearms or the rawhide slung across his saddle. The negroes in their linsey-woolsey jackets and checked trousers would stand among the hills grinning at us

children as we passed; and there was not one of them, nor of the white servants for that matter, that I could not call by name.

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And all this time I was busily wooing Mistress Dolly; but she, little minx, would give me no satisfaction. I see her standing among the strawberries, her black hair waving in the wind, and her red lips redder still from the stain. And the sound of her childish voice comes back to me now after all these years. And this was my first proposal:

“Dorothy, when you grow up and I grow up, you will marry me, and I shall give you all these strawberries.”

“I will marry none but a soldier,” says she, “and a great man.”

“Then will I be a soldier,” I cried, “and greater than the Governor himself.” And I believed it.

“Papa says I shall marry an earl,” retorts Dorothy, with a toss of her pretty head.

“There are no earls among us,” I exclaimed hotly, for even then I had some of that sturdy republican spirit which prevailed among the younger generation. “Our earls are those who have made their own way, like my grandfather.” For I had lately heard Captain Clapsaddle say this and much more on the subject. But Dorothy turned up her nose.

“I shall go home when I am eighteen,”—she said, “and I shall meet his Majesty the King.”

And to such an argument I found no logical answer.

Mr. Marmaduke Manners and his lady came to fetch Dorothy home. He was a foppish little gentleman who thought more of the cut of his waistcoat than of the affairs of the province, and would rather have been bidden to lead the assembly ball than to sit in council with his Excellency the Governor. My first recollection of him is of contempt. He must needs have his morning punch just so, and complained whiningly of Scipio if some perchance were spilled on the glass. He must needs be taken abroad in a chair when it rained. And though in the course of a summer he was often at Carvel Hall he never tarried long, and came to see Mr. Carvel’s guests rather than Mr. Carvel. He had little in common with my grandfather, whose chief business and pleasure was to promote industry on his farm. Mr. Marmaduke was wont to rise at noon, and knew not wheat from barley, or good leaf from bad; his hands he kept like a lady’s, rendering them almost useless by the long lace on the sleeves, and his chief pastime was card-playing. It was but reasonable therefore, when the troubles with the mother country began, that he chose the King’s side alike from indolence and contempt for things republican.

Of Mrs. Manners I shall say more by and by.

I took a mischievous delight in giving Mr. Manners every annoyance my boyish fancy could conceive. The evening of his arrival he and Mr. Carvel set out for a stroll about

the house, Mr. Marmaduke mincing his steps, for it had rained that morning. And presently they came upon the windmill with its long arms moving lazily in the light breeze, near touching the ground as they passed, for the mill was built in the Dutch fashion. I know not what moved me,

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but hearing Mr. Manners carelessly humming a minuet while my grandfather explained the usefulness of the mill, I seized hold of one of the long arms as it swung by, and before the gentlemen could prevent was carried slowly upwards. Dorothy screamed, and her father stood stock still with amazement and fear, Mr. Carvel being the only one who kept his presence of mind. "Hold on tight, Richard!" I heard him cry. It was dizzy riding, though the motion was not great, and before I had reached the right angle I regretted my rashness. I caught a glimpse of the Bay with the red sun on it, and as I turned saw far below me the white figure of Ivie Rawlinson, the Scotch miller, who had run out. "O haith!" he shouted. "Hand fast, Mr. Richard!"—And so I clung tightly and came down without much inconvenience, though indifferently glad to feel the ground again.

Mr. Marmaduke, as I expected, was in a great temper, and swore he had not had such a fright for years. He looked for Mr. Carvel to cane me stoutly: But Ivie laughed heartily, and said: "I wad yell gang far for anither laddie wi' the spunk, Mr. Manners," and with a sly look at my grandfather, "Ilka day we hae some sic whigmeleery."

I think Mr. Carvel was not ill pleased with the feat, or with Mr. Marmaduke's way of taking it. For afterwards I overheard him telling the story to Colonel Lloyd, and both gentlemen laughing over Mr. Manners's discomfiture.

CHAPTER III

CAUGHT BY THE TIDE

It is a nigh impossible task on the memory to trace those influences by which a lad is led to form his life's opinions, and for my part I hold that such things are bred into the bone, and that events only serve to strengthen them. In this way only can I account for my bitterness, at a very early age, against that King whom my seeming environment should have made me love. For my grandfather was as stanch a royalist as ever held a cup to majesty's health. And children are most apt before they can reason for themselves to take the note from those of their elders who surround them. It is true that many of Mr. Carvel's guests were of the opposite persuasion from him: Mr. Chase and Mr. Carroll, Mr. Lloyd and Mr. Bordley, and many others, including our friend Captain Clapsaddle. And these gentlemen were frequently in argument, but political discussion is Greek to a lad.

Mr. Carvel, as I have said, was most of his life a member of the Council, a man from whom both Governor Sharpe and Governor Eden were glad to take advice because of his temperate judgment and deep knowledge of the people of the province. At times, when his Council was scattered, Governor Sharpe would consult Mr. Carvel alone, and

often have I known my grandfather to embark in haste from the Hall in response to a call from his Excellency.

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’Twas in the latter part of August, in the year 1765, made memorable by the Stamp Act, that I first came in touch with the deep-set feelings of the times then beginning, and I count from that year the awakening of the sympathy which determined my career. One sultry day I was wading in the shallows after crabs, when the Governor’s messenger came drifting in, all impatience at the lack of wind. He ran to the house to seek Mr. Carvel, and I after him, with all a boy’s curiosity, as fast as my small legs would carry me. My grandfather hurried out to order his barge to be got ready at once, so that I knew something important was at hand. At first he refused me permission to go, but afterwards relented, and about eleven in the morning we pulled away strongly, the ten blacks bending to the oars as if their lives were at stake.

A wind arose before we sighted Greensbury Point, and I saw a bark sailing in, but thought nothing of this until Mr. Carvel, who had been silent and preoccupied, called for his glass and swept her decks. She soon shortened sail, and went so leisurely that presently our light barge drew alongside, and I perceived Mr. Zachariah Hood, a merchant of the town, returning from London, hanging over her rail. Mr. Hood was very pale in spite of his sea-voyage; he flung up his cap at our boat, but Mr. Carvel’s salute in return was colder than he looked for. As we came in view of the dock, a fine rain was setting in, and to my astonishment I beheld such a mass of people assembled as I had never seen, and scarce standing-room on the wharves. We were to have gone to the Governor’s wharf in the Severn, but my grandfather changed his intention at once. Many of the crowd greeted him as we drew near them, and, having landed, respectfully made room for him to pass through. I followed him a-tremble with excitement and delight over such an unwonted experience. We had barely gone ten paces, however, before Mr. Carvel stopped abreast of Mr. Claude, mine host of the Coffee House, who cried:

“Hast seen his Majesty’s newest representative, Mr. Carvel?”

“Mr. Hood is on board the bark, sir,” replied my grandfather. “I take it you mean Mr. Hood.”

“Ay, that I do; Mr. Zachariah Hood, come to lick stamps for his brother-colonists.”

“After licking his Majesty’s boots,” says a wag near by, which brings a laugh from those about us. I remembered that I had heard some talk as to how Mr. Hood had sought and obtained from King George the office of Stamp Distributor for the province. Now, my grandfather, God rest him! was as doughty an old gentleman as might well be, and would not listen without protest to remarks which bordered sedition. He had little fear of things below, and none of a mob.

“My masters,” he shouted, with a flourish of his stick, so stoutly that people fell back from him, “know that ye are met against the law, and endanger the peace of his Lordship’s government.”

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“Good enough, Mr. Carvel,” said Claude, who seemed to be the spokesman. “But how if we are stamped against law and his Lordship’s government? How then, sir? Your honour well knows we have naught against either, and are as peaceful a mob as ever assembled.”

This brought on a great laugh, and they shouted from all sides, “How then, Mr. Carvel?” And my grandfather, perceiving that he would lose dignity by argument, and having done his duty by a protest, was wisely content with that. They opened wider the lane for him to pass through, and he made his way, erect and somewhat defiant, to Mr. Pryse’s, the coachmaker opposite, holding me by the hand. The second storey of Pryse’s shop had a little balcony standing out in front, and here we established ourselves, that we might watch what was going forward.

The crowd below grew strangely silent as the bark came nearer and nearer, until Mr. Hood showed himself on the poop, when there rose a storm of hisses, mingled with shouts of derision. “How goes it at St. James, Mr. Hood?” and “Have you tasted his Majesty’s barley?” And some asked him if he was come as their member of Parliament. Mr. Hood dropped a bow, though what he said was drowned. The bark came in prettily enough, men in the crowd even catching her lines and making them fast to the piles. A gang-plank was thrown over. “Come out, Mr. Hood,” they cried; “we are here to do you honour, and to welcome you home again.” There were leather breeches with staves a-plenty around that plank, and faces that meant no trifling. “McNeir, the rogue,” exclaimed Mr. Carvel, “and that hulk of a tanner, Brown. And I would know those smith’s shoulders in a thousand.” “Right, sir,” says Pryse, “and ’twill serve them proper. when the King’s troops come among them for quartering.” Pryse being the gentry’s patron, shaped his politics according to the company he was in: he could ill be expected to seize one of his own ash spokes and join the resistance. Just then I caught a glimpse of Captain Clapsaddle on the skirts of the crowd, and with him Mr. Swain and some of the dissenting gentry. And my boyish wrath burst forth against that man smirking and smiling on the decks of the bark, so that I shouted shrilly: “Mr. Hood will be cudgelled and tarred as he deserves,” and shook my little fist at him, so that many under us laughed and cheered me. Mr. Carvel pushed me back into the window and out of their sight.

The crew of the bark had assembled on the quarterdeck, stout English tars every man of them, armed with pikes and belaying-pins; and at a word from the mate they rushed in a body over the plank. Some were thrust off into the water, but so fierce was their onset that others gained the wharf, laying sharply about them in all directions, but getting full as many knocks as they gave. For a space there was a very bedlam of cries and broken heads, those behind in the mob surging forward to reach the scrimmage, forcing their

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own comrades over the edge. McNeir had his thigh broken by a pike, and was dragged back after the first rush was over; and the mate of the bark was near to drowning, being rescued, indeed, by Graham, the tanner. Mr. Hood stood white in the gangway, dodging a missile now and then, waiting his chance, which never came. For many of the sailors were captured and carried bodily to the “Rose and Crown” and the “Three Blue Balls,” where they became properly drunk on Jamaica rum; others made good their escape on board. And at length the bark cast off again, amidst jeers and threats, and one-third of her crew missing, and drifted slowly back to the roads.

From the dock, after all was quiet, Mr. Carvel stepped into his barge and rowed to the Governor’s, whose house was prettily situated near Hanover Street, with ground running down to the Severn. His Excellency appeared much relieved to see my grandfather; Mr. Daniel Dulany was with him, and the three gentlemen at once repaired to the Governor’s writing-closet for consultation.

Mr. Carvel’s town house being closed, we stopped with his Excellency. There were, indeed, scarce any of the gentry in town at that season save a few of the Whig persuasion. Excitement ran very high; farmers flocked in every day from the country round about to take part in the demonstration against the Act. Mr. Hood’s storehouse was burned to the ground. Mr. Hood getting ashore by stealth, came, however, unmolested to Annapolis and offered at a low price the goods he had brought out in the bark, thinking thus to propitiate his enemies. This step but inflamed them the more.

My grandfather having much business to look to, I was left to my own devices, and the devices of an impetuous lad of twelve are not always such as his elders would choose for him. I was continually burning with a desire to see what was proceeding in the town, and hearing one day a great clamour and tolling of bells, I ran out of the Governor’s gate and down Northwest Street to the Circle, where a strange sight met my eyes. A crowd like that I had seen on the dock had collected there, Mr. Swain and Mr. Hammond and other barristers holding them in check. Mounted on a one-horse cart was a stuffed figure of the detested Mr. Hood. Mr. Hammond made a speech, but for the laughter and cheering I could not catch a word of it. I pushed through the people, as a boy will, diving between legs to get a better view, when I felt a hand upon my shoulder, bringing me up suddenly. And I recognized Mr. Matthias Tilghman, and with him was Mr. Samuel Chase.

“Does your grandfather know you are here, lad?” said Mr. Tilghman.

I paused a moment for breath before I answered: “He attended the rally at the dock himself, sir, and I believe enjoyed it.”

Both gentlemen smiled, and Mr. Chase remarked that if all the other party were like Mr. Carvel, troubles would soon cease. “I mean not Grafton,” says he, with a wink at Mr. Tilghman.

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“I’ll warrant, Richard, your uncle would be but ill pleased to see you in such company.”

“Nay, sir,” I replied, for I never feared to speak up, “there are you wrong. I think it would please my uncle mightily.”

“The lad hath indifferent penetration,” said Mr, Tilghman, laughing, and adding more soberly: “If you never do worse than this, Richard, Maryland may some day be proud of you.”

Mr. Hammond having finished his speech, a paper was placed in the hand of the effigy, and the crowd bore it shouting and singing to the hill, where Mr. John Shaw, the city carpenter, had made a gibbet. There nine and thirty lashes were bestowed on the unfortunate image, the people crying out that this was the Mosaic Law. And I cried as loud as any, though I knew not the meaning of the words. They hung Mr. Hood to the gibbet and set fire to a tar barrel under him, and so left him.

The town wore a holiday look that day, and I was loth to go back to the Governor’s house. Good patriots’ shops were closed, their owners parading as on Sunday in their best, pausing in knots at every corner to discuss the affair with which the town simmered. I encountered old Farris, the clockmaker, in his brown coat besprinkled behind with powder from his queue. “How now, Master Richard?” says he, merrily. “This is no place for young gentlemen of your persuasion.”

Next I came upon young Dr. Courtenay, the wit of the Tuesday Club, of whom I shall have more to say hereafter. He was taking the air with Mr. James Fotheringay, Will’s eldest brother, but lately back from Oxford and the Temple.

The doctor wore five-pound ruffles and a ten-pound wig, was dressed in cherry silk, and carried a long, clouded cane. His hat had the latest cock, for he was our macaroni of Annapolis.

“Egad, Richard,” he cries, “you are the only other loyalist I have seen abroad to-day.”

I remember swelling with indignation at the affront. “I call them Tories, sir,” I flashed back, “and I am none such.” “No Tory!” says he, nudging Mr. Fotheringay, who was with him; “I had as lief believe your grandfather hated King George.” I astonished them both by retorting that Mr. Carvel might think as he pleased, that being every man’s right; but that I chose to be a Whig. “I would tell you as a friend, young man,” replied the doctor, “that thy politics are not over politic.” And they left me puzzling, laughing with much relish over some catch in the doctor’s words. As for me, I could perceive no humour in them.

It was now near six of the clock, but instead of going direct to the Governor’s I made my way down Church Street toward the water. Near the dock I saw many people gathered

in the street in front of the “Ship” tavern, a time-honoured resort much patronized by sailors. My curiosity led me to halt there also. The “Ship” had stood in that place nigh on to three-score years, it was said. Its latticed windows were swung open,

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and from within came snatches of “Tom Bowling,” “Rule Britannia,” and many songs scarce fit for a child to hear. Now and anon some one in the street would throw back a taunt to these British sentiments, which went unheeded. “They be drunk as lords,” said Weld, the butcher’s apprentice, “and when they comes out we’ll hev more than one broken head in this street.” The songs continuing, he cried again, “Come out, d-n ye.” Weld had had more than his own portion of rum that day. Spying me seated on the gate-post opposite, he shouted: “So ho, Master Carvel, the streets are not for his Majesty’s supporters to-day.” Other artisans who were there bade him leave me in peace, saying that my grandfather was a good friend of the people. The matter might have ended there had I been older and wiser, but the excitement of the day had gone to my head like wine. “I am as stout a patriot as you, Weld,” I shouted back, and flushed at the cheering that followed. And Weld ran up to me, and though I was a good piece of a lad, swung me lightly onto his shoulder. “Harkee, Master Richard,” he said, “I can get nothing out of the poltroons by shouting. Do you go in and say that Weld will fight any mother’s son of them single-handed.”

“For shame, to send a lad into a tavern,” said old Bobbins, who had known my grandfather these many years. But the desire for a row was so great among the rest that they silenced him. Weld set me down, and I, nothing loth, ran through the open door.

I had never before been in the “Ship,” nor, indeed, in any tavern save that of Master Dingley, near Carvel Hall. The “Ship” was a bare place enough, with low black beams and sanded floor, and rough tables and chairs set about. On that September evening it was stifling hot; and the odours from the men, and the spilled rum and tobacco smoke, well-nigh overpowered me. The room was filled with a motley gang of sailors, mostly from the bark Mr. Hood had come on, and some from H.M.S. Hawk, then lying in the harbour.

A strapping man-o’-war’s-man sat near the door, his jacket thrown open and his great chest bared, and when he perceived me he was in the act of proposing a catch; ‘twas “The Great Bell o’ Lincoln,” I believe; and he held a brimming cup of bumbo in his hand. In his surprise he set it awkwardly down again, thereby spilling full half of it. “Avast,” says he, with an oath, “what’s this come among us?” and he looked me over with a comical eye. “A d-d provincial,” he went on scornfully, “but a gentleman’s son, or Jack Ball’s a liar.” Whereupon his companions rose from their seats and crowded round me. More than one reeled against me. And though I was somewhat awed by the strangeness of that dark, ill-smelling room, and by the rough company in which I found myself, I held my ground, and spoke up as strongly as I might.

“Weld, the butcher’s apprentice, bids me say he will fight any man among you single-handed.”

“So ho, my little gamecock, my little schooner with a swivel,” said he who had called himself Jack Ball, “and where can this valiant butcher be found?”

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“He waits in the street,” I answered more boldly.

“Split me fore and aft if he waits long,” said Jack, draining the rest of his rum. And picking me up as easily as did Weld he rushed out of the door, and after him as many of his mates as could walk or stagger thither.

In the meantime the news had got abroad in the street that the butcher’s apprentice was to fight one of the Hawk’s men, and when I emerged from the tavern the crowd had doubled, and people were running hither in all haste from both directions. But that fight was never to be. Big Jack Ball had scarce set me down and shouted a loud defiance, shaking his fist at Weld, who stood out opposite, when a soldierly man on a great horse turned the corner and wheeled between the combatants. I knew at a glance it was Captain Clapsaddle, and guiltily wished myself at the Governor’s. The townspeople knew him likewise, and many were slinking away even before he spoke, as his charger stood pawing the ground.

“What’s this I hear, you villain,” said he to Weld, in his deep, ringing voice, “that you have not only provoked a row with one of the King’s sailors, but have dared send a child into that tavern with your fool’s message?”

Weld was awkward and sullen enough, and no words came to him.

“Your tongue, you sot,” the captain went on, drawing his sword in his anger, “is it true you have made use of a gentleman’s son for your low purposes?”

But Weld was still silent, and not a sound came from either side until old Robbins spoke up.

“There are many here can say I warned him, your honour,” he said.

“Warned him!” cried the captain. “Mr. Carvel has just given you twenty pounds for your wife, and you warned him!”

Robbins said no more; and the butcher’s apprentice, hanging his head, as well he might before the captain, I was much moved to pity for him, seeing that my forwardness had in some sense led him on.

“Twas in truth my fault, captain,” I cried out. The captain looked at me, and said nothing. After that the butcher made bold to take up his man’s defence.

“Master Carvel was indeed somewhat to blame, sir,” said he, “and Weld is in liquor.”

“And I’ll have him to pay for his drunkenness,” said Captain Clapsaddle, hotly. “Get to your homes,” he cried. “Ye are a lot of idle hounds, who would make liberty the excuse for riot.” He waved his sword at the pack of them, and they scattered like sheep until

none but Weld was left. “And as for you, Weld,” he continued, “you’ll rue this pretty business, or Daniel Clapsaddle never punished a cut-throat.” And turning to Jack Ball, he bade him lift me to the saddle, and so I rode with him to the Governor’s without a word; for I knew better than to talk when he was in that mood.

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The captain was made to tarry and sup with his Excellency and my grandfather, and I sat perforce a fourth at the table, scarce daring to conjecture as to the outcome of my escapade. But as luck would have it, the Governor had been that day in such worry and perplexity, and my grandfather also, that my absence had passed unnoticed. Nor did my good friend the captain utter a word to them of what he knew. But afterwards he called me to him and set me upon his knee. How big, and kind, and strong he was, and how I loved his bluff soldier's face and blunt ways. And when at last he spoke, his words burnt deep in my memory, so that even now I can repeat them.

"Richard," he said, "I perceive you are like your father. I love your spirit greatly, but you have been overrash to-day. Remember this, lad, that you are a gentleman, the son of the bravest and truest gentleman I have ever known, save one; and he is destined to high things." I know now that he spoke of Colonel Washington. "And that your mother," here his voice trembled,—"your mother was a lady, every inch of her, and too good for this world. Remember, and seek no company, therefore, beyond that circle in which you were born. Fear not to be kind and generous, as I know you ever will be, but choose not intimates from the tavern." Here the captain cleared his throat, and seemed to seek for words. "I fear there are times coming, my lad," he went on presently, "when every man must choose his side, and stand arrayed in his own colours. It is not for me to shape your way of thinking. Decide in your own mind that which is right, and when you have so decided,"—he drew his sword, as was his habit when greatly moved, and placed his broad hand upon my head,—"know then that God is with you, and swerve not from thy course the width of this blade for any man."

We sat upon a little bench in the Governor's garden, in front of us the wide Severn merging into the bay, and glowing like molten gold in the setting sun. And I was thrilled with a strange reverence such as I have sometimes since felt in the presence of heroes.

CHAPTER IV

GRAFTON WOULD HEAL AN OLD BREACH

Doctor Hilliard, my grandfather's chaplain, was as holy a man as ever wore a gown, but I can remember none of his discourses which moved me as much by half as those simple words Captain Clapsaddle had used. The worthy doctor, who had baptized both my mother and father, died suddenly at Carvel Hall the spring following, of a cold contracted while visiting a poor man who dwelt across the river. He would have lacked but three years of fourscore come Whitsuntide. He was universally loved and respected in that district where he had lived so long and ably, by rich and poor alike, and those of many creeds saw him to his last resting-place. Mr. Carroll, of Carrollton, who was an ardent Catholic, stood bareheaded beside the grave.

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Doctor Hilliard was indeed a beacon in a time when his profession among us was all but darkness, and when many of the scandals of the community might be laid at the door of those whose duty it was to prevent them. The fault lay without doubt in his Lordship's charter, which gave to the parishioners no voice in the choosing of their pastors. This matter was left to Lord Baltimore's whim. Hence it was that he sent among us so many fox-hunting and gaming parsons who read the service ill and preached drowsy and illiterate sermons. Gaming and fox-hunting, did I say? These are but charitable words to cover the real characters of those impostors in holy orders, whose doings would often bring the blush of shame to your cheeks. Nay, I have seen a clergyman drunk in the pulpit, and even in those freer days their laxity and immorality were such that many flocked to hear the parsons of the Methodists and Lutherans, whose simple and eloquent words and simpler lives were worthy of their cloth. Small wonder was it, when every strolling adventurer and soldier out of employment took orders and found favour in his Lordship's eyes, and were given the fattest livings in place of worthier men, that the Established Church fell somewhat into disrepute. Far be it from me to say that there were not good men and true in that Church, but the wag who writ this verse, which became a common saying in Maryland, was not far wrong for the great body of them:—

> "Who is a monster of the first renown?
> A lettered sot, a drunkard in a gown."

My grandfather did not replace Dr. Hilliard at the Hall, afterwards saying the prayers himself. The doctor had been my tutor, and in spite of my waywardness and lack of love for the classics had taught me no little Latin and Greek, and early instilled into my mind those principles necessary for the soul's salvation. I have often thought with regret on the pranks I played him. More than once at lesson-time have I gone off with Hugo and young Harvey for a rabbit hunt, stealing two dogs from the pack, and thus committing a double offence. You may be sure I was well thrashed by Mr. Carvel, who thought the more of the latter misdoing, though obliged to emphasize the former. The doctor would never raise his hand against me. His study, where I recited my daily tasks, was that small sunny room on the water side of the east wing; and I well recall him as he sat behind his desk of a morning after prayers, his horn spectacles perched on his high nose and his quill over his ear, and his ink-powder and pewter stand beside him. His face would grow more serious as I scanned my Virgil in a faltering voice, and as he descanted on a passage my eye would wander out over the green trees and fields to the glistening water. What cared I for "Arma virumque" at such a time? I was watching Nebo a-fishing beyond the point, and as he waded ashore the burden on his shoulders had a much keener interest for me than that AEneas carried out of Troy.

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My Uncle Grafton came to Dr. Hilliard's funeral, choosing this opportunity to become reconciled to my grandfather, who he feared had not much longer to live. Albeit Mr. Carvel was as stout and hale as ever. None of the mourners at the doctor's grave showed more sorrow than did Grafton. A thousand remembrances of the good old man returned to him, and I heard him telling Mr. Carroll and some other gentlemen, with much emotion, how he had loved his reverend preceptor, from whom he had learned nothing but what was good. "How fortunate are you, Richard," he once said, "to have had such a spiritual and intellectual teacher in your youth. Would that Philip might have learned from such a one. And I trust you can say, my lad, that you have made the best of your advantages, though I fear you are of a wild nature, as your father was before you." And my uncle sighed and crossed his hands behind his back. "'Tis perhaps better that poor John is in his grave," he said. Grafton had a word and a smile for every one about the old place, but little else, being, as he said, but a younger son and a poor man. I was near to forgetting the shilling he gave Scipio. 'Twas not so unostentatiously done but that Mr. Carvel and I marked it. And afterwards I made Scipio give me the coin, replacing it with another, and flung it as far into the river as ever I could throw.

As was but proper to show his sorrow at the death of the old chaplain he had loved so much, Grafton came to the Hall drest entirely in black. He would have had his lady and Philip, a lad near my own age, clad likewise in sombre colours. But my Aunt Caroline would none of them, holding it to be the right of her sex to dress as became its charms. Her silks and laces went but ill with the low estate my uncle claimed for his purse, and Master Philip's wardrobe was twice the size of mine. And the family travelled in a coach as grand as Mr. Carvel's own, with panels wreathed in flowers and a footman and outrider in livery, from which my aunt descended like a duchess. She embraced my grandfather with much warmth, and kissed me effusively on both cheeks.

"And this is dear Richard?" she cried. "Philip, come at once and greet your cousin. He has not the look of the Carvels," she continued volubly, "but more resembles his mother, as I recall her."

"Indeed, madam," my grandfather answered somewhat testily, "he has the Carvel nose and mouth, though his chin is more pronounced. He has Elizabeth's eyes."

But my aunt was a woman who flew from one subject to another, and she had already ceased to think of me. She was in the hall. "The dear old home?" she cries, though she had been in it but once before, regarding lovingly each object as her eye rested upon it, nay, caressingly when she came to the great punch-bowl and the carved mahogany dresser, and the Peter Lely over the broad fireplace. "What memories they must bring to your mind, my dear," she remarks to her husband. "'Tis

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cruel, as I once said to dear papa, that we cannot always live under the old rafters we loved so well as children." And the good lady brushes away a tear with her embroidered pocket-napkin. Tears that will come in spite of us all. But she brightens instantly and smiles at the line of servants drawn up to welcome them. "This is Scipio, my son, who was with your grandfather when your father was born, and before." Master Philip nods graciously in response to Scipio's delighted bow. "And Harvey," my aunt rattles on. "Have you any new mares to surprise us with this year, Harvey?" Harvey not being as overcome with Mrs. Grafton's condescension as was proper, she turns again to Mr. Carvel.

"Ah, father, I see you are in sore need of a woman's hand about the old house. What a difference a touch makes, to be sure." And she takes off her gloves and attacks the morning room, setting an ornament here and another there, and drawing back for the effect. "Such a bachelor's hall as you are keeping!"

"We still have Willis, Caroline," remonstrates my grandfather, gravely. "I have no fault to find with her housekeeping."

"Of course not, father; men never notice," Aunt Caroline replies in an aggrieved tone. And when Willis herself comes in, auguring no good from this visit, my aunt gives her the tips of her fingers. And I imagine I see a spark fly between them.

As for Grafton, he was more than willing to let bygones be bygones between his father and himself. Aunt Caroline said with feeling that Dr. Hilliard's death was a blessing, after all, since it brought a long-separated father and son together once more. Grafton had been misjudged and ill-used, and he called Heaven to witness that the quarrel had never been of his seeking,—a statement which Mr. Carvel was at no pains to prove perjury. How attentive was Mr. Grafton to his father's every want. He read his Gazette to him of a Thursday, though the old gentleman's eyes are as good as ever. If Mr. Carvel walks out of an evening, Grafton's arm is ever ready, and my uncle and his worthy lady are eager to take a hand at cards before supper. "Philip, my dear," says my aunt, "thy grandfather's slippers," or, "Philip, my love, thy grandfather's hat and cane." But it is plain that Master Philip has not been brought up to wait on his elders. He is curled with a novel in his grandfather's easy chair by the window. "There is Dio, mamma, who has naught to do but serve grandpapa," says he, and gives a pull at the cord over his head which rings the bell about the servants' ears in the hall below. And Dio, the whites of his eyes showing, comes running into the room.

"It is nothing, Diomedes," says Mr. Carvel. "Master Philip will fetch what I need.". Master Philip's papa and mamma stare at each other in a surprise mingled with no little alarm, Master Philip being to all appearances intent upon his book.

“Philip,” says my grandfather, gently. I had more than once heard him speak thus, and well knew what was coming.

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“Sir,” replies my cousin, without looking up. “Follow me, sir,” said Mr. Carvel, in a voice so different that Philip drops his book. They went up the stairs together, and what occurred there I leave to the imagination. But when next Philip was bidden to do an errand for Mr. Carvel my grandfather said quietly: “I prefer that Richard should go, Caroline.” And though my aunt and uncle, much mortified, begged him to give Philip another chance, he would never permit it.

Nevertheless, a great effort was made to restore Philip to his grandfather’s good graces. At breakfast one morning, after my aunt had poured Mr. Carvel’s tea and made her customary compliment to the blue and gold breakfast china, my Uncle Grafton spoke up.

“Now that Dr. Hilliard is gone, father, what do you purpose concerning Richard’s schooling?”

“He shall go to King William’s school in the autumn,” Mr. Carvel replied.

“In the autumn!” cried my uncle. “I do not give Philip even the short holiday of this visit. He has his Greek and his Virgil every day.”

“And can repeat the best passages,” my aunt chimes in. “Philip, my dear, recite that one your father so delights in.”

However unwilling Master Philip had been to disturb himself for errands, he was nothing loth to show his knowledge, and recited glibly enough several lines of his Virgil verbatim; thereby pleasing his fond parents greatly and my grandfather not a little.

“I will add a crown to your savings, Philip,” says his father.

“And here is a pistole to spend as you will,” says Mr. Carvel, tossing him the piece.

“Nay, father, I do not encourage the lad to be a spendthrift,” says Grafton, taking the pistole himself. “I will place this token of your appreciation in his strong-box. You know we have a prodigal strain in the family, sir.” And my uncle looks at me significantly.

“Let it be as I say, Grafton,” persists Mr. Carvel, who liked not to be balked in any matter, and was not over-pleased at this reference to my father. And he gave Philip forthwith another pistole, telling his father to add the first to his saving if he would.

“And Richard must have his chance,” says my Aunt Caroline, sweetly, as she rises to leave the room.

“Ay, here is a crown for you, Richard,” says my uncle, smiling. “Let us hear your Latin, which should be purer than Philip’s.”

My grandfather glanced uneasily at me across the table; he saw clearly the trick Grafton had played me, I think. But for once I was equal to my uncle, and haply remembered a line Dr. Hilliard had expounded, which fitted the present case marvellously well. With little ceremony I tossed back the crown, and slowly repeated those words used to warn the Trojans against accepting the Grecian horse:

> "Timeo Danaos et dona ferentes."

"Egad," cried Mr. Carvel, slapping his knee, "the lad bath beaten you on your own ground, Grafton." And he laughed as my grandfather only could laugh, until the dishes rattled on the table. But my uncle thought it no matter for jesting.

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Philip was also well versed in politics for a lad of his age, and could discuss glibly the right of Parliament to tax the colonies. He denounced the seditious doings in Annapolis and Boston Town with an air of easy familiarity, for Philip had the memory of a parrot, and 'twas easy to perceive whence his knowledge sprang. But when my fine master spoke disparagingly of the tradesmen as at the bottom of the trouble, my grandfather's patience came to an end.

"And what think you lies beneath the wealth and power of England, Philip?" he asked.

"Her nobility, sir, and the riches she draws from her colonies," retorts Master Philip, readily enough.

"Not so," Mr. Carvel said gravely. "She owes her greatness to her merchants, or tradesmen, as you choose to call them. And commerce must be at the backbone of every great nation. Tradesmen!" exclaimed my grandfather. "Where would any of us be were it not for trade? We sell our tobacco and our wheat, and get money in return. And your father makes a deal here and a deal there, and so gets rich in spite of his pittance."

My Uncle Grafton raised his hand to protest, but Mr. Carvel continued: "I know you, Grafton, I know you. When a lad it was your habit to lay aside the money I gave you, and so pretend you had none."

"And 'twas well I learned then to be careful," said my uncle, losing for the instant his control, "for you loved the spend-thrift best, and I should be but a beggar now without my wisdom."

"I loved not John's carelessness with money, but other qualities in him which you lacked," answered Mr. Carvel.

Grafton shot a swift glance at me; and so much of malice and of hatred was conveyed in that look that with a sense of prophecy I shuddered to think that some day I should have to cope with such craft. For he detested me threefold, and combined the hate he bore my dead father and mother with the ill-will he bore me for standing in his way and Philip's with my grandfather's property. But so deftly could he hide his feelings that he was smiling again instantly. To see once, however, the white belly of the shark flash on the surface of the blue water is sufficient.

"I beg of you not to jest of me before the lads, father," said Grafton.

"God knows there was little jest in what I said," replied Mr. Carvell soberly, "and I care not who hears it. Your own son will one day know you well enough, if he does not now. Do not imagine, because I am old, that I am grown so foolish as to believe that a black sheep can become white save by dye. And dye will never deceive such as me. And Philip," the shrewd old gentleman went on, turning to my cousin, "do not let thy father or

any other make thee believe there cannot be two sides to every question. I recognize in your arguments that which smacks of his tongue, despite what he says of your reading the public prints and of forming your own opinions. And do not condemn the Whigs, many of whom are worthy men and true, because they quarrel with what they deem an unjust method of taxation."

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Grafton had given many of the old servants cause to remember him. Harvey in particular, who had come from England early in the century with my grandfather, spoke with bitterness of him. On the subject of my uncle, the old coachman's taciturnity gave way to torrents of reproach. "Beware of him as has no use for horses, Master Richard," he would say; for this trait in Grafton in Harvey's mind lay at the bottom of all others. At my uncle's approach he would retire into his shell like an oyster, nor could he be got to utter more than a monosyllable in his presence. Harvey's face would twitch, and his fingers clench of themselves as he touched his cap. And with my Aunt Caroline he was the same. He vouchsafed but a curt reply to all her questions, nor did her raptures over the stud soften him in the least. She would come tripping into the stable yard, daintily holding up her skirts, and crying, "Oh, Harvey, I have heard so much of Tanglefoot. I must see him before I go." Tanglefoot is led out begrudgingly enough, and Aunt Caroline goes over his points, missing the greater part of them, and remarking on the depth of chest, which is nothing notable in Tanglefoot. Harvey winks slyly at me the while, and never so much as offers a word of correction. "You must take Philip to ride, Richard, my dear," says my aunt. "His father was never as fond of it as I could have wished. I hold that every gentleman should ride to hounds."

"Humph!" grunts Harvey, when she is gone to the house,

"Master Philip to hunt, indeed! Foxes to hunt foxes!" And he gives vent to a dry laugh over his joke, in which I cannot but join. "Horsemen grows. Eh, Master Richard? There was Captain Jack, who jumped from the cradle into the saddle, and I never once seen a horse get the better o' him. And that's God's truth." And he smooths out Tanglefoot's mane, adding reflectively, "And you be just like him. But there was scarce a horse in the stables what wouldn't lay back his ears at Mr. Grafton, and small blame to 'em, say I. He never dared go near 'em. Oh, Master Philip comes by it honestly enough. She thinks old Harvey don't know a thoroughbred when he sees one, sir. But Mrs. Grafton's no thoroughbred; I tell 'ee that, though I'm saying nothing as to her points, mark ye. I've seen her sort in the old country, and I've seen 'em here, and it's the same the world over, in Injy and Chiny, too. Fine trappings don't make the horse, and they don't take thoroughbreds from a grocer's cart. A Philadelphy grocer," sniffs this old aristocrat. "I'd knowed her father was a grocer had I seen her in Pall Mall with a Royal Highness, by her gait, I may say. Thy mother was a thoroughbred, Master Richard, and I'll tell 'ee another," he goes on with a chuckle, "Mistress Dorothy Manners is such another; you don't mistake 'em with their high heads and patreeshan ways, though her father be one of them accidents as will occur in every stock. She's one to tame, sir, and I don't envy no young gentleman the task. But this I knows," says Harvey, not heeding my red cheeks, "that Master Philip, with all his satin small-clothes, will never do it."

Page 1979

Indeed, it was no secret that my Aunt Caroline had been a Miss Flaven, of Philadelphia, though she would have had the fashion of our province to believe that she belonged to the Governor's set there; and she spoke in terms of easy familiarity of the first families of her native city, deceiving no one save herself, poor lady. How fondly do we believe, with the ostrich, that our body is hidden when our head is tucked under our wing! Not a visitor in Philadelphia but knew Terence Flaven, Mrs. Grafton Carvel's father, who not many years since sold tea and spices and soap and glazed teapots over his own counter, and still advertised his cargoes in the public prints. He was a broad and charitable-minded man enough, and unassuming, but gave way at last to the pressure brought upon him by his wife and daughter, and bought a mansion in Front Street. Terence Flaven never could be got to stay there save to sleep, and preferred to spend his time in his shop, which was grown greatly, chatting with his customers, and bowing the ladies to their chariots. I need hardly say that this worthy man was on far better terms than his family with those personages whose society they strove so hard to attain.

At the time of Miss Flaven's marriage to my uncle 'twas a piece of gossip in every month that he had taken her for her dower, which was not inconsiderable; though to hear Mr. and Mrs. Grafton talk they knew not whence the next month's provender was to come. They went to live in Kent County, as I have said, spending some winters in Philadelphia, where Mr. Grafton was thought to have interests, though it never could be discovered what his investments were. On hearing of his marriage, which took place shortly before my father's, Mr. Carvel expressed neither displeasure nor surprise. But he would not hear of my mother's request to settle a portion upon his younger son.

"He has the Kent estate, Bess," said he, "which is by far too good for him. Never doubt but that the rogue can feather his own nest far better than can I, as indeed he hath already done. And by the Lord," cried Mr. Carvel, bringing his fist down upon the card-table where they sat, "he shall never get another farthing of my money while I live, nor afterwards, if I can help it! I would rather give it over to Mr. Carroll to found a nunnery."

And so that matter ended, for Mr. Carvel could not be moved from a purpose he had once made. Nor would he make any advances whatsoever to Grafton, or receive those hints which my uncle was forever dropping, until at length he begged to be allowed to come to Dr. Hilliard's funeral, a request my grandfather could not in decency refuse. 'Twas a pathetic letter in truth, and served its purpose well, though it was not as dust in the old gentleman's eyes. He called me into his bedroom and told me that my Uncle Grafton was coming at last. And seeing that I said nothing thereto, he gave me a queer look and bade me treat them as civilly as I knew how.

Page 1980

“I well know thy temper, Richard,” said he, “and I fear ’twill bring thee trouble enough in life. Try to control it, my lad; take an old man’s advice and try to control it.” He was in one of his gentler moods, and passed his arm about me, and together we stood looking silently through the square panes out into the rain, at the ducks paddling in the puddles until the darkness hid them.

And God knows, lad that I was, I tried to be civil to them. But my tongue rebelled at the very sight of my uncle (’twas bred into me, I suppose), and his fairest words seemed to me to contain a hidden sting. Once, when he spoke in his innuendo of my father, I ran from the room to restrain some act of violence; I know not what I should have done. And Willis found me in the deserted, study of the doctor, where my hot tears had stained the flowered paper on the wall. She did her best to calm me, good soul, though she had her own troubles with my Lady Caroline to think about at the time.

I had one experience with Master Philip before our visitors betook themselves back to Kent, which, unfortunate as it was, I cannot but relate here. My cousin would enter into none of those rough amusements in which I passed my time, for fear, I took it, of spoiling his fine broadcloths or of losing a gold buckle. He never could be got to wrestle, though I challenged him more than once. And he was a well-built lad, and might, with a little practice, have become skilled in that sport. He laughed at the homespun I wore about the farm, saying it was no costume for a gentleman’s son, and begged me sneeringly to don leather breeches. He would have none of the company of those lads with whom I found pleasure, young Harvey, and Willis’s son, who was being trained as Mr. Starkie’s assistant. Nor indeed did I disdain to join in a game with Hugo, who had been given to me, and other negro lads. Philip saw no sport in a wrestle or a fight between two of the boys from the quarters, and marvelled that I could lower myself to bet with Harvey the younger. He took not a spark of interest in the gaming cocks we raised together to compete at the local contests and at the fair, and knew not a gaff from a cockspur. Being one day at my wits’ end to amuse my cousin, I proposed to him a game of quoits on the green beside the spring-house, and thither we repaired, followed by Hugo, and young Harvey come to look on. Master Philip, not casting as well as he might, cries out suddenly to Hugo: “Begone, you black dog! What business have you here watching a game between gentlemen?”

“He is my servant, cousin,” I said quietly, “and no dog, if you please. And he is under my orders, not yours.”

But Philip, having scarcely scored a point, was in a rage. “And I’ll not have him here,” he shouted, giving poor Hugo a cuff which sent him stumbling over the stake. And turning to me; continued insolently: “Ever since we came here I have marked your manner toward us, as though my father had no right in my grandfather’s house.”

Page 1981

Then could I no longer contain myself. I heard young Harvey laugh, and remark: "'Tis all up with Master Philip now." But Philip, whatever else he may have been, was no coward, and had squared off to face me by the time I had run the distance between the stakes. He was heavier than I, though not so tall; and he parried my first blow and my second, and many more; having lively work of it, however, for I hit him as often as I was able. To speak truth, I had not looked for such resistance, and seeing that I could not knock him down, out of hand, I grew more cool and began to study what I was doing.

"Take off your macaroni coat," said I. "I have no wish to ruin your clothes."

But he only jeered in return: "Take off thy wool-sack." And Hugo, getting to his feet, cried out to me not to hurt Marse Philip, that he had meant no harm. But this only enraged Philip the more, and he swore a round oath at Hugo and another at me, and dealt a vicious blow at my stomach, whereat Harvey called out to him to fight fair. He was more skilful at the science of boxing than I, though I was the better fighter, having, I am sorry to say, fought but too often before. And presently, when I had closed one of his eyes, his skill went all to pieces, and he made a mad rush at me. As he went by I struck him so hard that he fell heavily and lay motionless.

Young Harvey ran into the spring-house and filled his hat as I bent over my cousin. I unbuttoned his waistcoat and felt his heart, and rejoiced to find it beating; we poured cold water over his face and wrists. By then, Hugo, who was badly frightened, had told the news in the house, and I saw my Aunt Caroline come running over the green as fast as her tight stays would permit, crying out that I had killed her boy, her dear Philip. And after her came my Uncle Grafton and my grandfather, with all the servants who had been in hearing. I was near to crying myself at the thought that I should grieve my grandfather. And my aunt, as she knelt over Philip, pushed me away, and bade me not touch him. But my cousin opened one of his eyes, and raised his hand to his head.

"Thank Heaven he is not killed!" exclaims Aunt Caroline, fervently.

"Thank God, indeed!" echoes my uncle, and gives me a look as much as to say that I am not to be thanked for it. "I have often warned you, sir," he says to Mr. Carvel, "that we do not inherit from stocks and stones. And so much has come of our charity."

I knew, lad that I was; that he spoke of my mother; and my blood boiled within me.

"Have a care, sir, with your veiled insults," I cried, "or I will serve you as I have served your son."

Grafton threw up his hands.

"What have we harboured, father?" says he. But Mr. Carvel seized him by the shoulder. "Peace, Grafton, before the servants," he said, "and cease thy crying,

Caroline. The lad is not hurt." And being a tall man, six feet in his stockings, and strong despite his age, he raised Philip from the grass, and sternly bade him walk to the house, which he did, leaning on his mother's arm. "As for you, Richard," my grandfather went on, "you will go into my study."

Page 1982

Into his study I went, where presently he came also, and I told him the affair in as few words as I might. And he, knowing my hatred of falsehood, questioned me not at all, but paced to and fro, I following him with my eyes, and truly sorry that I had given him pain. And finally he dismissed me, bidding me make it up with my cousin, which I was nothing loth to do. What he said to Philip and his father I know not. That evening we shook hands, though Philip's face was much swollen, and my uncle smiled, and was even pleasanter than before, saying that boys would be boys. But I think my Aunt Caroline could never wholly hide the malice she bore me for what I had done that day.

When at last the visitors were gone, every face on the plantation wore a brighter look. Harvey said: "God bless their backs, which is the only part I ever care to see of their honours." And Willis gave us a supper fit for a king. Mr. Lloyd and his lady were with us, and Mr. Carvel told his old stories of the time of the First George, many of which I can even now repeat: how he and two other collegians fought half a dozen Mohocks in Norfolk Street, and fairly beat them; and how he discovered by chance a Jacobite refugee in Greenwich, and what came of it; nor did he forget that oft-told episode with Dean Swift. And these he rehearsed in such merry spirit and new guise that we scarce recognized them, and Colonel Lloyd so choked with laughter that more than once he had to be hit between the shoulders.

CHAPTER V

"*If ladies be but young and fair*"

No boyhood could have been happier than mine, and throughout it, ever present with me, were a shadow and a light. The shadow was my Uncle Grafton. I know not what strange intuition of the child made me think of him so constantly after that visit he paid us, but often I would wake from my sleep with his name upon my lips, and a dread at my heart. The light—need I say?—was Miss Dorothy Manners. Little Miss Dolly was often at the Hall after that happy week we spent together; and her home, Wilmot House, was scarce three miles across wood and field by our plantation roads. I was a stout little fellow enough, and before I was twelve I had learned to follow to hounds my grandfather's guests on my pony; and Mr. Lloyd and Mr. Carvel when they shot on the duck points. Ay, and what may surprise you, my dears, I was given a weak little toddy off the noggin at night, while the gentlemen stretched their limbs before the fire, or played at whist or loo Mr. Carvel would have no milksop, so he said. But he early impressed upon me that moderation was the mark of a true man, even as excess was that of a weak one.

Page 1983

And so it was no wonder that I frequently found my way to Wilmot House alone. There I often stayed the whole day long, romping with Dolly at games of our own invention, and many the time I was sent home after dark by Mrs. Manners with Jim, the groom. About once in the week Mr. and Mrs. Manners would bring Dorothy over for dinner or tea at the Hall. She grew quickly—so quickly that I scarce realized—into a tall slip of a girl, who could be wilful and cruel, laughing or forgiving, shy or impudent, in a breath. She had as many moods as the sea. I have heard her entertain Mr. Lloyd and Mr. Bordley and the ladies, and my grandfather, by the hour, while I sat by silent and miserable, but proud of her all the same. Boylike, I had grown to think of her as my possession, tho' she gave me no reason whatever. I believe I had held my hand over fire for her, at a word. And, indeed, I did many of her biddings to make me wonder, now, that I was not killed. It used to please her, Ivie too, to see me go the round of the windmill, tho' she would cry out after I left the ground. And once, when it was turning faster than common and Ivie not there to prevent, I near lost my hold at the top, and was thrown at the bottom with such force that I lay stunned for a full minute. I opened my eyes to find her bending over me with such a look of fright and remorse upon her face as I shall never forget. Again, walking out on the bowsprit of the 'Oriole' while she stood watching me from the dock, I lost my balance and fell into the water. On another occasion I fought Will Fotheringay, whose parents had come for a visit, because he dared say he would marry her.

"She is to marry an earl," I cried, tho' I had thrashed another lad for saying so. "Mr. Manners is to take her home when she is grown, to marry her to an earl."

"At least she will not marry you, Master Richard," sneered Will. And then I hit him.

Indeed, even at that early day the girl's beauty was enough to make her talked about. And that foolish little fop, her father, had more than once declared before a company in our dining room that it was high time another title came into his family, and that he meant to take Dolly abroad when she was sixteen. Lad that I was, I would mark with pain the blush on Mrs. Manners's cheek, and clinch my fists as she tried to pass this off as a joke of her husband's. But Dolly, who sat next me at a side table, would make a wry little face at my angry one.

"You shall call me 'my lady,' Richard. And sometimes, if you are good, you shall ride inside my coroneted coach when you come home."

Page 1984

Ah, that was the worst of it! The vixen was conscious of her beauty. But her airs were so natural that young and old bowed before her. Nothing but worship had she had from the cradle. I would that Mr. Peale had painted her in her girlhood as a type of our Maryland lady of quality. Harvey was right when he called her a thoroughbred. Her nose was of patrician straightness, and the curves of her mouth came from generations of proud ancestors. And she had blue eyes to conquer and subdue; with long lashes to hide them under when she chose, and black hair with blue gloss upon it in the slanting lights. I believe I loved her best in the riding-habit that was the colour of the red holly in our Maryland woods. At Christmas-tide, when we came to the eastern shore, we would gallop together through miles of country, the farmers and servants tipping and staring after her as she laid her silver-handled whip upon her pony. She knew not the meaning of fear, and would take a fence or a ditch that a man might pause at. And so I fell into the habit of leading her the easy way round, for dread that she would be hurt.

How those Christmas times of childhood come sweeping back on my memory! Often, and without warning, my grandfather would say to me: "Richard, we shall celebrate at the Hall this year." And it rarely turned out that arrangements had not been made with the Lloyds and the Bordleys and the Manners, and other neighbours, to go to the country for the holidays. I have no occasion in these pages to mention my intimacy with the sons and daughters of those good friends of the Carvels', Colonel Lloyd and Mr. Bordley. Some of them are dead now, and the rest can thank God and look back upon worthy and useful lives. And if any of these, my old playmates, could read this manuscript, perchance they might feel a tingle of recollection of Children's Day, when Maryland was a province. We rarely had snow; sometimes a crust upon the ground that was melted into paste by the noonday sun, but more frequently, so it seems to me, a foggy, drizzly Christmas, with the fires crackling in saloon and lady's chamber. And when my grandfather and the ladies and gentlemen, his guests, came down the curving stairs, there were the broadly smiling servants drawn up in the wide hall,—all who could gather there,—and the rest on the lawn outside, to wish "Merry Chris'mas" to "de quality." The redemptioners in front, headed by Ivie and Jonas Tree, tho' they had long served their terms, and with them old Harvey and his son; next the house blacks and the outside liveries, and then the oldest slaves from the quarters. This line reached the door, which Scipio would throw open at "de quality's" appearance, disclosing the rest of the field servants, in bright-coloured gowns, and the little negroes on the green. Then Mr. Carvel would make them a little speech of thanks and of good-will, and white-haired Johnson of the senior quarters, who had been with my great-grandfather, would start the carol in a quaver.

Page 1985

How clear and sweet the melody of those negro voices comes back to me through the generations! And the picture of the hall, loaded with holly and mistletoe even to the great arch that spanned it, with the generous bowls of egg-nog and punch on the mahogany by the wall! And the ladies our guests, in cap and apron, joining in the swelling hymn; ay, and the men, too. And then, after the breakfast of sweet ham and venison, and hot bread and sausage, made under Mrs. Willis, and tea and coffee and chocolate steaming in the silver, and ale for the gentlemen if they preferred, came the prayers and more carols in the big drawing-room. And then music in the big house, or perhaps a ride afield to greet the neighbours, and fiddling and dancing in the two big quarters, Hank's and Johnson's, when the tables were cleared after the bountiful feast Mr. Carvel was wont to give them. There was no stint, my dears,—naught but good cheer and praising God in sheer happiness at Carvel Hall.

At night there was always a ball, sometimes at Wilmot House, sometimes at Colonel Lloyd's or Mr. Bordley's, and sometimes at Carvel Hall, for my grandfather dearly loved the company of the young. He himself would lead off the minuet,—save when once or twice his Excellency Governor Sharpe chanced to be present,—and would draw his sword with the young gallants that the ladies might pass under. And I have seen him join merrily in the country dances too, to the clapping of hands of the company. That was before Dolly and I were let upon the floor. We sat with the other children, our mammies at our sides, in the narrow gallery with the tiny rail that ran around the ball-room, where the sweet odour of the green myrtleberry candles mixed with that of the powder and perfume of the dancers. And when the beauty of the evening was led out, Dolly would lean over the rail, and pout and smile by turns. The mischievous little baggage could hardly wait for the conquering years to come.

They came soon enough, alack! The season Dorothy was fourteen, we had a ball at the Hall the last day of the year. When she was that age she had near arrived at her growth, and was full as tall as many young ladies of twenty. I had cantered with her that morning from Wilmot House to Mr. Lloyd's, and thence to Carvel Hall, where she was to stay to dinner. The sun was shining warmly, and after young Harvey had taken our horses we strayed through the house, where the servants were busy decorating, and out into my grandfather's old English flower garden, and took the seat by the sundial. I remember that it gave no shadow. We sat silent for a while, Dorothy toying with old Knipe, lying at our feet, and humming gayly the burden of a minuet. She had been flighty on the ride, with scarce a word to say to me, for the prospect of the dance had gone to her head.

"Have you a new suit to wear to-night, to see the New Year in, Master Sober?" she asked presently, looking up. "I am to wear a brocade that came out this autumn from London, and papa says I look like a duchess when I have my grandmother's pearls."

Page 1986

“Always the ball!” cried I, slapping my boots in a temper. “Is it, then, such a matter of importance? I am sure you have danced before—at my birthdays in Marlboro’ Street and at your own, and Will Fotheringay’s, and I know not how many others.”

“Of course,” replies Dolly, sweetly; “but never with a real man. Boys like you and Will and the Lloyds do not count. Dr. Courtenay is at Wilmot House, and is coming to-night; and he has asked me out. Think of it, Richard! Dr. Courtenay!”

“A plague upon him! He is a fop!”

“A fop!” exclaimed Dolly, her humour bettering as mine went down. “Oh, no; you are jealous. He is more sought after than any gentleman at the assemblies, and Miss Dulany vows his steps are ravishing. There’s for you, my lad! He may not be able to keep pace with you in the chase, but he has writ the most delicate verses ever printed in Maryland, and no other man in the colony can turn a compliment with his grace. Shall I tell you more? He sat with me for over an hour last night, until mamma sent me off to bed, and was very angry at you because I had engaged to ride with you to-day.”

“And I suppose you wish you had stayed with him,” I flung back, hotly. “He had spun you a score of fine speeches and a hundred empty compliments by now.”

“He had been better company than you, sir,” she laughed provokingly. “I never heard you turn a compliment in your life, and you are now seventeen. What headway do you expect to make at the assemblies?”

“None,” I answered, rather sadly than otherwise. For she had touched me upon a sore spot. “But if I cannot win a woman save by compliments,” I added, flaring up, “then may I pay a bachelor’s tax!”

My lady drew her whip across my knee.

“You must tell us we are beautiful, Richard,” said she, in another tone.

“You have but to look in a pier-glass,” I retorted. “And, besides, that is not sufficient. You will want some rhyming couplet out of a mythology before you are content.”

She laughed again.

“Sir,” answered she, “but you have wit, if you can but be got angry.”

She leaned over the dial’s face, and began to draw the Latin numerals with her finger. So arch, withal, that I forgot my ill-humour.

“If you would but agree to stay angry for a day,” she went on, in a low tone, “perhaps—”

“Perhaps?”

“Perhaps you would be better company,” said Dorothy. “You would surely be more entertaining.”

“Dorothy, I love you,” I said.

“To be sure. I know that,” she replied. “I think you have said that before.”

I admitted it sadly. “But I should be a better husband than Dr. Courtenay.”

“La!” cried she; “I am not thinking of husbands. I shall have a good time, sir, I promise you, before I marry. And then I should never marry you. You are much too rough, and too masterful. And you would require obedience. I shall never obey any man. You would be too strict a master, sir. I can see it with your dogs and your servants. And your friends, too. For you thrash any boy who does not agree with you. I want no rough squire for a husband. And then, you are a Whig. I could never marry a Whig. You behaved disgracefully at King William’s School last year. Don’t deny it!”

Page 1987

“Deny it!” I cried warmly; “I would as soon deny that you are an arrant flirt, Dorothy Manners, and will be a worse one.”

“Yes, I shall have my fling,” said the minx. “I shall begin to-night, with you for an audience. I shall make the doctor look to himself. But there is the dressing-bell.” And as we went into the house, “I believe my mother is a Whig, Richard. All the Brices are.”

“And yet you are a Tory?”

“I am a loyalist,” says my lady, tossing her head proudly; “and we are one day to kiss her Majesty’s hand, and tell her so. And if I were the Queen,” she finished in a flash, “I would teach you surly gentlemen not to meddle.”

And she swept up the stairs so stately, that Scipio was moved to say slyly: “Dem’s de kind of ladies, Marse Richard, I jes dotes t’ wait on!”

Of the affair at King William’s School I shall tell later.

We had some dozen guests staying at the Hall for the ball. At dinner my grandfather and the gentlemen twitted her, and laughed heartily at her apt retorts, and even toasted her when she was gone. The ladies shook their heads and nudged one another, and no doubt each of the mothers had her notion of what she would do in Mrs. Manners’s place. But when my lady came down dressed for the ball in her pink brocade with the pearls around her neck, fresh from the hands of Nester and those of her own tremulous mammy, Mr. Carvel must needs go up to her and hold her at arm’s length in admiration, and then kiss her on both her cheeks. Whereat she blushed right prettily.

“Bless me!” says he; “and can this be Richard’s little playmate grown? Upon my word, Miss Dolly, you’ll be the belle of the ball. Eh, Lloyd? Bless me, bless me, you must not mind a kiss from an old man. The young ones may have their turn after a while.” He laughed as my grandfather only could laugh, and turned to me, who had reddened to my forehead. “And so, Richard, she has outstripped you, fair and square. You are only an awkward lad, and she—why, i’ faith, in two years she’ll be beyond my protection. Come, Miss Dolly,” says he; “I’ll show you the mistletoe, that you may beware of it.”

And he led her off on his arm. “The old year and the new, gentlemen!” he cried merrily, as he passed the door, with Dolly’s mammy and Nester simpering with pride on the landing.

The company arrived in coach and saddle, many having come so far that they were to stay the night. Young Mr. Beall carried his bride on a pillion behind him, her red riding-cloak flung over her ball dress. Mr. Bordley and family came in his barge, Mr. Marmaduke and his wife in coach and four. With them was Dr. Courtenay, arrayed in peach-coloured coat and waistcoat, with black satin breeches and white silk stockings,

and pinchbeck buckles a-sparkle on his shoes. How I envied him as he descended the stairs, stroking his ruffles and greeting the company with the indifferent ease that was then the fashion. I fancied I saw his eyes wander among the ladies, and not marking her he crossed over to where I stood disconsolate before the fireplace.

Page 1988

“Why, Richard, my lad,” says he, “you are quite grown since I saw you. And the little girl that was your playmate,—Miss Dolly, I mean,—has outstripped me, egad. She has become suddenly une belle demoiselle, like a rose that blooms in a night.”

I answered nothing at all. But I had given much to know whether my stolid manner disconcerted him. Unconsciously I sought the bluff face above the chimney, depicted in all its ruggedness by the painter of King Charles’s day, and contrasted with the bundle of finery at my side. Dr. Courtenay certainly caught the look. He opened his snuff-box, took a pinch, turned on his heel, and sauntered off.

“What did you say, Richard?” asked Mr. Lloyd, coming up to me, laughing, for he had seen the incident.

“I looked merely at the man of Marston Moor, sir, and said nothing.”

“Faith, ’twas a better answer than if you had used your tongue, I think,” answered my friend. But he teased me a deal that night when Dolly danced with the doctor, and my grandfather bade me look to my honours. My young lady flung her head higher than ever, and made a minuet as well as any dame upon the floor, while I stood very glum at the thought of the prize slipping from my grasp. Now and then, in the midst of a figure, she would shoot me an arch glance, as much as to say that her pinions were strong now. But when it came to the country dances my lady comes up to me ever so prettily and asks the favour.

“Tis a monstrous state, indeed, when I have to beg you for a reel!” says she.

And so was I made happy.

CHAPTER VI

I FIRST SUFFER FOR THE CAUSE

In the eighteenth century the march of public events was much more eagerly followed than now by men and women of all stations, and even children. Each citizen was ready, nay, forward, in taking an active part in all political movements, and the children mimicked their elders. Old William Farris read his news of a morning before he began the mending of his watches, and by evening had so well digested them that he was primed for discussion with Pryse, of the opposite persuasion, at the Rose and Crown. Sol Mogg, the sexton of St. Anne’s, had his beloved Gazette in his pocket as he tolled the church bell of a Thursday, and would hold forth on the rights and liberties of man with the carpenter who mended the steeple. Mrs. Willard could talk of Grenville and Townshend as knowingly as her husband, the rich factor, and Francie Willard made many a speech to us younger Sons of Liberty on the steps of King William’s School. We younger sons, indeed, declared bitter war against the mother-country long before

our conservative old province ever dreamed of secession. For Maryland was well pleased with his Lordship's government.

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I fear that I got at King William's School learning of a far different sort than pleased my grandfather. In those days the school stood upon the Stadt House hill near School Street, not having moved to its present larger quarters. Mr. Isaac Daaken was then Master, and had under him some eighty scholars. After all these years, Mr. Daaken stands before me a prominent figure of the past in an ill-fitting suit of snuff colour. How well I recall that schoolroom of a bright morning, the sun's rays shot hither and thither, and split violet, green, and red by the bulging glass panes of the windows. And by a strange irony it so chanced that where the dominie sat—and he moved not the whole morning long save to reach for his birches—the crimson ray would often rest on the end of his long nose, and the word "rum" be passed tittering along the benches. For some men are born to the mill, and others to the mitre, and still others to the sceptre; but Mr. Daaken was born to the birch. His long, lanky legs were made for striding after culprits, and his arms for caning them. He taught, among other things, the classics, of course, the English language grammatically, arithmetic in all its branches, book-keeping in the Italian manner, and the elements of algebra, geometry, and trigonometry with their applications to surveying and navigation. He also wrote various sorts of hands, fearful and marvellous to the uninitiated, with which he was wont to decorate my monthly reports to my grandfather. I can shut my eyes and see now that wonderful hyperbola in the C in Carvel, which, after travelling around the paper, ended in intricate curves and a flourish which surely must have broken the quill.

The last day of every month would I fetch that scrolled note to Mr. Carvel, and he laid it beside his plate until dinner was over. And then, as sure as the sun rose that morning, my flogging would come before it set. This done with, and another promised next month provided Mr. Daaken wrote no better of me, my grandfather and I renewed our customary footing of love and companionship.

But Mr. Daaken, unwittingly or designedly, taught other things than those I have mentioned above. And though I never once heard a word of politics fall from his lips, his school shortly became known to all good Tories as a nursery of conspiracy and sedition. There are other ways of teaching besides preaching, and of that which the dominie taught best he spoke not a word. He was credited, you may well believe, with calumnies against King George, and once my Uncle Grafton and Mr. Dulany were for clapping him in jail, avowing that he taught treason to the young. I can account for the tone of King William's School in no other way than to say that patriotism was in the very atmosphere, and seemed to exude in some mysterious way from Mr. Daaken's person. And most of us became infected with it.

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The dominie lived outside the town, in a lonely little hamlet on the borders of the Spa. At two of the clock every afternoon he would dive through School Street to the Coffee House, where the hostler would have his bony mare saddled and waiting. Mr. Daaken by no chance ever entered the tavern. I recall one bright day in April when I played truant and had the temerity to go afishing on Spa Creek with Will Fotheringay, the bass being plentiful there. We had royal sport of it that morning, and two o'clock came and went with never a thought, you may be sure. And presently I get a pull which bends my English rod near to double, and in my excitement plunge waist deep into the water, Will crying out directions from the shore, when suddenly the head of Mr. Daaken's mare is thrust through the bushes, followed by Mr. Daaken himself. Will stood stock still from fright, and I was for dropping my rod and cutting, when I was arrested by the dominie calling out:

"Have a care, Master Carvel; have a care, sir. You will lose him. Play him, sir; let him run a bit."

And down he leaps from his horse and into the water after me, and together we landed a three-pound bass, thereby drenching his snuff-coloured suit. When the big fish lay shining in the basket, the dominie smiled grimly at William and me as we stood sheepishly by, and without a word he drew his clasp knife and cut a stout switch from the willow near, and then and there he gave us such a thrashing as we remembered for many a day after. And we both had another when we reached home.

"Mr. Carvel," said Mr. Dulany to my grandfather, "I would strongly counsel you to take Richard from that school. Pernicious doctrines, sir, are in the air, and like diseases are early caught by the young. 'Twas but yesterday I saw Richard at the head of a rabble of the sons of riff-raff, in Green Street, and their treatment of Mr. Fairbrother hath set the whole town by the ears."

What Mr. Dulany had said was true. The lads of Mr. Fairbrother's school being mostly of the unpopular party, we of King William's had organized our cohorts and led them on to a signal victory. We fell upon the enemy even as they were emerging from their stronghold, the schoolhouse, and smote them hip and thigh, with the sheriff of Anne Arundel County a laughing spectator. Some of the Tories (for such we were pleased to call them) took refuge behind Mr. Fairbrother's skirts, who shook his cane angrily enough, but without avail. Others of the Tory brood fought stoutly, calling out: "God save the King!" and "Down with the traitors!" On our side Francie Willard fell, and Archie Dennison raised a lump on my head the size of a goose egg. But we fairly beat them, and afterwards must needs attack the Tory dominie himself. He cried out lustily to the sheriff and spectators, of whom there were many by this time, for help, but got little but laughter for his effort. Young Lloyd and I, being large lads for our age, fairly pinioned the screeching master, who cried out that he was being murdered, and keeping his cane for a trophy, thrust him bodily into his house of learning, turned the great key upon him,

and so left him. He made his escape by a window and sought my grandfather in the Duke of Marlboro' Street as fast as ever his indignant legs would carry him.

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Of his interview with Mr. Carvel I know nothing save that Scipio was requested presently to show him the door, and conclude therefrom that his language was but ill-chosen. Scipio's patrician blood was wont to rise in the presence of those whom he deemed outside the pale of good society, and I fear he ushered Mr. Fairbrother to the street with little of that superior manner he used to the first families. As for Mr. Daaken, I feel sure he was not ill-pleased at the discomfiture of his rival, though it cost him five of his scholars.

Our schoolboy battle, though lightly undertaken, was fraught with no inconsiderable consequences for me. I was duly chided and soundly whipped by my grandfather for the part I had played; but he was inclined to pass the matter after that, and set it down to the desire for fighting common to most boyish natures. And he would have gone no farther than this had it not been that Mr. Green, of the Maryland Gazette, could not refrain from printing the story in his paper. That gentleman, being a stout Whig, took great delight in pointing out that a grandson of Mr. Carvel was a ringleader in the affair. The story was indeed laughable enough, and many a barrister's wig nodded over it at the Coffee House that day. When I came home from school I found Scipio beside my grandfather's empty seat in the dining-room, and I learned that Mr. Carvel was in the garden with my Uncle Grafton and the Reverend Bennett Allen, rector of St. Anne's. I well knew that something out of the common was in the wind to disturb my grandfather's dinner. Into the garden I went, and under the black walnut tree I beheld Mr. Carvel pacing up and down in great unrest, his Gazette in his hand, while on the bench sat my uncle and the rector of St. Anne's. So occupied was each in his own thought that my coming was unperceived; and I paused in my steps, seized suddenly by an instinctive dread, I know not of what. The fear of Mr. Carvel's displeasure passed from my mind so that I cared not how soundly he thrashed me, and my heart filled with a yearning, born of the instant, for that simple and brave old gentleman. For the lad is nearer to nature than the man, and the animal oft scents a danger the master cannot see. I read plainly in Mr. Allen's handsome face, flushed red with wine as it ever was, and in my Uncle Grafton's looks a snare to which I knew my grandfather was blind. I never rightly understood how it was that Mr. Carvel was deceived in Mr. Allen; perchance the secret lay in his bold manner and in the appearance of dignity and piety he wore as a cloak when on his guard. I caught my breath sharply and took my way toward them, resolved to make as brave a front as I might. It was my uncle, whose ear was ever open, that first heard my footstep and turned upon me.

"Here is Richard, now, father," he said.

I gave him so square a look that he bent his head to the ground. My grandfather stopped in his pacing and his eye rested upon me, in sorrow rather than in anger, I thought.

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“Richard,” he began, and paused. For the first time in my life I saw him irresolute. He looked appealingly at the rector, who rose. Mr. Allen was a man of good height and broad shoulders, with piercing black eyes, reminding one more of the smallsword than aught else I can think of. And he spoke solemnly, in a deep voice, as though from the pulpit.

“I fear it is my duty, Richard, to say what Mr. Carvel cannot. It grieves me to tell you, sir, that young as you are you have been guilty of treason against the King, and of grave offence against his Lordship’s government. I cannot mitigate my words, sir. By your rashness, Richard, and I pray it is such, you have brought grief to your grandfather in his age, and ridicule and reproach upon a family whose loyalty has hitherto been unstained.”

I scarce waited for him to finish. His pompous words stung me like the lash of a whip, and I gave no heed to his cloth as I answered:

“If I have grieved my grandfather, sir, I am heartily sorry, and will answer to him for what I have done. And I would have you know, Mr. Allen, that I am as able as any to care for the Carvel honour.”

I spoke with a vehemence, for the thought carried me beyond myself, that this upstart parson his Lordship had but a year since sent among us should question our family reputation.

“Remember that Mr. Allen is of the Church, Richard,” said my grandfather, severely.

“I fear he has little respect for Church or State, sir,” Grafton put in. “You are now reaping the fruits of your indulgence.”

I turned to my grandfather.

“You are my protector, sir,” I cried. “And if it please you to tell me what I now stand accused of, I submit most dutifully to your chastisement.”

“Very fair words, indeed, nephew Richard,” said my uncle, “and I draw from them that you have yet to hear of your beating an honest schoolmaster without other provocation than that he was a loyal servant to the King, and wantonly injuring the children of his school.” He drew from his pocket a copy of that Gazette Mr. Carvel held in his hand, and added ironically: “Here, then, are news which will doubtless surprise you, sir. And knowing you for a peaceful lad, never having entertained such heresies as those with which it pleases Mr. Green to credit you, I dare swear he has drawn on his imagination.”

I took the paper in amaze, not knowing why my grandfather, who had ever been so jealous of others taking me to task, should permit the rector and my uncle to chide me in

his presence. The account was in the main true enough, and made sad sport of Mr. Fairbrother.

“Have I not been caned for this, sir?” said I to my grandfather.

These words seemed to touch Mr. Carvel, and I saw a tear glisten in his eye as he answered:

“You have, Richard, and stoutly. But your uncle and Mr. Allen seem to think that your offence warrants more than a caning, and to deem that you have been actuated by bad principles rather than by boyish spirits.” He paused to steady his voice, and I realized then for the first time how sacred he held allegiance to the King. “Tell me, my lad,” said he, “tell me, as you love God and the truth, whether they are right.”

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For the moment I shrank from speaking, perceiving what a sad blow to Mr. Carvel my words must be. And then I spoke up boldly, catching the exulting sneer on my Uncle Grafton's face and the note of triumph reflected in Mr. Allen's.

"I have never deceived you, sir," I said, "and will not now hide from you that I believe the colonies to have a just cause against his Majesty and Parliament." The words came ready to my lips: "We are none the less Englishmen because we claim the rights of Englishmen, and, saving your presence, sir, are as loyal as those who do not. And if these principles be bad," I added to my uncle, "then should we think with shame upon the Magna Charta."

My grandfather stood astonished at such a speech from me, whom he had thought a lad yet without a formed knowledge of public affairs. But I was, in fact, supersaturated with that of which I spoke, and could have given my hearers many able Whig arguments to surprise them had the season befitted. There was silence for a space after I had finished, and then Mr. Carvel sank right heavily upon the bench.

"A Carvel against the King!" was all he said.

Had I been alone with him I should have cast myself at his feet, for it hurt me sorely to see him so. As it was, I held my head high.

"The Carvels ever did what they believed right, sir," I answered. "You would not have me to go against my conscience?"

To this he replied nothing.

"The evil has been done, as I feared, father," said Grafton, presently; "we must now seek for the remedy."

"Let me question the lad," Mr. Allen softly interposed. "Tell me, Richard, who has influenced you to this way of thinking?"

I saw his ruse, and was not to be duped by it.

"Men who have not feared to act bravely against oppression, sir," I said.

"Thank God," exclaimed my uncle, with fervour, "that I have been more careful of Philip's associations, and that he has not caught in the streets and taverns this noxious creed!"

"There is no danger from Philip; he remembers his family name," said the rector.

"No," quoth Mr. Carvel, bitterly, "there is no danger from Philip. Like his father, he will ever believe that which best serves him."

Grafton, needless to say, did not pursue such an argument, but rising, remarked that this deplorable affair had kept him long past his dinner hour, and that his services were as ever at his father's disposal. He refused to stay, though my grandfather pressed him of course, and with a low bow of filial respect and duty and a single glance at the rector, my uncle was gone. And then we walked slowly to the house and into the dining room, Mr. Carvel leading the procession, and I an unwilling rear, knowing that my fate would be decided between them. I thought Mr. Allen's grace would never end, and the meal likewise; I ate but little, while the two gentlemen discussed parish matters. And when at last Scipio had retired, and the rector of St. Anne's sat sipping the old Madeira, his countenance all gravity, but with a relish he could not hide, my grandfather spoke up. And though he addressed himself to the guest, I knew full well what he said was meant for me.

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“As you see, sir,” said he, “I am sore perplexed and troubled. We Carvels, Mr. Allen, have ever been stanch to Church and King. My great-grandsire fought at Naseby and Marston Moor for Charles, and suffered exile in his name. ’Twas love for King James that sent my father hither, though he swore allegiance to Anne and the First George. I can say with pride that he was no indifferent servant to either, refusing honours from the Pretender in ’15, when he chanced to be at home. An oath is an oath, sir, and we have yet to be false to ours. And the King, say I, should, next to God, be loved and loyally served by his subjects. And so I have served this George, and his grandfather before him, according to the talents which were given me.”

“And ably, sir, permit me to say,” echoed the rector, heartily. Too heartily, methought. And he carefully filled his pipe with choice leaf out of Mr. Carvel’s inlaid box.

“Be that as it may, I have done my best, as we must all do. Pardon me, sir, for speaking of myself. But I have brought up this lad from a child, Mr. Allen,” said Mr. Carvel, his words coming slowly, as if each gave him pain, “and have striven to be an example to him in all things. He has few of those faults which I most fear; God be thanked that he loves the truth, for there is yet a chance of his correction. A chance, said I?” he cried, his speech coming more rapid, “nay, he shall be cured! I little thought, fool that I was, that he would get this pox. His father fought and died for the King; and should trouble come, which God forbid, to know that Richard stood against his Majesty would kill me.”

“And well it might, Mr. Carvel,” said the divine. He was for the moment sobered, as weak men must be in the presence of those of strong convictions. My grandfather had half risen in his chair, and the lines of his smooth-shaven face deepened visibly with the pain of the feelings to which he gave utterance. As for me, I was well-nigh swept away by a bigness within me, and torn between love and duty, between pity and the reason left me, and sadly tried to know whether my dear parent’s life and happiness should be weighed against what I felt to be right. I strove to speak, but could say nothing.

“He must be removed from the influences,” the rector ventured, after a halt.

“That he must indeed,” said my grandfather. “Why did I not send him to Eton last fall? But it is hard, Mr. Allen, to part with the child of our old age. I would take passage and go myself with him to-morrow were it not for my duties in the Council.”

“Eton! I would have sooner, I believe, wrought by the side of any rascally redemptioner in the iron mines of the Patapsco than have gone to Eton.

“But for the present, sir, I would counsel you to put the lad’s studies in the charge of some able and learned man, that his mind may be turned from the disease which has fed upon it. Some one whose loyalty is beyond question.”

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“And who so fit as yourself, Mr. Allen?” returned my grandfather, relief plain in his voice. “You have his Lordship’s friendship and confidence, and never has rector of St. Anne’s or of any other parish brought letters to his Excellency to compare with yours. And so I crave your help in this time of need.”

Mr. Allen showed becoming hesitation.

“I fear you do me greater honour than I deserve, Mr. Carvel,” he answered, a strain of the pomp coming back, “though my gracious patron is disposed to think well of me, and I shall strive to hold his good opinion. But I have duties of parish and glebe to attend, and Master Philip Carvel likewise in my charge.”

I held my breath for my grandfather’s reply. The rector, however, had read him, and well knew that a show of reluctance would but inflame him the more.

“How now, sir?” he exclaimed. “Surely, as you love the King, you will not refuse me in this strait.”

Mr. Allen rose and grasped him by the hand.

“Nay, sir,” said he, “and you put it thus, I cannot refuse you.”

The thought of it was too much. I ran to my grandfather crying: “Not Mr. Allen, sir, not Mr. Allen. Any one else you please,—Mr. Fairbrother even.”

The rector drew back haughtily. “It is clear, Mr. Carvel,” he said, “that Richard has other preferences.”

“And be damned to them!” shouted my grandfather. “Am I to be ruled by this headstrong boy? He has beat Mr. Fairbrother, and shall have no skimmed-milk supervision if I can help it.”

And so it was settled that I should be tutored by the rector of St. Anne’s, and I took my seat beside my cousin Philip in his study the very next day.

CHAPTER VII

GRAFTON HAS HIS CHANCE

To add to my troubles my grandfather was shortly taken very ill with the first severe sickness he had ever in his life endured. Dr. Leiden came and went sometimes thrice daily, and for a week he bore a look so grave as to frighten me. Dr. Evarts arrived by horse from Philadelphia, and the two physicians held long conversations in the morning room, while I listened at the door and comprehended not a word of their talk save when

they spoke of bleeding. And after a very few consultations, as is often the way in their profession, they disagreed and quarrelled, and Dr. Evarts packed himself back to Philadelphia in high dudgeon. Then Mr. Carvel began to mend.

There were many who came regularly to inquire of him, and each afternoon I would see the broad shoulders and genial face of Governor Sharpe in the gateway, completing his walk by way of Marlboro' Street. I loved and admired him, for he had been a soldier himself before he came out to us, and had known and esteemed my father. His Excellency should surely have been knighted for his services in the French war. Once he spied me at the window and shook his cane pleasantly, and in he walks to the room where I sat reading of the victories of Blenheim and Malplaquet, for chronicles of this sort I delighted in.

Page 1996

“Aha, Richard,” says he, taking up the book, “’tis plain whither your tastes lead you. Marlboro was a great general, and as sorry a scoundrel as ever led troops to battle. Truly,” says he, musing, “the Lord often makes queer choice in his instruments for good.” And he lowered himself into the easy chair and crossed his legs, regarding me very comically. “What’s this I hear of your joining the burghers and barristers, and trouncing poor Mr. Fairbrother and his flock, and crying ’Liberty forever!’ in the very ears of the law?” he asks. “His Majesty will have need of such lads as you, I make no doubt, and should such proceedings come to his ears I would not give a pipe for your chances.”

I could not but laugh, confused as I was, at his Excellency’s rally. And this I may say, that had it pleased Providence to give me dealing with such men of the King’s side as he, perchance my fortunes had been altered.

“And in any good cause, sir,” I replied, “I would willingly give my life to his Majesty.”

“So,” said his Excellency, raising his eyebrows, “I see clearly you are of the rascals. But a lad must have his fancies, and when your age I was hot for the exiled Prince. I acquired more sense as I grew older. And better an active mind, say I, than a sluggard partisan.”

At this stage of our talk came in my Uncle Grafton, and bowing low to the Governor made apology that some of the elders of the family had not been there to entertain him. He told his Excellency that he had never left the house save for necessary business, which was true for once, my uncle having taken up his abode with us during that week. But now, thanking Heaven and Dr. Leiden and his own poor effort, he could report his dear father to be out of danger.

Governor Sharpe answered shortly that he had been happy to hear the good news from Scipio. “Faith,” says he, “I was well enough entertained, for I have a liking for this lad, and to speak truth I saw him here as I came up the walk.”

My uncle smiled deprecatingly, and hid any vexation he might have had from this remark.

“I fear that Richard lacks wisdom as yet, your Excellency,” said he, “and has many of his father’s headstrong qualities.”

“Which you most providentially escaped,” his Excellency put in.

Grafton bit his lip. “Necessity makes us all careful, sir,” said he.

“Necessity does more than that, Mr. Carvel,” returned the Governor, who was something of a wit; “necessity often makes us fools, if we be not careful. But give me ever a wanton fool rather than him of necessity’s handiwork. And as for the lad,” says he, “let

him not trouble you. Such as he, if twisted a little in the growth, come out straight enough in the end."

I think the Governor little knew what wormwood was this to my uncle.

"'Tis heartily to be hoped, sir," he said, "for his folly has brought trouble enough behind it to those who have his education and his welfare in hand, and I make no doubt is at the bottom of my father's illness."

Page 1997

At this injustice I could not but cry out, for all the town knew, and my grandfather himself best of all, that the trouble from which he now suffered sprang from his gout. And yet my heart was smitten at the thought that I might have hastened or aggravated the attack. The Governor rose. He seized his stick aggressively and looked sharply at Grafton.

“Nonsense,” he exclaimed; “my friend Mr. Carvel is far too wise to be upset by a boyish prank which deserves no notice save a caning. And that, my lad,” he added lightly, “I dare swear you got with interest.” And he called for a glass of the old Madeira when Scipio came with the tray, and departed with a polite inquiry after my Aunt Caroline’s health, and a prophecy that Mr. Carvel would soon be taking the air again.

There had been high doings indeed in Marlboro’ Street that miserable week. My grandfather took to his bed of a Saturday afternoon, and bade me go down to Mr. Aikman’s, the bookseller, and fetch him the latest books and plays. That night I became so alarmed that I sent Diomedes for Dr. Leiden, who remained the night through. Sunday was well gone before the news reached York Street, when my Aunt Caroline came hurrying over in her chair, and my uncle on foot. They brushed past Scipio at the door, and were pushing up the long flight when they were stopped on the landing by Dr. Leiden.

“How is my father, sir?” Grafton cried, “and why was I not informed at once of his illness? I must see him.”

“Your vater can see no one, Mr. Carvel,” said the doctor, quietly.

“What,” says my uncle, “you dare to refuse me?”

“Not so lout, I bray you,” says the doctor; “I tare any ting vere life is concerned.”

“But I will see him,” says Grafton, in a sort of helpless rage, for the doctor’s manner baffled him. “I will see him before he dies, and no man alive shall say me nay.”

Then my Aunt Caroline gathered up her skirt, and made shift to pass the doctor.

“I have come to nurse him,” said she, imperiously, and, turning to where I stood near, she added: “Bid a servant fetch from York Street what I shall have need of.”

The doctor smiled, but stood firm. He cared little for aught in heaven or earth, did Dr. Leiden, and nothing whatever for Mr. and Mrs. Grafton Carvel.

“I peg you, matam, do not disturp yourself,” said he. “Mr. Carvel is aply attended by an excellent voman, Mrs. Villis, and he has no neet of you.”

“What,” cried my aunt; “this is too much, sir, that I am thrust out of my father-in-law’s house, and my place taken by a menial. That woman able!” she fumed, dropping suddenly her cloak of dignity; “Mr. Carvel’s charity is all that keeps her here.”

Then my uncle drew himself up. “Dr. Leiden,” says he, “kindly oblige me by leaving my father’s house, and consider your services here at an end. And Richard,” he goes on to me, “send my compliments to Dr. Drake, and request him to come at once.”

Page 1998

I was stepping forward to say that I would do nothing of the kind, when the doctor stopped me by a signal, as much as to say that the quarrel was wide enough without me. He stood with his back against the great arched window flooded with the yellow light of the setting sun, a little black figure in high relief, with a face of parchment. And he took a pinch of snuff before he spoke.

“I am here py Mr. Carvel’s orters, sir,” said he, “and py tose alone vill I leaf.”

And this is how the Chippendale piece was broke, which you, my children, and especially Bess, admire so extravagantly. It stood that day behind the doctor, and my uncle, making a violent move to get by, struck it, and so it fell with a great crash lengthwise on the landing; and the wonderful vases Mr. Carroll had given my grandfather rolled down the stairs and lay crushed at the bottom. Withal he had spoken so quietly, Dr. Leiden possessed a temper drawn from his Teutonic ancestors. With his little face all puckered, he swore so roundly at my uncle in some lingo he had got from his father,—High German or Low German,—I know not what, that Grafton and his wife were glad enough to pick their way amongst the broken bits of glass and china, to the hall again. Dr. Leiden shook his fist at their retreating persons, saying that the Sabbath was no day to do murder.

I followed them with the pretence of picking up what was left of the ornaments. What between anger against the doctor and Mrs. Willis, and fright and chagrin at the fall of the Chippendale piece, my aunt was in such a state of nervous flurry that she bade the ashy Scipio call her chairmen, and vowed, in a trembling voice, she would never again enter a house where that low-bred German was to be found. But my Uncle Grafton was of a different nature. He deemed defeat but a postponement of the object he wished to gain, and settled himself in the library with a copy of “Miller on the Distinction of Ranks in Society.” He appeared at supper suave as ever, gravely concerned as to his father’s health, which formed the chief topic between us. He gave me to understand that he would take the green room until the old gentleman was past danger. Not a word, mind you, of Dr. Leiden, nor did my uncle express a wish to go into the sick-room, from which even I was forbid. Nay, the next morning he met the doctor in the hall and conversed with him at some length over the case as though nothing had occurred between them.

While my Uncle Grafton was in the house I had opportunity of marking the intimacy which existed between him and the rector of St. Anne’s. The latter swung each evening the muffled knocker, and was ushered on tiptoe across the polished floor to the library where my uncle sat in state. It was often after supper before the rector left, and coming in upon them once I found wine between them and empty decanters on the board, and they fell silent as I passed the doorway.

Page 1999

Our dear friend Captain Clapsaddle was away when my grandfather fell sick, having been North for three months or more on some business known to few. 'Twas generally supposed he went to Massachusetts to confer with the patriots of that colony. Hearing the news as he rode into town, he came booted and spurred to Marlboro' Street before going to his lodgings. I ran out to meet him, and he threw his arms about me on the street so that those who were passing smiled, for all knew the captain. And Harvey, who always came to take the captain's horse, swore that he was glad to see a friend of the family once again. I told the captain very freely of my doings, and showed him the clipping from the Gazette, which made him laugh heartily. But a shade came upon his face when I rehearsed the scene we had with my uncle and Mr. Allen in the garden.

"What," says he, "Mr. Carvel hath sent you to Mr. Allen on your uncle's advice?"

"No," I answered, "to do my uncle justice, he said not a word to Mr. Carvel about it."

The captain turned the subject. He asked me much concerning the rector and what he taught me, and appeared but ill-pleased at that I had to tell him. But he left me without so much as a word of comment or counsel. For it was a principle with Captain Clapsaddle not to influence in any way the minds of the young, and he would have deemed it unfair to Mr. Carvel had he attempted to win my sympathies to his. Captain Daniel was the first the old gentleman asked to see when visitors were permitted him, and you may be sure the faithful soldier was below stairs waiting for the summons.

I was some three weeks with my new tutor, the rector, before my grandfather's illness, and went back again as soon as he began to mend. I was not altogether unhappy, owing to a certain grim pleasure I had in debating with him, which I shall presently relate. There was much to annoy and anger me, too. My cousin Philip was forever carping and criticising my Greek and Latin, and it was impossible not to feel his sneer at my back when I construed. He had pat replies ready to correct me when called upon, and 'twas only out of consideration for Mr. Carvel that I kept my hands from him when we were dismissed.

I think the rector disliked Philip in his way as much as did I in mine. The Reverend Bennett Allen, indeed, might have been a very good fellow had Providence placed him in a different setting; he was one of those whom his Excellency dubbed "fools from necessity." He should have been born with a fortune, though I can think of none he would not have run through in a year or so. But nature had given him aristocratic tastes, with no other means toward their gratification than good looks, convincing ways, and a certain bold, half-defiant manner, which went far with his Lordship and those like him, who thought Mr. Allen excellent good company. With the rector, as with too many others, holy orders were but a means to an end. It was a sealed story what he had been before he came to Governor Sharpe with Baltimore's directions to give him the best in the colony. But our rakes and wits, and even our solid men, like my grandfather,

received him with open arms. He had ever a tale on his tongue's end tempered to the ear of his listener.

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Who had most influenced my way of thinking, Mr. Allen had well demanded. The gentleman was none other than Mr. Henry Swain, Patty's father. Of her I shall speak later. He was a rising barrister and man of note among our patriots, and member of the Lower House; a diffident man in public, with dark, soulful eyes, and a wide, white brow, who had declined a nomination to the Congress of '65. At his fireside, unknown to my grandfather and to Mr. Allen, I had learned the true principles of government. Before the House Mr. Swain spoke only under extraordinary emotion, and then he gained every ear. He had been my friend since childhood, but I never knew the meaning and the fire of oratory until curiosity brought me to the gallery of the Assembly chamber in the Stadt House, where the barrister was on his feet at the time. I well remember the tingle in my chest as I looked and listened. And I went again and again, until the House sat behind closed doors.

And so, when Mr. Allen brought forth for my benefit those arguments of the King's party which were deemed their strength, I would confront him with Mr. Swain's logic. He had in me a tough subject for conversion. I was put to very small pains to rout my instructor out of all his positions, because indolence, and lack of interest in the question, and contempt for the Americans, had made him neglect the study of it. And Philip, who entered at first glibly enough at the rector's side, was soon drawn into depths far beyond him. Many a time was Mr. Allen fain to laugh at his blunders. I doubt not my cousin had the facts straight enough when he rose from the breakfast table at home; but by the time he reached the rectory they were shaken up like so many parts of a puzzle in a bag, and past all straightening.

The rector was especially bitter toward the good people of Boston Town, whom he dubbed Puritan fanatics. To him Mr. Otis was but a meddling fool, and Mr. Adams a traitor whose head only remained on his shoulders by grace of the extreme clemency of his Majesty, which Mr. Allen was at a loss to understand. When beaten in argument, he would laugh out some sneer that would set my blood simmering. One morning he came in late for the lesson, smelling strongly of wine, and bade us bring our books out under the fruit trees in the garden. He threw back his gown and tilted his cap, and lighting his pipe began to speak of that act of Townshend's, passed but the year before, which afterwards proved the King's folly and England's ruin.

"Principle!" exclaimed my fine clergyman at length, blowing a great whiff among the white blossoms. "Oons! your Americans worship his Majesty stamped upon a golden coin. And though he saved their tills from plunder from the French, the miserly rogues are loth to pay for the service."

I rose, and taking a guinea-piece from my pocket, held it up before him.

"They care this much for gold, sir, and less for his Majesty, who cares nothing for them," I said. And walking to the well near by, I dropped the piece carelessly into the clear water. He was beside me before it left my hand, and Philip also, in time to see the

yellow coin edging this way and that toward the bottom. The rector turned to me with a smile of cynical amusement playing over his features.

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“Such a spirit has brought more than one brave fellow to Tyburn, Master Carvel,” he said. And then he added reflectively, “But if there were more like you, we might well have cause for alarm.”

RICHARD CARVEL

By Winston Churchill

Volume 2.

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CHAPTER VIII

OVER THE WALL

Dorothy treated me ill enough that spring. Since the minx had tasted power at Carvel Hall, there was no accounting for her. On returning to town Dr. Courtenay had begged her mother to allow her at the assemblies, a request which Mrs. Manners most sensibly refused. Mr. Marmaduke had given his consent, I believe, for he was more impatient than Dolly for the days when she would become the toast of the province. But the doctor contrived to see her in spite of difficulties, and Will Fotheringay was forever at her house, and half a dozen other lads. And many gentlemen of fashion like the doctor called ostensibly to visit Mrs. Manners, but in reality to see Miss Dorothy. And my lady knew it. She would be lingering in the drawing-room in her best bib and tucker, or strolling in the garden as Dr. Courtenay passed, and I got but scant attention indeed. I was but an awkward lad, and an old playmate, with no novelty about me.

“Why, Richard,” she would say to me as I rode or walked beside her, or sat at dinner in Prince George Street, “I know every twist and turn of your nature. There is nothing you could do to surprise me. And so, sir, you are very tiresome.”

“You once found me useful enough to fetch and carry, and amusing when I walked the Oriole’s bowsprit,” I replied ruefully.

“Why don’t you make me jealous?” says she, stamping her foot. “A score of pretty girls are languishing for a glimpse of you,—Jennie and Bess Fotheringay, and Betty Tayloe, and Heaven knows how many others. They are actually accusing me of keeping you

trailing. ‘La, girls!’ said I, ’if you will but rid me of him for a day, you shall have my lasting gratitude.’”

And she turned to the spinet and began a lively air. But the taunt struck deeper than she had any notion of. That spring arrived out from London on the Belle of the Wye a box of fine clothes my grandfather had commanded for me from his own tailor; and a word from a maid of fifteen did more to make me wear them than any amount of coaxing from Mr. Allen and my Uncle Grafton. My uncle seemed in particular anxious that I should make a good appearance, and reminded me that I should dress as became the heir of the Carvel house. I took counsel with Patty Swain, and then went to see Betty Tayloe, and the Fotheringay girls, and the Dulany girls, near the Governor’s. And (fie upon me!) I was not ill-pleased with the brave appearance I made. I would show my mistress how little I cared. But the worst of it was, the baggage seemed to trouble less than I, and had the effrontery to tell me how happy she was I had come out of my shell, and broken loose from her apron-strings.

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“Indeed, they would soon begin to think I meant to marry you, Richard,” says she at supper one Sunday before a tableful, and laughed with the rest.

“They do not credit you with such good sense, my dear,” says her mother, smiling kindly at me.

And Dolly bit her lip, and did not join in that part of the merriment.

I fled to Patty Swain for counsel, nor was it the first time in my life I had done so. Some good women seem to have been put into this selfish world to comfort and advise. After Prince George Street with its gilt and marbles and stately hedged gardens, the low-beamed, vine-covered house in the Duke of Gloucester Street was a home and a rest. In my eyes there was not its equal in Annapolis for beauty within and without. Mr. Swain had bought the dwelling from an aged man with a history, dead some nine years back. Its furniture, for the most part, was of the Restoration, of simple and massive oak blackened by age, which I ever fancied better than the Frenchy baubles of tables and chairs with spindle legs, and cabinets of glass and gold lacquer which were then making their way into the fine mansions of our town. The house was full of twists and turns, and steps up and down, and nooks and passages and queer hiding-places which we children knew, and in parts queer leaded windows of bulging glass set high in the wall, and older than the reign of Hanover. Here was the shrine of cleanliness, whose high-priestess was Patty herself. Her floors were like satin-wood, and her brasses lights in themselves. She had come honestly enough by her gifts, her father having married the daughter of an able townsman of Salem, in the Massachusetts colony, when he had gone north after his first great success in court. Now the poor lady sat in a padded armchair from morning to night, beside the hearth in winter, and under the trees in summer, by reason of a fall she had had. There she knitted all the day long. Her placid face and quiet way come before me as I write.

My friendship with Patty had begun early. One autumn day when I was a little lad of eight or nine, my grandfather and I were driving back from Whitehall in the big coach, when we spied a little maid of six by the Severn’s bank, with her apron full of chestnuts. She was trudging bravely through the dead leaves toward the town. Mr. Carvel pulled the cord to stop, and asked her name. “Patty Swain, and it please your honour,” the child answered, without fear. “So you are the young barrister’s daughter?” says he, smiling at something I did not understand. She nodded. “And how is it you are so far from home, and alone, my little one?” asked Mr. Carvel again. For some time he could get nothing out of her; but at length she explained, with much coaxing, that her big brother Tom had deserted her. My grandfather wished that Tom were his brother, that he might be punished as he deserved. He commanded young Harvey to lift the child into the coach, chestnuts

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and all, and there she sat primly between us. She was not as pretty as Dorothy, so I thought, but her clear gray eyes and simple ways impressed me by their very honesty, as they did Mr. Carvel. What must he do but drive her home to Green Street, where Mr. Swain then lived in a little cottage. Mr. Carvel himself lifted her out and kissed her, and handed her to her mother at the gate, who was vastly overcome by the circumstance. The good lady had not then received that fall which made her a cripple for life. "And will you not have my chestnuts, sir, for your kindness?" says little Patty. Whereat my grandfather laughed and kissed her again, for he loved children, and wished to know if she would not be his daughter, and come to live in Marlboro' Street; and told the story of Tom, for fear she would not. He was silent as we drove away, and I knew he was thinking of my own mother at that age.

Not long after this Mr. Swain bought the house in the Duke of Gloucester Street. This, as you know, is back to back with Marlboro. To reach Patty's garden I had but to climb the brick wall at the rear of our grounds, and to make my way along the narrow green lane left there for perhaps a hundred paces of a lad, to come to the gate in the wooden paling. In return I used to hoist Patty over the wall, and we would play at children's games under the fruit trees that skirted it. Some instinct kept her away from the house. I often caught her gazing wistfully at its wings and gables. She was not born to a mansion, so she said.

"But your father is now rich," I objected. I had heard Captain Daniel say so. "He may have a mansion of his own and he chooses. He can better afford it than many who are in debt for the fine show they make." I was but repeating gossip.

"I should like to see the grand company come in, when your grandfather has them to dine," said the girl. "Sometimes we have grand gentlemen come to see father in their coaches, but they talk of nothing but politics. We never have any fine ladies like—like your Aunt Caroline."

I startled her by laughing derisively.

"And I pray you never may, Patty," was all I said.

I never told Dolly of my intimacy with the barrister's little girl over the wall. This was not because I was ashamed of the friendship, but arose from a fear-well-founded enough—-that she would make sport of it. At twelve Dolly had notions concerning the walks of life that most other children never dream of. They were derived, of course, from Mr. Marmaduke. But the day of reckoning arrived. Patty and I were romping beside the back wall when suddenly a stiff little figure in a starched frock appeared through the trees in the direction of the house, followed by Master Will Fotheringay in his visiting clothes. I laugh now when I think of that formal meeting between the two little ladies.

There was no time to hoist Miss Swain over the wall, or to drive Miss Manners back upon the house. Patty stood blushing as though caught in a guilty act, while she of the Generations came proudly on, Will sniggering behind her.

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“Who is this, Richard?” asks Miss Manners, pointing a small forefinger.

“Patty Swain, if you must know!” I cried, and added boylike: “And she is just as good as you or me, and better.” I was quite red in the face, and angry because of it. “This is Dorothy Manners, Patty, and Will Fotheringay.”

The moment was a pregnant one. But I was resolved to carry the matter out with a bold front. “Will you join us at catch and swing?” I asked.

Will promptly declared that he would join, for Patty was good to look upon. Dolly glanced at her dress, tossed her head, and marched back alone.

“Oh, Richard!” cried Patty; “I shall never forgive myself! I have made you quarrel with __”

“His sweetheart,” said Will, wickedly.

“I don’t care,” said I. Which was not so.

Patty felt no resentment for my miss’s haughty conduct, but only a tearful penitence for having been the cause of a strife between us. Will’s arguments and mine availed nothing. I must lift her over the wall again, and she went home. When we reached the garden we found Dolly seated beside her mother on my grandfather’s bench, from which stronghold our combined tactics were powerless to drag her.

When Dolly was gone, I asked my grandfather in great indignation why Patty did not play with the children I knew, with Dorothy and the Fotheringays. He shook his head dubiously. “When you are older, Richard, you will understand that our social ranks are cropped close. Mr. Swain is an honest and an able man, though he believes in things I do not. I hear he is becoming wealthy. And I have no doubt,” the shrewd old gentleman added, “that when Patty grows up she will be going to the assemblies, though it was not so in my time.” So liberal was he that he used to laugh at my lifting her across the wall, and in his leisure delight to listen to my accounts of her childish housekeeping. Her life was indeed a contrast to Dorothy’s. She had all the solid qualities that my lady lacked in early years. And yet I never wavered in my liking to the more brilliant and wayward of the two. The week before my next birthday, when Mr. Carvel drew me to him and asked me what I wished for a present that year, as was his custom, I said promptly:

“I should like to have Patty Swain at my party, sir.”

“So you shall, my lad,” he cried, taking his snuff and eying me with pleasure. “I am glad to see, Richard, that you have none of Mr. Marmaduke’s nonsense about you. She is a good girl, i’ faith, and more of a lady now than many who call themselves such. And you shall have your present to boot. Hark’ee, Daniel,” said he to the captain; “if the child comes to my house, the poll-parrots and follow-me-ups will be wanting her, too.”

But the getting her to go was a matter of five days. For Patty was sensitive, like her father, and dreaded a slight. Not so with Master Tom, who must, needs be invited, too. He arrived half an hour ahead of time, arrayed like Solomon, and without his sister! I had to go for Patty, indeed, after the party had begun, and to get the key to the wicket in the wall to take her in that way, so shy was she. My dear grandfather showed her particular attention. And Miss Dolly herself, being in the humour, taught her a minuet.

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After that she came to all my birthdays, and lost some of her shyness. And was invited to other great houses, even as Mr. Carvel had predicted. But her chief pleasure seemed ever her duty. Whether or no such characters make them one and the same, who can tell? She became the light of her father's house, and used even to copy out his briefs, at which task I often found her of an evening.

As for Tom, that graceless scamp, I never could stomach him. I wondered then, as I have since, how he was the brother of such a sister. He could scarce bide his time until Mr. Swain should have a coach and a seat in the country with the gentry. "A barrister," quoth he, "is as good as any one else. And if my father came out a redemptioner, and worked his way, so had old Mr. Dulany. Our family at home was the equal of his." All of which was true, and more. He would deride Patty for sewing and baking, vowing that they had servants enough now to do the work twice over. She bore with him with a patience to be marvelled at; and I could never get it through my head why Mr. Swain indulged him, though he was the elder, and his mother's favourite. Tom began to dress early. His open admiration was Dr. Courtenay, his confessed hope to wear five-pound ruffles and gold sword knots. He clung to Will Fotheringay with a tenacity that became proverbial among us boys, and his boasts at King William's School were his father's growing wealth and intimacy with the great men of the province.

As I grew older, I took the cue of political knowledge, as I have said, from Mr. Swain rather than Captain Daniel, who would tell me nothing. I fell into the habit of taking supper in Gloucester Street. The meal was early there. And when the dishes were cleared away, and the barrister's pipe lit, and Patty and her mother had got their sewing, he would talk by the hour on the legality of our resistance to the King, and discuss the march of affairs in England and the other colonies. He found me a ready listener, and took pains to teach me clearly the right and wrong of the situation. 'Twas his religion, even as loyalty to the King was my grandfather's, and he did not think it wrong to spread it. He likewise instilled into me in that way more of history than Mr. Allen had ever taught me, using it to throw light upon this point or that. But I never knew his true power and eloquence until I followed him to the Stadt House.

Patty was grown a girl of fifteen then, glowing with health, and had ample good looks of her own. 'Tis odd enough that I did not fall in love with her when Dolly began to use me so outrageously. But a lad of eighteen is scarce a rational creature. I went and sat before my oracle upon the vine-covered porch under the eaves, and poured out my complaint. She laid down her needlework and laughed.

"You silly boy," said she, "can't you see that she herself has prescribed for you? She was right when she told you to show attention to Jenny. And if you dangle about Miss Dolly now, you are in danger of losing her. She knows it better than you."

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I had Jenny to ride the very next day. Result: my lady smiled on me more sweetly than ever when I went to Prince George Street, and vowed Jenny had never looked prettier than when she went past the house. This left my victory in such considerable doubt that I climbed the back wall forthwith in my new top-boots.

“So you looked for her to be angry?” said Patty.

“Most certainly,” said I.

“Unreasoning vanity!” she cried, for she knew how to speak plain. “By your confession to me you have done this to please her, for she warned you at the beginning it would please her. And now you complain of it. I believe I know your Dorothy better than you.”

And so I got but little comfort out of Patty that time.

CHAPTER IX

UNDER FALSE COLOURS

And now I come to a circumstance in my life I would rather pass over quickly. Had I steered the straight course of my impulse I need never have deceived that dear gentleman whom I loved and honoured above any in this world, and with whom I had always lived and dealt openly. After my grandfather was pronounced to be mending, I went back to Mr. Allen until such time as we should be able to go to the country. Philip no longer shared my studies, his hours having been changed from morning to afternoon. I thought nothing of this, being content with the rector’s explanation that my uncle had a task for Philip in the morning, now that Mr. Carvel was better. And I was well content to be rid of Philip’s company. But as the days passed I began to mark an absence still stranger. I had my Horace and my Ovid still: but the two hours from eleven to one, which he was wont to give up to history and what he was pleased to call instruction in loyalty, were filled with other matter. Not a word now of politics from Mr. Allen. Not even a comment from him concerning the spirited doings of our Assembly, with which the town was ringing. That body had met but a while before, primed to act on the circular drawn up by Mr. Adams of Massachusetts. The Governor’s message had not been so prompt as to forestall them, and I am occupied scarce the time in the writing of this that it took our brave members to adopt the petition to his Majesty and to pass resolutions of support to our sister colony of the North. This being done, and a most tart reply penned to his Excellency, they ended that sitting and passed in procession to the Governor’s mansion to deliver it, Mr. Speaker Lloyd at their head, and a vast concourse of cheering people at their heels. Shutters were barred on the Tory houses we passed. And though Mr. Allen spied me in the crowd, he never mentioned the circumstance. More than once I essayed to draw from him an opinion of Mr. Adams’s petition, which was deemed a work of great moderation and merit, and got

nothing but evasion from my tutor. That he had become suddenly an American in principle I could not believe. At length I made bold to ask him why our discussions were now omitted. He looked up from the new play he was reading on the study lounge, with a glance of dark meaning I could not fathom.

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“You are learning more than I can teach you in Gloucester Street, and at the Stadt House,” he said.

In truth I was at a loss to understand his attitude until the day in June my grandfather and I went to Carvel Hall.

The old gentleman was weak still, so feeble that he had to be carried to his barge in a chair, a vehicle he had ever held in scorn. But he was cheerful, and his spirit remained the same as of old: but for that spirit I believe he had never again risen from his bed in Marlboro’ Street. My uncle and the rector were among those who walked by his side to the dock, and would have gone to the Hall with him had he permitted them. He was kind enough to say that my arm was sufficient to lean on.

What peace there was sitting once again under the rustling trees on the lawn with the green river and the blue bay spread out before us, and Scipio standing by with my grandfather’s punch. Mr. Carvel would have me rehearse again all that had passed in town and colony since his illness, which I did with as much moderation as I was able. And as we talked he reached out and took my hand, for I sat near him, and said:

“Richard, I have heard tidings of you that gladden my heart, and they have done more than Dr. Leiden’s physic for this old frame of mine. I well knew a Carvel could never go a wrong course, lad, and you least of any.”

“Tidings, sir?” I said.

“Ay, tidings,” answered Mr. Carvel. Such a note of relief and gladness there was in the words as I had not heard for months from him, and a vague fear came upon me.

“Scipio,” he said merrily, “a punch for Mr. Richard.” And when the glass was brought my grandfather added: “May it be ever thus!”

I drained the toast, not falling into his humour or comprehending his reference, but dreading that aught I might say would disturb him, held my peace. And yet my apprehension increased. He set down his glass and continued:

“I had no hope of this yet, Richard, for you were ever slow to change. Your conversion does credit to Mr. Allen as well as to you. In short, sir, the rector gives me an excellent good account of your studies, and adds that the King hath gained another loyal servant, for which I thank God.”

I have no words to write of my feelings then. My head swam and my hand trembled on my grandfather’s, and I saw dimly the old gentleman’s face aglow with joy and pride, and knew not what to say or do. The answer I framed, alas, remained unspoken. From his own lips I had heard how much the news had mended him, and for once I lacked the

heart, nay, the courage, to speak the truth. But Mr. Carvel took no heed of my silence, setting it down to another cause.

“And so, my son,” he said, “there is no need of sending you to Eton next fall. I am not much longer for this earth, and can ill spare you: and Mr. Allen kindly consents to prepare you for Oxford.”

“Mr. Allen consents to that, sir?” I gasped. I think, could I have laid hands on the rector then, I would have thrashed him, cloth and all, within an inch of his life.

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And as if to crown my misery Mr. Carvel rose, and bearing heavily on my shoulder led me to the stable where Harvey and one of the black grooms stood in livery to receive us. Harvey held by the bridle a blooded bay hunter, and her like could scarce be found in the colony. As she stood arching her neck and pawing the ground, I all confusion and shame, my grandfather said simply:

“Richard, this is Firefly. I have got her for you from Mr. Randolph, of Virginia, for you are now old enough to have a good mount of your own.”

All that night I lay awake, trying to sift some motive for Mr. Allen’s deceit. For the life of me I could see no farther than a desire to keep me as his pupil, since he was well paid for his tuition. Still, the game did not seem worth the candle. However, he was safe in his lie. Shrewd rogue that he was, he well knew that I would not risk the attack a disappointment might bring my grandfather.

What troubled me most of all was the fear that Grafton had reaped the advantage of the opportunity the illness gave him, and by his insidious arts had worked himself back into the good graces of his father. You must not draw from this, my dears, that I feared for the inheritance. Praised be God, I never thought of that! But I came by nature to hate and to fear my uncle, as I hated and feared the devil. I saw him with my father’s eyes, and with my mother’s, and as my grandfather had seen him in the old days when he was strong. Instinct and reason alike made me loathe him. As the months passed, and letters in Grafton’s scroll hand came from the Kent estate or from Annapolis, my misgivings were confirmed by odd remarks that dropped from Mr. Carvel’s lips. At length arrived the revelation itself.

“I fear, Richard,” he had said querulously, “I fear that all these years I have done your uncle an injustice. Dear Elizabeth was wont to plead for him before she died, but I would never listen to her. I was hearty and strong then, and my heart was hard. And a remembrance of many things was fresh in my mind.” He paused for breath, as was his habit now. And I said nothing. “But Grafton has striven to wipe out the past. Sickness teaches us that we must condone, and not condemn. He has lived a reputable life, and made the most of the little start I gave him. He has supported his Majesty and my Lord in most trying times. And his Excellency tells me that the coming governor, Eden, will surely reward him with a seat in the Council.”

I thought of Governor Sharpe’s biting words to Grafton. The Governor knew my uncle well, and I was sure he had never sat at his Council.

“A son is a son, Richard,” continued Mr. Carvel. “You will one day find that out. Your uncle has atoned. He hath been faithful during my illness, despite my cold treatment. And he hath convinced me that your welfare is at his heart. I believe he is fond of you, my lad.”

No greater sign of breaking health did I need than this, that Mr. Carvel should become blind to Grafton's hypocrisy; forget his attempts to prevent my father's marriage, and to throw doubt upon my mother's birth. The agony it gave me, coming as it did on top of the cruel deception, I shall not dwell upon. And the thought bursting within me remained unspoken.

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I saw less of Dorothy then than I had in any summer of my life before. In spite of Mrs. Manners, the chrysalis had burst into the butterfly, and Wilmot House had never been so gay. It must be remembered that there were times when young ladies made their entrance into the world at sixteen, and for a beauty to be unmarried at twenty-two was rare indeed. When I went to Wilmot House to dine, the table would be always full, and Mr. Marmaduke simpering at the head of it, his air of importance doubled by his reflected glory.

“We see nothing of you, my lad,” he would say; “you must not let these young gallants get ahead of you. How does your grandfather? I must pay my compliments to-morrow.”

Of gallants there were enough, to be sure. Dr. Courtenay, of course, with a nosegay on his coat, striving to catch the beauty’s eye. And Mr. Worthington and Mr. Dulany, and Mr. Fitzhugh and Mr. Paca, and I know not how many other young bachelors of birth and means. And Will Fotheringay, who spent some of his time with me at the Hall. Silver and China, with the Manners coat-of-arms, were laid out that had not seen the light for many along day. And there were picnics, and sailing parties, and dances galore, some of which I attended, but heard of more. It seemed to me that my lady was tiring of the doctor’s compliments, and had transferred her fickle favour to young Mr. Fitzhugh, who was much more worthy, by the way. As for me, I had troubles enough then, and had become used in some sort to being shelved.

One night in July,—’twas the very day Mr. Carvel had spoken to me of Grafton,—I had ridden over to Wilmot House to supper. I had little heart for going, but good Mrs. Manners herself had made me promise, and I could: not break my word. I must have sat very silent and preoccupied at the table, where all was wit and merriment. And more than once I saw the laughter leave Dorothy’s face, and caught her eyes upon; me with such a look as set my beast throbbing. They would not meet my own, but would turn away instantly. I was heavy indeed that night, and did not follow the company into the ballroom, but made my excuses to Mrs. Manners.

The lawn lay bathed in moonlight; and as I picked, my way over it toward the stables for Firefly, I paused to look back at the house aglow, with light, the music of the fiddles and the sound of laughter floating out of the open windows. Even as I gaped a white figure was framed in the doorway, paused a moment on the low stone step, and then came on until it stood beside me.

“Are you not well, Richard?”

“Yes, I am well,” I answered. I scarcely knew my own voice.

“Is your grandfather worse?”

“No, Dorothy; he seems better to-day.”

She stood seemingly irresolute, her eyes new lifted, now falling before mine. Her slender arms bare, save for the little puff at the shoulders; her simple dress drawn a little above the waist, then falling straight to the white slipper. How real the ecstasy of that moment, and the pain of it!

Page 2010

“Why do you not coarse over, as you used to?” she asked, in a low tone.

“I am very busy,” I replied evasively; “Mr. Carvel cannot attend to his affairs.” I longed to tell her the whole truth, but the words would not come.

“I hear you are managing the estate all alone,” she said.

“There is no one else to do it.”

“Richard,” she cried, drawing closer; “you are in trouble. I—I have seen it. You are so silent, and—and you seem to have become older. Tell me, is it your Uncle Grafton?”

So astonished was I at the question, and because she had divined so, surely, that I did not answer.

“Is it?” she asked again.

“Yes,” I said; “yes, in part.”

And then came voices calling from the house. They had missed her.

“I am so sorry, Richard. I shall tell no one.”

She laid her hand ever so lightly upon mine and was gone. I stood staring after her until she disappeared in the door. All the way home I marvelled, my thoughts tumultuous, my hopes rising and falling.

But when next I saw her, I thought she had forgotten.

We had little company at the Hall that year, on account of Mr. Carvel. And I had been busy indeed. I sought with all my might to master a business for which I had but little taste, and my grandfather complimented me, before the season was done, upon my management. I was wont to ride that summer at four of a morning to canter beside Mr. Starkie afield, and I came to know the yield of every patch to a hogshead and the pound price to a farthing. I grew to understand as well as another the methods of curing the leaf. And the wheat pest appearing that year, I had the good fortune to discover some of the clusters in the sheaves, and ground our oyster-shells in time to save the crop. Many a long evening I spent on the wharves with old Stanwix, now toothless and living on his pension, with my eye on the glow of his pipe and my ear bent to his stories of the sea. It was his fancy that the gift of prophecy had come to him with the years; and at times, when his look would wander to the black rigging in the twilight, he would speak strangely enough.

“Faith, Mr. Richard,” he would say; “tho’ your father was a soldier afore ye, ye were born to the deck of a ship-o’-war. Mark an old man’s words, sir.”

“Can you see the frigate, Stanwix?” I laughed once, when he had repeated this with more than common solemnity.

His reply rose above the singing of the locusts.

“Ay, sir, that I can. But she’s no frigate, sir. Devil knows what she is. She looks like a big merchantman to me, such as I’ve seed in the Injy trade, with a high poop in the old style. And her piercin’s be not like a frigate.” He said this with a readiness to startle me, and little enough superstition I had. A light was on his seared face, and his pipe lay neglected on the boards. “Ay, sir, and there be a flag astern of her never yet seed on earth, nor on the waters under the earth. The tide is settin’ in, the tide is settin’ in.”

Page 2011

These were words to set me thinking. And many a time they came back to me when the old man was laid away in the spot reserved for those who sailed the seas for Mr. Carvel.

Every week I drew up a report for my grandfather, and thus I strove by shouldering labour and responsibility to ease my conscience of that load which troubled it. For often, as we walked together through the yellow fields of an evening, it had been on my tongue to confess the lie Mr. Allen had led me into. But the sight of the old man, trembling and tremulous, aged by a single stroke, his childlike trust in my strength and beliefs, and above all his faith in a political creed which he nigh deemed needful for the soul's salvation,—these things still held me back. Was it worth while now, I asked myself, to disturb the peace of that mind?

Thus the summer wore on to early autumn. And one day I was standing booted and spurred in the stables, Harvey putting the bridle upon Firefly, when my boy Hugo comes running in.

"Marse Dick!" he cries, "Marse Satan he come in the pinnace, and young Marse Satan and Missis Satan, and Marse Satan's pastor!"

"What the devil do you mean, Hugo?"

"Young ebony's right, sir," chuckled Harvey; "'tis the devil and his following."

"Do you mean Mr. Grafton, fellow?" I demanded, the unwelcome truth coming over me.

"That he does," remarked Harvey, laconically. "You won't be wanting her now, your honour?"

"Hold my stirrup," I cried, for the news had put me in anger. "Hold my stirrup, sirrah!"

I believe I took Firefly the best of thirty miles that afternoon and brought her back in the half-light, my saddle discoloured with her sweat. I clanked into the hall like a captain of horse. The night was sharp with the first touch of autumn, and a huge backlog lay on the irons. Around it, in a comfortable half-circle sat our guests, Grafton and Mr. Allen and Philip smoking and drinking for a whet against supper, and Mrs. Grafton in my grandfather's chair. There was an easy air of possession about the party of them that they had never before assumed, and the sight made me rattle again, the big door behind me.

"A surprise for you, my dear nephew," Grafton said gayly, "I'll, lay a puncheon you did, not, expect us."

Mr. Carvel woke with a start at the sound of the door and said querulously, "Guests, my lord, and I have done my poor best to make them welcome in your absence."

The sense of change in him stung me. How different would his tone have been a year ago!

He tattooed with his cane, which was the sign he generally made when he was ready for bed. Toward night his speech would hurt him. I assisted him up, the stairs, my uncle taking his arm on the other side. And together, with Diomedes help; we undressed him, Grafton talking in low tomes the while: Since this was, an office I was wont to perform, my temper was now overwhelming me. But I kept my month closed. At last he had had the simple meal Dr. Leiden allowed him, his candles were snuffed, and my uncle and I made our way to the hall together: There my aunt and Mr. Allen were at picquet.

Page 2012

“Supper is insupportably late,” says she; with a yawn, and rings the hand-bell. “Scipio,” she cries, “why are we not served?”

I took a stride forward. But my uncle raised a restraining hand.

“Caroline, remember that this is not our house,” says he, reprovingly.

There fell a deep silence; the log cracking; and just then the door swung on its hinges, and Mr. Starkie entered with the great bunch of keys in his hand.

“The buildings are all secure; Mr. Richard,” he said.

“Very good, Starkie,” I replied. I turned to Scipio, standing by the low-boy, his teeth, going like a castanet.

“You may serve at the usual hour, Scipio,” said I.

Supper began stiff as a state banquet. My uncle was conciliatory, with the manners of a Crichton. My aunt, not having come from generations of silver and self-control, flatly in a bad humour. Mr. Allen talked from force of habit, being used to pay in such kind for his meals. But presently the madeira, warmed these two into a better spirit. I felt that I had victory on my side, and was nothing loth to join them at whist, Philip and I against the rector and my aunt, and won something like two pounds apiece from them. Grafton made it a rule never to play.

The next morning, when I returned from my inspection, I found the rector and Philip had decamped with two of our choice horses, and that my uncle and aunt had commanded the barge, and gone to Mr. Lloyd’s. I sent for Scipio.

“Fore de Lawd, Marse Richard,” he wailed, “’twan’t Scipio’s fault. Marse Grafton is dry fambly!” This was Scipio’s strongest argument. “I jes’ can’t refuse one of de fambly, Marse Dick; and old Marse he say he too old now for quarrellin’.”

I saw that resistance was useless. There was nothing for it but to bide any time. And I busied myself with bills of cargo until I heard the horses on the drive. Mr. Allen and Philip came swaggering in, flushed with the exercise, and calling for punch, and I met them in the hall.

“A word with you, Mr. Allen!” I called out.

“A thousand, Mr. Richard, if you like,” he said gayly, “as soon as this thirst of mine be quenched.”

I waited while he drained two glasses, when he followed me into the library, closing the door behind him.

“Now, sir,” I began, “though by a chance you are my mental and spiritual adviser, I intend speaking plain. For I know you to be one of the greatest rogues in the colony.”

I watched him narrowly the while, for I had some notion he might run me through. But I had misjudged him.

“Speak plain, by all means,” he replied; “but first let me ask for some tobacco.”

He filled the bowl of his pipe, and sat him down by the window. For the moment I was silent with sheer surprise.

“You know I can’t call you out,” he went on, surrounding himself with clouds of smoke, “a lad of eighteen or so. And even if I could, I doubt whether I should. I like you, Richard,” said he. “You are straight-spoken and commanding. In brief, sir, you are the kind of lad I should have been had not fate pushed me into a corner, and made me squirm for life’s luxuries. I hate squirming as much as another. This is prime tobacco, Richard.”

Page 2013

He had come near disarming me; I was on the edge of a dangerous admiration for this man of the world, and for the life of me, I could not help liking him then. He had a fine presence, was undeniably handsome, and his riding clothes were of the latest London cut.

“Are there not better methods for obtaining what you wish than those you practise?” I asked curiously.

“No doubt,” he answered carelessly; “but these are well enough, and shorter. You were about to do me the honour of a communication?”

This brought me to my senses. I had, however, lost much of my heat in the interval.

“I should like to know why you lied to Mr. Carvel about my convictions, Mr. Allen,” I said. “I am not of the King’s party now, and never shall be. And you know this better than another.”

“Those are strong words, Richard, my lad,” said he, bringing his eyebrows together.

“They are true words,” I retorted. “Why did you lie, I say?”

He said nothing for a while, but his breath came heavily.

“I will pass it, I will pass it,” he said at length, “but, by God! it is more than I have had to swallow in all my life before. Look at your grandfather, sir!” he cried; “behold him on the very brink of the grave, and ask me again why I lied to him! His hope of heaven is scarce less sacred to him than his love of the King, and both are so tightly wrapped about his heart that this knowledge of you would break it. Yes, break his heart, I say” (and he got to his legs), “and you would kill him for the sake of a boyish fancy!”

I knew he was acting, as well as though he had climbed upon the table and said it. And yet he had struck the very note of my own fears, and hit upon the one reason why I had not confessed lung ago.

“There is more you might have said, Mr. Allen,” I remarked presently; “you have a cause for keeping me under your instruction, and that is behind all.”

He gave me a strange look.

“You are too acute by far,” said he; “your imagination runs with you. I have said I like you, and I can teach you classics as well as another. Is it not enough to admit that the money I get for your instruction keeps me in champagne?”

“No, it is not enough,” I said stoutly.

“Then you must guess again, my lad,” he answered with a laugh, and left the room with the easy grace that distinguished him.

There was armed peace the rest of my uncle’s visit. They departed on the third day. My Aunt Caroline, when she was not at picquet with Mr. Allen or quarrelling with Mrs. Willis or with Grafton himself, yawned without cessation. She declared in one of her altercations with her lord and master that she would lose her wits were they to remain another day, a threat that did not seem to move Grafton greatly. Philip ever maintained the right to pitch it on the side of his own convenience, and he chose in this instance to come to the rescue of his dear mamma, and

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turned the scales in her favour. He was pleased to characterize the Hall as insupportable, and vowed that his clothes would be out of fashion before they reached Rousby Hall, their next stopping-place. To do Philip justice, he was more honest a rascal than his father, though I am of the opinion that he had not the brain for great craft. And he had drawn from his mother a love of baubles which kept his mind from scheming. He had little to say to me, and I less to him.

Grafton, as may be supposed, made me distinct advances before his departure, perceiving the unwisdom of antagonizing me unnecessarily. He had the imprudence once to ask of me the facts and figures of the estate; and tho' 'twas skilfully done by contrasting his own crops in Kent, you may be sure I was on my guard, and that he got nothing.

I was near forgetting an incident of their visit which I afterwards had good cause to remember. The morning of my talk with Mr. Allen I went to the stables to see how he had used Cynthia, and found old Harvey wiping her down, and rumbling the while like a crater.

"What think you of the rector as a representative of heaven, Harvey?" I asked.

"Him a representative of heaven!" he snorted; "I've heard tell of rotten boroughs, and I'm thinking Mr. Allen will be standing for one. What be him and Mr. Grafton a-doing here, sir, plotting all kinds o' crime while the old gentleman's nigh on his back?"

"Plotting?" I said, catching at the word.

"Ay, plotting," repeated Harvey, casting his cloth away; "murder and all the crimes in the calendar, I take it. I hear him and Mr. Grafton among the stalls this morning, and when they sees me they look like Knipe, here, caught with a fowl."

"And what were they saying?" I demanded.

"Saying! God only knows their wickedness. I got the words 'Upper Marlboro' and 'South River' and 'next voyage,' and that profligate rector wanted to know as to how 'Griggs was reliable.'"

I thought no more of it at the time, believing it to be some of the small rascalities they were forever at. But that name of Griggs (why, the powers only know) stuck in my mind to turn up again.

CHAPTER X.

THE RED IN THE CARVEL BLOOD

After that, when we went back to Annapolis for the winter, there was no longer any disguise between my tutor and myself. I was not of a mind to feign a situation that did not exist, nor to permit him to do so. I gave him to understand that tho' I went to him for instruction, 'twas through no fault of mine. That I would learn what I pleased and do what pleased me. And the rector, a curse upon him, seemed well content with that; nor could I come at his devil's reason far wanting me, save for the money, as he had declared. There were days when he and I never touched a hook, both being out of humour for study, when he told me yarns

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of Frederick of Prussia and his giant guard, of Florence and of Venice, and of the court of his Holiness of Rome. For he had drifted about the earth like a log-end in the Atlantic, before his Lordship gave him his present berth. We passed, too, whole mornings at picquet, I learning enough of Horace to quote at the routs we both attended, but a deal more of kings and deuces. And as I may add, that he got no more of my money than did I of his.

The wonder of it was that we never became friends. He was two men, this rector of St. Anne's, half of him as lovable as any I ever encountered. But trust him I never would, always meeting him on the middle ground; and there were times, after his talks with Grafton, when his eyes were like a cat's, and I was conscious of a sinister note in his dealing which put me on my guard.

You will say, my dears, that some change had come over me, that I was no longer the same lad I have been telling you of.

Those days were not these, yet I make no show of hiding or of palliation. Was it Dorothy's conduct that drove me? Not wholly. A wild red was ever in the Carvel blood, in Captain Jack, in Lionel, in the ancestor of King Charles's day, who fought and bled and even gambled for his king. And my grandfather knew this; he warned me, but he paid my debts. And I thank Heaven he felt that my heart was right.

I was grown now, certainly in stature. And having managed one of the largest plantations in the province, I felt the man, as lads are wont after their first responsibilities. I commanded my wine at the Coffee House with the best of the bucks, and was made a member of the South River and Jockey clubs. I wore the clothes that came out to me from London, and vied in fashion with Dr. Courtenay and other macaronies. And I drove a carriage of mine own, the Carvel arms emblazoned thereon, and Hugo in the family livery.

After a deal of thought upon the subject, I decided, for a while at least, to show no political leanings at all. And this was easier of accomplishment than you may believe, for at that time in Maryland Tory and Whig were amiable enough, and the young gentlemen of the first families dressed alike and talked alike at the parties they both attended. The non-importation association had scarce made itself felt in the dress of society. Gentlemen of degree discussed differences amicably over their decanters. And only on such occasions as Mr. Hood's return, and the procession of the Lower House through the streets, and the arrival of the Good Intent, did high words arise among the quality. And it was because class distinctions were so strongly marked that it took so long to bring loyalists and patriots of high rank to the sword's point.

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I found time to manage such business affairs of Mr. Carvel's as he could not attend to himself. Grafton and his family dined in Marlboro' Street twice in the week; my uncle's conduct toward me was the very soul of consideration, and he compelled that likewise from his wife and his son. So circumspect was he that he would have fooled one who knew him a whit less than I. He questioned me closely upon my studies, and in my grandfather's presence I was forced to answer. And when the rector came to dine and read to Mr. Carvel, my uncle catechised him so searchingly on my progress that he was pushed to the last source of his ingenuity for replies. More than once was I tempted to blurt out the whole wretched business, for I well understood there was some deep game between him and Grafton. In my uncle's absence, my aunt never lost a chance for an ill-natured remark upon Patty, whom she had seen that winter at the assemblies and elsewhere. And she deplored the state our people of fashion were coming to, that they allowed young girls without family to attend their balls.

"But we can expect little else, father," she would say to Mr. Carvel nodding in his chair, "when some of our best families openly espouse the pernicious doctrines of republicanism. They are gone half mad over that Wilkes who should have been hung before this. Philip, dear, pour the wine for your grandfather."

Miss Patty had been well received. I took her to her first assembly, where her simple and unassuming ways had made her an instant favourite; and her face, which had the beauty of dignity and repose even so early in life, gained her ample attention. I think she would have gone but little had not her father laughed her out of some of her domesticity. No longer at Sunday night supper in Gloucester Street was the guest seat empty. There was more than one guest seat now, and the honest barrister himself was the most pleased at the change. As I took my accustomed place on the settle cushion, —Patty's first embroidery,—he would cry:

"Heigho, Richard, our little Miss Prim hath become a belle. And I must have another clerk now to copy out my briefs, and a housekeeper soon, i' faith."

Patty would never fail to flush up at the words, and run to perch on her father's knee and put her hand over his mouth.

"How can you, Mr. Swain?" says she; "how can you, when 'tis you and mother, and Richard here, who make me go into the world? You know I would a thousand times rather bake your cakes and clean your silver! But you will not hear of it."

"Fie!" says the barrister. "Listen to her, Richard! And yet she will fly up the stairs to don a fine gown at the first rap of the knocker. Oh, the wenches, the wenches! Are they not all alike, mother?"

"They have changed none since I was a lass," replies the quiet invalid, with a smile. "And you should know what I was, Henry."

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“I know!” cries he; “none better. Well I recall the salmon and white your mother gave you before I came to Salem.” He sighed and then laughed at the recollection. “And when this strapping young Singleton comes, Richard, ’twould do you good to be hiding there in that cupboard,—and it would hold you,—and count the seconds until Miss Prim has her skirt in her hand and her foot on the lower step. And yet how innocent is she now before you and me.”

Here he would invariably be smothered.

“Percy Singleton!” says Patty, with a fine scorn; “’twill be Mr. Eglinton, the curate, next.”

“This I know,” says her father, slapping me on the shoulder, “this I know, that you are content to see Richard without primping.”

“But I have known Richard since I was six,” says she. “Richard is one of the family. There is no need of disguise from him.”

I thought, ruefully enough, that it seemed my fate to be one of the family everywhere I went.

And just then, as if in judgment, the gate snapped and the knocker sounded, and Patty leaped down with a blush. “What said I say?” cries the barrister. “I have not seen human nature in court for naught. Run, now,” says he, pinching her cheek as she stood hesitating whether to fly or stay; “run and put on the new dress I have bought you. And Richard and I will have a cup of ale in the study.”

The visitor chanced to be Will Fotheringay that time. He was not the only one worn out with the mad chase in Prince George Street, and preferred a quiet evening with a quiet beauty to the crowded lists of Miss Manners. Will declared that the other gallants were fools over the rare touch of blue in the black hair: give him Miss Swain’s, quoth he, lifting his glass,—hers was; the colour of a new sovereign. Will was not, the only one. But I think Percy Singleton was the best of them all, tho’ Patty ridiculed him—every chance she got, and even to his face. So will: the best-hearted and soberest of women play the coquette. Singleton was rather a reserved young Englishman of four and twenty, who owned a large estate in Talbot which he was laying out with great success. Of a Whig family in the old country, he had been drawn to that party in the new, and so, had made Mr. Swain’s acquaintance. The next step in his fortunes was to fall in love with Patty, which was natural enough. Many a night that winter I walked with him from Gloucester Street to the Coffee House, to sit an hour over, a battle. And there Master Tom and Dr. Hamilton, and other gay macaronies would sometimes join us. Singleton had a greater contempt for Tom than I, but bore with him for his sister’s sake. For Tom, in addition to his other follies, was become an open loyalist, and never missed his Majesty’s health, though he knew no better than my Hugo the question at issue. ’Twas

not zeal for King George, however, that made him drunk at one of the assemblies, and forced his sister to leave in the midst of a dance for very shame.

Page 2018

“Oh, Richard, is, there not something you can do?” she cried, when, I had got her back in the little parlour in Gloucester Street; “father has argued and, pleaded and threatened in vain. I thought,—I thought perhaps you might help him.”

“I think I am not one to preach, or to boast,” I replied soberly.

“Yes,” said she, looking grave; “I know you are wilder than you used to be; that you play more than you ought, and higher than you ought.”

I was silent.

“And I suspect at whose door it lies,” said she.

“’Tis in the blood, Patty,” I answered.

She glanced at me quickly.

“I know you better than you think,” she said. “But Tom has not your excuse. And if he had only your faults I would say nothing. He does not care for those he should, and he is forever in the green-room of the theatre.”

I made haste to change the subject, and to give her what comfort I might; for she was sobbing before she finished. And the next day I gave Tom a round talking-to for having so little regard for his sister, the hem of whose skirt he was not worthy to touch. He took it meekly enough, with a barrel of pat excuses to come after. And he asked me to lend him my phaeton, that he might go a-driving with Miss Crane, of the theatrical company, to Round Bay!

Meanwhile I saw Miss Manners more frequently than was good for my peace of mind, and had my turn as her partner at the balls. But I could not bring myself to take third or fourth rank in the army that attended her. I, who had been her playmate, would not become her courtier. Besides, I had not the wit.

Was it strange that Dr. Courtenay should pride himself upon the discovery of a new beauty? And in the Coffee House, and in every drawing-room in town, prophesy for her a career of conquest such as few could boast? She was already launched upon that career. And rumour had it that Mr. Marmaduke was even then considering taking her home to London, where the stage was larger and the triumph greater. Was it surprising that the Gazette should contain a poem with the doctor’s well-known ear-marks upon it? It set the town a-wagging, and left no room for doubt as to who had inspired it.

> “Sweet Pandora, tho’ formed of Clay,
> Was fairer than the Light of Day.
> By Venus learned in Beauty’s Arts,
> And destined thus to conquer Hearts.

A Goddess of this Town, I ween,
Fair as Pandora, scarce Sixteen,
Is destined, e'en by Jove's Command,
To conquer all of Maryland.
Oh, Bachelors, play have a Care,
For She will all your Hearts ensnare."

So it ran. I think, if dear Mrs. Manners could have had her way, Dolly would have passed that year at a certain young ladies' school in New York. But Mr. Marmaduke's pride in his daughter's beauty got the better of her. The strut in his gait became more marked the day that poem appeared, and he went to the Coffee House both morning and evening, taking snuff to hide his emotions when Miss Manners was spoken of; and he was perceived by many in Church Street arm in arm with Dr. Courtenay himself.

Page 2019

As you may have imagined before now, the doctor's profession was leisure, not medicine. He had known ambition once, it was said, and with reason, for he had studied surgery in Germany for the mere love of the science. After which, making the grand tour in France and Italy, he had taken up that art of being a gentleman in which men became so proficient in my young days. He had learned to speak French like a Parisian, had hobnobbed with wit and wickedness from Versailles to Rome, and then had come back to Annapolis to set the fashions and to spend the fortune his uncle lately had left him. He was our censor of beauty, and passed judgment upon all young ladies as they stepped into the arena. To be noticed by him meant success; to be honoured in the Gazette was to be crowned at once a reigning belle. The chord of his approval once set a-vibrating, all minor chords sang in harmony. And it was the doctor who raised the first public toast to Miss Manners. Alas! I might have known it would be so!

But Miss Dorothy was not of a nature to remain dependent upon a censor's favour. The minx deported herself like any London belle of experience, as tho' she had known the world from her cradle. She was not to be deceived by the face value of the ladies' praises, nor rebuffed unmercifully by my Aunt Caroline, who had held the sceptre in the absence of a younger aspirant. The first time these ladies clashed, which was not long in coming, my aunt met with a wit as sharp again as her own, and never afterwards essayed an open tilt. The homage of men Dolly took as Caesar received tribute, as a matter of course. The doctor himself rode to the races beside the Manners coach, leaning gallantly over the door. My lady held court in her father's box, received and dismissed, smiled and frowned, with Courtenay as her master of ceremonies. Mr. Dulany was one of the presidents of the Jockey Club that year, and his horse winning the honours he presented her with his colours, scarlet and white, which she graciously wore. The doctor swore he would import a horse the next season on the chance of the privilege. My aunt was furious. I have never mentioned her beauty because I never could see it. 'Twas a coarser type than attracted me. She was then not greatly above six and thirty, appearing young for that age, and she knew the value of lead in judicious quantity. At that meet gentlemen came to her box only to tally of Miss Manners, to marvel that one so young could have the 'bel air', to praise her beauty and addresse, or to remark how well Mr. Durlany's red and white became her. With all of which Mrs. Grafton was fain to agree, and must even excel, until her small stock of patience was exhausted. To add to her chagrin my aunt lost a pretty sum to the rector by Mr. Dulany's horse. I came upon her after the race trying to coax her head-dress, through her coach door, Mr. Allen having tight hold of her hand the while.

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“And so he thinks he has found a divinity, does: he?” I overheard her saying: “I, for one, am heartily sick of Dr. Courtenay’s motions. Were he, to choose, a wench out of the King’s passengers I’d warrant our macaronies to compose odes to her eyebrows.” And at that moment perceiving me she added, “Why so disconsolate, my dear nephew? Miss Dolly is the craze now, and will last about as long as another of the doctor’s whims. And then you shall have her to yourself.”

“A pretty woman is ever the fashion, Aunt Caroline,” I said.

“Hoity-toity,” returned my aunt, who had by then succeeded in getting her head-gear safe within; “the fashion, yes until a prettier comes along.”

“There is small danger of that for the present,” I said, smiling: “Surely you can find no fault with this choice!”

“Gadzooks! If I were blind, sir, I think I might!” she cried unguardedly.

“I will not dispute that, Aunt Caroline,” I answered.

And as I rode off I heard her giving directions in no mild tone to the coachman through Mr. Allen.

Perchance you did not know, my dears, that Annapolis had the first theatre in all the colonies. And if you care to search through the heap of Maryland Gazettes in the garret, I make no doubt you will come across this announcement for a certain night in the spring of the year 1769:

By Permission of his Excellency, the Governor,
at the New Theatre in Annapolis,
by the American Company of Comedians, on Monday
next, being the 22nd of this Instant, will be performed

Romeo and Juliet.

(Romeo by a young Gentleman for his Diversion.)
Likewise the Farce called

Miss in her teens.

To begin precisely at Seven of the Clock. Tickets
to be had at the Printing Office. Box 10s. Pit 1s 6d.
No Person to be admitted behind the Scenes.

The gentleman to perform Romeo was none other than Dr. Courtenay himself. He had a gentlemanly passion for the stage, as was the fashion in those days, and had

organized many private theatricals. The town was in a ferment over the event, boxes being taken a week ahead. The doctor himself writ the epilogue, to be recited by the beautiful Mrs. Hallam, who had inspired him the year before to compose that famous poem beginning:

> "Around her see the Graces play,
> See Venus' Wanton doves,
> And in her Eye's Pellucid Ray
> See little Laughing Loves.
> Ye gods! 'Tis Cytherea's Face."

You may find that likewise in Mr. Green's newspaper.

The new theatre was finished in West Street that spring, the old one having proven too small for our gay capital. 'Twas then the best in the New World, the censor having pronounced it far above any provincial playhouse he had seen abroad. The scenes were very fine, the boxes carved and gilded in excellent good taste, and both pit and gallery commodious. And we, too, had our "Fops' Alley," where our macaronies ogled the fair and passed from box to box.

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For that night of nights when the doctor acted I received an invitation from Dolly to Mr. Marmaduke's box, and to supper afterward in Prince George Street. When I arrived, the playhouse was lit with myriad candles,—to be snuffed save the footlights presently,—and the tiers were all brilliant with the costumes of ladies and gentlemen. Miss Tayloe and Miss Dulany were of our party, with Fitzhugh and Worthington, and Mr. Manners for propriety. The little fop spent his evening, by the way, in a box opposite, where my Aunt Caroline gabbled to him and Mr. Allen during the whole performance. My lady got more looks than any in the house. She always drew admiration; indeed, but there had been much speculation of late whether she favoured Dr. Courtenay or Fitzhugh, and some had it that the doctor's acting would decide between the two.

When Romeo came upon the stage he was received with loud applause. But my lady showed no interest,—not she, while the doctor fervently recited, "Out of her favour, where I am in love." In the first orchard scene, with the boldness of a practised lover, he almost ignored Mrs. Hallam in the balcony. It seemed as though he cast his burning words and languishing glances at my lady in the box, whereupon there was a deal of nudging round about. Miss asked for her smelling salts, and declared the place was stifling. But I think if the doctor had cherished a hope of her affections he lost it when he arrived at the lines, "She speaks, yet she says nothing." At that unhappy moment Miss Dorothy was deep in conversation with Fitzhugh, the audible titter in the audience arousing her. How she reddened when she perceived the faces turned her way!

"What was it, Betty?" she demanded quickly.

But Betty was not spiteful, and would not tell. Fitzhugh himself explained, and to his sorrow, for during the rest of the evening she would have nothing to do with him. Presently she turned to me. Glancing upward to where Patty leaned on the rail between Will Fotheringay and Singleton, she whispered:

"I wonder you can sit here so quiet, Richard. You are showing a deal of self-denial."

"I am happy enough," I answered, surprised.

"I hear you have a rival," says she.

"I know I have a dozen," I answered.

"I saw Percy Singleton walking with her in Mr. Galloway's fields but yesterday," said Dolly, "and as they came out upon the road they looked as guilty as if I had surprised them arm in arm."

Now that she should think I cared for Patty never entered my head. I was thrown all in a heap.

“You need not be so disturbed,” whispers my lady. “Singleton has a crooked mouth, and I credit Patty with ample sense to choose between you. I adore her, Richard. I wish I had her sweet ways.”

“But,” I interrupted, when I was somewhat recovered, “why should you think me in love with Patty? I have never been accused of that before.”

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“Oh, fie! You deny her?” says Dolly. “I did not think that of you, Richard.”

“You should know better,” I replied, with some bitterness.

We were talking in low tones, Dolly with her head turned from the stage, whence the doctor was flinging his impassioned speeches in vain. And though the light fell not upon her face, I seemed to feel her looking me through and through.

“You do not care for Patty?” she whispered. And I thought a quiver of earnestness was in her voice. Her face was so close to mine that her breath fanned my cheek.

“No,” I said. “Why do you ask me? Have I ever been one to make pretences?”

She turned away.

“But you,” I said, bending to her ear, “is it Fitzhugh, Dorothy?”

I heard her laugh softly.

“No,” said she, “I thought you might divine, sir.”

Was it possible? And yet she had played so much with me that I dared not risk the fire. She had too many accomplished gallants at her feet to think of Richard, who had no novelty and no wit. I sat still, barely conscious of the rising and falling voices beyond the footlights, feeling only her living presence at my side. She spoke not another word until the playhouse servants had relighted the chandeliers, and Dr. Courtenay came in, flushed with triumph, for his mead of praise.

“And how went it, Miss Manners?” says he, very confident.

“Why, you fell over the orchard wall, doctor,” retorts my lady. “La! I believe I could have climbed it better myself.”

And all he got was a hearty laugh for his pains, Mr. Marmaduke joining in from the back of the box. And the story was at the Coffee House early on the morrow.

CHAPTER XI

A FESTIVAL AND A PARTING

My grandfather and I were seated at table together. It was early June, the birds were singing in the garden, and the sweet odours of the flowers were wafted into the room.

“Richard,” says he, when Scipio had poured his claret, “my illness cheated you out of your festival last year. I dare swear you deem yourself too old for birthdays now.”

I laughed.

“So it is with lads,” said Mr. Carvel; “they will rush into manhood as heedless as you please. Take my counsel, boy, and remain young. Do not cross the bridge before you have to. And I have been thinking that we shall have your fete this year, albeit you are grown, and Miss Dolly is the belle of the province. ’Tis like sunshine into my old heart to see the lads and lasses again, and to hear the merry, merry fiddling. I will have his new Excellency, who seems a good and a kindly man, and Lloyd and Tilghman and Dulany and the rest, with their ladies, to sit with me. And there will be plenty of punch and syllabub and sangaree, I warrant; and tarts and jellies and custards, too, for the misses. Ring for Mrs. Willis, my son.”

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Willis came with her curtsey to the old gentleman, who gave his order then and there. He never waited for a fancy of this kind to grow cold.

“We shall all be children again, on that day, Mrs. Willis,” says he. “And I catch any old people about, they shall be thrust straight in the town stocks, i’ faith.”

Willis made another curtsey.

“We missed it sorely, last year, please your honour,” says she, and departs smiling.

“And you shall have your Patty Swain, Richard,” Mr. Carvel continued. “Do you mind how you once asked the favour of inviting her in the place of a present? Oons! I loved you for that, boy. ’Twas like a Carvel. And I love that lass, Whig or no Whig. ’Pon my soul, I do. She hath demureness and dignity, and suits me better than yon whimsical baggage you are all mad over. I’ll have Mr. Swain beside me, too. I’ll warrant I’d teach his daughter loyalty in a day, and I had again your years and your spirit!”

I have but to close my eyes, and my fancy takes me back to that birthday festival. Think of it, my dears! Near threescore years are gone since then, when this old man you call grandfather, and some—bless me!—great-grandfather, was a lusty lad like Comyn here. But his hand is steady as he writes these words and his head clear, because he hath not greatly disabused that life which God has given him.

How can I, tho’ her face and form are painted on my memory, tell you what fair, pert Miss Dorothy was at that time’! Ay, I know what you would say: that Sir Joshua’s portrait hangs above, executed but the year after, and hung at the second exhibition of the Royal Academy. As I look upon it now, I say that no whit of its colour is overcharged. And there is likewise Mr. Peale’s portrait, done much later. I answer that these great masters have accomplished what poor, human art can do. But Nature hath given us a better picture. “Come hither, Bess! Yes, truly, you have Dolly’s hair, with the very gloss upon it. But fashions have changed, my child, and that is not as Dolly wore it.” Whereupon Bess goes to the portrait, and presently comes back to give me a start. And then we go hand in hand up the stairs of Calvert House even to the garret, where an old cedar chest is laid away under the eaves. Bess, the minx, well knows it, and takes out a prim little gown with the white fading yellow, and white silk mits without fingers, and white stockings with clocks, and a gauze cap, with wings and streamers, that sits saucily on the black locks; and the lawn-embroidered apron; and such dainty, high-heeled slippers with the pearls still a-glisten upon the buckles. Away she flies to put them on. And then my heart gives a leap to see my Dorothy back again,—back again as she was that June afternoon we went together to my last birthday party, her girlish arms bare to the elbow, and the lace about her slender throat. Yes, Bess hath the very tilt of her chin, the regal grace of that slim figure, and the deep blue eyes.

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“Grandfather, dear, you are crushing the gown!”

And so the fire is not yet gone out of this old frame.

Ah, yes, there they are again, those unpaved streets of old Annapolis arched with great trees on either side. And here is Dolly, holding her skirt in one hand and her fan in the other, and I in a brave blue coat, and pumps with gold buttons, and a cocked hat of the newest fashion. I had met her leaning over the gate in Prince George Street. And, what was strange for her, so deep in thought that she jumped when I spoke her name.

“Dorothy, I have come for you to walk to the party, as we used when we were children.”

“As we used when we were children!” cried she. And flinging wide the gate, stretched out her hand for me to take. “And you are eighteen years to-day! It seems but last year when we skipped hand in hand to Marlboro’ Street with Mammy Lucy behind us. Are you coming, mammy?” she called.

“Yes, mistis, I’se comin’,” said a voice from behind the golden-rose bushes, and out stepped Aunt Lucy in a new turban, making a curtsey to me. “La, Marse Richard!” said she, “to think you’se growed to be a fine gemman! ‘Taint but t’other day you was kissin’ Miss Dolly on de plantation.”

“It seems longer than that to me, Aunt Lucy,” I answered, laughing at Dolly’s blushes.

“You have too good a memory, mammy,” said my lady, withdrawing her fingers from mine.

“Bress you, honey! De ole woman doan’t forgit some things.”

And she fell back to a respectful six paces.

“Those were happy times,” said Dorothy. Then the little sigh became a laugh. “I mean to enjoy myself to-day, Richard. But I fear I shall not see as much of you as I used. You are old enough to play the host, now.”

“You shall see as much as you will.”

“Where have you been of late, sir? In Gloucester Street?”

“’Tis your own fault, Dolly. You are changeable as the sky,—to-day sunny, and to-morrow cold. I am sure of my welcome in Gloucester Street.”

She tripped a step as we turned the corner, and came closer to my side.

“You must learn to take me as you find me, dear Richard. To-day I am in a holiday humour.”

Some odd note in her tone troubled me, and I glanced at her quickly. She was a constant wonder and puzzle to me. After that night at the theatre my hopes had risen for the hundredth time, but I had gone to Prince George Street on the morrow to meet another rebuff—and Fitzhugh. So I had learned to interpret her by other means than words, and now her mood seemed reckless rather than merry.

“Are you not happy, Dolly?” I asked abruptly.

She laughed. “What a silly question!” she said. “Why do you ask?”

“Because I believe you are not.”

In surprise she looked up at me, and then down at the pearls upon her satin slippers.

“I am going with you to your birthday festival, Richard. Could we wish for more? I am as happy as you.”

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“That may well be, for I might be happier.”

Again her eyes met mine, and she hummed an air. So we came to the gate, beside which stood Diomedes and Hugo in the family claret-red. A coach was drawn up, and another behind it, and we went down the leafy walk in the midst of a bevy of guests.

We have no such places nowadays, my dears, as was my grandfather’s. The ground between the street and the brick wall in the rear was a great stretch, as ample in acreage as many a small country-place we have in these times. The house was on the high land in front, hedged in by old trees, and thence you descended by stately tiers until you came to the level which held the dancers. Beyond that, and lower still, a lilied pond widened out of the sluggish brook with a cool and rustic spring-house at one end. The spring-house was thatched, with windows looking out upon the water. Long after, when I went to France, I was reminded of the shy beauty of this part of my old home by the secluded pond of the Little Trianon. So was it that King Louis’s Versailles had spread its influence a thousand leagues to our youthful continent.

My grandfather sat in his great chair on the sward beside the fiddlers, his old friends gathering around him, as in former years.

“And this is the miss that hath already broken half the bachelor hearts in town!” said he, gayly. “What was my prediction, Miss Dolly, when you stepped your first dance at Carvel Hall?”

“Indeed, you do me wrong, Mr. Carvel!”

“And I were a buck, you would not break mine, I warrant, unless it were tit for tat,” said my grandfather; thereby putting me to more confusion than Dolly, who laughed with the rest.

“’Tis well to boast, Mr. Carvel, when we are out of the battle,” cried Mr. Lloyd.

Dolly was carried off immediately, as I expected. The doctor and Worthington and Fitzhugh were already there, and waiting. I stood by Mr. Carvel’s chair, receiving the guests, and presently came Mr. Swain and Patty.

“Heigho!” called Mr. Carvel, when he saw her; “here is the young lady that hath my old affections. You are right welcome, Mr. Swain. Scipio, another chair! ’Tis not over the wall any more, Miss Patty, with our flowered India silk. But I vow I love you best with your etui.”

Patty, too, was carried off, for you may be sure that Will Fotheringay and Singleton were standing on one foot and then the other, waiting for Mr. Carvel to have done. Next arrived my aunt, in a wide calash and a wider hoop, her stays laced so that she limped, and her hair wonderfully and fearfully arranged by her Frenchman. Neither she nor

Grafton was slow to shower congratulations upon my grandfather and myself. Mr. Marmaduke went through the ceremony after them. Dorothy's mother drew me aside. As long as I could remember her face had been one that revealed a life's disappointment. But to-day I thought it bore a trace of a deeper anxiety.

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“How well I recall this day, eighteen years ago, Richard,” she said. “And how proud your dear mother was that she had given a son to Captain Jack. She had prayed for a son. I hope you will always do your parents credit, my dear boy. They were both dear, dear friends of mine.”

My Aunt Caroline’s harsher voice interrupted her.

“Gadzooks, ma’am!” she cried, as she approached us, “I have never in my life laid eyes upon such beauty as your daughter’s. You will have to take her home, Mrs. Manners, to do her justice. You owe it her, ma’am. Come, nephew, off with you, and head the minuet with Miss Dolly!”

My grandfather was giving the word to the fiddlers. But whether a desire to cross my aunt held me back, or a sense of duty to greet the guests not already come, or a vague intuition of some impending news drawn from Mrs. Manners and Dorothy, I know not. Mr. Fitzhugh was easily persuaded to take my place, and presently I slipped unnoticed into a shaded seat on the side of the upper terrace, whence I could see the changing figures on the green. And I thought of the birthday festivals Dolly and I had spent here, almost since we were of an age to walk. Wet June days, when the broad wings of the house rang with the sound of silver laughter and pattering feet, and echoed with music from the hall; and merry June days, when the laughter rippled among the lilacs, and pansies and poppies and sweet peas were outshone by bright gowns and brighter faces. And then, as if to complete the picture of the past, my eye fell upon our mammies modestly seated behind the group of older people, Aunt Hester and Aunt Lucy, their honest, black faces aglow with such unselfish enjoyment as they alone could feel.

How easily I marked Dorothy among the throng!

Other girls found it hard to compress the spirits of youth within the dignity of a minuet, and thought of the childish romp of former years. Not so my lady. Long afterwards I saw her lead a ball with the first soldier and gentleman of the land, but on that Tuesday she carried herself full as well, so well that his Excellency and the gentlemen about him applauded heartily. As the strains died away and the couples moved off among the privet-lined paths, I went slowly down the terrace. Dorothy had come up to speak to her mother, Dr. Courtenay lingering impatient at her side. And though her colour glowed deeper, and the wind had loosed a wisp of her hair, she took his Excellency’s compliments undisturbed. Colonel Sharpe, our former governor, who now made his home in the province, sat beside him.

“Now where a-deuce were you, Richard?” said he. “You have missed as pleasing a sight as comes to a man in a lifetime. Why were you not here to see Miss Manners tread a minuet? My word! Terpsichore herself could scarce have made it go better.”

“I saw the dance, sir, from a safe distance,” I replied.

“I’ll warrant!” said he, laughing, while Dolly shot me a wayward glance from under her long lashes. “I’ll warrant your eyes were fast on her from beginning to end. Come, sir, confess!”

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His big frame shook with the fun of it, for none in the colony could be jollier than he on holiday occasions: and the group of ladies and gentlemen beside him caught the infection, so that I was sore put to it.

“Will your Excellency confess likewise?” I demanded.

“So I will, Richard, and make patent to all the world that she hath the remains of that shuttlecock, my heart.”

Up gets his Excellency (for so we still called him) and makes Dolly a low reverence, kissing the tips of her white fingers. My lady drops a mock curtsey in return.

“Your Excellency can do no less than sue for a dance,” drawled Dr. Courtenay.

“And no more, I fear, sir, not being so nimble as I once was. I resign in your favour, doctor,” said Colonel Sharpe.

Dr. Courtenay made his bow, his hat tucked under his arm. But he had much to learn of Miss Manners if he thought that even one who had been governor of the province could command her. The music was just begun again, and I making off in the direction of Patty Swain, when I was brought up as suddenly as by a rope. A curl was upon Dorothy’s lips.

“The dance belongs to Richard, doctor,” she said.

“Egad, Courtenay, there you have a buffer!” cried Colonel Sharpe, as the much-discomfited doctor bowed with a very ill grace; while I, in no small bewilderment, walked off with Dorothy. And a parting shot of the delighted colonel brought the crimson to my face. Like the wind or April weather was my lady, and her ways far beyond such a great simpleton as I.

“So I am ever forced to ask you to dance!” said Dolly.

“What were you about, moping off alone, with a party in your honour, sir?”

“I was watching you, as I told his Excellency.”

“Oh, fie!” she cried. “Why don’t you assert yourself, Richard? There was a time when you gave me no peace.”

“And then you rebuked me for dangling,” I retorted.

Up started the music, the fiddlers bending over their bows with flushed faces, having dipped into the cool punch in the interval. Away flung my lady to meet Singleton, while I swung Patty, who squeezed my hand in return. And soon we were in the heat of it,—-

sober minuet no longer, but romp and riot, the screams of the lasses a-mingle with our own laughter, as we spun them until they were dizzy. My brain was a-whirl as well, and presently I awoke to find Dolly pinching my arm.

“Have you forgotten me, Richard?” she whispered. “My other hand, sir. It is I down the middle.”

Down we flew between the laughing lines, Dolly tripping with her head high, and then back under the clasped hands in the midst of a fire of raillery. Then the music stopped. Some strange exhilaration was in Dorothy.

“Do you remember the place where I used to play fairy godmother, and wind the flowers into my hair?” said she.

What need to ask?

“Come!” she commanded decisively.

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“With all my heart!” I exclaimed, wondering at this new caprice.

“If we can but slip away unnoticed, they will never find us there,” she said. And led the way herself, silent. At length we came to the damp shade where the brook dived under the corner of the wall. I stooped to gather the lilies of the valley, and she wove them into her hair as of old. Suddenly she stopped, the bunch poised in her hand.

“Would you miss me if I went away, Richard?” she asked, in a low voice.

“What do you mean, Dolly?” I cried, my voice failing. “Just that,” said she.

“I would miss you, and sorely, tho’ you give me trouble enough.”

“Soon I shall not be here to trouble you, Richard. Papa has decided that we sail next week, on the Annapolis, for home.”

“Home!” I gasped. “England?”

“I am going to make my bow to royalty,” replied she, dropping a deep curtsey. “Your Majesty, this is Miss Manners, of the province of Maryland!”

“But next week!” I repeated, with a blank face. “Surely you cannot be ready for the Annapolis!”

“McAndrews has instructions to send our things after,” said she. “There! You are the first person I have told. You should feel honoured, sir.”

I sat down upon the grass by the brook, and for the moment the sap of life seemed to have left me. Dolly continued to twine the flowers. Through the trees sifted the voices and the music, sounds of happiness far away. When I looked up again, she was gazing into the water.

“Are you glad to go?” I asked.

“Of course,” answered the minx, readily. “I shall see the world, and meet people of consequence.”

“So you are going to England to meet people of consequence!” I cried bitterly.

“How provincial you are, Richard! What people of consequence have we here? The Governor and the honourable members of his Council, forsooth! There is not a title save his Excellency’s in our whole colony, and Virginia is scarce better provided.”

“In spite of my feeling I was fain to laugh at this, knowing well that she had culled it all from little Mr. Marmaduke himself.

“All in good time,” said I. “We shall have no lack of noted men presently.”

“Mere two-penny heroes,” she retorted. “I know your great men, such as Mr. Henry and Dr. Franklin and Mr. Adams.”

I began pulling up the grass savagely by the roots.

“I’ll lay a hundred guineas you have no regrets at leaving any of us, my fine miss!” I cried, getting to my feet. “You would rather be a lady of fashion than have the love of an honest man,—you who have the hearts of too many as it is.”

Her eyes lighted, but with mirth. Laughing, she chose a little bunch of the lilies and worked them into my coat.

“Richard, you silly goose!” she said; “I dote upon seeing you in a temper.”

I stood between anger and God knows what other feelings, now starting away, now coming back to her. But I always came back.

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“You have ever said you would marry an earl, Dolly,” I said sadly. “I believe you do not care for any of us one little bit.”

She turned away, so that for the moment I could not see her face, then looked at me with exquisite archness over her shoulder. The low tones of her voice were of a richness indescribable. ’Twas seldom she made use of them.

“You will be coming to Oxford, Richard.”

“I fear not, Dolly,” I replied soberly. “I fear not, now. Mr. Carvel is too feeble for me to leave him.”

At that she turned to me, another mood coming like a gust of wind on the Chesapeake.

“Oh, how I wish they were all like you!” she cried, with a stamp of her foot. “Sometimes I despise gallantry. I hate the smooth compliments of your macaronies. I thank Heaven you are big and honest and clumsy and—”

“And what, Dorothy?” I asked, bewildered.

“And stupid,” said she. “Now take me back, sir.”

We had not gone thirty paces before we heard a hearty bass voice singing:

> “’It was a lover and his lass,
> With a hey, with a ho, with a hey nonino.’”

And there was Colonel Sharpe, straying along among the privet hedges.

And so the morning of her sailing came, so full of sadness for me. Why not confess, after nigh threescore years, that break of day found me pacing the deserted dock. At my back, across the open space, was the irregular line of quaint, top-heavy shops since passed away, their sightless windows barred by solid shutters of oak. The good ship Annapolis, which was to carry my playmate to broader scenes, lay among the shipping, in the gray roads just quickening with returning light. How my heart ached that morning none shall ever know. But, as the sun shot a burning line across the water, a new salt breeze sprang up and fanned a hope into flame. ’Twas the very breeze that was to blow Dorothy down the bay. Sleepy apprentices took down the shutters, and polished the windows until they shone again; and chipper Mr. Denton Jacques, who did such a thriving business opposite, presently appeared to wish me a bright good morning.

I knew that Captain Waring proposed to sail at ten of the clock; but after breakfasting, I was of two minds whether to see the last of Miss Dorothy, foreseeing a levee in her honour upon the ship. And so it proved. I had scarce set out in a pungy from the dock, when I perceived a dozen boats about the packet; and when I thrust my shoulders

through the gangway, there was the company gathered at the mainmast. They made a gay bit of colour,—Dr. Courtenay in a green coat laced with fine Mechlin, Fitzhugh in claret and silk stockings of a Quaker gray, and the other gentlemen as smartly drest. The Dulany girls and the Fotheringay girls, and I know not how many others, were there to see their friend off for home.

In the midst of them was Dorothy, in a crimson silk capuchin, for we had had one of our changes of weather. It was she who spied me as I was drawing down the ladder again.

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“It is Richard!” I heard her cry. “He has come at last.”

I gripped the rope tightly, sprang to the deck, and faced her as she came out of the group, her lips parted, and the red of her cheeks vying with the hood she wore. I took her hand silently.

“I had given you over, Richard,” she said, her eyes looking reproachfully into mine. “Another ten minutes, and I should not have seen you.”

Indeed, the topsails were already off the caps, the captain on deck, and the men gathered at the capstan.

“Have you not enough to wish you good-by, Dolly?” I asked.

“There must be a score of them,” said my lady, making a face. “But I wish to talk to you.”

Mr. Marmaduke, however, had no notion of allowing a gathering in his daughter’s honour to be broken up. It had been wickedly said of him, when the news of his coming departure got around, that he feared Dorothy would fall in love with some provincial beau before he could get her within reach of a title. When he observed me talking to her, he hurried away from the friends come to see his wife (he had none himself), and seizing me by the arm implored me to take good care of my dear grandfather, and to write them occasionally of the state of his health, and likewise how I fared.

“I think Dorothy will miss you more than any of them, Richard,” said he. “Will you not, my dear?”

But she was gone. I, too, left him without ceremony, to speak to Mrs. Manners, who was standing apart, looking shoreward. She started when I spoke, and I saw that tears were in her eyes.

“Are you coming back soon, Mrs. Manners?” I asked.

“Oh, Richard! I don’t know,” she answered, with a little choke in her voice. “I hope it will be no longer than a year, for we are leaving all we hold dear for a very doubtful pleasure.”

She bade me write to them, as Mr. Marmaduke had, only she was sincere. Then the mate came, with his hand to his cap, respectfully to inform visitors that the anchor was up and down. Albeit my spirits were low, ’twas no small entertainment to watch the doctor and his rivals at their adieus. Courtenay had at his command an hundred subterfuges to outwit his fellows, and so manoeuvred that he was the last of them over the side. As for me, luckily, I was not worth a thought. But as the doctor leaned over her hand, I vowed in my heart that if Dorothy was to be gained only in such a way I

would not stoop to it. And in my heart I doubted it. I heard Dr. Courtenay hint, looking meaningly at her cloak, that some of his flowers would not have appeared amiss there.

“Why, doctor,” says my lady aloud, with a side glance at me, “the wisdom of Solomon might not choose out of twenty baskets.”

And this was all the thanks he got for near a boat-load of roses! When at length the impatient mate had hurried him off, Dolly turned to me. It was not in me to say more than:

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“Good-by, Dorothy. And do not forget your old playmate. He will never forget you.”

We stood within the gangway. With a quick movement she threw open her cloak, and pinned to her gown I saw a faded bunch of lilies of the valley.

I had but the time to press her hand. The boatswain’s pipe whistled, and the big ship was already sliding in the water as I leaped into my pungy, which Hugo was holding to the ladder. We pulled off to where the others waited.

But the Annapolis sailed away down the bay, and never another glimpse we caught of my lady.

CHAPTER XII

NEWS FROM A FAR COUNTRY

If perchance, my dears, there creeps into this chronicle too much of an old man’s heart, I know he will be forgiven. What life ever worth living has been without its tender attachment? Because, forsooth, my hair is white now, does Bess flatter herself I do not know her secret? Or does Comyn believe that these old eyes can see no farther than the spectacles before them? Were it not for the lovers, my son, satins and broadcloths had never been invented. And were it not for the lovers, what joys and sorrows would we lack in our lives!

That was a long summer indeed. And tho’ Wilmot House was closed, I often rode over of a morning when the dew was on the grass. It cheered me to smoke a pipe with old McAndrews, Mr. Manners’s factor, who loved to talk of Miss Dorothy near as much as I. He had served her grandfather, and people said that had it not been for McAndrews, the Manners fortune had long since been scattered, since Mr. Marmaduke knew nothing of anything that he should. I could not hear from my lady until near the first of October, and so I was fain to be content with memories—memories and hard work. For I had complete charge of the plantation now.

My Uncle Grafton came twice or thrice, but without his family, Aunt Caroline and Philip having declared their independence. My uncle’s manner to me was now of studied kindness, and he was at greater pains than before to give me no excuse for offence. I had little to say to him. He spent his visits reading to Mr. Carvel, who sat in his chair all the day long. Mr. Allen came likewise, to perform the same office.

My contempt for the rector was grown more than ever. On my grandfather’s account, however, I refrained from quarrelling with him. And, when we were alone, my plain speaking did not seem to anger him, or affect him in any way. Others came, too. Such was the affection Mr. Carvel’s friends bore him that they did not desert him when he was

no longer the companion he had been in former years. We had more company than the summer before.

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In the autumn a strange thing happened. When we had taken my grandfather to the Hall in June, his dotage seemed to settle upon him. He became a trembling old man, at times so peevish that we were obliged to summon with an effort what he had been. He was suspicious and fault-finding with Scipio and the other servants, though they were never so busy for his wants. Mrs. Willis's dainties were often untouched, and he would frequently sit for hours between slumber and waking, or mumble to himself as I read the prints. But about the time of the equinoctial a great gale came out of the south so strongly that the water rose in the river over the boat landing; and the roof was torn from one of the curing-sheds. The next morning dawned clear, and brittle, and blue. To my great surprise, Mr. Carvel sent for me to walk with him about the place, that he might see the damage with his own eyes. A huge walnut had fallen across the drive, and when he came upon it he stopped abruptly.

"Old friend!" he cried, "have you succumbed? After all these years have you dropped from the weight of a blow?" He passed his hand caressingly along the trunk, and scarce ever had I seen him so affected. In truth, for the instant I thought him deranged. He raised his cane above his shoulder and struck the bark so heavily that the silver head sunk deep into the wood. "Look you, Richard," he said, the water coming into his eyes, "look you, the heart of it is gone, lad; and when the heart is rotten 'tis time for us to go. That walnut was a life friend, my son. We have grown together," he continued, turning from me to the giant and brushing his cheeks, "but by God's good will we shall not die so, for my heart is still as young as the days when you were sprouting."

And he walked back to the house more briskly than he had come, refusing, for the first time, my arm. And from that day, I say, he began to mend. The lacing of red came again to his cheeks, and before we went back to town he had walked with me to Master Dingley's tavern on the highroad, and back.

We moved into Marlboro' Street the first part of November. I had seen my lady off for England, wearing my faded flowers, the panniers of the fine gentleman in a neglected pile at her cabin door. But not once had she deigned to write me. It was McAndrews who told me of her safe arrival. In Annapolis rumours were a-flying of conquests she had already made. I found Betty Tayloe had had a letter, filled with the fashion in caps and gowns, and the mention of more than one noble name. All of this being, for unknown reasons, sacred, I was read only part of the postscript, in which I figured: "The London Season was done almost before we arrived," so it ran. "We had but the Opportunity to pay our Humble Respects to their Majesties; and appear at a few Drum-Majors and Garden Fetes. Now we are off to Brighthelmstone, and thence, so Papa says, to Spa and the Continent until the end of January. I am pining for news of Maryland, dearest Betty. Address me in care of Mr. Ripley, Barrister, of Lincoln's Inn, and bid Richard Carvel write me."

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“Which does not look as if she were coming back within the year,” said Betty, as she poured me a dish of tea.

Alas, no! But I did not write. I tried and failed. And then I tried to forget. I was constant at all the gayeties, gave every miss in town a share of my attention, rode to hounds once a week at Whitehall or the South River Club with a dozen young beauties. But cantering through the winter mists ’twas Dolly, in her red riding-cloak and white beaver, I saw beside me. None of them had her seat in the saddle, and none of them her light hand on the reins. And tho’ they lacked not fire and skill, they had not my lady’s dash and daring to follow over field and fallow, stream and searing, and be in at the death with heightened colour, but never a look away.

Then came the first assembly of the year. I got back from Bentley Manor, where I had been a-visiting the Fotheringays, just in time to call for Patty in Gloucester Street.

“Have you heard the news from abroad, Richard?” she asked, as I handed her into my chariot.

“Never a line,” I replied.

“Pho!” exclaimed Patty; “you tell me that! Where have you been hiding? Then you shall not have it from me.”

I had little trouble, however, in persuading her. For news was a rare luxury in those days, and Patty was plainly uncomfortable until she should have it out.

“I would not give you the vapours to-night for all the world, Richard,” she exclaimed. “But if you must,—Dr. Courtenay has had a letter from Mr. Manners, who says that Dolly is to marry his Grace of Chartersea. There now!”

“And I am not greatly disturbed,” I answered, with a fine, careless air.

The lanthorn on the chariot was burning bright. And I saw Patty look at me, and laugh.

“Indeed!” says she; “what a sex is that to which you belong. How ready are men to deny us at the first whisper! And I thought you the most constant of all. For my part, I credit not a word of it. ’Tis one of Mr. Marmaduke’s lies and vanities.”

“And for my part, I think it true as gospel,” I cried. “Dolly always held a coronet above her colony, and all her life has dreamed of a duke.”

“Nay,” answered Patty, more soberly; “nay, you do her wrong. You will discover one day that she is loyal to the core, tho’ she has a fop of a father who would serve his Grace’s chocolate. We are all apt to talk, my dear, and to say what we do not mean, as you are doing.”

“Were I to die to-morrow, I would repeat it,” I exclaimed. But I liked Patty the better for what she had said.

“And there is more news, of less import,” she continued, as I was silent. “The Thunderer dropped anchor in the roads to-day, and her officers will be at the assembly. And Betty tells me there is a young lord among them,—la! I have clean forgot the string of adjectives she used,—but she would have had me know he was as handsome as Apollo, and so dashing and diverting as to put Courtenay and all our wits to shame. She dined with him at the Governor’s.”

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I barely heard her, tho' I had seen the man-o'-war in the harbour as I sailed in that afternoon.

The assembly hall was filled when we arrived, aglow with candles and a-tremble with music, the powder already flying, and the tables in the recesses at either end surrounded by those at the cards. A lively scene, those dances at the old Stadt House, but one I love best to recall with a presence that endeared it to me. The ladies in flowered aprons and caps and brocades and trains, and the gentlemen in brilliant coats, trimmed with lace and stiffened with buckram. That night, as Patty had predicted, there was a smart sprinkling of uniforms from the Thunderer. One of those officers held my eye. He was as well-formed a lad, or man (for he was both), as it had ever been my lot to see. He was neither tall nor short, but of a good breadth. His fair skin was tanned by the weather, and he wore his own wavy hair powdered, as was just become the fashion, and tied with a ribbon behind.

"Mercy, Richard, that must be his Lordship. Why, his good looks are all Betty claimed for them!" exclaimed Patty. Mr. Lloyd, who was standing by, overheard her, and was vastly amused at her downright way.

"I will fetch him directly, Miss Swain," said he, "as I have done for a dozen ladies before you." And fetch him he did.

"Miss Swain, this is my Lord Comyn," said he. "Your Lordship, one of the boasts of our province."

Patty grew red as the scarlet with which his Lordship's coat was lined. She curtseyed, while he made a profound bow.

"What! Another boast, Mr. Lloyd!" he cried. "Miss Swain is the tenth I have met. But I vow they excel as they proceed."

"Then you must meet no more, my Lord," said Patty, laughing at Mr. Lloyd's predicament.

"Egad, then, I will not," declared Comyn. "I protest I am satisfied."

Then I was presented. He had won me on the instant with his open smile and frank, boyish manner.

"And this is young Mr. Carvel, whom I hear wins every hunt in the colony?" said he.

"I fear you have been misinformed, my Lord," I replied, flashing with pleasure nevertheless.

“Nay, my Lord,” Mr. Lloyd struck in; “Richard could ride down the devil himself, and he were a fox. You will see for yourself to-morrow.”

“I pray we may not start the devil,” said his Lordship; “or I shall be content to let Mr. Carvel run him down.”

This Comyn was a man after my own fancy, as, indeed, he took the fancy of every one at the ball. Though a viscount in his own right, he gave himself not half the airs over us provincials as did many of his messmates. Even Mr. Jacques, who was sour as last year’s cider over the doings of Parliament, lost his heart, and asked why we were not favoured in America with more of his sort.

By a great mischance Lord Comyn had fallen into the tender clutches of my Aunt Caroline. It seemed she had known his uncle, the Honourable Arthur Comyn, in New York; and now she undertook to be responsible for his Lordship’s pleasure at Annapolis, that he might meet only those of the first fashion. Seeing him talking to Patty, my aunt rose abruptly from her loo and made toward us, all paint and powder and patches, her chin in the air, which barely enabled her to look over Miss Swain’s head.

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“My Lord,” she cries, “I will show you our colonial reel, which is about to begin, and I warrant you is gayer than any dance you have at home.”

“Your very devoted, Mrs. Carvel,” says his Lordship, with a bow, “but Miss Swain has done me the honour.”

“O Lud!” cries my aunt, sweeping the room, “I vow I cannot keep pace with the misses nowadays. Is she here?”

“She was but a moment since, ma’am,” replied Comyn, instantly, with a mischievous look at me, while poor Patty stood blushing not a yard distant.

There were many who overheard, and who used their fans and their napkins to hide their laughter at the very just snub Mrs. Grafton had received. And I wondered at the readiness with which he had read her character, liking him all the better. But my aunt was not to be disabled by this, —not she. After the dance she got hold of him, keeping him until certain designing ladies with daughters took him away; their names charity forbids me to mention. But in spite of them all he contrived to get Patty for supper, when I took Betty Tayloe, and we were very merry at table together. His Lordship proved more than able to take care of himself, and contrived to send Philip about his business when he pulled up a chair beside us. He drank a health to Miss Swain, and another to Miss Tayloe, and was on the point of filling a third glass to the ladies of Maryland, when he caught himself and brought his hand down on the table.

“Gad’s life!” cried he, “but I think she’s from Maryland, too!”

“Who?” demanded the young ladies, in a breath.

But I knew.

“Who!” exclaimed Comyn. “Who but Miss Dorothy Manners! Isn’t she from Maryland?” And marking our astonished nods, he continued: “Why, she descended upon Mayfair when they were so weary for something to worship, and they went mad over her in a s’ennight. I give you Miss Manners!”

“And you know her!” exclaimed Patty, her voice quivering with excitement.

“Faith!” said his Lordship, laughing. “For a whole month I was her most devoted, as were we all at Almack’s. I stayed until the last minute for a word with her,—which I never got, by the way,—and paid near a guinea a mile for a chaise to Portsmouth as a consequence. Already she has had her choice from a thousand a year up, and I tell you our English ladies are green with envy.”

I was stunned, you may be sure. And yet, I might have expected it.

“If your Lordship has left your heart in England,” said Betty, with a smile, “I give you warning you must not tell our ladies here of it.”

“I care not who knows it, Miss Tayloe,” he cried. That fustian, insincerity, was certainly not one of his faults. “I care not who knows it. To pass her chariot is to have your heart stolen, and you must needs run after and beg mercy. But, ladies,” he added, his eye twinkling; “having seen the women of your colony, I marvel no longer at Miss Manners’s beauty.”

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He set us all a-laughing.

“I fear you were not born a diplomat, sir,” says Patty. “You agree that we are beautiful, yet to hear that one of us is more so is small consolation.”

“We men turn as naturally to Miss Manners as plants to the sun, ma’am,” he replied impulsively. “Yet none of us dare hope for alliance with so brilliant and distant an object. I make small doubt those are Mr. Carvel’s sentiments, and still he seems popular enough with the ladies. How now, sir? How now, Mr. Carvel? You have yet to speak on so tender a subject.”

My eyes met Patty’s.

“I will be no more politic than you, my Lord,” I said boldly, “nor will I make a secret of it that I adore Miss Manners full as much.”

“Bravo, Richard!” cries Patty; and “Good!” cries his Lordship, while Betty claps her hands. And then Comyn swung suddenly round in his chair.

“Richard Carvel!” says he. “By the seven chimes I have heard her mention your name. The devil fetch my memory!”

“My name!” I exclaimed, in surprise, and prodigiously upset.

“Yes,” he answered, with his hand to his head; “some such thought was in my mind this afternoon when I heard of your riding. Stay! I have it! I was at Ampthill, Ossory’s place, just before I left. Some insupportable coxcomb was boasting a marvellous run with the hounds nigh across Hertfordshire, and Miss Manners brought him up with a round turn and a half hitch by relating one of your exploits, Richard Carvel. And take my word on’t she got no small applause. She told how you had followed a fox over one of your rough provincial counties, which means three of Hertfordshire, with your arm broken, by Heaven! and how they lifted you off at the death. And, Mr. Carvel,” said my Lord, generously, looking at my flushed face, “you must give me your hand for that.”

So Dorothy in England had thought of me at least. But what booted it if she were to marry a duke! My thoughts began to whirl over all Comyn had said of her so that I scarce heard a question Miss Tayloe had put.

“Marry Chartersea! That profligate pig!” Comyn was saying. “She would as soon marry a chairman or a chimneysweep, I’m thinking. Why, Miss Tayloe, Sir Charles Grandison himself would scarce suit her!”

“Good lack!” said Betty, “I think Sir Charles would be the very last for Dorothy.”

RICHARD CARVEL

By Winston Churchill

Volume 3.

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CHAPTER XIII

MR. ALLEN SHOWS HIS HAND

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So Dorothy's beauty had taken London by storm, even as it had conquered Annapolis! However, 'twas small consolation to me to hear his Grace of Chartersea called a pig and a profligate while better men danced her attendance in Mayfair. Nor, in spite of what his Lordship had said, was I quite easy on the score of the duke. It was in truth no small honour to become a duchess. If Mr. Marmaduke had aught to say, there was an end to hope. She would have her coronet. But in that hour of darkness I counted upon my lady's spirit.

Dr. Courtenay came to the assembly very late, with a new fashion of pinchbeck buckles on his pumps and a new manner of taking snuff. (I caught Fotheringay practising this by the stairs shortly after.) Always an important man, the doctor's prominence had been increased that day by the letter he had received. He was too thorough a courtier to profess any grief over Miss Manners's match, and went about avowing that he had always predicted a duke for Miss Dorothy. And he drew a deal of pleasure from the curiosity of those who begged but one look at the letter. Show it, indeed! For no consideration. A private communication from one gentleman to another must be respected. Will Fotheringay swore the doctor was a sly dog, and had his own reasons for keeping it to himself.

The doctor paid his compliment to the captain of the Thunderer, and to his Lordship; hoped that he would see them at the meet on the morrow, tho' his gout forbade his riding to hounds. He saluted me in the most friendly way, for I played billiards with him at the Coffee House now, and he won my money. He had pronounced my phaeton to be as well appointed as any equipage in town, and had done me the honour to drive out with me on several occasions. It was Betty that brought him humiliation that evening.

"What do you think of the soar our Pandora hath taken, Miss Betty?" says he. "From a Maryland manor to a ducal palace. 'Tis a fable, egad! No less!"

"Indeed, I think it is," retorted Betty. "Mark me, doctor, Dorothy will not put up an instant with a roue and a brute."

"A roue!" cries he, "and a brute! What the plague, Miss Tayloe! I vow I do not understand you."

"Then ask my Lord Comyn, who knows your Duke of Chartersea," said Betty.

Dr. Courtenay's expression was worth a pistole.

"Comyn know him!" he repeated.

"That he does," replied Betty, laughing. "His Lordship says Chartersea is a pig and a profligate, and I remember not what else. And that Dolly will not look at him. And so little Mr. Marmaduke may go a-hunting for another title."

No wonder I had little desire for dancing that night! I wandered out of the assembly-room and through the silent corridors of the Stadt House, turning over and over again what I had heard, and picturing Dorothy reigning over the macaronies of St. James's Street. She had said nothing of this in her letter to Betty, and had asked me to write to her. But now, with a duke to refuse or accept, could she care to hear from her old playmate? I took no thought of the time, until suddenly my conscience told me I had neglected Patty.

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As I entered the hall I saw her at the far end of it talking to Mr. Allen. This I thought strange, for I knew she disliked him. Lord Comyn and Mr. Carroll, the barrister, and Singleton, were standing by, listening. By the time I was halfway across to them the rector turned away. I remember thinking afterwards that he changed colour when he said: "Your servant, Mr. Richard." But I thought nothing of it at the time, and went on to Patty.

"I have come for a country dance, before we go, Patty," I said.

Then something in her mien struck me. Her eyes expressed a pain I had remarked in them before only when she spoke to me of Tom, and her lips were closed tightly. She flushed, and paled, and looked from Singleton to Mr. Carroll. They and his Lordship remained silent.

"I—I cannot, Richard. I am going home," she said, in a low voice.

"I will see if the chariot is here," I answered, surprised, but thinking of Tom.

She stopped me.

"I am going with Mr. Carroll," she said.

I hope a Carvel never has to be rebuffed twice, nor to be humbled by craving an explanation before a company. I was confounded that Patty should treat me thus, when I had done nothing to deserve it. As I made for the door, burning and indignant, I felt as tho' every eye in the room was upon me.' Young Harvey drove me that night.

"Marlboro' Street, Mr. Richard?" said he.

"Coffee House," replied I, that place coming first into my head.

Young Harvey seldom took liberties; but he looked down from the box.

"Better home, sir; your pardon, sir."

"D—n it!" I cried, "drive where I bid you!"

I pulled down the fore-glass, though the night was cold, and began to cast about for the cause of Patty's action. And then it was the rector came to my mind. Yes, he had been with her just before I came up, and I made sure on the instant that my worthy instructor was responsible for the trouble. I remembered that I had quarrelled with him the morning before I had gone to Bentley Manor, and threatened to confess his villany and my deceit to Mr. Carvel. He had answered me with a sneer and a dare. I knew than Patty put honour and honesty before all else in the world, and that she would not have suffered my friendship for a day had she believed me to lack either. But she, who knew

me so well, was not likely to believe anything he might say without giving me the chance to clear myself. And what could he have told her?

I felt my anger growing big within me, until I grew afraid of what I would do if I were tempted. I had a long score and a heavy score against this rector of St. Anne's,—a score that had been gathering these years. And I felt that my uncle was somewhere behind him; that the two of them were plotters against me, even as Harvey had declared; albeit my Uncle Grafton was little seen in his company now. And finally, in a sinister

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flash of revelation, came the thought that Grafton himself was at the back of this deception of my grandfather, as to my principles. Fool that I was, it had never occurred to me before. But how was he to gain by it? Did he hope that Mr. Carvel, in a fit of anger, would disinherit me when he found I had deceived him? Yes. And so had left the matter in abeyance near these two years, that the shock might be the greater when it came. I recalled now, with a shudder, that never since the spring of my grandfather's illness had my uncle questioned me upon my politics. I was seized with a fit of fury. I suspected that Mr. Allen would be at the Coffee House after the assembly. And I determined to seize the chance at once and have it out with him then and there.

The inn was ablaze, but as yet deserted; Mr. Claude expectant. He bowed me from my chariot door, and would know what took me from the ball. I threw him some short answer, bade Harvey go home, saying that I would have some fellow light me to Marlboro' Street when I thought proper. And coming into the long room I flung aside my greatcoat and commanded a flask of Mr. Stephen Bordley's old sherry, some of which Mr. Claude had obtained at that bachelor's demise.

The wine was scarce opened before I heard some sort of stir at the front, and two servants in a riding livery of scarlet and white hurried in to seek Mr. Claude. The sight of them sufficed mine host, for he went out as fast as his legs would go, giving the bell a sharp pull as he passed the door; and presently I heard him complimenting two gentlemen into the house. The voice of one I knew,—being no other than Captain Clapsaddle's; and him I had not seen for the past six months. I was just risen to my feet when they came in at the door beside me.

"Richard!" cried the captain, and grasped my hand in both his own. I returned his pressure, too much pleased to speak. Then his eye was caught by my finery.

"So ho!" says he, shaking his head at me for a sad rogue. "Wine and women and fine clothes, and not nineteen, or I mistake me. It was so with Captain Jack, who blossomed in a week; and few could vie with him, I warrant you, after he made his decision. But bless me!" he went on, drawing back, "the lad looks mature, and a fair two inches broader than last spring. But why are you not at the assembly, Richard?"

"I have but now come from there, sir," I replied, not caring in the presence of a stranger to enter into reasons.

At my answer the captain turned from me to the gentleman behind him, who had been regarding us both as we talked. There are some few men in the world, I thank God for it, who bear their value on their countenance; who stand unmistakably for qualities which command respect and admiration and love! We seem to recognize such men, and to wonder where we have seen them before. In reality we recognize the virtues

they represent. So it was with him I saw in front of me, and by his air and carriage I marked him then and there as a man born to great things. You all know his face, my dears, and I pray God it may live in the sight of those who come after you, for generation upon generation!

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“Colonel Washington,” said the captain, “this is Mr. Richard Carvel, the son of Captain Carvel.”

Mr. Washington did not speak at once. He stood regarding me a full minute, his eye seeming to penetrate the secrets of my life. And I take pride in saying it was an eye I could meet without flinching.

“Your father was a brave man, sir,” he said soberly, “and it seems you favour him. I am happy in knowing the son.”

For a moment he stood debating whether he would go to the house of one of his many friends in Annapolis, knowing that they would be offended when they learned he had stopped at the inn. He often came to town, indeed, but seldom tarried long; and it had never been my fortune to see him. Being arrived unexpectedly, and obliged to be away early on the morrow, he decided to order rooms of Mr. Claude, sat down with me at the table, and commenced supper. They had ridden from Alexandria. I gathered from their conversation that they were on their way to Philadelphia upon some private business, the nature of which, knowing Captain Daniel’s sentiments and those of Colonel Washington, I went not far to guess. The country was in a stir about the Townshend duties; and there being some rumour that all these were to be discharged save only that on tea, anxiety prevailed in our middle colonies that the merchants of New York would abandon the association formed and begin importation. It was of some mission to these merchants that I suspected them.

As I sat beside Colonel Washington, I found myself growing calmer, and ashamed of my lack of self-control. Unconsciously, when we come in contact with the great of character, we mould our minds to their qualities. His very person seemed to exhale, not sanctity, but virility. I felt that this man could command himself and others. In his presence self-command came to me, as a virtue gone out of him. ’Twas not his speech, I would have you know, that took hold of me. He was by no means a brilliant talker, and I had the good fortune to see him at his ease, since he and the captain were old friends. As they argued upon the questions of the day, the colonel did not seek to impress by words, or to fascinate by manner. His opinions were calm and moderate, and appeared to me so just as to admit of no appeal. He scrupled not to use a forceful word when occasion demanded. And yet, now and then, he had a lively way about him with all his dignity. When he had finished his supper he bade Mr. Claude bring another bottle of Mr. Bordley’s sherry, having tested mine, and addressed himself to me.

He would know what my pursuits had been; for my father’s sake, what were my ambitions? He questioned me about Mr. Carvel’s plantation, of which he had heard, and appeared pleased with the answers I gave as to its management and methods. Captain Daniel was no less so. Mr. Washington had agriculture at his finger ends, and gave me some advice which he had found serviceable at Mount Vernon.

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“’Tis a pity, Richard,” said he, smiling thoughtfully at the captain, “’tis a pity we have no service afield open to our young men. One of your spirit and bearing should be of that profession. Captain Jack was as brave and dashing an officer as I ever laid eyes on.”

I hesitated, the tingling at the compliment.

“I begin to think I was born for the sea, sir,” I answered, at length.

“What!” cried the captain; “what news is this, Richard? ’Slife! how has this come about?”

My anger subdued by Mr. Washington’s presence, a curious mood had taken its place. A foolish mood, I thought it, but one of feeling things to come.

“I believe I shall one day take part in a great sea-fight,” I said. And, tho’ ashamed to speak of it, I told him of Stanwix’s prophecy that I should pace the decks of a man-o’-war.

“A pox on Stanwix!” said the captain, “an artful old seadog! I never yet knew one who did not think the sun rises and sets from poop to forecastle, who did not wheedle with all the young blood to get them to follow a bow-legged profession.”

Colonel Washington laughed.

“Judge not, Clapsaddle,” said he; “here are two of us trying to get the lad for our own bow-legged profession. We are as hot as Methodists to convert.”

“Small conversion he needed when I was here to watch him, colonel. And he rides with any trooper I ever laid eyes on. Why, sir, I myself threw him on a saddle before he could well-nigh walk, and ’twere a waste of material to put him in the navy.”

“But what this old man said of a flag not yet seen in heaven or earth interests me,” said Colonel Washington. “Tell me,” he added with a penetration we both remarked, “tell me, does your Captain Stanwix follow the times? Is he a man to read his prints and pamphlets? In other words, is he a man who might predict out of his own heated imagination?”

“Nay, sir,” I answered, “he nods over his tobacco the day long. And I will make bold to swear, he has never heard of the Stamp Act.”

“’Tis strange,” said the colonel, musing; “I have heard of this second sight—have seen it among my own negroes. But I heartily pray that this may be but the childish fancy of an old mariner. How do you interpret it, sir?” he added, addressing himself to me.

“If a prophecy, I can interpret it in but one way,” I began, and there I stopped.

“To be sure,” said Mr. Washington. He studied me awhile as though weighing my judgment, and went on: “Needless to say, Richard, that such a service, if it comes, will not be that of his Majesty.”

“And it were, colonel, I would not embark in it a step,” I cried.

He laughed.

“The lad has his father’s impulse,” he said to Captain Daniel. “But I thought old Mr. Carvel to be one of the warmest loyalists in the colonies.”

I bit my lip; for, since that unhappy deception of Mr. Carvel, I had not meant to be drawn into an avowal of my sentiments. But I had, alas, inherited a hasty tongue.

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“Mr. Washington,” said the captain, “old Mr. Carvel has ever been a good friend to me. And, though I could not but perceive which way the lad was tending, I had held it but a poor return for friendship had I sought by word or deed to bring him to my way of thinking. Nor have I ever suffered his views in my presence.”

“My dear sir, I honour you for it,” put in the colonel, warmly.

“It is naught to my credit,” returned the captain. “I would not, for the sake of my party and beliefs, embitter what remains of my old friend’s life.”

I drew a long breath and drained the full glass before me.

“Captain Daniel!” I cried, “you must hear me now. I have been waiting your coming these months. And if Colonel Washington gives me leave, I will speak before him.”

The colonel bade me proceed, avowing that Captain Carvel’s son should have his best assistance.

With that I told them the whole story of Mr. Allen’s villany. How I had been sent to him because of my Whig sentiments, and for thrashing a Tory schoolmaster and his flock. This made the gentlemen laugh, tho’ Captain Daniel had heard it before. I went on to explain how Mr. Carvel had fallen ill, and was like to die; and how Mr. Allen, taking advantage of his weakness when he rose from his bed, had gone to him with the lie of having converted me. But when I told of the scene between my grandfather and me at Carvel Hall, of the tears of joy that the old gentleman shed, and of how he had given me Firefly as a reward, the captain rose from his chair and looked out of the window into the blackness, and swore a great oath all to himself. And the expression I saw come into the colonel’s eyes I shall never forget.

“And you feared the consequences upon your grandfather’s health?” he asked gravely.

“So help me God!” I answered, “I truly believe that to have undeceived him would have proved fatal.”

“And so, for the sake of the sum he receives for teaching you,” cried the captain, with another oath, “this scoundrelly clergyman has betrayed you into a lie. A scheme, by God’s life! worthy of a Machiavelli!”

“I have seen too many of his type in our parishes,” said Mr. Washington; “and yet the bishop of London seems powerless. And so used have we become in these Southern colonies to tippling and gaming parsons, that I warrant his people accept him as nothing out of the common.”

“He is more discreet than the run of them, sir. His parishioners dislike him, not because of his irregularities, but because he is attempting to obtain All Saints from his Lordship, in addition to St. Anne’s. He is thought too greedy.”

He was silent, his brow a little furrowed, and drummed with his fingers upon the table.

“But this I cannot reconcile,” said he, presently, “that the reward is out of all proportion to the risk. Such a clever rascal must play for higher stakes.”

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I was amazed at his insight. And for the moment was impelled to make a clean breast of my suspicions,—nay, of my convictions of the whole devil's plot. But I had no proofs. I remembered that to the colonel my uncle was a gentleman of respectability and of wealth, and a member of his Excellency's Council. That to accuse him of scheming for my inheritance would gain me nothing in Mr. Washington's esteem. And I caught myself before I had said aught of Mr. Allen's conduct that evening.

"Have you confronted this rector with his perfidy, Richard?" he asked.

"I have, colonel, at my first opportunity." And I related how Mr. Allen had come to the Hall, and what I had said to him, and how he had behaved. And finally told of the picquet we now had during lessons, not caring to shield myself. Both listened intently, until the captain broke out. Mr. Washington's indignation was the stronger for being repressed.

"I will call him out!" cried Captain Daniel, fingering his sword, as was his wont when angered; "I will call him out despite his gown, or else horse him publicly!"

"No, my dear sir, you will do nothing of the kind," said the colonel. "You would gain nothing by it for the lad, and lose much. Such rascals walk in water, and are not to be tracked. He cannot be approached save through Mr. Lionel Carvel himself, and that channel, for Mr. Carvel's sake, must be closed."

"But he must be shown up!" cried the captain.

"What good will you accomplish?" said Mr. Washington; "Lord Baltimore is notorious, and will not remove him. Nay, sir, you must find a way to get the lad from his influence." And he asked me how was my grandfather's health at present.

I said that he had mended beyond my hopes.

"And does he seem to rejoice that you are of the King's party?"

"Nay, sir. Concerning politics he seems strangely apathetic, which makes me fear he is not so well as he appears. All his life he has felt strongly."

"Then I beg you, Richard, take pains to keep neutral. Nor let any passing event, however great, move you to speech or action."

The captain shook his head doubtfully, as tho' questioning the ability of one of my temper to do this.

"I do not trust myself, sir," I answered.

He rose, declaring it was past his hour for bed, and added some kind things which I shall cherish in my memory. As he was leaving he laid his hand on my shoulder.

“One word of advice, my lad,” he said. “If by any chance your convictions are to come to your grandfather’s ears, let him have them from your own lips.” And he bade me good night.

The captain tarried but a moment longer.

“I have a notion who is to blame for this, Richard,” he said. “When I come back from New York, we shall see what we shall see.”

“I fear he is too slippery for a soldier to catch,” I answered.

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He went away to bed, telling me to be prudent, and mind the colonel's counsel until he returned from the North.

CHAPTER XIV

THE VOLTE COUPE

I was of a serious mind to take the advice. To prove this I called for my wrap-rascal and cane, and for a fellow with a flambeau to light me. But just then the party arrived from the assembly. I was tempted, and I sat down again in a corner of the room, resolved to keep a check upon myself, but to stay awhile.

The rector was the first in, humming a song, and spied me.

"Ho!" he cried, "will you drink, Richard? Or do I drink with you?"

He was already purple with wine.

"God save me from you and your kind!" I replied.

"'Sblood! what a devil's nest of fireworks!" he exclaimed, as he went off down the room, still humming, to where the rest were gathered. And they were soon between bottle and stopper, and quips a-coursing. There was the captain of the Thunderer, Collinson by name, Lord Comyn and two brother officers, Will Fotheringay, my cousin Philip, openly pleased to be found in such a company, and some dozen other toadeaters who had followed my Lord a-chair and a-foot from the ball, and would have tracked him to perdition had he chosen to go; and lastly Tom Swain, leering and hiccoughing at the jokes, in such a beastly state of drunkenness as I had rarely seen him. His Lordship recognized me and smiled, and was pushing his chair back, when something Collinson said seemed to restrain him.

I believe I was the butt of more than one jest for my aloofness, though I could not hear distinctly for the noise they made. I commanded some French cognac, and kept my eye on the rector, and the sight of him was making me dangerous.

I forgot the advice I had received, and remembered only the months he had goaded me. And I was even beginning to speculate how I could best pick a quarrel with him on any issue but politics, when an unexpected incident diverted me. Of a sudden the tall, ungainly form of Percy Singleton filled the doorway, wrapped in a greatcoat. He swept the room at a glance, and then strode rapidly toward the corner where I sat.

"I had thought to find you here," he said, and dropped into a chair beside me. I offered him wine, but he refused.

“Now,” he went on, “what has Patty done?”

“What have I done that I should be publicly insulted?” I cried.

“Insulted!” says he, “and did she insult you? She said nothing of that.”

“What brings you here, then?” I demanded.

“Not to talk, Richard,” he said quietly, “’tis no time tonight. I came to fetch you home. Patty sent me.”

Patty sent him! Why had Patty sent him? But this I did not ask, for I felt the devil within me.

“We must first finish this bottle,” said I, offhand, “and then I have a little something to be done which I have set my heart upon. After that I will go with you.”

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“Richard, Richard, will you never learn prudence? What is it you speak of?”

I drew my sword and laid it upon the table.

“I mean to spit that eel of a rector,” said I, “or he will bear a slap in the face. And you must see fair play.”

Singleton seized my coat, at the same time grasping the hilt of my sword with the other hand. But neither my words nor my action had gone unnoticed by the other end of the room. The company there fell silent awhile, and then we heard Captain Collinson talking in even, drawling tones.

“’Tis strange,” said he, “what hot sparks a man meets in these colonies. They should be stamped out. His Majesty pampers these d—d Americans, is too lenient by far. Gentlemen, this is how I would indulge them!” He raised a closed fist and brought it down on the board.

He spoke to Tories, but he forgot that Tories were Americans. In those days only the meanest of the King’s party would listen to such without protest from an Englishman. But some of the meaner sort were there: Philip and Tom laughed, and Mr. Allen, and my Lord’s sycophants. Fotheringay and some others of sense shook their heads one to another, comprehending that Captain Collinson was somewhat gone in wine. For, indeed, he had not strayed far from the sideboard at the assembly. Comyn made a motion to rise.

“It is already past three bells, sir, and a hunt to-morrow,” he said.

“From bottle to saddle, and from saddle to bottle, my Lord. We must have our pleasure ashore, and sleep at sea,” and the captain tipped his flask with a leer. He turned his eye uncertainly first on me, then on my Lord. “We are lately from Boston, gentlemen, that charnel-house of treason, and before we leave, my Lord, I must tell them how Mr. Robinson of the customs served that dog Otis, in the British Coffee House. God’s word, ’twas as good as a play.”

I know not how many got to their feet at that, for the story of the cowardly beating of Mr. Otis by Robinson and the army officers had swept over the colonies, burning like a flame all true-hearted men, Tory and Whig alike. I wrested my sword from Singleton’s hold, and in a trice I had reached the captain over chairs and table, tearing myself from Fotheringay on the way. I struck a blow that measured a man on the floor. Then I drew back, amazed.

I had hit Lord Comyn instead! The captain stood a yard beyond me.

The thing had been so deftly done by the rector of St. Anne’s—Comyn jostled at the proper moment between me and Collinson—that none save me guessed beyond an

accident; least of all my Lord Comyn himself. He was up again directly and his sword drawn, addressing me.

“Bear witness, my Lord, that I have no desire to fight with you,” said I, with what coolness I could muster. “But there is one here I would give much for a chance to run through.”

And I made a step toward Mr. Allen with such a purpose in my face and movements that he could not mistake. I saw the blood go from his face; yet he was no coward to physical violence. But he (or I?) was saved by the Satan’s luck that followed him, for my Lord stepped in between us with a bow, his cheek red where I had struck him.

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“It is my quarrel now, Mr. Carvel,” he cried.

“As you please, my Lord,” said I.

“It boots not who crosses with him,” Captain Collinson put in. “His Lordship uses the sword better than any here. But it boots not so that he is opposed by a loyal servant of the King.”

I wheeled on him for this.

“I would have you know that loyalty does not consist in outrage and murder, sir,” I answered, “nor in the ridiculing of them. And brutes cannot be loyal save through interest.”

He was angered, as I had desired. I had hopes then of shouldering the quarrel on to him, for I had near as soon drawn against my own brother as against Comyn. I protest I loved him then as one with whom I had been reared.

“Let me deal with this young gamecock, Comyn,” cried the captain, with an oath. “He seems to think his importance sufficient.”

But Comyn would brook no interference. He swore that no man should strike him with impunity, and in this I could not but allow he was right.

“You shall hear from me, Mr. Carvel,” he said.

“Nay,” I answered, “and fighting is to be done, sir, let us be through with it at once. A large room upstairs is at our disposal; and there is a hunt to-morrow which one of us may like to attend.”

There was a laugh at this, in which his Lordship joined.

“I would to God, Mr. Carvel,” he said, “that I had no quarrel with you!”

“Amen to that, my Lord,” I replied; “there are others here I would rather fight.” And I gave a meaning look at Mr. Allen. I was of two minds to announce the scurvy trick he had played, but saw that I would lose rather than gain by the attempt. Up to that time the wretch had not spoken a word; now he pushed himself forward, though well clear of me.

“I think it my duty as Mr. Carvel’s tutor, gentlemen, to protest against this matter proceeding,” he said, a sneer creeping into his voice. “Nor can I be present at it. Mr. Carvel is young and, besides, is not himself with liquor. And, in the choice of politics, he knows not which leg he stands upon. My Lord and gentlemen, your most humble and devoted.”

He made a bow and, before the retort on my lips could be spoken, left the tavern. My cousin Philip left with him. Tom Swain had fallen asleep in his chair.

Captain Collinson and Mr. Furness, of the Thunderer, offered to serve his Lordship, which made me bethink that I, too, would have need of some one. 'Twas then I remembered Singleton, who had passed from my mind.

He was standing close behind me, and nodded simply when I asked him. And Will Fotheringay came forward.

"I will act, Richard, if you allow me," he said. "I would have you know I am in no wise hostile to you, my Lord, and I am of the King's party. But I admire Mr. Carvel, and I may say I am not wholly out of sympathy with that which prompted his act."

It was a noble speech, and changed Will in my eyes; and I thanked him with warmth. He of all that company had the courage to oppose his Lordship!

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Mr. Claude was called in and, as is the custom in such cases, was told that some of us would play awhile above. He was asked for his private room. The good man had his suspicions, but could not refuse a party of such distinction, and sent a drawer thither with wine and cards. Presently we followed, leaving the pack of toadies in sad disappointment below.

We gathered about the table and made shift at loo until the fellow had retired, when the seconds proceeded to clear the room of furniture, and Lord Comyn and I stripped off our coats and waistcoats. I had lost my anger, but felt no fear, only a kind of pity that blood should be shed between two so united in spirit as we. Yes, my dears, I thought of Dorothy. If I died, she would hear that it was like a man—like a Carvel. But the thought of my old grandfather tightened my heart. Then the clock on the inn stairs struck two, and the noise of harsh laughter floated up to us from below.

And Comyn,—of what was he thinking? Of some fair home set upon the downs across the sea, of some heroic English mother who had kept her tears until he was gone? Her image rose in dumb entreaty, invoked by the lad before me. What a picture was he in his spotless shirt with the ruffles, his handsome boyish face all that was good and honest!

I had scarce felt his Lordship's wrist than I knew I had to deal with a pupil of Angelo. At first his attacks were all simple, without feint or trickery, as were mine. Collinson cursed and cried out that it was buffoonery, and called on my Lord not to let me off so easily; swore that I fenced like a mercer, that he could have stuck me like a pin-cushion twenty and twenty times. Often have I seen two animals thrust into a pit with nothing but good-will between them, and those without force them into anger and a deadly battle. And so it was, unconsciously, between Comyn and me. I forgot presently that I was not dealing with Captain Collinson, and my feelings went into my sword. Comyn began to press me, nor did I give back. And then, before it came over me that we had to do with life and death, he was upon me with a volte coupe, feinting in high carte and thrusting in low tierce, his point passing through a fold in my shirt. And I were not alive to write these words had I not leaped out of his measure.

"Bravo, Richard!" cried Fotheringay.

"Well made, gads life!" from Mr. Furness.

We engaged again, our faces hot. Now I knew that if I did not carry the matter against him I should be killed out of hand, and Heaven knows I was not used to play a passive part. I began to go carefully, but fiercely; tried one attack after another that my grandfather and Captain Daniel had taught me,—flanconnades, beats, and lunges. Comyn held me even, and in truth I had much to do to defend myself. Once I thought I had him in the sword-arm, after a circular parry, but he was too quick for me. We were

sweating freely by now, and by reason of the buzzing in my ears I could scarce hear the applause of the seconds.

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What unlucky chance it was I know not that impelled Comyn to essay again the trick by which he had come so near to spitting me; but try it he did, this time in prime and seconde. I had come by nature to that intuition which a true swordsman must have, gleaned from the eyes of his adversary. Long ago Captain Daniel had taught me the remedy for this coupe. I parried, circled, and straightened, my body in swift motion and my point at Comyn's heart, when Heaven brought me recollection in the space of a second. My sword rang clattering on the floor.

His Lordship understood, but too late. Despairing his life, he made one wild lunge at me that had never gone home had I held to my hilt. But the rattle of the blade had scarce reached my ears when there came a sharp pain at my throat, and the room faded before me. I heard the clock striking the half-hour.

I was blessed with a sturdy health such as few men enjoy, and came to myself sooner than had been looked for, with a dash of cold water. And the first face I beheld was that of Colonel Washington. I heard him speaking in a voice that was calm, yet urgent and commanding.

"I pray you, gentlemen, give back. He is coming to, and must have air. Fetch some linen!"

"Now God be praised!" I heard Captain Daniel cry.

With that his Lordship began to tear his own shirt into strips, and the captain bringing a bowl and napkin, the colonel himself washed the wound and bound it deftly, Singleton and Captain Daniel assisting. When Mr. Washington had finished, he turned to Comyn, who stood, anxious and dishevelled, at my feet.

"You may be thankful that you missed the artery, my Lord," he said.

"With all my heart, Colonel Washington!" cried his Lordship. "I owe my life to his generosity."

"What's that, sir?"

Mr. Carvel dropped his sword, rather than run me through."

"I'll warrant!" Captain Daniel put in; "'Od's heart! The lad has skill to point the eye of a button. I taught him myself."

Colonel Washington stood up and laid his hand on the captain's arm.

"He is Jack Carvel over again," I heard him say, in a low voice.

I tried to struggle to my feet, to speak, but he restrained me. And sending for his servants, he ordered them to have his baggage removed from the Roebuck, which was the best bed in the house. At this moment the door opened, and Mr. Swain came in hurriedly.

“I pray you, gentlemen,” he cried, “and he is fit to be moved, you will let me take him to Marlboro’ Street. I have a chariot at the door.”

CHAPTER XV

OF WHICH THE RECTOR HAS THE WORST

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’Twas late when I awoke the next day with something of a dull ache in my neck, and a prodigious stiffness, studying the pleatings of the bed canopy over my head. And I know not how long I lay idly thus when I perceived Mrs. Willis moving quietly about, and my grandfather sitting in the armchair by the window, looking into Freshwater Lane. As my eyes fell upon him my memory came surging back,—first of the duel, then of its cause. And finally, like a leaden weight, the thought of the deception I had practised upon him, of which he must have learned ere this. Nay, I was sure from the troubled look of his face that he knew of it.

“Mr. Carvel,” I said.

At the sound of my voice he got hastily from his chair and hurried to my side.

“Richard,” he answered, taking my hand, “Richard!”

I opened my mouth to speak, to confess. But he prevented me, the tears filling the wrinkles around his eyes.

“Nay, lad, nay. We will not talk of it. I know all.”

“Mr. Allen has been here—” I began.

“And be d—d to him! Be d—d to him for a wolf in sheep’s clothing!” shouted my grandfather, his manner shifting so suddenly to anger that I was taken back. “So help me God I will never set foot in St. Anne’s while he is rector. Nor shall he come to this house!”

And he took three or four disorderly turns about the room.

“Ah!” he continued more quietly, with something of a sigh, “I might have known how stubborn your mind should be. That you was never one to blow from the north one day and from the south the next. I deny not that there be good men and able of your way of thinking: Colonel Washington, for one, whom I admire and honour; and our friend Captain Daniel. They have been here to-day, Richard, and I promise you were good advocates.”

Then I knew that I was forgiven. And I could have thrown myself at Mr. Carvel’s feet for happiness.

“Has Colonel Washington spoken in my favour, sir?”

“That he has. He is upon some urgent business for the North, I believe, which he delayed for your sake. Both he and the captain were in my dressing-room before I was up, ahead of that scurrilous clergyman, who was for pushing his way to my bed-curtains. Ay, the two of them were here at nigh dawn this morning, and Mr. Allen close

after them. And I own that Captain Daniel can swear with such a consuming violence as to put any rogue out of countenance. 'Twas all Mr. Washington could do to restrain Clapsaddle from booting his Reverence over the balustrade and down two runs of the stairs, the captain declaring he would do for every cur's son of the whelps. 'Diomedes,' says I, waking up, 'what's this damnable racket on the landing? Is Mr. Richard home?' For I had some notion it was you, sir, after an over-night brawl. And I profess I would have caned you soundly. The fellow answered that Captain Clapsaddle's honour was killing Mr. Allen, and went out; and came back presently to say that some tall gentleman had the captain by the neck, and that Mr. Allen was picking his way down the ice on the steps outside. With that I went in to them in my dressing-gown.

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"'What's all this to-do, gentlemen?' said I.

"'I'd have finished that son of a dog,' says the captain, 'and Colonel Washington had let me.'

"'What, what!' said I. 'How now? What! Drive a clergyman from my house gentlemen?'

"'What's Richard been at now?'

"Mr. Washington asked me to dress, saying that they had something very particular to speak about; that they would stay to breakfast with me, tho' they were in haste to be gone to New York. I made my compliments to the colonel and had them shown to the library fire, and hurried down after them. Then they told me of this affair last night, and they cleared you, sir. 'Faith,' cried I, 'and I would have fought, too. The lad was in the right of it, though I would have him a little less hasty.' D—n me if I don't wish you had knocked that sea captain's teeth into his throat, and his brains with them. I like your spirit, sir. A pox on such men as he, who disgrace his Majesty's name and set better men against him."

"And they told you nothing else, sir?" I asked, with misgiving.

"That they did. Mr. Washington repeated the confession you made to them, sir, in a manner that did you credit. He made me compliments on you, —said that you were a man, sir, though a trifle hasty: in the which I agreed. Yes, d—n me, a trifle hasty like your father. I rejoice that you did not kill his Lordship, my son."

The twilight was beginning; and the old gentleman going back to his chair was set amusing, gazing out across the bare trees and gables falling gray after the sunset.

What amazed me was that he did not seem to be shocked by the revelation near as much as I had feared. So this matter had brought me happiness where I looked for nothing but sorrow.

"And the gentlemen are gone north, sir?" said I, after a while.

"Yes, Richard, these four hours. I commanded an early dinner for them, since the colonel was pleased to tarry long enough for a little politics and to spin a glass. And I profess, was I to live neighbours with such a man, I might come to his way of thinking, despite myself. Though I say it that shouldn't, some of his Majesty's ministers are d—d rascals."

I laughed. As I live, I never hoped to hear such words from my grandfather's lips.

"He did not seek to convince, like so many of your hotheaded know-it-alls," said Mr. Carvel; "he leaves a man to convince himself. He has great parts, Richard, and few can

stand before him." He paused. And then his smooth-shaven face became creased in a roguish smile which I had often seen upon it. "What baggage is this I hear of that you quarrelled over at the assembly? Ah, Sir, I fear you are become but a sad rake!" says he.

But by great good fortune Dr. Leiden was shown in at this instant. And the candles being lighted, he examined my neck, haranguing the while in his vile English against the practice of duelling. He bade me keep my bed for two days, thereby giving me no great pleasure.

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“As I hope to live,” said Mr. Carvel when the doctor was gone, “one would have thought his Excellency himself had been pinked instead of a whip of a lad, for the people who have been here. His Lordship and Dr. Courtenay came before the hunt, and young Mr. Fotheringay, and half a score of others. Mr. Swain is but now left to go to Baltimore on some barrister’s business.”

I was burning to learn what the rector had said to Patty, but it was plain Mr. Carvel knew nothing of this part of the story. He had not mentioned Grafton among the callers. I wondered what course my uncle would now pursue, that his plans to alienate me from my grandfather had failed. And I began debating whether or not to lay the whole plot before Mr. Carvel. Prudence bade me wait, since Grafton had not consorted with the rector openly, at least—for more than a year. And yet I spoke.

“Mr. Carvel!”

He stirred in his chair.

“Yes, my son.”

He had to repeat, and still I held my tongue. Even as I hesitated there came a knock at the door, and Scipio entered, bearing candles.

“Massa Grafton, suh,” he said.

My uncle was close at his heels. He was soberly dressed in dark brown silk, and his face wore that expression of sorrow and concern he knew how to assume at will. After greeting his father with his usual ceremony, he came to my bedside and asked gravely how I did.

“How now, Grafton!” cried Mr. Carvel; “this is no funeral. The lad has only a scratch, thank God!”

My uncle looked at me and forced a smile.

“Indeed I am rejoiced to find you are not worried over this matter, father,” said he. “I am but just back from Kent to learn of it, and looked to find you in bed.”

“Why, no, sir, I am not worried. I fought a duel in my own day,—over a lass, it was.”

This time Grafton’s smile was not forced.

“Over a lass, was it?” he asked, and added in a tone of relief, “and how do you, nephew?”

Mr. Carvel saved me from replying.

“’Od’s life!” he cried; “no, I did not say this was over a lass. I have heard the whole matter; how Captain Collinson, who is a disgrace to the service, brought shame upon his Majesty’s supporters, and how Richard felled the young lord instead. I’ll be sworn, and I had been there, I myself would have run the brute through.”

My uncle did not ask for further particulars, but took a chair, and a dish of tea from Scipio. His smug look told me plainer than words that he thought my grandfather still ignorant of my Whig sentiments.

“I often wish that this deplorable practice of duelling might be legislated against,” he remarked. “Was there no one at the Coffee House with character enough to stop the lads?”

Here was my chance.

“Mr. Allen was there,” I said.

“A devil’s plague upon him!” shouted my grandfather, beating the floor with his stick. “And the lying hypocrite ever crosses my path, by gad’s life! I’ll tear his gown from his back!”

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I watched Grafton narrowly. Such as he never turn pale, but he set down his tea so hastily as to spill the most of it on the dresser.

“Why, you astound me, my dear father!” he faltered; “Mr. Allen a lying hypocrite? What can he have done?”

“Done!” cried my grandfather, sputtering and red as a cherry with indignation. “He is as rotten within as a pricked pear, I tell you, sir! For the sake of retaining the lad in his tuition he came to me and lied, sir, just after I had escaped death, and said that by his influence Richard had become loyal, and set dependence upon Richard’s fear of the shock ’twould give me if he confessed—Richard, who never told me a falsehood in his life! And instead of teaching him, he has gamed with the lad at the rectory. I dare make oath he has treated your son to a like instruction. ’Slife, sir, and he had his deserts, he would hang from a gibbet at the Town Gate.”

I raised up in bed to see the effect of this on my uncle. But however the wind veered, Grafton could steer a course. He got up and began pacing the room, and his agitation my grandfather took for indignation such as his own.

“The dog!” he cried fiercely. “The villain! Philip shall leave him to-morrow. And to think that it was I who moved you to put Richard to him!”

His distress seemed so real that Mr. Carvel replied:

“No, Grafton, ’twas not your fault. You were deceived as much as I. You have put your own son to him. But if I live another twelve hours I shall write his Lordship to remove him. What! You shake your head, sir!”

“It will not do,” said my uncle. “Lord Baltimore has had his reasons for sending such a scoundrel—he knew what he was, you may be sure, father. His Lordship, sir, is the most abandoned rake in London, and that unmentionable crime of his but lately in the magazines—”

“Yes, yes,” my grandfather interrupted; “I have seen it. But I will publish him in Annapolis.”

My uncle’s answer startled me, so like was it to the argument Colonel Washington himself had used.

“What would you publish, sir? Mr. Allen will reply that what he did was for the lad’s good, and your own. He may swear that since Richard mentioned politics no more he had taken his conversion for granted.”

My grandfather groaned, and did not speak, and I saw the futility of attempting to bring Grafton to earth for a while yet.

My uncle had recovered his confidence. He had hoped, so he said, that I had become a good loyalist: perchance as I grew older I would see the folly of those who called themselves Patriots. But my grandfather cried out to him not to bother me then. And when at last he was gone, of my own volition I proposed to promise Mr. Carvel that, while he lived, I would take no active part in any troubles that might come. He stopped me with some vehemence.

“I pray God there may be no troubles, lad,” he answered; “but you need give me no promise. I would rather see you in the Whig ranks than a trimmer, for the Carvels have ever been partisans.”

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I tried to express my gratitude. But he sighed and wished me good night, bidding me get some rest.

I had scarce finished my breakfast the next morning when I heard a loud rat-tat-tat upon the street door-surely the footman of some person of consequence. And Scipio was in the act of announcing the names when, greatly to his disgust, the visitors themselves rushed into my bedroom and curtailed the ceremony. They were none other than Dr. Courtenay and my Lord Comyn himself. His Lordship had no sooner seen me than he ran to the bed, grasped both my hands and asked me how I did, declaring he would not have gone to yesterday's hunt had he been permitted to visit me.

"Richard," cried the doctor, "your fame has sprung up like Jonah's gourd. The Gazette is but just distributed. Here's for you! 'Twill set the wags a-going, I'll warrant."

He drew the newspaper from his pocket and began to read, stopping now and anon to laugh:

"Rumour hath it that a Young Gentleman of Quality of this Town, who is possessed of more Valour than Discretion, and whose Skill at Fence and in the Field is beyond his Years, crossed Swords on Wednesday Night with a Young Nobleman from the Thunderer. The Cause of this Deplorable Quarrel, which had its Origin at the Ball, is purported to have been a Young Lady of Wit and Beauty. (& we doubt it not; for, alas! the Sex hath Much to answer for of this Kind.)

"The Gentlemen, with their Seconds, repaired after the Assembly to the Coffee House. 'Tis said upon Authority that H-s L-dsh-p owes his Life to the Noble Spirit of our Young American, who cast down his Blade rather than sheathe it in his Adversary's Body, thereby himself receiving a Grievous, the' happily not Mortal, Wound. Our Young Gentleman is become the Hero of the Town, and the Subject of Prodigious Anxiety of all the Ladies thereof."

"There's for you, my lad!" says he; "Mr. Green has done for you both cleverly."

"Upon my soul," I cried, raising up in bed, "he should be put in the gatehouse for his impudence! My Lord,—"

"Don't 'My Lord' me," says Comyn; "plain 'Jack' will do."

There was no resisting such a man: and I said as much. And took his hand and called him 'Jack,' the doctor posing before the mirror the while, stroking his rues. "Out upon you both," says he, "for a brace of sentimental fools!"

"Richard," said Comyn, presently, with a roguish glance at the doctor, "there were some reason in our fighting had it been over a favour of Miss Manners. Eh? Come, doctor," he cried, "you will break your neck looking for the reflection of wrinkles. Come, now, we

must have little Finery's letter. I give you my word Chartersea is as ugly as all three heads of Cerberus, and as foul as a ship's barrel of grease. I tell you Miss Dorothy would sooner marry you."

"And she might do worse, my Lord," the doctor flung back, with a strut.

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“Ay, and better. But I promise you Richard and I are not such fools as to think she will marry his Grace. We must have the little coxcomb’s letter.”

“Well, have it you must, I suppose,” returns the doctor. And with that he draws it from his pocket, where he has it buttoned in. Then he took a pinch of Holland and began.

The first two pages had to deal with Miss Dorothy’s triumph, to which her father made full justice. Mr. Manners world have the doctor (and all the province) to know that peers of the realm, soldiers, and statesmen were at her feet. Orders were as plentiful in his drawing-room as the candles. And he had taken a house in Arlington Street, where Horry Walpole lived when not at Strawberry, and their entrance was crowded night and day with the footmen and chairmen of the grand monde. Lord Comyn broke in more than once upon the reading, crying,—“Hear, hear!” and,—“My word, Mr. Manners has not perjured himself thus far. He has not done her justice by half.” And I smiled at the thought that I had aspired to such a beauty!

“‘Entre noes, mon cher Courtenay,’ Mr. Manners writes, ’entre noes, our Dorothy hath had many offers of great advantage since she hath been here. And but yesterday comes a chariot with a ducal coronet to our door. His Grace of Chartersea, if you please, to request a private talk with me. And I rode with him straightway to his house in Hanover Square.’”

“’Egad! And would gladly have ridden straightway to Newgate, in a ducal chariot!” cried his Lordship, in a fit of laughter.

“‘I rode to Hanover Square,’ the doctor continued, ’where we discussed the matter over a bottle. His Grace’s generosity was such that I could not but cry out at it, for he left me to name any settlement I pleased. He must have Dorothy at any price, said he. And I give you my honour, mon cher Courtenay, that I lost no time in getting back to Arlington Street, and called Dorothy down to tell her.’”

“Now may I be flayed,” said Comyn, “if ever there was such another ass!”

The doctor took more snuff and fell a-laughing.

“But hark to this,” said he, “here’s the cream of it all:

“You will scarce believe me when I say that the baggage was near beside herself with anger at what I had to tell her. ’Marry that misshapen duke!’ cries she, ‘I would quicker marry Doctor Johnson!’ And truly, I begin to fear she hath formed an affection for some like, foul-linened beggar. That his Grace is misshapen I cannot deny; but I tried reason upon her. ’Think of the coronet, my dear, and of the ancient name to which it belongs.’ She only stamps her foot and cries out:

"'Coronet fiddlesticks! And are you not content with the name you bear, sir?" 'Our name is good as any in the three kingdoms,' said I, with truth. 'Then you would have me, for the sake of the coronet, joined to a wretch who is steeped in debauchery. Yes, debauchery, sir! You might then talk, forsooth, to the macaronies of Maryland, of your daughter the Duchess.'"

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“There’s spirit for you, my lad!” Comyn shouted; “I give you Miss Dorothy.” And he drained a glass of punch Scipio had brought in, Doctor Courtenay and I joining him with a will.

“I pray you go on, sir,” I said to the doctor.

“A pest on your impatience!” replied he; “I begin to think you are in love with her yourself.”

“To be sure he is,” said Comyn; “he had lost my esteem and he were not.”

The doctor gave me an odd look. I was red enough, indeed.

“’I could say naught, my dear Courtenay, to induce her to believe that his Grace’s indiscretions arose from the wildness of youth. And I pass over the injustice she hath unwittingly done me, whose only efforts are for her bettering. The end of it all was that I must needs post back to the duke, who was stamping with impatience up and down, and drinking Burgundy. I am sure I meant him no offence, but told him in as many words, that my daughter had refused him. And, will you believe me, sir? He took occasion to insult me (I cannot with propriety repeat his speech), and he flung a bottle after me as I passed out the door. Was he not far gone in wine at the time, I assure you I had called him out for it.’”

“And, gentlemen,” said the doctor, when our merriment was somewhat spent, “I’ll lay a pipe of the best Madeira, that our little fool never knows the figure he has cut with his Grace.”

CHAPTER XVI

IN WHICH SOME THINGS ARE MADE CLEAR

The Thunderer weighed the next day, Saturday, while I was still upon my back, and Comyn sailed with her. Not, however, before I had seen him again. Our affection was such as comes not often to those who drift together to part. And he left me that sword with the jewelled hilt, that hangs above my study fire, which he had bought in Toledo. He told me that he was heartily sick of the navy; that he had entered only in respect for a wish of his father’s, the late Admiral Lord Comyn, and that the Thunderer was to sail for New York, where he looked for a release from his commission, and whence he would return to England. He would carry any messages to Miss Manners that I chose to send. But I could think of none, save to beg him to remind her that she was constantly in my thoughts. He promised me, roguishly enough, that he would have thought of a better than that by the time he sighted Cape Clear. And were I ever to come to London he would put me up at Brooks’s Club, and warrant me a better time and more friends than ever had a Caribbee who came home on a visit.

My grandfather kept his word in regard to Mr. Allen, and on Sunday commanded the coach at eight. We drove over bad roads to the church at South River. And he afterwards declined the voluntary aid he hitherto had been used to give to St. Anne's. In the meantime, good Mr. Swain had called again, bringing some jelly and cake of Patty's own making; and a letter writ out of the sincerity of her heart, full of tender concern and of penitence. She would never cease to blame herself for the wrong she now knew she had done me.

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Though still somewhat weak from my wound and confinement, after dinner that Sunday I repaired to Gloucester Street. From the window she saw me coming, and, bare-headed, ran out in the cold to meet me. Her eyes rested first on the linen around my throat, and she seemed all in a fire of anxiety.

“I had thought you would come to-day, when I heard you had been to South River,” she said.

I was struck all of a sudden with her looks. Her face was pale, and I saw that she had suffered as much again as I. Troubled, I followed her into the little library. The day was fading fast, and the leaping flames behind the andirons threw fantastic shadows across the beams of the ceiling. We sat together in the deep window.

“And you have forgiven me, Richard?” she asked.

“An hundred times,” I replied. “I deserved all I got, and more.”

“If I had not wronged and insulted you—”

“You did neither, Patty,” I broke in; “I have played a double part for the first and last time in my life, and I have been justly punished for it.”

“’Twas I sent you to the Coffee House,” she cried, “where you might have been killed. How I despise myself for listening to Mr. Allen’s tales!”

“Then it was Mr. Allen!” I exclaimed, fetching a long breath.

“Yes, yes; I will tell you all.”

“No,” said I, alarmed at her agitation; “another time.”

“I must,” she answered more calmly; “it has burned me enough. You recall that we were at supper together, with Betty Tayloe and Lord Comyn, and how merry we were, altho’ ’twas nothing but ‘Dorothy’ with you gentlemen. Then you left me. Afterwards, as I was talking with Mr. Singleton, the rector came up. I never have liked the man, Richard, but I little knew his character. He began by twitting me for a Whig, and presently he said: ’But we have gained one convert, Miss Swain, who sees the error of his ways. Scarce a year since young Richard Carvel promised to be one of those with whom his Majesty will have to reckon. And he is now become,’ —laughing,—’the King’s most loyal and devoted.’ I was beside myself. ‘That is no subject for jest, Mr. Allen,’ I cried; I will never believe it of him!’ ‘Jest!’ said he; I give you my word I was never soberer in my life.’ Then it all came to me of a sudden that you sat no longer by the hour with my father, as you used, and you denounced the King’s measures and ministers no more. My father had spoken of it. ’Tell me why he has changed?’ I asked, faltering with doubt of you, which I never before had felt. ‘Indeed, I know not,’ replied the rector, with his most

cynical smile; unless it is because old Mr. Carvel might disinherit a Whig. But I see you doubt my word, Miss Swain. Here is Mr. Carroll, and you may ask him.' God forgive me, Richard! I stopped Mr. Carroll, who seemed mightily surprised. And he told me yes, that your grandfather had said but a few days before, and with joy, that you were now of his Majesty's party."

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“Alas! I might have foreseen this consequence,” I exclaimed. “Nor do I blame you, Patty.”

“But my father has explained all,” Patty continued, brightening. “His admiration for you is increased tenfold, Richard. Your grandfather told him of the rector’s treachery, which he says is sufficient to make him turn Methodist or Lutheran. We went to the curate’s service to-day. And —will you hear more, sir? Or do your ears burn? That patriots and loyalists are singing your praises from Town Gate to the dock, and regretting that you did not kill that detestable Captain Collinson—but I have something else, and of more importance, to tell you, Richard,” she continued, lowering her voice.

“What Mr. Carroll had told me stunned me like a blow, such had been my faith in you. And when Mr. Allen moved off, I stood talking to Percy Singleton and his Lordship without understanding a word of the conversation. I could scarce have been in my right mind. It was not your going over to the other side that pained me so, for all your people are Tories. But I had rather seen you dead than a pretender and a hypocrite, selling yourself for an inheritance. Then you came. My natural impulse should have been to draw you aside and there accuse you. But this was beyond my strength. And when I saw you go away without a word I knew that I had been unjust. I could have wept before them all. Mr. Carroll went for his coach, and was a full half an hour in getting it. But this is what I would tell you in particular, Richard. I have not spoken of it to a soul, and it troubles me above all else: While Maria was getting my cardinal I heard voices on the other side of the dressing-room door. The supper-room is next, you know. I listened, and recognized the rector’s deep tones: ’He has gone to the Coffee House,’ he was saying; Collinson declares that his Lordship is our man, if we can but contrive it. He is the best foil in the service, and was taught by—there! I have forgot the name.”

“Angelo!” I cried.

“Yes, yes, Angelo it was. How did you know?” she demanded, rising in her excitement.

“Angelo is the great fencing-master of London,” I replied.

“When I heard that,” she said, “I had no doubt of your innocence. I ran out into the assembly room as I was, in my hood, and tried to find Tom. But he—” She paused, ashamed.

“Yes, I know,” I said hurriedly; “you could not find him.”

She glanced at me in gratitude.

“How everybody stared at me! But little I cared! ’Twas that gave rise to Mr. Green’s report. I thought of Percy Singleton, and stopped him in the midst of a dance to bid him run as fast as his legs would carry him to the Coffee House, and to see that no harm

befell you. 'I shall hold you responsible for Richard,' I whispered. 'You must get him away from Mr. Claude's, or I shall never speak to you again.' He did not wait to ask questions, but went at once, like

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the good fellow he is. Then I rode home with Maria. I would not have Mr. Carroll come with me, though he begged hard. Father was in here, writing his brief. But I was all in pieces, Richard, and so shaken with sobbing that I could tell him no more than that you had gone to the Coffee House, where they meant to draw you into a duel. He took me up to my own room, and I heard him going out to wake Limbo to harness, and at last heard him driving away in our coach. I hope I may never in my life spend such another hour as I passed then."

The light in the sky had gone out. I looked up at the girl before me as she stood gazing into the flame, her features in strong relief, her lips parted, her hair red-gold, and the rounded outlines of her figure softened. I wondered why I had never before known her beauty. Perchance it was because, until that night, I had never seen her heart.

I leaped to my feet and seized her hands. For a second she looked at me, startled. Then she tore them away and ran behind the dipping chair in the corner.

"Richard, Richard!" she exclaimed. "Did Dorothy but know!"

"Dorothy is occupied with titles," I said.

Patty's lip quivered. And I knew, blundering fool that I was, that I had hurt her.

"Oh, you wrong her!" she cried; "believe me when I say that she loves you, and you only, Richard."

"Loves me!" I retorted bitterly,—brutally, I fear. "No. She may have once, long ago. But now her head is turned."

"She loves you now," answered Patty, earnestly; "and I think ever will, if you but deserve her."

And with that she went away, leaving me to stare after her in perplexity and consternation.

CHAPTER XVII

SOUTH RIVER

My grandfather's defection from St. Anne's called forth a deal of comment in Annapolis. His Excellency came to remonstrate, but to no avail, and Mr. Carvel denounced the rector in such terms that the Governor was glad to turn the subject. My Uncle Grafton acted with such quickness and force as would have served to lull the sharpest

suspicions. He forbid the rector his house, attended the curate's service, and took Philip from his care. It was decided that both my cousin and I were to go to King's College after Christmas. Grafton's conduct greatly pleased my grandfather. "He has behaved very loyally in this matter, Richard." he said to me. "I grow to reproach myself more every day for the injustice I once did him. He is heaping coals of fire upon my old head. But, faith! I cannot stomach your Aunt Caroline. You do not seem to like your uncle, lad."

I answered that I did not.

"It was ever the Carvel way not to forget," he went on. "Nevertheless, Grafton hath your welfare at heart, I think. His affection for you as his brother's son is great."

O that I had spoken the words that burned my tongue!

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Christmas fell upon Monday of that year, 1769. There was to be a ball at Upper Marlboro on the Friday before, to which many of us were invited. Though the morning came in with a blinding snowstorm from the north, the first of that winter, about ten of the clock we set out from Annapolis an exceeding merry party, the ladies in four coaches-and-six, the gentlemen and their servants riding at the wheels. We laughed and joked despite the storm, and exchanged signals with the fair ones behind the glasses.

But we had scarce got two miles beyond the town gate when a messenger overtook us with a note for Mr. Carvel, writ upon an odd slip of paper, and with great apparent hurry:

Honoured sir,

"I have but just come to Annapolis from New York, with Instructions to put into your Hands, & no Others, a Message of the greatest Import. Hearing you are but now set out for Upper Marlboro I beg of you to return for half an Hour to the Coffee House. By so doing you will be of service to a Friend, and confer a Favour upon y'r most ob'd't Humble Servant,

"*Silas Ridgeway*."

Our cavalcade had halted while I read, the ladies letting down the glasses and leaning out in their concern lest some trouble had befallen me or my grandfather. I answered them and bade them ride on, vowing that I would overtake the coaches before they reached the Patuxent. Then I turned Cynthia's head for town, with Hugo at my heels.

Patty, leaning from the window of the last coach, called out to me as I passed. I waved my hand in return, and did not remember until long after the anxiety in her eyes.

As I rode, and I rode hard, I pondered over the words of this letter. I knew not this Mr. Ridgeway from the Lord Mayor of London; but I came to the conclusion before I had reprised the gate that his message was from Captain Daniel. And I greatly feared that some evil had befallen my good friend. So I came to the Coffee House, and throwing my bridle to Hugo, I ran in.

I found Mr. Ridgeway neither in the long room nor in the billiard room nor the bar. Mr. Claude told me that indeed a man had arrived that morning from the North, a spare person with a hooked nose and scant hair, in a brown greatcoat with a torn cape. He had gone forth afoot half an hour since. His messenger, a negro lad whose face I knew, was in the stables with Hugo. He had never seen the stranger till he met him that morning in State House Circle inquiring for Mr. Carvel, and had been given a shilling to gallop after me. Impatient as I was to be gone, I sat me down in the coffee room, thinking every minute the man must return, and strongly apprehensive that Captain

Daniel must be in some grave predicament. That the favour he asked was of such a nature as I, and not my grandfather, could best fulfil.

At length, about a quarter after noon, my man comes in with Mr. Claude close behind him. I liked his looks less than his description, and the moment I clapped eyes on him I knew that Captain Daniel had never chose such a messenger.

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“This is Mr. Richard Carvel,” said Mr. Claude.

The fellow made me a low bow, which I scarcely returned.

“I am sure, ’sir,” he began in a whining voice, “that I crave your forbearance for this prodigious, stupid mistake I have made.”

“Mistake!” I exclaimed hotly; “you mean to say, sir, that you have brought me back for nothing?”

The man’s eye shifted, and he made me another bow.

“I scarce know what to say, Mr. Carvel,” he answered with much humility; “to speak truth, ’twas zeal to my employers, and methought to you, that caused you to retrace your steps in this pestiferous storm. I travel,” he proceeded with some importance, “I travel for Messrs. Rinnell and Runn, Barristers of the town of New York, and carry letters to men of mark all over these middle and southern colonies. And my instructions, sir, were to come to Annapolis with all reasonable speed with this double-sealed enclosure for Mr. Carvel: and to deliver it to him, and him only, the very moment I arrived. As I came through your town I made inquiries, and was told by a black fellow in the Circle that Mr. Carvel was but just left for Upper Marlboro with a cavalcade of four coaches-and-six and some dozen gentlemen with their servants. I am sure my mistake was pardonable, Mr. Carvel,” he concluded with a smirk; “this gentleman was plainly of the first quality, as was he to whom I was directed. And as he was about to leave town for I knew not how long, I hope I was in the right in bidding the black ride after him, for I give you my word the business was most pressing for him. I crave your forgiveness, and the pleasure of drinking your honour’s health.”

I barely heard the fellow through, and was turning on my heel in disgust, when it struck me to ask him what Mr. Carvel he sought, for I feared lest my grandfather had got into some lawsuit.

“And it please your honour, Mr. Grafton Carvel,” said he; “your uncle, I understand. Unfortunately he has gone to his estate in Kent County, whither I must now follow him.”

I bade Mr. Claude summon my servant, not stopping to question the man further, such was my resentment against him. And in ten minutes we were out of the town again, galloping between the nearly filled tracks of the coaches, now three hours ahead of us. The storm was increasing, and the wind cutting, but I dug into Cynthia so that poor Hugo was put to it to hold the pace, and, tho’ he had a pint of rum in him, was near perished with the cold. As my anger cooled somewhat I began to wonder how Mr. Silas Ridgeway, whoever he was, could have been such a simpleton as his story made him out. Indeed, he looked more the rogue than the ass; nor could I conceive how reliable barristers could hire such a one. I wished heartily that I had exhausted him further, and

a suspicion crossed my brain that he might have come to Mr. Allen, who had persuaded him to deliver a letter to Grafton intended for me.

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Some foreboding beset me, and I was once close to a full mind for going back, and slacked Cynthia's pace to a trot. But the thought of the pleasures at Upper Marlboro' and the hope of overtaking the party at Mr. Dorsey's place, over the Patuxent, where they looked to dine, decided me in pushing on. And thus we came to South River, with the snow so thick that we could scarce see ten yards in front of us.

Beyond, the road winds up the hill'around the end of Mr. Wiley's plantation and plunges shortly into the woods, gray and cold indeed to-day. At their skirt a trail branches off which leads to Mr. Whey's warehouses, on the water's edge a mile or so below. And I marked that this path was freshly trodden. I recall a small shock of surprise at this, for the way was used only in the early autumn to connect with some fields beyond the hill. And then I heard a sharp cry from Hugo and pulled Cynthia short. He was some ten paces behind me.

"Marse Dick!" he shouted, the whites of his eyes rolled up. "We'se gwine to be robbed, Marse Dick." And he pointed to the footprints in the snow; "somefin done tole Hugo not come to-day."

"Nonsense!" I cried; "Mr. Wiley is making his lazy beggars cut wood against Christmas."

When in this temper the poor fellow had more fear of me than of aught else, and he closed up to my horse's flank, glancing apprehensively to the right and left, his teeth rattling. We went at a brisk trot. We know not, indeed, how to account for many things in this world, for with. each beat of Cynthia's feet I found myself repeating the words South River and Marlboro, and seeking in my mind a connection to something gone before. Then, like a sudden gust of wind, comes to me that strange talk between Grafton and the rector, overheard by old Harvey in the stables at Carvel Hall. And Cynthia's ears were pointing forward.

With a quick impulse I loosed the lower frogs of my coat, for my sword was buckled beneath, and was reaching for one of the brace of pistols in my saddle-bags. I had but released them when Hugo cried out: "Gawd, Marse Dick, run for yo' life!" and I caught a glimpse of him flying down the road. As I turned a shot rang out, Cynthia reared high with a rough brute of a fellow clinging to her bridle. I sent my charge full into his chest, and as he tumbled in the snow I dug my spurs to the rowels.

What happened then is still a blurred picture in my brain. I know that Cynthia was shot from under me before she had taken her leap, and we fell heavily together. And I was scarcely up again and my sword drawn, when the villains were pressing me from all sides. I remember spitting but one, and then I heard a great seafaring oath, the first word out of their mouths, and I was felled from behind with a mighty blow.

THE “BLACK MOLL”

CHAPTER XVIII

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The “Black Moll”

I have no intention, my dears, of dwelling upon that part of my adventures which must be as painful to you as to me, the very recollection of which, after all these years, suffices to cause the blood within me to run cold. In my youth men whose natures shrank not from encounter with their enemies lacked not, I warrant you, a checkered experience. Those of us who are wound the tightest go the farthest and strike the hardest. Nor is it difficult for one, the last of whose life is being recorded, to review the outspread roll of it, and trace the unerring forces which have drawn for themselves.

Some, indeed, traverse this world weighing, before they partake, pleasure and business alike. But I am not sure, my children, that they better themselves; or that God, in His all-wise judgment, prefers them to such as are guided by the divine impulse with which He has endowed them. Far be it from me to advise rashness or imprudence, as such; nor do I believe you will take me so. But I say unto you: do that which is right, and let God, not man, be your interpreter.

My narrative awaits me.

I came to my wits with an immoderate feeling of faintness and sickness, with no more remembrance of things past than has a man bereft of reason. And for some time I swung between sense and oblivion before an overpowering stench forced itself upon my nostrils, accompanied by a creaking, straining sound and sweeping motion. I could see nothing for the pitchy blackness. Then I recalled what had befallen me, and cried aloud to God in my anguish, for I well knew I had been carried aboard ship, and was at sea. I had oftentimes heard of the notorious press-gang which supplied the need of the King’s navy, and my first thought was that I had fallen in their clutches. But I wondered that they had dared attack a person of my consequence.

I had no pain. I lay in a bunk that felt gritty and greasy to the touch, and my hair was matted behind by a clot of blood. I had been stripped of my clothes, and put into some coarse and rough material, the colour and condition of which I could not see for want of light. I began to cast about me, to examine the size of the bunk, which I found to be narrow, and plainly at some distance from the deck, for I laid hold upon one of the rough beams above me. By its curvature I knew it to be a knee, and thus I came to the caulked sides of the vessel, and for the first time heard the rattling thud and swish of water on the far side of it. I had no sooner made this discovery, which drew from me an involuntary groan, when a ship’s lanthorn was of a sudden thrust over me, and I perceived behind it a head covered with shaggy hair and beard, and beetling brows. Never had I been in such a terrifying presence.

“Damn my blood and bones, life signals at last! Another three bells gone, my silks and laces, and we had given you to the sharks.”

The man hung his lanthorn to a hook on the beam, and thrust a case-bottle of rum toward me, at the same time biting off a great quid of tobacco. For all my alarm I saw that his manner was not unkindly, and as I was conscious of a consuming thirst I seized and tipped it eagerly.

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"'Tis no fine Madeira, my blood," said he, "such as I fancy your palate is acquainted with. Yet 'tis as fair a Jamaica as ever Griggs put ashore i' the dark."

"Griggs!" I cried, the whole affair coming to me: Griggs, Upper Marlboro', South River, Grafton and the rector plotting in the stalls, and Mr. Silas Ridgeway the accomplice.

"Ay, Griggs," replied he; "ye may well repeat it, the-------, I'll lay a puncheon he'll be hailing you shortly. Guinea Griggs, Gold-Coast Griggs, Smuggler Griggs, Skull-and-Bones Griggs. Damn his soul and eyes, he hath sent to damnation many a ship's company."

He drained what remained of the bottle, took down the lanthorn, and left me sufficiently terrified to reflect upon my situation, which I found desperate enough, my dears. I have no words to describe what I went through in that vile, foul-smelling place. My tears flowed fast when I thought of my grandfather and of the dear friends I had left behind, and of Dorothy, whom I never hoped to see again. And then, perchance 'twas the rum put heart into me, I vowed I would face the matter show this cut-throat of a Griggs a bold front. Had he meant to murder me, I reflected, he had done the business long since. Then I fell asleep.

I awoke, I know not how soon, to discover the same shaggy countenance, and the lanthorn.

"Canst walk, Mechlin?" says he.

"I can try, at least," I answered.

He seemed pleased at this.

"You have courage a-plenty, and, by G—, you will have need of it all with that of a Griggs!" He gave me his bottle again, and assisted me down, and I found that my legs, save for the rocking of the ship, were steady enough. I followed him out of the hole in which I had lain on to a deck, which, in the half light, I saw covered with slush and filth. It was small, and but dimly illuminated by a hatchway, up the which I pushed after him, and then another. And so we came to the light of day, which near blinded me: so that I was fain to clap my hand to mine eyes, and stood for a space looking about me like a man dazed. The wind, tho' blowing stiff, was mild, and league after league of the green sea danced and foamed in the morning sunlight, and I perceived that I was on a large schooner under full sail, the crew of which were littered about at different occupations. Some gaming and some drinking, while on the forecastle two men were settling a dispute at fisticuffs. And they gave me no more notice, nor as much, than I had been a baboon thrust among them. From this indifference to a captive I augured no good.

Then my conductor, whom I rightly judged to be the mate of this devil's crew, took me roughly by the shoulder and bade me accompany him to the cabin.

As we drew near the topgallant poop there sounded in my ears a noise like a tempest, which I soon became aware was a man swearing with a prodigious vehemence in a fog-horn of a voice. "Sdeath and wounds! Where is that dog-fish of a Cockle? Damn his entrails, and he is not come soon, I'll mast-head him naked, by the seven holy spritsails!" And much more and worse to the same tune until we passed the door and stood before him, when he let out an oath like the death-cry of a monster.

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He was a short, lean man with a leathery face and long, black ropy hair, and beady black eyes that caught the light like a cat's. His looks, indeed, would have scared a timid person into a fit; but I resolved I would die rather than show the fear with which he inspired me. He was dressed in an old navy uniform with dirty lace. His cabin was bare enough, being scattered about with pistols and muskets and cutlasses, with a ragged pallet in one corner, and he sat behind an oaken table covered with greasy charts and spilled liquor and tobacco.

"So ho, you are risen from the dead, are you, my fine buck? Mr. What-do-they-call-you?" cried the captain, with a word as foul as any he had yet uttered. "By the Lord, you shall pay for running my bosun through!"

"And by the Lord, Captain What's-your-name," I cried back, for the rum I had taken had heated me, "you and your fellow-rascals shall pay in blood for this villanous injury!"

Griggs got to his feet and seized his hanger, his face like livid marble seamed with blue. And from force of habit I made motion for my sword, to make the shameful discovery that I was clothed from head to foot in linsey-woolsey.

"G-d——my soul," he roared, "if I don't slit you like a herring! The devil burn me to a cinder if I don't give your guts to the sharks!" And he made at me in such a fury that I would certainly have been cut to pieces had I not grasped a cutlass and parried his blow, Cockle looking on with his jaw dropped like a peak without haulyards. With a stroke of my weapon I disarmed Captain Griggs, his sword flying through the cabin window. For I made up my mind I would better die fighting than expire at a hideous torture, which I doubted not he would inflict, and so I took up a posture of defence, with one eye on the mate; despite the kind offices of the latter below I knew not whether he were disposed to befriend me before the captain. What was my astonishment, therefore, to behold Griggs's truculent manner change.

"Avast, my man-o-war," he cried; "blood and wounds! I had more than an eye when they brought thee aboard, else I would have killed thee like a sucking-pig under the forecastle, as I have given oath to do. By the Ghost, you are worth seven of that Roger Spratt whom you sent to hell in his boots."

Wherewith Cockle, who for all his terrible appearance stood in a mighty awe of his captain, set up a loud laugh, and vowed that Griggs knew a man when he spared me, and was cursed for his pains.

"So you were contracted to murder me, Captain Griggs?" said I.

"Ay," he replied, a devilish gleam coming into his eye, "but I have now got you and the money to boot. But harkye, I'll stand by my half of the bargain, by G—. If ever you reach Maryland alive, they may hang me to the yardarm of a ship-of-the-line."

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And I live long enough, my dears, I hope some day to write for you the account of all that befell me on this slaver, Black Moll, for so she was called. 'Twould but delay my story now. Suffice it to say that we sailed for a fortnight or so in the West India seas. From some observations that fell from the mouth of Griggs I gathered that he was searching for an island which evaded him; and each day added to his vexation at not finding it. At times he was drunk for forty hours at a stretch, when he would shut himself in his cabin and leave his ship to the care of Cockle, who navigated with the sober portion of the crew. And such a lousy, brawling lot of convicts I had never clapped eyes upon. As for me, I was treated indifferently well, though 'twas in truth punishment enough to live in that filthy ship, to eat their shins of beef and briny pork and wormy biscuit, to wear rough clothes that chafed my skin. I shared Cockle's cabin, in every way as dirty a place as the den I had left, but with the advantage of air, for which I fervently thanked God.

I think the mate had some little friendship for me, though he was too hardened by the life he had led to care a deal what became of me. He encouraged me secretly to continue to beard Griggs as I had begun, saying that it was my sole chance of a whole skin, and vowing that if he had had the courage to pursue the same course his own back had not been checkered like a grating. He told me stories of the captain's cruelty which I dare not repeat for their very horror, and indeed I lacked not for instances to substantiate what he said; men with their backs beaten to a pulp, and others with ears cut off, and mouths slit, and toes missing. So that I lived in hourly fear lest in some drunken fit Griggs might command me to be tortured. But, fortunately, he held small converse with me, and when sober busied himself in trying to find the island and in cursing the fate by which it eluded him.

So I existed, and prayed daily for deliverance. I plied Cockle with questions as to what they purposed doing with me, but he was wont to turn sulky, and would answer me not a word. But once, when he was deeper in his cups than common, he let me know that Griggs was to sell me to a certain planter. You may well believe that this did not serve to liven my spirits.

At length, one morning, Captain Griggs came out of his cabin and climbed upon the poop, calling all hands aft to the quarterdeck. Whereupon he proceeded to make them a speech that for vileness exceeded aught I have ever heard before or since. He finished by reminding them that this was the anniversary of the scuttling of the sloop Jane, which had made them all rich a year before, off the Canaries; the day that he had sent three and twenty men over the plank to hell. Wherefore he decreed a holiday, as the weather was bright and the trades light, and would serve quadruple portions of rum to every man jack aboard; and they set up a cheer that started the Mother Careys astern.

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I have no language to depict the bestiality of that day; and if I had I would think it sin to write of it. The helm was lashed on the port tack, the haulyards set taut, and all hands down to the lad who was the cook's scullion proceeded to get drunk. I took the precaution to have a hanger at my side and to slip one of Cockle's pistols within the band of my breeches. I was in an exquisite' agony of indecision as to what manner to act and how to defend myself from their drunken brutality, for I well knew that if I refused to imbibe with them I should probably be murdered for my abstemiousness; and, if I drank, the stuff was so near to alcohol that I could not hope to keep my senses. While in this predicament I received a polite invitation to partake in the captain's company, which I did not see my way clear to refuse, and repaired to the cabin accordingly.

There I found Griggs and Cockle seated, and a fair-sized barrel of rum between them that the captain had just moved thither. By way of welcome he shot at me a volley of curses and bade me to fill up, and through fear of offending him I took down my first mug with a fair good grace. Then, in his own particular language, he began the account of the capture of the Jane, taking care in the pauses to see that my mug was full. But, as luck would have it, he got no farther than the boarding by the Black Moll's crew, when he fell to squabbling with Cockle as to who had been the first man over the side; and while they were settling this difference I grasped the opportunity to escape.

The maudlin scene that met my eyes on deck defies description; some were fighting, others grinning with a hideous laughter, and still others shouting tavern jokes unspeakable. And suddenly, whilst I was observing these things from a niche behind the cabin door, I heard the captain cry from within, "The ensign, the ensign!" Forgetting his dispute with Cockle, he bumped past me and made his way with some trouble to the poop. I climbed the ladder after him, and to my horror beheld him in a drunken frenzy drag a black flag with a rudely painted skull and cross-bones from the signal-chest, and with uncertain fingers toggle it to the ensign haulyards and hoist to the peak, where it fluttered grimly in the light wind like an evil augur on a fair day. At sight of it the wretches on deck fell to shouting and huzzaing, Griggs standing leering up at it. Then he gravely pulled off his hat and made it a bow, and turned upon me.

"Salute it, ye lubberly! Ye are no first-rate here," he thundered. "Salute the flag!"

Unless fear had kept me sober, 'tis past my understanding why I was not as drunk as he. Be that as it may, I was near as quarrelsome, and would as soon have worshipped the golden calf as saluted that rag. I flung back some reply, and he lugged out and came at me with a spring like a wild beast; and his men below, seeing us fall out, made a rush for the poop with knives and cutlasses drawn. Betwixt them all I should soon have been in slivers had not the main shrouds offered themselves handy. And up them I sprung, the captain cutting at my legs as I left the sheer-pole, and I stopped not until I reached the schooner's cross-trees, where I drew my cutlass. They pranced around the mast and showered me with oaths, for all the world like a lot of howling dogs which had treed a cat.

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I began to feel somewhat easier, and cried aloud that the first of them who came up after me would go down again in two pieces. Despite my warning a brace essayed to climb the ratlines, as pitiable an attempt as ever I witnessed, and fell to the deck again. ’Twas a miracle that they missed falling into the sea. And after a while, becoming convinced that they could not get at me, and being too far gone to shoot with any accuracy, they tumbled off the poop swearing to serve me in a hundred horrible ways when they caught me, and fell again to drinking and quarrelling amongst themselves. I was indeed in an unenviable plight, by no means sure that I would not be slain out of hand when they became sufficiently sober to capture me. As I marked the progress of their damnable orgy I cast about for some plan to take advantage of their condition. I observed that a stupor was already beginning to overcome a few of them. Then suddenly an incident happened to drive all else from my mind.

Nothing less, my dears, than a white speck of sail gleaming on the southern horizon!

For an hour I watched it, now in a shiver of apprehension lest it pass us by, now weeping in an ecstasy of joy over a possible deliverance. But it grew steadily larger, and when about three miles on our port bow I saw that the ship was a brigantine. Though she had long been in sight from our deck, ’twas not until now that she was made out by a man on the forecastle, who set up a cry that brought about him all who could reel thither, Griggs staggering out of his cabin and to the nettings. The sight sobered him somewhat, for he immediately shouted orders to cast loose the guns, himself tearing the breeching from the nine-pounder next him and taking out the tompion. About half the crew were in a liquorish stupor from which the trump itself could scarce have aroused them; the rest responded with savage oaths, swore that they would boil their suppers in the blood of the brigantine’s men and give their corpses to the sea. They fell to work on the port battery in so ludicrous a manner that I was fain to laugh despite the gravity of the situation. But when they came to rig the powderhoist and a couple of them descended into the magazine with pipes lighted, I was in imminent expectation of being blown as high as a kite.

So absorbed had I been in these preparations that I neglected to watch the brigantine, which I discovered to be standing on and off in a very undecided manner, as though hesitating to attack. My spirits fell again at this, for with all my inexperience I knew her to be a better sailer than the Black Moll. Her master, as Griggs remarked, “was no d—d slouching lubber, and knew a yardarm from a rattan cane.”

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Finally, about six bells of the watch, the stranger wore ship and bore down across our bows, hoisting English colours, at sight of which I could scarce forbear a cheer. At this instant, Captain Griggs woke to the fact that his helm was still lashed, and bestowing a hearty kick on his prostrate quartermaster stuck fast to the pitchy seams of the deck, took the wheel himself, and easing off before the wind to bring the vessels broadside to broadside, commanded that the guns be shooed to the muzzle, an order that was barely executed before the brigantine came within close range. Aboard her was all order and readiness; the men at her guns fuse in hand, an erect and pompous figure of a man, in a cocked hat, on the break of her poop. He raised his hand, two puffs of white smoke darted out, and I heard first the shrieking of shot, the broadside came crashing round us, one tearing through the mainsail below me, another mangling two men in the waist of our schooner, and Griggs gave the order to touch off. But two of his guns answered, one of which had been so gorged with shot that it burst in a hundred pieces and sent the fellow with the swab to perdition, and such a hell of blood and confusion as resulted is indescribable. I saw Griggs in a wild fit of rage force the helm down, the schooner flying into the wind. And by this time, the brigantine having got round and presented her port battery, raked us at a bare hundred yards, and I was the first to guess by the tilting forward of the mast that our hull was hit between wind and water, and was fast settling by the bow.

The schooner was sinking like a gallipot.

That day, with the sea flashing blue and white in the sun, I saw men go to death with a curse upon their lips and a fever in their eyes, with murder and defiance of God's holy will in their hearts. Overtaken in bestiality, like the judgment of Nineveh, five and twenty disappeared from beneath me, and I had scarce the time to throw off my cutlass before I, too, was engulfed. So expired the Black Moll.

RICHARD CARVEL

By Winston Churchill

Volume 4.

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CHAPTER XIX

A MAN OF DESTINY

I was picked up and thrown into the brigantine's long-boat with a head and stomach full of salt water, and a heart as light as spray with the joy of it all. A big, red-bearded man lifted my heels to drain me.

"The mon's deid," said he.

"Dead!" cried I, from the bottom-board. "No more dead than you!"

I turned over so lustily that he dropped my feet, and I sat up, something to his consternation. And they had scarce hooked the ship's side when I sprang up the sea-ladder, to the great gaping of the boat's crew, and stood with the water running off me in rivulets before the captain himself. I shall never forget the look of his face as he regarded my sorry figure.

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“Now by Saint Andrew,” exclaimed he, “are ye kelpie or pirate?”

“Neither, captain,” I replied, smiling as the comical end of it came up to me, “but a young gentleman in misfortune.”

“Hoots!” says he, frowning at the grinning half-circle about us, “it’s daft ye are—”

But there he paused, and took of me a second sizing. How he got at my birth behind my tangled mat of hair and wringing linsey-woolsey I know not to this day. But he dropped his Scotch and merchant-captain’s manner, and was suddenly a French courtier, making me a bow that had done credit to a Richelieu.

“Your servant, Mr.—”

“Richard Carvel, of Carvel Hall, in his Majesty’s province of Maryland.”

He seemed sufficiently impressed.

“Your very humble servant, Mr. Carvel. ’Tis in faith a privilege to be able to serve a gentleman.”

He bowed me toward his cabin, and then in sharp, quick tones he gave an order to his mate to get under way, and I saw the men turning to the braces with wonder in their eyes. My own astonishment was as great. And so, with my clothes sucking to my body and a trail of water behind me like that of a wet walrus, I accompanied the captain aft. His quarters were indeed a contrast to those of Griggs, being so neat that I paused at the door for fear of profaning them; but was so courteously bid to enter that I came on again. He summoned a boy from the round house.

“William,” said he, “a bottle of my French brandy. And my compliments to Mr. MacMuir, and ask him for a suit of clothes. You are a larger man than I, Mr. Carvel,” he said to me, “or I would fit you out according to your station.”

I was too overwhelmed to speak. He poured out a liberal three fingers of brandy, and pledged me as handsomely as I had been an admiral come thither in mine own barge, instead of a ragged lad picked off a piratical slaver, with nothing save my bare word and address. ’Twas then I had space to note him more particularly. His skin was the rich colour of a well-seasoned ship’s bell, and he was of the middle height, owned a slight, graceful figure, tapering down at the waist like a top, which had set off a silk coat to perfection and soured the beaus with envy. His movements, however, had all the decision of a man of action and of force. But his eye it was took possession of me—an unfathomable, dark eye, which bore more toward melancholy than sternness, and yet had something of both. He wore a clean, ruffled shirt, an exceeding neat coat and breeches of blue broadcloth, with plate burnished buttons, and white cotton stockings.

Truly, this was a person to make one look twice, and think oftener. Then, as I went to pledge him, I, too, was caught for his name.

“Paul,” said he; “John Paul, of the brigantine John, of Kirkcudbright, in the West India trade.”

“Captain Paul—” I began. But my gratitude stuck fast in my throat and flowed out of my eyes. For the thought of the horrors from which he had saved me for the first time swept over me; his own kind treatment overcame me, and I blubbered like a child. With that he turned his back.

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“Hoots,” says he, again, “dinna ye thank me. ’Tis naething to scuttle a nest of vermin, but the duty of ilka man who sails the seas.” By this, having got the better of his emotion, he added: “And if it has been my good fortune to save a gentleman, Mr. Carvel, I thank God for it, as you must.”

Save for a slackness inside the leg and in the hips, Macbluir’s clothes fitted me well enough, and presently I reappeared in the captain’s cabin rigged out in the mate’s shore suit of purplish drab, and brass-buckled shoes that came high over the instep, with my hair combed clear and tied with a ribbon behind. I felt at last that I might lay some claim to respectability. And what was my surprise to find Captain Paul buried to his middle in a great chest, and the place strewn about with laced and broidered coats and waistcoats, frocks and Newmarkets, like any tailor’s shop in Church Street. So strange they looked in those tropical seas that he was near to catching me in a laugh as he straightened up. ’Twas then I noted that he was a younger man than I had taken him for.

“You gentlemen from the southern colonies are too well nourished, by far,” says he; “you are apt to be large of chest and limb. ’Odds bods, Mr. Carvel, it grieves me to see you apparelled like a barber surgeon. If the good Lord had but made you smaller, now,” and he sighed, “how well this skyblue frock had set you off.”

“Indeed, I am content, and more, captain,” I replied with a smile, “and thankful to be safe amongst friends. Never, I assure you, have I had less desire for finery.”

“Ay,” said he, “you may well say that, you who have worn silk all your life, and will the rest of it, and we get safe to port. But believe me, sir, the pleasure of seeing one of your face and figure in such a coat as that would not be a small one.”

And disregarding my blushes and protests, he held up the watchet blue frock against me, and it was near fitting me but for my breadth,—the skirts being prodigiously long. I wondered mightily what tailor had thrust this garment upon him; its fashion was of the old king’s time, the cuffs slashed like a sea-officer’s uniform, and the shoulders made carefully round. But other thoughts were running within me then.

“Captain,” I cut in, “you are sailing eastward.”

“Yes, yes,” he answered absently, fingering some Point d’Espagne.

“There is no chance of touching in the colonies?” I persisted.

“Colonies! No,” said he, in the same abstraction; “I am making for the Solway, being long overdue. But what think you of this, Mr. Carvel?”

And he held up a wondrous vellum-hole waistcoat of a gone-by vintage, and I saw how futile it were to attempt to lead him, while in that state of absorption, to topics which

touched my affair. Of a sudden the significance of what he had said crept over me, the word Solway repeating itself in my mind. That firth bordered England itself, and Dorothy was in London! I became reconciled. I had no particle of objection to the Solway save the uneasiness my grandfather would come through, which was beyond helping. Fate had ordered things well.

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Then I fell to applauding, while the captain tried on (for he was not content with holding up) another frock of white drab, which, cuffs and pockets, I'll take my oath mounted no less than twenty-four: another plain one of pink cut-velvet; tail-coats of silk, heavily broidered with flowers, and satin waistcoats with narrow lace. He took an inconceivable enjoyment out of this parade, discoursing the while, like a nobleman with nothing but dress in his head, or, perhaps, like a mastercutter, about the turn of this or that lapel, the length from armpit to fold, and the number of button-holes that was proper. And finally he exhibited with evident pride a pair of doeskins that buttoned over the calf to be worn with high shoes, which I make sure he would have tried on likewise had he been offered the slightest encouragement. So he exploited the whole of his wardrobe, such an unlucky assortment of finery as I never wish to see again; all of which, however, became him marvellously, though I think he had looked well in anything. I hope I may be forgiven the perjury I did that day. I wondered greatly that such a foible should crop out in a man of otherwise sound sense and plain ability.

At length, when the last chest was shut again and locked, and I had exhausted my ingenuity at commendation, and my patience also, he turned to me as a man come out of a trance.

"Od's fish, Mr. Carvel," he cried, "you will be starved. I had forgot your state."

I owned that hunger had nigh overcome me, whereupon he became very solicitous, bade the boy bring in supper at once, and in a short time we sat down together to the best meal I had seen for a month. It seemed like a year. Porridge, and bacon nicely done, and duff and ale, with the sea rushing past the cabin windows as we ate, touched into colour by the setting sun. Captain Paul did not mess with his mates, not he, and he gave me to understand that I was to share his cabin, apologizing profusely for what he was pleased to call poor fare. He would have it that he, and not I, were receiving favour.

"My dear sir," he said once, "you cannot know what a bit of finery is to me, who has so little chance for the wearing of it. To discuss with a gentleman, a connoisseur (I know a bit of French, Mr. Carvel), is a pleasure I do not often come at."

His simplicity in this touched me; it was pathetic.

"How know you I am a gentleman, Captain Paul?" I asked curiously.

"I should lack discernment, sir," he retorted, with some heat, "if I could not see as much. Breeding shines through sack-cloth, sir. Besides," he continued, in a milder tone, "the look of you is candour itself. Though I have not greatly the advantage of you in age, I have seen many men, and I know that such a face as yours cannot lie."

Here Mr. Lowrie, the second mate, came in with a report; and I remarked that he stood up hat in hand whilst making it, very much as if Captain Paul commanded a frigate. The captain went to a locker and brought forth some mellow Madeira, and after the mate had taken a glass of it standing, he withdrew. Then we lighted pipes and sat very cosey with a lanthorn swung between us, and Captain Paul expressed a wish to hear my story.

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I gave him my early history briefly, dwelling but casually upon the position enjoyed in Maryland by my family; but I spoke of my grandfather, now turning seventy, gray-haired in the service of King and province. The captain was indeed a most sympathetic listener, now throwing in a question showing keen Scotch penetration, and anon making a most ludicrous inquiry as to the dress livery our footmen wore, and whether Mr. Carvel used outriders when he travelled abroad. This was the other side of the man. As the wine warmed and the pipe soothed, I spoke at length of Grafton and the rector; and when I came to the wretched contrivance by which they got me aboard the Black Moll, he was stalking hither and thither about the cabin, his fists clenched and his voice thick, breaking into Scotch again and vowing that hell were too good for such as they.

His indignation, which seemed real and generous, transformed him into another man. He showered question after question upon me concerning my uncle and Mr. Allen; declared that he had known many villains, but had yet to hear of their equals; and finally, cooling a little, gave it as his judgment that the crime could never be brought home to them. This was my own opinion. He advised me, before we turned in, to “gie the parson a Grunt” as soon as ever I could lay hands upon him.

The John made a good voyage for that season, with fair winds and clear skies for the most part. ’Twas a stout ship and a steady, with generous breadth of beam, and kept by the master as clean and bright as his porringer. He was Emperor aboard her. He spelt Command with a large C, and when he inspected, his jacks stood to attention like man-o’-war’s men. The John mounting only four guns, and but two of them ninepounders, I expressed my astonishment that he had dared attack a pirate craft like the Black Moll, without knowing her condition and armament.

“Richard,” says he, impressively, for we had become very friendly, “I would close with a thirty-two and she flew that flag. Why, sir, a bold front is half the battle, using circumspection, of a course. A pretty woman, whatever her airs and quality, is to be carried the same way, and a man ought never to be frightened by appearances.”

Sometimes, at our meals, we discussed politics. But he seemed lukewarm upon this subject. He had told me that he had a brother William in Virginia, who was a hot Patriot. The American quarrel seemed to interest him very little. I should like to underscore this last sentence, my dears, in view of what comes after. What he said on the topic leaned perhaps to the King’s side, tho’ he was careful to say nothing that would give me offence. I was not surprised, for I had made a fair guess of his ambitions. It is only honest to declare that in my soberer moments my estimate of his character suffered. But he was a strange man,—a genius, as I soon discovered, to rouse the most sluggish nature to enthusiasm.

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The joy of sailing is born into some men, and those who are marked for the sea go down thither like the very streams, to be salted. Whatever the sign, old Stanwix was not far wrong when he read it upon me, and 'twas no great while before I was part and parcel of the ship beneath my feet, breathing deep with her every motion. What feeling can compare with that I tasted when the brigantine lay on her side, the silver spray hurling over the bulwarks and stinging me to life! Or, in the watches, to hear the sea lashing along her strakes in never ending music! I gave MacMuir his shore suit again, and hugely delighted and astonished Captain Paul by donning a jacket of Scotch wool and a pair of seaman's boots, and so became a sailor myself. I had no mind to sit idle the passage, and the love of it, as I have said, was in me. In a fortnight I went aloft with the best of the watch to reef topsails, and trod a foot-rope without losing head or balance, bent an easing, and could lay hand on any lift, brace, sheet, or haulyards in the racks. John Paul himself taught me to tack and wear ship, and MacMuir to stow a headsail. The craft came to me, as it were, in a hand-gallop.

At first I could make nothing of the crew, not being able to understand a word of their Scotch; but I remarked, from the first, that they were sour and sulky, and given to gathering in knots when the captain or MacMuir had not the deck. For Mr. Lowrie, poor man, they had little respect. But they plainly feared the first mate, and John Paul most of all. Of me their suspicion knew no bounds, and they would give me gruff answers, or none, when I spoke to them. These things roused both curiosity and foreboding within me.

Many a watch I paced thro' with MacMuir, big and red and kindly, and I was not long in letting him know of the interest which Captain Paul had inspired within me. His own feeling for him was little short of idolatry. I had surmised much as to the rank of life from which the captain had sprung, but my astonishment was great when I was told that John Paul was the son of a poor gardener.

"A gardener's son, Mr. MacMuir!" I repeated.

"Just that," said he, solemnly, "a guid man an' haly' was auld Paul. Unco puir, by reason o' seven bairns. I kennt the daddie weel. I mak sma' doubt the captain'll tak ye hame wi' him, syne the mither an' sisters still be i' the cot i' Mr. Craik's croft."

"Tell me, MacMuir," said I, "is not the captain in some trouble?"

For I knew that something, whatever it was, hung heavy on John Paul's mind as we drew nearer Scotland. At times his brow would cloud and he would fall silent in the midst of a jest. And that night, with the stars jumping and the air biting cold (for we were up in the 40's), and the John wish-washing through the seas at three leagues the hour, MacMuir told me the story of Mungo Maxwell. You may read it for yourselves, my dears, in the life of John Paul Jones.

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“Wae’s me!” he said, with a heave of his big chest, “I reca’ as yestreen the night Maxwell cam aboord. The sun gaed loon a’ bluidy, an’ belyve the morn rose unco mirk an’ dreary, wi’ bullers (rollers) frae the west like muckle sowthers (soldiers) wi’ white plumes. I tauld the captain ‘twas a’ the faut o’ Maxwell. I ne’er cad bide the blellum. Dour an’ din he was, wi’ ae girn like th’ auld hornie. But the captain wadna hark to my rede when I tauld him naught but dool wad cooin o’ taking Mungo.”

It seemed that John Paul, contrary to MacMuir’s advice, had shipped as carpenter on the voyage out—near seven months since—a man by the name of Mungo Maxwell. The captain’s motive had nothing in it but kindness, and a laudable desire to do a good turn to a playmate of his boyhood. As MacMuir said, “they had gaed barefit thegither amang the braes.” The man hailed from Kirkbean, John Paul’s own parish. But he had within him little of the milk of kindness, being in truth a sour and mutinous devil; and instead of the gratitude he might have shown, he cursed the fate that had placed him under the gardener’s son, whom he deemed no better than himself. The John had scarce cleared the Solway before Maxwell showed signs of impudence and rebellion.

The crew was three-fourths made of Kirkcudbright men who had known the master from childhood, many of them, indeed, being older than he; they were mostly jealous of Paul, envious of the command he had attained to over them, and impatient under the discipline he was ever ready to inflict. ’Tis no light task to enforce obedience from those with whom one has birdnested. But, having more than once felt the weight of his hand, they feared him.

Dissatisfaction among such spreads apace, if a leader is but given; and Maxwell was such a one. His hatred for John Paul knew no bounds, and, having once tasted of his displeasure, he lay awake o’ nights scheming to ruin him. And this was the plot: when the Azores should be in the wake, Captain Paul was to be murdered as he paced his quarterdeck in the morning, the two mates clapt into irons, and so brought to submission. And Maxwell, who had no more notion of navigation than a carpenter should, was to take the John to God knows where,—the Guinea coast, most probably. He would have no more navy regulations on a merchant brigantine, he promised them, nor banyan days, for the matter o’ that.

Happily, MacMuir himself discovered the affair on the eve of its perpetration, overhearing two men talking in the breadroom, and he ran to the cabin with the sweat standing out on his forehead. But the captain would have none of the precautions he urged; declared he would walk the deck as usual, and vowed he could cope single-handed with a dozen cowards like Maxwell. Sure enough, at crowdie-time, the men were seen coming aft, with Maxwell in the van carrying a bowl, on the pretext of a complaint against the cook.

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“John Paul,” said MacMuir, with admiration in his voice and gesture, “John Paul wasna feart a pickle, but gaed to the mast, whyles I stannt chittering i’ my claes, fearfu’ for his life. He teuk the horns from Mungo, priet (tasted) a soup o’ the crowdie, an’ wi’ that he seiz’t haut o’ the man by baith shouthers ere the blastie (scoundrel) raught for ’s knife. My aith upo’t, sir, the lave (rest) o’ the batch cowert frae his e’e for a’ the wand like thumpit tykes.’”

So ended that mutiny, by the brave act of a brave man. The carpenter was clapt into irons himself, and given no less of the cat-o’-nine-tails than was good for him, and properly discharged at Tobago with such as had supported him. But he brought Captain Paul before the vice-admiralty court of that place, charging him with gross cruelty, and this proceeding had delayed the brigantine six months from her homeward voyage, to the great loss of her owners. And tho’ at length the captain was handsomely acquitted, his character suffered unjustly, for there lacked not those who put their own interpretation upon the affair. He would most probably lose the brigantine. “He expected as much,” said MacMuir.

“There be mony aboord,” he concluded, with a sigh, “as’ll muckle gash (gossip) when we win to Kirkcudbright.”

CHAPTER XX

A SAD HOME-COMING

Mr. Lowrie and Auctherlonnie, the Dumfries bo’sun, both of whom would have died for the captain, assured me of the truth of MacMuir’s story, and shook their heads gravely as to the probable outcome. The peculiar water-mark of greatness that is woven into some men is often enough to set their own community bitter against them. Sandie, the plodding peasant, finds it a hard matter to forgive Jamie, who is taken from the plough next to his, and ends in Parliament. The affair of Mungo Maxwell, altered to suit, had already made its way on more than one vessel to Scotland. For according to Lowrie, there was scarce a man or woman in Kirkcudbrightshire who did not know that John Paul was master of the John, and (in their hearts) that he would be master of more in days to come. Human nature is such that they resented it, and cried out aloud against his cruelty.

On the voyage I had many sober thoughts of my own to occupy me of the terrible fate, from which, by Divine inter position, I had been rescued; of the home I had left behind. I was all that remained to Mr. Carvel in the world, and I was sure that he had given me up for dead. How had he sustained the shock? I saw him heavily mounting the stairs upon Scipicks arm when first the news was brought to him. Next Grafton would come hurrying in from Kent to Marlboro Street, disavowing all knowledge of the messenger from New York, and intent only upon comforting his father. And when I pictured my

uncle soothing him to his face, and grinning behind his bed-curtains, my anger would scald me, and the realization of my helplessness bring tears of very bitterness.

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What would I not have given then for one word with that honest and faithful friend of our family, Captain Daniel! I knew that he suspected Grafton: he had told me as much that night at the Coffee House. Perhaps the greatest of my fears was that my uncle would deny him access to Mr. Carvel when he returned from the North.

In the evening, when the sun settled red upon the horizon, I would think of Patty and my friends in Gloucester Street. For I knew they missed me sadly of a Sunday at the supper-table. But it has ever been my nature to turn forward instead of back, and to accept the twists and flings of fortune with hope rather than with discouragement. And so, as we left league after, league of the blue ocean behind us, I would set my face to the forecastle. For Dorothy was in England.

On a dazzling morning in March, with the brigantine running like a beagle in full cry before a heaping sea that swayed her body,—so I beheld for the first time the misty green of the high shores of Ireland. Ah! of what heroes' deeds was I capable as I watched the lines come out in bold relief from a wonderland of cloud! With what eternal life I seemed to tingle! 'Twas as though I, Richard Carvel, had discovered all this colour; and when a tiny white speck of a cottage came out on the edge of the cliff, I thought irresistibly of the joy to live there the year round with Dorothy, with the wind whistling about our gables, and the sea thundering on the rocks far below. Youth is in truth a mystery.

How long I was gazing at the shifting coast I know not, for a strange wildness was within me that made me forget all else, until suddenly I became conscious of a presence at my side, and turned to behold the captain.

"'Tis a braw sight, Richard," said he, "but no sae bonnie as auld Scotland. An' the wind hands, we shall see her shores the morn."

His voice broke, and I looked again to see two great tears rolling upon his cheeks.

"Ah, Scotland!" he pressed on, heedless of them, "God aboon kens what she is to me! But she hasna' been ower guid to me, laddie." And he walked to the taffrail, and stood looking astern that two men who had come aft to splice a haulyard might not perceive his disorder. I followed him, emboldened to speak at last what was in me.

"Captain Paul," said I, "MacMuir has told me of your trouble. My grandfather is rich, and not lacking in gratitude,"—here I paused for suitable words, as I could not solve his expression,—"you, sir, whose bravery and charity will have restored me to him, shall not want for friends and money."

He heard me through.

“Mr. Carvel,” he replied with an impressiveness that took me aback, “reward is a thing that should not be spoken of between gentlemen.”

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And thus he left me, upbraiding myself that I should have mentioned money. And yet, I reflected secondly, why not? He was no more nor less than a master of a merchantman, and surely nothing was out of the common in such a one accepting what he had honestly come by. Had my affection for him been less sincere, had I not been racked with sympathy, I had laughed over his notions of gentility. I resolved, however, that when I had reached London and seen Mr. Dix, Mr. Carvel's agent, he should be rewarded despite his scruples. And if he lost his ship, he should have one of my grandfather's.

But at dinner he had plainly forgot any offence, and I had more cause than ever to be puzzled over his odd mixture of confidence and aloofness. He talked gayly on a score of subjects,—on dress, of which he was never tired, and described ports in the Indies and South America, in a fashion that betrayed prodigious powers of acute observation; nor did he lack for wit when he spoke of the rich planters who had wined him, and had me much in laughter. We fell into a merry mood, in Booth, jingling the glasses in many toasts, for he had a list of healths to make me gasp, near as long as the brigantine's articles,—Inez in Havana and Maraquita in Cartagena, and Clotilde, the Creole, of Martinico, each had her separate charm. Then there was Bess, in Kingston, the relict of a customs official, Captain Paul relating with ingenuous gusto a midnight brush with a lieutenant of his Majesty, in which the fair widow figured, and showed her preference, too. But his adoration for the ladies of the more northern colonies, he would have me to understand, was unbounded. For example, Miss Arabella Pope of Norfolk, in Virginia,—and did I know her? No, I had not that pleasure, though I assured him the Popes of Virginia were famed. Miss Pope danced divinely as any sylph, and the very memory of her tripping at the Norfolk Assembly roused the captain to such a pitch of enthusiasm as I had never seen in him. Marvellous to say, his own words failed him, and he had recourse to the poets:

> "Her feet beneath her petticoat
> Like little mice stole in and out,
> As if they feared the light;
> But, oh, she dances such a way!
> No sun upon an Easter-day
> Is half so fine a sight."

The lines, he told me, were Sir John Suckling's; and he gave them standing, in excellent voice and elegant gesture.

He was in particular partial to the poets, could quote at will from Gay and Thomson and Goldsmith and Gray, and even from Shakespeare, much to my own astonishment and humiliation. Saving only Dr. Courtenay of Annapolis I had never met his equal for versatility of speech and command of fine language; and, having heard that he had been at sea since the age of twelve, I made bold to ask him at what school he had got his knowledge.

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“At none, Richard,” he answered with pride, “saving the rudiments at the Parish School at Kirkbean. Why, sir, I hold it to be within every man’s province to make himself what he will, and I early recognized in Learning the only guide for such as me. I may say that I married her for the furtherance of my fortunes, and have come to love her for her own sake. Many and many the ’tween-watch have I passed in a coil of rope in the tops, a volume of the classics in my hand. And ’my happiest days, when not at sea, have been spent in my brother William’s little library. He hath a modest estate near Fredericksburg, in Virginia, and none holds higher than he the worth of an education. Ah, Richard,” he added, with a certain sadness, “I fear you little know the value of that which hath been so lavishly bestowed upon you. There is no creation in the world to equal your fine gentleman!”

It struck me indeed as strange that a man of his powers should set store by such trumpery, and, too, that these notions had not impaired his ability as a seaman. I did not reply. He gave no heed, however, but drew from a case a number of odes and compositions, which he told me were his own. They were addressed to various of his enamouritas, abounded in orrery, and were all, I make no doubt, incredibly fine, tho’ not so much as one sticks in my mind. To speak truth I listened with a very ill grace, longing the while to be on deck, for we were about to sight the Isle of Man. The wine and the air of the cabin had made my eyes heavy. But presently, when he had run through with some dozen or more, he put them by, and with a quick motion got from his chair, a light coming into his dark eyes that startled me to attention. And I forgot the merchant captain, and seemed to be looking forward into the years.

“Mark you, Richard,” said he, “mark well when I say that my time will come, and a day when the best of them will bow to me. And every ell of that triumph shall be mine, sir,-ay, every inch!”

Such was his force, which sprang from some hidden fire within him, that I believed his words as firmly as they had been writ down in the Book of Isaiah. Brimming over with enthusiasm, I pledged his coming greatness in a reaming glass of Malaga.

“Alack,” he cried, “an’ they all had your faith, laddie, a fig for the prophecy! Ya maun ken th’ incentive’s the maist o’ the battle.”

There was more of wisdom in this than I dreamed of then. Here lay hid the very keynote of that ambitious character: he stooped to nothing less than greatness for a triumph over his slanderers.

I rose betimes the next morning to find the sun peeping above the wavy line of the Scottish hills far up the. Solway, and the brigantine sliding smoothly along in the lee of the Galloway Rhinns. And, though the month was March, the slopes of Burrow Head were green as the lawn of Carvel Hall in May, and the slanting rays danced on the ruffed

water. By eight of the clock we had crept into Kirkcudbright Bay and anchored off St. Mary's Isle, the tide running ebb, and leaving a wide brown belt of sand behind it.

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St. Mary's Isle! As we looked upon it that day, John Paul and I, and it lay low against the bright water with its bare oaks and chestnuts against the dark pines, 'twas perhaps as well that the future was sealed to us.

Captain Paul had conned the brigantine hither with a master's hand; but now that the anchor was on the ground, he became palpably nervous. I had donned again good MacMuir's shore suit, and was standing by the gangway when the captain approached me.

"What'll ye be doing now, Dickie lad?" he asked kindly.

What indeed! I was without money in a foreign port, still dependent upon my benefactor. And since he had declared his unwillingness to accept any return I was of no mind to go farther into his debt. I thanked him again for his goodness in what sincere terms I could choose, and told him I should be obliged if he would put me in the way of working my passage to London upon some coasting vessel. But my voice was thick, my affection for him having grown-past my understanding.

"Hoots!" he replied, moved in his turn, "whyles I hae siller ye shallna lack. Ye maun gae post-chaise to London, as befits yere station."

And scouting my expostulations, he commanded the longboat, bidding me be ready to go ashore with him. I had nothing to do but to say farewell to MacMuir and Lowrie and Auctherlonnie, which was hard enough. For the honest first mate I had a great liking, and was touched beyond speech when he enjoined me to keep his shore suit as long as I had want of it.

"But you will be needing it, MacMuir," I said, suspecting he had no other.

"Haith! I am but a plain man, Mr. Carvel, and ye can sen' back the claw frae London, wi' this geordie."

He slipped a guinea into my hand, but this I positively refused to take; and to hide my feelings I climbed quickly over the side and into the stern of the boat, beside the captain, and was rowed away through the little fleet of cobles gathering about the ship. Twisting my neck for a parting look at the John, I caught a glimpse of MacMuir's ungainly shoulders over the fokesle rail, and I was near to tears as he shouted a hearty "God speed" after me.

As we drew near the town of Kirkcudbright, which lies very low at the mouth of the river Dee, I made out a group of men and women on the wharves. The captain was silent, regarding them. When we had got within twenty feet or so of the landing, a dame in a red woollen kerchief called out:

"What hae ye done wi' Mungo, John Paul?"

"*Captain* John Paul, Mither Birkie," spoke up a coarse fellow with a rough beard. And a laugh went round.

"Ay, captain! I'll captain him!" screamed the carlin, pushing to the front as the oars were tossed, "I'll tak aith Mr. Currie'll be captaining him for his towmond voyage o' piratin'. He be leukin' for ye noo, John Paul." With that some of the men on the thwarts, perceiving that matters were likely to go ill with the captain, began to chaff with their friends above. The respect with which he had inspired them, however, prevented any overt insult on their part. As for me, my temper had flared up like the burning of a loose charge of powder, and by instinct my right hand sought the handle of the mate's hanger. The beldame saw the motion.

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“An’ hae ye murder’t MacMuir, John Paul, an’ gien’s claw to a Buckskin gowk?”

The knot stirred with an angry murmur: in truth they meant violence, —nothing less. But they had counted without their man, for Paul was born to ride greater crises. With his lips set in a line he stepped lightly out of the boat into their very midst, and they looked into his eyes to forget time and place. MacMuir had told me how those eyes could conquer mutiny, but I had not believed had I trot been thereto see the pack of them give back in sullen wonder. And so we walked through and on to the little street beyond, and never a word from the captain until we came opposite the sign of the Hurcheon.”

“Do you await me here, Richard,” he said quite calmly; “I mast seek Mr. Currie, and make my report.”

I have still the remembrance of that pitiful day in the clean little village. I went into the inn and sat down upon an oak settle in a corner of the bar, under the high lattice, and thought of the bitterness of this home-coming. If I was amongst strangers, he was amongst worse: verily, to have one’s own people set against one is heaviness of heart to a man whose love of Scotland was great as John Paul’s. After a while the place began to fill, Willie and Robbie and Jamie arriving to discuss Paul’s return over their nappy. The little I could make of their talk was not to my liking, but for the captain’s sake I kept my anger under as best I could, for I had the sense to know that brawling with a lot of alehouse frequenters would not advance his cause. At length, however, came in the same sneering fellow I had marked on the wharf, calling loudly for swats. “Ay, Captain Paul was noo at Mr. Curries, syne banie Alan seed him gang forbye the kirk.” The speaker’s name, I learned, was Davie, and he had been talking with each and every man in the long-boat. Yes, Mungo Maxwell had been cat-o’-ninetailed within an inch of his life; and that was the truth; for a trifling offence, too; and cruelly discharged at some outlandish port because, forsooth, he would not accept the gospel of the divinity of Captain Paul. He would as soon sign papers with the devil.

This Davie was gifted with a dangerous kind of humour which I have heard called innuendo, and he soon had the bar packed with listeners who laughed and cursed turn about, filling the room to a closeness scarce supportable. And what between the foul air and my resentment, and apprehension lest John Paul would come hither after me, I was in prodigious discomfort of body and mind. But there was no pushing my way through them unnoticed, wedged as I was in a far corner; so I sat still until unfortunately, or fortunately, the eye of Davie chanced to fall upon me, and immediately his yellow face lighted malignantly.

“Oh! here be the gentleman the captain’s brocht hame!” he cried, emphasizing the two words; “as braw a gentleman as eer taen frae pirates, an’ nae doubt sin to ae bien Buckskin bonnet-laird.”

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I saw through his game of getting satisfaction out of John Paul thro' goading me, and determined he should have his fill of it. For, all in all, he had me mad enough to fight three times over.

"Set aside the gentleman," said I, standing up and taking off MacMuir's coat, "and call me a lubberly clout like yourself, and we will see which is the better clout." I put off the longsleeved jacket, and faced him with my fists doubled, crying: "I'll teach you, you spawn of a dunghill, to speak ill of a good man!"

A clamour of "Fecht! fecht!" arose, and some of them applauded me, calling me a "swankie," which I believe is a compliment. A certain sense of fairness is often to be found where least expected. They capsized the fat, protesting browsterwife over her own stool, and were pulling Jamie's coat from his back, when I began to suspect that a fight was not to the sniveller's liking. Indeed, the very look of him made me laugh out —'twas now as mild as a summer's morn.

"Wow," says Jamie, "ye maun fecht wi' a man o' yere ain size."

"I'll lay a guinea that we weigh even," said I; and suddenly remembered that I had not so much as tuppence to bless me.

Happily he did not accept the wager. In huge disgust they hustled him from the inn and put forward the blacksmith, who was standing at the door in his leather apron. Now I had not bargained with the smith, who seemed a well-natured enough man, and grinned broadly at the prospect. But they made a ring on the floor, I going over it at one end, and he at the other, when a cry came from the street, those about the entrance parted, and in walked John Paul himself. At sight of him my new adversary, who was preparing to deal me out a blow to fell an ox, dropped his arms in surprise, and held out his big hand.

"Haith! John Paul," he shouted heartily, forgetting me, "'tis blythe I am to see yere bonnie face ance mair!

"An' wha are ye, Jamie Darrell," said the captain, "to be bangin' yere betters? Dinna ye ken gentry when ye see't?"

A puzzled look spread over the smith's grimy face.

"Gentry!" says he; "nae gentry that I ken, John Paul. Th' fecht be but a bit o' fun, an' nane o' my seekin'."

"What quarrel is this, Richard?" says John Paul to me.

“In truth I have no quarrel with this honest man,” I replied; “I desired but the pleasure of beating a certain evil-tongued Davie, who seems to have no stomach for blows, and hath taken his lies elsewhere.”

So quiet was the place that the tinkle of the guidwife’s needle, which she had dropped to the flags, sounded clear to all. John Paul stood in the middle of the ring, erect, like a man inspired, and the same strange sense of prophecy that had stirred my blood crept over him and awed the rest, as tho’ ’twere suddenly given to see him, not as he was, but as he would be. Then he spoke.

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“You, who are my countrymen, who should be my oldest and best friends, are become my enemies. You who were companions of my childhood are revilers of my manhood; you have robbed me of my good name and my honour, of my ship, of my very means of livelihood, and you are not content; you would rob me of my country, which I hold dearer than all. And I have never done you evil, nor spoken aught against you. As for the man Maxwell, whose part you take, his child is starving in your very midst, and you have not lifted your hands. ’Twas for her sake I shipped him, and none other. May God forgive you! He alone sees the bitterness in my heart this day. He alone knows my love for Scotland, and what it costs me to renounce her.”

He had said so much with an infinite sadness, and I read a response in the eyes of more than one of his listeners, the guidwife weeping aloud. But now his voice rose, and he ended with a fiery vigour.

“Renounce her I do,” he cried, “now and forevermore! Henceforth I am no countryman of yours. And if a day of repentance should come for this evil, remember well what I have said to you.”

They stood for a moment when he had finished, shifting uneasily, their tongues gone, like lads caught in a lie. I think they felt his greatness then, and had any one of them possessed the nobility to come forward with an honest word, John Paul might yet have been saved to Scotland. As it was, they slunk away in twos and threes, leaving at last only the good smith with us. He was not a man of talk, and the tears had washed the soot from his face in two white furrows.

“Ye’ll hae a waught wi’ me afore ye gang, John,” he said clumsily, “for th’ morns we’ve paddl’ ‘t thegither i’ th’ Nith.”

The ale was brought by the guidwife, who paused, as she put it down, to wipe her eyes with her apron. She gave John Paul one furtive glance and betook herself again to her knitting with a sigh, speech having failed her likewise. The captain grasped up his mug.

“May God bless you, Jamie,” he said.

“Ye’ll be gaen noo to see the mither,” said Jamie, after a long space.

“Ay, for the last time. An’, Jamie, ye’ll see that nae harm cams to her when I’m far awa’?”

The smith promised, and also agreed to have John Paul’s chests sent by wagon, that very day, to Dumfries. And we left him at his forge, his honest breast torn with emotion, looking after us.

CHAPTER XXI

THE GARDENER'S COTTAGE

So we walked out of the village, with many a head craned after us and many an eye peeping from behind a shutter, and on into the open highway. The day was heavenly bright, the wind humming around us and playing mad pranks with the white cotton clouds, and I forgot awhile the pity within me to wonder at the orderly look of the country, the hedges with never a stone out of place, and the bars always up.

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The ground was parcelled off in such bits as to make me smile when I remembered our own wide tracts in the New World. Here waste was sin: with us part and parcel of a creed. I marvelled, too, at the primness and solidity of the houses along the road, and remarked how their lines belonged rather to the landscape than to themselves. But I was conscious ever of a strange wish to expand, for I felt as tho' I were in the land of the Liliputians, and the thought of a gallop of forty miles or so over these honeycombed fields brought me to a laugh. But I was yet to see some estates of the gentry.

I had it on my tongue's tip to ask the captain whither he was taking me, yet dared not intrude on the sorrow that still gripped him. Time and time we met people plodding along, some of them nodding uncertainly, others abruptly taking the far side of the pike, and every encounter drove the poison deeper into his soul. But after we had travelled some way, up hill and down dale, he vouchsafed the intelligence that we were making for Arbigland, Mr. Craik's seat near Dumfries, which lies on the Nith twenty miles or so up the Solway from Kirkcudbright. On that estate stood the cottage where John Paul was born, and where his mother and sisters still dwelt.

"I'll juist be saying guidbye, Richard," he said; "and leave them a bit siller I hae saved, an' syne we'll be aff to London thegither, for Scotland's no but a cauld kintra."

"You are going to London with me?" I cried.

"Ay," answered he; "this is hame nae mair for John Paul."

I made bold to ask how the John's owners had treated him.

"I have naught to complain of, laddie," he answered; "both Mr. Beck and Mr. Currie bore the matter of the admiralty court and the delay like the gentlemen they are. They well know that I am hard driven when I resort to the lash. They were both sore at losing me, and says Mr. Beck: I We'll not soon get another to keep the brigantine like a man-o'-war, as did you, John Paul.' I thanked him, and told him I had sworn never to take another merchantman out of the Solway. And I will keep that oath."

He sighed, and added that he never hoped for better owners. In token of which he drew a certificate of service from his pocket, signed by Messrs. Currie and Beck, proclaiming him the best master and supercargo they had ever had in their service. I perceived that talk lightened him, and led him on. I inquired how he had got the 'John'.

"I took passage on her from Kingston, laddie. On the trip both Captain Macadam and the chief mate died of the fever. And it was I, the passenger, who sailed her into Kirkcudbright, tho' I had never been more than a chief mate before. That is scarce three years gone, when I was just turned one and twenty. And old Mr. Currie, who had known

my father, was so pleased that he gave me the ship. I had been chief mate of the ‘Two Friends’, a slaver out of Kingston.”

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“And so you were in that trade!” I exclaimed.

He seemed to hesitate.

“Yes,” he replied, “and sorry I am to say it. But a man must live. It was no place for a gentleman, and I left of my own accord. Before that, I was on a slaver out of Whitehaven.”

“You must know Whitehaven, then.”

I said it only to keep the talk going, but I remembered the remark long after.

“I do,” said he. “’Tis a fair sample of an English coast town. And I have often thought, in the event of war with France, how easy ’twould be for Louis’s cruisers to harry the place, and an hundred like it, and raise such a terror as to keep the British navy at home.”

I did not know at the time that this was the inspiration of an admiral and of a genius. The subject waned. And as familiar scenes jogged his memory, he launched into Scotch and reminiscence. Every barn he knew, and cairn and croft and steeple recalled stories of his boyhood.

We had long been in sight of Criffel, towering ahead of us, whose summit had beckoned for cycles to Helvellyn and Saddleback looming up to the southward, marking the wonderland of the English lakes. And at length, after some five hours of stiff walking, we saw the brown Nith below us going down to meet the Solway, and so came to the entrance of Mr. Craik’s place. The old porter recognized Paul by a mere shake of the head and the words, “Yere back, are ye?” and a lowering of his bushy white eyebrows. We took a by-way to avoid the manor-house, which stood on the rising ground twixt us and the mountain, I walking close to John Paul’s shoulder and feeling for him at every step. Presently, at a turn of the path, we were brought face to face with an elderly gentleman in black, and John Paul stopped.

“Mr. Craik!” he said, removing his hat.

But the gentleman only whistled to his dogs and went on.

“My God, even he!” exclaimed the captain, bitterly; “even he, who thought so highly of my father!”

A hundred yards more and we came to the little cottage nigh hid among the trees. John Paul paused a moment, his hand upon the latch of the gate, his eyes drinking in the familiar picture. The light of day was dying behind Criffel, and the tiny panes of the cottage windows pulsed with the rosy flame on the hearth within, now flaring, and again deepening. He sighed. He walked with unsteady step to the door and pushed it open.

I followed, scarce knowing what I did, halted at the threshold and drew back, for I had been upon holy ground.

John Paul was kneeling upon the flags by the ingleside, his face buried on the open Bible in his mother's lap. Her snowy-white head was bent upon his, her tears running fast, and her lips moving in silent prayer to Him who giveth and taketh away. Verily, here in this humble place dwelt a love that defied the hard usage of a hard world!

After a space he came to the door and called, and took me by the hand, and I went in with him. Though his eyes were wet, he bore himself like a cavalier.

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“Mother, this is Mr. Richard Carvell heir to Carvel Hall in Maryland,—a young gentleman whom I have had the honour to rescue from a slaver.”

I bowed low, such was my respect for Dame Paul, and she rose and curtseyed. She wore a widow’s cap and a black gown, and I saw in her deep-lined face a resemblance to her son.

“Madam,” I said, the title coming naturally, “I owe Captain Paul a debt I can never repay.”

“An’ him but a laddie!” she cried. “I’m thankful, John, I’m thankful for his mither that ye saved him.”

“I have no mother, Madam Paul,” said I, “and my father was killed in the French war. But I have a grandfather who loves me dearly as I love him.”

Some impulse brought her forward, and she took both my hands in her own.

“Ye’ll forgive an auld woman, sir,” she said, with a dignity that matched her son’s, “but ye’re sae young, an’ ye hae sic a leuk in yere bonny gray e’e that I ken yell aye be a true friend o’ John’s. He’s been a guid sin to me, an’ ye maunna reek what they say o’ him.”

When now I think of the triumph John Paul has achieved, of the scoffing world he has brought to his feet, I cannot but recall that sorrowful evening in the gardener’s cottage, when a son was restored but to be torn away. The sisters came in from their day’s work,—both well-favoured lasses, with John’s eyes and hair,—and cooked the simple meal of broth and porridge, and the fowl they had kept so long against the captain’s home-coming. He carved with many a light word that cost him dear. Did Janet reca’ the simmer nights they had supped here, wi’ the bumclocks bizzin’ ower the candles? And was Nancy, the cow, still i’ the byre? And did the bees still give the same bonnie hiney, and were the red apples still in the far orchard? Ay, Meg had thocht o’ him that autumn, and ran to fetch them with her apron to her face, to come back smiling through her tears. So it went; and often a lump would rise in my throat that I could not eat, famished as I was, and the mother and sisters scarce touched a morsel of the feast.

The one never failing test of a son, my dears, lies in his treatment of his mother, and from that hour forth I had not a doubt of John Paul. He was a man who had seen the world and become, in more than one meaning of the word, a gentleman. Whatever foibles he may have had, he brought no conscious airs and graces to this lowly place, but was again the humble gardener’s boy.

But time pressed, as it ever does. The hour came for us to leave, John Paul firmly refusing to remain the night in a house that belonged to Mr. Craik. Of the tenderness,

nay, of the pity and cruelty of that parting, I have no power to write. We knelt with bowed heads while the mother prayed for the son, expatriated, whom she never hoped to see again on this earth. She gave us bannocks of her own baking, and her last words were to implore me always to be a friend to John Paul.

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Then we went out into the night and walked all the way to Dumfries in silence.

We lay that night at the sign of the “Twa Naigs,” where Bonnie Prince Charlie had rested in the Mars year(1715). Before I went to bed I called for pen and paper, and by the light of a tallow dip sat down to compose a letter to my grandfather, telling him that I was alive and well, and recounting as much of my adventures as I could. I said that I was going to London, where I would see Mr. Dix, and would take passage thence for America. I prayed that he had been able to bear up against the ordeal of my disappearance. I dwelt upon the obligations I was under to John Paul, relating the misfortunes of that worthy seaman (which he so little deserved!). And said that it was my purpose to bring him to Maryland with me, where I knew Mr. Carvel would reward him with one of his ships, explaining that he would accept no money. But when it came to accusing Grafton and the rector, I thought twice, and bit the end of the feather. The chances were so great that my grandfather would be in bed and under the guardianship of my uncle that I forbore, and resolved instead to write it to Captain Daniel at my first opportunity.

I arose early to discover a morning gray and drear, with a mist falling to chill the bones. News travels apace the world over, and that of John Paul’s home-coming and of his public renunciation of Scotland at the “Hurcheon” had reached Dumfries in good time, substantiated by the arrival of the teamster with the chests the night before. I descended into the courtyard in time to catch the captain in his watchet-blue frock haggling with the landlord for a chaise, the two of them surrounded by a muttering crowd anxious for a glimpse of Mr. Craik’s gardener’s son, for he had become a nine-day sensation to the country round about. But John Paul minded them not so much as a swarm of flies, and the teamster’s account of the happenings at Kirkcudbright had given them so wholesome a fear of his speech and presence as to cause them to misdoubt their own wit, which is saying a deal of Scotchmen. But when the bargain had been struck and John Paul gone with the ’ostler to see to his chests, mine host thought it a pity not to have a fall out of me.

“So ye be the Buckskin laud,” he said, with a wink at a leering group of farmers; “ye hae braw gentles in America.”

He was a man of sixty or thereabout, with a shrewd but not unkindly face that had something familiar in it.

“You have discernment indeed to recognize a gentleman in Scotch clothes,” I replied, turning the laugh on him.

“Dinna raise ae Buckskin, Mr. Rawlinson,” said a man in corduroy.

“Rawlinson!” I exclaimed at random, “there is one of your name in the colonies who knows his station better.”

“Trowkt!” cried mine host, “ye ken Ivie o’ Maryland, Ivie my brither?”

“He is my grandfather’s miller at Carvel Hall,” I said.

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“Syne ye maun be nane ither than Mr. Richard Carvel. Yere servan’, Mr. Carvel,” and he made me a low bow, to the great dropping of jaws round about, and led me into the inn. With trembling hands he took a packet from his cabinet and showed me the letters, twenty-three in all, which Ivie had written home since he had gone out as the King’s passenger in ’45. The sight of them brought tears to my eyes and carried me out of the Scotch mist back to dear old Maryland. I had no trouble in convincing mine host that I was the lad eulogized in the scrawls, and he put hand on the very sheet which announced my birth, nineteen years since,—the fourth generation of Carvels Ivie had known.

So it came that the captain and I got the best chaise and pair in place of the worst, and sat down to a breakfast such as was prepared only for my Lord Selkirk when he passed that way, while I told the landlord of his brother; and as I talked I remembered the day I had caught the arm of the mill and gone the round, to find that Ivie had written of that, too!

After that our landlord would not hear of a reckoning. I might stay a month, a year, at the “Twa Naigs” if I wished. As for John Paul, who seemed my friend, he would say nothing, only to advise me privately that the man was queer company, shaking his head when I defended him. He came to me with ten guineas, which he pressed me to take for Ivies sake, and repay when occasion offered. I thanked him, but was of no mind to accept money from one who thought ill of my benefactor.

The refusal of these recalled the chaise, and I took the trouble to expostulate with the captain on that score, pointing out as delicately as I might that, as he had brought me to Scotland, I held it within my right to incur the expense of the trip to London, and that I intended to reimburse him when I saw Mr. Dix. For I knew that his wallet was not over full, since he had left the half of his savings with his mother. Much to my secret delight, he agreed to this as within the compass of a gentleman’s acceptance. Had he not, I had the full intention of leaving him to post it alone, and of offering myself to the master of the first schooner.

Despite the rain, and the painful scenes gone through but yesterday, and the sour-looking ring of men and women gathered to see the start, I was in high spirits as we went spinning down the Carlisle road, with my heart leaping to the crack of the postilion’s whip.

I was going to London and to Dorothy!

CHAPTER XXII

ON THE ROAD

Many were the ludicrous incidents we encountered on our journey to London. As long as I live, I shall never forget John Paul's alighting upon the bridge of the Sark to rid himself of a mighty farewell address to Scotland he had been composing upon the road. And this he delivered with such appalling voice and gesture as to frighten to a standstill a chaise on the English side of the stream, containing a young gentleman in a scarlet coat and a laced hat, and a young lady who sobbed as we passed them. They were, no doubt, running to Gretna Green to be married.

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Captain Paul, as I have said, was a man of moods, and strangely affected by ridicule. And this we had in plenty upon the road. Landlords, grooms, and'ostlers, and even our own post-boys, laughed and jested coarsely at his sky-blue frock, and their sallies angered him beyond all reason, while they afforded me so great an amusement that more than once I was on the edge of a serious falling-out with him as a consequence of my merriment. Usually, when we alighted from our vehicle, the expression of mine host would sour, and his sir would shift to a master; while his servants would go trooping in again, with many a coarse fling that they would get no vails from such as we. And once we were invited into the kitchen. He would be soar for half a day at a spell after a piece of insolence out of the common, and then deliver me a solemn lecture upon the advantages of birth in a manor. Then his natural buoyancy would lift him again, and he would be in childish ecstasies at the prospect of getting to London, and seeing the great world; and I began to think that he secretly cherished the hope of meeting some of its votaries. For I had told him, casually as possible, that I had friends in Arlington Street, where I remembered the Manners were established.

"Arlington Street!" he repeated, rolling the words over his tongue; "it has a fine sound, laddie, a fine sound. That street must be the very acme of fashion."

I laughed, and replied that I did not know. And at the ordinary of the next inn we came to, he took occasion to mention to me, in a louder voice than was necessary, that I would do well to call in Arlington Street as we went into town. So far as I could see, the remark did not compel any increase of respect from our fellow-diners.

Upon more than one point I was worried. Often and often I reflected that some hitch might occur to prevent my getting money promptly from Mr. Dix. Days would perchance elapse before I could find the man in such a great city as London; he might be out of town at this season, Easter being less than a se'nnight away. For I had heard my grandfather say that the elder Mr. Dix had a house in some merchant's suburb, and loved to play at being a squire before he died. Again (my heart stood at the thought), the Manners might be gone back to America. I cursed the stubborn pride which had led the captain to hire a post-chaise, when the wagon had served us so much better, and besides relieved him of the fusillade of ridicule he got travelling as a gentleman. But such reflections always ended in my upbraiding myself for blaming him whose generosity had rescued me from perhaps a life-long misery.

But, on the whole, we rolled southward happily, between high walls and hedges, past trim gardens and fields and meadows, and I marvelled at the regular, park-like look of the country, as though stamped from one design continually recurring, like our butter at Carvel Hall. The roads were sometimes good, and sometimes as execrable as a colonial byway in winter, with mud up to the axles. And yet, my heart went out to this country, the home of my ancestors. Spring was at hand; the ploughboys whistled between the furrows, the larks circled overhead, and the lilacs were cautiously pushing forth their noses. The air was heavy with the perfume of living things.

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The welcome we got at our various stopping-places was often scanty indeed, and more than once we were told to go farther down the street, that the inn was full. And I may as well confess that my mind was troubled about John Paul. Despite all I could say, he would go to the best hotels in the larger towns, declaring that there we should meet the people of fashion. Nor was his eagerness damped when he discovered that such people never came to the ordinary, but were served in their own rooms by their own servants.

“I shall know them yet,” he would vow, as we started off of a morning, after having seen no more of my Lord than his liveries below stairs. “Am I not a gentleman in all but birth, Richard? And that is a difficulty many before me have overcome. I have the classics, and the history, and the poets. And the French language, though I have never made the grand tour. I flatter myself that my tone might be worse. By the help of your friends, I shall have a title or two for acquaintances before I leave London; and when my money is gone, there is a shipowner I know of who will give me employment, if I have not obtained preferment.”

The desire to meet persons of birth was near to a mania with him. And I had not the courage to dampen his hopes. But, inexperienced as I was, I knew the kind better than he, and understood that it was easier for a camel to enter the eye of a needle, than for John Paul to cross the thresholds of the great houses of London. The way of adventurers is hard, and he could scarce lay claim then to a better name.

“We shall go to Maryland together, Captain Paul,” I said, “and waste no time upon London save to see Vauxhall, and the opera, and St. James’s and the Queen’s House and the Tower, and Parliament, and perchance his Majesty himself,” I added, attempting merriment, for the notion of seeing Dolly only to leave her gave me a pang. And the captain knew nothing of Dolly.

“So, Richard, you fear I shall disgrace you,” he said reproachfully. “Know, sir, that I have pride enough and to spare. That I can make friends without going to Arlington Street.”

I was ready to cry with vexation at this childish speech.

“And a time will come when they shall know me,” he went on. “If they insult me now they shall pay dearly for it.”

“My dear captain,” I cried; “nobody will insult you, and least of all my friends, the Manners.” I had my misgivings about little Mr. Marmaduke. “But we are, neither of us, equipped for a London season. I am but an unknown provincial, and you—” I paused for words.

For a sudden realization had come upon me that our positions were now reversed. It seemed strange that I should be interpreting the world to this man of power.

“And I?” he repeated bitterly.

“You have first to become an admiral,” I replied, with inspiration; “Drake was once a common seaman.”

He did not answer. But that evening as we came into Windsor, I perceived that he had not abandoned his intentions. The long light flashed on the peaceful Thames, and the great, grim castle was gilded all over its western side.

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The captain leaned out of the window.

“Postilion,” he called, “which inn here is most favoured by gentlemen?”

“The Castle,” said the boy, turning in his saddle to grin at me. “But if I might be so bold as to advise your honour, the ‘Swan’ is a comfortable house, and well attended.”

“Know your place, sirrah,” shouted the captain, angrily, “and drive us to the ‘Castle.’”

The boy snapped his whip disdainfully, and presently pulled us up at the inn, our chaise covered with the mud of three particular showers we had run through that day. And, as usual, the landlord, thinking he was about to receive quality, came scraping to the chaise door, only to turn with a gesture of disgust when he perceived John Paul’s sea-boxes tied on behind, and the costume of that hero, as well as my own.

The captain demanded a room. But mine host had turned his back, when suddenly a thought must have struck him, for he wheeled again.

“Stay,” he cried, glancing suspiciously at the sky-blue frock; “if you are Mr. Dyson’s courier, I have reserved a suite.”

This same John Paul, who was like iron with mob and mutiny, was pitiably helpless before such a prop of the aristocracy. He flew into a rage, and rated the landlord in Scotch and English, and I was fain to put my tongue in my cheek and turn my back that my laughter might not anger him the more.

And so I came face to face with another smile, behind a spying-glass,—a smile so cynical and unpleasant withal that my own was smothered. A tall and thin gentleman, who had come out of the inn without a hat, was surveying the dispute with a keen delight. He was past the middle age. His clothes bore that mark which distinguishes his world from the other, but his features were so striking as to hold my attention unwittingly.

After a while he withdrew his glass, cast one look at me which might have meant anything, and spoke up.

“Pray, my good Goble, why all this fol-de-rol about admitting a gentleman to your house?”

I scarce know which was the more astonished, the landlord, John Paul, or I. Goble bowed at the speaker.

“A gentleman, your honour!” he gasped. “Your honour is joking again. Surely this trumpery Scotchman in Jews’ finery is no gentleman, nor the longshore lout he has got with him. They may go to the ‘Swan.’”

“Jews’ finery!” shouted the captain, with his fingers on his sword.

But the stranger held up a hand deprecatingly.

“’Pon my oath, Goble, I gave you credit for more penetration,” he drawled; “you may be right about the Scotchman, but your longshore lout has had both birth and breeding, or I know nothing.”

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John Paul, who was in the act of bowing to the speaker, remained petrified with his hand upon his heart, entirely discomfited. The landlord forsook him instantly for me, then stole a glance at his guest to test his seriousness, and looked at my face to see how greatly it were at variance with my clothes. The temptation to lay hands on the cringing little toadeater grew too strong for me, and I picked him up by the scruff of the collar,—he was all skin and bones,—and spun him round like a corpse upon a gibbet, while he cried mercy in a voice to wake the dead. The slim gentleman under the sign laughed until he held his sides, with a heartiness that jarred upon me. It did not seem to fit him.

“By Hercules and Vulcan,” he cried, when at last I had set the landlord down, “what an arm and back the lad has! He must have the best in the house, Goble, and sup with me.”

Goble pulled himself together.

“And he is your honour’s friend,” he began, with a scowl.

“Ay, he is my friend, I tell you,” retorted the important personage, impatiently.

The innkeeper, sulky, half-satisfied, yet fearing to offend, welcomed us with what grace he could muster, and we were shown to “The Fox and the Grapes,” a large room in the rear of the house.

John Paul had not spoken since the slim gentleman had drawn the distinction between us, and I knew that the affront was rankling in his breast. He cast himself into a chair with such an air of dejection as made me pity him from my heart. But I had no consolation to offer. His first words, far from being the torrent of protest I looked for, almost startled me into laughter.

“He can be nothing less than a duke,” said the captain. “Ah, Richard, see what it is to be a gentleman!”

“Fiddlesticks! I had rather own your powers than the best title in England,” I retorted sharply.

He shook his head sorrowfully, which made me wonder the more that a man of his ability should be unhappy without this one bauble attainment.

“I shall begin to believe the philosophers have the right of it,” he remarked presently. “Have you ever read anything of Monsieur Rousseau’s, Richard?”

The words were scarce out of his mouth when we heard a loud rap on the door, which I opened to discover a Swiss fellow in a private livery, come to say that his master

begged the young gentleman would sup with him. The man stood immovable while he delivered this message, and put an impudent emphasis upon the gentleman.

“Say to your master, whoever he may be,” I replied, in some heat at the man’s sneer, “that I am travelling with Captain Paul. That any invitation to me must include him.”

The lackey stood astounded at my answer, as though he had not heard aright. Then he retired with less assurance than he had come, and John Paul sprang to his feet and laid his hands upon my shoulders, as was his wont when affected. He reproached himself for having misjudged me, and added a deal more that I have forgotten.

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“And to think,” he cried, “that you have forgone supping with a nobleman on my account!”

“Pish, captain, ’tis no great denial. His Lordship—if Lordship he is —is stranded in an inn, overcome with ennui, and must be amused. That is all.”

Nevertheless I think the good captain was distinctly disappointed, not alone because I gave up what in his opinion was a great advantage, but likewise because I could have regaled him on my return with an account of the meal. For it must be borne in mind, my dears, that those days are not these, nor that country this one. And in judging Captain Paul it must be remembered that rank inspired a vast respect when King George came to the throne. It can never be said of John Paul that he lacked either independence or spirit. But a nobleman was a nobleman then.

So when presently the gentleman himself appeared smiling at our door, which his servant had left open, we both of us rose up in astonishment and bowed very respectfully, and my face burned at the thought of the message I had sent him. For, after all, the captain was but twenty-one and I nineteen, and the distinguished unknown at least fifty. He took a pinch of snuff and brushed his waistcoat before he spoke.

“Egad,” said he, with good nature, looking up at me, “Mohammed was a philosopher, and so am I, and come to the mountain. ’Tis worth crossing an inn in these times to see a young man whose strength has not been wasted upon foppery. May I ask your name, sir?”

“Richard Carvel,” I answered, much put aback.

“Ah, Carvel,” he repeated; “I know three or four of that name. Perhaps you are Robert Carvel’s son, of Yorkshire. But what the devil do you do in such clothes? I was resolved to have you though I am forced to take a dozen watchet-blue mountebanks in the bargain.”

“Sir, I warn you not to insult my friend,” I cried, in a temper again.

“There, there, not so loud, I beg you,” said he, with a gesture. “Hot as pounded pepper, —but all things are the better for a touch of it. I had no intention of insulting the worthy man, I give my word. I must have my joke, sir. No harm meant.” And he nodded at John Paul, who looked as if he would sink through the floor. “Robert Carvel is as testy as the devil with the gout, and you are not unlike him in feature.”

“He is no relation of mine,” I replied, undecided whether to laugh or be angry. And then I added, for I was very young, “I am an American, and heir to Carvel Hall in Maryland.”

“Lord, lord, I might have known,” exclaimed he. “Once I had the honour of dining with your Dr. Franklin, from Pennsylvania. He dresses for all the world like you, only worse,

and wears a hat I would not be caught under at Bagnigge Wells, were I so imprudent as to go there."

"Dr. Franklin has weightier matters than hats to occupy him, sir," I retorted. For I was determined to hold my own.

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He made a French gesture, a shrug of his thin shoulders, which caused me to suspect he was not always so good-natured.

“Dr. Franklin would better have stuck to his newspaper, my young friend,” said he. “But I like your appearance too well to quarrel with you, and we’ll have no politics before eating. Come, gentlemen, come! Let us see what Goble has left after his shaking.”

He struck off with something of a painful gait, which he explained was from the gout. And presently we arrived at his parlour, where supper was set out for us. I had not tasted its equal since I left Maryland. We sat down to a capon stuffed with eggs, and dainty sausages, and hot rolls, such as we had at home; and a wine which had cobwebbed and mellowed under the Castle Inn for better than twenty years. The personage did not drink wine. He sent his servant to quarrel with Goble because he had not been given iced water. While he was tapping on the table I took occasion to observe him. His was a physiognomy to strike the stranger, not by reason of its nobility, but because of its oddity. He had a prodigious length of face, the nose long in proportion, but not prominent. The eyes were dark, very bright, and wide apart, with little eyebrows dabbed over them at a slanting angle. The thin-lipped mouth rather pursed up, which made his smile the contradiction it was. In short, my dears, while I do not lay claim to the reading of character, it required no great astuteness to perceive the scholar, the man of the world, and the ascetic—and all affected. His conversation bore out the summary. It astonished us. It encircled the earth, embraced history and letters since the world began. And added to all this, he had a thousand anecdotes on his tongue’s tip. His words he chose with too great a nicety; his sentences were of a foreign formation, twisted around; and his stories were illustrated with French gesticulations. He threw in quotations galore, in Latin, and French, and English, until the captain began casting me odd, uncomfortable looks, as though he wished himself well out of the entertainment. Indeed, poor John Paul’s perturbation amused me more than the gentleman’s anecdotes. To be ill at ease is discouraging to any one, but it was peculiarly fatal with the captain. This arch-aristocrat dazzled him. When he attempted to follow in the same vein he would get lost. And his really considerable learning counted for nothing. He reached the height of his mortification when the slim gentleman dropped his eyelids and began to yawn. I was wickedly delighted. He could not have been better met. Another such encounter, and I would warrant the captain’s illusions concerning the gentry to go up in smoke. Then he might come to some notion of his own true powers. As for me, I enjoyed the supper which our host had insisted upon our partaking, drank his wine, and paid him very little attention.

“May I make so bold as to ask, sir, whether you are a patron of literature?” said the captain, at length.

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“A very poor patron, my dear man,” was the answer. “Merely a humble worshipper at the shrine. And I might say that I partake of its benefits as much as a gentleman may. And yet,” he added, with a laugh and a cough, “those silly newspapers and magazines insist on calling me a literary man.”

“And now that you have indulged in a question, and the claret is coming on,” said he, “perhaps you will tell me something of yourself, Mr. Carvel, and of your friend, Captain Paul. And how you come to be so far from home.” And he settled himself comfortably to listen, as a man who has bought his right to an opera box.

Here was my chance. And I resolved that if I did not further enlighten John Paul, it would be no fault of mine.

“Sir,” I replied, in as dry a monotone as I could assume, “I was kidnapped by the connivance of some unscrupulous persons in my colony, who had designs upon my grandfather’s fortune. I was taken abroad in a slaver and carried down to the Caribbean seas, when I soon discovered that the captain and his crew were nothing less than pirates. For one day all hands got into a beastly state of drunkenness, and the captain raised the skull and cross-bones, which he had handy in his chest. I was forced to climb the main rigging in order to escape being hacked to pieces.”

He sat bolt upright, those little eyebrows of his gone up full half an inch, and he raised his thin hands with an air of incredulity. John Paul was no less astonished at my little ruse.

“Holy Saint Clement!” exclaimed our host; “pirates! This begins to have a flavour indeed. And yet you do not seem to be a lad with an imagination. Egad, Mr. Carvel, I had put you down for one who might say, with Alceste: ‘Etre franc et sincere est mon plus grand talent.’ But pray go on, sir. You have but to call for pen and ink to rival Mr. Fielding.”

With that I pushed back my chair, got up from the table, and made him a bow. And the captain, at last seeing my drift, did the same.

“I am not used at home to have my word doubted, sir,” I said. “Sir, your humble servant. I wish you a very good evening.” He rose precipitately, crying out from his gout, and laid a hand upon my arm.

“Pray, Mr. Carvel, pray, sir, be seated,” he said, in some agitation. “Remember that the story is unusual, and that I have never clapped eyes on you until to-night. Are all young gentlemen from Maryland so fiery? But I should have known from your face that you are incapable of deceit. Pray be seated, captain.”

I was persuaded to go on, not a little delighted that I had scored my point, and broken down his mask of affectation and careless cynicism. I told my story, leaving out the family history involved, and he listened with every mark of attention and interest. Indeed, to my surprise, he began to show some enthusiasm, of which sensation I had not believed him capable.

“What a find! what a find!” he continued to exclaim, when I had finished. “And true. You say it is true, Mr. Carvel?”

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“Sir!” I replied, “I thought we had thrashed that out.”

“Yes, yes, to be sure. I beg pardon,” said he. And then to his servant: “Colomb, is my writing-tablet unpacked?”

I was more mystified than ever as to his identity. Was he going to put the story in a magazine?

After that he seemed plainly anxious to be rid of us. I bade him good night, and he grasped my hand warmly enough. Then he turned to the captain in his most condescending manner. But a great change had come over John Paul. He was ever quick to see and to learn, and I rejoiced to remark that he did not bow over the hand, as he might have done two hours since. He was again Captain Paul, the man, who fought his way on his own merits. He held himself as tho’ he was once more pacing the deck of the John.

The slim gentleman poured the width of a finger of claret in his glass, soused it with water, and held it up.

“Here’s to your future, my good captain,” he said, “and to Mr. Carvel’s safe arrival home again. When you get to town, Mr. Carvel, don’t fail to go to Davenport, who makes clothes for most of us at Almack’s, and let him remodel you. I wish to God he might get hold of your doctor. And put up at the Star and Garter in Pall Mall: I take it that you have friends in London.”

I replied that I had. But he did not push the inquiry.

“You should write out this history for your grandchildren, Mr. Carvel,” he added, as he bade his Swiss light us to our room. “A strange yarn indeed, captain.”

“And therefore,” said the captain, coolly, “as a stranger give it welcome.

> “’There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,
> Than are dreamt of in your philosophy.’”

Had a meteor struck at the gentleman’s feet, he could not have been more taken aback.

“What! What’s this?” he cried. “You quote Hamlet! And who the devil are you, sir, that you know my name?”

“Your name, sir!” exclaims the captain, in astonishment.

“Well, well,” he said, stepping back and eying us closely, “’tis no matter. Good night, gentlemen, good night.”

And we went to bed with many a laugh over the incident.

“His name must be Horatio. We’ll discover it in the morning,” said John Paul.

CHAPTER XXIII

LONDON TOWN

But he had not risen when we set out, nor would the illnatured landlord reveal his name. It mattered little to me, since I desired to forget him as quickly as possible. For here was one of my own people of quality, a gentleman who professed to believe what I told him, and yet would do no more for me than recommend me an inn and a tailor; while a poor sea-captain, driven from his employment and his home, with no better reason to put faith in my story, was sharing with me his last penny. Goble, in truth, had made us pay dearly for our fun with him, and the hum of the vast unknown fell upon our ears with the question of lodging still unsettled. The captain was for going to the Star and Garter, the inn the gentleman had mentioned. I was in favour of seeking a more modest and less fashionable hostelry.

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“Remember that you must keep up your condition, Richard,” said John Paul.

“And if all English gentlemen are like our late friend,” I said, “I would rather stay in a city coffee-house. Remember that you have only two guineas left after paying for the chaise, and that Mr. Dix may be out of town.”

“And your friends in Arlington Street?” said he.

“May be back in Maryland,” said I; and added inwardly,

“God forbid!”

“We shall have twice the chance at the Star and Garter. They will want a show of gold at a humbler place, and at the Star we may carry matters with a high hand. Pick out the biggest frigate,” he cried, for the tenth time, at least, “or the most beautiful lady, and it will surprise you, my lad, to find out how many times you will win.”

I know of no feeling of awe to equal that of a stranger approaching for the first time a huge city. The thought of a human multitude is ever appalling as that of infinity itself, a human multitude with its infinity of despairs and joys, disgraces and honours, each small unit with all the world in its own brain, and all the world out of it! Each intent upon his own business or pleasure, and striving the while by hook or crook to keep the ground from slipping beneath his feet. For, if he falls, God help him!

Yes, here was London, great and pitiless, and the fear of it was upon our souls as we rode into it that day.

Holland House with its shaded gardens, Kensington Palace with the broad green acres of parks in front of it stitched by the silver Serpentine, and Buckingham House, which lay to the south over the hill,—all were one to us in wonder as they loomed through the glittering mist that softened all. We met with a stream of countless wagons that spoke of a trade beyond knowledge, sprinkled with the equipages of the gentry floating upon it; coach and chaise, cabriolet and chariot, gorgeously bedecked with heraldry and wreaths; their numbers astonished me, for to my mind the best of them were no better than we could boast in Annapolis. One matter, which brings a laugh as I recall it, was the oddity to me of seeing white coachmen and footmen.

We clattered down St. James’s Street, of which I had often heard my grandfather speak, and at length we drew up before the Star and Garter in Pall Mall, over against the palace. The servants came hurrying out, headed by a chamberlain clad in magnificent livery, a functionary we had not before encountered. John Paul alighted to face this personage, who, the moment he perceived us, shifted his welcoming look to one of such withering scorn as would have daunted a more timid man than the captain. Without the formality of a sir he demanded our business, which started the inn people

and our own boy to snickering, and made the passers-by pause and stare. Dandies who were taking the air stopped to ogle us with their spying-glasses and to offer quips, and behind them

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gathered the flunkies and chairmen awaiting their masters at the clubs and coffee-houses near by. What was my astonishment, therefore, to see a change in the captain's demeanour. Truly for quick learning and the application of it I have never known his equal. His air became the one of careless ease habitual to the little gentleman we had met at Windsor, and he drew from his pocket one of his guineas, which he tossed in the man's palm.

"Here, my man," said he, snapping his fingers; "an apartment at once, or you shall pay for this nonsense, I promise you." And walked in with his chin in the air, so grandly as to dissolve ridicule into speculation.

For an instant the chamberlain wavered, and I trembled, for I dreaded a disgrace in Pall Mall, where the Manners might hear of it. Then fear, or hope of gain, or something else got the better of him, for he led us to a snug, well-furnished suite of a parlour and bedroom on the first floor, and stood bowing in the doorway for his honour's further commands. They were of a sort to bring the sweat to my forehead.

"Have a fellow run to bid Davenport, the tailor, come hither as fast as his legs will carry him. And you may make it known that this young gentleman desires a servant, a good man, mind you, with references, who knows a gentleman's wants. He will be well paid."

That name of Davenport was a charm,—the mention of a servant was its finishing touch. The chamberlain bent almost double, and retired, closing the door softly behind him. And so great had been my surprise over these last acquirements of the captain that until now I had had no breath to expostulate.

"I must have my fling, Richard," he answered, laughing; "I shall not be a gentleman long. I must know how it feels to take your ease, and stroke your velvet, and order lackeys about. And when my money is gone I shall be content to go to sea again, and think about it o' stormy nights."

This feeling was so far beyond my intelligence that I made no comment. And I could not for the life of me chide him, but prayed that all would come right in the end.

In less than an hour Davenport himself arrived, bristling with importance, followed by his man carrying such a variety of silks and satins, flowered and plain, and broadcloths and velvets, to fill the furniture. And close behind the tailor came a tall haberdasher from Bond Street, who had got wind of a customer, with a bewildering lot of ruffles and handkerchiefs and neckerchiefs, and bows of lawn and lace which (so he informed us) gentlemen now wore in the place of solitaires. Then came a hosier and a bootmaker and a hatter; nay, I was forgetting a jeweller from Temple Bar. And so imposing a front did the captain wear as he picked this and recommended the other that he got credit for

me for all he chose, and might have had more besides. For himself he ordered merely a modest street suit of purple, the sword to be thrust through the pocket, Davenport promising it with mine for the next afternoon. For so much discredit had been cast upon his taste on the road to London that he was resolved to remain indoors until he could appear with decency. He learned quickly, as I have said.

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By the time we had done with these matters, which I wished to perdition, some score of applicants was in waiting for me. And out of them I hired one who had been valet to the young Lord Rereby, and whose recommendation was excellent. His name was Banks, his face open and ingenuous, his stature a little above the ordinary, and his manner respectful. I had Davenport measure him at once for a suit of the Carvel livery, and bade him report on the morrow.

All this while, my dears, I was aching to be off to Arlington Street, but a foolish pride held me back. I had heard so much of the fashion in which the Manners moved that I feared to bring ridicule upon them in poor MacMuir's clothes. But presently the desire to see Dolly took such hold upon me that I set out before dinner, fought my way past the chairmen and chaisemen at the door, and asked my way of the first civil person I encountered. 'Twas only a little rise up the steps of St. James's Street, Arlington Street being but a small pocket of Piccadilly, but it seemed a dull English mile; and my heart thumped when I reached the corner, and the houses danced before my eyes. I steadied myself by a post and looked again. At last, after a thousand leagues of wandering, I was near her! But how to choose between fifty severe and imposing mansions? I walked on toward that endless race of affairs and fashion, Piccadilly, scanning every door, nay, every window, in the hope that I might behold my lady's face framed therein. Here a chair was set down, there a chariot or a coach pulled up, and a clocked flunky bowing a lady in. But no Dorothy. Finally, when I had near made the round of each side, I summoned courage and asked a butcher's lad, whistling as he passed me, whether he could point out the residence of Mr. Manners.

"Ay," he replied, looking me over out of the corner of his eye, "that I can. But y'ell not get a glimpse o' the beauty this day, for she's but just off to Kensington with a coachful o' quality."

And he led me, all in a tremble over his answer, to a large stone dwelling with arched windows, and pillared portico with lanthorns and link extinguishers, an area and railing beside it. The flavour of generations of aristocracy hung about the place, and the big knocker on the carved door seemed to regard with such a forbidding frown my shabby clothes that I took but the one glance (enough to fix it forever in my memory), and hurried on. Alas, what hope had I of Dorothy now!

"What cheer, Richard?" cried the captain when I returned; "have you seen your friends?"

I told him that I had feared to disgrace them, and so refrained from knocking—a decision which he commended as the very essence of wisdom. Though a desire to meet and talk with quality pushed him hard, he would not go a step to the ordinary, and gave orders to be served in our room, thus fostering the mystery which had enveloped us since our arrival. Dinner at the Star and Garter being at the fashionable hour of half after four, I was forced to give over for that day the task of finding Mr. Dix.

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That evening—shall I confess it?—I spent between the Green Park and Arlington Street, hoping for a glimpse of Miss Dolly returning from Kensington.

The next morning I proclaimed my intention of going to Mr. Dix.

“Send for him,” said the captain. “Gentlemen never seek their men of affairs.”

“No,” I cried; “I can contain myself in this place no longer. I must be moving.”

“As you will, Richard,” he replied, and giving me a queer, puzzled look he settled himself between the Morning Post and the Chronicle.

As I passed the servants in the lower hall, I could not but remark an altered treatment. My friend the chamberlain, more pompous than ever, stood erect in the door with a stony stare, which melted the moment he perceived a young gentleman who descended behind me. I heard him cry out “A chaise for his Lordship!” at which command two of his assistants ran out together. Suspicion had plainly gripped his soul overnight, and this, added to mortified vanity at having been duped, was sufficient for him to allow me to leave the inn unattended. Nor could I greatly blame him, for you must know, my dears, that at that time London was filled with adventurers of all types.

I felt a deal like an impostor, in truth, as I stepped into the street, disdaining to inquire of any of the people of the Star and Garter where an American agent might be found. The day was gray and cheerless, the colour of my own spirits as I walked toward the east, knowing that the city lay that way. But I soon found plenty to distract me.

To a lad such as I, bred in a quiet tho’ prosperous colonial town, a walk through London was a revelation. Here in the Pall Mall the day was not yet begun, tho’ for some scarce ended. I had not gone fifty paces from the hotel before I came upon a stout gentleman with twelve hours of claret inside him, brought out of a coffee-house and put with vast difficulty into his chair; and I stopped to watch the men stagger off with their load to St. James’s Street. Next I met a squad of redcoated guards going to the palace, and after them a grand coach and six rattled over the Scotch granite, swaying to a degree that threatened to shake off the footmen clinging behind. Within, a man with an eagle nose sat impassive, and I set him down for one of the king’s ministers.

Presently I came out into a wide space, which I knew to be Charing Cross by the statue of Charles the First which stood in the centre of it, and the throat of a street which was just in front of me must be the Strand. Here all was life and bustle. On one hand was Golden’s Hotel, and a crowded mail-coach was dashing out from the arch beneath it, the horn blowing merrily; on the other hand, so I was told by a friendly man in brown, was Northumberland House, the gloomy grandeur whereof held my eyes for a time. And I made bold to ask in what district were those who had dealings with the colonies. He scanned me with a puzzling look of commiseration.

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“Ye’re not a-going to sell yereself for seven year, my lad?” said he. “I was near that myself when I was young, and I thank God’ to this day that I talked first to an honest man, even as you are doing. They’ll give ye a pretty tale,—the factors,—of a land of milk and honey, when it’s naught but stripes and curses yell get.”

And he was about to rebuke me hotly, when I told him I had come from Maryland, where I was born.

“Why, ye speak like a gentleman!” he exclaimed. “I was informed that all talk like naygurs over there. And is it not so of your redemptioners?”

I said that depended upon the master they got.

“Then I take it ye are looking for the lawyers, who mostly represent the planters. And y e’ll find them at the Temple or Lincoln’s Inn.”

I replied that he I sought was not an attorney, but a man of business. Whereupon he said that I should find all those in a batch about the North and South American Coffee House, in Threadneedle Street. And he pointed me into the Strand, adding that I had but to follow my nose to St. Paul’s, and there inquire.

I would I might give you some notion of the great artery of London in those days, for it has changed much since I went down it that heavy morning in April, 1770, fighting my way. Ay, truly, fighting my way, for the street then was no place for the weak and timid, when bullocks ran through it in droves on the way to market, when it was often jammed from wall to wall with wagons, and carmen and truckmen and coachmen swung their whips and cursed one another to the extent of their lungs. Near St. Clement Danes I was packed in a crowd for ten minutes while two of these fellows formed a ring and fought for the right of way, stopping the traffic as far as I could see. Dustmen, and sweeps, and even beggars, jostled you on the corners, bullies tried to push you against the posts or into the kennels; and once, in Butchers’ Row, I was stopped by a flashy, soft-tongued fellow who would have lured me into a tavern near by.

The noises were bedlam ten times over. Shopmen stood at their doors and cried, “Rally up, rally up, buy, buy, buy!” venders shouted saloop and barley, furmity, Shrewsbury cakes and hot peascods, rosemary and lavender, small coal and sealing-wax, and others bawled “Pots to solder!” and “Knives to grind!” Then there was the incessant roar of the heavy wheels over the rough stones, and the rasp and shriek of the brewers’ sledges as they moved clumsily along. As for the odours, from that of the roasted coffee and food of the taverns, to the stale fish on the stalls, and worse, I can say nothing. They surpassed imagination.

At length, upon emerging from Butchers' Row, I came upon some stocks standing in the street, and beheld ahead of me a great gateway stretching across the Strand from house to house.

Its stone was stained with age, and the stern front of it seemed to mock the unseemly and impetuous haste of the tide rushing through its arches. I stood and gazed, nor needed one to tell me that those two grinning skulls above it, swinging to the wind on the pikes, were rebel heads. Bare and bleached now, and exposed to a cruel view, but once caressed by loving hands, was the last of those whose devotion to the house of Stuart had brought from their homes to Temple Bar.

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I halted by the Fleet Market, nor could I resist the desire to go into St. Paul's, to feel like a pebble in a bell under its mighty dome; and it lacked but half an hour of noon when I had come out at the Poultry and finished gaping at the Mansion House. I missed Threadneedle Street and went down Cornhill, in my ignorance mistaking the Royal Exchange, with its long piazza and high tower, for the coffeehouse I sought: in the great hall I begged a gentleman to direct me to Mr. Dix, if he knew such a person. He shrugged his shoulders, which mystified me somewhat, but answered with a ready good-nature that he was likely to be found at that time at Tom's Coffee House, in Birchin Lane near by, whither I went with him. He climbed the stairs ahead of me and directed me, puffing, to the news room, which I found filled with men, some writing, some talking eagerly, and others turning over newspapers. The servant there looked me over with no great favour, but on telling him my business he went off, and returned with a young man of a pink and white complexion, in a green riding-frock, leather breeches, and top boots, who said:

"Well, my man, I am Mr. Dix."

There was a look about him, added to his tone and manner, set me strong against him. I knew his father had not been of this stamp.

"And I am Mr. Richard Carvel, grandson to Mr. Lionel Carvel, of Carvel Hall, in Maryland," I replied, much in the same way.

He thrust his hands into his breeches and stared very hard.

"You?" he said finally, with something very near a laugh.

"Sir, a gentleman's word usually suffices!" I cried.

He changed his tone a little.

"Your pardon, Mr. Carvel," he said, "but we men of business have need to be careful. Let us sit, and I will examine your letters. Your determination must have been suddenly taken," he added, "for I have nothing from Mr. Carvel on the subject of your coming."

"Letters! You have heard nothing!" I gasped, and there stopped short and clinched the table. "Has not my grandfather written of my disappearance?"

Immediately his expression went back to the one he had met me with. "Pardon me," he said again.

I composed myself as best I could in the face of his incredulity, swallowing with an effort the aversion I felt to giving him my story.

“I think it strange he has not informed you,” I said; “I was kidnapped near Annapolis last Christmas-time, and put on board of a slaver, from which I was rescued by great good fortune, and brought to Scotland. And I have but just made my way to London.”

“The thing is not likely, Mr.—, Mr.—,” he said, drumming impatiently on the board.

Then I lost control of myself.

“As sure as I am heir to Carvel Hall, Mr. Dix,” I cried, rising, “you shall pay for your insolence by forfeiting your agency!”

Now the roan was a natural coward, with a sneer for some and a smirk for others. He went to the smirk.

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“I am but looking to Mr. Carvel’s interests the best I know how,” he replied; “and if indeed you be Mr. Richard Carvel, then you must applaud my caution, sir, in seeking proofs.”

“Proofs I have none,” I cried; “the very clothes on my back are borrowed from a Scotch seaman. My God, Mr. Dix, do I look like a rogue?”

“Were I to advance money upon appearances, sir, I should be insolvent in a fortnight. But stay,” he cried uneasily, as I flung back my chair, “stay, sir. Is there no one of your province in the town to attest your identity?”

“Ay, that there is,” I said bitterly; “you shall hear from Mr. Manners soon, I promise you.”

“Pray, Mr. Carvel,” he said, overtaking me on the stairs, “you will surely allow the situation to be—extraordinary, you will surely commend my discretion. Permit me, sir, to go with you to Arlington Street.” And he sent a lad in haste to the Exchange for a hackney-chaise, which was soon brought around.

I got in, somewhat mollified, and ashamed of my heat: still disliking the man, but acknowledging he had the better right on his side. True to his kind he gave me every mark of politeness now, asked particularly after Mr. Carvel’s health, and encouraged me to give him as much of my adventure as I thought proper. But what with the rattle of the carriage and the street noises and my disgust, I did not care to talk, and presently told him as much very curtly. He persisted, how: ever, in pointing out the sights, the Fleet prison, and where the Ludgate stood six years gone; and the Devil’s Tavern, of old Ben Jonson’s time, and the Mitre and the Cheshire Cheese and the Cock, where Dr. Johnson might be found near the end of the week at his dinner. He showed me the King’s Mews above Charing Cross, and the famous theatre in the Haymarket, and we had but turned the corner into Piccadilly when he cried excitedly at a passing chariot:

“There, Mr. Carvel, there go my Lord North and Mr. Rigby!”

“The devil take them, Mr. Dix!” I exclaimed.

He was silent after that, glancing at me covertly from while to while until we swung into Arlington Street. Before I knew we were stopped in front of the house, but as I set foot on the step I found myself confronted by a footman in the Manners livery, who cried out angrily to our man: “Make way, make way for his Grace of Chartersea!” Turning, I saw a coach behind, the horses dancing at the rear wheels of the chaise. We alighted hastily, and I stood motionless, my heart jumping quick and hard in the hope and fear that Dorothy was within, my eye fixed on the coach door. But when the footman pulled it open and lowered the step, out lolled a very broad man with a bloated face and little, beady eyes without a spark of meaning, and something very like a hump was on the top

of his back. He wore a yellow top-coat, and red-heeled shoes of the latest fashion, and I settled at once he was the Duke of Chartersea.

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Next came little Mr. Manners, stepping daintily as ever; and then, as the door closed with a bang, I remembered my errand. They had got halfway to the portico.

“Mr. Manners!” I cried.

He faced about, and his Grace also, and both stared in wellbred surprise. As I live, Mr. Manners looked into my face, into my very eyes, and gave no sign of recognition. And what between astonishment and anger, and a contempt that arose within me, I could not speak.

“Give the man a shilling, Manners,” said his Grace; “we can’t stay here forever.”

“Ay, give the man a shilling,” lisped Mr. Manners to the footman. And they passed into the house, and the door eras shut.

Then I heard Mr. Dix at my elbow, saying in a soft voice: “Now, my fine gentleman, is there any good reason why you should not ride to Bow Street with me?”

“As there is a God in heaven. Mr. Dix,” I answered, very low, “if you attempt to lay hands on me, you shall answer for it! And you shall hear from me yet, at the Star and Garter hotel.”

I spun on my heel and left him, nor did he follow; and a great lump was in my throat and tears welling in my eyes.

What would John Paul say?

CHAPTER XXIV

CASTLE YARD

But I did not go direct to the Star and Garter. No, I lacked the courage to say to John Paul: “You have trusted me, and this is how I have rewarded your faith.” And the thought that Dorothy’s father, of all men, had served me thus, after what I had gone through, filled me with a bitterness I had never before conceived. And when my brain became clearer I reflected that Mr. Manners had had ample time to learn of my disappearance from Maryland, and that his action had been one of design, and of cold blood. But I gave to Dorothy or her mother no part in it. Mr. Manners never had had cause to hate me, and the only reason I could assign was connected with his Grace of Chartersea, which I dismissed as absurd.

A few drops of rain warned me to seek shelter. I knew not where I was, nor how long I had been walking the streets at a furious pace. But a huckster told me I was in Chelsea; and kindly directed me back to Pall Mall. The usual bunch of chairmen was

around the hotel entrance, but I noticed a couple of men at the door, of sharp features and unkempt dress, and heard a laugh as I went in. My head swam as I stumbled up the stairs and fumbled at the knob, when I heard voices raised inside, and the door was suddenly and violently thrown open. Across the sill stood a big, rough-looking man with his hands on his hips.

“Oho! Here be the other fine bird a-homing, I’ll warrant,” he cried.

The place was full. I caught sight of Davenport, the tailor, with a wry face, talking against the noise; of Banks, the man I had hired, resplendent in my livery. One of the hotel servants was in the corner perspiring over John Paul’s chests, and beside him stood a man disdainfully turning over with his foot the contents, as they were thrown on the floor. I saw him kick the precious vellum-hole waistcoat across the room in wrath and disgust, and heard him shout above the rest: “The lot of them would not bring a guinea from any Jew in St. Martin’s Lane!”

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In the other corner, by the writing-desk, stood the hatter and the haberdasher with their heads together. And in the very centre of the confusion was the captain himself. He was drest in his new clothes Davenport had brought, and surprised me by his changed appearance, and looked as fine a gentleman as any I have ever seen. His face lighted with relief at sight of me.

“Now may I tell these rogues begone, Richard?” he cried. And turning to the man confronting me, he added, “This gentleman will settle their beggarly accounts.”

Then I knew we had to do with bailiffs, and my heart failed me.

“Likely,” laughed the big man; “I’ll stake my oath he has not a groat to pay their beggarly accounts, as year honour is pleased to call them.”

They ceased jabbering and straightened to attention, awaiting my reply. But I forgot them all, and thought only of the captain, and of the trouble I had brought him. He began to show some consternation as I went up to him.

“My dear friend,” I said, vainly trying to steady my voice, “I beg, I pray that you will not lose faith in me,—that you will not think any deceit of mine has brought you to these straits. Mr. Dix did not know me, and has had no word from my grandfather of my disappearance. And Mr. Manners, whom I thought my friend, spurned me in the street before the Duke of Chartersea.”

And no longer master of myself, I sat down at the table and hid my face, shaken by great sobs, to think that this was my return for his kindness.

“What,” I heard him cry, “Mr. Manners spurned you, Richard! By all the law in Coke and Littleton, he shall answer for it to me. Your fairweather fowl shall have the chance to run me through!”

I sat up in bewilderment, doubting my senses.

“You believe me, captain,” I said, overcome by the man’s faith; “you believe me when I tell you that one I have known from childhood refused to recognize me to-day?”

He raised me in his arms as tenderly as a woman might.

“And the whole world denied you, lad, I would not. I believe you—” and he repeated it again and again, unable to get farther.

And if his words brought tears to my eyes, my strength came with them.

“Then I care not,” I replied; “I only to live to reward you.”

“Mr. Manners shall answer for it to me!” cried John Paul again, and made a pace toward the door.

“Not so fast, not so fast, captain, or admiral, or whatever you are,” said the bailiff, stepping in his way, for he was used to such scenes; “as God reigns, the owners of all these fierce titles be fire-eaters, who would spit you if you spilt snuff upon ’em. Come, come, gentlemen, your swords, and we shall see the sights o’ London.”

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This was the signal for another uproar, the tailor shrieking that John Paul must take off the suit, and Banks the livery; asking the man in the corner by the sea-chests (who proved to be the landlord) who was to pay him for his work and his lost cloth. And the landlord shook his fist at us and shouted back, who was to pay him his four pounds odd, which included two ten-shilling dinners and a flask of his best wine? The other tradesmen seized what was theirs and made off with remarks appropriate to the occasion. And when John Paul and my man were divested of their plumes, we were marched downstairs and out through a jeering line of people to a hackney coach.

“Now, sirs, whereaway?” said the bailiff when we were got in beside one of his men, and burning with the shame of it; “to the prison? Or I has a very pleasant hotel for gentlemen in Castle Yard.”

The frightful stories my dear grandfather had told me of the Fleet came flooding into my head, and I shuddered and turned sick. I glanced at John Paul.

“A guinea will not go far in a sponging-house,” said he, and the bailiff’s man laughed.

The bailiff gave a direction we did not hear, and we drove off. He proved a bluff fellow with a bloat yet not unkindly humour, and despite his calling seemed to have something that was human in him. He passed many a joke on that pitiful journey in an attempt to break our despondency, urging us not to be downcast, and reminding us that the last gentleman he had taken from Pall Mall was in over a thousand pounds, and that our amount was a bagatelle. And when we had gone through Temple Bar, instead of keeping on down Fleet Street, we jolted into Chancery Lane. This roused me.

“My friend has warned you that he has no money,” I said, “and no more have I.”

The bailiff regarded me shrewdly.

“Ay,” he replied, “I know. But I has seen many stripes o’ men in my time, my masters, and I know them to trust, and them whose silver I must feel or send to the Fleet.”

I told him unreservedly my case, and that he must take his chance of being paid; that I could not hear from America for three months at least. He listened without much show of attention, shaking his head from side to side.

“If you ever cheated a man, or the admiral here either, then I begin over again,” he broke in with decision; “it is the fine sparks from the clubs I has to watch. You’ll not worry, sir, about me. Take my oath I’ll get interest out of you on my money.”

Unwilling as we both were to be beholden to a bailiff, the alternative of the Fleet was too terrible to be thought of. And so we alighted after him with a shiver at the sight of the ugly, grimy face of the house, and the dirty windows all barred with double iron. In answer to a knock we were presently admitted by a turnkey to a vestibule as black as a

tomb, and the heavy outer door was locked behind us. Then, as the man cursed and groped for the keyhole of the inner door, despair laid hold of me.

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Once inside, in the half light of a narrow hallway, a variety of noises greeted our ears,—-laughter from above and below, interspersed with oaths; the click of billiard balls, and the occasional hammering of a pack of cards on a bare table before the shuffle. The air was close almost to suffocation, and out of the coffee room, into which I glanced, came a heavy cloud of tobacco smoke.

“Why, my masters, why so glum?” said the bailiff; “my inn is not such a bad place, and you’ll find ample good company here, I promise you.”

And he led us into a dingy antechamber littered with papers, on every one of which, I daresay, was written a tragedy. Then he inscribed our names, ages, descriptions, and the like in a great book, when we followed him up three flights to a low room under the eaves, having but one small window, and bare of furniture save two narrow cots for beds, a broken chair, and a cracked mirror. He explained that cash boarders got better, and added that we might be happy we were not in the Fleet.

“We dine at two here, gentlemen, and sup at eight. This is not the Star and Garter,” said he as he left us.

It was the captain who spoke first, though he swallowed twice before the words came out.

“Come, Richard, come, laddie,” he said, “’tis no so bad it micht-na be waur. We’ll mak the maist o’ it.”

“I care not for myself, Captain Paul,” I replied, marvelling the more at him, “but to think that I have landed you here, that this is my return for your sacrifice.”

“Hoots! How was ye to foresee Mr. Manners was a blellum?” And he broke into threats which, if Mr. Marmaduke had heard and comprehended, would have driven him into the seventh state of fear. “Have you no other friends in London?” he asked, regaining his English.

I shook my head. Then came—a question I dreaded.

“And Mr. Manners’s family?”

“I would rather remain here for life,” I said, “than to them now.”

For pride is often selfish, my dears, and I did not reflect that if I remained, the captain would remain likewise.

“Are they all like Mr. Manners?”

“That they are not,” I returned with more heat than was necessary; “his wife is goodness itself, and his daughter—” Words failed me, and I reddened.

“Ah, he has a daughter, you say,” said the captain, casting a significant look at me and beginning to pace the little room. He was keener than I thought, this John Paul.

If it were not so painful a task, my dears, I would give you here some notion of what a London sponging-house was in the last century. Comyn has heard me tell of it, and I have seen Bess cry over the story. Gaming was the king-vice of that age, and it filled these places to overflowing. Heaven help a man who came into the world with that propensity in the early days of King George the Third. Many, alas, acquired it before they were come to years of discretion.

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Next me, at the long table where we were all thrown in together,—all who could not pay for private meals, —sat a poor fellow who had flung away a patrimony of three thousand a year. Another had even mortgaged to a Jew his prospects on the death of his mother, and had been seized by the bailiffs outside of St. James's palace, coming to Castle Yard direct from his Majesty's levee. Yet another, with such a look of dead hope in his eyes as haunts me yet, would talk to us by the hour of the Devonshire house where he was born, of the green valley and the peaceful stream, and of the old tower-room, caressed by trees, where Queen Bess had once lain under the carved oak rafters. Here he had taken his young wife, and they used to sit together, so he said, in the sunny oriel over the water, and he had sworn to give up the cards. That was but three years since, and then all had gone across the green cloth in one mad night in St. James's Street. Their friends had deserted them, and the poor little woman was lodged in Holborn near by, and came every morning with some little dainty to the bailiff's, for her liege lord who had so used her. He pressed me to share a fowl with him one day, but it would have choked me. God knows where she got the money to buy it. I saw her once hanging on his neck in the hall, he trying to shield her from the impudent gaze of his fellow-lodgers.

But some of them lived like lords in luxury, with never a seeming regret; and had apartments on the first floor, and had their tea and paper in bed, and lounged out the morning in a flowered nightgown, and the rest of the day in a laced coat. These drank the bailiff's best port and champagne, and had nothing better than a frown or haughty look for us, when we passed them at the landing. Whence the piper was paid I knew not, and the bailiff cared not. But the bulk of the poor gentlemen were a merry crew withal, and had their wit and their wine at table, and knew each other's histories (and soon enough ours) by heart. They betted away the week at billiards or whist or picquet or loo, and sometimes measured swords for diversion, tho' this pastime the bailiff was greatly set against; as calculated to deprive him of a lodger.

Although we had no money for gaming, and little for wine or tobacco, the captain and I were received very heartily into the fraternity. After one afternoon of despondency we both voted it the worst of bad policy to remain aloof and nurse our misfortune, and spent our first evening in making acquaintances over a deal of very thin "debtor's claret." I tossed long that night on the hard cot, listening to the scurrying rats among the roof-timbers. They ran like the thoughts in my brain. And before I slept I prayed again and again that God would put it in my power to reward him whom charity for a friendless foundling had brought to a debtor's prison.

Not so much as a single complaint or reproach had passed his lips!

CHAPTER XXV

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THE RESCUE

Perchance, my dears, if John Paul and I had not been cast by accident in a debtor's prison, this great man might never have bestowed upon our country those glorious services which contributed so largely to its liberty. And I might never have comprehended that the American Revolution was brought on and fought by a headstrong king, backed by unscrupulous followers who held wealth above patriotism. It is often difficult to lay finger upon the causes which change the drift of a man's opinions, and so I never wholly knew why John Paul abandoned his deep-rooted purpose to obtain advancement in London by grace of the accomplishments he had laboured so hard to attain. But I believe the beginning was at the meeting at Windsor with the slim and cynical gentleman who had treated him to something between patronage and contempt. Then my experience with Mr. Manners had so embedded itself in his mind that he could never speak of it but with impatience and disgust. And, lastly, the bailiff's hotel contained many born gentlemen who had been left here to rot out the rest of their dreary lives by friends who were still in power and opulence. More than once when I climbed to our garret I found the captain seated on the three-legged chair, with his head between his hands, sunk in reflection.

"You were right, Richard," said he; "your great world is a hard world for those in the shadow of it. I see now that it must not be entered from below, but from the cabin window. A man may climb around it, lad, and when he is above may scourge it."

"And you will scourge it, captain!" I had no doubt of his ability one day to do it.

"Ay, and snap my fingers at it. 'Tis a pretty organization, this society, which kicks the man who falls to the dogs. None of your fine gentlemen for me!"

And he would descend to talk politics with our fellow-guests. We should have been unhappy indeed had it not been for this pastime. It seems to me strange that these debtors took such a keen interest in outside affairs, even tho' it was a time of great agitation. We read with eagerness the cast-off newspapers of the first-floor gentlemen. One poor devil who had waddled (failed) in Change Alley had collected under his mattress the letters of Junius, then selling the Public Advertiser as few publications had ever sold before. John Paul devoured these attacks upon his Majesty and his ministry in a single afternoon, and ere long he had on the tip of his tongue the name and value of every man in Parliament and out of it. He learned, almost by heart, the history of the astonishing fight made by Mr. Wilkes for the liberties of England, and speedily was as good a Whig and a better than the member from Middlesex himself.

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The most of our companions were Tories, for, odd as it may appear, they retained their principles even in Castle Yard. And in those days to be a Tory was to be the friend of the King, and to be the friend of the King was to have some hope of advancement and reward at his hand. They had none. The captain joined forces with the speculator from the Alley, who had hitherto contended against mighty odds, and together they bore down upon the enemy—ay, and rooted him, too. For John Paul had an air about him and a natural gift of oratory to command attention, and shortly the dining room after dinner became the scene of such contests as to call up in the minds of the old stagers a field night in the good days of Mr. Pitt and the second George. The bailiff often sat by the door, an interested spectator, and the macaroni lodgers condescended to come downstairs and listen. The captain attained to fame in our little world from his maiden address, in which he very shrewdly separated the political character of Mr. Wilkes from his character as a private gentleman, and so refuted a charge of profligacy against the people's champion.

Altho' I never had sufficient confidence in my powers to join in these discussions, I followed them zealously, especially when they touched American questions, as they frequently did. This subject of the wrongs of the colonies was the only one I could ever be got to study at King William's School, and I believe that my intimate knowledge of it gave the captain a surprise. He fell into the habit of seating himself on the edge of my bed after we had retired for the night, and would hold me talking until the small hours upon the injustice of taxing a people without their consent, and upon the multitude of measures of coercion which the King had pressed upon us to punish our resistance. He declaimed so loudly against the tyranny of quartering troops upon a peaceable state that our exhausted neighbours were driven to pounding their walls and ceilings for peace. The news of the Boston massacre had not then reached England.

I was not, therefore, wholly taken by surprise when he said to me one night:

"I am resolved to try my fortune in America, lad. That is the land for such as I, where a man may stand upon his own merits."

"Indeed, we shall go together, captain," I answered heartily, "if we are ever free of this cursed house. And you shall taste of our hospitality at Carvel Hall, and choose that career which pleases you. Faith, I could point you a dozen examples in Annapolis of men who have made their way without influence. But you shall have influence," I cried, glowing at the notion of rewarding him; "you shall experience Mr. Carvel's gratitude and mine. You shall have the best of our ships, and you will."

He was a man to take fire easily, and embraced me. And, strange to say, neither he nor I saw the humour, nor the pity, of the situation. How many another would long before have become sceptical of my promises! And justly. For I had led him to London, spent all his savings, and then got him into a miserable prison, and yet he had faith remaining, and to spare!

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It occurred to me to notify Mr. Dix of my residence in Castle Yard, not from any hope that he would turn his hand to my rescue, but that he might know where to find me if he heard from Maryland. And I penned another letter to Mr. Carvel, but a feeling I took no pains to define compelled me to withhold an account of Mr. Manners's conduct. And I refrained from telling him that I was in a debtor's prison. For I believe the thought of a Carvel in a debtor's prison would have killed him. I said only that we were comfortably lodged in a modest part of London; that the Manners were inaccessible (for I could not bring myself to write that they were out of town). Just then a thought struck me with such force that I got up with a cheer and hit the astonished captain between the shoulders.

"How now!" he cried, ruefully rubbing himself. "If these are thy amenities, Richard, Heaven spare me thy blows."

"Why, I have been a fool, and worse," I shouted. "My grandfather's ship, the Sprightly Bess, is overhauling this winter in the Severn. And unless she has sailed, which I think unlikely, I have but to despatch a line to Bristol to summon Captain Bell, the master, to London. I think he will bring the worthy Mr. Dix to terms."

"Whether he will or no," said John Paul, hope lighting his face, "Bell must have command of the twenty pounds to free us, and will take us back to America. For I must own, Richard, that I have no great love for London."

No more had I. I composed this letter to Bell in such haste that my hand shook, and sent it off with a shilling to the bailiff's servant, that it might catch the post. And that afternoon we had a two-shilling bottle of port for dinner, which we shared with a broken-down parson who had been chaplain in ordinary to my Lord Wortley, and who had preached us an Easter sermon the day before. For it was Easter Monday. Our talk was broken into by the bailiff, who informed me that a man awaited me in the passage, and my heart leaped into my, throat.

There was Banks. Thinking he had come to reproach me; I asked him rather sharply what he wanted. He shifted his hat from one hand to the other and looked sheepish.

"Your pardon, sir," said he, "but your honour must be very ill-served here."

"Better than I should be, Banks, for I have no money," I said, wondering if he thought me a first-floor lodger.

He made no immediate reply to that, either, but seemed more uneasy still. And I took occasion to note his appearance. He was exceeding neat in a livery of his old master, which he had stripped of the trimmings. Then, before I had guessed at his drift, he thrust his hand inside his coat and drew forth a pile of carefully folded bank notes.

“I be a single man, sir, and has small need of this. And and I knows your honour will pay me when your letter comes from America.”

And he handed me five Bank of England notes of ten pounds apiece. I took them mechanically, without knowing what I did. The generosity of the act benumbed my senses, and for the instant I was inclined to accept the offer upon the impulse of it.

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“How do you know you would get your money again, Banks?” I asked curiously.

“No fear, sir,” he replied promptly, actually brightening at the prospect. “I knows gentlemen, sir, them that are such, sir. And I will go to America with you, and you say the word, sir.”

I was more touched than I cared to show over his offer, which I scarce knew how to refuse. In truth it was a difficult task, for he pressed me again and again, and when he saw me firm, turned away to wipe his eyes upon his sleeve. Then he begged me to let him remain and serve me in the sponginghouse, saying that he would pay his own way. The very thought of a servant in the bailiff’s garret made me laugh, and so I put him off, first getting his address, and promising him employment on the day of my release.

On Wednesday we looked for a reply from Bristol, if not for the appearance of Bell himself, and when neither came apprehension seized us lest he had already sailed for Maryland. The slender bag of Thursday’s letters contained none for me. Nevertheless, we both did our best to keep in humour, forbearing to mention to one another the hope that had gone. Friday seemed the beginning of eternity; the day dragged through I know not how, and toward evening we climbed back to our little room, not daring to speak of what we knew in our hearts to be so,—that the Sprightly Bess had sailed. We sat silently looking out over the dreary stretch of roofs and down into a dingy court of Bernard’s Inn below, when suddenly there arose a commotion on the stairs, as of a man mounting hastily. The door was almost flung from its hinges, some one caught me by the shoulders, gazed eagerly into my face, and drew back. For a space I thought myself dreaming. I searched my memory, and the name came. Had it been Dorothy, or Mr. Carvel himself, I could not have been more astonished, and my knees weakened under me.

“Jack!” I exclaimed; “Lord Comyn!”

He seized my hand. “Yes; Jack, whose life you saved, and no other,” he cried, with a sailor’s impetuosity. “My God, Richard! it was true, then; and you have been in this place for three weeks!”

“For three weeks,” I repeated.

He looked at me, at John Paul, who was standing by in bewilderment, and then about the grimy, cobwebbed walls of the dark garret, and then turned his back to hide his emotion, and so met the bailiff, who was coming in.

“For how much are these gentlemen in your books?” he demanded hotly.

“A small matter, your Lordship,—a mere trifle,” said the man, bowing.

“How much, I say?”

“Twenty-two guineas, five shillings, and eight pence, my Lord, counting debts, and board,—and interest,” the bailiff glibly replied; for he had no doubt taken off the account when he spied his Lordship’s coach. “And I was very good to Mr. Carvel and the captain, as your Lordship will discover—”

“D—n your goodness!” said my Lord, cutting him short.

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And he pulled out a wallet and threw some pieces at the bailiff, bidding him get change with all haste. “And now, Richard,” he added, with a glance of disgust about him, “pack up, and we’ll out of this cursed hole!”

“I have nothing to pack, my Lord,” I said.

“My Lord! Jack, I have told you, or I leave you here.”

“Well, then, Jack, and you will,” said I, overflowing with thankfulness to God for the friends He had bestowed upon me. “But before we go a step, Jack, you must know the man but for whose bravery I should long ago have been dead of fever and ill-treatment in the Indies, and whose generosity has brought him hither. My Lord Comyn, this is Captain John Paul.”

The captain, who had been quite overwhelmed by this sudden arrival of a real lord to our rescue at the very moment when we had sunk to despair, and no less astonished by the intimacy that seemed to exist between the newcomer and myself, had the presence of mind to bend his head, and that was all. Comyn shook his hand heartily.

“You shall not lack reward for this, captain, I promise you,” cried he. “What you have done for Mr. Carvel, you have done for me. Captain, I thank you. You shall have my interest.”

I flushed, seeing John Paul draw his lips together. But how was his Lordship to know that he was dealing with no common sea-captain?

“I have sought no reward, my Lord,” said he. “What I have done was out of friendship for Mr. Carvel, solely.”

Comyn was completely taken by surprise by these words, and by the haughty tone in which they were spoken. He had not looked for a gentleman, and no wonder. He took a quizzical sizing of the sky-blue coat. Such a man in such a station was out of his experience.

“Egad, I believe you, captain,” he answered, in a voice which said plainly that he did not. “But he shall be rewarded nevertheless, eh, Richard? I’ll see Charles Fox in this matter to-morrow. Come, come,” he added impatiently, “the bailiff must have his change by now. Come, Richard!” and he led the way down the winding stairs.

“You must not take offence at his ways,” I whispered to the captain. For I well knew that a year before I should have taken the same tone with one not of my class. “His Lordship is all kindness.”

“I have learned a bit since I came into England, Richard,” was his sober reply.

“’Twas a pitiful sight to see gathered on the landings the poor fellows we had come to know in Castle Yard, whose horizons were then as gray as ours was bright. But they each had a cheery word of congratulation for us as we passed, and the unhappy gentleman from Devonshire pressed my hand and begged that I would sometime think of him when I was out under the sky. I promised even more, and am happy to be able to say, my dears, that I saw both him and his wife off for America before I left London. Our eyes were wet when we reached the lower hall, and I was making for the door in an agony to leave the place, when the bailiff came out of his little office.

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“One moment, sir,” he said, getting in front of me; “there is a little form yet to be gone through. The haste of gentlemen to leave us is not flattering.”

He glanced slyly at Comyn, and his Lordship laughed a little. I stepped unsuspectingly into the office.

“Richard!”

I stopped across the threshold as tho’ I had been struck. The late sunlight filtering through the dirt of the window fell upon the tall figure of a girl and lighted an upturned face, and I saw tears glistening on the long lashes.

It was Dorothy. Her hands were stretched out in welcome, and then I had them pressed in my own. And I could only look and look again, for I was dumb with joy.

“Thank God you are alive!” she cried; “alive and well, when we feared you dead. Oh, Richard, we have been miserable indeed since we had news of your disappearance.”

“This is worth it all, Dolly,” I said, only brokenly.

She dropped her eyes, which had searched me through in wonder and pity, —those eyes I had so often likened to the deep blue of the sea,—and her breast rose and fell quickly with I knew not what emotions. How the mind runs, and the heart runs, at such a time! Here was the same Dorothy I had known in Maryland, and yet not the same. For she was a woman now, who had seen the great world, who had refused both titles and estates, —and perchance accepted them. She drew her hands from mine.

“And how came you in such a place?” she asked, turning with a shudder. “Did you not know you had friends in London, sir?”

Not for so much again would I have told her of Mr. Manners’s conduct. So I stood confused, casting about for a reply with truth in it, when Comyn broke in upon us.

“I’ll warrant you did not look for her here, Richard. Faith, but you are a lucky dog,” said my Lord, shaking his head in mock dolefulness; “for there is no man in London, in the world, for whom she would descend a flight of steps, save you. And now she has driven the length of the town when she heard you were in a sponging-house, nor all the dowagers in Mayfair could stop her.”

“Fie, Comyn,” said my lady, blushing and gathering up her skirts; “that tongue of yours had hung you long since had it not been for your peer’s privilege. Richard and I were brought up as brother and sister, and you know you were full as keen for his rescue as I.”

His Lordship pinched me playfully.

“I vow I would pass a year in the Fleet to have her do as much for me,” said he.

“But where is the gallant seaman who saved you, Richard?” asked Dolly, stamping her foot.

“What,” I exclaimed; “you know the story?”

“Never mind,” said she; “bring him here.”

My conscience smote me, for I had not so much as thought of John Paul since I came into that room. I found him waiting in the passage, and took him by the hand.

“A lady wishes to know you, captain,” I said.

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“A lady!” he cried. “Here? Impossible!” And he looked at his clothes.

“Who cares more for your heart than your appearance,” I answered gayly, and led him into the office.

At sight of Dorothy he stopped abruptly, confounded, as a man who sees a diamond in a dust-heap. And a glow came over me as I said:

“Miss Manners, here is Captain Paul, to whose courage and unselfishness I owe everything.”

“Captain,” said Dorothy, graciously extending her hand, “Richard has many friends. You have put us all in your debt, and none deeper than his old playmate.”

The captain fairly devoured her with his eyes as she made him a curtsey. But he was never lacking in gallantry, and was as brave on such occasions as when all the dangers of the deep threatened him. With an elaborate movement he took Miss Manners’s fingers and kissed them, and then swept the floor with a bow.

“To have such a divinity in my debt, madam, is too much happiness for one man,” he said. “I have done nothing to merit it. A lifetime were all too short to pay for such a favour.”

I had almost forgotten Miss Dolly the wayward, the mischievous. But she was before me now, her eyes sparkling, and biting her lips to keep down her laughter. Comyn turned to fleck the window with his handkerchief, while I was not a little put out at their mirth. But if John Paul observed it, he gave no sign.

“Captain, I vow your manners are worthy of a Frenchman,” said my Lord; “and yet I am given to understand you are a Scotchman.”

A shadow crossed the captain’s face.

“I was, sir,” he said.

“You were!” exclaimed Comyn, astonished; “and pray, what are you now, sir?”

“Henceforth, my Lord,” John Paul replied with vast ceremony: “I am an American, the compatriot of the beautiful Miss Manners!”

“One thing I’ll warrant, captain,” said his Lordship, “that you are a wit.”

RICHARD CARVEL

By Winston Churchill

Volume 5.

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CHAPTER XXVI

THE PART HORATIO PLAYED

The bailiff’s business was quickly settled. I heard the heavy doors close at our backs, and drew a deep draught of the air God has made for all His creatures alike. Both the captain and I turned to the windows to wave a farewell to the sad ones we were leaving behind, who gathered about the bars for a last view of us, for strange as it may seem, the mere sight of happiness is often a pleasure for those who are sad. A coach in private arms and livery was in waiting, surrounded by a crowd. They made a lane for us to pass, and stared at the young lady of queenly beauty coming out of the sponging-house until the coachman snapped his whip in their faces and the footman jostled them back. When we were got in, Dolly and I on the back seat, Comyn told the man to go to Mr. Manners’s.

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“Oh, no!” I cried, scarce knowing what I said; “no, not there!” For the thought of entering the house in Arlington Street was unbearable.

Both Comyn and Dorothy gazed at me in astonishment.

“And pray, Richard, why not’?” she asked. “Have not your old friends the right to receive you.”

It was my Lord who saved me, for I was in agony what to say.

“He is still proud, and won’t go to Arlington Street dressed like a bargeman. He must needs plume, Miss Manners.”

I glanced anxiously at Dorothy, and saw that she was neither satisfied nor appeased. Well I remembered every turn of her head, and every curve of her lip! In the meantime we were off through Cursitor Street at a gallop, nearly causing the death of a ragged urchin at the corner of Chancery Lane. I had forgotten my eagerness to know whence they had heard of my plight, when some words from Comyn aroused me.

“The carriage is Mr. Horace Walpole’s, Richard. He has taken a great fancy to you.”

“But I have never so much as clapped eyes upon him!” I exclaimed in perplexity.

“How about his honour with whom you supped at Windsor? how about the landlord you spun by the neck? You should have heard the company laugh when Horry told us that! And Miss Dolly cried out that she was sure it must be Richard, and none other. Is it not so, Miss Manners?”

“Really, my Lord, I can’t remember,” replied Dolly, looking out of the coach window. “Who put those frightful skulls upon Temple Bar?”

Then the mystery of their coming was clear to me, and the superior gentleman at the Castle Inn had been the fashionable dabbler in arts and letters and architecture of Strawberry Hill, of whom I remembered having heard Dr. Courtenay speak, Horace Walpole. But I was then far too concerned about Dorothy to listen to more. Her face was still turned away from me, and she was silent. I could have cut out my tongue for my blunder. Presently, when we were nearly out of the Strand, she turned upon me abruptly.

“We have not yet heard, Richard,” she said, “how you got into such a predicament.”

“Indeed, I don’t know myself, Dolly. Some scoundrel bribed the captain of the slaver. For I take it Mr. Walpole has told you I was carried off on a slaver, if he recalled that much of the story.”

“I don’t mean that,” answered Dolly, impatiently. “There is something strange about all this. How is it that you were in prison?”

“Mr. Dix, my grandfather’s agent, took me for an impostor and would advance me no money,” I answered, hard pushed.

But Dorothy had a woman’s instinct, which is often the best of understanding. And I was beginning to think that a suspicion was at the bottom of her questions. She gave her head an impatient fling, and, as I feared, appealed to John Paul.

“Perhaps you can tell me, captain, why he did not come to his friends in his trouble.”

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And despite my signals to him he replied: “In truth, my dear lady, he haunted the place for a sight of you, from the moment he set foot in London.”

Comyn laughed, and I felt the blood rise to my face, and kicked John Paul viciously. Dolly retained her self-possession.

“Pho!” says she; “for a sight of me! You seamen are all alike. For a sight of me! And had you not strength enough to lift a knocker, sir, —you who can raise a man from the ground with one hand?”

“’Twas before his tailor had prepared him, madam, and he feared to disgrace you,” the captain gravely continued, and I perceived how futile it were to attempt to stop him. “And afterward—”

“And afterward?” repeated Dorothy, leaning forward.

“And afterward he went to Arlington Street with Mr. Dix to seek Mr. Manners, that he might be identified before that gentleman. He encountered Mr. Manners and his Grace of Something.”

“Chartersea,” put in Comyn, who had been listening eagerly. “Getting out of a coach,” said the captain.

“When was this?” demanded Dorothy of me, interrupting him. Her voice was steady, but the colour had left her face.

“About three weeks ago.”

“Please be exact, Richard.”

“Well, if you must,” said I, “the day was Tuesday, and the time about half an hour after two.”

She said nothing for a while, trying to put down an agitation which was beginning to show itself in spite of her effort. As for me, I was almost wishing myself back in the sponginghouse.

“Are you sure my father saw you?” she asked presently.

“As clearly as you do now, Dolly,” I said.

“But your clothes? He might have gone by you in such.”

“I pray that he did, Dorothy,” I replied. But I was wholly convinced that Mr. Manners had recognized me.

“And—and what did he say?” she asked.

For she had the rare courage that never shrinks from the truth. I think I have never admired and pitied her as at that moment.

“He said to the footman,” I answered, resolved to go through with it now, “‘Give the man a shilling.’ That was his Grace’s suggestion.”

My Lord uttered something very near an oath. And she spoke not a word more until I handed her out in Arlington Street. The rest of us were silent, too, Comyn now and again giving me eloquent glances expressive of what he would say if she were not present; the captain watching her with a furtive praise, and he vowed to me afterward she was never so beautiful as when angry, that he loved her as an avenging Diana. But I was uneasy, and when I stood alone with her before the house I begged her not to speak to her father of the episode.

“Nay, he must be cleared of such an imputation, Richard,” she answered proudly. “He may have made mistakes, but I feel sure he would never turn you away when you came to him in trouble—you, the grandson of his old friend, Lionel Carvel.”

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“Why bother over matters that are past and gone? I would have borne an hundred such trials to have you come to me as you came to-day, Dorothy. And I shall surely see you again,” I said, trying to speak lightly; “and your mother, to whom you will present my respects, before I sail for America.”

She looked up at me, startled.

“Before you sail for America!” she exclaimed, in a tone that made me thrill at once with joy and sadness. “And are you not, then, to see London now you are here?”

“Are you never coming back, Dolly?” I whispered; for I feared Mr. Marmaduke might appear at any moment; “or do you wish to remain in England always?”

For an instant I felt her pressure on my hand, and then she had fled into the house, leaving me standing by the steps looking after her. Comyn’s voice aroused me.

“To the Star and Garter!” I heard him command, and on the way to Pall Mall he ceased not to rate Mr. Manners with more vigour than propriety. “I never liked the little cur, d—n him! No one likes him, Richard,” he declared. “All the town knows how Chartersea threw a bottle at him, and were it not for his daughter he had long since been put out of White’s. Were it not for Miss Dolly I would call him out for this cowardly trick, and then publish him.”

“Nay, my Lord, I had held that as my privilege,” interrupted the captain, “were it not, as you say, for Miss Manners.”

His Lordship shot a glance at John Paul somewhat divided between surprise, resentment, and amusement.

“Now you have seen the daughter, captain, you perceive it is impossible,” I hastened to interpose.

“How in the name of lineage did she come to have such a father?” Comyn went on. “I thank Heaven he’s not mine. He’s not fit to be her lackey. I would sooner twenty times have a profligate like my Lord Sandwich for a parent than a milk and water sop like Manners, who will risk nothing over a crown piece at play or a guinea at Newmarket. By G—, Richard,” said his Lordship, bringing his fist against the glass with near force enough to break the pane, “I have a notion why he did not choose to see you that day. Why, he has no more blood than a louse!”

I had come to the guess as soon as he, but I dared not give it voice, nor anything but ridicule. And so we came to the hotel, the red of departing day fading in the sky above the ragged house-line in St. James’s Street.

It was a very different reception we got than when we had first come there. You, my dears, who live in this Republic can have no notion of the stir and bustle caused by the arrival of Horace Walpole's carriage at a fashionable hotel, at a time when every innkeeper was versed in the arms of every family of note in the three kingdoms. Our friend the chamberlain was now humility itself, and fairly ran in his eagerness to anticipate Comyn's demands. It was "Yes, my Lord," and "To be sure, your Lordship,"

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every other second, and he seized the first occasion to make me an elaborate apology for his former cold conduct, assuring me that had our honours been pleased to divulge the fact that we had friends in London, such friends as my Lord Comyn and Mr. Walpole, whose great father he had once had the distinction to serve as linkman, all would have been well. And he was desiring me particularly to comprehend that he had been acting under most disagreeable orders when he sent for the bailiff, before I cut him short.

We were soon comfortably installed in our old rooms; Comyn had sent post-haste for Davenport, who chanced to be his own tailor, and for the whole army of auxiliaries indispensable to a gentleman's make-up; and Mr. Dix was notified that his Lordship would receive him at eleven on the following morning, in my rooms. I remembered the faithful Banks with a twinge of gratitude, and sent for him. And John Paul and I, having been duly installed in the clothes made for us, all three of us sat down merrily to such a supper as only the cook of the Star and Garter, who had been chef to the Comte de Maurepas, could prepare. Then I begged Comyn to relate the story of our rescue, which I burned to hear.

"Why, Richard," said he, filling his glass, "had you run afoul any other man in London, save perchance Selwyn, you'd have been drinking the bailiff's triple-diluted for a month to come. I never knew such a brace of fools as he and Horry for getting hold of strange yarns and making them stranger; the wonder was that Horry told this as straight as he did. He has written it to all his friends on the Continent, and had he not been in dock with the gout ever since he reached town, he would have told it at the opera, and at a dozen routs and suppers. Beg pardon, captain," said he, turning to John Paul, "but I think 'twas your peacock coat that saved you both, for it caught Horry's eye through the window, as you got out of the chaise, and down he came as fast as he could hobble.

"Horry had a little dinner to-day in Arlington Street, where he lives, and Miss Dorothy was there. I have told you, Richard, there has been no sensation in town equal to that of your Maryland beauty, since Lady Sarah Lennox. You may have some notion of the old beau Horry can be when he tries, and he is over-fond of Miss Dolly—she puts him in mind of some canvas or other of Sir Peter's. He vowed he had been saving this piece de resistance, as he was pleased to call it, expressly for her, since it had to do somewhat with Maryland. 'What d'ye think I met at Windsor, Miss Manners?' he cries, before we had begun the second course.

"'Perhaps a repulse from his Majesty,' says Dolly, promptly.

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"'Nay,' says Mr. Walpole, making a face, for he hates a laugh at his cost; nothing less than a young American giant, with the attire of Dr. Benjamin Franklin and the manner of the Fauxbourg Saint Germain. But he had a whiff of deer leather about him, and shoulders and back and legs to make his fortune at Hockley in the Hole, had he lived two generations since. And he had with him a strange, Scotch sea-captain, who had rescued him from pirates, bless you, no less. That is, he said he was a sea-captain; but he talked French like a Parisian, and quoted Shakespeare like Mr. Burke or Dr. Johnson. He may have been M. Caron de Beaumarchais, for I never saw him, or a soothsayer, or Cagliostro the magician, for he guessed my name.'

"'Guessed your name!' we cried, for the story was out of the ordinary.

"'Just that,' answered he, and repeated some damned verse I never heard, with Horatio in it, and made them all laugh."

John Paul and I looked at each other in astonishment, and we, too, laughed heartily. It was indeed an odd coincidence.

His Lordship continued: "'Well, be that as it may,' said Horry, 'he was an able man of sagacity, this sea-captain, and, like many another, had a penchant for being a gentleman. But he was more of an oddity than Hertford's beast of Gevaudan, and was dressed like Salvinio, the monkey my Lord Holland brought back from his last Italian tour.'"

I have laughed over this description since, my dears, and so has John Paul. But at that time I saw nothing funny in it, and winced with him when Comyn repeated it with such brutal unconsciousness. However, young Englishmen of birth and wealth of that day were not apt to consider the feelings of those they deemed below them.

"Come to your story. Comyn," I cut in testily.

But his Lordship missed entirely the cause of my displeasure.

"Listen to him!" he exclaimed good-naturedly. "He will hear of nothing but Miss Dolly. Well, Richard, my lad, you should have seen her as Horry went on to tell that you had been taken from Maryland, with her head forward and her lips parted, and a light in those eyes of hers to make a man fall down and worship. For Mr. Lloyd, or some one in your Colony, had written of your disappearance, and I vow bliss Dorothy has not been the same since. Nor have I been the only one to remark it," said he, waving off my natural protest at such extravagance. "We have talked of you more than once, she and I, and mourned you for dead. But I am off my course again, as we sailors say, captain. Horry was describing how Richard lifted little Goble by one hand and spun all the dignity out of him, when Miss Manners broke in, being able to contain herself no longer.

"'An American, Mr. Walpole, and from Maryland?' she demanded. And the way she said it made them all look at her.

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"'Assurement, mademoiselle,' replied Horry, in his cursed French; and perhaps you know him. He would gladden the heart of Frederick of Prussia, for he stands six and three if an inch. I took such a fancy to the lad that I invited him to sup with me, and he gave me back a message fit for Mr. Wilkes to send to his Majesty, as haughty as you choose, that if I desired him I must have his friend in the bargain. You Americans are the very devil for independence, Miss Manners! 'Ods fish, I liked his spirit so much I had his friend, Captain something or other—'and there he stopped, caught by Miss Manners's appearance, for she was very white.

"'The name is Richard Carvel!' she cried.

"'I'll lay a thousand it was!' I shouted, rising in my chair. And the company stared, and Lady Pembroke vowed I had gone mad.

"'Bless me, bless me, here's a romance for certain!' cried Horry; 'it throws my "Castle of Otranto" in the shade' ("that's some damned book he has written," Comyn interjected).

"You may not believe me, Richard, when I say that Miss Dolly ate but little after that, and her colour came and went like the red of a stormy sunset at sea. 'Here's this dog Richard come to spill all our chances,' I swore to myself. The company had been prodigiously entertained by the tale, and clamoured for more, and when Horry had done I told how you had fought me at Annapolis, and had saved my life. But Miss Manners sat very still, biting her lip, and I knew she was sadly vexed that you had not gone to her in Arlington Street. For a woman will reason thus," said his Lordship, winking wisely. "But I more than suspected something to have happened, so I asked Horry to send his fellow Favre over to the Star and Garter to see if you were there, tho' I was of three minds to let you go to the devil. You should have seen her face when he came back to say that you had been for three weeks in a Castle Yard sponging-house! Then Horry said he would lend me his coach, and when it was brought around Miss Manners took our breaths by walking downstairs and into it, nor would she listen to a word of the objections cried by my Lady Pembroke and the rest. You must know there is no stopping the beauty when she has made her mind. And while they were all chattering on the steps I jumped in, and off we drove, and you will be the most talked-of man in London to-morrow. I give you Miss Manners!" cried his Lordship, as he ended.

We all stood to the toast, I with my blood a-tingle and my brain awhirl, so that I scarce knew what I did.

CHAPTER XXVII

IN WHICH I AM SORE TEMPTED

“Who the devil is this John Paul, and what is to become of him?” asked Comyn, as I escorted him downstairs to a chair. “You must give him two hundred pounds, or a thousand, if you like, and let him get out. He can’t be coming to the clubs with you.”

And he pulled me into the coffee room after him.

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“You don’t understand the man, Comyn,” said I; “he isn’t that kind, I tell you. What he has done for me is out of friendship, as he says, and he wouldn’t touch a farthing save what I owe him.”

“Cursed if he isn’t a rum sea-captain,” he answered, shrugging his shoulders; “cursed if I ever ran foul of one yet who would refuse a couple of hundred and call quits. What’s he to do? Is he to live like a Lord of the Treasury upon a master’s savings?”

“Jack,” said I, soberly, resolved not to be angry, “I would willingly be cast back in Castle Yard to-night rather than desert him, who might have deserted me twenty times to his advantage. Mr. Carvel has not wealth enough, nor I gratitude enough, to reward him. But if our family can make his fortune, it shall be made. And I am determined to go with him to America by the first packet I can secure.”

He clutched my arm with an earnestness to startle me.

“You must not leave England now,” he said.

“And why?”

“Because she will marry Chartersea if you do. And take my oath upon it, you alone can save her from that.”

“Nonsense!” I exclaimed, but my breath caught sharply.

“Listen, Richard. Mr. Manners’s manoeuvres are the talk of the town, and the beast of a duke is forever wining and dining in Arlington Street. At first people ridiculed, now they are giving credit. It is said,” he whispered fearfully, “it is said that his Grace has got Mr. Manners in his power,—some question of honour, you understand, which will ruin him, —and that even now the duke is in a position to force the marriage.”

He leaned forward and searched me with his keen gray eyes, as tho’ watching the effect of the intelligence upon me. I was, indeed, stunned.

“Now, had she refused me fifty times instead of only twice,” my Lord continued, “I could not wish her such a fate as that vicious scoundrel. And since she will not have me, I would rather it were you than any man alive. For she loves you, Richard, as surely as the world is turning.”

“Oh, no!” I replied passionately; “you are deceived by the old liking she has always had for me since we were children together.” I was deeply touched by his friendship. “But tell me how that could affect this marriage with Chartersea. I believe her pride capable of any sacrifice for the family honour.”

He made a gesture of impatience that knocked over a candlestick.

“There, curse you, there you are again!” he said, “showing how little you know of women and of their pride. If she were sure that you loved her, she would never marry Chartersea or any one else. She has had near the whole of London at her feet, and toyed with it. Now she has been amusing herself with Charles Fox, but I vow she cares for none of them. Titles, fame, estates, will not move her.”

“If she were sure that I loved her!” I repeated, dazed by what he was saying. “How you are talking, Comyn!”

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“Just that. Ah, how I know her, Richard! She can be reckless beyond notion. And if it were proved to her that you were in love with Miss Swain, the barrister’s daughter, over whom we were said to have fought, she would as soon marry Chartersea, or March, or the devil, to show you how little she cared.”

“With Patty Swain!” I exclaimed.

“But if she knew you did not care a rope’s end for Patty, Mr. Marmaduke and his reputation might go into exile together,” he continued, without heeding. “So much for a woman’s pride, I say. The day the news of your disappearance arrived, Richard, she was starting out with a party to visit Lord Carlisle’s seat, Castle Howard. Not a step would she stir, though Mr. Marmaduke whined and coaxed and threatened. And I swear to you she has never been the same since, though few but I know why. I might tell you more, my lad, were it not a breach of confidence.”

“Then don’t,” I said; for I would not let my feelings run.

“Egad, then, I will!” he cried impetuously, “for the end justifies it. You must know that after the letter came from Mr. Lloyd, we thought you dead. I could never get her to speak of you until a fortnight ago. We both had gone with a party to see Wanstead and dine at the Spread Eagle upon the Forest, and I stole her away from the company and led her out under the trees. My God, Richard, how beautiful she was in the wood with the red in her cheeks and the wind blowing her black hair! For the second time I begged her to be Lady Comyn. Fool that I was, I thought she wavered, and my heart beat as it never will again. Then, as she turned away, from her hand slipped a little gold-bound purse, and as I picked it up a clipping from a newspaper fluttered out. ’Pon my soul, it was that very scandalous squib of the Maryland Gazette about our duel! I handed it back with a bow. I dared not look up at her face, but stood with my eyes on the ground, waiting.

“‘Lord Comyn,’ says she, presently, with a quiver in her voice, ’before I give you a reply you must first answer, on your word as a gentleman, what I ask you.’

“I bowed again.

“‘Is it true that Richard Carvel was in love with Miss Swain?’ she asked.”

“And you said, Comyn,” I broke in, unable longer to contain myself, “you said—”

“I said: ’Dorothy, if I were to die to-morrow, I would swear Richard Carvel loved you, and you only.’”

His Lordship had spoken with that lightness which hides only the deepest emotion.

“And she refused you?” I cried. “Oh, surely not for that!”

“And she did well,” said my Lord.

I bowed my head on my arms, for I had gone through a great deal that day, and this final example of Comyn’s generosity overwhelmed me. Then I felt his hand laid kindly on my shoulder, and I rose up and seized it. His eyes were dim, as were mine.

“And now, will you go to Maryland and be a fool?” asked his Lordship.

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I hesitated, sadly torn between duty and inclination. John Paul could, indeed, go to America without me. Next the thought came over me in a flash that my grandfather might be ill, or even dead, and there would be no one to receive the captain. I knew he would never consent to spend the season at the Star and Garter at my expense. And then the image of the man rose before me, of him who had given me all he owned, and gone with me so cheerfully to prison, though he knew me not from the veriest adventurer and impostor. I was undecided no longer.

“I must go, Jack,” I said sadly; “as God judges, I must.”

He looked at me queerly, as if I were beyond his comprehension, picked up his hat, called out that he would see me in the morning, and was gone.

I went slowly upstairs, threw off my clothes mechanically, and tumbled into bed. The captain had long been asleep. By the exertion of all the will power I could command, I was able gradually to think more and more soberly, and the more I thought, the more absurd, impossible, it seemed that I, a rough provincial not yet of age, should possess the heart of a beauty who had but to choose from the best of all England. An hundred times I went over the scene of poor Comyn’s proposal, nay, saw it vividly, as though the whole of it had been acted before me: and as I became calmer, the plainer I perceived that Dorothy, thinking me dead, was willing to let Comyn believe that she had loved me, and had so eased the soreness of her refusal. Perhaps, in truth, a sentiment had sprung up in her breast when she heard of my disappearance, which she mistook for love. But surely the impulse that sent her to Castle Yard was not the same as that Comyn had depicted: it was merely the survival of the fancy of a little girl in a grass-stained frock, who had romped on the lawn at Carvel Hall. I sighed as I remembered the sun and the flowers and the blue Chesapeake, and recalled the very toss of her head when she had said she would marry nothing less than a duke.

Alas, Dolly, perchance it was to be nothing more than a duke! The bloated face and beady eyes and the broad crooked back I had seen that day in Arlington Street rose before me,—I should know his Grace of Chartersea again were I to meet him in purgatory. Was it, indeed, possible that I could prevent her marriage with this man? I fell asleep, repeating the query, as the dawn was sifting through the blinds.

I awakened late. Banks was already there to dress me, to congratulate me as discreetly as a well-trained servant should; nor did he remind me of the fact that he had offered to lend me money, for which omission I liked him the better. In the parlour I found the captain sipping his chocolate and reading his morning Chronicle, as though all his life he had done nothing else.

“Good morning, captain.” And fetching him a lick on the back that nearly upset his bowl, I cried as heartily as I could:

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“Egad, if our luck holds, we’ll be sailing before the week is out.”

But he looked troubled. He hemmed and hawed, and finally broke out into Scotch:

“Indeed, laddie, y’ell no be leaving Miss Dorothy for me.”

“What nonsense has Comyn put into your head?” I demanded, with a stitch in my side; I am no more to Miss Manners than—”

“Than John Paul! Faith, y’ell not make me believe that. Ah, Richard,” said he, “ye’re a sly dog. You and I have been as thick these twa months as men can well live, and never a word out of you of the most sublime creature that walks. I have seen women in many countries, lad, beauties to set thoughts afire and swords a-play,—and ’tis not her beauty alone. She hath a spirit for a queen to covet, and air and carriage, too.”

This eloquent harangue left me purple.

“I grant it all, captain. She has but to choose her title and estate.”

“Ay, and I have a notion which she’ll be choosing.”

“The knowledge is worth a thousand pounds at the least,” I replied. “I will lend you the sum, and warrant no lack of takers.”

“Now the devil fly off with such temperament! And I had half the encouragement she has given you, I would cast anchor on the spot, and they might hang and quarter me to move me. But I know you well,” he exclaimed, his manner changing, “you are making this great sacrifice on my account. And I will not be a drag on your pleasures, Richard, or stand in the way of your prospects.”

“Captain Paul,” I said, sitting down beside him, “have I deserved this from you? Have I shown a desire to desert you now that my fortunes have changed? I have said that you shall taste of our cheer at Carvel Hall, and have looked forward this long while to the time when I shall take you to my grandfather and say: ’Mr. Carvel, this is he whose courage and charity have restored you to me, and me to you.’ And he will have changed mightily if you do not have the best in Maryland. Should you wish to continue on the sea, you shall have the Belle of the Wye, launched last year. ’Tis time Captain Elliott took to his pension.”

The captain sighed, and a gleam I did not understand came into his dark eyes.

“I would that God had given me your character and your heart, Richard,” he said, “in place of this striving thing I have within me. But ’tis written that a leopard cannot change his spots.”

“The passage shall be booked this day,” I said.

That morning was an eventful one. Comyn arrived first, dressed in a suit of mauve French cloth that set off his fine figure to great advantage. He regarded me keenly as he entered, as if to discover whether I had changed my mind over night. And I saw he was not in the best of tempers.

“And when do you sail?” he cried. “I have no doubt you have sent out already to get passage.”

“I have been trying to persuade Mr. Carvel to remain in London, my Lord,” said the captain. “I tell him he is leaving his best interests behind him.”

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“I fear that for once you have undertaken a task beyond your ability, Captain Paul,” was the rather tart reply.

“The captain has a ridiculous idea that he is the cause of my going,” I said quickly.

John Paul rose somewhat abruptly, seized his hat and bowed to his Lordship, and in the face of a rain sallied out, remarking that he had as yet seen nothing of the city.

“Jack, you must do me the favour not to talk of this in John Paul’s presence,” I said, when the door had closed.

“If he doesn’t suspect why you are going, he has more stupidity than I gave him credit for,” Comyn answered gruffly.

“I fear he does suspect,” I said.

His Lordship went to the table and began to write, leaving me to the Chronicle, the pages of which I did not see. Then came Mr. Dix, and such a change I had never beheld in mortal man. In place of the would-be squire I had encountered in Threadneedle Street, here was an unctuous person of business in sober gray; but he still wore the hypocritical smirk with no joy in it. His bow was now all respectful obedience. Comyn acknowledged it with a curt nod.

Mr. Dix began smoothly, where a man of more honesty would have found the going difficult.

“Mr. Carvel,” he said, rubbing his hands, “I wish first to express my profound regrets for what has happened.”

“Curse your regrets,” said Comyn, bluntly. “You come here on business. Mr. Carvel does not stand in need of regrets at present.”

“I was but on the safe side of Mr. Carvel’s money, my Lord.”

“Ay, I’ll warrant you are always on the safe side of money,” replied Comyn, with a laugh. “What I wish to know, Mr. Dix,” he continued, “is whether you are willing to take my word that this is Mr. Richard Carvel, the grandson and heir of Lionel Carvel, Esquire, of Carvel Hall in Maryland?”

“I am your Lordship’s most obedient servant,” said Mr. Dix.

“Confound you, sir! Can you or can you not answer a simple question?”

Mr. Dix straightened. He may have spoken elsewhere of asserting his dignity.

“I would not presume to doubt your Lordship’s word.”

“Then, if I were to be personally responsible for such sums as Mr. Carvel may need, I suppose you would be willing to advance them to him.”

“Willingly, willingly, my Lord,” said Mr. Dix, and added immediately: “Your Lordship will not object to putting that in writing? Merely a matter of form, as your Lordship knows, but we men of affairs are held to a strict accountability.”

Comyn made a movement of disgust, took up a pen and wrote out the indorsement.

“There,” he said. “You men of affairs will at least never die of starvation.”

Mr. Dix took the paper with a low bow, began to shower me with protestations of his fidelity to my grandfather’s interests, which were one day to be my own,—he hoped, with me, not soon,—drew from his pocket more than sufficient for my immediate wants, said that I should have more by a trusty messenger, and was going on to clear himself of his former neglect and indifference, when Banks announced:

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“His honour, Mr. Manners!”

Comyn and I exchanged glances, and his Lordship gave a low whistle. Nor was the circumstance without its effect upon Mr. Dix. With my knowledge of the character of Dorothy’s father I might have foreseen this visit, which came, nevertheless, as a complete surprise. For a moment I hesitated, and then made a motion to show him up. Comyn voiced my decision.

“Why let the little cur stand in the way?” he said; “he counts for nothing.”

Mr. Marmaduke was not long in ascending, and tripped into the room as Mr. Dix backed out of it, as gayly as tho’ he had never sent me about my business in the street. His clothes, of a cherry cut velvet, were as ever a little beyond the fashion, and he carried something I had never before seen, then used by the extreme dandies in London,—an umbrella.

“What! Richard Carvel! Is it possible?” he screamed in his piping voice. “We mourned you for dead, and here you turn up in London alive and well, and bigger and stronger than ever. Oons! one need not go to Scripture for miracles. I shall write my congratulations to Mr. Carvel this day, sir.” And he pushed his fingers into my waistcoat, so that Comyn and I were near to laughing in his face. For it was impossible to be angry with a little coxcomb of such pitiful intelligence.

“Ah, good morning, my Lord. I see your Lordship has risen early in the same good cause, I myself am up two hours before my time. You will pardon the fuss I am making over the lad, Comyn, but his grandfather is my very dear friend, and Richard was brought up with my daughter Dorothy. They were like brother and sister. What, Richard, you will not take my hand! Surely you are not so unreasonable as to hold against me that unfortunate circumstance in Arlington Street! Yes, Dorothy has shocked me. She has told me of it.”

Comyn winked at me as I replied:—

“We shan’t mention it, Mr. Manners. I have had my three weeks in prison, and perhaps know the world all the better for them.”

He held up his umbrella in mock dismay, and stumbled abruptly into a chair. There he sat looking at me, a whimsical uneasiness on his face. “We shall indeed mention it, sir. Three weeks in prison, to think of it! And you would not so much as send me a line. Ah, Richard, pride is a good thing, but I sometimes think we from Maryland have too much of it. We shall indeed speak of the matter. Out of justice to me you must understand how it occurred. You must know that I am deucedly absentminded, and positively lost without my glass. And I had somebody with me, so Dorothy said. Chartersea, I

believe. And his Grace made me think you were a cursed beggar. I make a point never to have to do with ’em.”

“You are right, Mr. Manners,” Comyn cut in dryly; “for I have known them to be so persistently troublesome, when once encouraged, as to interfere seriously with our arrangements.”

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“Eh!” Mr. Manners ejaculated, and then came to an abrupt pause, while I wondered whether the shot had told. To relieve him I inquired after Mrs. Manners’s health.

“Ah, to be sure,” he replied, beginning to fumble in his skirts; “London agrees with her remarkably, and she is better than she has been for years. And she is overjoyed at your most wonderful escape, Richard, as are we all.”

And he gave me a note. I concealed my eagerness as I took it and broke the seal, to discover that it was not from Dorothy, but from Mrs. Manners herself.

“My dear Richard” (so it ran), “I thank God with your dear Grandfather over y’r Deliverance, & you must bring y’r Deliverer, whom Dorothy describes as Courtly and Gentlemanly despite his Calling, to dine with us this very Day, that we may express to him our Gratitude. I know you are far too Sensible not to come to Arlington Street. I subscribe myself, Richard, y’r sincere Friend,

“*Margaretmanners*.”

There was not so much as a postscript from Dolly, as I had hoped. But the letter was whole-souled, like Mrs. Manners, and breathed the affection she had always had for me. I honoured her the more that she had not attempted to excuse Mr. Manners’s conduct.

“You will come, Richard?” cried Mr. Marmaduke, with an attempt at heartiness. “You must come, and the captain, too. For I hear, with regret, that you are not to be long with us.”

I caught another significant look from Comyn from between the window curtains. But I accepted for myself, and conditionally for John Paul. Mr. Manners rose to take his leave.

“Dorothy will be glad to see you,” he said. “I often think, Richard, that she tires of these generals and King’s ministers, and longs for a romp at Wilmot House again. Alas,” he sighed, offering us a pinch of snuff (which he said was the famous Number 37), “alas, she has had a deal too much of attention, with his Grace of Chartersea and a dozen others would to marry her. I fear she will go soon,” and he sighed again. “Upon my soul I cannot make her out. I’ll lay something handsome, my Lord, that the madcap adventure with you after Richard sets the gossips going. One day she is like a schoolgirl, and I blame myself for not taking her mother’s advice to send her to Mrs. Terry, at Campden House; and the next, egad, she is as difficult to approach as a crowned head. Well, gentlemen, I give you good day, I have an appointment at White’s. I am happy to see you have fallen in good hands, Richard. My Lord, your most obedient!”

“He’ll lay something handsome!” said my Lord, when the door had closed behind him.

CHAPTER XXVIII

ARLINGTON STREET

The sun having come out, and John Paul not returning by two,—being ogling, I supposed, the ladies in Hyde Park,—I left him a message and betook myself with as great trepidation as ever to Dorothy’s house. The door was opened by the identical footman who had so insolently offered me money, and I think he recognized me, for he backed away as he told me the ladies were not at home. But I had not gone a dozen paces in my disappointment when I heard him running after me, asking if my honour were Mr. Richard Carvel.

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“The ladies will see your honour,” he said, and conducted me back into the house and up the wide stairs. I had heard that Arlington Street was known as the street of the King’s ministers, and I surmised that Mr. Manners had rented this house, and its furniture, from some great man who had gone out of office, plainly a person of means and taste. The hall, like that of many of the great town-houses, was in semi-darkness, but I remarked that the stair railing was of costly iron-work and polished brass; and, as I went up, that the stone niches in the wall were filled with the busts of statesmen, and I recognized among these, that of the great Walpole. A great copper gilt chandelier hung above. But the picture of the drawing-room I was led into, with all its colours, remains in the eye of my mind to this day. It was a large room, the like of which I had never seen in any private residence of the New World, situated in the back of the house. Its balcony overlooked the fresh expanse of the Green Park. Upon its high ceiling floated Venus and the graces, by Zucchi; and the mantel, upon which ticked an antique and curious French clock, was carved marble.

On the gilt panels of the walls were wreaths of red roses. At least a half-dozen tall mirrors, framed in rococos, were placed about, the largest taking the space between the two high windows on the park side. And underneath it stood a gold cabinet, lacquered by Martin’s inimitable hand, in the centre of which was set a medallion of porcelain, with the head in dark blue of his Majesty, Charles the First. The chairs and lounges were marquetry,—satin-wood and mahogany,—with seats and backs of blue brocade. The floor was polished to the degree of danger, and on the walls hung a portrait by Van Dycke, another, of a young girl, by Richardson, a landscape by the Dutch artist Ruysdael, and a water-colour by Zaccarelli.

I had lived for four months the roughest of lives, and the room brought before me so sharply the contrast between my estate and the grandeur and elegance in which Dorothy lived, that my spirits fell as I looked about me. In front of me was a vase of flowers, and beside them on the table lay a note “To Miss Manners, in Arlington Street,” and sealed with a ducal crest. I was unconsciously turning it over, when something impelled me to look around. There, erect in the doorway, stood Dolly, her eyes so earnestly fixed upon me that I dropped the letter with a start. A faint colour mounted to her crown of black hair.

“And so you have come, Richard,” she said. Her voice was low, and tho’ there was no anger in it, the tone seemed that of reproach. I wondered whether she thought the less of me for coming.

“Can you blame me for wishing to see you before I leave, Dolly?” I cried, and crossed quickly over to her.

But she drew a step backward.

“Then it is true that you are going,” said she, this time with a plain note of coldness.

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“I must, Dorothy.”

“When?”

“As soon as I can get passage.”

She passed me and seated herself on the lounge, leaving me to stand like a lout before her, ashamed of my youth and of the clumsiness of my great body.

“Ah, Richard,” she laughed, “confess to your old play mate! I should like to know how many young men of wealth and family would give up the pleasures of a London season were there not a strong attraction in Maryland.”

How I longed to tell her that I would give ten years of my life to remain in England: that duty to John Paul took me home. But I was dumb.

“We should make a macaroni of you to amaze our colony,” said Dolly, lightly, as I sat down a great distance away; “to accept my schooling were to double your chances when you return, Richard. You should have cards to everything, and my Lord Comyn or Mr. Fox or some one would introduce you at the clubs. I vow you would be a sensation, with your height and figure. You should meet all the beauties of England, and perchance,” she added mischievously, “perchance you might be taking one home with you.”

“Nay, Dolly,” I answered; “I am not your match in jesting.”

“Jesting!” she exclaimed, “I was never more sober. But where is your captain?”

I said that I hoped that John Paul would be there shortly.

“How fanciful he is! And his conversation,—one might think he had acquired the art at Marly or in the Fauxbourg. In truth, he should have been born on the far side of the Channel. And he has the air of the great man,” said she, glancing up at ms, covertly. “For my part, I prefer a little more bluntness.”

I was nettled at the speech. Dorothy had ever been quick to seize upon and ridicule the vulnerable oddities of a character, and she had all the contempt of the great lady for those who tried to scale by pleasing arts. I perceived with regret that she had taken a prejudice.

“There, Dorothy,” I cried, “not even you shall talk so of the captain. For you have seen him at his worst. There are not many, I warrant you, born like him a poor gardener’s son who rise by character and ability to be a captain at three and twenty. And he will be higher yet. He has never attended any but a parish school, and still has learning to astonish Mr. Walpole, learning which he got under vast difficulties. He is a gentleman, I

say, far above many I have known, and he is a man. If you would know a master, you should see him on his own ship. If you would know a gentleman, you have been with me in his mother's cottage." And, warming as I talked, I told her of that saddest of all homecomings to the little cabin under Criffel's height.

Small wonder that I adored Dorothy!

Would that I could paint her moods, that I might describe the strange light in her eyes when I had finished, that I might tell how in an instant she was another woman. She rose impulsively and took a chair at my side, and said:—

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"'Tis so I love to hear you speak, Richard, when you uphold the absent. For I feel it is so you must champion me when I am far away. My dear old playmate is ever the same, strong to resent, and seeing ever the best in his friends. Forgive me, Richard, I have been worse than silly. And will you tell me that story of your adventures which I long to learn?"

Ay, that I would. I told it her, and she listened silently, save only now and then a cry of wonder or of sympathy that sounded sweet to my ears,—just as I had dreamed of her listening when I used to pace the deck of the brigantine John, at sea. And when at length I had finished, she sat looking out over the Green Park, as tho' she had forgot my presence.

And so Mrs. Manners came in and found us.

It had ever pleased me to imagine that Dorothy's mother had been in her youth like Dorothy. She had the same tall figure, grace in its every motion, and the same eyes of deep blue, and the generous but well-formed mouth. A man may pity, but cannot conceive the heroism that a woman of such a mould must have gone through who has been married since early girlhood to a man like Mr. Manners. Some women would have been driven quickly to frivolity, and worse, but this one had struggled year after year to maintain an outward serenity to a critical world, and had succeeded, tho' success had cost her dear. Each trial had deepened a line of that face, had done its share to subdue the voice which had once rung like Dorothy's; and in the depths of her eyes lingered a sadness indefinable.

She gazed upon me with that kindness and tenderness I had always received since the days when, younger and more beautiful than now, she was the companion of my mother. And the unbidden shadow of a thought came to me that these two sweet women had had some sadness in common. Many a summer's day I remembered them sewing together in the spring-house, talking in subdued voices which were hushed when I came running in. And lo! the same memory was on Dorothy's mother then, half expressed as she laid her hands upon my shoulders.

"Poor Elizabeth!" she said,—not to me, nor yet to Dorothy; "I wish that she might have lived to see you now. It is Captain Jack again."

She sighed, and kissed me. And I felt at last that I had come home after many wanderings. We sat down, mother and daughter on the sofa with their fingers locked. She did not speak of Mr. Manners's conduct, or of my stay in the sponging-house. And for this I was thankful.

"I have had a letter from Mr. Lloyd, Richard," she said.

"And my grandfather?" I faltered, a thickness in my throat.

“My dear boy,” answered Mrs. Manners, gently, “he thinks you dead. But you have written him?” she added hurriedly.

I nodded. “From Dumfries.”

“He will have the letter soon,” she said cheerfully. “I thank Heaven I am able to tell you that his health is remarkable under the circumstances. But he will not quit the house, and sees no one except your uncle, who is with him constantly.”

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It was what I expected. But the confirmation of it brought me to my feet in a torrent of indignation, exclaiming:

“The villain! You tell me he will allow Mr. Carvel to see no one?”

She started forward, laying her hand on my arm, and Dorothy gave a little cry.

“What are you saying, Richard? What are you saying?”

“Mrs. Manners,” I answered, collecting myself, “I must tell you that I believe it is Grafton Carvel himself that is responsible for my abduction. He meant that I should be murdered.”

Then Dorothy rose, her eyes flashing and her head high.

“He would have murdered you—you, Richard?” she cried, in such a storm of anger as I had never seen her. “Oh, he should hang for the thought of it! I have always suspected Grafton Carvel capable of any crime!”

“Hush, Dorothy,” said her mother; “it is not seemly for a young girl to talk so.”

“Seemly!” said Dorothy. “If I were a man I would bring him to justice, and it took me a lifetime. Nay, if I were a man and could use a sword—”

“Dorothy! Dorothy!” interrupted Mrs. Manners.

Dorothy sat down, the light lingering in her eyes. She had revealed more of herself in that instant than in all her life before.

“It is a grave charge, Richard,” said Mrs. Manners, at length. “And your uncle is a man of the best standing in Annapolis.”

“You must remember his behaviour before my mother’s marriage, Mrs. Manners.”

“I do, I do, Richard,” she said sadly. “And I have never trusted him since. I suppose you are not making your accusation without cause?”

“I have cause enough,” I answered bitterly.

“And proof?” she added. She should have been the man in her family.

I told her how Harvey had overheard the bits of the plot at Carvel Hall near two years gone; and now that I had begun, I was going through with Mr. Allen’s part in the conspiracy, when Dorothy startled us both by crying:

“Oh, there is so much wickedness in the world, I wish I had never been born!”

She flung herself from the room in a passion of tears to shock me. As if in answer to my troubled look, Mrs. Manners said, with a sigh:

“She has not been at all well, lately, Richard. I fear the gayety of this place is too much for her. Indeed, I am sorry we ever left Maryland.”

I was greatly disturbed, and thought involuntarily of Comyn’s words. Could it be that Mr. Manners was forcing her to marry Chartersea?

“And has Mr. Lloyd said nothing of my uncle?” I asked after a while.

“I will not deny that ugly rumours are afloat,” she answered. “Grafton, as you know, is not liked in Annapolis, especially by the Patriot party. But there is not the slightest ground for suspicion. The messenger—”

“Yes?”

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“Your uncle denies all knowledge of. He was taken to be the tool of the captain of the slaver, and he disappeared so completely that it was supposed he had escaped to the ship. The story goes that you were seized for a ransom, and killed in the struggle. Your black ran all the way to town, crying the news to those he met on the Circle and in West Street, but by the mercy of God he was stopped by Mr. Swain and some others before he had reached your grandfather. In ten minutes a score of men were galloping out of the Town Gate, Mr. Lloyd and Mr. Singleton ahead. They found your horse dead, and the road through the woods all trampled down, and they spurred after the tracks down to the water’s edge. Singleton recalled a slaver, the crew of which had been brawling at the Ship tavern a few nights before. But the storm was so thick they could not see the ship’s length out into the river. They started two fast sloops from the town wharves in chase, and your uncle has been moving heaven and earth to obtain some clew of you. He has put notices in the newspapers of Charlestown, Philadelphia, New York, and even Boston, and offered a thousand pounds reward.”

CHAPTER XXIX

I MEET A VERY GREAT YOUNG MAN

The French clock had struck four, and I was beginning to fear that, despite my note, the captain’s pride forbade his coming to Mr. Manners’s house, when in he walked, as tho’ ’twere no novelty to have his name announced. And so straight and handsome was he, his dark eye flashing with the self-confidence born in the man, that the look of uneasiness I had detected upon Mrs. Manners’s face quickly changed to one of surprise and pleasure. Of course the good lady had anticipated a sea-captain of a far different mould. He kissed her hand with a respectful grace, and then her daughter’s, for Dorothy had come back to us, calmer. And I was filled with joy over his fine appearance. Even Dorothy was struck by the change the clothes had made in him. Mrs. Manners thanked him very tactfully for restoring me to them, as she was pleased to put it, to which John Paul modestly replied that he had done no more than another would under the same circumstances. And he soon had them both charmed by his address.

“Why, Richard,” said Dorothy’s mother aside to me, “surely this cannot be your sea-captain!”

I nodded merrily. But John Paul’s greatest triumph was yet to come. For presently Mr. Marmaduke arrived from White’s, and when he had greeted me with effusion he levelled his glass at the corner of the room.

“Ahem!” he exclaimed. “Pray, my dear, whom have you invited to-day?” And without awaiting her reply, as was frequently his habit, he turned to me and said: “I had hoped

we were to have the pleasure of Captain Paul's company, Richard. For I must have the chance before you go of clasping the hand of your benefactor."

"You shall have the chance, at least, sir," I replied, a fiery exultation in my breast. "Mr. Manners, this is my friend, Captain Paul."

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The captain stood up and bowed gravely at the little gentleman's blankly amazed countenance.

"Ahem," said he; "dear me, is it possible!" and advanced a step, but the captain remained immovable. Mr. Marmaduke fumbled for his snuff-box, failed to find it, halted, and began again, for he never was known to lack words for long: "Captain, as one of the oldest friends of Mr. Lionel Carvel, I claim the right to thank you in his name for your gallant conduct. I hear that you are soon to see him, and to receive his obligations from him in person. You will not find him lacking, sir, I'll warrant."

Such was Mr. Marmaduke's feline ingenuity! I had a retort ready, and I saw that Mrs. Manners, long tried in such occasions, was about to pour oil on the waters. But it was Dorothy who exclaimed:

"What captain! are you, too, going to Maryland?"

John Paul reddened.

"Ay, that he is, Dolly," I cut in hurriedly. "Did you imagine I would let him escape so easily? Henceforth as he has said, he is to be an American."

She flashed at me such a look as might have had a dozen different meanings, and in a trice it was gone again under her dark lashes.

Dinner was got through I know not how. Mr. Manners led the talk, and spoke more than was needful concerning our approaching voyage. He was at great pains to recommend the Virginia packet, which had made the fastest passage from the Capes; and she sailed, as was no doubt most convenient, the Saturday following. I should find her a comfortable vessel, and he would oblige me with a letter to Captain Alsop. Did Captain Paul know him? But the captain was describing West Indian life to Mrs. Manners. Dorothy had little to say; and as for me, I was in no very pleasant humour.

I gave a deaf ear to Mr. Marmaduke's sallies, to speculate on the nature of the disgrace which Chartersea was said to hold over his head. And twenty times, as I looked upon Dolly's beauty, I ground my teeth at the notion of returning home. I have ever been slow of suspicion, but suddenly it struck me sharply that Mr. Manners's tactics must have a deeper significance than I had thought. Why was it that he feared my presence in London?

As we made our way back to the drawing-room, I was hoping for a talk with Dolly (alas! I should not have many more), when I heard a voice which sounded strangely familiar.

"You know, Comyn," it was saying, "you know I should be at the Princess's were I not so completely worn out. I was up near all of last night with Rosette."

Mr. Marmaduke, entering before us, cried:—

“The dear creature! I trust you have had medical attendance, Mr. Walpole.”

“Egad!” quoth Horry (for it was he), “I sent Favre to Hampstead to fetch Dr. Pratt, where he was attending some mercer’s wife. It seems that Rosette had got into the street and eaten something horrible out of the kennel. I discharged the footman, of course.”

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“A plague on your dog, Horry,” said my Lord, yawning, and was about to add something worse, when he caught sight of Dorothy.

Mr. Walpole bowed over her hand.

“And have you forgotten so soon your Windsor acquaintances, Mr. Walpole?” she asked, laughing.

“Bless me,” said Horry, looking very hard at me, “so it is, so it is. Your hand, Mr. Carvel. You have only to remain in London, sir, to discover that your reputation is ready-made. I contributed my mite. For you must know that I am a sort of circulating library of odd news which those devils, the printers, contrive to get sooner or later—Heaven knows how! And Miss Manners herself has completed your fame. Yes, the story of your gallant rescue is in all the clubs to-day. Egad, sir, you come down heads up, like a loaded coin. You will soon be a factor in Change Alley.” And glancing slyly at the blushing Dolly, he continued:

“I have been many things, Miss Manners, but never before an instrument of Providence. And so you discovered your rough diamond yesterday, and have polished him in a day. O that Dr. Franklin had profited as well by our London tailors! The rogue never told me, when he was ordering me about in his swan-skin, that he had a friend in Arlington Street, and a reigning beauty. But I like him the better for it.”

“And I the worse,” said Dolly.

“I perceive that he still retains his body-guard,” said Mr. Walpole; “Captain—”

“Paul,” said Dolly, seeing that we would not help him out.

“Ah, yes. These young princes from the New World must have their suites. You must bring them both some day to my little castle at Strawberry Hill.”

“Unfortunately, Mr. Walpole, Mr. Carvel finds that he must return to America,” Mr. Marmaduke interjected. He had been waiting to get in this word.

Comyn nudged me. And I took the opportunity, in the awkward silence that followed, to thank Mr. Walpole for sending his coach after us.

“And pray where did you get your learning?” he demanded abruptly of the captain, in his most patronizing way. “Your talents are wasted at sea, sir. You should try your fortune in London, where you shall be under my protection, sir. They shall not accuse me again of stifling young genius. Stay,” he cried, warming with generous enthusiasm, “stay, I have an opening. ’Twas but yesterday Lady Cretherton told me that she stood in need of a tutor for her youngest son, and you shall have the position.”

“Pardon me, sir, but I shall not have the position,” said John Paul, coolly. And Horry might have heeded the danger signal. I had seen it more than once on board the brigantine John, and knew what was coming.

“Faith, and why not, sir? If I recommend you, why not, sir?”

“Because I shall not take it,” he said. “I have my profession, Mr. Walpole, and it is an honourable one. And I would not exchange it, sir, were it in your power to make me a Gibbon or a Hume, or tutor to his Royal Highness, which it is not.”

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Thus, for the second time, the weapon of the renowned master of Strawberry was knocked from his hand at a single stroke of his strange adversary. I should like to describe John Paul as he made that speech, —for 'twas not so much the speech as the atmosphere of it. Those who heard and saw were stirred with wonder, for Destiny lay bare that instant, just as the powers above are sometimes revealed at a single lightning-bolt. Mr. Walpole made a reply that strove hard to be indifferent; Mr. Marmaduke stuttered, for he was frightened, as little souls are apt to be at such times. But my Lord Comyn, forever natural, forever generous, cried out heartily:—

"Egad, captain, there you are a true sailor! Which would you rather have been, I say, William Shakespeare or Sir Francis?"

"Which would you rather be, Richard," said Dolly to me, under her breath, "Horace Walpole or Captain John Paul? I begin to like your captain better."

Willy nilly, Mr. Walpole was forever doing me a service. Now, in order to ignore the captain more completely, he sat him down to engage Mr. and Mrs. Manners. Comyn was soon hot in an argument with John Paul concerning the seagoing qualities of a certain frigate, every rope and spar of which they seemed to know. And so I stole a few moments with Dorothy.

"You are going to take the captain to Maryland, Richard?" she asked, playing with her fan.

"I intend to get him the Belle of the Tye. 'Tis the least I can do. For I am at my wits' end how to reward him, Dolly. And when are you coming back?" I whispered earnestly, seeing her silent.

"I would that I knew, Richard," she replied, with a certain sadness that went to my heart, as tho' the choice lay beyond her. Then she changed. "Richard, there was more in Mr. Lloyd's letter than mamma told you of. There was ill news of one of your friends."

"News!"

She looked at me fixedly, and then continued, her voice so low that I was forced to bend over:

"Yes. You were not told that Patty Swain fell in a faint when she heard of your disappearance. You were not told that the girl was ill for a week afterwards. Ah, Richard, I fear you are a sad flirt. Nay, you may benefit by the doubt,—perchance you are going home to be married."

You may be sure that this intelligence, from Dorothy's lips, only increased my trouble and perplexity.

“You say that Patty has been ill?”

“Very ill,” says she, with her lips tight closed.

“Indeed, I grieve to hear of it,” I replied; “but I cannot think that my accident had anything to do with the matter.”

“Young ladies do not send their fathers to coffee-houses to prevent duels unless their feelings are engaged,” she flung back.

“You have heard the story of that affair, Dorothy. At least enough of it to do me justice.”

She was plainly agitated.

“Has Lord Comyn—”

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“Lord Comyn has told you the truth,” I said; “so much I know.”

Alas for the exits and entrances of life! Here comes the footman.

“Mr. Fox,” said he, rolling the name, for it was a great one.

Confound Mr. Fox! He might have waited five short minutes.

It was, in truth, none other than that precocious marvel of England who but a year before had taken the breath from the House of Commons, and had sent his fame flying over the Channel and across the wide Atlantic; the talk of London, who set the fashions, cringed not before white hairs, or royalty, or customs, or institutions, and was now, at one and twenty, Junior Lord of the Admiralty—Charles James Fox. His face was dark, forbidding, even harsh—until he smiled. His eyebrows were heavy and shaggy, and his features of a rounded, almost Jewish mould. He put me in mind of the Stuarts, and I was soon to learn that he was descended from them.

As he entered the room I recall remarking that he was possessed of the supremest confidence of any man I had ever met. Mrs. Manners he greeted in one way, Mr. Marmaduke in another, and Mr. Walpole in still another. To Comyn it was “Hello, Jack,” as he walked by him. Each, as it were, had been tagged with a particular value.

Chagrined as I was at the interruption, I was struck with admiration. For the smallest actions of these rare men of master passions so compel us. He came to Dorothy, whom he seemed not to have perceived at first, and there passed between them such a look of complete understanding that I suddenly remembered Comyn’s speech of the night before, “Now it is Charles Fox.” Here, indeed, was the man who might have won her. And yet I did not hate him. Nay, I loved him from the first time he addressed me. It was Dorothy who introduced us.

“I think I have heard of you, Mr. Carvel,” he said, making a barely perceptible wink at Comyn.

“And I think I have heard of you, Mr. Fox,” I replied.

“The deuce you have, Mr. Carvel!” said he, and laughed. And Comyn laughed, and Dorothy laughed, and I laughed. We were friends from that moment.

“Richard has appeared amongst us like a comet,” put in the ubiquitous Mr. Manners, “and, I fear, intends to disappear in like manner.”

“And where is the tail of this comet?” demanded Fox, instantly; “for I understood there was a tail.”

John Paul was brought up, and the Junior Lord of the Admiralty looked him over from head to toe. And what, my dears, do you think he said to him?

“Have you ever acted, Captain Paul?”

The captain started back in surprise.

“Acted!” he exclaimed; “really, sir, I do not know. I have never been upon the boards.”

Mr. Fox vowed that he could act: that he was sure of it, from the captain’s appearance.

“And I, too, am sure of it, Mr. Fox,” cried Dorothy; clapping her hands. “Persuade him to stay awhile in London, that you may have him at your next theatricals at Holland House. Why, he knows Shakespeare and Pope and—and Chaucer by heart, and Ovid and Horace,—is it not so, Mr. Walpole?”

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“Is not what so, my dear young lady?” asked Mr. Walpole, pretending not to have heard.

“There!” exclaimed Dolly, pouting, when the laughter had subsided; “you make believe to care something about me, and yet will not listen to what I say.”

I had seen at her feet our own Maryland gallants, the longest of whose reputations stretched barely from the James to the Schuylkill; but here in London men were hanging on her words whose names were familiarly spoken in Paris, and Rome, and Geneva. Not a topic was broached by Mr. Walpole or Mr. Fox, from the remonstrance of the Archbishop against masquerades and the coming marriage of my Lord Albemarle to the rights and wrongs of Mr. Wilkes, but my lady had her say. Mrs. Manners seemed more than content that she should play the hostess, which she did to perfection. She contrived to throw poisoned darts at the owner of Strawberry that started little Mr. Marmaduke to fidgeting in his seat, and he came to the rescue with all the town-talk at his command. He knew little else. Could Mr. Walpole tell him of this club of both sexes just started at Almack’s? Mr. Walpole could tell a deal, tho’ he took the pains first to explain that he was becoming too old for such frivolous and fashionable society. He could not, for the life of him, say why he was included. But, in spite of Mr. Walpole, John Paul was led out in the paces that best suited him, and finally, to the undisguised delight of Mr. Fox, managed to trip Horry upon an obscure point in Athenian literature. And this broke up the company.

As we took our leave Dorothy and Mr. Fox were talking together with lowered voices.

“I shall see you before I go,” I said to her.

She laughed, and glanced at Mr. Fox.

“You are not going, Richard Carvel,” said she.

“That you are not, Richard Carvel,” said Mr. Fox.

I smiled, rather lamely, I fear, and said good night.

CHAPTER XXX

A CONSPIRACY

“Banks, where is the captain?” I asked, as I entered the parlour the next morning.

“Gone, sir, since seven o’clock,” was the reply. “Gone!” I exclaimed; “gone where?”

“Faith, I did not ask his honour, sir.”

I thought it strange, but reflected that John Paul was given to whims. Having so little time before him, he had probably gone to see the sights he had missed yesterday: the Pantheon, which was building, an account of which had appeared in all the colonial papers; or the new Blackfriars Bridge; or the Tower; or perhaps to see his Majesty ride out. The wonders of London might go hang, for all I cared. Who would gaze at the King when he might look upon Dorothy! I sighed. I bade Banks dress me in the new suit Davenport had brought that morning, and then sent him off to seek the shipping agent of the Virginia packet to get us a cabin. I would go to Arlington Street as soon as propriety admitted.

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But I had scarce finished my chocolate and begun to smoke in a pleasant revery, when I was startled by the arrival of two gentlemen. One was Comyn, and the other none less than Mr. Charles Fox.

“Now where the devil has your captain flown to?” said my Lord, tossing his whip on the table.

“I believe he must be sight-seeing,” I said. “I dare swear he has taken a hackney coach to the Tower.”

“To see the liberation of the idol of the people, I’ll lay ten guineas. But they say the great Mr. Wilkes is to come out quietly, and wishes no demonstration,” said Mr. Fox. “I believe the beggar has some sense, if the—Greek—would only let him have his way. So your captain is a Wilkite, Mr. Carvel?” he demanded.

“I fear you run very fast to conclusions, Mr. Fox,” I answered, laughing, tho’ I thought his guess was not far from wrong.

“I’ll lay you the ten guineas he has been to the Tower,” said Mr. Fox, promptly.

“Done, sir,” said I.

“Hark ye, Richard,” said Comyn, stretching himself in an arm-chair; “we are come to take the wind out of your sails, and leave you without an excuse for going home. And we want your captain, alive or dead. Charles, here, is to give him a commission in his Majesty’s Navy.”

Then I knew why Dorothy had laughed when I had spoken of seeing her again. Comyn—bless him!—had told her of his little scheme.

“Egad, Charles!” cried his Lordship, “to look at his glum face, one might think we were a couple of Jews who had cornered him.”

Alas for the perversity of the heart! Instead of leaping for joy, as no doubt they had both confidently expected, I was both troubled and perplexed by this unlooked-for news. Oak, when bent, is even harder to bend back again. And so it has ever been with me. I had determined, after a bitter struggle, to go to Maryland, and had now become used to that prospect. I was anxious to see my grandfather, and to confront Grafton Carvel with his villany. And there was John Paul. What would he think?

“What ails you, Richard?” Comyn demanded somewhat testily.

“Nothing, Jack,” I replied. “I thank you from my heart, and you, Mr. Fox. I know that commissions are not to be had for the asking, and I rejoice with the captain over his good fortune. But, gentlemen,” I said soberly, “I had most selfishly hoped that I might be

able to do a service to John Paul in return for his charity to me. You offer him something nearer his deserts, something beyond my power to give him."

Fox's eyes kindled.

"You speak like a man, Mr. Carvel," said he. "But you are too modest. Damn it, sir, don't you see that it is you, and no one else, who has procured this commission? Had I not been taken with you, sir, I should scarce have promised it to your friend Comyn, through whose interest you obtain it for your protege."

I remembered what Mr. Fox's enemies said of him, and smiled at the plausible twist he had given the facts.

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“No,” I said; “no, Mr. Fox; never that. The captain must not think that I wish to be rid of him. I will not stand in the way, though if it is to be offered him, he must comprehend that I had naught to do with the matter. But, sir,” I continued curiously, “what do you know of John Paul’s abilities as an officer?”

Mr. Fox and Comyn laughed so immoderately as to bring the blood to my face.

“Damme!” cried the Junior Lord, “but you Americans have odd consciences! Do you suppose Rigby was appointed Paymaster of the Forces because of his fitness? Why was North himself made Prime Minister? For his abilities?” And he broke down again. “Ask Jack, here, how he got into the service, and how much seamanship he knows.”

“Faith,” answered Jack, unblushingly, “Admiral Lord Comyn, my father, wished me to serve awhile. And so I have taken two cruises, delivered some score of commands, and scarce know a supple jack from a can of flip. Cursed if I see the fun of it in these piping times o’ peace, so I have given it up, Richard. For Charles says this Falkland business with Spain will blow out of the touch-hole.”

I could see little to laugh over. For the very rottenness of the service was due to the miserable and servile Ministry and Parliament of his Majesty, by means of which instruments he was forcing the colonies to the wall. Verily, that was a time when the greatness of England hung in the balance! How little I suspected that the young man then seated beside me, who had cast so unthinkingly his mighty powers on the side of corruption, was to be one of the chief instruments of her salvation! We were to fight George the Third across the seas. He was to wage no less courageous a battle at home, in the King’s own capital. And the cause? Yes, the cause was to be the same as that of the Mr. Wilkes he reviled, who obtained his liberty that day.

At length John Paul came in, calling my name. He broke off abruptly at sight of the visitors.

“Now we shall decide,” said Mr. Fox. “Captain, I have bet Mr. Carvel ten guineas you have been to the Tower to see Squinting Jack (John Wilkes) get his liberty at last.”

The captain looked astonished.

“Anan, then, you have lost, Richard,” said he. “For I have been just there.”

“And helped, no doubt, to carry off the champion on your shoulders,” said Mr. Fox, sarcastically, as I paid the debt.

“Mr. Wilkes knows full well the value of moderation, sir,” replied the captain, in the same tone.

“Well, damn the odds!” exclaimed the Junior Lord, laughing. “You may have the magic number tattooed all over your back, for all I care. You shall have the commission.”

“The commission?”

“Yes,” said Fox, carelessly; “I intend making you a lieutenant, sir, in the Royal Navy.”

The moment the words were out I was a-tremble as to how he would take the offer. For he had a certain puzzling pride, which flew hither and thither. But there was surely no comparison between the situations of the master of the Belle of the Wye and an officer in the Royal Navy. There, his talents would make him an admiral, and doubtless give him the social position he secretly coveted. He confounded us all by his answer.

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“I thank you, Mr. Fox. But I cannot accept your kindness.”

“Slife!” said Fox, “you refuse? And you know what you are doing?”

“I know usually, sir.”

Comyn swore. My exclamation had something of relief in it.

“Captain,” I said, “I felt that I could not stand in the way of this. It has been my hope that you will come with me, and I have sent this morning after a cabin on the Virginia. You must know that Mr. Fox’s offer is his own, and Lord Comyn’s.”

“I know it well, Richard. I have not lived these three months with you for nothing.” His voice seemed to fail him. He drew near me and took my hand. “But did you think I would require of you the sacrifice of leaving London now?”

“It is my pleasure as well as my duty, captain.”

“No,” he said, “I am not like that. Yesterday I went to the city to see a shipowner whose acquaintance I made when he was a master in the West India trade. He has had some reason to know that I can handle a ship. Never mind what. And he has given me the bark ‘Betsy’, whose former master is lately dead of the small-pox. Richard, I sail to-morrow.”

In Dorothy’s coach to Whitehall Stairs, by the grim old palace out of whose window Charles the Martyr had walked to his death. For Dorothy had vowed it was her pleasure to see John Paul off, and who could stand in her way? Surely not Mr. Marmaduke! and Mrs. Manners laughingly acquiesced. Our spirits were such that we might have been some honest mercer’s apprentice and his sweetheart away for an outing.

“If we should take a wherry, Richard,” said Dolly, “who would know of it? I have longed to be in a wherry ever since I came to London.”

The river was smiling as she tripped gayly down to the water, and the red-coated watermen were smiling, too, and nudging one another. But little cared we! Dolly in holiday humour stopped for naught. “Boat, your honour! Boat, boat! To Rotherhithe—-Redriff? Two and six apiece, sir.” For that intricate puzzle called human nature was solved out of hand by the Thames watermen. Here was a young gentleman who never heard of the Lord Mayor’s scale of charges. And what was a shilling to such as he! Intricate puzzle, indeed! Any booby might have read upon the young man’s face that secret which is written for all,—high and low, rich and poor alike.

My new lace handkerchief was down upon the seat, lest Dolly soil her bright pink lutestring. She should have worn nothing else but the hue of roses. How the bargemen stared, and the passengers craned their necks, and the longshoremen stopped their

work as we shot past them! On her account a barrister on the Temple Stairs was near to letting fall his bag in the water. A lady in a wherry! Where were the whims of the quality to lead them next? Past the tall water-tower and York Stairs, the idlers under the straight row of trees leaning over the high river wall; past Adelphi Terrace, where the great Garrick

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lived; past the white columns of Somerset House, with its courts and fountains and alleys and architecture of all ages, and its river gate where many a gilded royal barge had lain, and many a fine ambassador had arrived in state over the great highway of England; past the ancient trees in the Temple Gardens. And then under the new Blackfriars Bridge to Southwark, dingy with its docks and breweries and huddled houses, but forever famous,—the Southwark of Shakespeare and Jonson and Beaumont and Fletcher. And the shelf upon which they stood in the library at Carvel Hall was before my eyes.

“Yes,” said Dolly; “and I recall your mother’s name written in faded ink upon the fly-leaves.”

Ah, London Town, by what subtleties are you tied to the hearts of those born across the sea? That is one of the mysteries of race.

Under the pointed arches of old London Bridge, with its hooded shelters for the weary, to where the massive Tower had frowned for ages upon the foolish river. And then the forest of ships, and the officious throng of little wherries and lighters that pressed around them, seeming to say, “You clumsy giants, how helpless would you be without us!” Soon our own wherry was dodging among them, ships brought hither by the four winds of the seas; many discharging in the stream, some in the docks then beginning to be built, and hugging the huge warehouses. Hides from frozen Russia were piled high beside barrels of sugar and rum from the moist island cane-fields of the Indies, and pipes of wine from the sunny hillsides of France, and big boxes of tea bearing the hall-mark of the mysterious East. Dolly gazed in wonder. And I was commanded to show her a schooner like the Black Moll, and a brigantine like the John.

“And Captain Paul told me you climbed the masts, Richard, and worked like a common seaman. Tell me,” says she, pointing at the royal yard of a tall East Indiaman, “did you go as high as that when it was rough?”

And, hugely to the boatman’s delight, the minx must needs put her fingers on the hard welts on my hands, and vow she would be a sailor and she were a man. But at length we came to a trim-built bark lying off Redriff Stairs, with the words “Betsy, of London,” painted across her stern. In no time at all, Captain Paul was down the gangway ladder and at the water-side, too hand Dorothy out.

“This honour overwhelms me, Miss Manners,” he said; “but I know whom to thank for it.” And he glanced slyly at me.

Dorothy stepped aboard with the air of Queen Elizabeth come to inspect Lord Howard’s flagship.

“Then you will thank me,” said she. “Why, I could eat my dinner off your deck, captain! Are all merchantmen so clean?”

John Paul smiled.

“Not all, Miss Manners,” he said.

“And you are still sailing at the ebb?” I asked.

“In an hour, Richard, if the wind holds good.”

With what pride he showed us over his ship, the sailors gaping at the fine young lady. It had taken him just a day to institute his navy discipline. And Dolly went about exclaiming, and asking an hundred questions, and merrily catechising me upon the run of the ropes. All was order and readiness for dropping down the stream when he led us into his cabin, where he had a bottle of wine and some refreshments laid out against my coming.

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“Had I presumed to anticipate your visit, Miss Manners, I should have had something more suitable for a lady,” he said. “What, you will not eat, either, Richard?”

I could not, so downcast had I become at the thought of parting. I had sat up half the night before with him in restless argument and indecision, and even when he had left for Rotherhithe, early that morning, my mind had not been made. My conscience had insisted that I should sail with John Paul; that I might never see my deaf grandfather on earth again. I had gone to Arlington Street that morning resolved to say farewell to Dorothy. I will not recount the history of that defeat, my dears. Nay, to this day I know not how she accomplished the matter. Not once had she asked me to remain, or referred to my going. Nor had I spoken of it, weakling that I was. She had come down in the pink lutestring, smiling but pale; and traces of tears in her eyes, I thought. From that moment I knew that I was defeated. It was she herself who had proposed going with me to see the Betsy sail.

“I will drink some Madeira to wish you Godspeed, captain,” I said.

“What is the matter with you, Richard?” Dolly cried; “you are as sour as my Lord Sandwich after a bad Newmarket. Why, captain,” said she, “I really believe he wants to go, too. The swain pines for his provincial beauty.”

Poor John Paul! He had not yet learned that good society is seldom literal.

“Upon my soul, Miss Manners, there you do him wrong,” he retorted, with ludicrous heat; “you, above all, should know for whom he pines.”

“He has misled you by praising me. This Richard, despite his frank exterior, is most secretive.”

“There you have hit him, Miss Manners,” he declared; “there you have hit him! We were together night and day, on the sea and on the road, and, while I poured out my life to him, the rogue never once let fall a hint of the divine Miss Dorothy. ’Twas not till I got to London that I knew of her existence, and then only by a chance. You astonish me. You speak of a young lady in Maryland?”

Dorothy swept aside my protest.

“Captain,” says she, gravely, “I leave you to judge. What is your inference, when he fights a duel about a Miss with my Lord Comyn?”

“A duel!” cried the captain, astounded.

“Miss Manners persists in her view of the affair, despite my word to the contrary,” I put in rather coldly.

“But a duel!” cried the captain again; “and with Lord Comyn! Miss Manners, I fondly thought I had discovered a constant man, but you make me fear he has had as many flames as I. And yet, Richard,” he added meaningly, “I should think shame on my conduct and I had had such a subject for constancy as you.”

Dorothy’s armour was pierced, and my ill-humour broken down, by this characteristic speech. We both laughed, greatly to his discomfiture.

“You had best go home with him, Richard,” said Dolly. “I can find my way back to Arlington Street alone.”

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“Nay; gallantry forbids his going with me now,” answered John Paul; “and I have my sailing orders. But had I known of this, I should never have wasted my breath in persuading him to remain.”

“And did he stand in need of much persuasion, captain?” asked Dolly, archly.

Time was pressing, and the owner came aboard, puffing,—a round-faced, vociferous, jolly merchant, who had no sooner got his breath than he lost it again upon catching sight of Dolly.

While the captain was giving the mate his final orders, Mr. Orchardson, for such was his name, regaled us with a part of his life’s history. He had been a master himself, and mangled and clipped King George’s English as only a true master might.

“I like your own captain better than ever, Richard,” whispered Dolly, while Mr. Orchardson relieved himself of his quid over the other side; “how commanding he is! Were I to take passage in the Betsy, I know I should be in love with him long before we got to Norfolk.”

I took it upon myself to tell Mr. Orchardson, briefly and clearly as I could, the lamentable story of John Paul’s last cruise. For I feared it might sooner or later reach his ears from prejudiced mouths. And I ended by relating how the captain had refused a commission in the navy because he had promised to take the Betsy. This appeared vastly to impress him, and he forgot Dorothy’s presence.

“Passion o’ my ’eart, Mr. Carvel,” cried he, excitedly,

“John Paul’s too big a man, an’ too good a seaman, to go into the navy without hinflooence. If flag horfocers I roots of is booted haside to rankle like a lump o’ salt butter in a gallipot, ’ow will a poor Scotch lieutenant win hadvancement an’ he be not o’ the King’s friends? ’Wilkes an’ Liberty,’ say I; ‘forever,’ say I. An’ w’en I see ‘im goin’ to the Tower to be’old the Champion, ‘Captain Paul,’ says I, ’yere a man arfter my hown ‘eart.’ My heye, sir, didn’t I see ’im, w’n a mere lad, take the John into Kingston ‘arbour in the face o’ the worst gale I hever seed blowed in the Caribbees? An’ I says, ‘Bill Horchardson, an’ ye Never ‘ave ships o’ yere own, w’ich I ’ope will be, y’ell know were to look for a marster.’ An’ I tells ’im that same, Mr. Carvel. I means no disrespect to the dead, sir, but an’ John Paul ’ad discharged the Betsy, I’d not ‘a’ been out twenty barrels or more this day by Thames mudlarks an’ scuffle hunters. ’Eave me flat, if ‘e’ll be two blocks wi’ liquor an’ dischargin’ cargo. An’ ye may rest heasy, Mr. Carvel, I’ll not do wrong by ’im, neither.”

He told me that if I would honour him in Maid Lane, Southwark, I should have as many pounds as I liked of the best tobacco ever cured in Cuba. And so he left me to see that the mate had signed all his lighter bills, shouting to the captain not to forget his cockets

at Gravesend. Dolly and I stood silent while the men hove short, singing a jolly song to the step. With a friendly wave the round figure of Mr. Orchardson disappeared over the side, and I knew that the time had come to say farewell. I fumbled in my waistcoat for the repeater I had bought that morning over against Temple Bar, in Fleet Street, and I thrust it into John Paul's hand as he came up.

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“Take this in remembrance of what you have suffered so unselfishly for my sake, Captain Paul,” I said, my voice breaking. “And whatever befalls you, do not forget that Carvel Hall is your home as well as mine.”

He seemed as greatly affected as was I. Tears forced themselves to his eyes as he held the watch, which he opened absently to read the simple inscription I had put there.

“Oh, Dickie lad!” he cried, “I’ll be missing ye sair three hours hence, and thinking of ye for months to come in the night watches. But something tells me I’ll see ye again.”

And he took me in his arms, embracing me with such fervour that there was no doubting the sincerity of his feelings.

“Miss Dorothy,” said he, when he was calmer, “I give ye Richard for a leal and a true heart. Few men are born with the gift of keeping the affections warm despite absence, and years, and interest. But have no fear of Richard Carvel.”

Dorothy stood a little apart, watching us, her eyes that faraway blue of the deepening skies at twilight.

“Indeed, I have no fear of him, captain,” she said gently. Then, with a quick movement, impulsive and womanly, she unpinned a little gold brooch at her throat, and gave it to him, saying: “In token of my gratitude for bringing him back to us.”

John Paul raised it to his lips.

“I shall treasure it, Miss Manners, as a memento of the greatest joy of my life. And that has been,” gracefully taking her hand and mine, “the bringing you two together again.”

Dorothy grew scarlet as she curtseyed. As for me, I could speak never a word. He stepped over the side to hand her into the wherry, and embraced me once again. And as we rowed away he waved his hat in a last good-by from the taffrail. Then the Betsy floated down the Thames.

CHAPTER XXXI

“*Upstairs into the world*”

It will be difficult, my dears, without bulging this history out of all proportion, to give you a just notion of the society into which I fell after John Paul left London. It was, above all, a gaming society. From that prying and all-powerful God of Chance none, great or small, escaped. Guineas were staked and won upon frugal King George and his beef and barley-water; Charles Fox and his debts; the intrigues of Choiseul and the Du Barry and the sensational marriage of the Due d’Orleans with Madame de Montesson (for

your macaroni knew his Paris as well as his London); Lord March and his opera singer; and even the doings of Betty, the apple-woman of St. James's Street, and the beautiful barmaid of Nando's in whom my Lord Thurlow was said to be interested. All these, and much more not to be repeated, were duly set down in the betting-books at White's and Brooks's.

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Then the luxury of the life was something to startle a provincial, even tho' he came, as did I, from one of the two most luxurious colonies of the thirteen. Annapolis might be said to be London on a small scale, —but on a very small scale. The historian of the future need look no farther than our houses (if any remain), to be satisfied that we had more than the necessities of existence. The Maryland aristocrat with his town place and his country place was indeed a parallel of the patrician at home. He wore his English clothes, drove and rode his English horses, and his coaches were built in Long Acre. His heavy silver service came from Fleet Street, and his claret and Champagne and Lisbon and Madeira were the best that could be bought or smuggled. His sons were often educated at home, at Eton or Westminster and Oxford or Cambridge. So would I have been if circumstances had permitted. So was James Fotheringay, the eldest of the family, and later the Dulany boys, and half a dozen others I might mention. And then our ladies! 'Tis but necessary to cite my Aunt Caroline as an extreme dame of fashion, who had her French hairdresser, Piton.

As was my aunt to the Duchess of Kingston, so was Annapolis to London. To depict the life of Mayfair and of St. James's Street during a season about the year of grace 1770 demands a mightier pen than wields the writer of these simple memoirs.

And who was responsible for all this luxury and laxity? Who but the great Mr. Pitt, then the Earl of Chatham, whose wise policy had made Britain the ruler of the world, and rich beyond compare. From all corners of the earth her wealth poured in upon her. Nabob and Caribbee came from East and West to spend their money in the capital. And fortunes near as great were acquired by the City merchants themselves. One by one these were admitted within that charmed circle, whose motto for ages had been "No Trade," to leaven it with their gold. And to keep the pace,—nay, to set it, the nobility and landed gentry were sore pressed. As far back as good Queen Anne, and farther, their ancestors had gamed and tippled away the acres; and now that John and William, whose forebears had been good tenants for centuries, were setting their faces to Liverpool and Birmingham and Leeds, their cottages were empty. So Lord and Squire went to London to recuperate, and to get their share of the game running. St. James's Street and St. Stephen's became their preserves. My Lord wormed himself into a berth in the Treasury, robbed the country systematically for a dozen of years, and sold the places and reversions under him to the highest bidder. Boroughs were to be had somewhat dearer than a pair of colours. And my Lord spent his spare time—he had plenty of it—in fleecing the pigeons at White's and Almack's. Here there was no honour, even amongst thieves. And young gentlemen were hurried through Eton and Oxford, where they learned to drink and swear and to call a main as well as to play tennis and billiards

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and to write Latin, and were thrust into Brooks's before they knew the difference in value between a farthing and a banknote: at nineteen they were hardened rake, or accomplished men of the world, or both. Dissipated noblemen of middle age like March and Sandwich, wits and beaus and fine gentlemen like Selwyn and Chesterfield and Walpole, were familiarly called by their first names by youngsters like Fox and Carlisle and Comyn. Difference of age was no difference. Young Lord Carlisle was the intimate of Mr. Selwyn, born thirty years before him.

And whilst I am speaking of intimacies, that short one which sprang up between me and the renowned Charles Fox has always seemed the most unaccountable: not on my part, for I fell a victim to him at once. Pen and paper, brush and canvas, are wholly inadequate to describe the charm of the man. When he desired to please, his conversation and the expression of his face must have moved a temperament of stone itself. None ever had more devoted friends or more ardent admirers. They saw his faults, which he laid bare before them, but they settled his debts again and again, vast sums which he lost at Newmarket and at Brooks's. And not many years after the time of which I now write Lord Carlisle was paying fifteen hundred a year on the sum he had loaned him, cheerfully denying himself the pleasures of London as a consequence.

It was Mr. Fox who discovered for me my lodgings in Dover Street, vowing that I could not be so out of fashion as to live at an inn. The brief history of these rooms, as given by him, was this: "A young cub had owned them, whose mamma had come up from Berkshire on Thursday, beat him soundly on Friday, paid his debts on Saturday, and had taken him back on Sunday to hunt with Sir Henry the rest of his life." Dorothy came one day with her mother and swept through my apartments, commanded all the furniture to be moved about, ordered me to get pictures for the walls, and by one fell decree abolished all the ornaments before the landlady, used as she was to the ways of quality, had time to gasp.

"Why, Richard," says my lady, "you will be wanting no end of pretty things to take back to Maryland when you go. You shall come with me to-morrow to Mr. Josiah Wedgwood's, to choose some of them."

"Dorothy!" says her mother, reprovingly.

"And he must have the Chippendale table I saw yesterday at the exhibition, and chairs to match. And every bachelor should have a punch bowl—Josiah has such a beauty!"

But I am running far ahead. Among the notes with which my table was laden, Banks had found a scrawl. This I made out with difficulty to convey that Mr. Fox was not attending Parliament that day. If Mr. Carvel would do him the honour of calling at his lodging, over Mackie's Italian Warehouse in Piccadilly, at four o'clock, he would take

great pleasure in introducing him at Brooks's Club. In those days 'twas far better for a young gentleman

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of any pretensions to remain at home than go to London and be denied that inner sanctuary,—the younger club at Almack's. Many the rich brewer's son has embittered his life because it was not given him to see more than the front of the house from the far side of Pall Mall. But to be taken there by Charles Fox was an honour falling to few. I made sure that Dolly was at the bottom of it.

Promptly at four I climbed the stairs and knocked at Mr. Fox's door. The Swiss who opened it shook his head dubiously when I asked for his master, and said he had not been at home that day.

"But I had an appointment to meet him," I said, thinking it very strange.

The man's expression changed.

"An appointment, sir! Ah, sir, then you are to step in here." And to my vast astonishment he admitted me into a small room at one side of the entrance. It was bare as poverty, and furnished with benches, and nothing more. On one of these was seated a person with an unmistakable nose and an odour of St. Giles's, who sprang to his feet and then sat down again dejectedly. I also sat down, wondering what it could mean, and debating whether to go or stay.

"Exguse me, your honour," said the person, "but haf you seen Mister Fox?"

I said that I, too, was waiting for him, whereat he cast at me a cunning look beyond my comprehension. Surely, I thought, a man of Fox's inherited wealth and position could not be living in such a place! Before the truth and humour of the situation had dawned upon me, I heard a ringing voice without, swearing in most forcible English, and the door was thrown open, admitting a tall young gentleman, as striking as I have ever seen. He paid not the smallest attention to the Jew, who was bowing and muttering behind me.

"Mr. Richard Carvel?" said he, with a merry twinkle in his eye.

I bowed.

"Gad's life, Mr. Carvel, I'm deuced sorry this should have happened. Will you come with me?"

"Exguse me, your honour!" cried the other visitor.

"Now, what the plague, Aaron!" says he; "you wear out the stairs. Come to-morrow, or the day after."

“Ay, ’tis always ‘to-morrow’ with you fine gentlemen. But I vill bring the bailiffs, so help me—”

“Damn ’em!” says the tall young gentleman, as he slammed the door and so shut off the wail. “Damn ’em, they worry Charles to death. If he would only stick to quinze and picquet, and keep clear of the hounds*, he need never go near a broker.”

[*"The “hounds,” it appears, were the gentlemen of sharp practices at White’s and Almack’s.—D. C. C.]*

“Do you have Jews in America, Mr. Carvel?” Without waiting for an answer, he led me through a parlour, hung with pictures, and bewilderingly furnished with French and Italian things, and Japan and China ware and bronzes, and cups and trophies. “My name is Fitzpatrick, Mr. Carvel, —yours to command, and Charles’s. I am his ally for offence and defence. We went to school together,” he explained simply.

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His manner was so free, and yet so dignified, as to charm me completely. For I heartily despised all that fustian trumpery of the age. Then came a voice from beyond, calling:—

"That you, Carvel? Damn that fellow Eiffel, and did he thrust you into the Jerusalem Chamber?"

"The Jerusalem Chamber!" I exclaimed.

"Where I keep my Israelites," said he; "but, by Gad's life! I think they are one and all descended from Job, and not father Abraham at all. He must have thought me cursed ascetic, eh, Fitz? Did you find the benches hard? I had 'em made hard as the devil. But if they were of stone, I vow the flock could find their own straw to sit on."

"Curse it, Charles," cut in Mr. Fitzpatrick, in some temper, "can't you be serious for once! He would behave this way, Mr. Carvel, if he were being shriven by the Newgate ordinary before a last carting to Tyburn. Charles, Charles, it was Aaron again, and the dog is like to snap at last. He is talking of bailiffs. Take my advice and settle with him. Hold Cavendish off another fortnight and settle with him."

Mr. Fox's reply was partly a laugh, and the rest of it is not to be printed. He did not seem in the least to mind this wholesale disclosure of his somewhat awkward affairs. And he continued to dress, or to be dressed, alternately swearing at his valet and talking to Fitzpatrick and to me.

"You are both of a name," said he. "Let a man but be called Richard, and I seem to take to him. I' faith, I like the hunchback king, and believe our friend Horry Walpole is right in defending him, despite Davie Hume. I vow I shall like you, Mr. Carvel."

I replied that I certainly hoped so.

"Egad, you come well enough recommended," he said, pulling on his breeches. "No, Eiffel, cursed if I go en petit maitre to-day. How does that strike you for a demi saison, Mr. Buckskin? I wore three of 'em through the customs last year, and March's worked olive nightgown tucked under my greatcoat, and near a dozen pairs of shirts and stockings. And each of my servants had on near as much. O Lud, we were amazing-like beef-eaters or blower pigeons. Sorry you won't meet my brother,—he that will have the title. He's out of town."

Going on in this discursory haphazard way while he dressed, he made me feel much at home. For the young dictator—so Mr. Fitzpatrick informed me afterward—either took to you or else he did not, and stood upon no ceremony. After he had chosen a coat with a small pattern and his feet had been thrust into the little red shoes with the high heels, imported by him from France, he sent for a hackney-chaise. And the three of us drove

together to Pall Mall. Mr. Brooks was at the door, and bowed from his hips as we entered.

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“A dozen vin de Graves, Brooks!” cries Mr. Fox, and ushers me into a dining room, with high curtained windows and painted ceiling, and chandeliers throwing a glitter of light. There, at a long table, surrounded by powdered lackeys, sat a bevy of wits, mostly in blue and silver, with point ruffles, to match Mr. Fox’s costume. They greeted my companions uproariously. It was “Here’s Charles at last!” “Howdy, Charles!” “Hello, Richard!” and “What have you there? a new Caribbee?” They made way for Mr. Fox at the head of the table, and he took the seat as though it were his right.

“This is Mr. Richard Carvel, gentlemen, of Carvel Hall, in Maryland.”

They stirred with interest when my name was called, and most of them turned in their chairs to look at me. I knew well the reason, and felt my face grow hot. Although you may read much of the courtesy of that age, there was a deal of brutal frankness among young men of fashion.

“Egad, Charles, is this he the Beauty rescued from Castle Yard?”

A familiar voice relieved my embarrassment.

“Give the devil his due, Bully. You forget that I had a hand in that.”

“Faith, Jack Comyn,” retorted the gentleman addressed, “you’re already famous for clinging to her skirt.”

“But cling to mine, Bully, and we’ll all enter the temple together. But I bid you welcome, Richard,” said his Lordship; “you come with two of the most delightful vagabonds in the world.”

Mr. Fox introduced me in succession to Colonel St. John, known in St. James’s Street as the Baptist; to my Lord Bolingbroke, Colonel St. John’s brother, who was more familiarly called Bully; to Mr. Fitzpatrick’s brother, the Earl of Upper Ossory, who had come up to London, so he said, to see a little Italian dance at the Garden; to Gilly Williams; to Sir Charles Bunbury, who had married Lady Sarah Lennox, Fox’s cousin, the beauty who had come so near to being queen of all England; to Mr. Storer, who was at once a Caribbee and a Crichton; to Mr. Uvedale Price. These I remember, but there are more that escape me. Most good-naturedly they drank my health in Charles’s vin de grave, at four shillings the bottle; and soon I was astonished to find myself launched upon the story of my adventures, which they had besought me to tell them. When I had done, they pledged me again, and, beginning to feel at home, I pledged them handsomely in return. Then the conversation began. The like of it I have never heard anywhere else in the world. There was a deal that might not be written here, and a deal more that might, to make these pages sparkle. They went through the meetings, of course, and thrashed over the list of horses entered at Ipswich, and York, and Newmarket, and how many were thought to be pulled. Then followed the recent gains

and losses of each and every individual of the company. After that there was a roar of merriment over Mr. Storer cracking mottoes with a certain Lady Jane;

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and how young Lord Stavordale, on a wager, tilted the candles and set fire to the drawing-room at Lady Julia's drum, the day before. Mr. Price told of the rage Topham Beauclerk had got Dr. Johnson into, by setting down a mark for each oyster the sage had eaten, and showing him the count. But Mr. Fox, who was the soul of the club, had the best array of any. He related how he had gone post from Paris to Lyons, to order, among other things, an embroidered canary waistcoat for George Selwyn from Jabot. "' Et quel dessin, monsieur?' 'Beetles and frogs, in green.' 'Escargots! grenouilles!' he cries, with a shriek; 'Et pour Monsieur Selwyn! Monsieur Fox badine!' It came yesterday, by Crawford, and I sent it to Chesterfield Street in time for George to wear to the Duchess's. He has been twice to Piccadilly after me, and twice here, and swears he will have my heart. And I believe he is now gone to Matson in a funk."

After that they fell upon politics. I knew that Mr. Fox was already near the head of the King's party, and that he had just received a substantial reward at his Majesty's hands; and I went not far to guess that every one of these easy-going, devil-may-care macaronies was a follower or sympathizer with Lord North's policy. But what I heard was a revelation indeed. I have dignified it by calling it politics. All was frankness here amongst friends. There was no attempt made to gloss over ugly transactions with a veneer of morality. For this much I honoured them. But irresistibly there came into my mind the grand and simple characters of our own public men in America, and it made me shudder to think that, while they strove honestly for our rights, this was the type which opposed them. Motives of personal spite and of personal gain were laid bare, and even the barter and sale of offices of trust took place before my very eyes. I was silent, though my tongue burned me, until one of the gentlemen, thinking me neglected, said:

"What a-deuce is to be done with those unruly countrymen of yours, Mr. Carvel? Are they likely to be pacified now that we have taken off all except the tea? You who are of our party must lead a sorry life among them. Tell me, do they really mean to go as far as rebellion?"

The blood rushed to my face.

"It is not a question of tea, sir," I answered hotly; "nor yet of tuppence. It is a question of principle, which means more to Englishmen than life itself. And we are Englishmen."

I believe I spoke louder than I intended, for a silence followed my words. Fox glanced at Comyn, who of all of them at the table was not smiling, and said:

"I thought you came of a loyalist family, Mr. Carvel."

“King George has no more loyal servants than the Americans, Mr. Fox, be they Tory or Whig. And he has but to read our petitions to discover it,” I said.

I spoke calmly, but my heart was thumping with excitement and resentment. The apprehension of the untried is apt to be sharp at such moments, and I looked for them to turn their backs upon me for an impertinent provincial. Indeed, I think they would have, all save Comyn, had it not been for Fox himself. He lighted a pipe, smiled, and began easily, quite dispassionately, to address me.

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“I wish you would favour us with your point of view, Mr. Carvel,” said he; “for, upon my soul, I know little about the subject.”

“You know little about the subject, and you in Parliament!”

I cried.

This started them all to laughing. Why, I did not then understand. But I was angry enough.

“Come, let’s have it!” said he.

They drew their chairs closer, some wearing that smile of superiority which to us is the Englishman’s most maddening trait. I did not stop to think twice, or to remember that I was pitted against the greatest debater in all England. I was to speak that of which I was full, and the heart’s argument needs no logic to defend it. If it were my last word, I would pronounce it.

I began by telling them that the Americans had paid their share of the French war, in blood and money, twice over. And I had the figures in my memory. Mr. Fox interrupted. For ten minutes at a space he spoke, and in all my life I have never talked to a man who had the English of King James’s Bible, of Shakespeare, and Milton so wholly at his command. And his knowledge of history, his classical citations, confounded me. I forgot myself in wondering how one who had lived so fast had acquired such learning. Afterward, when I tried to recall what he said, I laughed at his surprising ignorance of the question at issue, and wondered where my wits could have gone that I allowed myself to be dazzled and turned aside at every corner. As his speech came faster he twisted fact into fiction and fiction into fact, until I must needs close my mind and bolt the shutters of it, or he had betrayed me into confessing the right of Parliament to quarter troops among us. Though my head swam, I clung doggedly to my text. And that was my salvation. He grew more excited, and they applauded him. In truth, I myself felt near to clapping. And then, as I stared him in the eye, marvelling how a man of such vast power and ability could stand for such rotten practices, the thought came to me (I know not whence) of Saint Paul the Apostle.

“Mr. Fox,” I said, when he had paused, “before God, do you believe what you are saying?”

I saw them smiling at my earnestness and simplicity. Fox seemed surprised, and laughed evasively,—not heartily as was his wont.

“My dear Mr. Carvel,” he said, glancing around the circle, political principles are not to be swallowed like religion, but taken rather like medicine, experimentally. If they agree

with you, very good. If not, drop them and try others. We are always ready to listen to remedies, here."

"Ay, if they agree with you!" I exclaimed. "But food for one is poison for another. Do you know what you are doing? You are pushing home injustice and tyranny to the millions, for the benefit of the thousands. For is it not true, gentlemen, that the great masses of England are against the measures you impose upon us? Their fight is our fight. They are no longer represented in Parliament; we have never been. Taxation without representation is true of your rotten boroughs as well as of your vast colonies. You are helping the King to crush freedom abroad in order that he may the more easily break it at home. You are committing a crime.

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“I tell you we would give up all we own were the glory or honour of England at stake. And yet you call us rebels, and accuse us of meanness and of parsimony. If you wish money, leave the matter to our colonial assemblies, and see how readily you will get it. But if you wish war, persist in trying to grind the spirit from a people who have in them the pride of your own ancestors. Yes, you are estranging the colonies, gentlemen. A greater man than I has warned you”

And with that I rose, believing that I had given them all mortal offence. To my astonishment several got to their feet in front of me, huzzaing, and Comyn and Lord Ossory grasped my hands. And Charles Fox reached out over the corner of the table and pulled me back into my chair.

“Bravo, Richard Carvel!” he cried. “Cursed if I don’t love a man who will put up a fight against odds. Who will stand bluff to what he believes, and won’t be talked out of his boots. We won’t quarrel with any such here, my buckskin, I can tell you.”

And that is the simple story, my dears, of the beginning of my friendship with one who may rightly be called the Saint Paul of English politics. He had yet some distance to go, alas, ere he was to begin that sturdy battle for the right for which his countrymen and ours will always bless him. I gave him my hand with a better will than I had ever done anything, and we pressed our fingers numb. And his was not the only hand I clasped. And honest Jack Comyn ordered more wine, that they might drink to a speedy reconciliation with America.

“A pint bumper to Richard Carvel!” said Mr. Fitzpatrick.

I pledged Brooks’s Club in another pint. Upon which they swore that I was a good fellow, and that if all American Whigs were like me, all cause of quarrel was at an end. Of this I was not so sure, nor could I see that the question had been settled one way or another. And that night I had reason to thank the Reverend Mr. Allen, for the first and last time in my life, that I could stand a deal of liquor, and yet not roll bottom upward.

The dinner was settled on the Baptist, who paid for it without a murmur. And then we adjourned to the business of the evening. The great drawing-room, lighted by an hundred candles, was filled with gayly dressed macaronies, and the sound of their laughter and voices in contention mingled with the pounding of the packs on the mahogany and the rattle of the dice and the ring of the gold pieces. The sight was dazzling, and the noise distracting. Fox had me under his especial care, and I was presented to young gentlemen who bore names that had been the boast of England through the centuries. Lands their forebears had won by lance and sword, they were squandering away as fast as ever they could. I, too, was known. All had heard the romance of the Beauty and Castle Yard, and some had listened to Horry Walpole tell that foolish story of Goble at Windsor, on which he seemed to set such store.

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They guessed at my weight. They betted upon it. And they wished to know if I could spin Mr. Brooks, who was scraping his way from table to table. They gave me choice of whist, or picquet, or quinze, or hazard. I was carried away. Nay, I make no excuse. Tho' the times were drinking and gaming ones, I had been brought up that a gentleman should do both in moderation. We mounted, some dozen of us, to the floor above, and passed along to a room of which Fox had the key; and he swung me in on his arm, the others pressing after. And the door was scarce closed and locked again, before they began stripping off their clothes.

To my astonishment, Fox handed me a great frieze coat, which he bade me don, as the others were doing. Some were turning their coats inside out; for luck, said they; and putting on footman's leather guards to save their ruffles. And they gave me a hat with a high crown, and a broad brim to save my eyes from the candle glare. We were as grotesque a set as ever I laid my eyes upon. But I hasten over the scene; which has long become distasteful to me. I mention it only to show to what heights of folly the young men had gone. I recall a gasp when they told me they played for rouleaux of ten pounds each, but I took out my pocket-book as boldly as tho' I had never played for less, and laid my stake upon the board. Fox lost, again and again; but he treated his ill-luck with such a raillery of contemptuous wit, that we must needs laugh with him. Comyn, too, lost, and at supper excused himself, saying that he had promised his mother, the dowager countess, not to lose more than a quarter's income at a sitting. But I won and won, until the fever of it got into my blood, and as the first faint light of that morning crept into the empty streets, we were still at it, Fox vowing that he never waked up until daylight. That the best things he said in the House came to him at dawn.

CHAPTER XXXII

LADY TANKERVILLE'S DRUM-MAJOR

The rising sun, as he came through the little panes of the windows, etched a picture of that room into my brain. I can see the twisted candles with their wax smearing the sticks, the chairs awry, the tables littered with blackened pipes, and bottles, and spilled wine and tobacco among the dice; and the few that were left of my companions, some with dark lines under their eyes, all pale, but all gay, unconcerned, witty, and cynical; smoothing their ruffles, and brushing the ashes and snuff from the pattern of their waistcoats. As we went downstairs, singing a song Mr. Foote had put upon the stage that week, they were good enough to declare that I should never be permitted to go back to Maryland. That my grandfather should buy me a certain borough, which might be had for six thousand pounds.

The drawing-room made a dismal scene, too, after the riot and disorder of the night. Sleepy servants were cleaning up, but Fox vowed that they should bring us yet another bottle before going home. So down we sat about the famous old round table, Fox fingering the dents the gold had made in the board, and philosophizing; and reciting Orlando Furioso in the Italian, and Herodotus in the original Greek. Suddenly casting his eyes about, they fell upon an ungainly form stretched on a lounge, that made us all start.

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“Bully!” he cried; “I’ll lay you fifty guineas that Mr. Carvel gets the Beauty, against Chartersea.”

This roused me.

“Nay, Mr. Fox, I beg of you,” I protested, with all the vehemence I could muster. “Miss Manners must not be writ down in such a way.”

For answer he snapped his fingers at the drowsy Brooks, who brought the betting book.

“There!” says he; “and there, and there,” turning over the pages; “her name adorns a dozen leaves, my fine buckskin. And it will be well to have some truth about her. Enter the wager, Brooks.”

“Hold!” shouts Bolingbroke; “I haven’t accepted.”

You may be sure I was in an agony over this desecration, which I was so powerless to prevent. But as I was thanking my stars that the matter had blown over with Bolingbroke’s rejection, there occurred a most singular thing.

The figure on the lounge, with vast difficulty, sat up. To our amazement we beheld the bloated face of the Duke of Chartersea staring stupidly.

“Damme, Bully, you refushe bet like tha’!” he said. “I’ll take doshen of ’em-doshen, egad. Gimme the book, Brooksh. Cursh Fox—lay thousand d—d provinshial never getsh ’er—I know—”

I sat very still, seized with a loathing beyond my power to describe to thick that this was the man Mr. Manners was forcing her to marry. Fox laughed.

“Help his Grace to his coach,” he said to two of the footmen.

“Kill fellow firsht!” cried his Grace, with his hand on his sword, and instantly fell over, and went sound asleep.

“His Grace has sent his coach home, your honour,” said one of the men, respectfully. “The duke is very quarrelsome, sir.”

“Put him in a chair, then,” said Charles.

So they fearfully lifted his Grace, who was too far gone to resist, and carried him to a chair. And Mr. Fox bribed the chairmen with two guineas apiece, which he borrowed from me, to set his Grace down amongst the marketwomen at Covent Garden.

The next morning Banks found in my pockets something over seven hundred pounds more than I had had the day before.

I rose late, my head swimming with mains and nicks, and combinations of all the numbers under the dozen; debated whether or no I would go to Arlington Street, and decided that I had not the courage. Comyn settled it by coming in his cabriolet, proposed that we should get the air in the park, dine at the Cocoa Tree, and go afterwards to Lady Tankerville's drum-major, where Dolly would undoubtedly be.

"Now you are here, Richard," said his Lordship, with his accustomed bluntness, "and your sea-captain has relieved your Quixotic conscience, what the deuce do you intend to do?

"Win a thousand pounds every night at Brooks's, or improve your time and do your duty, and get Miss Manners out of his Grace's clutches? I'll warrant something will come of that matter this morning."

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“I hope so,” I said shortly.

Comyn looked at me sharply.

“Would you fight him?” he asked.

“If he gave me the chance.”

His Lordship whistled. “Egad, then,” said he, “I shall want to be there to see. In spite of his pudding-bag shape he handles the sword as well as any man in England. I have crossed with him at Angelo’s. And he has a devilish tricky record, Richard.”

I said nothing to that.

“Hope you do—kill him,” Comyn continued. “He deserves it richly. But that will be a cursed unpleasant way of settling the business, —unpleasant for you, unpleasant for her, and cursed unpleasant for him, too, I suppose. Can’t you think of any other way of getting her? Ask Charles to give you a plan of campaign. You haven’t any sense, and neither have I.”

“Hang you, Jack, I have no hopes of getting her,” I replied, for I was out of humour with myself that day. “In spite of what you say, I know she doesn’t care a brass farthing to marry me. So let’s drop that.”

Comyn made a comic gesture of deprecation. I went on: “But I am going to stay here and find out the truth, though it may be a foolish undertaking. And if he is intimidating Mr. Manners—”

“You may count on me, and on Charles,” said my Lord, generously; “and there are some others I know of. Gad! You made a dozen of friends and admirers by what you said last night, Richard. And his Grace has a few enemies. You will not lack support.”

We dined very comfortably at the Cocoa Tree, where Comyn had made an appointment for me with two as diverting gentlemen as had ever been my lot to meet. My Lord Carlisle was the poet and scholar of the little clique which had been to Eton with Charles Fox, any member of which (so ’twas said) would have died for him. His Lordship, be it remarked in passing, was as lively a poet and scholar as can well be imagined. He had been recently sobered, so Comyn confided; which I afterwards discovered meant married. Charles Fox’s word for the same was fallen. And I remembered that Jack had told me it was to visit Lady Carlisle at Castle Howard that Dorothy was going when she heard of my disappearance. Comyn’s other guest was Mr. Topham Beauclerk, the macaroni friend of Dr. Johnson. He, too, had been recently married, but appeared no more sobered than his Lordship. Mr. Beauclerk’s wife, by the way, was the beautiful Lady Diana Spencer, who had been divorced from Lord Bolingbroke, the Bully I had met the night before. These gentlemen seemed both well acquainted with Miss Manners,

and vowed that none but American beauties would ever be the fashion in London more. Then we all drove to Lady Tankerville's drum-major near Chesterfield House.

"You will be wanting a word with her when she comes in," said Comyn, slyly divining. Poor fellow! I fear that I scarcely appreciated his feelings as to Dorothy, or the noble unselfishness of his friendship for me.

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We sat aside in a recess of the lower hall, watching the throng as they passed: haughty dowagers, distorted in lead and disfigured in silk and feathers nodding at the ceiling; accomplished beaus of threescore or more, carefully mended for the night by their Frenchmen at home; young ladies in gay brocades with round skirts and stiff, pear-shaped bodices; and youngsters just learning to ogle and to handle their snuff-boxes. One by one their names were sent up and solemnly mouthed by the footman on the landing. At length, when we had all but given her up, Dorothy arrived. A hood of lavender silk heightened the oval of her face, and out from under it crept rebellious wisps of her dark hair. But she was very pale, and I noticed for the first time a worn expression that gave me a twinge of uneasiness. 'Twas then I caught sight of the duke, a surly stamp on his leaden features. And after him danced Mr. Manners. Dolly gave a little cry when she saw me.

"Oh! Richard, I am so glad you are here. I was wondering what had become of you. And Comyn, too." Whispering to me, "Mamma has had a letter from Mrs. Brice; your grandfather has been to walk in the garden."

"And Grafton?"

"She said nothing of your uncle," she replied, with a little shudder at the name; "but wrote that Mr. Carvel was said to be better. So there! your conscience need not trouble you for remaining. I am sure he would wish you to pay a visit home.

"And I have to scold you, sir. You have not been to Arlington Street for three whole days."

It struck me suddenly that her gayety was the same as that she had worn to my birthday party, scarce a year agone.

"Dolly, you are not well!" I said anxiously.

She flung her head saucily for answer. In the meantime his Grace, talking coldly to Comyn, had been looking unutterable thunders at me. I thought of him awaking in the dew at Covent Garden, and could scarce keep from laughing in his face. Mr. Marmaduke squirmed to the front.

"Morning, Richard," he said, with a marked cordiality. "Have you met the Duke of Chartersea? No! Your Grace, this is Mr. Richard Carvel. His family are dear friends of ours in the colonies."

To my great surprise, the duke saluted me quite civilly. But I had the feeling of facing a treacherous bull which would gore me as soon as ever my back was turned. He was always putting me in mind of a bull, with his short neck and heavy, hunched shoulders, —and with the ugly tinge of red in the whites of his eyes.

“Mr. Manners tells me you are to remain awhile in London, Mr. Carvel,” he said, in his thick voice.

I took his meaning instantly, and replied in kind.

“Yes, your Grace, I have some business to attend to here.”

“Ah,” he answered; “then I shall see you again.”

“Probably, sir,” said I.

His Lordship watched this thrust and parry with an ill-concealed delight. Dorothy’s face was impassive, expressionless. As the duke turned to mount the stairs, he stumbled clumsily across a young man coming to pay his respects to Miss Manners, and his Grace went sprawling against the wall.

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“Confound you, sir!” he cried.

For the ducal temper was no respecter of presences. Then a title was a title to those born lower, and the young man plainly had a vast honour for a coronet.

“I beg your Grace’s pardon,” said he.

“Who the deuce is he?” demanded the duke petulantly of Mr. Manners, thereby setting the poor little man all a-tremble.

“Why, why,—” he replied, searching for his spyglass.

For an instant Dolly’s eyes shot scorn. Chartersea had clearly seen and heeded that signal before.

“The gentleman is a friend of mine,” she said.

Tho’ I were put out of the Garden of Eden as a consequence, I itched to have it out with his Grace then and there. I knew that I was bound to come into collision with him sooner or later. Such, indeed, was my mission in London. But Dorothy led the way upstairs, a spot of colour burning each of her cheeks. The stream of guests had been arrested until the hall was packed, and the curious were peering over the rail above.

“Lord, wasn’t she superb!” exclaimed Comyn, exultingly, as we followed. In the drawing-room the buzzing about the card tables was hushed a moment as she went in. But I soon lost sight of her, thanks to Comyn. He drew me on from group to group, and I was duly presented to a score of Lady So-and-sos and honourable misses, most of whom had titles, but little else. Mammas searched their memories, and suddenly discovered that they had heard their parents speak of my grandfather. But, as it was a fair presumption that most colonial gentlemen made a visit home at least once in their lives, I did not allow the dust to get into my eyes. I was invited to dinners, and fairly showered with invitations to balls and drums and garden parties. I was twitted about the Beauty, most often with only a thin coating of amiability covering the spite of the remark. In short, if my head had not been so heavily laden with other matters, it might well have become light under the strain. Had I been ambitious to enter the arena I should have had but little trouble, since eligibility then might be reduced to guineas and another element not moral. I was the only heir of one of the richest men in the colony, vouched for by the Manners and taken up by Mr. Fox and my Lord Comyn. Inquiries are not pushed farther. I could not help seeing the hardness of it all, or refrain from contrasting my situation with that of the penniless outcast I had been but a little time before. The gilded rooms, the hundred yellow candles multiplied by the mirrors, the powder, the perfume, the jewels,—all put me in mind of the poor devils I had left wasting away their lives in Castle Yard. They, too, had had their times of prosperity, their friends who had faded with the first waning of fortune. Some of them had known what it was to

be fawned over. And how many of these careless, flitting men of fashion I looked upon could feel the ground firm beneath their feet; or could say with certainty what a change of ministers, or one wild night at White's or Almack's, would bring forth? Verily, one must have seen the under side of life to know the upper!

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Presently I was sought out by Mr. Topham Beauclerk, who had heard of the episode below and wished to hear more. He swore at the duke.

“He will be run through some day, and serve him jolly right,” said he. “Bet you twenty pounds Charles Fox does it! His Grace knows he has the courage to fight him.”

“The courage!” I repeated.

“Yes. Angelo says the duke has diabolical skill. And then he won’t fight fair. He killed young Atwater on a foul, you know. Slipped on the wet grass, and Chartersea had him pinned before he caught his guard. But there is Lady Di a-calling, a-calling.”

“Do all the women cheat in America too?” asked Topham, as we approached.

I thought of my Aunt Caroline, and laughed.

“Some,” I answered.

“They will game, d—n ’em,” said Topham, as tho’ he had never gamed in his life. “And they will cheat, till a man has to close his eyes to keep from seeing their pretty hands. And they will cry, egad, oh so touchingly, if the luck goes against them in spite of it all. Only last week I had to forgive Mrs Farnham an hundred guineas. She said she’d lost her pin-money twice over, and was like to have wept her eyes out.”

Thus primed in Topham’s frank terms, I knew what to expect. And I found to my amusement he had not overrun the truth. I lost like a stoic, saw nothing, and discovered the straight road to popularity.

“The dear things expect us to make it up at the clubs,” whispered he.

I discovered how he had fallen in love with his wife, Lady Diana, and pitied poor Bolingbroke heartily for having lost her. She was then in her prime,—a beauty, a wit, and a great lady, with a dash of the humanities about her that brought both men and women to her feet.

“You must come to see me, Mr. Carvel,” said she. “I wish to talk to you of Dorothy.”

“Your Ladyship believes me versed in no other subject?” I asked.

“None other worth the mention,” she replied instantly; “Topham tells me you can talk horses, and that mystery of mysteries, American politics. But look at Miss Manners Dow. I’ll warrant she is making Sir Charles see to his laurels, and young Stavordale is struck dumb.”

I looked up quickly and beheld Dolly surrounded by a circle of admirers.

“Mark the shot strike!” Lady Di continued, between the deals; “that time Chartersea went down. I fancy he is bowled over rather often,” she said slyly. “What a brute it is. And they say that that little woman she has for a father imagines a union with the duke will redound to his glory.”

“They say,” remarked Mrs. Meynel, sitting next me, “that the duke has thumbscrews of some kind on Mr. Manners.”

“Miss Manners is able to take care of herself,” said Topham.

“‘On dit’, that she has already refused as many dukes as did her Grace of Argyle,” said Mrs. Meynel.

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I had lost track of the cards, and knew I was losing prodigiously. But my eyes went back again and again to the group by the doorway, where Dolly was holding court and dispensing justice, and perchance injustice. The circle increased. Ribands, generals whose chests were covered with medals of valour, French noblemen, and foreign ambassadors stopped for a word with the Beauty and passed on their way, some smiling, some reflecting, to make room for others. I overheard from the neighbouring tables a spiteful protest that a young upstart from the colonies should turn Lady Tankerville's drum into a levee. My ears tingled as I listened. But not a feathered parrot in the carping lot of them could deny that Miss Manners had beauty and wit enough to keep them all at bay. Hers was not an English beauty: every line of her face and pose of her body proclaimed her of that noble type of Maryland women, distinctly American, over which many Englishmen before and since have lost their heads and hearts.

"Egad!" exclaimed Mr. Storer, who was looking on; "she's already defeated some of the Treasury Bench, and bless me if she isn't rating North himself."

Half the heads in the room were turned toward Miss Manners, who was exchanging jokes with the Prime Minister of Great Britain. I saw a corpulent man, ludicrously like the King's pictures, with bulging gray eyes that seemed to take in nothing. And this was North, upon whose conduct with the King depended the fate of our America. Good-natured he was, and his laziness was painfully apparent. He had the reputation of going to sleep standing, like a horse.

"But the Beauty contrives to keep him awake," said Storer.

"If you stay among us, Mr. Carvel," said Topham, "she will get you a commissionership for the asking."

"Look," cried Lady Di, "there comes Mr. Fox, the precocious, the irresistible. Were he in the Bible, we should read of him passing the time of day with King Solomon."

"Or instructing Daniel in the art of lion-taming," put in Mrs. Meynel.

There was Mr. Fox in truth, and the Beauty's face lighted up at sight of him. And presently, when Lord North had made his bow and passed on, he was seen to lead her out of the room, leaving her circle to go to pieces, like an empire without a head.

CHAPTER XXXIII

DRURY LANE

After a night spent in making resolutions, I set out for Arlington Street, my heart beating a march, as it had when I went thither on my arrival in London. Such was my excitement that I was near to being run over in Piccadilly like many another country

gentleman, and roundly cursed by a wagoner for my stupidity. I had a hollow bigness within me, half of joy, half of pain, that sent me onward with ever increasing steps and a whirling storm of contradictions in my head. Now it was: Dolly loved me in spite of all the great men in England. Why, otherwise, had she

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come to the sponging-house? Berating myself: had her affection been other than that of a life-long friendship she would not have come an inch. But why had she made me stay in London? Why had she spoken so to Comyn? What interpretation might be put upon a score of little acts of hers that came a-flooding to mind, each a sacred treasure of memory? A lover's interpretation, forsooth. Fie, Richard! what presumption to think that you, a raw lad, should have a chance in such a field! You have yet, by dint of hard knocks and buffets, to learn the world.

By this I had come in sight of her house, and suddenly I trembled like a green horse before a cannon. My courage ran out so fast that I was soon left without any, and my legs had carried me as far as St. James's Church before I could bring them up. Then I was sure, for the first time, that she did not love me. In front of the church I halted, reflecting that I had not remained in England with any hope of it, but rather to discover the truth about Chartersea's actions, and to save her, if it were possible. I turned back once more, and now got as far as the knocker, and lifted it as a belfry was striking the hour of noon. I think I would have fled again had not the door been immediately opened.

Once more I found myself in the room looking out over the Park, the French windows open to the balcony, the sunlight flowing in with the spring-scented air. On the table was lying a little leather book, stamped with gold,—her prayerbook. Well I remembered it! I opened it, to read: "Dorothy, from her Mother. Annapolis, Christmas, 1768." The sweet vista of the past stretched before my eyes. I saw her, on such a, Mayday as this, walking to St. Anne's under the grand old trees, their budding leaves casting a delicate tracery at her feet. I followed her up the aisle until she disappeared in the high pew, and then I sat beside my grandfather and thought of her, nor listened to a word of Mr. Allen's sermon. Why had they ever taken her to London?

When she came in I sought her face anxiously. She was still pale; and I thought, despite her smile, that a trace of sadness lingered in her eyes.

"At last, sir, you have come," she said severely. "Sit down and give an account of yourself at once. You have been behaving very badly."

"Dorothy—"

"Pray don't 'Dorothy' me, sir. But explain where you have been for this week past."

"But, Dolly—"

"You pretend to have some affection for your old playmate, but you do not trouble yourself to come to see her."

“Indeed, you do me wrong.”

“Do you wrong! You prefer to gallivant about town with Comyn and Charles Fox, and with all those wild gentlemen who go to Brooks’s. Nay, I have heard of your goings-on. I shall write to Mr. Carvel to-day, and advise him to send for you. And tell him that you won a thousand pounds in one night—”

“It was only seven hundred,” I interrupted sheepishly. I thought she smiled faintly.

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And will probably lose twenty thousand before you have done. And I shall say to him that you have dared to make bold rebel speeches to a Lord of the Admiralty and to some of the King's supporters. I shall tell your grandfather you are disgracing him."

"Rebel speeches!" I cried.

"Yes, rebel speeches at Almack's. Who ever heard of such a thing! No doubt I shall hear next of your going to a drawing-room and instructing his Majesty how to subdue the colonies. And then, sir, you will be sent to the Tower, and I shan't move a finger to get you out."

"Who told you of this, Dolly?" I demanded.

"Mr. Fox, himself, for one. He thought it so good,—or so bad,—that he took me aside last night at Lady Tankerville's, asked me why I had let you out of Castle Yard, and told me I must manage to curb your tongue. I replied that I had about as much influence with you as I have with Dr. Franklin."

I laughed.

"I saw Fox lead you off," I said.

"Oh, you did, did you!" she retorted. "But you never once came near me yourself, save when I chanced to meet you in the hall, tho' I was there a full three hours."

"How could I!" I exclaimed. "You were surrounded by prime ministers and ambassadors, and Heaven knows how many other great people."

"When you wish to do anything, Richard, you usually find a way."

"Nay," I answered, despairing, "I can never explain anything to you, Dolly. Your tongue is too quick for mine."

"Why didn't you go home with your captain?" she asked mockingly.

"Do you know why I stayed?"

"I suppose because you want to be a gay spark and taste of the pleasures of London. That is, what you men are pleased to call pleasures. I can think of no other season."

"There is another," I said desperately.

"Ah," said Dolly. And in her old aggravating way she got up and stood in the window, looking out over the park. I rose and stood beside her, my very temples throbbing.

“We have no such springs at home,” she said. “But oh, I wish I were at Wilmot House to-day!”

“There is another reason,” I repeated. My voice sounded far away, like that of another. I saw the colour come into her cheeks again, slowly. The southwest wind, with a whiff of the channel salt in it, blew the curtains at our backs.

“You have a conscience, Richard,” she said gently, without turning. “So few of us have.”

I was surprised. Nor did I know what to make of that there were so many meanings.

“You are wild,” she continued, “and impulsive, as they say your father was. But he was a man I should have honoured. He stood firm beside his friends. He made his enemies fear him. All strong men must have enemies, I suppose. They must make them.”

I looked at her, troubled, puzzled, but burning at her praise of Captain Jack.

“Dolly,” I cried, “you are not well. Why won’t you come back to Maryland?”

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She did not reply to that. Then she faced me suddenly.

“Richard, I know now why you insisted upon going back. It was because you would not desert your sea-captain. Comyn and Mr. Fox have told me, and they admire you for it as much as I.”

What language is worthy to describe her as she was then in that pose, with her head high, as she was wont to ride over the field after the hounds. Hers was in truth no beauty of stone, but the beauty of force, —of life itself.

“Dorothy,” I cried; “Dorothy, I stayed because I love you. There, I have said it again, what has not passed my lips since we were children. What has been in my heart ever since.”

I stopped, awed. For she had stepped back, out on the balcony. She hid her head in her hands, and I saw her breast shaken as with sobs. I waited what seemed a day,—a year. Then she raised her face and looked at me through the tears shining in her eyes.

“Richard,” she said sadly, “why, why did you ever tell me? Why can we not always be playmates?”

The words I tried to say choked me. I could not speak for sorrow, for very bitterness. And yet I might have known! I dared not look at her again.

“Dear Richard,” I heard her say, “God alone understands how it hurts me to give you pain. Had I only foreseen—”

“Had you only foreseen,” I said quickly.

“I should never have let you speak.”

Her words came steadily, but painfully. And when I raised my eyes she met them bravely.

“You must have seen,” I cried. “These years I have loved you, nor could I have hidden it if I had wished. But I have little—to offer you,” I went on cruelly, for I knew not what I said; “you who may have English lands and titles for the consenting. I was a fool.”

Her tears started again. And at sight of them I was seized with such remorse that I could have bitten my tongue in two.

“Forgive me, Dorothy, if you can,” I implored. “I did not mean it. Nor did I presume to think you loved me. I have adored,—I shall be content to adore from far below. And I stayed,—I stayed that I might save you if a danger threatened.”

“Danger!” she exclaimed, catching her breath.

“I will come to the point,” I said. “I stayed to save you from the Duke of Chartersea.”

She grasped the balcony rail, and I think would have fallen but for my arm. Then she straightened, and only the quiver of her lip marked the effort.

“To save me from the Duke of Chartersea?” she said, so coldly that my conviction was shaken. “Explain yourself, sir.”

“You cannot love him!” I cried, amazed.

She flashed upon me a glance I shall never forget.

“Richard Carvel,” she said, “you have gone too far. Though you have been my friend all my life, there are some things which even you cannot say to me.”

And she left me abruptly and went into the house, her head flung back. And I followed in a tumult of mortification and wounded pride, in such a state of dejection that I wished I had never been born. But hers was a nature of surprises, and impulsive, like my own. Beside the cabinet she turned, calm again, all trace of anger vanished from her face. Drawing a hawthorn sprig from a porcelain vase I had given her, she put it in my hand.

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“Let us forget this, Richard,” said she; “we have both been very foolish.”

Forget, indeed! Unless Heaven had robbed me of reason, had torn the past from me at a single stroke. I could not have forgotten. When I reached my lodgings I sent the anxious Banks about his business and threw myself in a great chair before the window, the chair she had chosen. Strange to say, I had no sensation save numbness. The time must have been about two of the clock: I took no account of it. I recall Banks coming timidly back with the news that two gentlemen had called. I bade him send them away. Would my honour not have Mrs. Marble cook my dinner, and be dressed for Lady Pembroke’s ball? I sent him off again, harshly.

After a long while the slamming of a coach door roused me, and I was straightway seized with such an agony of mind that I could have cried aloud. ’Twas like the pain of blood flowing back into a frozen limb. Darkness was fast gathering as I reached the street and began to walk madly. Word by word I rehearsed the scene in the drawing-room over the Park, but I could not think calmly, for the pain of it. Little by little I probed, writhing, until far back in my boyhood I was tearing at the dead roots of that cherished plant, which was the Hope of Her Love. It had grown with my own life, and now with its death to-day I felt that I had lost all that was dear to me. Then, in the midst of this abject self-pity, I was stricken with shame. I thought of Comyn, who had borne the same misfortune as a man should. Had his pain been the less because he had not loved her from childhood? Like Comyn, I resolved to labour for her happiness.

What hour of the night it was I know not when a man touched me on the shoulder, and I came to myself with a start. I was in a narrow street lined by hideous houses, their windows glaring with light. Each seemed a skull, with rays darting from its grinning eye-holes. Within I caught glimpses of debauchery that turned me sick. Ten paces away three women and a man were brawling, the low angry tones of his voice mingling with the screeches of their Billingsgate. Muffled figures were passing and repassing unconcernedly, some entering the houses, others coming out, and a handsome coach, without arms and with a footman in plain livery, lumbered along and stopped farther on. All this I remarked before I took notice of him who had intercepted me, and demanded what he wanted.

“Hey, Bill!” he cried with an oath to a man who stood on the steps opposite; “’ere’s a soft un as has put ’is gill in.”

The man responded, and behind him came two more of the same feather, and suddenly I found myself surrounded by an ill-smelling crowd of flashy men and tawdry women. They jostled me, and I reached for my sword, to make the discovery that I had forgotten it. Regaining my full senses, I struck the man nearest me a blow that sent him sprawling in the dirt. A blade gleamed under the sickly light of the fish-oil lamp overhead, but a man crashed through from behind and caught the ruffian’s sword-arm and flung him back in the kennel.

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“The watch!” he cried, “the watch!”

They vanished like rats into their holes at the shout, leaving me standing alone with him. The affair had come and gone so quickly that I scarce caught my breath.

“Pardon, sir,” he said, knuckling, “but I followed you.”

It was Banks. For a second time he had given me an affecting example of his faithfulness. I forgot that he was my servant, and I caught his hand and pressed it.

“You have saved my life at the risk of your own,” I said; “I shall not forget it.”

But Banks had been too well trained to lose sight of his position. He merely tipped his hat again and said imperturbably:

“Best get out of here, your honour. They’ll be coming again directly.”

“Where are we?” I asked.

“Drury Lane, sir,” he replied, giving me just the corner of a glance; “shall I fetch a coach, sir?” No, I preferred to walk. Before we had turned into Long Acre I had seen all of this Sodom of London that it should be given a man to see, if indeed we must behold some of the bestiality of this world. Here alone, in the great city, high and low were met equal. Sin levels rank. The devil makes no choice between my lord and his kitchen wench who has gone astray. Here, in Sodom, painted vice had lain for an hundred years and bred half the crime of a century. How many souls had gone hence in that time to meet their Maker! Some of these brazen creatures who leered at me had known how long ago! —a peaceful home and a mother’s love; had been lured in their innocence to this place of horrors, never to leave it until death mercifully overtakes them. Others, having fallen, had been driven hither by a cruel world that shelters all save the helpless, that forgives all save the truly penitent. I shuddered as I thought of Mr. Hogarth’s prints, which, in the library in Marlboro’ Street at home, had had so little meaning for me. Verily he had painted no worse than the reality. As I strode homeward, my own sorrow subdued by the greater sorrow I had looked upon, the craving I had had to be alone was gone, and I would have locked arms with a turnspit. I called to Banks, who was behind at a respectful distance, and bade him come talk to me. His presence of mind in calling on the watch had made even a greater impression upon me than his bravery. I told him that he should have ten pounds, and an increase of wages. And I asked him where I had gone after leaving Dover Street, and why he had followed me. He answered this latter question first. He had seen gentlemen in the same state, or something like it, before: his Lordship, his late master, after he had fought with Mr. Onslow, of the Guards, and Sir Edward Minturn, when he had lost an inheritance and a reversion at Brooks’s, and was forced to give over his engagement to

marry the Honourable Miss Swift. “Lord, sir,” he said, “but that was a sad case, as set all London agog. And Sir Edward shot hisself at Portsmouth not a se’nnight after.”

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And he relapsed into silence, no doubt longing to ask the cause of my own affliction. Presently he surprised me by saying:

“And I might make so bold, Mr. Carvel, I would like to tell your honour something.”

I nodded. And he hawed awhile and then burst out:

“Your honour must know then that I belongs to the footman’s club in Berkeley Square, where I meets all the servants o’ quality—”

“Yes,” I said, wondering what footman’s tale he had to tell.

“And Whipple, he’s a hintimate o’ mine, sir.” He stopped again.

“And who may Whipple be?”

“With submission, sir. Whipple’s his Grace o’ Chartersea’s man—and, you’ll forgive me, sir—Whipple owns his Grace is prodigious ugly, an’ killed young Mr. Atwater unfair, some think. Whipple says he would give notice had he not promised the old duke—”

“Drat Whipple!” I cried.

“Yes, sir. To be sure, sir. His Grace was in a bloody rage when he found hisself in a fruit bin at Covent Carding. An’ two redbreasts had carried him to the round house, sir, afore they discovered his title. An’ since his Grace ha’ said time an’ time afore Whipple, that he’ll ha’ Mr. Carvel’s heart for that, and has called you most disgustin’ bad names, sir. An’ Whipple he says to me: ’Banks, drop your marster a word, an’ you get the chance. His Grace’ll speak him fair to’s face, but let him look behind him.’”

“I thank you again, Banks. I shall bear in mind your devotion,” I replied. “But I had nothing to do with sending the duke to Covent Garden.”

“Ay, sir, so I tells Whipple.”

“Pray, how did you know?” I demanded curiously.

“Lord, sir! All the servants at Almack’s is friends o’ mine,” says he. “But Whipple declares his Grace will be sworn you did it, sir, tho’ the Lord Mayor hisself made deposition ’twas not.”

“Then mark me, Banks, you are not to talk of this.”

“Oh, Lord, no, your honour,” he said, as he fell back. But I was not so sure of his discretion as of his loyalty.

And so I was led to perceive that I was not to be the only aggressor in the struggle that was to come. That his Grace did me the honour to look upon me as an obstacle. And that he intended to seize the first opportunity to make way with me, by fair means or foul.

RICHARD CARVEL

By Winston Churchill

Volume 6.

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XXXV. In which my Lord Baltimore appears
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CHAPTER XXXIV

HIS GRACE MAKES ADVANCES

The next morning I began casting about as to what I should do next. There was no longer any chance of getting at the secret from Dorothy, if secret there were. Whilst I am ruminating comes a great battling at the street door, and Jack Comyn blew in like a gust of wind, rating me soundly for being a lout and a blockhead.

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“Zooks!” he cried, “I danced the soles off my shoes trying to get in here yesterday, and I hear you were moping all the time, and paid me no more attention than I had been a dog scratching at the door. What! and have you fallen out with my lady?”

I confessed the whole matter to him. He was not to be resisted. He called to Banks for a cogue of Nantsey, and swore amazingly at what he was pleased to term the inscrutability of woman, offering up consolation by the wholesale. The incident, he said, but strengthened his conviction that Mr. Manners had appealed to Dorothy to save him. “And then,” added his Lordship, facing me with absolute fierceness, “and then, Richard, why the devil did she weep? There were no tears when I made my avowal. I tell you, man, that the whole thing points but the one way. She loves you. I swear it by the rood.”

I could not help laughing, and he stood looking at me with such a whimsical expression that I rose and flung my arms around him.

“Jack, Jack!” I cried, “what a fraud you are! Do you remember the argument you used when you had got me out of the sponging-house? Quoting you, all I had to do was to put Dorothy to the proof, and she would toss Mr. Marmaduke and his honour broadcast. Now I have confessed myself, and what is the result? Nay, your theory is gone up in vapour.”

“Then why,” cried his Lordship, hotly, “why before refusing me did she demand to know whether you had been in love with Patty Swain? ’Sdeath! you put me in mind of a woman upon stilts—a man has always to be walking alongside her with encouragement handy. And when a proud creature such as our young lady breaks down as she hath done, ’tis clear as skylight there is something wrong. And as for Mr. Manners, Hare overheard a part of a pow-wow ’twixt him and the duke at the Bedford Arms,—and Chartersea has all but owned in some of his drunken fits that our little fop is in his power.”

“Then she is in love with some one else,” I said.

“I tell you she is not,” said Comyn, still more emphatically; “and you can write that down in red in your table book. Gossip has never been able to connect her name with that of any man save yours, when she went for you in Castle Yard. And, gemini, gossip is like water, and will get in if a crack shows. When the Marquis of Wells was going to Arlington Street once every day, she sent him about his business in a fortnight.”

Despite Comyn’s most unselfish optimism, I could see no light. And in the recklessness that so often besets youngsters of my temper, on like occasions, I went off to Newmarket next day with Mr. Fox and Lord Ossory, in his Lordship’s travelling-chaise and four. I spent a very gay week trying to forget Miss Dolly. I was the loser by some three hundred pounds, in addition to what I expended and loaned to Mr. Fox. This

young gentleman was then beginning to accumulate at Newmarket a most execrable stud. He lost prodigiously, but seemed in no wise disturbed

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thereby. I have never known a man who took his ill-luck with such a stoical nonchalance. Not so while the heat was on. As I write, a most ridiculous recollection rises of Charles dragging his Lordship and me and all who were with him to that part of the course where the race was highest, where he would act like a madman; blowing and perspiring, and whipping and swearing all at a time, and rising up and down as if the horse was throwing him.

At Newmarket I had the good—or ill-fortune to meet that incorrigible rake and profligate, my Lord of March and Ruglen. For him the goddess of Chance had smiled, and he was in the most complaisant humour. I was presented to his Grace, the Duke of Grafton, whose name I had no reason to love, and invited to Wakefield Lodge. We went instead, Mr. Fox and I, to Ampthill, Lord Ossory's seat, with a merry troop. And then we had more racing; and whist and quinze and pharaoh and hazard, until I was obliged to write another draft upon Mr. Dix to settle the wails: and picquet in the travelling-chaise all the way to London. Dining at Brooks's, we encountered Fitzpatrick and Comyn and my Lord Carlisle.

"Now how much has Charles borrowed of you, Mr. Carvel?" demanded Fitzpatrick, as we took our seats.

"I'll lay ten guineas that Charles has him mortgaged this day month, though he owns as much land as William Penn, and is as rich as Fordyce."

Comyn demanded where the devil I had been, though he knew perfectly. He was uncommonly silent during dinner, and then asked me if I had heard the news. I told him I had heard none. He took me by the sleeve, to the quiet amusement of the company, and led me aside.

"Curse you, Richard," says be; "you have put me in such a temper that I vow I'll fling you over. You profess to love her, and yet you go betting to Newmarket and carousing to Ampthill when she is ill."

"Ill!" I said, catching my breath.

"Ay! That hurts, does it? Yes, ill, I say. She was missed at Lady Pembroke's that Friday you had the scene with her, and at Lady Ailesbury's on Saturday. On Monday morning, when I come to you for tidings, you are off watching Charles make an ass of himself at Newmarket."

"And how is she now, Comyn?" I asked, catching him by the arm.

"You may go yourself and see, and be cursed, Richard Carvel. She is in trouble, and you are pleasure-seeking in the country. Damme! you deserve richly to lose her."

Calling for my greatcoat, and paying no heed to the jeers of the company for leaving before the toasts and the play, I fairly ran to Arlington Street. I was in a passion of remorse. Comyn had been but just. Granting, indeed, that she had refused to marry me, was that any reason why I should desert my life-long friend and playmate? A hundred little tokens of her affection for me rose to mind, and last of all that rescue from Castle Yard in the face of all Mayfair. And in that hour of darkness the conviction that something was wrong came back upon me with redoubled force. Her lack of colour, her feverish actions, and the growing slightness of her figure, all gave me a pang, as I connected them with that scene on the balcony over the Park.

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The house was darkened, and a coach was in front of it.

“Yessir,” said the footman, “Miss Manners has been quite ill. She is now some better, and Dr. James is with her. Mrs. Manners begs company will excuse her.”

And Mr. Marmaduke? The man said, with as near a grin as he ever got, that the marster was gone to Mrs. Cornelys’s assembly. As I turned away, sick at heart, the physician, in his tie-wig and scarlet cloak, came out, and I stopped him. He was a testy man, and struck the stone an impatient blow with his staff.

“’Od’s life, sir. I am besieged day and night by you young gentlemen. I begin to think of sending a daily card to Almack’s.”

“Sir, I am an old friend of Miss Manners,” I replied, “having grown up with her in Maryland—”

“Are you Mr. Carvel?” he demanded abruptly, taking his hat from his arm.

“Yes,” I answered, surprised. In the gleam of the portico lanthorn he scrutinized me for several seconds.

“There are some troubles of the mind which are beyond the power of physic to remedy, Mr. Carvel,” said he. “She has mentioned your name, sir, and you are to judge of my meaning. Your most obedient, sir. Good night, sir.”

And he got into his coach, leaving me standing where I was, bewildered.

That same fear of being alone, which has driven many a man to his cups, sent me back to Brooks’s for company. I found Fox and Comyn seated at a table in the corner of the drawing-room, for once not playing, but talking earnestly. Their expressions when they saw me betrayed what my own face must have been.

“What is it?” cried Comyn, half rising; “is she—is she—”

“No, she is better,” I said.

He looked relieved.

“You must have frightened him badly, Jack,” said Fox.

I flung myself into a chair, and Fox proposed whist, something unusual for him. Comyn called for cards, and was about to go in search of a fourth, when we all three caught sight of the Duke of Chartersea in the door, surveying the room with a cold leisure. His eye paused when in line with us, and we were seized with astonishment to behold him making in our direction.

“Squints!” exclaimed Mr. Fox, “now what the devil can the hound want?”

“To pull your nose for sending him to market,” my Lord suggested.

Fox laughed coolly.

“Lay you twenty he doesn’t, Jack,” he said.

His Grace plainly had some business with us, and I hoped he was coming to force the fighting. The pieces had ceased to rattle on the round mahogany table, and every head in the room seemed turned our way, for the Covent Garden story was well known. Chartersea laid his hand on the back of our fourth chair, greeted us with some ceremony, and said something which, under the circumstances, was almost unheard of in that day: “If you stand in need of one, gentlemen, I should deem it an honour.”

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The situation had in it enough spice for all of us. We welcomed him with alacrity. The cards were cut, and it fell to his Grace to deal, which he did very prettily, despite his heavy hands. He drew Charles Fox, and they won steadily. The conversation between deals was anywhere; on the virtue of Morello cherries for the gout, to which his Grace was already subject; on Mr. Fox's Ariel, and why he had not carried Sandwich's cup at Newmarket; on the advisability of putting three-year-olds on the track; in short, on a dozen small topics of the kind. At length, when Comyn and I had lost some fifty pounds between us, Chartersea threw down the cards.

"My coach waits to-night, gentlemen," said he, with some sort of an accent that did not escape us. "It would give me the greatest pleasure and you will sup with me in Hanover Square."

CHAPTER XXXV

IN WHICH MY LORD BALTIMORE APPEARS

His Grace's offer was accepted with a readiness he could scarce have expected, and we all left the room in the midst of a buzz of comment. We knew well that the matter was not so haphazard as it appeared, and on the way to Hanover Square Comyn more than once stepped on my toe, and I answered the pressure. Our coats and canes were taken by the duke's lackeys when we arrived. We were shown over the house. Until now —so his Grace informed us—it had not been changed since the time of the fourth duke, who, as we doubtless knew, had been an ardent supporter of the Hanoverian succession. The rooms were high-panelled and furnished in the German style, as was the fashion when the Square was built. But some were stripped and littered with scaffolding and plaster, new and costly marble mantels were replacing the wood, and an Italian of some renown was decorating the ceilings. His Grace appeared to be at some pains that the significance of these improvements should not be lost upon us; was constantly appealing to Mr. Fox's taste on this or that feature. But those fishy eyes of his were so alert that we had not even opportunity to wink. It was wholly patent, in brief, that the Duke of Chartersea meant to be married, and had brought Charles and Comyn hither with a purpose. For me he would have put himself out not an inch had he not understood that my support came from those quarters.

He tempered off this exhibition by showing us a collection of pottery famous in England, that had belonged to the fifth duke, his father. Every piece of it, by the way, afterwards brought an enormous sum at auction. Supper was served in a warm little room of oak. The game was from Derresley Manor, the duke's Nottinghamshire seat, and the wine, so he told us, was some of fifty bottles of rare Chinon he had inherited. Melted rubies it was indeed, of the sort which had quickened the blood of many a royal gathering at Blois and Amboise and Chenonceaux,—the distilled peasant song of the Loire valley. In it many a careworn clown had tasted the purer happiness of the lowly. Our restraint

gave way under its influence. His Grace lost for the moment his deformities, and Mr. Fox made us laugh until our sides ached again. His Lordship told many a capital yarn, and my own wit was afterwards said to be astonishing, though I can recall none of it to support the affirmation.

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Not a word or even a hint of Dorothy had been uttered, nor did Chartersea so much as refer to his Covent Garden experience. At length, when some half dozen of the wine was gone, and the big oak clock had struck two, the talk lapsed. It was Charles Fox, of course, who threw the spark into the powder box.

“We were speaking of hunting, Chartersea,” he said. “Did you ever know George Wrottlesey, of the Suffolk branch?”

“No,” said his Grace, very innocent.

“No! ’Od’s whips and spurs, I’ll be sworn I never saw a man to beat him for reckless riding. He would take five bars any time, egad, and sit any colt that was ever foaled. The Wrottleseys were poor as weavers then, with the Jews coming down in the wagon from London and hanging round the hall gates. But the old squire had plenty of good hunters in the stables, and haunches on the board, and a cellar that was like the widow’s cruse of oil, or barrel of meal—or whatever she had. All the old man had to do to lose a guinea was to lay it on a card. He never nicked in his life, so they say. Well, young George got after a rich tea-merchant’s daughter who had come into the country near by. ’Slife! she was a saucy jade, and devilish pretty. Such a face! so Stavordale vowed, and such a neck! and such eyes! so innocent, so ravishingly innocent. But she knew cursed well George was after the bank deposit, and kept him galloping. And when he got a view, halloa, egad! she was stole away again, and no scent.

“One morning George was out after the hounds with Stavordale, who told me the story, and a lot of fellows who had come over from Newmarket. He was upon Aftermath, the horse that Foley bought for five hundred pounds and was a colt then. Of course he left the field out of sight behind. He made for a gap in the park wall (faith! there was no lack of ’em), but the colt refused, and over went George and plumped into a cart of winter apples some farmer’s sot was taking to Bury Saint Edmunds to market. The fall knocked the sense out of George, for he hasn’t much, and Stavordale thinks he must have struck a stake as he went in. Anyway, the apples rolled over on top of him, and the drunkard on the seat never woke up, i’ faith. And so they came to town.

“It so chanced, egad, that the devil sent Miss Tea Merchant to Bury to buy apples. She amused herself at playing country gentlewoman while papa worked all week in the city. She saw the cart in the market, and ate three (for she had the health of a barmaid), and bid in the load, and George with it. ’Pon my soul! she did. They found his boots first. And the lady said, before all the grinning Johns and Willums, that since she had bought him she supposed she would have to keep him. And, by Gads life! she has got him yet, which is a deal stranger.”

Even the duke laughed. For, as Fox told it, the story was irresistible. But it came as near to being a wanton insult as a reference to his Grace’s own episode might. The red came slowly back into his eye. Fox stared vacantly, as was his habit when he had done

or said something especially daring. And Comyn and I waited, straining and expectant, like boys who have prodded a wild beast and stand ready for the spring. There was a metallic ring in the duke's voice as he spoke.

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“I have heard, Mr. Carvel, that you can ride any mount offered you.”

“Od’s, and so he can!” cried Jack. “I’ll take oath on that.”

“I will lay you an hundred guineas, my Lord,” says his Grace, very off-hand, “that Mr. Carvel does not sit Baltimore’s Pollux above twenty minutes.”

“Done!” says Jack, before I could draw breath.

“I’ll take your Grace for another hundred,” calmly added Mr. Fox.

“It seems to me, your Grace,” I cried, angry all at once, “it seems to me that I am the one to whom you should address your wagers. I am not a jockey, to be put up at your whim, and to give you the chance to lose money.”

Chartersea swung around my way.

“Your pardon, Mr. Carvel,” said he, very coolly, very politely; “yours is the choice of the wager. And you reject it, the others must be called off.”

“Slife! I double it!” I said hotly, “provided the horse is alive, and will stand up.”

“Devilish well put, Richard!” Mr. Fox exclaimed, casting off his restraint.

“I give you my word the horse is alive, sir,” he answered, with a mock bow; “’twas only yesterday that he killed his groom, at Hampstead.”

A few moments of silence followed this revelation. It was Charles Fox who spoke first.

“I make no doubt that your Grace, as a man of honour,”—he emphasized the word forcibly,—“will not refuse to ride the horse for another twenty minutes, provided Mr. Carvel is successful. And I will lay your Grace another hundred that you are thrown, or run away with.”

Truly, to cope with a wit like Mr. Fox’s, the duke had need for a longer head. He grew livid as he perceived how neatly he had been snared in his own trap.

“Done!” he cried loudly; “done, gentlemen. It only remains to hit upon time and place for the contest. I go to York to-morrow, to be back this day fortnight. And if you will do me the favour of arranging with Baltimore for the horse, I shall be obliged. I believe he intends selling it to Astley, the showman.”

“And are we to keep it?” asks Mr. Fox.

“I am dealing with men of honour,” says the duke, with a bow: “I need have no better assurance that the horse will not be ridden in the interval.”

“’Od so!” said Comyn, when we were out; “very handsome of him. But I would not say as much for his Grace.”

And Mr. Fox declared that the duke was no coward, but all other epithets known might be called him. “A very diverting evening, Richard,” said he; “let’s to your apartments and have a bowl, and talk it over.”

And thither we went.

I did not sleep much that night, but ’twas of Dolly I thought rather than of Chartersea. I was abroad early, and over to inquire in Arlington Street, where I found she had passed a good night. And I sent Banks a-hooting for some violets to send her, for I knew she loved that flower.

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Between ten and eleven Mr. Fox and Comyn and I set out for Baltimore House. When you go to London, my dears, you will find a vast difference in the neighbourhood of Bloomsbury from what it was that May morning in 1770. Great Russell Street was all a sweet fragrance of gardens, mingling with the smell of the fields from the open country to the north. We drove past red Montagu House with its stone facings and dome, like a French hotel, and the cluster of buildings at its great gate. It had been then for over a decade the British Museum. The ground behind it was a great resort for Londoners of that day. Many a sad affair was fought there, but on that morning we saw a merry party on their way to play prisoner's base.

Then we came to the gardens in front of Bedford House, which are now Bloomsbury Square. For my part I preferred this latter mansion to the French creation by its side, and admired its long and graceful lines. Its windows commanded a sweep from Holborn on the south to Highgate on the north. To the east of it, along Southampton Row, a few great houses had gone up or were building; and at the far end of that was Baltimore house, overlooking her Grace of Bedford's gardens. Beyond Lamb's Conduit Fields stretched away to the countryside.

I own I had a lively curiosity to see that lordly ruler, the proprietor of our province, whose birthday we celebrated after his Majesty's. Had I not been in a great measure prepared, I should have had a revulsion indeed.

When he heard that Mr. Fox and my Lord Comyn were below stairs he gave orders to show them up to his bedroom, where he received us in a night-gown embroidered with oranges. My Lord Baltimore, alas! was not much to see. He did not make the figure a ruler should as he sat in his easy chair, and whined and cursed his Swiss. He was scarce a year over forty, and he had all but run his race. Dissipation and corrosion had set their seal upon him, had stamped his yellow face with crows' feet and blotted it with pimples. But then the glimpse of a fine gentleman just out of bed of a morning, before he is made for the day, is unfair.

"Morning, Charles! Howdy, Jack!" said his Lordship, apathetically. "Glad to know you, Mr. Carvel. Heard of your family. 'Slife! Wish there were more like 'em in the province."

This sentiment not sitting very well upon his Lordship, I bowed, and said nothing.

"By the bye," he continued, pouring out his chocolate into the dish, "I sent a damned rake of a parson out there some years gone. Handsome devil, too. Never seen his match with the women, egad. 'Od's fish—" he leered. And then added with an oath and a nod and a vile remark: "Married three times to my knowledge. Carried off dozen or so more. Some of 'em for me. Many a good night I've had with him. Drank between us one evening at Essex's gallon and half Champagne and Burgundy apiece. He got to know too much, y' know," he concluded, with a wicked wink. "Had to buy him up pack him off."

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“His name, Fred?” said Comyn, with a smile at me.

“’Sdeath! That’s it. Trouble to remember. Damned if I can think.” And he repeated this remark over and over.

“Allen?” said Comyn.

“Yes,” said Baltimore; “Allen. And egad I think he’ll find hell a hotter place than me. You know him, Mr. Carvel?”

“Yes,” I replied. I said no more. I make no reservations when I avow I was never so disgusted in my life. But as I looked upon him, haggard and worn, with retribution so neat at hand, I had no words to protest or condemn.

Baltimore gave a hollow mirthless laugh, stopped short, and looked at Charles Fox.

“Curse you, Charles! I suppose you are after that little matter I owe you for quinze.”

“Damn the little matter!” said Fox. “Come, get you perfumed and dressed, and order up some of your Tokay while we wait. I have to go to St. Stephens. Mr. Carvel has come to buy your horse Pollux. He has bet Chartersea two hundred guineas he rides him for twenty minutes.”

“The devil he has!” cried his Lordship, jaded no longer. “Why, you must know, Mr. Carvel, there was no groom in my stables who would sit him until Foley made me a present of his man, Miller, who started to ride him to Hyde Park. As he came out of Great Russell Street, by gads life! the horse broke and ran out the Tottenham Court Road all the way to Hampstead. And the fiend picked out a big stone water trough and tossed Miller against it. Then they gathered up the fragments. Damme if I like to see suicide, Mr. Carvel. If Chartersea wants to kill you, let him try it in the fields behind Montagu House here.”

I told his Lordship that I had made the wager, and could not in honour withdraw, though the horse had killed a dozen grooms. But already he seemed to have lost interest. He gave a languid pull at the velvet tassel on his bell-rope, ordered the wine; and, being informed that his anteroom below was full of people, had them all dismissed with the message that he was engaged upon important affairs. He told Mr. Fox he had heard of the Jerusalem Chamber, and vowed he would have a like institution. He told me he wished the colony of Maryland in hell; that he was worn out with the quarrels of Governor Eden and his Assembly, and offered to lay a guinea that the Governor’s agent would get to him that day,—will-he, nill-he. I did not think it worth while to argue with such a man.

My Lord took three-quarters of an hour to dress, and swore he had not accomplished the feat so quickly in a year. He washed his hands and face in a silver basin, and the

scent of the soap filled the room. He rated his Swiss for putting cinnamon upon his ruffles in place of attar of roses, and attempted to regale us the while with some of his choicest adventures. In more than one of these, by the way, his Grace of Chartersea figured. It was Fox who brought him up.

“See here, Baltimore,” he said, “I’m not squeamish. But I’m cursed if I like to hear a man who may die any time between bottles talk so.”

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His Lordship took the rebuke with an oath, and presently hobbled down the stairs of the great and silent house to the stable court, where two grooms were in waiting with the horse. He was an animal of amazing power, about sixteen hands, and dapple gray in colour. And it required no special knowledge to see that he had a devil inside him. It gleamed wickedly out of his eye.

"'Od's life, Richard!" cried Charles, "he has a Jew nose; by all the seven tribes I bid you 'ware of him."

"You have but to ride him with a gold bit, Richard," said Comyn, "and he is a kitten, I'll warrant."

At that moment Pollux began to rear and kick, so that it took both the 'ostlers to hold him.

"Show him a sovereign," suggested Fox. "How do you feel, Richard?"

"I never feared a horse yet," I said with perfect truth, "nor do I fear this one, though I know he may kill me."

"I'll lay you twenty pounds you have at least one bone broken, and ten that you are killed," Baltimore puts in querulously, from the doorway.

"I'll do this, my Lord," I answered. "If I ride him, he is mine. If he throws me, I give you twenty pounds for him."

The gentlemen laughed, and Baltimore vowed he could sell the horse to Astley for fifty; that Pollux was the son of Renown, of the Duke of Kingston's stud, and much more. But Charles rallied him out by a reference to the debt at quinze, and an appeal to his honour as a sportsman. And swore he was discouraging one of the prettiest encounters that would take place in England for many a long day. And so the horse was sent to the stables of the White Horse Cellar, in Piccadilly, and left there at my order.

CHAPTER XXXVI

A GLIMPSE OF MR. GARRICK

Day after day I went to Arlington Street, each time to be turned away with the same answer: that Miss Manners was a shade better, but still confined to her bed. You will scarce believe me, my dears, when I say that Mr. Marmaduke had gone at this crisis with his Grace to the York races. On the fourth morning, I think, I saw Mrs. Manners. She was much worn with the vigil she had kept, and received me with an apathy to frighten me. Her way with me had hitherto always been one of kindness and warmth. In answer to the dozen questions I showered upon her, she replied that Dorothy's

malady was in no wise dangerous, so Dr. James had said, and undoubtedly arose out of the excitement of a London season. As I knew, Dorothy was of the kind that must run and run until she dropped. She had no notion of the measure of her own strength. Mrs. Manners hoped that, in a fortnight, she would be recovered sufficiently to be removed to one of the baths.

“She wishes me to thank you for the flowers, Richard. She has them constantly by her. And bids me tell you how sorry she is that she is compelled to miss so much of your visit to England. Are you enjoying London, Richard? I hear that you are well liked by the best of company.”

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I left, prodigiously cast down, and went directly to Mr. Wedgwood's, to choose the prettiest set of tea-cups and dishes I could find there. I pitied Mrs. Manners from my heart, and made every allowance for her talk with me, knowing the sorrow of her life. Here was yet another link in the chain of the Chartersea evidence. And I made no doubt that Mr. Manner's brutal desertion at such a time must be hard to bear. I continued my visits of inquiry, nearly always meeting some person of consequence, or the footman of such, come on the same errand as myself. And once I encountered the young man she had championed against his Grace at Lady Tankerville's.

Rather than face the array of anxieties that beset me, I plunged recklessly into the gayeties—nay, the excesses—of Mr. Charles Fox and his associates. I paid, in truth, a very high price for my friendship with Mr. Fox. But, since it did not quite ruin me, I look back upon it as cheaply bought. To know the man well, to be the subject of his regard, was to feel an infatuation in common with the little band of worshippers which had come with him from Eton. They remained faithful to him all his days, nor adversity nor change of opinion could shake their attachment. They knew his faults, deplored them, and paid for them. And this was not beyond my comprehension, tho' many have wondered at it. Did he ask me for five hundred pounds,—which he did,—I gave it freely, and would gladly have given more, tho' I saw it all wasted in a night when the dice rolled against him. For those honoured few of whom I speak likewise knew his virtues, which were quite as large as the faults, albeit so mingled with them that all might not distinguish.

I attended some of the routs and parties, to all of which, as a young colonial gentleman of wealth and family, I was made welcome. I went to a ball at Lord Stanley's, a mixture of French horns and clarionets and coloured glass lanthorns and candles in gilt vases, and young ladies pouring tea in white, and musicians in red, and draperies and flowers ad libitum. There I met Mr. Walpole, looking on very critically. He was the essence of friendliness, asked after my equerry, and said I had done well to ship him to America. At the opera, with Lord Ossory and Mr. Fitzpatrick, I talked through the round of the boxes, from Lady Pembroke's on the right to Lady Hervey's on the left, where Dolly's illness and Lady Harrington's snuffing gabble were the topics rather than Giardini's fiddling. Mr. Storer took me to Foote's dressing-room at the Haymarket, where we found the Duke of Cumberland lounging. I was presented, and thought his Royal Highness had far less dignity than the monkey-comedian we had come to see.

I must not forget the visit I made to Drury Lane Playhouse with my Lords Carlisle and Grantham and Comyn. The great actor received me graciously in such a company, you may be sure. He appeared much smaller off the boards than on, and his actions and speech were quick and nervous. Gast, his hairdresser, was making him up for the character of Richard III.

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“’Ods!” said Mr. Garrick, “your Lordships come five minutes too late. Goldsmith is but just gone hence, fresh from his tailor, Filby, of Water Lane. The most gorgeous creature in London, gentlemen, I’ll be sworn. He is even now, so he would have me know, gone by invitation to my Lord Denbigh’s box, to ogle the ladies.”

“And have you seen your latest lampoon, Mr. Garrick?” asks Comyn, winking at me.

Up leaps Mr. Garrick, so suddenly as to knock the paint-pot from Gast’s hand.

“Nay, your Lordship jests, surely!” he cried, his voice shaking.

“Jests!” says my Lord, very serious; “do I jest, Carlisle?” And turning to Mr. Cross, the prompter, who stood by, “Fetch me the St. James’s Evening Post,” says he.

“’Ods my life!” continues poor Garrick, almost in tears; “I have loaned Foote upwards of two thousand pounds. And last year, as your Lordship remembers, took charge of his theatre when his leg was cut off. ’Pon my soul, I cannot account for his ingratitude.”

“’Tis not Foote,” says Carlisle, biting his lip; “I know Foote’s mark.”

“Then Johnson,” says the actor, “because I would not let him have my fine books in his dirty den to be kicked about the floor, but put my library at his disposal—”

“Nay, nor Johnson. Nor yet Macklin nor Murphy.”

“Surely not—” cries Mr. Garrick, turning white under the rouge. The name remained unpronounced.

“Ay, ay, Junius, in the Evening Post. He has fastened upon you at last,” answers Comyn, taking the paper.

“’Sdeath! Garrick,” Carlisle puts in, very solemn, “what have you done to offend the Terrible Unknown? Talebearing to his Majesty, I’ll warrant! I gave you credit for more discretion.”

At these words Mr. Garrick seized the chair for support, and swung heavily into it. Whereat the young lords burst into such a tempest of laughter that I could not refrain from joining them. As for Mr. Garrick, he was so pleased to have escaped that he laughed too, though with a palpable nervousness.

> [Note by the editor. It was not long after this that Mr. Garrick’s punishment came, and for the self-same offence.]

“By the bye, Garrick,” Carlisle remarked slyly, when he had recovered, “Mrs. Crewe was vastly taken with the last ‘vers’ you left on her dressing-table.”

“Was she, now, my Lord?” said the great actor, delighted, but scarce over his fright. “You must know that I have writ one to my Lady Carlisle, on the occasion of her dropping her fan in Piccadilly.” Whereupon he proceeded to recite it, and my Lord Carlisle, being something of a poet himself, pronounced it excellent.

Mr. Garrick asked me many questions concerning American life and manners, having a play in his repertory the scene of which was laid in New York. In the midst of this we were interrupted by a dirty fellow who ran in, crying excitedly:

“Sir, the Archbishop of York is getting drunk at the Bear, and swears he’ll be d—d if he’ll act to-night.”

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“The archbishop may go to the devil!” snapped Mr. Garrick. “I do not know a greater rascal, except yourself.”

I was little short of thunderstruck. But presently Mr. Garrick added complainingly:

“I paid a guinea for the archbishop, but the fellow got me three murderers to-day and the best alderman I ever clapped eyes upon. So we are square.”

After the play we supped with him at his new house in Adelphi Terrace, next Topham Beauclerk’s. ’Twas handsomely built in the Italian style, and newly furnished throughout, for Mr. Garrick travelled now with a coach and six and four menservants, forsooth. And amongst other things he took pride in showing us that night was a handsome snuffbox which the King of Denmark had given him the year before, his Majesty’s portrait set in jewels thereon.

Presently the news of the trial of Lord Baltimore’s horse began to be noised about, and was followed by a deluge of wagers at Brooks’s and White’s and elsewhere. Comyn and Fox, my chief supporters, laid large sums upon me, despite all my persuasion. But the most unpleasant part of the publicity was the rumour that the match was connected with the struggle for Miss Manners’s hand. I was pressed with invitations to go into the country to ride this or that horse. His Grace the Duke of Grafton had a mount he would have me try at Wakefield Lodge, and was far from pleasant over my refusal of his invitation. I was besieged by young noblemen like Lord Derby and Lord Foley, until I was heartily sick of notoriety, and cursed the indiscretion of the person who let out the news, and my own likewise. My Lord March, who did me the honour to lay one hundred pounds upon my skill, insisted that I should make one of a party to the famous amphitheatre near Lambeth. Mr. Astley, the showman, being informed of his Lordship’s intention, met us on Westminster Bridge dressed in his uniform as sergeant major of the Royal Light Dragoons and mounted on a white charger. He escorted us to one of the large boxes under the pent-house reserved for the gentry. And when the show was over and the place cleared, begged, that I would ride his Indian Chief. I refused; but March pressed me, and Comyn declared he had staked his reputation upon my horsemanship. Astley was a large man, about my build, and I donned a pair of his leather breeches and boots, and put Indian Chief to his paces around the ring. I found him no more restive, nor as much so, as Firefly. The gentlemen were good enough to clap me roundly, and Astley vowed (no doubt because of the noble patrons present) that he had never seen a better seat.

We all repaired afterwards for supper to Don Saltero’s Coffee House and Museum in Chelsea. And I remembered having heard my grandfather speak of the place, and tell how he had seen Sir Richard Steele there, listening to the Don scraping away at the “Merry Christ Church Bells” on his fiddle. The Don was since dead, but King James’s coronation sword and King Henry VIII.’s coat of mail still hung on the walls.

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The remembrance of that fortnight has ever been an appalling one. Mr. Carvel had never attempted to teach me the value of money. My grandfather, indeed, held but four things essential to the conduct of life; namely, to fear God, love the King, pay your debts, and pursue your enemies. There was no one in London to advise me, Comyn being but a wild lad like myself. But my Lord Carlisle gave me a friendly warning:

“Have a care, Carvel,” said he, kindly, “or you will run your grandfather through, and all your relations beside. I little realized the danger of it when I first came up.” (He was not above two and twenty then.) “And now I have a wife, am more crippled than I care to be, thanks to this devilish high play. Will you dine with Lady Carlisle in St. James’s Place next Friday?”

My heart went out to this young nobleman. Handsome he was, as a picture. And he knew better than most of your fine gentlemen how to put a check on his inclinations. As a friend he had few equals, his purse being ever at the command of those he loved. And his privations on Fox’s account were already greater than many knew.

I had a call, too, from Mr. Dix. I found him in my parlour one morning, cringing and smiling, and, as usual, half an hour away from his point.

“I warrant you, Mr. Carvel,” says he, “there are few young gentlemen not born among the elect that make the great friends you are blessed with.”

“I have been fortunate, Mr. Dix,” I replied dryly.

“Fortunate!” he cried; “good Lord, sir! I hear of you everywhere with Mr. Fox, and you have been to Astley’s with my Lord March. And I have a draft from you at Ampthill.”

“Vastly well manoeuvred, Mr. Dix,” I said, laughing at the guilty change in his pink complexion. “And hence you are here.”

He fidgeted, and seeing that I paid him no attention, but went on with my chocolate, he drew a paper from his pocket and opened it.

“You have spent a prodigious sum, sir, for so short a time,” said he, unsteadily. “’Tis very well for you, Mr. Carvel, but I have to remember that you are heir only. I am advancing you money without advices from his Worship, your grandfather. A most irregular proceeding, sir, and one likely to lead me to trouble. I know not what your allowance may be.”

“Nor I, Mr. Dix,” I replied, unreasonably enough. “To speak truth, I have never had one. You have my Lord Comyn’s signature to protect you,” I went on ill-naturedly, for I had not had enough sleep. “And in case Mr. Carvel protests, which is unlikely and preposterous, you shall have ten percentum on your money until I can pay you. That should be no poor investment.”

He apologized. But he smoothed out the paper on his knee.

“It is only right to tell you, Mr. Carvel, that you have spent one thousand eight hundred and thirty-seven odd pounds, in home money, which is worth more than your colonial. Your grandfather’s balance with me was something less than one thousand five hundred, as I made him a remittance in December last. I have advanced the rest. And yesterday,” he went on, resolutely for him, “yesterday I got an order for five hundred more.”

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And he handed me the paper. I must own that the figures startled me. I laid it down with a fine show of indifference.

“And so you wish me to stop drawing? Very good, Mr. Dix.”

He must have seen some threat implied, though I meant none. He was my very humble servant at once, and declared he had called only to let me know where I stood. Then he bowed himself out, wishing me luck with the horse he had heard of, and I lighted my pipe with his accompt.

CHAPTER XXXVII

THE SERPENTINE

Whether it was Mr. Dix. that started me reflecting, or my Lord Carlisle’s warning, or a few discreet words from young Lady Carlisle herself, I know not. At all events, I made a resolution to stop high play, and confine myself to whist and quinze and picquet. For I conceived a notion, enlarged by Mr. Fox, that I had more than once fallen into the tender clutches of the hounds. I was so reflecting the morning following Lord Carlisle’s dinner, when Banks announced a footman.

“Mr. Manners’s man, sir,” he added significantly, and handed me a little note. I seized it, and, to hide my emotion, told him to give the man his beer.

The writing was Dorothy’s, and some time passed after I had torn off the wrapper before I could compose myself to read it.

“So, Sir, the Moment I am too ill to watch you you must needs lapse into Wilde & Flity Doings, for thus y’rs are call’d even in London. Never Mind how y’r Extravigancies are come to my Ears Sir. One Matter I have herd that I am Most Concerned about, & I pray you, my Dear Richard do not allow y’r Recklessness & Contemt for Danger to betray you into a Stil more Amazing Follie or I shall be very Miserable Indeed. I have Hopes that the Report is at Best a Rumour & you must sit down & write me that it is Sir that my Minde may be set at Rest. I fear for you Vastly & I beg you not Riske y’r Life Foolishly & this for the Sake of one who subscribes herself y’r Old Playmate & Well-Wisher Dolly.

“P.S. I have writ Sir Jon Fielding to put you in the Marshallsee or New Gate until Mr. Carvel can be tolde. I am Better & hope soon to see you agen & have been informed of y’r Dayly Visitts & y’r Flowers are beside me. D. M.”

In about an hour and a half, Mr. Marmaduke’s footman was on his way back to Arlington Street in a condition not to be lightly spoken of. During that period I had committed an hundred silly acts, and incidentally learned the letter by heart. I was much distressed to think that she had heard of the affair of the horse, and more so to surmise that the

gossip which clung to it must also have reached her. But I fear I thought most of her anxiety concerning me, which reflection caused my hand to shake from very happiness. “Y’r Flowers are beside me,” and, “I beg you not Riske y’r Life Foolishly,” and “I shall be very Miserable Indeed” But then: “Y’r Old Plamate & Well Wisher”! Nay, she was inscrutable as ever.

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And my reply,—what was that to be? How I composed it in the state of mind I was in, I have no conception to this day. The chimney was clogged with papers ere (in a spelling to vie with Dolly's) I had set down my devotion, my undying devotion, to her interests. I asked forgiveness for my cruelty on that memorable morning I had last seen her. But even to allude to the bet with Chartersea was beyond my powers; and as for renouncing it, though for her sake,—that was not to be thought of. The high play I readily promised to avoid in the future, and I signed myself,—well, it matters not after seventy years.

The same day, Tuesday, I received a letter from his Grace of Chartersea saying that he looked to reach London that night, but very late. He begged that Mr. Fox and Lord Comyn and I would sup with him at the Star and Garter at eleven, to fix matters for the trial on the morrow. Mr. Fox could not go, but Comyn and I went to the inn, having first attended "The Tempest" at Drury Lane with Lady Di and Mr. Beauclerk.

We found his Grace awaiting us in a private room, with Captain Lewis, of the 60th Foot, who had figured as a second in the duel with young Atwater. The captain was a rake and a bully and a toadeater, of course, with a loud and profane tongue, and he had had a bottle too many in the duke's travelling-coach. There was likewise a Sir John Brooke, a country neighbour of his Grace in Nottinghamshire. Sir John apparently had no business in such company. He was a hearty, fox-hunting squire who had seen little of London; a three-bottle man who told a foul story and went asleep immediately afterwards. Much to my disappointment, Mr. Manners had gone to Arlington Street direct. I had longed for a chance to speak a little of my mind to him.

This meeting, which I shall not take the time to recount, was near to ending in an open breach of negotiations. His Grace had lost money at York, and more to Lewis on the way to London. He was in one of his vicious humours. He insisted that Hyde Park should be the place of the contest. In vain did Comyn and I plead for some less public spot on account of the disagreeable advertisement the matter had received. His Grace would be damned before he would yield; and Lewis, adding a more forcible contingency, hinted that our side feared a public trial. Comyn presently shut him up.

"Do you ride the horse after his Grace is thrown," says he, "and I agree to get on after and he does not kill you. 'Sdeath! I am not of the army," adds my Lord, cuttingly; "I am a seaman, and not supposed to know a stirrup from a snaffle."

"'Od's blood!" yelled the captain, "you question my horsemanship, my Lord? Do I understand your Lordship to question my courage?"

"After I am thrown!" cries his Grace, very ugly, and fingering the jewels on his hilt.

Sir John was awakened by the noise, and turning heavily spilled the whole of a pint of port on the duke's satin waist coat and breeches. Whereat Chartersea in a rage flung the bottle at his head with a curse, which it seems was a habit with his Grace. But the

servants coming in, headed by my old friend the chamberlain, they quieted down. And it was presently agreed that the horse was to be at noon in the King's Old Road, or Rotten Row (as it was then beginning to be called), in Hyde Park.

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I shall carry to the grave the memory of the next day. I was up betimes, and over to the White Horse Cellar to see Pollux groomed, where I found a crowd about the opening into the stable court. “The young American!” called some one, and to my astonishment and no small annoyance I was greeted with a “Huzzay for you, sir!” “My groat’s on your honour!”

This good-will was owing wholly to the duke’s unpopularity with all classes. Inside, sporting gentlemen in hunting-frocks of red and green, and velvet visored caps, were shouldering favoured ’ostlers from the different noblemen’s stables; and there was a liberal sprinkling of the characters who attended the cock mains in Drury Lane and at Newmarket. At the moment of my arrival the head ’ostler was rubbing down the stallion’s flank.

“Here’s ten pounds to ride him, Saunders!” called one of the hunting-frocks.

“Umph!” sniffed the ’ostler; “ride ’im is it, yere honour? Two hunner beast eno’, an’ a Portugal crown i’ th’ boot. Sooner take me chaunces o’ Tyburn on ’Ounslow ‘Eath. An’ Miller waurna able to sit ’im, ’tis no for th’ likes o’ me to try. Th’ bloody devil took th’ shirt off Teddy’s back this morn. I adwises th’ young Buckskin t’ order ’s coffin.” Just then he perceived me, and touched his cap, something abashed. “With submission, sir, y’r honour’ll take an old man’s adwise an’ not go near ’im.”

Pollux’s appearance, indeed, was not calculated to reassure me. He looked ugly to exaggeration, his ears laid back and his nostrils as big as crowns, and his teeth bared time and time. Now and anon an impatient fling of his hoof would make the grooms start away from him. Since coming to the inn he had been walked a couple of miles each day, with two men with loaded whips to control him. I was being offered a deal of counsel, when big Mr. Astley came in from Lambeth, and silenced them all.

“These grooms, Mr. Carvel,” he said to me, as we took a bottle in private inside, “these grooms are the very devil for superstition. And once a horse gets a bad name with them, good-by to him. Miller knew how to ride, of course, but like many another of them, was too damned over-confident. I warned him more than once for getting young horses into a fret, and I’m willing to lay a ten-pound note that he angered Pollux. ’Od’s life! He is a vicious beast. So was his father, Culloden, before him. But here’s luck to you, sir!” says Mr. Astley, tipping his glass; “having seen you ride, egad! I have put all the money I can afford in your favour.”

Before I left him he had given me several valuable hints as to the manner of managing that kind of a horse: not to auger him with the spurs unless it became plain that he meant to kill me; to try persuasion first and force afterwards; and secondly, he taught me a little trick of twisting the bit which I have since found very useful.

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Leaving the White Horse, I was followed into Piccadilly by the crowd, until I was forced to take refuge in a hackney chaise. The noise of the affair had got around town, and I was heartily sorry I had not taken the other and better method of trying conclusions with the duke, and slapped his face. I found Jack Comyn in Dover Street, and presently Mr. Fox came for us with his chestnuts in his chaise, Fitzpatrick with him. At Hyde Park Corner there was quite a jam of coaches, chaises, and cabriolets and beribboned phaetons, which made way for us, but kept us busy bowing as we passed among them. It seemed as if everybody of consequence that I had met in London was gathered there. One face I missed, and rejoiced that she was absent, for I had a degraded feeling like that of being the favourite in a cudgel-bout. And the thought that her name was connected with all this made my face twitch. I heard the people clapping and saw them waving in the carriages as we passed, and some stood forward before the rest in a haphazard way, without rhyme or reason. Mr. Walpole with Lady Di Beauclerk, and Mr. Storer and Mr. Price and Colonel St. John, and Lord and Lady Carlisle and Lady Ossory. These I recognized. Inside, the railing along the row was lined with people. And there stood Pollux, bridled, with a blanket thrown over his great back and chest, surrounded still by the hunting-frocks, who had followed him from the White Horse. Mixed in with these, swearing, conjecturing, and betting, were some to surprise me, whose names were connected with every track in England: the Duke of Grafton and my Lords Sandwich and March and Bolingbroke, and Sir Charles Bunbury, and young Lords Derby and Foley, who, after establishing separate names for folly on the tracks, went into partnership. My Lord Baltimore descended listlessly from his cabriolet to join the group. They all sang out when they caught sight of our party, and greeted me with a zeal to carry me off my feet. And my Lord Sandwich, having done me the honour to lay something very handsome upon me, had his chief jockey on hand to give me some final advice. I believe I was the coolest of any of them. And at that time of all others the fact came up to me with irresistible humour that I, a young colonial Whig, who had grown up to detest these people, should be rubbing noses with them.

The duke put in an appearance five minutes before the hour, upon a bay gelding, and attended by Lewis and Sir John Brooke, both mounted. As a most particular evidence of the detestation in which Chartersea was held, he could find nothing in common with such notorious rakes as March and Sandwich. And it fell to me to champion these. After some discussion between Fox and Captain Lewis, March was chosen umpire. His Lordship took his post in the middle of the Row, drew forth an enamelled repeater from his waistcoat, and mouthed out the conditions of the match,—the terms, as he said, being private.

“Are you ready, Mr. Carvel?” he asked.

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“I am, my Lord,” I answered. The bells were pealing noon.

“Then mount, sir,” said he.

The voices of the people dropped to a hum that brought to mind the long forgotten sound of the bees swarming in the garden by the Chesapeake. My breath began to come quickly. Through the sunny haze I saw the cows and deer grazing by the Serpentine, and out of the back of my eye handkerchiefs floated from the carriages banked at the gate. They took the blanket off the stallion. Stall-fed, and excited by the crowd, he looked brutal indeed. The faithful Banks, in a new suit of the Carvel livery, held the stirrup, and whispered a husky “God keep you, sir!” Suddenly I was up. The murmur was hushed, and the Park became still as a peaceful farm in Devonshire. The grooms let go of the stallion’s head.

He stood trembling like the throes of death. I gripped my knees as Captain Daniel had taught me, years ago, when some invisible force impelled me to look aside. From between the broad and hunching shoulders of Chartersea I met such a venomous stare as a cattle-fish might use to freeze his prey. Cattle—fish! The word kept running over my tongue. I thought of the snaky arms that had already caught Mr. Marmaduke, and were soon, perhaps, to entangle Dorothy. She had begged me not to ride, and I was risking a life which might save hers.

The wind rushing in my ears and beating against my face awoke me all at once. The trees ran madly past, and the water at my right was a silver blur. The beast beneath me snorted as he rose and fell. Fainter and fainter dropped the clamour behind me, which had risen as I started, and the leaps grew longer and longer. Then my head was cleared like a steamed window-pane in a cold blast. I saw the road curve in front of me, I put all my strength into the curb, and heeling at a fearful angle was swept into the busy Kensington Road. For the first time I knew what it was to fear a horse. The stallion’s neck was stretched, his shoes rang on the cobbles, and my eyes were fixed on a narrow space between carriages coming together. In a flash I understood why the duke had insisted upon Hyde Park, and that nerved me some. I saw the frightened coachmen pulling their horses this way and that, I heard the cries of the foot-passengers, and then I was through, I know not how. Once more I summoned all my power, recalled the twist Astley had spoken of, and tried it. I bent his neck for an inch of rein. Next I got another inch, and then came a taste—the smallest taste—of mastery like elixir. The motion changed with it, became rougher, and the hoof-beats a fraction less frequent. He steered like a ship with sail reduced. In and out we dodged among the wagons, and I was beginning to think I had him, when suddenly, without a move of warning, he came down rigid with his feet planted together, and only a miracle and my tight grip restrained me from shooting over his head. There he stood shaking and snorting, nor any persuasion would move him. I resorted at last to the spurs.

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He was up in the air in an instant, and came down across the road. Again I dug in to the rowels, and clung the tighter, and this time he landed with his head to London. A little knot of people had collected to watch me, and out stepped a strapping fellow in the King's scarlet, from the Guard's Horse near by.

"Hold him, sir!" he said, tipping. "Better dismount, sir. He means murder, y'r honour."

"Keep clear, curse you!" I cried, waving him off. "What time is it?"

He stepped back, no doubt thinking me mad. Some one spoke up and said it was five minutes past noon. I had the grace to thank him, I believe. To my astonishment I had been gone but four minutes; they had seemed twenty. Looking about me, I found I was in the open space before old Kensington Church, over against the archway there. Once more I dug in the spurs, this time with success. Almost at a jump the beast took me into the angle of posts to the east of the churchyard gate and tore up the footpath of Church Lane, terrified men and women ahead of me taking to the kennel. He ran irregularly, now on the side of the posts, now against the bricks, and then I gave myself up.

Heaven put a last expedient into my head, that I had once heard Mr. Dulany speak of. I braced myself for a pull that should have broken the stallion's jaw and released his mouth altogether. Incredible as it may seem, he jarred into a trot, and presently came down to a walk, tossing his head like fury, and sweating at every pore. I leaned over and patted him, speaking him fair, and (marvel of marvels!) when we had got to the dogs that guard the entrance of Camden House I had coaxed him around and into the street, and cantered back at easy speed to the church. Without pausing to speak to the bunch that stood at the throat of the lane, I started toward London, thankfulness and relief swelling within me. I understood the beast, and spoke to him when he danced aside at a wagon with bells or a rattling load of coals, and checked him with a word and a light hand.

Before I gained the Life Guard's House I met a dozen horsemen, amongst them Banks on a mount of Mr. Fox's. They shouted when they saw me, Colonel St. John calling out that he had won another hundred that I was not dead. Sir John Brooke puffed and swore he did not begrudge his losses to see me safe, despite Captain Lewis's sourness. Storey vowed he would give a dinner in my honour, and, riding up beside me, whispered that he was damned sorry the horse was now broken, and his Grace's chance of being killed taken away. And thus escorted, I came in by the King's New Road to avoid the people running in the Row, and so down to Hyde Park Corner, and in among the chaises and the phaetons, where there was enough cheering and waving of hats and handkerchiefs to please the most exacting of successful generals. I rode up to my Lord March, and finding there was a minute yet to run I went up the Row a distance and back again amidst more huzzaing, Pollux prancing and quivering, and frothing his bit, but never once attempting to break.

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When I had got down, they pressed around me until I could scarce breathe, crying congratulations, Comyn embracing me openly. Mr. Fox vowed he had never seen so fine a sight, and said many impolitic things which the duke must have overheard . . . . Lady Carlisle sent me a red rose for my buttonhole by his Lordship. Mr. Warner, the lively parson with my Lord March, desired to press my hand, declaring that he had won a dozen of port upon me, which he had set his best cassock against. My Lord Sandwich offered me snuff, and invited me to Hichinbroke. Indeed, I should never be through were I to continue. But I must not forget my old acquaintance Mr. Walpole, who protested that he must get permission to present me to Princess Amelia: that her Royal Highness would not rest content now, until she had seen me. I did not then know her Highness's sporting propensity.

Then my Lord March called upon the duke, who stood in the midst of an army of his toadeaters. I almost pitied him then, tho' I could not account for the feeling. I think it was because a nobleman with so great a title should be so cordially hated and despised. There were high words along the railing among the duke's supporters, Captain Lewis, in his anger, going above an inference that the stallion had been broken privately. Chartersea came forward with an indifferent swagger, as if to say as much: and, in truth, no one looked for more sport, and some were even turning away. He had scarce put foot to the stirrup, when the surprise came. Two minutes were up before he was got in the saddle, Pollux rearing and plunging and dancing in a circle, the grooms shouting and dodging, and his Grace cursing in a voice to wake the dead and Mr. Fox laughing, and making small wagers that he would never be mounted. But at last the duke was up and gripped, his face bloody red, giving vent to his fury with the spurs.

Then something happened, and so quickly that it cannot be writ fast enough. Pollux bolted like a shot out of a sling, vaulted the railing as easily as you or I would hop over a stick, and galloping across the lawn and down the embankment flung his Grace into the Serpentine. Precisely, as Mr. Fox afterwards remarked, as the swine with the evil spirits ran down the slope into the sea.

An indescribable bedlam of confusion followed, lords and gentlemen, tradesmen and grooms, hostlers and apprentices, all tumbling after, many crying with laughter. My Lord Sandwich's jockey pulled his Grace from the water in a most pitiable state of rage and humiliation. His side curls gone, the powder and pomatum washed from his hair, bedraggled and muddy and sputtering oaths, he made his way to Lord March, swearing by all divine that a trick was put on him, that he would ride the stallion to Land's End. His Lordship, pulling his face straight, gravely informed the duke that the match was over. With this his Grace fell flatly sullen, was pushed into a coach by Sir John and the captain, and drove rapidly off Kensington way, to avoid the people at the corner.

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CHAPTER XXXVIII

IN WHICH I AM ROUNDLY BROUGHT TO TASK

I would have gone to Arlington Street direct, but my friends had no notion of letting me escape. They carried me off to Brooks's Club, where a bowl of punch was brewed directly, and my health was drunk to three times three. Mr. Storer commanded a turtle dinner in my honour. We were not many, fortunately,—only Mr. Fox's little coterie. And it was none other than Mr. Fox who made the speech of the evening. "May I be strung as high as Haman," said he, amid a tempest of laughter, "if ever I saw half so edifying a sight as his Grace pitching into the Serpentine, unless it were his Grace dragged out again. Mr. Carvel's advent has been a Godsend to us narrow ignoramuses of this island, gentlemen. To the Englishmen of our colonies, sirs, and that we may never underrate or misunderstand them more!"

"Nay, Charles," cried my Lord Comyn. "Where is our gallantry? I give you first the Englishwomen of our colonies, and in particular the pride of Maryland, who has brought back to the old country all the graces of the new,—Miss Manners."

His voice was drowned by a deafening shout, and we charged our glasses to drain them brimming. And then we all went to Drury Lane to see Mrs. Clive romp through 'The Wonder' in the spirit of the "immortal Peg." She spoke an epilogue that Mr. Walpole had writ especial for her, and made some witty and sarcastic remarks directed at the gentlemen in our stagebox. We topped off a very full day by a supper at the Bedford Arms, where I must draw the certain.

The next morning I was abed at an hour which the sobriety of old age makes me blush abed think of. Banks had just concluded a discreet discourse upon my accomplishment of the day before, and had left for my newspapers, when he came running back with the information that Miss Manners would see my honour that day. There was no note. Between us we made my toilet in a jiffy, and presently I was walking in at the Manners's door in an amazing hurry, and scarcely waited for a direction. But as I ran up the stairs, I heard the tinkle of the spinet, and the notes of an old, familiar tune fell upon my ears. The words rose in my head with the cadence.

> "Love me little, love me long,
> Is the burthen of my song,
> Love that is too hot and strong
> Runneth soon to waste."

That simple air, already mellowed by an hundred years, had always been her favourite. She used to sing it softly to herself as we roamed the woods and fields of the Eastern Shore. Instinctively I paused at the dressing-room door. Nay, my dears, you need not

cry out, such was the custom of the times. A dainty bower it was, filled with the perfume of flowers, and rosy cupids disporting on the ceiling; and china and silver and gold filigree strewn about, with my tea-cups on the table. The sunlight fell like a halo round Dorothy's head, her hands strayed over the keys, and her eyes were far away. She had not heard me. I remember her dress,—a silk with blue cornflowers on a light ground, and the flimsiest of lace caps resting on her hair. I thought her face paler; but beyond that she did not show her illness.

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She looked up, and perceived me, I thought, with a start. “So it is you!” she said demurely enough; “you are come at last to give an account of yourself.”

“Are you better, Dorothy?” I asked earnestly.

“Why should you think that I have been ill?” she replied, her fingers going back to the spinet. “It is a mistake, sir. Dr. James has given me near a gross of his infamous powders, and is now exploiting another cure. I have been resting from the fatigues of London, while you have been wearing yourself out.”

“Dr. James himself told me your condition was serious,” I said.

“Of course,” said she; “the worse the disease, the more remarkable the cure, the more sought after the physician. When will you get over your provincial simplicity?”

I saw there was nothing to be got out of her while in this baffling humour. I wondered what devil impelled a woman to write one way and talk another. In her note to me she had confessed her illness. The words I had formed to say to her were tied on my tongue. But on the whole I congratulated myself. She knew how to step better than I, and there were many awkward things between us of late best not spoken of. But she kept me standing an unconscionable time without a word, which on the whole was cruelty, while she played over some of Dibdin’s ballads.

“Are you in a hurry, sir,” she asked at length, turning on me with a smile, “are you in a hurry to join my Lord March or his Grace of Grafton? And have you writ Captain Clapsaddle and your Whig friends at home of your new intimacies, of Mr. Fox and my Lord Sandwich?”

I was dumb.

“Yes, you must be wishing to get away,” she continued cruelly, picking up the newspaper. “I had forgotten this notice. When I saw it this morning I thought of you, and despaired of a glimpse of you to-day.” (Reading.) “At the Three Hats, Islington, this day, the 10th of May, will be played a grand match at that ancient and much renowned manly diversion called Double Stick by a sect of chosen young men at that exercise from different parts of the West Country, for two guineas given free; those who break the most heads to bear away the prize. Before the above-mentioned diversion begins, Mr. Sampson and his young German will display alternately on one, two, and three horses, various surprising and curious feats of famous horsemanship in like manner as at the Grand Jubilee at Stratford-upon-Avon. Admittance one shilling each person.’ Before you leave, Mr. Richard,” she continued, with her eyes still on the sheet, “I should like to talk over one or two little matters.”

“Dolly—!”

“Will you sit, sir?”

I sat down uneasily, expecting the worst. She disappointed me, as usual.

“What an unspeakable place must you keep in Dover Street! I cannot send even a footman there but what he comes back reeling.”

I had to laugh at this. But there was no smile out of my lady.

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“It took me near an hour and a half to answer your note,” I replied.

“And ’twas a masterpiece!” exclaimed Dolly, with withering sarcasm; “oh, a most amazing masterpiece, I’ll be bound! His worship the French Ambassador is a kitten at diplomacy beside you, sir. An hour and a half, did you say, sir? Gemini, the Secretary of State and his whole corps could not have composed the like in a day.”

“Faith!” I cried, with feeling enough; “and if that is diplomacy, I would rather make leather breeches than be given an embassy.”

She fixed her eyes upon me so disconcertingly that mine fell.

“There was a time,” she said, with a change of tone, “there was a time when a request of mine, and it were not granted outright, would have received some attention. This is my first experience at being ignored.”

“I had made a wager,” said I, “and could not retract with honour.”

“So you had made a wager! Now we are to have some news at last. How stupid of you, Richard, not to tell me before. I confess I wonder what these wits find in your company. Here am I who have seen naught but dull women for a fortnight, and you have failed to say anything amusing in a quarter of an hour. Let us hear about the wager.”

“Where is little to tell,” I answered shortly, considerably piqued. “I bet your friend, the Duke of Chartersea, some hundreds of pounds I could ride Lord Baltimore’s Pollux for twenty minutes, after which his Grace was to get on and ride twenty more.”

“Where did you see the duke?” Dolly interrupted, without much show of interest.

I explained how we had met him at Brooks’s, and had gone to his house.

“You went to his house?” she repeated, raising her eyebrows a trifle; “and Comyn and Mr. Fox? And pray, how did this pretty subject come up?”

I related, very badly, I fear, Fox’s story of young Wrottlesey and the tea-merchant’s daughter. And what does my lady do but get up and turn her back, arranging some pinks in the window. I could have sworn she was laughing, had I not known better.

“Well?”

“Well, that was a reference to a little pleasantry Mr. Fox had put up on him some time before. His Grace flared, but tried not to show it. He said he had heard I could do something with a horse (I believe he made it up), and Comyn gave oath that I could; and then he offered to bet Comyn that I could not ride this Pollux, who had killed his

groom. That made me angry, and I told the duke I was no jockey to be put up to decide wagers, and that he must make his offers to me."

"La!" said Dolly, "you fell in head over heels."

"What do you mean by that?" I demanded.

"Nothing," said she, biting her lip. "Come, you are as ponderous as Dr. Johnson."

"Then Mr. Fox proposed that his Grace should ride after me."

Here Dolly laughed in her handkerchief.

"I'll be bound," said she.

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“Then the duke went to York,” I continued hurriedly; and when he came back we met him at the Star and Garter. He insisted that the match should come off in Hyde Park. I should have preferred the open roads north of Bedford House.”

“Where there is no Serpentine,” she interrupted, with the faintest suspicion of a twinkle about her eyes. “On, sir, on! You are as reluctant as our pump at Wilmot House in the dry season. I see you were not killed, as you richly deserved. Let us have the rest of your tale.”

“There is very little more to it, save that I contrived to master the beast, and his Grace —”

“—Was disgraced. A vastly fine achievement, surely. But where are you to stop? You will be shaming the King next by outwalking him. Pray, how did the duke appear as he was going into the Serpentine?”

“You have heard?” I exclaimed, the trick she had played me dawning upon me.

“Upon my word, Richard, you are more of a simpleton than I thought you. Have you not seen your newspaper this morning?”

I explained how it was that I had not. She took up the Chronicle.

“’This Mr. Carvel has made no inconsiderable noise since his arrival in town, and yesterday crowned his performances by defeating publicly a noble duke at a riding match in Hyde Park, before half the quality of the kingdom. His Lordship of March and Ruglen acted as umpire.’ There, sir, was I not right to beg Sir John Fielding to put you in safe keeping until your grandfather can send for you?”

I made to seize the paper, but she held it from me.

“’If Mr. Carvel remains long enough in England, he bids fair to share the talk of Mayfair with a certain honourable young gentleman of Brooks’s and the Admiralty, whose debts and doings now furnish most of the gossip for the clubs and the card tables. Their names are both connected with this contest. ’Tis whispered that the wager upon which the match was ridden arose—’” here Dolly stopped shortly, her colour mounting, and cried out with a stamp of her foot. “You are not content to bring publicity upon yourself, who deserve it, but must needs drag innocent names into the newspapers.”

“What have they said?” I demanded, ready to roll every printer in London in the kennel.

“Nay, you may read for yourself,” said she. And, flinging the paper in my lap, left the room.

They had not said much more, Heaven be praised. But I was angry and mortified as I had never been before, realizing for the first time what a botch I had made of my stay in London. In great dejection, I was picking up my hat to leave the house, when Mrs. Manners came in upon me, and insisted that I should stay for dinner. She was very white, and seemed troubled and preoccupied, and said that Mr. Manners had come back from York with a cold on his chest, but would insist upon joining the party to Vauxhall on Monday. I asked her when she was going to the baths, and suggested that the change would do her good. Indeed, she looked badly.

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“We are not going, Richard,” she replied; “Dorothy will not hear of it. In spite of the doctor she says she is not ill, and must attend at Vauxhall, too. You are asked?”

I said that Mr. Storer had included me. I am sure, from the way she looked at me, that she did not heed my answer. She appeared to hesitate on the verge of a speech, and glanced once or twice at the doors.

“Richard, I suppose you are old enough to take care of yourself, tho’ you seem still a child to me. I pray you will be careful, my boy,” she said, with something of the affection she had always borne me, “for your grandfather’s sake, I pray you will run into no more danger. I—we are your old friends, and the only ones here to advise you.”

She stopped, seemingly, to weigh the wisdom of what was to come next, while I leaned forward with an eagerness I could not hide. Was she to speak of the Duke of Chartersea? Alas, I was not to know. For at that moment Dorothy came back to inquire why I was not gone to the cudgelling at the Three Hats. I said I had been invited to stay to dinner.

“Why, I have writ a note asking Comyn,” said she. “Do you think the house will hold you both?”

His Lordship came in as we were sitting down, bursting with some news, and he could hardly wait to congratulate Dolly on her recovery before he delivered it.

“Why, Richard,” says the dog, “what do you think some wag has done now? They believe at Brooks’s ’twas that jackanapes of a parson, Dr. Warner, who was there yesterday with March.” He drew a clipping from his pocket. “Listen, Miss Dolly:

> “On Wednesday did a carter see
> His Grace, the Duke of Ch-rt—s-a,
> As plump and helpless as a bag,
> A-straddle of a big-boned nag.
> “Lord, Sam!” the carter loudly yelled,
> On by this wondrous sight impelled,
> “We’ll run and watch this noble gander
> Master a steed, like Alexander.”
> But, when the carter reached the Row,
> His Grace had left it, long ago.
> Bucephalus had leaped the green,
> The duke was in the Serpentine.
> The fervent wish of all good men
> That he may ne’er come out again!’”

Comyn's impudence took my breath, tho' the experiment interested me not a little. My lady was pleased to laugh at the doggerel, and even Mrs. Manners. Its effect upon Mr. Marmaduke was not so spontaneous. His smile was half-hearted. Indeed, the little gentleman seemed to have lost his spirits, and said so little (for him), that I was encouraged to corner him that very evening and force him to a confession. But I might have known he was not to be caught. It appeared almost as if he guessed my purpose, for as soon as ever the claret was come on, he excused himself, saying he was promised to Lady Harrington, who wanted one.

Comyn and I departed early on account of Dorothy. She had denied a dozen who had left cards upon her.

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“Egad, Richard,” said my Lord, when we had got to my lodgings, “I made him change colour, did I not? Do you know how the little fool looks to me? ’Od’s life, he looks hunted, and cursed near brought to earth. We must fetch this thing to a point, Richard. And I am wondering what Chartersea’s next move will be,” he added thoughtfully.

CHAPTER XXXIX

HOLLAND HOUSE

On the morrow, as I was setting out to dine at Brooks’s, I received the following on a torn slip of paper: “Dear Richard, we shall have a good show to-day you may care to see.” It was signed “Fox,” and dated at St. Stephen’s. I lost no time in riding to Westminster, where I found a flock of excited people in Parliament Street and in the Palace Yard. And on climbing the wide stone steps outside and a narrower flight within I was admitted directly into the august presence of the representatives of the English people. They were in a most prodigious and unseemly state of uproar.

What a place is old St. Stephen’s Chapel, over St. Mary’s in the Vaults, for the great Commons of England to gather! It is scarce larger or more imposing than our own assembly room in the Stadt House in Annapolis. St. Stephen’s measures but ten yards by thirty, with a narrow gallery running along each side for visitors. In one of these, by the rail, I sat down suffocated, bewildered, and deafened. And my first impression out of the confusion was of the bewigged speaker enthroned under the royal arms, sore put to restore order. On the table in front of him lay the great mace of the Restoration. Three chandeliers threw down their light upon the mob of honourable members, and I wondered what had put them into this state of uproar.

Presently, with the help of a kind stranger on my right, who was occasionally making shorthand notes, I got a few bearings. That was the Treasury Bench, where Lord North sat (he was wide awake, now). And there was the Government side. He pointed out Barrington and Weymouth and Jerry Dyson and Sandwich, and Rigby in the court suit of purple velvet with the sword thrust through the pocket. I took them all in, as some of the worst enemies my country had in Britain. Then my informant seemed to hesitate, and made bold to ask my persuasion. When I told him I was a Whig, and an American, he begged the favour of my hand.

“There, sir,” he cried excitedly, “that stout young gentleman with the black face and eyebrows, and the blacker heart, I may say,—the one dressed in the fantastical costume called by a French name,—is Mr. Charles Fox. He has been sent by the devil himself, I believe, to ruin this country. ’Ods, sir, that devil Lord Holland begot him. He is but one and twenty, but his detestable arts have saved North’s neck from Burke and Wedderburn on two occasions this year.”

“And what has happened to-day?” I asked, smiling.

The stranger smiled, too.

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“Why, sir,” he answered, raising his voice above the noise; “if you have been in London any length of time, you will have read the account, with comment, of the Duke of Grafton’s speech in the Lords, signed Domitian. Their Lordships well know it should have been over a greater signature. This afternoon his Grace of Manchester was talking in the Upper House about the Spanish troubles, when Lord Gower arose and desired that the place might be cleared of strangers, lest some Castilian spy might lurk under the gallery. That was directed against us of the press, sir, and their Lordships knew it. ’Ad’s heart, sir, there was a riot, the house servants tumbling everybody out, and Mr. Burke and Mr. Dunning in the boot, who were gone there on the business of this house to present a bill. Those gentlemen are but just back, calling upon the commons to revenge them and vindicate their honour. And my Lord North looks troubled, as you will mark, for the matter is like to go hard against his Majesty’s friends. But hush, Mr. Burke is to speak.”

The horse fell quiet to listen, and my friend began to ply his shorthand industriously. I leaned forward with a sharp curiosity to see this great friend of America. He was dressed in a well-worn suit of brown, and I recall a decided Irish face, and a more decided Irish accent, which presently I forgot under the spell of his eloquence. I have heard it said he had many defects of delivery. He had none that day, or else I was too little experienced to note them. Afire with indignation, he told how the deputy black rod had hustled him like a vagabond or a thief, and he called the House of Lords a bear garden. He was followed by Dunning, in a still more inflammatory mood, until it seemed as if all the King’s friends in the Lower House must desert their confederates in the Upper. No less important a retainer than Mr. Onslow moved a policy of retaliation, and those that were left began to act like the Egyptians when they felt the Red Sea under them. They nodded and whispered in their consternation.

It was then that Mr. Fox got calmly up before the pack of frightened mercenaries and argued (God save the mark!) for moderation. He had the ear of the house in a second, and he spoke with all the confidence—this youngster who had just reached his majority—he had used with me before his intimates. I gaped with astonishment and admiration. The Lords, said he, had plainly meant no insult to this honourable house, nor yet to the honourable members. They had aimed at the common enemies of man, the printers. And for this their heat was more than pardonable. My friend at my side stopped his writing to swear under his breath. “Look at ’em!” he cried; “they are turning already. He could argue Swedenborg into popery!”

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The deserters were coming back to the ranks, indeed, and North and Dyson and Weymouth had ceased to look haggard, and were wreathed in smiles. In vain did Mr. Burke harangue them in polished phrase. It was a language North and Company did not understand, and cared not to learn. Their young champion spoke the more worldly and cynical tongue of White's and Brooks's, with its shorter sentences and absence of formality. And even as the devil can quote Scripture to his purpose, Mr. Fox quoted history and the classics, with plenty more that was not above the heads of the booted and spurred country squires. And thus, for the third time, he earned the gratitude of his gracious Majesty.

"Well, Richard," said he, slipping his arm through mine as we came out into Parliament Street, "I promised you some sport. Have you enjoyed it?"

I was forced to admit that I had.

"Let us to the 'Thatched House,' and have supper privately," he suggested. "I do not feel like a company to-night." We walked on for some time in silence. Presently he said:

"You must not leave us, Richard. You may go home to see your grandfather die, and when you come back I will see about getting you a little borough for what my father paid for mine. And you shall marry Dorothy, and perchance return in ten years as governor of a principality. That is, after we've ruined you at the club. How does that prospect sit?"

I wondered at the mood he was in, that made him choose me rather than the adulation and applause he was sure to receive at Brooks's for the part he had played that night. After we had satisfied our hunger,—for neither of us had dined,—and poured out a bottle of claret, he looked up at me quizzically.

"I have not heard you congratulate me," he said.

"Nor will you," I replied, laughing.

"I like you the better for it, Richard. 'Twas a damned poor performance, and that's truth."

"I thought the performance remarkable," I said honestly.

"Oh, but it was not," he answered scornfully. "The moment that dun-coloured Irishman gets up, the whole government pack begins to whine and shiver. There are men I went to school with I fear more than Burke. But you don't like to see the champion of America come off second best. Is that what you're thinking?"

“No. But I was wondering why you have devoted your talents to the devil,” I said, amazed at my boldness.

He glanced at me, and half laughed again.

“You are cursed frank,” said he; “damned frank.”

“But you invited it.”

“Yes,” he replied, “so I did. Give me a man who is honest. Fill up again,” said he; “and spit out all you would like to say, Richard.”

“Then,” said I, “why do you waste your time and your breath in defending a crew of political brigands and placemen, and a king who knows not the meaning of the word gratitude, and who has no use for a man of ability? You have honoured me with your friendship, Charles Fox, and I may take the liberty to add that you seem to love power more than spoils. You have originality. You are honest enough to think and act upon your own impulses. And pardon me if I say you have very little chance on that side of the house where you have put yourself.”

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“You seem to have picked up a trifle since you came into England,” he said. “A damned shrewd estimate, I’ll be sworn. And for a colonial! But, as for power,” he added a little doggedly, “I have it in plenty, and the kind I like. The King and North hate and fear me already more than Wilkes.”

“And with more cause,” I replied warmly. “His Majesty perhaps knows that you understand him better, and foresees the time when a man of your character will give him cause to fear indeed.”

He did not answer that, but called for a reckoning; and taking my arm again, we walked out past the sleeping houses.

“Have you ever thought much of the men we have in the colonies?” I asked.

“No,” he replied; “Chatham stands for ’em, and I hate Chatham on my father’s account. That is reason enough for me.”

“You should come back to America with me,” I said. “And when you had rested awhile at Carvel Hall, I would ride with you through the length of the provinces from Massachusetts to North Carolina. You will see little besides hard-working, self-respecting Englishmen, loyal to a king who deserves loyalty as little as Louis of France. But with their eyes open, and despite the course he has taken. They are men whose measure of resolution is not guessed at.”

He was silent again until we had got into Piccadilly and opposite his lodgings.

“Are they all like you?” he demanded.

“Who?” said I. For I had forgotten my words.

“The Americans.”

“The greater part feel as I do.”

“I suppose you are for bed,” he remarked abruptly.

“The night is not yet begun,” I answered, repeating his favourite words, and pointing at the glint of the sun on the windows.

“What do you say to a drive behind those chestnuts of mine, for a breath of air? I have just got my new cabriolet Selwyn ordered in Paris.”

Soon we were rattling over the stones in Piccadilly, wrapped in greatcoats, for the morning wind was cold. We saw the Earl of March and Ruglen getting out of a chair

before his house, opposite the Green Park, and he stopped swearing at the chairmen to wave at us.

“Hello, March!” Mr. Fox said affably, “you’re drunk.”

His Lordship smiled, bowed graciously if unsteadily to me, and did not appear to resent the pleasantry. Then he sighed.

“What a pair of cubs it is,” said he; “I wish to God I was young again. I hear you astonished the world again last night, Charles.”

We left him being assisted into his residence by a sleepy footman, paid our toll at Hyde Park Corner, and rolled onward toward Kensington, Fox laughing as we passed the empty park at the thought of what had so lately occurred there. After the close night of St. Stephen’s, nature seemed doubly beautiful. The sun slanted over the water in the gardens in bars of green and gold. The bright new leaves were on the trees, and the morning dew

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had brought with it the smell of the living earth. We passed the stream of market wagons lumbering along, pulled by sturdy, patient farm-horses, driven by smocked countrymen, who touched their caps to the fine gentlemen of the court end of town; who shook their heads and exchanged deep tones over the whims of quality, unaccountable as the weather. But one big-chested fellow arrested his salute, a scowl came over his face, and he shouted back to the wagoner whose horses were munching his hay:

“Hi, Jeems, keep down yere hands. Mr. Fox is noo friend of we.”

This brought a hard smile on Mr. Fox’s face.

“I believe, Richard,” he said, “I have become more detested than any man in Parliament.”

“And justly,” I replied; “for you have fought all that is good in you.”

“I was mobbed once, in Parliament Street. I thought they would kill me. Have you ever been mobbed, Richard?” he asked indifferently.

“Never, I thank Heaven,” I answered fervently.

“I think I would rather be mobbed than indulge in any amusement I know of,” he continued. “Than confound Wedderburn, or drive a measure against Burke,—which is no bad sport, my word on’t. I would rather be mobbed than have my horse win at Newmarket. There is a keen pleasure you wot not of, my lad, in listening to Billingsgate and Spitalfields howl maledictions upon you. And no sensation I know of is equal to that of the moment when the mud and sticks and oranges are coming through the windows of your coach, when the dirty weavers are clutching at your ruffles and shaking their filthy fists under your nose.”

“It is, at any rate, strictly an aristocratic pleasure,” I assented, laughing.

So we came to Holland House. Its wide fields of sprouting corn, its woods and pastures and orchards in blossom, were smiling that morning, as though Leviathan, the town, were not rolling onward to swallow them. Lord Holland had bought the place from the Warwicks, with all its associations and memories. The capped towers and quaint facades and projecting windows were plain to be seen from where we halted in the shaded park, and to the south was that Kensington Road we had left, over which all the glory and royalty of England at one time or another had rolled. Under these majestic oaks and cedars Cromwell and Ireton had stood while the beaten Royalists lashed their horses on to Brentford. Nor did I forget that the renowned Addison had lived here after his unhappy marriage with Lady Warwick, and had often ridden hence to Button’s Coffee House in town, where my grandfather had had his dinner with Dean Swift.

We sat gazing at the building, which was bathed in the early sun, at the deer and sheep grazing in the park, at the changing colours of the young leaves as the breeze swayed them. The market wagons had almost ceased now, and there was little to break the stillness.

“You love the place?” I said.

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He started, as though I had awakened him out of a sleep. And he was no longer the Fox of the clubs, the cynical, the reckless. He was no longer the best-dressed man in St. James's Street, or the aggressive youngster of St. Stephen's.

"Love it!" he cried. "Ay, Richard, and few guess how well. You will not laugh when I tell you that my happiest days have been passed here, when I was but a chit, in the long room where Addison used to walk up and down composing his Spectators: or trotting after my father through these woods and gardens. A kinder parent does not breathe than he. Well I remember how he tossed me in his arms under that tree when I had thrashed another lad for speaking ill of him. He called me his knight. In all my life he has never broken faith with me. When they were blasting down a wall where those palings now stand, he promised me I should see it done, and had it rebuilt and blown down again because I had missed the sight. All he ever exacted of me was that I should treat him as an elder brother. He had his own notion of the world I was going into, and prepared me accordingly. He took me from Eton to Spa, where I learned gaming instead of Greek, and gave me so much a night to risk at play."

I looked at him in astonishment. To say that I thought these relations strange would have been a waste of words.

"To be sure," Charles continued, "I was bound to learn, and could acquire no younger." He flicked the glossy red backs of his horses with his whip. "You are thinking it an extraordinary education, I know," he added rather sadly. "I hav a-told you this—God knows why! Yes, because I like you damnably, and you would have heard worse elsewhere, both of him and of me. I fear you have listened to the world's opinion of Lord Holland."

Indeed, I had heard a deal of that nobleman's peculations of the public funds. But in this he was no worse than the bulk of his colleagues. His desertion of William Pitt I found hard to forgive.

"The best father in the world, Richard!" cried Charles. "If his former friends could but look into his kind heart, and see him in his home, they would not have turned their backs upon him. I do not mean such scoundrels as Rigby. And now my father is in exile half the year in Nice, and the other half at King's Gate. The King and Jack Bute used him for a tool, and then cast him out. You wonder why I am of the King's party?" said he, with something sinister in his smile; "I will tell you. When I got my borough I cared not a fig for parties or principles. I had only the one definite ambition, to revenge Lord Holland. Nay," he exclaimed, stopping my protest, "I was not too young to know rottenness as well as another. The times are rotten in England. You may have virtue in America, amongst a people which is fresh from a struggle with the earth and its savages. We have cursed little at home, in faith. The King, with his barley water and rising at six, and

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shivering in chapel, and his middle-class table, is rottener than the rest. The money he saves in his damned beggarly court goes to buy men's souls. His word is good with none. For my part I prefer a man who is drunk six days out of the seven to one who takes his pleasure so. And I am not so great a fool that I cannot distinguish justice from injustice. I know the wrongs of the colonies, which you yourself have put as clear as I wish to hear, despite Mr. Burke and his eloquence.

> [My grandfather has made a note here, which in justice should be added, that he was not deceived by Mr. Fox's partiality.—D. C. C.]

And perhaps, Richard," he concluded, with a last lingering look at the old pile as he turned his horses, "perhaps some day, I shall remember what you told us at Brooks's."

It was thus, boyishly, that Mr. Fox chose to take me into his confidence, an honour which I shall remember with a thrill to my dying day. So did he reveal to me the impulses of his early life, hidden forever from his detractors. How little does the censure of this world count, which cannot see the heart behind the embroidered waistcoat! When Charles Fox began his career he was a thoughtless lad, but steadfast to such principles as he had formed for himself. They were not many, but, compared to those of the arena which he entered, they were noble. He strove to serve his friends, to lift the name of a father from whom he had received nothing but kindness, however misguided. And when he saw at length the error of his ways, what a mighty blow did he strike for the right!

"Here is a man," said Dr. Johnson, many years afterwards, "who has divided his kingdom with Caesar; so that it was a doubt whether the nation should be ruled by the sceptre of George the Third or the tongue of Fox."

CHAPTER XL

VAUXHALL

Matters had come to a pretty pickle indeed. I was openly warned at Brooks's and elsewhere to beware of the duke, who was said upon various authority to be sulking in Hanover Square, his rage all the more dangerous because it was smouldering. I saw Dolly only casually before the party to Vauxhall. Needless to say, she flew in the face of Dr. James's authority, and went everywhere. She was at Lady Bunbury's drum, whither I had gone in another fruitless chase after Mr. Marmaduke. Dr. Warner's verse was the laughter of the company. And, greatly to my annoyance,—in the circumstances,—I was made a hero of, and showered with three times as many invitations as I could accept.

The whole story got abroad, even to the awakening of the duke in Covent Garden. And that clownish Mr. Foote, of the Haymarket, had added some lines to a silly popular song entitled 'The Sights o' Lunnun', with which I was hailed at Mrs. Betty's fruit-stall in St. James's Street. Here is one of the verses:

> "In Maryland, he hunts the Fox
> From dewy Morn till Day grows dim;
> At Home he finds a Paradox,
> From Noon till Dawn the Fox hunts him."

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Charles Fox laughed when he heard it. But he was serious when he came to speak of Chartersea, and bade me look out for assassination. I had Banks follow me abroad at night with a brace of pistols under his coat, albeit I feared nothing save that I should not have an opportunity to meet the duke in a fair fight. And I resolved at all hazards to run Mr. Marmaduke down with despatch, if I had to waylay him.

Mr. Storer, who was forever giving parties, was responsible for this one at Vauxhall. We went in three coaches, and besides Dorothy and Mr. Marmaduke, the company included Lord and Lady Carlisle, Sir Charles and Lady Sarah Bunbury, Lady Ossory and Lady Julia Howard, two Miss Stanleys and Miss Poole, and Comyn, and Hare, and Price, and Fitzpatrick, the latter feeling very glum over a sum he had dropped that afternoon to Lord Harrington. Fox had been called to St. Stephen's on more printer's business.

Dolly was in glowing pink, as I loved best to see her, and looked divine. Comyn and I were in Mr. Manners's coach. The evening was fine and warm, and my lady in very lively spirits. As we rattled over Westminster Bridge, the music of the Vauxhall band came "throbbing through the still night," and the sky was bright with the reflection of the lights. It was the fashion with the quality to go late; and so eleven o'clock had struck before we had pulled up between Vauxhall stairs, crowded with watermen and rough mudlarks, and the very ordinary-looking house which forms the entrance of the great garden. Leaving the servants outside, single-file we trailed through the dark passage guarded by the wicketgate.

"Prepare to be ravished, Richard," said my lady, with fine sarcasm.

"You were yourself born in the colonies, miss," I retorted. "I confess to a thrill, and will not pretend that I have seen such sights often enough to be sated."

"La!" exclaimed Lady Sarah, who had overheard; "I vow this is refreshing. Behold a new heaven and a new earth, Mr. Carvel?"

Indeed, much to the amusement of the company, I took no pains to hide my enthusiasm at the brilliancy of the scene which burst upon me. A great orchestra rose in the midst of a stately grove lined on all four sides with supper-boxes of brave colours, which ran in straight tiers or swept around in circles. These were filled with people of all sorts and conditions, supping and making merry. Other people were sauntering under the trees, keeping step with the music. Lamps of white and blue and red and green hung like luminous fruit from the branches, or clustered in stars and crescents upon the buildings.

"Why, Richard, you are as bad as Farmer Colin."

> "'O Patty! Soft in feature,
> I've been at dear Vauxhall;

No paradise is sweeter,
Not that they Eden call.'"

whispered Dolly, paraphrasing.

At that instant came hurrying Mr. Tom Tyers, who was one of the brothers, proprietors of the gardens. He was a very lively young fellow who seemed to know everybody, and he desired to know if we would walk about a little before being shown to the boxes reserved for us.

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“They are on the right side, Mr. Tyers?” demanded Mr. Storer.

“Oh, to be sure, sir. Your man was most particular to stipulate the pink and blue flowered brocades, next the Prince of Wales’s.”

“But you must have the band stop that piece, Mr. Tyers,” cried Lady Sarah. “I declare, it is too much for my nerves. Let them play Dibbin’s Ephesian Matron.”

“As your Ladyship wishes,” responded the obliging Mr. Tyers, and sent off an uniformed warder to the band-master.

As he led us into the Rotunda, my Lady Dolly, being in one of her whimsical humours, began to recite in the manner of the guide-book, to the vast diversion of our party and the honest citizens gaping at us.

“This, my lords, ladies, and gentlemen,” says the minx, “is that marvellous Rotunda commonly known as the ‘umbrella,’ where the music plays on wet nights, and where we have our masquerades and ridottos. Their Royal Highnesses are very commonly seen here on such occasions. As you see, it is decorated with mirrors and scenes and busts, and with gilded festoons. That picture was painted by the famous Hogarth. The organ in the orchestra cost—you must supply the figure, Mr. Tyers,—and the ceiling is at least two hundred feet high. Gentlemen from the colonies and the country take notice.”

By this time we were surrounded. Mr. Marmaduke was scandalized and crushed, but Mr. Tyers, used to the vagaries of his fashionable patrons, was wholly convulsed.

“Faith, Miss Manners, and you would consent to do this two nights more, we should have to open another gate,” he declared. Followed by the mob, which it seems was part of the excitement, he led us out of the building into the Grand Walk; and offered to turn on the waterfall and mill, which (so Lady Sarah explained to me) the farmers and merchants fell down and worshipped every night at nine, to the tinkling of bells. She told Mr. Tyers there was diversion enough without “tin cascades.” When we got to the Grand Cross Walk he pointed out the black “Wilderness” of tall elms and cedars looming ahead of us. And—so we came to the South Walk, with its three triumphal arches framing a noble view of architecture at the far end. Our gentlemen sauntered ahead, with their spy-glasses, staring the citizens’ pretty daughters out of countenance, and making cynical remarks.

“Why, egad!” I heard Sir Charles say, “the wig-makers have no cause to petition his Majesty for work. I’ll be sworn the false hair this good staymaker has on cost a guinea.”

A remark which caused the staymaker (if such he was) such huge discomfort that he made off with his wife in the opposite direction, to the time of jeers and cock-crows from the bevy of Vauxhall bucks walking abreast.

“You must show us the famous ‘dark walks,’ Mr. Tyers,” says Dorothy.

“Surely you will not care to see those, Miss Manners.”

“O lud, of course you must,” chimed in the Miss Stanleys; “there is no spice in these flaps and flies.”

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He led us accordingly into Druid's Walk, overarched with elms, and dark as the shades, our gentlemen singing, "'Ods! Lovers will contrive,'" in chorus, the ladies exclaiming and drawing together. Then I felt a soft, restraining hold on my arm, and fell back instinctively, vibrating to the touch.

"Could you not see that I have been trying to get a word with you for ever so long?"

"I trust you to find a way, Dolly, if you but wish," I replied, admiring her stratagem.

"I am serious to-night." Indeed, her voice betrayed as much. How well I recall those rich and low tones! "I said I wished you shut up in the Marshalsea, and I meant it. I have been worrying about you."

"You make me very happy," said I; which was no lie.

"Richard, you are every bit as reckless and indifferent of danger as they say your father was. And I am afraid—"

"Of what?" I asked quickly.

"You once mentioned a name to me—"

"Yes?" I was breathing deep.

"I have forgiven you," she said gently. "I never meant to have referred to that incident more. You will understand whom I mean. You must know that he is a dangerous man, and a treacherous. Oh!" she exclaimed, "I have been in hourly terror ever since you rode against him in Hyde Park. There! I have said it."

The tense sweetness of that moment none will ever know.

"But you have more reason to fear him than I, Dorothy."

"Hush!" she whispered, catching her breath; "what are you saying?"

"That he has more cause to fear me than I to dread him."

She came a little closer.

"You stayed in London for me, Richard. Why did you? There was no need," she exclaimed; "there was no need, do you hear? Oh, I shall never forgive Comyn for his meddling! I am sure 'twas he who told you some ridiculous story. He had no foundation for it."

“Dorothy,” I demanded, my voice shaking with earnestness, “will you tell me honestly there is no foundation for the report that the duke is intriguing to marry you?”

That question was not answered, and regret came the instant it had left my lips—regret and conviction both. Dorothy joined Lady Carlisle before our absence had been noted, and began to banter Fitzpatrick upon his losings.

We were in the lighted Grove again, and sitting down to a supper of Vauxhall fare: transparent slices of ham (which had been a Vauxhall joke for ages), and chickens and cheese cakes and champagne and claret, and arrack punch. Mr. Tyers extended the concert in our favour. Mrs. Weichsell and the beautiful Baddeley trilled sentimental ballads which our ladies chose; and Mr. Vernon, the celebrated tenor, sang Cupid’s Recruiting Sergeant so happily that Storer sent him a bottle of champagne. After which we amused ourselves with catches until the space between our boxes and the orchestra was filled. In the midst of this Comyn came quietly in from the other box and took a seat beside me.

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“Chartersea is here to-night,” said he.

I started. “How do you know?”

“Tyers told me he turned up half an hour since. Tom asked his Grace to join our party,” his Lordship laughed. “Duke said no—he was to be here only half an hour, and Tom did not push him. He told me as a joke, and thinks Chartersea came to meet some petite.”

“Any one with him?” I asked.

“Yes. Tall, dark man, one eye cast,—that’s Lewis. They have come on some dirty work, Richard. Watch little Marmaduke. He has been fidgety as a cat all night.”

“That’s true,” said I. Looking up, I caught Dorothy’s eyes upon us, her lips parted, uneasiness and apprehension plain upon her face. Comyn dropped his voice still lower.

“I believe she suspects something,” he said, rising. “Chartersea is gone off toward the Wilderness, so Tom says. You must not let little Marmaduke see him. If Manners gets up to go, I will tune up Black-eked Susan, and do you follow on some pretext. If you are not back in a reasonable time, I’ll after you.”

He had been gone scant three minutes before I heard his clear voice singing, “in the Downs”, and up I got, with a precipitation far from politic, and stepped out of the box. Our company stared in surprise. But Dorothy rose clear from her chair. The terror I saw stamped upon her face haunts me yet, and I heard her call my name.

I waited for nothing. Gaining the Grand Walk, I saw Mr. Marmaduke’s insignificant figure dodging fearfully among the roughs, whose hour it was. He traversed the Cross Walk, and twenty yards farther on dived into an opening in the high hedge bounding the Wilderness. Before he had made six paces I had him by the shoulder, and he let out a shriek of fright like a woman’s.

“It is I, Richard Carvel, Mr. Manners,” I said shortly. I could not keep out the contempt from my tone. “I beg a word with you.”

In his condition then words were impossible. His teeth rattled again, and he trembled like a hare caught alive. I kept my hold of him, and employed the time until he should be more composed peering into the darkness. For all I knew Chartersea might be within ear-shot. But I could see nothing but black trunks of trees.

“What is it, Richard?”

“You are going to meet Chartersea,” I said.

He must have seen the futility of a lie, or else was scared out of all contrivance. “Yes,” he said weakly.

“You have allowed it to become the talk of London that this filthy nobleman is blackmailing you for your daughter,” I went on, without wasting words. “Tell me, is it, or is it not, true?”

As he did not answer, I retained a handful of the grained silk on his shoulder as a measure of precaution.

“Is this so?” I repeated.

“You must know, I suppose,” he said, under his breath, and with a note of sullenness.

“I must,” I said firmly. “The knowledge is the weapon need, for I, too, am going to meet Chartersea.”

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He ceased quivering all at once.

“You are going to meet him!” he cried, in another voice. “Yes, yes, it is so,—it is so. I will tell you all.”

“Keep it to yourself, Mr. Manners,” I replied, with repugnance, “I have heard all I wish. Where is he?” I demanded.

“Hold the path until you come to him. And God bless—”

I shook my head.

“No, not that! Do you go back to the company and make some excuse for me. Do not alarm them. And if you get the chance, tell Lord Comyn where to come.”

I waited until I saw him under the lights of the Grand Walk, and fairly running. Then I swung on my heel. I was of two minds whether to wait for Comyn, by far the wiser course. The unthinking recklessness I had inherited drove me on.

CHAPTER XLI

THE WILDERNESS

My eyes had become accustomed to the darkness, and presently I made out a bench ahead, with two black figures starting from it. One I should have known on the banks of the Styx. From each came a separate oath as I stopped abreast them, and called the duke by name.

“Mr. Carvel!” he cried; “what the devil do you here, sir?”

“I am come to keep an appointment for Mr. Manners,” I said. “May I speak to your Grace alone?”

He made a peculiar sound by sucking in his breath, meant for a sneering laugh.

“No,” says he, “damned if you shall! I have nothing in common with you, sir. So love for Miss Manners has driven you mad, my young upstart. And he is not the first, Lewis.”

“Nor the last, by G—,” says the captain.

“I have a score to settle with you, d—n you!” cried Chartersea.

“That is why I am here, your Grace,” I replied; “only you have twisted the words. There has been foul play enough. I have come to tell you,” I cried, boiling with anger, “I have

come to tell you there has been foul play enough with a weakling that cannot protect himself, and to put an end to your blackmail."

In the place of an oath, a hoarse laugh of derision came out of him. But I was too angry then to note its significance. I slapped his face—nay, boxed it so that my palm stung. I heard his sword scraping out of the scabbard, and drew mine, stepping back to distance at the same instant. Then, with something of a shudder, I remembered young Atwater, and a 380 brace of other instances of his villany. I looked for the captain. He was gone.

Our blades, the duke's and mine, came together with a ring, and I felt the strength of his wrist behind his, and of his short, powerful arm. The steel sung with our quick changes from 'quarte' to 'tierce'. 'Twas all by the feeling, without light to go by, and hatred between us left little space for skill. Our lunges were furious. 'Twas not long before I felt his point at my chest, but his reach was scant. All at once the music swelled up voices and laughter were wafted faintly from the pleasure world of lights beyond. But my head was filled, to the exclusion of all else, with a hatred and fury. And (God forgive me!) from between my teeth came a prayer that if I might kill this monster, I would die willingly.

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Suddenly, as I pressed him, he shifted ground, and there was Lewis standing within range of my eye. His hands were nowhere—they were behind his back! God alone knows why he had not murdered me. To keep Chartersea between him and me I swung another quarter. The duke seemed to see my game, struggled against it, tried to rush in under my guard, made a vicious lunge that would have ended me then and there had he not slipped. We were both panting like wild beasts. When next I raised my eyes Lewis had faded into the darkness. Then I felt my head as wet as from a plunge, the water running on my brow, and my back twitching. Every second I thought the sting of his sword was between my ribs. But to forsake the duke would have been the maddest of follies.

In that moment of agony came footsteps beating on the path, and by tacit consent our swords were still. We listened.

“Richard! Richard Carvel!”

For the second time in my life I thanked Heaven for that brave and loyal English heart. I called back, but my throat was dry and choked.

“So they are at their d—d assassins’ tricks again! You need have no fear of one murderer.”

With that their steels rang out behind me, like broadswords, Lewis wasting his breath in curses and blasphemies. I began to push Chartersea with all my might, and the wonder of it was that we did not fight with our fingers on each other’s necks. His attacks, too, redoubled. Twice I felt the stings of his point, once in the hand, and once in the body, but I minded them as little as pinpricks. I was sure I had touched him, too. I heard him blowing distressedly. The casks of wine he had drunk in his short life were telling now, and his thrusts grew weaker. That fiercest of all joys—of killing an enemy—was in me, when I heard a cry that rang in my ears for many a year afterward, and the thud of a body on the ground.

“I have done for him, your Grace,” says Lewis, with an oath; and added immediately, “I think I hear people.”

Before I had reached my Lord the captain repeated this, and excitedly begged the duke, I believe, to fly. Chartersea hissed out that he would not move a step until he had finished me, and as I bent over the body his point popped through my coat, and the pain shot under my shoulder. I staggered, and fell. A second of silence ensued, when the duke said with a laugh that was a cackle:

“He won’t marry her, d—n him!” (panting). “He had me cursed near killed, Lewis. Best give him another for luck.”

I felt his heavy hand on the sword, and it tearing out of me. Next came the single word "Dover," and they were gone. I had not lost my senses, and was on my knees again immediately, ripping open Comyn's waistcoat with my left hand, and murmuring his name in an agony of sorrow. I was searching under his shirt, wet with blood, when I became aware of voices at my side. "A duel! A murder! Call the warders! Warders, ho!"

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“A surgeon!” I cried. “A surgeon first of all!”

Some one had wrenched a lamp from the Grand Walk and held it, flickering in the wind, before his Lordship’s face. Guided by its light, more people came running through the wood, then the warders with lanthorns, headed by Mr. Tyers, and on top of him Mr. Fitzpatrick and my Lord Carlisle. We carried poor Jack to the house at the gate, and closed the doors against the crowd.

By the grace of Heaven Sir Charles Blicke was walking in the gardens that night, and, battering at the door, was admitted along with the constable and the watch. Assisted by a young apothecary, Sir Charles washed and dressed the wound, which was in the left groin, and to our anxious questions replied that there was a chance of recovery.

“But you, too, are hurt, sir,” he said, turning his clear eyes upon me. Indeed, the blood had been dripping from my hand and arm during the whole of the operation, and I began to be weak from the loss of it. By great good fortune Chartersea’s thrust, which he thought had ended my life, passed under my armpit from behind and, stitching the skin, lodged deep in my right nipple. This wound the surgeon bound carefully, and likewise two smaller ones.

The constable was for carrying me to the Marshalsea. And so I was forced to tell that I had quarrelled with Chartersea; and the watch, going out to the scene of the fight, discovered the duke’s sword which he had pulled out of me, and Lewis’s laced hat; and also a trail of blood leading from the spot. Mr. Tyers testified that he had seen Chartersea that night, and Lord Carlisle and Fitzpatrick to the grudge the duke bore me. I was given my liberty.

Comyn was taken to his house in Brook Street, Grosvenor Square, in Sir Charles’s coach, whither I insisted upon preceding him. ’Twas on the way there that Fitzpatrick told me Dorothy had fainted when she heard the alarm—a piece of news which added to my anxiety. We called up the dowager countess, Comyn’s mother, and Carlisle broke the news to her, mercifully lightening me of a share of the blame. Her Ladyship received the tidings with great fortitude; and instead of the torrent of reproaches I looked for, and deserved, she implored me to go home and care for my injuries lest I get the fever. I believe that I burst into tears.

His Lordship was carried up the stairs with never a word or a groan from his lips, and his heart beating out slowly.

We reached my lodgings as the watchman was crying: “Past two o’clock, and a windy morning!”

Mr. Fitzpatrick stayed with me that night. And the next morning, save for the soreness of the cuts I had got, I found myself well as ever. I was again to thank the robustness of

my health. Despite the protests of Banks and Fitzpatrick, and of Mr. Fox (who arrived early, not having been to bed at all), I jumped into a chaise and drove to Brook Street. There I had the good fortune to get the greatest load from my mind. Comyn was resting so much easier that the surgeon had left, and her Ladyship retired two hours since.

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The day was misting and dark, but so vast was my relief that I imagined the sun was out as I rattled toward Arlington Street. If only Dolly were not ill again from the shock, I should be happy indeed. She must have heard, ere then, that I was not killed; and I had still better news to tell her than that of Lord Comyn's condition. Mr. Fox, who got every rumour that ran, had shouted after me that the duke and Lewis were set out for France. How he knew I had not waited to inquire. But the report tallied with my own surmise, for they had used the word "Dover" when they left us for dead in the Wilderness.

I dismissed my chaise at the door.

"Mr. Manners waits on you, sir, in the drawing-room," said the footman. "Your honour is here sooner than he looked for," he added gratuitously.

"Sooner than he looked for?"

"Yes, sir. James is gone to you but quarter of an hour since with a message, sir."

I was puzzled.

"And Miss Manners? Is she well?"

The man smiled.

"Very well, sir, thank your honour."

To add to my surprise, Mr. Marmaduke was pacing the drawing-room in a yellow night-gown. He met me with an expression I failed to fathom, and then my eye was held by a letter in his hand. He cleared his throat.

"Good morning, Richard," said he, very serious,—very pompous, I thought. "I am pleased to see that you are so well out of the deplorable affair of last night."

I had not looked for gratitude. In truth, I had done nothing for him, and Chartersea might have exposed him a highwayman for all I cared,—I had fought for Dolly. But this attitude astonished me. I was about to make a tart reply, and then thought better of it.

"Walter, a decanter of wine for Mr. Carvel," says he to the footman. Then to me: "I am rejoiced to hear that Lord Comyn is out of danger."

I merely stared at him.

"Will you sit?" he continued. "To speak truth, the Annapolis packet came in last night with news for you. Knowing that you have not had time to hear from Maryland, I sent for you."

My brain was in such a state that for the moment I took no meaning from this introduction. I was conscious only of indignation against him for sending for me, when for all he knew I might have been unable to leave my bed. Suddenly I jumped from the chair.

“You have heard from Maryland?” I cried. “Is Mr. Carvel dead? Oh, tell me, is Mr. Carvel dead?” And I clutched his arm to make him wince.

He nodded, and turned away. “My dear old friend is no more,” he said. “Your grandfather passed away on the seventh of last month.”

I sank into a chair and bowed my face, a flood of recollections overwhelming me, a thousand kindnesses of my grandfather coming to mind. One comfort alone stood forth, even had I gone home with John Paul, I had missed him. But that he should have died alone with Grafton brought the tears brimming to my eyes. I had thought to be there to receive his last words and blessing, to watch over him, and to Smooth his pillow. Who had he else in the world to bear him affection on his death-bed? The imagination of that scene drove me mad.

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Mr. Manners aroused me by a touch, and I looked up quickly. So quickly that I surprised the trace of a smile about his weak mouth. Were I to die to-morrow, I would swear to this on the Evangels. Nor was it the smile which compels itself upon the weak in serious moments. Nay, there was in it something malicious. And Mr. Manners could not even act.

“There is more, Richard,” he was saying; “there is worse to come. Can you bear it?”

His words and look roused me from my sorrow. I have ever been short of temper with those I disliked, and (alas!) with my friends also. And now all my pent-up wrath against this little man broke forth. I divined his meaning, and forgot that he was Dorothy’s father.

“Worse?” I shouted, while he gave back in his alarm. “Do you mean that Grafton has got possession of the estate? Is that what you mean, sir?”

“Yes,” he gasped, “yes. I pray you be calm.”

“And you call that worse than losing my dearest friend on earth?” I cried. There must have been an infinite scorn in my voice. “Then your standards and mine are different, Mr. Manners. Your ways and mine are different, and I thank God for it. You have played more than one double part with me. You looked me in the face and denied me, and left me to go to a prison. I shall not repeat my grandfather’s kindnesses to you, sir. Though you may not recall them, I do. And if your treatment of me was known in Maryland, you would be drummed out of the colony even as Mr. Hood was, and hung in effigy”

“As God hears me, Richard—”

“Do not add perjury to it,” I said. “And have no uneasiness that I shall publish you. Your wife and daughter have saved you before,—they will save you now.”

I paused, struck speechless by a suspicion that suddenly flashed into my head. A glance at the contemptible form cowering within the folds of the flowered gown clinched it to a conviction. In two strides I had seized him by the skin over his ribs, and he shrieked with pain and fright.

“You—you snake!” I cried, in uncontrollable anger. “You well knew Dorothy’s spirit, which she has not got from you, and you lied to her. Yes, lied, I say. To force her to marry Chartersea you made her believe that your precious honour was in danger. And you lied to me last night, and sent me in the dark to fight two of the most treacherous villains in England. You wish they had killed me. The plot was between you and his Grace. You, who have not a cat’s courage, commit an indiscretion! You never made

one in your life, Tell me," I cried, shaking him until his teeth smote together, "was it not put up between you?"

"Let me go! Let me go, and I will tell!" he wailed in the agony of my grip. I tightened it the more.

"You shall confess it first," I said, from between my teeth.

Scarce had his lips formed the word yes, when I had flung him half across the room. He tripped on his gown, and fell sprawling on his hands. So the servant found us when he came back with the tray. The lackey went out again hastily.

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“My God!” I exclaimed, in bitterness and disgust; “you are a father, and would sell both your daughter and your honour for a title, and to the filthiest wretch in the kingdom?”

Without bestowing upon him another look, I turned on my heel and left the room. I had set my foot on the stair, when I heard the rustle of a dress, and the low voice which I knew so well calling my name.

“Richard.”

There at my side was Dorothy, even taller in her paleness, with sorrow and agitation in her blue eyes.

“Richard, I have heard all.—I listened. Are you going away without a word for me?” Her breath came fast, and mine, as she laid a hand upon my arm. “Richard, I do not care whether you are poor. What am I saying?” she cried wildly. “Am I false to my own father? Richard, what have you done?”

And then, while I stood dazed, she tore open her gown, and drawing forth a little gold locket, pressed it in my palm. “The flowers you gave me on your birthday,—the lilies of the valley, do you remember? They are here, Richard. I have worn them upon my heart ever since.”

I raised the locket to my lips.

“I shall treasure it for your sake, Dorothy,” I said, “for the sake of the old days. God keep you!”

For a moment I looked into the depths of her eyes. Then she was gone, and I went down the stairs alone. Outside, the rain fell unheeded on my new coat. My steps bent southward, past Whitehall, where the martyr Charles had met death so nobly: past the stairs to the river, where she had tripped with me so gayly not a month since. Death was in my soul that day,—death and love, which is the mystery of life. God guided me into the great Abbey near by, where I fell on my knees before Him and before England’s dead. He had raised them and cast them down, even as He was casting me, that I might come to know the glory of His holy name.

RICHARD CARVEL

By Winston Churchill

Volume 7.

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CHAPTER XLII

MY FRIENDS ARE PROVEN

At the door of my lodgings I was confronted by Banks, red with indignation and fidgety from uneasiness.

"O Lord, Mr. Carvel, what has happened, sir?" he cried. "Your honour's agent 'as been here since noon. Must I take orders from the likes o' him, sir?"

Mr. Dix was indeed in possession of my rooms, lounging in the chair Dolly had chosen, smoking my tobacco. I stared at him from the threshold. Something in my appearance, or force of habit, or both brought him to his feet, and wiped away the smirk from his face. He put down the pipe guiltily. I told him shortly that I had heard the news which he must have got by the packet: and that he should have his money, tho' it took the rest of my life: and the ten per cent I had promised him provided he would not press my Lord Comyn. He hesitated, and drummed on the table. He was the man of business again.

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“What security am I to have, Mr. Carvel?” he asked.

“My word,” I said. “It has never yet been broken, I thank God, nor my father’s before me. And hark ye, Mr. Dix, you shall not be able to say that of Grafton.” Truly I thought the principal and agent were now well matched.

“Very good, Mr. Carvel,” he said; “ten per cent. I shall call with the papers on Monday morning.”

“I shall not run away before that,” I replied.

He got out, with a poor attempt at a swagger, without his customary protestations of duty and humble offers of service. And I thanked Heaven he had not made a scene, which in my state of mind I could not have borne, but must have laid hands upon him. Perhaps he believed Grafton not yet secure in his title. I did not wonder then, in the heat of my youth, that he should have accepted my honour as security. But since I have marvelled not a little at this. The fine gentlemen at Brooks’s with whom I had been associating were none too scrupulous, and regarded money-lenders as legitimate prey. Debts of honour they paid but tardily, if at all. A certain nobleman had been owing my Lord Carlisle thirteen thousand pounds for a couple of years, that his Lordship had won at hazard. And tho’ I blush to write it, Mr. Fox himself was notorious in such matters, and was in debt to each of the coterie of fashionables of which he was the devoted chief.

The faithful Banks vowed, with tears in his eyes, that he would never desert me. And in that moment of dejection the poor fellow’s devotion brought me no little comfort. At such times the heart is bitter. We look askance at our friends, and make the task of comfort doubly hard for those that remain true. I had a great affection for the man, and had become so used to his ways and unwearying service that I had not the courage to refuse his prayers to go with me to America. I had not a farthing of my own—he would serve me for nothing—nay, work for me. “Sure,” he said, taking off my coat and bringing me my gown,—“Sure, your honour was not made to work.” To cheer me he went on with some foolish footman’s gossip that there lacked not ladies with jointures who would marry me, and be thankful. I smiled sadly.

“That was when I was Mr. Carvel’s heir, Banks.”

“And your face and figure, sir, and masterful ways! Faith, and what more would a lady want!” Banks’s notions of morality were vague enough, and he would have had me sink what I had left at hazard at Almack’s. He had lived in this atmosphere. Alas! there was little chance of my ever regaining the position I had held but yesterday. I thought of the sponging-house, and my brow was moist. England was no place, in those days, for fallen gentlemen. With us in the Colonies the law offered itself. Mr. Swain, and other

barristers of Annapolis, came to my mind, for God had given me courage. I would try the law. For I had small hopes of defeating my Uncle Grafton.

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The Sunday morning dawned brightly, and the church bells ringing brought me to my feet, and out into Piccadilly, in the forlorn hope that I might see my lady on her way to morning service,—see her for the last time in life, perhaps. Her locket I wore over my heart. It had lain upon hers. To see her was the most exquisite agony in the world. But not to see her, and to feel that she was scarce quarter of a mile away, was beyond endurance. I stood beside an area at the entrance to Arlington Street, and waited for an hour, quite in vain; watching every face that passed, townsmen in their ill-fitting Sunday clothes, and fine ladies with the footmen carrying velvet prayerbooks. And some that I knew only stared, and others gave me distant bows from their coach windows. For those that fall from fashion are dead to fashion.

Dorothy did not go to church that day.

It is a pleasure, my dears, when writing of that hour of bitterness, to record the moments of sweetness which lightened it. As I climbed up to my rooms in Dover Street, I heard merry sounds above, and a cloud of smoke blew out of the door when I opened it.

“Here he is,” cried Mr. Fox. “You see, Richard, we have not deserted you when we can win no more of your money.”

“Why, egad! the man looks as if he had had a calamity,” said Mr. Fitzpatrick.

“And there is not a Jew here,” Fox continued. “Tho’ it is Sunday, the air in my Jerusalem chamber is as bad as in any crimps den in St. Giles’s. ’Slife, and I live to be forty, I shall have as many underground avenues as his Majesty Louis the Eleventh.”

“He must have a place,” put in my Lord Carlisle.

“We must do something for him,” said Fox, “albeit he is an American and a Whig, and all the rest of the execrations. Thou wilt have to swallow thy golden opinions, my buckskin, when we put thee in office.”

I was too overwhelmed even to protest.

“You are not in such a cursed bad way, when all is said, Richard,” said Fitzpatrick. “Charles, when he loses a fortune, immediately borrows another.”

“If you stick to whist and quinze,” said Charles, solemnly, giving me the advice they were forever thrusting upon him, “and play with system, you may make as much as four thousand a year, sir.”

And this was how I was treated by those heathen and cynical macaronies, Mr. Fox’s friends. I may not say the same for the whole of Brooks’s Club, tho’ I never darkened its doors afterwards. But I encountered my Lord March that afternoon, and got only a blank stare in place of a bow.

Charles had collected (Heaven knows how!) the thousand pounds which he stood in my debt, and Mr. Storer and Lord Carlisle offered to lend me as much as I chose. I had some difficulty in refusing, and more still in denying Charles when he pressed me to go with them to Richmond, where he had rooms for play over Sunday.

Banks brought me the news that Lord Comyn was sitting up, and had been asking for me that day; that he was recovering beyond belief. But I was resolved not to go to Brook Street until the money affairs were settled on Monday with Mr. Dix, for I knew well that his Lordship would insist upon carrying out with the agent the contract he had so generously and hastily made, rather than let me pay an abnormal interest.

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On Monday I rose early, and went out for a bit of air before the scene with Mr. Dix. Returning, I saw a coach with his Lordship's arms on the panels, and there was Comyn himself in my great chair at the window, where he had been deposited by Banks and his footman. I stared as on one risen from the dead.

"Why, Jack, what are you doing here?" I cried.

He replied very offhand, as was his manner at such times:

"Blicke vows that Chartersea and Lewis have qualified for the College of Surgeons," says he. "They are both born anatomists. Your job under the arm was the worst bungle of the two, egad, for Lewis put his sword, pat as you please, between two of my organs (cursed if I know their names), and not so much as scratched one."

"Look you, Jack," said I, "I am not deceived. You have no right to be here, and you know it."

"Tush!" answered his Lordship; "I am as well as you." And he took snuff to prove the assertion. "Why the devil was you not in Brook Street yesterday to tell me that your uncle had swindled you? I thought I was your friend," says he, "and I learn of your misfortune through others."

"It is because you are my friend, and my best friend, that I would not worry you when you lay next door to death on my account," I said, with emotion.

And just then Banks announced Mr. Dix.

"Let him wait," said I, greatly disturbed.

"Show him up!" said my Lord, peremptorily.

"No, no!" I protested; "he can wait. We shall have no business now."

But Banks was gone. And I found out, long afterward, that it was put up between them.

The agent swaggered in with that easy assurance he assumed whenever he got the upper hand. He was the would-be squire once again, in top-boots and a frock. I have rarely seen a man put out of countenance so easily as was Mr. Dix that morning when he met his Lordship's fixed gaze from the arm-chair.

"And so you are turned Jew?" says he, tapping his snuffbox. "Before you go ahead so fast again, you will please to remember, d—n you, that Mr. Carvel is the kind that does not lose his friends with his fortune."

Mr. Dix made a salaam, which was so ludicrous in a squire that my Lord roared with laughter, and I feared for his wound.

“A man must live, my Lord,” sputtered the agent. His discomfiture was painful.

“At the expense of another,” says Comyn, dryly. “That is your motto in Change Alley.”

“If you will permit, Jack, I must have a few words in private with Mr. Dix,” I cut in uneasily.

His Lordship would be damned first. “I am not accustomed to be thwarted, Richard, I tell you. Ask the dowager if I have not always had my way. I am not going to stand by and see a man who saved my life fall into the clutches of an usurer. Yes, I said usurer, Mr. Dix. My attorney, Mr. Kennett, of Lincoln’s Inn, has instructions to settle with you.”

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And, despite all I could say, he would not budge an inch. At last I submitted under the threat that he would never after have a word to say to me. By good luck, when I had paid into Mr. Dix's hand the thousand pounds I had received from Charles Fox, and cleared my outstanding bills, the sum I remained in Comyn's debt was not greatly above seven hundred pounds. And that was the end of Mr. Dix for me; when he had backed himself out in chagrin at having lost his ten per centum, my feelings got the better of me. The water rushed to my eyes, and I turned my back upon his Lordship. To conceal his own emotions he fell to swearing like mad.

"Fox will get you something," he said at length, when he was a little calmed.

I told him, sadly, that my duty took me to America.

"And Dorothy?" he said; "you will leave her?"

I related the whole miserable story (all save the part of the locket), for I felt that I owed it him. His excitement grew as he listened, until I had to threaten to stop to keep him quiet. But when I had done, he saw nothing but good to come of it.

"'Od's life! Richard, lad, come here!" he cried. "Give me your hand. Why, you ass, you have won a thousand times over what you lost. She loves you! Did I not say so? And as for that intriguing little puppy, her father, you have pulled his teeth, egad. She heard what you said to him, you tell me. Then he will never deceive her again, my word on't. And Chartersea may come back to London, and be damned."

CHAPTER XLIII

ANNAPOLIS ONCE MORE

Three days after that I was at sea, in the Norfolk packet, with the farewells of my loyal English friends ringing in my ears. Captain Graham, the master of the packet, and his passengers found me but a poor companion. But they had heard of my misfortune, and vied with each other in heaping kindnesses upon me. Nor did they intrude on my walks in the night watches, to see me slipping a locket from under my waistcoat—ay, and raising it to my lips. 'Twas no doubt a blessing that I had lesser misfortunes to share my attention. God had put me in the way of looking forward rather than behind, and I was sure that my friends in Annapolis would help me to an honest living, and fight my cause against Grafton.

Banks was with me. The devoted soul did his best to cheer me, tho' downcast himself at leaving England. To know what to do with him gave me many an anxious moment. I doubted not that I could get him into a service, but when I spoke of such a thing he burst into tears, and demanded whether I meant to throw him off. Nor was any argument of mine of use.

After a fair and uneventful voyage of six weeks, I beheld again my native shores in the low spits of the Virginia capes. The sand was very hot and white, and the waters of the Chesapeake rolled like oil under the July sun. We were all day getting over to Yorktown, the ship's destination. A schooner was sailing for Annapolis early the next morning, and I barely had time to get off my baggage and catch her. We went up the bay with a fresh wind astern, which died down at night.

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The heat was terrific after England and the sea-voyage, and we slept on the deck. And Banks sat, most of the day, exclaiming at the vast scale on which this new country was laid out, and wondering at the myriad islands we passed, some of them fair with grain and tobacco; and at the low-lying shores clothed with forests, and broken by the salt marshes, with now and then the manor-house of some gentleman-planter visible on either side. Late on the second day I beheld again the cliffs that mark the mouth of the Severn, then the sail-dotted roads and the roofs of Annapolis.

We landed, Banks and I, in a pinnace from the schooner, and so full was my heart at the sight of the old objects that I could only gulp now and then, and utter never a word. There was the dock where I had paced up and down near the whole night, when Dolly had sailed away; and Pryse the coachmaker's shop, and the little balcony upon which I had stood with my grandfather, and railed in a boyish tenor at Mr. Hood. The sun cast sharp, black shadows. And it being the middle of the dull season, when the quality were at their seats, and the dinner-hour besides, the town might have been a deserted one for its stillness, as tho' the inhabitants had walked out of it, and left it so. I made my way, Banks behind me, into Church Street, past the "Ship" tavern, which brought memories of the brawl there, and of Captain Clapsaddle forcing the mob, like chaff, before his sword. The bees were humming idly over the sweet-scented gardens, and Farris, the clock-maker, sat at his door, and nodded. He jerked his head as I went by with a cry of "Lord, it is Mr. Richard back!" and I must needs pause, to let him bow over my hand. Farther up the street I came to mine host of the Coffee House standing on his steps, with his hands behind his back.

"Mr. Claude," I said.

He looked at me as tho' I had risen from the dead.

"God save us!" he shouted, in a voice that echoed through the narrow street. "God save us!"

He seemed to go all to pieces. To my bated questions he replied at length, when he had got his breath, that Captain Clapsaddle had come to town but the day before, and was even then in the coffee-room at his dinner. Alone? Yes, alone. Almost tottering, I mounted the steps, and turned in at the coffee-room door, and stopped. There sat the captain at a table, the roast and wine untouched before him, his waistcoat thrown open. He was staring out of the open window into the inn garden beyond, with its shade of cherry trees. Mr. Claude's cry had not disturbed his reveries, nor our talk after it. I went forward. I touched him on the shoulder, and he sprang up, and looked once into my face, and by some trick of the mind uttered the very words Mr. Claude had used.

"God save us! Richard!" And he opened his arms and strained me to his great chest, calling my name again and again, while the tears coursed down the furrows of his cheeks. For I marked the furrows for the first time, and the wrinkles settling in his

forehead and around his eyes. What he said when he released me, nor my replies, can I remember now, but at last he called, in his ringing voice, to mine host:

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“A bottle from your choicest bin, Claude! Some of Mr. Bordley’s. For he that was lost is found.”

The hundred questions I had longed to ask were forgotten. A peace stole upon me that I had not felt since I had looked upon his face before. The wine was brought by Mr. Claude, and opened, and it was mine host who broke the silence, and the spell.

“Your very good health, Mr. Richard,” he said; “and may you come to your own again!”

“I drink it with all my heart, Richard,” replied Captain Daniel. But he glanced at me sadly, and his honest nature could put no hope into his tone. “We have got him back again, Mr. Claude. And God has answered our prayers. So let us be thankful.” And he sat down in silence, gazing at me in pity and tenderness, while Mr. Claude withdrew. “I can give you but a sad welcome home, my lad,” he said presently, with a hesitation strange to him. “’Tis not the first bad news I have had to break in my life to your family, but I pray it may be the last.” He paused. I knew he was thinking of the black tidings he had once brought my mother. “Richard, your grandfather is dead,” he ended abruptly.

I nodded wonderingly.

“What!” he exclaimed; “you have heard already?”

“Mr. Manners told me, in London,” I said, completely mystified.

“London!” he cried, starting forward. “London and Mr. Manners! Have you been to London?”

“You had my letters to Mr. Carvel?” I demanded, turning suddenly sick.

His eye flashed.

“Never a letter. We mourned you for dead, Richard. This is Grafton’s work!” he cried, springing to his feet and striking the table with his great fist, so that the dishes jumped. “Grafton Carvel, the prettiest villain in these thirteen colonies! Oh, we shall hang him some day.”

“Then Mr. Carvel died without knowing that I was safe?” I interrupted.

“On that I’ll lay all my worldly goods,” replied Captain Daniel, emphatically. “If any letters came to Marlboro’ Street from you, Mr. Carvel never dropped eyes on ’em.”

“What a fool was I not to have written you!” I groaned.

He drew his chair around the table, and close to mine.

“Had the news that you escaped death been cried aloud in the streets, my lad, ’twould never have got to your grandfather’s ear,” he said, in lower tones. “I will tell you what happened, tho’ I have it at second hand, being in the North, as you may remember. Grafton came in from Kent and invested Marlboro’ Street. He himself broke the news to Mr. Carvel, who took to his bed. Leiden was not in attendance, you may be sure, but that quack-doctor Drake. Swain sent me a message, and I killed a horse getting here from New York. But I could no more gain admittance to your grandfather, Richard, than to King George the Third. I was met in the hall by that crocodile, who told me with too many fair words that I could not see my old friend; that for the present Dr. Drake denied him everybody. Then I damned Dr. Drake, and Grafton too. And I let him know my suspicions. He ordered me off, Richard—from that house which has been my only home for these twenty years.” His voice broke.

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“Mr. Carvel thought me dead, then.”

“And most mercifully. Your black Hugo, when he was somewhat recovered, swore he had seen you killed and carried off. Sooth, they say there was blood enough on the place. But we spared no pains to obtain a clew of you. I went north to Boston, and Lloyd’s factor south to Charleston. But no trace of the messenger who came to the Coffee House after you could we find. Hell had opened and swallowed him. And mark this for consummate villany: Grafton himself spent no less than five hundred pounds in advertising and the like.”

“And he is not suspected?” I asked. This was the same question I had put to Mrs. Manners. It caused the captain to flare up again.

“’Tis incredible how a rogue may impose upon men of worth and integrity if he but know how to smirk piously, and never miss a service. And then he is an exceeding rich man. Riches cover a multitude of sins in the most virtuous community in the world. Your Aunt Caroline brought him a pretty fortune, you know. We had ominous times this spring, with the associations forming, and the ‘Good Intent’ and the rest being sent back to England. His Excellency was at his wits’ end for support. It was Grafton Carvel who helped him most, and spent money like tobacco for the King’s cause, which, being interpreted, was for his own advancement. But I believe Colonel Lloyd suspects him, tho’ he has never said as much to me. I have told Mr. Swain, under secrecy, what I think. He is one of the ablest lawyers that the colony owns, Richard, and a stanch friend of yours. He took your case of his own accord. But he says we have no foothold as yet.”

When I asked if there was a will the captain rapped out an oath.

“’Sdeath! yes,” he cried, “a will in favour of Grafton and his heirs, witnessed by Dr. Drake, they say, and another scoundrel. Your name does not occur throughout the length and breadth of it. You were dead. But you will have to ask Mr. Swain for those particulars. My dear old friend was sadly gone when he wrote it, I fear. For he never lacked shrewdness in his best days. Nor,” added Captain Daniel, with force, “nor did he want for a proper estimation of Grafton.”

“He has never been the same since that first sickness,” I answered sadly.

When the captain came to speak of Mr. Carvel’s death, the son and daughter he loved, and the child of his old age in the grave before him, he proceeded brokenly, and the tears blinded him. Mr. Carvel’s last words will never be known, my dears. They sounded in the unfeeling ears of the serpent Grafton. ’Twas said that he was seen coming out of his father’s house an hour after the demise, a smile on his face which he strove to hide with a pucker of sorrow. But by God’s grace Mr. Allen had not read the

prayers. The rector was at last removed from Annapolis, and had obtained the fat living of Frederick which he coveted.

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“As I hope for salvation,” the captain concluded, “I will swear there is not such another villain in the world as Grafton. The imagination of a fiend alone could have conceived and brought to execution the crime he has committed. And the Borgias were children to him. ’Twas not only the love of money that urged him, but hatred of you and of your father. That was his strongest motive, I believe. However, the days are coming, lad, when he shall have his reward, unless all signs fail. And we have had enough of sober talk,” said he, pressing me to eat. “Faith, but just now, when you came in, I was thinking of you, Richard. And—God forgive me! complaining against the lot of my life. And thinking, now that you were taken out of it, and your father and mother and grandfather gone, how little I had to live for. Now you are home again,” says he, his eyes lighting on me with affection, “I count the gray hairs as nothing. Let us have your story, and be merry. Nay, I might have guessed you had been in London, with your fine clothes and your English servant.”

’Twas a long story, as you know, my dears. He lighted his pipe and laid his big hand over mine, and filled my glass, and I told him most of that which had happened to me. But I left out the whole of that concerning Mr. Manners and the Duke of Chartersea, nor did I speak of the sponging-house. I believe my only motive for this omittance was a reluctance to dwell upon Dorothy, and a desire to shield her father for her sake. He dropped many a vigorous exclamation into my pauses, but when I came to speak of my friendship with Mr. Fox, his brow clouded over.

“’Ad’s heart!” he cried, “’Ad’s heart! And so you are turned Tory, and have at last been perverted from those principles for which I loved you most. In the old days my conscience would not allow me to advise you, Richard, and now that I am free to speak, you are past advice.”

I laughed aloud.

“And what if I tell you that I made friends with his Grace of Grafton, and Lord Sandwich, and was invited to Hichinbroke, his Lordship’s seat?” said I.

His honest face was a picture of consternation.

“Now the good Lord deliver us!” he exclaimed fervently. “Sandwich! Grafton! The devil!”

I gave myself over to the first real merriment I had had since I had heard of Mr. Carvel’s death.

“And when Mr. Fox learned that I had lost my fortune,” I went on, “he offered me a position under Government.”

“Have you not friends enough at home to care for you, sir?” he said, his face getting purple. “Are you Jack Carvel’s son, or are you an impostor?”

“I am Jack Carvel’s son, dear Captain Daniel, and that is why I am here,” I replied. “I am a stouter Whig than ever, and I believe I might have converted Mr. Fox himself had I remained at home sufficiently long,” I added, with a solemn face. And, for my own edification, I related how I had bearded his Majesty’s friends at Brooks’s, whereat he gave a great, joyful laugh, and thumped me on the back.

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“You dog, Richard! You sly rogue!” And he called to Mr. Claude for another bottle on the strength of that, and we pledged the Association. He peppered me with questions concerning Junius, and Mr. Wilkes, and Mr. Franklin of Philadelphia. Had I seen him in London? “I would not doubt a Carvel’s word,” says the captain, “(always excepting Grafton and his line, as usual), but you may duck me on the stool and I comprehend why Mr. Fox and his friends took up with such a young rebel rapscallion as you—and after the speech you made ’em.”

I astonished him vastly by pointing out that Mr. Fox and his friends cared a deal for place, and not a fig for principle; that my frankness had entertained rather than offended them; and that, having a taste for a bit of wild life and the money to gratify it, and being of a tolerant, easy nature withal, I had contrived to make many friends in that set, without aiming at influence. Whereat he gave me another lick between the shoulders.

“It was so with Jack,” he cried; “thou art a replica. He would have made friends with the devil himself. In the French war, when all the rest of us Royal Americans were squabbling with his Majesty’s officers out of England, and cursing them at mess, they could never be got to fight with Jack, tho’ he gave them ample provocation. There was Tetherington, of the 22d foot,—who jeered us for damned provincials, and swaggered through three duels in a week,—would enter no quarrel with him. I can hear him say: ’Damn you, Carvel, you may slap my face and you will, or walk in ahead of me at the general’s dinner and you will, but I like you too well to draw at you. I would not miss your company at table for all the world.’ And when he was killed,” Captain Daniel continued, lowering his voice, “some of them cried like women, Tetherington among ’em,—and swore they would rather have lost their commissions at high play.”

We sat talking until the summer’s dusk grew on apace, and one thing this devoted lover of my family told me, which lightened my spirits of the greatest burden that had rested upon them since my calamity befell me. I had dwelt at length upon my Lord Comyn, and upon the weight of his services to me, and touched upon the sum which I stood in his debt. The captain interrupted me.

“One day, before your mother died, she sent for me,” said he, “and I came to Carvel Hall. You were too young to remember. It was in September, and she was sitting on the seat under the oak she loved so well,—by Dr. Hilliard’s study.

“The lace shawl your father had given her was around her shoulders, and upon her face was the smile that gave me a pang to see. For it had something of heaven in it, Richard. She called me ‘Daniel’ then for the second time in her life. She bade me be seated beside her. ‘Daniel,’ she said, ’when I am gone, and father is gone, it is you who will take care of Richard. I sometimes believe all may not be well then, and that he will need you.’ I knew she was thinking of Grafton,” said the captain. “’I have a little money of my own, Daniel, which I have saved lately with this in view. I give it into your charge, and if trouble comes to him, my old friend, you will use it as you see fit.’

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“It was a bit under a thousand pounds, Richard. And when she died I put it out under Mr. Carroll’s direction at safe interest. So that you have enough to discharge your debt, and something saved against another emergency.”

He fell silent, sunk into one of those reveries which the memory of my mother awoke in him. My own thoughts drifted across the sea. I was again at the top of the stairs in Arlington Street, and feeling the dearest presence in the world. The pale oval of Dorothy’s face rose before me and the troubled depths of her blue eyes. And I heard once more the tremble in her voice as she confessed, in words of which she took no heed, that love for which I had sought in vain.

The summer dusk was gathering. Outside, under the cherry trees, I saw Banks holding forth to an admiring circle of negro ’ostlers. And presently Mr. Claude came in to say that Shaw, the town carpenter, and Sol Mogg, the ancient sexton of St. Anne’s, and several more of my old acquaintances were without, and begged the honour of greeting me.

CHAPTER XLIV

NOBLESSE OBLIGE

I lay that night in Captain Clapsaddle’s lodgings opposite, and slept soundly. Banks was on hand in the morning to assist at my toilet, and was greatly downcast when I refused him this privilege, for the first time. Captain Daniel was highly pleased with the honest fellow’s devotion in following me to America. To cheer him he began to question him as to my doings in London, and the first thing of which Banks must tell was of the riding-contest in Hyde Park, which I had omitted. It is easy to imagine how this should have tickled the captain, who always had my horsemanship at heart; and when it came to Chartersea’s descent into the Serpentine, I thought he would go into apoplexy. For he had put on flesh with the years.

The news of my return had spread all over town, so that I had a deal more handshaking to do when we went to the Coffee House for breakfast. All the quality were in the country, of course, save only four gentlemen of the local Patriots’ committee, of which Captain Daniel was a member, and with whom he had an appointment at ten. It was Mr. Swain who arrived first of the four.

This old friend of my childhood was a quiet man (I may not have specified), thin, and a little under stature, with a receding but thoughtful forehead. But he could express as much of joy and welcome in his face and manner as could Captain Daniel with his heartier ways.

“It does me good to see you, lad,” he said, pressing my hand. “I heard you were home, and sent off an express to Patty and the mother last night.”

“And are they not here?” I asked, with disappointment.

Mr. Swain smiled.

“I have done a rash thing since I saw you, Richard, and bought a little plantation in Talbot, next to Singleton’s. It will be my ruin,” he added. “A lawyer has no business with landed ambitions.”

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“A little plantation!” echoed the captain. “’Od’s life, he has bought one of his Lordship’s own manors—as good an estate as there is in the province.”

“You overdo it, Daniel,” said he, reprovingly.

At that moment there was a stir in the doorway, and in came Mr. Carroll, the barrister, and Mr. Bordley and Colonel Lloyd. These gentlemen gave me such a welcome as those warm-hearted planters and lawyers knew how to bestow.

“What, he!” cried Mr. Lloyd, “I’m stamped and taxed if it isn’t young Richard Carvel himself. Well,” says he, “I know one who will sleep easier o’ nights now,—one Clapsaddle. The gray hairs are forgot, Daniel. We had more to-do over your disappearance than when Mr. Worthington lost his musical nigger. Where a deuce have you been, sir?”

“He shall tell us when we come back,” said Mr. Bordley. “He has brought our worthy association to a standstill once, and now we must proceed about our business. Will you come, Richard? I believe you have proved yourself a sufficiently good patriot, and in this very house.”

We went down Church Street, I walking behind with Colonel Lloyd, and so proud to be in such company that I cared not a groat whether Grafton had my acres or not. I remembered that the committee all wore plain and sober clothes, and carried no swords. Mr. Swain alone had a wig. I had been away but seven months, and yet here was a perceptible change. In these dignified and determined gentlemen England had more to fear than in all the mobs at Mr. Wilkes’s back. How I wished that Charles Fox might have been with me.

The sun beat down upon the street. The shopkeepers were gathered at their doors, but their chattering was hushed as the dreaded committee passed. More than one, apparently, had tasted of its discipline. Colonel Lloyd whispered to me to keep my countenance, that they were not after very large game that morning,—only Chipchase, the butcher. And presently we came upon the rascal putting up his shutters in much precipitation, although it was noon. He had shed his blood-stained smock and breeches, and donned his Sunday best,—a white, thick-set coat, country cloth jacket, blue broadcloth breeches, and white shirt. A grizzled cut wig sat somewhat awry under his bearskin hat. When he perceived Mr. Carroll at his shoulder, he dropped his shutter against the wall, and began bowing frantically.

“You keep good hours, Master Chipchase,” remarked Colonel Lloyd.

“And lose good customers,” Mr. Swain added laconically.

The butcher wriggled.

“Your honours must know there be little selling when the gentry be out of town. And I was to take a holiday to-day, to see my daughter married.”

“You will have a feast, my good man?” Captain Daniel asked.

“To be sure, your honour, a feast.”

“And any little ewe-lambs?” says Mr. Bordley, very innocent.

Master Chipchase turned the colour of his meat, and his wit failed him.

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"'Fourthly,'" recited Mr. Carroll, with an exceeding sober face, "'Fourthly, that we will not kill, or suffer to be killed, or sell, or dispose to any person whom we have reason to believe intends to kill, any ewe-lamb that shall be weaned before the first day of May, in any year during the time aforesaid.' Have you ever heard anything of that sound, Mr. Chipchase?"

Mr. Chipchase had. And if their honours pleased, he had a defence to make, if their honours would but listen. And if their honours but knew, he was as good a patriot as any in the province, and sold his wool to Peter Psalter, and he wore the homespun in winter. Then Mr. Carroll drew a paper from his pocket, and began to read: "Mr. Thomas Hincks, personally known to me, deposeth and saith,—"

Master Chipchase's knees gave from under him.

"And your honours please," he cried piteously, "I killed the lamb, but 'twas at Mr. Grafton Carvel's order, who was in town with his Excellency." (Here Mr. Swain and the captain glanced significantly at me.) "And I lose Mr. Carvel's custom, there is twelve pounds odd gone a year, your honours. And I am a poor man, sirs."

"Who is it owns your shop, my man?" asks Mr. Bordley, very sternly.

"Oh, I beg your honours will not have me put out—"

The wailing of his voice had drawn a crowd of idlers and brother shopkeepers, who seemed vastly to enjoy the knave's discomfiture. Amongst them I recognized my old acquaintance, Weld, now a rival butcher. He pushed forward boldly.

"And your honours please," said he, "he has sold lamb to half the Tory gentry in Annapolis."

"A lie!" cried Chipchase; "a lie, as God hears me!"

Now Captain Clapsaddle was one who carried his loves and his hatreds to the grave, and he had never liked Weld since the day, six years gone by, he had sent me into the Ship tavern. And when Weld heard the captain's voice he slunk away without a word.

"Have a care, Master Weld," says he, in a quiet tone that boded no good; "there is more evidence against you than you will like."

Master Chipchase, after being frightened almost out of his senses, was pardoned this once by Captain Daniel's influence. We went thence to Mr. Hildreth's shop; he was suspected of having got tea out of a South River snow; then to Mr. Jackson's; and so on. 'Twas after two when we got back to the Coffee House, and sat down to as good a dinner as Mr. Claude could prepare. "And now," cried Colonel Lloyd, "we shall have

your adventures, Richard. I would that your uncle were here to listen to them," he added dryly.

I recited them very much as I had done the night before, and I warrant you, my dears, that they listened with more zest and eagerness than did Mr. Walpole. But they were all shrewd men, and kept their suspicions, if they had any, to themselves. Captain Daniel would have me omit nothing,—my intimacy with Mr. Fox, the speech at Brooks's Club, and the riding-match at Hyde Park.

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“What say you to that, gentlemen?” he cried. “Egad, I’ll be sworn he deserves credit,—-an arrant young spark out of the Colonies, scarce turned nineteen, defeating a duke of the realm on horseback, and preaching the gospel of ‘no taxation’ at Brooks’s Club! Nor the favour of Sandwich or March could turn him from his principles.”

Modesty, my dears, does not permit me to picture the enthusiasm of these good gentlemen, who bore the responsibility of the colony of Maryland upon their shoulders. They made more of me than I deserved. In vain did I seek to explain that if a young man was but well-born, and had a full purse and a turn for high play, his principles might go hang, for all Mr. Fox cared. Colonel Lloyd commanded that the famous rose punch-bowl be filled to the brim with Mr. Claude’s best summer brew, and they drank my health and my grandfather’s memory. It mattered little to them that I was poor. They vowed I should not lose by my choice. Mr. Bordley offered me a home, and added that I should have employment enough in the days to come. Mr. Carroll pressed me likewise. And big-hearted Colonel Lloyd desired to send me to King’s College, as was my grandfather’s wish, where Will Fotheringay and my cousin Philip had been for a term. I might make a barrister of myself. Mr. Swain alone was silent and thoughtful, but I did not for an instant doubt that he would have done as much for me.

Before we broke up for the evening the gentlemen plied me with questions concerning the state of affairs in England, and the temper of his Majesty and Parliament. I say without vanity that I was able to enlighten them not a little, for I had learned a deeper lesson from the set into which I had fallen in London than if I had become the confidant of Rockingham himself. America was a long way from England in those days. I regretted that I had not arrived in London in time to witness Lord Chatham’s dramatic return to politics in January, when he had completed the work of Junius, and broken up the Grafton ministry. But I told them of the debate I had heard in St. Stephen’s, and made them laugh over Mr. Fox’s rescue of the King’s friends, and the hustling of Mr. Burke from the Lords.

They were very curious, too, about Mr. Manners; and I was put to much ingenuity to answer their queries and not reveal my own connection with him. They wished to know if it were true that some nobleman had flung a bottle at his head in a rage because Dorothy would not marry him, as Dr. Courtenay’s letter had stated. I replied that it was so. I did not add that it was the same nobleman who had been pitched into the Serpentine. Nor did I mention the fight at Vauxhall. I made no doubt these things would come to their ears, but I did not choose to be the one to tell them. Mr. Swain remained after the other gentlemen, and asked me if I would come with him to Gloucester Street; that he had something to say to me. We went the long way thither, and I was very grateful to him for avoiding Marlboro’ Street, which must needs bring me painful recollections. He said little on the way.

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I almost expected to see Patty come tripping down from the vine-covered porch with her needlework in her hand, and the house seemed strangely empty without her. Mr. Swain had his negro, Romney, place chairs for us under the apple tree, and bring out pipes and sangaree. The air was still, and heavy with the flowers' scent, and the sun was dipping behind the low eaves of the house. It was so natural to be there that I scarce realized all that had happened since last I saw the back gate in the picket fence. Alas! little Patty would never more be smuggled through it and over the wall to Marlboro' Street. Mr. Swain recalled my thoughts.

"Captain Clapsaddle has asked me to look into this matter of the will, Richard," he began abruptly. "Altho' we thought never to see you again, we have hoped against hope. I fear you have little chance for your property, my lad."

I replied that Captain Daniel had so led me to believe, and thanked him for his kindness and his trouble.

"'Twas no trouble," he replied quickly. "Indeed, I wish it might have been. I shall always think of your grandfather with reverence and with sorrow. He was a noble man, and was a friend to me, in spite of my politics, when other gentlemen of position would not invite me to their houses. It would be the greatest happiness of my life if I could restore his property to you, where he would have had it go, and deprive that villain, your uncle, of the fruits of his crime."

"Then there is nothing to be got by contesting the will?" I asked.

He shook his head soberly.

"I fear not at present," said he, "nor can I with honesty hold out any hope to you, Richard. Your uncle, by reason of his wealth, is a man of undue influence with the powers of the colony. Even if he were not so, I doubt greatly whether we should be the gainers. The will is undoubtedly genuine. Mr. Carvel thought you dead, and we cannot prove undue influence by Grafton unless we also prove that it was he who caused your abduction. Do you think you can prove that?"

"There is one witness," I exclaimed, "who overheard my uncle and Mr. Allen talking of South River and Griggs, the master of the slaver, in the stables at Carvel Hall."

"And who is that?" demanded Mr. Swain, with more excitement than I believed him capable of.

"Old Harvey."

Your grandfather's coachman? Alas, he died the day after Mr. Carvel, and was buried the same afternoon. Have you spoken of this?"

“Not to a soul,” said I.

“Then I would not. You will have to be very careful and say nothing, Richard. Let me hear what other reasons you have for believing that your uncle tried to do away with you.”

I told him, lucidly as possible, everything I have related in these pages, and the admission of Griggs. He listened intently, shaking his head now and then, but not a word out of him.

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“No,” he said at length, “nothing is there which will be admitted, but enough to damn him if you yourself might be a witness. I will give you the law, briefly: descendible estates among us are of two kinds, estates in fee simple and estates in fee tail. Had your grandfather died without a will, his estate, which we suppose to be in fee simple, would have descended to you as the son of his eldest son, according to the fourth of the canons of descent in Blackstone. But with us fee simple estates are devisable, and Mr. Carvel was wholly within his right in cutting off the line of his eldest son. Do you follow me?”

I nodded.

“There is one chance,” he continued, “and that is a very slim one. I said that Mr. Carvel’s estate was supposed to be in fee simple. Estates tail are not devisable. Our system of registration is far from infallible, and sometimes an old family settlement turns up to prove that a property which has been willed out of the direct line, as in fee simple, is in reality entailed. Is there a possibility of any such document?”

I replied that I did not know. My grandfather had never brought up the subject.

“We must bend our efforts in that direction,” said the barrister. “I shall have my clerks make a systematic search.”

He ceased talking, and sat sipping his sangaree in the abstracted manner common to him. I took the opportunity to ask about his family, thinking about what Dolly had said of Patty’s illness.

“The mother is as well as can be expected, Richard, and Patty very rosy with the country air. Your disappearance was a great shock to them both.”

“And Tom?”

He went behind his reserve. “Tom is a d—d rake,” he exclaimed, with some vehemence. “I have given him over. He has taken up with that macaroni Courtenay, who wins his money,—or rather my money,—and your cousin Philip, when he is home from King’s College. How Tom can be son of mine is beyond me, in faith. I see him about once in two months, when he comes here with a bill for his satins and his ruffles, and along face of repentance, and a lot of gaming debts to involve my honour. And that reminds me, Richard,” said he, looking straight at me with his clear, dark eyes: “have you made any plans for your future?”

I ventured to ask his advice as to entering the law.

“As the only profession open to a gentleman,” he replied, smiling a little. “No, you were no more cut out for an attorney, or a barrister, or a judge, than was I for a macaroni doctor. The time is not far away, my lad,” he went on, seeing my shame and confusion,

“when an American may amass money in any way he chooses, and still be a gentleman, behind a counter, if he will.”

“I do not fear work, Mr. Swain,” I remarked, with some pride.

“That is what I have been thinking,” he said shortly. “And I am not a man to make up my mind while you count three, Richard. I have the place in Talbot, and no one to look after it. And—and in short I think you are the man.”

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He paused to watch the effect of this upon me. But I was so taken aback by this new act of kindness that I could not say a word.

“Tom is fast going to the devil, as I told you,” he continued. “He cannot be trusted. If I die, that estate shall be Patty’s, and he may never squander it. Captain Daniel tells me, and Mr. Bordley also, that you managed at Carvel Hall with sense and ability. I know you are very young, but I think I may rely upon you.”

Again he hesitated, eying me fixedly.

“Ah,” said he, with his quiet smile, “it is the old noblesse oblige. How many careers has it ruined since the world began!”

CHAPTER XLV

THE HOUSE OF MEMORIES

I was greatly touched, and made Mr. Swain many awkward acknowledgments, which he mercifully cut short. I asked him for a while to think over his offer. This seemed to please rather than displease him. And my first impulse on reaching the inn was to ask the captain’s advice. I thought better of it however, and at length resolved to thrash out the matter for myself.

The next morning, as I sat reflecting, an overwhelming desire seized me to go to Marlboro’ Street. Hitherto I could not have borne the sight of the old place. I gulped down my emotion as the gate creaked behind me, and made my way slowly to the white seat under the big chestnut behind the house, where my grandfather had been wont to sit reading his prints, in the warm weather. The flowers and the hedges had grown to a certain wildness; and the smell of the American roses carried me back-as odours will-to long-forgotten and trivial scenes. Here I had been caned many a day for Mr. Daaken’s reports, and for earlier offences. And I recalled my mother as she once ran out at the sound of my cries to beg me off. So vivid was that picture that I could hear Mr. Carvel say: “He is yours, madam, not mine. Take him!”

I started up. The house was still, the sun blistering the green paint of the shutters. My eye was caught by those on the room that had been hers, and which, by my grandfather’s decree, had lain closed since she left it. The image of it grew in my mind: the mahogany bed with its poppy counterpane and creamy curtains, and the steps at the side by which she was wont to enter it; and the ‘prie-dieu’, whence her soul had been lifted up to God. And the dresser with her china and silver upon it, covered by years of dust. For I had once stolen the key from Willis’s bunch, crept in, and crept out again, awed. That chamber would be profaned, now, and those dear ornaments, which were mine, violated. The imagination choked me.

I would have them. I must. Nothing easier than to pry open a door or window in the north wing, by the ball-room. When I saw Grafton I would tell him. Nay, I would write him that day. I was even casting about me for an implement, when I heard a step on the gravel beside me.

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I swung around, and came face to face with my uncle.

He must have perceived me. And after the first shock of my surprise had passed, I remarked a bearing on him that I had not seen before. He was master of the situation at last,—so it read. The realization gave him an easier speech than ever.

“I thought I might find you here, Richard,” he said, “since you were not at the Coffee House.”

He did not offer me his hand. I could only stare at him, for I had expected anything but this.

“I came from Carvel Hall to get you,” he proceeded smoothly enough. “I heard but yesterday of your return, and some of your miraculous adventures. Your recklessness has caused us many a trying day, Richard, and I believe killed your grandfather. You have paid dearly, and have made us pay dearly, for your mad frolic of fighting cut-throats on the highroad.”

The wonder was that I did not kill him on the spot. I cannot think what possessed the man,—he must have known me better.

“My recklessness!” I shouted, fairly hoarse with anger. I paid no heed to Mr. Swain’s warning. “You d—d scoundrel!” I cried, “it was you killed him, and you know it. When you had put me out of the way and he was in your power, you tortured him to death. You forced him to die alone with your sneering face, while your shrew of a wife counted cards downstairs. Grafton Carvel, God knows you better than I, who know you two well. And He will punish you as sure as the crack of doom.”

He heard me through, giving back as I came forward, his face blanching only a little, and wearing all the time that yellow smile which so fitted it.

“You have finished?” says he.

“Ay, I have finished. And now you may order me from this ground you have robbed me of. But there are some things in that house you shall not steal, for they are mine despite you.”

“Name them, Richard,” he said, very sorrowful.

“The articles in my mother’s room, which were hers.”

“You shall have them this day,” he answered.

It was his way never to lose his temper, tho' he were called by the vilest name in the language. He must always assume this pious grief which made me long to throttle him. He had the best of me, even now, as he took the great key from his pocket.

"Will you look at them before you go?" he asked.

At first I was for refusing. Then I nodded. He led the way silently around by the front; and after he had turned the lock he stepped aside with a bow to let me pass in ahead of him. Once more I was in the familiar hall with the stairs dividing at the back. It was cool after the heat, and musty, and a touch of death hung in the prisoned air. We paused for a moment on the landing, beside the high, triple-arched window which the branches tapped on windy winter days, while Grafton took down the bunch of keys from beside the clock. I thought of my dear grandfather winding it every Sunday, and his ruddy face and large figure as he stood glancing sidewise down at me. Then the sound of Grafton's feet upon the bare steps recalled the present.

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We passed Mr. Carvel's room and went down the little corridor over the ball-room, until we came to the full-storied wing. My uncle flung open the window and shutters opposite and gave me the key. A delicacy not foreign to him held him where he was. Time had sealed the door, and when at last it gave before my strength, a shower of dust quivered in the ray of sunlight from the window. I entered reverently. I took only the silverbound prayer-book, cast a lingering look at the old familiar objects dimly defined, and came out and locked the door again. I said very quietly that I would send for the things that afternoon, for my anger was hushed by what I had seen.

We halted together on the uncovered porch in front of the house, that had a seat set on each side of it. Marlboro' Street was still, the wide trees which flanked it spreading their shade over walk and roadway. Not a soul was abroad in the midday heat, and the windows of the long house opposite were sightless.

"Richard," said my uncle, staring ahead of him, "I came to offer you a home, and you insult me brutally, as you have done unreproved all your life. And yet no one shall say of me that I shirk my duty. But first I must ask you if there is aught else you desire of me."

"The black boy, Hugo, is mine," I said. I had no great love for Hugo, save for association's sake, and I had one too many servants as it was; but to rescue one slave from Grafton's clutches was charity.

"You shall have him," he replied, "and your chaise, and your wardrobe, and your horses, and whatever else I have that belongs to you. As I was saying, I will not shirk my duty. The memory of my dear father, and of what he would have wished, will not permit me to let you go a-begging. You shall be provided for out of the estate, despite what you have said and done."

This was surely the quintessence of a rogue's imagination. Instinctively I shrank from him. With a show of piety that 'turned me sick he continued:

"Let God witness that I carry out my father's will!"

"Stop there, Grafton Carvel!" I cried; "you shall not take His name in vain. Under this guise of holiness you and your accomplice have done the devil's own work, and the devil will reward you."

This reference to Mr. Allen, I believe, frightened him. For a second only did he show it.

"My—my accomplice, sir!" he stammered. And then righting himself: "You will have to explain this, by Heaven."

"In ample time your plot shall be laid bare, and you and his Reverence shall hang, or lie in chains."

“You threaten, Mr. Carvel?” he shouted, nearly stepping off the porch in his excitement.

“Nay, I predict,” I replied calmly. And I went down the steps and out of the gate, he looking after me. Before I had turned the corner of Freshwater Lane, he was in the seat, and fanning himself with his hat.

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I went straight to Mr. Swain's chambers in the Circle, where I found the good barrister and Captain Daniel in their shirt-sleeves, seated between the windows in the back room. Mr. Swain was grave enough when he heard of my talk with Grafton, but the captain swore I was my father's son (for the fiftieth time since I had come back), and that a man could no more help flying at Grafton's face than Knipe could resist his legs; or Cynthia his back, if he went into her stall. I had scarce finished my recital, when Mr. Renwick, the barrister's clerk, announced Mr. Tucker, which caused Mr. Swain to let out a whistle of surprise.

"So the wind blows from that quarter, Daniel," said he. "I thought so."

Mr. Tucker proved to be the pettifogger into whose hands Grafton had put his affairs, taking them from Mr. Dulany at Mr. Carvel's death. The man was all in a sweat, and had hardly got in the door before he began to talk. He had no less astonishing a proposition to make than this, which he enunciated with much mouthing of the honour and sense of duty of Mr. Grafton Carvel. His client offered to Mr. Richard Carvel the estate lying in Kent County, embracing thirty-three hundred acres more or less of arable land and woodland, with a fine new house, together with the indented servants and negroes and other chattels thereon. Mr. Richard Carvel would observe that in making this generous offer for the welfare of his nephew, Mr. Tucker's client was far beyond the letter of his obligations; wherefore Mr. Grafton Carvel made it contingent upon the acceptance of the estate that his nephew should sign a paper renouncing forever any claims upon the properties of the late Mr. Lionel Carvel. This condition was so deftly rolled up in law-Latin that I did not understand a word of it until Mr. Swain stated it very briefly in English. His quiet laugh prodigiously disconcerted the pettifogger, who had before been sufficiently ill at ease in the presence of the great lawyer. Mr. Tucker blew his nose loudly to hide his confusion.

"And what say you, Richard?" said Mr. Swain, without a shade of accent in his voice.

I bowed my head. I knew that the honest barrister had read my heart when he spoke of noblesse oblige. That senseless pride of cast, so deep-rooted in those born in our province, had made itself felt. To be a factor (so I thought, for I was young) was to renounce my birth. Until that moment of travail the doctrine of equality had seemed very pretty to me. Your fine gentleman may talk as nobly as he pleases over his Madeira, and yet would patronize Monsieur Rousseau if he met him; and he takes never a thought of those who knuckle to him every day, and clean his boots and collect his rents. But when he is tried in the fire, and told suddenly to collect some one else's rents and curse another's negroes, he is fainthearted for the experiment. So it was with me when I had to meet the issue. I might take Grafton's offer, and the chance to marry Dorothy was come again. For by industry the owner of the Kent lands would become rich.

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The room was hot, and still save for the buzzing of the flies. When I looked up I discovered the eyes of all three upon me.

“You may tell your client, Mr. Tucker, that I refuse his offer,” I said.

He got to his feet, and with the customary declaration of humble servitude bowed himself out.

The door was scarce closed on him when the captain had me by the hands.

“What said I, Henry?” he cried. “Did I not know the lad?”

Mr. Swain did not stir from his seat. He was still gazing at me with a curious expression. And then I saw the world in truer colour. This good Samaritan was not only taking me into his home, but would fight for my rights with the strong brain that had lifted him out of poverty and obscurity. I stood, humbled before him.

“I would accept your kindness, Mr. Swain,” I said, vainly trying to steady my voice, “but I have the faithful fellow, Banks, who followed me here from England, dependant on me, and Hugo, whom I rescued from my uncle. I will make over the black to you and you will have him.”

He rose, brushed his eyes with his shirt, and took me by the arm. “You and the captain dine with me to-day,” says he. “And as for Banks, I think that can be arranged. Now I have an estate, I shall need a trained butler, egad. I have some affairs to keep me in town to-day, Richard. But we’ll be off for Cordon’s Pride in the morning, and I know of one little girl will be glad to see us.”

We dined out under the apple tree in Gloucester Street. And the captain argued, in his hopeful way, that Tucker’s visit betrayed a weak point in Grafton’s position. But the barrister shook his head and said that Grafton was too shrewd a rogue to tender me an estate if he feared me. It was Mr. Swain’s opinion that the motive of my uncle was to put himself in a good light; and perhaps, he added, there was a little revenge mixed therein, as the Kent estate was the one Mr. Carvel had given him when he cast him off.

A southerly wind was sending great rolls of fog before it as Mr. Swain and I, with Banks, crossed over to Kent Island on the ferry the next morning. We traversed the island, and were landed by the other ferry on the soil of my native county, Queen Anne’s. In due time we cantered past Master Dingley’s tavern, the sight of which gave me a sharp pang, for it is there that the by-road turns over the bridge to Carvel Hall and Wilmot House; and force of habit drew my reins to the right across the horse’s neck, so that I swerved into it. The barrister had no word of comment when I overtook him again.

’Twas about two o’clock when we came to the gate Mr. Swain had erected at the entrance to his place; the land was a little rolling, and partly wooded, like that on the Wye. But the fields were prodigiously unkempt. He drew up, and glanced at me.

“You will see there is much to be done with such fallows as these,” said he. “The lessees from his Lordship were sportsmen rather than husbandmen, and had an antipathy to a constable or a sheriff like a rat to a boar cat. That is the curse of some of your Eastern Shore gentlemen, especially in Dorchester,” he added; “they get to be fishmongers.”

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Presently we came in sight of the house, long and low, like the one in Gloucester Street, with a new and unpainted wing just completed. That day the mist softened its outline and blurred the trees which clustered about it. Even as we swung into the circle of the drive a rounded and youthful figure appeared in the doorway, gave a little cry, and stood immovable. It was Patty, in a striped dimity gown with the sleeves rolled up, and her face fairly shone with joy as I leaped from my horse and took her hands.

“So you like my surprise, girl?” said her father, as he kissed her blushing face.

For answer she tore herself away, and ran through the hall to the broad porch in front.

“Our barrister is come, mother,” we heard her exclaiming, “and whom do you think he has brought?”

“Is it Richard?” asked the gentler voice, more hastily than usual.

I stepped out on the porch, where the invalid sat in her armchair. She was smiling with joy, too, and she held out her wasted hands and drew me toward her, kissing me on both cheeks.

“I thank God for His goodness,” said she.

“And the boy has come to stay, mother,” said her husband, as he stooped over her.

“To stay!” cries Patty.

“Gordon’s Pride is henceforth his home,” replied the barrister. “And now I can return in peace to my musty law, and know that my plantation will be well looked after.”

Patty gasped.

“Oh, I am so glad!” said she, “I could almost rejoice that his uncle cheated him out of his property. He is to be factor of Gordon’s Pride?”

“He is to be master of Gordon’s Pride, my dear,” says her father, smiling and tilting her chin; “we shall have no such persons as factors here.”

At that the tears forced themselves into my own eyes. I turned away, and then I perceived for the first time the tall form of my old friend, Percy Singleton.

“May I, too, bid you welcome, Richard,” said he, in his manly way; “and rejoice that I have got such a neighbour?”

“Thank you, Percy,” I answered. I was not in a state to say much more.

“And now,” exclaims Patty, “what a dinner we shall have in the prodigal’s honour! I shall make you all some of the Naples biscuit Mrs. Brice told me of.”

She flew into the house, and presently we heard her clear voice singing in the kitchen.

CHAPTER XLVI

GORDON’S PRIDE

The years of a man’s life that count the most are often those which may be passed quickest in the story of it. And so I may hurry over the first years I spent as Mr. Swain’s factor at Gordon’s Pride. The task that came to my hand was heaven-sent.

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That manor-house, I am sure, was the tidiest in all Maryland, thanks to Patty's New England blood. She was astir with the birds of a morning, and near the last to retire at night, and happy as the days were long. She was ever up to her elbows in some dish, and her butter and her biscuits were the best in the province. Little she cared to work samplers, or peacocks in pretty wools, tho' in some way she found the time to learn the spinet. As the troubles with the mother country thickened, she took to a foot-wheel, and often in the crisp autumn evenings I would hear the bumping of it as I walked to the house, and turn the knob to come upon her spinning by the twilight. She would have no English-made linen in that household. "If mine scratch your back, Richard," she would say, "you must grin and bear, and console yourself with your virtue." It was I saw to the flax, and learned from Ivie Rawlinson (who had come to us from Carvel Hall) the best manner to ripple and break and swingle it. And Mr. Swain, in imitation of the high example set by Mr. Bordley, had buildings put up for wheels and the looms, and in due time kept his own sheep.

If man or woman, white or black, fell sick on the place, it was Patty herself who tended them. She knew the virtue of every herb in the big chest in the storeroom. And at table she presided over her father's guests with a womanliness that won her more admiration than mine. Now that the barrister was become a man of weight, the house was as crowded as ever was Carvel Hall. Carrolls and Pacas and Dulanys and Johnsons, and Lloyds and Bordleys and Brices and Scotts and Jennings and Ridouts, and Colonel Sharpe, who remained in the province, and many more families of prominence which I have not space to mention, all came to Gordon's Pride. Some of these, as their names proclaim, were of the King's side; but the bulk of Mr. Swain's company were stanch patriots, and toasted Miss Patty instead of his Majesty. By this I do not mean that they lacked loyalty, for it is a matter of note that our colony loved King George.

I must not omit from the list above the name of my good friend, Captain Clapsaddle.

Nor was there lack of younger company. Betty Tayloe, who plied me with questions concerning Dorothy and London, but especially about the dashing and handsome Lord Comyn; and the Dulany girls, and I know not how many others. Will Fotheringay, when he was home from college, and Archie Brice, and Francis Willard (whose father was now in the Assembly) and half a dozen more to court Patty, who would not so much as look at them. And when I twitted her with this she would redden and reply: "I was created for a housewife, sir, and not to make eyes from behind a fan." Indeed, she was at her prettiest and best in the dimity frock, with the sleeves rolled up.

'Twas a very merry place, the manor of Gordon's Pride. A generous bowl of punch always stood in the cool hall, through which the south winds swept from off the water, and fruit and sangaree and lemonade were on the table there. The manor had no ball-room, but the negro fiddlers played in the big parlour. And the young folks danced till supper time. In three months Patty's suppers grew famous in a colony where there was no lack of good cooks.

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The sweet-natured invalid enjoyed these festivities in her quiet way, and often pressed me to partake. So did Patty beg me, and Mr. Swain. Perhaps a false sense of pride restrained me, but my duties held me all day in the field, and often into the night when there was curing to be done, or some other matters of necessity. And for the rest, I thought I detected a change in the tone of Mr. Fotheringay, and some others, tho' it may have been due to sensibility on my part. I would put up with no patronage.

There was no change of tone, at least, with the elder gentlemen. They plainly showed me an added respect. And so I fell into the habit, after my work was over, of joining them in their suppers rather than the sons and daughters. There I was made right welcome. The serious conversation spiced with the wit of trained barristers and men of affairs better suited my changed condition of life. The times were sober, and for those who could see, a black cloud was on each horizon. 'Twas only a matter of months when the thunder-clap was to come-indeed, enough was going on within our own province to forebode a revolution. The Assembly to which many of these gentlemen belonged was in a righteous state of opposition to the Proprietary and the Council concerning the emoluments of colonial officers and of clergymen. Honest Governor Eden had the misfortune to see the justice of our side, and was driven into a seventh state by his attempts to square his conscience. Bitter controversies were waging in the Gazette, and names were called and duels fought weekly. For our cause "The First Citizen" led the van, and the able arguments and moderate language of his letters soon identified him as Mr. Charles Carroll of Carrollton, one of the greatest men Maryland has ever known. But even at Mr. Swain's, amongst his few intimate friends, Mr. Carroll could never be got to admit his 'nom de guerre' until long after 'Antilon' had been beaten.

I write it with pride, that at these suppers I was sometimes asked to speak; and, having been but lately to England, to give my opinion upon the state of affairs there. Mr. Carroll honoured me upon two occasions with his confidence, and I was made clerk to a little club they had, and kept the minutes in my own hand.

I went about in homespun, which, if good enough for Mr. Bordley, was good enough for me. I rode with him over the estate. This gentleman was the most accomplished and scientific farmer we had in the province. Having inherited his plantation on Wye Island, near Carvel Hall, he resigned his duties as judge, and a lucrative practice, to turn all his energies to the cultivation of the soil. His wheat was as eagerly sought after as was Colonel Washington's tobacco.

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It was to Mr. Bordley's counsel that the greater part of my success was due. He taught me the folly of ploughing with a fluke,—a custom to which the Eastern Shore was wedded, pointing out that a double surface was thus exposed to the sun's rays; and explained at length why there was more profit in small grain in that district than heavy tobacco. He gave me Dr. Eliot's "Essays on Field Husbandry," and Mill's "Husby," which I read from cover to cover. And I went from time to time to visit him at Wye Island, when he would canter with me over that magnificent plantation, and show me with pride the finished outcome of his experiments.

Mr. Swain's affairs kept him in town the greater part of the twelve months, and Mrs. Swain and Patty moved to Annapolis in the autumn. But for three years I was at Cordon's Pride winter and summer alike. At the end of that time I was fortunate enough to show my employer such substantial results as to earn his commendation—ay, and his confidence, which was the highest token of that man's esteem. The moneys of the estate he left entirely at my order. And in the spring of '73, when the opportunity was suddenly offered to buy a thousand acres of excellent wheat land adjoining, I made the purchase for him while he was at Williamsburg, and upon my own responsibility.

This connected the plantation on the east with Singleton's. It had been my secret hope that the two estates might one day be joined in marriage. For of all those who came a-courting Patty, Percy was by far the best. He was but a diffident suitor; he would sit with me on the lawn evening after evening, when company was there, while Fotheringay and Francis Willard made their compliments within,—silly flatteries, at which Patty laughed.

Percy kept his hounds, and many a run we had together' in the sparkling days that followed the busy summer, when the crops were safe in the bottoms; or a quiet pipe and bottle in his bachelor's hall, after a soaking on the duck points.

And this brings me to a subject on which I am loth to write. Where Mr. Singleton was concerned, Patty, the kindest of creatures, was cruelty itself. Once, when I had the effrontery to venture a word in his behalf, I had been silenced so effectively as to make my ears tingle. A thousand little signs led me to a conclusion which pained me more than I can express. Heaven is my witness that no baser feeling leads me to hint of it here. Every day while the garden lasted flowers were in my room, and it was Banks who told me that she would allow no other hands than her own to place them by my bed. He got a round rating from me for violating the pledge of secrecy he had given her. It was Patty who made my shirts, and on Christmas knitted me something of comfort; who stood on the horse-block in the early morning waving after me as I rode away, and at my coming her eyes would kindle with a light not to be mistaken.

None of these things were lost upon Percy Singleton, and I often wondered why he did not hate me. He was of the kind that never shows a hurt. Force of habit still sent him to Gordon's Pride, but for days he would have nothing to say to the mistress of it, or she to him.

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CHAPTER XLVII

VISITORS

It was not often that Mr. Thomas Swain honoured Gordon's Pride with his presence. He vowed that the sober Whig company his father brought there gave him the vapours. He snapped his fingers at the articles of the Patriots' Association, and still had his cocked hats and his Brussels lace and his spyglass, and his top boots when he rode abroad, like any other Tory buck. His intimates were all of the King's side,—of the worst of the King's side, I should say, for I would not be thought to cast any slur on the great number of conscientious men of that party. But, being the son of one of the main props of the Whigs, Mr. Tom went unpunished for his father's sake. He was not uncondemned.

Up to 1774, the times that Mr. Swain mentioned his son to me might be counted on the fingers of one hand. It took not a great deal of shrewdness to guess that he had paid out many a pretty sum to keep Tom's honour bright: as bright, at least, as such doubtful metal would polish. Tho' the barrister sought my ear in many matters, I never heard a whimper out of him on this score.

Master Tom had no ambition beyond that of being a macaroni; his easy-going nature led him to avoid alike trouble and responsibility. Hence he did not bother his head concerning my position. He appeared well content that I should make money out of the plantation for him to spend. His visits to Gordon's Pride were generally in the late autumn, and he brought his own company with him. I recall vividly his third or fourth appearance, in October of '73. Well I may! The family was preparing to go to town, and this year I was to follow them, and take from Mr. Swain's shoulders some of his private business, for he had been ailing a little of late from overwork.

The day of which I have spoken a storm had set in, the rain falling in sheets. I had been in the saddle since breakfast, seeing to an hundred repairs that had to be made before the cold weather. 'Twas near the middle of the afternoon when I pulled up before the weaving house. The looms were still, and Patty met me at the door with a grave look, which I knew portended something. But her first words were of my comfort.

"Richard, will you ever learn sense? You have been wet all day long, and have missed your dinner. Go at once and change your clothes, sir!" she commanded severely.

"I have first to look at the warehouse, where the roof is leaking," I expostulated.

"You shall do no such thing," replied she, "but dry yourself, and march into the dining room. We have had the ducks you shot yesterday, and some of your experimental hominy; but they are all gone."

I knew well she had laid aside for me some dainty, as was her habit. I dismounted. She gave me a quick, troubled glance, and said in a low voice:

“Tom is come. And oh, I dare not tell you whom he has with him now!”

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“Courtenay?” I asked.

“Yes, of coarse. I hate the sight of the man. But your cousin, Philip Carvel, is here, Richard. Father will be very angry. And they are making a drinking-tavern of the house.”

I gave Firefly a slap that sent her trotting stable-ward, and walked rapidly to the house. I found the three of them drinking in the hall, the punch spilled over the table, and staining the cards.

“Gad’s life!” cries Tom, “here comes Puritan Richard, in his broad rim. How goes the crop, Richard? ’Twill have to go well, egad, for I lost an hundred at the South River Club last week!”

Next him sat Philip, whom I had not seen since before I was carried off. He was lately come home from King’s College; and very mysteriously, his father giving out that his health was not all it should be. He had not gained Grafton’s height, but he was broader, and his face had something in it of his father. He had his mother’s under lip and complexion. Grafton was sallow; Philip was a peculiar pink,—not the ruddy pink of heartier natures, like my grandfather’s, nor yet had he the peach-like skin of Mr. Dix. Philip’s was a darker and more solid colour, and I have never seen man or woman with it and not mistrusted them. He wore a red velvet coat embroidered with gold, and as costly ruffles as I had ever seen in London. But for all this my cousin had a coarse look, and his polished blue flints of eyes were those of a coarse man.

He got to his feet as Tom spoke, looking anywhere but at me, and came forward slowly. He was loyal to no one, was Philip, not even to his father. When he was got within three paces he halted.

“How do you, cousin?” says he.

“A little wet, as you perceive, Philip,” I replied.

I left him and stood before the fire, my rough wool steaming in the heat. He sat down again, a little awkwardly; and the situation began to please me better.

“How do you?” I asked presently.

“I have got a devilish cold,” said he. “Faith, I’ll warrant the doctor will be sworn I have been but indifferent company since we left the Hall. Eh, doctor?”

Courtenay, with his feet stretched out, bestowed an amiable but languid wink upon me, as much as to say that I knew what Mr. Philip’s company was at best. When I came out after my dinner, they were still sitting there, Courtenay yawning, and Tom and Philip wrangling over last night’s play.

“Come, my man of affairs, join us a hand!” says the doctor to me. “I have known the time when you would sit from noon until supper.”

“I had money then,” said I.

“And you have a little now, or I am cursed badly mistook. Oons! what do you fear?” he exclaimed, “you that have played with March and Fox?”

“I fear nothing, doctor,” I answered, smiling. “But a man must have a sorry honour when he will win fifty pounds with but ten of capital.”

“One of Dr. Franklin’s maxims, I presume,” says he, with sarcasm.

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“And if it were, it could scarce be more pat,” I retorted. “’Tis Poor Richard’s maxim.”

“O lud! O my soul!” cries Tom, with a hiccup and a snigger; “’tis time you made another grand tour, Courtenay. Here’s the second Whig has got in on you within the week!”

“Thank God they have not got me down to osnabrig and bumbo yet,” replies the doctor. Coming over to me by the fire, he tapped my sleeve and added in a low tone: “Forbearance with such a pair of asses is enough to make a man shed bitter tears. But a little of it is necessary to keep out of debt. You and I will play together, against both the lambs, Richard. One of them is not far from maudlin now.”

“Thank you, doctor,” I answered politely, “but I have a better way to make my living.” In three years I had learned a little to control my temper.

He shrugged his thin shoulders. “Eh bien, mon bon,” says he, “I dare swear you know your own game better than do I.” And he cast a look up the stairs, of which I quite missed the meaning. Indeed, I was wholly indifferent. The doctor and his like had passed out of my life, and I believed they were soon to disappear from our Western Hemisphere. The report I had heard was now confirmed, that his fortune was dissipated, and that he lived entirely off these young rakes who aspired to be macaronies.

“Since your factor is become a damned Lutheran, Tom,” said he, returning to the table and stripping a pack, “it will have to be picquet. You promised me we could count on a fourth, or I had never left Inman’s.”

It was Tom, as I had feared, who sat down unsteadily opposite. Philip lounged and watched them sulkily, snuffing and wheezing and dipping into the bowl, and cursing the house for a draughty barn. I took a pipe on the settle to see what would come of it. I was not surprised that Courtenay lost at first, and that Tom drank the most of the punch. Nor was it above half an hour before the stakes were raised and the tide began to turn in the doctor’s favour.

“A plague of you, Courtenay!” cries Mr. Tom, at length, flinging down the cards. His voice was thick, while the Selwyn of Annapolis was never soberer in his life. Tom appealed first to Philip for the twenty pounds he owed him.

“You know how damned stingy my father is, curse you,” whined my cousin, in return. “I told you I should not have it till the first of the month.”

Tom swore back. He thrust his hands deep in his pockets and sank into that attitude of dejection common to drunkards. Suddenly he pulled himself up.

“‘Shblood! Here’s Richard t’ draw from. Lemme have fifty pounds, Richard.”

“Not a farthing,” I said, unmoved.

“You say wha’ shall be done with my father’s money!” he cried. “I call tha’ damned cool —Gad’s life! I do. Eh, Courtenay?”

Courtenay had the sense not to interfere.

“I’ll have you dishcharged, Gads death! so I will!” he shouted. “No damned airs wi’ me, Mr. Carvel. I’ll have you know you’re not wha’ you once were, but, only a cursht oversheer.”

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He struggled to his feet, forgot his wrath on the instant, and began to sing drunkenly the words of a ribald air. I took him by both shoulders and pushed him back into his chair.

“Be quiet,” I said sternly; “while your mother and sister are here you shall not insult them with such a song.” He ceased, astonished. “And as for you, gentlemen,” I continued, “you should know better than to make a place of resort out of a gentleman’s house.”

Courtenay’s voice broke the silence that followed.

“Of all the cursed impertinences I ever saw, egad!” he drawled. “Is this your manor, Mr. Carvel? Or have you a seat in Kent?”

I would not have it in black and white that I am an advocate of fighting. But a that moment I was in the mood when it does not matter much one way or the other. The drunken man carried us past the point.

“The damned in—intriguing rogue’sh worked himself into my father’s grashes,” he said, counting out his words. “He’sh no more Whig than me. I know’sh game, Courtenay—-he wants t’ marry Patty. Thish place’ll be hers.”

The effect upon me of these words, with all their hideous implication of gossip and scandal, was for an instant benumbing. The interpretation of the doctor’s innuendo struck me then. I was starting forward, with a hand open to clap over Tom’s mouth, when I saw the laugh die on Courtenay’s face, and him come bowing to his legs. I turned with a start.

On the stairs stood Patty herself, pale as marble.

“Come with me, Tom,” she said.

He had obeyed her from childhood. This time he tried, and failed miserably.

“Beg pardon, Patty,” he stammered, “no offensh meant. Thish factor thinks h’ ownsh Gordon’s now. I say, not’ll h’ marries you. Good fellow, Richard, but infernal forward. Eh, Courtenay?”

Philip turned away, while the doctor pretended to examine the silver punch-ladle. As for me, I could only stare. It was Patty who kept her head, and made us a stately curtsey.

“Will you do me the kindness, gentlemen,” said she, “to leave me with my brother?”

We walked silently into the parlour, and I closed the door.

“Slife!” cried Courtenay, “she’s a vision. What say you, Philip? And I might see her in that guise again, egad, I would forgive Tom his five hundred crowns!”

“A buxom vision,” agreed my cousin, “but I vow I like ’em so.” He had forgotten his cold.

“This conversation is all of a piece with the rest of your conduct,” said I, hotly.

The candles were burning brightly in the sconces. The doctor walked to the glass, took snuff, and burnished his waistcoat before he answered.

“Sure, a fortune lies under every virtue we assume,” he recited. “But she is not for you, Richard,” says he, tapping his box.

“Mr. Carvel, if you please,” I replied. I felt the demon within me. But I had the sense to realize that a quarrel with Dr. Courtenay, under the circumstances, would be far from wise. He had no intention of quarrelling, however. He made me a grand bow.

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“Mr. Carvel, your very obedient. Hereafter I shall know better than to forget myself with an overseer.” And he gave me his back. “What say you to a game of billiards, Philip?”

Philip seemed glad to escape. And soon I heard their voices, mingling with the click of the balls. There followed for me one of the bitterest half hours I have had in my life. Then Patty opened the hall door.

“Will you come in for a moment, Richard?” she said, quite calmly.

I followed her, wondering at the masterful spirit she had shown. For there was Tom all askew in his chair, his feet one way and his hands another, totally subdued. What was most to the point, he made me an elaborate apology. How she had sobered his mind I know not. His body was as helpless as the day he was born.

Long before the guests thought of rising the next morning, Patty came to me as I was having the mare saddled. The sun was up, and the clouds were being chased, like miscreants who have played their prank, and were now running for it. The sharp air brought the red into her cheeks. And for the first time in her life with me she showed shyness. She glanced up into my face, and then down at the leaves running on the ground.

“I hope they will go to-day,” said she, when I was ready to mount.

I began to tighten the girths, venting my feelings on Firefly until the animal swung around and made a vicious pass at my arm.

“Richard!”

“Yes.”

“You will not worry over that senseless speech of Tom’s?”

“I see it in a properer light now, Patty,” I replied. “I usually do—in the morning.”

She sighed.

“You are so—high-strung,” she said, “I was afraid you would—”

“I would—?”

She did not answer until I had repeated.

“I was very silly,” she said slowly, her colour mounting even higher,” I was afraid that you would—leave us.” Stroking the mare’s neck, and with a little halt in her voice, “I do not know what we should do without you.”

Indeed, I was beginning to think I would better leave, though where I should go was more than I could say. With a quick intuition she caught my hand as I put foot in the stirrup.

“You will not go away!” she cried. “Say you will not! What would poor father do? He is not so well as he used to be.”

The wild appeal in her eyes frightened me. It was beyond resisting. In great agitation I put my foot to the ground again.

“Patty, I should be a graceless scamp in truth,” I exclaimed. “I do not forget that your father gave me a home when mine was taken away, and has made me one of his family. I shall thank God if I can but lighten some of his burdens.”

But they did not depart that day, nor the next; nor, indeed, for a week after. For Philip’s cold brought on a high fever. He stuck to his bed, and Patty herself made broth and dainties for him, and prescribed him medicine out of the oak chest whence had come so much comfort. At first Philip thought he would die, and forswore wine and cards, and some other things the taste for which he had cultivated, and likewise worse vices that had come to him by nature.

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I am greatly pleased to write that the stay profited the gallant Dr. Courtenay nothing. Patty's mature beauty and her manner of carrying off the episode in the hall had made a deep impression upon the Censor. I read the man's mind in his eye; here was a match to mend his fortunes, and do him credit besides. However, his wit and his languishing glances and double meanings fell on barren ground. No tire-woman on the plantation was busier than Patty during the first few days of his stay. After that he grew sulky and vented his spleen on poor Tom, winning more money from him at billiards and picquet. Since the doctor was too much the macaroni to ride to hounds and to shoot ducks, time began to hang exceeding heavy on his hands.

Patty and I had many a quiet laugh over his predicament. And, to add zest to the situation, I informed Singleton of what was going forward. He came over every night for supper, and to my delight the bluff Englishman was received in a fashion to make the doctor writhe and snort with mortification. Never in his life had he been so insignificant a person. And he, whose conversation was so sought after in the gay season in town, was thrown for companionship upon a scarce-grown boy whose talk was about as salted, and whose intellect as great, as those of the cockerouse in our fable. He stood it about a se'nnight, at the end of which space Philip was put on his horse, will-he-nill-he, and made to ride northward.

I sat with my cousin of an evening as he lay in bed. Not, I own, from any charity on my part, but from other motives which do me no credit. The first night he confessed his sins, and they edified me not a little. On the second he was well enough to sit up and swear, and to vow that Miss Swain was an angel; that he would marry her the very next week and his father Grafton were not such a stickler for family.

"Curse him," says his dutiful and loyal son, "he is so bally stingy with my stipend that I am in debt to half the province. And I say it myself, Richard, he has been a blackguard to you, tho' I allow him some little excuse. You were faring better now, my dear cousin, and you had not given him every reason to hate you. For I have heard him declare more than once 'pon my soul, I have—that he would rather you were his friend than his enemy."

My contempt for Philip kept me silent here. I might quarrel with Grafton, who had sense enough to feel pain at a well deserved thrust. Philip had not the intelligence to recognize insult from compliment. It was but natural he should mistake my attitude now. He leaned forward in his bed.

"Hark you, Richard," whispers he, with a glance at the door, "I might tell you some things and I chose, and—and it were worth my while."

"Worth your while?" I repeated vaguely.

He traced nervously the figures on the counterpane. Next came a rush of anger to redden his face.

“By Gad, I will tell you. Swear to Gad I will.” Then, the little cunning inherited from his father asserting itself, he added, “Look you, Richard, I am the son of one of the richest men in the colony, and I get the pittance of a backwoods pastor. I tell you ’tis not to be borne with. And I am not of as much consideration at the Hall as Brady, the Irish convict, who has become overseer.”

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I little wondered at this. Philip sank back, and for some moments eyed me between narrowed lids. He continued presently with shortened breath:

“I have evidence—I have evidence to get you back a good share of the estate, which my father will never miss. And I will do it,” he cries, suddenly bold, “I will do it for three thousand pounds down when you receive it.”

This was why he had come with Tom to Talbot! I was so dumfounded that my speech was quite taken away. Then I got up and began pacing the room. Was it not fair to fight a scoundrel with his own weapons? Here at last was the witness Mr. Swain had been seeking so long, come of his own free will. Then—Heaven help me!—my mind flew on. As time had passed I had more than once regretted refusing the Kent plantation, which had put her from whom my thought never wandered within my reach again. Good Mr. Swain had erred for once. ’Twas foolish, indeed, not to accept a portion of what was rightfully mine, when no more could be got. And now, if what Philip said was true (and I doubted it not), here at last was the chance come again to win her without whom I should never be happy. I glanced at my cousin.

“Gad’s life!” says he, “it is cheap enough. I might have asked you double.”

“So you might, and have been refused,” I cried hotly. For I believe that speech of his recalled me to my senses. It has ever been an instinct with me that no real prosperity comes out of double-dealing. And commerce with such a sneak sickened me. “Go back to your father, Philip, and threaten him, and he may make you rich. Such as he live by blackmail. And you may add, and you will, that the day of retribution is coming for him.”

CHAPTER XLVIII

MULTUM IN PARVO

I lost no time after getting to Annapolis in confiding to Mr. Swain the conversation I had had with my cousin Philip. And I noticed, as he sat listening to my account in the library in Gloucester Street, that the barrister looked very worn. He had never been a strong man, and the severe strain he had been under with the patriots’ business was beginning to tell.

He was very thoughtful when I had finished, and then told me briefly that I had done well not to take the offer. “Tucker would have made but short work of such evidence, my lad,” said he, “and I think Master Philip would have lied himself in and out a dozen times. I cannot think what witness he would have introduced save Mr. Allen. And there is scarcely a doubt that your uncle pays him for his silence, for I am told he is living in Frederick in a manner far above what he gets from the parish. However, Philip has

given us something more to work on. It may be that he can put hands on the messenger."

I rose to go.

"We shall bring them to earth yet, Richard, and I live," he added. "And I have always meant to ask you whether you ever regretted your decision in taking Gordon's Pride."

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“And you live, sir!” I exclaimed, not heeding the question.

He smiled somewhat sadly.

“Of one thing I am sure, my lad,” he continued, “which is that I have had no regrets about taking you. Mr. Bordley has just been here, and tells me you are the ablest young man in the province. You see that more eyes than mine are upon you. You have proved yourself a man, Richard, and there are very few macaronies would have done as you did. I am resolved to add another little mite to your salary.”

The “little mite” was of such a substantial nature that I protested strongly against it. I thought of Tom’s demands upon him.

“I could afford to give you double for what you have made off the place,” he interrupted. “But I do not believe in young men having too much.” He sighed, and turned to his work.

I hesitated. “You have spent time and labour upon my case, sir, and have asked no fee.”

“I shall speak of the fee when I win it,” he said dryly, “and not before. How would you like to be clerk this winter to the Committee of Correspondence?”

I suppose my pleasure was expressed in my face.

“Well,” said he, “I have got you the appointment without much difficulty. There are many ways in which you can be useful to the party when not helping me with my affairs.”

This conversation gave me food for reflection during a week. I was troubled about Mr. Swain, and what he had said as to not living kept running in my head as I wrote or figured. For I had enough to hold me busy.

In the meantime, the clouds fast gathering on both sides of the Atlantic grew blacker, and blacker still. I saw a great change in Annapolis. Men of affairs went about with grave faces, while gay and sober alike were touched by the spell. The Tory gentry, to be sure, rattled about in their gilded mahogany coaches, in spite of jeers and sour looks. My Aunt Caroline wore jewelled stomachers to the assemblies,—now become dry and shrivelled entertainments. She kept her hairdresser, had three men in livery to her chair, and a little negro in Turk’s costume to wait on her. I often met her in the streets, and took a fierce joy in staring her, in the eye. And Grafton! By a sort of fate I was continually running against him. He was a very busy man, was my uncle, and had a kind of dignified run, which he used between Marlboro’ Street and the Council Chamber in the Stadt House, or the Governor’s mansion. He never did me the honour to glance at me. The Rev. Mr. Allen, too, came a-visiting from Frederick, where he had grown stout as an alderman upon the living and its perquisites and Grafton’s additional

bounty. The gossips were busy with his doings, for he had his travelling-coach and servant now. He went to the Tory balls with my aunt. Once I all but encountered him on the Circle, but he ran into Northeast Street to avoid me.

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Yes, that was the winter when the wise foresaw the inevitable, and the first sharp split occurred between men who had been brothers. The old order of things had plainly passed, and I was truly thankful that my grandfather had not lived to witness those scenes. The greater part of our gentry stood firm for America's rights, and they had behind them the best lawyers in America. After the lawyers came the small planters and most of the mechanics. The shopkeepers formed the backbone of King George's adherents; the Tory gentry, the clergy, and those holding office under the proprietor made the rest.

And it was all about tea, a word which, since '67, had been steadily becoming the most vexed in the language. The East India Company had put forth a complaint. They had Heaven knows how many tons getting stale in London warehouses, all by reason of our stubbornness, and so it was enacted that all tea paying the small American tax should have a rebate of the English duties. That was truly a master-stroke, for Parliament to give it us cheaper than it could be had at home! To cause his Majesty's government to lose revenues for the sake of being able to say they had caught and taxed us at last! The happy result is now history, my dears. And this is not a history, tho' I wish it were. What occurred at Boston, at Philadelphia, and Charleston, has since caused Englishmen, as well as Americans, to feel proud. The chief incident in Annapolis I shall mention in another chapter.

When it became known with us that several cargoes were on their way to the colonies, excitement and indignation gained a pitch not reached since the Stamp Act. Business came to a standstill, plantations lay idle, and gentry and farmers flocked to Annapolis, and held meetings and made resolutions anew. On my way of a morning from Mr. Swain's house to his chambers in the Circle I would meet as many as a dozen knots of people. Mr. Claude was one of the few patriots who reaped reward out of the disturbance, for his inn was crowded. The Assembly met, appointed committees to correspond with the other colonies, and was prorogued once and again. Many a night I sat up until the small hours copying out letters to the committees of Virginia, and Pennsylvania, and Massachusetts. The gentlemen were wont to dine at the Coffee House, and I would sit near the foot of the table, taking notes of their plans. 'Twas so I met many men of distinction from the other colonies. Colonel Washington came once. He was grown a greater man than ever, and I thought him graver than when I had last seen him. I believe a trait of this gentleman was never to forget a face.

"How do you, Richard?" said he. How I reddened when he called me so before all the committee. "I have heard your story, and it does you vast credit. And the gentlemen tell me you are earning laurels, sir."

That first winter of the tea troubles was cold and wet with us, and the sun, as if in sympathy with the times, rarely showed his face. Early in February our apprehensions concerning Mr. Swain's health were realized. One day, without a word to any one, he went to his bed, where Patty found him. And I ran all the way to Dr. Leiden's. The

doctor looked at him, felt his pulse and his chest, and said nothing. But he did not rest that night, nor did Patty or I.

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Thus I came to have to do with the good barrister's private affairs. I knew that he was a rich man, as riches went in our province, but I had never tried to guess at his estate. I confess the sums he had paid out in Tom's behalf frightened me. With the advice of Mr. Bordley and Mr. Lloyd I managed his money as best I could, but by reason of the non-importation resolutions there was little chance for good investments, —no cargoes coming and few going. I saw, indeed, that buying the Talbot estate had been a fortunate step, since the quantities of wheat we grew there might be disposed of in America.

When Dr. Leiden was still coming twice a day to Gloucester Street, Mr. Tom must needs get into a scrape with one of the ladies of the theatre, and come to me in the Circle chambers for one hundred pounds. I told him, in despair, that I had no authority to pay out his father's money. "And so you have become master, sure enough!" he cried, in a passion. For he was desperate. "You have worked your way in vastly well, egad, with your Whig committee meetings and speeches. And now he is on his back, and you have possession, you choose to cut me off. 'Slife, I know what will be coming next!"

I pulled him into Mr. Swain's private room, where we would be free of the clerks. "Yes, I am master here," I replied, sadly enough, as he stood sullenly before me. "I should think you would be ashamed to own it. When I came to your father I was content to be overseer in Talbot, and thankful for his bounty. 'Tis no fault of mine, but your disgrace, that his son is not managing his business, and supporting him in the rights of his country. I am not very old, Tom. A year older than you, I believe. But I have seen enough of life to prophesy your end and you do not reform."

"We are turned preacher," he says, with a sneer.

"God forbid! But I have been in a sponging-house, and tasted the lowest dregs. And if this country becomes free, as I think it will some day, such as you will be driven to England, and die in the Fleet."

"Not while my father lives," retorts he, and throws aside the oiled silk cape with a London name upon it. The day was rainy. I groaned. My responsibility lay heavy upon me. And this was not my first scene with him. He continued doggedly:—"You have no right to deny me what is not yours. 'Twill be mine one day."

"You have no right to accuse me of thoughts that do not occur to men of honour," I replied. "I am slower to anger than I once was, but I give you warning now. Do you know that you will ruin your father in another year and you continue?"

He gave me no answer. I reached for the ledger, and turning the pages, called off to him the sums he had spent.

"Oh, have done, d—n it!" he cried, when I was not a third through. "Are you or are you not to give me the money?"

“And you are to spend it upon an actress?” I should have called her by a worse name.

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“Actress!” he shouted. “Have you seen her in The Orphan? My soul, she is a divinity!” Then he shifted suddenly to whining and cringing. “I am ruined outright, Richard, if I do not get it.”

Abjectly he confessed the situation, which had in it enough material for a scandal to set the town wagging for a month. And the weight of it would fall; as I well knew, upon those who deserved it least.

“I will lend you the money, or, rather, will pay it for you,” I said, at last. For I was not so foolish as to put it into his hands. “You shall have the sum under certain conditions.”

He agreed to them before they were out of my mouth, and swore in a dozen ways that he would repay me every farthing. He was heartily tired of the creature, and, true to his nature, afraid of her. That night when the play was over I went to her lodging, and after a scene too distressing to dwell upon, bought her off.

I sat with Mr. Swain many an hour that spring, with Patty sewing at the window open to the garden. Often, as we talked, unnoticed by her father she would drop her work and the tears glisten in her eyes. For the barrister’s voice was not as strong as it once was, and the cold would not seem to lift from his chest. So this able man, who might have sat in the seats of Maryland’s high reward, was stricken when he was needed most.

He was permitted two visitors a day: now ’twas Mr. Carroll and Colonel Lloyd, again Colonel Tilghman and Captain Clapsaddle, or Mr. Yaca and Mr. Bordley. The gentlemen took turns, and never was their business so pressing that they missed their hour. Mr. Swain read all the prints, and in his easier days would dictate to me his views for the committee, or a letter signed Brutes for Mr. Green to put in the Gazette. So I became his mouthpiece at the meetings, and learned to formulate my thoughts and to speak clearly.

For fear of confusing this narrative, my dears, I have referred but little to her who was in my thoughts night and day, and whose locket I wore, throughout all those years, next my heart. I used to sit out under the stars at Gordon’s Pride, with the river lapping at my feet, and picture her the shining centre of all the brilliant scenes I had left, and wonder if she still thought of me.

Nor have I mentioned that faithful correspondent, and more faithful friend, Lord Comyn. As soon as ever I had obtained from Captain Daniel my mother’s little inheritance, I sent off the debt I owed his Lordship. ’Twas a year before I got him to receive it; he despatched the money back once, saying that I had more need of it than he. I smiled at this, for my Lord was never within his income, and I made no doubt he had signed a note to cover my indebtedness.

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Every letter Comyn writ me was nine parts Dolly, and the rest of his sheet usually taken up with Mr. Fox and his calamities: these had fallen upon him very thick of late. Lord Holland had been forced to pay out a hundred thousand pounds for Charles, and even this enormous sum did not entirely free Mr. Fox from the discounters and the hounds. The reason for this sudden onslaught was the birth of a boy to his brother Stephen, who was heir to the title. "When they told Charles of it," Comyn wrote, "said he, coolly: 'My brother Ste's son is a second Messiah, born for the destruction of the Jews.'"

I saw no definite signs, as yet, of the conversion of this prodigy, which I so earnestly hoped for. He had quarrelled with North, lost his place on the Admiralty, and presently the King had made him a Lord of the Treasury, tho' more out of fear than love. Once in a while, when he saw Comyn at Almack's, he would desire to be remembered to me, and he always spoke of me with affection. But he could be got to write to no one, said my Lord, with kind exaggeration; nor will he receive letters, for fear he may get a dun.

Alas, I got no message from Dorothy! Nor had she ever mentioned my name to Comyn. He had not seen her for eight months after I left England, as she had been taken to the Continent for her health. She came back to London more ravishing than before, and (I use his Lordship's somewhat extravagant language) her suffering had stamped upon her face even more of character and power. She had lost much of her levity, likewise. In short, my Lord declared, she was more of the queen than ever, and the mystery which hung over the Vauxhall duel had served only to add to her fame.

Dorothy having become cognizant of Mr. Marmaduke's trickery, Chartersea seemed to have dropped out of the race. He now spent his time very evenly between Spa and Derresley and Paris. Hence I had so much to be thankful for,—that with all my blunders, I had saved her from his Grace. My Lord the Marquis of Wells was now most conspicuous amongst her suitors. Comyn had nothing particular against this nobleman, saying that he was a good fellow, with a pretty fortune. And here is a letter, my dears, in which he figures, that I brought to Cordon's Pride that spring:

"10 *South parade*, *bath*,
"March 12, 1774.

"*Dear Richard*:—Miss Manners has come to Bath, with a train behind her longer than that which followed good Queen Anne hither, when she made this Gehenna the fashion. Her triumphal entry last Wednesday was announced by such a peal of the abbey bells as must have cracked the metal (for they have not rung since) and started Beau Nash a-cursing where he lies under the floor. Next came her serenade by the band. Mr. Marmaduke swore they would never have done, and squirmed and grinned like Punch when he thought of the fee, for he had hoped to get off with a crown, I warrant

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you. You should have seen his face when they would accept no fee at all for the beauty! Some wag has writ a verse about it, which was printed, and has set the whole pump-room laughing this morning.“She was led out by Wells in the Seasons last night. As Spring she is too bewildering for my pen,—all primrose and white, with the flowers in her blue-black hair. Had Sir Joshua seen her, he would never rest content till he should have another portrait. The Duc de Lauzun, who contrived to get two dances, might give you a description in a more suitable language than English. And there was a prodigious deal of jealousy among the fair ones on the benches, you may be sure, and much jaundiced comment.“Some half dozen of us adorers have a mess at the Bear, and have offered up a prize for the most appropriate toast on the beauty. This is in competition with Mrs. Miller. Have you not heard of her among your tobacco-hills? Horry calls her Mrs. ‘Calliope’ Miller. At her place near here, Bath Easton Villa, she has set up a Roman vase bedecked with myrtle, and into this we drop our bouts-rimes. Mrs. Calliope has a ball every Thursday, when the victors are crowned. T’other day the theme was ‘A Buttered Muffin,’ and her Grace of Northumberland was graciously awarded the prize. In faith, that theme taxed our wits at the Bear,—how to weave Miss Dolly’s charms into a verse on a buttered muffin. I shall not tire you with mine. Storer’s deserved to win, and we whisper that Mrs. Calliope ruled it out through spite. ‘When Phyllis eats,’ so it began, and I vow ’twas devilish ingenious.“We do nothing but play lasquenet and tennis, and go to the assembly, and follow Miss Dolly into Gill’s, the pastry-cook’s, where she goes every morning to take a jelly. The ubiquitous Wells does not give us much chance. He writes ‘vers de societe’ with the rest, is high in Mr. Marmaduke’s favour, which alone is enough to damn his progress. I think she is ill of the sight of him.

“Albeit she does not mourn herself into a tree, I’ll take oath your Phyllis is true to you, Richard, and would live with you gladly in a thatched hut and you asked her. Write me more news of yourself.

“Your ever affectionate
“*Comyn*

“P.S. I have had news of you through Mr. Worthington, of your colony, who is just arrived here. He tells me that you have gained a vast reputation for your plantation, and likewise that you are thought much of by the Whig wiseacres, and that you hold many seditious offices. He does not call them so. Since your modesty will not permit you to write me any of these things, I have been imagining you driving slaves with a rawhide, and seeding runaway convicts to the mines. Mr. W. is even now paying his respects to Miss Manners, and I doubt not trumpeting your praises there, for he seems to like you. So I have asked him

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to join the Bear mess. One more unfortunate!“P.S. I was near forgetting the news about Charles Fox. He sends you his love, and tells me to let you know that he has been turned out of North’s house for good and all. He is sure you will be cursed happy over it, and says that you predicted he would go over to the Whigs. I can scarce believe that he will. North took a whole week to screw up His courage, h-s M-j-sty pricking him every day. And then he wrote this: “’Sir, his Majesty has thought proper to order a new Commission of
the Treasury to be made out, in which I do not see your name.’ Poor Charles! He is now without money or place, but as usual appears to worry least of all of us, and still reads his damned Tasso for amusement.

“C.”

Perchance he was to be the Saint Paul of English politics, after all.

CHAPTER XLIX

LIBERTY LOSES A FRIEND

Mr. Bordley’s sloop took Mr. Swain to Gordon’s Pride in May, and placed him in the big room overlooking the widening river. There he would lie all day long, staring through the leaves at the water, or listening to the sweet music of his daughter’s voice as she read from the pompous prints of the time. Gentlemen continued to come to the plantation, for the barrister’s wisdom was sorely missed at the councils. One day, as I rode in from the field, I found Colonel Lloyd just arrived from Philadelphia, sipping sangaree on the lawn and mopping himself with his handkerchief. His jolly face was troubled. He waved his hand at me.

“Well, Richard,” says he, “we children are to have our first whipping. At least one of us. And the rest are resolved to defy our parent.”

“Boston, Mr. Lloyd?” I asked.

“Yes, Boston,” he replied; “her port is closed, and we are forbid any intercourse with her until she comes to her senses. And her citizens must receive his gracious Majesty’s troopers into their houses. And if a man kill one of them by any chance, he is to go to England to be tried. And there is more quite as bad.”

“’Tis bad enough!” I cried, flinging myself down. And Patty gave me a glass in silence.

“Ay, but you must hear all,” said he; “our masters are of a mind to do the thing thoroughly. Canada is given some score of privileges. Her French Roman Catholics, whom we fought not long since, are thrown a sop, and those vast territories between the lakes and the Ohio and Mississippi are given to Quebec as a price for her fidelity. And so, if the worst comes to worst, George’s regiments will have a place to land against us.”

Such was the news, and though we were some hundreds of miles from Massachusetts, we felt their cause as our own. There was no need of the appeal which came by smoking horses from Philadelphia, for the indignation of our people was roused to the highest pitch. Now Mr. Swain had to take to his bed from the excitement.

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This is not a history, my dears, as I have said. And time is growing short. I shall pass over that dreary summer of ’74. It required no very keen eye to see the breakers ahead, and Mr. Bordley’s advice to provide against seven years of famine did not go unheeded. War was the last thing we desired. We should have been satisfied with so little, we colonies! And would have voted the duties ten times over had our rights been respected. Should any of you doubt this, you have but to read the “Address to the King” of our Congress, then sitting in Philadelphia. The quarrel was so petty, and so easy of mending, that you of this generation may wonder why it was allowed to run. I have tried to tell you that the head of a stubborn, selfish, and wilful monarch blocked the way to reconciliation. King George the Third is alone to blame for that hatred of race against race which already hath done so much evil. And I pray God that a great historian may arise whose pen will reveal the truth, and reconcile at length those who are, and should be, brothers.

By October, that most beautiful month of all the year in Maryland, we were again in Annapolis: One balmy day ’twas a Friday, I believe, and a gold and blue haze hung over the Severn—Mr. Chase called in Gloucester Street to give the barrister news of the Congress, which he had lately left. As he came down the stairs he paused for a word with me in the library, and remarked sadly upon Mr. Swain’s condition. “He looks like a dying man, Richard,” said he, “and we can ill afford to lose him.”

Even as we sat talking in subdued tones, the noise of a distant commotion arose. We had scarce started to our feet, Mr. Chase and I, when the brass knocker resounded, and Mr. Hammond was let in. His wig was awry, and his face was flushed.

“I thought to find you here,” he said to Mr. Chase. “The Anne Arundel Committee is to meet at once, and we desire to have you with us.” Perceiving our blank faces, he added: “The ‘Peggy Stewart’ is in this morning with over a ton of tea aboard, consigned to the Williams’s.”

The two jumped into a chaise, and I followed afoot, stopped at every corner by some excited acquaintance; so that I had the whole story, and more, ere I reached Church Street. The way was blocked before the committee rooms, and ’twas said that the merchants, Messrs. Williams, and Captain Jackson of the brig, were within, pleading their cause.

Presently the news leaked abroad that Mr. Anthony Stewart, the brig’s owner, had himself paid the duty on the detested plant. Some hundreds of people were elbowing each other in the street, for the most part quiet and anxious, until Mr. Hammond appeared and whispered to a man at the door. In all my life before I had never heard the hum of an angry crowd. The sound had something ominous in it, like the first meanings of a wind that is to break off great trees at their trunks. Then some one shouted: “To Hanover Street! To

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Hanover Street! We'll have him tarred and feathered before the sun is down!" The voice sounded strangely like Weld's. They charged at this cry like a herd of mad buffalo, the weaker ones trampled under foot or thrust against the wall. The windows of Mr. Aikman's shop were shattered. I ran with the leaders, my stature and strength standing me in good stead more than once, and as we twisted into Northwest Street I took a glance at the mob behind me, and great was my anxiety at not being able to descry one responsible person.

Mr. Stewart's house stood, and stands to-day, amid trim gardens, in plain sight of the Severn. Arriving there, the crowd massed in front of it, some of the boldest pressing in at the gate and spreading over the circle of lawn enclosed by the driveway. They began to shout hoarsely, with what voices they had left, for Mr. Stewart to come out, calling him names not to be spoken, and swearing they would show him how traitors were to be served. I understood then the terror of numbers, and shuddered. A chandler, a bold and violent man, whose leather was covered with grease, already had his foot on the steps, when the frightened servants slammed the door in his face, and closed the lower windows. In vain I strained my eyes for some one who might have authority with them. They began to pick up stones, though none were thrown.

Suddenly a figure appeared at an upper window,—a thin and wasted woman dressed in white, with sad, sweet features. It was Mrs. Stewart. Without flinching she looked down upon the upturned faces; but a mob of that kind has no pity. Their leaders were the worst class in our province, being mostly convicts who had served their terms of indenture. They continued to call sullenly for "the traitor." Then the house door opened, and the master himself appeared. He was pale and nervous, and no wonder; and his voice shook as he strove to make himself heard. His words were drowned immediately by shouts of "Seize him! Seize the d—d traitor!" "A pot and a coat of hot tar!"

Those who were nearest started forward, and I with them. With me 'twas the decision of an instant. I beat the chandler up the steps, and took stand in front of the merchant, and I called out to them to fall back.

To my astonishment they halted. The skirts of the crowd were now come to the foot of the little porch. I faced them with my hand on Mr. Stewart's arm, without a thought of what to do next, and expecting violence. There was a second's hush. Then some one cried out:

"Three cheers for Richard Carvel!"

They gave them with a will that dumfounded me.

“My friends,” said I, when I had got my wits, “this is neither the justice nor the moderation for which our province is noted. You have elected your committee of your free wills, and they have claims before you.”

“Ay, ay, the committee!” they shouted. “Mr. Carvel is right. Take him to the Committee!”

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Mr. Stewart raised his hand.

“My friends,” he began, as I had done, “when you have learned the truth, you will not be so hasty to blame me for an offence of which I am innocent. The tea was not for me. The brig was in a leaky and dangerous state and had fifty souls aboard her. I paid the duty out of humanity—”

He had come so far, when they stopped him.

“Oh, a vile Tory!” they shouted. “He is conniving with the Council. ’Twas put up between them.” And they followed this with another volley of hard names, until I feared that his chance was gone.

“You would best go before the Committee, Mr. Stewart,” I said.

“I will go with Mr. Carvel, my friends,” he cried at once. And he invited me into the house whilst he ordered his coach. I preferred to remain outside.

I asked them if they would trust me with Mr. Stewart to Church Street.

“Yes, yes, Mr. Carvel, we know you,” said several. “He has good cause to hate Tories,” called another, with a laugh. I knew the voice.

“For shame, Weld,” I cried. And I saw McNeir, who was a stanch friend of mine, give him a cuff to send him spinning.

To my vast satisfaction they melted away, save only a few of the idlest spirits, who hung about the gate, and cheered as we drove off. Mr. Stewart was very nervous, and profuse in his gratitude. I replied that I had acted only as would have any other responsible citizen. On the way he told me enough of his case to convince me that there was much to be said on his side, but I thought it the better part of wisdom not to commit myself. The street in front of the committee rooms was empty, and I was informed that a town meeting had been called immediately at the theatre in West Street. And I advised Mr. Stewart to attend. But through anxiety or anger, or both, he was determined not to go, and drove back to his house without me.

I had got as far as St. Anne’s, halfway to the theatre, when it suddenly struck me that Mr. Swain must be waiting for news. With a twinge I remembered what Mr. Chase had said about the barrister’s condition, and I hurried back to Gloucester Street, much to the surprise of those I met on their way to the meeting. I was greatly relieved, when I arrived, to find Patty on the porch. I knew she had never been there were her father worse. After a word with her and her mother, I went up the stairs.

It was the hour for the barrister's nap. But he was awake, lying back on the pillows, with his eyes half closed. He was looking out into the garden, which was part orchard, now beginning to shrivel and to brown with the first touch of frosts.

"That is you, Richard?" he inquired, without moving. "What is going forward to-day?"

I toned down the news, so as not to excite him, and left out the occurrence in Hanover Street. He listened with his accustomed interest, but when I had done he asked no questions, and lay for a long time silent. Then he begged me to bring my chair nearer.

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“Richard,—my son,” said he, with an evident effort, “I have never thanked you for your devotion to me and mine through the best years of your life. It shall not go unrewarded, my lad.”

It seemed as if my heart stood still with the presage of what was to come.

“May God reward you, sir!” I said.

“I have wished to speak to you,” he continued, “and I may not have another chance. I have arranged with Mr. Carroll, the barrister, to take your cause against your uncle, so that you will lose nothing when I am gone. And you will see, in my table in the library, that I have left my property in your hands, with every confidence in your integrity, and ability to care for my family, even as I should have done.”

I could not speak at once. A lump rose in my throat, for I had come to look upon him as a father. His honest dealings, his charity, of which the world knew nothing, and his plain and unassuming ways had inspired in me a kind of worship. I answered, as steadily as I might:

“I believe I am too inexperienced for such a responsibility, Mr. Swain. Would it not be better that Mr. Bordley or Mr. Lloyd should act?”

“No, no,” he said; “I am not a man to do things unadvisedly, or to let affection get the better of my judgment, where others dear to me are concerned. I know you, Richard Carvel. Scarce an action of yours has escaped my eye, though I have said nothing. You have been through the fire, and are of the kind which comes out untouched. You will have Judge Bordley’s advice, and Mr. Carroll’s. And they are too busy with the affairs of the province to be burdened as my executors. But,” he added a little more strongly, “if what I fear is coming, Mr. Bordley will take the trust in your absence. If we have war, Richard, you will not be content to remain at home, nor would I wish it.”

I did not reply.

“You will do what I ask?” he said.

“I would refuse you nothing, Mr. Swain,” I answered. “But I have heavy misgivings.”

He sighed. “And now, if it were not for Tom, I might die content,” he said.

If it were not for Tom! The full burden of the trust began to dawn upon me then. Presently I heard him speaking, but in so low a voice that I hardly caught the words.

“In our youth, Richard,” he was saying, “the wrath of the Almighty is but so many words to most of us. When I was little more than a lad, I committed a sin of which I tremble now to think. And I was the fool to imagine, when I amended my life, that God had

forgotten. His punishment is no heavier than I deserve. But He alone knows what He has made me suffer."

I felt that I had no right to be there.

"That is why I have paid Tom's debts," he continued; "I cannot cast off my son. I have reasoned, implored, and appealed in vain. He is like Reuben,—his resolutions melt in an hour. And I have pondered day and night what is to be done for him."

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“Is he to have his portion?” I asked. Indeed, the thought of the responsibility of Tom Swain overwhelmed me.

“Yes, he is to have it,” cried Mr. Swain, with a violence to bring on a fit of coughing. “Were I to leave it in trust for a time, he would have it mortgaged within a year. He is to have his portion, but not a penny additional.”

He lay for a long time breathing deeply, I watching him. Then, as he reached out and took my hand, I knew by some instinct what was to come. I summoned all my self-command to meet his eye. I knew that the malicious and unthinking gossip of the town had reached him, and that he had received it in the simple faith of his hopes.

“One thing more, my lad,” he said, “the dearest wish of all—that you will marry Patty. She is a good girl, Richard. And I have thought,” he added with hesitation, “I have thought that she loves you, though her lips have never opened on that subject.”

So the blow fell. I turned away, for to save my life the words would not come. He missed the reason of my silence.

“I understand and honour your scruples,” he went on. His kindness was like a knife.

“No, I have had none, Mr. Swain,” I exclaimed. For I would not be thought a hypocrite.

There I stopped. A light step sounded in the hall, and Patty came in upon us. Her colour at once betrayed her understanding. To my infinite relief her father dropped my fingers, and asked cheerily if there was any news from the town meeting.

On the following Wednesday, with her flag flying and her sails set, the Peggy Stewart was run ashore on Windmill Point. She rose, a sacrifice to Liberty, in smoke to heaven, before the assembled patriots of our city.

That very night a dear friend to Liberty passed away. He failed so suddenly that Patty had no time to call for aid, and when the mother had been carried in, his spirit was flown. We laid him high on the hill above the creek, in the new lot he had bought and fenced around. The stone remains:

Here LIETH

Henry swain, *barrister*.
Born may 13, 1730 (O.S.);
Died October 19, 1774.
Fidus Amicis atque Patrice.

The simple inscription, which speaks volumes to those who knew him, was cut after the Revolution. He was buried with the honours of a statesman, which he would have been had God spared him to serve the New Country which was born so soon after his death.

RICHARD CARVEL

By Winston Churchill

Volume 8.

L. Farewell to Gordon's
LI. How an Idle Prophecy came to pass
LII. How the Gardener's Son fought the Serapis
LIII. In which I make Some Discoveries
LIV. More Discoveries.
LV. The Love of a Maid for a Man
LVI. How Good came out of Evil
LVII. I come to my Own again

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CHAPTER L

FAREWELL TO GORDON'S

I cannot bear to recall my misery of mind after Mr. Swain's death. One hope had lightened all the years of my servitude. For, when I examined my soul, I knew that it was for Dorothy I had laboured. And every letter that came from Comyn telling me she was still free gave me new heart for my work. By some mystic communion—I know not what—I felt that she loved me yet, and despite distance and degree. I would wake of a morning with the knowledge of it, and be silent for half the day with some particle of a dream in my head, lingering like the burden of a song with its train of memories.

So, in the days that followed, I scarce knew myself. For a while (I shame to write it) I avoided that sweet woman who had made my comfort her care, whose father had taken me when I was homeless. The good in me cried out, but the flesh rebelled.

Poor Patty! Her grief for her father was pathetic to see. Weeks passed in which she scarcely spoke a word. And I remember her as she sat in church Sundays, the whiteness of her face enhanced by the crape she wore, and a piteous appeal in her gray eyes. My own agony was nigh beyond endurance, my will swinging like a pendulum from right to wrong, and back again. Argue as I might that I had made the barrister no promise, conscience allowed no difference. I was in despair at the trick fate had played me; at the decree that of all women I must love her whose sphere was now so far removed from mine. For Patty had character and beauty, and every gift which goes to make man's happiness and to kindle his affections.

Her sorrow left her more womanly than ever. And after the first sharp sting of it was deadened, I noticed a marked reserve in her intercourse with me. I knew then that she must have strong suspicions of her father's request. Speak I could not soon after the sad event, but I strove hard that she should see no change in my conduct.

Before Christmas we went to the Eastern Shore. In Annapolis fife and drum had taken the place of fiddle and clarion; militia companies were drilling in the empty streets; despatches were arriving daily from the North; and grave gentlemen were hurrying to meetings. But if the war was to come, I must settle what was to be done at Gordon's Pride with all possible speed. It was only a few days after our going there, that I rode into Oxford with a black cockade in my hat Patty had made me, and the army sword Captain Jack had given Captain Daniel at my side. For I had been elected a lieutenant in the Oxford company, of which Percy Singleton was captain.

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So passed that winter, the darkest of my life. One soft spring day, when the birds were twittering amid new-born leaves, and the hyacinths and tulips in Patty's garden were coming to their glory, Master Tom rode leisurely down the drive at Gordon's Pride. That was a Saturday, the 29th of April, 1775. The news which had flown southward, night and day alike, was in no hurry to run off his tongue; he had been lolling on the porch for half an hour before he told us of the bloodshed between the minute-men of Massachusetts and the British regulars, of the rout of Percy's panting redcoats from Concord to Boston. Tom added, with the brutal nonchalance which characterized his dealings with his mother and sister, that he was on his way to Philadelphia to join a company.

The poor invalid was carried up the stairs in a faint by Banks and Romney. Patty, with pale face and lips compressed, ran to fetch the hartshorn. But Master Tom remained undisturbed.

"I suppose you are going, Richard," he remarked affably. For he treated me with more consideration than his family. "We shall ride together," said he.

"We ride different ways, and to different destinations," I replied dryly. "I go to serve my country, and you to fight against it."

"I think the King is right," he answered sullenly.

"Oh, I beg your pardon," I remarked, and rose. "Then you have studied the question since last I saw you."

"No, by G-d!" he cried, "and I never will. I do not want to know your d—d principles—or grievances, or whatever they are. We were living an easy life, in the plenty of money, and nothing to complain of. You take it all away, with your cursed cant—"

I left him railing and swearing. And that was the last I saw of Tom Swain. When I returned from a final survey of the plantation; and a talk with Percy Singleton, he had ridden North again.

I found Patty alone in the parlour. Her work (one of my own stockings she was darning) lay idle in her lap, and in her eyes were the unshed tears which are the greatest suffering of women. I sat down beside her and called her name. She did not seem to hear me.

"Patty!"

She started. And my courage ebbed.

"Are you going to the war—to leave us, Richard?" she faltered.

“I fear there is no choice, Patty,” I answered, striving hard to keep my own voice steady. “But you will be well looked after. Ivie Rawlinson is to be trusted, and Mr. Bordley has promised to keep an eye upon you.”

She took up the darning mechanically.

“I shall not speak a word to keep you, Richard. He would have wished it,” she said softly. “And every strong arm in the colonies will be needed. We shall think of you, and pray for you daily.”

I cast about for a cheerful reply.

“I think when they discover how determined we are, they will revoke their measures in a hurry. Before you know it, Patty, I shall be back again making the rounds in my broad rim, and reading to you out of Captain Cook.”

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It was a pitiful attempt. She shook her head sadly. The tears were come now, and she was smiling through them. The sorrow of that smile!

“I have something to say to you before I go, Patty,” I said. The words stuck. I knew that there must be no pretence in that speech. It must be true as my life after, the consequence of it. “I have something to ask you, and I do not speak without your father’s consent. Patty, if I return, will you be my wife?”

The stocking slipped unheeded to the floor. For a moment she sat transfixed, save for the tumultuous swelling of her breast. Then she turned and gazed earnestly into my face, and the honesty of her eyes smote me. For the first time I could not meet them honestly with my own.

“Richard, do you love me?” she asked.

I bowed my head. I could not answer that. And for a while there was no sound save that of the singing of the frogs in the distant marsh.

Presently I knew that she was standing at my side. I felt her hand laid upon my shoulder.

“Is—is it Dorothy?” she said gently.

Still I could not answer. Truly, the bitterness of life, as the joy of it, is distilled in strong drops.

“I knew,” she continued, “I have known ever since that autumn morning when I went to you as you saddled—when I dreaded that you would leave us. Father asked you to marry me, the day you took Mr. Stewart from the mob. How could you so have misunderstood me, Richard?”

I looked up in wonder. The sweet cadence in her tone sprang from a purity not of this earth. They alone who have consecrated their days to others may utter it. And the light upon her face was of the same source. It was no will of mine brought me to my feet. But I was not worthy to touch her.

“I shall make another prayer, beside that for your safety, Richard,” she said.

In the morning she waved me a brave farewell from the block where she had stood so often as I rode afield, when the dawn was in the sky. The invalid mother sat in her chair within the door; the servants were gathered on the lawn, and Ivie Rawlinson and Banks lingered where they had held my stirrup. That picture is washed with my own tears.

The earth was praising God that Sunday as I rode to Mr. Bordley’s. And as it is sorrow which lifts us nearest to heaven, I felt as if I were in church.

I arrived at Wye Island in season to dine with the good judge and his family, and there I made over to his charge the property of Patty and her mother. The afternoon we spent in sober talk, Mr. Bordley giving me much sound advice, and writing me several letters of recommendation to gentlemen in Congress. His conduct was distinguished by even more of kindness and consideration than he had been wont to show me.

In the evening I walked out alone, skirting the acres of Carvel Hall, each familiar landmark touching the quick of some memory of other days. Childhood habit drew me into the path to Wilmot House. I came upon it just as the sunlight was stretching level across the Chesapeake, and burning its windows molten red. I had been sitting long on the stone steps, when the gaunt figure of McAndrews strode toward me out of the dusk.

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“God be gude to us, it is Mr. Richard!” he cried. “I hae na seen ye’re bonny face these muckle years, sir, sync ye cam’ back frae ae sight o’ the young mistress.” (I had met him in Annapolis then.) “An’ will ye be aff to the wars?”

I told him yes. That I had come for a last look at the old place before I left.

He sighed. “Ye’re vera welcome, sir.” Then he added: “Mr. Bordley’s gi’en me a fair notion o’ yere management at Gordon’s. The judge is thinking there’ll be nane ither lad t’ hand a candle to ye.”

“And what news do you hear from London?” I asked, cutting him short.

“Ill uncos, sir,” he answered, shaking his head with violence. He had indeed but a sorry tale for my ear, and one to make my heart heavier than it was. McAndrews opened his mind to me, and seemed the better for it. How Mr. Marmaduke was living with the establishment they wrote of was more than the honest Scotchman could imagine. There was a country place in Sussex now, said he, that was the latest. And drafts were coming in before the wheat was in the ear; and the plantations of tobacco on the Western Shore had been idle since the non-exportation, and were mortgaged to their limit to Mr. Willard. Money was even loaned on the Wilmot House estate. McAndrews had a shrewd suspicion that neither Mrs. Manners nor Miss Dorothy knew aught of this state of affairs.

“Mr. Richard,” he said earnestly, as he bade me good-by, “I kennt Mr. Manners’s mind when he lea’d here. There was a laird in’t, sir, an’ a fortune. An’ unless these come soon, I’m thinking I can spae th’ en’.”

In truth, a much greater fool than McAndrews might have predicted that end.

On Monday Judge Bordley accompanied me as far as Dingley’s tavern, and showed much emotion at parting.

“You need have no fears for your friends at Gordon’s Pride, Richard,” said he. “And when the General comes back, I shall try to give him a good account of my stewardship.”

The General! That title brought old Stanwix’s cobwebbed prophecy into my head again. Here, surely, was the war which he had foretold, and I ready to embark in it.

Why not the sea, indeed?

CHAPTER LI

HOW AN IDLE PROPHECY CAME TO PASS

Captain Clapsaddle not being at his lodgings, I rode on to the Coffee House to put up my horse. I was stopped by Mr. Claude.

“Why, Mr. Carvel,” says he, “I thought you on the Eastern Shore. There is a gentleman within will be mightily tickled to see you, or else his protestations are lies, which they may very well be. His name? Now, ’Pon my faith, it was Jones—no more.”

This thing of being called for at the Coffee House stirred up unpleasant associations.

“What appearance does the man make?” I demanded.

“Merciful gad!” mine host exclaimed; “once seen, never forgotten, and once heard, never forgotten. He quotes me Thomson, and he tells me of his estate in Virginia.”

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The answer was not of a sort to allay my suspicions.

“Then he appears to be a landowner?” said I.

“’Ods! Blest if I know what he is,” says Mr. Claude. “He may be anything, an impostor or a high-mightiness. But he’s something to strike the eye and hold it, for all his Quaker clothes. He is swarth and thickset, and some five feet eight inches—full six inches under your own height. And he comes asking for you as if you owned the town between you. ‘Send a fellow to Marlboro’ Street for Mr. Richard Carvel, my good host!’ says he, with a snap of his fingers. And when I tell him the news of you, he is prodigiously affected, and cries—but here’s my gentleman now!”

I jerked my head around. Coming down the steps I beheld my old friend and benefactor, Captain John Paul!

“Ahoy, ahoy!” cries he. “Now Heaven be praised, I have found you at last.”

Out of the saddle I leaped, and straight into his arms.

“Hold, hold, Richard!” he gasped. “My ribs, man! Leave me some breath that I may tell you how glad I am to see you.”

“Mr. Jones!” I said, holding him out, “now where the devil got you that?”

“Why, I am become a gentleman since I saw you,” he answered, smiling. “My poor brother left me his estate in Virginia. And a gentleman must have three names at the least.”

I dropped his shoulders and shook with laughter.

“But Jones!” I cried. “’Ad’s heart! could you go no higher? Has your imagination left you, captain?”

“Republican simplicity, sir,” says he, looking a trifle hurt. But I laughed the more.

“Well, you have contrived to mix oil and vinegar,” said I. “A landed gentleman and republican simplicity. I’ll warrant you wear silk-knit under that gray homespun, and have a cameo in your pocket.”

He shook his head, looking up at me with affection.

“You might have guessed better,” he answered. “All of quality I have about me are an enamelled repeater and a gold brooch.”

This made me suddenly grave, for McAndrews's words had been ringing in my ears ever since he had spoken them. I hitched my arm into the captain's and pulled him toward the Coffee House door.

"Come," I said, "you have not dined, and neither have I. We shall be merry to-day, and you shall have some of the best Madeira in the colonies." I commanded a room, that we might have privacy. As he took his seat opposite me I marked that he had grown heavier and more browned. But his eye had the same unfathomable mystery in it as of yore. And first I upbraided him for not having writ me.

"I took you for one who glories in correspondence, captain," said I; "and I did not think you could be so unfaithful. I directed twice to you in Mr. Orchardson's care."

"Orchardson died before I had made one voyage," he replied, "and the Betsy changed owners. But I did not forget you, Richard, and was resolved but now not to leave Maryland until I had seen you. But I burn to hear of you," he added. "I have had an inkling of your story from the landlord. So your grandfather is dead, and that blastie, your uncle, of whom you told me on the John, is in possession."

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He listened to my narrative keenly, but with many interruptions. And when I was done, he sighed.

“You are always finding friends, Richard,” said he; “no matter what your misfortunes, they are ever double discounted. As for me; I am like Fulmer in Mr. Cumberland’s ‘West Indian’: ’I have beat through every quarter of the compass; I have bellowed for freedom; I have offered to serve my country; I have’—I am engaging to betray it. No, Scotland is no longer my country, and so I cannot betray her. It is she who has betrayed me.”

He fell into a short mood of dejection. And, indeed, I could not but reflect that much of the character fitted him like a jacket. Not the betrayal of his country. He never did that, no matter how roundly they accused him of it afterward.

To lift him, I cried:

“You were one of my first friends, Captain Paul” (I could not stomach the Jones); “but for you I should now be a West Indian, and a miserable one, the slave of some unmerciful hidalgo. Here’s that I may live to repay you!”

“And while we are upon toasts,” says he, bracing immediately, “I give you the immortal Miss Manners! Her beauty has dwelt unfaded in my memory since I last beheld her, aboard the Betsy.” Remarking the pain in my face, he added, with a concern which may have been comical: “And she is not married?”

“Unless she is lately gone to Gretna, she is not,” I replied, trying to speak lightly.

“Alack! I knew it,” he exclaimed. “And if there’s any prophecy in my bones, she’ll be Mrs. Carvel one of these days.”

“Well captain,” I said abruptly, “the wheel has gone around since I saw you. Now it is you who are the gentleman, while I am a factor. Is it the bliss you pictured?”

I suspected that his acres were not as broad, nor his produce as salable, as those of Mount Vernon.

“To speak truth, I am heartily tired of that life,” said he. “There is little glory in raising nicotia, and sipping bumbo, and cursing negroes. Ho for the sea!” he cried. “The salt sea, and the British prizes. Give me a tight frigate that leaves a singing wake. Mark me, Richard,” he said, a restless gleam coning into his dark eyes, “stirring times are here, and a chance for all of us to make a name.” For so it seemed ever to be with him.

“They are black times, I fear,” I answered.

“Black!” he said. “No, glorious is your word. And we are to have an upheaval to throw many of us to the top.”

“I would rather the quarrel were peacefully settled,” said I, gravely. “For my part, I want no distinction that is to come out of strife and misery.”

He regarded me quizzically.

“You are grown an hundred years old since I pulled you out of the sea,” says he. “But we shall have to fight for our liberties. Here is a glass to the prospect!”

“And so you are now an American?” I said curiously.

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“Ay, strake and keelson,—as good a one as though I had got my sap in the Maine forests. A plague of monarchs, say I. They are a blotch upon modern civilization. And I have here,” he continued, tapping his pocket, “some letters writ to the Virginia printers, signed Demosthenes, which Mr. Randolph and Mr. Henry have commended. To speak truth, Richard, I am off to Congress with a portmanteau full of recommendations. And I was resolved to stop here even till I secured your company. We shall sweep the seas together, and so let George beware!”

I smiled. But my blood ran faster at the thought of sailing under such a captain. However, I made the remark that Congress had as yet no army, let alone a navy.

“And think you that gentlemen of such spirit and resources will lack either for long?” he demanded, his eye flashing.

“Then I know nothing of a ship save the little I learned on the John,” I said.

“You were born for the sea, Richard,” he exclaimed, raising his glass high. “And I would rather have one of your brains and strength and handiness than any merchant’s mate I ever sailed with. The more gentlemen get commissions, the better will be our new service.”

At that instant came a knock at the door, and one of the inn negroes to say that Captain Clapsaddle was below, and desired to see me. I persuaded John Paul to descend with me. We found Captain Daniel seated with Mr. Carroll, the barrister, and Mr. Chase.

“Captain,” I said to my old friend, “I have a rare joy this day in making known to you Mr. John Paul Jones, of whom I have spoken to you a score of times. He it is whose bravery sank the Black Moll, whose charity took me to London, and who got no other reward for his faith than three weeks in a debtors’ prison. For his honour, as I have told you, would allow him to accept none, nor his principles to take the commission in the Royal Navy which Mr. Fox offered him.”

Captain Daniel rose, his honest face flushing with pleasure. “Faith, Mr. Jones,” he cried, when John Paul had finished one of his elaborate bows, “this is well met, indeed. I have been longing these many years for a chance to press your hand, and in the names of those who are dead and gone to express my gratitude.”

“I have my reward now, captain,” replied John Paul; “a sight of you is to have Richard’s whole life revealed. And what says Mr. Congreve?

> “’For blessings ever wait on virtuous deeds,
> And tho’ a late, a sure reward succeeds.’

“Tho’ I would not have you believe that my deed was virtuous. And you, who know Richard, may form some notion of the pleasure I had out of his companionship.”

I hastened to present my friend to the other gentlemen, who welcomed him with warmth, though they could not keep their amusement wholly out of their faces.

“Mr. Jones is now the possessor of an estate in Virginia, sirs,” I explained.

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“And do you find it more to your taste than seafaring, Mr. Jones?” inquired Mr. Chase.

This brought forth a most vehement protest, and another quotation.

“Why, sir,” he cried, “to be

> ’Fixed like a plant on his peculiar spot,
> To draw nutrition, propagate, and rot,’

is an animal’s existence. I have thrown it over, sir, with a right good will, and am now on my way to Philadelphia to obtain a commission in the navy soon to be born.”

Mr. Chase smiled. John Paul little suspected that he was a member of the Congress.

“This is news indeed, Mr. Jones,” he said. “I have yet to hear of the birth of this infant navy, for which we have not yet begun to make swaddling clothes.”

“We are not yet an infant state, sir,” Mr. Carroll put in, with a shade of rebuke. For Maryland was well content with the government she had enjoyed, and her best patriots long after shunned the length of secession. “I believe and pray that the King will come to his senses. And as for the navy, it is folly. How can we hope to compete with England on the sea?”

“All great things must have a beginning sir,” replied John Paul, launching forth at once, nothing daunted by such cold conservatism. “What Israelite brickmaker of Pharaoh’s dreamed of Solomon’s temple? Nay, Moses himself had no conception of it. And God will send us our pillars of cloud and of fire. We must be reconciled to our great destiny, Mr. Carroll. No fight ever was won by man or nation content with half a victory. We have forests to build an hundred armadas, and I will command a fleet and it is given me.”

The gentlemen listened in astonishment.

“I’ faith, I believe you, sir,” cried Captain Daniel, with admiration.

The others, too, were somehow fallen under the spell of this remarkable individuality. “What plan would you pursue, sir?” asked Mr. Chase, betraying more interest than he cared to show.

“What plan, sir!” said Captain John Paul, those wonderful eyes of his alight. “In the first place, we Americans build the fastest ships in the world,—yours of the Chesapeake are as fleet as any. Here, if I am not mistaken, one hundred and eighty-two were built in the year ’71. They are idle now. To them I would issue letters of marque, to harry England’s trade. From Carolina to Maine we have the wood and iron to build cruisers,

in harbours that may not easily be got at. And skilled masters and seamen to elude the enemy."

"But a navy must be organized, sir. It must be an unit," objected Mr. Carroll. "And you would not for many years have force enough, or discipline enough, to meet England's navy."

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“I would never meet it, sir,” he replied instantly. “That would be the height of folly. I would divide our forces into small, swift-sailing squadrons, of strength sufficient to repel his cruisers. And I would carry the war straight into his unprotected ports of trade. I can name a score of such defenceless places, and I know every shoal of their harbours. For example, Whitehaven might be entered. That is a town of fifty thousand inhabitants. The fleet of merchantmen might with the greatest ease be destroyed, a contribution levied, and Ireland’s coal cut off for a winter. The whole of the shipping might be swept out of the Clyde. Newcastle is another likely place, and in almost any of the Irish ports valuable vessels may be found. The Baltic and West Indian fleets are to be intercepted. I have reflected upon these matters for years, gentlemen. They are perfectly feasible. And I’ll warrant you cannot conceive the havoc and consternation their fulfilment would spread in England.”

If the divine power of genius ever made itself felt, ’twas on that May evening, at candle-light, in the Annapolis Coffee House. With my own eyes I witnessed two able and cautious statesmen of a cautious province thrilled to the pitch of enthusiasm by this strange young man of eight and twenty. As for good Captain Daniel, enthusiasm is but a poor word to express his feelings. A map was sent for and spread out upon the table. And it was a late hour when Mr. Chase and Mr. Carroll went home, profoundly impressed. Mr. Chase charged John Paul look him up in Congress.

The next morning I bade Captain Daniel a solemn good-by, and rode away with John Paul to Baltimore. Thence we took stage to New Castle on the Delaware, and were eventually landed by Mr. Tatlow’s stage-boat at Crooked Billet wharf, Philadelphia.

A *brief summary*, *which brings this biography to the famous fight of the bon homme Richard and the Serapis*

ByDaniel Clapsaddle Carvel

Mr. Richard Carvel refers here to the narrative of his experiences in the War of the Revolution, which he had written in the year 1805 or 1806. The insertion of that account would swell this book, already too long, out of all proportion. Hence I take it upon myself, with apologies, to compress it.

Not until October of that year, 1775, was the infant navy born. Mr. Carvel was occupied in the interval in the acquirement of practical seamanship and the theory of maritime warfare under the most competent of instructors, John Paul Jones. An interesting side light is thrown upon the character of that hero by the fact that, with all his supreme confidence in his ability, he applied to Congress only for a first lieutenancy. This was in deference to the older men before that body. “I hoped,”

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said he, “in that rank to gain much useful knowledge from those of more experience than myself.” His lack of assertion for once cost him dear. He sailed on the New Providence expedition under Commodore Hopkins as first lieutenant of the Alfred, thirty; and he soon discovered that, instead of gaining information, he was obliged to inform others. He trained the men so thoroughly in the use of the great guns “that they went through the motions of broadsides and rounds exactly as soldiers generally perform the manual exercise.”

Captain Jones was not long in fixing the attention and earning the gratitude of the nation, and of its Commander-in-Chief, General Washington. While in command of the Providence, twelve four-pounders, his successful elusions of the ‘Cerberus’, which hounded him, and his escape from the ‘Solebay’, are too famous to be dwelt upon here. Obtaining the Alfred, he captured and brought into Boston ten thousand suits of uniform for Washington’s shivering army. Then, by the bungling of Congress, thirteen officers were promoted over his head. The bitterness this act engendered in the soul of one whose thirst for distinction was as great as Captain Jones’s may be imagined. To his everlasting credit be it recorded that he remained true to the country to which he had dedicated his life and his talents. And it was not until 1781 that he got the justice due him.

That the rough and bluff captains of the American service should have regarded a man of Paul Jones’s type with suspicion is not surprising. They resented his polish and accomplishments, and could not understand his language. Perhaps it was for this reason, as well as a reward for his brilliant services, that he was always given a separate command. In the summer of 1777 he was singled out for the highest gift in the power of the United States, nothing less than that of the magnificent frigate ‘Indien’, then building at Amsterdam. And he was ordered to France in command of the ‘Ranger’, a new ship then fitting at Portsmouth. Captain Jones was the admiration of all the young officers in the navy, and was immediately flooded with requests to sail with him. One of his first acts, after receiving his command, was to apply to the Marine Committee for Mr. Carvel. The favour was granted.

My grandfather had earned much commendation from his superiors. He had sailed two cruises as master’s mate of the Cabot, and was then serving as master of the Trumbull, Captain Saltonstall. This was shortly after that frigate had captured the two British transports off New York.

Captain Jones has been at pains to mention in his letters the services rendered him by Mr. Carvel in fitting out the Ranger. And my grandfather gives a striking picture of the captain. At that time the privateers, with the larger inducements of profit they offered, were getting all the best seamen. John Paul had but to take two turns with a man across the dock, and he would sign papers.

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Captain Jones was the first to raise the new flag of the stars and stripes over a man-o'-war. They got away on November 14, 1777, with a fair crew and a poor lot of officers. Mr. Carvel had many a brush with the mutinous first lieutenant Simpson. Family influence deterred the captain from placing this man under arrest, and even Dr. Franklin found trouble, some years after, in bringing about his dismissal from the service. To add to the troubles, the Ranger proved crank and slow-sailing; and she had only one barrel of rum aboard, which made the men discontented.

Bringing the official news of Burgoyne's surrender, which was to cause King Louis to acknowledge the independence of the United States, the Ranger arrived at Nantes, December 2. Mr. Carvel accompanied Captain Jones to Paris, where a serious blow awaited him. The American Commissioners informed him that the Indien had been transferred to France to prevent her confiscation. That winter John Paul spent striving in vain for a better ship, and imbibing tactics from the French admirals. Incidentally, he obtained a salute for the American flag. The cruise of the Ranger in English waters the following spring was a striking fulfilment, with an absurdly poor and inadequate force, of the plan set forth by John Paul Jones in the Annapolis Coffee House. His descent upon Whitehaven spread terror and consternation broadcast through England, and he was branded as a pirate and a traitor. Mr. Carvel was fortunately not of the landing party on St. Mary's Isle, which place he had last beheld in John Paul's company, on the brigantine John, when entering Kirkcudbright. The object of that expedition, as is well known, was to obtain the person of the Earl of Selkirk, in order to bring about the rescue of the unfortunate Americans suffering in British prisons. After the celebrated capture of the sloop-of-war Drake, Paul Jones returned to France a hero.

If Captain Jones was ambitious of personal glory, he may never, at least, be accused of mercenary motives. The ragged crew of the Ranger was paid in part out of his own pocket, and for a whole month he supported the Drake's officers and men, no provision having been made for prisoners. He was at large expense in fitting out the Ranger, and he bought back at twice what it was worth the plate taken from St. Mary's Isle, getting but a tardy recognition from the Earl of Selkirk for such a noble and unheard-of action. And, I take pride in writing it, Mr. Carvel spent much of what he had earned at Gordon's Pride in a like honourable manner.

Mr. Carvel's description of the hero's reception at Versailles is graphic and very humorous. For all his republican principles John Paul never got over his love of courts, and no man was ever a more thorough courtier. He exchanged compliments with Queen Marie Antoinette, who was then in the bloom of her beauty, and declared that she was a "good girl, and deserved to be happy."

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The unruly Simpson sailed for America in the Ranger in July, Captain Jones being retained in France “for a particular enterprise.” And through the kindness of Dr. Franklin, Mr. Carvel remained with him. Then followed another period of heartrending disappointment. The fine ship the French government promised him was not forthcoming, though Captain Jones wrote a volume of beautiful letters to every one of importance, from her Royal Highness the Duchess of Chartres to his Most Christian Majesty, Louis, King of France and Navarre. At length, when he was sitting one day in unusual dejection and railing at the vanity of courts and kings, Mr. Carvel approached him with a book in his hand.

“What have you there, Richard?” the captain demanded.

“Dr. Franklin’s Maxims,” replied my grandfather. They were great favourites with him. The captain took the book and began mechanically to turn over the pages. Suddenly he closed it with a bang, jumped up, and put on his coat and hat. Mr. Carvel looked on in astonishment.

“Where are you going, sir?” says he.

“To Paris, sir,” says the captain. “Dr. Franklin has taught me more wisdom in a second than I had in all my life before. ’If you wish to have any business faithfully and expeditiously performed, go and do it yourself; otherwise, send.’”

As a result of that trip he got the Duras, which he renamed the ’Bon homme Richard’ in honour of Dr. Franklin. The Duras was an ancient Indiaman with a high poop, which made my grandfather exclaim, when he saw her, at the remarkable fulfilment of old Stanwix’s prophecy. She was perfectly rotten, and in the constructor’s opinion not worth refitting. Her lowest deck (too low for the purpose) was pierced aft with three ports on a side, and six worn-out eighteen-pounders mounted there. Some of them burst in the action, killing their people. The main battery, on the deck above, was composed of twenty-eight twelve-pounders. On the uncovered deck eight nine-pounders were mounted. Captain Jones again showed his desire to serve the cause by taking such a ship, and not waiting for something better.

In the meantime the American frigate ‘Alliance’ had brought Lafayette to France, and was added to the little squadron that was to sail with the ‘Bon homme Richard’. One of the most fatal mistakes Congress ever made was to put Captain Pierre Landais in command of her, out of compliment to the French allies. He was a man whose temper and vagaries had failed to get him a command in his own navy. His insulting conduct and treachery to Captain Jones are strongly attested to in Mr. Carvel’s manuscript: they were amply proved by the written statements of other officers.

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The squadron sailed from L'Orient in June, but owing to a collision between the Bon homme Richard and the Alliance it was forced to put back into the Groix roads for repairs. Nails and rivets were with difficulty got to hold in the sides of the old Indianian. On August 14th John Paul Jones again set sail for English waters, with the following vessels: Alliance, thirty-six; Pallas, thirty; Cerf, eighteen; Vengeance, twelve; and two French privateers. Owing to the humiliating conditions imposed upon him by the French Minister of Marine, Commodore Jones did not have absolute command. In a gale on the 26th the two privateers and the Cerf parted company, never to return. After the most outrageous conduct off the coast of Ireland, Landais, in the 'Alliance', left the squadron on September 6th, and did not reappear until the 23d, the day of the battle.

Mr. Carvel was the third lieutenant of the 'Bon homme Richard', tho' he served as second in the action. Her first lieutenant (afterwards the celebrated Commodore Richard Dale) was a magnificent man, one worthy in every respect of the captain he served. When the hour of battle arrived, these two and the sailing master, and a number of raw midshipmen, were the only line-officers left, and two French officers of marines.

The rest had been lost in various ways. And the crew of the 'Bon homme Richard' was as sorry a lot as ever trod a deck. Less than three score of the seamen were American born; near four score were British, inclusive of sixteen Irish; one hundred and thirty-seven were French soldiers, who acted as marines; and the rest of the three hundred odd souls to fight her were from all over the earth,—Malays and Maltese and Portuguese. In the hold were more than one hundred and fifty English prisoners.

This was a vessel and a force, truly, with which to conquer a fifty-gun ship of the latest type, and with a picked crew.

Mr. Carvel's chapter opens with Landais's sudden reappearance on the morning of the day the battle was fought. He shows the resentment and anger against the Frenchman felt by all on board, from cabin-boy to commodore. But none went so far as to accuse the captain of the 'Alliance' of such supreme treachery as he was to show during the action. Cowardice may have been in part responsible for his holding aloof from the two duels in which the Richard and the Pallas engaged. But the fact that he poured broadsides into the Richard, and into her off side, makes it seem probable that his motive was to sink the commodore's ship, and so get the credit of saving the day, to the detriment of the hero who won it despite all disasters. To account for the cry that was raised when first she attacked the Richard, it must be borne in mind that the crew of the 'Alliance' was largely composed of Englishmen. It was thought that these had mutinied and taken her.

CHAPTER LII

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How the gardener's son fought the "*Serapis*"

When I came on deck the next morning our yards were a-drip with a clammy fog, and under it the sea was roughed by a southwest breeze. We were standing to the northward before it. I remember reflecting as I paused in the gangway that the day was Thursday, September the 23d, and that we were near two months out of Groix with this tub of an Indiaman. In all that time we had not so much as got a whiff of an English frigate, though we had almost put a belt around the British Isles. Then straining my eyes through the mist, I made out two white blurs of sails on our starboard beam.

Honest Jack Pearce, one of the few good seamen we had aboard, was rubbing down one of the nines beside me.

"Why, Jack," said I, "what have we there? Another prize?" For that question had become a joke on board the 'Bon homme Richard' since the prisoners had reached an hundred and fifty, and half our crew was gone to man the ships.

"Bless your 'art, no, sir," said he. "'Tis that damned Frenchy Landais in th' Alliance. She turns up with the Pallas at six bells o' the middle watch."

"So he's back, is he?"

"Ay, he's back," he returned, with a grunt that was half a growl; "arter three weeks breakin' o' liberty. I tell 'ee what, sir, them Frenchies is treecherous devils, an' not to be trusted the len'th of a lead line. An' they beant seamen eno' to keep a full an' by with all their 'takteek'. Ez fer that Landais, I hearn him whinin' at the commodore in the round house when we was off Clear, an' sayin' as how he would tell Sartin on us when he gets back to Paree. An' jabberin to th'other Frenchmen as was there that this here butter-cask was er King's ship, an' that the commodore weren't no commodore nohow. They say as how Cap'n Jones be bound up in a hard knot by some articles of agreement, an' daresn't punish him. Be that so, Mr. Carvel?"

I said that it was.

"Shiver my bulkheads!" cried Jack, "I gave my oath to that same, sir. For I knowed the commodore was the lad t' string 'em to the yard-arm an' he had the say on it. Oh, the devil take the Frenchies," said Jack, rolling his quid to show his pleasure of the topic, "they sits on their bottoms in Brest and L'Oriong an' talks takteek wi' their han's and mouths, and daresn't as much as show the noses o' their three-deckers in th' Bay o' Biscay, while Cap'n Jones pokes his bowsprit into every port in England with a hulk the rats have left. I've had my bellyful o' Frenchies, Mr. Carvell save it be to fight 'em. An' I tell 'ee 'twould give me the greatest joy in life t' leave loose 'Scolding Sairy' at that there Landais. Th' gal ain't had a match on her this here cruise, an' t' my mind she couldn't be christened better, sir."

I left him patting the gun with a tender affection.

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The scene on board was quiet and peaceful enough that morning. A knot of midshipmen on the forecastle were discussing Landais's conduct, and cursing the concordat which prevented our commodore from bringing him up short. Mr. Stacey, the sailing-master, had the deck, and the coasting pilot was conning; now and anon the boatswain's whistle piped for Garrett or Quito or Fogg to lay aft to the mast, where the first lieutenant stood talking to Colonel de Chamillard, of the French marines. The scavengers were sweeping down, and part of the after guard was bending a new bolt-rope on a storm staysail.

Then the—fore-topmast crosstrees reports a sail on the weather quarter, the Richard is brought around on the wind, and away we go after a brigantine, "flying like a snow laden with English bricks," as Midshipman Coram jokingly remarks. A chase is not such a novelty with us that we crane our necks to windward.

At noon, when I relieved Mr. Stacey of the deck, the sun had eaten up the fog, and the shores of England stood out boldly. Spurn Head was looming up across our bows, while that of Flamborough jutted into the sea behind us. I had the starboard watch piped to dinner, and reported twelve o'clock to the commodore. And had just got permission to "make it," according to a time-honoured custom at sea, when another "Sail, ho!" came down from aloft.

"Where away?" called back Mr. Linthwaite, who was midshipman of the forecastle.

"Starboard quarter, rounding Flamborough Head, sir. Looks like a full-rigged ship, sir."

I sent the messenger into the great cabin to report. He was barely out of sight before a second cry came from the masthead: "Another sail rounding Flamborough, sir!"

The officers on deck hurried to the taffrail. I had my glass, but not a dot was visible above the sea-line. The messenger was scarcely back again when there came a third hail: "Two more rounding the head, sir! Four in all, sir!"

Here was excitement indeed. Without waiting for instructions, I gave the command:

"Up royal yards! Royal yardmen in the tops!"

We were already swaying out of the chains, when Lieutenant Dale appeared and asked the coasting pilot what fleet it was. He answered that it was the Baltic fleet, under convoy of the Countess of Scarborough, twenty guns, and the Serapis, forty-four.

"Forty-four," repeated Mr. Dale, smiling; "that means fifty, as English frigates are rated. We shall have our hands full this day, my lads," said he. "You have done well to get the royals on her, Mr. Carvel."

While he was yet speaking, three more sail were reported from aloft. Then there was a hush on deck, and the commodore himself appeared. As he reached the poop we saluted him and informed him of what had happened.

“The Baltic fleet,” said he, promptly. “Call away the pilotboat with Mr. Lunt to follow the brigantine, sir, and ease off before the wind. Signal ‘General Chase’ to the squadron, Mr. Mayrant.”

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The men had jumped to the weather braces before I gave the command, and all the while more sail were counting from the crosstrees, until their number had reached forty-one. The news spread over the ship; the starboard watch trooped up with their dinners half eaten. Then a faint booming of guns drifted down upon our ears.

“They’ve got sight of us, sir,” shouted the lookout. “They be firing guns to windward, an’ letting fly their topgallant sheets.”

At that the commodore hurried forward, the men falling back to the bulwarks respectfully, and he mounted the fore-rigging as agile as any topman, followed by his aide with a glass. From the masthead he sung out to me to set our stu’nsails, and he remained aloft till near seven bells of the watch. At that hour the merchantmen had all scuttled to safety behind the head, and from the deck a great yellow King’s frigate could be plainly seen standing south to meet us, followed by her smaller consort. Presently she hove to, and through our glasses we discerned a small boat making for her side, and then a man clambering up her sea-ladder.

“That be the bailiff of Scarborough, sir,” said the coasting pilot, “come to tell her cap’n ’tis Paul Jones he has to fight.”

At that moment the commodore lay down from aloft, and our hearts beat high as he walked swiftly aft to the quarterdeck, where he paused for a word with Mr. Dale. Meanwhile Mr. Mayrant hove out the signal for the squadron to form line of battle.

“Recall the pilot-boat, Mr. Carvel,” said the commodore, quietly. “Then you may beat to quarters, and I will take the ship, sir.”

“Ay, ay, sir.” I raised my trumpet. “All hands clear ship for action!”

It makes me sigh now to think of the cheer which burst from that tatterdemalion crew. Who were they to fight the bone and sinew of the King’s navy in a rotten ship of an age gone by? And who was he, that stood so straight upon the quarter-deck, to instil this scum with love and worship and fervour to blind them to such odds? But the bo’suns piped and sang out the command in fog-horn voices, the drums beat the long roll and the fifes whistled, and the decks became suddenly alive. Breechings were loosed and gun-tackles unlashed, rammer and sponge laid out, and pike and pistol and cutlass placed where they would be handy when the time came to rush the enemy’s decks. The powder-monkeys tumbled over each other in their hurry to provide cartridges, and grape and canister and doubleheaded shot were hoisted up from below. The trimmers rigged the splinter nettings, got out spare spars and blocks and ropes against those that were sure to be shot away, and rolled up casks of water to put out the fires. Tubs were filled with sand, for blood is slippery upon the boards. The French marines, their scarlet and white very natty in contrast to most of our ragged wharf-rats at the guns, were mustered on poop and forecastle, and some were sent aloft to the tops to assist the tars

there to sweep the British decks with handgrenade and musket. And, lastly, the surgeon and his mates went below to cockpit and steerage, to make ready for the grimmest work of all.

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My own duties took me to the dark lower deck, a vile place indeed, and reeking with the smell of tar and stale victuals. There I had charge of the battery of old eighteens, while Mr. Dale commanded the twelves on the middle deck. We loaded our guns with two shots apiece, though I had my doubts about their standing such a charge, and then the men stripped until they stood naked to the waist, waiting for the fight to begin. For we could see nothing of what was going forward. I was pacing up and down, for it was a task to quiet the nerves in that dingy place with the gun-ports closed, when about three bells of the dog, Mr. Mease, the purser, appeared on the ladder.

“Lunt has not come back with the pilot-boat, Carvel,” said he. “I have volunteered for a battery, and am assigned to this. You are to report to the commodore.”

I thanked him, and climbed quickly to the quarterdeck. The ’Bon homme Richard’ was lumbering like a leaden ship before the wind, swaying ponderously, her topsails flapping and her heavy blocks whacking against the yards. And there was the commodore, erect, and with fire in his eye, giving sharp commands to the men at the wheel. I knew at once that no trifle had disturbed him. He wore a brand-new uniform; a blue coat with red lapels and yellow buttons, and slashed cuffs and stand-up collar, a red waistcoat with tawny lace, blue breeches, white silk stockings, and a cocked hat and a sword. Into his belt were stuck two brace of pistols.

It took some effort to realize, as I waited silently for his attention, that this was the man of whose innermost life I had had so intimate a view. Who had taken me to the humble cottage under Criffel, who had poured into my ear his ambitions and his wrongs when we had sat together in the dingy room of the Castle Yard sponging-house. Then some of those ludicrous scenes on the road to London came up to me, for which the sky-blue frock was responsible. And yet this commodore was not greatly removed from him I had first beheld on the brigantine John. His confidence in his future had not so much as wavered since that day. That future was now not so far distant as the horizon, and he was ready to meet it.

“You will take charge of the battery of nines on this deck, Mr. Carvel,” said he, at length.

“Very good, sir,” I replied, and was making my way down the poop ladder, when I heard him calling me, in a low voice, by the old name: “Richard!”

I turned and followed him aft to the taffrail, where we were clear of the French soldiers. The sun was hanging red over the Yorkshire Wolds, the Head of Flamborough was in the blue shadow, and the clouds were like rose leaves in the sky. The enemy had tacked and was standing west, with ensign and jack and pennant flying, the level light washing his sails to the whiteness of paper. ’Twas then I first remarked that the Alliance had left her place in line and was sailing swiftly ahead toward the Serapis. The commodore seemed to read my exclamation.

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“Landais means to ruin me yet, by hook or crook,” said he.

“But he can’t intend to close with them,” I replied. “He has not the courage.”

“God knows what he intends,” said the commodore, bitterly. “It is no good, at all events.”

My heart bled for him. Some minutes passed that he did not speak, making shift to raise his glass now and again, and I knew that he was gripped by a strong emotion. “’Twas so he ever behaved when the stress was greatest. Presently he lays down the glass on the signal-chest, fumbles in his coat, and brings out the little gold brooch I had not set eyes on since Dolly and he and I had stood together on the Betsy’s deck.

“When you see her, Richard, tell her that I have kept it as sacred as her memory,” he said thickly. “She will recall what I spoke of you when she gave it me. You have been leal and true to me indeed, and many a black hour have you tided me over since this war’ began. Do you know how she may be directed to?” he concluded, with abruptness.

I glanced at him, surprised at the question. He was staring at the English shore.

“Mr. Ripley, of Lincoln’s Inn, used to be Mr. Manners’s lawyer,” I answered.

He took out a little note-book and wrote that down carefully. “And now,” he continued, “God keep you, my friend. We must win, for we fight with a rope around our necks.”

“But you, Captain Paul,” I said, “is—is there no one?”

His face took on the look of melancholy it had worn so often of late, despite his triumphs. That look was the stamp of fate.

“Richard,” replied he, with an ineffable sadness, “I am naught but a wanderer upon the face of the earth. I have no ties, no kindred,—no real friends, save you and Dale, and some of these honest fellows whom I lead to slaughter. My ambition is seamed with a flaw. And all my life I must be striving, striving, until I am laid in the grave. I know that now, and it is you yourself who have taught me. For I have violently broken forth from those bounds which God in His wisdom did set.”

I pressed his hand, and with bowed head went back to my station, profoundly struck by the truth of what he had spoken. Though he fought under the flag of freedom, the curse of the expatriated was upon his head.

Shortly afterward he appeared at the poop rail, straight and alert, his eye piercing each man as it fell on him. He was the commodore once more.

The twilight deepened, until you scarce could see your hands. There was no sound save the cracking of the cabins and the tumbling of the blocks, and from time to time a muttered command. An age went by before the trimmers were sent to the lee braces, and the Richard rounded lazily to. And a great frigate loomed out of the night beside us, half a pistolshot away.

“What ship is that?” came the hail, intense out of the silence.

“I don’t hear you,” replied our commodore, for he had not yet got his distance.

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Again came the hail: “What ship is that?”

John Paul Jones leaned forward over the rail.

“Pass the word below to the first lieutenant to begin the action, sir.”

Hardly were the words out of my mouth before the deck gave a mighty leap, a hot wind that seemed half of flame blew across my face, and the roar started the pain throbbing in my ears. At the same instant the screech of shot sounded overhead, we heard the sharp crack-crack of wood rending and splitting,—as with a great broadaxe,—and a medley of blocks and ropes rattled to the deck with the ’thud of the falling bodies. Then, instead of stillness, moans and shrieks from above and below, oaths and prayers in English and French and Portuguese, and in the heathen gibberish of the East. As the men were sponging and ramming home in the first fury of hatred, the carpenter jumped out under the battle-lanthorn at the main hatch, crying in a wild voice that the old eighteens had burst, killing half their crews and blowing up the gundeck above them. At this many of our men broke and ran for the hatches.

“Back, back to your quarters! The first man to desert will be shot down!”

It was the same strange voice that had quelled the mutiny on the John, that had awed the men of Kirkcudbright. The tackles were seized and the guns run out once more, and fired, and served again in an agony of haste. In the darkness shot shrieked hither and thither about us like demons, striking everywhere, sometimes sending casks of salt water over the nettings. Incessantly the quartermaster walked to and fro scattering sand over the black pools that kept running, running together as the minutes were tolled out, and the red flashes from the guns revealed faces in a hideous contortion. One little fellow, with whom I had had many a lively word at mess, had his arm taken off at the shoulder as he went skipping past me with the charge under his coat, and I have but to listen now to hear the patter of the blood on the boards as they carried him away to the cockpit below. Out of the main hatch, from that charnel house, rose one continuous cry. It was an odd trick of the mind or soul that put a hymn on my lips in that dreadful hour of carnage and human misery, when men were calling the name of their Maker in vain. But as I ran from crew to crew, I sang over and over again a long-forgotten Christmas carol, and with it came a fleeting memory of my mother on the stairs at Carvel Hall, and of the negroes gathered on the lawn without.

Suddenly, glancing up at the dim cloud of sails above, I saw that we were aback and making sternway. We might have tossed a biscuit aboard the big Serapis as she glided ahead of us. The broadsides thundered, and great ragged scantlings brake from our bulwarks and flew as high as the mizzen-top; and the shrieks and groans redoubled. Involuntarily my eyes sought the poop, and I gave a sigh of relief at the sight of the commanding figure in the midst of the whirling smoke. We shotted our guns with double-headed, manned our lee braces, and gathered headway.

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“Stand by to board!”

The boatswains’ whistles trilled through the ship, pikes were seized, and pistol and cutlass buckled on. But even as we waited with set teeth, our bows ground into the enemy’s weather quarter-gallery. For the Richard’s rigging was much cut away, and she was crank at best. So we backed and filled once more, passing the Englishman close aboard, himself being aback at the time. Several of his shot crushed through the bulwarks in front of me, shattering a nine-pounder and killing half of its crew. And it is only a miracle that I stand alive to be able to tell the tale. Then I caught a glimpse of the quartermaster whirling the spokes of our wheel, and over went our helm to lay us athwart the forefoot of the ‘Serapis’, where we might rake and rush her decks. Our old Indiaman answered but doggedly; and the huge bowsprit of the Serapis, towering over our heads, snapped off our spanker gaff and fouled our mizzen rigging.

“A hawser, Mr. Stacey, a hawser!” I heard the commodore shout, and saw the sailing-master slide down the ladder and grope among the dead and wounded and mass of broken spars and tackles, and finally pick up a smeared rope’s end, which I helped him drag to the poop. There we found the commodore himself taking skilful turns around the mizzen with the severed stays and shrouds dangling from the bowsprit, the French marines looking on.

“Don’t swear, Mr. Stacey,” said he, severely; “in another minute we may all be in eternity.”

I rushed back to my guns, for the wind was rapidly swinging the stern of the Serapis to our own bow, now bringing her starboard batteries into play. Barely had we time to light our snatches and send our broadside into her at three fathoms before the huge vessels came crunching together, the disordered riggings locking, and both pointed northward to a leeward tide in a death embrace. The chance had not been given him to shift his crews or to fling open his starboard gun-ports.

Then ensued a moment’s breathless hush, even the cries of those in agony lulling. The pall of smoke rolled a little, and a silver moonlight filtered through, revealing the weltering bodies twisted upon the boards. A stern call came from beyond the bulwarks.

“Have you struck, sir?”

The answer sounded clear, and bred hero-worship in our souls.

“Sir, I have not yet begun to fight.”

Our men raised a hoarse yell, drowned all at once by the popping of musketry in the tops and the bursting of grenades here and there about the decks. A mighty muffled blast sent the Bon homme Richard rolling to larboard, and the smoke eddied from our

hatches and lifted out of the space between the ships. The Englishman had blown off his gun-ports. And next some one shouted that our battery of twelves was fighting them muzzle to muzzle below, our rammers leaning into the Serapis to send their shot home. No chance then for the thoughts which had tortured

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us in moments of suspense. That was a fearful hour, when a shot had scarce to leap a cannon's length to find its commission; when the belches of the English guns burned the hair of our faces; when Death was sovereign, merciful or cruel at his pleasure. The red flashes disclosed many an act of coolness and of heroism. I saw a French lad whip off his coat when a gunner called for a wad, and another, who had been a scavenger, snatch the rammer from Pearce's hands when he staggered with a grape-shot through his chest. Poor Jack Pearce! He did not live to see the work 'Scolding Sairy' was to do that night. I had but dragged him beyond reach of the recoil when he was gone.

Then a cry came floating down from aloft. Thrice did I hear it, like one waking out of a sleep, ere I grasped its import. "The Alliance! The Alliance!" But hardly had the name resounded with joy throughout the ship, when a hail of grape and canister tore through our sails from aft forward. "She rakes us! She rakes us!" And the French soldiers tumbled headlong down from the poop with a wail of "Les Anglais font prise!" "Her Englishmen have taken her, and turned her guns against us!" Our captain was left standing alone beside the staff where the stars and stripes waved black in the moonlight.

"The Alliance is hauling off, sir!" called the midshipman of the mizzen-top. "She is making for the Pallas and the Countess of Scarborough."

"Very good, sir," was all the commodore said.

To us hearkening for his answer his voice betrayed no sign of dismay. Seven times, I say, was that battle lost, and seven times regained again. What was it kept the crews at their quarters and the officers at their posts through that hell of flame and shot, when a madman could scarce have hoped for victory? What but the knowledge that somewhere in the swirl above us was still that unswerving and indomitable man who swept all obstacles from before him, and into whose mind the thought of defeat could not enter. His spirit held us to our task, for flesh and blood might not have endured alone.

We had now but one of our starboard nine-pounders on its carriage, and word came from below that our battery of twelves was all but knocked to scrap iron, and their ports blown into one yawning gap. Indeed, we did not have to be told that sides and stanchions had been carried away, for the deck trembled and teetered under us as we dragged 'Scolding Sairy' from her stand in the larboard waist, clearing a lane for her between the bodies. Our feet slipped and slipped as we hove, and burning bits of sails and splinters dropping from aloft fell unheeded on our heads and shoulders. With the energy of desperation I was bending to the pull, when the Malay in front of me sank dead across the tackle. But, ere I could touch him, he was tenderly lifted aside, and a

familiar figure seized the rope where the dead man's hands had warmed it. Truly, the commodore was everywhere that night.

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“Down to the surgeon with you, Richard!” he cried. “I will look to the battery.”

Dazed, I put my hand to my hair to find it warm and wringing wet. When I had been hit, I knew not. But I shook my head, for the very notion of that cockpit turned my stomach. The blood was streaming from a gash in his own temple, to which he gave no heed, and stood encouraging that panting line until at last the gun was got across and hooked to the ring-bolts of its companion that lay shattered there. “Serve her with double-headed, my lads,” he shouted, “and every shot into the Englishman’s mainmast!”

“Ay, ay, sir,” came the answer from every man of that little remnant.

The Serapis, too, was now beginning to blaze aloft, and choking wood-smoke eddied out of the Richard’s hold and mingled with the powder fumes. Then the enemy’s fire abreast us seemed to lull, and Mr. Stacey mounted the bulwarks, and cried out: “You have cleared their decks, my hearties!” Aloft, a man was seen to clamber from our mainyard into the very top of the Englishman, where he threw a hand-grenade, as I thought, down her main hatch. An instant after an explosion came like a, clap of thunder in our faces, and a great quadrant of light flashed as high as the ‘Serapis’s’ trucks, and through a breach in her bulwarks I saw men running with only the collars of their shirts upon their naked bodies.

’Twas at this critical moment, when that fearful battle once more was won, another storm of grape brought the spars about our heads, and that name which we dreaded most of all was spread again. As we halted in consternation, a dozen round shot ripped through our unengaged side, and a babel of voices hailed the treacherous Landais with oaths and imprecations. We made out the Alliance with a full head of canvas, black and sharp, between us and the moon. Smoke hung above her rail. Getting over against the signal fires blazing on Flamborough Head, she wore ship and stood across our bows, the midshipman on the forecastle singing out to her, by the commodore’s orders, to lay the enemy by the board. There was no response.

“Do you hear us?” yelled Mr. Linthwaite.

“Ay, ay,” came the reply; and with it the smoke broke from her and the grape and canister swept our forecastle. Then the Alliance sailed away, leaving brave Mr. Caswell among the many Landais had murdered.

The ominous clank of the chain pumps beat a sort of prelude to what happened next. The gunner burst out of the hatch with blood running down his face, shouting that the Richard was sinking, and yelling for quarter as he made for the ensign-staff on the poop, for the flag was shot away. Him the commodore felled with a pistol-butt. At the gunner’s heels were the hundred and fifty prisoners we had taken, released by the master at arms. They swarmed out of the bowels of the ship like a horde of Tartars, unkempt and wild and desperate with fear, until I thought

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that the added weight on the scarce-supported deck would land us all in the bilges. Words fail me when I come to describe the frightful panic of these creatures, frenzied by the instinct of self-preservation. They surged hither and thither as angry seas driven into a pocket of a storm-swept coast. They trampled rough-shod over the moaning heaps of wounded and dying, and crowded the crews at the guns, who were powerless before their numbers. Some fought like maniacs, and others flung themselves into the sea.

Those of us who had clung to hope lost it then. Standing with my back to the mast, beating them off with a pike, visions of an English prison-ship, of an English gallows, came before me. I counted the seconds until the enemy's seamen would be pouring through our ragged ports. The seventh and last time, and we were beaten, for we had not men enough left on our two decks to force them down again. Yes,—I shame to confess it—the heart went clean out of me, and with that the pain pulsed and leaped in my head like a devil unbound. At a turn of the hand I should have sunk to the boards, had not a voice risen strong and clear above that turmoil, compelling every man to halt trembling in his steps.

"Cast off, cast off! 'The Serapis' is sinking. To the pumps, ye fools, if you would save your lives!"

That unerring genius of the gardener's son had struck the only chord!

They were like sheep before us as we beat them back into the reeking hatches, and soon the pumps were heard bumping with a renewed and a desperate vigour. Then, all at once, the towering mainmast of the enemy cracked and tottered and swung this way and that on its loosened shrouds. The first intense silence of the battle followed, in the midst of which came a cry from our top:

"Their captain is hauling down, sir!"

The sound which broke from our men could scarce be called a cheer. That which they felt as they sank exhausted on the blood of their comrades may not have been elation. My own feeling was of unmixed wonder as I gazed at a calm profile above me, sharp-cut against the moon.

I was moved as out of a revery by the sight of Dale swinging across to the Serapis by the main brace pennant. Calling on some of my boarders, I scaled our bulwarks and leaped fairly into the middle of the gangway of the Serapis.

Such is nearly all of my remembrance of that momentous occasion. I had caught the one glimpse of our first lieutenant in converse with their captain and another officer,

when a naked seaman came charging at me. He had raised a pike above his shoulder ere I knew what he was about, and my senses left me.

CHAPTER LIII

IN WHICH I MAKE SOME DISCOVERIES

The room had a prodigious sense of change about it. That came over me with something of a shock, since the moment before I had it settled that I was in Marlboro' Street. The bare branches swaying in the wind outside should belong to the trees in Freshwater Lane. But beyond the branches were houses, the like of which I had no remembrance of in Annapolis. And then my grandfather should be sitting in that window. Surely, he was there! He moved! He was coming toward me to say: "Richard, you are forgiven," and to brush his eyes with his ruffles.

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Then there was the bed-canopy, the pleatings of which were gone, and it was turned white instead of the old blue. And the chimney-place! That was unaccountably smaller, and glowed with a sea-coal fire. And the mantel was now but a bit of a shelf, and held many things that seemed scarce at home on the rough and painted wood,—gold filigree; and China and Japan, and a French clock that ought not to have been just there. Ah, the teacups! Here at last was something to touch a fibre of my brain, but a pain came with the effort of memory. So my eyes went back to my grandfather in the window. His face was now become black as Scipio's, and he wore a red turban and a striped cotton gown that was too large for him. And he was sewing. This was monstrous!

I hurried over to the tea-cups, such a twinge did that discovery give me. But they troubled me near as much, and the sea-coal fire held strange images. The fascination in the window was not to be denied, for it stood in line with the houses and the trees. Suddenly there rose up before me a gate. Yes, I knew that gate, and the girlish figure leaning over it. They were in Prince George Street. Behind them was a mass of golden-rose bushes, and out of these came forth a black face under a turban, saying, "Yes, mistis, I'se comin'."

"Mammy—Mammy Lucy!"

The figure in the window stirred, and the sewing fell its ample lap.

"Now Lawd'a mercy!"

I trembled—with a violence unspeakable. Was this but one more of those thousand voices, harsh and gentle, rough and tender, to which I had listened in vain this age past? The black face was hovering over me now, and in an agony of apprehension I reached up and felt its honest roughness. Then I could have wept for joy.

"Mammy Lucy!"

"Yes, Marse Dick?"

"Where—where is Miss Dolly?"

"Now, Marse Dick, doctah done say you not t' talk, suh."

"Where is Miss Dolly?" I cried, seizing her arm.

"Hush, Marse Dick. Miss Dolly'll come terectly, suh. She's lyin' down, suh."

The door creaked, and in my eagerness I tried to lift myself. 'Twas Aunt Lucy's hand that restrained me, and the next face I saw was that of Dorothy's mother. But why did it

appear so old and sorrow-lined? And why was the hair now of a whiteness with the lace of the cap? She took my fingers in her own, and asked me anxiously if I felt any pain.

“Where am I, Mrs. Manners?”

“You are in London, Richard.”

“In Arlington Street?”

She shook her head sadly. “No, my dear, not in Arlington Street. But you are not to talk.”

“And Dorothy? May I not see Dorothy? Aunt Lucy tells me she is here.”

Mrs. Manners gave the old mammy a glance of reproof, a signal that alarmed me vastly.

“Oh, tell me, Mrs. Manners! You will speak the truth. Tell me if she is gone away?”

“My dear boy, she is here, and under this very roof. And you shall see her as soon as Dr. Barry will permit. Which will not be soon,” she added with a smile, “if you persist in this conduct.”

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The threat had the desired effect. And Mrs. Manners quietly left the room, and after a while as quietly came back again and sat down by the fire, whispering to Aunt Lucy.

Fate, in some inexplicable way, had carried me into the enemy's country and made me the guest of Mr. Marmaduke Manners. As I lay staring upward, odd little bits of the past came floating to the top of my mind, presently to be pieced together. The injuries Mr. Marmaduke had done me were the first to collect, since I was searching for the cause of my resentment against him. The incidents arrived haphazard as magic lanthorn views, but very vivid. His denial of me before Mr. Dix, and his treachery at Vauxhall, when he had sent me to be murdered. Next I felt myself clutching the skin over his ribs in Arlington Street, when I had flung him across the room in his yellow night-gown. That brought me to the most painful scene of my life, when I had parted with Dorothy at the top of the stairs. Afterward followed scraps of the years at Gordon's Pride, and on top of them the talk with McAndrews. Here was the secret I sought. The crash had come. And they were no longer in Mayfair, but must have taken a house in some poorer part of London. This thought cast me down tremendously.

And Dorothy! Had time changed her? 'Twas with that query on my lips I fell asleep, to dream of the sun shining down on Carvel Hall and Wilmot House; of Aunt Hester and Aunt Lucy, and a lass and a lad romping through pleasant fields and gardens.

When I awoke it was broad day once more. A gentleman sat on the edge of my bed. He had a queer, short face, ruddy as the harvest moon, and he smiled good-humouredly when I opened my eyes.

"I bid you good morning, Mr. Carvel, for the first time since I have made your acquaintance," said he. "And how do you feel, sir?"

"I have never felt better in my life," I replied, which was the whole truth.

"Well, vastly well," says he, laughing, "prodigious well for a young man who has as many holes in him as have you. Do you hear him, Mrs. Manners?"

At that last word, I popped up to look about the room, and the doctor caught hold of me with ludicrous haste. A pain shot through my body.

"Avast, avast, my hearty," cries he. "'Tis a miracle you can speak, let alone carry your bed and walk for a while yet." And he turned to Dorothy's mother, whom I beheld smiling at me. "You will give him the physic, ma'am, at the hours I have chosen. Egad, I begin to think we shall come through.

"But pray remember, ma'am, if he talks, you are to put a wad in his mouth."

"He shall have no opportunity to talk, Dr. Barry," said Mrs. Manners.

“Save for a favour I have to ask you, doctor,” I cried.

“’Od’s bodkins! Already, sir? And what may that be?”

“That you will allow me to see Miss Manners.”

He shook with laughter, and then winked at me very roguishly.

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“Oh!” says he, “and faith, I should be worse than cruel. First she comes imploring me to see you, and so prettily that a man of oak could not refuse her. And now it is you begging to see her. Had your eyes been opened, sir, you might have had many a glimpse of Miss Dolly these three weeks past.”

“What! She has been watching with me?” I asked, in a rapture not to be expressed.

“’Od’s, but those are secrets. And the medical profession is close-mouthed, Mr. Carvel. So you want to see her? No,” cries he, “’tis not needful to swear it on the Evangels. And I let her come in, will you give me your honour as a gentleman not to speak more than two words to her?”

“I promise anything, and you will not deny me looking at her,” said I.

He shook again, all over. “You rascal! You sad dog, sir! No, sir, faith, you must shut your eyes. Eh, madam, must he not shut his eyes?”

“They were playmates, doctor,” answers Mrs. Manners. She was laughing a little, too.

“Well, she shall come in. But remember that I shall have my ear to the keyhole, and you go beyond your promise, out she’s whisked. So I caution you not to spend rashly those two words, sir.”

And he followed Mrs. Manners out of the room, frowning and shaking his fist at me in mock fierceness. I would have died for the man. For a space—a prodigious long space—I lay very still, my heart bumping like a gun-carriage broke loose, and my eyes riveted on the crack of the door. Then I caught the sound of a light footstep, the knob turned, and joy poured into my soul with the sweep of a Fundy tide.

“Dorothy!” I cried. “Dorothy!”

She put her finger to her lips.

“There, sir,” said she, “now you have spoken them both at once!”

She closed the door softly behind her, and stood looking down upon me with such a wondrous love-light in her eyes as no man may describe. My fancy had not lifted me within its compass, my dreams even had not imagined it. And the fire from which it sprang does not burn in humbler souls. So she stood gazing, those lips which once had been the seat of pride now parted in a smile of infinite tenderness. But her head she still held high, and her body straight. Down the front of her dress fell a tucked apron of the whitest linen, and in her hand was a cup of steaming broth.

“You are to take this, Richard,” she commanded. And added, with a touch of her old mischief, “Mind, sir, if I hear a sound out of you, I am to disappear like the fairy godmother.”

I knew full well she meant it, and the terror of losing her kept me silent. She put down the cup, placed another pillow behind my head with a marvellous deftness, and then began feeding me in dainty spoonfuls something which was surely nectar. And mine eyes, too, had their feast. Never before had I seen my lady in this gentle guise, this task of nursing the sick, which her doing raised to a queenly art.

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Her face had changed some. Years of trial unknown to me had left an ennobling mark upon her features, increasing their power an hundred fold. And the levity of girlish years was gone. How I burned to question her! But her lips were now tight closed, her glance now and anon seeking mine, and then falling with an exquisite droop to the coverlet. For the old archness, at least, would never be eradicated. Presently, after she had taken the cup and smoothed my pillow, I reached out for her hand. It was a boldness of which I had not believed myself capable; but she did not resist, and even, as I thought, pressed my fingers with her own slender ones, the red of our Maryland holly blushing in her cheeks. And what need of words, indeed! Our thoughts, too, flew coursing hand in hand through primrose paths, and the angels themselves were not to be envied.

A master might picture my happiness, waking and sleeping, through the short winter days that came and went like flashes of gray light. The memory of them is that of a figure tall and lithe, a little more rounded than of yore, and a chiselled face softened by a power that is one of the world's mysteries. Dorothy had looked the lady in rags, and housewife's cap and apron became her as well as silks or brocades. When for any reason she was absent from my side, I moped, to the quiet amusement of Mrs. Manners and the more boisterous delight of Aunt Lucy, who took her turn sewing in the window. I was near to forgetting the use of words, until at length, one rare morning when the sun poured in, the jolly doctor dressed my wounds with more despatch than common, and vouchsafed that I might talk awhile that day.

"Oh!" cries he, putting me as ever to confusion, "but I have a guess whom my gentleman will be wishing to talk with. But I'll warrant, sir, you have said a deal more than I have any notion of without opening your lips."

And he went away, intolerably pleased with his joke.

Alas for the perversity of maiden natures! It was not my dear nurse who brought my broth that morning, but Mrs. Manners herself. She smiled at my fallen face, and took a chair at my bedside.

"Now, my dear boy," she said, "you may ask what questions you choose, and I will tell you very briefly how you have come here."

"I have been thinking, Mrs. Manners," I replied, "that if it were known that you harboured one of John Paul Jones's officers in London, very serious trouble might follow for you."

I thought her brow clouded a little.

"No one knows of it, Richard, or is likely to. Dr. Barry, like so many in England, is a good Whig and friend to America. And you are in a part of London far removed from Mayfair." She hesitated, and then continued in a voice that strove to be lighter: "This little house is in Charlotte Street, Mary-le-Bone, for the war has made all of us suffer

some. And we are more fortunate than many, for we are very comfortable here, and though I say it, happier than in Arlington Street. And the best of our friends are still faithful. Mr. Fox, with all his greatness, has never deserted us, nor my Lord Comyn. Indeed, we owe them much more than I can tell you of now," she said, and sighed. "They are here every day of the world to inquire for you, and it was his Lordship brought you out of Holland."

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And so I had reason once more to bless this stanch friend!

“Out of Holland?” I cried.

“Yes. One morning as we sat down to breakfast, Mr. Ripley’s clerk brought in a letter for Dorothy. But I must say first that Mr. Dulany, who is in London, told us that you were with John Paul Jones. You can have no conception, Richard, of the fear and hatred that name has aroused in England. Insurance rates have gone up past belief, and the King’s ships are cruising in every direction after the traitor and pirate, as they call him. We have prayed daily for your safety, and Dorothy—well, here is the letter she received. It had been opened by the inspector, and allowed to pass. And it is to be kept as a curiosity.” She drew it from the pocket of her apron and began to read.

“*The Texel*, October 3, 1779

“*My dear* Miss *Dorothy*: I would not be thought to flutter y’r Gentle Bosom with Needless Alarms, nor do I believe I have misjudged y’r Warm & Generous Nature when I write you that One who is held very High in y’r Esteem lies Exceeding Ill at this Place, who might by Tender Nursing regain his Health. I seize this Opportunity to say, my dear Lady, that I have ever held my too Brief Acquaintance with you in London as one of the Sacred Associations of my Life. From the Little I saw of you then I feel Sure that this Appeal will not pass in Vain. I remain y’r most Humble and Devoted Admirer,

“*JamesOrchardson*.”

“And she knew it was from Commodore Jones?” I asked, in astonishment.

“My dear,” replied Mrs. Manners, with a quiet smile, “we women have a keener instinct than men—though I believe your commodore has a woman’s intuition. Yes, Dorothy knew. And I shall never forget the fright she gave me as she rose from the table and handed me the sheet to read, crying but the one word. She sent off to Brook Street for Lord Comyn, who came at once, and, in half an hour the dear fellow was set out for Dover. He waited for nothing, since war with Holland was looked for at any day. And his Lordship himself will tell you about that rescue. Within the week he had brought you to us. Your skull had been trepanned, you had this great hole in your thigh, and your heart was beating but slowly. By Mr. Fox’s advice we sent for Dr. Barry, who is a skilled surgeon, and a discreet man despite his manner. And you have been here for better than three weeks, Richard, hanging between life and death.”

“And I owe my life to you and to Dorothy,” I said.

“To Lord Comyn and Dr. Barry, rather,” she replied quickly. “We have done little but keep the life they saved. And I thank God it was given me to do it for the son of your mother and father.”

Something of the debt I owed them was forced upon me.

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They were poor, doubtless driven to make ends meet, and yet they had taken me in, called upon near the undivided services of an able surgeon, and worn themselves out with nursing me. Nor did I forget the risk they ran with such a guest. For the first time in many years my heart relented toward Mr. Marmaduke. For their sakes I forgave him over and over what I had suffered, and my treatment of him lay like a weight upon me. And how was I to repay them? They needed the money I had cost them, of that I was sure. After the sums I had expended to aid the commodore with the 'Ranger' and the 'Bon homme Richard', I had scarce a farthing to my name. With such leaden reflections was I occupied when I heard Mrs. Manners speaking to me.

"Richard, I have some news for you which the doctor thinks you can bear to-day. Mr. Dulany, who is exiled like the rest of us, brought them. It is a great happiness to be able to tell you, my dear, that you are now the master of Carvel Hall, and like to stay so."

The tears stole into her eyes as she spoke. And the enormity of those tidings, coming as they did on the top of my dejection, benumbed me. All they meant was yet far away from my grasp, but the one supreme result that was first up to me brought me near to fainting in my weakness.

"I would not raise your hopes unduly, Richard," the good lady was saying, "but the best informed here seem to think that England cannot push the war much farther. If the Colonies win, you are secure in your title."

"But how is it come about, Mrs. Manners?" I demanded, with my first breath.

"You doubtless have heard that before the Declaration was signed at Philadelphia your Uncle Grafton went to the committee at Annapolis and contributed to the patriot cause, and took very promptly the oath of the Associated Freemen of Maryland, thus forsaking the loyalist party—"

"Yes, yes," I interrupted, "I heard of it when I was on the Cabot. He thought his property in danger."

"Just so," said Mrs. Manners, laughing; "he became the best and most exemplary of patriots, even as he had been the best of Tories. He sent wheat and money to the army, and went about bemoaning that his only son fought under the English flag. But very little fighting has Philip done, my dear. Well, when the big British fleet sailed up the bay in '77, your precious uncle made the first false step in his long career of rascality. He began to correspond with the British at Philadelphia, and one of his letters was captured near the Head of Elk. A squad was sent to the Kent estate, where he had been living, to arrest him, but he made his escape to New York. And his lands were at once confiscated by the state."

"'Then they belong to the state," I said, with misgiving.

“Not so fast, Richard. At the last session of the Maryland Legislature a bill was introduced, through the influence of Mr. Bordley and others, to restore them to you, their rightful owner. And insomuch as you were even then serving the country faithfully and bravely, and had a clean and honourable record of service, the whole of the lands were given to you. And now, my dear, you have had excitement enough for one day.”

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CHAPTER LIV

MORE DISCOVERIES

All that morning I pondered over the devious lane of my life, which had led up to so fair a garden. And one thing above all kept turning and turning in my head, until I thought I should die of waiting for its fulfilment. Now was I free to ask Dorothy to marry me, to promise her the ease and comfort that had once been hers, should God bring us safe back to Maryland. The change in her was little less than a marvel to me, when I remembered the wilful miss who had come to London bent upon pleasure alone. Truly, she was of that rare metal which refines, and then outshines all others. And there was much I could not understand. A miracle had saved her from the Duke of Chartersea, but why she had refused so many great men and good was beyond my comprehension. Not a glimpse of her did I get that day, though my eyes wandered little from the knob of the door. And even from Aunt Lucy no satisfaction was to be had as to the cause of her absence.

"'Clare to goodness, Marse Dick," said she, with great solemnity, "'clare to goodness, I'se nursed Miss Dolly since she was dat high, and neber one minnit obher life is I knowed what de Chile gwine t' do de next. She ain't neber yit done what I calcelated on."

The next morning, after the doctor had dressed my wounds and bantered me to his heart's content, enters Mr. Marmaduke Manners. I was prodigiously struck by the change in him, and pitied him then near as much as I had once despised him. He was arrayed in finery, as of old. But the finery was some thing shabby; the lace was frayed at the edges, there was a neat but obvious patch in his small-clothes, and two more in his coat. His air was what distressed me most of all, being that of a man who spends his days seeking favours and getting none. I had seen too many of the type not to know the sign of it.

He ran forward and gave me his hand, which I grasped as heartily as my weakness would permit.

"They would not let me see you until to-day, my dear Richard," he exclaimed. "I bid you welcome to what is left of our home. 'Tis not Arlington Street, my lad."

"But more of a home than was that grander house, Mr. Manners."

He sighed heavily.

"Alas!" said he, "poverty is a bitter draught, and we have drunk deep of it since last we beheld you. My great friends know me no more, and will not take my note for a shilling.

They do not remember the dinners and suppers I gave them. Faith, this war has brought nothing but misery, and how we are to get through it, God knows!”

Now I understood it was not the war, but Mr. Marmaduke himself, which had carried his family to this pass. And some of my old resentment rekindled.

“I know that I have brought you great additional anxiety and expense, Mr. Manners,” I answered somewhat testily. “The care I have been to Mrs. Manners and Dorothy I may never repay. But it gives me pleasure to feel, sir, that I am in a position to reimburse you, and likewise to loan you something until your lands begin to pay again.”

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“There the Carvel speaks,” he cried, “and the true son of our generous province. You can have no conception of the misfortunes come to me out of this quarrel. The mortgages on my Western Shore tobacco lands are foreclosed, and Wilmot House itself is all but gone. You well know, of course, that I would do the same by you, Richard.”

I smiled, but more in sadness than amusement. Hardship had only degraded Mr. Marmaduke the more, and even in trouble his memory was convenient as is that of most people in prosperity. I was of no mind to jog his recollection. But I wanted badly to ask about his Grace. Where had my fine nobleman been at the critical point of his friend’s misfortunes? For I had had many a wakeful night over that same query since my talk with McAndrews.

“So you have come to your own again, Richard, my lad,” said Mr. Marmaduke, breaking in upon my train. “I have felt for you deeply, and talked many a night with Margaret and Dorothy over the wrong done you. Between you and me,” he whispered, “that uncle of yours is an arrant knave, whom the patriots have served with justice. To speak truth, sir, I begin myself to have a little leaning to that cause which you have so bravely espoused.”

This time I was close to laughing outright. But he was far too serious to remark my mirth. He commenced once more, with an ahem, which gave me a better inkling than frankness of what bothered him.

“You will have an agent here, Richard, I take it,” said he. “Your grandfather had one. Ahem! Doubtless this agent will advance you all you shall have need of, when you are well enough to see him. Fact is, he might come here.”

“You forget, Mr. Manners, that I am a pirate and an outlaw, and that you are the shielder of such.”

That thought shook the pinch of Holland he held all over him. But he recovered.

“My dear Richard, men of business are of no faction and of no nation. Their motto is discretion. And to obtain the factorship in London of a like estate to yours one of them would wear a plaster over his mouth, I’ll warrant you. You have but to summon one of the rascals, promise him a bit of war interest, and he will leave you as much as you desire, and nothing spoken.”

“To talk plainly, Mr. Manners,” I replied, “I think ’twould be the height of folly to resort to such means. When I am better, we shall see what can be done.”

His face plainly showed his disappointment.

“To be sure,” he said, in a whining tone, “I had forgotten your friends, Lord Comyn and Mr. Fox. They may do something for you, now you own your estate. My dear sir, I

dislike to say aught against any man. Mrs. Manners will tell you of their kindness to us, but I vow I have not been able to see it. With all the money at their command they will not loan me a penny in my pressing need. And I shame to say it, my own daughter prevents me from obtaining the money to keep us out of the Fleet.

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I know she has spoken to Dulany. Think of it, Richard, my own daughter, upon whom I lavished all when I had it, who might have made a score of grand matches when I gave her the opportunity, and now we had all been rolling in wealth. I'll be sworn I don't comprehend her, nor her mother either, who abets her. For they prefer to cook Maryland dainties for a living, to put in the hands of the footmen of the ladies whose houses they once visited. And how much of that money do you suppose I get, sir? Will you believe it that I—" (he was shrieking now), "that I, the man of the family, am allowed only my simple meals, a farthing for snuff, and not a groat for chaise-hire? At my age I am obliged to walk to and from their lordships' side entrances in patched clothes, egad, when a new suit might obtain us a handsome year's income!"

I turned my face to the wall, completely overcome, and the tears scalding in my eyes, at the thought of Dorothy and her mother bending over the stove cooking delicacies for their livelihood, and watching at my bedside night and day despite their weariness of body. And not a word out of these noble women of their sacrifice, nor of the shame and trouble and labour of their lives, who always had been used to every luxury! Nothing but cheer had they brought to the sickroom, and not a sign of their poverty and hardship, for they knew that their broths and biscuit and jellies must have choked me. No. It remained for this contemptible cur of a husband and father to open my eyes.

He had risen when I had brought myself to look at him. And as I hope for heaven he took my emotion for pity of himself.

"I have worried you enough for one day with my troubles, my lad," said he. "But they are very hard to bear, and once in a while it does me good to speak of them."

I did not trust myself to reply.

It was Aunt Lucy who spent the morning with me, and Mrs. Manners brought my dinner. I observed a questioning glance as she entered, which I took for an attempt to read whether Mr. Marmaduke had spoke more than he ought. But I would have bitten off my tongue rather than tell her of my discoveries, though perhaps my voice may have betrayed an added concern. She stayed to talk on the progress of the war, relating the gallant storming of Stony Point by Mad Anthony in July, and the latest Tory insurrection on our own Eastern Shore. She passed from these matters to a discussion of General Washington's new policy of the defensive, for Mrs. Manners had always been at heart a patriot. And whilst I lay listening with a deep interest, in comes my lady herself. So was it ever, when you least expected her, even as Mammy had said. She curtseyed very prettily, with her chin tilted back and her cheeks red, and asked me how I did.

"And where have you been these days gone, Miss Will-o'the-Wisp, since the doctor has given me back my tongue?" I cried.

“I like you better when you are asleep,” says she. “For then you are sometimes witty, though I doubt not the wit is other people’s.”

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So I saw that she had tricked me, and taken her watch at night. For I slept like a trooper after a day's forage. As to what I might have said in my dreams—that thought made me red as an apple.

"Dorothy, Dorothy," says her mother, smiling, "you would provoke a saint."

"Which would be better fun than teasing a sinner," replies the minx, with a little face at me. "Mr. Carvel, a gentleman craves the honour of an audience from your Excellency."

"A gentleman!"

"Even so. He presents a warrant from your Excellency's physician."

With that she disappeared, Mrs. Manners going after her. And who should come bursting in at the door but my Lord Comyn? He made one rush at me, and despite my weakness bestowed upon me a bear's hug.

"Oh, Richard," cried he, when he had released me, "I give you my oath that I never hoped to see you rise from that bed when we laid you there. But they say that love works wondrous cures, and, egad, I believe that now. 'Tis love is curing you, my lad."

He held me off at arm's length, the old-time affection beaming from his handsome face.

"What am I to say to you, Jack?" I answered. And my voice was all but gone, for the sight of him revived the memory of every separate debt of the legion I owed him. "How am I to piece words enough together to thank you for this supreme act of charity?"

"'Od's, you may thank your own devilish thick head," said my Lord Comyn. "I should never have bothered my own about you were it not for her. Had it not been for her happiness do you imagine I would have picked you out of that crew of half-dead pirates in the Texel fort?"

I must needs brush my cheek, then, with the sleeve of my night-rail.

"And will you give me some account of this last prodigious turn you have done her?" I said.

He laughed, and pinched me playfully.

"Now are you coming to your senses," said he. "There was cursed little to the enterprise, Richard, and that's the truth. I got down to Dover, and persuaded the master of a schooner to carry me to Rotterdam. That was not so difficult, since your Terror of the Seas was locked up safe enough in the Texel. In Rotterdam I had a travelling-chaise stripped, and set off at the devil's pace for the Texel. You must know that the whole Dutch nation was in an uproar—as much of an uproar as those boors ever reach

—over the arrival of your infamous squadron. The Court Party and our ambassador were for having you kicked out, and the Republicans for making you at home. I heard that their High Mightinesses had given Paul Jones the use of the Texel fort for his wounded and his prisoners, and thither I ran. And I was even cursing the French sentry at the drawbridge in his own tongue, when up comes your commodore himself. You may quarter me if wasn't knocked off my feet when I recognized the identical peacock of a sea-captain we had pulled out of Castle Yard along with you, and offered a commission in the Royal Navy."

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“Dolly hadn’t told you?”

“Dolly tell me!” exclaimed his Lordship, scornfully. “She was in a state to tell me nothing the morning I left, save only to bring you to England alive, and repeat it over and over. But to return to your captain,—he, too, was taken all aback. But presently he whipt out my name, and I his, without the Jones. And when I told him my errand, he wept on my neck, and said he had obtained unlimited leave of absence for you from the Paris commissioners. He took me up into a private room in the fort, where you were; and the surgeon, who was there at the time, said that your chances were as slim as any man’s he had ever seen. Faith, you looked it, my lad. At sight of your face I took one big gulp, for I had no notion of getting you back to her. And rather than come without you, and look into her eyes, I would have drowned myself in the Straits of Dover.

“Despite the host of troubles he had on his hands, your commodore himself came with us to Rotterdam. Now I protest I love that man, who has more humanity in him than most of the virtuous people in England who call him hard names. If you could have seen him leaning over you, and speaking to you, and feeling every minute for your heart-beats, egad, you would have cried. And when I took you off to the schooner, he gave me an hundred directions how to care for you, and then his sorrow bowled him all in a heap.”

“And is the commodore still at the Texel?” I asked, after a space.

“Ay, that he is, with our English cruisers thick as gulls outside’ waiting for a dead fish. But he has spurned the French commission they have offered him, saying that of the Congress is good enough for him. And he declares openly that when he gets ready he will sail out in the Alliance under the Stars and Stripes. And for this I honour him,” added he, “and Charles honours him, and so must all Englishmen honour him when they come to their senses. And by Gads life, I believe he will get clear, for he is a marvel at seamanship.”

“I pray with all my heart that he may,” said I, fervently.

“God help him if they catch him!” my Lord exclaimed. “You should see the bloody piratical portraits they are scattering over London.”

“Has the risk you ran getting me into England ever occurred to you, Jack?” I asked, with some curiosity.

“Faith, not until the day after we got back, Richard,” says he, “when I met Mr. Attorney General on the street. ’Sdeath, I turned and ran the other way like the devil was after me. For Charles Fox vows that conscience makes cowards of the best of us.”

“So that is some of Charles’s wisdom!” I cried, and laughed until I was forced to stop from pain.

“Come, my hearty,” says Jack, “you owe me nothing for fishing you out of Holland—that is her debt. But I declare that you must one day pay me for saving her for you. What! have I not always sworn that she loved you? Did I not pull you into the coffee-room of the Star and Garter years ago, and tell you that same?”

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My face warmed, though I said nothing.

“Oh, you sly dog! I’ll warrant there has been many a tender talk just where I’m sitting.”

“Not one,” said I.

“’Slife, then, what have you been doing,” he cries, “seeing her every day and not asking her to marry you, my master of Carvel Hall?”

“Since I am permitted to use my tongue, she has not come near me, save when I slept,” I answered ruefully.

“Nor will she, I’ll be sworn,” says he, shaken with laughter.

“’Ods, have you no invention? Egad, you must feign sleep, and seize her unawares.”

I did not inform his Lordship how excellent this plan seemed to me.

“And I possessed the love of such a woman, Richard,” he said, in another tone, “I think I should die of happiness. She will never tell you how these weeks past she has scarce left your side. The threats combined of her mother and the doctor, and Charles and me, would not induce her to take any sleep. And time and time have I walked from here to Brook Street without recognizing a step of the way, lifted clear out of myself by the sight of her devotion.”

What was my life, indeed, that such a blessing should come into it!

“When the crash came,” he continued, “’twas she took command, and ’tis God’s pity she had not done so long before. Mr. Marmaduke was pushed to the bottom of the family, where he belongs, and was given only snuff-money. She would give him no opportunity to contract another debt, and even charged Charles and me to loan him nothing. Nor would she receive aught from us, but” (he glanced at me uneasily)—“but she and Mrs. Manners must take to cooking delicacies—”

“Yes, yes, I know,” I faltered.

“What! has the puppy told you?” cried he.

I nodded. “He was in here this morning, with his woes.”

“And did he speak of the bargain he tried to make with our old friend, his Grace of Chartersea?”

“He tried to sell her again?” I cried, my breath catching. “I have feared as much since I heard of their misfortunes.”

“Yes,” replied Comyn, “that was the first of it. ’Twas while they were still in Arlington Street, and before Mrs. Manners and Dorothy knew. Mr. Marmaduke goes posting off to Nottinghamshire, and comes back inside the duke’s own carriage. And his Grace goes to dine in Arlington Street for the first time in years. Dorothy had wind of the trouble then, Charles having warned her. And not a word would she speak to Chartersea the whole of the dinner, nor look to the right or left of her plate. And when the servants are gone, up gets my lady with a sweep and confronts him.

“‘Will your Grace spare me a minute in the drawing-room?’ says she.

“He blinked at her in vast astonishment, and pushed back his chair. When she was come to the door, she turns with another sweep on Mr. Marmaduke, who was trotting after.

“‘You will please to remain here, father,’ she said; ’what I am to say is for his Grace’s ear alone.’

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“Of what she spoke to the duke I can form only an estimate, Richard,” my Lord concluded, “but I’ll lay a fortune ’twas greatly to the point. For in a little while Chartersea comes stumbling down the steps. And he has never darkened the door since. And the cream of it is,” said Comyn, “that her father gave me this himself, with a face a foot long, for me to sympathize. The little beast has strange bursts of confidence.”

“And stranger confidants,” I ejaculated, thinking of the morning, and of Courtenay’s letter, long ago.

But the story had made my blood leap again with pride of her. The picture in my mind had followed his every sentence, and even the very words she must have used were ringing in my ears.

Then, as we sat talking in low tones, the door opened, and a hearty voice cried out:

“Now where is this rebel, this traitor? They tell me one lies hid in this house. ’Slife, I must have at him!”

“Mr. Fox!” I exclaimed.

He took my hands in his, and stood regarding me.

“For the convenience of my friends, I was christened Charles,” said he.

I stared at him in amazement. He was grown a deal stouter, but my eye was caught and held by the blue coat and buff waistcoat he wore. They were frayed and stained and shabby, yet they seemed all of a piece with some new grandeur come upon the man.

“Is all the world turning virtuous? Is the millennium arrived?” I cried.

He smiled, with his old boyish smile.

“You think me changed some since that morning we drove together to Holland House—-do you remember it after the night at St. Stephen’s?”

“Remember it!” I repeated, with emphasis, “I’ll warrant I can give you every bit of our talk.”

“I have seen many men since, but never have I met your equal for a most damnable frankness, Richard Carvel. Even Jack, here, is not half so blunt and uncompromising. But you took my fancy—God knows why!—that first night I clapped eyes on you in Arlington Street, and I loved you when your simplicity made us that speech at Brooks’s Club. So you have not forgotten that morning under the trees, when the dew was on the grass. Faith, I am glad of it. What children we were!” he said, and sighed.

“And yet you were a Junior Lord,” I said.

“Which is more than I am now,” he answered. “Somehow—you may laugh —somehow I have never been able to shake off the influence of your words, Richard. Your cursed earnestness scared me.”

“Scared you?” I cried, in astonishment.

“Just that,” said Charles. “Jack will bear witness that I have said so to Dolly a score of times. For I had never imagined such a single character as yours. You know we were all of us rakes at fifteen, to whom everything good in the universe was a joke. And do you recall the teamster we met by the Park, and how he arrested his salute when he saw who it was? At another time I should have laughed over that, but it cut me to have it happen when you were along.”

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“And I’ll lay an hundred guineas to a farthing the fellow would put his head on the block for Charles now,” cut in his Lordship, with his hand on Mr. Fox’s shoulder. “Behold, O Prophet,” he cried, “one who is become the champion of the People he reviled! Behold the friend of Rebellion and ‘Lese Majeste’, the viper in Britannia’s bosom!”

“Oh, have done, Jack,” said Mr. Fox, impatiently, “you have no more music in your soul than a cow. Damned little virtue attaches to it, Richard,” he went on. “North threw me out, and the king would have nothing to do with me, so I had to pick up with you rebels and traitors.”

“You will not believe him, Richard,” cried my Lord; “you have only to look at him to see that he lies. Take note of the ragged uniform of the rebel army he carries, and then think of him ‘en petite maitre’, with his cabriolet and his chestnuts. Egad, he might be as rich as Rigby were it not for those principles which he chooses to deride. And I have seen him reduced to a crown for them. I tell you, Richard,” said my Lord, “by espousing your cause Charles is become greater than the King. For he has the hearts of the English people, which George has not, and the allegiance of you Americans, which George will never have. And if you once heard him, in Parliament, you should hear him now, and see the Speaker wagging his wig like a man bewitched, and hear friends and enemies calling out for him to go on whenever he gives the sign of a pause.”

This speech of his Lordship’s may seem cold in the writing, my dears, and you who did not know him may wonder at it. It had its birth in an admiration few men receive, and which in Charles Fox’s devoted coterie was dangerously near to idolatry. During the recital of it Charles walked to the window, and there stood looking out upon the gray prospect, seemingly paying but little attention. But when Comyn had finished, he wheeled on us with a smile.

“Egad, he will be telling you next that I have renounced the devil and all his works, Richard,” said he.

“’Oohs, that I will not,” his Lordship made haste to declare. “For they were born in him, and will die with him.”

“And you, Jack,” I asked, “how is it that you are not in arms for the King, and commanding one of his frigates?”

“Why, it is Charles’s fault,” said my Lord, smiling. “Were it not for him I should be helping Sir George Collier lay waste to your coast towns.”

CHAPTER LV

“*The love of* A *maid for* A *man*”

The next morning, when Dr. Barry had gone, Mrs. Manners propped me up in bed and left me for a little, so she said. Then who should come in with my breakfast on a tray but my lady herself, looking so fresh and beautiful that she startled me vastly.

“A penny for your thoughts, Richard,” she cried. “Why, you are as grave as a screech-owl this brave morning.”

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“To speak truth, Dolly,” said I, “I was wondering how the commodore is to get away from the Texel, with half the British navy lying in wait outside.”

“Do not worry your head about that,” said she, setting down the tray; “it will be mere child’s play to him. Oh but I should like to see your commodore again, and tell him how much I love him.

“I pray that you may have the chance,” I replied.

With a marvellous quickness she had tied the napkin beneath my chin, not so much as looking at the knot. Then she stepped to the mantel and took down one of Mr. Wedgwood’s cups and dishes, and wiping them with her apron, filled the cup with fragrant tea, which she tendered me with her eyes sparkling.

“Your Excellency is the first to be honoured with this service,” says she, with a curtsey.

I was as a man without a tongue, my hunger gone from sheer happiness—and fright. And yet eating the breakfast with a relish because she had made it. She busied herself about the room, dusting here and tidying there, and anon throwing a glance at me to see if I needed anything. My eyes followed her hither and thither. When I had finished, she undid the napkin, and brushed the crumbs from the coverlet.

“You are not going?” I said, with dismay.

“Did you wish anything more, sir?” she asked.

“Oh, Dorothy,” I cried, “it is you I want, and you will not come near me.”

For an instant she stood irresolute. Then she put down the tray and came over beside me.

“Do you really want me, sir?”

“Dorothy,” I began, “I must first tell you that I have some guess at the sacrifice you are making for my sake, and of the trouble and danger which I bring you.”

Without more ado she put her hand over my mouth.

“No,” she said, reddening, “you shall tell me nothing of the sort.”

I seized her hand, however it struggled, and holding it fast, continued:

“And I have learned that you have been watching with me by night, and working by day, when you never should have worked at all. To think that you should be reduced to that, and I not know it!”

Her eyes sought mine for a fleeting second.

“Why, you silly boy, I have made a fortune out of my cookery. And fame, too, for now am I known from Mary-le-bone to Chelsea, while before my name was unheard of out of little Mayfair. Indeed, I would not have missed the experience for a lady-in-waiting-ship. I have learned a deal since I saw you last, sir. I know that the world, like our Continental money, must not be taken for the price that is stamped upon it. And as for the watching with you,” said my lady, “that had to be borne with as cheerfully as might be. Since I had sent off for you, I was in duty bound to do my share toward your recovery. I was even going to add that this watching was a pleasure,—our curate says the sense of duty performed is sure to be. But you used to cry out the most terrifying things to frighten me: the pattering of blood and the bumping of bodies on the decks, and the black rivulets that ran and ran and ran and never stopped; and strange, rough commands I could not understand; and the name of your commodore whom you love so much. And often you would repeat over and over: ’I have not yet begun, to fight, I have not yet begun to fight!’”

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“Yes, ’twas that he answered when they asked him if he had struck,” I exclaimed.

“It must have been an awful scene,” she said, and her shoulders quivered. “When you were at your worst you would talk of it, and sometimes of what happened to you in London, of that ride in Hyde Park, or—or of Vauxhall,” she continued hurriedly. “And when I could bear it no longer, I would take your hand and call you by name, and often quiet you thus.”

“And did I speak of aught else?” I asked eagerly.

“Oh, yes. When you were caliper, it would be of your childhood, of your grandfather and your birthdays, of Captain Clapsaddle, and of Patty and her father.”

“And never of Dolly, I suppose.”

She turned away her head.

“And never of Dolly?”

“I will tell you what you said once, Richard,” she answered, her voice dropping very low. “I was sitting by the window there, and the dawn was coming. And suddenly I heard you cry: ’Patty, when I return will you be my wife?’ I got up and came to your side, and you said it again, twice.”

The room was very still. And the vision of Patty in the parlour of Gordon’s Pride, knitting my woollen stocking, rose before me.

“Yes,” I said at length, “I asked her that the day before I left for the war. God bless her! She has the warmest heart in the world, and the most generous nature. Do you know what her answer was, Dorothy?”

“No.” ’Twas only her lips moving that formed the word. She was twisting absently the tassel of the bed curtain.

“She asked me if I loved her.”

My lady glanced up with a start, then looked me searchingly through and through.

“And you?” she said, in the same inaudible way.

“I could answer nothing. ’Twas because of her father’s dying wish I asked her, and she guessed that same. I would not tell her a lie, for only the one woman lives whom I love, and whom I have loved ever since we were children together among the strawberries. Need I say that that woman is you, Dorothy? I loved you before we sailed to Carvel Hall between my grandfather’s knees, and I will love you till death claims me.”

Then it seemed as if my heart had stopped beating. But the snowy apron upon her breast fluttered like a sail stirring in the wind, her head was high, and her eyes were far away. Even my voice sounded in the distance as I continued:

“Will you be the mistress of Carvel Hall, Dorothy? Hallowed is the day that I can ask it.”

What of this earth may excel in sweetness the surrender of that proud and noble nature! And her words, my dears, shall be sacred to you, too, who are descended from her. She bent forward a little, those deep blue eyes gazing full into my own with a fondness to make me tremble.

“Dear Richard,” she said, “I believe I have loved you always. If I have been wilful and wicked, I have suffered more than you know—even as I have made you suffer.”

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“And now our suffering is over, Dorothy.”

“Oh, don’t say that, my dear!” she cried, “but let us rather make a prayer to God.”

Down she got on her knees close beside me, and I took both of her hands between my own. But presently I sought for a riband that was around my neck, and drew out a locket. Within it were pressed those lilies of the valley I had picked for her long years gone by on my birthday. And she smiled, though the tears shone like dewdrops on her lashes.

“When Jack brought you to us for dead, we did not take it off, dear,” she said gently. “I wept with sorrow and joy at sight of it, for I remembered you as you were when you picked those flowers, and how lightly I had thought of leaving you as I wound them into my hair. And then, when I had gone aboard the ‘Annapolis’, I knew all at once that I would have given anything to stay, and I thought my heart would break when we left the Severn cliffs behind. But that, sir, has been a secret until this day,” she added, smiling archly through her tears.

She took out one of the withered flowers, and then as caressingly put it back beside the others, and closed the locket.

“I forbade Dr. Barry to take it off, Richard, when you lay so white and still. I knew then that you had been true to me, despite what I had heard. And if you were to die—” her voice broke a little as she passed her hand over my brow, “if you were to die, my single comfort would have been that you wore it then.”

“And you heard rumours of me, Dorothy?”

“George Worthington and others told me how ably you managed Mr. Swain’s affairs, and that you had become of some weight with the thinking men of the province. Richard, I was proud to think that you had the courage to laugh at disaster and to become a factor. I believe,” she said shyly, “twas that put the cooking into my head, and gave me courage. And when I heard that Patty was to marry you, Heaven is my witness that I tried to be reconciled and think it for the best. Through my own fault I had lost you, and I knew well she would make you a better wife than I.”

“And you would not even let Jack speak for me!”

“Dear Jack!” she cried; “were it not for Jack we should not be here, Richard.”

“Indeed, Dolly, two people could scarce fall deeper in debt to another than are you and I to my Lord Viscount,” I answered, with feeling. “His honesty and loyalty to us both saved you for me at the very outset.”

“Yes,” she replied thoughtfully, “I believed you dead. And I should have married him, I think. For Dr. Courtenay had sent me that piece from the Gazette telling of the duel between you over Patty Swain—”

“Dr. Courtenay sent you that!” I interrupted.

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“I was a wild young creature then, my dear, with little beside vanity under my cap. And the notion that you could admire and love any girl but me was beyond endurance. Then his Lordship arrived in England, brimming with praise of you, to assure me that the affair was not about Patty at all. This was far from making me satisfied that you were not in love with her, and I may say now that I was miserable. Then, as we were setting out for Castle Howard, came the news of your death on the road to Upper Marlboro. I could not go a step. Poor Jack, he was very honest when he proposed,” she added, with a sigh.

“He loved you, Dorothy.”

She did not hear me, so deep was she in thought.

“’Twas he who gave me news of you, when I was starving at Gordon’s.”

“And I—I starved, too, Richard,” she answered softly. “Dearest, I slid very wrong. There are some matters that must be spoken of between us, whatever the pain they give. And my heart aches now when I think of that dark day in Arlington Street when I gave you the locket, and you went out of my life. I knew that I had done wrong then, Richard, as soon as ever the door closed behind you. I should have gone with you, for better for worse, for richer for poorer. I should have run after you in the rain and thrown myself at your feet. And that would have been best for my father and for me.”

She covered her face with her hands, and her words were stifled by a sob.

“Dorothy, Dorothy!” I cried, drawing her to me. “Another time. Not now, when we are so happy.”

“Now, and never again, dear,” she said. “Yes, I saw and heard all that passed in the drawing-room. And I did not blame, but praised you for it. I have never spoken a word beyond necessity to my father since. God forgive me!” she cried, “but I have despised him from that hour. When I knew that he had plotted to sell me to that detestable brute, working upon me to save his honour, of which he has not the smallest spark; that he had recognized and denied you, friendless before our house, and sent you into the darkness at Vauxhall to be murdered, then he was no father of mine. I would that you might know what my mother has suffered from such a man, Richard.”

“My dear, I have often pitied her from my soul,” I said.

“And now I shall tell you something of the story of the Duke of Chartersea,” she went on, and I felt her tremble as she spoke that name. “I think of all we have Lord Comyn to thank for, next to saving your life twice, was his telling you of the danger I ran. And, Richard, after refusing you that day on the balcony over the Park, I had no hope left. You may thank your own nobility and courage that you remained in London after that.

Richard," she said, "do you recall my asking you in the coach, on the way from Castle Yard, for the exact day you met my father in Arlington Street?"

"Yes," I replied, in some excitement, "yes." For I was at last to come at the bottom of this affair.

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“The duke had made a formal offer for me when first we came to London. I think my father wrote of that to Dr. Courtenay.” (I smiled at the recollection, now.) “Then his Grace persisted in following me everywhere, and vowed publicly that he would marry me. I ordered him from our house, since my father would not. At last one afternoon he came back to dine with us, insolent to excess. I left the table. He sat with my father two hours or more, drinking and singing, and giving orders to the servants. I shut my door, that I might not hear. After a while my mother came up to me, crying, saying that Mr. Manners would be branded with dishonour and I did not consent to marry his Grace,—a most terrible dishonour, of which she could not speak. That the duke had given my father a month to win my consent. And that month was up, Richard, the very afternoon you appeared with Mr. Dix in Arlington Street.”

“And you agreed to marry him, Dolly?” I asked breathlessly.

“By the grace of Heaven, I did not,” she answered quickly. “The utmost that I would consent to was a two months’ respite, promising to give my hand to no one in that interval. And so I was forced to refuse you, Richard. You must have seen even then that I loved you, dear, though I was so cruel when you spoke of saving me from his Grace. I could not bear to think that you knew of any stain upon our family. I think—I think I would rather have died, or have married him. That day I threw Chartersea’s presents out of the window, but my father made the servants gather them all which escaped breaking, and put them in the drawing-room. Then I fell ill.”

She was silent, I clinging to her, and shuddering to think how near I had been to losing her.

“It was Jack who came to cheer me,” I said presently.

“His faith in you was never shaken, sweetheart. But I went to Newmarket and Ampthill, and behaved like the ingrate I was. I richly deserved the scolding he had for me when I got back to town, which sent me running to Arlington Street. There I met Dr. James coming out, who asked me if I was Mr. Carvel, and told me that you had called my name.”

“And, you goose, you never suspected,” says she, smiling.

“How was I to suspect that you loved a provincial booby like me, when you had the choice of so many accomplished gentlemen with titles and estates?”

“How were you to perceive, indeed, that you had qualities which they lacked?”

“And you were forever vowing that you would marry a nobleman, my lady. For you said to me once that I should call you so, and ride in the coach with the coroneted panels when I came home on a visit.”

“And I said, too,” retorted Dolly, with mischief in her eyes, “do you remember what I told you the New Year’s eve when we sat out by the sundial at Carvel Hall, when I was so proud of having fixed Dr. Courtenay’s attentions? I said that I should never marry you, sir, who was so rough and masterful, and thrashed every lad that did not agree with you.”

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“Alas, so you did, and a deal more!” I exclaimed.

With that she broke away from me and, getting to her feet, made me a low curtsey with the grace that was hers alone.

“You are my Lord and my King, sir,” she said, “and my rough Patriot squire, all in one.”

“Are you happy, Dolly?” I asked, tremulous from my own joy.

“I have never been happy in all my life before, Richard dear,” she said.

In truth, she was a being transformed, and more wondrous fair than ever. And even then I pictured her in the brave gowns and jewels I would buy her when times were mended, when our dear country would be free. All at once, ere I could draw a breath, she had stooped and kissed me ever so lightly on the forehead.

The door opened upon Aunt Lucy. She had but to look at us, and her black face beamed at our blushes. My lady threw her arms about her neck, and hid her face in the ample bosom.

“Now praise de good Lawd!” cried Mammy; “I knowed it dis longest time. What’s I done tole you, Miss Dolly? What’s I done tole you, honey?”

But my lady flew from the room. Presently I heard the spinet playing softly, and the words of that air came out of my heart from long ago.

> “Love me little, love me long,
> Is the burthen of my song.
> Love that is too hot and strong
> Burneth soon to waste.
> Still, I would not have thee cold,
> Nor too backward, nor too bold.
> Love that lasteth till ’tis old
> Fadeth not in haste.”

CHAPTER LVI

HOW GOOD CAME OUT OF EVIL

’Twas about candlelight when I awoke, and Dorothy was sitting alone beside me. Her fingers were resting upon my arm, and she greeted me with a smile all tenderness.

“And does my Lord feel better after—after his excitement to-day?” she asked.

“Dorothy, you have made me a whole man again. I could walk to Windsor and back.”

“You must have your dinner, or your supper first, sir,” she answered gayly, “and do you rest quiet until I come back to feed you. Oh, Richard dear,” she cried, “how delightful that you should be the helpless one, and dependent on me!”

As I lay listening for the rustle of her gown, the minutes dragged eternally. Every word and gesture of the morning passed before my mind, and the touch of her lips still burned on my forehead. At last, when I was getting fairly restless, the distant tones of a voice, deep and reverberating, smote upon my ear, jarring painfully some long-forgotten chord. That voice belonged to but one man alive, and yet I could not name him. Even as I strained, the tones drew nearer, and they were mixed with sweeter ones I knew well, and Dorothy’s mother’s voice. Whilst I was still searching, the door opened, the voices fell calm, and Dorothy came in bearing a candle in each hand. As she set them down on the table, I saw an agitation in her face, which she strove to hide as she addressed me.

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“Will you see a visitor, Richard?”

“A visitor!” I repeated, with misgiving. ’Twas not so she had announced Comyn.

“Will you see Mr. Allen?”—

“Mr. Allen, who was the rector of St. Anne’s? Mr. Allen in London, and here?”

“Yes.” Her breath seemed to catch at the word. “He says he must see you, dear, and will not be denied. How he discovered you were with us I know not.”

“See him!” I cried. “And I had but the half of my strength I would fling him downstairs, and into the kennel. Will you tell him so for me, Dorothy?”

And I raised up in bed, shaken with anger against the man. In a trice she was holding me, fearfully.

“Richard, Richard, you will open your wound. I pray you be quiet.”

“And Mr. Allen has the impudence to ask to see me!”

“Listen, Richard. Your anger makes you forget many things. Remember that he is a dangerous man, and now that he knows you are in London he holds your liberty, perhaps your life, in his hands.”

It was true. And not mine alone, but the lives and liberty of others.

“Do you know what he wishes, Dorothy?”

“No, he will not tell us. But he is greatly excited, and says he must see you at once, for your own good. For your own good, Richard!”

“I do not trust the villain, but he may come in,” I said, at length.

She gave me the one lingering, anxious look, and opened the door.

Never had I beheld such a change in mortal man as there was in Mr. Allen, my old tutor, and rector of St. Anne’s. And ’twas a baffling, intangible change. ’Twas as if the mask bad been torn from his face, for he was now just a plain adventurer that need not have imposed upon a soul. The coarse wine and coarse food of the lower coffee-houses of London had replaced the rich and abundant fare of Maryland. The next day was become one of the terrors of his life. His clothes were of poor stuff, but aimed at the fashion. And yet—and yet, as I looked upon him, a something was in his face to puzzle me entirely. I had seen many stamps of men, but this thing I could not recognize.

He stepped forward with all of his old confidence, and did not regard a farthing my cold stare.

“’Tis like gone days to see you again, Richard,” he cried. “And I perceive you have as ever fallen into the best of hands.”

“I am Mr. Carvel to my enemies, if they must speak to me at all,” I said.

“But, my dear fellow, I am not your enemy, or I should not be here this day. And presently I shall prove that same.” He took snuff. “But first I must congratulate you on coming alive out of that great battle off Flamborough. You look as though you had been very near to death, my lad. A deal nearer than I should care to get.”

What to say to the man! What to do save to knock him down, and I could not do that.

“There can be no passing the time of day between you and me, Mr. Allen,” I answered hotly. “You, whose machinations have come as near to ruining me as a man’s can.”

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“And that was your own fault, my dear sir,” said he, as he brushed himself. “You never showed me a whit of consideration, which is very dear to men in my position.”

My head swam. Then I saw Dolly by the door regarding me curiously, with something of a smile upon her lips, but anxiety still in her eyes. With a “by your leave, ma’am,” to her, Mr. Allen took the chair abreast me.

“You have but to call me when you wish, Richard,” said she.

“Nay, Dorothy, Mr. Allen can have nothing to say to me that you may not hear,” I said instantly. “And you will do me a favour to remain.”

She sat down without a word, where I could look at her. Mr. Allen raised his eyebrows at the revelation in our talk, but by the grace of God he kept his mouth shut.

“And now, Mr. Allen,” I said, “to what do I owe the pain of this visit?”

“The pain!” he exclaimed, and threw back his head and gave way to a fit of laughter. “By the mass! your politeness drowns me. But I like you, Richard, as I have said more than once. I believe your brutal straight-dealing has more to do with my predilection than aught else. For I have seen a deal of rogues in my day.”

“And they have seen a deal of you, Mr. Allen.”

“So they have,” he cried, and laughed the more. “Egad, Miss Dorothy, you have saved all of him, I think.” Then he swung round upon me, very careless. “Has your Uncle Grafton called to express his sympathies, Richard?” he asked.

That name brought a cry out of my head, Dolly seizing the arm of her chair.

“Grafton Carvel in London?” I exclaimed.

“Ay, in very pretty lodgings in Jermyn Street, for he has put by enough, I’ll warrant you, despite the loss of his lands. Your aunt is with him, and his dutiful son, Philip, now broken of his rank in the English army. They arrived, before yesterday, from New York.”

“And to what is this an introduction?” I demanded.

“I merely thought it strange,” said Mr. Allen, imperturbably, “that he had not called to inquire after his nephew’s health.”

Dolly was staring at him, with eyes wide open.

“And pray, how did he discover I was in London, sir?” I said. “I was about to ask how you knew of it, but that is one and the same thing.”

He shot at me a look not to be solved.

“It is not well to bite the hand that lifts you out of the fire, Richard,” said he.

“You had not gained admission to this house were I not on my back, Mr. Allen.”

“And that same circumstance is a blessing for you,” he cried.

’Twas then I saw Dorothy making me mute signals of appeal.

“I cannot think why you are here, Mr. Allen,” I said. “When you consider all the harm you have done me, and all the double-dealing I may lay at your door, can you blame me for my feelings?”

“No,” he answered, with more soberness than he had yet used; “I honour you for them. And perchance I am here to atone for some of that harm. For I like you, my lad, and that’s God’s truth.”

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“All this is neither here nor there, Mr. Allen,” I exclaimed, wholly out of patience. “If you have come with a message, let me have it. If not, I beg you get out of my sight, for I have neither the will nor the desire for palavering.”

“Oh, Richard, do keep your temper!” implored Dorothy. “Can you not see that Mr. Allen desires to do us—to do you—a service?”

“Of that I am not so sure,” I replied.

“It is his way, Miss Manners,” said the rector, “and I hold it not against him. To speak truth, I looked for a worse reception, and came steeled to withstand it. And had my skin been thin, I had left ere now.” He took more snuff. “It was Mr. Dix,” he said to me slowly, “who informed Mr. Carvel of your presence in London.”

“And how the devil did Mr. Dix know?”

He did not reply, but glanced apprehensively at Dorothy.

And I have wondered since at his consideration.

“Miss Manners may not wish to hear,” he said uneasily.

“Miss Manners hears all that concerns me,” I answered.

He shrugged his shoulders in comprehension.

“It was Mr. Manners, then, who went to Mr. Dix, and told him under the pledge of secrecy.”

Not a sound came from Dorothy, nor did I dare to look at her face. The whole matter was clear to me now. After his conversation with me, Mr. Marmaduke had lost no time in seeing Mr. Dix, in order to raise money on my prospects. And the man of business had gone straight to Grafton with the intelligence. The suspicion flashed through me that Mr. Allen had been sent to spy, but his very next words disarmed it.

“And now, Richard,” he continued, “before I say what I have come to say, and since you cannot now prosecute me, I mean to confess to you something which you probably know almost to a certainty. I was in the plot to carry you off and deprive you of your fortune. I have been paid for it, though not very handsomely. Fears for my own safety alone kept me from telling you and Mr. Swain. And I swear to you that I was sorry for the venture almost before I had embarked, and ere I had received a shilling. The scheme was laid out before I took you for a pupil; indeed, that was part of it, as you no doubt have guessed. As God hears me, I learned to love you, Richard, in those days at the rectory. You were all of a man, and such an one as I might have hoped to be had I been born like you. You said what you chose, and spoke from your own convictions,

and catered to no one. You did not whine when the luck went against you, but lost like a gentleman, and thought no more of it. You had no fear of the devil himself. Why should you? While your cousin Philip, with his parrot talk and sneaking ways, turned my stomach. I was sick of him, and sick of Grafton, I tell you. But dread of your uncle drove me on, and I had debts to frighten me."

He paused. "Twas with a strange medley of emotions I looked at him. And Dorothy, too, was leaning forward, her lips parted and her eyes riveted upon his face.

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“Oh, I am speaking the truth,” he said bitterly. “And I assume no virtue for the little justice it remains in my power to do. It is the lot of my life that I must be false to some one always, and even now I am false to your uncle. Yes, I am come to do justice, and ’tis a strange errand for me. I know that estates have been restored to you by the Maryland Legislature, Richard, and I believe in my heart that you will win this war.” Here he fetched a memorandum from his pocket. “But to make you secure,” said he, “in the year 1710, and on the 9th of March, old style, your great-grandfather, Mr. George Carvel, drew up a document entailing the lands of Carvel Hall. By this they legally pass to you.”

“The family settlement Mr. Swain suspected!” I exclaimed.

“Just so,” he answered.

“And what am I to pay for this information?” I asked.

Hardly were the words spoken, when Dorothy ran to my bedside, and seizing my hand, faced him.

“He—he is not well, Mr. Allen,” she cried.

The rector had risen, and stood gazing down at us with the whole of his life written on his face. That look was fearful to see, and all of hell was expressed therein. For what is hell if it is not hope dead and buried, and galling regret for what might have been? With mine own great happiness so contrasted against his torture, my heart melted.

“I am not well, indeed, Mr. Allen,” I said. “God knows how hard it is for me to forgive, but I forgive you this night.”

One brief instant he stared at me, and then tumbled suddenly down into his chair, his head falling forward on his arms. And the long sobs by which his frame was shaken awed our very souls. Dorothy drew back against me, clasping my shoulder, the tears wet upon her cheeks. What we looked on, there in the candlelight, was the Revelation itself.

How long it, endured none of us might say. And when at last he raised his face, it was haggard and worn in truth, but the evil of it seemed to have fled. Again and again he strove to speak. The words would not obey. And when he had mastered himself, his voice was shattered and gone.

“Richard, I have sinned heavily in my time, and preached God’s holy word with a sneer and unbelief in my heart. He knows what I have suffered, and what I shall yet suffer before His judgment comes for us all. But I beg it is no sin to pray to Him for your happiness and Miss Dorothy’s.”

He stumbled there, and paused, and then continued with more steadiness:

“I came here to-night to betray you, and might have gone hence to your uncle to claim my pieces of silver. I remain to tell you that Grafton has an appointment at nine with his Majesty’s chief Secretary of State. I need not mention his motives, nor dwell upon your peril. For the King’s sentiments toward Paul Jones are well known. You must leave London without delay, and so must Mr. Manners and his family.”

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Is it the generations which decide? When I remember bow Dorothy behaved that night, I think so. Scarce had the rector ceased when she had released me and was standing erect before him. Pity was in her eyes, but in her face that courage which danger itself begets in heroic women.

“You have acted a noble part this day, Mr. Allen,” she said, “to atone for the wrongs you have done Richard. May God forgive you, and make you happier than you have been!”

He struggled to his feet, listening as to a benediction. Then, with a single glance to give me confidence, she was gone. And for a minute there was silence between us.

“How may you be directed to?” I asked.

He leaped as out of a trance.

“Just ‘the world,’ Richard,” said he. “For I am adrift again, and not very like to find a harbour, now.”

“You were to have been paid for this, Mr. Allen,” I replied. “And a man must live.”

“A man must live!” he cried. “The devil coined that line, and made it some men’s history.”

“I have you on my conscience, Mr. Allen,” I went on, “for I have been at fault as well as you. I might have treated you better, even as you have said. And I command you to assign a place in London whence you may be reached.”

“A letter to the Mitre coffee-house will be delivered,” he said.

“You shall receive it,” I answered. “And now I bid you good-by, and thank you.”

He seized and held my hand. Then walked blindly to the door and turned abruptly.

“I do not tell you that I shall change my life, Richard, for I have said that too many times before. Indeed, I warn you that any money you may send will be spent in drink, and—-and worse. I will be no hypocrite to you. But I believe that I am better this hour than I have been since last I knelt at my mother’s knee in the little Oxfordshire cottage where I was born.”

When Dorothy returned to me, there was neither haste in her step nor excitement in her voice. Her very coolness inspired me.

“Do you feel strong enough for a journey, Richard?” she asked.

“To the world’s end, Dolly, if you will but go with me.”

She smiled faintly. “I have sent off for my Lord and Mr. Fox, and pray that one of them may be here presently.”

Scarcely greater were the visible signs of apprehension upon Mrs. Manners. Her first care, and Dorothy’s, was to catechise me most particularly on my state. And whilst they were so occupied Mr. Marmaduke entered, wholly frenzied from fright, and utterly oblivious to his own blame in the matter. He was sent out again directly. After that, with Aunt Lucy to assist, they hurriedly packed what few things might be taken. The costly relics of Arlington Street were untouched, and the French clock was left on the mantel to tick all the night, and for days to come, in a silent and forsaken room; or perhaps to greet impassively the King’s officers when they broke in at the door. But I caught my lady in the act of wrapping up the Wedgwood cups and dishes.

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In the midst of these preparations Mr. Fox was heard without, and was met at the door by Dorothy. Two sentences sufficed her to tell him what had occurred, and two seconds for this man of action to make his decision.

“In an hour you shall have travelling chaises here, Dorothy,” he said. “You must go to Portsmouth, and take ship for Lisbon. And if Jack does not arrive, I will go with you.”

“No, Charles, you must not!” she cried, her emotion conquering her for the nonce. “That might be to ruin your career, and perchance to lose your life. And suppose we were to escape, what would they say of you!”

“Fish!” Charles retorted, to hide some feelings of his own; “once our rebel is out of the country, they may speak their minds. They have never lacked for names to call me, and I have been dubbed a traitor before now, my dear lady.”

He stepped hastily to the bed, and laid his hand on me with affection.

“Charles,” I said, “this is all of a piece with your old recklessness. You were ever one to take any risk, but I will not hear of such a venture as this. Do you think I will allow the hope of all England to be staked for a pirate? And would you break our commander of her rank? All that Dorothy need do at Portsmouth is to curtsey to the first skipper she meets, and I’ll warrant he will carry us all to the antipodes.”

“Egad, but that is more practical than it sounds,” he replied, with a glance of admiration at my lady, as she stood so tall before us. “She has a cool head, Richard Carvel, and a long head, and—and I’m thinking you are to come out of this the best of all of us. You cannot get far off your course, my lad, with her at the helm.”

It was there his voice belied the jest in his words, and he left us with precipitation.

They lifted me out of my sheets (I was appalled to discover my weakness), and bundled me with tender care in a dozen shawls and blankets. My feet were thrust into two pairs of heavy woollen stockings, and Dorothy bound her own silk kerchief at my throat, whispering anxious questions the while. And when her mother and mammy went from the room, her arms flew around my neck in a passion of solicitude. Then she ran away to dress for the journey, and in a surprising short time was back again, with her muff and her heavy cloak, and bending over me to see if I gave any signs of failure.

Fifty and five minutes had been registered by the French clock, when the rattle of wheels and the clatter of hoofs sounded below, and Charles Fox panted up the stairs, muffled in a huge wrap-rascal. ’Twas he and Aunt Lucy carried me down to the street, Dorothy walking at my side, and propped me up in the padded corner of one of the two vehicles in waiting. This was an ample travelling-carriage with a lamp hanging from its

top, by the light of which my lady tucked me in from head to foot, and then took her place next me. Aunt Lucy filled most of the seat opposite.

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The baggage was hoisted up behind, and Charles was about to slam the door, when a hackney-chaise turned the corner at a gallop and pulled up in the narrow street abreast, and the figure of my Lord Comyn suddenly leaped within the compass of the lanthorn's rays. He was dressed as for a ball, with only a thin rain-cloak over his shoulders, for the night was thick with mist. He threw at us a startled look that was a question.

"Jack, Richard is to be betrayed to-night by his uncle," said Charles, shortly. "And I am taking them to Portsmouth to get them off for Lisbon."

"Charles," said his Lordship, sternly, "give me that greatcoat."

It was just the one time that ever I saw uncertainty on Mr. Fox's face. He threw an uneasy glance into the chaise.

"I have brought money," his Lordship went on rapidly; "'Twas that kept me, for I guessed at something of this kind. Give me the coat, I say."

Mr. Fox wriggled out of it, and took the oiled cape in return.

"Thank you, Jack," he said simply, and stepped into the carriage. "Who is to mend my waistcoats now?" he cried. "Faith, I shall treasure this against you, Richard. Good-by, my lad, and obey your rebel general. Alas! I must even ask your permission to salute her."

And he kissed the unresisting Dorothy on both her cheeks. "God keep the two of you," he said, "for I love you with all my heart."

Before we could answer he was gone into the night; and my Lord, standing without, had closed the carriage door. And that was the last I saw of this noble man, the true friend of America, who devoted his glorious talents and his life to fighting the corruption that was rotting the greatness of England. He who was followed by the prayers of the English race was ever remembered in our own humble ones.

CHAPTER LVII

I COME TO MY OWN AGAIN

'Twas a rough, wild journey we made to Portsmouth, my dears, and I think it must have killed me had not my lady been at my side. We were no sooner started than she pulled the curtains and opened her portmanteau, which I saw was near filled with things for my aid and comfort. And I was made to take a spoonful of something. Never, I believe, was medicine swallowed with a greater willingness. Talk was impossible, so I lay back

in the corner and looked at her; and now and anon she would glance at my face, with a troubled guess in her own as to how I might stand the night. For we were still in London. That I knew by the trot of our horses, and by the granite we traversed from time to time. But at length we rumbled over a bridge, there was a sharp call back from our post-boy to him of the chaise behind, and then began that rocking and pitching and swaying and creaking, which was to last the whole night long, save for the brief stops at the post-houses.

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After an hour of it, I was holding my breath against the lurches, like a sea-sick man against that bottomless fall of the ship's bows on the ocean. I had no pain,—only an over whelming exhaustion,—but the joy of her touch and her presence kept me from failing. And though Aunt Lucy dozed, not a wink of sleep did my lady get through all of those weary twelve hours. Always alert was she, solicitous beyond belief, scanning ever the dial of her watch to know when to give me brandy and physic; or reaching across to feel my temples for the fever. The womanliness of that last motion was a thing for a man to wonder at. But most marvellous of all was the instinct which told her of my chief sickening discomfort, —of the leathery, travelled smell of the carriage. As a relief for this she charged her pocket-napkin with a most delicate perfume, and held it to my face.

When we drew up to shift horses, Jack would come to the door to inquire if there was aught she wanted, and to know how I was bearing up. And often Mrs. Manners likewise. At first I was for talking with them, but this Dorothy would not allow. Presently, indeed, it was beyond my power, and I could only smile feebly at my Lord when I heard Dolly asking him that the hostlers might be more quiet. Toward morning a lethargy fell upon me. Once I awoke when the lamp had burned low, to perceive the curtains drawn back, a black blotch of trees without, and the moonlight streaming in on my lady's features. With the crack of a whip I was off again.

When next consciousness came, the tarry, salt smell of a ship was in my nostrils, and I knew that we were embarked. I lay in a clean bunk in a fair-sized and sun-washed cabin, and I heard the scraping of ropes and the tramp of feet on the deck above my head. Framed against the irregular glass of the cabin window, which was greened by the water beyond, Dorothy and my Lord stood talking in whispers.

"Jack!" I said.

At the sound they turned and ran toward me, asking how I felt.

"I feel that words are very empty, Jack, to express such a gratitude as mine," I answered. "Twice you have saved me from death, you have paid my debts, and have been stanch to us both in our troubles. And—" The effort was beyond me, and I glanced appealingly at Dolly.

"And it is to you, dear Jack," she finished, "it is to you alone that we owe the great joy of our lives."

Her eyes were shining through her tears, and her smile was like the sun out of a rain-swept sky. His Lordship took one of her hands in his own, and one of mine. He scanned our faces in a long, lingering look.

“You will cherish her, Richard,” he said brokenly, “for her like is not to be found in this world. I knew her worth when first she came to London, as arrant a baggage as ever led man a dance. I saw then that a great love alone was needed to make her the highest among women, and from the night I fought with you at the Coffee House I have felt upon whom that love would fall. O thou of little faith,” he cried, “what little I may have done has been for her. No, Richard, you do not deserve her, but I would rather think of her as your wife than that of any man living.”

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I shall not dwell upon that painful farewell which wrung our hearts, and made us silent for a long, long while after the ship was tossing in the short seas of the Channel.

Nor is it my purpose to tell you of that long voyage across the Atlantic. We reached Lisbon in safety, and after a week of lodgings in that city by the best of fortune got passage in a swift bark bound for Baltimore. For the Chesapeake commerce continued throughout the war, and kept alive the credit of the young nation. There were many excitements ere we sighted the sand-spits of Virginia, and off the Azores we were chased for a day and a night by a British sloop of war. Our captain, however, was a cool man and a seaman, and slipped through the cruisers lying in wait off the Capes very triumphantly.

But the remembrance of those fair days at sea fills my soul with longing. The weather was mild and bright for the season, and morning upon morning two stout topmen would carry me out to a sheltered spot on the deck, always chosen by my lady herself. There I sat by the hour, swathed in many layers of wool, and tended by her hands alone. Every nook and cranny of our lives were revealed to the other. She loved to hear of Patty and my years at Gordon's, and would listen with bated breath to the stories of the Ranger and the Bonhomme Richard, and of that strange man whom we both loved, whose genius had made those cruises famous. Sometimes, in low voices, we talked of our future; but often, when the wind blew and the deck rocked and the sun flashed upon the waters, a silence would fall between us that needed no word to interpret.

Mrs. Manners yielded to my wish for us all to go to Carvel Hall. It was on a sparkling morning in February that we sighted the familiar toe of Kent Island, and the good-natured skipper put about and made for the mouth of our river. Then, as of old, the white cupola of Carvel House gleamed a signal of greeting, to which our full hearts beat a silent response. Once again the great windmill waved its welcome, and the same memory was upon us both as we gazed. Of a hale old gentleman in the sheets of a sailing pinnace, of a boy and a girl on his knees quivering with excitement of the days to come. Dorothy gently pressed my hand as the bark came into the wind, and the boat was dropped into the green water. Slowly they lowered me into it, for I was still helpless, Dorothy and her mother and Aunt Lucy were got down, and finally Mr. Marmaduke stepped gingerly from the sea-ladder over the gunwale. The cutter leaped under the strong strokes up the river with the tide. Then, as we rounded the bend, we were suddenly astonished to see people gathered on the landing at the foot of the lawn, where they had run, no doubt, in a flurry at sight of the ship below. In the front of the group stood out a strangely familiar figure.

"Why," exclaimed Dolly, "it is Ivie Rawlinson!"

Ivie it was, sure enough. And presently, when we drew a little closer, he gave one big shout and whipped off the hat from his head; and off, too, came the caps from the white heads of Scipio and Chess and Johnson behind him. Our oars were tossed, Ivie caught

our bows, and reached his hand to Dorothy. It was fitting that she should be the first to land at Carvel Hall.

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“’Twas yere bonny face I seed first, Miss Dolly,” he cried, the tears coursing down the scars of his cheeks. “An’ syne I kennt weel the young master was here. Noo God be praised for this blythe day, that Mr. Richard’s cam to his ain at last!”

But Scipio and Chess could only blubber as they helped him to lift me out, Dolly begging them to be careful. As they carried me up the familiar path to the pillared porch, the first I asked Ivie was of Patty, and next why he had left Gordon’s. She was safe and well, despite the Tories, and herself had sent him to take charge of Carvel Hall as soon as ever Judge Bordley had brought her the news of its restoration to me. He had supplied her with another overseer. Thanks to the good judge and to Colonel Lloyd, who had looked to my interests since Grafton was fled, Ivie had found the old place in good order, all the negroes quiet, and impatient with joy against my arrival.

It is time, my children, to bring this story to a close. I would I might write of those delicious spring days I spent with Dorothy at Carvel Hall, waited on by the old servants of my grandfather. At our whim my chair would be moved from one to another of the childhood haunts; on cool days we sat in the sun by the dial, where the flowers mingled their odours with the salt breezes off the Chesapeake; or anon, when it was warmer, in the summer-house my mother loved, or under the shade of the great trees on the lawn, looking out over the river. And once my lady went off very mysteriously, her eyes brimful of mischief, to come back with the first strawberries of the year staining her apron.

We were married on the fifteenth of June, already an anniversary for us both, in the long drawing-room. General Clapsaddle was there from the army to take Dorothy in his arms, even as he had embraced another bride on the same spot in years gone by. She wore the wedding gown that was her mother’s, but when the hour was come to dress her Aunt Lucy and Aunt Hester failed in their task, and it was Patty who performed the most of that office, and hung the necklace of pearls about her neck.

Dear Patty! She hath often been with us since. You have heard your mothers and fathers speak of Aunt Patty, my dears, and they will tell you how she spoiled them when they went a-visiting to Gordon’s Pride.

Ere I had regained my health, the war for Independence was won. I pray God that time may soften the bitterness it caused, and heal the breach in that noble race whose motto is Freedom. That the Stars and Stripes and the Union Jack may one day float together to cleanse this world of tyranny!

AFTERWORD

The author makes most humble apologies to any who have, or think they have, an ancestor in this book. He has drawn the foregoing with a very free hand, and in the Maryland scenes has made use of names rather than of actual personages. His

purpose, however poorly accomplished, was to give some semblance of reality to this part of the story. Hence he has introduced those names in the setting, choosing them entirely at random from the many prominent families of the colony.

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No one may read the annals of these men, who were at once brave and courtly, and of these women, who were ladies by nature as well as by birth, and not love them. The fascination of that free and hospitable life has been so strong on the writer of this novel that he closes it with a genuine regret and the hope that its perusal may lead others to the pleasure he has derived from the history of Maryland.

As few liberties as possible have been taken with the lives of Charles James Fox and of John Paul Jones. The latter hero actually made a voyage in the brigantine 'John' about the time he picked up Richard Carvel from the Black Moll, after the episode with Mungo Maxwell at Tobago. The Scotch scene, of course, is purely imaginary. Accuracy has been aimed at in the account of the fight between the 'Bonhomme Richard' and the 'Serapis', while a little different arrangement might have been better for the medium of the narrative. To be sure, it was Mr. Mease, the purser, instead of Richard Carvel, who so bravely fought the quarter-deck guns; and in reality Midshipman Mayrant, Commodore Jones's aide, was wounded by a pike in the thigh after the surrender. No injustice is done to the second and third lieutenants, who were absent from the ship during the action.

The author must acknowledge that the only good anecdote in the book and the only verse worth printing are stolen. The story on page concerning Mr. Garrick and the Archbishop of York may be found in Fitzgerald's life of the actor, much better told. The verse (in Chapter X) is by an unknown author in the Annapolis Gazette, and is republished in Mr. Elihu Riley's excellent "History of Annapolis."

PG EDITOR'S BOOKMARKS:

A bold front is half the battle
A man ought never to be frightened by appearances
Affections warm despite absence, and years, and interest
Ever been my nature to turn forward instead of back
Genius honored but never encouraged
God bless their backs, which is the only part I ever care to see
He was our macaroni of Annapolis
Human multitude with its infinity of despairs and joys
It is sorrow which lifts us nearest to heaven
No real prosperity comes out of double-dealing
Shaped his politics according to the company he was in
Sight of happiness is often a pleasure for those who are sad
Sir, I have not yet begun to fight
The worse the disease, the more remarkable the cure
Their lines belonged rather to the landscape (cottages)
Thy politics are not over politic
Tis no so bad it micht-na be waur

Within every man's province to make himself what he will
Ya maun ken th' incentive's the maist o' the battle
Youth is in truth a mystery

A MODERN CHRONICLE

By Winston Churchill

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A MODERN CHRONICLE

CHAPTER I

WHAT'S IN HEREDITY

Honora Leffingwell is the original name of our heroine. She was born in the last quarter of the Nineteenth Century, at Nice, in France, and she spent the early years of her life in St. Louis, a somewhat conservative old city on the banks of the Mississippi River. Her father was Randolph Leffingwell, and he died in the early flower of his manhood, while filling with a grace that many remember the post of United States Consul at Nice. As a linguist he was a phenomenon, and his photograph in the tortoise-shell frame proves indubitably, to anyone acquainted with the fashions of 1870, that he was a master of that subtlest of all arts, dress. He had gentle blood in his veins, which came from Virginia through Kentucky in a coach and six, and he was the equal in appearance and manners of any duke who lingered beside classic seas.

Honora has often pictured to herself a gay villa set high above the curving shore, the amethyst depths shading into emerald, laced with milk-white foam, the vivid colours of the town, the gay costumes; the excursions, the dinner-parties presided over by the immaculate young consul in three languages, and the guests chosen from the haute noblesse of Europe. Such was the vision in her youthful mind, added to by degrees as she grew into young-ladyhood and surreptitiously became familiar with the writings of Ouida and the Duchess, and other literature of an educating cosmopolitan nature.

Honora's biography should undoubtedly contain a sketch of Mrs. Randolph Leffingwell. Beauty and dash and a knowledge of how to seat a table seem to have been the lady's chief characteristics; the only daughter of a carefully dressed and carefully, preserved widower, likewise a linguist,—whose super-refined tastes and the limited straits to which he, the remaining scion of an old Southern family, had been reduced by a gentlemanly contempt for money, led him 'to choose Paris rather than New York as a place of residence. One of the occasional and carefully planned trips to the Riviera proved fatal to the beautiful but reckless Myrtle Allison. She, who might have chosen counts or dukes from the Tagus to the Danube, or even crossed the Channel; took the dashing but impecunious American consul, with a faith in his future that was sublime. Without going over too carefully the upward path which led to the post of their country's representative at the court of St. James, neither had the slightest doubt that Randolph Leffingwell would tread it.

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It is needless to dwell upon the chagrin of Honora's maternal grandfather, Howard Allison Esquire, over this turn of affairs, this unexpected bouleversement, as he spoke of it in private to his friends in his Parisian club. For many years he had watched the personal attractions of his daughter grow, and a brougham and certain other delights not to be mentioned had gradually become, in his mind, synonymous with old age. The brougham would have on its panels the Allison crest, and his distinguished (and titled) son-in-law would drop in occasionally at the little apartment on the Boulevard Haussmann. Alas, for visions, for legitimate hopes shattered forever! On the day that Randolph Leffingwell led Miss Allison down the aisle of the English church the vision of the brougham and the other delights faded. Howard Allison went back to his club.

Three years later, while on an excursion with Sir Nicholas Baker and a merry party on the Italian aide, the horses behind which Mr. and Mrs. Leffingwell were driving with their host ran away, and in the flight managed to precipitate the vehicle, and themselves, down the side of one of the numerous deep valleys of the streams seeking the Mediterranean. Thus, by a singular caprice of destiny Honors was deprived of both her parents at a period which—some chose to believe—was the height of their combined glories. Randolph Leffingwell lived long enough to be taken back to Nice, and to consign his infant daughter and sundry other unsolved problems to his brother Tom.

Brother Tom—or Uncle Tom, as we must call him with Honora—cheerfully accepted the charge. For his legacies in life had been chiefly blessings in disguise. He was paying teller of the Prairie Bank, and the thermometer registered something above 90 deg. Fahrenheit on the July morning when he stood behind his wicket reading a letter from Howard Allison, Esquire, relative to his niece. Mr. Leffingwell was at this period of his life forty-eight, but the habit he had acquired of assuming responsibilities and burdens seemed to have had the effect of making his age indefinite. He was six feet tall, broad-shouldered, his mustache and hair already turning; his eyebrows were a trifle bushy, and his eyes reminded men of one eternal and highly prized quality—honesty. They were blue grey. Ordinarily they shed a light which sent people away from his window the happier without knowing why; but they had been known, on rare occasions, to flash on dishonesty and fraud like the lightnings of the Lord. Mr. Isham, the president of the bank, coined a phrase about him. He said that Thomas Leffingwell was constitutionally honest.

Although he had not risen above the position of paying teller, Thomas Leffingwell had a unique place in the city of his birth; and the esteem in which he was held by capitalists and clerks proves that character counts for something. On his father's failure and death he had entered the Prairie Bank, at eighteen, and never left it. If he had owned it, he could not have been treated by the customers with more respect. The city, save for a few notable exceptions, like Mr. Isham, called him Mr. Leffingwell, but behind his back often spoke of him as Tom.

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On the particular hot morning in question, as he stood in his seersucker coat reading the unquestionably pompous letter of Mr. Allison announcing that his niece was on the high seas, he returned the greetings of his friends with his usual kindness and cheer. In an adjoining compartment a long-legged boy of fourteen was busily stamping letters.

“Peter,” said Mr. Leffingwell, “go ask Mr. Isham if I may see him.”

It is advisable to remember the boy’s name. It was Peter Erwin, and he was a favourite in the bank, where he had been introduced by Mr. Leffingwell himself. He was an orphan and lived with his grandmother, an impoverished old lady with good blood in her veins who boarded in Graham’s Row, on Olive Street. Suffice it to add, at this time, that he worshipped Mr. Leffingwell, and that he was back in a twinkling with the information that Mr. Isham was awaiting him.

The president was seated at his desk. In spite of the thermometer he gave no appearance of discomfort in his frock-coat. He had scant, sandy-grey whiskers, a tightly closed and smooth-shaven upper lip, a nose with-a decided ridge, and rather small but penetrating eyes in which the blue pigment had been used sparingly. His habitual mode of speech was both brief and sharp, but people remarked that he modified it a little for Tom Leffingwell.

“Come in, Tom,” he said. “Anything the matter?”

“Mr. Isham, I want a week off, to go to New York.”

The request, from Tom Leffingwell, took Mr. Isham’s breath. One of the bank president’s characteristics was an extreme interest in the private affairs of those who came within his zone of influence and especially when these affairs evinced any irregularity.

“Randolph again?” he asked quickly.

Tom walked to the window, and stood looking out into the street. His voice shook as he answered:

“Ten days ago I learned that my brother was dead, Mr. Isham.”

The president glanced at the broad back of his teller. Mr. Isham’s voice was firm, his face certainly betrayed no feeling, but a flitting gleam of satisfaction might have been seen in his eye.

“Of course, Tom, you may go,” he answered.

Thus came to pass an event in the lives of Uncle Tom and Aunt Mary, that journey to New York (their first) of two nights and two days to fetch Honora. We need not dwell

upon all that befell them. The first view of the Hudson, the first whiff of the salt air on this unwonted holiday, the sights of this crowded city of wealth,—all were tempered by the thought of the child coming into their lives. They were standing on the pier when the windows were crimson in the early light, and at nine o'clock on that summer's morning the Albania was docked, and the passengers came crowding down the gang-plank. Prosperous tourists, most of them, with servants and stewards carrying bags of English design and checked steamer rugs; and at last a ruddy-faced bonne with streamers and a bundle of ribbons and laces—Honora—Honora, aged eighteen months, gazing at a subjugated world.

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“What a beautiful child! exclaimed a woman on the pier.”

Was it instinct or premonition that led them to accost the bonne?

“Oui, Leffingwell!” she cried, gazing at them in some perplexity. Three children of various sizes clung to her skirts, and a younger nurse carried a golden-haired little girl of Honora’s age. A lady and gentleman followed. The lady was beginning to look matronly, and no second glance was required to perceive that she was a person of opinion and character. Mr. Holt was smaller than his wife, neat in dress and unobtrusive in appearance. In the rich Mrs. Holt, the friend of the Randolph Leffingwells, Aunt Mary was prepared to find a more vapidly fashionable personage, and had schooled herself forthwith.

“You are Mrs. Thomas Leffingwell?” she asked. “Well, I am relieved.” The lady’s eyes, travelling rapidly over Aunt Mary’s sober bonnet and brooch and gown, made it appear that these features in Honora’s future guardian gave her the relief in question. “Honora, this is your aunt.”

Honora smiled from amidst the laces, and Aunt Mary, only too ready to capitulate, surrendered. She held out her arms. Tears welled up in the Frenchwoman’s eyes as she abandoned her charge.

“Pauvre mignonne!” she cried.

But Mrs. Holt rebuked the nurse sharply, in French,—a language with which neither Aunt Mary nor Uncle Tom was familiar. Fortunately, perhaps. Mrs. Holt’s remark was to the effect that Honora was going to a sensible home.

“Hortense loves her better than my own children,” said that lady.

Honora seemed quite content in the arms of Aunt Mary, who was gazing so earnestly into the child’s face that she did not at first hear Mrs. Holt’s invitation to take breakfast with them on Madison Avenue, and then she declined politely. While grossing on the steamer, Mrs. Holt had decided quite clearly in her mind just what she was going to say to the child’s future guardian, but there was something in Aunt Mary’s voice and manner which made these remarks seem unnecessary—although Mrs. Holt was secretly disappointed not to deliver them.

“It was fortunate that we happened to, be in Nice at the time,” she said with the evident feeling that some explanation was due. “I did not know poor Mrs. Randolph Leffingwell very—very intimately, or Mr. Leffingwell. It was such a sudden—such a terrible affair. But Mr. Holt and I were only too glad to do what we could.”

“We feel very grateful to you,” said Aunt Mary, quietly.

Mrs. Holt looked at her with a still more distinct approval, being tolerably sure that Mrs. Thomas Leffingwell understood. She had cleared her skirts of any possible implication of intimacy with the late Mrs. Randolph, and done so with a master touch.

In the meantime Honora had passed to Uncle Tom. After securing the little trunk, and settling certain matters with Mr. Holt, they said good-by to her late kind protectors, and started off for the nearest street-cars, Honora pulling Uncle Tom's mustache. More than one pedestrian paused to look back at the tall man carrying the beautiful child, bedecked like a young princess, and more than one passenger in the street cars smiled at them both.

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CHAPTER II

PERDITA RECALLED

Saint Louis, or that part of it which is called by dealers in real estate the choice residence section, grew westward. And Uncle Tom might be said to have been in the vanguard of the movement. In the days before Honora was born he had built his little house on what had been a farm on the Olive Street Road, at the crest of the second ridge from the river. Up this ridge, with clanking traces, toiled the horse-cars that carried Uncle Tom downtown to the bank and Aunt Mary to market.

Fleeing westward, likewise, from the smoke, friends of Uncle Tom's and Aunt Mary's gradually surrounded them—building, as a rule, the high Victorian mansions in favour at that period, which were placed in the centre of commodious yards. For the friends of Uncle Tom and Aunt Mary were for the most part rich, and belonged, as did they, to the older families of the city. Mr. Dwyer's house, with its picture gallery, was across the street.

In the midst of such imposing company the little dwelling which became the home of our heroine sat well back in a plot that might almost be called a garden. In summer its white wooden front was nearly hidden by the quivering leaves of two tall pear trees. On the other side of the brick walk, and near the iron fence, was an elm and a flower bed that was Uncle Tom's pride and the admiration of the neighbourhood. Honora has but to shut her eyes to see it aflame with tulips at Eastertide. The eastern wall of the house was a mass of Virginia creeper, and beneath that another flower bed, and still another in the back-yard behind the lattice fence covered with cucumber vine. There were, besides, two maples and two apricot trees, relics of the farm, and of blessed memory. Such apricots! Visions of hot summer evenings come back, with Uncle Tom, in his seersucker coat, with his green watering-pot, bending over the beds, and Aunt Mary seated upright in her chair, looking up from her knitting with a loving eye.

Behind the lattice, on these summer evenings, stands the militant figure of that old retainer, Bridget the cook, her stout arms akimbo, ready to engage in vigorous banter should Honora deign to approach.

"Whisht, 'Nora darlint, it's a young lady yell be soon, and the beaux a-comin' 'round!" she would cry, and throw back her head and laugh until the tears were in her eyes.

And the princess, a slim figure in an immaculate linen frock with red ribbons which Aunt Mary had copied from Longstreth's London catalogue, would reply with dignity:

"Bridget, I wish you would try to remember that my name is Honora."

Another spasm of laughter from Bridget.

“Listen to that now!” she would cry to another ancient retainer, Mary Ann, the housemaid, whose kitchen chair was tilted up against the side of the woodshed. “It’ll be Miss Honora next, and George Hanbury here to-day with his eye through a knothole in the fence, out of his head for a sight of ye.”

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George Hanbury was Honora's cousin, and she did not deem his admiration a subject fit for discussion with Bridget.

"Sure," declared Mary Ann, "it's the air of a princess the child has."

That she should be thought a princess did not appear at all remarkable to Honora at twelve years of age. Perdita may have had such dreams. She had been born, she knew, in some wondrous land by the shores of the summer seas, not at all like St. Louis, and friends and relatives had not hesitated to remark in her hearing that she resembled—her father,—that handsome father who surely must have been a prince, whose before-mentioned photograph in the tortoise-shell frame was on the bureau in her little room. So far as Randolph Leffingwell was concerned, photography had not been invented for nothing. Other records of him remained which Honora had likewise seen: one end of a rose-covered villa—which Honora thought was a wing of his palace; a coach and four he was driving, and which had chanced to belong to an Englishman, although the photograph gave no evidence of this ownership. Neither Aunt Mary nor Uncle Tom had ever sought—for reasons perhaps obvious—to correct the child's impression of an extraordinary paternity.

Aunt Mary was a Puritan of Southern ancestry, and her father had been a Presbyterian minister, Uncle Tom was a member of the vestry of a church still under Puritan influences. As a consequence for Honora, there were Sunday afternoons—periods when the imaginative faculty, in which she was by no means lacking, was given full play. She would sit by the hour in the swing Uncle Tom had hung for her under the maple near the lattice, while castles rose on distant heights against blue skies. There was her real home, in a balconied chamber that overlooked mile upon mile of rustling forest in the valley; and when the wind blew, the sound of it was like the sea. Honora did not remember the sea, but its music was often in her ears.

She would be aroused from these dreams of greatness by the appearance of old Catherine, her nurse, on the side porch, reminding her that it was time to wash for supper. No princess could have had a more humble tiring-woman than Catherine.

Honora cannot be unduly blamed. When she reached the "little house under the hill" (as Catherine called the chamber beneath the eaves), she beheld reflected in the mirror an image like a tall, white flower that might indeed have belonged to a princess. Her hair, the colour of burnt sienna, fell evenly to her shoulders; her features even then had regularity and hauteur; her legs, in their black silk stockings, were straight; and the simple white lawn frock made the best of a slender figure. Those frocks of Honora's were a continual source of wonder and sometimes of envy—to Aunt Mary's friends; who returned from the seaside in the autumn, after a week among the fashions in Boston or New York, to find Honora in the latest models, and better dressed than their own children. Aunt Mary made no secret of the methods by which these seeming miracles

were performed, and showed Cousin Eleanor Hanbury the fashion plates in the English periodicals. Cousin Eleanor sighed.

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“Mary, you are wonderful,” she would say. “Honora’s clothes are better-looking than those I buy in the East, at such fabulous prices, from Cavendish.”

Indeed, no woman was ever farther removed from personal vanity than Aunt Mary. She looked like a little Quakeress. Her silvered hair was parted in the middle and had, in spite of palpable efforts towards tightness and repression, a perceptible ripple in it. Grey was her only concession to colour, and her gowns and bonnets were of a primness which belonged to the past. Repression, or perhaps compression, was her note, for the energy confined within her little body was a thing to have astounded scientists: And Honora grew to womanhood and reflection before she had. guessed or considered that her aunt was possessed of intense emotions which had no outlet. Her features were regular, her shy eye had the clearness of a forest pool. She believed in predestination, which is to say that she was a fatalist; and while she steadfastly continued to regard this world as a place of sorrow and trials, she concerned herself very little about her participation in a future life. Old Dr. Ewing, the rector of St. Anne’s, while conceding that no better or more charitable woman existed, found it so exceedingly difficult to talk to her, on the subject of religion that he had never tried it but once.

Such was Aunt Mary. The true student of human nature should not find it surprising that she spoiled Honora and strove—at what secret expense, care, and self-denial to Uncle Tom and herself, none will ever know—to adorn the child that she might appear creditably among companions whose parents were more fortunate in this world’s goods; that she denied herself to educate Honora as these other children were educated. Nor is it astonishing that she should not have understood the highly complex organism of the young lady we have chosen for our heroine, who was shaken, at the age of thirteen, by unfulfilled longings.

Very early in life Honora learned to dread the summer, when one by one the families of her friends departed until the city itself seemed a remote and distant place from what it had been in the spring and winter. The great houses were closed and blinded, and in the evening the servants who had been left behind chattered on the front steps. Honora could not bear the sound of the trains that drifted across the night, and the sight of the trunks piled in the Hanburys’ hall, in Wayland Square, always filled her with a sickening longing. Would the day ever come when she, too, would depart for the bright places of the earth? Sometimes, when she looked in the mirror, she was filled with a fierce belief in a destiny to sit in the high seats, to receive homage and dispense bounties, to discourse with great intellects, to know London and Paris and the marts and centres of the world as her father had. To escape—only to escape from the prison walls of a humdrum existence, and to soar!

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Let us, if we can, reconstruct an August day when all (or nearly all) of Honora's small friends were gone eastward to the mountains or the seaside. In "the little house under the hill," the surface of which was a hot slate roof, Honora would awake about seven o'clock to find old Catherine bending over her in a dun-coloured calico dress, with the light fiercely beating against the closed shutters that braved it so unflinchingly throughout the day.

"The birds are before ye, Miss Honora, honey, and your uncle waterin' his roses this half-hour."

Uncle Tom was indeed an early riser. As Honora dressed (Catherine assisting as at a ceremony), she could see him, in his seersucker coat, bending tenderly over his beds; he lived enveloped in a peace which has since struck wonder to Honora's soul. She lingered in her dressing, even in those days, falling into reveries from which Catherine gently and deferentially aroused her; and Uncle Tom would be carving the beefsteak and Aunt Mary pouring the coffee when she finally arrived in the dining room to nibble at one of Bridget's unforgettable rolls or hot biscuits. Uncle Tom had his joke, and at quarter-past eight precisely he would kiss Aunt Mary and walk to the corner to wait for the ambling horse-car that was to take him to the bank. Sometimes Honora went to the corner with him, and he waved her good-by from the platform as he felt in his pocket for the nickel that was to pay his fare.

When Honora returned, Aunt Mary had donned her apron, and was industriously aiding Mary Ann to wash the dishes and maintain the customary high polish on her husband's share of the Leffingwell silver which, standing on the side table, shot hither and thither rays of green light that filtered through the shutters into the darkened room. The child partook of Aunt Mary's pride in that silver, made for a Kentucky great-grandfather Leffingwell by a famous Philadelphia silversmith three-quarters of a century before. Honora sighed.

"What's the matter, Honora?" asked Aunt Mary, without pausing in her vigorous rubbing.

"The Leffingwells used to be great once upon a time, didn't they, Aunt Mary?"

"Your Uncle Tom," answered Aunt Mary, quietly, "is the greatest man I know, child."

"And my father must have been a great man, too," cried Honora, "to have been a consul and drive coaches."

Aunt Mary was silent. She was not a person who spoke easily on difficult subjects.

"Why don't you ever talk to me about my father, Aunt Mary? Uncle Tom does."

"I didn't know your father, Honora."

“But you have seen him?”

“Yes,” said Aunt Mary, dipping her cloth into the whiting; “I saw him at my wedding. But he was very, young.”

“What was he like?” Honora demanded. “He was very handsome, wasn’t he?”

’Yes, child.”

“And he had ambition, didn’t he, Aunt Mary?”

Aunt Mary paused. Her eyes were troubled as she looked at Honora, whose head was thrown back.

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“What kind of ambition do you mean, Honora?”

“Oh,” cried Honora, “to be great and rich and powerful, and to be somebody.”

“Who has been putting such things in your head, my dear?”

“No one, Aunt Mary. Only, if I were a man, I shouldn’t rest until I became great.”

Alas, that Aunt Mary, with all her will, should have such limited powers of expression! She resumed her scrubbing of the silver before she spoke.

“To do one’s duty, to accept cheerfully and like a Christian the responsibilities and burdens of life, is the highest form of greatness, my child. Your Uncle Tom has had many things to trouble him; he has always worked for others, and not for himself. And he is respected and loved by all who know him.”

“Yes, I know, Aunt Mary. But—”

“But what, Honora?”

“Then why isn’t he rich, as my father was?”

“Your father wasn’t rich, my dear,” said Aunt Mary, sadly.

“Why, Aunt Mary!” Honora exclaimed, “he lived in a beautiful house, and owned horses. Isn’t that being rich?”

Poor Aunt Mary!

“Honora,” she answered, “there are some things you are too young to understand. But try to remember, my dear, that happiness doesn’t consist in being rich.”

“But I have often heard you say that you wished you were rich, Aunt Mary, and had nice things, and a picture gallery like Mr. Dwyer.”

“I should like to have beautiful pictures, Honora.”

“I don’t like Mr. Dwyer,” declared Honora, abruptly.

“You mustn’t say that, Honora,” was Aunt Mary’s reproof. “Mr. Dwyer is an upright, public-spirited man, and he thinks a great deal of your Uncle Tom.”

“I can’t help it, Aunt Mary,” said Honora. “I think he enjoys being —well, being able to do things for a man like Uncle Tom.”

Neither Aunt Mary nor Honora guessed what a subtle criticism this was of Mr. Dwyer. Aunt Mary was troubled and puzzled; and she began to speculate (not for the first time) why the Lord had given a person with so little imagination a child like Honora to bring up in the straight and narrow path.

“When I go on Sunday afternoons with Uncle Tom to see Mr. Dwyer’s pictures,” Honora persisted, “I always feel that he is so glad to have what other people haven’t or he wouldn’t have any one to show them to.”

Aunt Mary shook her head. Once she had given her loyal friendship, such faults as this became as nothing.

“And when” said Honora, “when Mrs. Dwyer has dinner-parties for celebrated people who come here, why does she invite you in to see the table?”

“Out of kindness, Honora. Mrs. Dwyer knows that I enjoy looking at beautiful things.”

“Why doesn’t she invite you to the dinners?” asked Honora, hotly. “Our family is just as good as Mrs. Dwyer’s.”

The extent of Aunt Mary’s distress was not apparent.

“You are talking nonsense, my child,” she said. “All my friends know that I am not a person who can entertain distinguished people, and that I do not go out, and that I haven’t the money to buy evening dresses. And even if I had,” she added, “I haven’t a pretty neck, so it’s just as well.”

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A philosophy distinctly Aunt Mary's.

Uncle Tom, after he had listened without comment that evening to her account of this conversation, was of the opinion that to take Honora to task for her fancies would be waste of breath; that they would right themselves as she grew up.

"I'm afraid it's inheritance, Tom," said Aunt Mary, at last. "And if so, it ought to be counteracted. We've seen other signs of it. You know Honora has little or no idea of the value of money—or of its ownership."

"She sees little enough of it," Uncle Tom remarked with a smile.

"Tom."

"Well."

"Sometimes I think I've done wrong not to dress her more simply. I'm afraid it's given the child a taste for—for self-adornment."

"I once had a fond belief that all women possessed such a taste," said Uncle Tom, with a quizzical look at his own exception. "To tell you the truth, I never classed it as a fault."

"Then I don't see why you married me," said Aunt Mary—a periodical remark of hers. "But, Tom, I do wish her to appear as well as the other children, and (Aunt Mary actually blushed) the child has good looks."

"Why don't you go as far as old Catherine, and call her a princess?" he asked.

"Do you want me to ruin her utterly?" exclaimed Aunt Mary.

Uncle Tom put his hands on his wife's shoulders and looked down into her face, and smiled again. Although she held herself very straight, the top of her head was very little above the level of his chin.

"It strikes me that you are entitled to some little indulgence in life, Mary," he said.

One of the curious contradictions of Aunt Mary's character was a never dying interest, which held no taint of envy, in the doings of people more fortunate than herself. In the long summer days, after her silver was cleaned and her housekeeping and marketing finished, she read in the book-club periodicals of royal marriages, embassy balls, of great town and country houses and their owners at home and abroad. And she knew, by means of a correspondence with Cousin Eleanor Hanbury and other intimates, the kind of cottages in which her friends sojourned at the seashore or in the mountains; how many rooms they had, and how many servants, and very often who the servants were; she was likewise informed on the climate, and the ease with which it was possible to

obtain fresh vegetables. And to all of this information Uncle Tom would listen, smiling but genuinely interested, while he carved at dinner.

One evening, when Uncle Tom had gone to play piquet with Mr. Isham, who was ill, Honora further surprised her aunt by exclaiming: “How can you talk of things other people have and not want them, Aunt Mary?”

“Why should I desire what I cannot have, my dear? I take such pleasure out of my friends’ possessions as I can.”

“But you want to go to the seashore, I know you do. I’ve heard you say so,” Honora protested.

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“I should like to see the open ocean before I die,” admitted Aunt Mary, unexpectedly. “I saw New York harbour once, when we went to meet you. And I know how the salt water smells—which is as much, perhaps, as I have the right to hope for. But I have often thought it would be nice to sit for a whole summer by the sea and listen to the waves dashing upon the beach, like those in the Chase picture in Mr. Dwyer’s gallery.”

Aunt Mary little guessed the unspeakable rebellion aroused in Honora by this acknowledgment of being fatally circumscribed. Wouldn’t Uncle Tom ever be rich?

Aunt Mary shook her head—she saw no prospect of it.

But other men, who were not half so good as Uncle Tom, got rich.

Uncle Tom was not the kind of man who cared for riches. He was content to do his duty in that sphere where God had placed him.

Poor Aunt Mary. Honora never asked her uncle such questions: to do so never occurred to her. At peace with all men, he gave of his best to children, and Honora remained a child. Next to his flowers, walking was Uncle Tom’s chief recreation, and from the time she could be guided by the hand she went with him. His very presence had the gift of dispelling longings, even in the young; the gift of compelling delight in simple things. Of a Sunday afternoon, if the heat were not too great, he would take Honora to the wild park that stretches westward of the city, and something of the depth and intensity of his pleasure in the birds, the forest, and the wild flowers would communicate itself to her. She learned all unconsciously (by suggestion, as it were) to take delight in them; a delight that was to last her lifetime, a never failing resource to which she was to turn again and again. In winter, they went to the botanical gardens or the Zoo. Uncle Tom had a passion for animals, and Mr. Isham, who was a director, gave him a pass through the gates. The keepers knew him, and spoke to him with kindly respect. Nay, it seemed to Honora that the very animals knew him, and offered themselves ingratiatingly to be stroked by one whom they recognized as friend. Jaded horses in the street lifted their noses; stray, homeless cats rubbed against his legs, and vagrant dogs looked up at him trustfully with wagging tails.

Yet his goodness, as Emerson would have said, had some edge to it. Honora had seen the light of anger in his blue eye—a divine ray. Once he had chastised her for telling Aunt Mary a lie (she could not have lied to him) and Honora had never forgotten it. The anger of such a man had indeed some element in it of the divine; terrible, not in volume, but in righteous intensity. And when it had passed there was no occasion for future warning. The memory of it lingered.

CHAPTER III

CONCERNING PROVIDENCE

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What quality was it in Honora that compelled Bridget to stop her ironing on Tuesdays in order to make hot waffles for a young woman who was late to breakfast? Bridget, who would have filled the kitchen with righteous wrath if Aunt Mary had transgressed the rules of the house, which were like the laws of the Medes and Persians! And in Honora's early youth Mary Ann, the housemaid, spent more than one painful evening writing home for cockle shells and other articles to propitiate our princess, who rewarded her with a winning smile and a kiss, which invariably melted the honest girl into tears. The Queen of Scots never had a more devoted chamber woman than old Catherine,—who would have gone to the stake with a smile to save her little lady a single childish ill, and who spent her savings, until severely taken to task by Aunt Mary, upon objects for which a casual wish had been expressed. The saints themselves must at times have been aweary from hearing Honora's name.

Not to speak of Christmas! Christmas in the little house was one wild delirium of joy. The night before the festival was, to all outward appearances, an ordinary evening, when Uncle Tom sat by the fire in his slippers, as usual, scouting the idea that there would be any Christmas at all. Aunt Mary sewed, and talked with maddening calmness of the news of the day; but for Honora the air was charged with coming events of the first magnitude. The very furniture of the little sitting-room had a different air, the room itself wore a mysterious aspect, and the cannel-coal fire seemed to give forth a special quality of unearthly light.

"Is to-morrow Christmas?" Uncle Tom would exclaim. Bless me! Honora, I am so glad you reminded me."

"Now, Uncle Tom, you knew it was Christmas all the time!"

"Kiss your uncle good night, Honora, and go right to sleep, dear,"—from Aunt Mary.

The unconscious irony in that command of Aunt Mary's!—to go right to sleep! Many times was a head lifted from a small pillow, straining after the meaning of the squeaky noises that came up from below! Not Santa Claus. Honora's belief in him had merged into a blind faith in a larger and even more benevolent, if material providence: the kind of providence which Mr. Meredith depicts, and which was to say to Beauchamp: "Here's your marquise;" a particular providence which, at the proper time, gave Uncle Tom money, and commanded, with a smile, "Buy this for Honora—she wants it." All-sufficient reason! Soul-satisfying philosophy, to which Honora was to cling for many years of life. It is amazing how much can be wrung from a reluctant world by the mere belief in this kind of providence.

Sleep came at last, in the darkest of the hours. And still in the dark hours a stirring, a delicious sensation preceding reason, and the consciousness of a figure stealing about the room. Honora sat up in bed, shivering with cold and delight.

“Is it awake ye are, darlint, and it but four o’clock the morn!”

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“What are you doing, Cathy?”

“Musha, it’s to Mass I’m going, to ask the Mother of God to give ye many happy Christmases the like of this, Miss Honora.” And Catherine’s arms were about her.

“Oh, it’s Christmas, Cathy, isn’t it? How could I have forgotten it!”

“Now go to sleep, honey. Your aunt and uncle wouldn’t like it at all at all if ye was to make noise in the middle of the night—and it’s little better it is.”

Sleep! A despised waste of time in childhood. Catherine went to Mass, and after an eternity, the grey December light began to sift through the shutters, and human endurance had reached its limit. Honora, still shivering, seized a fleecy wrapper (the handiwork of Aunt Mary) and crept, a diminutive ghost, down the creaking stairway to the sitting-room. A sitting-room which now was not a sitting-room, but for to-day a place of magic. As though by a prearranged salute of the gods,—at Honora’s entrance the fire burst through the thick blanket of fine coal which Uncle Tom had laid before going to bed, and with a little gasp of joy that was almost pain, she paused on the threshold. That one flash, like Pizarro’s first sunrise over Peru, gilded the edge of infinite possibilities.

Needless to enumerate them. The whole world, as we know, was in a conspiracy to spoil Honora. The Dwyers, the Cartwrights, the Haydens, the Brices, the Ishams, and I know not how many others had sent their tributes, and Honora’s second cousins, the Hanburys, from the family mansion behind the stately elms of Wayland Square—of which something anon. A miniature mahogany desk, a prayer-book and hymnal which the Dwyers had brought home from New York, endless volumes of a more secular and (to Honora) entrancing nature; roller skates; skates for real ice, when it should appear in the form of sleet on the sidewalks; a sled; humbler gifts from Bridget, Mary Ann, and Catherine, and a wonderful coat, with hat to match, of a certain dark green velvet. When Aunt Mary appeared, an hour or so later, Honora was surveying her magnificence in the glass.

“Oh, Aunt Mary!” she cried, with her arms tightly locked around her aunt’s neck, “how lovely! Did you send all the way to New York for it?”

“No, Honora,” said her aunt, “it didn’t come from New York.” Aunt Mary did not explain that this coat had been her one engrossing occupation for six weeks, at such times when Honora was out or tucked away safely in bed.

Perhaps Honora’s face fell a little. Aunt Mary scanned it rather anxiously.

“Does that cause you to like it any less, Honora?” she asked.

“Aunt Mary!” exclaimed Honora, in a tone of reproval. And added after a little, “I suppose Mademoiselle made it.”

“Does it make any difference who made it, Honora?”

“Oh, no indeed, Aunt Mary. May I wear it to Cousin Eleanor’s to-day?”

“I gave it to you to wear, Honora.”

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Not in Honora's memory was there a Christmas breakfast during which Peter Erwin did not appear, bringing gifts. Peter Erwin, of whom we caught a glimpse doing an errand for Uncle Tom in the bank. With the complacency of the sun Honora was wont to regard this most constant of her satellites. Her awakening powers of observation had discovered him in bondage, and in bondage he had been ever since: for their acquaintance had begun on the first Sunday afternoon after Honora's arrival in St. Louis at the age of eighteen months. It will be remembered that Honora was even then a coquette, and as she sat in her new baby-carriage under the pear tree, flirted outrageously with Peter, who stood on one foot from embarrassment.

"Why, Peter," Uncle Tom had said slyly, "why don't you kiss her?"

That kiss had been Peter's seal of service. And he became, on Sunday afternoons, a sort of understudy for Catherine. He took an amazing delight in wheeling Honora up and down the yard, and up and down the sidewalk. Brunhilde or Queen Elizabeth never wielded a power more absolute, nor had an adorer more satisfactory; and of all his remarkable talents, none were more conspicuous than his abilities to tell a story and to choose a present. Emancipated from the perambulator, Honora would watch for him at the window, and toddle to the gate to meet him, a gentleman-in-waiting whose zeal, however arduous, never flagged.

On this particular Christmas morning, when she heard the gate slam, Honora sprang up from the table to don her green velvet coat. Poor Peter! As though his subjugation could be more complete!

"It's the postman," suggested Uncle Tom, wickedly.

"It's Peter!" cried Honora, triumphantly, from the hall as she flunk open the door, letting in a breath of cold Christmas air out of the sunlight.

It was Peter, but a Peter who has changed some since perambulator days, —just as Honora has changed some. A Peter who, instead of fourteen, is six and twenty; a full-fledged lawyer, in the office of that most celebrated of St. Louis practitioners, Judge Stephen Brice. For the Peter Erwins of this world are queer creatures, and move rapidly without appearing to the Honoras to move at all. A great many things have happened to Peter since he had been a messenger boy in the bank.

Needless to say, Uncle Tom had taken an interest in him. And, according to Peter, this fact accounted for all the good fortune which had followed. Shortly before the news came of his brother's death, Uncle Tom had discovered that the boy who did his errands so willingly was going to night school, and was the grandson of a gentleman who had fought with credit in the Mexican War, and died in misfortune: the grandmother was Peter's only living relative. Through Uncle Tom, Mr. Isham became interested, and

Judge Brice. There was a certain scholarship in the Washington University which Peter obtained, and he worked his way through the law school afterwards.

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A simple story, of which many a duplicate could be found in this country of ours. In the course of the dozen years or so of its unravelling the grandmother had died, and Peter had become, to all intents and purposes, a member of Uncle Tom's family. A place was set for him at Sunday dinner; and, if he did not appear, at Sunday tea. Sometimes at both. And here he was, as usual, on Christmas morning, his arms so full that he had had to push open the gate with his foot.

"Well, well, well, well!" he said, stopping short on the doorstep and surveying our velvet-clad princess, "I've come to the wrong house."

The princess stuck her finger into her cheek.

"Don't be silly, Peter!" she said; and Merry Christmas!"

"Merry Christmas!" he replied, edging sidewise in at the door and depositing his parcels on the mahogany horsehair sofa. He chose one, and seized the princess—velvet coat and all!—in his arms and kissed her. When he released her, there remained in her hand a morocco-bound diary, marked with her monogram, and destined to contain high matters.

"How could you know what I wanted, Peter?" she exclaimed, after she had divested it of the tissue paper, holly, and red ribbon in which he had so carefully wrapped it. For it is a royal trait to thank with the same graciousness and warmth the donors of the humblest and the greatest offerings.

There was a paper-knife for Uncle Tom, and a workbasket for Aunt Mary, and a dress apiece for Catherine, Bridget, and Mary Ann, none of whom Peter ever forgot. Although the smoke was even at that period beginning to creep westward, the sun poured through the lace curtains into the little dining-room and danced on the silver coffeepot as Aunt Mary poured out Peter's cup, and the blue china breakfast plates were bluer than ever because it was Christmas. The humblest of familiar articles took on the air of a present. And after breakfast, while Aunt Mary occupied herself with that immemorial institution,—which was to lure hitherwards so many prominent citizens of St. Louis during the day,—eggnogg, Peter surveyed the offerings which transformed the sitting-room. The table had been pushed back against the bookcases, the chairs knew not their time-honoured places, and white paper and red ribbon littered the floor. Uncle Tom, relegated to a corner, pretended to read his newspaper, while Honora flitted from Peter's knees to his, or sat cross-legged on the hearth-rug investigating a bottomless stocking.

"What in the world are we going to do with all these things?" said Peter.

"We?" cried Honora.

“When we get married, I mean,” said Peter, smiling at Uncle Tom. “Let’s see!” and he began counting on his fingers, which were long but very strong—so strong that Honora could never loosen even one of them when they gripped her. “One—two—three—eight Christmases before you are twenty-one. We’ll have enough things to set us up in housekeeping. Or perhaps you’d rather get married when you are eighteen?”

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“I’ve always told you I wasn’t going to marry you, Peter,” said Honora, with decision.

“Why by not?” He always asked that question.

Honora sighed.

“I’ll make a good husband,” said Peter; “I’ll promise. Ugly men are always good husbands.”

“I didn’t say you were ugly,” declared the ever considerate Honora.

“Only my nose is too big,” he quoted; “and I am too long one way and not wide enough.”

“You have a certain air of distinction in spite of it,” said Honora.

Uncle Tom’s newspaper began to shake, and he read more industriously than ever.

“You’ve been reading—novels!” said Peter, in a terrible judicial voice.

Honora flushed guiltily, and resumed her inspection of the stocking. Miss Rossiter, a maiden lady of somewhat romantic tendencies, was librarian of the Book Club that year. And as a result a book called “Harold’s Quest,” by an author who shall be nameless, had come to the house. And it was Harold who had had “a certain air of distinction.”

“It isn’t very kind of you to make fun of me when I pay you a compliment,” replied Honora, with dignity.

“I was naturally put out,” he declared gravely, “because you said you wouldn’t marry me. But I don’t intend to give up. No man who is worth his salt ever gives up.”

“You are old enough to get married now,” said Honora, still considerate.

“But I am not rich enough,” said Peter; “and besides, I want you.”

One of the first entries in the morocco diary—which had a lock and key to it—was a description of Honora’s future husband. We cannot violate the lock, nor steal the key from under her pillow. But this much, alas, may be said with discretion, that he bore no resemblance to Peter Erwin. It may be guessed, however, that he contained something of Harold, and more of Randolph Leffingwell; and that he did not live in St. Louis.

An event of Christmas, after church, was the dinner of which Uncle Tom and Aunt Mary and Honora partook with Cousin Eleanor Hanbury, who had been a Leffingwell, and was a first cousin of Honora’s father. Honora loved the atmosphere of the massive, yellow stone house in Wayland Square, with its tall polished mahogany doors and thick

carpets, with its deferential darky servants, some of whom had been the slaves of her great uncle. To Honora, gifted with imagination, the house had an odour all its own; a rich, clean odour significant, in later life, of wealth and luxury and spotless housekeeping. And she knew it from top to bottom. The spacious upper floor, which in ordinary dwellings would have been an attic, was the realm of young George and his sisters, Edith and Mary (Aunt Mary's namesake). Rainy Saturdays, all too brief, Honora had passed there, when the big dolls' house in the playroom became the scene of domestic dramas which Edith rehearsed after she went to bed, although Mary took them more calmly. In his tenderer years, Honora even fired George, and riots occurred which took the combined efforts of Cousin Eleanor and Mammy Lucy to quell. It may be remarked, in passing, that Cousin Eleanor looked with suspicion upon this imaginative gift of Honora's, and had several serious conversations with Aunt Mary on the subject.

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It was true, in a measure, that Honora quickened to life everything she touched, and her arrival in Wayland Square was invariably greeted with shouts of joy. There was no doll on which she had not bestowed a history, and by dint of her insistence their pasts clung to them with all the reality of a fate not by any means to be lived down. If George rode the huge rocking-horse, he was Paul Revere, or some equally historic figure, and sometimes, to Edith's terror, he was compelled to assume the role of Bluebeard, when Honora submitted to decapitation with a fortitude amounting to stoicism. Hide and seek was altogether too tame for her, a stake of life and death, or imprisonment or treasure, being a necessity. And many times was Edith extracted from the recesses of the cellar in a condition bordering on hysterics, the day ending tamely with a Bible story or a selection from "Little Women" read by Cousin Eleanor.

In autumn, and again in spring and early summer before the annual departure of the Hanbury family for the sea, the pleasant yard with its wide shade trees and its shrubbery was a land of enchantment threatened by a genie. Black Bias, the family coachman, polishing the fat carriage horses in the stable yard, was the genie; and George the intrepid knight who, spurred by Honora, would dash in and pinch Bias in a part of his anatomy which the honest darky had never seen. An ideal genie, for he could assume an astonishing fierceness at will.

"I'll git you yit, Marse George!"

Had it not been for Honora, her cousins would have found the paradise in which they lived a commonplace spot, and indeed they never could realize its tremendous possibilities in her absence. What would the Mediterranean Sea and its adjoining countries be to us unless the wanderings of Ulysses and AEneas had made them real? And what would Cousin Eleanor's yard have been without Honora? Whatever there was of romance and folklore in Uncle Tom's library Honora had extracted at an early age, and with astonishing ease had avoided that which was dry and uninteresting. The result was a nomenclature for Aunt Eleanor's yard, in which there was even a terra incognita wherefrom venturesome travellers never returned, but were transformed into wild beasts or monkeys.

Although they acknowledged her leadership, Edith and Mary were sorry for Honora, for they knew that if her father had lived she would have had a house and garden like theirs, only larger, and beside a blue sea where it was warm always. Honora had told them so, and colour was lent to her assertions by the fact that their mother, when they repeated this to her, only smiled sadly, and brushed her eyes with her handkerchief. She was even more beautiful when she did so, Edith told her,—a remark which caused Mrs. Hanbury to scan her younger daughter closely; it smacked of Honora.

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“Was Cousin Randolph handsome?” Edith demanded. Mrs. Hanbury started, so vividly there arose before her eyes a brave and dashing figure, clad in grey English cloth, walking by her side on a sunny autumn morning in the Rue de la Paix. Well she remembered that trip abroad with her mother, Randolph’s aunt, and how attentive he was, and showed them the best restaurants in which to dine. He had only been in France a short time, but his knowledge of restaurants and the world in general had been amazing, and his acquaintances legion. He had a way, which there was no resisting, of taking people by storm.

“Yes, dear,” answered Mrs. Hanbury, absently, when the child repeated the question, “he was very handsome.”

“Honora says he would have been President,” put in George. “Of course I don’t believe it. She said they lived in a palace by the sea in the south of France, with gardens and fountains and a lot of things like that, and princesses and princes and eunuchs—”

“And what!” exclaimed Mrs. Hanbury, aghast.

“I know,” said George, contemptuously, “she got that out of the Arabian Nights.” But this suspicion did not prevent him, the next time Honora regaled them with more adventures of the palace by the summer seas, from listening with a rapt attention. No two tales were ever alike. His admiration for Honora did not wane, but increased. It differed from that of his sisters, however, in being a tribute to her creative faculties, while Edith’s breathless faith pictured her cousin as having passed through as many adventures as Queen Esther. George paid her a characteristic compliment, but chivalrously drew her aside to bestow it. He was not one to mince matters.

“You’re a wonder, Honora,” he said. “If I could lie like that, I wouldn’t want a pony.”

He was forced to draw back a little from the heat of the conflagration he had kindled.

“George Hanbury,” she cried, “don’t you ever speak to me again! Never! Do you understand?”

It was thus that George, at some cost, had made a considerable discovery which, for the moment, shook even his scepticism. Honora believed it all herself.

Cousin Eleanor Hanbury was a person, or personage, who took a deep and abiding interest in her fellow-beings, and the old clothes of the Hanbury family went unerringly to the needy whose figures most resembled those of the original owners. For Mrs. Hanbury had a wide but comparatively unknown charity list. She was, secretly, one of the many providence which Honora accepted collectively, although it is by no means certain whether Honora, at this period, would have thanked her cousin for tuition at Miss Farmer’s school, and for her daily tasks at French and music concerning which Aunt

Mary was so particular. On the memorable Christmas morning when, arrayed in green velvet, she arrived with her aunt and uncle for dinner in Wayland Square, Cousin Eleanor drew Aunt Mary into her bedroom and shut the door, and handed her a sealed envelope. Without opening it, but guessing with much accuracy its contents, Aunt Mary handed it back.

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“You are doing too much, Eleanor,” she said.

Mrs. Hanbury was likewise a direct person.

“I will, take it back on one condition, Mary. If you will tell me that Tom has finished paying Randolph’s debts.”

Mrs. Leffingwell was silent.

“I thought not,” said Mrs. Hanbury. “Now Randolph was my own cousin, and I insist.”

Aunt Mary turned over the envelope, and there followed a few moments’ silence, broken only by the distant clamour of tin horns and other musical instruments of the season.

“I sometimes think, Mary, that Honora is a little like Randolph, and-Mrs. Randolph. Of course, I did not know her.”

“Neither did I,” said Aunt Mary.

“Mary,” said Mrs. Hanbury, again, “I realize how you worked to make the child that velvet coat. Do you think you ought to dress her that way?”

“I don’t see why she shouldn’t be as well dressed as the children of my friends, Eleanor.”

Mrs. Hanbury laid her hand impulsively on Aunt Mary’s.

“No child I know of dresses half as well,” said Mrs. Hanbury. “The trouble you take—”

“Is rewarded,” said Aunt Mary.

“Yes,” Mrs. Hanbury agreed. “If my own daughters were half as good looking, I should be content. And Honora has an air of race. Oh, Mary, can’t you see? I am only thinking of the child’s future.”

“Do you expect me to take down all my mirrors, Eleanor? If she has good looks,” said Aunt Mary, “she has not learned it from my lips.”

It was true: Even Aunt Mary’s enemies, and she had some, could not accuse her of the weakness of flattery. So Mrs. Hanbury smiled, and dropped the subject.

CHAPTER IV

OF TEMPERAMENT

We have the word of Mr. Cyrus Meeker that Honora did not have to learn to dance. The art came to her naturally. Of Mr. Cyrus Meeker, whose mustaches, at the age of five and sixty, are waxed as tight as ever, and whose little legs to-day are as nimble as of yore. He has a memory like Mr. Gladstone's, and can give you a social history of the city that is well worth your time and attention. He will tell you how, for instance, he was kicked by the august feet of Mr. George Hanbury on the occasion of his first lesson to that distinguished young gentleman; and how, although Mr. Meeker's shins were sore, he pleaded nobly for Mr. George, who was sent home in the carriage by himself,—a punishment, by the way, which Mr. George desired above all things.

This celebrated incident occurred in the new ballroom at the top of the new house of young Mrs. Hayden, where the meetings of the dancing class were held weekly. Today the soot, like the ashes of Vesuvius, spouting from ten thousand soft-coal craters, has buried that house and the whole district fathoms deep in social obscurity. And beautiful Mrs. Hayden what has become of her? And Lucy Hayden, that doll-like darling of the gods?

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All this belongs, however, to another history, which may some day be written. This one is Honora's, and must be got on with, for it is to be a chronicle of lightning changes. Happy we if we can follow Honora, and we must be prepared to make many friends and drop them in the process.

Shortly after Mrs. Hayden had built that palatial house (which had a high fence around its grounds and a driveway leading to a porte-cochere) and had given her initial ball, the dancing class began. It was on a blue afternoon in late November that Aunt Mary and Honora, with Cousin Eleanor and the two girls, and George sulking in a corner of the carriage, were driven through the gates behind Bias and the fat horses of the Hanburys.

Honora has a vivid remembrance of the impression the house made on her, with its polished floors and spacious rooms filled with a new and mysterious and altogether inspiring fashion of things. Mrs. Hayden represented the outposts in the days of Richardson and Davenport—had Honora but known it. This great house was all so different from anything she (and many others in the city) had ever seen. And she stood gazing into the drawing room, with its curtains and decorously drawn shades, in a rapture which her aunt and cousins were far from guessing.

"Come, Honora," said her aunt. "What's the matter, dear?"

How could she explain to Aunt Mary that the sight of beautiful things gave her a sort of pain—when she did not yet know it herself? There was the massive stairway, for instance, which they ascended, softly lighted by a great leaded window of stained glass on the first landing; and the spacious bedrooms with their shining brass beds and lace spreads (another innovation which Honora resolved to adopt when she married); and at last, far above all, its deep-set windows looking out above the trees towards the park a mile to the westward, the ballroom,—the ballroom, with its mirrors and high chandeliers, and chairs of gilt and blue set against the walls, all of which made no impression whatever upon George and Mary and Edith, but gave Honora a thrill. No wonder that she learned to dance quickly under such an inspiration!

And how pretty Mrs. Hayden looked as she came forward to greet them and kissed Honora! She had been Virginia Grey, and scarce had had a gown to her back when she had married the elderly Duncan Hayden, who had built her this house and presented her with a checkbook,—a check-book which Virginia believed to be like the widow's cruse of oil-unfailing. Alas, those days of picnics and balls; of dinners at that recent innovation, the club; of theatre-parties and excursions to baseball games between the young men in Mrs. Hayden's train (and all young men were) who played at Harvard or Yale or Princeton; those days were too care-free to have endured.

"Aunt Mary," asked Honora, when they were home again in the lamplight of the little sitting-room, "why was it that Mr. Meeker was so polite to Cousin Eleanor, and asked her about my dancing instead of you?"

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Aunt Mary smiled.

“Because, Honora,” she said, “because I am a person of no importance in Mr. Meeker’s eyes.”

“If I were a man,” cried Honora, fiercely, “I should never rest until I had made enough money to make Mr. Meeker wriggle.”

“Honora, come here,” said her aunt, gazing in troubled surprise at the tense little figure by the mantel. “I don’t know what could have put such things into your head, my child. Money isn’t everything. In times of real trouble it cannot save one.”

“But it can save one from humiliation!” exclaimed Honora, unexpectedly. Another sign of a peculiar precociousness, at fourteen, with which Aunt Mary was finding herself unable to cope. “I would rather be killed than humiliated by Mr. Meeker.”

Whereupon she flew out of the room and upstairs, where old Catherine, in dismay, found her sobbing a little later.

Poor Aunt Mary! Few people guessed the spirit which was bound up in her, aching to extend its sympathy and not knowing how, save by an unswerving and undemonstrative devotion. Her words of comfort were as few as her silent deeds were many.

But Honora continued to go to the dancing class, where she treated Mr. Meeker with a hauteur that astonished him, amused Virginia Hayden, and perplexed Cousin Eleanor. Mr. Meeker’s cringing soul responded, and in a month Honora was the leading spirit of the class, led the marches, and was pointed out by the little dancing master as all that a lady should be in deportment and bearing.

This treatment, which succeeded so well in Mr. Meeker’s case, Honora had previously applied to others of his sex. Like most people with a future, she began young. Of late, for instance, Mr. George Hanbury had shown a tendency to regard her as his personal property; for George had a high-handed way with him,—boys being an enigma to his mother. Even in those days he had a bullet head and a red face and square shoulders, and was rather undersized for his age—which was Honora’s.

Needless to say, George did not approve of the dancing class; and let it be known, both by words and deeds, that he was there under protest. Nor did he regard with favour Honora’s triumphal progress, but sat in a corner with several congenial spirits whose feelings ranged from scorn to despair, commenting in loud whispers upon those of his sex to whom the terpsichorean art came more naturally. Upon one Algernon Cartwright, for example, whose striking likeness to the Van Dyck portrait of a young king had been more than once commented upon by his elders, and whose velveteen suits enhanced the resemblance. Algernon, by the way, was the favourite male pupil of Mr. Meeker;

and, on occasions, Algernon and Honora were called upon to give exhibitions for the others, the sight of which filled George with contemptuous rage. Algernon danced altogether too much with Honora,—so George informed his cousin.

The simple result of George's protests was to make Honora dance with Algernon the more, evincing, even at this period of her career, a commendable determination to resent dictation. George should have lived in the Middle Ages, when the spirit of modern American womanhood was as yet unborn. Once he contrived, by main force, to drag her out into the hall.

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“George,” she said, “perhaps, if you’d let me alone perhaps I’d like you better.”

“Perhaps,” he retorted fiercely, “if you wouldn’t make a fool of yourself with those mother’s darlings, I’d like you better.”

“George,” said Honora, “learn to dance.”

“Never!” he cried, but she was gone. While hovering around the door he heard Mrs. Hayden’s voice.

“Unless I am tremendously mistaken, my dear,” that lady was remarking to Mrs. Dwyer, whose daughter Emily’s future millions were powerless to compel youths of fourteen to dance with her, although she is now happily married, “unless I am mistaken, Honora will have a career. The child will be a raving beauty. And she has to perfection the art of managing men.”

“As her father had the art of managing women,” said Mrs. Dwyer. “Dear me, how well I remember Randolph! I would have followed him to—to Cheyenne.”

Mrs. Hayden laughed. “He never would have gone to Cheyenne, I imagine,” she said.

“He never looked at me, and I have reason to be profoundly thankful for it,” said Mrs. Dwyer.

Virginia Hayden bit her lip. She remembered a saying of Mrs. Brice, “Blessed are the ugly, for they shall not be tempted.”

“They say that poor Tom Leffingwell has not yet finished paying his debts,” continued Mrs. Dwyer, “although his uncle, Eleanor Hanbury’s father, cancelled what Randolph had had from him in his will. It was twenty-five thousand dollars. James Hanbury, you remember, had him appointed consul at Nice. Randolph Leffingwell gave the impression of conferring a favour when he borrowed money. I cannot understand why he married that penniless and empty-headed beauty.”

“Perhaps,” said Mrs. Hayden, “it was because of his ability to borrow money that he felt he could afford to.”

The eyes of the two ladies unconsciously followed Honora about the room.

“I never knew a better or a more honest woman than Mary Leffingwell, but I tremble for her. She is utterly incapable of managing that child. If Honora is a complicated mechanism now, what will she be at twenty? She has elements in her which poor Mary never dreamed of. I overheard her with Emily, and she talks like a grown-up person.”

Mrs. Hayden’s dimples deepened.

“Better than some grown-up women,” she said. “She sat in my room while I dressed the other afternoon. Mrs. Leffingwell had sent her with a note about that French governess. And, by the way, she speaks French as though she had lived in Paris.”

Little Mrs. Dwyer raised her hands in protest.

“It doesn’t seem natural, somehow. It doesn’t seem exactly—moral, my dear.”

“Nonsense,” said Mrs. Hayden. “Mrs. Leffingwell is only giving the child the advantages which her companions have—Emily has French, hasn’t she?”

“But Emily can’t speak it—that way,” said Mrs. Dwyer. “I don’t blame Mary Leffingwell. She thinks she is doing her duty, but it has always seemed to me that Honora was one of those children who would better have been brought up on bread and butter and jam.”

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“Honora would only have eaten the jam,” said Mrs. Hayden. “But I love her.”

“I, too, am fond of the child, but I tremble for her. I am afraid she has that terrible thing which is called temperament.”

George Hanbury made a second heroic rush, and dragged Honora out once more.

“What is this disease you’ve got?” he demanded.

“Disease?” she cried; “I haven’t any disease.”

“Mrs Dwyer says you have temperament, and that it is a terrible thing.”

Honora stopped him in a corner.

“Because people like Mrs. Dwyer haven’t got it,” she declared, with a warmth which George found inexplicable.

“What is it?” he demanded.

“You’ll never know, either, George,” she answered; “it’s soul.”

“Soul!” he repeated; “I have one, and its immortal,” he added promptly.

In the summer, that season of desolation for Honora, when George Hanbury and Algernon Cartwright and other young gentlemen were at the seashore learning to sail boats and to play tennis, Peter Erwin came to his own. Nearly every evening after dinner, while the light was still lingering under the shade trees of the street, and Aunt Mary still placidly sewing in the wicker chair on the lawn, and Uncle Tom making the tour of flowers with his watering pot, the gate would slam, and Peter’s tall form appear.

It never occurred to Honora that had it not been for Peter those evenings would have been even less bearable than they were. To sit indoors with a light and read in a St. Louis midsummer was not to be thought of. Peter played backgammon with her on the front steps, and later on—chess. Sometimes they went for a walk as far as Grand Avenue. And sometimes when Honora grew older—she was permitted to go with him to Uhrig’s Cave. Those were memorable occasions indeed!

What Saint Louisan of the last generation does not remember Uhrig’s Cave? nor look without regret upon the thing which has replaced it, called a Coliseum? The very name, Uhrig’s Cave, sent a shiver of delight down one’s spine, and many were the conjectures one made as to what might be enclosed in that half a block of impassible brick wall, over which the great trees stretched their branches. Honora, from comparative infancy, had her own theory, which so possessed the mind of Edith Hanbury that she would not look at the wall when they passed in the carriage. It was a still and sombre place by

day; and sometimes, if you listened, you could hear the whisperings of the forty thieves on the other side of the wall. But no one had ever dared to cry “Open, Sesame!” at the great wooden gates.

At night, in the warm season, when well brought up children were at home or at the seashore, strange things were said to happen at Uhrig’s Cave.

Honora was a tall slip of a girl of sixteen before it was given her to know these mysteries, and the Ali Baba theory a thing of the past. Other theories had replaced it. Nevertheless she clung tightly to Peter’s arm as they walked down Locust Street and came in sight of the wall. Above it, and under the big trees, shone a thousand glittering lights: there was a crowd at the gate, and instead of saying, “Open, Sesame,” Peter slipped two bright fifty-cent pieces to the red-faced German ticketman, and in they went.

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First and most astounding of disillusions of passing childhood, it was not a cave at all! And yet the word “disillusion” does not apply. It was, after all, the most enchanting and exciting of spots, to make one’s eye shine and one’s heart beat. Under the trees were hundreds of tables surrounded by hovering ministering angels in white, and if you were German, they brought you beer; if American, ice-cream. Beyond the tables was a stage, with footlights already set and orchestra tuning up, and a curtain on which was represented a gentleman making decorous love to a lady beside a fountain. As in a dream, Honora followed Peter to a table, and he handed her a programme.

“Oh, Peter,” she cried, “it’s going to be ’Pinafore’!”

Honora’s eyes shone like stars, and elderly people at the neighbouring tables turned more than once to smile at her that evening. And Peter turned more than once and smiled too. But Honora did not consider Peter. He was merely Providence in one of many disguises, and Providence is accepted by his beneficiaries as a matter of fact.

The rapture of a young lady of temperament is a difficult thing to picture. The bird may feel it as he soars, on a bright August morning, high above amber cliffs jutting out into indigo seas; the novelist may feel it when the four walls of his room magically disappear and the profound secrets of the universe are on the point of revealing themselves. Honora gazed, and listened, and lost herself. She was no longer in Uhrig’s Cave, but in the great world, her soul a-quiver with harmonies.

“Pinafore,” although a comic opera, held something tragic for Honora, and opened the flood-gates to dizzy sensations which she did not understand. How little Peter, who drummed on the table to the tune of:

> “Give three cheers and one cheer more
> For the hearty captain of the Pinafore,”

imagined what was going on beside him! There were two factors in his pleasure; he liked the music, and he enjoyed the delight of Honora.

What is Peter? Let us cease looking at him through Honora’s eyes and taking him like daily bread, to be eaten and not thought about. From one point of view, he is twenty-nine and elderly, with a sense of humour unsuspected by young persons of temperament. Strive as we will, we have only been able to see him in his role of Providence, or of the piper. Has he no existence, no purpose in life outside of that perpetual gentleman in waiting? If so, Honora has never considered it.

After the finale had been sung and the curtain dropped for the last time, Honora sighed and walked out of the garden as one in a trance. Once in a while, as he found a way for them through the crowd, Peter glanced down at her, and something like a smile tugged

at the corners of a decidedly masculine mouth, and lit up his eyes. Suddenly, at Locust Street, under the lamp, she stopped and surveyed him. She saw

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a very real, very human individual, clad in a dark nondescript suit of clothes which had been bought ready-made, and plainly without the bestowal of much thought, on Fifth Street. The fact that they were a comparative fit was in itself a tribute to the enterprise of the Excelsior Clothing Company, for Honora's observation that he was too long one way had been just. He was too tall, his shoulders were too high, his nose too prominent, his eyes too deep-set; and he wore a straw hat with the brim turned up.

To Honora his appearance was as familiar as the picture of the Pope which had always stood on Catherine's bureau. But to-night, by grace of some added power of vision, she saw him with new and critical eyes. She was surprised to discover that he was possessed of a quality with which she had never associated him—youth. Not to put it too strongly—comparative youth.

"Peter," she demanded, "why do you dress like that?"

"Like what?" he said.

Honora seized the lapel of his coat.

"Like that," she repeated. "Do you know, if you wore different clothes, you might almost be distinguished looking. Don't laugh. I think it's horrid of you always to laugh when I tell you things for your own good."

"It was the idea of being almost distinguished looking that—that gave me a shock," he assured her repentantly.

"You should dress on a different principle," she insisted.

Peter appeared dazed.

"I couldn't do that," he said.

"Why not?"

"Because—because I don't dress on any principle now."

"Yes, you do," said Honora, firmly. "You dress on the principle of the wild beasts and fishes. It's all in our natural history at Miss Farmer's. The crab is the colour of the seaweed, and the deer of the thicket. It's a device of nature for the protection of weak things."

Peter drew himself up proudly.

“I have always understood, Miss Leffingwell, that the king of beasts was somewhere near the shade of the jungle.”

Honora laughed in spite of this apparent refutation of her theory of his apparel, and shook her head.

“Do be serious, Peter. You’d make much more of an impression on people if you wore clothes that had—well, a little more distinction.”

“What’s the use of making an impression if you can’t follow it up?” he said.

“You can,” she declared. “I never thought of it until to-night, but you must have a great deal in you to have risen all the way from an errand boy in the bank to a lawyer.”

“Look out!” he cautioned her; “I shall become insupportably conceited.”

“A little more conceit wouldn’t hurt you,” said Honora, critically. “You’ll forgive me, Peter, if I tell you from time to time what I think. It’s for your own good.”

“I try to realize that,” replied Peter, humbly. “How do you wish me to dress—like Mr. Rossiter?”

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The picture evoked of Peter arrayed like Mr. Harland Rossiter, who had sent flowers to two generations and was preparing to send more to a third, was irresistible. Every city, hamlet, and village has its Harland Rossiter. He need not be explained. But Honora soon became grave again.

“No, but you ought to dress as though you were somebody, and different from the ordinary man on the street.”

“But I’m not,” objected Peter.

“Oh,” cried Honora, “don’t you want to be? I can’t understand any man not wanting to be. If I were a man, I wouldn’t stay here a day longer than I had to.”

Peter was silent as they went in at the gate and opened the door, for on this festive occasion they were provided with a latchkey. He turned up the light in the hall to behold a transformation quite as wonderful as any contained in the “Arabian Nights” or Keightley’s “Fairy Mythology.” This was not the Honora with whom he had left the house scarce three hours before! The cambric dress, to be sure, was still no longer than the tops of her ankles and the hair still hung in a heavy braid down her back. These were positively all that remained of the original Honora, and the change had occurred in the incredibly brief space required for the production of the opera “Pinafore.” This Honora was a woman in a strange and disturbing state of exaltation, whose eyes beheld a vision. And Peter, although he had been the subject of her conversation, well knew that he was not included in the vision. He smiled a little as he looked at her. It is becoming apparent that he is one of those unfortunate unimaginative beings incapable of great illusions.

“You’re not going!” she exclaimed.

He glanced significantly at the hall clock.

“Why, it’s long after bedtime, Honora.”

“I don’t want to go to bed. I feel like talking,” she declared. “Come, let’s sit on the steps awhile. If you go home, I shan’t go to sleep for hours, Peter.”

“And what would Aunt Mary say to me?” he inquired.

“Oh, she wouldn’t care. She wouldn’t even know it.”

He shook his head, still smiling.

“I’d never be allowed to take you to Uhrig’s Cave, or anywhere else, again,” he replied. “I’ll come to-morrow evening, and you can talk to me then.”

“I shan’t feel like it then,” she said in a tone that implied his opportunity was now or never. But seeing him still obdurate, with startling suddenness she flung her arms mound his neck—a method which at times had succeeded marvellously—and pleaded coaxingly: “Only a quarter of an hour, Peter. I’ve got so many things to say, and I know I shall forget them by to-morrow.”

It was a night of wonders. To her astonishment the hitherto pliant Peter, who only existed in order to do her will, became transformed into a brusque masculine creature which she did not recognize. With a movement that was almost rough he released himself and fled, calling back a “good night” to her out of the darkness. He did not even wait to assist her in the process of locking up. Honora, profoundly puzzled, stood for a while in the doorway gazing out into the night. When at length she turned, she had forgotten him entirely.

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It was true that she did not sleep for hours, and on awaking the next morning another phenomenon awaited her. The “little house under the hill” was immeasurably shrunken. Poor Aunt Mary, who did not understand that a performance of “Pinafore” could give birth to the unfulfilled longings which result in the creation of high things, spoke to Uncle Tom a week later concerning an astonishing and apparently abnormal access of industry.

“She’s been reading all day long, Tom, or else shut up in her room, where Catherine tells me she is writing. I’m afraid Eleanor Hanbury is right when she says I don’t understand the child. And yet she is the same to me as though she were my own.”

It was true that Honora was writing, and that the door was shut, and that she did not feel the heat. In one of the bookcases she had chanced upon that immortal biography of Dr. Johnson, and upon the letters of another prodigy of her own sex, Madame d’Arblay, whose romantic debut as an authoress was inspiration in itself. Honora actually quivered when she read of Dr. Johnson’s first conversation with Miss Burney. To write a book of the existence of which even one’s own family did not know, to publish it under a nom de plume, and to awake one day to fetes and fame would be indeed to live!

Unfortunately Honora’s novel no longer exists, or the world might have discovered a second Evelina. A regard for truth compels the statement that it was never finished. But what rapture while the fever lasted! Merely to take up the pen was to pass magically through marble portals into the great world itself.

The Sir Charles Grandison of this novel was, needless to say, not Peter Erwin. He was none other than Mr. Randolph Leffingwell, under a very thin disguise.

CHAPTER V

IN WHICH PROVIDENCE BEEPS FAITH

Two more years have gone by, limping in the summer and flying in the winter, two more years of conquests. For our heroine appears to be one of the daughters of Helen, born to make trouble for warriors and others —and even for innocent bystanders like Peter Erwin. Peter was debarred from entering those brilliant lists in which apparel played so great a part. George Hanbury, Guy Rossiter, Algernon Cartwright, Eliphalet Hopper Dwyer—familiarly known as “Hoppy”—and other young gentlemen whose names are now but memories, each had his brief day of triumph. Arrayed like Solomon in wonderful clothes from the mysterious and luxurious East, they returned at Christmas-tide and Easter from college to break lances over Honora. Let us say it boldly—she was like that: she had the world-old knack of sowing discord and despair in the souls of young men. She was—as those who had known that fascinating gentleman were not slow to remark—Randolph Leffingwell over again.

During the festival seasons, Uncle Tom averred, they wore out the latch on the front gate. If their families possessed horses to spare, they took Honora driving in Forest Park; they escorted her to those anomalous dances peculiar to their innocent age, which are neither children's parties nor full-fledged balls; their presents, while of no intrinsic value—as one young gentleman said in a presentation speech—had an enormous, if shy, significance.

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“What a beautiful ring you are wearing, Honora,” Uncle Tom remarked slyly one April morning at breakfast; “let me see it.”

Honora blushed, and hid her hand under the table-cloth.

And the ring-suffice it to say that her little finger was exactly insertable in a ten-cent piece from which everything had been removed but the milling: removed with infinite loving patience by Mr. Rossiter, and at the expense of much history and philosophy and other less important things, in his college bedroom at New Haven. Honora wore it for a whole week; a triumph indeed for Mr. Rossiter; when it was placed in a box in Honora’s bedroom, which contained other gifts—not all from him—and many letters, in the writing of which learning had likewise suffered. The immediate cause of the putting away of this ring was said to be the renowned Clinton Howe, who was on the Harvard football eleven, and who visited Mr. George Hanbury that Easter. Fortunate indeed the tailor who was called upon to practise his art on an Adonis like Mr. Howe, and it was remarked that he scarcely left Honora’s side at the garden party and dance which Mrs. Dwyer gave in honour of the returning heroes, on the Monday of Easter week.

This festival, on which we should like to linger, but cannot, took place at the new Dwyer residence. For six months the Victorian mansion opposite Uncle Tom’s house had been sightless, with blue blinds drawn down inside the plate glass windows. And the yellow stone itself was not so yellow as it once had been, but had now the appearance of soiled manilla wrapping paper, with black streaks here and there where the soot had run. The new Dwyer house was of grey stone, Georgian and palatial, with a picture-gallery twice the size of the old one; a magnificent and fitting pioneer in a new city of palaces.

Westward the star of Empire—away from the smoke. The Dwyer mansion, with its lawns and gardens and heavily balustraded terrace, faced the park that stretched away like a private estate to the south and west. That same park with its huge trees and black forests that was Ultima Thule in Honora’s childhood; in the open places there had been real farms and hayricks which she used to slide down with Peter while Uncle Tom looked for wild flowers in the fields. It had been separated from the city in those days by an endless country road, like a Via Claudia stretching towards mysterious Germanian forests, and it was deemed a feat for Peter to ride thither on his big-wheeled bicycle. Forest Park was the country, and all that the country represented in Honora’s childhood. For Uncle Tom on a summer’s day to hire a surrey at Braintree’s Livery Stable and drive thither was like—to what shall that bliss be compared in these days when we go to Europe with indifference?

And now Lindell Road—the Via Claudia of long, ago—had become Lindell Boulevard, with granitoid sidewalks. And the dreary fields through which it had formerly run were bristling with new houses in no sense Victorian, and which were the first stirrings of a national sense of the artistic. The old horse-cars with the clanging chains had

disappeared, and you could take an electric to within a block of the imposing grille that surrounded the Dwyer grounds. Westward the star!

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Fading fast was the glory of that bright new district on top of the second hill from the river where Uncle Tom was a pioneer. Soot had killed the pear trees, the apricots behind the lattice fence had withered away; asphalt and soot were slowly sapping the vitality of the maples on the sidewalk; and sometimes Uncle Tom's roses looked as though they might advantageously be given a coat of paint, like those in Alice in Wonderland. Honora should have lived in the Dwyers' mansion-people who are capable of judging said so. People who saw her at the garden party said she had the air of belonging in such surroundings much more than Emily, whom even budding womanhood had not made beautiful. And Eliphalet Hopper Dwyer, if his actions meant anything, would have welcomed her to that house, or built her another twice as fine, had she deigned to give him the least encouragement.

Cinderella! This was what she facetiously called herself one July morning of that summer she was eighteen.

Cinderella in more senses than one, for never had the city seemed more dirty or more deserted, or indeed, more stifling. Winter and its festivities were a dream laid away in moth balls. Surely Cinderella's life had held no greater contrasts! To this day the odour of matting brings back to Honora the sense of closed shutters; of a stifling south wind stirring their slats at noonday; the vision of Aunt Mary, cool and placid in a cambric sacque, sewing by the window in the upper hall, and the sound of fruit venders crying in the street, or of ragmen in the alley—"Rags, bottles, old iron!" What memories of endless, burning, lonely days come rushing back with those words!

When the sun had sufficiently heated the bricks of the surrounding houses in order that he might not be forgotten during the night, he slowly departed. If Honora took her book under the maple tree in the yard, she was confronted with that hideous wooden sign "To Let" on the Dwyer's iron fence opposite, and the grass behind it was unkempt and overgrown with weeds. Aunt Mary took an unceasing and (to Honora's mind) morbid interest in the future of that house.

"I suppose it will be a boarding-house," she would say, "it's much too large for poor people to rent, and only poor people are coming into this district now."

"Oh, Aunt Mary!"

"Well, my dear, why should we complain? We are poor, and it is appropriate that we should live among the poor. Sometimes I think it is a pity that you should have been thrown all your life with rich people, my child. I am afraid it has made you discontented. It is no disgrace to be poor. We ought to be thankful that we have everything we need."

Honora put down her sewing. For she had learned to sew—Aunt Mary had insisted upon that, as well as French. She laid her hand upon her aunt's.

“I am thankful,” she said, and her aunt little guessed the intensity of the emotion she was seeking to control, or imagined the hidden fires. “But sometimes—sometimes I try to forget that we are poor. Perhaps —some day we shall not be.”

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It seemed to Honora that Aunt Mary derived a real pleasure from the contradiction of this hope. She shook her head vigorously.

“We shall always be, my child. Your Uncle Tom is getting old, and he has always been too honest to make a great deal of money. And besides,” she added, “he has not that kind of ability.”

Uncle Tom might be getting old, but he seemed to Honora to be of the same age as in her childhood. Some people never grow old, and Uncle Tom was one of these. Fifteen years before he had been promoted to be the cashier of the Prairie Bank, and he was the cashier to-day. He had the same quiet smile, the same quiet humour, the same calm acceptance of life. He seemed to bear no grudge even against that ever advancing enemy, the soot, which made it increasingly difficult for him to raise his flowers. Those which would still grow he washed tenderly night and morning with his watering-pot. The greatest wonders are not at the ends of the earth, but near us. It was to take many years for our heroine to realize this.

Strong faith alone could have withstood the continued contact with such a determined fatalism as Aunt Mary’s, and yet it is interesting to note that Honora’s belief in her providence never wavered. A prince was to come who was to bear her away from the ragmen and the boarding-houses and the soot: and incidentally and in spite of herself, Aunt Mary was to come too, and Uncle Tom. And sometimes when she sat reading of an evening under the maple, her book would fall to her lap and the advent of this personage become so real a thing that she bounded when the gate slammed —to find that it was only Peter.

It was preposterous, of course, that Peter should be a prince in disguise. Peter who, despite her efforts to teach him distinction in dress, insisted upon wearing the same kind of clothes. A mild kind of providence, Peter, whose modest functions were not unlike those of the third horse which used to be hitched on to the street car at the foot of the Seventeenth-Street hill: it was Peter’s task to help pull Honora through the interminable summers. Uhrig’s Cave was an old story now: mysteries were no longer to be expected in St. Louis. There was a great panorama—or something to that effect—in the wilderness at the end of one of the new electric lines, where they sometimes went to behold the White Squadron of the new United States Navy engaged in battle with mimic forts on a mimic sea, on the very site where the country place of Madame Clement had been. The mimic sea, surrounded by wooden stands filled with common people eating peanuts and popcorn, was none other than Madame Clement’s pond, which Honora remembered as a spot of enchantment. And they went out in the open cars with these same people, who stared at Honora as though she had got in by mistake, but always politely gave her a seat. And Peter thanked them. Sometimes he fell into conversations with them, and it was noticeable that they nearly always shook hands with him at parting. Honora did not approve of this familiarity.

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“But they may be clients some day,” he argued—a frivolous answer to which she never deigned to reply.

Just as one used to take for granted that third horse which pulled the car uphill, so Peter was taken for granted. He might have been on the highroad to a renown like that of Chief Justice Marshall, and Honora had been none the wiser.

“Well, Peter,” said Uncle Tom at dinner one evening of that memorable summer, when Aunt Mary was helping the blackberries, and incidentally deploring that she did not live in the country, because of the cream one got there, “I saw Judge Brice in the bank to-day, and he tells me you covered yourself with glory in that iron foundry suit.”

“The Judge must have his little joke, Mr. Leffingwell,” replied Peter, but he reddened nevertheless.

Honora thought winning an iron foundry suit a strange way to cover one’s self with glory. It was not, at any rate, her idea of glory. What were lawyers for, if not to win suits? And Peter was a lawyer.

“In five years,” said Uncle Tom, “the firm will be ‘Brice and Erwin’. You mark my words. And by that time,” he added, with a twinkle in his eye, “you’ll be ready to marry Honora.”

“Tom,” reproved Aunt Mary, gently, “you oughtn’t to say such things.”

This time there was no doubt about Peter’s blush. He fairly burned. Honora looked at him and laughed.

“Peter is meant for an old bachelor,” she said.

“If he remains a bachelor,” said Uncle Tom, “he’ll be the greatest waste of good material I know of. And if you succeed in getting him, Honora, you’ll be the luckiest young woman of my acquaintance.”

“Tom,” said Aunt Mary, “it was all very well to talk that way when Honora was a child. But now—she may not wish to marry Peter. And Peter may not wish to marry her.”

Even Peter joined in the laughter at this literal and characteristic statement of the case.

“It’s more than likely,” said Honora, wickedly. “He hasn’t kissed me for two years.”

“Why, Peter,” said Uncle Tom, “you act as though it were warm to-night. It was only seventy when we came in to dinner.”

“Take me out to the park,” commanded Honora.

“Tom,” said Aunt Mary, as she stood on the step and watched them cross the street, “I wish the child would marry him. Not now, of course,” she added hastily,—a little frightened by her own admission, “but later. Sometimes I worry over her future. She needs a strong and sensible man. I don’t understand Honora. I never did. I always told you so. Sometimes I think she may be capable of doing something foolish like—like Randolph.”

Uncle Tom patted his wife on the shoulder.

“Don’t borrow trouble, Mary,” he said, smiling a little. “The child is only full of spirits. But she has a good heart. It is only human that she should want things that we cannot give her.”

“I wish,” said Aunt Mary, “that she were not quite so good-looking.”

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Uncle Tom laughed. “You needn’t tell me you’re not proud of it,” he declared.

“And I have given her,” she continued, “a taste for dress.”

“I think, my dear,” said her husband, “that there were others who contributed to that.”

“It was my own vanity. I should have combated the tendency in her,” said Aunt Mary.

“If you had dressed Honora in calico, you could not have changed her,” replied Uncle Tom, with conviction.

In the meantime Honora and Peter had mounted the electric car, and were speeding westward. They had a seat to themselves, the very first one on the “grip”—that survival of the days of cable cars. Honora’s eyes brightened as she held on to her hat, and the stray wisps of hair about her neck stirred in the breeze.

“Oh, I wish we would never stop, until we came to the Pacific Ocean!” she exclaimed.

“Would you be content to stop then?” he asked. He had a trick of looking downward with a quizzical expression in his dark grey eyes.

“No,” said Honora. “I should want to go on and see everything in the world worth seeing. Sometimes I feel positively as though I should die if I had to stay here in St. Louis.”

“You probably would die—eventually,” said Peter.

Honora was justifiably irritated.

“I could shake you, Peter!”

He laughed.

“I’m afraid it wouldn’t do any good,” he answered.

“If I were a man,” she proclaimed, “I shouldn’t stay here. I’d go to New York—I’d be somebody—I’d make a national reputation for myself.”

“I believe you would,” said Peter sadly, but with a glance of admiration.

“That’s the worst of being a woman—we have to sit still until something happens to us.”

“What would you like to happen?” he asked, curiously. And there was a note in his voice which she, intent upon her thoughts, did not remark.

“Oh, I don’t know,” she said; “anything—anything to get out of this rut and be something in the world. It’s dreadful to feel that one has power and not be able to use it.”

The car stopped at the terminal. Thanks to the early hour of Aunt Mary’s dinner, the western sky was still aglow with the sunset over the forests as they walked past the closed grille of the Dwyer mansion into the park. Children rolled on the grass, while mothers and fathers, tired out from the heat and labour of a city day, sat on the benches. Peter stooped down and lifted a small boy, painfully thin, who had fallen, weeping, on the gravel walk. He took his handkerchief and wiped the scratch on the child’s forehead.

“There, there!” he said, smiling, “it’s all right now. We must expect a few tumbles.”

The child looked at him, and suddenly smiled through his tears.

The father appeared, a red-headed Irishman.

“Thank you, Mr. Erwin; I’m sure it’s very kind of you, sir, to bother with him,” he said gratefully. “It’s that thin he is with the heat, I take him out for a bit of country air.”

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“Why, Tim, it’s you, is it?” said Peter. “He’s the janitor of our building down town,” he explained to Honora, who had remained a silent witness to this simple scene. She had been, in spite of herself, impressed by it, and by the mingled respect and affection in the janitor’s manner towards Peter. It was so with every one to whom he spoke. They walked on in silence for a few moments, into a path leading to a lake, which had stolen the flaming green-gold of the sky.

“I suppose,” said Honora, slowly, “it would be better for me to wish to be contented where I am, as you are. But it’s no use trying, I can’t.”

Peter was not a preacher.

“Oh,” he said, “there are lots of things I want.”

“What?” demanded Honora, interested. For she had never conceived of him as having any desires whatever.

“I want a house like Mr. Dwyer’s,” he declared, pointing at the distant imposing roof line against the fading eastern sky.

Honora laughed. The idea of Peter wishing such a house was indeed ridiculous. Then she became grave again.

“There are times when you seem to forget that I have at last grown up, Peter. You never will talk over serious things with me.”

“What are serious things?” asked Peter.

“Well,” said Honora vaguely, “ambitions, and what one is going to make of themselves in life. And then you make fun of me by saying you want Mr. Dwyer’s house.” She laughed again. “I can’t imagine you in that house!”

“Why not?” he asked, stopping beside the pond and thrusting his hands in his pockets. He looked very solemn, but she knew he was smiling inwardly.

“Why—because I can’t,” she said, and hesitated. The question had forced her to think about Peter. “I can’t imagine you living all alone in all that luxury. It isn’t like you.”

“Why I all alone?” asked Peter.

“Don’t—Don’t be ridiculous,” she said; “you wouldn’t build a house like that, even if you were twice as rich as Mr. Dwyer. You know you wouldn’t. And you’re not the marrying kind,” she added, with the superior knowledge of eighteen.

“I’m waiting for you, Honora,” he announced.

“You know I love you, Peter,”—so she tempered her reply, for Honora’s feelings were tender. What man, even Peter, would not have married her if he could? Of course he was in earnest, despite his bantering tone, “but I never could—marry you.”

“Not even if I were to offer you a house like Mr. Dwyer’s?” he said. A remark which betrayed—although not to her—his knowledge of certain earthly strains in his goddess.

The colours faded from the water, and it blackened.

As they walked on side by side in the twilight, a consciousness of repressed masculine force, of reserve power, which she had never before felt about Peter Erwin, invaded her; and she was seized with a strange uneasiness. Ridiculous was the thought (which she lost no time in rejecting) that pointed out the true road to happiness in marrying such a man as he. In the gathering darkness she slipped her hand through his arm.

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“I wish I could marry you, Peter,” she said.

He was fain to take what comfort he could from this expression of good-will. If he was not the Prince Charming of her dreams, she would have liked him to be. A little reflection on his part ought to have shown him the absurdity of the Prince Charming having been there all the time, and in ready-made clothes. And he, too, may have had dreams. We are not concerned with them.

……

If we listen to the still, small voice of realism, intense longing is always followed by disappointment. Nothing should have happened that summer, and Providence should not have come disguised as the postman. It was a sultry day in early September-which is to say that it was comparatively cool—a blue day, with occasional great drops of rain spattering on the brick walk. And Honora was reclining on the hall sofa, reading about Mr. Ibbetson and his duchess, when she perceived the postman’s grey uniform and smiling face on the far side of the screen door. He greeted her cordially, and gave her a single letter for Aunt Mary, and she carried it unsuspectingly upstairs.

“It’s from Cousin Eleanor,” Honora volunteered.

Aunt Mary laid down her sewing, smoothed the ruffles of her sacque, adjusted her spectacles, opened the envelope, and began to read. Presently the letter fell to her lap, and she wiped her glasses and glanced at Honora, who was deep in her book once more. And in Honora’s brain, as she read, was ringing the refrain of the prisoner:

“Orleans, Beaugency!
Notre Dame de Clery!
Vendome! Vendome!
Quel chagrin, quel ennui
De compter toute la nuit
Les heures, les heures!”.

The verse appealed to Honora strangely; just as it had appealed to Ibbetson. Was she not, too, a prisoner. And how often, during the summer days and nights, had she listened to the chimes of the Pilgrim Church near by?

“One, two, three, four!
One, two, three, four!”

After Uncle Tom had watered his flowers that evening, Aunt Mary followed him upstairs and locked the door of their room behind her. Silently she put the letter in his hand. Here is one paragraph of it:

“I have never asked to take the child from you in the summer, because she has always been in perfect health, and I know how lonely you would have been without her, my dear Mary. But it seems to me that a winter at Sutcliffe, with my, girls, would do her a world of good just now. I need not point out to you that Honora is, to say the least, remarkably good looking, and that she has developed very rapidly. And she has, in spite of the strict training you have given her, certain ideas and ambitions which seem to me, I am sorry to say, more or less prevalent among young American women these days. You know it is only because I love her that I am so frank. Miss Turner’s influence will, in my opinion, do much to counteract these tendencies.”

Uncle Tom folded the letter, and handed it back to his wife.

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“I feel that we ought not to refuse, Tom. And I am afraid Eleanor is right.”

“Well, Mary, we’ve had her for seventeen years. We ought to be willing to spare her for—how many months?”

“Nine,” said Aunt Mary, promptly. She had counted them. “And Eleanor says she will be home for two weeks at Christmas. Seventeen years! It seems only yesterday when we brought her home, Tom. It was just about this time of day, and she was asleep in your arms, and Bridget opened the door for us.” Aunt Mary looked out of the window. “And do you remember how she used to play under the maple there, with her dolls?”

Uncle Tom produced a very large handkerchief, and blew his nose.

“There, there, Mary,” he said, “nine months, and two weeks out at Christmas. Nine months in eighteen years.”

“I suppose we ought to be very thankful,” said Aunt Mary. “But, Tom, the time is coming soon—”

“Tut tut,” exclaimed Uncle Tom. He turned, and his eyes beheld a work of art. Nothing less than a porcelain plate, hung in brackets on the wall, decorated by Honora at the age of ten with wild roses, and presented with much ceremony on an anniversary morning. He pretended not to notice it, but Aunt Mary’s eyes were too quick. She seized a photograph on her bureau, a photograph of Honora in a little white frock with a red sash.

“It was the year that was taken, Tom.”

He nodded. The scene at the breakfast table came back to him, and the sight of Catherine standing respectfully in the hall, and of Honora, in the red sash, making the courtesy the old woman had taught her.

Honora recalled afterwards that Uncle Tom joked even more than usual that evening at dinner. But it was Aunt Mary who asked her, at length, how she would like to go to boarding-school. Such was the matter-of-fact manner in which the portentous news was announced.

“To boarding-school, Aunt Mary?”

Her aunt poured out her uncle’s after-dinner coffee.

“I’ve spilled some, my dear. Get another saucer for your uncle.”

Honora went mechanically to the china closet, her heart thumping. She did not stop to reflect that it was the rarest of occurrences for Aunt Mary to spill the coffee.

“Your Cousin Eleanor has invited you to go this winter with Edith and Mary to Sutcliffe.”

Sutcliffe! No need to tell Honora what Sutcliffe was—her cousins had talked of little else during the past winter; and shown, if the truth be told, just a little commiseration for Honora. Sutcliffe was not only a famous girls’ school, Sutcliffe was the world—that world which, since her earliest remembrances, she had been longing to see and know. In a desperate attempt to realize what had happened to her, she found herself staring hard at the open china closet, at Aunt Mary’s best gold dinner set resting on the pink lace paper that had been changed only last week. That dinner set, somehow, was always an augury of festival—when, on the rare occasions Aunt Mary entertained, the little dining room was transformed by it and the Leffingwell silver into a glorified and altogether unrecognizable state, in which any miracle seemed possible.

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Honora pushed back her chair.

Her lips were parted.

“Oh, Aunt Mary, is it really true that I am going?” she said.

“Why,” said Uncle Tom, “what zeal for learning!”

“My dear,” said Aunt Mary, who, you may be sure, knew all about that school before Cousin Eleanor’s letter came, “Miss Turner insists upon hard work, and the discipline is very strict.”

“No young men,” added Uncle Tom.

“That,” declared Aunt Mary, “is certainly an advantage.”

“And no chocolate cake, and bed at ten o’clock,” said Uncle Tom.

Honora, dazed, only half heard them. She laughed at Uncle Tom because she always had, but tears were shining in her eyes. Young men and chocolate cake! What were these privations compared to that magic word Change? Suddenly she rose, and flung her arms about Uncle Tom’s neck and kissed his rough cheek, and then embraced Aunt Mary. They would be lonely.

“Aunt Mary, I can’t bear to leave you—but I do so want to go! And it won’t be for long—-will it? Only until next spring.”

“Until next summer, I believe,” replied Aunt Mary, gently; “June is a summer month-isn’t it, Tom?”

“It will be a summer month without question next year,” answered Uncle Tom, enigmatically.

It has been remarked that that day was sultry, and a fine rain was now washing Uncle Tom’s flowers for him. It was he who had applied that term “washing” since the era of ultra-soot. Incredible as it may seem, life proceeded as on any other of a thousand rainy nights. The lamps were lighted in the sitting-room, Uncle Tom unfolded his gardening periodical, and Aunt Mary her embroidery. The gate slammed, with its more subdued, rainy-weather sound.

“It’s Peter,” said Honora, flying downstairs. And she caught him, astonished, as he was folding his umbrella on the step. “Oh, Peter, if you tried until to-morrow morning, you never could guess what has happened.”

He stood for a moment, motionless, staring at her, a tall figure, careless of the rain.

“You are going away,” he said.

“How did you guess it?” she exclaimed in surprise. “Yes—to boarding-school. To Sutcliffe, on the Hudson, with Edith and Mary. Aren’t you glad? You look as though you had seen a ghost.”

“Do I?” said Peter.

“Don’t stand there in the rain,” commanded Honora; “come into the parlour, and I’ll tell you all about it.”

He came in. She took the umbrella from him, and put it in the rack.

“Why don’t you congratulate me?” she demanded.

“You’ll never come back,” said Peter.

“What a horrid thing to say! Of course I shall come back. I shall come back next June, and you’ll be at the station to meet me.”

And—what will Uncle Tom and Aunt Mary do—without you?”

“Oh,” said Honora, “I shall miss them dreadfully. And I shall miss you, Peter.”

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“Very much?” he asked, looking down at her with such a queer expression. And his voice, too, sounded queer. He was trying to smile.

Suddenly Honora realized that he was suffering, and she felt the pangs of contrition. She could not remember the time when she had been away from Peter, and it was natural that he should be stricken at the news. Peter, who was the complement of all who loved and served her, of Aunt Mary and Uncle Tom and Catherine, and who somehow embodied them all. Peter, the eternally dependable.

She found it natural that the light should be temporarily removed from his firmament while she should be at boarding-school, and yet in the tenderness of her heart she pitied him. She put her hands impulsively upon his shoulders as he stood looking at her with that queer expression which he believed to be a smile.

“Peter, you dear old thing, indeed I shall miss you! I don’t know what I shall do without you, and I’ll write to you every single week.”

Gently he disengaged her arms. They were standing under that which, for courtesy’s sake, had always been called the chandelier. It was in the centre of the parlour, and Uncle Tom always covered it with holly and mistletoe at Christmas.

“Why do you say I’ll never come back?” asked Honora. “Of course I shall come back, and live here all the rest of my life.”

Peter shook his head slowly. He had recovered something of his customary quizzical manner.

“The East is a strange country,” he said. “The first thing we know you’ll be marrying one of those people we read about, with more millions than there are cars on the Olive Street line.”

Honora was a little indignant.

“I wish you wouldn’t talk so, Peter,” she said. “In the first place, I shan’t see any but girls at Sutcliffe. I could only see you for a few minutes once a week if you were there. And in the second place, it isn’t exactly—Well—dignified to compare the East and the West the way you do, and speak about people who are very rich and live there as though they were different from the people we know here. Comparisons, as Shakespeare said, are odorous.”

“Honora,” he declared, still shaking his head, “you’re a fraud, but I can’t help loving you.”

For a long time that night Honora lay in bed staring into the darkness, and trying to realize what had happened. She heard the whistling and the puffing of the trains in the

cinder-covered valley to the southward, but the quality of these sounds had changed. They were music now.

CHAPTER VI

HONORA HAS A GLIMPSE OF THE WORLD

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It is simply impossible to give any adequate notion of the industry of the days that followed. No sooner was Uncle Tom out of the house in the morning than Anne Rory marched into the sitting-room and took command, and turned it, into a dressmaking establishment. Anne Rory, who deserves more than a passing mention, one of the institutions of Honora's youth, who sewed for the first families, and knew much more about them than Mr. Meeker, the dancing-master. If you enjoyed her confidence,—as Aunt Mary did,—she would tell you of her own accord who gave their servants enough to eat, and who didn't. Anne Rory was a sort of inquisition all by herself, and would have made a valuable chief of police. The reputations of certain elderly gentlemen of wealth might have remained to this day intact had it not been for her; she had a heaven-sent knack of discovering peccadilloes. Anne Rory knew the gentlemen by sight, and the gentlemen did not know Anne Rory. Uncle Tom she held to be somewhere in the calendar of the saints.

There is not time, alas, to linger over Anne Rory or the new histories which she whispered to Aunt Mary when Honora was out of the room. At last the eventful day of departure arrived. Honora's new trunk—her first—was packed by Aunt Mary's own hands, the dainty clothes and the dresses folded in tissue paper, while old Catherine stood sniffing by. After dinner—sign of a great occasion—a carriage came from Braintree's Livery Stable, and Uncle Tom held the horses while the driver carried out the trunk and strapped it on. Catherine, Mary Ann, and Bridget, all weeping, were kissed good-by, and off they went through the dusk to the station. Not the old Union Depot, with its wooden sheds, where Honora had gone so often to see the Hanburys off, that grimy gateway to the fairer regions of the earth. This new station, of brick and stone and glass and tiles, would hold an army corps with ease. And when they alighted at the carriage entrance, a tall figure came forward out of the shadow. It was Peter, and he had a package under his arm. Peter checked Honora's trunk, and Peter had got the permission—through Judge Brice—which enabled them all to pass through the grille and down the long walk beside which the train was standing.

They entered that hitherto mysterious conveyance, a sleeping-car, and spoke to old Mrs. Stanley, who was going East to see her married daughter, and who had gladly agreed to take charge of Honora. Afterwards they stood on the platform, but in spite of the valiant efforts of Uncle Tom and Peter, conversation was a mockery.

"Honora," said Aunt Mary, "don't forget that your trunk key is in the little pocket on the left side of your bag."

"No, Aunt Mary."

"And your little New Testament at the bottom. And your lunch is arranged in three packages. And don't forget to ask Cousin Eleanor about the walking shoes, and to give her my note."

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Cries reverberated under the great glass dome, and trains pulled out with deafening roars. Honora had a strange feeling, as of pressure from within, that caused her to take deep breaths of the smoky air. She but half heard what was being said to her: she wished that the train would go, and at the same time she had a sudden, surprising, and fierce longing to stay. She had been able to eat scarcely a mouthful of that festal dinner which Bridget had spent the afternoon in preparing, comprised wholly of forbidden dishes of her childhood, for which Bridget and Aunt Mary were justly famed. Such is the irony of life. Visions of one of Aunt Mary's rare lunch-parties and of a small girl peeping covetously through a crack in the dining-room door, and of the gold china set, rose before her. But she could not eat.

"Bread and jam and tea at Miss Turner's," Uncle Tom had said, and she had tried to smile at him.

And now they were standing on the platform, and the train might start at any moment.

"I trust you won't get like the New Yorkers, Honora," said Aunt Mary. "Do you remember how stiff they were, Tom?" She was still in the habit of referring to that memorable trip when they had brought Honora home. "And they say now that they hold their heads higher than ever."

"That," said Uncle Tom, gravely, "is a local disease, and comes from staring at the tall buildings."

"Uncle Tom!"

Peter presented the parcel under his arm. It was a box of candy, and very heavy, on which much thought had been spent.

"They are some of the things you like," he said, when he had returned from putting it in the berth.

"How good of you, Peter! I shall never be able to eat all that."

"I hope there is a doctor on the train," said Uncle Tom.

"Yassah," answered the black porter, who had been listening with evident relish, "right good doctah—Doctah Lov'ring."

Even Aunt Mary laughed.

"Peter," asked Honora, "can't you get Judge Brice to send you on to New York this winter on law business? Then you could come up to Sutcliffe to see me."

"I'm afraid of Miss Turner," declared Peter.

“Oh, she wouldn’t mind you,” exclaimed Honora. “I could say you were an uncle. It would be almost true. And perhaps she would let you take me down to New York for a matinee.”

“And how about my ready-made clothes?” he said, looking down at her. He had never forgotten that.

Honora laughed.

“You don’t seem a bit sorry that I’m going,” she replied, a little breathlessly. “You know I’d be glad to see you, if you were in rags.”

“All aboard!” cried the porter, grinning sympathetically.

Honora threw her arms around Aunt Mary and clung to her. How small and frail she was! Somehow Honora had never realized it in all her life before.

“Good-by, darling, and remember to put on your thick clothes on the cool days, and write when you get to New York.”

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Then it was Uncle Tom's turn. He gave her his usual vigorous hug and kiss.

"It won't be long until Christmas," he whispered, and was gone, helping Aunt Mary off the train, which had begun to move.

Peter remained a moment.

"Good-by, Honora. I'll write to you often and let you know how they are. And perhaps—you'll send me a letter once in a while."

"Oh, Peter, I will," she cried. "I can't bear to leave you—I didn't think it would be so hard—"

He held out his hand, but she ignored it. Before he realized what had happened to him she had drawn his face to hers, kissed it, and was pushing him off the train. Then she watched from the, platform the three receding figures in the yellow smoky light until the car slipped out from under the roof into the blackness of the night. Some faint, premonitory divination of what they represented of immutable love in a changing, heedless, selfish world came to her; rocks to which one might cling, successful or failing, happy or unhappy. For unconsciously she thought of them, all three, as one, a human trinity in which her faith had never been betrayed. She felt a warm moisture on her cheeks, and realized that she was crying with the first real sorrow of her life.

She was leaving them—for what? Honora did not know. There had been nothing imperative in Cousin Eleanor's letter. She need not have gone if she had not wished. Something within herself, she felt, was impelling her. And it is curious to relate that, in her mind, going to school had little or nothing to do with her journey. She had the feeling of faring forth into the world, and she had known all along that it was destined she should. What was the cause of this longing to break the fetters and fly away? fetters of love, they seemed to her now—and were. And the world which she had seen afar, filled with sunlit palaces, seemed very dark and dreary to her to-night.

"The lady's asking for you, Miss," said the porter.

She made a heroic attempt to talk to Mrs. Stanley. But at the sight of Peter's candy, when she opened it, she was blinded once more. Dear Peter! That box was eloquent with the care with which he had studied her slightest desires and caprices. Marrons glaces, and Langtrys, and certain chocolates which had received the stamp of her approval—and she could not so much as eat one! The porter made the berths. And there had been a time when she had asked nothing more of fate than to travel in a sleeping-car! Far into the night she lay wide awake, dry-eyed, watching the lamp-lit streets of the little towns they passed, or staring at the cornfields and pastures in the darkness; thinking of the home she had left, perhaps forever, and wondering whether they were sleeping there; picturing them to-morrow at breakfast without her, and Uncle

Tom leaving for the bank, Aunt Mary going through the silent rooms alone, and dear old Catherine haunting the little chamber where she had slept for seventeen years—almost her lifetime. A hundred vivid scenes of her childhood came back, and familiar objects oddly intruded themselves; the red and green lambrequin on the parlour mantel—a present many years ago from Cousin Eleanor; the what-not, with its funny curly legs, and the bare spot near the lock on the door of the cake closet in the dining room!

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Youth, however, has its recuperative powers. The next day the excitement of the journey held her, the sight of new cities and a new countryside. But when she tried to eat the lunch Aunt Mary had so carefully put up, new memories assailed her, and she went with Mrs. Stanley into the dining car. The September dusk was made lurid by belching steel-furnaces that reddened the heavens; and later, when she went to bed, sharp air and towering contours told her of the mountains. Mountains which her great-grandfather had crossed on horse back, with that very family silver in his saddle-bags which shone on Aunt Mary's table. And then—she awoke with the light shining in her face, and barely had time to dress before the conductor was calling out "Jersey City."

Once more the morning, and with it new and wonderful sensations that dispelled her sorrows; the ferry, the olive-green river rolling in the morning sun, alive with dodging, hurrying craft, each bent upon its destination with an energy, relentlessness, and selfishness of purpose that fascinated Honora. Each, with its shrill, protesting whistle, seemed to say: "My business is the most important. Make way for me." And yet, through them all, towering, stately, imperturbable, a great ocean steamer glided slowly towards the bay, by very might and majesty holding her way serene and undisturbed, on a nobler errand. Honora thrilled as she gazed, as though at last her dream were coming true, and she felt within her the pulse of the world's artery. That irksome sense of spectatorship seemed to fly, and she was part and parcel now of the great, moving things, with sure pinions with which to soar. Standing rapt upon the forward deck of the ferry, she saw herself, not an atom, but one whose going and coming was a thing of consequence. It seemed but a simple step to the deck of that steamer when she, too, would be travelling to the other side of the world, and the journey one of the small incidents of life.

The ferry bumped into its slip, the windlasses sang loudly as they took up the chains, the gates folded back, and Honora was forced with the crowd along the bridge-like passage to the right. Suddenly she saw Cousin Eleanor and the girls awaiting her.

"Honora," said Edith, when the greetings were over and they were all four in the carriage, which was making its way slowly across the dirty and irregularly paved open space to a narrow street that opened between two saloons, "Honora, you don't mean to say that Anne Rory made that street dress? Mother, I believe it's better-looking than the one I got at Bremer's."

"It's very simple,", said Honora.

"And she looks fairly radiant," cried Edith, seizing her cousin's hand. "It's quite wonderful, Honora; nobody would ever guess that you were from the West, and that you had spent the whole summer in St. Louis."

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Cousin Eleanor smiled a little as she contemplated Honora, who sat, fascinated, gazing out of the window at novel scenes. There was a colour in her cheeks and a sparkle in her eyes. They had reached Madison Square. Madison Square, on a bright morning in late September, seen for the first time by an ambitious young lady who had never been out of St. Louis! The trimly appointed vehicles, the high-stepping horses, the glittering shops, the well-dressed women and well-groomed men—all had an esprit de corps which she found inspiring. On such a morning, and amidst such a scene, she felt that there was no limit to the possibilities of life.

Until this year, Cousin Eleanor had been a conservative in the matter of hotels, when she had yielded to Edith's entreaties to go to one of the "new ones." Hotels, indeed, that revolutionized transient existence. This one, on the Avenue, had a giant in a long blue livery coat who opened their carriage door, and a hall in yellow and black onyx, and maids and valets. After breakfast, when Honora sat down to write to Aunt Mary, she described the suite of rooms in which they lived,—the brass beds, the electric night lamps, the mahogany French furniture, the heavy carpets, and even the white-tiled bathroom. There was a marvellous arrangement in the walls with which Edith was never tired of playing, a circular plate covered with legends of every conceivable want, from a newspaper to a needle and thread and a Scotch whiskey highball.

At breakfast, more stimulants—of a mental nature, of course. Solomon in all his glory had never broken eggs in such a dining room. It had onyx pillars, too, and gilt furniture, and table after table of the whitest napery stretched from one end of it to the other. The glass and silver was all of a special pattern, and an obsequious waiter handed Honora a menu in a silver frame, with a handle. One side of the menu was in English, and the other in French. All around them were well-dressed, well-fed, prosperous-looking people, talking and laughing in subdued tones as they ate. And Honora had a strange feeling of being one of them, of being as rich and prosperous as they, of coming into a long-deferred inheritance.

The mad excitement of that day in New York is a faint memory now, so much has Honora lived since then. We descendants of rigid Puritans, of pioneer tobacco-planters and frontiersmen, take naturally to a luxury such as the world has never seen—as our right. We have abolished kings, in order that as many of us as possible may abide in palaces. In one day Honora forgot the seventeen years spent in the "little house under the hill," as though these had never been. Cousin Eleanor, with a delightful sense of wrong-doing, yielded to the temptation to adorn her; and the saleswomen, who knew Mrs. Hanbury, made indiscreet-remarks. Such a figure and such a face, and just enough of height! Two new gowns were ordered, to be tried on at Sutcliffe, and as many hats, and an ulster, and heaven knows what else. Memory fails.

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In the evening they went to a new comic opera, and it is the music of that which brings back the day most vividly to Honora's mind.

In the morning they took an early train to Sutcliffe Manors, on the Hudson. It is an historic place. First of all, after leaving the station, you climb through the little town clinging to the hillside; and Honora was struck by the quaint houses and shops which had been places of barter before the Revolution. The age of things appealed to her. It was a brilliant day at the very end of September, the air sharp, and here and there a creeper had been struck crimson. Beyond the town, on the slopes, were other new sights to stimulate the imagination: country houses—not merely houses in the country, but mansions—enticingly hidden among great trees in a way to whet Honora's curiosity as she pictured to herself the blissful quality of the life which their owners must lead. Long, curving driveways led up to the houses from occasional lodges; and once, as though to complete the impression, a young man and two women, superbly mounted, came trotting out of one of these driveways, talking and laughing gayly. Honora took a good look at the man. He was not handsome, but had, in fact, a distinguished and haunting ugliness. The girls were straight-featured and conventional to the last degree.

Presently they came to the avenue of elms that led up to the long, low buildings of the school.

Little more will be necessary, in the brief account of Honora's life at boarding-school, than to add an humble word of praise on the excellence of Miss Turner's establishment. That lady, needless to say, did not advertise in the magazines, or issue a prospectus. Parents were more or less in the situation of the candidates who desired the honour and privilege of whitewashing Tom Sawyer's fence. If you were a parent, and were allowed to confide your daughter to Miss Turner, instead of demanding a prospectus, you gave thanks to heaven, and spoke about it to your friends.

The life of the young ladies, of course, was regulated on the strictest principles. Early rising, prayers, breakfast, studies; the daily walk, rain or shine, under the watchful convoy of Miss Hood, the girls in columns of twos; tennis on the school court, or skating on the school pond. Cotton Mather himself could not have disapproved of the Sundays, nor of the discourse of the elderly Doctor Moale (which you heard if you were not a Presbyterian), although the reverend gentleman was distinctly Anglican in appearance and manners. Sometimes Honora felt devout, and would follow the service with the utmost attention. Her religion came in waves. On the Sundays when the heathen prevailed she studied the congregation, grew to distinguish the local country families; and, if the truth must be told, watched for several Sundays for that ugly yet handsome young man whom she had seen on horseback. But he never appeared, and presently she forgot him.

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Had there been a prospectus (which is ridiculous!), the great secret of Miss Turner's school could not very well have been mentioned in it. The English language, it is to be feared, is not quite flexible enough to mention this secret with delicacy. Did Honora know it? Who can say? Self-respecting young ladies do not talk about such things, and Honora was nothing if not self-respecting.

"*Sutcliffemanors*, October 15th.

"*Dearest aunt Mary*: As I wrote you, I continue to miss you and Uncle Tom dreadfully,—-and dear old Peter, too; and Cathy and Bridget and Mary Ann. And I hate to get up at seven o'clock. And Miss Hood, who takes us out walking and teaches us composition, is such a ridiculously strict old maid—you would laugh at her. And the Sundays are terrible. Miss Turner makes us read the Bible for a whole hour in the afternoon, and reads to us in the evening. And Uncle Tom was right when he said we should have nothing but jam and bread and butter for supper: oh, yes, and cold meat. I am always ravenously hungry. I count the days until Christmas, when I shall have some really good things to eat again. And of course I cannot wait to see you all."I do not mean to give you the impression that I am not happy here, and I never can be thankful enough to dear Cousin Eleanor for sending me. Some of the girls are most attractive. Among others, I have become great friends with Ethel Wing, who is tall and blond and good-looking; and her clothes, though simple, are beautiful. To hear her imitate Miss Turner or Miss Hood or Dr. Moale is almost as much fun as going to the theatre. You must have heard of her father—he is the Mr. Wing who owns all the railroads and other things, and they have a house in Newport and another in New York, and a country place and a yacht."I like Sarah Wycliffe very much. She was brought up abroad, and we lead the French class together. Her father has a house in Paris, which they only use for a month or so in the year: an hotel, as the French call it. And then there is Maude Capron, from Philadelphia, whose father is Secretary of War. I have now to go to my class in English composition, but I will write to you again on Saturday.

"Your loving niece,

"*Honora*."

The Christmas holidays came, and went by like mileposts from the window of an express train. There was a Glee Club: there were dances, and private theatricals in Mrs. Dwyer's new house, in which it was imperative that Honora should take part. There was no such thing as getting up for breakfast, and once she did not see Uncle Tom for two whole days. He asked her where she was staying. It was the first Christmas she remembered spending without Peter. His present appeared, but perhaps it was fortunate, on the whole, that he was in Texas, trying a case. It seemed almost no time at all before she was at the station again, clinging to Aunt Mary: but now the separation was not so hard, and she had Edith and Mary for company, and George, a dignified and responsible sophomore at Harvard.

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Owing to the sudden withdrawal from school of little Louise Simpson, the Cincinnati girl who had shared her room during the first term, Honora had a new room-mate after the holidays, Susan Holt. Susan was not beautiful, but she was good. Her nose turned up, her hair Honora described as a negative colour, and she wore it in defiance of all prevailing modes. If you looked very hard at Susan (which few people ever did), you saw that she had remarkable blue eyes: they were the eyes of a saint. She was neither tall nor short, and her complexion was not all that it might have been. In brief, Susan was one of those girls who go through a whole term at boarding—school without any particular notice from the more brilliant Honoras and Ethel Wings.

In some respects, Susan was an ideal room-mate. She read the Bible every night and morning, and she wrote many letters home. Her ruling passion, next to religion, was order, and she took it upon herself to arrange Honora's bureau drawers. It is needless to say that Honora accepted these ministrations and that she found Susan's admiration an entirely natural sentiment. Susan was self-effacing, and she enjoyed listening to Honora's views on all topics.

Susan, like Peter, was taken for granted. She came from somewhere, and after school was over, she would go somewhere. She lived in New York, Honora knew, and beyond that was not curious. We never know when we are entertaining an angel unawares. One evening, early in May, when she went up to prepare for supper she found Susan sitting in the window reading a letter, and on the floor beside her was a photograph. Honora picked it up. It was the picture of a large country house with many chimneys, taken across a wide green lawn.

"Susan, what's this?"

Susan looked up.

"Oh, it's Silverdale. My brother Joshua took it."

"Silverdale?" repeated Honora.

"It's our place in the country," Susan replied. "The family moved up last week. You see, the trees are just beginning to bud."

Honora was silent a moment, gazing at the picture.

"It's very beautiful, isn't it? You never told me about it."

"Didn't I?" said Susan. "I think of it very often. It has always seemed much more like home to me than our house in New York, and I love it better than any spot I know."

Honora gazed at Susan, who had resumed her reading.

“And you are going there when school is over.”

“Oh, yes,” said Susan; “I can hardly wait.” Suddenly she put down her letter, and looked at Honora.

“And you,” she asked, “where are you going?”

“I don’t know. Perhaps—perhaps I shall go to the sea for a while with my cousins.”

It was foolish, it was wrong. But for the life of her Honora could not say she was going to spend the long hot summer in St. Louis. The thought of it had haunted her for weeks: and sometimes, when the other girls were discussing their plans, she had left them abruptly. And now she was aware that Susan’s blue eyes were fixed upon her, and that they had a strange and penetrating quality she had never noticed before: a certain tenderness, an understanding that made Honora redden and turn.

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“I wish,” said Susan, slowly, “that you would come and stay awhile with me. Your home is so far away, and I don’t know when I shall see you again.”

“Oh, Susan,” she murmured, “it’s awfully good of you, but I’m afraid—I couldn’t.”

She walked to the window, and stood looking out for a moment at the budding trees. Her heart was beating faster, and she was strangely uncomfortable.

“I really don’t expect to go to the sea, Susan,” she said. “You see, my aunt and uncle are all alone in St. Louis, and I ought to go back to them. If—if my father had lived, it might have been different. He died, and my mother, when I was little more than a year old.”

Susan was all sympathy. She slipped her hand into Honora’s.

“Where did he live?” she asked.

“Abroad,” answered Honora. “He was consul at Nice, and had a villa there when he died. And people said he had an unusually brilliant career before him. My aunt and uncle brought me up, and my cousin, Mrs. Hanbury, Edith’s mother, and Mary’s, sent me here to school.”

Honora breathed easier after this confession, but it was long before sleep came to her that night. She wondered what it would be like to visit at a great country house such as Silverdale, what it would be like to live in one. It seemed a strange and cruel piece of irony on the part of the fates that Susan, instead of Honora, should have been chosen for such a life: Susan, who would have been quite as happy spending her summers in St. Louis, and taking excursions in the electric cars: Susan, who had never experienced that dreadful, vacuum-like feeling, who had no ambitious craving to be satisfied. Mingled with her flushes of affection for Susan was a certain queer feeling of contempt, of which Honora was ashamed.

Nevertheless, in the days that followed, a certain metamorphosis seemed to have taken place in Susan. She was still the same modest, self-effacing, helpful roommate, but in Honora’s eyes she had changed —Honora could no longer separate her image from the vision of Silverdale. And, if the naked truth must be told, it was due to Silverdale that Susan owes the honour of her first mention in those descriptive letters from Sutcliffe, which Aunt Mary has kept to this day.

Four days later Susan had a letter from her mother containing an astonishing discovery. There could be no mistake,—Mrs. Holt had brought Honora to this country as a baby.

“Why, Susan,” cried Honora, “you must have been the other baby.”

“But you were the beautiful one,” replied Susan, generously. “I have often heard mother tell about it, and how every one on the ship noticed you, and how Hortense cried when your aunt and uncle took you away. And to think we have been rooming together all these months and did not know that we were really—old friends.

“And Honora, mother says you must come to Silverdale to pay us a visit when school closes. She wants to see you. I think,” added Susan, smiling, “I think she feels responsible, for you. She says that you must give me your aunts address, and that she will write to her.”

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“Oh, I’d so like to go, Susan. And I don’t think Aunt Mary would object ——for a little while.”

Honora lost no time in writing the letter asking for permission, and it was not until after she had posted it that she felt a sudden, sharp regret as she thought of them in their loneliness. But the postponement of her homecoming would only be for a fortnight at best. And she had seen so little!

In due time Aunt Mary’s letter arrived. There was no mention of loneliness in it, only of joy that Honora was to have the opportunity to visit such a place as Silverdale. Aunt Mary, it seems, had seen pictures of it long ago in a magazine of the book club, in an article concerning one of Mrs. Holt’s charities—a model home for indiscreet young women. At the end of the year, Aunt Mary added, she had bought the number of the magazine, because of her natural interest in Mrs. Holt on Honora’s account. Honora cried a little over that letter, but her determination to go to Silverdale was unshaken.

June came at last, and the end of school. The subject of Miss Turner’s annual talk was worldliness. Miss Turner saw signs, she regretted to say, of a lowering in the ideals of American women: of a restlessness, of a desire for what was a false consideration and recognition; for power. Some of her own pupils, alas! were not free from this fault. Ethel Wing, who was next to Honora, nudged her and laughed, and passed her some of Maillard’s chocolates, which she had in her pocket. Woman’s place, continued Miss Turner, was the home, and she hoped they would all make good wives. She had done her best to prepare them to be such. Independence, they would find, was only relative: no one had it completely. And she hoped that none of her scholars would ever descend to that base competition to outdo one’s neighbours, so characteristic of the country to-day.

The friends, and even the enemies, were kissed good-by, with pledges of eternal friendship. Cousin Eleanor Hanbury came for Edith and Mary, and hoped Honora would enjoy herself at Silverdale. Dear Cousin Eleanor! Her heart was large, and her charity unpretentious. She slipped into Honora’s fingers, as she embraced her, a silver-purse with some gold coins in it, and bade her not to forget to write home very often.

“You know what pleasure it will give them, my dear,” she said, as she stepped on the train for New York.

“And I am going home soon, Cousin Eleanor,” replied Honora, with a little touch of homesickness in her voice.

“I know, dear,” said Mrs. Hanbury. But there was a peculiar, almost wistful expression on her face as she kissed Honora again, as of one who assents to a fiction in order to humour a child.

As the train pulled out, Ethel Wing waved to her from the midst of a group of girls on the wide rear platform of the last car. It was Mr. Wing's private car, and was going to Newport.

"Be good, Honora!" she cried.

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A MODERN CHRONICLE

By Winston Churchill

BOOK I.

Volume 2.

CHAPTER VII

THE OLYMPIAN ORDER

Lying back in the chair of the Pullman and gazing over the wide Hudson shining in the afternoon sun, Honora's imagination ran riot until the seeming possibilities of life became infinite. At every click of the rails she was drawing nearer to that great world of which she had dreamed, a world of country houses inhabited by an Olympian order. To be sure, Susan, who sat reading in the chair behind her, was but a humble representative of that order—but Providence sometimes makes use of such instruments. The picture of the tall and brilliant Ethel Wing standing behind the brass rail of the platform of the car was continually recurring to Honora as emblematic: of Ethel, in a blue tailor-made gown trimmed with buff braid, and which fitted her slender figure with military exactness. Her hair, the colour of the yellowest of gold, in the manner of its finish seemed somehow to give the impression of that metal; and the militant effect of the costume had been heightened by a small colonial cocked hat. If the truth be told, Honora had secretly idealized Miss Wing, and had found her insouciance, frankness, and tendency to ridicule delightful. Militant—that was indeed Ethel's note—militant and positive.

"You're not going home with Susan!" she had exclaimed, making a little face when Honora had told her. "They say that Silverdale is as slow as a nunnery—and you're on your knees all the time. You ought to have come to Newport with me."

It was characteristic of Miss Wing that she seemed to have taken no account of the fact that she had neglected to issue this alluring invitation. Life at Silverdale slow! How could it be slow amidst such beauty and magnificence?

The train was stopping at a new little station on which hung the legend, in gold letters, "Sutton." The sun was well on his journey towards the western hills. Susan had touched her on the shoulder.

"Here we are, Honora," she said, and added, with an unusual tremor in her voice, "at last!"

On the far side of the platform a yellow, two-seated wagon was waiting, and away they drove through the village, with its old houses and its sleepy streets and its orchards, and its ancient tavern dating from stage-coach days. Just outside of it, on the tree-dotted slope of a long hill, was a modern brick building, exceedingly practical in appearance, surrounded by spacious grounds enclosed in a paling fence. That, Susan said, was the Sutton Home.

“Your mother’s charity?”

A light came into the girl’s eyes.

“So you have heard of it? Yes, it is the, thing that interests mother more than anything else in the world.”

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“Oh,” said Honora, “I hope she will let me go through it.”

“I’m sure she will want to take you there to-morrow,” answered Susan, and she smiled.

The road wound upwards, by the valley of a brook, through the hills, now wooded, now spread with pastures that shone golden green in the evening light, the herds gathering at the gate-bars. Presently they came to a gothic-looking stone building, with a mediaeval bridge thrown across the stream in front of it, and massive gates flung open. As they passed, Honora had a glimpse of a blue driveway under the arch of the forest. An elderly woman looked out at them through the open half of a leaded lattice.

“That’s the Chamberlin estate,” Susan volunteered. “Mr. Chamberlin has built a castle on the top of that hill.”

Honora caught her breath.

“Are many of the places here like that?” she asked. Susan laughed.

“Some people don’t think the place is very—appropriate,” she contented herself with replying.

A little later, as they climbed higher, other houses could be discerned dotted about the country-side, nearly all of them varied expressions of the passion for a new architecture which seemed to possess the rich. Most of them were in conspicuous positions, and surrounded by wide acres. Each, to Honora, was an inspiration.

“I had no idea there were so many people here,” she said.

“I’m afraid Sutton is becoming fashionable,” answered Susan.

“And don’t you want it to?” asked Honora.

“It was very nice before,” said Susan, quietly.

Honora was silent. They turned in between two simple stone pillars that divided a low wall, overhung from the inside by shrubbery growing under the forest. Susan seized her friend’s hand and pressed it.

“I’m always so glad to get back here,” she whispered. “I hope you’ll like it.”

Honora returned the pressure.

The grey road forked, and forked again. Suddenly the forest came to an end in a sort of premeditated tangle of wild garden, and across a wide lawn the great house loomed against the western sky. Its architecture was of the ’60’s and ’70’s, with a wide porte-

cochere that sheltered the high entrance doors. These were both flung open, a butler and two footmen were standing impassively beside them, and a neat maid within. Honora climbed the steps as in a dream, followed Susan through a hall with a black-walnut, fretted staircase, and where she caught a glimpse of two huge Chinese vases, to a porch on the other side of the house spread with wicker chairs and tables. Out of a group of people at the farther end of this porch arose an elderly lady, who came forward and clasped Susan in her arms.

“And is this Honora? How do you do, my dear? I had the pleasure of knowing you when you were much younger.”

Honora, too, was gathered to that ample bosom. Released, she beheld a lady in a mauve satin gown, at the throat of which a cameo brooch was fastened. Mrs. Holt’s face left no room for conjecture as to the character of its possessor. Her hair, of a silvering blend, parted in the middle, fitted tightly to her head. She wore earrings. In short, her appearance was in every way suggestive of momentum, of a force which the wise would respect.

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“Where are you, Joshua?” she said. “This is the baby we brought from Nice. Come and tell me whether you would recognize her.”

Mr. Holt released his—daughter. He had a mild blue eye, white mutton-chop whiskers, and very thin hands, and his tweed suit was decidedly the worse for wear.

“I can’t say that I should, Elvira,” he replied; “although it is not hard to believe that such a beautiful baby should, prove to be such a—er —good-looking young woman.”

“I’ve always felt very grateful to you for bringing me back,” said Honora.

“Tut, tut, child,” said Mrs. Holt; “there was no one else to do it. And be careful how you pay young women compliments, Joshua. They grow vain enough. By the way, my dear, what ever became of your maternal grandfather, old Mr. Allison—wasn’t that his name?”

“He died when I was very young,” replied Honora.

“He was too fond of the good things of this life,” said Mrs. Holt.

“My dear Elvira!” her husband protested.

“I can’t help it, he was,” retorted that lady. “I am a judge of human nature, and I was relieved, I can tell you, my dear” (to Honora), “when I saw your uncle and aunt on the wharf that morning. I knew that I had confided you to good hands.”

“They have done everything for me, Mrs. Holt,” said Honora.

The good lady patted her approvingly on the shoulder.

“I’m sure of it, my dear,” she said. “And I am glad to see you appreciate it. And now you must renew your acquaintance with the family.”

A sister and a brother, Honora had already learned from Susan, had died since she had crossed the ocean with them. Robert and Joshua, Junior, remained. Both were heavyset, with rather stern faces, both had close-cropped, tan-coloured mustaches and wide jaws, with blue eyes like Susan’s. Both were, with women at least, what the French would call difficult—Robert less so than Joshua. They greeted Honora reservedly and—she could not help feeling—a little suspiciously. And their appearance was something of a shock to her; they did not, somehow, “go with the house,” and they dressed even more carelessly than Peter Erwin. This was particularly true of Joshua, whose low, turned-down collar revealed a porous, brick-red, and extremely virile neck, and whose clothes were creased at the knees and across the back.

As for their wives, Mrs. Joshua was a merry, brown-eyed little lady already inclining to stoutness, and Honora felt at home with her at once. Mrs. Robert was tall and thin, with an olive face and dark eyes which gave the impression of an uncomfortable penetration. She was dressed simply in a shirtwaist and a dark skirt, but Honora thought her striking looking.

The grandchildren, playing on and off the porch, seemed legion, and they were besieging Susan. In reality there were seven of them, of all sizes and sexes, from the third Joshua with a tennis-bat to the youngest who was weeping at being sent to bed, and holding on to her Aunt Susan with desperation. When Honora had greeted them all, and kissed some of them, she was informed that there were two more upstairs, safely tucked away in cribs.

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“I’m sure you love children, don’t you?” said Mrs. Joshua. She spoke impulsively, and yet with a kind of childlike shyness.

“I adore them,” exclaimed Honora.

A trellised arbour (which some years later would have been called a pergola) led from the porch up the hill to an old-fashioned summer-house on the crest. And thither, presently, Susan led Honora for a view of the distant western hills silhouetted in black against a flaming western sky, before escorting her to her room. The vastness of the house, the width of the staircase, and the size of the second-story hall impressed our heroine.

“I’ll send a maid to you later, dear,” Susan said. “If you care to lie down for half an hour, no one will disturb you. And I hope you will be comfortable.”

Comfortable! When the door had closed, Honora glanced around her and sighed, “comfort” seemed such a strangely inadequate word. She was reminded of the illustrations she had seen of English country houses. The bed alone would almost have filled her little room at home. On the farther side, in an alcove, was a huge dressing-table; a fire was laid in the grate of the marble mantel, the curtains in the bay window were tightly drawn, and near by was a lounge with a reading-light. A huge mahogany wardrobe occupied one corner; in another stood a pier glass, and in another, near the lounge, was a small bookcase filled with books. Honora looked over them curiously. “Robert Elsmere” and a life of Christ, “Mr. Isaacs,” a book of sermons by an eminent clergyman, “Innocents Abroad,” Hare’s “Walks in Rome,” “When a Man’s Single,” by Barrie, a book of meditations, and “Organized Charities for Women.”

Adjoining the bedroom was a bathroom in proportion, evidently all her own,—with a huge porcelain tub and a table set with toilet bottles containing liquids of various colours.

Dreamily, Honora slipped on the new dressing-gown Aunt Mary had made for her, and took a book out of the bookcase. It was the volume of sermons. But she could not read: she was forever looking about the room, and thinking of the family she had met downstairs. Of course, when one lived in a house like this, one could afford to dress and act as one liked. She was aroused from her reflections by the soft but penetrating notes of a Japanese gong, followed by a gentle knock on the door and the entrance of an elderly maid, who informed her it was time to dress for dinner.

“If you’ll excuse me, Miss,” said that hitherto silent individual when the operation was completed, “you do look lovely.”

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Honora, secretly, was of that opinion too as she surveyed herself in the long glass. The simple summer silk, of a deep and glowing pink, rivalled the colour in her cheeks, and contrasted with the dark and shining masses of her hair; and on her neck glistened a little pendant of her mother's jewels, which Aunt Mary, with Cousin Eleanor's assistance, had had set in New York. Honora's figure was that of a woman of five and twenty: her neck was a slender column, her head well set, and the look of race, which had been hers since childhood, was at nineteen more accentuated. All this she saw, and went down the stairs in a kind of exultation. And when on the threshold of the drawing-room she paused, the conversation suddenly ceased. Mr. Holt and his sons got up somewhat precipitately, and Mrs. Holt came forward to meet her.

"I hope you weren't waiting for me," said Honora, timidly.

"No indeed, my dear," said Mrs. Holt. Tucking Honora's hand under her arm, she led the way majestically to the dining-room, a large apartment with a dimly lighted conservatory at the farther end, presided over by the decorous butler and his assistants. A huge chandelier with prisms hung over the flowers at the centre of the table, which sparkled with glass and silver, while dishes of vermilion and yellow fruits relieved the whiteness of the cloth. Honora found herself beside Mr. Holt, who looked more shrivelled than ever in his evening clothes. And she was about to address him when, with a movement as though to forestall her, he leaned forward convulsively and began a mumbling grace.

The dinner itself was more like a ceremony than a meal, and as it proceeded, Honora found it increasingly difficult to rid herself of a curious feeling of being on probation.

Joshua, who sat on her other side and ate prodigiously, scarcely addressed a word to her; but she gathered from his remarks to his father and brother that he was interested in cows. And Mr. Holt was almost exclusively occupied in slowly masticating the special dishes which the butler impressively laid before him. He asked her a few questions about Miss Turner's school, but it was not until she had admired the mass of peonies in the centre of the table that his eyes brightened, and he smiled.

"You like flowers?" he asked.

"I love them," slid Honora.

"I am the gardener here," he said. "You must see my garden, Miss Leffingwell. I am in it by half-past six every morning, rain or shine."

Honora looked up, and surprised Mrs. Robert's eyes fixed on her with the same strange expression she had noticed on her arrival. And for some senseless reason, she flushed.

The conversation was chiefly carried on by kindly little Mrs. Joshua and by Mrs. Holt, who seemed at once to preside and to dominate. She praised Honora's gown, but left a lingering impression that she thought her overdressed, without definitely saying so. And she made innumerable—and often embarrassing—inquiries about Honora's aunt and uncle, and her life in St. Louis, and her friends there, and how she had happened to go to Sutcliffe to school. Sometimes Honora blushed, but she answered them all good-naturedly. And when at length the meal had marched sedately down to the fruit, Mrs. Holt rose and drew Honora out of the dining room.

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“It is a little hard on you, my dear,” she said, “to give you so much family on your arrival. But there are some other people coming to-morrow, when it will be gayer, I hope, for you and Susan.”

“It is so good of you and Susan to want me, Mrs. Holt,” replied Honora, “I am enjoying it so much. I have never been in a big country house like this, and I am glad there is no one else here. I have heard my aunt speak of you so often, and tell how kind you were to take charge of me, that I have always hoped to know you sometime or other. And it seems the strangest of coincidences that I should have roomed with Susan at Sutcliffe.”

“Susan has grown very fond of you,” said Mrs. Holt, graciously. “We are very glad to have you, my dear, and I must own that I had a curiosity to see you again. Your aunt struck me as a good and sensible woman, and it was a positive relief to know that you were to be confided to her care.” Mrs. Holt, however, shook her head and regarded Honora, and her next remark might have been taken as a clew to her thoughts. “But we are not very gay at Silverdale, Honora.”

Honora’s quick intuition detected the implication of a frivolity which even her sensible aunt had not been able to eradicate.

“Oh, Mrs. Holt,” she cried, “I shall be so happy here, just seeing things and being among you. And I am so interested in the little bit I have seen already. I caught a glimpse of your girls’ home on my way from the station. I hope you will take me there.”

Mrs. Holt gave her a quick look, but beheld in Honora’s clear eyes only eagerness and ingenuousness.

The change in the elderly lady’s own expression, and incidentally in the atmosphere which enveloped her, was remarkable.

“Would you really like to go, my dear?”

“Oh, yes indeed,” cried Honora. “You see, I have heard so much of it, and I should like to write my aunt about it. She is interested in the work you are doing, and she has kept a magazine with an article in it, and a picture of the institution.”

“Dear me!” exclaimed the lady, now visibly pleased. “It is a very modest little work, my dear. I had no idea that—out in St. Louis—that the beams of my little candle had carried so far. Indeed you shall see it, Honora. We will go down the first thing in the morning.”

Mrs. Robert, who had been sitting on the other side of the room, rose abruptly and came towards them. There was something very like a smile on her face,—although it wasn’t really a smile—as she bent over and kissed her mother-in-law on the cheek.

“I am glad to hear you are interested in—charities, Miss Leffingwell,” she said.

Honora’s face grew warm.

“I have not so far had very much to do with them, I am afraid,” she answered.

“How should she?” demanded Mrs. Holt. “Gwendolen, you’re not going up already?”

“I have some letters to write,” said Mrs. Robert.

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“Gwen has helped me immeasurably,” said Mrs. Holt, looking after the tall figure of her daughter-in-law, “but she has a curious, reserved character. You have to know her, my dear. She is not at all like Susan, for instance.”

Honora awoke the next morning to a melody, and lay for some minutes in a delicious semi-consciousness, wondering where she was. Presently she discovered that the notes were those of a bird on a tree immediately outside of her window—a tree of wonderful perfection, the lower branches of which swept the ground. Other symmetrical trees, of many varieties, dotted a velvet lawn, which formed a great natural terrace above the forested valley of Silver Brook. On the grass, dew-drenched cobwebs gleamed in the early sun, and the breeze that stirred the curtains was charged with the damp, fresh odours of the morning. Voices caught her ear, and two figures appeared in the distance. One she recognized as Mr. Holt, and the other was evidently a gardener. The gilt clock on the mantel pointed to a quarter of seven.

It is far too late in this history to pretend that Honora was, by preference, an early riser, and therefore it must have been the excitement caused by her surroundings that made her bathe and dress with alacrity that morning. A housemaid was dusting the stairs as she descended into the empty hall. She crossed the lawn, took a path through the trees that bordered it, and came suddenly upon an old-fashioned garden in all the freshness of its early morning colour. In one of the winding paths she stopped with a little exclamation. Mr. Holt rose from his knees in front of her, where he had been digging industriously with a trowel. His greeting, when contrasted with his comparative taciturnity at dinner the night before, was almost effusive—and a little pathetic.

“My dear young lady,” he exclaimed, “up so early?” He held up forbiddingly a mould-covered palm. “I can’t shake hands with you.”

Honora laughed.

“I couldn’t resist the temptation to see your garden,” she said.

A gentle light gleamed in his blue eyes, and he paused before a trellis of June roses. With his gardening knife he cut three of them, and held them gallantly against her white gown. Her sensitive colour responded as she thanked him, and she pinned them deftly at her waist.

“You like gardens?” he said.

“I was brought up with them,” she answered; “I mean,” she corrected herself swiftly, “in a very modest way. My uncle is passionately fond of flowers, and he makes our little yard bloom with them all summer. But of course,” Honora added, “I’ve never seen anything like this.”

“It has been a life work,” answered Mr. Holt, proudly, “and yet I feel as though I had not yet begun. Come, I will show you the peonies—they are at their best—before I go in and make myself respectable for breakfast.”

Ten minutes later, as they approached the house in amicable and even lively conversation, they beheld Susan and Mrs. Robert standing on the steps under the porte-cochere, watching them.

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“Why, Honora,” cried Susan, “how energetic you are! I actually had a shock when I went to your room and found you’d gone. I’ll have to write Miss Turner.”

“Don’t,” pleaded Honora; “you see, I had every inducement to get up.”

“She has been well occupied,” put in Mr. Holt. “She has been admiring my garden.”

“Indeed I have,” said Honora.

“Oh, then, you have won father’s heart!” cried Susan. Gwendolen Holt smiled. Her eyes were fixed upon the roses in Honora’s belt.

“Good morning, Miss Leffingwell,” she said, simply.

Mr. Holt having removed the loam from his hands, the whole family, excepting Joshua, Junior, and including an indefinite number of children, and Carroll, the dignified butler, and Martha, the elderly maid, trooped into the library for prayers. Mr. Holt sat down before a teak-wood table at the end of the room, on which reposed a great, morocco-covered Bible. Adjusting his spectacles, he read, in a mild but impressive voice, a chapter of Matthew, while Mrs. Joshua tried to quiet her youngest. Honora sat staring at a figure on the carpet, uncomfortably aware that Mrs. Robert was still studying her. Mr. Holt closed the Bible reverently, and announced a prayer, whereupon the family knelt upon the floor and leaned their elbows on the seats of their chairs. Honora did likewise, wondering at the facility with which Mr. Holt worded his appeal, and at the number of things he found to pray for. Her knees had begun to ache before he had finished.

At breakfast such a cheerful spirit prevailed that Honora began almost to feel at home. Even Robert indulged occasionally in raillery.

“Where in the world is Josh?” asked Mrs. Holt, after they were seated.

“I forgot to tell you, mother,” little Mrs. Joshua chirped up, “that he got up at an unearthly hour, and went over to Grafton to look at a cow.”

“A cow!” sighed Mrs: Holt. “Oh, dear, I might have known it. You must understand, Honora, that every member of the Holt family has a hobby. Joshua’s is Jerseys.”

“I’m sure I should adore them if I lived in the country,” Honora declared.

“If you and Joshua would only take that Sylvester farm, and build a house, Annie,” said Mr. Holt, munching the dried bread which was specially prepared for him, “I should be completely happy. Then,” he added, turning to Honora, “I should have both my sons settled on the place. Robert and Gwen are sensible in building.”

“It’s cheaper to live with you, granddad,” laughed Mrs. Joshua. “Josh says if we do that, he has more money to buy cows.”

At this moment a footman entered, and presented Mrs. Holt with some mail on a silver tray.

“The Vicomte de Toqueville is coming this afternoon, Joshua,” she announced, reading rapidly from a sheet on which was visible a large crown. “He landed in New York last week, and writes to know if I could have him.”

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“Another of mother’s menagerie,” remarked Robert.

“I don’t think that’s nice of you, Robert,” said his mother. “The Vicomte was very kind to your father and me in Paris, and invited us to his chateau in Provence.”

Robert was sceptical.

“Are you sure he had one?” he insisted.

Even Mr. Holt laughed.

“Robert,” said his mother, “I wish Gwen could induce you to travel more. Perhaps you would learn that all foreigners aren’t fortune-hunters.”

I’ve had an opportunity to observe the ones who come over here, mother.”

“I won’t have a prospective guest discussed,” Mrs. Holt declared, with finality. “Joshua, you remember my telling you last spring that Martha Spence’s son called on me?” she asked. “He is in business with a man named Dallam, I believe, and making a great deal of money for a young man. He is just a year younger than you, Robert.”

“Do you mean that fat, tow-headed boy that used to come up here and eat melons and ride my pony?” inquired Robert. “Howard Spence?”

Mrs. Holt smiled.

“He isn’t fat any longer, Robert. Indeed, he’s quite good-looking. Since his mother died, I had lost trace of him. But I found a photograph of hers when I was clearing up my desk some months ago, and sent it to him, and he came to thank me. I forgot to tell you that I invited him for a fortnight any time he chose, and he has just written to ask if he may come now. I regret to say that he’s on the Stock Exchange—but I was very fond of his mother. It doesn’t seem to me quite a legitimate business.”

“Why!” exclaimed little Mrs. Joshua, unexpectedly, “I’m given to understand that the Stock Exchange is quite aristocratic in these days.”

“I’m afraid I am old-fashioned, my dear,” said Mrs. Holt, rising. “It has always seemed to me little better than a gambling place. Honora, if you still wish to go to the Girls’ Home, I have ordered the carriage in a quarter of an hour.”

CHAPTER VIII

A CHAPTER OF CONQUESTS

Honora's interest in the Institution was so lively, and she asked so many questions and praised so highly the work with which the indiscreet young women were occupied that Mrs. Holt patted her hand as they drove homeward.

"My dear," she said, "I begin to wish I'd adopted you myself. Perhaps, later on, we can find a husband for you, and you will marry and settle down near us here at Silverdale, and then you can help me with the work."

"Oh, Mrs. Holt," she replied, "I should so like to help you, I mean. And it would be wonderful to live in such a place. And as for marriage, it seems such a long way off that somehow I never think of it."

"Naturally," ejaculated Mrs. Holt, with approval, "a young girl of your age should not. But, my dear, I am afraid you are destined to have many admirers. If you had not been so well brought up, and were not naturally so sensible, I should fear for you."

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“Oh, Mrs. Holt!” exclaimed Honora, deprecatingly, and blushing very prettily.

“Whatever else I am,” said Mrs. Holt, vigorously, “I am not a flatterer. I am telling you something for your own good—which you probably know already.”

Honora was discreetly silent. She thought of the proud and unsusceptible George Hanbury, whom she had cast down from the tower of his sophomore dignity with such apparent ease; and of certain gentlemen at home, young and middle-aged, who had behaved foolishly during the Christmas holidays.

At lunch both the Roberts and the Joshuas were away.

Afterwards, they romped with the children—she and Susan. They were shy at first, especially the third Joshua, but Honora captivated him by playing two sets of tennis in the broiling sun, at the end of which exercise he regarded her with a new-born admiration in his eyes. He was thirteen.

“I didn’t think you were that kind at all,” he said.

“What kind did you think I was?” asked Honora, passing her arm around his shoulder as they walked towards the house.

The boy grew scarlet.

“Oh, I didn’t think you—you could play tennis,” he stammered.

Honora stopped, and seized his chin and tilted his face upward.

“Now, Joshua,” she said, “look at me and say that over again.”

“Well,” he replied desperately, “I thought you wouldn’t want to get all mussed up and hot.”

“That’s better,” said Honora. “You thought I was vain, didn’t you?”

“But I don’t think so any more,” he avowed passionately. “I think you’re a trump. And we’ll play again to-morrow, won’t we?”

“We’ll play any day you like,” she declared.

It is unfair to suppose that the arrival of a real vicomte and of a young, good-looking, and successful member of the New York Stock Exchange were responsible for Honora’s appearance, an hour later, in the embroidered linen gown which Cousin Eleanor had given her that spring. Tea was already in progress on the porch, and if a hush in the conversation and the scraping of chairs is any sign of a sensation, this happened when

our heroine appeared in the doorway. And Mrs. Holt, in the act of lifting the hot-water kettle; put it down again. Whether or not there was approval in the lady's delft-blue eye, Honora could not have said. The Vicomte, with the graceful facility of his race, had differentiated himself from the group and stood before her. As soon as the words of introduction were pronounced, he made a bow that was a tribute in itself, exaggerated in its respect.

"It is a pleasure, Mademoiselle," he murmured, but his eyes were more eloquent.

A description of him in his own language leaped into Honora's mind, so much did he appear to have walked out of one of the many yellow-backed novels she had read. He was not tall, but beautifully made, and his coat was quite absurdly cut in at the waist; his mustache was en-croc, and its points resembled those of the Spanish bayonets in the conservatory: he might have been three and thirty, and he was what the novels described as 'un peu fane' which means that he had seen the world: his eyes were extraordinarily bright, black, and impenetrable.

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A greater contrast to the Vicomte than Mr. Howard Spence would have been difficult to find. He was Honora's first glimpse of Finance, of the powers that travelled in private cars and despatched ships across the ocean. And in our modern mythology, he might have stood for the god of Prosperity. Prosperity is pink, and so was Mr. Spence, in two places, —his smooth-shaven cheeks and his shirt. His flesh had a certain firmness, but he was not stout; he was merely well fed, as Prosperity should be. His features were comparatively regular, his mustache a light brown, his eyes hazel. The fact that he came from that mysterious metropolis, the heart of which is Wall Street, not only excused but legitimized the pink shirt and the neatly knotted green tie, the pepper-and-salt check suit that was loose and at the same time well-fitting, and the jewelled ring on his plump little finger. On the whole, Mr. Spence was not only prepossessing, but he contrived to give Honora, as she shook his hand, the impression of being brought a step nearer to the national source of power. Unlike the Vicomte, he did not appear to have been instantly and mortally wounded upon her arrival on the scene, but his greeting was flattering, and he remained by her side instead of returning to that of Mrs. Robert.

"When did you come up?" he asked.

"Only yesterday," answered Honora.

"New York," said Mr. Spence, producing a gold cigarette case on which his monogram was largely and somewhat elaborately engraved, "New York is played out this time of year—isn't it? I dropped in at Sherry's last night for dinner, and there weren't thirty people there."

Honora had heard of Sherry's as a restaurant where one dined fabulously, and she tried to imagine the cosmopolitan and blissful existence which permitted "dropping in at" such a place. Moreover, Mr. Spence was plainly under the impression that she too "came up" from New York, and it was impossible not to be a little pleased.

"It must be a relief to get into the country," she ventured.

Mr. Spence glanced around him expressively, and then looked at her with a slight smile. The action and the smile—to which she could not refrain from responding—-seemed to establish a tacit understanding between them. It was natural that he should look upon Silverdale as a slow place, and there was something delicious in his taking, for granted that she shared this opinion. She wondered a little wickedly what he would say when he knew the truth about her, and this was the birth of a resolution that his interest should not flag.

"Oh, I can stand the country when it is properly inhabited," he said, and their eyes met in laughter.

"How many inhabitants do you require?" she asked.

“Well,” he said brazenly, “the right kind of inhabitant is worth a thousand of the wrong kind. It is a good rule in business, when you come across a gilt-edged security, to make a specialty of it.”

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Honora found the compliment somewhat singular. But she was prepared to forgive New York a few sins in the matter of commercial slang: New York, which evidently dressed as it liked, and talked as it liked. But not knowing any more of a gilt-edged security than that it was something to Mr. Spence's taste, a retort was out of the question. Then, as though she were doomed that day to complicity, her eyes chanced to encounter an appealing glance from the Vicomte, who was searching with the courage of despair for an English word, which his hostess awaited in stoical silence. He was trying to give his impressions of Silverdale, in comparison to country places abroad, while Mrs. Robert regarded him enigmatically, and Susan sympathetically. Honora had an almost irresistible desire to laugh.

"Ah, Madame," he cried, still looking at Honora, "will you have the kindness to permit me to walk about ever so little?"

"Certainly, Vicomte, and I will go with you. Get my parasol, Susan. Perhaps you would like to come, too, Howard," she added to Mr. Spence; "it has been so long since you were here, and we have made many changes."

"And you, Mademoiselle," said the Vicomte to Honora, you will come—yes? You are interested in landscape?"

"I love the country," said Honora.

"It is a pleasure to have a guest who is so appreciative," said Mrs. Holt. "Miss Leffingwell was up at seven this morning, and in the garden with my husband."

"At seven!" exclaimed the Vicomte; "you American young ladies are wonderful. For example—" and he was about to approach her to enlarge on this congenial theme when Susan arrived with the parasol, which Mrs. Holt put in his hands.

"We'll begin, I think, with the view from the summer house," she said. "And I will show you how our famous American landscape architect, Mr. Olmstead, has treated the slope."

There was something humorous, and a little pathetic in the contrasted figures of the Vicomte and their hostess crossing the lawn in front of them. Mr. Spence paused a moment to light his cigarette, and he seemed to derive infinite pleasure from this juxtaposition.

"Got left,—didn't he?" he said.

To this observation there was, obviously, no answer.

“I’m not very strong on foreigners,” he declared. “An American is good enough for me. And there’s something about that fellow which would make me a little slow in trusting him with a woman I cared for.”

“If you are beginning to worry over Mrs. Holt,” said Honora, “we’d better walk a little faster.”

Mr. Spence’s delight at this sally was so unrestrained as to cause the couple ahead to turn. The Vicomte’s expression was reproachful.

“Where’s Susan?” asked Mrs. Holt.

“I think she must have gone in the house,” Honora answered.

“You two seem to be having a very good time.”

“Oh, we’re hitting it off fairly well,” said Mr. Spence, no doubt for the benefit of the Vicomte. And he added in a confidential tone, “Aren’t we?”

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“Not on the subject of the Vicomte,” she replied promptly. “I like him. I like French people.”

“What!” he exclaimed, halting in his steps, “you don’t take that man seriously?”

“I haven’t known him long enough to take him seriously,” said Honora.

“There’s a blindness about women,” he declared, “that’s incomprehensible. They’ll invest in almost any old thing if the certificates are beautifully engraved. If you were a man, you wouldn’t trust that Frenchman to give you change for five dollars.”

“French people,” proclaimed Honora, “have a light touch of which we Americans are incapable. We do not know how to relax.”

“A light touch!” cried Mr. Spence, delightedly, “that about describes the Vicomte.”

“I’m sure you do him an injustice,” said Honora.

“We’ll see,” said Mr. Spence. “Mrs. Holt is always picking up queer people like that. She’s noted for it.” He turned to her. How did you happen to come here?”

“I came with Susan,” she replied, amusedly, “from boarding-school at Sutcliffe.”

“From boarding-school!”

She rather enjoyed his surprise.

“You don’t mean to say you are Susan’s age?”

“How old did you think I was?” she asked.

“Older than Susan,” he said surveying her.

“No, I’m a mere child, I’m nineteen.”

“But I thought—” he began, and paused and lighted another cigarette.

Her eyes lighted mischievously.

“You thought that I had been out several years, and that I’d seen a good deal of the world, and that I lived in New York, and that it was strange you didn’t know me. But New York is such an enormous place I suppose one can’t know everybody there.”

“And—where do you come from, if I may ask?” he said.

“St. Louis. I was brought to this country before I was two years old, from France. Mrs. Holt brought me. And I have never been out of St. Louis since, except to go to Sutcliffe. There you have my history. Mrs. Holt would probably have told it to you, if I hadn’t.”

“And Mrs. Holt brought you to this country?”

Honora explained, not without a certain enjoyment.

“And how do you happen to be here?” she demanded. “Are you a member of —of the menagerie?”

He had the habit of throwing back his head when he laughed. This, of course, was a thing to laugh over, and now he deemed it audacity. Five minutes before he might have given it another name there is no use in saying that the recital of Honora’s biography had not made a difference with Mr. Howard Pence, and that he was not a little mortified at his mistake. What he had supposed her to be must remain a matter of conjecture. He was, however, by no means aware how thoroughly this unknown and inexperienced young woman had read his thoughts in her regard. And if the truth be told, he was on the whole relieved that she was nobody. He was just an ordinary man, provided with no sixth sense or premonitory small voice to warn him that masculine creatures are often in real danger at the moment when they feel most secure.

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It is certain that his manner changed, and during the rest of the walk she listened demurely when he talked about Wall Street, with casual references to the powers that be. It was evident that Mr. Howard Spence was one who had his fingers on the pulse of affairs. Ambition leaped in him.

They reached the house in advance of Mrs. Holt and the Vicomte, and Honora went to her room.

At dinner, save for a little matter of a casual remark when Mr. Holt had assumed the curved attitude in which he asked grace, Mr. Spence had a veritable triumph. Self-confidence was a quality which Honora admired. He was undaunted by Mrs. Holt, and advised Mrs. Robert, if she had any pin-money, to buy New York Central; and he predicted an era of prosperity which would be unexampled in the annals of the country. Among other powers, he quoted the father of Honora's schoolmate, Mr. James Wing, as authority for this prophecy. He sat next to Susan, who maintained her usual maidenly silence, but Honora, from time to time, and as though by accident, caught his eye. Even Mr. Holt, when not munching his dried bread, was tempted to make some inquiries about the market.

"So far as I am concerned," Mrs. Holt announced suddenly, "nothing can convince me that it is not gambling."

"My dear Elvira!" protested Mr. Holt.

"I can't help it," said that lady, stoutly; "I'm old-fashioned, I suppose. But it seems to me like legalized gambling."

Mr. Spence took this somewhat severe arraignment of his career in admirable good nature. And if these be such a thing as an implied wink, Honora received one as he proceeded to explain what he was pleased to call the bona-fide nature of the transactions of Dallam and Spence.

A discussion ensued in which, to her surprise, even the ordinarily taciturn Joshua took a part, and maintained that the buying and selling of blooded stock was equally gambling. To this his father laughingly agreed. The Vicomte, who sat on Mrs. Holt's right, and who apparently was determined not to suffer a total eclipse without a struggle, gallantly and unexpectedly came to his hostess' rescue, though she treated him as a doubtful ally. This was because he declared with engaging frankness that in France the young men of his monde had a jeunesse: he, who spoke to them, had gambled; everybody gambled in France, where it was regarded as an innocent amusement. He had friends on the Bourse, and he could see no difference in principle between betting on the red at Monte Carlo and the rise and fall of the shares of la Compagnie des Metaux, for example. After completing his argument, he glanced triumphantly about the table, until his

restless black eyes encountered Honora's, seemingly seeking a verdict. She smiled impartially.

The subject of finance lasted through the dinner, and the Vicomte proclaimed himself amazed with the evidences of wealth which confronted him on every side in this marvellous country. And once, when he was at a loss for a word, Honora astonished and enchanted him by supplying it.

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“Ah, Mademoiselle,” he exclaimed, “I was sure when I first beheld you that you spoke my language! And with such an accent!”

“I have studied it all my life, Vicomte,” she said, modestly, “and I had the honour to be born in your country. I have always wished to see it again.”

Monsieur de Toqueville ventured the fervent hope that her wish might soon be gratified, but not before he returned to France. He expressed himself in French, and in a few moments she found herself deep in a discussion with him in that tongue. While she talked, her veins seemed filled with fire; and she was dimly and automatically aware of the disturbance about her, as though she were creating a magnetic storm that interfered with all other communication. Mr. Holt’s nightly bezique, which he played with Susan, did not seem to be going as well as usual, and elsewhere conversation was a palpable pretence. Mr. Spence, who was attempting to entertain the two daughters-in-law, was clearly distrait—if his glances meant anything. Robert and Joshua had not appeared, and Mrs. Holt, at the far end of the room under the lamp, regarded Honora from time to time over the edge of the evening newspaper.

In his capacity as a student of American manners, an unsuspected if scattered knowledge on Honora’s part of that portion of French literature included between Theophile Gautier and Gyp at once dumfounded and delighted the Vicomte de Toqueville. And he was curious to know whether, amongst American young ladies, Miss Leffingwell was the exception or the rule. Those eyes of his, which had paid to his hostess a tender respect, snapped when they spoke to our heroine, and presently he boldly abandoned literature to declare that the fates alone had sent her to Silverdale at the time of his visit.

It was at this interesting juncture that Mrs. Holt rattled her newspaper a little louder than usual, arose majestically, and addressed Mrs. Joshua.

“Annie, perhaps you will play for us,” she said, as she crossed the room, and added to Honora: “I had no idea you spoke French so well, my dear. What have you and Monsieur de Toqueville been talking about?”

It was the Vicomte who, springing to his feet, replied nimbly: “Mademoiselle has been teaching me much of the customs of your country.”

“And what,” inquired Mrs. Holt, “have you been teaching Mademoiselle?”

The Vicomte laughed and shrugged his shoulders expressively.

“Ah, Madame, I wish I were qualified to be her teacher. The education of American young ladies is truly extraordinary.”

“I was about to tell Monsieur de Toqueville,” put in Honora, wickedly, “that he must see your Institution as soon as possible, and the work your girls are doing.”

“Madame,” said the Vicomte, after a scarcely perceptible pause, “I await my opportunity and your kindness.”

“I will take you to-morrow,” said Mrs. Holt.

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At this instant a sound closely resembling a sneeze caused them to turn. Mr. Spence, with his handkerchief to his mouth, had his back turned to them, and was studiously regarding the bookcases.

After Honora had gone upstairs for the night she opened her door in response to a knock, to find Mrs. Holt on the threshold.

“My dear,” said that lady, “I feel that I must say a word to you. I suppose you realize that you are attractive to men.”

“Oh, Mrs. Holt.”

“You’re no fool, my dear, and it goes without saying that you-do realize it—in the most innocent way, of course. But you have had no experience in life. Mind you, I don’t say that the Vicomte de Toqueville isn’t very much of a gentleman, but the French ideas about the relations of young men and young women are quite different and, I regret to say, less innocent than ours. I have no reason to believe that the Vicomte has come to this country to—to mend his fortunes. I know nothing about his property. But my sense of responsibility towards you has led me to tell him that you have no dot, for you somehow manage to give the impression of a young woman of fortune. Not purposely, my dear—I did not mean that.” Mrs. Holt tapped gently Honora’s flaming cheek. “I merely felt it my duty to drop you a word of warning against Monsieur de Toqueville —-because he is a Frenchman.”

“But, Mrs. Holt, I had no idea of—of falling in love with him,” protested Honora, as soon as she could get her breath. He seemed so kind —and so interested in everything.

“I dare say,” said Mrs. Holt, dryly. “And I have always been led to believe that that is the most dangerous sort. I am sure, Honora, after what I have said, you will give him no encouragement.”

“Oh, Mrs. Holt,” cried Honora again, “I shouldn’t think of such a thing!”

“I am sure of it, Honora, now that you are forewarned. And your suggestion to take him to the Institution was not a bad one. I meant to do so anyway, and I think it will be good for him. Good night, my dear.”

After the good lady bad gone, Honora stood for some moments motionless. Then she turned out the light.

CHAPTER IX

IN WHICH THE VICOMTE CONTINUES HIS STUDIES

Mr. Robert Holt, Honora learned at breakfast, had two bobbies. She had never heard of what is called Forestry, and had always believed the wood of her country to be inexhaustible. It had never occurred to her to think of a wild forest as an example of nature's extravagance, and so flattering was her attention while Robert explained the primary principles of caring for trees that he actually offered to show her one of the tracts on the estate which he was treating. He could not,—he regretted to say, take her that morning.

His other hobby was golf. He was president of the Sutton Golf Club, and had arranged to play a match with Mr. Spence. This gentleman, it appeared, was likewise an enthusiast, and had brought to Silverdale a leather bag filled with sticks.

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“Won’t you come, too, Miss Leffingwell?” he said, as he took a second cup of coffee.

Somewhat to the astonishment of the Holt family, Robert seconded the invitation.

“I’ll bet, Robert,” said Mr. Spence, gallantly, “that Miss Leffingwell can put it over both of us.”

“Indeed, I can’t play at all,” exclaimed Honora in confusion. “And I shouldn’t think of spoiling your match. And besides, I am going to drive with Susan.”

“We can go another day, Honora,” said Susan.

But Honora would not hear of it.

“Come over with me this afternoon, then,” suggested Mr. Spence, “and I’ll give you a lesson.”

She thanked him gratefully.

“But it won’t be much fun for you, I’m afraid,” she added, as they left the dining room.

“Don’t worry about me,” he answered cheerfully. He was dressed in a checked golf costume, and wore a pink shirt of a new pattern. And he stood in front of her in the hall, glowing from his night’s sleep, evidently in a high state of amusement.

“What’s the matter?” she demanded.

“You did for the Vicomte all right,” he said. “I’d give a good deal to see him going through the Institution.”

“It wouldn’t have hurt you, either,” she retorted, and started up the stairs. Once she glanced back and saw him looking after her.

At the far end of the second story hall she perceived the Vicomte, who had not appeared at breakfast, coming out of his room. She paused with her hand on the walnut post and laughed a little, so ludicrous was his expression as he approached her.

“Ah, Mademoiselle, que vous etes mechante!” he exclaimed. “But I forgive you, if you will not go off with that stock-broker. It must be that I see the Home sometime, and if I go now it is over. I forgive you. It is in the Bible that we must forgive our neighbour—-how many times?”

“Seventy times seven,” said Honora.

“But I make a condition,” said the Vicomte, “that my neighbour shall be a woman, and young and beautiful. Then I care not how many times. Mademoiselle, if you would but have your portrait painted as you are, with your hand on the post, by Sargent or Carolus Duran, there would be some noise in the Salon.”

“Is that you, Vicomte?” came a voice from the foot of the stairs—Mrs. Holt’s voice.

“I come this instant, Madame,” he replied, looking over the banisters, and added: “malheureux que je suis! Perhaps, when I return, you will show me a little of the garden.”

The duty of exhibiting to guests the sights of Silverdale and the neighbourhood had so often devolved upon Susan, who was methodical, that she had made out a route, or itinerary, for this purpose. There were some notes to leave and a sick woman and a child to see, which caused her to vary it a little that morning; and Honora, who sat in the sunlight and held the horse, wondered how it would feel to play the lady bountiful. “I am so glad to have you all to myself for a little while, Honora,” Susan said to her. “You are so popular that I begin to fear that I shall have to be unselfish, and share you.”

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“Oh, Susan,” she said, “every one has been so kind. And I can’t tell you how much I am enjoying this experience, which I feel I owe to you.”

“I am so happy, dear, that it is giving you pleasure,” said Susan.

“And don’t think,” exclaimed Honora, “that you won’t see lots of me, for you will.”

Her heart warmed to Susan, yet she could not but feel a secret pity for her, as one unable to make the most of her opportunities in the wonderful neighbourhood in which she lived. As they drove through the roads and in and out of the well-kept places, everybody they met had a bow and a smile for her friend—a greeting such as people give to those for whom they have only good-will. Young men and girls waved their racquets at her from the tennis-courts; and Honora envied them and wished that she, too, were a part of the gay life she saw, and were playing instead of being driven decorously about. She admired the trim, new houses in which they lived, set upon the slopes of the hills. Pleasure houses, they seemed to her, built expressly for joys which had been denied her.

“Do you see much of—of these people, Susan?” she asked.

“Not so much as I’d like,” replied Susan, seriously. “I never seem to get time. We nearly always have guests at Silverdale, and then there are so many things one has to attend to. Perhaps you have noticed,” she added, smiling a little, “that we are very serious and old-fashioned.”

“Oh, no indeed,” protested Honora. “It is such a wonderful experience for me to be here!”

“Well,” said Susan, “we’re having some young people to dinner to-night, and others next week—that’s why I’m leaving these notes. And then we shall be a little livelier.”

“Really, Susan, you mustn’t think that I’m not having a good time. It is exciting to be in the same house with a real French Vicomte, and I like Mr. Spence tremendously.”

Her friend was silent.

“Don’t you?” demanded Honora.

To her surprise, the usually tolerant Susan did not wholly approve of Mr. Spence.

“He is a guest, and I ought not to criticise him,” she answered. “But since you ask me, Honora, I have to be honest. It seems to me that his ambitions are a little sordid—that he is too intent upon growing rich.”

“But I thought all New Yorkers were that way,” exclaimed Honora, and added hastily, “except a few, like your family, Susan.”

Susan laughed.

“You should marry a diplomat, my dear,” she said. “After all, perhaps I am a little harsh. But there is a spirit of selfishness and—and of vulgarity in modern, fashionable New York which appears to be catching, like a disease. The worship of financial success seems to be in every one’s blood.”

“It is power,” said Honora.

Susan glanced at her, but Honora did not remark the expression on her friend’s face, so intent was she on the reflections which Susan’s words had aroused. They had reached the far end of the Silverdale domain, and were driving along the shore of the lake that lay like a sapphire set amongst the green hills. It was here that the new house of the Robert Holts was building. Presently they came to Joshua’s dairy farm, and Joshua himself was standing in the doorway of one of his immaculate barn Honora put her hand on Susan’s arm.

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“Can’t we see the cows?” she asked.

Susan looked surprised.

“I didn’t know you were interested in cows, Honora.”

“I am interested in everything,” said Honora: “and I think your brother is so attractive.”

It was at this moment that Joshua, with his hands in his pockets, demanded what his sister was doing there.

“Miss Leffingwell wants to look at the cattle, Josh,” called Susan.

“Won’t you show them to me, Mr. Holt,” begged Honora. “I’d like so much to see some really good cattle, and to know a little more about them.”

Joshua appeared incredulous. But, being of the male sex, he did not hide the fact that he was pleased, “it seems strange to have somebody really want to see them,” he said. “I tried to get Spence to come back this way, but the idea didn’t seem to appeal to him. Here are some of the records.”

“Records?” repeated Honora, looking at a mass of typewritten figures on the wall. “Do you mean to say you keep such an exact account of all the milk you get?”

Joshua laughed, and explained. She walked by his side over the concrete paving to the first of the varnished stalls.

“That,” he said, and a certain pride had come into his voice, “is Lady Guinevere, and those ribbons are the prizes she has taken on both sides of the water.”

“Isn’t she a dear!” exclaimed Honora; “why, she’s actually beautiful. I didn’t know cows could be so beautiful.”

“She isn’t bad,” admitted Joshua. “Of course the good points in a cow aren’t necessarily features of beauty for instance, these bones here,” he added, pointing to the hips.

“But they seem to add, somehow, to the thoroughbred appearance,” Honora declared.

“That’s absolutely true,” replied Joshua,—whereupon he began to talk. And Honora, still asking questions, followed him from stall to stall. “There are some more in the pasture,” he said, when they had reached the end of the second building.

“Oh, couldn’t I see them?” she asked.

“Surely,” replied Joshua, with more of alacrity than one would have believed him capable. “I’ll tell Susan to drive on, and you and I will walk home across the fields, if you like.”

“I should love to,” said Honora.

It was not without astonishment that the rest of the Holt family beheld them returning together as the gongs were sounding for luncheon. Mrs. Holt, upon perceiving them, began at once to shake her head and laugh.

“My dear, it can’t be that you have captivated Joshua!” she exclaimed, in a tone that implied the carrying of a stronghold hitherto thought impregnable.

Honora blushed, whether from victory or embarrassment, or both, it is impossible to say.

“I’m afraid it’s just the other way, Mrs. Holt,” she replied; “Mr. Holt has captivated me.”

“We’ll call it mutual, Miss Leffingwell,” declared Joshua, which was for him the height of gallantry.

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“I only hope he hasn’t bored you,” said the good-natured Mrs. Joshua.

“Oh, dear, no,” exclaimed Honora. “I don’t see bow any one could be bored looking at such magnificent animals as that Hardicanute.”

It was at this moment that her eyes were drawn, by a seemingly resistless attraction, to Mrs. Robert’s face. Her comment upon this latest conquest, though unexpressed, was disquieting. And in spite of herself, Honora blushed again.

At luncheon, in the midst of a general conversation, Mr. Spence made a remark sotto voce which should, in the ordinary course of events, have remained a secret.

“Susan,” he said, “your friend Miss Leffingwell is a fascinator. She’s got Robert’s scalp, too, and he thought it a pretty good joke because I offered to teach her to play golf this afternoon.”

It appeared that Susan’s eyes could flash indignantly. Perhaps she resented Mr. Spence’s calling her by her first name.

“Honora Leffingwell is the most natural and unspoiled person I know,” she said.

There is, undoubtedly, a keen pleasure and an ample reward in teaching a pupil as apt and as eager to learn as Honora. And Mr. Spence, if he attempted at all to account for the swiftness with which the hours of that long afternoon slipped away, may have attributed their flight to the discovery in himself of hitherto latent talent for instruction. At the little Casino, he had bought, from the professional in charge of the course, a lady’s driver; and she practised with exemplary patience the art of carrying one’s hands through and of using the wrists in the stroke.

“Not quite, Miss Leffingwell,” he would say, “but so.”

Honora would try again.

“That’s unusually good for a beginner, but you are inclined to chop it off a little still. Let it swing all the way round.”

“Oh, dear, how you must hate me!”

“Hate you?” said Mr. Spence, searching in vain for words with which to obliterate such a false impression. “Anything but that!”

“Isn’t it a wonderful, spot?” she exclaimed, gazing off down the swale, emerald green in the afternoon light between its forest walls. In the distance, Silver Brook was gleaming amidst the meadows. They sat down on one of the benches and watched the groups of players pass. Mr. Spence produced his cigarette case, and presented it to her playfully.

“A little quiet whiff,” he suggested. “There’s not much chance over at the convent,” and she gathered that it was thus he was pleased to designate Silverdale.

In one instant she was doubtful whether or not to be angry, and in the next grew ashamed of the provincialism which had caused her to suspect an insult. She took a cigarette, and he produced a gold match case, lighted a match, and held it up for her. Honora blew it out.

“You didn’t think seriously that I smoked?” she asked, glancing at him.

“Why not?” he asked; “any number of girls do.”

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She tore away some of the rice paper and lifted the tobacco to her nose, and made a little grimace.

“Do you like to see women smoke?” she asked.

Mr. Spence admitted that there was something cosey about the custom, when it was well done.

“And I imagine,” he added, “that you’d do it well.”

“I’m sure I should make a frightful mess of it,” she protested modestly.

“You do everything well,” he said.

“Even golf?” she inquired mischievously.

“Even golf, for a beginner and—and a woman; you’ve got the swing in an astonishingly short time. In fact, you’ve been something of an eye-opener to me,” he declared. “If I had been betting, I should have placed the odds about twenty to one against your coming from the West.”

This Eastern complacency, although it did not lower Mr. Spence in her estimation, aroused Honora’s pride.

“That shows how little New Yorkers know of the West,” she replied, laughing. “Didn’t you suppose there were any gentlewomen there?”

“Gentlewomen,” repeated Mr. Spence, as though puzzled by the word, “gentlewomen, yes. But you might have been born anywhere.”

Even her sense of loyalty to her native place was not strong enough to override this compliment.

“I like a girl with some dash and go to her,” he proclaimed, and there could be no doubt about the one to whom he was attributing these qualities. “Savoir faire, as the French call it, and all that. I don’t know much about that language, but the way you talk it makes Mrs. Holt’s French and Susan’s sound silly. I watched you last night when you were stringing the Vicomte.”

“Oh, did you?” said Honora, demurely.

“You may have thought I was talking to Mrs. Robert,” he said.

“I wasn’t thinking anything about you,” replied Honora, indignantly. “And besides, I wasn’t I stringing’ the Vicomte. In the West we don’t use anything like so much slang as you seem to use in New York.”

“Oh, come now!” he exclaimed, laughingly, and apparently not the least out of countenance, “you made him think he was the only pebble on the beach. I have no idea what you were talking about.”

“Literature,” she said. “Perhaps that was the reason why you couldn’t understand it.”

“He may be interested in literature,” replied Mr. Spence, “but it wouldn’t be a bad guess to say that he was more interested in stocks and bonds.”

“He doesn’t talk about them, at any rate,” said Honora.

“I’d respect him more if he did,” he announced. “I know those fellows-they make love to every woman they meet. I saw him eying you at lunch.”

Honora laughed.

“I imagine the Vicomte could make love charmingly,” she said.

Mr. Spence suddenly became very solemn.

“Merely as a fellow-countryman, Miss Leffingwell—” he began, when she sprang to her feet, her eyes dancing, and finished the sentence.

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“You would advise me to be on my guard against him, because, although I look twenty-five and experienced, I am only nineteen and inexperienced. Thank you.”

He paused to light another cigarette before he followed her across the turf. But she had the incomprehensible feminine satisfaction of knowing, as they walked homeward, that the usual serenity of his disposition was slightly ruffled.

A sudden caprice impelled her, in the privacy of her bedroom that evening, to draw his portrait for Peter Erwin. The complacency of New York men was most amusing, she wrote, and the amount of slang they used would have been deemed vulgar in St. Louis. Nevertheless, she liked people to be sure of themselves, and there was something “insolent” about New York which appealed to her. Peter, when he read that letter, seemed to see Mr. Howard Spence in the flesh; or arrayed, rather, in the kind of cloth alluringly draped in the show-windows of fashionable tailors. For Honora, all unconsciously, wrote literature. Literature was invented before phonographs, and will endure after them. Peter could hear Mr. Spence talk, for a part of that gentleman’s conversation—a characteristic part—was faithfully transcribed. And Peter detected a strain of admiration running even through the ridicule.

Peter showed that letter to Aunt Mary, whom it troubled, and to Uncle Tom, who laughed over it. There was also a lifelike portrait of the Vicomte, followed by the comment that he was charming, but very French; but the meaning of this last, but quite obvious, attribute remained obscure. He was possessed of one of the oldest titles and one of the oldest chateaux in France. (Although she did not say so, Honora had this on no less authority than that of the Vicomte himself.) Mrs. Holt—with her Victorian brooch and ear-rings and her watchful delft-blue eyes that somehow haunted one even when she was out of sight, with her ample bosom and the really kind heart it contained—was likewise depicted; and Mr. Holt, with his dried bread, and his garden which Honora wished Uncle Tom could see, and his prayers that lacked imagination. Joshua and his cows, Robert and his forest, Susan and her charities, the Institution, jolly Mrs. Joshua and enigmatical Mrs. Robert—all were there: and even a picture of the dinner-party that evening, when Honora sat next to a young Mr. Patterson with glasses and a studious manner, who knew George Hanbury at Harvard. The other guests were a florid Miss Chamberlin, whose person loudly proclaimed possessions, and a thin Miss Longman, who rented one of the Silverdale cottages and sketched.

Honora was seeing life. She sent her love to Peter, and begged him to write to her.

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The next morning a mysterious change seemed to have passed over the members of the family during the night. It was Sunday. Honora, when she left her room, heard a swishing on the stairs—Mrs. Joshua, stiffly arrayed for the day. Even Mrs. Robert swished, but Mrs. Holt, in a bronze-coloured silk, swished most of all as she entered the library after a brief errand to the housekeeper's room. Mr. Holt was already arranging his book-marks in the Bible, while Joshua and Robert, in black cutaways that seemed to have the benumbing and paralyzing effect of strait-jackets, wandered aimlessly about the room, as though its walls were the limit of their movements. The children had a subdued and touch-me-not air that reminded Honora of her own youth.

It was not until prayers were over and the solemn gathering seated at the breakfast table that Mr. Spence burst upon it like an aurora. His flannel suit was of the lightest of grays; he wore white tennis shoes and a red tie, and it was plain, as he cheerfully bade them good morning, that he was wholly unaware of the enormity of his costume. There was a choking, breathless moment before Mrs. Holt broke the silence.

"Surely, Howard," she said, "you're not going to church in those clothes."

"I hadn't thought of going to church," replied Mr. Spence, helping himself to cherries.

"What do you intend to do?" asked his hostess.

"Read the stock reports for the week as soon as the newspapers arrive."

"There is no such thing as a Sunday newspaper in my house," said Mrs. Holt.

"No Sunday newspapers!" he exclaimed. And his eyes, as they encountered Honora's, —who sought to avoid them,—expressed a genuine dismay.

"I am afraid," said Mrs. Holt, "that I was right when I spoke of the pernicious effect of Wall Street upon young men. Your mother did not approve of Sunday newspapers."

During the rest of the meal, although he made a valiant attempt to hold his own, Mr. Spence was, so to speak, outlawed. Robert and Joshua must have had a secret sympathy for him. One of them mentioned the Vicomte.

"The Vicomte is a foreigner," declared Mrs. Holt. "I am in no sense responsible for him."

The Vicomte was at that moment propped up in bed, complaining to his valet about the weakness of the coffee. He made the remark (which he afterwards repeated to Honora) that weak coffee and the Protestant religion seemed inseparable; but he did not attempt to discover the whereabouts, in Sutton, of the Church of his fathers. He was not in the best of humours that morning, and his toilet had advanced no further when, an hour or so later, he perceived from behind his lace curtains Mr. Howard Spence, dressed with

comparative soberness, handing Honora into the omnibus. The incident did not serve to improve the cynical mood in which the Vicomte found himself.

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Indeed, the Vicomte, who had a theory concerning Mr. Spence's church-going, was not far from wrong. As may have been suspected, it was to Honora that credit was due. It was Honora whom Mr. Spence sought after breakfast, and to whom he declared that her presence alone prevented him from leaving that afternoon. It was Honora who told him that he ought to be ashamed of himself. And it was to Honora, after church was over and they were walking homeward together along the dusty road, that Mr. Spence remarked by way of a delicate compliment that "the morning had not been a total loss, after all!"

The little Presbyterian church stood on a hillside just outside of the village and was, as far as possible, the possession of the Holt family. The morning sunshine illuminated the angels in the Holt memorial window, and the inmates of the Holt Institution occupied all the back pews. Mrs. Joshua played the organ, and Susan, with several young women and a young man with a long coat and plastered hair, sang in the choir. The sermon of the elderly minister had to do with beliefs rather than deeds, and was the subject of discussion at luncheon.

"It is very like a sermon I found in my room," said Honora.

"I left that book in your room, my dear, in the hope that you would not overlook it," said Mrs. Holt, approvingly. "Joshua, I wish you would read that sermon aloud to us."

"Oh, do, Mr. Holt!" begged Honora.

The Vicomte, who had been acting very strangely during the meal, showed unmistakable signs of a futile anger. He had asked Honora to walk with him.

"Of course," added Mrs. Holt, "no one need listen who doesn't wish to. Since you were good enough to reconsider your decision and attend divine service, Howard, I suppose I should be satisfied."

The reading took place in the library. Through the open window Honora perceived the form of Joshua asleep in the hammock, his Sunday coat all twisted under him. It worried her to picture his attire when he should wake up. Once Mrs. Robert looked in, smiled, said nothing, and went out again. At length, in a wicker chair under a distant tree on the lawn, Honora beheld the dejected outline of the Vicomte. He was trying to read, but every once in a while would lay down his book and gaze protractedly at the house, stroking his mustache. The low song of the bees around the shrubbery vied with Mr. Holt's slow reading. On the whole, the situation delighted Honora, who bit her lip to refrain from smiling at M. de Toqueville. When at last she emerged from the library, he rose precipitately and came towards her across the lawn, lifting his hands towards the pitiless puritan skies.

“Enfin!” he exclaimed tragically. “Ah, Mademoiselle, never in my life have I passed such a day!”

“Are you ill, Vicomte?” she asked.

“Ill! Were it not for you, I would be gone. You alone sustain me—it is for the pleasure of seeing you that I suffer. What kind of a menage is this, then, where I am walked around Institutions, where I am forced to listen to the exposition of doctrines, where the coffee is weak, where Sunday, which the bon Dieu set aside for a jour de fete resembles to a day in purgatory?”

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“But, Vicomte,” Honora laughed, “you must remember that you are in America, and that you have come here to study our manners and customs.”

“Ah, no,” he cried, “ah, no, it cannot all be like this! I will not believe it. Mr. Holt, who sought to entertain me before luncheon, offered to show me his collection of Chinese carvings! I, who might be at Trouville or Cabourg! If it were not for you, Mademoiselle, I should not stay here—not one little minute,” he said, with a slow intensity. “Behold what I suffer for your sake!”

“For my sake?” echoed Honora.

“For what else?” demanded the Vicomte, gazing upon her with the eyes of martyrdom. “It is not for my health, alas! Between the coffee and this dimanche I have the vertigo.”

Honora laughed again at the memory of the dizzy Sunday afternoons of her childhood, when she had been taken to see Mr. Isham’s curios.

“You are cruel,” said the Vicomte; “you laugh at my tortures.”

“On the contrary, I think I understand them,” she replied. “I have often felt the same way.”

“My instinct was true, then,” he cried triumphantly; “the first time my eyes fell on you, I said to myself, ‘ah! there is one who understands.’ And I am seldom mistaken.”

“Your experience with the opposite sex,” ventured Honora, “must have made you infallible.”

He shrugged and smiled, as one whose modesty forbade the mention of conquests.

“You do not belong here either, Mademoiselle,” he said. “You are not like these people. You have temperament, and a future—believe me. Why do you waste your time?”

“What do you mean, Vicomte?”

“Ah, it is not necessary to explain what I mean. It is that you do not choose to understand—you are far too clever. Why is it, then, that you bore yourself by regarding Institutions and listening to sermons in your jeunesse? It is all very well for Mademoiselle Susan, but you are not created for a religieuse. And again, it pleases you to spend hours with the stockbroker, who is as lacking in esprit as the bull of Joshua. He is no companion for you.”

“I am afraid,” she said reprovingly, “that you do not understand Mr. Spence.”

“Par exemple!” cried the Vicomte; “have I not seen hundreds’ like him? Do not they come to Paris and live in the great hotels and demand cocktails and read the stock reports and send cablegrams all the day long? and go to the Folies Bergeres, and yawn? Nom de nom, of what does his conversation consist? Of the price of railroads; —is it not so? I, who speak to you, have talked to him. Does he know how to make love?”

“That accomplishment is not thought of very highly in America,” Honora replied.

“It is because you are a new country,” he declared.

“And you are mad over money. Money has taken the place of love.”

“Is money so despised in France?” she asked. “I have heard—that you married for it!”

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“Touch!” cried the Vicomte, laughing. “You see, I am frank with you. We marry for money, yes, but we do not make a god of it. It is our servant. You make it, and we enjoy it. Yes, and you, Mademoiselle—you, too, were made to enjoy. You do not belong here,” he said, with a disdainful sweep of the arm. “Ah, I have solved you. You have in you the germ of the Riviera. You were born there.”

Honora wondered if what he said were true. Was she different? She was having a great deal of pleasure at Silverdale; even the sermon reading, which would have bored her at home, had interested and amused her. But was it not from the novelty of these episodes, rather than from their special characters, that she received the stimulus? She glanced curiously towards the Vicomte, and met his eye.

They had been walking the while, and had crossed the lawn and entered one of the many paths which it had been Robert’s pastime to cut through the woods. And at length they came out at a rustic summer-house set over the wooded valley. Honora, with one foot on the ground, sat on the railing gazing over the tree-tops; the Vicomte was on the bench beside her. His eyes sparkled and snapped, and suddenly she tingled with a sense that the situation was not without an element of danger.

“I had a feeling about you, last night at dinner,” he said; “you reminded me of a line of Marcel Prevost, ’Cette femme ne sera pas aimee que parmi des drames.’”

“Nonsense,” said Honora; “last night at dinner you were too much occupied with Miss Chamberlin to think of me.”

“Ah, Mademoiselle, you have read me strangely if you think that. I talked to her with my lips, yes—but it was of you I was thinking. I was thinking that you were born to play a part in many dramas, that you have the fatal beauty which is rare in all ages.” The Vicomte bent towards her, and his voice became caressing. “You cannot realize how beautiful you are,” he sighed.

Suddenly he seized her hand, and before she could withdraw it she had the satisfaction of knowing the sensation of having it kissed. It was a strange sensation indeed. And the fact that she did not tingle with anger alone made her all the more angry. Trembling, her face burning, she leaped down from the railing and fled into the path. And there, seeing that he did not follow, she turned and faced him. He stood staring at her with eyes that had not ceased to sparkle.

“How cowardly of you!” she cried.

“Ah, Mademoiselle,” he answered fervently, “I would risk your anger a thousand times to see you like that once more. I cannot help my feelings—they were dead indeed if they did not respond to such an inspiration. Let them plead for my pardon.”

Honora felt herself melting a little. After all, there might have been some excuse for it, and he made love divinely. When he had caught up with her, his contriteness was such that she was willing to believe he had not meant to insult her. And then, he was a Frenchman. As a proof of his versatility, if not of his good faith, he talked of neutral matters on the way back to the house, with the charming ease and lightness that was the gift of his race and class. On the borders of the wood they encountered the Robert Holts, walking with their children.

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“Madame,” said the Vicomte to Gwendolen, “your Silverdale is enchanting. We have been to that little summer-house which commands the valley.”

“And are you still learning things about our country, Vicomte?” she asked, with a glance at Honora.

CHAPTER X

IN WHICH HONORA WIDENS HER HORIZON

If it were not a digression, it might be interesting to speculate upon the reason why, in view of their expressed opinions of Silverdale, both the Vicomte and Mr. Spence remained during the week that followed. Robert, who went off in the middle of it with his family to the seashore, described it to Honora as a normal week. During its progress there came and went a missionary from China, a pianist, an English lady who had heard of the Institution, a Southern spinster with literary gifts, a youthful architect who had not built anything, and a young lawyer interested in settlement work.

The missionary presented our heroine with a book he had written about the Yang-tse-kiang; the Southern lady suspected her of literary gifts; the architect walked with her through the woods to the rustic shelter where the Vicomte had kissed her hand, and told her that he now comprehended the feelings of Christopher Wren when he conceived St. Paul’s Cathedral, of Michael Angelo when he painted the Sistine Chapel. Even the serious young lawyer succumbed, though not without a struggle. When he had first seen Miss Leffingwell, he confessed, he had thought her frivolous. He had done her an injustice, and wished to acknowledge it before he left. And, since she was interested in settlement work, he hoped, if she were going through New York, that she would let him know. It would be a real pleasure to show her what he was doing.

Best of all, Honora, by her unselfishness, endeared herself to her hostess.

“I can’t tell you what a real help you are to me, my dear,” said that lady. “You have a remarkable gift with people for so young a girl, and I do you the credit of thinking that it all springs from a kind heart.”

In the meantime, unknown to Mrs. Holt, who might in all conscience have had a knowledge of what may be called social chemistry, a drama was slowly unfolding itself. By no fault of Honora’s, of course. There may have been some truth in the quotation of the Vicomte as applied to her —that she was destined to be loved only amidst the play of drama. If experience is worth anything, Monsieur de Toqueville should have been an expert in matters of the sex. Could it be possible, Honora asked herself more than once, that his feelings were deeper than her feminine instinct and, the knowledge she had gleaned from novels led her to suspect?

It is painful to relate that the irregularity and deceit of the life the Vicomte was leading amused her, for existence at Silverdale was plainly not of a kind to make a gentleman of the Vicomte's temperament and habits ecstatically happy. And Honora was filled with a strange and unaccountable delight when she overheard him assuring Mrs. Wellfleet, the English lady of eleemosynary tendencies, that he was engaged in a study at first hand of Americans.

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The time has come to acknowledge frankly that it was Honora he was studying—-Honora as the type of young American womanhood. What he did not suspect was that young American womanhood was studying him. Thanks to a national System, she had had an apprenticeship; the heart-blood of Algernon Cartwright and many others had not been shed in vain. And the fact that she was playing with real fire, that this was a duel with the buttons off, lent a piquancy and zest to the pastime which it had hitherto lacked.

The Vicomte's feelings were by no means hidden processes to Honora, and it was as though she could lift the lid of the furnace at any time and behold the growth of the flame which she had lighted. Nay, nature had endowed her with such a gift that she could read the daily temperature as by a register hung on the outside, without getting scorched. Nor had there been any design on her part in thus tormenting his soul. He had not meant to remain more than four days at Silverdale, that she knew; he had not meant to come to America and fall in love with a penniless beauty—that she knew also. The climax would be interesting, if perchance uncomfortable.

It is wonderful what we can find the time to do, if we only try. Monsieur de Toqueville lent Honora novels, which she read in bed; but being in the full bloom of health and of a strong constitution, this practice did not prevent her from rising at seven to take a walk through the garden with Mr. Holt—a custom which he had come insensibly to depend upon. And in the brief conversations which she vouchsafed the Vicomte, they discussed his novels. In vain he pleaded, in caressing undertones, that she should ride with him. Honora had never been on a horse, but she did not tell him so. If she would but drive, or walk-only a little way—he would promise faithfully not to forget himself. Honora intimated that the period of his probation had not yet expired. If he waylaid her on the stairs, he got but little satisfaction.

"You converse by the hour with the missionaries, and take long promenades with the architects and charity workers, but to me you will give nothing," he complained.

"The persons of whom you speak are not dangerous," answered Honora, giving him a look.

The look, and being called dangerous, sent up the temperature several degrees. Frenchmen are not the only branch of the male sex who are complimented by being called dangerous. The Vicomte was desolated, so he said.

"I stay here only for you, and the coffee is slowly deranging me," he declared in French, for most of their conversations were in that language. If there were duplicity in this, Honora did not recognize it. "I stay here only for you, and how you are cruel! I live for you—how, the good God only knows. I exist—to see you for ten minutes a day."

“Oh, Vicomte, you exaggerate. If you were to count it up, I am sure you would find that we talk an hour at least, altogether. And then, although I am very young and inexperienced, I can imagine how many conquests you have made by the same arts.”

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“I suffer,” he cried; “ah, no, you cannot look at me without perceiving it—you who are so heartless. And when I see you play at golf with that Mr. Spence—!”

“Surely,” said Honora, “you can’t object to my acquiring a new accomplishment when I have the opportunity, and Mr. Spence is so kind and good-natured about it.”

“Do you think I have no eyes?” he exclaimed. “Have I not seen him look at you like the great animal of Joshua when he wants his supper? He is without esprit, without soul. There is nothing inside of him but money-making machinery.”

“The most valuable of all machinery,” she replied, laughingly.

“If I thought you believed that, Mademoiselle, if I thought you were like so many of your countrywomen in this respect, I should leave to-morrow,” he declared.

“Don’t be too sure, Vicomte,” she cautioned him.

If one possessed a sense of humour and a certain knowledge of mankind, the spectacle of a young and successful Wall Street broker at Silverdale that week was apt to be diverting. Mr. Spence held his own. He advised the architect to make a specialty of country houses, and promised some day to order one: he disputed boldly with the other young man as to the practical uses of settlement work, and even measured swords with the missionary. Needless to say, he was not popular with these gentlemen. But he was also good-natured and obliging, and he did not object to repeating for the English lady certain phrases which she called “picturesque expressions,” and which she wrote down with a gold pencil.

It is evident, from the Vicomte’s remarks, that he found time to continue Honora’s lessons in golf—or rather that she found time, in the midst of her manifold and self-imposed duties, to take them. And in this diversion she was encouraged by Mrs. Holt herself. On Saturday morning, the heat being unusual, they ended their game by common consent at the fourth hole and descended a wood road to Silver Brook, to a spot which they had visited once before and had found attractive. Honora, after bathing her face in the pool, perched herself on a boulder. She was very fresh and radiant.

This fact, if she had not known it, she might have gathered from Mr. Silence’s expression. He had laid down his coat; his sleeves were rolled up and his arms were tanned, and he stood smoking a cigarette and gazing at her with approbation. She lowered her eyes.

“Well, we’ve had a pretty good time, haven’t we?” he remarked.

Lightning sometimes fails in its effect, but the look she flashed back at him from under her blue lashes seldom misses.

“I’m afraid I haven’t been a very apt pupil,” she replied modestly.

“You’re on the highroad to a cup,” he assured her. “If I could take you on for another week” He paused, and an expression came into his eyes which was not new to Honora, nor peculiar to Mr. Silence. “I have to go back to town on Monday.”

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If Honora felt any regret at this announcement, she did not express it.

“I thought you couldn’t stand Silverdale much longer,” she replied.

“You know why I stayed,” he said, and paused again—rather awkwardly for Mr. Spence. But Honora was silent. “I had a letter this morning from my partner, Sidney Dallam, calling me back.”

“I suppose you are very busy,” said Honora, detaching a copper-green scale of moss from the boulder.

“The fact is,” he explained, “that we have received an order of considerable importance, for which I am more or less responsible. Something of a compliment—since we are, after all, comparatively young men.”

“Sometimes,” said Honora, “sometimes I wish I were a man. Women are so hampered and circumscribed, and have to wait for things to happen to them. A man can do what he wants. He can go into Wall Street and fight until he controls miles of railroads and thousands and thousands of men. That would be a career!”

“Yes,” he agreed, smilingly, “it’s worth fighting for.”

Her eyes were burning with a strange light as she looked down the vista of the wood road by which they had come. He flung his cigarette into the water and took a step nearer her.

“How long have I known you?” he asked.

She started.

“Why, it’s only a little more than a week,” she said.

“Does it seem longer than that to you?”

“Yes,” admitted Honora, colouring; “I suppose it’s because we’ve been staying in the same house.”

“It seems to me,” said Mr. Spence, “that I have known you always.”

Honora sat very still. It passed through her brain, without comment, that there was a certain haunting familiarity about this remark; some other voice, in some other place, had spoken it, and in very much the same tone.

“You’re the kind of girl I admire,” he declared. “I’ve been watching you—more than you have any idea of. You’re adaptable. Put you down any place, and you take hold. For

instance, it's a marvellous thing to me how you've handled all the curiosities up there this week."

"Oh, I like people," said Honora, "they interest me." And she laughed a little, nervously. She was aware that Mr. Spence was making love, in his own manner: the New fork manner, undoubtedly; though what he said was changed by the new vibrations in his voice. He was making love, too, with a characteristic lack of apology and with assurance. She stole a glance at him, and beheld the image of a dominating man of affairs. He did not, it is true, evoke in her that extreme sensation which has been called a thrill. She had read somewhere that women were always expecting thrills, and never got them. Nevertheless, she had not realized how close a bond of sympathy had grown between them until this sudden announcement of his going back to New York. In a little while she too would be leaving for St. Louis. The probability that she would never see him again seemed graver than she would have believed.

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“Will you miss me a little?” he asked.

“Oh, yes,” she said breathlessly, “and I shall be curious to know how your—your enterprise succeeds.”

“Honora,” he said, “it is only a week since I first met you, but I know my own mind. You are the woman I want, and I think I may say without boasting that I can give you what you desire in life—after a while. I love you. You are young, and just now I felt that perhaps I should have waited a year before speaking, but I was afraid of missing altogether what I know to be the great happiness of my life. Will you marry me?”

She sat silent upon the rock. She heard him speak, it is true; but, try as she would, the full significance of his words would not come to her. She had, indeed, no idea that he would propose, no notion that his heart was involved to such an extent. He was very near her, but he had not attempted to touch her. His voice, towards the end of his speech, had trembled with passion—a true note had been struck. And she had struck it, by no seeming effort! He wished to marry her!

He aroused her again.

“I have frightened you,” he said.

She opened her eyes. What he beheld in them was not fright—it was nothing he had ever seen before. For the first time in his life, perhaps, he was awed. And, seeing him helpless, she put out her hands to him with a gesture that seemed to enhance her gift a thousand-fold. He had not realized what he was getting.

“I am not frightened,” she said. “Yes, I will marry you.”

He was not sure whether—so brief was the moment!—he had held and kissed her cheek. His arms were empty now, and he caught a glimpse of her poised on the road above him amidst the quivering, sunlit leaves, looking back at him over her shoulder.

He followed her, but she kept nimbly ahead of him until they came out into the open golf course. He tried to think, but failed. Never in his orderly life had anything so precipitate happened to him. He caught up with her, devoured her with his eyes, and beheld in marriage a delirium.

“Honora,” he said thickly, “I can’t grasp it.”

She gave him a quick look, and a smile quivered at the corners of her mouth.

“What are you thinking of?” he asked.

“I am thinking of Mrs. Holt’s expression when we tell her,” said Honora. “But we shan’t tell her yet, shall we, Howard? We’ll have it for our own secret a little while.”

The golf course being deserted, he pressed her arm.

“We’ll tell her whenever you like, dear,” he replied.

In spite of the fact that they drove Joshua’s trotter to lunch—much too rapidly in the heat of the day, they were late.

“I shall never be able to go in there and not give it away,” he whispered to her on the stairs.

“You look like the Cheshire cat in the tree,” whispered Honora, laughing, “only more purple, and not so ghostlike.”

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“I know I’m smiling,” replied Howard, “I feel like it, but I can’t help it. It won’t come off. I want to blurt out the news to every one in the dining-room—to that little Frenchman, in particular.”

Honora laughed again. Her imagination easily summoned up the tableau which such a proceeding would bring forth. The incredulity, the chagrin, the indignation, even, in some quarters. He conceived the household, with the exception of the Vicomte, precipitating themselves into his arms.

Honora, who was cool enough herself (no doubt owing to the superior training which women receive in matters of deportment), observed that his entrance was not a triumph of dissimulation. His colour was high, and his expression, indeed, a little idiotic; and he declared afterwards that he felt like a sandwich-man, with the news printed in red letters before and behind. Honora knew that the intense improbability of the truth would save them, and it did. Mrs. Holt remarked, slyly, that the game of golf must have hidden attractions, and regretted that she was too old to learn it.

“We went very slowly on account of the heat,” Howard declared.

“I should say that you had gone very rapidly, from your face,” retorted Mrs. Holt. In relaxing moods she indulged in banter.

Honora stepped into the breach. She would not trust her newly acquired fiance to extricate himself.

“We were both very much worried, Mrs. Holt,” she explained, “because we were late for lunch once before.”

“I suppose I’ll have to forgive you, my dear, especially with that colour. I am modern enough to approve of exercise for young girls, and I am sure your Aunt Mary will think Silverdale has done you good when I send you back to her.”

“Oh, I’m sure she will,” said Honora.

In the meantime Mr. Spence was concentrating all of his attention upon a jellied egg. Honora glanced at the Vicomte. He sat very stiff, and his manner of twisting his mustache reminded her of an animal sharpening its claws. It was at this moment that the butler handed her a telegram, which, with Mrs. Holt’s permission, she opened and read twice before the meaning of it came to her.

“I hope it is no bad news, Honora,” said Mrs. Holt.

“It’s from Peter Erwin,” she replied, still a little dazed. “He’s in New York. And he’s corning up on the five o’clock train to spend an hour with me.”

“Oh,” said Susan; “I remember his picture on your bureau at Sutcliffe. He had such a good face. And you told me about him.”

“He is like my brother,” Honora explained, aware that Howard was looking at her. “Only he is much older than I. He used to wheel me up and down when I was a baby. He was, an errand boy in the bank then, and Uncle Tom took an interest in him, and now he is a lawyer. A very good one, I believe.”

“I have a great respect for any man who makes his own way in life,” said Mrs. Holt. “And since he is such an old friend, my dear, you must ask him to spend the night.”

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“Oh, thank you, Mrs. Bolt,” Honora answered.

It was, however, with mingled feelings that she thought of Peter’s arrival at this time. Life, indeed, was full of strange coincidences!

There was a little door that led out of the house by the billiard room, Honora remembered, and contrived, after luncheon, to slip away and reach it. She felt that she must be alone, and if she went to her room she was likely to be disturbed by Susan or Mrs. Joshua—or indeed Mrs. Holt herself. Honora meant to tell Susan the first of all. She crossed the great lawn quickly, keeping as much as possible the trees and masses of shrubbery between herself and the house, and reached the forest. With a really large fund of energy at her disposal, Honora had never been one to believe in the useless expenditure of it; nor did she feel the intense desire which a girl of another temperament might have had, under the same conditions, to keep in motion. So she sat down on a bench within the borders of the wood.

It was not that she wished to reflect, in the ordinary meaning of the word, that she had sought seclusion, but rather to give her imagination free play. The enormity of the change that was to come into her life did not appall her in the least; but she had, in connection with it, a sense of unreality which, though not unpleasant, she sought unconsciously to dissipate. Howard Spence, she reflected with a smile, was surely solid and substantial enough, and she thought of him the more tenderly for the possession of these attributes. A castle founded on such a rock was not a castle in Spain!

It did not occur to Honora that her thoughts might be more of the castle than of the rock: of the heaven he was to hold on his shoulders than of the Hercules she had chosen to hold it.

She would write to her Aunt Mary and her Uncle Tom that very afternoon —one letter to both. Tears came into her eyes when she thought of them, and of their lonely life’ without her. But they would come on to New York to visit her often, and they would be proud of her. Of one thing she was sure—she must go home to them at once—on Tuesday. She would tell Mrs. Holt to-morrow, and Susan to-night. And, while pondering over the probable expression of that lady’s amazement, it suddenly occurred to her that she must write the letter immediately, because Peter Erwin was coming.

What would he say? Should she tell him? She was surprised to find that the idea of doing so was painful to her. But she was aroused from these reflections by a step on the path, and raised her head to perceive the Vicomte. His face wore an expression of triumph.

“At last,” he cried, “at last!” And he sat down on the bench beside her. Her first impulse was to rise, yet for some inexplicable reason she remained.

“I always suspected in you the qualities of a Monsieur Lecoq,” she remarked. “You have an instinct for the chase.”

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“Mon dieu?” he said. “I have risked a stroke of the sun to find you. Why should you so continually run away from me?”

“To test your ingenuity, Vicomte.”

“And that other one—the stock-broker—you do not avoid him. Diable, I am not blind, Mademoiselle. It is plain to me at luncheon that you have made boil the sluggish blood of that one. As for me—”

“Your boiling-point is lower,” she said, smiling.

“Listen, Mademoiselle,” he pursued, bending towards her. “It is not for my health that I stay here, as I have told you. It is for the sight of you, for the sound of the music of that low voice. It is in the hope that you will be a little kinder, that you will understand me a little better. And to-day, when I learn that still another is on his way to see you, I could sit still no longer. I do not fear that Spence,—no. But this other—what is he like?”

“He is the best type of American,” replied Honora. “I am sure you will be interested in him, and like him.”

The Vicomte shrugged his shoulders.

“It is not in America that you will find your destiny, Mademoiselle. You are made to grace a salon, a court, which you will not find in this country. Such a woman as you is thrown away here. You possess qualities—you will pardon me—in which your countrywomen are lacking, —esprit, imagination, elan, the power to bind people to you. I have read you as you have not read yourself. I have seen how you have served yourself by this famille Holt, and how at the same time you have kept their friendship.”

“Vicomte!” she exclaimed.

“Ah, do not get angry,” he begged; “such gifts are rare—they are sublime. They lead,” he added, raising his arms, “to the heights.”

Honora was silent. She was, indeed, not unmoved by his voice, into which there was creeping a vibrant note of passion. She was a little frightened, but likewise puzzled and interested. This was all so different from what she had expected of him. What did he mean? Was she indeed like that?

She was aware that he was speaking again, that he was telling her of a chateau in France which his ancestors had owned since the days of Louis XII; a grey pile that stood upon a thickly wooded height,—a chateau with a banquet hall, where kings had dined, with a chapel where kings had prayed, with a flowering terrace high above a gleaming river. It was there that his childhood had been passed. And as he spoke, she listened with mingled feelings, picturing the pageantry of life in such a place.

“I tell you this, Mademoiselle,” he said, “that you may know I am not what you call an adventurer. Many of these, alas! come to your country. And I ask you to regard with some leniency customs which must be strange to Americans. When we marry in France, it is with a dot, and especially is it necessary amongst the families of our nobility.”

Honora rose, the blood mounting to her temples.

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“Mademoiselle,” he cried, “do not misunderstand me. I would die rather than hurt your feelings. Listen, I pray. It was to tell you frankly that I came to this country for that purpose,—in order that I might live as my ancestors have lived, with a hotel in Paris: But the chateau, grace a dieu, is not mortgaged, nor am I wholly impoverished. I have soixante quinze mille livres de rente, which is fifteen thousand dollars a year in your money, and which goes much farther in France. At the proper time, I will present these matters to your guardians. I have lived, but I have a heart, and I love you madly. Rather would I dwell with you in Provence, where I will cultivate the soil of my forefathers, than a palace on the Champs Elysees with another. We can come to Paris for two months, at least. For you I can throw my prospects out of the window with a light heart. Honore—how sweet is your name in my language—I love you to despair.”

He seized her hand and pressed it to his lips, but she drew it gently away. It seemed to her that he had made the very air quiver with feeling, and she let herself wonder, for a moment, what life with him would be. Incredible as it seemed, he had proposed to her, a penniless girl! Her own voice was not quite steady as she answered him, and her eyes were filled with compassion.

“Vicomte,” she said, “I did not know that you cared for me—that way. I thought—I thought you were amusing yourself.”

“Amusing myself!” he exclaimed bitterly. “And you—were you amusing yourself?”

“I—I tried to avoid you,” she replied, in a low voice.

“I am engaged.”

“Engaged!” He sprang to his feet. “Engaged! Ah, no, I will not believe it. You were engaged when you came here?”

She was no little alarmed by the violence which he threw into his words. At the same time, she was indignant. And yet a mischievous sprite within her led her on to tell him the truth.

“No, I am going to marry Mr. Howard Spence, although I do not wish it announced.”

For a moment he stood motionless, speechless, staring at her, and then he seemed to sway a little and to choke.

“No, no,” he cried, “it cannot be! My ears have deceived me. I am not sane. You are going to marry him—? Ah, you have sold yourself.”

“Monsieur de Toqueville,” she said, “you forget yourself. Mr. Spence is an honourable man, and I love him.”

The Vicomte appeared to choke again. And then, suddenly, he became himself, although his voice was by no means natural. His elaborate and ironic bow she remembered for many years.

“Pardon, Mademoiselle,” he said, “and adieu. You will be good enough to convey my congratulations to Mr. Spence.”

With a kind of military “about face” he turned and left her abruptly, and she watched him as he hurried across the lawn until he had disappeared behind the trees near the house. When she sat down on the bench again, she found that she was trembling a little. Was the unexpected to occur to her from now on? Was it true, as the Vicomte had said, that she was destined to be loved amidst the play of drama?

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She felt sorry for him because he had loved her enough to fling to the winds his chances of wealth for her sake—a sufficient measure of the feelings of one of his nationality and caste. And she permitted, for an instant, her mind to linger on the supposition that Howard Spence had never come into her life; might she not, when the Vicomte had made his unexpected and generous avowal, have accepted him? She thought of the romances of her childish days, written at fever heat, in which ladies with titles moved around and gave commands and rebuked lovers who slipped in through wicket gates. And to think that she might have been a Vicomtesse and have lived in a castle!

A poor Vicomtesse, it is true.

CHAPTER XI

WHAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN

Honora sat still upon the bench. After an indefinite period she saw through the trees a vehicle on the driveway, and in it a single passenger. And suddenly it occurred to her that the passenger must be Peter, for Mrs. Holt had announced her intention of sending for him. She arose and approached the house, not without a sense of agitation.

She halted a moment at a little distance from the porch, where he was talking with Howard Spence and Joshua, and the fact that he was an unchanged Peter came to her with a shock of surprise. So much, in less than a year, had happened to Honora! And the sight of him, and the sound of his voice, brought back with a rush memories of a forgotten past. How long it seemed since she had lived in St. Louis!

Yes, he was the same Peter, but her absence from him had served to sharpen her sense of certain characteristics. He was lounging in his chair with his long legs crossed, with one hand in his pocket, and talking to these men as though he had known them always. There was a quality about him which had never struck her before, and which eluded exact definition. It had never occurred to her, until now, when she saw him out of the element with which she had always associated him, that Peter Erwin had a personality. That personality was a mixture of simplicity and self-respect and—common sense. And as Honora listened to his cheerful voice, she perceived that he had the gift of expressing himself clearly and forcibly and withal modestly; nor did it escape her that the other two men were listening with a certain deference. In her sensitive state she tried to evade the contrast thus suddenly presented to her between Peter and the man she had promised, that very morning, to marry.

Howard Spence was seated on the table, smoking a cigarette. Never, it seemed, had he more distinctly typified to her Prosperity. An attribute which she had admired in him, of strife without the appearance of strife, lost something of its value. To look at Peter

was to wonder whether there could be such a thing as a well-groomed combatant; and until to-day she had never thought of Peter as a combatant. The sight of his lean face summoned, all undesired, the vague vision of an ideal, and perhaps it was this that caused her voice to falter a little as she came forward and called his name. He rose precipitately.

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“What a surprise, Peter!” she said, as she took his hand. “How do you happen to be in the East?”

“An errand boy,” he replied. “Somebody had to come, so they chose me. Incidentally,” he added, smiling down at her, “it is a part of my education.”

“We thought you were lost,” said Howard Spence, significantly.

“Oh, no,” she answered lightly, evading his look. “I was on the bench at the edge of the wood.” She turned again to Peter. “How good of you to come up and see me!”

“I couldn’t have resisted that,” he declared, “if it were only for an hour.”

“I’ve been trying to persuade him to stay a while with us,” Joshua put in with unusual graciousness. “My mother will be disappointed not to see you.”

“There is nothing I should like better, Mr. Holt,” said Peter, simply, gazing off across the lawn. “Unfortunately I have to leave for the West to-night.”

“Before you go,” said Honora, “you must see this wonderful place. Come, we’ll begin with the garden.”

She had a desire now to take him away by himself, something she had wished, an hour ago, to avoid.

“Wouldn’t you like a runabout?” suggested Joshua, hospitably.

Honora thanked him.

“I’m sure Mr. Erwin would rather walk,” she replied.

“Come, Peter, you must tell me all the news of home.”

Spence accepted his dismissal with a fairly good grace, and gave no evidence of jealousy. He put his hand on Peter’s shoulder.

“If you’re ever in New York, Erwin,” said he, “look me up Dallam and Spence. We’re members of the Exchange, so you won’t have any trouble in finding us. I’d like to talk to you sometime about the West.”

Peter thanked him.

For a little while, as they went down the driveway side by side, he was meditatively silent. She wondered what he thought of Howard Spence, until suddenly she remembered that her secret was still her own, that Peter had as yet no particular reason

to single out Mr. Spence for especial consideration. She could not, however, resist saying, “New Yorkers are like that.”

“Like what?” he asked.

She coloured.

“Like—Mr. Spence. A little—self-assertive, sure of themselves.” She strove to keep out of her voice any suspicion of the agitation which was the result of the events of an extraordinary day, not yet ended. She knew that it would have been wiser not to have mentioned Howard; but Peter’s silence, somehow, had impelled her to speak. “He has made quite an unusual success for so young a man.”

Peter looked at her and shook his head.

“New York—success! What is to become of poor old St. Louis?” he inquired.

“Oh, I’m going back next week,” Honora cried. “I wish I were going with you.”

“And leave all this,” he said incredulously, “for trolley rides and Forest Park and—and me?”

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He stopped in the garden path and looked upon the picture she made standing in the sunlight against the blazing borders, her wide hat casting a shadow on her face. And the smile which she had known so well since childhood, indulgent, quizzical, with a touch of sadness, was in his eyes. She was conscious of a slight resentment. Was there, in fact, no change in her as the result of the events of those momentous ten months since she had seen him? And rather than a tolerance in which there was neither antagonism nor envy, she would have preferred from Peter an open disapproval of luxury, of the standards which he implied were hers. She felt that she had stepped into another world, but he refused to be dazzled by it. He insisted upon treating her as the same Honora.

“How did you leave Uncle Tom and Aunt Mary?” she asked.

They were counting the days, he said, until she should return, but they did not wish to curtail her visit. They did not expect her next week, he knew.

Honora coloured again.

“I feel—that I ought to go to them,” she said.

He glanced at her as though her determination to leave Silverdale so soon surprised him.

“They will be very happy to see you, Honora,” he said. “They have been very lonesome.”

She softened. Some unaccountable impulse prompted her to ask: “And you? Have you missed me—a little?”

He did not answer, and she saw that he was profoundly affected. She laid a hand upon his arm.

“Oh, Peter, I didn’t mean that,” she cried. “I know you have. And I have missed you—-terribly. It seems so strange seeing you here,” she went on hurriedly. “There are so many’ things I want to show you. Tell me how it happened hat you came on to New York.”

“Somebody in the firm had to come,” he said.

“In the firm!” she repeated. She did not grasp the full meaning of this change in his status, but she remembered that Uncle Tom had predicted it one day, and that it was an honour. “I never knew any one so secretive about their own affairs! Why didn’t you write me you had been admitted to the firm? So you are a partner of Judge Brice.”

“Brice, Graves, and Erwin,” said Peter; “it sounds very grand, doesn’t it? I can’t get used to it myself.”

“And what made you call yourself an errand boy?” she exclaimed reproachfully. “When I go back to the house I intend to tell Joshua Holt and—and Mr. Spence that you are a great lawyer.”

Peter laughed.

“You’d better wait a few years before you say that,” said he.

He took an interest in everything he saw, in Mr. Holt’s flowers, in Joshua’s cow barn, which they traversed, and declared, if he were ever rich enough, he would live in the country. They walked around the pond, —fringed now with yellow water-lilies on their floating green pads, —through the woods, and when the shadows were lengthening came out at the little summer-house over the valley of Silver Brook—the scene of that first memorable encounter with the Vicomte. At the sight of it the episode, and much else of recent happening, rushed back into Honora’s mind, and she realized with suddenness that she had, in his companionship, unconsciously been led far afield and in pleasant places. Comparisons seemed inevitable.

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She watched him with an unwonted tugging at her heart as he stood for a long time by the edge of the railing, gazing over the tree-tops of the valley towards the distant hazy hills. Nor did she understand what it was in him that now, on this day of days when she had definitely cast the die of life, when she had chosen her path, aroused this strange emotion. Why had she never felt it before? She had thought his face homely—now it seemed to shine with a transfiguring light. She recalled, with a pang, that she had criticised his clothes: to-day they seemed the expression of the man himself. Incredible is the range of human emotion! She felt a longing to throw herself into his arms, and to weep there.

He turned at length from the view.

“How wonderful!” he said.

“I didn’t know—you cared for nature so much, Peter.”

He looked at her strangely and put out his hand and drew her, unresisting, to the bench beside him.

“Are you in trouble, Honora?” he asked.

“Oh, no,” she cried, “oh, no, I am—very happy.”

“You may have thought it odd that I should have come here without knowing Mrs. Holt,” he said gravely, “particularly when you were going home so soon. I do not know myself why I came. I am a matter-of-fact person, but I acted on an impulse.”

“An impulse!” she faltered, avoiding the troubled, searching look in his eyes.

“Yes,” he said, “an impulse. I can call it by no other name. I should have taken a train that leaves New York at noon; but I had a feeling this morning, which seemed almost like a presentiment, that I might be of some use to you.”

“This morning?” She felt herself trembling, and she scarcely recognized Peter with such words on his lips. “I am happy—indeed I am. Only—I am overwrought—seeing you again—and you made me think of home.”

“It was no doubt very foolish of me,” he declared. “And if my coming has upset you—”

“Oh, no,” she cried. “Please don’t think so. It has given me a sense of—of security. That you were ready to help me if—if I needed you.”

“You should always have known that,” he replied. He rose and stood gazing off down the valley once more, and she watched him with her heart beating, with a sense of an impending crisis which she seemed powerless to stave off. And presently he turned to

her, “Honora, I have loved you for many years,” he said. “You were too young for me to speak of it. I did not intend to speak of it when I came here to-day. For many years I have hoped that some day you might be my wife. My one fear has been that I might lose you. Perhaps—perhaps it has been a dream. But I am willing to wait, should you wish to see more of the world. You are young yet, and I am offering myself for all time. There is no other woman for me, and never can be.”

He paused and smiled down at her. But she did not speak. She could not.

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“I know,” he went on, “that you are ambitious. And with your gifts I do not blame you. I cannot offer you great wealth, but I say with confidence that I can offer you something better, something surer. I can take care of you and protect you, and I will devote my life to your happiness. Will you marry me?”

Her eyes were sparkling with tears,—tears, he remembered afterwards, that were like blue diamonds.

“Oh, Peter,” she cried, “I wish I could! I have always—wished that I could. I can’t.”

“You can’t?”

She shook her head.

“I—I have told no one yet—not even Aunt Mary. I am going to marry Mr. Spence.”

For a long time he was silent, and she did not dare to look at the suffering in his face.

“Honora,” he said at last, “my most earnest wish in life will be for your happiness. And whatever may, come to you I hope that you will remember that I am your friend, to be counted on. And that I shall not change. Will you remember that?”

“Yes,” she whispered. She looked at him now, and through the veil of her tears she seemed to see his soul shining in his eyes. The tones of a distant church bell were borne to them on the valley breeze.

Peter glanced at his watch.

“I am afraid,” he said, “that I haven’t time to go back to the house—my train goes at seven. Can I get down to the village through the valley?”

Honora pointed out the road, faintly perceptible through the trees beneath them.

“And you will apologize for my departure to Mrs. Holt?”

She nodded. He took her hand, pressed it, and was gone. And presently, in a little clearing far below, he turned and waved his hat at her bravely.

CHAPTER XII

WHICH CONTAINS A SURPRISE FOR MRS. HOLT

How long she sat gazing with unseeing eyes down the valley Honora did not know. Distant mutterings of thunder aroused her; the evening sky had darkened, and angry-

looking clouds of purple were gathering over the hills. She rose and hurried homeward. She had thought to enter by the billiard-room door, and so gain her own chamber without encountering the household; but she had reckoned without her hostess. Beyond the billiard room, in the little entry filled with potted plants, she came face to face with that lady, who was inciting a footman to further efforts in his attempt to close a recalcitrant skylight. Honora proved of more interest, and Mrs. Holt abandoned the skylight.

“Why, my dear,” she said, “where have you been all afternoon?”

“I—I have been walking with Mr. Erwin, Mrs. Holt. I have been showing him Silverdale.”

“And where is he? It seems to me I invited him to stay all night, and Joshua tells me he extended the invitation.”

“We were in the little summer-house, and suddenly he discovered that it was late and he had to catch the seven o’clock train,” faltered Honora, somewhat disconnectedly. “Otherwise he would have come to you himself and told you—how much he regretted not staying. He has to go to St. Louis to-night.”

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“Well,” said Mrs. Holt, “this is an afternoon of surprises. The Vicomte has gone off, too, without even waiting to say good-by.”

“The Vicomte!” exclaimed Honora.

“Didn’t you see him, either, before he left?” inquired Mrs. Holt; “I thought perhaps you might be able to give me some further explanation of it.”

“I?” exclaimed Honora. She felt ready to sink through the floor, and Mrs. Holt’s delft-blue eyes haunted her afterwards like a nightmare.

“Didn’t you see him, my dear? Didn’t he tell you anything?”

“He—he didn’t say he was going away.”

“Did he seem disturbed about anything?” Mrs. Holt insisted.

“Now I think of it, he did seem a little disturbed.”

“To save my life,” said Mrs. Holt, “I can’t understand it. He left a note for me saying that he had received a telegram, and that he had to go at once. I was at a meeting of my charity board. It seems a very strange proceeding for such an agreeable and polite man as the Vicomte, although he had his drawbacks, as all Continentals have. And at times I thought he was grave and moody,—didn’t you?”

“Oh, yes, he was moody,” Honora agreed eagerly.

“You noticed it, too,” said Mrs. Holt. “But he was a charming man, and so interested in America and in the work we are doing. But I can’t understand about the telegram. I had Carroll inquire of every servant in the house, and there is no knowledge of a telegram having come up from the village this afternoon.”

“Perhaps the Vicomte might have met the messenger in the grounds,” hazarded Honora.

At this point their attention was distracted by a noise that bore a striking resemblance to a suppressed laugh. The footman on the step-ladder began to rattle the skylight vigorously.

“What on earth is the matter with you, Woods?” said Mrs. Holt.

“It must have been some dust off the skylight, Madam, that got into my throat,” he stammered, the colour of a geranium.

“Nonsense,” said Mrs. Holt, “there is no dust on the skylight.”

“It may be I swallowed the wrong way, looking up like, as I was, Madam,” he ventured, rubbing the frame and looking at his finger to prove his former theory.

“You are very stupid not to be able to close it,” she declared; “in a few minutes the place will be flooded. Tell Carroll to come and do it.”

Honora suffered herself to be led limply through the library and up the stairs into Mrs. Holt’s own boudoir, where a maid was closing the windows against the first great drops of the storm, which the wind was pelting against them. She drew the shades deftly, lighted the gas, and retired. Honora sank down in one of the upholstered light blue satin chairs and gazed at the shining brass of the coal grate set in the marble mantel, above which hung an engraving of Sir Joshua Reynolds’ cherubs. She had an instinct that the climax of the drama was at hand.

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Mrs. Holt sat down in the chair opposite.

“My dear,” she began, “I told you the other day what an unexpected and welcome comfort and help you have been to me. You evidently inherit” (Mrs. Holt coughed slightly) “the art of entertaining and pleasing, and I need not warn you, my dear, against the dangers of such a gift. Your aunt has evidently brought you up with strictness and religious care. You have been very fortunate.”

“Indeed I have, Mrs. Holt,” echoed Honora, in bewilderment.

“And Susan,” continued Mrs. Holt, “useful and willing as she is, does not possess your gift of taking people off my hands and entertaining them.”

Honora could think of no reply to this. Her eyes—to which no one could be indifferent—were riveted on the face of her hostess, and how was the good lady to guess that her brain was reeling?

I was about to say, my dear, that I expect to have a great deal of—well, of rather difficult company this summer. Next week, for instance, some prominent women in the Working Girls’ Relief Society are coming, and on July the twenty-third I give a garden party for the delegates to the Charity Conference in New York. The Japanese Minister has promised to pay me a visit, and Sir Rupert Grant, who built those remarkable tuberculosis homes in England, you know, is arriving in August with his family. Then there are some foreign artists.”

“Oh, Mrs. Holt,” exclaimed Honora; “how many interesting people you see!”

“Exactly, my dear. And I thought that, in addition to the fact that I have grown very fond of you, you would be very useful to me here, and that a summer with me might not be without its advantages. As your aunt will have you until you are married, which, I may say, without denying your attractions, is likely to be for some time, I intend to write to her to-night—with your consent—and ask her to allow you to remain with me all summer.”

Honora sat transfixed, staring painfully at the big pendant ear-rings.

“It is so kind of you, Mrs. Holt—” she faltered.

“I can realize, my dear, that you would wish to get back to your aunt. The feeling does you infinite credit. But, on the other hand, besides the advantages which would accrue to you, it might, to put the matter delicately, be of a little benefit to your relations, who will have to think of your future.”

“Indeed, it is good of you, but I must go back, Mrs. Holt.”

“Of course,” said Mrs. Holt, with a touch of dignity—for ere now people had left Silverdale before she wished them to—“of course, if you do not care to stay, that is quite another thing.”

“Oh, Mrs. Holt, don’t say that!” cried Honora, her face burning; “I cannot thank you enough for the pleasure you have given me. If—if things were different, I would stay with you gladly, although I should miss my family. But now,—now I feel that I must be with them. I—I am engaged to be married.”

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Honora still remembers the blank expression which appeared on the countenance of her hostess when she spoke these words. Mrs. Holt's cheeks twitched, her ear-rings quivered, and her bosom heaved-once.

"Engaged to be married!" she gasped.

"Yes," replied our heroine, humbly, "I was going to tell you—to-morrow."

"I suppose," said Mrs. Holt, after a silence, "it is to the young man who was here this afternoon, and whom I did not see. It accounts for his precipitate departure. But I must say, Honora, since frankness is one of my faults, that I feel it my duty to write to your aunt and disclaim all responsibility."

"It is not to Mr. Erwin," said Honora, meekly; "it is—it is to Mr. Spence."

Mrs. Holt seemed to find difficulty in speaking, Her former symptoms, which Honora had come to recognize as indicative of agitation, returned with alarming intensity. And when at length her voice made itself heard, it was scarcely recognizable.

"You are engaged—to—Howard Spence?"

"Oh, Mrs. Holt," exclaimed Honora, "it was as great a surprise to me —believe me—as it is to you."

But even the knowledge that they shared a common amazement did not appear, at once, to assuage Mrs. Holt's emotions.

"Do you love him?" she demanded abruptly.

Whereupon Honora burst into tears.

"Oh, Mrs. Holt," she sobbed, "how can you ask?"

From this time on the course of events was not precisely logical. Mrs. Holt, setting in abeyance any ideas she may have had about the affair, took Honora in her arms, and against that ample bosom was sobbed out the pent-up excitement and emotion of an extraordinary day.

"There, there, my dear," said Mrs. Holt, stroking the dark hair, "I should not have asked you that-forgive me." And the worthy lady, quivering with sympathy now, remembered the time of her own engagement to Joshua. And the fact that the circumstances of that event differed somewhat from those of the present—in regularity, at least, increased rather than detracted from Mrs. Holt's sudden access of tenderness. The perplexing questions as to the probable result of such a marriage were swept away by a flood of

feeling. “There, there, my dear, I did not mean to be harsh. What you told me was such a shock—such a surprise, and marriage is such a grave and sacred thing.”

“I know it,” sobbed Honora.

“And you are very young.”

“Yes, Mrs. Holt.”

“And it happened in my house.”

“No,” said Honora, “it happened—near the golf course.”

Mrs. Holt smiled, and wiped her eyes.

“I mean, my dear, that I shall always feel responsible for bringing you together——for your future happiness. That is a great deal. I could have wished that you both had taken longer to reflect, but I hope with all my heart that you will be happy.”

Honora lifted up a tear-stained face.

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“He said it was because I was going away that—that he spoke,” she said. “Oh, Mrs. Holt, I knew that you would be kind about it.”

“Of course I am kind about it, my dear,” said Mrs. Holt. “As I told you, I have grown to have an affection for you. I feel a little as though you belonged to me. And after this—-this event, I expect to see a great deal of you. Howard Spence’s mother was a very dear friend of mine. I was one of the first who knew her when she came to New York, from Troy, a widow, to educate her son. She was a very fine and a very courageous woman.” Mrs. Holt paused a moment. “She hoped that Howard would be a lawyer.”

“A lawyer!” Honora repeated.

“I lost sight of him for several years,” continued Mrs. Holt, “but before I invited him here I made some inquiries about him from friends of mine in the financial world. I find that he is successful for so young a man, and well thought of. I have no doubt he will make a good husband, my dear, although I could wish he were not on the Stock Exchange. And I hope you will make him happy.”

Whereupon the good lady kissed Honora, and dismissed her to dress for dinner.

“I shall write to your aunt at once,” she said.

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Requited love, unsettled condition that it is supposed to bring, did not interfere with Howard Spence’s appetite at dinner. His spirits, as usual, were of the best, and from time to time Honora was aware of his glance. Then she lowered her eyes. She sat as in a dream; and, try as she might, her thoughts would not range themselves. She seemed to see him but dimly, to hear what he said faintly; and it conveyed nothing to her mind.

This man was to be her husband! Over and over she repeated it to herself. His name was Howard Spence, and he was on the highroad to riches and success, and she was to live in New York. Ten days before he had not existed for her. She could not bring herself to believe that he existed now. Did she love him? How could she love him, when she did not realize him? One thing she knew, that she had loved him that morning.

The fetters of her past life were broken, and this she would not realize. She had opened the door of the cage for what? These were the fragments of thoughts that drifted through her mind like tattered clouds across an empty sky after a storm. Peter Erwin appeared to her more than once, and he was strangely real. But he belonged to

the past. Course succeeded course, and she talked subconsciously to Mr. Holt and Joshua—such is the result of feminine training.

After dinner she stood on the porch. The rain had ceased, a cool damp breeze shook the drops from the leaves, and the stars were shining. Presently, at the sound of a step behind her, she started. He was standing at her shoulder.

“Honora!” he said.

She did not move.

“Honora, I haven’t seen you—alone—since morning. It seems like a thousand years. Honora?”

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“Yes.”

“Did you mean it?

“Did I mean what?”

“When you said you’d marry me.” His voice trembled a little. “I’ve been thinking of nothing but you all day. You’re not—sorry? You haven’t changed your mind?”

She shook her head.

“At dinner when you wouldn’t look at me, and this afternoon—”

“No, I’m not sorry,” she said, cutting him short. “I’m not sorry.”

He put his arm about her with an air that was almost apologetic. And, seeing that she did not resist, he drew her to him and kissed her. Suddenly, unaccountably to her, she clung to him.

“You love me!” he exclaimed.

“Yes,” she whispered, “but I am tired. I—I am going upstairs, Howard. I am tired.”

He kissed her again.

“I can’t believe it!” he said. “I’ll make you a queen. And we’ll be married in the autumn, Honora.” He nodded boyishly towards the open windows of the library. “Shall I tell them?” he asked. “I feel like shouting it. I can’t hold on much longer. I wonder what the old lady will say!”

Honora disengaged herself from his arms and fled to the screen door. As she opened it, she turned and smiled back at him.

“Mrs. Holt knows already,” she said.

And catching her skirt, she flew quickly up the stairs.

BOOK II

Volume 3.

CHAPTER I

So long as ye both shall live!

It was late November. And as Honora sat at the window of the drawing-room of the sleeping car, life seemed as fantastic and unreal as the moss-hung Southern forest into which she stared. She was happy, as a child is happy who is taken on an excursion into the unknown. The monotony of existence was at last broken, and riven the circumscribing walls. Limitless possibilities lay ahead.

The emancipation had not been without its pangs of sorrow, and there were moments of retrospection—as now. She saw herself on Uncle Tom's arm, walking up the aisle of the old church. How many Sundays of her life had she sat watching a shaft of sunlight strike across the stone pillars of its gothic arches! She saw, in the chancel, tall and grave and pale, Peter Erwin standing beside the man with the flushed face who was to be her husband. She heard again the familiar voice of Dr. Ewing reciting the words of that wonderful introduction. At other weddings she had been moved. Why was her own so unrealizable?

"Honora, wilt thou have this man to thy wedded husband, to live together after God's ordinance in the holy state of Matrimony? Wilt thou obey him, and serve him, love, honour, and keep him in sickness and in health; and, forsaking all others, keep thee only unto him, so long as ye both shall live?"

She had promised. And they were walking out of the church, facing the great rose window with its blended colours, and the vaults above were ringing now with the volume of an immortal march.

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After that an illogical series of events and pictures passed before her. She was in a corner of the carriage, her veil raised, gazing at her husband, who had kissed her passionately. He was there beside her, looking extremely well in his top hat and frock-coat, with a white flower in his buttonhole. He was the representative of the future she had deliberately chosen. And yet, by virtue of the strange ceremony through which they had passed, he seemed to have changed. In her attempt to seize upon a reality she looked out of the window. They were just passing the Hanbury mansion in Wayland Square, and her eyes fell upon the playroom windows under the wide cornice; and she wondered whether the doll's house were still in its place, its mute inhabitants waiting to be called by the names she had given them, and quickened into life once more.

Next she recalled the arrival at the little house that had been her home, summer and winter, for so many years of her life. A red and white awning, stretching up the length of the walk which once had run beside the tall pear trees, gave it an unrecognizable, gala air. Long had it stood there, patient, unpretentious, content that the great things should pass it by! And now, modest still, it had been singled out from amongst its neighbours and honoured. Was it honoured? It seemed to Honora, so fanciful this day, that its unwonted air of festival was unnatural. Why should the hour of departure from such a harbour of peace be celebrated?

She was standing beside her husband in the little parlour, while carriage doors slammed in the dusk outside; while one by one—a pageant of the past which she was leaving forever the friends of her childhood came and went. Laughter and tears and kisses! And then, in no time at all, she found herself changing for the journey in the "little house under the hill." There, locked up in the little desk Cousin Eleanor had given her long ago, was the unfinished manuscript of that novel written at fever heat during those summer days in which she had sought to escape from a humdrum existence. And now—she had escaped. Aunt Mary, helpful under the most trying circumstances, was putting her articles in a bag, the initials on which she did not recognize—H. L. S.—-Honora Leffingwell Spence; while old Catherine, tearful and inefficient, knelt before her, fumbling at her shoes. Honora, bending over, took the face of the faithful old servant and kissed it.

"Don't feel badly, Catherine," she said; "I'll be coming back often to see you, and you will be coming to see me."

"Will ye, darlint? The blessing of God be on you for those words—and you to be such a fine lady! It always was a fine lady ye were, with such a family and such a bringin' up. And now ye've married a rich man, as is right and proper. If it's rich as Croesus he was, he'd be none too good for you."

"Catherine," said Aunt Mary, reprovingly, "what ideas you put into the child's head!"

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“Sure, Miss Mary,” cried Catherine, “it’s always the great lady she was, and she a wee bit of a thing. And wasn’t it yerself, Miss Mary, that dressed her like a princess?”

Then came the good-bys—the real ones. Uncle Tom, always the friend of young people, was surrounded by a group of bridesmaids in the hall. She clung to him. And Peter, who had the carriage ready. What would her wedding have been without Peter? As they drove towards the station, his was the image that remained persistently in her mind, bareheaded on the sidewalk in the light of the carriage lamps. The image of struggle.

She had married Prosperity. A whimsical question, that shocked her, irresistibly presented itself: was it not Prosperity that she had promised to love, honour, and obey?

It must not be thought that Honora was by any means discontented with her Prosperity. He was new—that was all. Howard looked new. But she remembered that he had always looked new; such was one of his greatest charms. In the long summer days since she had bade him good-by on her way through New York from Silverdale, Honora had constructed him: he was perpetual yet sophisticated Youth; he was Finance and Fashion; he was Power in correctly cut clothes. And when he had arrived in St. Louis to play his part in the wedding festivities, she had found her swan a swan indeed—he was all that she had dreamed of him. And she had tingled with pride as she introduced him to her friends, or gazed at him across the flower-laden table as he sat beside Edith Hanbury at the bridesmaids’ dinner in Wayland Square.

The wedding ceremony had somehow upset her opinion of him, but Honora regarded this change as temporary. Julius Caesar or George Washington himself must have been somewhat ridiculous as bridegrooms: and she had the sense to perceive that her own agitations as a bride were partly responsible. No matter how much a young girl may have trifled with that electric force in the male sex known as the grand passion, she shrinks from surrendering herself to its dominion. Honora shrank. He made love to her on the way to the station, and she was terrified. He actually forgot to smoke cigarettes. What he said was to the effect that he possessed at last the most wonderful and beautiful woman in the world, and she resented the implication of possession.

Nevertheless, in the glaring lights of the station, her courage and her pride in him revived, and he became again a normal and a marked man. Although the sex may resent it, few women are really indifferent to clothes, and Howard’s well-fitting check suit had the magic touch of the metropolis. His manner matched his garments. Obsequious porters grasped his pig-skin bag, and seized Honora’s; the man at the gate inclined his head as he examined their tickets, and the Pullman conductor himself showed them their stateroom, and plainly regarded them as important people far from home. Howard had the cosmopolitan air. He gave the man a dollar, and remarked that the New Orleans train was not exactly the Chicago and New York Limited.

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“Not by a long shot,” agreed the conductor, as he went out, softly closing the door behind him.

Whereupon the cosmopolitan air dropped from Mr. Howard Spence, not gracefully, and he became once more that superfluous and awkward and utterly banal individual, the husband.

“Let’s go out and walk on the platform until the train starts,” suggested Honora, desperately. “Oh, Howard, the shades are up! I’m sure I saw some one looking in!”

He laughed. But there was a light in his eyes that frightened her, and she deemed his laughter out of place. Was he, after all, an utterly different man than what she had thought him? Still laughing, he held to her wrist with one hand, and with the other pulled down the shades.

“This is good enough for me,” he said. “At last—at last,” he whispered, “all the red tape is over, and I’ve got you to myself! Do you love me just a little, Honora?”

“Of course I do,” she faltered, still struggling, her face burning as from a fire.

“Then what’s the matter?” he demanded.

“I don’t know—I want air. Howard, please let me go. It’s-it’s so hot inhere. You must let me go.”

Her release, she felt afterwards, was due less to a physical than a mental effort. She seemed suddenly to have cowed him, and his resistance became enfeebled. She broke from him, and opened the door, and reached the cement platform and the cold air. When he joined her, there was something jokingly apologetic about his manner, and he was smoking a cigarette; and she could not help thinking that she would have respected him more if he had held her.

“Women beat me,” he said. “They’re the most erratic stock in the market.”

It is worthy of remark how soon the human, and especially the feminine brain adjusts itself to new conditions. In a day or two life became real again, or rather romantic.

For the American husband in his proper place is an auxiliary who makes all things possible. His ability to “get things done,” before it ceases to be a novelty, is a quality to be admired. Honora admired. An intimacy—if the word be not too strong—sprang up between them. They wandered through the quaint streets of New Orleans, that most foreign of American cities, searching out the tumbledown French houses; and Honora was never tired of imagining the romances and tragedies which must have taken place in them. The new scenes excited her,—the quaint cafes with their delicious, peppery Creole cooking,—and she would sit talking for a quarter of an hour at a time with

Alphonse, who outdid himself to please the palate of a lady with such allure. He called her “Madame”; but well he knew, this student of human kind, that the title had not been of long duration.

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Madame came from New York, without doubt? such was one of his questions, as he stood before them in answer to Howard's summons, rubbing his hands. And Honora, with a little thrill, acknowledged the accuracy of his guess. There was no dish of Alphonse's they did not taste. And Howard smilingly paid the bills. He was ecstatically proud of his wife, and although he did justice to the cooking, he cared but little for the mysterious courtyards, the Spanish buildings, and the novels of Mr. George W. Cable, which Honora devoured when she was too tired to walk about. He followed her obediently to the battle field of New Orleans, and admired as obediently the sunset, when the sky was all silver-green through the magnolias, and the spreading live oaks hung with Spanish moss, and a silver bar lay upon the Father of Waters. Honora, with beating heart and flushed cheeks, felt these things: Howard felt them through her and watched—not the sunset—but the flame it lighted in her eyes.

He left her but twice a day, and then only for brief periods. He even felt a joy when she ventured to complain.

"I believe you care more for those horrid stocks than for me," she said. "I—I am just a novelty."

His answer, since they were alone in their sitting-room, was obvious.

"Howard," she cried, "how mean of you! Now I'll have to do my hair all over again. I've got such a lot of it—you've no idea how difficult it is."

"You bet I have!" he declared meaningly, and Honora blushed.

His pleasure of possession was increased when people turned to look at her on the street or in the dining room—to think that this remarkable creature was in reality his wife! Nor did the feeling grow less intense with time, being quite the same when they arrived at a fashionable resort in the Virginia mountains, on their way to New York. For such were the exactions of his calling that he could spare but two weeks for his honeymoon.

Honora's interest in her new surroundings was as great, and the sight of those towering ridges against the soft blue of the autumn skies inspired her. It was Indian summer here, the tang of wood smoke was in the air; in the valleys—as they drove—the haze was shot with the dust of gold, and through the gaps they looked across vast, unexplored valleys to other distant, blue-stained ridges that rose between them and the sunset. Honora took an infinite delight in the ramshackle cabins beside the red-clay roads, in the historic atmosphere of the ancient houses and porticoes of the Warm Springs, where the fathers of the Republic had come to take the waters. And one day, when a north wind had scattered the smoke and swept the sky, Howard followed her up the paths to the ridge's crest, where she stood like a Victory, her garments blowing,

gazing off over the mighty billows to the westward. Howard had never seen a Victory, but his vision of domesticity was untroubled.

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Although it was late in the season, the old-fashioned, rambling hotel was well filled, and people interested Honora as well as scenery—a proof of her human qualities. She chided Howard because he, too, was not more socially inclined.

“How can you expect me to be—now?” he demanded.

She told him he was a goose, although secretly admitting the justice of his defence. He knew four or five men in the hotel, with whom he talked stocks while waiting for Honora to complete her toilets; and he gathered from two of these, who were married, that patience was a necessary qualification in a husband. One evening they introduced their wives. Later, Howard revealed their identity—or rather that of the husbands.

“Bowker is one of the big men in the Faith Insurance Company, and Tyler is president of the Gotham Trust.” He paused to light a cigarette, and smiled at her significantly. “If you can dolly the ladies along once in a while, Honora, it won’t do any harm,” he added. “You have a way with you, you know,—when you want to.”

Honora grew scarlet.

“Howard!” she exclaimed.

He looked somewhat shamefaced.

“Well,” he said, “I was only joking. Don’t take it seriously. But it doesn’t do any harm to be polite.”

“I am always polite,” she answered a little coldly.

Honeymoons, after all, are matters of conjecture, and what proportion of them contain disenchantments will never be known. Honora lay awake for a long time that night, and the poignant and ever recurring remembrance of her husband’s remark sent the blood to her face like a flame. Would Peter, or George Hanbury, or any of the intimate friends of her childhood have said such a thing?

A new and wistful feeling of loneliness was upon her. For some days, with a certain sense of isolation and a tinge of envy which she would not acknowledge, she had been watching a group of well-dressed, clean-looking people galloping off on horseback or filling the six-seated buckboards. They were from New York—that she had discovered; and they did not mix with the others in the hotel. She had thought it strange that Howard did not know them, but for a reason which she did not analyze she hesitated to ask him who they were. They had rather a rude manner of staring —especially the men —and the air of deriving infinite amusement from that which went on about them. One of them, a young man with a lisp who was addressed by the singular name of “Toots,” she had overheard demanding as she passed: who the deuce was the tall girl with the dark hair and the colour? Wherever she went, she was aware of them. It was foolish,

she knew, but their presence seemed—in the magnitude which trifles are wont to assume in the night-watches—of late to have poisoned her pleasure.

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Enlightenment as to the identity of these disturbing persons came, the next day, from an unexpected source. Indeed, from Mrs. Tyler. She loved brides, she said, and Honora seemed to her such a sweet bride. It was Mrs. Tyler's ambition to become thin (which was hitching her wagon to a star with a vengeance), and she invited our heroine to share her constitutional on the porch. Honora found the proceeding in the nature of an ordeal, for Mrs. Tyler's legs were short, her frizzled hair very blond, and the fact that it was natural made it seem, somehow, all the more damning.

They had scarcely begun to walk before Honora, with a sense of dismay of which she was ashamed, beheld some of the people who had occupied her thoughts come out of the door and form a laughing group at the end of the porch. She could not rid herself of the feeling that they were laughing at her. She tried in vain to drive them from her mind, to listen to Mrs. Tyler's account of how she, too, came as a bride to New York from some place with a classical name, and to the advice that accompanied the narration. The most conspicuous young woman in the group, in riding clothes, was seated on the railing, with the toe of one boot on the ground. Her profile was clear-cut and her chestnut hair tightly knotted behind under her hat. Every time they turned, this young woman stared at Honora amusedly.

"Nasty thing!" exclaimed Mrs. Tyler, suddenly and unexpectedly in the midst of a description of the delights of life in the metropolis.

"Who?" asked Honora.

"That young Mrs. Freddy Maitland, sitting on the rail. She's the rudest woman in New York."

A perversity of spirit which she could not control prompted Honora to reply:

"Why, I think she is so good-looking, Mrs. Tyler. And she seems to have so much individuality and independence."

"There!" cried Mrs. Tyler, triumphantly. "Once—not so very long ago—I was just as inexperienced as you, my dear. She belongs to that horribly fast set with which no self-respecting woman would be seen. It's an outrage that they should come to a hotel like this and act as though it belonged to them. She knows me quite as well as I know her, but when I am face to face she acts as though I was air."

Honora could not help thinking that this, at least, required some imagination on Mrs. Maitland's part. Mrs. Tyler had stopped for breath.

"I have been introduced to her twice," she continued, "but of course I wouldn't speak to her. The little man with the lisp, next to her, who is always acting in that silly way, they call Toots Cuthbert. He gets his name in the newspapers by leading cotillons in New

York and Newport. And the tall, slim, blond one, with the green hat and the feather in it, is Jimmy Wing. He's the son of James Wing, the financier."

"I went to school at Sutcliffe with his sister," said Honora.

It seemed to Honora that Mrs. Tyler's manner underwent a change.

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“My dear,” she exclaimed, “did you go to Sutcliffe? What a wonderful school it is! I fully intend to send my daughter Louise there.”

An almost irresistible desire came over Honora to run away. She excused herself instead, and hurried back towards her room. On the way she met Howard in the corridor, and he held a telegram in his hand.

“I’ve got some bad news, Honora,” he said. “That is, bad from the point of view of our honeymoon. Sid Dallam is swamped with business, and wants me in New York. I’m afraid we’ve got to cut it short.”

To his astonishment she smiled.

“Oh, I’m so glad, Howard,” she cried. “I—I don’t like this place nearly so well as New Orleans. There are—so many people here.”

He looked relieved, and patted her on the arm.

“We’ll go to-night, old girl,” he said.

CHAPTER II

“*Stafford park*”

There is a terrifying aspect of all great cities. Rome, with its leviathan aqueducts, its seething tenements clinging to the hills, its cruel, shining Palatine, must have overborne the provincial traveller coming up from Ostia. And Honora, as she stood on the deck of the ferry-boat, approaching New York for the second time in her life, could not overcome a sense of oppression. It was on a sharp December morning, and the steam of the hurrying craft was dazzling white in the early sun. Above and beyond the city rose, overpowering, a very different city, somehow, than that her imagination had first drawn. Each of that multitude of vast towers seemed a fortress now, manned by Celt and Hun and, Israelite and Saxon, captained by Titans. And the strife between them was on a scale never known in the world before, a strife with modern arms and modern methods and modern brains, in which there was no mercy.

Hidden somewhere amidst those bristling miles of masonry to the northward of the towers was her future home. Her mind dwelt upon it now, for the first time, and tried to construct it. Once she had spoken to Howard of it, but he had smiled and avoided discussion. What would it be like to have a house of one’s own in New York? A house on Fifth Avenue, as her girl friends had said when they laughingly congratulated her and begged her to remember that they came occasionally to New York. Those of us who, like Honora, believe in Providence, do not trouble ourselves with mere matters of dollars and cents. This morning, however, the huge material towers which she gazed upon

seemed stronger than Providence, and she thought of her husband. Was his fibre sufficiently tough to become eventually the captain of one of those fortresses, to compete with the Maitlands and the Wings, and others she knew by name, calmly and efficiently intrenched there?

The boat was approaching the slip, and he came out to her from the cabin, where he had been industriously reading the stock reports, his newspapers thrust into his overcoat pocket.

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“There’s no place like New York, after all,” he declared, and added, “when the market’s up. We’ll go to a hotel for breakfast.”

For some reason she found it difficult to ask the question on her lips.

“I suppose,” she said hesitatingly, “I suppose we couldn’t go—home, Howard. You—-you have never told me where we are to live.”

As before, the reference to their home seemed to cause him amusement. He became very mysterious.

“Couldn’t you pass away a few hours shopping this morning, my dear?”

“Oh, yes,” replied Honora.

“While I gather in a few dollars,” he continued. “I’ll meet you at lunch, and then we’ll go-home.”

As the sun mounted higher, her spirits rose with it. New York, or that strip of it which is known to the more fortunate of human beings, is a place to raise one’s spirits on a sparkling day in early winter. And Honora, as she drove in a hansom from shop to shop, felt a new sense of elation and independence. She was at one, now, with the prosperity that surrounded her: her purse no longer limited, her whims existing only to be gratified. Her reflections on this recently attained state alternated with alluring conjectures on the place of abode of which Howard had made such a mystery. Where was it? And why had he insisted, before showing it to her, upon waiting until afternoon?

Newly arrayed in the most becoming of grey furs, she met him at that hitherto fabled restaurant which in future days—she reflected—was to become so familiar—-Delmonico’s. Howard was awaiting her in the vestibule; and it was not without a little quiver of timidity and excitement and a consequent rise of colour that she followed the waiter to a table by the window. She felt as though the assembled fashionable world was staring at her, but presently gathered courage enough to gaze at the costumes of the women and the faces of the men. Howard, with a sang froid of which she felt a little proud, ordered a meal for which he eventually paid a fraction over eight dollars. What would Aunt Mary have said to such extravagance? He produced a large bunch of violets.

“With Sid Dallam’s love,” he said, as she pinned them on her gown. “I tried to get Lily—Mrs. Sid—for lunch, but you never can put your finger on her. She’ll amuse you, Honora.”

“Oh, Howard, it’s so much pleasanter lunching alone to-day. I’m glad you didn’t. And then afterwards—?”

He refused, however, to be drawn. When they emerged she did not hear the directions he gave the cabman, and it was not until they turned into a narrow side street, which became dingier and dingier as they bumped their way eastward, that she experienced a sudden sinking sensation.

“Howard!” she cried. “Where are you going? You must tell me.”

“One of the prettiest suburbs in New Jersey—Rivington,” he said. “Wait till you see the house.”

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“Suburbs! Rivington! New Jersey!” The words swam before Honora’s eyes, like the great signs she had seen printed in black letters on the tall buildings from the ferry that morning. She had a sickening sensation, and the odour of his cigarette in the cab became unbearable. By an ironic trick of her memory, she recalled that she had told the clerks in the shops where she had made her purchases that she would send them her address later. How different that address from what she had imagined it!

“It’s in the country!” she exclaimed.

To lunch at Delmonico’s for eight dollars and live in Rivington

Howard appeared disturbed. More than that, he appeared astonished, solicitous.

“Why, what’s the matter, Honora?” he asked. “I thought you’d like it. It’s a brand new house, and I got Lily Dallam to furnish it. She’s a wonder on that sort of thing, and I told her to go ahead—within reason. I talked it over with your aunt and uncle, and they agreed with me you’d much rather live out there for a few years than in a flat.”

“In a flat!” repeated Honora, with a shudder.

“Certainly,” he said, flicking his ashes out of the window. “Who do you think I am, at my age? Frederick T. Maitland, or the owner of the Brougham Building?”

“But—Howard,” she protested, “why didn’t you talk it over with me?”

“Because I wanted to surprise you,” he replied. “I spent a month and a half looking for that house. And you never seemed to care. It didn’t occur to me that you would care—-for the first few years,” he added, and there was in his voice a note of reproach that did not escape her. “You never seemed inclined to discuss business with me, Honora. I didn’t think you were interested. Dallam and I are making money. We expect some day to be on Easy Street—so to speak—or Fifth Avenue. Some day, I hope, you can show some of these people the road. But just now what capital we have has to go into the business.”

Strangely enough, in spite of the intensity of her disappointment, she felt nearer to her husband in that instant than at any time since their marriage. Honora, who could not bear to hurt any one’s feelings, seized his hand repentantly. Tears started in her eyes.

“Oh, Howard, I must seem to you very ungrateful,” she cried. “It was such a—such a surprise. I have never lived in the country, and I’m sure it will be delightful—and much more healthful than the city. Won’t you forgive me?”

If he had known as much about the fluctuations of the feminine temperament as of those of stocks, the ease with which Honora executed this complete change of front might have disturbed him. Howard, as will be seen, possessed that quality which is

loosely called good nature. In marriage, he had been told (and was ready to believe), the wind blew where it listed; and he was a wise husband who did not spend his time in inquiry as to its sources. He kissed her before he helped her out of the carriage. Again they crossed the North River, and he led her through the wooden ferry house on the New Jersey side to where the Rivington train was standing beside a platform shed.

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There was no parlour car. Men and women—mostly women—with bundles were already appropriating the seats and racks, and Honora found herself wondering how many of these individuals were her future neighbours. That there might have been an hysterical element in the lively anticipation she exhibited during the journey did not occur to Howard Spence.

After many stops,—in forty-two minutes, to be exact, the brakeman shouted out the name of the place which was to be her home, and of which she had been ignorant that morning. They alighted at an old red railroad station, were seized upon by a hackman in a coonskin coat, and thrust into a carriage that threatened to fall to pieces on the frozen macadam road. They passed through a village in which Honora had a glimpse of the drug store and grocery and the Grand Army Hall; then came detached houses of all ages in one and two-acre plots some above the road, for the country was rolling; a very attractive church of cream-coloured stone, and finally the carriage turned sharply to the left under an archway on which were the words “Stafford Park,” and stopped at a very new curbstone in a very new gutter on the right.

“Here we are!” cried Howard, as he fished in his trousers pockets for money to pay the hackman.

Honora looked around her. Stafford Park consisted of a wide centre-way of red gravel, not yet packed, with an island in its middle planted with shrubbery and young trees, the bare branches of which formed a black tracery against the orange-red of the western sky. On both sides of this centre-way were concrete walks, with cross-walks from the curbs to the houses. There were six of these—three on each side—standing on a raised terrace and about two hundred feet apart. Beyond them, to the northward, Stafford Park was still a wilderness of second-growth hardwood, interspersed with a few cedars.

Honora’s house, the first on the right, was exactly like the other five. If we look at it through her eyes, we shall find this similarity its main drawback. If we are a little older, however, and more sophisticated, we shall suspect the owner of Stafford Park and his architect of a design to make it appear imposing. It was (indefinite and much-abused term) Colonial; painted white; and double, with dormer windows of diagonal wood-surrounded panes in the roof. There was a large pillared porch on its least private side—namely, the front. A white-capped maid stood in the open doorway and smiled at Honora as she entered.

Honora walked through the rooms. There was nothing intricate about the house; it was as simple as two times four, and really too large for her and Howard. Her presents were installed, the pictures and photograph frames and chairs, even Mr. Isham’s dining-room table and Cousin Eleanor’s piano. The sight of these, and of the engraving which Aunt Mary had sent on, and which all her childhood had hung over her bed in the little room at home, brought the tears once more to her eyes. But she forced them back bravely.

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These reflections were interrupted by the appearance of the little maid announcing that tea was ready, and bringing her two letters. One was from Susan Holt, and the other, written in a large, slanting, and angular handwriting, was signed Lily Dallam. It was dated from New York.

“My dear Honora,” it ran, “I feel that I must call you so, for Sid and Howard, in addition to being partners, are such friends. I hesitated so long about furnishing your house, my dear, but Howard insisted, and said he wished to surprise you. I am sending you this line to welcome you, and to tell you that I have arranged with the furniture people to take any or all things back that you do not like, and exchange them. After all, they will be out of date in a few years, and Howard and Sid will have made so much money by that time, I hope, that I shall be able to leave my apartment, which is dear, and you will be coming to town.”

Honora laid down the sheet, and began to tidy her hair before the glass of the highly polished bureau in her room. A line in Susan’s letter occurred to her: “Mother hopes to see you soon. She asked me to tell you to buy good things which will last you all your life, and says that it pays.”

The tea-table was steaming in the parlour in front of the wood fire in the blue tiled fireplace. The oak floor reflected its gleam, and that of the electric lights; the shades were drawn; a slight odour of steam heat pervaded the place. Howard, smoking a cigarette, was reclining on a sofa that evidently was not made for such a purpose, reading the evening newspapers.

“Well, Honora,” he said, as she took her seat behind the tea-table, “you haven’t told me how you like it. Pretty cosey, eh? And enough spare room to have people out over Sundays.”

“Oh, Howard, I do like it,” she cried, in a desperate attempt—which momentarily came near succeeding to convince herself that she could have desired nothing more. “It’s so sweet and clean and new—and all our own.”

She succeeded, at any rate, in convincing Howard. In certain matters, he was easily convinced.

“I thought you’d be pleased when you saw it, my dear,” he said.

CHAPTER III

THE GREAT UNATTACHED

It was the poet Cowper who sang of domestic happiness as the only bliss that has survived the Fall. One of the burning and unsolved questions of to-day is,—will it

survive the twentieth century? Will it survive rapid transit and bridge and Woman's Rights, the modern novel and modern drama, automobiles, flying machines, and intelligence offices; hotel, apartment, and suburban life, or four homes, or none at all? Is it a weed that will grow anywhere, in a crevice between two stones in the city? Or is it a plant that requires tender care and the water of self-sacrifice? Above all, is it desirable?

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Our heroine, as may have been suspected, has an adaptable temperament. Her natural position is upright, but like the reed, she can bend gracefully, and yields only to spring back again blithely. Since this chronicle regards her, we must try to look at existence through her eyes, and those of some of her generation and her sex: we must give the four years of her life in Rivington the approximate value which she herself would have put upon it—which is a chapter. We must regard Rivington as a kind of purgatory, not solely a place of departed spirits, but of those which have not yet arrived; as one of the many temporary abodes of the Great Unattached.

No philosophical writer has as yet made the attempt to define the change —as profound as that of the tadpole to the frog—between the lover and the husband. An author of ideals would not dare to proclaim that this change is inevitable: some husbands—and some wives are fortunate enough to escape it, but it is not unlikely to happen in our modern civilization. Just when it occurred in Howard Spence it is difficult to say, but we have got to consider him henceforth as a husband; one who regards his home as a shipyard rather than the sanctuary of a goddess; as a launching place, the ways of which are carefully greased, that he may slide off to business every morning with as little friction as possible, and return at night to rest undisturbed in a comfortable berth, to ponder over the combat of the morrow.

It would be inspiring to summon the vision of Honora, in rustling garments, poised as the figurehead of this craft, beckoning him on to battle and victory. Alas! the launching happened at that grimmest and most unromantic of hours-ten minutes of eight in the morning. There was a period, indeterminate, when she poured out his coffee with wifely zeal; a second period when she appeared at the foot of the stairs to kiss him as he was going out of the door; a third when, clad in an attractive dressing-gown, she waved him good-by from the window; and lastly, a fourth, which was only marked by an occasional protest on his part, when the coffee was weak.

“I’d gladly come down, Howard, if it seemed to make the least difference to you,” said Honora. “But all you do is to sit with your newspaper propped up and read the stock reports, and growl when I ask you a polite question. You’ve no idea how long it makes the days out here, to get up early.”

“It seems to me you put in a good many days in town,” he retorted.

“Surely you don’t expect me to spend all my time in Rivington!” she cried reproachfully; “I’d die. And then I am always having to get new cooks for you, because they can’t make Hollandaise sauce like hotel chefs. Men have no idea how hard it is to keep house in the country,—I just wish you had to go to those horrid intelligence offices. You wouldn’t stay in Rivington ten days. And all the good cooks drink.”

Howard, indeed, with the aid of the village policeman, had had to expel from his kitchen one imperious female who swore like a dock hand, and who wounded Honora to the

quick by remarking, as she departed in durance, that she had always lived with ladies and gentlemen and people who were somebody. The incident had tended further to detract from the romance of the country.

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It is a mistake to suppose that the honeymoon disappears below the horizon with the rapidity of a tropical sun. And there is generally an afterglow. In spite of cooks and other minor clouds, in spite of visions of metropolitan triumphs (not shattered, but put away in camphor), life was touched with a certain novelty. There was a new runabout and a horse which Honora could drive herself, and she went to the station to meet her husband. On mild Saturday and Sunday afternoons they made long excursions, into the country—until the golf season began, when the lessons begun at Silverdale were renewed. But after a while certain male competitors appeared, and the lessons were discontinued. Sunday, after his pile of newspapers had religiously been disposed of, became a field day. Indeed, it is impossible, without a twinge of pity, to behold Howard taking root in Rivington, for we know that sooner or later he will be dug up and transplanted. The soil was congenial. He played poker on the train with the Rivington husbands, and otherwise got along with them famously. And it was to him an enigma—-when occasionally he allowed his thoughts to dwell upon such trivial matters—why Honora was not equally congenial with the wives.

There were, no doubt, interesting people in Rivington about whom many stories could be written: people with loves and fears and anxieties and joys, with illnesses and recoveries, with babies, but few grandchildren. There were weddings at the little church, and burials; there were dances at the golf club; there were Christmas trees, where most of the presents —like Honora's—came from afar, from family centres formed in a social period gone by; there were promotions for the heads of families, and consequent rejoicings over increases of income; there were movings; there were—-inevitable in the ever grinding action of that remorseless law, the survival of the fittest—-commercial calamities, and the heartrending search for new employment.

Rivington called upon Honora in vehicles of all descriptions, in proportion to the improvidence or prosperity of the owners. And Honora returned the calls, and joined the Sewing Circle, and the Woman's Luncheon Club, which met for the purpose of literary discussion. In the evenings there were little dinners of six or eight, where the men talked business and the women house rent and groceries and gossip and the cheapest places in New York City to buy articles of the latest fashion. Some of them had actually built or were building houses that cost as much as thirty thousand dollars, with the inexplicable intention of remaining in Rivington the rest of their lives!

Honora was kind to these ladies. As we know, she was kind to everybody. She almost allowed two or three of them to hope that they might become her intimates, and made excursions to New York with them, and lunched in fashionable restaurants. Their range of discussion included babies and Robert Browning, the modern novel and the best matinee. It would be interesting to know why she treated them, on the whole, like travellers met by chance in a railroad station, from whom she was presently forever to depart. The time and manner of this departure were matters to be determined in the future.

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It would be interesting to know, likewise, just at what period the intention of moving away from Rivington became fixed in Honora's mind. Honora circumscribed, Honora limited, Honora admitting defeat, and this chronicle would be finished. The gods exist somewhere, though many incarnations may, be necessary to achieve their companionship. And no prison walls loom so high as to appall our heroine's soul. To exchange one prison for another is in itself something of a feat, and an argument that the thing may be done again. Neither do the wise ones beat themselves uselessly against brick or stone. Howard—poor man!—is fatuous enough to regard a great problem as being settled once and for all by a marriage certificate and a benediction; and labours under the delusion that henceforth he may come and go as he pleases, eat his breakfast in silence, sleep after dinner, and spend his Sundays at the Rivington Golf Club. It is as well to leave him, at present, in blissful ignorance of his future.

Our sympathies, however, must be with Honora, who has paid the price for heaven, and who discovers that by marriage she has merely joined the ranks of the Great Unattached. Hitherto it had been inconceivable to her that any one sufficiently prosperous could live in a city, or near it and dependent on it, without being socially a part of it. Most momentous of disillusions! With the exception of the Sidney Dallams and one or two young brokers who occasionally came out over Sunday, her husband had no friends in New York. Rivington and the Holt family (incongruous mixture) formed the sum total of her acquaintance.

On Monday mornings in particular, if perchance she went to town, the huge signs which she read across the swamps, of breakfast foods and other necessaries, seemed, for some reason, best to express her isolation. Well-dressed, laughing people descended from omnibuses at the prettier stations, people who seemed all-sufficient to themselves; people she was sure she should like if only she knew them. Once the sight of her school friend, Ethel Wing, chatting with a tall young man, brought up a flood of recollections; again, in a millinery establishment, she came face to face with the attractive Mrs. Maitland whom she had seen at Hot Springs. Sometimes she would walk on Fifth Avenue, watching, with mingled sensations, the procession there. The colour, the movement, the sensation of living in a world where every one was fabulously wealthy, was at once a stimulation and a despair. Brougham after brougham passed, victoria after victoria, in which beautifully gowned women chatted gayly or sat back, impassive, amidst the cushions. Some of them, indeed, looked bored, but this did not mar the general effect of pleasure and prosperity. Even the people—well-dressed, too—in the hansom cabs were usually animated and smiling. On the sidewalk athletic, clear-skinned girls passed her, sometimes with a man, sometimes in groups of two and three, going in and out of the expensive-looking shops with the large, plate-glass windows.

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All of these women, apparently, had something definite to do, somewhere to go, some one to meet the very next, minute. They protested to milliners and dressmakers if they were kept waiting, and even seemed impatient of time lost if one by chance bumped into them. But Honora had no imperative appointments. Lily Dallam was almost sure to be out, or going out immediately, and seemed to have more engagements than any one in New York.

“I’m so sorry, my dear,” she would say, and add reproachfully: “why didn’t you telephone me you were coming? If you had only let me know we might have lunched together or gone to the matinee. Now I have promised Clara Trowbridge to go to a lunch party at her house.”

Mrs. Dallam had a most convincing way of saying such things, and in spite of one’s self put one in the wrong for not having telephoned. But if indeed Honora telephoned—as she did once or twice in her innocence—Lily was quite as distressed.

“My dear, why didn’t you let me know last night? Trixy Brent has given Lula Chandos his box at the Horse Show, and Lula would never, never forgive me if I backed out.”

Although she lived in an apartment—in a most attractive one, to be sure —there could be no doubt about it that Lily Dallam was fashionable. She had a way with her, and her costumes were marvellous. She could have made her fortune either as a dressmaker or a house decorator, and she bought everything from “little” men and women whom she discovered herself. It was a curious fact that all of these small tradespeople eventually became fashionable, too. Lily was kind to Honora, and gave her their addresses before they grew to be great and insolent and careless whether one patronized them or not.

While we are confessing the trials and weaknesses of our heroine, we shall have to admit that she read, occasionally, the society columns of the newspapers. And in this manner she grew to have a certain familiarity with the doings of those favourites of fortune who had more delightful engagements than hours in which to fulfil them. So intimate was Lily Dallam with many of these Olympians that she spoke of them by their first names, or generally by their nicknames. Some two years after Honora’s marriage the Dallams had taken a house in that much discussed colony of Quicksands, where sport and pleasure reigned supreme: and more than once the gown which Mrs. Sidney Dallam had worn to a polo match had been faithfully described in the public prints, or the dinners which she had given at the Quicksands Club. One of these dinners, Honora learned, had been given in honour of Mr. Trixton Brent.

“You ought to know Trixy, Honora,” Mrs. Dallam declared; “he’d be crazy about you.”

Time passed, however, and Mrs. Dallam made no attempt to bring about this most desirable meeting. When Honora and Howard went to town to dine with the Dallams, it

was always at a restaurant, a ‘partie carree’. Lily Dallam thought it dull to dine at home, and they went to the theatre afterwards—invariably a musical comedy. Although Honora did not care particularly for musical comedies, she always experienced a certain feverish stimulation which kept her wide awake on the midnight train to Rivington. Howard had a most exasperating habit of dozing in the corner of the seat.

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“You are always sleepy when I have anything interesting to talk to you about,” said Honora, “or reading stock reports. I scarcely see anything at all of you.”

Howard roused himself.

“Where are we now?” he asked.

“Oh,” cried Honora, “we haven’t passed Hydeville. Howard, who is Trixton Brent?”

“What about him?” demanded her husband.

“Nothing—except that he is one of Lily’s friends, and she said she knew —I should like him. I wish you would be more interested in people. Who is he?”

“One of the best-known operators in the market,” Howard answered, and his air implied that a lack of knowledge of Mr. Brent was ignorance indeed; “a daring gambler. He cornered cotton once, and raked in over a million. He’s a sport, too.”

“How old is he?”

“About forty-three.”

“Is he married?” inquired Honora.

“He’s divorced,” said Howard. And she had to be content with so much of the gentleman’s biography, for her husband relapsed into somnolence again. A few days later she saw a picture of Mr. Brent, in polo costume, in one of the magazines. She thought him good-looking, and wondered what kind of a wife he had had.

Honora, when she went to town for the day, generally could be sure of finding some one, at least, of the Holt family at home at luncheon time. They lived still in the same house on Madison Avenue to which Aunt Mary and Uncle Tom had been invited to breakfast on the day of Honora’s arrival in her own country. It had a wide, brownstone front, with a basement, and a high flight of steps leading up to the door. Within, solemnity reigned, and this effect was largely produced by the prodigiously high ceilings and the black walnut doors and woodwork. On the second floor, the library where the family assembled was more cheerful. The books themselves, although in black-walnut cases, and the sun pouring in, assisted in making this effect.

Here, indeed, were stability and peace. Here Honora remade the acquaintance of the young settlement worker, and of the missionary, now on the Presbyterian Board of Missions. Here she charmed other friends and allies of the Holt family; and once met, somewhat to her surprise, two young married women who differed radically from the other guests of the house. Honora admired their gowns if not their manners; for they

ignored her, and talked to Mrs. Holt about plans for raising money for the Working Girl's Relief Society.

"You should join us, my dear," said Mrs. Holt; "I am sure you would be interested in our work."

"I'd be so glad to, Mrs. Holt," replied Honora, "if only I didn't live in the country."

She came away as usual, feeling of having run into a cul de sac. Mrs. Holt's house was a refuge, not an outlet; and thither Honora directed her steps when a distaste for lunching alone or with some of her Rivington friends in the hateful, selfish gayety of a fashionable restaurant overcame her; or when her moods had run through a cycle, and an atmosphere of religion and domesticity became congenial.

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“Howard,” she asked unexpectedly one evening, as he sat smoking beside the blue tiled mantel, “have you got on your winter flannels?”

“I’ll bet a hundred dollars to ten cents,” he cried, “that you’ve been lunching with Mrs. Holt.”

“I think you’re horrid,” said Honora.

Something must be said for her. Domestic virtue, in the face of such mocking heresy, is exceptionally difficult of attainment.

Mrs. Holt had not been satisfied with Honora’s and Susan’s accounts of the house in Stafford Park. She felt called upon to inspect it. And for this purpose, in the spring following Honora’s marriage, she made a pilgrimage to Rivington and spent the day. Honora met her at the station, and the drive homeward was occupied in answering innumerable questions on the characters, conditions, and modes of life of Honora’s neighbours.

“Now, my dear,” said Mrs. Holt, when they were seated before the fire after lunch, “I want you to feel that you can come to me for everything. I must congratulate you and Howard on being sensible enough to start your married life simply, in the country. I shall never forget the little house in which Mr. Holt and I began, and how blissfully happy I was.” The good lady reached out and took Honora’s hand in her own. “Not that your deep feeling for your husband will ever change. But men are more difficult to manage as they grow older, my dear, and the best of them require a little managing for their own good. And increased establishments bring added cares and responsibilities. Now that I am here, I have formed a very fair notion of what it ought to cost you to live in such a place. And I shall be glad to go over your housekeeping books with you, and tell you if you are being cheated as I dare say you are.”

“Oh, Mrs. Holt,” Honora faltered, “I—I haven’t kept any books. Howard just pays the bills.”

“You mean to say he hasn’t given you any allowance!” cried Mrs. Holt, aghast. “You don’t know what it costs to run this house?”

“No,” said Honora, humbly. “I never thought of it. I have no idea what Howard’s income may be.”

“I’ll write to Howard myself—to-night,” declared Mrs. Holt.

“Please don’t, Mrs. Holt. I’ll—I’ll speak to him,” said Honora.

“Very well, then,” the good lady agreed, “and I will send you one of my own books, with my own system, as soon as I get home. It is not your fault, my dear, it is Howard’s. It is

little short of criminal of him. I suppose this is one of the pernicious results of being on the Stock Exchange. New York is nothing like what it was when I was a girl—the extravagance by everybody is actually appalling. The whole city is bent upon lavishness and pleasure. And I am afraid it is very often the wives, Honora, who take the lead in prodigality. It all tends, my dear, to loosen the marriage tie—especially this frightful habit of dining in hotels and restaurants."

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Before she left Mrs. Holt insisted on going over the house from top to bottom, from laundry to linen closet. Suffice it to say that the inspection was not without a certain criticism, which must be passed over.

“It is a little large, just for you and Howard, my dear,” was her final comment. “But you are wise in providing for the future.”

“For the future?” Honora repeated.

Mrs. Holt playfully pinched her cheek.

“When the children arrive, my dear, as I hope they will—soon,” she said, smiling at Honora’s colour. “Sometimes it all comes back to me—my own joy when Joshua was a baby. I was very foolish about him, no doubt. Annie and Gwendolen tell me so. I wouldn’t even let the nurse sit up with him when he was getting his teeth. Mercy!” she exclaimed, glancing at the enamelled watch on her gown,—for long practice had enabled her to tell the time upside down,—“we’ll be late for the train, my dear.”

After returning from the station, Honora sat for a long time at her window, looking out on the park. The afternoon sunlight had the silvery tinge that comes to it in March; the red gravel of the centre driveway was very wet, and the grass of the lawns of the houses opposite already a vivid green; in the back-yards the white clothes snapped from the lines; and a group of children, followed by nurses with perambulators, tripped along the strip of sidewalk.

Why could not she feel the joys and desires of which Mrs. Holt had spoken? It never had occurred to her until to-day that they were lacking in her. Children! A home! Why was it that she did not want children? Why should such a natural longing be absent in her? Her mind went back to the days of her childhood dolls, and she smiled to think of their large families. She had always associated marriage with children—until she got married. And now she remembered that her childhood ideals of the matrimonial state had been very much, like Mrs. Holt’s own experience of it: Why then had that ideal gradually faded until, when marriage came to her, it was faint and shadowy indeed? Why were not her spirit and her hopes enclosed by the walls in which she sat?

The housekeeping book came from Mrs. Holt the next morning, but Honora did not mention it to her husband. Circumstances were her excuse: he had had a hard day on the Exchange, and at such times he showed a marked disinclination for the discussion of household matters. It was not until the autumn, in fact, that the subject of finance was mentioned between them, and after a period during which Howard had been unusually uncommunicative and morose. Just as electrical disturbances are said to be in some way connected with sun spots, so Honora learned that a certain glumness and tendency to discuss expenses on the part of her husband were synchronous with a depression in the market.

“I wish you’d learn to go a little slow, Honora,” he said one evening. “The bills are pretty stiff this month. You don’t seem to have any idea of the value of money.”

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“Oh, Howard,” she exclaimed, after a moment’s pause for breath, “how can you say such a thing, when I save you so much?”

“Save me so much!” he echoed.

“Yes. If I had gone to Ridley for this suit, he would have charged me two hundred dollars. I took such pains—all on your account—to find a little man Lily Dallam told me about, who actually made it for one hundred and twenty-five.”

It was typical of the unreason of his sex that he failed to be impressed by this argument.

“If you go on saving that way,” said he, “we’ll be in the hands of a receiver by Christmas. I can’t see any difference between buying one suit from Ridley—whoever he may be—and three from Lily Dallam’s ’little man,’ except that you spend more than three times as much money.”

“Oh, I didn’t get three!—I never thought you could be so unjust, Howard. Surely you don’t want me to dress like these Rivington women, do you?”

“I can’t see anything wrong with their clothes,” he maintained.

“And to think that I was doing it all to please you!” she cried reproachfully.

“To please me!”

“Who else? We-we don’t know anybody in New York. And I wanted you to be proud of me. I’ve tried so hard and—and sometimes you don’t even look at my gowns, and say whether you like them and they are all for you.”

This argument, at least, did not fail of results, combined as it was with a hint of tears in Honora’s voice. Its effect upon Howard was peculiar —he was at once irritated, disarmed, and softened. He put down his cigarette—and Honora was on his knee! He could not deny her attractions.

“How could you be so cruel, Howard?” she asked.

“You know you wouldn’t like me to be a slattern. It was my own idea to save money—I had a long talk about economy one day with Mrs. Holt. And you act as though you had such a lot of it when we’re in town for dinner with these Rivington people. You always have champagne. If—if you’re poor, you ought to have told me so, and I shouldn’t have ordered another dinner gown.”

“You’ve ordered another dinner gown!”

“Only a little one,” said Honora, “the simplest kind. But if you’re poor—”

She had made a discovery—to reflect upon his business success was to touch a sensitive nerve.

“I’m not poor,” he declared. “But the bottom’s dropped out of the market, and even old Wing is economizing. We’ll have to put on the brakes for awhile, Honora.”

It was shortly after this that Honora departed on the first of her three visits to St. Louis.

CHAPTER IV

THE NEW DOCTRINE

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This history concerns a free and untrammelled—and, let us add, feminine —spirit. No lady is in the least interesting if restricted and contented with her restrictions,—a fact which the ladies of our nation are fast finding out. What would become of the Goddess of Liberty? And let us mark well, while we are making these observations, that Liberty is a goddess, not a god, although it has taken us in America over a century to realize a significance in the choice of her sex. And—another discovery!—she is not a haus frau. She is never domiciled, never fettered. Even the French, clever as they are, have not conceived her: equality and fraternity are neither kith nor kin of hers, and she laughs at them as myths—for she is a laughing lady. She alone of the three is real, and she alone is worshipped for attributes which she does not possess. She is a coquette, and she is never satisfied. If she were, she would not be Liberty: if she were, she would not be worshipped of men, but despised. If they understood her, they would not care for her. And finally, she comes not to bring peace, but a sword.

At quarter to seven one blustery evening of the April following their fourth anniversary Honora returned from New York to find her husband seated under the tall lamp in the room he somewhat facetiously called his “den,” scanning the financial page of his newspaper. He was in his dressing gown, his slippered feet extended towards the hearth, smoking a cigarette. And on the stand beside him was a cocktail glass—empty.

“Howard,” she cried, brushing his ashes from the table, “how can you be so untidy when you are so good-looking dressed up? I really believe you’re getting fat. And there,” she added, critically touching a place on the top of his head, “is a bald spot!”

“Anything else?” he murmured, with his eyes still on the sheet.

“Lots,” answered Honora, pulling down the newspaper from before his face. “For one thing, I’m not going to allow you to be a bear any more. I don’t mean a Stock Exchange bear, but a domestic bear—which is much worse. You’ve got to notice me once in a while. If you don’t, I’ll get another husband. That’s what women do in these days, you know, when the one they have doesn’t take the trouble to make himself sufficiently agreeable. I’m sure I could get another one quite easily,” she declared.

He looked up at her as she stood facing him in the lamplight before the fire, and was forced to admit to himself that the boast was not wholly idle. A smile was on her lips, her eyes gleamed with health; her furs —of silver fox—were thrown back, the crimson roses pinned on her mauve afternoon gown matched the glow in her cheeks, while her hair mingled with the dusky shadows. Howard Spence experienced one of those startling, illuminating moments which come on occasions to the busy and self-absorbed husbands of his nation. Psychologists have a name for such a phenomenon. Ten minutes before, so far as his thoughts were concerned, she had not existed, and suddenly she had become a possession which he had not, in truth, sufficiently prized. Absurd though it was, the possibility which she had suggested aroused in him a slight uneasiness.

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“You are a deuced good-looking woman, I’ll say that for you, Honora,” he admitted.

“Thanks,” she answered, mockingly, and put her hands behind her back. “If I had only known you were going to settle down in Rivington and get fat and bald and wear dressing gowns and be a bear, I never should have married you—never, never, never! Oh, how young and simple and foolish I was! And the magnificent way you talked about New York, and intimated that you were going to conquer the world. I believed you. Wasn’t I a little idiot not—to know that you’d make for a place like this and dig a hole and stay in it, and let the world go hang?”

He laughed, though it was a poor attempt. And she read in his eyes, which had not left her face, that he was more or less disturbed.

“I treat you pretty well, don’t I, Honora?” he asked. There was an amorous, apologetic note in his voice that amused her, and reminded her of the honeymoon. “I give you all the money you want or rather—you take it,—and I don’t kick up a row, except when the market goes to pieces—”

“When you act as though we’d have to live in Harlem—which couldn’t be much worse,” she interrupted. “And you stay in town all day and have no end of fun making money, —for you like to make money, and expect me to amuse myself the best part of my life with a lot of women who don’t know enough to keep thin.”

He laughed again, but still uneasily. Honora was still smiling.

“What’s got into you?” he demanded. “I know you don’t like Rivington, but you never broke loose this way before.”

“If you stay here,” said Honora, with a new firmness, “it will be alone. I can’t see what you want with a wife, anyway. I’ve been thinking you over lately. I don’t do anything for you, except to keep getting you cooks—and anybody could do that. You don’t seem to need me in any possible way. All I do is to loiter around the house and read and play the piano, or go to New York and buy clothes for nobody to look at except strangers in restaurants. I’m worth more than that. I think I’ll get married again.”

“Great Lord, what are you talking about?” he exclaimed when he got his breath.

“I think I’ll take a man next time,” she continued calmly, “who has something to him, some ambition. The kind of man I thought I was getting when I took you only I shouldn’t be fooled again. Women remarry a good deal in these days, and I’m beginning to see the reason why. And the women who have done it appear to be perfectly happy—much happier than they were at first. I saw one of them at Lily Dallam’s this afternoon. She was radiant. I can’t see any particular reason why a woman should be tied all her life to her husband’s apron strings—or whatever he wears —and waste the talents she has.

It's wicked, when she might be the making of some man who is worth something, and who lives somewhere."

Her husband got up.

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“Jehosaphat!” he cried, “I never heard such talk in my life.”

The idea that her love for him might have ebbed a little, or that she would for a moment consider leaving him, he rejected as preposterous, of course: the reputation which the majority of her sex had made throughout the ages for constancy to the marriage tie was not to be so lightly dissipated. Nevertheless, there was in her words a new undertone of determination he had never before heard—or, at least, noticed.

There was one argument, or panacea, which had generally worked like a charm, although some time had elapsed since last he had resorted to it. He tried to seize and kiss her, but she eluded him. At last he caught her, out of breath, in the corner of the room.

“Howard—you’ll knock over the lamp—you’ll ruin my gown—and then you’ll have to buy me another. I *did* mean it,” she insisted, holding back her head; “you’ll have to choose between Rivington and me. It’s—it’s an ultimatum. There were at least three awfully attractive men at Lily Dallam’s tea—I won’t tell you who they were—who would be glad to marry me in a minute.”

He drew her down on the arm of his chair.

“Now that Lily has a house in town,” he said weakly, “I suppose you think you’ve got to have one.”

“Oh, Howard, it is such a dear house. I had no idea that so much could be done with so narrow a front. It’s all French, with mirrors and big white panels and satin chairs and sofas, and a carved gilt piano that she got for nothing from a dealer she knows; and church candlesticks. The mirrors give it the effect of being larger than it really is. I’ve only two criticisms to make: it’s too far from Fifth Avenue, and one can scarcely turn around in it without knocking something down—a photograph frame or a flower vase or one of her spindle-legged chairs. It was only a hideous, old-fashioned stone front when she bought it. I suppose nobody but Reggie Farwell could have made anything out of it.”

“Who’s Reggie Farwell?” inquired her husband.

“Howard, do you really mean to say you’ve never heard of Reggie Farwell? Lily was so lucky to get him—she says he wouldn’t have done the house if he hadn’t been such a friend of hers. And he was coming to the tea this afternoon—only something happened at the last minute, and he couldn’t. She was so disappointed. He built the Maitlands’ house, and did over the Cecil Graingers’. And he’s going to do our house—some day.”

“Why not right away?” asked Howard.

“Because I’ve made up my mind to be very, very reasonable,” she replied. “We’re going to Quicksands for a while, first.”

“To Quicksands!” he repeated. But in spite of himself he experienced a feeling of relief that she had not demanded a town mansion on the spot.

Honora sprang to her feet.

“Get up, Howard,” she cried, “remember that we’re going out for dinner-and you’ll never be ready.”

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“Hold on,” he protested, “I don’t know about this Quicksands proposition. Let’s talk it over a little more—”

“We’ll talk it over another time,” she replied. “But—remember my ultimatum. And I am only taking you there for your own good.”

“For my own good!”

“Yes. To get you out of a rut. To keep you from becoming commonplace and obscure and—and everything you promised not to be when you married me,” she retorted from the doorway, her eyes still alight with that disturbing and tantalizing fire. “It is my last desperate effort as a wife to save you from baldness, obesity, and nonentity.” Wherewith she disappeared into her room and closed the door.

We read of earthquakes in the tropics and at the ends of the earth with commiseration, it is true, yet with the fond belief that the ground on which we have built is so firm that our own ‘lares’ and ‘penates’ are in no danger of being shaken down. And in the same spirit we learn of other people’s domestic cataclysms. Howard Spence had had only a slight shock, but it frightened him and destroyed his sense of immunity. And during the week that followed he lacked the moral courage either to discuss the subject of Quicksands thoroughly or to let it alone: to put down his foot like a Turk or accede like a Crichton.

Either course might have saved him. One trouble with the unfortunate man was that he realized but dimly the gravity of the crisis. He had laboured under the delusion that matrimonial conditions were still what they had been in the Eighteenth Century—-although it is doubtful whether he had ever thought of that century. Characteristically, he considered the troublesome affair chiefly from its business side. His ambition, if we may use so large a word for the sentiment that had filled his breast, had been coincident with his prenuptial passion for Honora. And she had contrived, after four years, in some mysterious way to stir up that ambition once more; to make him uncomfortable; to compel him to ask himself whether he were not sliding downhill; to wonder whether living at Quicksands might not bring him in touch with important interests which had as yet eluded him. And, above all,—if the idea be put a little more crudely and definitely than it occurred in his thoughts, he awoke to the realization that his wife was an asset he had hitherto utterly neglected. Inconceivable though it were (a middle-of-the-night reflection), if he insisted on trying to keep such a woman bottled up in Rivington she might some day pack up and leave him. One never could tell what a woman would do in these days. Les sacrees femmes.

We are indebted to Honora for this view of her husband’s mental processes. She watched them, as it were, through a glass in the side of his head, and incidentally derived infinite amusement therefrom. With instinctive wisdom she refrained from tinkering.

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An invitation to dine with the Dallams', in their own house, arrived a day or two after the tea which Honora had attended there. Although Lily had always been cordial, Honora thought this note couched in terms of unusual warmth. She was implored to come early, because Lily had so much to talk to her about which couldn't be written on account of a splitting headache. In moderate obedience to this summons Honora arrived, on the evening in question, before the ornamental ironwork of Mrs. Dallam's front door at a few minutes after seven o'clock. Honora paused in the spring twilight to contemplate the house, which stood out incongruously from its sombre, brownstone brothers and sisters with noisy basement kitchens. The Third Avenue Elevated, "so handy for Sid," roared across the gap scarcely a block away; and just as the door was opened the tightest of little blue broughams, pulled by a huge chestnut horse and driven by the tiniest of grooms in top boots, drew up at the curb. And out of it burst a resplendent lady—Mrs. Dallam.

"Oh, it's you, Honora," she cried. "Am I late? I'm so sorry. But I just couldn't help it. It's all Clara Trowbridge's fault. She insisted on my staying to meet that Renee Labride who dances so divinely in Lady Emmeline. She's sweet. I've seen her eight times." Here she took Honora's arm, and faced her towards the street. "What do you think of my turnout? Isn't he a darling?"

"Is he—full grown?" asked Honora.

Lilly Dallam burst out laughing.

"Bless you, I don't mean Patrick,—although I had a terrible time finding him. I mean the horse. Trixy Brent gave him to me before he went abroad."

"Gave him to you!" Honora exclaimed.

"Oh, he's always doing kind things like that, and he hadn't any use for him. My dear, I hope you don't think for an instant Trixy's in love with me! He's crazy about Lula Chandos. I tried so hard to get her to come to dinner to-night, and the Trowbridges' and the Barclays'. You've no idea how difficult it is in New York to get any one under two weeks. And so we've got just ourselves."

Honora was on the point of declaring, politely, that she was very glad, when Lily Dallam asked her how she liked the brougham.

"It's the image of Mrs. Cecil Grainger's, my dear, and I got it for a song. As long as Trixy gave me the horse, I told Sid the least he could do was to give me the brougham and the harness. Is Master Sid asleep?" she inquired of the maid who had been patiently waiting at the door. "I meant to have got home in time to kiss him."

She led Honora up the narrow but thickly carpeted stairs to a miniature boudoir, where Madame Adelaide, in a gilt rococo frame, looked superciliously down from the walls.

“Why haven’t you been in to see me since my tea, Honora? You were such a success, and after you left they were all crazy to know something about you, and why they hadn’t heard of you. My dear, how much did little Harris charge you for that dress? If I had your face and neck and figure I’d die before I’d live in Rivington. You’re positively wasted, Honora. And if you stay there, no one will look at you, though you were as beautiful as Mrs. Langtry.”

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“You’re rather good-looking yourself, Lily,” said Honora.

“I’m ten years older than you, my dear, and I have to be so careful. Sid says I’m killing myself, but I’ve found a little massage woman who is wonderful. How do you like this dress?”

“All your things are exquisite.”

“Do you think so?” cried Mrs. Dallam, delightedly.

Honora, indeed, had not perjured herself. Only the hypercritical, when Mrs. Dallam was dressed, had the impression of a performed miracle. She was the most finished of finished products. Her complexion was high and (be it added) natural, her hair wonderfully ‘onduled’, and she had withal the sweetest and kindest of smiles and the most engaging laughter in the world. It was impossible not to love her.

“Howard,” she cried, when a little later they were seated at the table, “how mean of you to have kept Honora in a dead and alive place like Rivington all these years! I think she’s an angel to have stood it. Men are beyond me. Do you know what an attractive wife you’ve got? I’ve just been telling her that there wasn’t a woman at my tea who compared with her, and the men were crazy about her.”

“That’s the reason I live down there,” proclaimed Howard, as he finished his first glass of champagne.

“Honora,” demanded Mrs. Dallam, ignoring his bravado, “why don’t you take a house at Quicksands? You’d love it, and you’d look simply divine in a bathing suit. Why don’t you come down?”

“Ask Howard,” replied Honora, demurely.

“Well, Lily, I’ll own up I have been considering it a little,” that gentleman admitted with gravity. “But I haven’t decided anything. There are certain drawbacks—”

“Drawbacks!” exclaimed Mrs. Dallam. “Drawbacks at Quicksands! I’d like to know what they are. Don’t be silly, Howard. You get more for your money there than any place I know.” Suddenly the light of an inspiration came into her eyes, and she turned to her husband. “Sid, the Alfred Fern house is for rent, isn’t it?”

“I think it must be, Lily,” replied Mr. Dallam.

“Sometimes I believe I’m losing my mind,” declared Mrs. Dallam. “What an imbecile I was not to think of it! It’s a dear, Honora, not five minutes from the Club, with the sweetest furniture, and they just finished it last fall. It would be positively wicked not to take it, Howard. They couldn’t have failed more opportunely. I’m sorry for Alfred, but I

always thought Louise Fern a little snob. Sid, you must see Alfred down town the first thing in the morning and ask him what's the least he'll rent it for. Tell him I wish to know."

"But—my dear Lily—began Mr. Dallam apologetically.

"There!" complained his wife, "you're always raising objections to my most charming and sensible plans. You act as though you wanted Honora and Howard to stay in Rivington."

"My dear Lily!" he protested again. And words failing him, he sought by a gesture to disclaim such a sinister motive for inaction.

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“What harm can it do?” she asked plaintively. “Howard doesn’t have to rent the house, although it would be a sin if he didn’t. Find out the rent in the morning, Sid, and we’ll all four go down on Sunday and look at it, and lunch at the Quicksands Club. I’m sure I can get out of my engagement at Laura Dean’s—this is so important. What do you say, Honora?”

“I think it would be delightful,” said Honora.

CHAPTER V

QUICKSANDS

To convey any adequate idea of the community familiarly known as Quicksands a cinematograph were necessary. With a pen we can only approximate the appearance of the shifting grains at any one time. Some households there were, indeed, which maintained a precarious though seemingly miraculous footing on the surface, or near it, going under for mere brief periods, only to rise again and flaunt men-servants in the face of Providence.

There were real tragedies, too, although a casual visitor would never have guessed it. For tragedies sink, and that is the end of them. The cinematograph, to be sure, would reveal one from time to time, coming like a shadow across an endless feast, and gone again in a flash. Such was what might appropriately be called the episode of the Alfred Ferns. After three years of married life they had come, they had rented; the market had gone up, they had bought and built—upon the sands. The ancient farmhouse which had stood on the site had been torn down as unsuited to a higher civilization, although the great elms which had sheltered it had been left standing, in grave contrast to the twisted cedars and stunted oaks so much in evidence round about.

The Ferns—or rather little Mrs. Fern—had had taste, and the new house reflected it. As an indication of the quality of imagination possessed by the owners, the place was called “The Brackens.” There was a long porch on the side of the ocean, but a view of the water was shut off from it by a hedge which, during the successive ownerships of the adjoining property, had attained a height of twelve feet. There was a little toy greenhouse connecting with the porch (an “economy” indulged in when the market had begun to go the wrong way for Mr. Fern). Exile, although unpleasant, was sometimes found necessary at Quicksands, and even effective.

Above all things, however, if one is describing Quicksands, one must not be depressing. That is the unforgiveable sin there. Hence we must touch upon these tragedies lightly.

If, after walking through the entrance in the hedge that separated the Brackens from the main road, you turned to the left and followed a driveway newly laid out between young poplars, you came to a mass of cedars. Behind these was hidden the stable. There were four stalls, all replete with brass trimmings, and a box, and the carriage-house was made large enough for the break which Mr. Fern had been getting ready to buy when he had been forced, so unexpectedly, to change his mind.

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If the world had been searched, perhaps, no greater contrast to Rivington could have been found than this delightful colony of quicksands, full of life and motion and colour, where everybody was beautifully dressed and enjoying themselves. For a whole week after her instalment Honora was in a continual state of excitement and anticipation, and the sound of wheels and voices on the highroad beyond the hedge sent her peeping to her curtains a dozen times a day. The waking hours, instead of burdens, were so many fleeting joys. In the morning she awoke to breathe a new, perplexing, and delicious perfume—the salt sea breeze stirring her curtains: later, she was on the gay, yellow-ochre beach with Lily Dallam, making new acquaintances; and presently stepping, with a quiver of fear akin to delight, into the restless, limitless blue water that stretched southward under a milky haze: luncheon somewhere, more new acquaintances, and then, perhaps, in Lily's light wood victoria to meet the train of trains. For at half-past five the little station, forlorn all day long in the midst of the twisted cedars that grew out of the heated sand, assumed an air of gayety and animation. Vehicles of all sorts drew up in the open space before it, wagonettes, phaetons, victorias, high wheeled hackney carts, and low Hempstead carts: women in white summer gowns and veils compared notes, or shouted invitations to dinner from carriage to carriage. The engine rolled in with a great cloud of dust, the horses danced, the husbands and the overnight guests, grimy and brandishing evening newspapers, poured out of the special car where they had sat in arm-chairs and talked stocks all the way from Long Island City. Some were driven home, it is true; some to the beach, and others to the Quicksands Club, where they continued their discussions over whiskey-and-sodas until it was time to have a cocktail and dress for dinner.

Then came the memorable evening when Lily Dallam gave a dinner in honour of Honora, her real introduction to Quicksands. It was characteristic of Lily that her touch made the desert bloom. Three years before Quicksands had gasped to hear that the Sidney Dallams had bought the Faraday house —or rather what remained of it.

"We got it for nothing," Lily explained triumphantly on the occasion of Honora's first admiring view. "Nobody would look at it, my dear."

It must have been this first price, undoubtedly, that appealed to Sidney Dallam, model for all husbands: to Sidney, who had had as much of an idea of buying in Quicksands as of acquiring a Scotch shooting box. The "Faraday place" had belonged to the middle ages, as time is reckoned in Quicksands, and had lain deserted for years, chiefly on account of its lugubrious and funereal aspect. It was on a corner. Two "for rent" signs had fallen successively from the overgrown hedge: some fifty feet back from the road, hidden by undergrowth and in the tenebrous shades of huge larches and cedars, stood a hideous, two-storied house with a mansard roof, once painted dark red.

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The magical transformation of all this into a sunny, smiling, white villa with red-striped awnings and well-kept lawns and just enough shade had done no little towards giving to Lily Dallam that ascendency which she had acquired with such startling rapidity in the community. When Honora and Howard drove up to the door in the deepening twilight, every window was a yellow, blazing square, and above the sound of voices rose a waltz from "Lady Emmeline" played with vigour on the piano. Lily Dallam greeted Honora in the little room which (for some unexplained reason) was known as the library, pressed into service at dinner parties as the ladies' dressing room.

"My dear, how sweet you look in that coral! I've been so lucky to-night," she added in Honora's ear; "I've actually got Trixy Brent for you."

Our heroine was conscious of a pleasurable palpitation as she walked with her hostess across the little entry to the door of the drawing-room, where her eyes encountered an inviting and vivacious scene. Some ten or a dozen guests, laughing and talking gayly, filled the spaces between the furniture; an upright piano was embedded in a corner, and the lady who had just executed the waltz had swung around on the stool, and was smiling up at a man who stood beside her with his hand in his pocket. She was a decided brunette, neither tall nor short, with a suggestion of plumpness.

"That's Lula Chandos," explained Lily Dallam in her usual staccato, following Honora's gaze, "at the piano, in ashes of roses. She's stopped mourning for her husband. Trixy told her to-night she'd discarded the sackcloth and kept the ashes. He's awfully clever. I don't wonder that she's crazy about him, do you? He's standing beside her."

Honora took a good look at the famous Trixy, who resembled a certain type of military Englishman. He had close-cropped hair and a close-cropped mustache; and his grey eyes, as they rested amusedly on Mrs. Chandos, seemed to have in them the light of mockery.

"Trixy!" cried his hostess, threading her way with considerable skill across the room and dragging Honora after her, "Trixy, I want to introduce you to Mrs. Spence. Now aren't you glad you came!"

It was partly, no doubt, by such informal introductions that Lily Dallam had made her reputation as the mistress of a house where one and all had such a good time. Honora, of course, blushed to her temples, and everybody laughed—even Mrs. Chandos.

"Glad," said Mr. Brent, with his eyes on Honora, "does not quite express it. You usually have a supply of superlatives, Lily, which you might have drawn on."

"Isn't he irrepressible?" demanded Lily Dallam, delightedly, "he's always teasing."

It was running through Honora's mind, while Lily Dallam's characteristic introductions of the other guests were in progress, that "irrepressible" was an inaccurate word to apply to Mr. Brent's manner. Honora could not define his attitude, but she vaguely resented it. All of Lily's guests had the air of being at home, and at that moment a young gentleman named Charley Goodwin, who was six feet tall and weighed two hundred pounds, was loudly demanding cocktails. They were presently brought by a rather harassed-looking man-servant.

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“I can’t get over how well you look in that gown, Lula,” declared Mrs. Dallam, as they went out to dinner. “Trixy, what does she remind you of?”

“Cleopatra,” cried Warry Trowbridge, with an attempt to be gallant.

“Eternal vigilance,” said Mr. Brent, and they sat down amidst the laughter, Lily Dallam declaring that he was horrid, and Mrs. Chandos giving him a look of tender reproach. But he turned abruptly to Honora, who was on his other side.

“Where did you drop down from, Mrs. Spence?” he inquired.

“Why do you take it for granted that I have dropped?” she asked sweetly.

He looked at her queerly for a moment, and then burst out laughing.

“Because you are sitting next to Lucifer,” he said. “It’s kind of me to warn you, isn’t it?”

“It wasn’t necessary,” replied Honora. “And besides, as a dinner companion, I imagine Lucifer couldn’t be improved on.”

He laughed again.

“As a dinner companion!” he repeated. “So you would limit Lucifer to dinners? That’s rather a severe punishment, since we’re neighbours.”

“How delightful to have Lucifer as one’s neighbour,” said Honora, avoiding his eyes. “Of course I’ve been brought up to believe that he was always next door, so to speak, but I’ve never—had any proof of it until now.”

“Proof!” echoed Mr. Brent. “Has my reputation gone before me?”

“I smell the brimstone,” said Honora.

He derived, apparently, infinite amusement from this remark likewise.

“If I had known I was to have the honour of sitting here, I should have used another perfume,” he replied. “I have several.”

It was Honora’s turn to laugh.

“They are probably for—commercial transactions, not for ladies,” she retorted. “We are notoriously fond of brimstone, if it is not too strong. A suspicion of it.”

Her colour was high, and she was surprised at her own vivacity. It seemed strange that she should be holding her own in this manner with the renowned Trixton Brent. No wonder, after four years of Rivington, that she tingled with an unwonted excitement.

At this point Mr. Brent's eye fell upon Howard, who was explaining something to Mrs. Trowbridge at the far end of the table.

"What's your husband like?" he demanded abruptly.

Honora was a little taken aback, but recovered sufficiently to retort: "You'd hardly expect me to give you an unprejudiced judgment."

"That's true," he agreed significantly.

"He's everything," added Honora, "that is to be expected in a husband."

"Which isn't much, in these days," declared Mr. Brent.

"On the contrary," said Honora.

"What I should like to know is why you came to Quicksands," said Mr. Brent.

"For a little excitement," she replied. "So far, I have not been disappointed. But why do you ask that question?" she demanded, with a slight uneasiness. "Why did you come here?"

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“Oh,” he said, “you must remember that I’m—Lucifer, a citizen of the world, at home anywhere, a sort of ’freebooter. I’m not here all the time—but that’s no reflection on Quicksands. May I make a bet with you, Mrs. Spence?”

“What about?”

“That you won’t stay in Quicksands more than six months,” he answered.

“Why do you say that?” she asked curiously.

He shook his head.

“My experience with your sex,” he declared enigmatically, “has not been a slight one.”

“Trixy!” interrupted Mrs. Chandos at this juncture, from his other side, “Warry Trowbridge won’t tell me whether to sell my Consolidated Potteries stock.”

“Because he doesn’t know,” said Mr. Brent, laconically, and readdressed himself to Honora, who had, however, caught a glimpse of Mrs. Chandos’ face.

“Don’t you think it’s time for you to talk to Mrs. Chandos?” she asked.

“What for?”

“Well, for one reason, it is customary, out of consideration for the hostess, to assist in turning the table.”

“Lily doesn’t care,” he said.

“How about Mrs. Chandos? I have an idea that she does care.”

He made a gesture of indifference.

“And how about me?” Honora continued. “Perhaps—I’d like to talk to Mr. Dallam.”

“Have you ever tried it?” he demanded.

Over her shoulder she flashed back at him a glance which he did not return. She had never, to tell the truth, given her husband’s partner much consideration. He had existed in her mind solely as an obliging shopkeeper with whom Lily had unlimited credit, and who handed her over the counter such things as she desired. And to-night, in contrast to Trixton Brent, Sidney Dallam suggested the counter more than ever before. He was about five and forty, small, neatly made, with little hands and feet; fast growing bald, and what hair remained to him was a jet black. His suavity of manner and anxious desire to give one just the topic that pleased had always irritated Honora.

Good shopkeepers are not supposed to have any tastes, predilections, or desires of their own, and it was therefore with no little surprise that, after many haphazard attempts, Honora discovered Mr, Dallam to be possessed by one all-absorbing weakness. She had fallen in love, she remarked, with little Sid on the beach, and Sidney Dallam suddenly became transfigured. Was she fond of children? Honora coloured a little, and said “yes.” He confided to her, with an astonishing degree of feeling, that it had been the regret of his life he had not had more children. Nobody, he implied, who came to his house had ever exhibited the proper interest in Sid.

“Sometimes,” he said, leaning towards her confidentially, “I slip upstairs for a little peep at him after dinner.”

“Oh,” cried Honora, “if you’re going to-night mayn’t I go with you? I’d love to see him in bed.”

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“Of course I’ll take you,” said Sidney Dallam, and he looked at her so gratefully that she coloured again.

“Honora,” said Lily Dallam, when the women were back in the drawing-room, “what did you do to Sid? You had him beaming—and he hates dinner parties.”

“We were talking about children,” replied Honora, innocently.

“Children!”

“Yes,” said Honora, “and your husband has promised to take me up to the nursery.”

“And did you talk to Trixy about children, too?” cried Lily, laughing, with a mischievous glance at Mrs. Chandos.

“Is he interested in them?” asked Honora.

“You dear!” cried Lily, “you’ll be the death of me. Lula, Honora wants to know whether Trixy is interested in children.”

Mrs. Chandos, in the act of lighting a cigarette, smiled sweetly.

“Apparently he is,” she said.

“It’s time he were, if he’s ever going to be,” said Honora, just as sweetly.

Everybody laughed but Mrs. Chandos, who began to betray an intense interest in some old lace in the corner of the room.

“I bought it for nothing, my dear,” said Mrs. Dallam, but she pinched Honora’s arm delightedly. “How wicked of you!” she whispered, “but it serves her right.”

In the midst of the discussion of clothes and house rents and other people’s possessions, interspersed with anecdotes of a kind that was new to Honora, Sidney Dallam appeared at the door and beckoned to her.

“How silly of you, Sid!” exclaimed his wife; “of course she doesn’t want to go.”

“Indeed I do,” protested Honora, rising with alacrity and following her host up the stairs. At the end of a hallway a nurse, who had been reading beside a lamp, got up smilingly and led the way on tiptoe into the nursery, turning on a shaded electric light. Honora bent over the crib. The child lay, as children will, with his little yellow head resting on his arm. But in a moment, as she stood gazing at him, he turned and opened his eyes and smiled at her, and she stooped and kissed him.

“Where’s Daddy?” he demanded.

“We’ve waked him!” said Honora, remorsefully.

“Daddy,” said the child, “tell me a story.”

The nurse looked at Dallam reproachfully, as her duty demanded, and yet she smiled. The noise of laughter reached them from below.

“I didn’t have any to-night,” the child pleaded.

“I got home late,” Dallam explained to Honora, and, looking at the nurse, pleaded in his turn; “just one.”

“Just a tiny one,” said the child.

“It’s against all rules, Mr. Dallam,” said the nurse, “but—he’s been very lonesome to-day.”

Dallam sat down on one side of him, Honora on the other.

“Will you go to sleep right away if I do, Sid?” he asked.

The child shut his eyes very tight.

“Like that,” he promised.

It was not the Sidney Dallam of the counting-room who told that story, and Honora listened with strange sensations which she did not attempt to define.

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“I used to be fond of that one when I was a youngster,” he explained apologetically to her as they went out, and little Sid had settled himself obediently on the pillow once more. “It was when I dreamed,” he added, “of less prosaic occupations than the stock market.”

Sidney Dallam had dreamed!

Although Lily Dallam had declared that to leave her house before midnight was to insult her, it was half-past eleven when Honora and her husband reached home. He halted smilingly in her doorway as she took off her wrap and laid it over a chair.

“Well, Honora,” he asked, “how do you like—the whirl of fashion?”

She turned to him with one of those rapid and bewildering movements that sometimes characterized her, and put her arms on his shoulders.

“What a dear old stay-at-home you were, Howard,” she said. “I wonder what would have happened to you if I hadn’t rescued you in the nick of time! Own up that you like—a little variety in life.”

Being a man, he qualified his approval.

“I didn’t have a bad time,” he admitted. “I had a talk with Brent after dinner, and I think I’ve got him interested in a little scheme. It’s a strange thing that Sid Dallam was never able to do any business with him. If I can put this through, coming to Quicksands will have been worth while.” He paused a moment, and added: “Brent seems to have taken quite a shine to you, Honora.”

She dropped her arms, and going over to her dressing table, unclasped a pin on the front of her gown.

“I imagine,” she answered, in an indifferent tone, “that he acts so with every new woman he meets.”

Howard remained for a while in the doorway, seemingly about to speak. Then he turned on his heel, and she heard him go into his own room.

Far into the night she lay awake, the various incidents of the evening, like magic lantern views, thrown with bewildering rapidity on the screen of her mind. At last she was launched into life, and the days of her isolation gone by forever. She was in the centre of things. And yet —well, nothing could be perfect. Perhaps she demanded too much. Once or twice, in the intimate and somewhat uproarious badinage that had been tossed back and forth in the drawing-room after dinner, her delicacy had been offended: an air of revelry had prevailed, enhanced by the arrival of whiskey-and-soda on a tray. And at the time she had been caught up by an excitement in the grip of which she still found

herself. She had been aware, as she tried to talk to Warren Trowbridge, of Trixton Brent's glance, and of a certain hostility from Mrs. Chandos that caused her now to grow warm with a kind of shame when she thought of it. But she could not deny that this man had for her a fascination. There was in him an insolent sense of power, of scarcely veiled contempt for the company in which he found himself. And she asked herself, in this mood of introspection, whether a little of his contempt for Lily Dallam's guests had not been communicated from him to her.

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When she had risen to leave, he had followed her into the entry. She recalled him vividly as he had stood before her then, a cigar in one hand and a lighted match in the other, his eyes fixed upon her with a singularly disquieting look that was tinged, however, with amusement. “I’m coming to see you,” he announced.

“Do be careful,” she had cried, “you’ll burn yourself!”

“That,” he answered, tossing away the match, “is to be expected.”

She laughed nervously.

“Good night,” he added, “and remember my bet.”

What could he have meant when he had declared that she would not remain in Quicksands?

CHAPTER VI

GAD AND MENI

There was an orthodox place of worship at Quicksands, a temple not merely opened up for an hour or so on Sunday mornings to be shut tight during the remainder of the week although it was thronged with devotees on the Sabbath. This temple, of course, was the Quicksands Club. Howard Spence was quite orthodox; and, like some of our Puritan forefathers, did not even come home to the midday meal on the first day of the week. But a certain instinct of protest and of nonconformity which may have been remarked in our heroine sent her to St. Andrews-by-the-Sea—by no means so well attended as the house of Gad and Meni. She walked home in a pleasantly contemplative state of mind through a field of daisies, and had just arrived at the hedge m front of the Brackens when the sound of hoofs behind her caused her to turn. Mr. Trixton Brent, very firmly astride of a restive, flea-bitten polo pony, surveyed her amusedly.

“Where have you been?” said he.

“To church,” replied Honora, demurely.

“Such virtue is unheard of in Quicksands.”

“It isn’t virtue,” said Honora.

“I had my doubts about that, too,” he declared.

“What is it, then?” she asked laughingly, wondering why he had such a faculty of stirring her excitement and interest.

“Dissatisfaction,” was his prompt reply.

“I don’t see why you say that,” she protested.

“I’m prepared to make my wager definite,” said he. “The odds are a thoroughbred horse against a personally knitted worsted waistcoat that you won’t stay in Quicksands six months.”

“I wish you wouldn’t talk nonsense,” said Honora, “and besides, I can’t knit.”

There was a short silence during which he didn’t relax his disconcerting stare.

“Won’t you come in?” she asked. “I’m sorry Howard isn’t home.”

“I’m not,” he said promptly. “Can’t you come over to my box for lunch? I’ve asked Lula Chandos and Warry Trowbridge.”

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It was not without appropriateness that Trixton Brent called his house the “Box.” It was square, with no pretensions to architecture whatever, with a porch running all the way around it. And it was literally filled with the relics of the man’s physical prowess cups for games of all descriptions, heads and skins from the Bitter Roots to Bengal, and masks and brushes from England. To Honora there was an irresistible and mysterious fascination in all these trophies, each suggesting a finished —and some perhaps a cruel —performance of the man himself. The cups were polished until they beat back the light like mirrors, and the glossy bear and tiger skins gave no hint of dying agonies.

Mr. Brent’s method with women, Honora observed, more resembled the noble sport of Isaac Walton than that of Nimrod, but she could not deny that this element of cruelty was one of his fascinations. It was very evident to a feminine observer, for instance, that Mrs. Chandos was engaged in a breathless and altogether desperate struggle with the slow but inevitable and appalling Nemesis of a body and character that would not harmonize. If her figure grew stout, what was to become of her charm as an ’enfant gate’? Her host not only perceived, but apparently derived great enjoyment out of the drama of this contest. From self-indulgence to self-denial—even though inspired by terror—is a far cry. And Trixton Brent had evidently prepared his menu with a satanic purpose.

“What! No entree, Lula? I had that sauce especially for you.”

“Oh, Trixy, did you really? How sweet of you!” And her liquid eyes regarded, with an almost equal affection, first the master and then the dish. “I’ll take a little,” she said weakly; “it’s so bad for my gout.”

“What,” asked Trixton Brent, flashing an amused glance at Honora, “are the symptoms of gout, Lula? I hear a great deal about that trouble these days, but it seems to affect every one differently.”

Mrs. Chandos grew very red, but Warry Trowbridge saved her.

“It’s a swelling,” he said innocently.

Brent threw back his head and laughed.

“You haven’t got it anyway, Warry,” he cried.

Mr. Trowbridge, who resembled a lean and greying Irish terrier, maintained that he had.

“It’s a pity you don’t ride, Lula. I understand that that’s one of the best preventives—for gout. I bought a horse last week that would just suit you—an ideal woman’s horse. He’s taken a couple of blue ribbons this summer.”

“I hope you will show him to us, Mr. Brent,” exclaimed Honora, in a spirit of kindness.

“Do you ride?” he demanded.

“I’m devoted to it,” she declared.

It was true. For many weeks that spring, on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday mornings, she had gone up from Rivington to Harvey’s Riding Academy, near Central Park. Thus she had acquired the elements of the equestrian art, and incidentally aroused the enthusiasm of a riding-master.

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After Mrs. Chandos had smoked three of the cigarettes which her host specially imported from Egypt, she declared, with no superabundance of enthusiasm, that she was ready to go and see what Trixy had in the “stables.” In spite of that lady’s somewhat obvious impatience, Honora insisted upon admiring everything from the monogram of coloured sands so deftly woven on the white in the coach house, to the hunters and polo ponies in their rows of boxes. At last Vercingetorix, the latest acquisition of which Brent had spoken, was uncovered and trotted around the ring.

“I’m sorry, Trixy, but I’ve really got to leave,” said Mrs. Chandos. “And I’m in such a predicament! I promised Fanny Darlington I’d go over there, and it’s eight miles, and both my horses are lame.”

Brent turned to his coachman.

“Put a pair in the victoria right away and drive Mrs. Chandos to Mrs. Darlington’s,” he said.

She looked at him, and her lip quivered.

“You always were the soul of generosity, Trixy, but why the victoria?”

“My dear Lula,” he replied, “if there’s any other carriage you prefer—?”

Honora did not hear the answer, which at any rate was scarcely audible. She moved away, and her eyes continued to follow Vercingetorix as he trotted about the tan-bark after a groom. And presently she was aware that Trixton Brent was standing beside her.

“What do you think of him?” he asked.

“He’s adorable,” declared Honora. Would you like to try him?”

“Oh—might I? Sometime?”

“Why not to-day—now?” he said. “I’ll send him over to your house and have your saddle put on him.”

Before Honora could protest Mrs. Chandos came forward.

“It’s awfully sweet of you, Trixy, to offer to send me to Fanny’s, but Warry says he will drive me over. Good-by, my dear,” she added, holding out her hand to Honora.

“I hope you enjoy your ride.”

Mr. Trowbridge’s phaeton was brought up, Brent helped Mrs. Chandos in, and stood for a moment gazing after her. Amusement was still in his eyes as he turned to Honora.

“Poor Lula!” he said. “Most women could have done it better than that —couldn’t they?”

“I think you were horrid to her,” exclaimed Honora, indignantly. “It wouldn’t have hurt you to drive her to Mrs. Darlington’s.”

It did not occur to her that her rebuke implied a familiarity at which they had swiftly but imperceptibly arrived.

“Oh, yes, it would hurt me,” said he. “I’d rather spend a day in jail than drive with Lula in that frame of mind. Tender reproaches, and all that sort of thing, you know although I can’t believe you ever indulge in them. Don’t,” he added.

In spite of the fact that she was up in arms for her sex, Honora smiled.

“Do you know,” she said slowly, “I’m beginning to think you are a brute.”

“That’s encouraging,” he replied.

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“And fickle.”

“Still more encouraging. Most men are fickle. We’re predatory animals.”

“It’s just as well that I am warned,” said Honora. She raised her parasol and picked up her skirts and shot him a look. Although he did not resemble in feature the great if unscrupulous Emperor of the French, he reminded her now of a picture she had once seen of Napoleon and a lady; the lady obviously in a little flutter under the Emperor’s scrutiny. The picture had suggested a probable future for the lady.

“How long will it take you to dress?” he asked.

“To dress for what?”

“To ride with me.”

“I’m not going to ride with you,” she said, and experienced a tingle of satisfaction from his surprise.

“Why not?” he demanded.

“In the first place, because I don’t want to; and in the second, because I’m expecting Lily Dallam.”

“Lily never keeps an engagement,” he said.

“That’s no reason why I shouldn’t,” Honora answered.

“I’m beginning to think you’re deuced clever,” said he.

“How unfortunate for me!” she exclaimed.

He laughed, although it was plain that he was obviously put out. Honora was still smiling.

“Deuced clever,” he repeated.

“An experienced moth,” suggested Honora; “perhaps one that has been singed a little, once or twice. Good-by—I’ve enjoyed myself immensely.”

She glanced back at him as she walked down the path to the roadway. He was still standing where she had left him, his feet slightly apart, his hands in the pockets of his riding breeches, looking after her.

Her announcement of an engagement with Mrs. Dallam had been, to put it politely, fiction. She spent the rest of the afternoon writing letters home, pausing at periods to

look out of the window. Occasionally it appeared that her reflections were amusing. At seven o'clock Howard arrived, flushed and tired after his day of rest.

"By the way, Honora, I saw Trixy Brent at the Club, and he said you wouldn't go riding with him."

"Do you call him Trixy to his face?" she asked.

"What? No—but everyone calls him Trixy. What's the matter with you?"

"Nothing," she replied. "Only—the habit every one has in Quicksands of speaking of people they don't know well by their nicknames seems rather bad taste."

"I thought you liked Quicksands," he retorted. "You weren't happy until you got down here."

"It's infinitely better than Rivington," she said.

"I suppose," he remarked, with a little irritation unusual in him, "that you'll be wanting to go to Newport next."

"Perhaps," said Honora, and resumed her letter. He fidgeted about the room for a while, ordered a cocktail, and lighted a cigarette.

"Look here," he began presently, "I wish you'd be decent to Brent. He's a pretty good fellow, and he's in with James Wing and that crowd of big financiers, and he seems to have taken a shine to me probably because he's heard of that copper deal I put through this spring."

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Honora thrust back her writing pad, turned in her chair, and faced him.

“How ‘decent’ do you wish me to be?” she inquired.

“How decent?” he repeated.

“Yes.”

He regarded her uneasily, took the cocktail which the maid offered him, drank it, and laid down the glass.

He had had before, in the presence of his wife, this vague feeling of having passed boundaries invisible to him. In her eyes was a curious smile that lacked mirth, in her voice a dispassionate note that added to his bewilderment.

“What do you mean, Honora?”

“I know it’s too much to expect of a man to be as solicitous about his wife as he is about his business,” she replied. “Otherwise he would hesitate before he threw her into the arms of Mr. Trixton Brent. I warn you that he is very attractive to women.”

“Hang it,” said Howard, “I can’t see what you’re driving at. I’m not throwing you into his arms. I’m merely asking you to be friendly with him. It means a good deal to me—to both of us. And besides, you can take care of yourself. You’re not the sort of woman to play the fool.”

“One never can tell,” said Honora, “what may happen. Suppose I fell in love with him?”

“Don’t talk nonsense,” he said.

“I’m not so sure,” she answered, meditatively, “that it is nonsense. It would be quite easy to fall in love with him. Easier than you imagine. curiously. Would you care?” she added.

“Care!” he cried; “of course I’d care. What kind of rot are you talking?”

“Why would you care?”

“Why? What a darned idiotic question—”

“It’s not really so idiotic as you think it is,” she said. “Suppose I allowed Mr. Brent to make love to me, as he’s very willing to do, would you be sufficiently interested to compete.”

“To what?”

“To compete.”

“But—but we’re married.”

She laid her hand upon her knee and glanced down at it.

“It never occurred to me until lately,” she said, “how absurd is the belief men still hold in these days that a wedding-ring absolves them forever from any effort on their part to retain their wives’ affections. They regard the ring very much as a ball and chain, or a hobble to prevent the women from running away, that they may catch them whenever they may desire—which isn’t often. Am I not right?”

He snapped his cigarette case.

“Darn it, Honora, you’re getting too deep for me!” he exclaimed. “You never liked those, Browning women down at Rivington, but if this isn’t browning I’m hanged if I know what it is. An attack of nerves, perhaps. They tell me that women go all to pieces nowadays over nothing at all.”

“That’s just it,” she agreed, “nothing at all!”

“I thought as much,” he replied, eager to seize this opportunity of ending a conversation that had neither head nor tail, and yet was marvellously uncomfortable. “There! be a good girl, and forget it.”

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He stooped down suddenly to her face to kiss her, but she turned her face in time to receive the caress on the cheek.

“The panacea!” she said.

He laughed a little, boyishly, as he stood looking down at her.

“Sometimes I can’t make you out,” he said. “You’ve changed a good deal since I married you.”

She was silent. But the thought occurred to her that a complete absorption in commercialism was not developing.

“If you can manage it, Honora,” he added with an attempt at lightness, “I wish you’d have a little dinner soon, and ask Brent. Will you?”

“Nothing,” she replied, “would give me greater pleasure.”

He patted her on the shoulder and left the room whistling. But she sat where she was until the maid came in to pull the curtains and turn on the lights, reminding her that guests were expected.

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Although the circle of Mr. Brent’s friends could not be said to include any university or college presidents, it was, however, both catholic and wide. He was hail fellow, indeed, with jockeys and financiers, great ladies and municipal statesmen of good Irish stock. He was a lion who roamed at large over a great variety of hunting grounds, some of which it would be snobbish to mention; for many reasons he preferred Quicksands: a man-eater, a woman-eater, and extraordinarily popular, nevertheless. Many ladies, so it was reported, had tried to tame him: some of them he had cheerfully gobbled up, and others after the briefest of inspections, disdainfully thrust aside with his paw.

This instinct for lion taming, which the most spirited of women possess, is, by the way, almost inexplicable to the great majority of the male sex. Honora had it, as must have been guessed. But however our faith in her may be justified by the ridiculous ease of her previous conquests, we cannot regard without trepidation her entrance into the arena with this particular and widely renowned king of beasts. Innocence pitted against sophistry and wile and might.

Two of the preliminary contests we have already witnessed. Others, more or less similar, followed during a period of two months or more. Nothing inducing the excessive wagging of tongues,—Honora saw to that, although Mrs. Chandos kindly took the

trouble to warn our heroine,—a scene for which there is unfortunately no space in this chronicle; an entirely amicable, almost honeyed scene, in Honora's boudoir. Nor can a complete picture of life at Quicksands be undertaken. Multiply Mrs. Dallam's dinner-party by one hundred, Howard Silence's Sundays at the Club by twenty, and one has a very fair idea of it. It was not precisely intellectual. "Happy," says Montesquieu, "the people whose annals are blank in history's book." Let us leave it at that.

Late one afternoon in August Honora was riding homeward along the ocean road. The fragrant marshes that bordered it were a vivid green under the slanting rays of the sun, and she was gazing across them at the breakers crashing on the beach beyond. Trixton Brent was beside her.

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“I wish you wouldn’t stare at me so,” she said, turning to him suddenly; “it is embarrassing.”

“How did you know I was looking at you?” he asked.

“I felt it.”

He drew his horse a little nearer.

“Sometimes you’re positively uncanny,” she added.

He laughed.

“I rather like that castles-in-Spain expression you wore,” he declared.

“Castles in Spain?”

“Or in some other place where the real estate is more valuable. Certainly not in Quicksands.”

“You are uncanny,” proclaimed Honora, with conviction.

“I told you you wouldn’t like Quicksands,” said he.

“I’ve never said I didn’t like it,” she replied. “I can’t see why you assume that I don’t.”

“You’re ambitious,” he said. “Not that I think it a fault, when it’s more or less warranted. Your thrown away here, and you know it.”

She made him a bow from the saddle.

“I have not been without a reward, at least,” she answered, and looked at him.

“I have,” said he.

Honora smiled.

“I’m going to be your good angel, and help you get out of it,” he continued.

“Get out of what?”

“Quicksands.”

“Do you think I’m in danger of sinking?” she asked. “And is it impossible for me to get out alone, if I wished to?”

“It will be easier with my help,” he answered. “You’re clever enough to realize that—-Honora.”

She was silent awhile.

“You say the most extraordinary things,” she remarked presently. “Sometimes I think they are almost—”

“Indelicate,” he supplied.

She coloured.

“Yes, indelicate.”

“You can’t forgive me for sweeping away your rose-coloured cloud of romance,” he declared, laughing. “There are spades in the pack, however much you may wish to ignore ’em. You know very well you don’t like these Quicksands people. They grate on your finer sensibilities, and all that sort of thing. Come, now, isn’t it so?”

She coloured again, and put her horse to the trot.

“Onwards and upwards,” he cried. “Veni, vidi, vici, ascendi.”

“It seems to me,” she laughed, “that so much education is thrown away on the stock market.”

“Whether you will be any happier higher up,” he went on, “God knows. Sometimes I think you ought to go back to the Arcadia you came from. Did you pick out Spence for an embryo lord of high finance?”

“My excuse is,” replied Honora, “that I was very young, and I hadn’t met you.”

Whether the lion has judged our heroine with astuteness, or done her a little less than justice, must be left to the reader. Apparently he is accepting her gentle lashings with a meek enjoyment. He assisted her to alight at her own door, sent the horses home, and offered to come in and give her a lesson in a delightful game that was to do its share in the disintegration of the old and tiresome order of things—bridge. The lion, it will be seen, was self-sacrificing even to the extent of double dummy. He had picked up the game with characteristic aptitude abroad —Quicksands had yet to learn it.

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Howard Spence entered in the midst of the lesson.

“Hello, Brent,” said he, genially, “you may be interested to know I got that little matter through without a hitch to-day.”

“I continue to marvel at you,” said the lion, and made it no trumps.

Since this is a veracious history, and since we have wandered so far from home and amidst such strange, if brilliant scenes, it must be confessed that Honora, three days earlier, had entered a certain shop in New York and inquired for a book on bridge. Yes, said the clerk, he had such a treatise, it had arrived from England a week before. She kept it looked up in her drawer, and studied it in the mornings with a pack of cards before her.

Given the proper amount of spur, anything in reason can be mastered.

A MODERN CHRONICLE

By Winston Churchill

Volume 4.

CHAPTER VII

OF CERTAIN DELICATE MATTERS

In the religious cult of Gad and Meni, practised with such enthusiasm at Quicksands, the Saints’ days were polo days, and the chief of all festivals the occasion of the match with the Banbury Hunt Club —Quicksands’s greatest rival. Rival for more reasons than one, reasons too delicate to tell. Long, long ago there appeared in Punch a cartoon of Lord Beaconsfield executing that most difficult of performances, an egg dance. We shall be fortunate indeed if we get to the end of this chapter without breaking an egg!

Our pen fails us in a description of that festival of festivals, the Banbury one, which took place early in September. We should have to go back to Babylon and the days of King Nebuchadnezzar. (Who turns out to have been only a regent, by the way, and his name is now said to be spelled rezzar). How give an idea of the libations poured out to Gad and the shekels laid aside for Meni in the Quicksands Temple?

Honora privately thought that building ugly, and it reminded her of a collection of huge yellow fungi sprawling over the ground. A few of the inevitable tortured cedars were around it. Between two of the larger buildings was wedged a room dedicated to the worship of Bacchus, to-day like a narrow river-gorge at flood time jammed with tree-

trunks—some of them, let us say, water-logged—and all grinding together with an intolerable noise like a battle. If you happened to be passing the windows, certain more or less intelligible sounds might separate themselves from the bedlam.

“Four to five on Quicksands!”

“That stock isn’t worth a d—n!”

“She’s gone to South Dakota.”

Honora, however, is an heretic, as we know. Without going definitely into her reasons, these festivals had gradually become distasteful to her. Perhaps it would be fairer to look at them through the eyes of Lily Dallam, who was in her element on such days, and regarded them as the most innocent and enjoyable of occasions, and perhaps they were.

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The view from the veranda, at least, appealed to our heroine's artistic sense. The marshes in the middle distance, the shimmering sea beyond, and the polo field laid down like a vast green carpet in the foreground; while the players, in white breeches and bright shirts, on the agile little horses that darted hither and thither across the turf lent an added touch of colour and movement to the scene. Amongst them, Trixton Brent most frequently caught the eye and held it. Once Honora perceived him flying the length of the field, madly pursued, his mallet poised lightly, his shirt bulging in the wind, his close-cropped head bereft of a cap, regardless of the havoc and confusion behind him. He played, indeed, with the cocksureness and individuality one might have expected; and Honora, forgetting at moments the disturbing elements by which she was surrounded, followed him with fascination. Occasionally his name rippled from one end of the crowded veranda to the other, and she experienced a curious and uncomfortable sensation when she heard it in the mouths of these strangers.

From time to time she found herself watching them furtively, comparing them unconsciously with her Quicksands friends. Some of them she had remarked before, at contests of a minor importance, and they seemed to her to possess a certain distinction that was indefinable. They had come to-day from many mysterious (and therefore delightful) places which Honora knew only by name, and some had driven the twenty-five odd miles from the bunting community of Banbury in coaches and even those new and marvellous importations—French automobiles. When the game had ended, and Lily Dallam was cajoling the club steward to set her tea-table at once, a group of these visitors halted on the lawn, talking and laughing gayly. Two of the younger men Honora recognized with a start, but for a moment she could not place them—until suddenly she remembered that she had seen them on her wedding trip at Hot Springs. The one who lisped was Mr. Cuthbert, familiarly known as "Toots": the other, taller and slimmer and paler, was Jimmy Wing. A third, the regularity of whose features made one wonder at the perfection which nature could attain when she chose, who had a certain Gallic appearance (and who, if the truth be told, might have reminded an impartial eye of a slightly animated wax clothing model), turned, stared, hesitated, and bowed to Lily Dallam.

"That's Reggie Farwel, who did my house in town," she whispered to Honora. "He's never been near me since it was finished. He's utterly ruined."

Honora was silent. She tried not to look at the group, in which there were two women of very attractive appearance, and another man.

"Those people are so superior," Mrs. Dallam continued.

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“I’m not surprised at Elsie Shorter. Ever since she married Jerry she’s stuck to the Graingers closer than a sister. That’s Cecil Grainger, my dear, the man who looks as though he were going to fall asleep any moment. But to think of Abby Kame acting that way! Isn’t it ridiculous, Clara?” she cried, appealing to Mrs. Trowbridge. “They say that Cecil Grainger never leaves her side. I knew her when she first married John Kame, the dearest, simplest man that ever was. He was twenty years older than Abby, and made his money in leather. She took the first steamer after his funeral and an apartment in a Roman palace for the winter. As soon as she decently could she made for England. The English will put up with anybody who has a few million dollars, and I don’t deny that Abby’s good-looking, and clever in her way. But it’s absurd for her to come over here and act as though we didn’t exist. She needn’t be afraid that I’ll speak to her. They say she became intimate with Bessie Grainger through charities. One of your friend Mrs. Holt’s charities, by the way, Honora. Where are you going?”

For Honora had risen.

“I think I’ll go home, Lily,” she said; “I’m rather tired.”

“Home!” exclaimed Mrs. Dallam. “What can you be thinking of, my dear? Nobody ever goes home after the Banbury match. The fun has just begun, and we’re all to stay here for dinner and dance afterwards. And Trixy Brent promised me faithfully he’d’ come here for tea, as soon as he dressed.”

“I really can’t stay, Lily. I—I don’t feel up to it,” said Honora, desperately.

“And you can’t know how I counted on you! You look perfectly fresh, my dear.”

Honora felt an overwhelming desire to hide herself, to be alone. In spite of the cries of protest that followed her and drew—she thought—an unnecessary and disagreeable attention to her departure, she threaded her way among groups of people who stared after her. Her colour was high, her heart beating painfully; a vague sense of rebellion and shame within her for which she did not try to account. Rather than run the gantlet of the crowded veranda she stepped out on the lawn, and there encountered Trixton Brent. He had, in an incredibly brief time, changed from his polo clothes to flannels and a straw hat. He looked at her and whistled, and barred her passage.

“Hello!” he cried. “Hoity-toity! Where are we going in such a hurry?”

“Home,” answered Honora, a little breathlessly, and added for his deception, “the game’s over, isn’t it? I’m glad you won.”

Mr. Brent, however, continued to gaze at her penetratingly, and she avoided his eyes.

“But why are you rushing off like a flushed partridge?—no reference to your complexion. Has there been a row?”

“Oh, no—I was just—tired. Please let me go.”

“Being your good angel—or physician, as you choose—I have a prescription for that kind of weariness,” he said smilingly. “I—anticipated such an attack. That’s why I got into my clothes in such record time.”

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“I don’t know what you mean,” faltered Honora. “You are always imagining all sorts of things about me that aren’t true.”

“As a matter of fact,” said Brent, “I have promised faithfully to do a favor for certain friends of mine who have been clamouring to be presented to you.”

“I can’t—to-day—Mr. Brent,” she cried. “I really don’t feel like-meeting people. I told Lily Dallam I was going home.”

The group, however, which had been the object of that lady’s remarks was already moving towards them—with the exception of Mrs. Shorter and Mr. Farwell, who had left it. They greeted Mr. Brent with great cordiality.

“Mrs. Kame,” he said, “let me introduce Mrs. Spence. And Mrs. Spence, Mr. Grainger, Mr. Wing, and Mr. Cuthbert. Mrs. Spence was just going home.”

“Home!” echoed Mrs. Kame, “I thought Quicksands people never went home after a victory.”

“I’ve scarcely been here long enough,” replied Honora, “to have acquired all of the Quicksands habits.”

“Oh,” said Mrs. Kame, and looked at Honora again. “Wasn’t that Mrs. Dallam you were with? I used to know her, years ago, but she doesn’t speak to me any more.”

“Perhaps she thinks you’ve forgotten her,” said Honora.

“It would be impossible to forget Mrs. Dallam,” declared Mrs. Kame.

“So I should have thought,” said Honora.

Trixton Brent laughed, and Mrs. Kame, too, after a moment’s hesitation. She laid her hand familiarly on Mr. Brent’s arm.

“I haven’t seen you all summer, Trixy,” she said. “I hear you’ve been here at Quicksands, stewing in that little packing-case of yours. Aren’t you coming into our steeplechase at Banbury.

“I believe you went to school with my sister,” said young Mr. Wing.

“Oh, yes,” answered Honora, somewhat surprised. “I caught a glimpse of her once, in New York. I hope you will remember me to her.”

“And I’ve seen you before,” proclaimed Mr. Cuthbert, “but I can’t for the life of me think where.”

Honora did not enlighten him.

“I shan’t forget, at any rate, Mrs. Spence,” said Cecil Grainger, who had not taken his eyes from her, except to blink.

Mrs. Kame saved her the embarrassment of replying.

“Can’t we go somewhere and play bridge,” Trixy demanded.

“I’d be delighted to offer you the hospitality of my packing-case, as you call it,” said Brent, “but the dining-room ceiling fell down Wednesday, and I’m having the others bolstered up as a mere matter of precaution.”

“I suppose we couldn’t get a fourth, anyway. Neither Jimmy nor Toots plays. It’s so stupid of them not to learn.”

“Mrs. Spence might, help us out,” suggested Brent.

“Do you play?” exclaimed Mrs. Kame, in a voice of mixed incredulity and hope.

“Play!” cried Mr. Brent, “she can teach Jerry Shorter or the Duchess of Taunton.”

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“The Duchess cheats,” announced Cecil Grainger. “I caught her at it at Cannes—”

“Indeed, I don’t play very well,” Honora interrupted him, “and besides—”

“Suppose we go over to Mrs. Spence’s house,” Trixton Brent suggested. “I’m sure she’d like to have us wouldn’t you, Mrs. Spence?”

“What a brilliant idea, Trixy!” exclaimed Mrs. Kame.

“I should be delighted,” said Honora, somewhat weakly. An impulse made her glance toward the veranda, and for a fraction of a second she caught the eye of Lily Dallam, who turned again to Mrs. Chandos.

“I say,” said Mr. Cuthbert, “I don’t play—but I hope I may come along.”

“And me too,” chimed in Mr. Wing.

Honora, not free from a certain uneasiness of conscience, led the way to the Brackens, flanked by Mr. Grainger and Mr. Cuthbert. Her frame of mind was not an ideal one for a hostess; she was put out with Trixton Brent, and she could not help wondering whether these people would have made themselves so free with another house. When tea was over, however, and the bridge had begun, her spirits rose; or rather, a new and strange excitement took possession of her that was not wholly due to the novel and revolutionary experience of playing, for money—and winning. Her star being in the ascendant, as we may perceive. She had drawn Mrs. Kame for a partner, and the satisfaction and graciousness of that lady visibly grew as the score mounted: even the skill of Trixton Brent could not triumph over the hands which the two ladies held.

In the intervals the talk wandered into regions unfamiliar to Honora, and she had a sense that her own horizon was being enlarged. A new vista, at least, had been cut: possibilities became probabilities. Even when Mrs. Kame chose to ridicule Quicksands Honora was silent, so keenly did she feel the justice of her guest’s remarks; and the implication was that Honora did not belong there. When train time arrived and they were about to climb into Trixton Brent’s omnibus—for which he had obligingly telephoned—Mrs. Kame took Honora’s band in both her own. Some good thing, after all, could come out of this community—such was the triumphant discovery the lady’s manner implied.

“My dear, don’t you ever come to Banbury?” she asked. I’d be so glad to see you. I must get Trixy to drive you over some day for lunch. We’ve had such a good time, and Cecil didn’t fall asleep once. Quite a record. You saved our lives, really.”

“Are you going to be in town this winter?” Mr. Grainger inquired.

“I,—I suppose so—replied Honora, for the moment taken aback, although I haven’t decided just where.”

“I shall look forward to seeing you,” he said.

This hope was expressed even more fervently by Mr. Cuthbert and Mr. Wing, and the whole party waved her a cordial good-by as the carriage turned the circle. Trixton Brent, with his hands in his pockets, stood facing her under the electric light on the porch.

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“Well?” he said.

“Well,” repeated Honora.

“Nice people,” said Mr. Brent.

Honora bridled.

“You invited them here,” she said. “I must say I think it, was rather —presumptuous. And you’ve got me into no end of trouble with Lily Dallam.”

He laughed as he held open the screen door for her.

“I wonder whether a good angel was ever so abused,” he said.

“A good angel,” she repeated, smiling at him in spite of herself.

“Or knight-errant,” he continued, “whichever you choose. You want to get out of Quicksands—I’m trying to make it easy for you. Before you leave you have to arrange some place to go. Before we are off with the old we’d better be on with the new.”

“Oh, please don’t say such things,” she cried, “they’re so—so sordid.” She looked searchingly into his face. “Do I really seem to you like that?”

Her lip was quivering, and she was still under the influence of the excitement which the visit of these people had brought about.

“No,” said Brent—coming very close to her, “no, you don’t. That’s the extraordinary part of it. The trouble with you, Honora, is that you want something badly very badly—and you haven’t yet found out what it is.

“And you won’t find out,” he added, “until you have tried everything. Therefore am I a good Samaritan, or something like it.”

She looked at him with startled eyes, breathing deeply.

“I wonder if that is so!” she said, in a low voice.

“Not until you have had and broken every toy in the shop,” he declared. “Out of the mouths of men of the world occasionally issues wisdom. I’m going to help you get the toys. Don’t you think I’m kind?”

“And isn’t this philanthropic mood a little new to you?” she asked.

“I thought I had exhausted all novelties,” he answered. “Perhaps that’s the reason why I enjoy it.”

She turned and walked slowly into the drawing-room, halted, and stood staring at the heap of gold and yellow bills that Mr. Grainger had deposited in front of the place where she had sat. Her sensation was akin to sickness. She reached out with a kind of shuddering fascination and touched the gold.

“I think,” she said, speaking rather to herself than to Brent, “I’ll give it to charity.”

“If it is possible to combine a meritorious act with good policy, I should suggest giving it to Mrs. Grainger for the relief of oppressed working girls,” he said.

Honora started.

“I wonder why Howard doesn’t come she exclaimed, looking at the clock.

“Probably because he is holding nothing but full hands and flushes,” hazarded Mr. Brent. “Might I propose myself for dinner?”

“When so many people are clamouring for you?” she asked.

“Even so,” he said.

“I think I’ll telephone to the Club,” said Honora, and left the room.

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It was some time before her husband responded to the call; and then he explained that if Honora didn't object, he was going to a man's dinner in a private room. The statement was not unusual.

"But, Howard," she said, I—I wanted you particularly to-night."

"I thought you were going to dine with Lily Dallam. She told me you were. Are you alone?"

"Mr. Brent is here. He brought over some Banbury people to play bridge. They've gone."

"Oh, Brent will amuse you," he replied. "I didn't know you were going to be home, and I've promised these men. I'll come back early."

She hung up the receiver thoughtfully, paused a moment, and went back to the drawing-room. Brent looked up.

"Well," he said, "was I right?"

"You seem always to be right," Honora, sighed.

After dinner they sat in the screened part of the porch which Mrs. Fern had arranged very cleverly as an outside room. Brent had put a rug over Honora's knees, for the ocean breath that stirred the leaves was cold. Across the darkness fragments of dance music drifted fitfully from the Club, and died away; and at intervals, when the embers of his cigar flared up, she caught sight of her companion's face.

She found him difficult to understand. There are certain rules of thumb in every art, no doubt,—even in that most perilous one of lion-taming. But here was a baffling, individual lion. She liked him best, she told herself, when he purred platonically, but she could by no means be sure that his subjection was complete. Sometimes he had scratched her in his play. And however natural it is to desire a lion for one's friend, to be eaten is both uncomfortable and inglorious.

"That's, a remarkable husband of yours," he said at length.

"I shouldn't have said that you were a particularly good judge of husbands," she retorted, after a moment of surprise.

He acknowledged with a laugh the justice of this observation.

"I stand corrected. He is by no means a remarkable husband. Permit me to say he is a remarkable man."

“What makes you think so?” asked Honora, considerably disturbed.

“Because he induced you to marry him, for one thing,” said Brent. “Of course he got you before you knew what you were worth, but we must give him credit for discovery and foresight.”

“Perhaps,” Honora could not resist replying, “perhaps he didn’t know what he was getting.”

“That’s probably true,” Brent assented, “or he’d be sitting here now, where I am, instead of playing poker. Although there is something in matrimony that takes the bloom off the peach.”

“I think that’s a horrid, cynical remark,” said Honora.

“Well,” he said, “we speak according to our experiences—that is, if we’re not inclined to be hypocritical. Most women are.”

Honora was silent. He had thrown away his cigar, and she could no longer see his face. She wondered whither he was leading.

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“How would you like to see your husband president of a trust company?” he said suddenly.

“Howard—president of a trust company!” she exclaimed.

“Why not?” he demanded. And added enigmatically, “Smaller men have been.”

“I wish you wouldn’t joke about Howard,” she said.

“How does the idea strike you?” he persisted. “Ambition satisfied —temporarily; Quicksands a mile-stone on a back road; another toy to break; husband a big man in the community, so far as the eye can see; visiting list on Fifth Avenue, and all that sort of thing.”

“I once told you you could be brutal,” she said.

“You haven’t told me what you thought of the idea.”

“I wish you’d be sensible once in a while,” she exclaimed.

“Howard Spence, President of the Orange Trust Company!” he recited. “I suppose no man is a hero to his wife. Does it sound so incredible?”

It did. But Honora did not say so.

“What have I to do with it?” she asked, in pardonable doubt as to his seriousness.

“Everything,” answered Brent. “Women of your type usually have. They make and mar without rhyme or reason—set business by the ears, alter the gold reserve, disturb the balance of trade, and nobody ever suspects it. Old James Wing and I have got a trust company organized, and the building up, and the man Wing wanted for president backed out.”

Honora sat up.

“Why—why did he ’back out’?” she demanded.

“He preferred to stay where he was, I suppose,” replied Brent, in another tone. “The point is that the place is empty. I’ll give it to *you*.”

“To me?”

“Certainly,” said Brent, “I don’t pretend to care anything about your husband. He’ll do as well as the next man. His duties are pretty well —defined.”

Again she was silent. But after a moment dropped back in her chair and laughed uneasily.

“You’re preposterous,” she said; “I can’t think why I let you talk to me in this way.”

CHAPTER VIII

OF MENTAL PROCESSES—FEMININE AND INSOLUBLE

Honora may be pardoned for finally ascribing to Mr. Brent’s somewhat sardonic sense of humour his remarks concerning her husband’s elevation to a conspicuous position in the world of finance. Taken in any other sense than a joke, they were both insulting and degrading, and made her face burn when she thought of them. After he had gone—or rather after she had dismissed him—she took a book upstairs to wait for Howard, but she could not read. At times she wished she had rebuked Trixton Brent more forcibly, although he was not an easy person to rebuke; and again she reflected that, had she taken the matter too seriously, she would have laid herself open to his ridicule. The lion was often unwittingly rough, and perhaps that was part of his fascination.

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If Howard had come home before midnight it is possible that she might have tried to sound him as to his relations with Trixton Brent. That gentleman, she remembered, had the reputation of being a peculiarly hardheaded business man, and it was of course absurd that he should offer her husband a position merely to please her. And her imagination failed her when she tried to think of Howard as the president of a trust company. She was unable to picture him in a great executive office:

This tram of thought led her to the unaccustomed task of analyzing his character. For the first time since her marriage comparisons crept into her mind, and she awoke to the fact that he was not a masterful man—even among men. For all his self-confidence-self-assurance, perhaps, would be the better word—he was in reality a follower, not a leader; a gleaner. He did not lack ideas. She tried to arrest the process in her brain when she got as far as asking herself whether it might not be that he lacked ideals. Since in business matters he never had taken her into his confidence, and since she would not at any rate have understood such things, she had no proof of such a failing. But one or two vague remarks of Trixton Brent's which she recalled, and Howard's own request that she should be friendly with Brent, reenforced her instinct on this point.

When she heard her husband's footstep on the porch, she put out her light, but still lay thinking in the darkness. Her revelations had arrived at the uncomfortable stage where they began to frighten her, and with an effort she forced herself to turn to the other side of the account. The hour was conducive to exaggerations. Perfection in husbands was evidently a state not to be considered by any woman in her right senses. He was more or less amenable, and he was prosperous, although definite news of that prosperity never came from him—Quicksands always knew of it first. An instance of this second-hand acquisition of knowledge occurred the very next morning, when Lily Dallam, with much dignity, walked into Honora's little sitting-room. There was no apparent reason why dignity should not have been becoming to Lily Dallam, for she was by no means an unimpressive-looking woman; but the assumption by her of that quality always made her a little tragic or (if one chanced to be in the humour—Honora was not) a little ridiculous.

"I suppose I have no pride," she said, as she halted within a few feet of the doorway.

"Why, Lily!" exclaimed Honora, pushing back the chair from her desk, and rising.

But Mrs. Dallam did not move.

"I suppose I have no pride," she repeated in a dead voice, "but I just couldn't help coming over and giving you a chance."

"Giving me a chance?" said Honora.

“To explain—after the way you treated me at the polo game. If I hadn’t seen it with my own eyes, I shouldn’t have believed it. I don’t think I should have trusted my own eyes,” Mrs. Dallam went so far as to affirm, “if Lula Chandos and Clara Trowbridge and others hadn’t been there and seen it too; I shouldn’t have believed it.”

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Honora was finding penitence a little difficult. But her heart was kind.

“Do sit down, Lily,” she begged. “If I’ve offended you in any way, I’m exceedingly sorry—I am, really. You ought to know me well enough to understand that I wouldn’t do anything to hurt your feelings.”

“And when I counted on you so, for my tea and dinner at the club!” continued Mrs. Dallam. “There were other women dying to come. And you said you had a headache, and were tired.”

“I was,” began Honora, fruitlessly.

“And you were so popular in Quicksands—everybody was crazy about you. You were so sweet and so unspoiled. I might have known that it couldn’t last. And now, because Abby Kame and Cecil Grainger and—”

“Lily, please don’t say such things!” Honora implored, revolted.

“Of course you won’t be satisfied now with anything less than Banbury or Newport. But you can’t say I didn’t warn you, Honora, that they are a horrid, selfish, fast lot,” Lily Dallam declared, and brushed her eyes with her handkerchief. “I did love you.”

“If you’ll only be reasonable a moment, Lily,—” said Honora.

“Reasonable! I saw you with my own eyes. Five minutes after you left me they all started for your house, and Lula Chandos said it was the quickest cure of a headache she had ever seen.”

“Lily,” Honora began again, with exemplary patience, when people invite themselves to one’s house, it’s a little difficult to refuse them hospitality, isn’t it?”

“Invite themselves?”

“Yes,” replied Honora. “If I weren’t—fond of you, too, I shouldn’t make this explanation. I was tired. I never felt less like entertaining strangers. They wanted to play bridge, there wasn’t a quiet spot in the Club where they could go. They knew I was on my way home, and they suggested my house. That is how it happened.”

Mrs. Dallam was silent a moment.

“May I have one of Howard’s cigarettes?” she asked, and added, after this modest wish had been supplied, that’s just like them. They’re willing to make use of anybody.”

“I meant,” said Honora, “to have gone to your house this morning and to have explained how it happened.”

Another brief silence, broken by Lily Dallam.

“Did you notice the skirt of that suit Abby Kame had on?”, she asked. “I’m sure she paid a fabulous price for it in Paris, and it’s exactly like one I ordered on Tuesday.”

The details of the rest of this conversation may be omitted. That Honora was forgiven, and Mrs. Dallam’s spirits restored may be inferred from her final remark.

“My dear, what do you think of Sid and Howard making twenty thousand dollars apiece in Sassafras Copper? Isn’t it too lovely! I’m having a little architect make me plans for a conservatory. You know I’ve always been dying for one—I don’t see how I’ve lived all these years without it.”

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Honora, after her friend had gone, sat down in one of the wicker chairs on the porch. She had a very vague idea as to how much twenty thousand dollars was, but she reflected that while they had lived in Rivington Howard must have made many similar sums, of which she was unaware. Gradually she began to realize, however, that her resentment of the lack of confidence of her husband was by no means the only cause of the feeling that took possession of and overwhelmed her. Something like it she had experienced before: to-day her thoughts seemed to run through her in pulsations, like waves of heat, and she wondered that she could have controlled herself while listening to Lily Dallam.

Mrs. Dallam's reproaches presented themselves to Honora in new aspects. She began to feel now, with an intensity that frightened her, distaste and rebellion. It was intolerable that she should be called to account for the people she chose to have in her house, that any sort of pressure should be brought to bear on her to confine her friends to Quicksands. Treason, heresy, disloyalty to the cult of that community—in reality these, and not a breach of engagement, were the things of which she had been accused. She saw now. She would not be tied to Quicksands—she would not, she would not, she would not! She owed it no allegiance. Her very soul rebelled at the thought, and cried out that she was made for something better, something higher than the life she had been leading. She would permit no one forcibly to restrict her horizon.

Just where and how this higher and better life was to be found Honora did not know; but the belief of her childhood—that it existed somewhere—was still intact. Her powers of analysis, we see, are only just budding, and she did not and could not define the ideal existence which she so unflaggingly sought. Of two of its attributes only she was sure—that it was to be free from restraint and from odious comparisons. Honora's development, it may be remarked, proceeds by the action of irritants, and of late her protest against Quicksands and what it represented had driven her to other books besides the treatise on bridge. The library she had collected at Rivington she had brought with her, and was adding to it from time to time. Its volumes are neither sufficiently extensive or profound to enumerate.

Those who are more or less skilled in psychology may attempt to establish a sequence between the events and reflections just related and the fact that, one morning a fortnight later, Honora found herself driving northward on Fifth Avenue in a hansom cab. She was in a pleasurable state of adventurous excitement, comparable to that Columbus must have felt when the shores of the Old World had disappeared below the horizon. During the fortnight we have skipped Honora had been to town several times, and had driven and walked through certain streets: inspiration, courage, and decision had all arrived at once this morning, when at the ferry she had given the cabman this particular address on Fifth Avenue.

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The cab, with the jerking and thumping peculiar to hansoms, made a circle and drew up at the curb. But even then a moment of irresolution intervened, and she sat staring through the little side window at the sign, T. Gerald Shorter, Real Estate, in neat gold letters over the basement floor of the building.

“Here y’are, Miss,” said the cabman through the hole in the roof.

Honora descended, and was almost at the flight of steps leading down to the office door when a familiar figure appeared coming out of it. It was that of Mr. Toots Cuthbert, arrayed in a faultless morning suit, his tie delicately suggestive of falling leaves; and there dangled over his arm the slenderest of walking sticks.

“Mrs. Spence!” he lisped, with every appearance of joy.

“Mr. Cuthbert!” she cried.

“Going in to see Jerry?” he inquired after he had put on his hat, nodding up at the sign.

“I—that is, yes, I had thought of it,” she answered.

“Town house?” said Mr. Cuthbert, with a knowing smile.

“I did have an idea of looking at houses,” she confessed, somewhat taken aback.

“I’m your man,” announced Mr. Cuthbert.

“You!” exclaimed Honora, with an air of considering the lilies of the field. But he did not seem to take offence.

“That’s my business,” he proclaimed,—“when in town. Jerry gives me a commission. Come in and see him, while I get a list and some keys. By the way, you wouldn’t object to telling him you were a friend of mine, would you?”

“Not at all,” said Honora, laughing.

Mr. Shorter was a jovial gentleman in loose-fitting clothes, and he was exceedingly glad to meet Mr. Cuthbert’s friend.

“What kind of a house do you want, Mrs. Spence?” he asked. “Cuthbert tells me this morning that the Whitworth house has come into the market. You couldn’t have a better location than that, on the Avenue between the Cathedral and the Park.”

“Oh,” said Honora with a gasp, “that’s much too expensive, I’m sure. And there are only two of us.” She hesitated, a little alarmed at the rapidity with which affairs were proceeding, and added: “I ought to tell you that I’ve not really decided to take a house.

I wished to—to see what there was to be had, and then I should have to consult my husband."

She gazed very seriously into Mr. Shorter's brown eyes, which became very wide and serious, too. But all the time it seemed to her that other parts of him were laughing.

"Husbands," he declared, "are kill-joys. What have they got to do with a house—except to sleep in it? Now I haven't the pleasure of knowing you as well as I hope to one of these days, Mrs. Spence—"

"Oh, I say!" interrupted Mr. Cuthbert.

"But I venture to predict, on a slight acquaintance," continued Mr. Shorter, undisturbed, "that you will pick out the house you want, and that your husband will move into it."

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Honora could not help laughing. And Mr. Shorter leaned back in his revolving chair and laughed, too, in so alarming a manner as to lead her to fear he would fall over backwards. But Mr. Cuthbert, who did not appear to perceive the humour in this conversation, extracted some keys and several pasteboard slips from a rack in the corner. Suddenly Mr. Shorter jerked himself upright again, and became very solemn.

“Where’s my hat?” he demanded.

“What do you want with your hat?” Mr. Cuthbert inquired.

“Why, I’m going with you, of course,” Mr. Shorter replied. “I’ve decided to take a personal interest in this matter. You may regard my presence, Cuthbert, as justified by an artistic passion for my profession. I should never forgive myself if Mrs. Spence didn’t get just the right house.”

“Oh,” said Mr. Cuthbert, “I’ll manage that all right. I thought you were going to see the representative of a syndicate at eleven.”

Mr. Shorter, with a sigh, acknowledged this necessity, and escorted Honora gallantly through the office and across the sidewalk to the waiting hansom. Cuthbert got in beside her.

“Jerry’s a joker,” he observed as they drove off, “you mustn’t mind him.”

“I think he’s delightful,” said Honora.

“One wouldn’t believe that a man of his size and appearance could be so fond of women,” said Mr. Cuthbert. “He’s the greatest old lady-killer that ever breathed. For two cents he would have come with us this morning, and let a five thousand dollar commission go. Do you know Mrs. Shorter?”

“No,” replied Honora. “She looks most attractive. I caught a glimpse of her at the polo that day with you.”

“I’ve been at her house in Newport ever since. Came down yesterday to try to earn some money,” he continued, cheerfully making himself agreeable. “Deuced clever woman, much too clever for me and Jerry too. Always in a tete-a-tete with an antiquarian or a pathologist, or a psychologist, and tells novelists what to put into their next books and jurists how to decide cases. Full of modern and liberal ideas—believes in free love and all that sort of thing, and gives Jerry the dickens for practising it.”

“Oh!” exclaimed Honora.

Mr. Cuthbert, however, did not appear to realize that he had shocked her.

“By the way,” he asked, “have you seen Cecil Grainger since the Quicksands game?”

“No,” she replied. “Has Mr. Grainger been at Quicksands since?”

“Nobody knows where he’s been,” answered Mr. Cuthbert. “It’s a mystery. He hasn’t been home—at Newport, I mean-for a fortnight. He’s never stayed away so long without letting any one know where he is. Naturally they thought he was at Mrs. Kame’s in Banbury, but she hasn’t laid eyes on him. It’s a mystery. My own theory is that he went to sleep in a parlour car and was sent to the yards, and hasn’t waked up.”

“And isn’t Mrs. Grainger worried?” asked Honora.

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“Oh, you never can tell anything about her,” he said. “Do you know her? She’s a sphinx. All the Pendletons are Stoics. And besides, she’s been so busy with this Charities Conference that she hasn’t had time to think of Cecil. Who’s that?”

“That” was a lady from Rivington, one of Honora’s former neighbours, to whom she had bowed. Life, indeed, is full of contrasts. Mr. Cuthbert, too, was continually bowing and waving to acquaintances on the Avenue.

Thus pleasantly conversing, they arrived at the first house on the list, and afterwards went through a succession of them. Once inside, Honora would look helplessly about her in the darkness while her escort would raise the shades, admitting a gloomy light on bare interiors or shrouded furniture.

And the rents: Four, five, six, and seven and eight thousand dollars a year. Pride prevented her from discussing these prices with Mr. Cuthbert; and in truth, when lunch time came, she had seen nothing which realized her somewhat vague but persistent ideals.

“I’m so much obliged to you,” she said, “and I hope you’ll forgive me for wasting your time.”

Mr. Cuthbert smiled broadly, and Honora smiled too.

Indeed, there was something ludicrous in the remark. He assumed an attitude of reflection.

“I imagine you wouldn’t care to go over beyond Lexington Avenue, would you? I didn’t think to ask you.”

“No,” she replied, blushing a little, “I shouldn’t care to go over as far as that.”

He pondered a while longer, when suddenly his face lighted up.

“I’ve got it!” he cried, “the very thing—why didn’t. I think of it? Dicky Farnham’s house, or rather his wife’s house. I’ll get it straight after a while,—she isn’t his wife any more, you know; she married Eustace Rindge last month. That’s the reason it’s for rent. Dicky says he’ll never get married again—you bet! They planned it together, laid the corner-stone and all that sort of thing, and before it was finished she had a divorce and had gone abroad with Rindge. I saw her before she sailed, and she begged me to rent it. But it isn’t furnished.”

“I might look at it,” said Honora, dubiously.

“I’m sure it will just suit you,” he declared with enthusiasm. “It’s a real find. We’ll drive around by the office and get the keys.”

The house was between Fifth Avenue and Madison, on a cross street not far below Fifty-Ninth, and Honora had scarcely entered the little oak-panelled hall before she had forgotten that Mr. Cuthbert was a real estate agent—a most difficult thing to remember.

Upstairs, the drawing-room was flooded with sunlight that poured in through a window with stone mullions and leaded panes extending the entire width of the house. Against the wall stood a huge stone mantel of the Tudor period, and the ceiling was of wood. Behind the little hall a cosey library lighted by a well, and behind that an ample dining-room. And Honora remembered to have seen, in a shop on Fourth Avenue, just the sideboard for such a setting.

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On the third floor, as Mr. Cuthbert pointed out, there was a bedroom and boudoir for Mrs. Spence, and a bedroom and dressing-room for Mr. Spence. Into the domestic arrangement of the house, however important, we need not penetrate. The rent was eight thousand dollars, which Mr. Cuthbert thought extremely reasonable.

“Eight thousand dollars!” As she stood with her back turned, looking out on the street, some trick of memory brought into her mind the fact that she had once heard her uncle declare that he had bought his house and lot for that exact sum. And as cashier of Mr. Isham’s bank, he did not earn so much in a year.

She had found the house, indeed, but the other and mightier half of the task remained, of getting Howard into it. In the consideration of this most difficult of problems Honora, who in her exaltation had beheld herself installed in every room, grew suddenly serious. She was startled out of her reflections by a remark of almost uncanny penetration on the part of Mr. Cuthbert.

“Oh, he’ll come round all right, when he sees the house,” that young gentleman declared.

Honora turned quickly, and, after a moment of astonishment, laughed in spite of herself. It was impossible not to laugh with Mr. Cuthbert, so irresistible and debonair was he, so confiding and sympathetic, that he became; before one knew it, an accomplice. Had he not poured out to Honora, with a charming gayety and frankness, many of his financial troubles?

“I’m afraid he’ll think it frightfully expensive,” she answered, becoming thoughtful once more. And it did not occur to her that neither of them had mentioned the individual to whom they referred.

“Wait until he’s feeling tiptop,” Mr. Cuthbert advised, “and then bring him up here in a hurry. I say, I hope you do take the house,” he added, with a boyish seriousness after she had refused his appeal to lunch with him, “and that you will let me come and see you once in a while.”

She lunched alone, in a quiet corner of the dining-room of one of the large hotels, gazing at intervals absently out of the window. And by the middle of the afternoon she found herself, quite unexpectedly, in the antique furniture shop, gazing at the sideboard and a set of leather-seated Jacobean chairs, and bribing the dealer with a smile to hold them for a few days until she could decide whether she wished them. In a similar mood of abstraction she boarded the ferry, but it was not until the boat had started on its journey that she became aware of a trim, familiar figure in front of her, silhouetted against the ruffed blue waters of the river—Trixton Brent’s. And presently, as though the concentration of her thoughts upon his back had summoned him, he turned.

“Where have you been all this time?” she asked. “I haven’t seen you for an age.”

“To Seattle.”

“To Seattle!” she exclaimed. “What were you doing there?”

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“Trying to forget you,” he replied promptly, “and incidentally attempting to obtain control of some properties. Both efforts, I may add, were unsuccessful.”

“I’m sorry,” said Honora.

“And what mischief,” he demanded, “have you been up to?”

“You’ll never guess!” she exclaimed.

“Preparing for the exodus,” he hazarded.

“You surely don’t expect me to stay in Quicksands all winter?” she replied, a little guiltily.

“Quicksands,” he declared, “has passed into history.”

“You always insist upon putting a wrong interpretation upon what I do,” she complained.

He laughed.

“What interpretation do you put on it?” he asked.

“A most natural and praiseworthy one,” she answered. “Education, improvement, growth—these things are as necessary for a woman as for a man. Of course I don’t expect you to believe that—your idea of women not being a very exalted one.”

He did not reply, for at that instant the bell rang, the passengers pressed forward about them, and they were soon in the midst of the confusion of a landing. It was not until they were seated in adjoining chairs of the parlour-car that the conversation was renewed.

“When do you move to town?” he inquired.

However simple Mr. Brent’s methods of reasoning may appear to others, his apparent clairvoyance never failed to startle Honora.

“Somebody has told you that I’ve been looking at houses!” she exclaimed.

“Have you found one?”

She hesitated.

“Yes—I have found one. It belongs to some people named Farnham—they’re divorced.”

“Dicky Farnham’s ex-wife,” he supplied. “I know where it is —unexceptionable neighbourhood and all that sort of thing.”

“And it’s just finished,” continued Honora, her enthusiasm gaining on her as she spoke of the object which had possessed her mind for four hours. “It’s the most enchanting house, and so sunny for New York. If I had built it myself it could not have suited me better. Only—”

“Only—” repeated Trixton Brent, smiling.

“Well,” she said slowly, “I really oughtn’t to talk about it. I—I haven’t said anything to Howard yet, and he may not like it. I ran across it by the merest accident.”

“What will you give me,” he said, “if I can induce Howard to like it?”

“My eternal friendship,” she laughed.

“That’s not enough,” said Trixton Brent.

CHAPTER IX

INTRODUCING A REVOLUTIONIZING VEHICLE

“Howard,” said Honora that evening, “I’ve been going through houses to-day.”

“Houses!” he exclaimed, looking up from his newspaper.

“And I’ve been most fortunate,” she continued. “I found one that Mrs. Farnham built—-she is now Mrs. Rindge. It is just finished, and so attractive. If I’d looked until doomsday I couldn’t have done any better.”

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“But great Scott!” he ejaculated, “what put the notion of a town house into your head?”

“Isn’t it high time to be thinking of the winter?” she asked. “It’s nearly the end of September.”

He was inarticulate for a few moments, in an evident desperate attempt to rally his forces to meet such an unforeseen attack.

“Who said anything about going to town?” he inquired.

“Now, Howard, don’t be foolish,” she replied. “Surely you didn’t expect to stay in Quicksands all winter?”

“Foolish!” he repeated, and added inconsequently, “why not?”

“Because,” said Honora, calmly, “I have a life to lead as well as you.”

“But you weren’t satisfied until you got to Quicksands, and now you want to leave it.”

“I didn’t bargain to stay here in the winter,” she declared. “You know very well that if you were unfortunate it would be different. But you’re quite prosperous.”

“How do you know?” he demanded unguardedly.

“Quicksands tells me,” she said. “It is—a little humiliating not to have more of your confidence, and to hear such things from outsiders.”

“You never seemed interested in business matters,” he answered uneasily.

“I should be,” said Honora, “if you would only take the trouble to tell me about them.” She stood up. “Howard, can’t you see that it is making us—grow apart? If you won’t tell me about yourself and what you’re doing, you drive me to other interests. I am your wife, and I ought to know—I want to know. The reason I don’t understand is because you’ve never taken the trouble to teach me. I wish to lead my own life, it is true—to develop. I don’t want to be like these other women down here. I—I was made for something better. I’m sure of it. But I wish my life to be joined to yours, too—and it doesn’t seem to be. And sometimes—I’m afraid I can’t explain it to you—sometimes I feel lonely and frightened, as though I might do something desperate. And I don’t know what’s going to become of me.”

He laid down his newspaper and stared at her helplessly, with the air of a man who suddenly finds himself at sea in a small boat without oars.

“Oh, you can’t understand!” she cried. “I might have known you never could.”

He was, indeed, thoroughly perplexed and uncomfortable: unhappy might not be too strong a word. He got up awkwardly and put his hand on her arm. She did not respond. He drew her, limp and unresisting, down on the lounge beside him.

“For heaven’s sake, what is the matter, Honora?” he faltered. “I—I thought we were happy. You were getting on all right, and seemed to be having a good time down here. You never said anything about—this.”

She turned her head and looked at him—a long, searching look with widened eyes.

“No,” she said slowly, “you don’t understand. I suppose it isn’t your fault.”

“I’ll try,” he said, “I don’t like to see you—upset like this. I’ll do anything I can to make you happy.”

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“Not things, not—not toys,” Trixton Brent’s expression involuntarily coming to her lips. “Oh, can’t you see I’m not that kind of a woman? I don’t want to be bought. I want you, whatever you are, if you are. I want to be saved. Take care of me—see a little more of me—be a little interested in what I think. God gave me a mind, and—other men have discovered it. You don’t know, you can’t know, what temptations you subject me to. It isn’t right, Howard. And oh, it is humiliating not to be able to interest one’s husband.”

“But you do interest me,” he protested.

She shook her head.

“Not so much as your business,” she said; “not nearly so much.”

“Perhaps I have been too absorbed,” he confessed. “One thing has followed another. I didn’t suspect that you felt this way. Come, I’ll try to brace up.” He pressed her to him. “Don’t feel badly. You’re overwrought. You’ve exaggerated the situation, Honora. We’ll go in on the eight o’clock train together and look at the house—although I’m afraid it’s a little steep,” he added cautiously.

“I don’t care anything about the house,” said Honora. “I don’t want it.”

“There!” he said soothingly, “you’ll feel differently in the morning. We’ll go and look at it, anyway.”

Her quick ear, however, detected an undertone which, if not precisely resentment, was akin to the vexation that an elderly gentleman might be justified in feeling who has taken the same walk for twenty years, and is one day struck by a falling brick. Howard had not thought of consulting her in regard to remaining all winter in Quicksands. And, although he might not realize it himself, if he should consent to go to New York one reason for his acquiescence would be that the country in winter offered a more or less favourable atmosphere for the recurrence of similar unpleasant and unaccountable domestic convulsions. Business demands peace at any price. And the ultimatum at Rivington, though delivered in so different a manner, recurred to him.

The morning sunlight, as is well known, is a dispeller of moods, a disintegrator of the night’s fantasies. It awoke Honora at what for her was a comparatively early hour, and as she dressed rapidly she heard her husband whistling in his room. It is idle to speculate on the phenomenon taking place within her, and it may merely be remarked in passing that she possessed a quality which, in a man, leads to a career and fame. Unimagined numbers of America’s women possess that quality—a fact that is becoming more and more apparent every day.

“Why, Honora!” Howard exclaimed, as she appeared at the breakfast table. “What’s happened to you?”

“Have you forgotten already,” she asked, smilingly, as she poured out her coffee, “that we are going to town together?”

He readjusted his newspaper against the carafe.

“How much do you think Mrs. Farnham—or Mrs. Rindge—is worth?” he asked.

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“I’m sure I don’t know,” she replied.

“Old Marshall left her five million dollars.”

“What has that to do with it?” inquired Honora.

“She isn’t going to rent, especially in that part of town, for nothing.”

“Wouldn’t it be wiser, Howard, to wait and see the house. You know you proposed it yourself, and it won’t take very much of your time.”

He returned to a perusal of the financial column, but his eye from time to time wandered from the sheet to his wife, who was reading her letters.

“Howard,” she said, “I feel dreadfully about Mrs. Holt. We haven’t been at Silverdale all summer. Here’s a note from her saying she’ll be in town to-morrow for the Charities Conference, asking me to come to see her at her hotel. I think I’ll go to Silverdale a little later.”

“Why don’t you?” he said. “It would do you good.”

“And you?” she asked.

“My only day of the week is Sunday, Honora. You know that. And I wouldn’t spend another day at Silverdale if they gave me a deed to the property,” he declared.

On the train, when Howard had returned from the smoking car and they were about to disembark at Long Island City, they encountered Mr. Trixton Brent.

“Whither away?” he cried in apparent astonishment. “Up at dawn, and the eight o’clock train!”

“We were going to look at a house,” explained Honora, “and Howard has no other time.”

“I’ll go, too,” declared Mr. Brent, promptly. “You mightn’t think me a judge of houses, but I am. I’ve lived in so many bad ones that I know a good one when I see it now.”

“Honora has got a wild notion into her head that I’m going to take the Farnham house,” said Howard, smiling. There, on the deck of the ferryboat, in the flooding sunlight, the idea seemed to give him amusement. With the morning light Pharaoh must have hardened his heart.

“Well, perhaps you are,” said Mr. Brent, conveying to Honora his delight in the situation by a scarcely perceptible wink. “I shouldn’t like to take the other end of the bet. Why

shouldn't you? You're fat and healthy and making money faster than you can gather it in."

Howard coughed, and laughed a little, uncomfortably. Trixton Brent was not a man to offend.

"Honora has got that delusion, too," he replied. He steeled himself in his usual manner for the ordeal to come by smoking a cigarette, for the arrival of such a powerful ally on his wife's side lent a different aspect to the situation.

Honora, during this colloquy, was silent. She was a little uncomfortable, and pretended not to see Mr. Brent's wink.

"Incredible as it may seem, I expected to have my automobile ready this morning," he observed; "we might have gone in that. It landed three days ago, but so far it has failed to do anything but fire off revolver shots."

"Oh, I do wish you had it," said Honora, relieved by the change of subject. "To drive in one must be such a wonderful sensation."

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“I’ll let you know when it stops shooting up the garage and consents to move out,” he said. “I’ll take you down to Quicksands in it.”

The prospective arrival of Mr. Brent’s French motor car, which was looked for daily, had indeed been one of the chief topics of conversation at Quicksands that summer. He could appear at no lunch or dinner party without being subjected to a shower of questions as to where it was, and as many as half a dozen different women among whom was Mrs. Chandos —declared that he had promised to bring them out from New York on the occasion of its triumphal entry into the colony. Honora, needless to say, had betrayed no curiosity.

Neither Mr. Shorter nor Mr. Cuthbert had appeared at the real estate office when, at a little after nine o’clock; Honora asked for the keys. And an office boy, perched on the box seat of the carriage, drove with them to the house and opened the wrought-iron gate that guarded the entrance, and the massive front door. Honora had a sense of unreality as they entered, and told herself it was obviously ridiculous that she should aspire to such a dwelling. Yesterday, under the spell of that somewhat adventurous excursion with Mr. Cuthbert, she had pictured herself as installed. He had contrived somehow to give her a sense of intimacy with the people who lived thereabout—his own friends.

Perhaps it was her husband who was the disillusionizing note as he stood on the polished floor of the sunflooded drawing-room. Although bare of furniture, it was eloquent to Honora of a kind of taste not to be found at Quicksands: it carried her back, by undiscernible channels of thought, to the impression which, in her childhood, the Hanbury mansion had always made. Howard, in her present whimsical fancy, even seemed a little grotesque in such a setting. His inevitable pink shirt and obviously prosperous clothes made discord there, and she knew in this moment that he was appraising the house from a commercial standpoint. His comment confirmed her guess.

“If I were starting out to blow myself, or you, Honora,” he said, poking with his stick a marmouset of the carved stone mantel, “I’d get a little more for my money while I was about it.”

Honora did not reply. She looked out of the window instead.

“See here, old man,” said Trixton Brent, “I’m not a real estate dealer or an architect, but if I were in your place I’d take that carriage and hustle over to Jerry Shorter’s as fast as I could and sign the lease.”

Howard looked at him in some surprise, as one who had learned that Trixton Brent’s opinions were usually worth listening to. Characteristically, he did not like to display his ignorance.

“I know what you mean, Brent,” he replied, “and there may be something to the argument. It gives an idea of conservativeness and prosperity.”

“You’ve made a bull’s-eye,” said Trixton Brent, succinctly.

“But—but I’m not ready to begin on this scale,” objected Howard.

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“Why,” cried Brent, with evident zest—for he was a man who enjoyed sport in all its forms, even to baiting the husbands of his friends,—“when I first set eyes on you, old fellow, I thought you knew a thing or two, and you’ve made a few turns since that confirmed the opinion. But I’m beginning to perceive that you have limitations. I could sit down here now, if there were any place to sit, and calculate how much living in this house would be worth to me in Wall Street.”

Honora, who had been listening uneasily, knew that a shrewder or more disturbing argument could not have been used on her husband; and it came from Trixton Brent—to Howard at least—ex cathedra. She was filled with a sense of shame, which was due not solely to the fact that she was a little conscience-stricken because of her innocent complicity, nor that her husband did not resent an obvious attempt of a high-handed man to browbeat him; but also to the feeling that the character of the discussion had in some strange way degraded the house itself. Why was it that everything she touched seemed to become contaminated?

“There’s no use staying any longer,” she said. “Howard doesn’t like it.”

“I didn’t say so,” he interrupted. “There’s something about the place that grows on you. If I felt I could afford it—”

“At any rate,” declared Honora, trying to control her voice, “I’ve decided, now I’ve seen it a second time, that I don’t want it. I only wished him to look at it,” she added, scornfully aware that she was taking up the cudgels in his behalf. But she could not bring herself, in Brent’s presence, to declare that the argument of the rent seemed decisive.

Her exasperation was somewhat increased by the expression on Trixton Brent’s face, which plainly declared that he deemed her last remarks to be the quintessence of tactics; and he obstinately refused, as they went down the stairs to the street, to regard the matter as closed.

“I’ll take him down town in the Elevated,” he said, as he put her into the carriage. “The first round’s a draw.”

She directed the driver to the ferry again, and went back to Quicksands. Several times during the day she was on the point of telephoning Brent not to try to persuade Howard to rent the house, and once she even got so far as to take down the receiver. But when she reflected, it seemed an impossible thing to do. At four o’clock she herself was called to the telephone by Mr. Cray, a confidential clerk in Howard’s office, who informed her that her husband had been obliged to leave town suddenly on business, and would not be home that night.

“Didn’t he say where he was going?” asked Honora.

“He didn’t even tell me, Mrs. Spence,” Cray replied, and Mr. Dallam doesn’t know.”

“Oh, dear,” said Honora, “I hope he realizes that people are coming for dinner to-morrow evening.”

“I’m positive, from what he said, that he’ll be back some time to-morrow,” Cray reassured her.

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She refused an invitation to dine out, and retired shortly after her own dinner with a novel so distracting that she gradually regained an equable frame of mind. The uneasiness, the vague fear of the future, wore away, and she slept peacefully. In the morning, however; she found on her breakfast tray a note from Trixton Brent.

Her first feeling after reading it was one of relief that he had not mentioned the house. He had written from a New York club, asking her to lunch with him at Delmonico's that day and drive home in the motor. No answer was required: if she did not appear at one o'clock, he would know she couldn't come.

Honora took the eleven o'clock train, which gave her an hour after she arrived in New York to do as she pleased. Her first idea, as she stood for a moment amidst the clamour of the traffic in front of the ferry house, was to call on Mrs. Holt at that lady's hotel; and then she remembered that the Charities Conference began at eleven, and decided to pay a visit to Madame Dumond, who made a specialty of importing novelties in dress. Her costume for the prospective excursion in the automobile had cost Honora some thought that morning. As the day was cool, she had brought along an ulster that was irreproachable. But how about the hat and veil?

Madame Dumond was enchanted. She had them both,—she had landed with them only last week. She tried them on Honora, and stood back with her hands clasped in an ecstasy she did not attempt to hide. What a satisfaction to sell things to Mrs. Spence! Some ladies she could mention would look like frights in them, but Madame Spence had 'de la race'. She could wear anything that was chic. The hat and veil, said Madame, with a simper, were sixty dollars.

"Sixty dollars!" exclaimed Honora.

"Ah, madame, what would you?" Novelties were novelties, the United States Custom authorities robbers.

Having attended to these important details, Honora drove to the restaurant in her hansom cab, the blood coursing pleasantly in her veins. The autumn air sparkled, and New York was showing signs of animation. She glanced furtively into the little mirror at the side. Her veil was grey, and with the hat gave her somewhat the air of a religieuse, an aspect heightened by the perfect oval of her face; and something akin to a religious thrill ran through her.

The automobile, with its brass and varnish shining in the sunlight, was waiting a little way up the street, and the first person Honora met in the vestibule of Delmonico's was Lula Chandos. She was, as usual, elaborately dressed, and gave one the impression of being lost, so anxiously was she scanning the face of every new arrival.

“Oh, my dear,” she cried, staring hard at the hat and the veil, “have you seen Clara Trowbridge anywhere?”

A certain pity possessed Honora as she shook her head.

“She was in town this morning,” continued Mrs. Chandos, “and I was sure she was coming here to lunch. Trixy just drove up a moment ago in his new car. Did you see it?”

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Honora's pity turned into a definite contempt.

"I saw an automobile as I came in," she said, but the brevity of her reply seemed to have no effect upon Mrs. Chandos.

"There he is now, at the entrance to the cafe," she exclaimed.

There, indeed, was Trixton Brent, staring at them from the end of the hall, and making no attempt to approach them.

"I think I'll go into the dressing-room and leave my coat," said Honora, outwardly calm but inwardly desperate. Fortunately, Lula made no attempt to follow her.

"You're a dream in that veil, my dear," Mrs. Chandos called after her. "Don't forget that we're all dining with you to-night in Quicksands."

Once in the dressing-room, Honora felt like locking the doors and jumping out of the window. She gave her coat to the maid, rearranged her hair without any apparent reason, and was leisurely putting on her hat again, and wondering what she would do next, when Mrs. Kame appeared.

"Trixy asked me to get you," she explained. "Mr. Grainger and I are going to lunch with you."

"How nice!" said Honora, with such a distinct emphasis of relief that Mrs. Kame looked at her queerly.

"What a fool Trixy was, with all his experience, to get mixed up with that Chandos woman," that lady remarked as they passed through the hallway. "She's like molasses—one can never get her off. Lucky thing he found Cecil and me here. There's your persistent friend, Trixy," she added, when they were seated. "Really, this is pathetic, when an invitation to lunch and a drive in your car would have made her so happy."

Honora looked around and beheld, indeed, Mrs. Chandos and two other Quicksands women, Mrs. Randall and Mrs. Barclay, at a table in the corner of the room.

"Where's Bessie to-day, Cecil—or do you know?" demanded Mrs. Kame, after an amused glance at Brent, who had not deigned to answer her. "I promised to go to Newport with her at the end of the week, but I haven't been able to find her."

"Cecil doesn't know," said Trixton Brent. "The police have been looking for him for a fortnight. Where the deuce have you been, Cecil?"

"To the Adirondacks," replied Mr Grainger, gravely.

This explanation, which seemed entirely plausible to Honora, appeared to afford great amusement to Brent, and even to Mrs. Kame.

“When did you come to life?” demanded Brent.

“Yesterday,” said Mr. Grainger, quite as solemnly as before.

Mrs. Kame glanced curiously at Honora, and laughed again.

“You ought to be ashamed of yourself, Trixy,” she said.

“Why?” he asked innocently. “There’s nothing wrong in going to the Adirondacks—is there, Cecil?”

“No,” said Mr. Grainger, blinking rapidly.

“The Adirondacks,” declared Mrs. Kame, “have now become classic.”

“By the way,” observed Mr. Grainger, “I believe Bessie’s in town to-day at a charity pow-wow, reading a paper. I’ve half a mind to go over and listen to it. The white dove of peace—and all that kind of thing.”

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“You’d go to sleep and spoil it all,” said Brent.

“But you can’t, Cecil!” cried Mrs. Kame. “Don’t you remember we’re going to Westchester to the Faunces’ to spend the night and play bridge? And we promised to arrive early.”

“That’s so, by George,” said Mr. Grainger, and he drank the rest of his whiskey-and-soda.

“I’ll tell you what I’ll do, if Mrs. Spence is willing,” suggested Brent. “If you start right after lunch, I’ll take you out. We’ll have plenty of time,” he added to Honora, “to get back to Quicksands for dinner.”

“Are you sure?” she asked anxiously. “I have people for dinner tonight.”

“Oh, lots of time,” declared Mrs. Kame. “Trixy’s car is some unheard-of horse-power. It’s only twenty-five miles to the Faunces’, and you’ll be back at the ferry by half-past four.”

“Easily,” said Trixton Brent.

CHAPTER X

ON THE ART OF LION TAMING

After lunch, while Mrs. Kame was telephoning to her maid and Mr. Grainger to Mrs. Faunce, Honora found herself alone with Trixton Brent in the automobile at a moment when the Quicksands party were taking a cab. Mrs. Chandos parsed long enough to wave her hand.

“Bon voyage!” she cried. “What an ideal party! and the chauffeur doesn’t understand English. If you don’t turn up this evening, Honora, I’ll entertain your guests.”

“We must get back,” said Honora, involuntarily to Brent. “It would be too dreadful if we didn’t!”

“Are you afraid I’ll run off with you?” he asked.

“I believe you’re perfectly capable of it,” she replied. “If I were wise, I’d take the train.”

“Why don’t you?” he demanded.

She smiled.

“I don’t know. It’s because of your deteriorating influence, I suppose. And yet I trust you, in spite of my instincts and—my eyes. I’m seriously put out with you.”

“Why?”

“I’ll tell you later, if you’re at a loss,” she said, as Mrs. Kame and Mr. Grainger appeared.

Eight years have elapsed since that day and this writing—an aeon in this rapidly moving Republic of ours. The roads, although far from perfect yet, were not then what they have since become. But the weather was dry and the voyage to Westchester accomplished successfully. It was half-past three when they drove up the avenue and deposited Mrs. Kame and Cecil Grainger at the long front of the Faunce house: and Brent, who had been driving, relinquished the wheel to the chauffeur and joined Honora in the tonneau. The day was perfect, the woods still heavy with summer foliage, and the only signs of autumn were the hay mounds and the yellowing cornstalks stacked amidst the stubble of the fields.

Brent sat silently watching her, for she had raised her veil in saying good-by to Mrs. Kame, and—as the chauffeur was proceeding slowly—had not lowered it. Suddenly she turned and looked him full in the face.

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“What kind of woman do you think I am?” she demanded.

“That’s rather a big order, isn’t it?” he said.

“I’m perfectly serious,” continued Honora, slowly.

“I’d really like to know.”

“Before I begin on the somewhat lengthy list of your qualities,” he replied, smiling, “may I ask why you’d like to know?”

“Yes,” she said quickly. “I’d like to know because I think you’ve misjudged me. I was really more angry than you have any idea of at the manner in which you talked to Howard. And did you seriously suppose that I was in earnest when we spoke about your assistance in persuading him to take the house?”

He laughed.

“You are either the cleverest woman in the world,” he declared, “or else you oughtn’t to be out without a guardian. And no judge in possession of his five senses would appoint your husband.”

Indignant as she was, she could not resist smiling. There was something in the way Brent made such remarks that fascinated her.

“I shouldn’t call you precisely eligible, either,” she retorted.

He laughed again. But his eyes made her vaguely uneasy.

“Are these harsh words the reward for my charity? he asked.

“I’m by no means sure it’s charity,” she said. “That’s what is troubling me. And you have no right to say such things about my husband.”

“How was I to know you were sensitive on the subject? he replied.

“I wonder what it would be like to be so utterly cynical as you,” she said.

“Do you mean to say you don’t want the house?”

“I don’t want it under those conditions,” she answered with spirit. “I didn’t expect to be taken literally. And you’ve always insisted,” she added, “in ascribing to me motives that —that never occurred to me. You make the mistake of thinking that because you have no ideals, other people haven’t. I hope Howard hasn’t said he’d take the house. He’s gone off somewhere, and I haven’t been able to see him.”

Trixton Brent looked at her queerly.

“After that last manoeuvre of yours,” he said, “it was all I could do to prevent him from rushing over to Jerry Shorter’s—and signing the lease.”

She did not reply.

“What do these sudden, virtuous resolutions mean?” he asked. “Resignation? Quicksands for life? Abandonment of the whole campaign?”

“There isn’t any I campaign,” she said—and her voice caught in something like a sob. “I’m not that sordid kind of a person. And if I don’t like Quicksands, it’s because the whole atmosphere seems to be charged with —with just such a spirit.”

Her hand was lying on the seat. He covered it with his own so quickly that she left it there for a moment, as though paralyzed, while she listened to the first serious words he had ever addressed to her.

“Honora, I admire you more than any woman I have ever known,” he said.

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Her breath came quickly, and she drew her hand away.

“I suppose I ought to feel complimented,” she replied.

At this crucial instant what had been a gliding flight of the automobile became, suddenly, a more or less uneven and jerky progress, accompanied by violent explosions. At the first of these Honora, in alarm, leaped to her feet. And the machine, after what seemed an heroic attempt to continue, came to a dead stop. They were on the outskirts of a village; children coming home from school surrounded them in a ring. Brent jumped out, the chauffeur opened the hood, and they peered together into what was, to Honora, an inexplicable tangle of machinery. There followed a colloquy, in technical French, between the master and the man.

“What’s the matter?” asked Honora, anxiously.

“Nothing much,” said Brent, “spark-plugs. We’ll fix it up in a few minutes.” He looked with some annoyance at the gathering crowd. “Stand back a little, can’t you?” he cried, “and give us room.”

After some minutes spent in wiping greasy pieces of steel which the chauffeur extracted, and subsequent ceaseless grinding on the crank, the engine started again, not without a series of protesting cracks like pistol shots. The chauffeur and Brent leaped in, the bystanders parted with derisive cheers, and away they went through the village, only to announce by another series of explosions a second disaster at the other end of the street. A crowd collected there, too.

“Oh, dear!” said Honora, “don’t you think we ought to take the train, Mr. Brent? If I were to miss a dinner at my own house, it would be too terrible!”

“There’s nothing to worry about,” he assured her. “Nothing broken. It’s only the igniting system that needs adjustment.”

Although this was so much Greek to Honora, she was reassured. Trixton Brent inspired confidence. There was another argument with the chauffeur, a little more animated than the first; more greasy plugs taken out and wiped, and a sharper exchange of compliments with the crowd; more grinding, until the chauffeur’s face was steeped in perspiration, and more pistol shots. They were off again, but lamely, spurting a little at times, and again slowing down to the pace of an ox-cart. Their progress became a series of illustrations of the fable of the hare and the tortoise. They passed horses, and the horses shied into the ditch: then the same horses passed them, usually at the periods chosen by the demon under the hood to fire its pistol shots, and into the ditch went the horses once more, their owners expressing their thoughts in language at once vivid and unrestrained.

It is one of the blessed compensations of life that in times of prosperity we do not remember our miseries. In these enlightened days, when everybody owns an automobile and calmly travels from Chicago to Boston if he chooses, we have forgotten the dark ages when these machines were possessed by devils: when it took sometimes as much as three hours to go twenty miles, and often longer than that. How many of us have had the same experience as Honora!

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She was always going to take the train, and didn't. Whenever her mind was irrevocably made up, the automobile whirled away on all four cylinders for a half a mile or so, until they were out of reach of the railroad. There were trolley cars, to be sure, but those took forever to get anywhere. Four o'clock struck, five and six, when at last the fiend who had conspired with fate, having accomplished his evident purpose of compelling Honora to miss her dinner, finally abandoned them as suddenly and mysteriously as he had come, and the automobile was a lamb once more. It was half-past six, and the sun had set, before they saw the lights twinkling all yellow on the heights of Fort George. At that hour the last train they could have taken to reach the dinner-party in time was leaving the New York side of the ferry.

"What will they think?" cried Honora. "They saw us leave Delmonico's at two o'clock, and they didn't know we were going to Westchester."

It needed no very vivid imagination to summon up the probable remarks of Mrs. Chandos on the affair. It was all very well to say the motor broke down; but unfortunately Trixton Brent's reputation was not much better than that of his car.

Trixton Brent, as might have been expected, was inclined to treat the matter as a joke.

"There's nothing very formal about a Quicksands dinner-party," he said. "We'll have a cosey little dinner in town, and call 'em up on the telephone."

She herself was surprised at the spirit of recklessness stealing over her, for there was, after all, a certain appealing glamour in the adventure. She was thrilled by the swift, gliding motion of the automobile, the weird and unfamiliar character of these upper reaches of a great city in the twilight, where new houses stood alone or m rows on wide levelled tracts; and old houses, once in the country, were seen high above the roadway behind crumbling fences, surrounded by gloomy old trees with rotting branches. She stole a glance at the man close beside her; a delightful fear of him made her shiver, and she shrank closer into the corner of the seat.

"Honora!"

All at once he had seized her hand again, and held it in spite of her efforts to release it.

"Honora," he said, "I love you as I have never loved in my life. As I never shall love again."

"Oh—you mustn't say that!" she cried.

"Why not?" he demanded. "Why not, if I feel it?"

"Because," faltered Honora, "because I can't listen to you."

Brent made a motion of disdain with his free hand.

“I don’t pretend that it’s right,” he said. “I’m not a hypocrite, anyway, thank God! It’s undoubtedly wrong, according to all moral codes. I’ve never paid any attention to them. You’re married. I’m happy to say I’m divorced. You’ve got a husband. I won’t be guilty of the bad taste of discussing him. He’s a good fellow enough, but he never thinks about you from

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the time the Exchange opens in the morning until he gets home at night and wants his dinner. You don't love him—it would be a miracle if a woman with any spirit did. He hasn't any more of an idea of what he possesses by legal right than the man I discovered driving in a cart one of the best hunters I ever had in my stables. To say that he doesn't appreciate you is a ludicrous understatement. Any woman would have done for him."

"Please don't!" she implored him. "Please don't!"

But for the moment she knew that she was powerless, carried along like a chip on the crest of his passion.

"I don't pretend to say how it is, or why it is," he went on, paying no heed to her protests. "I suppose there's one woman for every man in the world—though I didn't use to think so. I always had another idea of woman before I met you. I've thought I was in love with 'em, but now I understand it was only—something else. I say, I don't know what it is in you that makes me feel differently. I can't analyze it, and I don't want to. You're not perfect, by a good deal, and God knows I'm not. You're ambitious, but if you weren't, you'd be humdrum—yet there's no pitiful artifice in you as in other women that any idiot can see through. And it would have paralyzed forever any ordinary woman to have married Howard Spence."

A new method of wooing, surely, and evidently peculiar to Trixton Brent. Honora, in the prey of emotions which he had aroused in spite of her, needless to say did not, at that moment, perceive the humour in it. His words gave her food for thought for many months afterwards.

The lion was indeed aroused at last, and whip or goad or wile of no avail. There came a time when she no longer knew what he was saying: when speech, though eloquent and forceful, seemed a useless medium. Her appeals were lost, and she found herself fighting in his arms, when suddenly they turned into one of the crowded arteries of Harlem. She made a supreme effort of will, and he released her.

"Oh!" she cried, trembling.

But he looked at her, unrepentant, with the light of triumph in his eyes.

"I'll never forgive you!" she exclaimed, breathless.

"I gloried in it," he replied. "I shall remember it as long as I live, and I'll do it again."

She did not answer him. She dropped her veil, and for a long space was silent while they rapidly threaded the traffic, and at length turned into upper Fifth Avenue, skirting

the Park. She did not so much as glance at him. But he seemed content to watch her veiled profile in the dusk.

Her breath, in the first tumult of her thought, came and went deeply. But gradually as the street lights burned brighter and familiar sights began to appear, she grew more controlled and became capable of reflection. She remembered that there was a train for Quicksands at seven-fifteen, which Howard had taken once or twice. But she felt that the interval was too short. In that brief period she could not calm herself sufficiently to face her guests. Indeed, the notion of appearing alone, or with Brent, at that dinner-party, appalled her. And suddenly an idea presented itself.

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Brent leaned over, and began to direct the chauffeur to a well-known hotel. She interrupted him.

“No,” she said, “I’d rather go to the Holland House.”

“Very well,” he said amicably, not a little surprised at this unlooked-for acquiescence, and then told his man to keep straight on down the Avenue.

She began mechanically to rearrange her hat and veil; and after that, sitting upright, to watch the cross streets with feverish anticipation, her hands in her lap.

“Honora?” he said.

She did not answer.

“Raise the veil, just for a moment, and look at me.”

She shook her head. But for some reason, best known to herself, she smiled a little. Perhaps it was because her indignation, which would have frightened many men into repentance, left this one undismayed. At any rate, he caught the gleam of the smile through the film of her veil, and laughed.

“We’ll have a little table in the corner of the room,” he declared, “and you shall order the dinner. Here we are,” he cried to the chauffeur. “Pull up to the right.”

They alighted, crossed the sidewalk, the doors were flung open to receive them, and they entered the hotel.

Through the entrance to the restaurant Honora caught sight of the red glow of candles upon the white tables, and heard the hum of voices. In the hall, people were talking and laughing in groups, and it came as a distinct surprise to her that their arrival seemed to occasion no remark. At the moment of getting out of the automobile, her courage had almost failed her.

Trixton Brent hailed one of the hotel servants.

“Show Mrs. Spence to the ladies’ parlour,” said he. And added to Honora, “I’ll get a table, and have the dinner card brought up in a few moments.”

Honora stopped the boy at the elevator door.

“Go to the office,” she said, “and find out if Mrs. Joshua Holt is in, and the number of her room. And take me to the telephone booths. I’ll wait there.”

She asked the telephone operator to call up Mr. Spence's house at Quicksands—and waited.

"I'm sorry, madam," he said, after a little while, which seemed like half an hour to Honora, "but they've had a fire in the Kingston exchange, and the Quicksands line is out of order."

Honora's heart sank; but the bell-boy had reappeared. Yes, Mrs. Holt was in.

"Take me to her room," she said, and followed him into the elevator.

In response to his knock the door was opened by Mrs. Holt herself. She wore a dove-coloured gown, and in her hand was a copy of the report of the Board of Missions. For a moment she peered at Honora over the glasses lightly poised on the uncertain rim of her nose.

"Why—my dear!" she exclaimed, in astonishment. Honora!"

"Oh," cried Honora, "I'm so glad you're here. I was so afraid you'd be out."

In the embrace that followed both the glasses and the mission report fell to the floor. Honora picked them up.

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“Sit down, my dear, and tell me how you happen to be here,” said Mrs. Holt. “I suppose Howard is downstairs.”

“No, he isn’t,” said Honora, rather breathlessly; “that’s the reason I came here. That’s one reason, I mean. I was coming to see you this morning, but I simply didn’t have time for a call after I got to town.”

Mrs. Holt settled herself in the middle of the sofa, the only piece of furniture in the room in harmony with her ample proportions. Her attitude and posture were both judicial, and justice itself spoke in her delft-blue eyes.

“Tell me all about it,” she said, thus revealing her suspicions that there was something to tell.

“I was just going to,” said Honora, hastily, thinking of Trixton Brent waiting in the ladies’ parlour. “I took lunch at Delmomico’s with Mr. Grainger, and Mr. Brent, and Mrs. Kame—”

“Cecil Grainger?” demanded Mrs. Holt.

Honora trembled.

“Yes,” she said.

“I knew his father and mother intimately,” said Mrs. Holt, unexpectedly. “And his wife is a friend of mine. She’s one of the most executive women we have in the ‘Working Girls’ Association,’ and she read a paper today that was masterful. You know her, of course.”

“No,” said Honora, “I haven’t met her yet.”

“Then how did you happen to be lunching with her husband?

“I wasn’t lunching with him, Mrs. Holt,” said Honora; “Mr. Brent was giving the lunch.”

“Who’s Mr. Brent?” demanded Mrs. Holt. “One of those Quicksands people?”

“He’s not exactly a Quicksands person. I scarcely know how to describe him. He’s very rich, and goes abroad a great deal, and plays polo. That’s the reason he has a little place at Quicksands. He’s been awfully kind both to Howard and me,” she added with inspiration.

“And Mrs. Kame?” said Mrs. Holt.

“She’s a widow, and has a place at Banbury.

“I never heard of her,” said Mrs. Holt, and Honora thanked her stars.

“And Howard approves of these mixed lunches, my dear? When I was young, husbands and wives usually went to parties together.”

A panicky thought came to Honora, that Mrs. Holt might suddenly inquire as to the whereabouts of Mr. Brent’s wife.

“Oh, Howard doesn’t mind,” she said hastily. “I suppose times have changed, Mrs. Holt. And after lunch we all went out in Mr. Brent’s automobile to the Faunces’ in Westchester—”

“The Paul Jones Faunces?” Mrs. Holt interrupted.

“What a nice woman that young Mrs. Faunce is! She was Kitty Esterbrook, you know. Both of them very old families.”

“It was only,” continued Honora, in desperation, “it was only to leave Mr. Grainger and Mrs. Kame there to spend the night. They all said we had plenty of time to go and get back to Quicksands by six o’clock. But coming back the automobile broke down—”

“Of course,” said Mrs. Holt, “it serves any one right for trusting to them. I think they are an invention of the devil.”

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“And we’ve only just got back to New York this minute.”

“Who?” inquired Mrs. Holt.

“Mr. Brent and I,” said Honora, with downcast eyes.

“Good gracious!” exclaimed the elder lady.

“I couldn’t think of anything else to do but come straight here to you,” said Honora, gazing at her friend. “And oh, I’m so glad to find you. There’s not another train to Quicksands till after nine.”

“You did quite right, my dear, under the circumstances. I don’t say you haven’t been foolish, but it’s Howard’s fault quite as much as yours. He has no business to let you do such things.”

“And what makes it worse,” said Honora, “is that the wires are down to Quicksands, and I can’t telephone Howard, and we have people to dinner, and they don’t know I went to Westchester, and there’s no use telegraphing: it wouldn’t be delivered till midnight or morning.”

“There, there, my dear, don’t worry. I know how anxious you feel on your husband’s account—”

“Oh—Mrs. Holt, I was going to ask you a great, great favour. Wouldn’t you go down to Quicksands with me and spend the night—and pay us a little visit? You know we would so love to have you!”

“Of course I’ll go down with you, my dear,” said Mrs. Holt. “I’m surprised that you should think for an instant that I wouldn’t. It’s my obvious duty. Martha!” she called, “Martha!”

The door of the bedroom opened, and Mrs. Holt’s elderly maid appeared. The same maid, by the way, who had closed the shutters that memorable stormy night at Silverdale. She had, it seemed, a trick of appearing at crises.

“Martha, telephone to Mrs. Edgerly—you know her number-and say that I am very sorry, but an unexpected duty calls me out of town to-night, and ask her to communicate with the Reverend Mr. Field. As for staying with you, Honora,” she continued, “I have to be back at Silverdale to-morrow night. Perhaps you and Howard will come back with me. My frank opinion is, that a rest from the gayety of Quicksands will do you good.”

“I will come, with pleasure,” said Honora. “But as for Howard—I’m afraid he’s too busy.”

“And how about dinner?” asked Mrs. Holt.

“I forgot to say,” said Honora, that Mr. Brent’s downstairs. He brought me here, of course. Have you any objection to his dining with us?”

“No,” answered Mrs. Holt, “I think I should like to see him.”

After Mrs. Holt had given instructions to her maid to pack, and Honora had brushed some of the dust of the roads from her costume, they descended to the ladies’ parlour. At the far end of it a waiter holding a card was standing respectfully, and Trixton Brent was pacing up and down between the windows. When he caught sight of them he stopped in his tracks, and stared, and stood as if rooted to the carpet. Honora came forward.

“Oh, Mr. Brent!” she cried, “my old friend, Mrs. Holt, is here, and she’s going to take dinner with us and come down to Quicksands for the night. May I introduce Mr. Brent.”

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“Wasn’t it fortunate, Mr. Brent, that Mrs. Spence happened to find me?” said Mrs. Holt, as she took his hand. “I know it is a relief to you.”

It was not often, indeed, that Trixton Brent was taken off his guard; but some allowance must be made for him, since he was facing a situation unparalleled in his previous experience. Virtue had not often been so triumphant, and never so dramatic as to produce at the critical instant so emblematic a defender as this matronly lady in dove colour. For a moment, he stared at her, speechless, and then he gathered himself together.

“A relief?” he asked.

“It would seem so to me,” said Mrs. Holt. “Not that I do not think you are perfectly capable of taking care of her, as an intimate friend of her husband. I was merely thinking of the proprieties. And as I am a guest in this hotel, I expect you both to do me the honour to dine with me before we start for Quicksands.”

After all, Trixton Brent had a sense of humour, although it must not be expected that he should grasp at once all the elements of a joke on himself so colossal.

“I, for one,” he said, with a slight bow which gave to his words a touch somewhat elaborate, “will be delighted.” And he shot at Honora a glance compounded of many feelings, which she returned smilingly.

“Is that the waiter?” asked Mrs. Holt.

“That is a waiter,” said Trixton Brent, glancing at the motionless figure. “Shall I call him?”

“If you please,” said Mrs. Holt. “Honora, you must tell me what you like.”

“Anything, Mrs. Holt,” said Honora.

“If we are to leave a little after nine,” said that lady, balancing her glasses on her nose and glancing at the card, “we have not, I’m afraid, time for many courses.”

The head waiter greeted them at the door of the dining-room. He, too, was a man of wisdom and experience. He knew Mrs. Holt, and he knew Trixton Brent. If gravity had not been a life-long habit with him, one might have suspected him of a desire to laugh. As it was, he seemed palpably embarrassed,—for Mr. Brent had evidently been conversing with him.

“Two, sir?” he asked.

“Three,” said Mrs. Holt, with dignity.

The head waiter planted them conspicuously in the centre of the room; one of the strangest parties, from the point of view of a connoisseur of New York, that ever sat down together. Mrs. Holt with her curls, and her glasses laid flat on the bosom of her dove-coloured dress; Honora in a costume dedicated to the very latest of the sports, and Trixton Brent in English tweeds. The dining-room was full. But here and there amongst the diners, Honora observed, were elderly people who smiled discreetly as they glanced in their direction—friends, perhaps, of Mrs. Holt. And suddenly, in one corner, she perceived a table of six where the mirth was less restrained.

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Fortunately for Mr. Brent, he had had a cocktail, or perhaps two, in Honora's absence. Sufficient time had elapsed since their administration for their proper soothing and exhilarating effects. At the sound of the laughter in the corner he turned his head, a signal for renewed merriment from that quarter. Whereupon he turned back again and faced his hostess once more with a heroism that compelled Honora's admiration. As a sportsman, he had no intention of shirking the bitterness of defeat.

"Mrs. Grainger and Mrs. Shorter," he remarked, "appear to be enjoying themselves."

Honora felt her face grow hot as the merriment at the corner table rose to a height it had not heretofore attained. And she did not dare to look again.

Mrs. Holt was blissfully oblivious to her surroundings. She was, as usual, extremely composed, and improved the interval, while drinking her soup, with a more or less undisguised observation of Mr. Brent; evidently regarding him somewhat in the manner that a suspicious householder would look upon a strange gentleman whom he accidentally found in his front hall. Explanations were necessary. That Mr. Brent's appearance, on the whole, was in his favour did not serve to mitigate her suspicions. Good-looking men were apt to be unscrupulous.

"Are you interested in working girls, Mr. Brent?" she inquired presently.

Honora, in spite of her discomfort, had an insane desire to giggle. She did not dare to raise her eyes.

"I can't say that I've had much experience with them, Mrs. Holt," he replied, with a gravity little short of sublime.

"Naturally you wouldn't have had," said Mrs. Holt. "What I meant was, are you interested in the problems they have to face?"

"Extremely," said he, so unexpectedly that Honora choked. "I can't say that I've given as many hours as I should have liked to a study of the subject, but I don't know of any class that has a harder time. As a rule, they're underpaid and overworked, and when night comes they are either tired to death or bored to death, and the good-looking ones are subject to temptations which some of them find impossible to resist, in a natural desire for some excitement to vary the routine of their lives."

"It seems to me," said Mrs. Holt, "that you are fairly conversant with the subject. I don't think I ever heard the problem stated so succinctly and so well. Perhaps," she added, "it might interest you to attend one of our meetings next month. Indeed, you might be willing to say a few words."

"I'm afraid you'll have to excuse me, Mrs. Holt. I'm a rather busy man, and nothing of a public speaker, and it is rarely I get off in the daytime."

“How about automobiling?” asked Mrs. Holt, with a smile.

“Well,” said Trixton Brent, laughing in spite of himself, “I like the working girls, I have to have a little excitement occasionally. And I find it easier to get off in the summer than in the winter.”

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“Men cover a multitude of sins under the plea of business,” said Mrs. Holt, shaking her head. I can’t say I think much of your method of distraction. Why any one desires to get into an automobile, I don’t see.”

“Have you ever been in one?” he asked. “Mine is here, and I was about to invite you to go down to the ferry in it. I’ll promise to go slow.”

“Well,” said Mrs. Holt, “I don’t object to going that distance, if you keep your promise. I’ll admit that I’ve always had a curiosity.”

“And in return,” said Brent, gallantly, “allow me to send you a cheque for your working girls.”

“You’re very good,” said Mrs. Holt.

“Oh,” he protested, I’m not in the habit of giving much to charities, I’m sorry to say. I’d like to know how it feels.”

“Then I hope the sensation will induce you to try it again,” said Mrs. Holt.

“Nobody, Mrs. Holt,” cried Honora, “could be kinder to his friends than Mr. Brent!”

“We were speaking of disinterested kindness, my dear,” was Mrs. Holt’s reply.

“You’re quite right, Mrs. Holt,” said Trixton Brent, beginning, as the dinner progressed, to take in the lady opposite a delight that surprised him. “I’m willing to confess that I’ve led an extremely selfish existence.”

“The confession isn’t necessary,” she replied. “It’s written all over you. You’re the type of successful man who gets what he wants. I don’t mean to say that you are incapable of kindly instincts.” And her eye twinkled a little.

“I’m very grateful for that concession, at any rate,” he declared.

“There might be some hope for you if you fell into the hands of a good woman,” said Mrs. Holt. “I take it you are a bachelor. Mark my words, the longer you remain one, the more steeped in selfishness you are likely to become in this modern and complex and sense-satisfying life which so many people lead.”

Honora trembled for what he might say to this, remembering his bitter references of that afternoon to his own matrimonial experience. Visions of a scene arose before her in the event that Mrs. Holt should discover his status. But evidently Trixton Brent had no intention of discussing his marriage.

“Judging by some of my married friends and acquaintances,” he said, “I have no desire to try matrimony as a remedy for unselfishness.”

“Then,” replied Mrs. Holt, “all I can say is, I should make new friends amongst another kind of people, if I were you. You are quite right, and if I were seeking examples of happy marriages, I should not begin my search among the so-called fashionable set of the present day. They are so supremely selfish that if the least difference in taste develops, or if another man or woman chances along whom they momentarily fancy more than their own husbands or wives, they get a divorce. Their idea of marriage is not a mutual sacrifice which brings happiness through trials borne together and through the making of character. No, they have a notion that man and wife may continue to lead their individual lives. That isn’t marriage. I’ve lived with Joshua Holt thirty-five years last April, and I haven’t pleased myself in all that time.”

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“All men,” said Trixton Brent, “are not so fortunate as Mr. Holt.”

Honora began to have the sensations of a witness to a debate between Mephistopheles and the powers of heaven. Her head swam. But Mrs. Holt, who had unlooked-for flashes of humour, laughed, and shook her curls at Brent.

“I should like to lecture you some time,” she said; “I think it would do you good.”

He shook his head.

“I’m beyond redemption. Don’t you think so, Honora?” he asked, with an unexpected return of his audacity.

“I’m afraid I’m not worthy to judge you,” she replied, and coloured.

“Stuff and nonsense,” said Mrs. Holt; “women are superior to men, and it’s our duty to keep them in order. And if we’re really going to risk our lives in your automobile, Mr. Brent, you’d better make sure it’s there,” she added, glancing at her watch.

Having dined together in an apparent and inexplicable amity, their exit was of even more interest to the table in the corner than their entrance had been. Mrs. Holt’s elderly maid was waiting in the hall, Mrs. Holt’s little trunk was strapped on the rear of the car; and the lady herself, with something of the feelings of a missionary embarking for the wilds of Africa, was assisted up the little step and through the narrow entrance of the tonneau by the combined efforts of Honora and Brent. An expression of resolution, emblematic of a determination to die, if necessary, in the performance of duty, was on her face as the machinery started; and her breath was not quite normal when, in an incredibly brief period, they descended at the ferry.

The journey to Quicksands was accomplished in a good fellowship which Honora, an hour before, would not have dreamed of. Even Mrs. Holt was not wholly proof against the charms of Trixton Brent when he chose to exert himself; and for some reason he did so choose. As they stood in the starlight on the platform of the deserted little station while he went across to Whelen’s livery stable to get a carriage, Mrs. Holt remarked to Honora:

“Mr. Brent is a fascinating man, my dear.”

“I am so glad that you appreciate him,” exclaimed Honora.

“And a most dangerous one,” continued Mrs. Holt. “He has probably, in his day, disturbed the peace of mind of a great many young women. Not that I haven’t the highest confidence in you, Honora, but honesty forces me to confess that you are young and pleasure-loving, and a little heedless. And the atmosphere in which you live is not

likely to correct those tendencies. If you will take my advice, you will not see too much of Mr. Trixton Brent when your husband is not present."

Indeed, as to the probable effect of this incident on the relations between Mr. Brent and herself Honora was wholly in the dark. Although, from her point of view, what she had done had been amply justified by the plea of self-defence, it could not be expected that he would accept it in the same spirit. The apparent pleasure he had taken in the present situation, once his amazement had been overcome, profoundly puzzled her.

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He returned in a few minutes with the carriage and driver, and they started off. Brent sat in front, and Honora explained to Mrs. Holt the appearance of the various places by daylight, and the names of their owners. The elderly lady looked with considerable interest at the blazing lights of the Club, with the same sensations she would no doubt have had if she had been suddenly set down within the Moulin Rouge. Shortly afterwards they turned in at the gate of "The Brackens." The light streamed across the porch and driveway, and the sound of music floated out of the open windows. Within, the figure of Mrs. Barclay could be seen; she was singing vaudeville songs at the piano. Mrs. Holt's lips were tightly shut as she descended and made her way up the steps.

"I hope you'll come in,", said Honora to Trixton Brent, in a low voice.

"Come in!" he replied, "I wouldn't miss it for ten thousand dollars."

Mrs. Holt was the first of the three to appear at the door of the drawing-room, and Mrs. Barclay caught sight of her, and stopped in the middle of a bar, with her mouth open. Some of the guests had left. A table in the corner, where Lula Chandos had insisted on playing bridge, was covered with scattered cards and some bills, a decanter of whiskey, two soda bottles, and two glasses. The blue curling smoke from Mrs. Chandos' cigarette mingled with the haze that hung between the ceiling and the floor, and that lady was in the act of saying cheerfully to Howard, who sat opposite,—"Trixy's run off with her."

Suddenly the chill of silence pervaded the room. Lula Chandos, whose back was turned to the door, looked from Mrs. Barclay to Howard, who, with the other men had risen to his feet.

"What's the matter?" she said in a frightened tone. And, following the eyes of the others, turned her head slowly towards the doorway.

Mrs. Holt, who filled it, had been literally incapable of speech. Close behind her stood Honora and Trixton whose face was inscrutable.

"Howard," said Honora, summoning all the courage that remained in her, "here's Mrs. Holt. We dined with her, and she was good enough to come down for the night. I'm so sorry not to have been here," she added to her guests, "but we went to Westchester with Mrs. Kame and Mr. Grainger, and the automobile broke down on the way back."

Mrs. Holt made no attempt to enter, but stared fixedly at the cigarette that Mrs. Chandos still held in her trembling fingers. Howard crossed the room in the midst of an intense silence.

"Glad to see you, Mrs. Holt," he said. "Er—won't you come in and—and sit down?"

“Thank you, Howard” she replied, “I do not wish to interrupt your party. It is my usual hour for retiring.

“And I think, my dear,” she added, turning to Honora, “that I’ll ask you to excuse me, and show me to my room.”

“Certainly, Mrs. Holt,” said Honora, breathlessly.

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“Howard, ring the bell.”

She led the way up the stairs to the guest-chamber with the rose paper and the little balcony. As she closed the door gusts of laughter reached them from the floor below, and she could plainly distinguish the voices of May Barclay and Trixton Brent.

“I hope you’ll be comfortable, Mrs. Holt,” she said. “Your maid will be in the little room across the hall and I believe you like breakfast at eight.”

“You mustn’t let me keep you from your guests, Honora.”

“Oh, Mrs. Holt,” she said, on the verge of tears, “I don’t want to go to them. Really, I don’t.”

“It must be confessed,” said Mrs. Holt, opening her handbag and taking out the copy of the mission report, which had been carefully folded, “that they seem to be able to get along very well without you. I suppose I am too old to understand this modern way of living. How well I remember one night—it was in 1886—I missed the train to Silverdale, and my telegram miscarried. Poor Mr. Holt was nearly out of his head.”

She fumbled for her glasses and dropped them. Honora picked them up, and it was then she perceived that the tears were raining down the good lady’s cheeks. At the same moment they sprang into Honora’s eyes, and blinded her. Mrs. Holt looked at her long and earnestly.

“Go down, my dear,” she said gently, “you must not neglect your friends. They will wonder where you are. And at what time do you breakfast?”

“At—at any time you like.”

“I shall be down at eight,” said Mrs. Holt, and she kissed her.

Honora, closing the door, stood motionless in the hall, and presently the footsteps and the laughter and the sound of carriage wheels on the gravel died away.

CHAPTER XI

CONTAINING SOME REVELATIONS

Honora, as she descended, caught a glimpse of the parlour maid picking up the scattered cards on the drawing-room floor. There were voices on the porch, where Howard was saying good-by to Mrs. Chandos and Trixton Brent. She joined them.

“Oh, my dear!” cried Mrs. Chandos, interrupting Honora’s apologies, “I’m sure I shan’t sleep a wink—she gave me such a fright. You might have sent Trixy ahead to prepare us. When I first caught sight of her, I thought it was my own dear mother who had come all the way from Cleveland, and the cigarette burned my fingers. But I must say I think it was awfully clever of you to get hold of her and save Trixy’s reputation. Good night, dear.”

And she got into her carriage.

“Give my love to Mrs. Holt,” said Brent, as he took Honora’s hand, “and tell her I feel hurt that she neglected to say good night to me. I thought I had made an impression. Tell her I’ll send her a cheque for her rescue work. She inspires me with confidence.”

Howard laughed.

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“I’ll see you to-morrow, Brent,” he called out as they drove away. Though always assertive, it seemed to Honora that her husband had an increased air of importance as he turned to her now with his hands in his pockets. He looked at her for a moment, and laughed again. He, too, had apparently seen the incident only in a humorous light. “Well, Honora,” he remarked, “you have a sort of a P. T. Barnum way of doing things once in a while—haven’t you? Is the old lady really tucked away for the night, or is she coming down to read us a sermon? And how the deuce did you happen to pick her up?”

She had come downstairs with confession on her lips, and in the agitation of her mind had scarcely heeded Brent’s words or Mrs. Chandos’. She had come down prepared for any attitude but the one in which she found him; for anger, reproaches, arraignments. Nay, she was surprised to find now that she had actually hoped for these. She deserved to be scolded: it was her right. If he had been all of a man, he would have called her to account. There must be—there was something lacking in his character. And it came to her suddenly, with all the shock of a great contrast, with what different eyes she had looked upon him five years before at Silverdale.

He went into the house and started to enter the drawing-room, still in disorder and reeking with smoke.

“No, not in there!” she cried sharply.

He turned to her puzzled. Her breath was coming and going quickly. She crossed the hall and turned on the light in the little parlour there, and he followed her.

“Don’t you feel well?” he asked.

“Howard,” she said, “weren’t you worried?”

“Worried? No, why should I have been? Lula Chandos and May Barclay had seen you in the automobile in town, and I knew you were high and dry somewhere.”

“High and dry,” she repeated. What?”

“Nothing. They said I had run off with Mr. Brent, didn’t they?”

He laughed.

“Yes, there was some joking to that effect.”

“You didn’t take it seriously?

“No—why should I?”

She was appalled by his lack of knowledge of her. All these years she had lived with him, and he had not grasped even the elements of her nature. And this was marriage! Trixton Brent—short as their acquaintance had been—had some conception of her character and possibilities her husband none. Where was she to begin? How was she to tell him the episode in the automobile in order that he might perceive something of its sinister significance?

Where was she to go to be saved from herself, if not to him?

“I might have run away with him, if I had loved him,” she said after a pause. “Would you have cared?”

“You bet your life,” said Howard, and put his arm around her.

She looked up into his face. So intent had she been on what she had meant to tell him that she did not until now perceive he was preoccupied, and only half listening to what she was saying.

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“You bet your life,” he said, patting her shoulder. “What would I have done, all alone, in the new house?”

“In the new house?” she cried. “Oh, Howard—you haven’t taken it!”

“I haven’t signed the lease,” he replied importantly, smiling down at her, and thrusting his hands in his pockets.

“I don’t want it,” said Honora; “I don’t want it. I told you that I’d decided I didn’t want it when we were there. Oh, Howard, why did you take it?”

He whistled. He had the maddening air of one who derives amusement from the tantrums of a spoiled child.

“Well,” he remarked, “women are too many for me. If there’s any way of pleasing ’em I haven’t yet discovered it. The night before last you had to have the house. Nothing else would do. It was the greatest find in New York. For the first time in months you get up for breakfast—a pretty sure sign you hadn’t changed your mind. You drag me to see it, and when you land me there, because I don’t lose my head immediately, you say you don’t want it. Of course I didn’t take you seriously—I thought you’d set your heart on it, so I wired an offer to Shorter to-day, and he accepted it. And when I hand you this pleasant little surprise, you go right up in the air.”

He had no air of vexation, however, as he delivered this somewhat reproachful harangue in the picturesque language to which he commonly resorted. Quite the contrary. He was still smiling, as Santa Claus must smile when he knows he has another pack up the chimney.

“Why this sudden change of mind?” he demanded. “It can’t be because you want to spend the winter in Quicksands.”

She was indeed at a loss what to say. She could not bring herself to ask him whether he had been influenced by Trixton Brent. If he had, she told herself, she did not wish to know. He was her husband, after all, and it would be too humiliating. And then he had taken the house.

“Have you hit on a palace you like better?” he inquired, with a clumsy attempt at banter. “They tell me the elder Maitlands are going abroad —perhaps we could get their house on the Park.”

“You said you couldn’t afford Mrs. Rindge’s house,” she answered uneasily, “and I—I believed you.”

“I couldn’t,” he said mysteriously, and paused.

It seemed to her, as she recalled the scene afterwards, that in this pause he gave the impression of physically swelling. She remembered staring at him with wide, frightened eyes and parted lips.

“I couldn’t,” he repeated, with the same strange emphasis and a palpable attempt at complacency. “But—er—circumstances have changed since then.”

“What do you mean, Howard?” she whispered.

The corners of his mouth twitched in the attempt to repress a smile.

“I mean,” he said, “that the president of a trust company can afford to live in a better house than the junior partner of Dallam and Spence.”

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“The president of a trust company!” Honora scarcely recognized her own voice—so distant it sounded. The room rocked, and she clutched the arm of a chair and sat down. He came and stood over her.

“I thought that would surprise you some,” he said, obviously pleased by these symptoms. “The fact is, I hadn’t meant to break it to you until morning. But I think I’ll go in on the seven thirty-five.” (He glanced significantly up at the ceiling, as though Mrs. Holt had something to do with this decision.) “President of the Orange Trust Company at forty isn’t so bad, eh?”

“The Orange Trust Company? Did you say the Orange Trust Company?”

“Yes.” He produced a cigarette. “Old James Wing and Brent practically control it. You see, if I do say it myself, I handled some things pretty well for Brent this summer, and he’s seemed to appreciate it. He and Wing were buying in traction stocks out West. But you could have knocked me down with a paper-knife when he came to me—”

“When did he come to you?” she asked breathlessly.

“Yesterday. We went down town together, you remember, and he asked me to step into his office. Well, we talked it over, and I left on the one o’clock for Newport to see Mr. Wing. Wonderful old man! I sat up with him till midnight—it wasn’t any picnic” . . .

More than once during the night Honora awoke with a sense of oppression, and each time went painfully through the whole episode from the evening —some weeks past when Trixton Brent had first mentioned the subject of the trust company, to the occurrence in the automobile and Howard’s triumphant announcement. She had but a vague notion of how that scene had finished; or of how, limply, she had got to bed. Round and round the circle she went in each waking period. To have implored him to relinquish the place had been waste of breath; and then—her reasons? These were the moments when the current was strongest, when she grew incandescent with humiliation and pain; when stray phrases in red letters of Brent’s were illuminated. Merit! He had a contempt for her husband which he had not taken the trouble to hide. But not a business contempt. “As good as the next man,” Brent had said—or words to that effect. “As good as the next man!” Then she had tacitly agreed to the bargain, and refused to honour the bill! No, she had not, she had not. Before God, she was innocent of that! When she reached this point it was always to James Wing that she clung—the financier, at least, had been impartial. And it was he who saved her.

At length she opened her eyes to discover with bewilderment that the room was flooded with light, and then she sprang out of bed and went to the open window. To seaward hung an opal mist, struck here and there with crimson. She listened; some one was whistling an air she had heard before—Mrs. Barclay had been singing it last night! Wheels crunched the gravel—Howard was going off. She stood motionless until the

horse's hoofs rang on the highroad, and then hurried into her dressing-gown and slippers and went downstairs to the telephone and called a number.

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“Is this Mr. Brent’s? Will you say to Mr. Brent that Mrs. Spence would be greatly, obliged if he stopped a moment at her house before going to town? Thank you.”

She returned to her room and dressed with feverish haste, trying to gather her wits for an ordeal which she felt it would have killed her to delay. At ten minutes to eight she emerged again and glanced anxiously at Mrs. Holt’s door; and scarcely had she reached the lower hall before he drove into the circle. She was struck more forcibly than ever by the physical freshness of the man, and he bestowed on her, as he took her hand, the peculiar smile she knew so well, that always seemed to have an enigma behind it. At sight and touch of him the memory of what she had prepared to say vanished.

“Behold me, as ever, your obedient servant,” he said, as he followed her into the screened-off portion of the porch.

“You must think it strange that I sent for you, I know,” she cried, as she turned to him. “But I couldn’t wait. I—I did not know until last night. Howard only told me then. Oh, you didn’t do it for me! Please say you didn’t do it for me!”

“My dear Honora,” replied Trixton Brent, gravely, “we wanted your husband for his abilities and the valuable services he can render us.”

She stood looking into his eyes, striving to penetrate to the soul behind, ignorant or heedless that others before her had tried and failed. He met her gaze unflinchingly, and smiled.

“I want the truth,” she craved.

“I never lie—to a woman,” he said.

“My life—my future depends upon it,” she went on. “I’d rather scrub floors, I’d rather beg—than to have it so. You must believe me!”

“I do believe you,” he affirmed. And he said it with a gentleness and a sincerity that startled her.

“Thank you,” she answered simply. And speech became very difficult. “If—if I haven’t been quite fair with you—Mr. Brent, I am sorry. I—I liked you, and I like you to-day better than ever before. And I can quite see now how I must have misled you into thinking—queer things about me. I didn’t mean to. I have learned a lesson.”

She took a deep, involuntary breath. The touch of lightness in his reply served to emphasize the hitherto unsuspected fact that sportsmanship in Trixton Brent was not merely a code, but assumed something of the grandeur of a principle.

“I, too, have learned a lesson,” he replied. “I have learned the difference between nature and art. I am something of a connoisseur in art. I bow to nature, and pay my bets.”

“Your bets?” she asked, with a look.

“My renunciations, forfeits, whatever you choose to call them. I have been fairly and squarely beaten—but by nature, not by art. That is my consolation.”

Laughter struck into her eyes like a shaft of sunlight into a well; her emotions were no longer to be distinguished. And in that moment she wondered what would have happened if she had loved this man, and why she had not. And when next he spoke, she started.

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“How is my elderly dove-coloured friend this morning?” he asked. “That dinner with her was one of the great events of my life. I didn’t suppose such people existed any more.”

“Perhaps you’ll stay to breakfast with her,” suggested Honora, smiling. “I know she’d like to see you again.”

“No, thanks,” he said, taking her hand, “I’m on my way to the train—I’d quite forgotten it. Au revoir!” He reached the end of the porch, turned, and called back, “As a ‘dea ex machina’, she has never been equalled.”

Honora stood for a while looking after him, until she heard a footstep behind her,—Mrs. Holt’s.

“Who was that, my dear?” she asked, “Howard?”

“Howard has gone, Mrs. Holt,” Honora replied, rousing herself. “I must make his apologies. It was Mr. Brent.”

“Mr. Brent!” the good lady repeated, with a slight upward lift of the faint eyebrows. “Does he often call this early?”

Honora coloured a little, and laughed.

“I asked him to breakfast with you, but he had to catch a train. He —wished to be remembered. He took such a fancy to you.”

“I am afraid,” said Mrs. Holt, “that his fancy is a thing to be avoided. Are you coming to Silverdale with me, Honora?”

“Yes, Mrs. Holt,” she replied, slipping her arm through that of her friend, “for as long as you will let me stay.”

And she left a note for Howard to that effect.

A MODERN CHRONICLE

By Winston Churchill

BOOK III

Volume 5.

CHAPTER I

ASCENDI

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

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

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

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

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

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

One morning, as she sat in that room, possessed by these whimsical though painful fancies, she picked up a newspaper and glanced through it, absently, until her eye fell by chance upon a name on the editorial page. Something like an electric shock ran through her, and the letters of the name seemed to quiver and become red. Slowly they spelled—Peter Erwin.

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

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

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

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

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She stood still with presentiment.

“What is his name?” she asked.

“Mr. Erwin,” said the man.

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

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

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

“Peter,” she said, in a low voice.

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

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

“Coincidence?”

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

He laughed, and released his hands somewhat abruptly.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

She rang for tea.

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

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

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

“The Mr. Wing,” said Peter.

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

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

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

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

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

“I’m not coming.”

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

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

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

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

“It’s growing,” said Peter—and they laughed together.

“Why didn’t you come to lunch?” she said.

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

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

He shook his head regretfully.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“I am glad you are happy, Honora, and that you have got what you wanted in life. Although I may be unreasonable and provincial and—and Western,” he confessed with a twinkle—for he had the characteristic national trait of shading off his most serious remarks—“I have never gone so far as to declare that happiness was a question of locality.”

She laughed.

“Nor fame.” Her mind returned to the loadstar.

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

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

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

“The Metropolitan Museum?” she repeated in bewilderment.

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

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

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

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

Some one spoke in the doorway.

“Mr. Grainger, madam.”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Honora laughed, and momentarily forgot her resentment.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Thinking," she answered.

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

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

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

"I'll believe you," she said.

"Did he say anything about it to you?"

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

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

CHAPTER II

THE PATH OF PHILANTHROPY

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Honora suddenly found herself without an excuse.

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

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

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

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

Mrs. Grainger bestowed upon Honora her enigmatic smile.

“Oh,” she declared, “I’ve heard of Mrs. Spence from other sources, and I’ve seen her, too.”

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

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

An announcement that fairly took away Honora’s breath. She managed to express her appreciation of Mrs. Grainger’s intention, and presently found herself walking rapidly up-town through swirling snow, somewhat dazed by the events of the afternoon. And these, by the way, were not yet finished. As she reached her own door, a voice vaguely familiar called her name.

“Honora!”

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

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

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

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

“Who?” asked Honora, curiously.

“Mr. Erwin.”

“Peter Erwin!”

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

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

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

“Yes—he came. But he didn’t mention being at lunch at your house.”

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

“Wiped up the ground with Mr. Wing!” Honora repeated.

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

“What was the discussion about?” asked Honora.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Honora nodded.

"I think I'm changing all the time," she replied.

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

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

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

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

……

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

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

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

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

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

He lighted a cigarette.

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

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

“What way?” he demanded.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

speak, exposed for and sensitive to impressions. She was on the threshold of the Alhambra.

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

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

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

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

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

"I'm going to Florida Wednesday. We want another man. Think it over."

"Sorry, but I've got something else to do," he said.

"The devil and idle hands," retorted Mrs. Maitland.

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

"Have you been away?" she asked.

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

She was a little repelled, a little piqued; and a little relieved when the man on her other side spoke to her, and she recognized Mr. Reginald Farwell, the architect. The table capriciously swung that way. She did not feel prepared to talk to Mr. Chiltern. And before entering upon her explorations she was in need of a guide. She could have found none more charming, none more impersonal, none more subtly aware of her wants (which had once been his) than Mr. Farwell. With his hair parted with geometrical precision from the back of his collar to his forehead, with his silky mustache and eyes of soft hazel lights, he was all things to all men and women—within reason. He was an achievement that civilization had not hitherto produced, a combination of the Beaux Arts and the Jockey Club and American adaptability. He was of those upon whom labour leaves no trace.

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

charmed Mr. Farwell so much as simplicity—when it was combined with personal attractions. He did not say so, but contrived to intimate the former.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“Is it such lamentable ignorance?” she asked.

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

Honora was struck by the appropriateness of the word.

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

“Well,” he laughed, lowering his voice a little, here goes for a little rough and ready editing. One thing about Chiltern that’s to be admired is that he’s never cared a rap what people think. Of course, in a way, he never had to. His family own a section of the state, where they’ve had woollen mills for a hundred years, more or less. I believe Hugh Chiltern has sold ’em, or they’ve gone into a trust, or something, but the estate is still there, at Grenoble—one of the most beautiful places I’ve ever seen. The General

—this man's father—was a violent, dictatorial man. There is a story about his taking a battery at Gettysburg which is almost incredible. But he went back to Grenoble after the war, and became the typical public-spirited citizen; built up the mills which his own pioneer grandfather had founded, and all that. He married an aunt of Mrs. Grainger's, —one of those delicate, gentle women who never dare to call their soul their own."

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“And then?” prompted Honora, with interest.

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

Honora glanced across the table.

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

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

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

“Do you live in New York?” he asked.

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

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

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“You mean civilization?” she hazarded.

“Yes. And yet I’ve come back to it.”

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

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

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

Her eyes lighted.

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

“What would you do?” he asked curiously.

She considered this.

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

He was clearly interested.

“And now?” he prompted her.

She laughed a little, to relieve the tension.

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

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

“I’m afraid you’ll think I’m preaching,” she apologized.

“No,” he said impatiently, “no.”

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

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

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

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

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

“Haven’t I seen you before?” she asked.

CHAPTER III

VINELAND

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

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

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

moment of hushed astonishment, followed by an acclaim that sent the curtain up twice again.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Honora did not at first analyze or define these emotions, and was conscious only of a stirring within her, and a change. Reality became unreality. The house in which she lived, and for which she felt a passion of ownership, was for two days a rented house. Other women in Newport had week-end guests in the guise of husbands, and some of them went so far as to bewail the fact. Some had got rid of them. Honora kissed hers dutifully, and picked up the newspapers, drove him to the beach, and took him out to dinner, where he talked oracularly of finance. On Sunday night he departed, without visible regrets, for New York.

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

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

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

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

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

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

The fourth at the table was Ned Carrington, who had been first secretary at an Embassy, and he had many stories to tell of ambassadors who spoke commercial American and asked royalties after their wives. Some one had said about him that he was the only edition of the Almanach de Gotha that included the United States. He somewhat resembled a golden seal emerging from a cold bath, and from time to time screwed an eyeglass into his eye and made a careful survey of Mrs. Grenfell's guests.

"By George!" he exclaimed. "Isn't that Hugh Chiltern?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

He released her.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

In the eighteenth century, Mrs. Shorter would have had a title and a salon in the Faubourg: in the twentieth, she was the wife of a most fashionable and successful real estate agent in New York, and was aware of no incongruity. Bourgeoise was the last thing that could be said of her; she was as ready as a George Sand to discuss the whole range of human emotions; which she did many times a week with certain gentlemen of intellectual bent who had the habit of calling on her. She had never, to the knowledge of her acquaintances, been shocked. But while she believed that a great love carried, mysteriously concealed in its flame, its own pardon, she had through some fifteen years of married life remained faithful to Jerry Shorter: who was not, to say the least, a Lochinvar or a Roland. Although she had had nervous prostration and was thirty-four, she was undeniably pretty. She was of the suggestive, and not the strong-minded type, and the secret of her strength with the other sex was that she was in the habit of submitting her opinions for their approval.

“My dear,” she said to Honora, “you may thank heaven that you are still young enough to look beautiful in negligee. How far have you got? Have you guessed of which woman Vivarce was the lover? And isn’t it the most exciting play you’ve ever read?

Ned Carrington saw it in Paris, and declares it frightened him into being good for a whole week!”

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

Mrs. Shorter glanced at the pile of favours.

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

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

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

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

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

Curiosity got the better of Honora.

“Changed?” she repeated.

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

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

Mrs. Shorter appeared puzzled.

“That’s what interests me,” she said. “My dear, don’t you think life tremendously interesting? I do. I wish I could write a novel. Between ourselves, I’ve tried. I had Mr. Dewing send it to a publisher, who said it was clever, but had no plot. If I only could get a plot!”

Honora laughed.

“How would I The Transformation of Mr. Chiltern’ do, Elsie?”

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

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER IV

THE VIKING

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

Whether by design or accident he was at the leafy entrance of her lane she was not to know. She spied him standing there; and in her leisurely approach a strange conceit of reincarnation possessed her, and she smiled at the contrast thus summoned up. Despite the jingling harnesses of Bellevue Avenue and the background of Mr. Chamberlin’s palace wall; despite the straw hat and white trousers and blue double-breasted serge coat in which he was conventionally arrayed, he was the sea fighter still—of all the ages. M. Vipsanius Agrippa, who had won an empire for Augustus, had just such a head.

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

“Won’t you come in?” asked Honora, gently.

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

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

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

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

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

“Not,” said Honora, “when I can have this.”

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

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

“Yes,” she replied hastily, “I am very happy here. Mrs. Shorter tells me you are staying with then.”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Done something!"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“No—”

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

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

Honora coloured.

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

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

“You were not consulted, either.”

“I was consulted before lunch,” he replied.

“You mean—?”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“Who?” he demanded.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

His face lighted.

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

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

“And I am going to tell you why I came home,” he said. “I have spoken of it to nobody, but I wish you to know that it had nothing to do with any ordinary complication these people may invent. Nor was there anything supernatural about it: what happened to me, I suppose, is as old a story as civilization itself. I’d been knocking about the world for a good many years, and I’d had time to think. One day I found myself in the interior of China with a few coolies and a man who I suspect was a ticket-of-leave Englishman. I can see the place now the yellow fog, the sand piled up against the wall like yellow snow. Desolation was a mild name for it. I think I began with a consideration of the Englishman who was asleep in the shadow of a tower. There was something inconceivably hopeless in his face in that ochre light. Then the place where I was born and brought up came to me with a startling completeness, and I began to go over my own life, step by step. To make a long story short, I perceived that what my father had tried to teach me, in his own way, had some reason in it. He was a good deal of a man. I made up my mind I’d come home and start in where I belonged. But I didn’t do so right away—I finished the trip first, and lent the Englishman a thousand pounds to buy into a firm in Shanghai. I suppose,” he added, “that is what is called suggestion. In my case it was merely the cumulative result of many reflections in waste places.”

“And since then?”

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

“And you’re going back on Friday,” she said.

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

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

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

“You’ve thought of me?” he said.

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

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

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

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

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

“Why shouldn’t we?” he demanded.

But she was not to be led into casuistry.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

> "To mock the expectations of the world,
> To frustrate prophecies."

Honora disliked Mr. Carrington.

Perhaps the events of Thursday, would better be left in the confusion in which they remained in Honora's mind. She was awakened by penetrating, persistent, and mournful notes which for some time she could not identify, although they sounded oddly familiar; and it was not until she felt the dampness of the coverlet and looked at the white square of her open windows that she realized there was a fog. And it had not lifted when Chiltern came in the afternoon. They discussed literature—but the book had fallen to the floor. 'Absit omen'! If printing had then been invented, undoubtedly there would have been a book instead of an apple in the third chapter of Genesis. He confided to her his plan of collecting his father's letters and of writing the General's life. Honora, too, would enjoy writing a book. Perhaps the thought of the pleasure of collaboration occurred to them both at once; it was Chiltern who wished that he might have her help in the difficult places; she had, he felt, the literary instinct. It was not the Viking who was talking now. And then, at last, he had risen reluctantly to leave. The afternoon had flown. She held out her hand with a frank smile.

"Good-by," she said. "Good-by, and good luck."

"But I may not go," he replied.

She stood dismayed.

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

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

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

"Why should I?" she said.

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

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

“Everything,” he answered—and was gone.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

He answered that the Dolly was a good sea boat.

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

“For what?”

“For staying in Newport.”

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

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

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

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

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

“You haven’t answered my question.”

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

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

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

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

Honora laughed.

“I hadn’t noticed anything peculiar about him,” she answered.

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

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

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

“What other can I give you?”

“Is it because you are married?” he demanded.

She grew crimson.

“Isn’t that an unnecessary question?”

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

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“Oh,” she cried, “don’t say such things!”

“Have you found happiness?” he asked.

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

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

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

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

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

She stopped him with an imploring gesture.

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

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

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

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

“So you wish me to go away?”

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

“You care!” he exclaimed.

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

“And you refuse happiness?”

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

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

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You have no right to say such a thing."

"We have each of us but one life to live."

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

He swung the boat around.

"Others have rebuilt upon ruins," he declared.

She smiled at him.

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

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER V

THE SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST

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

It was an odd sensation thus to be regarding one's husband objectively. For the first time he appeared to her definitely as a stranger; as much a stranger as the man who came once a week to wind Mrs. Forsythe's clocks. Nay, more. There was a sense of intrusion in this visit, of invasion of a life with which he had nothing to do. She examined him ruthlessly, very much as one might examine a burglar taken unawares. There was the inevitable shirt with the wide pink stripes, of the abolishment or even of the effective toning down of which she had long since despaired. On the contrary, like his complexion, they evinced a continual tendency towards a more aggressive colour. There was also the jewelled ring, now conspicuously held aloft on a fat little finger. The stripes appeared that morning as the banner of a hated suzerain,

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the ring as the emblem of his overlordship. He did not belong in that house; everything in it cried out for his removal; and yet it was, in the eyes of the law at least, his. By grace of that fact she was here, enjoying it. At that instant, as though in evidence of this, he laid down a burning cigarette on a mahogany stand he had had brought out to him. Honora seized an ash tray, hurried to the porch, and picked up the cigarette in the tips of her fingers.

“Howard, I wish you would be more careful of Mrs. Forsythe’s furniture,” she exclaimed.

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

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

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

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

He stared at her.

“I never saw you look like that,” he declared.

“It’s because you never look at me closely,” she answered.

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

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

“Why do I come to Newport?” he repeated. “I don’t understand you.”

“Why do you come up here every week?”

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

“I wished to be sure,” said Honora.

“Sure of what?”

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

“What do you mean?”

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

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

“What part of it?” she demanded.

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

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

Upon Ethel Wing had descended the dominating characteristics of the elder James, who, whatever the power he might wield in Wall Street, was little more than a visitor in Newport. It was Ethel’s house, from the hour she had swept the Reel and Carter plans (which her father had brought home) from the table and sent for Mr. Farwell. The forehanded Reginald arrived with a sketch, and the result, as every one knows,

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is one of the chief monuments to his reputation. So exquisitely proportioned is its simple, two-storied marble front as seen through the trees left standing on the old estate, that tourists, having beheld the Chamberlin and other mansions, are apt to think this niggardly for a palace. Two infolding wings, stretching towards the water, enclose a court, and through the slender white pillars of the peristyle one beholds in fancy the summer seas of Greece.

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Your husband's feeling tiptop, isn't he?" said he.

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

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

Mr. Cuthbert apologized.

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

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Honora smiled.

“No, I don’t mind,” she said.

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

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

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

He laughed nervously.

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

Her reply was unexpected.

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

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

“I’m glad you’re not,” said Honora.

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

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

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

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

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

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

She was silent.

“Are you angry?”

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

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

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

But he stood in front of her.

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

“I wanted to see you again.”

“And now?”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“Yes,” she said.

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

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

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

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

“It’s the greatest scheme extant,” he answered with elation. “I won’t go into details—you wouldn’t understand’em. Mr. Wing and some others have tried the thing before, nearer home, and it worked like a charm. Street railways. We buy up the little lines for nothing, and get an interest in the big ones, and sell the little lines for fifty times what they cost us, and guarantee big dividends for the big lines.”

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

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

A MODERN CHRONICLE

By Winston Churchill

Volume 6.

CHAPTER VI

Clio, *or Thalia*?

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According to the ordinary and inaccurate method of measuring time, a fortnight may have gone by since the event last narrated, and Honora had tasted at last the joys of authorship. Her name was not to appear, to be sure, on the cover of the Life and Letters of General Angus Chiltern; nor indeed, so far, had she written so much as a chapter or a page of a work intended to inspire young and old with the virtues of citizenship. At present the biography was in the crucial constructive stage. Should the letters be put in one volume, and the life in another? or should the letters be inserted in the text of the life? or could not there be a third and judicious mixture of both of these methods? Honora's counsel on this and other problems was, it seems, invaluable. Her own table was fairly littered with biographies more or less famous which had been fetched from the library, and the method of each considered.

Even as Mr. Garrick would never have been taken for an actor in his coach and four, so our heroine did not in the least resemble George Eliot, for instance, as she sat before her mirror at high noon with Monsieur Cadron and her maid Mathilde in worshipful attendance. Some of the ladies, indeed, who have left us those chatty memoirs of the days before the guillotine, she might have been likened to. Monsieur Cadron was an artist, and his branch of art was hair-dressing. It was by his own wish he was here to-day, since he had conceived a new coiffure especially adapted, he declared, to the type of Madame Spence. Behold him declaring ecstatically that seldom in his experience had he had such hairs to work with.

"Avec une telle chevelure, l'on peut tout faire, madame. Etre simple, c'est le comble de l'art. Ca vous donne," he added, with clasped hands and a step backward, "ca vous donne tout a fait l'air d'une dame de Nattier."

Madame took the hand-glass, and did not deny that she was eblouissante. If madame, suggested Monsieur Cadron, had but a little dress a la Marie Antoinette? Madame had, cried madame's maid, running to fetch one with little pink flowers and green leaves on an ecru ground. Could any coiffure or any gown be more appropriate for an entertainment at which Clio was to preside?

It is obviously impossible that a masterpiece should be executed under the rules laid down by convention. It would never be finished. Mr. Chiltern was coming to lunch, and it was not the first time. On her appearance in the doorway he halted abruptly in his pacing of the drawing-room, and stared at her.

"I'm sorry I kept you waiting," she said.

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“It was worth it,” he said. And they entered the dining room. A subdued, golden-green light came in through the tall glass doors that opened out on the little garden which had been Mrs. Forsythe’s pride. The scent of roses was in the air, and a mass of them filled a silver bowl in the middle of the table. On the dark walls were Mrs. Forsythe’s precious prints, and above the mantel a portrait of a thin, aristocratic gentleman who resembled the poet Tennyson. In the noonday shadows of a recess was a dark mahogany sideboard loaded with softly gleaming silver—Honora’s. Chiltern sat down facing her. He looked at Honora over the roses,—and she looked at him. A sense of unreality that was, paradoxically, stronger than reality itself came over her, a sense of fitness, of harmony. And for the moment an imagination, ever straining at its leash, was allowed to soar. It was Chiltern who broke the silence.

“What a wonderful bowl!” he said.

“It has been in my father’s family a great many years. He was very fond of it,” she answered, and with a sudden, impulsive movement she reached over and set the bowl aside.

“That’s better,” he declared, “much as I admire the bowl, and the roses.”

She coloured faintly, and smiled. The feast of reason that we are impatiently awaiting is deferred. It were best to attempt to record the intangible things; the golden-green light, the perfumes, and the faint musical laughter which we can hear if we listen. Thalia’s laughter, surely, not Clio’s. Thalia, enamoured with such a theme, has taken the stage herself—and as Vesta, goddess of hearths. It was Vesta whom they felt to be presiding. They lingered, therefore, over the coffee, and Chiltern lighted a cigar. He did not smoke cigarettes.

“I’ve lived long enough,” he said, “to know that I have never lived at all. There is only one thing in life worth having.”

“What is it?” asked Honora.

“This,” he answered, with a gesture; “when it is permanent.”

She smiled.

“And how is one to know whether it would be—permanent?”

“Through experience and failure,” he answered quickly, “we learn to distinguish the reality when it comes. It is unmistakable.”

“Suppose it comes too late?” she said, forgetting the ancient verse inscribed in her youthful diary: “Those who walk on ice will slide against their wills.”

“To admit that is to be a coward,” he declared.

“Such a philosophy may be fitting for a man,” she replied, “but for a woman—”

“We are no longer in the dark ages,” he interrupted. “Every one, man or woman, has the right to happiness. There is no reason why we should suffer all our lives for a mistake.”

“A mistake!” she echoed.

“Certainly,” he said. “It is all a matter of luck, or fate, or whatever you choose to call it. Do you suppose, if I could have found fifteen years ago the woman to have made me happy, I should have spent so much time in seeking distraction?”

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“Perhaps you could not have been capable of appreciating her—fifteen years ago,” suggested Honora. And, lest he might misconstrue her remark, she avoided his eyes.

“Perhaps,” he admitted. “But suppose I have found her now, when I know the value of things.”

“Suppose you should find her now—within a reasonable time. What would you do?”

“Marry her,” he exclaimed promptly. “Marry her and take her to Grenoble, and live the life my father lived before me.”

She did not reply, but rose, and he followed her to the shaded corner of the porch where they usually sat. The bundle of yellow-stained envelopes he had brought were lying on the table, and Honora picked them up mechanically.

“I have been thinking,” she said as she removed the elastics, “that it is a mistake to begin a biography by the enumeration of one’s ancestors. Readers become frightfully bored before they get through the first chapter.”

“I’m beginning to believe,” he laughed, “that you will have to write this one alone. All the ideas I have got so far have been yours. Why shouldn’t you write it, and I arrange the material, and talk about it! That appears to be all I’m good for.”

If she allowed her mind to dwell on the vista he thus presented, she did not betray herself.

“Another thing,” she said, “it should be written like fiction.”

“Like fiction?”

“Fact should be written like fiction, and fiction like fact. It’s difficult to express what I mean. But this life of your father deserves to be widely known, and it should be entertainingly done, like Lockhart, or Parton’s works—”

An envelope fell to the floor, spilling its contents. Among them were several photographs.

“Oh,” she exclaimed, “how beautiful! What place is this?”

“I hadn’t gone over these letters,” he answered. “I only got them yesterday from Cecil Grainger. These are some pictures of Grenoble which must leave been taken shortly before my father died.”

She gazed in silence at the old house half hidden by great maples and beeches, their weighted branches sweeping the ground. The building was of wood, painted white, and

through an archway of verdure one saw the generous doorway with its circular steps, with its fan-light above, and its windows at the side. Other quaint windows, some of them of triple width, suggested an interior of mystery and interest.

“My great-great-grandfather, Alexander Chiltern, built it,” he said, “on land granted to him before the Revolution. Of course the house has been added to since then, but the simplicity of the original has always been kept. My father put on the conservatory, for instance,” and Chiltern pointed to a portion at the end of one of the long low wings. “He got the idea from the orangery of a Georgian house in England, and an English architect designed it.”

Honora took up the other photographs. One of them, over which she lingered, was of a charming, old-fashioned garden spattered with sunlight, and shut out from the world by a high brick wall. Behind the wall, again, were the dense masses of the trees, and at the end of a path between nodding foxgloves and Canterbury bells, in a curved recess, a stone seat.

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She turned her face. His was at her shoulder.

“How could you ever have left it?” she asked reproachfully.

She voiced his own regrets, which the crowding memories had awakened.

“I don’t know,” he answered, not without emotion. “I have often asked myself that question.” He crossed over to the railing of the porch, swung about, and looked at her. Her eyes were still on the picture. “I can imagine you in that garden,” he said.

Did the garden cast the spell by which she saw herself on the seat? or was it Chiltern’s voice? She would indeed love and cherish it. And was it true that she belonged there, securely infolded within those peaceful walls? How marvellously well was Thalia playing her comedy! Which was the real, and which the false? What of true value, what of peace and security was contained in her present existence? She had missed the meaning of things, and suddenly it was held up before her, in a garden.

A later hour found them in Honora’s runabout wandering northward along quiet country roads on the eastern side of the island. Chiltern, who was driving, seemed to take no thought of their direction, until at last, with an exclamation, he stopped the horse; and Honora beheld an abandoned mansion of a bygone age sheltered by ancient trees, with wide lands beside it sloping to the water.

“What is it?” she asked.

“Beaulieu,” he replied. “It was built in the seventeenth century, I believe, and must have been a fascinating place in colonial days.” He drove in between the fences and tied the horse, and came around by the side of the runabout. “Won’t you get out and look at it?”

She hesitated, and their eyes met as he held out his hand, but she avoided it and leaped quickly to the ground neither spoke as they walked around the deserted house and gazed at the quaint facade, broken by a crumbling, shaded balcony let in above the entrance door. No sound broke the stillness of the summer’s day—a pregnant stillness. The air was heavy with perfumes, and the leaves formed a tracery against the marvellous blue of the sky. Mystery brooded in the place. Here, in this remote paradise now in ruins, people had dwelt and loved. Thought ended there; and feeling, which is unformed thought, began. Again she glanced at him, and again their eyes met, and hers faltered. They turned, as with one consent, down the path toward the distant water. Paradise overgrown! Could it be reconstructed, redeemed?

In former days the ground they trod had been a pleasance the width of the house, bordered, doubtless, by the forest. Trees grew out of the flower beds now, and underbrush choked the paths. The box itself, that once primly lined the alleys, was gnarled and shapeless. Labyrinth had replaced order, nature had reaped her

vengeance. At length, in the deepening shade, they came, at what had been the edge of the old terrace, to the daintiest of summer-houses, crumbling too, the shutters off their hinges, the floor-boards loose. Past and gone were the idyls of which it had been the stage.

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They turned to the left, through tangled box that wound hither and thither, until they stopped at a stone wall bordering a tree-arched lane. At the bottom of the lane was a glimpse of blue water.

Honora sat down on the wall with her back to a great trunk. Chiltern, with a hand on the stones, leaped over lightly, and stood for some moments in the lane, his feet a little apart and firmly planted, his hands behind his back.

What had Thalia been about to allow the message of that morning to creep into her comedy? a message announcing the coming of an intruder not in the play, in the person of a husband bearing gifts. What right had he, in the eternal essence of things, to return? He was out of all time and place. Such had been her feeling when she had first read the hastily written letter, but even when she had burned it it had risen again from the ashes. Anything but that! In trying not to think of it, she had picked up the newspaper, learned of a railroad accident,—and shuddered. Anything but his return! Her marriage was a sin,—there could be no sacrament in it. She would flee first, and abandon all rather than submit to it.

Chiltern's step aroused her now. He came back to the wall where she was sitting, and faced her.

"You are sad," he said.

She shook her head at him, slowly, and tried to smile.

"What has happened?" he demanded rudely. "I can't bear to see you sad."

"I am going away," she said. The decision had suddenly come to her. Why had she not seen before that it was inevitable?

He seized her wrist as it lay on the wall, and she winced from the sudden pain of his grip.

"Honora, I love you," he said, "I must have you—I will have you. I will make you happy. I promise it on my soul. I can't, I won't live without you."

She did not listen to his words—she could not have repeated them afterwards. The very tone of his voice was changed by passion; creation spoke through him, and she heard and thrilled and swayed and soared, forgetting heaven and earth and hell as he seized her in his arms and covered her face with kisses. Thus Eric the Red might have wooed. And by what grace she spoke the word that delivered her she never knew. As suddenly as he had seized her he released her, and she stood before him with flaming cheeks and painful breath.

“I love you,” he said, “I love you. I have searched the world for you and found you, and by all the laws of God you are mine.”

And love was written in her eyes. He had but to read it there, though her lips might deny it. This was the man of all men she would have chosen, and she was his by right of conquest. Yet she held up her hand with a gesture of entreaty.

“No, Hugh—it cannot be,” she said.

“Cannot!” he cried. “I will take you. You love me.”

“I am married.”

“Married! Do you mean that you would let that man stand between you and happiness?”

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“What do you mean?” she asked, in a frightened voice.

“Just what I say,” he cried, with incredible vehemence. “Leave him —divorce him. You cannot live with him. He isn’t worthy to touch your hand.”

The idea planted itself with the force of a barbed arrow from a strong-bow. Struggle as she might, she could not henceforth extract it.

“Oh!” she cried.

He took her arm, gently, and forced her to sit down on the wall. Such was the completeness of his mastery that she did not resist. He sat down beside her.

“Listen, Honora,” he said, and tried to speak calmly, though his voice was still vibrant; “let us look the situation m the face. As I told you once, the days of useless martyrdom are past. The world is more enlightened today, and recognizes an individual right to happiness.”

“To happiness,” she repeated after him, like a child. He forgot his words as he looked into her eyes: they were lighted as with all the candles of heaven in his honour.

“Listen,” he said hoarsely, and his fingers tightened on her arm.

The current running through her from him made her his instrument. Did he say the sky was black, she would have exclaimed at the discovery.

“Yes—I am listening.”

“Honora!”

“Hugh,” she answered, and blinded him. He was possessed by the tragic fear that she was acting a dream; presently she would awake—and shatter the universe. His dominance was too complete.

“I love you—I respect you. You are making it very hard for me. Please try to understand what I am saying,” he cried almost fiercely. “This thing, this miracle, has happened in spite of us. Henceforth you belong to me—do you hear?”

Once more the candles flared up.

“We cannot drift. We must decide now upon some definite action. Our lives are our own, to make as we choose. You said you were going away. And you meant—alone?”

The eyes were wide, now, with fright.

“Oh, I must—I must,” she said. “Don’t—don’t talk about it.” And she put forth a hand over his.

“I will talk about it,” he declared, trembling. “I have thought it all out,” and this time it was her fingers that tightened. “You are going away. And presently—when you are free—I will come to you.”

For a moment the current stopped.

“No, no!” she cried, almost in terror. The first fatalist must have been a woman, and the vision of rent prison bars drove her mad. “No, we could never be happy.”

“We can—we will be happy,” he said, with a conviction that was unshaken. “Do you hear me? I will not debase what I have to say by resorting to comparisons. But—others I know have been happy are happy, though their happiness cannot be spoken of with ours. Listen. You will go away—for a little while—and afterwards we shall be together for all time. Nothing shall separate us: We never have known life, either of us, until now. I, missing you, have run after the false gods. And you—I say it with truth-needed me. We will go to live at Grenoble, as my father and mother lived. We will take up their duties there. And if it seems possible, I will go into public life. When I return, I shall find you—waiting for me—in the garden.”

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So real had the mirage become, that Honora did not answer. The desert and its journey fell away. Could such a thing, after all, be possible? Did fate deal twice to those whom she had made novices? The mirage, indeed, suddenly became reality—a mirage only because she had proclaimed it such. She had beheld in it, as he spoke, a Grenoble which was paradise regained. And why should paradise regained be a paradox? Why paradise regained? Paradise gained. She had never known it, until he had flung wide the gates. She had sought for it, and never found it until now, and her senses doubted it. It was a paradise of love, to be sure; but one, too, of duty. Duty made it real. Work was there, and fulfilment of the purpose of life itself. And if his days hitherto had been useless, hers had in truth been barren.

It was only of late, after a life-long groping, that she had discovered their barrenness. The right to happiness! Could she begin anew, and found it upon a rock? And was he the rock?

The question startled her, and she drew away from him first her hand, and then she turned her body, staring at him with widened eyes. He did not resist the movement; nor could he, being male, divine what was passing within her, though he watched her anxiously. She had no thought of the first days,—but afterwards. For at such times it is the woman who scans the veil of the future. How long would that beacon burn which flamed now in such prodigal waste? Would not the very springs of it dry up? She looked at him, and she saw the Viking. But the Viking had fled from the world, and they—they would be going into it. Could love prevail against its dangers and pitfalls and—-duties? Love was the word that rang out, as one calling through the garden, and her thoughts ran molten. Let love overflow—she gloried in the waste! And let the lean years come,—she defied them to-day.

“Oh, Hugh!” she faltered.

“My dearest!” he cried, and would have seized her in his arms again but for a look of supplication. That he had in him this innate and unsuspected chivalry filled her with an exquisite sweetness.

“You will—protect me?” she asked.

“With my life and with my honour,” he answered. “Honora, there will be no happiness like ours.”

“I wish I knew,” she sighed: and then, her look returning from the veil, rested on him with a tenderness that was inexpressible. “I—I don’t care, Hugh. I trust you.”

The sun was setting. Slowly they went back together through the paths of the tangled garden, which had doubtless seen many dramas, and the courses changed of many

lives: overgrown and outworn now, yet love was loth to leave it. Honora paused on the lawn before the house, and looked back at him over her shoulder.

“How happy we could have been here, in those days,” she sighed.

“We will be happier there,” he said.

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Honora loved. Many times in her life had she believed herself to have had this sensation, and yet had known nothing of these aches and ecstasies! Her mortal body, unattended, went out to dinner that evening. Never, it is said, was her success more pronounced. The charm of Randolph Leffingwell, which had fascinated the nobility of three kingdoms, had descended on her, and hostesses had discovered that she possessed the magic touch necessary to make a dinner complete. Her quality, as we know, was not wit: it was something as old as the world, as new as modern psychology. It was, in short, the power to stimulate. She infused a sense of well-being; and ordinary people, in her presence, surprised themselves by saying clever things.

Lord Ayllington, a lean, hard-riding gentleman, who was supposed to be on the verge of contracting an alliance with the eldest of the Grenfell girls, regretted that Mrs. Spence was neither unmarried nor an heiress.

“You know,” he said to Cecil Grainger, who happened to be gracing his wife’s dinner-party, “she’s the sort of woman for whom a man might consent to live in Venice.”

“And she’s the sort of woman,” replied, “a man couldn’t get to go to Venice.”

Lord Ayllington’s sigh was a proof of an intimate knowledge of the world.

“I suppose not,” he said. “It’s always so. And there are few American women who would throw everything overboard for a grand passion.”

“You ought to see her on the beach,” Mr. Grainger suggested.

“I intend to,” said Ayllington. “By the way, not a few of your American women get divorced, and keep their cake and eat it, too. It’s a bit difficult, here at Newport, for a stranger, you know.”

“I’m willing to bet,” declared Mr. Grainger, “that it doesn’t pay. When you’re divorced and married again you’ve got to keep up appearances—the first time you don’t. Some of these people are working pretty hard.”

Whereupon, for the Englishman’s enlightenment, he recounted a little gossip.

This, of course, was in the smoking room. In the drawing-room, Mrs. Grainger’s cousin did not escape, and the biography was the subject of laughter.

“You see something of him, I hear,” remarked Mrs. Playfair, a lady the deficiency of whose neck was supplied by jewels, and whose conversation sounded like liquid coming out of an inverted bottle. “Is he really serious about the biography?”

“You’ll have to ask Mr. Grainger,” replied Honora.

“Hugh ought to marry,” Mrs. Grenfell observed.

“Why did he come back?” inquired another who had just returned from a prolonged residence abroad. “Was there a woman in the case?”

“Put it in the plural, and you’ll be nearer right,” laughed Mrs. Grenfell, and added to Honora, “You’d best take care, my dear, he’s dangerous.”

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Honora seemed to be looking down on them from a great height, and to Reginald Farwell alone is due the discovery of this altitude; his reputation for astuteness, after that evening, was secure. He had sat next her, and had merely put two and two together—an operation that is probably at the root of most prophecies. More than once that summer Mr. Farwell had taken sketches down Honora's lane, for she was on what was known as his list of advisers: a sheepfold of ewes, some one had called it, and he was always piqued when one of them went astray. In addition to this, intuition told him that he had taken the name of a deity in vain—and that deity was Chiltern. These reflections resulted in another after-dinner conversation to which we are not supposed to listen.

He found Jerry Shorter in a receptive mood, and drew him into Cecil Grainger's study, where this latter gentleman, when awake, carried on his lifework of keeping a record of prize winners.

"I believe there is something between Mrs. Spence and Hugh Chiltern, after all, Jerry," he said.

"By jinks, you don't say so!" exclaimed Mr. Shorter, who had a profound respect for his friend's diagnoses in these matters. "She was dazzling to-night, and her eyes were like stars. I passed her in the hall just now, and I might as well have been in Halifax."

"She fairly withered me when I made a little fun of Chiltern," declared Farwell.

"I tell you what it is, Reggie," remarked Mr. Shorter, with more frankness than tact, "you could talk architecture with 'em from now to Christmas, and nothing'd happen, but it would take an iceberg to write a book with Hugh and see him alone six days out of seven. Chiltern knocks women into a cocked hat. I've seen 'em stark raving crazy. Why, there was that Mrs. Slicer six or seven years ago—you remember—that Cecil Grainger had such a deuce of a time with. And there was Mrs. Dutton—I was a committee to see her, when the old General was alive,—to say nothing about a good many women you and I know."

Mr. Farwell nodded.

"I'm confoundedly sorry if it's so," Mr. Shorter continued, with sincerity. "She has a brilliant future ahead of her. She's got good blood in her, she's stunning to look at, and she's made her own way in spite of that Billycock of a husband who talks like the original Rothschild. By the bye, Wing is using him for a good thing. He's sent him out West to pull that street railway chestnut out of the fire. I'm not particularly squeamish, Reggie, though I try to play the game straight myself—the way my father played it. But by the lord Harry, I can't see the difference between Dick Turpin and Wing and Trixy Brent. It's hold and deliver with those fellows. But if the police get anybody, their get Spence."

“The police never get anybody,” said Farwell, pessimistically; for the change of topic bored him.

“No, I suppose they don’t,” answered Mr. Shorter, cheerfully finishing his chartreuse, and fixing his eye on one of the coloured lithographs of lean horses on Cecil Grainger’s wall. “I’d talk to Hugh, if I wasn’t as much afraid of him as of Jim Jeffries. I don’t want to see him ruin her career.”

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“Why should an affair with him ruin it?” asked Farwell, unexpectedly. “There was Constance Witherspoon. I understand that went pretty far.”

“My dear boy,” said Mr. Shorter, “it’s the women. Bessie Grainger here, for instance—-she’d go right up in the air. And the women had—well, a childhood-interest in Constance. Self-preservation is the first law—of women.”

“They say Hugh has changed—that he wants to settle down,” said Farwell.

“If you’d ever gone to church, Reggie,” said Mr. Shorter, “you’d know something about the limitations of the leopard.”

CHAPTER VII

“*Liberty*, *and the pursuit of happiness*”

That night was Honora’s soul played upon by the unknown musician of the sleepless hours. Now a mad, ecstatic chorus dinned in her ears and set her blood coursing; and again despair seized her with a dirge. Periods of semiconsciousness only came to her, and from one of these she was suddenly startled into wakefulness by her own words. “I have the right to make of my life what I can.” But when she beheld the road of terrors that stretched between her and the shining places, it seemed as though she would never have the courage to fare forth along its way. To look back was to survey a prospect even more dreadful.

The incidents of her life ranged by in procession. Not in natural sequence, but a group here and a group there. And it was given her, for the first time, to see many things clearly. But now she loved. God alone knew what she felt for this man, and when she thought of him the very perils of her path were dwarfed. On returning home that night she had given her maid her cloak, and had stood for a long time immobile,—gazing at her image in the pierglass.

“Madame est belle comme l’Imperatrice d’Autriche!” said the maid at length.

“Am I really beautiful, Mathilde?”

Mathilde raised her eyes and hands to heaven in a gesture that admitted no doubt. Mathilde, moreover, could read a certain kind of history if the print were large enough.

Honora looked in the glass again. Yes, she was beautiful. He had found her so, he had told her so. And here was the testimony of her own eyes. The bloom on the nectarines that came every morning from Mr. Chamberlin’s greenhouse could not compare with the colour of her cheeks; her hair was like the dusk; her eyes like the blue pools among the

rocks, and touched now by the sun; her neck and arms of the whiteness of sea-foam. It was meet that she should be thus for him and for the love he brought her.

She turned suddenly to the maid.

“Do you love me, Mathilde?” she asked.

Mathilde was not surprised. She was, on the contrary, profoundly touched.

“How can madame ask?” she cried impulsively, and seized Honora’s hand. How was it possible to be near madame, and not love her?

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“And would you go—anywhere with me?”

The scene came back to her in the night watches. For the little maid had wept and vowed eternal fidelity.

It was not—until the first faint herald of the morning that Honora could bring herself to pronounce the fateful thing that stood between her and happiness, that threatened to mar the perfection of a heaven-born love —Divorce! And thus, having named it resolutely several times, the demon of salvation began gradually to assume a kindly aspect that at times became almost benign. In fact, this one was not a demon at all, but a liberator: the demon, she perceived, stalked behind him, and his name was Notoriety. It was he who would flay her for coquetting with the liberator.

What if she were flayed? Once married to Chiltern, once embarked upon that life of usefulness, once firmly established on ground of her own tilling, and she was immune. And this led her to a consideration of those she knew who had been flayed. They were not few, and a surfeit of publicity is a sufficient reason for not enumerating them here. And during this process of exorcism Notoriety became a bogey, too: he had been powerless to hurt them. It must be true what Chiltern had said that the world was changing. The tragic and the ridiculous here joining hands, she remembered that Reggie Farwell had told her that he had recently made a trip to western New York to inspect a house he had built for a “remarried” couple who were not wholly unknown. The dove-cote, he had called it. The man, in his former marriage, had been renowned all up and down tidewater as a rake and a brute, and now it was an exception when he did not have at least one baby on his knee. And he knew, according to Mr. Farwell, more about infant diet than the whole staff of a maternity hospital.

At length, as she stared into the darkness, dissolution came upon it. The sills of her windows outlined themselves, and a blurred foliage was sketched into the frame. With a problem but half solved the day had surprised her. She marvelled to see that it grew apace, and presently arose to look out upon a stillness like that of eternity: in the grey light the very leaves seemed to be holding their breath in expectancy of the thing that was to come. Presently the drooping roses raised their heads, from pearl to silver grew the light, and comparison ended. The reds were aflame, the greens resplendent, the lawn sewn with the diamonds of the dew.

A little travelling table was beside the window, and Honora took her pen and wrote.

“My dearest, above all created things I love you. Morning has come, and it seems to me that I have travelled far since last I saw you. I have come to a new place, which is neither hell nor heaven, and in the mystery of it you—you alone are real. It is to your strength that I cling, and I know that you will not fail me.“Since I saw you, Hugh, I have

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been through the Valley of the Shadow. I have thought of many things. One truth alone is clear— that I love you transcendently.. You have touched and awakened me into life. I walk in a world unknown."There is the glory of martyrdom in this message I send you now. You must not come to me again until I send for you. I cannot, I will not trust myself or you. I will keep this love which has come to me undefiled. It has brought with it to me a new spirit, a spirit with a scorn for things base and mean. Though it were my last chance in life, I would not see you if you came. If I thought you would not understand what I feel, I could not love you as I do.

> "I will write to you again, when I see my way more clearly. I told you in the garden before you spoke that I was going away. Do not seek to know my plans. For the sake of the years to come, obey me.

"*Honora*."

She reread the letter, and sealed it. A new and different exaltation had come to her—-begotten, perhaps, in the act of writing. A new courage filled her, and now she contemplated the ordeal with a tranquillity that surprised her. The disorder and chaos of the night were passed, and she welcomed the coming day, and those that were to follow it. As though the fates were inclined to humour her impatience, there was a telegram on her breakfast tray, dated at New York, and informing her that her husband would be in Newport about the middle of the afternoon. His western trip was finished a day earlier than he expected. Honora rang her bell.

"Mathilde, I am going away."

"Oui, madame."

"And I should like you to go with me."

"Oui, madame."

"It is only fair that you should understand, Mathilde. I am going away alone. I am not—-coming back."

The maid's eyes filled with sudden tears.

"Oh, madame," she cried, in a burst of loyalty, "if madame will permit me to stay with her!"

Honora was troubled, but her strange calmness did not forsake her. The morning was spent in packing, which was a simple matter. She took only such things as she needed, and left her dinner-gowns hanging in the closets. A few precious books of her own she chose, but the jewellery her husband had given her was put in boxes and laid upon the

dressing-table. In one of these boxes was her wedding ring. When luncheon was over, an astonished and perturbed butler packed the Leffingwell silver and sent it off to storage.

There had been but one interruption in Honora's labours. A note had arrived—from him—a note and a box. He would obey her! She had known he would understand, and respect her the more. What would their love have been, without that respect? She shuddered to think. And he sent her this ring, as a token of that love, as undying as the fire in its stones. Would she wear it, that in her absence she might think of him? Honora kissed it and slipped it on her finger, where it sparkled. The letter was beneath her gown, though she knew it by heart. Chiltern had gone at last: he could not, he said, remain in Newport and not see her.

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At midday she made but the pretence of a meal. It was not until afterwards, in wandering through the lower rooms of this house, become so dear to her, that agitation seized her, and a desire to weep. What was she leaving so precipitately? and whither going? The world indeed was wide, and these rooms had been her home. The day had grown blue-grey, and in the dining room the gentle face seemed to look down upon her compassionately from the portrait. The scent of the roses overpowered her. As she listened, no sound brake the quiet of the place.

Would Howard never come? The train was in—had been in ten minutes. Hark, the sound of wheels! Her heart beating wildly, she ran to the windows of the drawing-room and peered through the lilacs. Yes, there he was, ascending the steps.

“Mrs. Spence is out, I suppose,” she heard him say to the butler, who followed with his bag.

“No, sir, she’s is the drawing-room.”

The sight of him, with his air of satisfaction and importance, proved an unexpected tonic to her strength. It was as though he had brought into the room, marshalled behind him, all the horrors of her marriage, and she marvelled and shuddered anew at the thought of the years of that sufferance.

“Well, I’m back,” he said, “and we’ve made a great killing, as I wrote you. They were easier than I expected.”

He came forward for the usual perfunctory kiss, but she recoiled, and it was then that his eye seemed to grasp the significance of her travelling suit and veil, and he glanced at her face.

“What’s up? Where are you going?” he demanded. “Has anything happened?”

“Everything,” she said, and it was then, suddenly, that she felt the store of her resolution begin to ebb, and she trembled. “Howard, I am going away.”

He stopped short, and thrust his hands into the pockets of his checked trousers.

“Going away,” he repeated. “Where?”

“I don’t know,” said Honora; “I’m going away.”

As though to cap the climax of tragedy, he smiled as he produced his cigarette case. And she was swept, as it were, by a scarlet flame that deprived her for the moment of speech.

“Well,” he said complacently, “there’s no accounting for women. A case of nerves—eh, Honora? Been hitting the pace a little too hard, I guess.” He lighted a match, blissfully unaware of the quality of her look. “All of us have to get toned up once in a while. I need it myself. I’ve had to drink a case of Scotch whiskey out West to get this deal through. Now what’s the name of that new boat with everything on her from a cafe to a Stock Exchange? A German name.”

“I don’t know,” said Honora. She had answered automatically.

To the imminent peril of one of the frailest of Mrs. Forsythe’s chairs, he sat down on it, placed his hands on his knees, flung back his head, and blew the smoke towards the ceiling. Still she stared at him, as in a state of semi-hypnosis.

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“Instead of going off to one of those thousand-dollar-a-minute doctors, let me prescribe for you,” he said. “I’ve handled some nervous men in my time, and I guess nervous women aren’t much different. You’ve had these little attacks before, and they blow over—don’t they? Wing owes me a vacation. If I do say it myself, there are not five men in New York who would have pulled off this deal for him. Now the proposition I was going to make to you is this: that we get cosey in a cabin de luxe on that German boat, hire an automobile on the other side, and do up Europe. It’s a sort of a handicap never to have been over there.”

“Oh, you’re making it very hard for me, Howard,” she cried. “I might have known that you couldn’t understand, that you never could understand—why I am going away. I’ve lived with you all this time, and you do not know me any better than you know—the scrub-woman. I’m going away from you—forever.”

In spite of herself, she ended with an uncontrollable sob.

“Forever!” he repeated, but he continued to smoke and to look at her without any evidences of emotion, very much as though he had received an ultimatum in a business transaction. And then there crept into his expression something of a complacent pity that braced her to continue. “Why?” he asked.

“Because—because I don’t love you. Because you don’t love me. You don’t know what love is—you never will.”

“But we’re married,” he said. “We get along all right.”

“Oh, can’t you see that that makes it all the worse!” she cried. “I can stand it no longer. I can’t live with you—I won’t live with you. I’m of no use to you—you’re sufficient unto yourself. It was all a frightful mistake. I brought nothing into your life, and I take nothing out of it. We are strangers—we have always been so. I am not even your housekeeper. Your whole interest in life is in your business, and you come home to read the newspapers and to sleep! Home! The very word is a mockery. If you had to choose between me and your business you wouldn’t hesitate an instant. And I—I have been starved. It isn’t your fault, perhaps, that you don’t understand that a woman needs something more than dinner-gowns and jewels and—and trips abroad. Her only possible compensation for living with a man is love. Love—and you haven’t the faintest conception of it. It isn’t your fault, perhaps. It’s my fault for marrying you. I didn’t know any better.”

She paused with her breast heaving. He rose and walked over to the fireplace and flicked his ashes into it before he spoke. His calmness maddened her.

“Why didn’t you say something about this before?” he asked.

“Because I didn’t know it—I didn’t realize it—until now.”

“When you married me,” he went on, “you had an idea that you were going to live in a house on Fifth Avenue with a ballroom, didn’t you?”

“Yes,” said Honora. “I do not say I am not to blame. I was a fool. My standards were false. In spite of the fact that my aunt and uncle are the most unworldly people that ever lived—perhaps because of it—I knew nothing of the values of life. I have but one thing to say in my defence. I thought I loved you, and that you could give me—what every woman needs.”

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“You were never satisfied from the first,” he retorted. “You wanted money and position—a mania with American women. I’ve made a success that few men of my age can duplicate. And even now you are not satisfied when I come back to tell you that I have money enough to snap my fingers at half these people you know.”

“How,” asked Honora, “how did you make it?”

“What do you mean?” he asked.

She turned away from him with a gesture of weariness.

“No, you wouldn’t understand that, either, Howard.”

It was not until then that he showed feeling.

“Somebody has been talking to you about this deal. I’m not surprised. A lot of these people are angry because we didn’t let them in. What have they been saying?” he demanded.

Her eyes flashed.

“Nobody has spoken to me on the subject,” she said. “I only know what I have read, and what you have told me. In the first place, you deceived the stockholders of these railways into believing their property was worthless, and in the second place, you intend to sell it to the public for much more than it is worth.”

At first he stared at her in surprise. Then he laughed.

“By George, you’d make something of a financier yourself, Honora,” he exclaimed. And seeing that she did not answer, continued: “Well, you’ve got it about right, only it’s easier said than done. It takes brains. That’s what business is—a survival of the fittest. If you don’t do the other man, he’ll do you.” He opened the cigarette case once more. “And now,” he said, “let me give you a little piece of advice. It’s a good motto for a woman not to meddle with what doesn’t concern her. It isn’t her business to make the money, but to spend it; and she can usually do that to the queen’s taste.”

“A high ideal?” she exclaimed.

“You ought to have some notion of where that ideal came from,” he retorted. “You were all for getting rich, in order to compete with these people. Now you’ve got what you want—”

“And I am going to throw it away. That is like a woman, isn’t it?”

He glanced at her, and then at his watch.

“See here, Honora, I ought to go over to Mr. Wing’s. I wired him I’d be there at four-thirty.”

“Don’t let me keep you,” she replied.

“By gad, you are pale!” he said. “What’s got into the women these days? They never used to have these confounded nerves. Well, if you are bent on it, I suppose there’s no use trying to stop you. Go off somewhere and take a rest, and when you come back you’ll see things differently.”

She held out her hand.

“Good-by, Howard,” she said. “I wanted you to know that I didn’t—bear you any ill-will—that I blame myself as much as you. More, if anything. I hope you will be happy—I know you will. But I must ask you to believe me when I say that I shan’t come back. I—I am leaving all the valuable things you gave me. You will find them on my dressing-table. And I wanted to tell you that my uncle sent me a little legacy from my father-an unexpected one—that makes me independent.”

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He did not take her hand, but was staring at her now, incredulously.

“You mean you are actually going?” he exclaimed.

“Yes.”

“But—what shall I say to Mr. Wing? What will he think?”

Despite the ache in her heart, she smiled.

“Does it make any difference what Mr. Wing thinks?” she asked gently. “Need he know? Isn’t this a matter which concerns us alone? I shall go off, and after a certain time people will understand that I am not coming back.”

“But—have you considered that it may interfere with my prospects?” he asked.

“Why should it? You are invaluable to Mr. Wing. He can’t afford to dispense with your services just because you will be divorced. That would be ridiculous. Some of his own associates are divorced.”

“Divorced!” he cried, and she saw that he had grown pasty white. “On what grounds? Have you been—”

He did not finish.

“No,” she said, “you need fear no scandal. There will be nothing in any way harmful to your—prospects.”

“What can I do?” he said, though more to himself than to her. Her quick ear detected in his voice a note of relief. And yet, he struck in her, standing helplessly smoking in the middle of the floor, chords of pity.

“You can do nothing, Howard,” she said. “If you lived with me from now to the millennium you couldn’t make me love you, nor could you love me—the way I must be loved. Try to realize it. The wrench is what you dread. After it is over you will be much more contented, much happier, than you have been with me. Believe me.”

His next remark astonished her.

“What’s the use of being so damned precipitate?” he demanded.

“Precipitate!”

“Because I can stand it no longer. I should go mad,” she answered.

He took a turn up and down the room, stopped suddenly, and stared at her with eyes that had grown smaller. Suspicion is slow to seize the complacent. Was it possible that he had been supplanted?

Honora, with an instinct of what was coming, held up her head. Had he been angry, had he been a man, how much humiliation he would have spared her!

“So you’re in love!” he said. “I might have known that something was at the bottom of this.”

She took account of and quivered at the many meanings behind his speech —meanings which he was too cowardly to voice in words.

“Yes,” she answered, “I am in love—in love as I never hoped to be—as I did not think it possible to be. My love is such that I would go through hell fire for the sake of it. I do not expect you to believe me when I tell you that such is not the reason why I am leaving you. If you had loved me with the least spark of passion, if I thought I were in the least bit needful to you as a woman and as a soul, as a helper and a confidante, instead of a mere puppet to advertise your prosperity, this would not—could not—have happened. I love a man who would give up the world for me to-morrow. I have but one life to live, and I am going to find happiness if I can.”

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She paused, afire with an eloquence that had come unsought. But her husband only stared at her. She was transformed beyond his recognition. Surely he had not married this woman! And, if the truth be told, down in his secret soul whispered a small, congratulatory voice. Although he did not yet fully realize it, he was glad he had not.

Honora, with an involuntary movement, pressed her handkerchief to her eyes.

“Good-by, Howard,” she said. “I—I did not expect you to understand. If I had stayed, I should have made you miserably unhappy.”

He took her hand in a dazed manner, as though he knew not in the least what he was doing. He muttered something and found speech impossible. He gulped once, uncomfortably. The English language had ceased to be a medium. Great is the force of habit! In the emergency he reached for his cigarette case.

Honora had given orders that the carriage was to wait at the door. The servants might suspect, but that was all. Her maid had been discreet. She drew down her veil as she descended the steps, and told the coachman to drive to the station.

It was raining. Leaning forward from under the hood as the horses started, she took her last look at the lilacs.

CHAPTER VIII

IN WHICH THE LAW BETRAYS A HEART

It was still raining when she got into a carriage at Boston and drove under the elevated tracks, through the narrow, slippery business streets, to the hotel. From the windows of her room, as the night fell, she looked out across the dripping foliage of the Common. Below her, and robbed from that sacred ground, were the little granite buildings that housed the entrances to the subway, and for a long time she stood watching the people crowding into these. Most of them had homes to go to! In the gathering gloom the arc-lights shone, casting yellow streaks on the glistening pavement; wagons and carriages plunged into the maelstrom at the corner; pedestrians dodged and slipped; lightnings flashed from overhead wires, and clanging trolley cars pushed their greater bulk through the mass. And presently the higher toned and more ominous bell of an ambulance sounded on its way to the scene of an accident.

It was Mathilde who ordered her dinner and pressed her to eat. But she had no heart for food. In her bright sitting-room, with the shades tightly drawn, an inexpressible loneliness assailed her. A large engraving of a picture of a sentimental school hung on the wall: she could not bear to look at it, and yet her eyes, from time to time, were fatally drawn thither. It was of a young girl taking leave of her lover, in early Christian

times, before entering the arena. It haunted Honora, and wrought upon her imagination to such a pitch that she went into her bedroom to write.

For a long time nothing more was written of the letter than “Dear Uncle Tom and Aunt Mary”: what to say to them?

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“I do not know what you will think of me. I do not know, to-night, what to think of myself. I have left Howard. It is not because he was cruel to me, or untrue. He does not love me, nor I him. I cannot expect you, who have known the happiness of marriage, to realize the tortures of it without love. My pain in telling you this now is all the greater because I realize your belief as to the sacredness of the tie—and it is not your fault that you did not instil that belief into me. I have had to live and to think and to suffer for myself. I do not attempt to account for my action, and I hesitate to lay the blame upon the modern conditions and atmosphere in which I lived; for I feel that, above all things, I must be honest with myself.“My marriage with Howard was a frightful mistake, and I have grown slowly to realize it, until life with him became insupportable. Since he does not love me, since his one interest is his business, my departure makes no great difference to him.

“Dear Aunt Mary and Uncle Tom, I realize that I owe you much
—everything that I am. I do not expect you to understand or to
condone what I have done. I only beg that you will continue to
—love your niece,

“*Honora*.”

She tried to review this letter. Incoherent though it were and incomplete, in her present state of mind she was able to add but a few words as a postscript. “I will write you my plans in a day or two, when I see my way more clearly. I would fly to you—but I cannot. I am going to get a divorce.”

She sat for a time picturing the scene in the sitting-room when they should read it, and a longing which was almost irresistible seized her to go back to that shelter. One force alone held her in misery where she was,—her love for Chiltern; it drew her on to suffer the horrors of exile and publicity. When she suffered most, his image rose before her, and she kissed the ring on her hand. Where was he now, on this rainy night? On the seas?

At the thought she heard again the fog-horns and the sirens.

Her sleep was fitful. Many times she went over again her talk with Howard, and she surprised herself by wondering what he had thought and felt since her departure. And ever and anon she was startled out of chimerical dreams by the clamour of bells-the trolley cars on their ceaseless round passing below. At last came the slumber of exhaustion.

It was nine o’clock when she awoke and faced the distasteful task she had set herself for the day. In her predicament she descended to the office, where the face of one of the clerks attracted her, and she waited until he was unoccupied.

“I should like you to tell me—the name of some reputable lawyer,” she said.

“Certainly, Mrs. Spence,” he replied, and Honora was startled at the sound of her name. She might have realized that he would know her. “I suppose a young lawyer would do—if the matter is not very important.”

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“Oh, no!” she cried, blushing to her temples. “A young lawyer would do very well.”

The clerk reflected. He glanced at Honora again; and later in the day she divined what had been going on in his mind.

“Well,” he said, “there are a great many. I happen to think of Mr. Wentworth, because he was in the hotel this morning. He is in the Tremont Building.”

She thanked him hurriedly, and was driven to the Tremont Building, through the soggy street that faced the still dripping trees of the Common. Mounting in the elevator, she read on the glass door amongst the names of the four members of the firm that of Alden Wentworth, and suddenly found herself face to face with the young man, in his private office. He was well groomed and deeply tanned, and he rose to meet her with a smile that revealed a line of perfect white teeth.

“How do you do, Mrs. Spence?” he said. “I did not think, when I met you at Mrs. Grenfell’s, that I should see you so soon in Boston. Won’t you sit down?”

Honora sat down. There seemed nothing else to do. She remembered him perfectly now, and she realized that the nimble-witted clerk had meant to send her to a gentleman.

“I thought,” she faltered, “I thought I was coming to a—a stranger. They gave me your address at the hotel—when I asked for a lawyer.”

“Perhaps,” suggested Mr. Wentworth, delicately, “perhaps you would prefer to go to some one else. I can give you any number of addresses, if you like.”

She looked up at him gratefully. He seemed very human and understanding, —very honourable. He belonged to her generation, after all, and she feared an older man.

“If you will be kind enough to listen to me, I think I will stay here. It is only a matter of—-of knowledge of the law.” She looked at him again, and the pathos of her smile went straight to his heart. For Mr. Wentworth possessed that organ, although he did not wear it on his sleeve.

He crossed the room, closed the door, and sat down beside her.

“Anything I can do,” he said.

She glanced at him once more, helplessly.

“I do not know how to tell you,” she began. “It all seems so dreadful.” She paused, but he had the lawyer’s gift of silence—of sympathetic silence. “I want to get a divorce from my husband.”

If Mr. Wentworth was surprised, he concealed it admirably. His attitude of sympathy did not change, but he managed to ask her, in a business-like tone which she welcomed:—-"On what grounds?"

"I was going to ask you that question," said Honora.

This time Mr. Wentworth was surprised—genuinely so, and he showed it.

"But, my dear Mrs. Spence," he protested, "you must remember that—that I know nothing of the case."

"What are the grounds one can get divorced on?" she asked.

He coloured a little under his tan.

"They are different in different states," he replied. "I think—perhaps —the best way would be to read you the Massachusetts statutes."

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“No—wait a moment,” she said. “It’s very simple, after all, what I have to tell you. I don’t love my husband, and he doesn’t love me, and it has become torture to live together. I have left him with his knowledge and consent, and he understands that I will get a divorce.”

Mr. Wentworth appeared to be pondering—perhaps not wholly on the legal aspects of the case thus naively presented. Whatever may have been his private comments, they were hidden. He pronounced tentatively, and a little absently, the word “desertion.”

“If the case could possibly be construed as desertion on your husband’s part, you could probably get a divorce in three years in Massachusetts.”

“Three years!” cried Honora, appalled. “I could never wait three years!”

She did not remark the young lawyer’s smile, which revealed a greater knowledge of the world than one would have suspected. He said nothing, however.

“Three years!” she repeated. “Why, it can’t be, Mr. Wentworth. There are the Waterfords—she was Mrs. Boutwell, you remember. And—and Mrs. Rindge—it was scarcely a year before—”

He had the grace to nod gravely, and to pretend not to notice the confusion in which she halted. Lawyers, even young ones with white teeth and clear eyes, are apt to be a little cynical. He had doubtless seen from the beginning that there was a man in the background. It was not his business to comment or to preach.

“Some of the western states grant divorces on—on much easier terms,” he said politely. “If you care to wait, I will go into our library and look up the laws of those states.”

“I wish you would,” answered Honora. “I don’t think I could bear to spend three years in such—in such an anomalous condition. And at any rate I should much rather go West, out of sight, and have it all as quickly over with as possible.”

He bowed, and departed on his quest. And Honora waited, at moments growing hot at the recollection of her conversation with him. Why—she asked herself should the law make it so difficult, and subject her to such humiliation in a course which she felt to be right and natural and noble? Finally, her thoughts becoming too painful, she got up and looked out of the window. And far below her, through the mist, she beheld the burying-ground of Boston’s illustrious dead which her cabman had pointed out to her as he passed. She did not hear the door open as Mr. Wentworth returned, and she started at the sound of his voice.

“I take it for granted that you are really serious in this matter, Mrs. Spence,” he said.

“Oh!” she exclaimed.

“And that you have thoroughly reflected,” he continued imperturbably. Evidently, in spite of the cold impartiality of the law, a New England conscience had assailed him in the library. “I cannot take er—the responsibility of advising you as to a course of action. You have asked me the laws of certain western states as to divorce I will read them.”

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An office boy followed him, deposited several volumes on the taule, and Mr. Wentworth read from them in a voice magnificently judicial.

“There’s not much choice, is there?” she faltered, when he had finished.

He smiled.

“As places of residence—” he began, in an attempt to relieve the pathos.

“Oh, I didn’t mean that,” she cried. “Exile is—is exile.” She flushed. After a few moments of hesitation she named at random a state the laws of which required a six months’ residence. She contemplated him. “I hardly dare to ask you to give me the name of some reputable lawyer out there.”

He had looked for an instant into her eyes. Men of the law are not invulnerable, particularly at Mr. Wentworth’s age, and New England consciences to the contrary notwithstanding. In spite of himself, her eyes had made him a partisan: an accomplice, he told himself afterwards.

“Really, Mrs. Spence,” he began, and caught another appealing look. He remembered the husband now, and a lecture on finance in the Grenfell smoking room which Howard Spence had delivered, and which had grated on Boston sensibility. “It is only right to tell you that our firm does not—does not—take divorce cases—as a rule. Not that we are taking this one,” he added hurriedly. “But as a friend—”

“Oh, thank you!” said Honora.

“Merely as a friend who would be glad to do you a service,” he continued, “I will, during the day, try to get you the name of—of as reputable a lawyer as possible in that place.”

And Mr. Wentworth paused, as red as though he had asked her to marry him.

“How good of you!” she cried. “I shall be at the Touraine until this evening.”

He escorted her through the corridor, bowed her into the elevator, and her spirits had risen perceptibly as she got into her cab and returned to the hotel. There, she studied railroad folders. One confidant was enough, and she dared not even ask the head porter the way to a locality where—it was well known—divorces were sold across a counter. And as she worked over the intricacies of this problem the word her husband had applied to her action recurred to her—precipitate. No doubt Mr. Wentworth, too, had thought her precipitate. Nearly every important act of her life had been precipitate. But she was conscious in this instance of no regret. Delay, she felt, would have killed her. Let her exile begin at once.

She had scarcely finished luncheon when Mr. Wentworth was announced. For reasons best known to himself he had come in person; and he handed her, written on a card, the name of the Honourable David Beckwith.

“I’ll have to confess I don’t know much about him, Mrs. Spence,” he said, “except that he has been in Congress, and is one of the prominent lawyers of that state.”

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The gift of enlisting sympathy and assistance was peculiarly Honora's. And if some one had predicted that morning to Mr. Wentworth that before nightfall he would not only have put a lady in distress on the highroad to obtaining a western divorce (which he had hitherto looked upon as disgraceful), but that likewise he would miss his train for Pride's Crossing, buy the lady's tickets, and see her off at the South Station for Chicago, he would have regarded the prophet as a lunatic. But that is precisely what Mr. Wentworth did. And when, as her train pulled out, Honora bade him goodby, she felt the tug at her heartstrings which comes at parting with an old friend.

"And anything I can do for you here in the East, while—while you are out there, be sure to let me know," he said.

She promised and waved at him from the platform as he stood motionless, staring after her. Romance had spent a whole day in Boston! And with Mr. Alden Wentworth, of all people!

Fortunately for the sanity of the human race, the tension of grief is variable. Honora, closed in her stateroom, eased herself that night by writing a long, if somewhat undecipherable, letter to Chiltern; and was able, the next day, to read the greater portion of a novel. It was only when she arrived in Chicago, after nightfall, that loneliness again assailed her. She was within nine hours—so the timetable said—of St. Louis! Of all her trials, the homesickness which she experienced as she drove through the deserted streets of the metropolis of the Middle West was perhaps the worst. A great city on Sunday night! What traveller has not felt the depressing effect of it? And, so far as the incoming traveller is concerned, Chicago does not put her best foot forward. The way from the station to the Auditorium Hotel was hacked and bruised—so it seemed—by the cruel battle of trade. And she stared, in a kind of fascination that increased the ache in her heart; at the ugliness and cruelty of the twentieth century.

To have imagination is unquestionably to possess a great capacity for suffering, and Honora was paying the penalty for hers. It ran riot now. The huge buildings towered like formless monsters against the blackness of the sky under the sickly blue of the electric lights, across the dirty, foot-scarred pavements, strange black human figures seemed to wander aimlessly: an elevated train thundered overhead. And presently she found herself the tenant of two rooms in that vast refuge of the homeless, the modern hotel, where she sat until the small hours looking down upon the myriad lights of the shore front, and out beyond them on the black waters of an inland sea.

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From Newport to Salomon City, in a state not far from the Pacific tier, is something of a transition in less than a week, though in modern life we should be surprised at nothing.

Limited trains are wonderful enough; but what shall be said of the modern mind, that travels faster than light? and much too fast for the pages of a chronicle. Martha Washington and the good ladies of her acquaintance knew nothing about the upper waters of the Missouri, and the words “for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer” were not merely literature to them.

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‘Nous avons change tout cela’, although there are yet certain crudities to be eliminated. In these enlightened times, if in one week a lady is not entirely at home with husband number one, in the next week she may have travelled in comparative comfort some two-thirds across a continent, and be on the highroad to husband number two. Why travel? Why have to put up with all this useless expense and worry and waste of time? Why not have one’s divorce sent, C.O.D., to one’s door, or establish a new branch of the Post-office Department? American enterprise has surely lagged in this.

Seated in a plush-covered rocking-chair that rocked on a track of its own, and thus saved the yellow-and-red hotel carpet, the Honourable Dave Beckwith patiently explained the vexatious process demanded by his particular sovereign state before she should consent to cut the Gordian knot of marriage. And his state—the Honourable Dave remarked—was in the very forefront of enlightenment in this respect: practically all that she demanded was that ladies in Mrs. Spence’s predicament should become, pro tempore, her citizens. Married misery did not exist in the Honourable Dave’s state, amongst her own bona fide citizens. And, by a wise provision in the Constitution of our glorious American Union, no one state could tie the nuptial knot so tight that another state could not cut it at a blow.

Six months’ residence, and a whole year before the divorce could be granted! Honora looked at the plush rocking-chair, the yellow-and-red carpet, the inevitable ice-water on the marble-topped table, and the picture of a lady the shape of a liqueur bottle playing tennis in the late eighties, and sighed. For one who is sensitive to surroundings, that room was a torture chamber.

“But Mr. Beckwith,” she exclaimed, “I never could spend a year here! Isn’t there a—-house I could get that is a—a little—a little better furnished? And then there is a certain publicity about staying at a hotel.”

The Honourable Dave might have been justly called the friend of ladies in a temporary condition of loneliness. His mission in life was not merely that of a liberator, but his natural goodness led him to perform a hundred acts of kindness to make as comfortable as possible the purgatory of the unfortunates under his charge. He was a man of a remarkable appearance, and not to be lightly forgotten. His hair, above all, fascinated Honora, and she found her eyes continually returning to it. So incredibly short it was, and so incredibly stiff, that it reminded her of the needle points on the cylinder of an old-fashioned music-box; and she wondered, if it were properly inserted, what would be the resultant melody.

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The Honourable Dave's head was like a cannon-ball painted white. Across the top of it (a blemish that would undoubtedly have spoiled the tune) was a long scar,—a relic of one of the gentleman's many personal difficulties. He who made the sear, Honora reflected, must have been a strong man. The Honourable Dave, indeed, had fought his way upward through life to the Congress of the United States; and many were the harrowing tales of frontier life he told Honora in the long winter evenings when the blizzards came down the river valley. They would fill a book; unfortunately, not this book. The growing responsibilities of taking care of the lonely ladies that came in increasing numbers to Salomon City from the effeter portions of the continent had at length compelled him to give up his congressional career. The Honourable Dave was unmarried; and, he told Honora, not likely to become so. He was thus at once human and invulnerable, a high priest dedicated to freedom.

It is needless to say that the plush rocking-chair and the picture of the liqueur-bottle lady did not jar on his sensibilities. Like an eminent physician who has never himself experienced neurosis, the Honourable Dave firmly believed that he understood the trouble from which his client was suffering. He had seen many cases of it in ladies from the Atlantic coast: the first had surprised him, no doubt. Salomon City, though it contained the great Boon, was not esthetic. Being a keen student of human nature, he rightly supposed that she would not care to join the colony, but he thought it his duty to mention that there was a colony.

Honora repeated the word.

"Out there," he said, waving his cigar to the westward, "some of the ladies have ranches." Some of the gentlemen, too, he added, for it appeared that exiles were not confined to one sex. "It's social—a little too social, I guess," declared Mr. Beckwith, "for you." A delicate compliment of differentiation that Honora accepted gravely. "They've got a casino, and they burn a good deal of electricity first and last. They don't bother Salomon City much. Once in a while, in the winter, they come in a bunch to the theatre. Soon as I looked at you I knew you wouldn't want to go there."

Her exclamation was sufficiently eloquent.

"I've got just the thing for you," he said. "It looks a little as if I was reaching out into the sanitarium business. Are you acquainted by any chance with Mrs. Boutwell, who married a fellow named Waterford?" he asked, taking momentarily out of his mouth the cigar he was smoking by permission.

Honora confessed, with no great enthusiasm, that she knew the present Mrs. Waterford. Not the least of her tribulations had been to listen to a partial recapitulation, by the Honourable Dave, of the ladies he had assisted to a transfer of husbands. What, indeed, had these ladies to do with her? She felt that the very mention of them tended to soil the pure garments of her martyrdom.

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“What I was going to say was this,” the Honourable Dave continued. “Mrs. Boutwell—-that is to say Mrs. Waterford—couldn’t stand this hotel any more than you, and she felt like you do about the colony, so she rented a little house up on Wylie Street and furnished it from the East. I took the furniture off her hands: it’s still in the house, by the way, which hasn’t been rented. For I figured it out that another lady would be coming along with the same notions. Now you can look at the house any time you like.”

Although she had to overcome the distaste of its antecedents, the house, or rather the furniture, was too much of a find in Salomon City to be resisted. It had but six rooms, and was of wood, and painted grey, like its twin beside it. But Mrs. Waterford had removed the stained-glass window-lights in the front door, deftly hidden the highly ornamental steam radiators, and made other eliminations and improvements, including the white bookshelves that still contained the lady’s winter reading fifty or more yellow-and-green-backed French novels and plays. Honora’s first care, after taking possession, was to order her maid to remove these from her sight: but it is to be feared that they found their way, directly, to Mathilde’s room. Honora would have liked to fumigate the house; and yet, at the same time, she thanked her stars for it. Mr. Beekwith obligingly found her a cook, and on Thursday evening she sat down to supper in her tiny dining room. She had found a temporary haven, at last.

Suddenly she remembered that it was an anniversary. One week ago that day, in the old garden at Beaulieu, had occurred the momentous event that had changed the current of her life!

CHAPTER IX

WYLIE STREET

There was a little spindle-supported porch before Honora’s front door, and had she chosen she might have followed the example of her neighbours and sat there in the evenings. She preferred to watch the life about her from the window-seat in the little parlour. The word exile suggests, perhaps, to those who have never tried it, empty wastes, isolation, loneliness. She had been prepared for these things, and Wylie Street was a shock to her: in sending her there at this crisis in her life fate had perpetrated nothing less than a huge practical joke. Next door, for instance, in the twin house to hers, flaunted in the face of liberal divorce laws, was a young couple with five children. Honora counted them, from the eldest ones that ran over her little grass plot on their way to and from the public school, to the youngest that spent much of his time gazing skyward from a perambulator on the sidewalk. Six days of the week, about six o’clock in the evening, there was a celebration in the family. Father came home from work! He was a smooth-faced young man whom a fortnight in the woods might have helped wonderfully—a clerk in the big department store.

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He radiated happiness. When opposite Honora's front door he would open his arms—-the signal for a race across her lawn. Sometimes it was the little girl, with pigtails the colour of pulled molasses candy, who won the prize of the first kiss: again it was her brother, a year her junior; and when he was raised it was seen that the seat of his trousers was obviously double. But each of the five received a reward, and the baby was invariably lifted out of the perambulator. And finally there was a conjugal kiss on the spindled porch.

The wife was a roly-poly little body. In the mornings, at the side windows, Honora heard her singing as she worked, and sometimes the sun struck with a blinding flash the pan she was in the act of shining. And one day she looked up and nodded and smiled. Strange indeed was the effect upon our heroine of that greeting! It amazed Honora herself. A strange current ran through her and left her hot, and even as she smiled and nodded back, unbidden tears rose scalding to her eyes. What was it? Why was it?

She went downstairs to the little bookcase, filled now with volumes that were not trash. For Hugh's sake, she would try to improve herself this winter by reading serious things. But between her eyes and the book was the little woman's smile. A month before, at Newport, how little she would have valued it.

One morning, as Honora was starting out for her lonely walk—that usually led her to the bare clay banks of the great river—she ran across her neighbour on the sidewalk. The little woman was settling the baby for his airing, and she gave Honora the same dazzling smile.

"Good morning, Mrs. Spence," she said.

"Good morning," replied Honora, and in her strange confusion she leaned over the carriage. "Oh, what a beautiful baby!"

"Isn't he!" cried the little woman. "Of all of 'em, I think he's the prize. His father says so. I guess," she added, "I guess it was because I didn't know so much about 'em when they first began to come. You take my word for it, the best way is to leave 'em alone. Don't dandle 'em. It's hard to keep your hands off 'em, but it's right."

"I'm sure of it," said Honora, who was very red.

They made a strange contrast as they stood on that new street, with its new vitrified brick paving and white stone curbs, and new little trees set out in front of new little houses: Mrs. Mayo (for such, Honora's cook had informed her, was her name) in a housekeeper's apron and a shirtwaist, and Honora, almost a head taller, in a walking costume of dark grey that would have done justice to Fifth Avenue. The admiration in the little woman's eyes was undisguised.

“You’re getting a bill, I hear,” she said, after a moment.

“A bill?” repeated Honora.

“A bill of divorce,” explained Mrs. Mayo.

Honora was conscious of conflicting emotions: astonishment, resentment, and—most curiously—of relief that the little woman knew it.

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“Yes,” she answered.

But Mrs. Mayo did not appear to notice or resent her brevity.

“I took a fancy to you the minute I saw you,” she said. “I can’t say as much for the other Easterner that was here last year. But I made up my mind that it must be a mighty mean man who would treat you badly.”

Honora stood as though rooted to the pavement. She found a reply impossible.

“When I think of my luck,” her neighbour continued, “I’m almost ashamed. We were married on fifteen dollars a week. Of course there have been trials, we must always expect that; and we’ve had to work hard, but—it hasn’t hurt us.” She paused and looked up at Honora, and added contritely: “There! I shouldn’t have said anything. It’s mean of me to talk of my happiness. I’ll drop in some afternoon—if you’ll let me —when I get through my work,” said the little woman.

“I wish you would,” replied Honora.

She had much to think of on her walk that morning, and new resolutions to make. Here was happiness growing and thriving, so far as she could see, without any of that rarer nourishment she had once thought so necessary. And she had come two thousand miles to behold it.

She walked many miles, as a part of the regimen and discipline to which she had set herself. Her haunting horror in this place, as she thought of the colony of which Mr. Beckwith had spoken and of Mrs. Boutwell’s row of French novels, was degeneration. She was resolved to return to Chiltern a better and a wiser and a truer woman, unstained by the ordeal. At the outskirts of the town she halted by the river’s bank, breathing deeply of the pure air of the vast plains that surrounded her.

She was seated that afternoon at her desk in the sitting-room upstairs when she heard the tinkle of the door-bell, and remembered her neighbour’s promise to call. With something of a pang she pushed back her chair. Since the episode of the morning, the friendship of the little woman had grown to have a definite value; for it was no small thing, in Honora’s situation, to feel the presence of a warm heart next door. All day she had been thinking of Mrs. Mayo and her strange happiness, and longing to talk with her again, and dreading it. And while she was bracing herself for the trial Mathilde entered with a card.

“Tell Mrs. Mayo I shall be down in a minute,” she said.

It was not a lady, Mathilde replied, but a monsieur.

Honora took the card. For a long time she sat staring at it, while Mathilde waited. It read:

Mr. Peter Erwin.

“Madame will see monsieur?”

A great sculptor once said to the statesman who was to be his model: “Wear your old coat. There is as much of a man in the back of his old coat, I think, as there is in his face.” As Honora halted on the threshold, Peter was standing looking out of the five-foot plate-glass window, and his back was to her.

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She was suddenly stricken. Not since she had been a child, not even in the weeks just passed, had she felt that pain. And as a child, self-pity seized her—as a lost child, when darkness is setting in, and the will fails and distance appalls. Scalding tears welled into her eyes as she seized the frame of the door, but it must have been her breathing that he heard. He turned and crossed the room to her as she had known he would, and she clung to him as she had so often done in days gone by when, hurt and bruised, he had rescued and soothed her. For the moment, the delusion that his power was still limitless prevailed, and her faith whole again, so many times had he mended a world all awry.

He led her to the window-seat and gently disengaged her hands from his shoulders and took one of them and held it between his own. He did not speak, for his was a rare intuition; and gradually her hand ceased to tremble, and the uncontrollable sobs that shook her became less frequent.

“Why did you come? Why did you come?” she cried.

“To see you, Honora.”

“But you might have—warned me.”

“Yes,” he said, “it’s true, I might.”

She drew her hand away, and gazed steadfastly at his face.

“Why aren’t you angry?” she said. “You don’t believe in what I have done—you don’t sympathize with it—you don’t understand it.”

“I have come here to try,” he said.

She shook her head.

“You can’t—you can’t—you never could.”

“Perhaps,” he answered, “it may not be so difficult as you think.”

Grown calmer, she considered this. What did he mean by it? to imply a knowledge of herself?

“It will be useless,” she said inconsequently.

“No,” he said, “it will not be useless.”

She considered this also, and took the broader meaning that such acts are not wasted.

“What do you intend to try to do?” she asked.

He smiled a little.

“To listen to as much as you care to tell me, Honora.”

She looked at him again, and an errant thought slipped in between her larger anxieties. Wherever he went, how extraordinarily he seemed to harmonize with his surroundings. At Silverdale, and in the drawing-room of the New York house, and in the little parlour in this far western town. What was it? His permanence? Was it his power? She felt that, but it was a strange kind of power—not like other men’s. She felt, as she sat there beside him, that his was a power more difficult to combat. That to defeat it was at once to make it stronger, and to grow weaker. She summoned her pride, she summoned her wrongs: she summoned the ego which had winged its triumphant flight far above his kindly, disapproving eye. He had the ability to make her taste defeat in the very hour of victory. And she knew that, when she fell, he would be there in his strength to lift her up.

“Did—did they tell you to come?” she asked.

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“There was no question of that, Honora. I was away when—when they learned you were here. As soon as I returned, I came.”

“Tell me how they feel,” she said, in a low voice.

“They think only of you. And the thought that you are unhappy overshadows all others. They believe that it is to them you should have come, if you were in trouble instead of coming here.”

“How could I?” she cried. “How can you ask? That is what makes it so hard, that I cannot be with them now. But I should only have made them still more unhappy, if I had gone. They would not have understood—they cannot understand who have every reason to believe in marriage, why those to whom it has been a mockery and a torture should be driven to divorce.”

“Why divorce?” he said.

“Do you mean—do you mean that you wish me to give you the reasons why I felt justified in leaving my husband?”

“Not unless you care to,” he replied. “I have no right to demand them. I only ask you to remember, Honora, that you have not explained these reasons very clearly in your letters to your aunt and uncle. They do not understand them. Your uncle was unable, on many accounts, to come here; and he thought that—that as an old friend, you might be willing to talk to me.”

“I can’t live with—with my husband,” she cried. “I don’t love him, and he doesn’t love me. He doesn’t know what love is.”

Peter Erwin glanced at her, but she was too absorbed then to see the thing in his eyes. He made no comment.

“We haven’t the same tastes, nor—nor the same way of looking at things —the same views about making money—for instance. We became absolute strangers. What more is there to say?” she added, a little defiantly.

“Your husband committed no—flagrant offence against you?” he inquired.

“That would have made him human, at least,” she cried. “It would have proved that he could feel—something. No, all he cares for in the world is to make money, and he doesn’t care how he makes it. No woman with an atom of soul can live with a man like that.”

If Peter Erwin deemed this statement a trifle revolutionary, he did not say so.

“So you just—left him,” he said.

“Yes,” said Honora. “He didn’t care. He was rather relieved than otherwise. If I had lived with him till I died, I couldn’t have made him happy.”

“You tried, and failed,” said Peter.

She flushed.

“I couldn’t have made him happier,” she declared, correcting herself. “He has no conception of what real happiness is. He thinks he is happy,-he doesn’t need me. He’ll be much more—contented without me. I have nothing against him. I was to blame for marrying him, I know. But I have only one life to live, and I can’t throw it away, Peter, I can’t. And I can’t believe that a woman and a man were intended to live together without love. It is too horrible. Surely that isn’t your idea of marriage!”

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“My idea of marriage isn’t worth very much, I’m afraid,” he said. “If I talked about it, I should have to confine myself to theories and—and dreams.”

“The moment I saw your card, Peter, I knew why you had come here,” she said, trying to steady her voice. “It was to induce me to go back to my husband. You don’t know how it hurts me to give you pain. I love you—I love you as I love Uncle Tom and Aunt Mary. You are a part of me. But oh, you can’t understand! I knew you could not. You have never made any mistakes—you have never lived. It is useless. I won’t go back to him. If you stayed here for weeks you could not make me change my mind.”

He was silent.

“You think that I could have prevented—this, if I had been less selfish,” she said.

“Where you are concerned, Honora, I have but one desire,” he answered, “and that is to see you happy—in the best sense of the term. If I could induce you to go back and give your husband another trial, I should return with a lighter heart. You ask me whether I think you have been selfish. I answer frankly that I think you have. I don’t pretend to say your husband has not been selfish also. Neither of you have ever tried, apparently, to make your marriage a success. It can’t be done without an honest effort. You have abandoned the most serious and sacred enterprise in the world as lightly as though it had been a piece of embroidery. All that I can gather from your remarks is that you have left your husband because you have grown tired of him.”

“Yes,” said Honora, “and you can never realize how tired, unless you knew him as I did. When love dies, it turns into hate.”

He rose, and walked to the other end of the room, and turned.

“Could you be induced,” he said, “for the sake of your aunt and uncle, if not for your own, to consider a legal separation?”

For an instant she stared at him hopelessly, and then she buried her face in her hands.

“No,” she cried. “No, I couldn’t. You don’t know what you ask.”

He went to her, and laid his hand lightly on her shoulder.

“I think I do,” he said.

There was a moment’s tense silence, and then she got to her feet and looked at him proudly.

“Yes,” she cried, “it is true. And I am not ashamed of it. I have discovered what love is, and what life is, and I am going to take them while I can.”

She saw the blood slowly leave his face, and his hands tighten. It was not until then that she guessed at the depth of his wound, and knew that it was unhealed. For him had been reserved this supreme irony, that he should come here to plead for her husband and learn from her own lips that she loved another man. She was suddenly filled with awe, though he turned away from her that she might not see his face: And she sought in vain for words. She touched his hand, fearfully, and now it was he who trembled.

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“Peter,” she exclaimed, “why do you bother with me? I—I am what I am. I can’t help it. I was made so. I cannot tell you that I am sorry for what I have done—for what I am going to do. I will not lie to you—and you forced me to speak. I know that you don’t understand, and that I caused you pain, and that I shall cause—them pain. It may be selfishness—I don’t know. God alone knows. Whatever it is, it is stronger than I. It is what I am. Though I were to be thrown into eternal fire I would not renounce it.”

She looked at him again, and her breath caught. While she had been speaking, he had changed. There was a fire in his eyes she had never seen before, in all the years she had known him.

“Honora,” he said quietly, “the man who has done this is a scoundrel.”

She stared at him, doubting her senses, her pupils wide with terror.

“How dare you, Peter! How dare you!” she cried.

“I dare to speak the truth,” he said, and crossed the room to where his hat was lying and picked it up. She watched him as in a trance. Then he came back to her.

“Some day, perhaps, you will forgive me for saying that, Honora. I hope that day will come, although I shall never regret having said it. I have caused you pain. Sometimes, it seems, pain is unavoidable. I hope you will remember that, with the exception of your aunt and uncle, you have no better friend than I. Nothing can alter that friendship, wherever you go, whatever you do. Goodby.”

He caught her hand, held it for a moment in his own, and the door had closed before she realized that he had gone. For a few moments she stood motionless where he had left her, and then she went slowly up the stairs to her own room . . . .

CHAPTER X

THE PRICE OF FREEDOM

Had he, Hugh Chiltern, been anathematized from all the high pulpits of the world, Honora’s belief in him could not have been shaken. Ivanhoe and the Knights of the Round Table to the contrary, there is no chivalry so exalted as that of a woman who loves, no courage higher, no endurance greater. Her knowledge is complete; and hers the supreme faith that is unmoved by calumny and unbelief. She alone knows. The old Chiltern did not belong to her: hers was the new man sprung undefiled from the sacred fire of their love; and in that fire she, too, had been born again. Peter—even Peter had no power to share such a faith, though what he had said of Chiltern had wounded her—wounded her because Peter, of all others, should misjudge and condemn him. Sometimes she drew consolation from the thought that Peter had never seen him. But

she knew he could not understand him, or her, or what they had passed through: that kind of understanding comes alone through experience.

In the long days that followed she thought much about Peter, and failed to comprehend her feelings towards him. She told herself that she ought to hate him for what he had so cruelly said, and at times indeed her resentment was akin to hatred: again, his face rose before her as she had seen it when he had left her, and she was swept by an incomprehensible wave of tenderness and reverence. And yet—paradox of paradoxes—Chiltern possessed her!

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On the days when his letters came it was as his emissary that the sun shone to give her light in darkness, and she went about the house with a song on her lips. They were filled, these letters, with an elixir of which she drank thirstily to behold visions, and the weariness of her exile fell away. The elixir of High Purpose. Never was love on such a plane! He lifting her,—no marvel in this; and she—by a magic power of levitation at which she never ceased to wonder—sustaining him. By her aid he would make something of himself which would be worthy of her. At last he had the incentive to enable him to take his place in the world. He pictured their future life at Grenoble until her heart was strained with yearning for it to begin. Here would be duty,—let him who would gainsay it, duty and love combined with a wondrous happiness. He at a man's labour, she at a woman's; labour not for themselves alone, but for others. A paradise such as never was heard of—a God-fearing paradise, and the reward of courage.

He told her he could not go to Grenoble now and begin the life without her. Until that blessed time he would remain a wanderer, avoiding the haunts of men. First he had cruised in the 'Folly, and then camped and shot in Canada; and again, as winter drew on apace, had chartered another yacht, a larger one, and sailed away for the West Indies, whence the letters came, stamped in strange ports, and sometimes as many as five together. He, too, was in exile until his regeneration should begin.

Well he might be at such a time. One bright day in early winter Honora, returning from her walk across the bleak plains in the hope of letters, found newspapers and periodicals instead, addressed in an unknown hand. It matters not whose hand: Honora never sought to know. She had long regarded as inevitable this acutest phase of her martyrdom, and the long nights of tears when entire paragraphs of the loathed stuff she had burned ran ceaselessly in her mind. Would she had burned it before reading it! An insensate curiosity had seized her, and she had read and read again until it was beyond the reach of fire.

Save for its effect upon Honora, it is immaterial to this chronicle. It was merely the heaviest of her heavy payments for liberty. But what, she asked herself shamefully, would be its effect upon Chiltern? Her face burned that she should doubt his loyalty and love; and yet—the question returned. There had been a sketch of Howard, dwelling upon the prominence into which he had sprung through his connection with Mr. Wing. There had been a sketch of her; and how she had taken what the writer was pleased to call Society by storm: it had been intimated, with a cruelty known only to writers of such paragraphs, that ambition to marry a Chiltern had been her motive! There had been a sketch of Chiltern's career, in carefully veiled but thoroughly comprehensible language, which might have made a Bluebeard shudder. This, of course, she bore best of all; or, let it be said rather, that it cost her the least suffering. Was it not she who had changed and redeemed him?

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What tortured her most was the intimation that Chiltern's family connections were bringing pressure to bear upon him to save him from this supremest of all his follies. And when she thought of this the strange eyes and baffling expression of Mrs. Grainger rose before her. Was it true? And if true, would Chiltern resist, even as she, Honora, had resisted, loyally? Might this love for her not be another of his mad caprices?

How Honora hated herself for the thought that thus insistently returned at this period of snows and blasts! It was January. Had he seen the newspapers? He had not, for he was cruising: he had, for of course they had been sent him. And he must have received, from his relatives, protesting letters. A fortnight passed, and her mail contained nothing from him! Perhaps something had happened to his yacht! Visions of shipwreck cause her to scan the newspapers for storms at sea,—but the shipwreck that haunted her most was that of her happiness. How easy it is to doubt in exile, with happiness so far away! One morning, when the wind dashed the snow against her windows, she found it impossible to rise.

If the big doctor suspected the cause of her illness, Mathilde knew it. The maid tended her day and night, and sought, with the tact of her nation, to console and reassure her. The little woman next door came and sat by her bedside. Cruel and infinitely happy little woman, filled with compassion, who brought delicacies in the making of which she had spent precious hours, and which Honora could not eat! The Lord, when he had made Mrs. Mayo, had mercifully withheld the gift of imagination. One topic filled her, she lived to one end: her Alpha and Omega were husband and children, and she talked continually of their goodness and badness, of their illnesses, of their health, of their likes and dislikes, of their accomplishments and defects, until one day a surprising thing happened. Surprising for Mrs. Mayo.

"Oh, don't!" cried Honora, suddenly. "Oh, don't! I can't bear it."

"What is it?" cried Mrs. Mayo, frightened out of her wits. "A turn? Shall I telephone for the doctor?"

"No," relied Honora, "but—but I can't talk any more—to-day."

She apologized on the morrow, as she held Mrs. Mayo's hand. "It—it was your happiness," she said; "I was unstrung. I couldn't listen to it. Forgive me."

The little woman burst into tears, and kissed her as she sat in bed.

"Forgive you, deary!" she cried. "I never thought."

"It has been so easy for you," Honora faltered.

"Yes, it has. I ought to thank God, and I do—every night."

She looked long and earnestly, through her tears, at the young lady from the far away East as she lay against the lace pillows, her paleness enhanced by the pink gown, her dark hair in two great braids on her shoulders.

“And to think how pretty you are!” she exclaimed.

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It was thus she expressed her opinion of mankind in general, outside of her own family circle. Once she had passionately desired beauty, the high school and the story of Helen of Troy notwithstanding. Now she began to look at it askance, as a fatal gift; and to pity, rather than envy, its possessors.

As a by-industry, Mrs. Mayo raised geraniums and carnations in her front cellar, near the furnace, and once in a while Peggy, with the pulled-molasses hair, or chubby Abraham Lincoln, would come puffing up Honora's stairs under the weight of a flower-pot and deposit it triumphantly on the table at Honora's bedside. Abraham Lincoln did not object to being kissed: he had, at least, grown to accept the process as one of the unaccountable mysteries of life. But something happened to him one afternoon, on the occasion of his giving proof of an intellect which may eventually bring him, in the footsteps of his great namesake, to the White House. Entering Honora's front door, he saw on the hall table a number of letters which the cook (not gifted with his brains) had left there. He seized them in one fat hand, while with the other he hugged the flower-pot to his breast, mounted the steps, and arrived, breathless but radiant, on the threshold of the beautiful lady's room, and there calamity overtook him in the shape of one of the thousand articles which are left on the floor purposely to trip up little boys.

Great was the disaster. Letters, geranium, pieces of flower-pot, a quantity of black earth, and a howling Abraham Lincoln bestrewed the floor. And similar episodes, in his brief experience with this world, had not brought rewards. It was from sheer amazement that his tears ceased to flow—amazement and lack of breath—for the beautiful lady sprang up and seized him in her arms, and called Mathilde, who eventually brought a white and gold box. And while Abraham sat consuming its contents in ecstasy he suddenly realized that the beautiful lady had forgotten him. She had picked up the letters, every one, and stood reading them with parted lips and staring eyes.

It was Mathilde who saved him from a violent illness, closing the box and leading him downstairs, and whispered something incomprehensible in his ear as she pointed him homeward.

"Le vrai medecin—c'est toi, mon mignon."

There was a reason why Chiltern's letters had not arrived, and great were Honora's self-reproach and penitence. With a party of Englishmen he had gone up into the interior of a Central American country to visit some famous ruins. He sent her photographs of them, and of the Englishmen, and of himself. Yes, he had seen the newspapers. If she had not seen them, she was not to read them if they came to her. And if she had, she was to remember that their love was too sacred to be soiled, and too perfect to be troubled. As for himself, as she knew, he was a changed man, who thought of his former life with loathing. She had made him clean, and filled him with a new strength.

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The winter passed. The last snow melted on the little grass plot, which changed by patches from brown to emerald green; and the children ran over it again, and tracked it in the soft places, but Honora only smiled. Warm, still days were interspersed between the windy ones, when the sky was turquoise blue, when the very river banks were steeped in new colours, when the distant, shadowy mountains became real. Liberty ran riot within her. If he thought with loathing on his former life, so did she. Only a year ago she had been penned up in a New York street in that prison-house of her own making, hemmed in by surroundings which she had now learned to detest from her soul.

A few more penalties remained to be paid, and the heaviest of these was her letter to her aunt and uncle. Even as they had accepted other things in life, so had they accepted the hardest of all to bear—Honora's divorce. A memorable letter her Uncle Tom had written her after Peter's return to tell them that remonstrances were useless! She was their daughter in all but name, and they would not forsake her. When she should have obtained her divorce, she should go back to them. Their house, which had been her home, should always remain so. Honora wept and pondered long over that letter. Should she write and tell them the truth, as she had told Peter? It was not because she was ashamed of the truth that she had kept it from them throughout the winter: it was because she wished to spare them as long as possible. Cruellest circumstance of all, that a love so divine as hers should not be understood by them, and should cause them infinite pain!

The weeks and months slipped by. Their letters, after that first one, were such as she had always received from them: accounts of the weather, and of the doings of her friends at home. But now the time was at hand when she must prepare them for her marriage with Chiltern; for they would expect her in St. Louis, and she could not go there. And if she wrote them, they might try to stop the marriage, or at least to delay it for some years.

Was it possible that a lingering doubt remained in her mind that to postpone her happiness would perhaps be to lose it? In her exile she had learned enough to know that a divorced woman is like a rudderless ship at sea, at the mercy of wind and wave and current. She could not go back to her life in St. Louis: her situation there would be unbearable: her friends would not be the same friends. No, she had crossed her Rubicon and destroyed the bridge deep within her she felt that delay would be fatal, both to her and Chiltern. Long enough had the banner of their love been trailed in the dust.

Summer came again, with its anniversaries and its dragging, interminable weeks: demoralizing summer, when Mrs. Mayo quite frankly appeared at her side window in a dressing sacque, and Honora longed to do the same. But time never stands absolutely still, and the day arrived when Mr. Beckwith called in a carriage. Honora, with an audibly beating heart, got into it, and they drove down town, past the department store where Mr. Mayo spent his days, and new blocks of banks and business houses that

flanked the wide street, where the roaring and clanging of the ubiquitous trolley cars resounded.

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Honora could not define her sensations—excitement and shame and fear and hope and joy were so commingled. The colours of the red and yellow brick had never been so brilliant in the sunshine. They stopped before the new court-house and climbed the granite steps. In her sensitive state, Honora thought that some of the people paused to look after them, and that some were smiling. One woman, she thought, looked compassionate. Within, they crossed the marble pavement, the Honourable Dave handed her into an elevator, and when it stopped she followed him as in a dream to an oak-panelled door marked with a legend she did not read. Within was an office, with leather chairs, a large oak desk, a spittoon, and portraits of grave legal gentlemen on the wall.

“This is Judge Whitman’s office,” explained the Honourable Dave. “He’ll let you stay here until the case is called.”

“Is he the judge—before whom—the case is to be tried?” asked Honora.

“He surely is,” answered the Honourable Dave. “Whitman’s a good friend of mine. In fact, I may say, without exaggeration, I had something to do with his election. Now you mustn’t get flustered,” he added. “It isn’t anything like as bad as goin’ to the dentist. It don’t amount to shucks, as we used to say in Missouri.”

With these cheerful words of encouragement he slipped out of a side door into what was evidently the court room, for Honora heard a droning. After a long interval he reappeared and beckoned her with a crooked finger. She arose and followed him into the court room.

All was bustle and confusion there, and her counsel whispered that they were breaking up for the day. The judge was stretching himself; several men who must have been lawyers, and with whom Mr. Beckwith was exchanging amenities behind the railing, were arranging their books and papers; some of the people were leaving, and others talking in groups about the room. The Honourable Dave whispered to the judge, a tall, lank, cadaverous gentleman with iron-grey hair, who nodded. Honora was led forward. The Honourable Dave, standing very close to the judge and some distance from her, read in a low voice something that she could not catch—supposedly the petition. It was all quite as vague to Honora as the trial of the Jack of Hearts; the buzzing of the groups still continued around the court room, and nobody appeared in the least interested. This was a comfort, though it robbed the ceremony of all vestige of reality. It seemed incredible that the majestic and awful Institution of the ages could be dissolved with no smoke or fire, with such infinite indifference, and so much spitting. What was the use of all the pomp and circumstance and ceremony to tie the knot if it could be cut in the routine of a day’s business?

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The solemn fact that she was being put under oath meant nothing to her. This, too, was slurred and mumbled. She found herself, trembling, answering questions now from her counsel, now from the judge; and it is to be doubted to this day whether either heard her answers. Most convenient and considerate questions they were. When and where she was married, how long she had lived with her husband, what happened when they ceased to live together, and had he failed ever since to contribute to her support? Mercifully, Mr. Beckwith was in the habit of coaching his words beforehand. A reputable citizen of Salomon City was produced to prove her residence, and somebody cried out something, not loudly, in which she heard the name of Spence mentioned twice. The judge said, “Take your decree,” and picked up a roll of papers and walked away. Her knees became weak, she looked around her dizzily, and beheld the triumphant professional smile of the Honourable Dave Beckwith.

“It didn’t hurt much, did it?” he asked. “Allow me to congratulate you.”

“Is it—is it all over?” she said, quite dazed.

“Just like that,” he said. “You’re free.”

“Free!” The word rang in her ears as she drove back to the little house that had been her home. The Honourable Dave lifted his felt hat as he handed her out of the carriage, and said he would call again in the evening to see if he could do anything further for her. Mathilde, who had been watching from the window, opened the door, and led her mistress into the parlour.

“It’s—it’s all over, Mathilde,” she said.

“Mon dieu, madame,” said Mathilde, “c’est simple comme bonjour!”

A MODERN CHRONICLE

By Winston Churchill

Volume 7.

CHAPTER XI

IN WHICH IT IS ALL DONE OVER AGAIN

All morning she had gazed on the shining reaches of the Hudson, their colour deepening to blue as she neared the sea. A gold-bound volume of Shelley, with his name on the fly-leaf, lay in her lap. And two lines she repeated softly to herself—two lines that held a vision:

> "He was as the sun in his fierce youth,
> As terrible and lovely as a tempest;"

She summoned him out of the chaos of the past, and the past became the present, and he stood before her as though in the flesh. Nay, she heard his voice, his laugh, she even recognized again the smouldering flames in his eyes as he glanced into hers, and his characteristic manners and gestures. Honora wondered. In vain, during those long months of exile had she tried to reconstruct him thus the vision in its entirety would not come: rare, fleeting, partial, and tantalizing glimpses she had been vouchsafed, it is true. The whole of him had been withheld until this breathless hour before the dawn of her happiness.

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Yet, though his own impatient spirit had fared forth to meet her with this premature gift of his attributes, she had to fight the growing fear within her. Now that the days of suffering were as they had not been, insistent questions dinned in her ears: was she entitled to the joys to come? What had she done to earn them? Had hers not been an attempt, on a gigantic scale, to cheat the fates? Nor could she say whether this feeling were a wholly natural failure to grasp a future too big, or the old sense of the unreality of events that had followed her so persistently.

The Hudson disappeared. Factories, bridges, beflagged week-end resorts, ramshackle houses, and blocks of new buildings were scattered here and there. The train was running on a causeway between miles of tenements where women and children, overtaken by lassitude, hung out of the windows: then the blackness of the tunnel, and Honora closed her eyes. Four minutes, three minutes, two minutes . . . . The motion ceased. At the steps of the car a uniformed station porter seized her bag; and she started to walk down the long, narrow platform. Suddenly she halted.

“Drop anything, Miss?” inquired the porter.

“No,” answered Honora, faintly. He looked at her in concern, and she began to walk on again, more slowly.

It had suddenly come over her that the man she was going to meet she scarcely knew! Shyness seized her, a shyness that bordered on panic. And what was he really like, that she should put her whole trust in him? She glanced behind her: that way was closed: she had a mad desire to get away, to hide, to think. It must have been an obsession that had possessed her all these months. The porter was looking again, and he voiced her predicament.

“There’s only one way out, Miss.”

And then, amongst the figures massed behind the exit in the grill, she saw him, his face red-bronze with the sea tan, his crisp, curly head bared, his eyes alight with a terrifying welcome; and a tremor of a fear akin to ecstasy ran through her: the fear of the women of days gone by whose courage carried them to the postern or the strand, and fainted there. She could have taken no step farther—and there was no need. New strength flowed from the hand she held that was to carry her on and on.

He spoke her name. He led her passive, obedient, through the press to the side street, and then he paused and looked into her burning face.

“I have you at last,” he said. “Are you happy?”

“I don’t know,” she faltered. “Oh, Hugh, it all seems so strange! I don’t know what I have done.”

“I know,” he said exultantly; “but to save my soul I can’t believe it.”

She watched him, bewildered, while he put her maid into a cab, and by an effort roused herself.

“Where are you going, Hugh?”

“To get married,” he replied promptly.

She pulled down her veil.

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“Please be sensible,” she implored. “I’ve arranged to go to a hotel.”

“What hotel?”

“The—the Barnstable,” she said. The place had come to her memory on the train. “It’s very nice and—and quiet—so I’ve been told. And I’ve telegraphed for my rooms.”

“I’ll humour you this once,” he answered, and gave the order.

She got into the carriage. It had blue cushions with the familiar smell of carriage upholstery, and the people in the street still hurried about their business as though nothing in particular were happening. The horses started, and some forgotten key in her brain was touched as Chiltern raised her veil again.

“You’ll tear it, Hugh,” she said, and perforce lifted it herself. Her eyes met his—and she awoke. Not to memories or regrets, but to the future, for the recording angel had mercifully destroyed his book.

“Did you miss me?” she said.

“Miss you! My God, Honora, how can you ask? When I look back upon these last months, I don’t see how I ever passed through them. And you are changed,” he said. “I could not have believed it possible, but you are. You are—you are finer.”

He had chosen his word exquisitely. And then, as they trotted sedately through Madison Avenue, he strained her in his arms and kissed her.

“Oh, Hugh!” she cried, scarlet, as she disengaged, herself, “you mustn’t —here!”

“You’re free!” he exclaimed. “You’re mine at last! I can’t believe it! Look at me, and tell me so.”

She tried.

“Yes,” she faltered.

“Yes—what?”

“Yes. I—I am yours.”

She looked out of the window to avoid those eyes. Was this New York, or Jerusalem? Were these the streets through which she had driven and trod in her former life? Her whole soul cried out denial. No episode, no accusing reminiscences stood out—not one: the very corners were changed. Would it all change back again if he were to lessen the insistent pressure on the hand in her lap.

“Honora?”

“Yes?” she answered, with a start.

“You missed me? Look at me and tell me the truth.”

“The truth!” she faltered, and shuddered. The contrast was too great —the horror of it too great for her to speak of. The pen of Dante had not been adequate. “Don’t ask me, Hugh,” she begged, “I can’t talk about it—I never shall be able to talk about it. If I had not loved you, I should have died.”

How deeply he felt and understood and sympathized she knew by the quivering pressure on her hand. Ah, if he had not! If he had failed to grasp the meaning of her purgatory.

“You are wonderful, Honora,” was what he said in a voice broken by emotion.

She thanked him with one fleeting, tearful glance that was as a grant of all her priceless possessions. The carriage stopped, but it was some moments before they realized it.

“You may come up in a little while,” she whispered, “and lunch with me —if you like.”

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“If I like!” he repeated.

But she was on the sidewalk, following the bell boy into the cool, marble-lined area of the hotel. A smiling clerk handed her a pen, and set the new universe to rocking.

“Mrs. Leffingwell, I presume? We have your telegram.”

Mrs. Leffingwell! Who was that person? For an instant she stood blankly holding the pen, and then she wrote rapidly, if a trifle unsteadily: “Mrs. Leffingwell and maid.” A pause. Where was her home? Then she added the words, “St. Louis.”

Her rooms were above the narrow canon of the side street, looking over the roofs of the inevitable brownstone fronts opposite. While Mathilde, in the adjoining chamber, unpacked her bag, Honora stood gazing out of the sitting-room windows, trying to collect her thoughts. Her spirits had unaccountably fallen, the sense of homelessness that had pursued her all these months overtaken her once more. Never, never, she told herself, would she enter a hotel again alone; and when at last he came she clung to him with a passion that thrilled him the more because he could not understand it.

“Hugh—you will care for me?” she cried.

He kissed away her tears. He could not follow her; he only knew that what he held to him was a woman such as he had never known before. Tender, and again strangely and fiercely tender: an instrument of such miraculous delicacy as to respond, quivering, to the lightest touch; an harmonious and perfect blending of strength and weakness, of joy and sorrow,—of all the warring elements in the world. What he felt was the supreme masculine joy of possession.

At last they sat down on either side of the white cloth the waiter had laid, for even the gods must eat. Not that our deified mortals ate much on this occasion. Vesta presided once more, and after the feast was over gently led them down the slopes until certain practical affairs began to take shape in the mind of the man. Presently he looked at his watch, and then at the woman, and made a suggestion.

“Marry you now—this of afternoon!” she cried, aghast. “Hugh, are you in your right senses?”

“Yes,” he said, “I’m reasonable for the first time in my life.”

She laughed, and immediately became serious. But when she sought to marshal her arguments, she found that they had fled.

“Oh, but I couldn’t,” she answered. “And besides, there are so many things I ought to do. I—I haven’t any clothes.”

But this was a plea he could not be expected to recognize. He saw no reason why she could not buy as many as she wanted after the ceremony.

“Is that all?” he demanded.

“No—that isn’t all. Can’t you see that—that we ought to wait, Hugh?”

“No,” he exclaimed, “No I can’t see it. I can only see that every moment of waiting would be a misery for us both. I can only see that the situation, as it is to-day, is an intolerable one for you.”

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She had not expected him to see this.

“There are others to be thought of,” she said, after a moment’s hesitation.

“What others?”

The answer she should have made died on her lips.

“It seems so-indecorous, Hugh.”

“Indecorous!” he cried, and pushed back his chair and rose. “What’s indecorous about it? To leave you here alone in a hotel in New York would not only be indecorous, but senseless. How long would you put it off? a week—a month—a year? Where would you go in the meantime, and what would you do?”

“But your friends, Hugh—and mine?”

“Friends! What have they got to do with it?”

It was the woman, now, who for a moment turned practical—and for the man’s sake. She loved, and the fair fabric of the future which they were to weave together, and the plans with which his letters had been filled and of which she had dreamed in exile, had become to-day as the stuff of which moonbeams are made. As she looked up at him, eternity itself did not seem long enough for the fulfilment of that love. But he? Would the time not come when he would demand something more? and suppose that something were denied? She tried to rouse herself, to think, to consider a situation in which her instinct had whispered just once—there must be some hidden danger: but the electric touch of his hand destroyed the process, and made her incapable of reason.

“What should we gain by a week’s or a fortnight’s delay,” he was saying, “except so much misery?”

She looked around the hotel sitting-room, and tried to imagine the desolation of it, stripped of his presence. Why not? There was reason in what he said. And yet, if she had known it, it was not to reason she yielded, but to the touch of his hand.

“We will be married to-day,” he decreed. “I have planned it all. I have bought the ‘Adhemar’, the yacht which I chartered last winter. She is here. We’ll go off on her together, away from the world, for as long as you like. And then,” he ended triumphantly, “then we’ll go back to Grenoble and begin our life.”

“And begin our life!” she repeated. But it was not to him that she spoke. “Hugh, I positively have to have some clothes.”

“Clothes!” His voice expressed his contempt for the mundane thought.

“Yes, clothes,” she repeated resolutely.

He looked at his watch once more.

“Very well,” he said, “we’ll get ’em on the way.”

“On the way?” she asked.

“We’ll have to have a marriage license, I’m afraid,” he explained apologetically.

Honora grew crimson. A marriage license!

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She yielded, of course. Who could resist him? Nor need the details of that interminable journey down the crowded artery of Broadway to the Centre of Things be entered into. An ignoble errand, Honora thought; and she sat very still, with flushed cheeks, in the corner of the carriage. Chiltern's finer feelings came to her rescue. He, too, resented this senseless demand of civilization as an indignity to their Olympian loves. And he was a man to chafe at all restraints. But at last the odious thing was over, grim and implacable Law satisfied after he had compelled them to stand in line for an interminable period before his grill, and mingle with those whom he chose, in his ignorance, to call their peers. Honora felt degraded as they emerged with the hateful paper, bought at such a price. The City Hall Park, with its moving streams of people, etched itself in her memory.

"Leave me, Hugh," she said; "I will take this carriage—you must get another one."

For once, he accepted his dismissal with comparative meekness.

"When shall I come?" he asked.

"She smiled a little, in spite of herself.

"You may come for me at six o'clock," she replied.

"Six o'clock!" he exclaimed; but accepted with resignation and closed the carriage door. Enigmatical sex!

Enigmatical sex indeed! Honora spent a feverish afternoon, rest and reflection being things she feared. An afternoon in familiar places; and (strangest of all facts to be recorded!) memories and regrets troubled her not at all. Her old dressmakers, her old milliners, welcomed her as one risen, radiant, from the grave; risen, in their estimation, to a higher life. Honora knew this, and was indifferent to the wealth of meaning that lay behind their discretion. Milliners and dressmakers read the newspapers and periodicals—certain periodicals. Well they knew that the lady they flattered was the future Mrs. Hugh Chiltern.

Nothing whatever of an indelicate nature happened. There was no mention of where to send the bill, or of whom to send it to. Such things as she bought on the spot were placed in her carriage. And happiest of all omissions, she met no one she knew. The praise that Madame Barriere lavished on Honora's figure was not flattery, because the Paris models fitted her to perfection. A little after five she returned to her hotel, to a Mathilde in a high state of suppressed excitement. And at six, the appointed fateful hour, arrayed in a new street gown of dark green cloth, she stood awaiting him.

He was no laggard. The bell on the church near by was still singing from the last stroke when he knocked, flung open the door, and stood for a moment staring at her. Not that

she had been shabby when he had wished to marry her at noon: no self-respecting woman is ever shabby; not that her present costume had any of the elements of overdress; far from it. Being a woman, she had her thrill of triumph at his exclamation. Diana had no need, perhaps, of a French dressmaker, but it is an open question whether she would have scorned them. Honora stood motionless, but her smile for him was like the first quivering shaft of day. He opened a box, and with a strange mixture of impetuosity and reverence came forward. And she saw that he held in his hand a string of great, glistening pearls.

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“They were my mother’s,” he said. “I have had them restrung—for you.”

“Oh, Hugh!” she cried. She could find no words to express the tremor within. And she stood passively, her eyes half closed, while he clasped the string around the lace collar that pressed the slender column of her neck and kissed her.

Even the humble beings who work in hotels are responsive to unusual disturbances in the ether. At the Barnstable, a gala note prevailed: bell boys, porters, clerk, and cashier, proud of their sudden wisdom, were wreathed in smiles. A new automobile, in Chiltern’s colours, with his crest on the panel, was panting beside the curb.

“I meant to have had it this morning,” he apologized as he handed her in, “but it wasn’t ready in time.”

Honora heard him, and said something in reply. She tried in vain to rouse herself from the lethargy into which she had fallen, to cast off the spell. Up Fifth Avenue they sped, past meaningless houses, to the Park. The crystal air of evening was suffused with the level evening light; and as they wound in and out under the spreading trees she caught glimpses across the shrubbery of the deepening blue of waters. Pools of mystery were her eyes.

The upper West Side is a definite place on the map, and full, undoubtedly, of palpitating human joys and sorrows. So far as Honora was concerned, it might have been Bagdad. The automobile had stopped before a residence, and she found herself mounting the steps at Chiltern’s side. A Swedish maid opened the door.

“Is Mr. White at home?” Chiltern asked.

It seemed that “the Reverend Mr. White” was. He appeared, a portly gentleman with frock coat and lawn tie who resembled the man in the moon. His head, like polished ivory, increased the beaming effect of his welcome, and the hand that pressed Honora’s was large and soft and warm. But dreams are queer things, in which no events surprise us.

The reverend gentleman, as he greeted Chiltern, pronounced his name with unction. His air of hospitality, of good-fellowship, of taking the world as he found it, could not have been improved upon. He made it apparent at once that nothing could surprise him. It was the most natural circumstance in life that two people should arrive at his house in an automobile at half-past six in the evening and wish to get married: if they chose this method instead of the one involving awnings and policemen and uncomfortably-arrayed relations and friends, it was none of Mr. White’s affair. He led them into the Gothic sanctum at the rear of the house where the famous sermons were written that shook the sounding-board of the temple where the gentleman preached,—-the sermons that sometimes got into the newspapers. Mr. White cleared his throat.

“I am—very familiar with your name, Mr. Chiltern,” he said, “and it is a pleasure to be able to serve you, and the lady who is so shortly to be your wife. Your servant arrived with your note at four o’clock. Ten minutes later, and I should have missed him.”

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And then Honora heard Chiltern saying somewhat coldly:—“In order to save time, Mr. White, I wish to tell you that Mrs. Leffingwell has been divorced—”

The Reverend Mr. White put up a hand before him, and looked down at the carpet, as one who would not dwell upon painful things.

“Unfortunate—ahem—mistakes will occur in life, Mr. Chiltern—in the best of lives,” he replied. “Say no more about it. I am sure, looking at you both—”

“Very well then,” said Chiltern brusquely, “I knew you would have to know. And here,” he added, “is an essential paper.”

A few minutes later, in continuation of the same strange dream, Honora was standing at Chiltern’s side and the Reverend Mr. White was addressing them: What he said—apart of it at least—seemed curiously familiar. Chiltern put a ring on a finger of her ungloved hand. It was a supreme moment in her destiny—this she knew. Between her responses she repeated it to herself, but the mighty fact refused to be registered. And then, suddenly, rang out the words:

“Those whom God hath joined together let no man Put asunder.”

Those whom God hath joined together! Mr. White was congratulating her. Other people were in the room—the minister’s son, his wife, his brother-in-law. She was in the street again, in the automobile, without knowing how she got there, and Chiltern close beside her in the limousine.

“My wife!” he whispered.

Was she? Could it be true, be lasting, be binding for ever and ever? Her hand pressed his convulsively.

“Oh, Hugh!” she cried, “care for me—stay by me forever. Will you promise?”

“I promise, Honora,” he repeated. “Henceforth we are one.”

Honora would have prolonged forever that honeymoon on summer seas. In those blissful days she was content to sit by the hour watching him as, bareheaded in the damp salt breeze, he sailed the great schooner and gave sharp orders to the crew. He was a man who would be obeyed, and even his flashes of temper pleased her. He was her master, too, and she gloried in the fact. By the aid of the precious light within her, she studied him.

He loved her mightily, fiercely, but withal tenderly. With her alone he was infinitely tender, and it seemed that something in him cried out for battle against the rest of the world. He had his way, in port and out of it. He brooked no opposition, and delighted to

carry, against his captain's advice, more canvas than was wise when it blew heavily. But the yacht, like a woman, seemed a creature of his will; to know no fear when she felt his guiding hand, even though the green water ran in the scuppers.

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And every day anew she scanned his face, even as he scanned the face of the waters. What was she searching for? To have so much is to become miserly, to fear lest a grain of the precious store be lost. On the second day they had anchored, for an hour or two, between the sandy headlands of a small New England port, and she had stood on the deck watching his receding figure under the flag of the gasoline launch as it made its way towards the deserted wharves. Beyond the wharves was an elm-arched village street, and above the verdure rose the white cupola of the house of some prosperous sea-captain of bygone times. Honora had not wished to go ashore. First he had begged, and then he had laughed as he had leaped into the launch. She lay in a chaise longue, watching it swinging idly at the dock.

The night before he had written letters and telegrams. Once he had looked up at her as she sat with a book in her hand across the saloon, and caught her eyes. She had been pretending not to watch him.

“Wedding announcements,” he said.

And she had smiled back at him bravely. Such was the first acknowledgment between them that the world existed.

“A little late,” he observed, smiling in his turn as he changed his pen, “but they’ll have to make allowances for the exigencies of the situation. And they’ve been after me to settle down for so many years that they ought to be thankful to get them at all. I’ve told them that after a decent period they may come to Grenoble—in the late autumn. We don’t want anybody before then, do we, Honora?”

“No,” she said faintly; and added, “I shall always be satisfied with you alone, Hugh.”

He laughed happily, and presently she went up on deck and stood with her face to the breeze. There were no sounds save the musical beat of the water against the strakes, and the low hum of wind on the towering vibrant sails. One moulten silver star stood out above all others. To the northward, somewhere beyond the spot where sea and sky met in the hidden kiss of night, was Newport,—were his relations and her friends. What did they think? He, at least, had no anxieties about the world, why should she? Their defiance of it had been no greater than that of an hundred others on whom it had smiled benignly. But had not the others truckled more to its conventions? Little she cared about it, indeed, and if he had turned the prow of the ‘Adhemar’ towards the unpeopled places of the earth, her joy would have been untroubled.

One after another the days glided by, while with the sharpened senses of a great love she watched for a sign of the thing that slept in him—of the thing that had driven him home from his wanderings to re-create his life. When it awoke, she would have to share him; now he was hers alone. Her feelings towards this thing did not assume the proportions of jealousy or fear; they were merely alert, vaguely disquieting. The

sleeping thing was not a monster. No, but it might grow into one, if its appetite were not satisfied, and blame her.

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She told herself that, had he lacked ambition, she could not have loved him, and did not stop to reflect upon the completeness of her satisfaction with the Viking. He seemed, indeed, in these weeks, one whom the sea has marked for its own, and her delight in watching him as he moved about the boat never palled. His nose reminded her of the prow of a ship of war, and his deep-set eyes were continually searching the horizon for an enemy. Such were her fancies. In the early morning when he donned his sleeveless bathing suit, she could never resist the temptation to follow him on deck to see him plunge into the cold ocean: it gave her a delightful little shiver—and he was made like one of the gods of Valhalla.

She had discovered, too, in these intimate days, that he had the Northman's temperament; she both loved and dreaded his moods. And sometimes, when the yacht glided over smoother seas, it was his pleasure to read to her, even poetry and the great epics. That he should be fond of the cruel Scotch ballads she was not surprised; but his familiarity with the book of Job, and his love for it, astonished her. It was a singular library that he had put on board the 'Adhemar'.

One evening when the sails flapped idly and the blocks rattled, when they had been watching in silence the flaming orange of the sunset above the amethystine Camden hills, he spoke the words for which she had been waiting.

"Honora, what do you say to going back to Grenoble?"

She succeeded in smiling at him.

"Whenever you like, Hugh," she said.

So the bowsprit of the 'Adhemar' was turned homewards; and with every league of water they left behind them his excitement and impatience seemed to grow.

"I can't wait to show it to you, Honora—to see you in it," he exclaimed. "I have so long pictured you there, and our life as it will be."

CHAPTER XII

THE ENTRANCE INTO EDEN

They had travelled through the night, and in the early morning left the express at a junction. Honora sat in the straight-backed seat of the smaller train with parted lips and beating heart, gazing now and again at the pearly mists rising from the little river valley they were climbing. Chiltern was like a schoolboy.

"We'll soon be there," he cried, but it was nearly nine o'clock when they reached the Gothic station that marked the end of the line. It was a Chiltern line, he told her, and

she was already within the feudal domain. Time indeed that she awoke! She reached the platform to confront a group of upturned, staring faces, and for the moment her courage failed her. Somehow, with Chiltern's help, she made her way to a waiting omnibus backed up against the boards. The footman touched his hat, the grey-headed coachman saluted, and they got in. As the horses started off at a quick trot, Honora saw that the group on the station platform had with one consent swung about to stare after them.

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They passed through the main street of the town, lined with plate-glass windows and lively signs, and already bustling with the business of the day, through humbler thoroughfares, and presently rumbled over a bridge that spanned a rushing stream confined between the foundation walls of mills. Hundreds of yards of mills stretched away on either side; mills with windows wide open, and within them Honora heard the clicking and roaring of machinery, and saw the men and women at their daily tasks. Life was a strange thing that they should be doing this while she should be going to live in luxury at a great country place. On one of the walls she read the legend Chiltern and Company.

“They still keep our name,” said Hugh, “although they are in the trust.”

He pointed out to her, with an air of pride, every landmark by the roadside. In future they were to have a new meaning—they were to be shared with her. And he spoke of the times—as child and youth, home from the seashore or college, he had driven over the same road. It wound to the left, behind the mills, threaded a village of neat wooden houses where the better class of operatives lived, reached the river again, and turned at last through a brick gateway, past a lodge in the dense shade of sheltering boughs, into a wooded drive that climbed, by gentle degrees, a slope. Human care for generations had given to the place a tradition. People had lived here and loved those trees—his people. And could it be that she was to inherit all this, with him? Was her name really Chiltern?

The beating of her heart became a pain when in the distance through the spreading branches she caught a glimpse of the long, low outline of the house, a vision at once familiar and unreal. How often in the months gone by had she called up the memory of the photograph she had once seen, only to doubt the more that she should ever behold that house and these trees with him by her side! They drew up before the door, and a venerable, ruddy-faced butler stood gravely on the steps to welcome them. Hugh leaped out. He was still the schoolboy.

“Starling,” he said, “this is Mrs. Chiltern.”

Honora smiled tremulously.

“How do you do, Starling?” she said.

“Starling’s an old friend, Honora. He’s been here ever since I can remember.”

The blue eyes of the old servant were fixed on her with a strange, searching expression. Was it compassion she read in them, on this that should be the happiest of her days? In that instant, unaccountably, her heart went out to the old man; and something of what he had seen, and something of what was even now passing within

him, came to her intuitively. It was as though, unexpectedly, she had found a friend—-and a friend who had had no previous intentions of friendship.

“I’m sure I wish you happiness, madame,—and Mr. Hugh, he said in a voice not altogether firm.

“Happiness!” cried Hugh. “I’ve never known what it was before now, Starling.”

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The old man's eyes glistened.

"And you've come to stay, sir?"

"All my life, Starling," said Hugh.

They entered the hall. It was wide and cool, white panelled to the ceiling, with a dark oak floor. At the back of it was an eighteenth-century stairway, with a band of red carpet running up the steps, and a wrought-iron guard with a velvet-covered rail. Halfway up, the stairway divided at a landing, lighted by great triple windows of small panes.

"You may have breakfast in half an hour, Starling," said Chiltern, and led Honora up the stairs into the east wing, where he flung open one of the high mahogany doors on the south side. "These are your rooms, Honora. I have had Keller do them all over for you, and I hope you'll like them. If you don't, we'll change them again."

Her answer was an exclamation of delight. There was a bedroom in pink, with brocaded satin on the walls, and an oriel window thrust out over the garden; a panelled boudoir at the corner of the house, with a marble mantel before which one of Marie Antoinette's duchesses had warmed her feet; and shelves lined with gold-lettered books. From its windows, across the flowering shrubbery and through the trees, she saw the gleaming waters of a lake, and the hills beyond. From this view she turned, and caught her breath, and threw her arms about her husband's neck. He was astonished to see that her eyes were filled with tears.

"Oh, Hugh," she cried, "it's too perfect! It almost makes me afraid."

"We will be very happy, dearest," he said, and as he kissed her he laughed at the fates.

"I hope so—I pray so," she said, as she clung to him. "But—don't laugh,—I can't bear it."

He patted her cheek.

"What a strange little girl you are!" he said. "I suppose I shouldn't be mad about you if you weren't that way. Sometimes I wonder how many women I have married."

She smiled at him through her tears.

"Isn't that polygamy, Hugh?" she asked.

It was all like a breathless tale out of one of the wonder books of youth. So, at least, it seemed to Honora as she stood, refreshed with a new white linen gown, hesitating on the threshold of her door before descending. Some time the bell must ring, or the cock crow, or the fairy beckon with a wand, and she would have to go back. Back where?

She did not know—she could not remember. Cinderella dreaming by the embers, perhaps.

He was awaiting her in the little breakfast room, its glass casements open to the garden with the wall and the round stone seat. The simmering urn, the white cloth, the shining silver, the big green melons that the hot summer sun had ripened for them alone, and Hugh's eyes as they rested on her—such was her illusion. Nor was it quite dispelled when he lighted a pipe and they started to explore their Eden, wandering through chambers with, low ceilings in the old part of the house, and larger, higher apartments in the portion that was called new. In the great darkened library, side by side against the Spanish leather on the walls, hung the portraits of his father and mother in heavy frames of gilt.

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Her husband was pleased that she should remain so long before them. And for a while, as she stood lost in contemplation, he did not speak. Once she glanced at him, and then back at the stern face of the General, —stern, yet kindly. The eyes, deep-set under bushy brows, like Hugh's, were full of fire; and yet the artist had made them human, too. A dark, reddish brown, close-trimmed mustache and beard hid the mouth and chin. Hugh had inherited the nose, but the father's forehead was wider and fuller. Hugh was at once a newer type, and an older. The face and figure of the General were characteristic of the mid-century American of the northern states, a mixture of boldness and caution and Puritanism, who had won his battles in war and commerce by a certain native quality of mind.

"I never appreciated him," said Hugh at length, "until after he died —long after. Until now, in fact. At times we were good friends, and then something he would say or do would infuriate me, and I would purposely make him angry. He had a time and a rule for everything, and I could not bear rules. Breakfast was on the minute, an hour in his study to attend to affairs about the place, so many hours in his office at the mills, in the president's room at the bank, vestry and charity meetings at regular intervals. No movement in all this country round about was ever set on foot without him. He was one to be finally reckoned with. And since his death, many proofs have come to me of the things he did for people of which the world was ignorant. I have found out at last that his way of life was, in the main, the right way. But I know now, Honora," he added soberly, slipping his hand within her arm, "I know now that without you I never could do all I intend to do."

"Oh, don't say that!" she cried. "Don't say that!"

"Why not?" he asked, smiling at her vehemence. "It is not a confession of weakness. I had the determination, it is true. I could—I should have done something, but my deeds would have lacked the one thing needful to lift them above the commonplace—at least for me. You are the inspiration. With you here beside me, I feel that I can take up this work with joy. Do you understand?"

She pressed his hand with her arm.

"Hugh," she said slowly, "I hope that I shall be a help, and not—not a hindrance."

"A hindrance!" he exclaimed. "You don't know, you can't realize, what you are to me."

She was silent, and when she lifted her eyes it was to rest them on the portrait of his mother. And she seemed to read in the sweet, sad eyes a question—a question not to be put into words. Chiltern, following her gaze, did not speak: for a space they looked at the portrait together, and in silence . . . .

From one end of the house to the other they went, Hugh reviving at the sight of familiar objects a hundred memories of his childhood; and she trying to imagine that childhood, so different from her own, passed in this wonderful place. In the glass cases of the gun room, among the shining, blue barrels which he had used in all parts of the world, was the little shotgun his father had had made for him when he was twelve years old. Hugh locked the door after them when they came out, and smiled as he put the key in his pocket.

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“My destroying days are over,” he declared.

Honora put on a linen hat and they took the gravelled path to the stables, where the horses, one by one, were brought out into the courtyard for their inspection. In anticipation of this hour there was a blood bay for Honora, which Chiltern had bought in New York. She gave a little cry of delight when she saw the horse shining in the sunlight, his nostrils in the air, his brown eyes clear, his tapering neck patterned with veins. And then there was the dairy, with the fawn-coloured cows and calves; and the hillside pastures that ran down to the river, and the farm lands where the stubbled grain was yellowing. They came back by the path that wound through the trees and shrubbery bordering the lake to the walled garden, ablaze in the mellow sunlight with reds and purples, salvias and zinnias, dahlias, gladioli, and asters.

Here he left her for a while, sitting dreamily on the stone bench. Mrs. Hugh Chiltern, of Grenoble! Over and over she repeated that name to herself, and it refused somehow to merge with her identity. Yet was she mistress of this fair domain; of that house which had sheltered them race for a century, and the lines of which her eye caressed with a loving reverence; and the Chiltern pearls even then lay hidden around her throat.

Her thoughts went back, at this, to the gentle lady to whom they had belonged, and whose look began again to haunt her. Honora’s superstition startled her. What did it mean, that look? She tried to recall where she had seen it before, and suddenly remembered that the eyes of the old butler had held something not unlike it. Compassionate—this was the only word that would describe it. No, it had not proclaimed her an intruder, though it may have been ready to do so the moment before her appearance; for there was a note of surprise in it—surprise and compassion.

This was the lady in whose footsteps she was to walk, whose charities and household cares she was to assume! Tradition, order, observance, responsibility, authority it was difficult to imagine these as a logical part of the natural sequence of her life. She would begin to-day, if God would only grant her these things she had once contemned, and that seemed now so precious. Her life—her real life would begin to-day. Why not? How hard she would strive to be worthy of this incomparable gift! It was hers, hers! She listened, but the only answer was the humming of the bees in the still September morning.

Chiltern’s voice aroused her. He was standing in the breakfast room talking to the old butler.

“You’re sure there were no other letters, Starling, besides these bills?”

Honora became tense.

“No, sir,” she heard the butler say, and she seemed to detect in his deferential voice the note of anxiety suppressed in the other’s. “I’m most particular about letters, sir, as one who lived so many years with your father would be. All that came were put in your study, Mr. Hugh.”

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“It doesn’t matter,” answered Chiltern, carelessly, and stepped out into the garden. He caught sight of her, hesitated the fraction of a moment, and as he came forward again the cloud in his eyes vanished. And yet she was aware that he was regarding her curiously.

“What,” he said gayly, “still here?”

“It is too beautiful!” she cried. “I could sit here forever.”

She lifted her face trustfully, smilingly, to his, and he stooped down and kissed it . . . .

To give the jealous fates not the least chance to take offence, the higher life they were to lead began at once. And yet it seemed at times to Honora as though this higher life were the gift the fates would most begrudge: a gift reserved for others, the pretensions to which were a kind of knavery. Merriment, forgetfulness, music, the dance; the cup of pleasure and the feast of Babylon—these might more readily have been vouchsafed; even deemed to have been bargained for. But to take that which supposedly had been renounced—virtue, sobriety, security, respect —would this be endured? She went about it breathlessly, like a thief.

Never was there a more exemplary household. They rose at half-past seven, they breakfasted at a quarter after eight; at nine, young Mr. Manning, the farm superintendent, was in waiting, and Hugh spent two or more hours in his company, inspecting, correcting, planning; for two thousand acres of the original Chiltern estate still remained. Two thousand acres which, since the General’s death, had been at sixes and sevens. The General’s study, which was Hugh’s now, was piled high with new and bulky books on cattle and cultivation of the soil. Government and state and private experts came and made tests and went away again; new machinery arrived, and Hugh passed hours in the sun, often with Honora by his side, installing it. General Chiltern had been president and founder of the Grenoble National Bank, and Hugh took up his duties as a director.

Honora sought, with an energy that had in it an element of desperation, to keep pace with her husband. For she was determined that he should have no interests in which she did not share. In those first days it was her dread that he might grow away from her, and instinct told her that now or never must the effort be made. She, too, studied farming; not from books, but from him. In their afternoon ride along the shady river road, which was the event of her day, she encouraged him to talk of his plans and problems, that he might thus early form the habit of bringing them to her. And the unsuspecting male in him responded, innocent of the simple subterfuge. After an exhaustive discourse on the elements lacking in the valley soil, to which she had listened in silent intensity, he would exclaim:

“By George, Honora, you’re a continual surprise to me. I had no idea a woman would take an interest in these things, or grasp them the way you do.”

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Lordly commendations these, and she would receive them with a flush of gratitude.

Nor was it ever too hot, or she too busy with household cares, for her to follow him to the scene of his operations, whatever these might be: she would gladly stand for an hour listening to a consultation with the veterinary about an ailing cow. Her fear was lest some matter of like importance should escape her. She had private conversations with Mr. Manning, that she might surprise her husband by an unsuspected knowledge. Such were her ruses.

The housekeeper who had come up from New York was the subject of a conjugal conversation.

“I am going to send her away, Hugh,” Honora announced. “I don’t believe ——your mother had one.”

The housekeeper’s departure was the beginning of Honora’s real intimacy with Starling. Complicity, perhaps, would be a better word for the commencement of this relationship. First of all, there was an inspection of the family treasures: the table-linen, the silver, and the china —Sevres, Royal Worcester, and Minton, and the priceless dinner-set, of Lowestoft which had belonged to Alexander Chiltern, reserved, for great occasions only: occasions that Starling knew by heart; their dates, and the guests the Lowestoft had honoured. His air was ceremonial as he laid, reverently, the sample pieces on the table before her, but it seemed to Honora that he spoke as one who recalls departed glories, who held a conviction that the Lowestoft would never be used again.

Although by unalterable custom he submitted, at breakfast, the menus of the day to Hugh, the old butler came afterwards to Honora’s boudoir during her struggle with the account books. Sometimes she would look up and surprise his eyes fixed upon her, and one day she found at her elbow a long list made out in a painstaking hand.

“What’s this, Starling?” she asked.

“If you please, madame,” he answered, “they’re the current prices in the markets—-here.”

She thanked him. Nor was his exquisite delicacy in laying stress upon the locality lost upon her. That he realized the magnitude—for her—of the task to which she had set herself; that he sympathized deeply with the spirit which had undertaken it, she was as sure as though he had said so. He helped her thus in a dozen unobtrusive ways, never once recognizing her ignorance; but he made her feel the more that that ignorance was a shameful thing not to be spoken of. Speculations upon him were irresistible. She was continually forgetting the nature of his situation, and he grew gradually to typify in her mind the Grenoble of the past. She knew his principles as well as though he had spoken them—which he never did. For him, the world had become awry; he abhorred

divorce, and that this modern abomination had touched the house of Chiltern was a calamity that had shaken the very foundations of his soul. In spite of this, he had remained. Why? Perhaps from habit, perhaps from love of the family and Hugh,—-perhaps to see!

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And having stayed, fascination had laid hold of him,—of that she was sure,—and his affections had incomprehensibly become involved. He was as one assisting at a high tragedy not unworthy of him, the outcome of which he never for an instant doubted. And he gave Honora the impression that he alone, inscrutable, could have pulled aside the curtain and revealed the end.

CHAPTER XIII

OF THE WORLD BEYOND THE GATES

Honora paused in her toilet, and contemplated for a moment the white skirt that her maid presented.

“I think I’ll wear the blue pongee to-day, Mathilde,” she said.

The decision for the blue pongee was the culmination of a struggle begun with the opening of her eyes that morning. It was Sunday, and the time was at hand when she must face the world. Might it not be delayed a little while—a week longer? For the remembrance of the staring eyes which had greeted her on her arrival at the station at Grenoble troubled her. It seemed to her a cruel thing that the house of God should hold such terrors for her: to-day she had a longing for it that she had never felt in her life before.

Chiltern was walking in the garden, waiting for her to breakfast with him, and her pose must have had in it an element of the self-conscious when she appeared, smilingly, at the door.

“Why, you’re all dressed up,” he said.

“It’s Sunday, Hugh.”

“So it is,” he agreed, with what may have been a studied lightness—she could not tell.

“I’m going to church,” she said bravely.

“I can’t say much for old Stopford,” declared her husband. “His sermons used to arouse all the original sin in me, when I had to listen to them.”

She poured out his coffee.

“I suppose one has to take one’s clergyman as one does the weather,” she said. “We go to church for something else besides the sermon—don’t we?”

“I suppose so, if we go at all,” he replied. “Old Stopford imposes a pretty heavy penalty.”

“Too heavy for you?” she asked, and smiled at him as she handed him the cup.

“Too heavy for me,” he said, returning her smile. “To tell you the truth, Honora, I had an overdose of church in my youth, here and at school, and I’ve been trying to even up ever since.”

“You’d like me to go, wouldn’t you, Hugh?” she ventured, after a silence.

“Indeed I should,” he answered, and again she wondered to what extent his cordiality was studied, or whether it were studied at all. “I’m very fond of that church, in spite of the fact that—that I may be said to dissemble my fondness.” She laughed with him, and he became serious. “I still contribute—the family’s share toward its support. My father was very proud of it, but it is really my mother’s church. It was due to her that it was built.”

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Thus was comedy played—and Honora by no the means sure that it was a comedy. Even her alert instinct had not been able to detect the acting, and the intervening hours were spent in speculating whether her fears had not been overdone. Nevertheless, under the eyes of Starling, at twenty minutes to eleven she stepped into the victoria with an outward courage, and drove down the shady avenue towards the gates. Sweet-toned bells were ringing as she reached the residence portion of the town, and subdued pedestrians in groups and couples made their way along the sidewalks. They stared at her; and she in turn, with heightened colour, stared at her coachman's back. After all, this first Sunday would be the most difficult.

The carriage turned into a street arched by old elms, and flanked by the houses of the most prosperous townspeople. Some of these were of the old-fashioned, classic type, and others new examples of a national architecture seeking to find itself,—white and yellow colonial, roughcast modifications of the Shakespearian period, and nondescript mixtures of cobblestones and shingles. Each was surrounded by trim lawns and shrubbery. The church itself was set back from the street. It was of bluish stone, and half covered with Virginia creeper.

At this point, had the opportunity for a secret retreat presented itself, Honora would have embraced it, for until now she had not realized the full extent of the ordeal. Had her arrival been heralded by sounding trumpets, the sensation it caused could not have been greater. In her Eden, the world had been forgotten; the hum of gossip beyond the gates had not reached her. But now, as the horses approached the curb, their restive feet clattering on the hard pavement, in the darkened interior of the church she saw faces turned, and entering worshippers pausing in the doorway. Something of what the event meant for Grenoble dawned upon her: something, not all; but all that she could bear.

If it be true that there is no courage equal to that which a great love begets in a woman, Honora's at that moment was sublime. Her cheeks tingled, and her knees weakened under her as she ran the gantlet to the church door, where she was met by a gentleman on whose face she read astonishment unalloyed: amazement, perhaps, is not too strong a word for the sensation it conveyed to her, and it occurred to her afterwards that there was an element in it of outrage. It was a countenance peculiarly adapted to such an expression—yellow, smooth-shaven, heavy-jowled, with one drooping eye; and she needed not to be told that she had encountered, at the outset, the very pillar of pillars. The frock coat, the heavy watch chain, the square-toed boots, all combined to make a Presence.

An instinctive sense of drama amongst the onlookers seemed to create a hush, as though these had been the unwilling witnesses to an approaching collision and were awaiting the crash. The gentleman stood planted in the inner doorway, his drooping eye fixed on hers.

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“I am Mrs. Chiltern,” she faltered.

He hesitated the fraction of an instant, but he somehow managed to make it plain that the information was superfluous. He turned without a word and marched majestically up the aisle before her to the fourth pew from the front on the right. There he faced about and laid a protesting hand on the carved walnut, as though absolving himself in the sight of his God and his fellow-citizens. Honora fell on her knees.

She strove to calm herself by prayer: but the glances of a congregation focussed between her shoulder-blades seemed to burn her back, and the thought of the concentration of so many minds upon her distracted her own. She could think of no definite prayer. Was this God’s tabernacle? or the market-place, and she at the tail of a cart? And was she not Hugh Chiltern’s wife, entitled to his seat in the place of worship of his fathers? She rose from her knees, and her eyes fell on the softly glowing colours of a stained-glass window: In memoriam—Alicia Reyburn Chiltern. Hugh’s mother, the lady in whose seat she sat.

The organist, a sprightly young man, came in and began turning over his music, and the choir took their-places, in the old-fashioned’ manner. Then came the clergyman. His beard was white, his face long and narrow and shrivelled, his forehead protruding, his eyes of the cold blue of a winter’s sky. The service began, and Honora repeated the familiar prayers which she had learned by heart in childhood—until her attention was arrested by the words she spoke: “We have offended against Thy holy laws.” Had she? Would not God bless her marriage? It was not until then that she began to pray with an intensity that blotted out the world that He would not punish her if she had done wrong in His sight. Surely, if she lived henceforth in fear of Him, He would let her keep this priceless love which had come to her! And it was impossible that He should regard it as an inordinate and sinful affection—since it had filled her life with light. As the wife of Hugh Chiltern she sought a blessing. Would God withhold it? He would not, she was sure, if they lived a sober and a righteous life. He would take that into account, for He was just.

Then she grew calmer, and it was not until after the doctrinal sermon which Hugh had predicted that her heart began to beat painfully once more, when the gentleman who had conducted her to her seat passed her the plate. He inspired her with an instinctive fear; and she tried to imagine, in contrast, the erect and soldierly figure of General Chiltern performing the same office. Would he have looked on her more kindly?

When the benediction was pronounced, she made her way out of the church with downcast eyes. The people parted at the door to let her pass, and she quickened her step, gained the carriage at last, and drove away —seemingly leaving at her back a buzz of comment. Would she ever have the courage to do it again?

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The old butler, as he flung open the doors at her approach, seemed to be scrutinizing her.

“Where’s Mr. Chiltern, Starling?” she asked.

“He’s gone for a ride, madame.”

Hugh had gone for a ride!

She did not see him until lunch was announced, when he came to the table in his riding clothes. It may have been that he began to talk a little eagerly about the excursion he had made to an outlying farm and the conversation he had had with the farmer who leased it.

“His lease is out in April,” said Chiltern, “and when I told him I thought I’d turn the land into the rest of the estate he tried to bribe me into a renewal.”

“Bribe you?”

Chiltern laughed.

“Only in joke, of course. The man’s a character, and he’s something of a politician in these parts. He intimated that there would be a vacancy in this congressional district next year, that Grierson was going to resign, and that a man with a long purse who belonged to the soil might have a chance. I suppose he thinks I would buy it.”

“And—would you like to go to Congress, Hugh?”

“Well,” he said, smiling, “a man never can tell when he may have to eat his words. I don’t say I shouldn’t—in the distant future. It would have pleased the General. But if I go,” he added with characteristic vigour, “it will be in spite of the politicians, not because of them. If I go I shan’t go bound, and I’ll fight for it. I should enjoy that.”

And she was able to accord him the smile of encouragement he expected.

“I am sure you would,” she replied. “I think you might have waited until this afternoon and taken me,” she reproached him. “You know how I enjoy going with you to those places.”

It was not until later in the meal that he anticipated, in an admirably accidental manner, the casual remark she had intended to make about church.

“Your predictions were fulfilled,” she answered; “the sermon wasn’t thrilling.”

He glanced at her. And instead of avoiding his eyes, she smiled into them.

“Did you see the First Citizen of Grenoble?” he inquired.

“I am sure of it,” she laughed, “if he’s yellow, with a drooping eye and a presence; he was kind enough to conduct me to the pew.”

“Yes,” he exclaimed, “that’s Israel Simpson—you couldn’t miss him. How I used to hate him when I was a boy! I haven’t quite got over it yet. I used to outdo myself to make things uncomfortable for him when he came up here—I think it was because he always seemed to be truckling. He was ridiculously servile and polite in those days. He’s changed since,” added Hugh, dryly. “He must quite have forgotten by this time that the General made him.”

“Is—is he so much?” said Honora.

Her husband laughed.

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“Is it possible that you have seen him and still ask that?” said he. “He is Grenoble. Once the Chilterns were. He is the head of the honoured firm of Israel Simpson and Sons, the president of the Grenoble National Bank, the senior warden of the church, a director in the railway. Twice a year, in the columns of the New York newspapers dedicated to the prominent arrivals at the hotels, you may read the name of Israel Simpson of Grenoble. Three times has he been abroad, respectably accompanied by Maria, who invariably returns to read a paper on the cathedrals and art before the Woman’s Club.”

Maria is his wife, I suppose.”

“Yes. Didn’t you run across Maria? She’s quite as pronounced, in her way, as Israel. A very tower of virtue.”

“I didn’t meet anybody, Hugh,” said Honora. “I’ll—I’ll look for her next Sunday. I hurried out. It was a little embarrassing the first time,” she added, “your family being so prominent in Grenoble.”

Upon this framework, the prominence of his family, she built up during the coning week a new structure of hope. It was strange she had never thought before of this quite obvious explanation for the curiosity of Grenoble. Perhaps—perhaps it was not prejudice, after all—or not all of it. The wife of the Chiltern heir would naturally inspire a considerable interest in any event, and Mrs. Hugh Chiltern in particular. And these people would shortly understand, if they did not now understand, that Hugh had come back voluntarily and from a sense of duty to assume the burdens and responsibilities that so many of his generation and class had shirked. This would tell in their favour, surely. At this point in her meditations she consulted the mirror, to behold a modest, slim-waisted young woman becomingly arrayed in white linen, whose cheeks were aglow with health, whose eyes seemingly reflected the fire of a distant high vision. Not a Poppaea, certainly, nor a Delila. No, it was unbelievable that this, the very field itself of their future labours, should be denied them. Her heart, at the mere conjecture, turned to stone.

During the cruise of the Adhemar she had often watched, in the gathering darkness, those revolving lights on headland or shoal that spread now a bright band across the sea, and again left the waters desolate in the night. Thus, ceaselessly revolving from white hope to darker doubt, were her thoughts, until sometimes she feared to be alone with them, and surprised him by her presence in his busiest moments. For he was going ahead on the path they had marked out with a faith in which she could perceive no flaw. If faint and shadowy forms had already come between them, he gave no evidence of having as yet discerned these. There was the absence of news from his family, for instance,—the Graingers, the Stranger, the Shorters, and the Pendletons, whom she had never seen; he had never spoken to her of this, and he seemed to hold it as of no account. Her instinct whispered that it had left its mark, a hidden mark. And

while she knew that consideration for her prompted him to hold his peace, she told herself that she would have been happier had he spoken of it.

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Always she was brought back to Grenoble when she saw him thus, manlike, with his gaze steadily fixed on the task. If New York itself withheld recognition, could Grenoble —provincial and conservative Grenoble, preserving still the ideas of the last century for which his family had so unflinchingly stood—be expected to accord it? New York! New York was many, many things, she knew. The great house could have been filled from weekend to week-end from New York; but not with Graingers and Pendletons and Stranger; not with those around the walls of whose fortresses the currents of modernity still swept impotently; not with those who, while not contemning pleasure, still acknowledged duty; not with those whose assured future was that for which she might have sold her soul itself. Social free lances, undoubtedly, and unattached men; those who lived in the world of fashion but were not squeamish—Mrs. Kame, for example; and ladies like Mrs. Eustace Rindge, who had tried a second throw for happiness,—such votaries of excitement would undoubtedly have been more than glad to avail themselves of the secluded hospitality of Grenoble for that which they would have been pleased to designate as “a lively time.” Honora shuddered at the thought: And, as though the shudder had been prophetic, one morning the mail contained a letter from Mrs. Kame herself.

Mercifully Hugh had not noticed it. Honora did not recognize the handwriting, but she slipped the envelope into her lap, fearful of what it might contain, and, when she gained the privacy of her rooms, read it with quickening breath. Mrs. Kame’s touch was light and her imagination sympathetic; she was the most adaptable of the feminine portion of her nation, and since the demise of her husband she had lived, abroad and at home, among men and women of a world that does not dot its i’s or cross its t’s. Nevertheless, the letter filled Honora with a deep apprehension and a deeper resentment. Plainly and clearly stamped between its delicately worded lines was the claim of a comradeship born of Honora’s recent act. She tore the paper into strips and threw it into the flames and opened the window to the cool air of the autumn morning. She had a feeling of contamination that was intolerable.

Mrs. Kame had proposed herself—again the word “delicately” must be used —for one of Honora’s first house-parties. Only an acute perception could have read in the lady’s praise of Hugh a masterly avoidance of that part of his career already registered on the social slate. Mrs. Kame had thought about them and their wonderful happiness in these autumn days at Grenoble; to intrude on that happiness yet awhile would be a sacrilege. Later, perhaps, they would relent and see something of their friends, and throw open again the gates of a beautiful place long closed to the world. And—without the air of having picked the single instance, but of having chosen from many—Mrs. Kame added that she had only lately seen Elsie Shorter, whose admiration for Honora was greater than ever. A sentiment, Honora reflected a little bitterly, that Mrs. Shorter herself had not taken the pains to convey. Consistency was not Elsie’s jewel.

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It must perhaps be added for the sake of enlightenment that since going to Newport Honora's view of the writer of this letter had changed. In other words, enlarging ideals had dwarfed her somewhat; it was strictly true that the lady was a boon companion of everybody. Her Catholicism had two limitations only: that she must be amused, and that she must not—in what she deemed the vulgar sense—be shocked.

Honora made several attempts at an answer before she succeeded in saying, simply, that Hugh was too absorbed in his work of reconstruction of the estate for them to have house-parties this autumn. And even this was a concession hard for her pride to swallow. She would have preferred not to reply at all, and this slightest of references to his work—and hers —seemed to degrade it. Before she folded the sheet she looked again at that word "reconstruction" and thought of eliminating it. It was too obviously allied to "redemption"; and she felt that Mrs. Kame could not understand redemption, and would ridicule it. Honora went downstairs and dropped her reply guiltily into the mail-bag. It was for Hugh's sake she was sending it, and from his eyes she was hiding it.

And, while we are dealing with letters, one, or part of one, from Honora's aunt, may perhaps be inserted here. It was an answer to one that Honora had written a few days after her installation at Grenoble, the contents of which need not be gone into: we, who know her, would neither laugh nor weep at reading it, and its purport may be more or less accurately surmised from her aunt's reply.

"As I wrote you at the time, my dear,"—so it ran "the shock which your sudden marriage with Mr. Chiltern caused us was great—so great that I cannot express it in words. I realize that I am growing old, and perhaps the world is changing faster than I imagine. And I wrote you, too, that I would not be true to myself if I told you that what you have done was right in my eyes. I have asked myself whether my horror of divorce and remarriage may not in some degree be due to the happiness of my life with your uncle. I am, undoubtedly, an exceptionally fortunate woman; and as I look backwards I see that the struggles and trials which we have shared together were really blessings."Nevertheless, dear Honora, you are, as your uncle wrote you, our child, and nothing can alter that fact in our hearts. We can only pray with all our strength that you may find happiness and peace in your new life. I try to imagine, as I think of you and what has happened to you in the few years since you have left us—how long they seem!—I try to imagine some of the temptations that have assailed you in that world of which I know nothing. If I cannot, it is because God made us different. I know what you have suffered, and my heart aches for you."You say that experience has taught you much that you could not have—learned

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in any other way. I do not doubt it. You tell me that your new life, just begun, will be a dutiful one. Let me repeat that it is my anxious prayer that you have not builded upon sand, that regrets may not come. I cannot say more. I cannot dissemble. Perhaps I have already said too much.

“Your loving

“*AuntMary*.”

An autumn wind was blowing, and Honora gazed out of the window at the steel-blue, ruffled waters of the lake. Unconsciously she repeated the words to herself:

“Builded upon sand!”

CHAPTER XIV

CONTAINING PHILOSOPHY FROM MR. GRAINGER

Swiftly came the autumn days, and swiftly went. A bewildering, ever changing, and glorious panorama presented itself, green hillsides struck first with flaming crimsons and yellows, and later mellowing into a wondrous blending of gentler, tenderer hues; lavender, and wine, and the faintest of rose colours where the bare beeches massed. Thus the slopes were spread as with priceless carpets for a festival. Sometimes Honora, watching, beheld from her window the russet dawn on the eastern ridge, and the white mists crouching in strange, ghostly shapes abode the lake and the rushing river: and she saw these same mists gather again, shivering, at nightfall. In the afternoon they threaded valleys, silent save for the talk between them and the stirring of the leaves under their horses’ feet.

So the Indian summer passed—that breathless season when even happiness has its premonitions and its pangs. The umber fields, all ploughed and harrowed, lay patiently awaiting the coming again of the quickening spring. Then fell the rain, the first, cold winter rain that shrouded the valley and beat down upon the defenceless, dismantled garden and made pools in the hollows of the stone seat: that flung itself against Honora’s window as though begrudging her the warmth and comfort within. Sometimes she listened to it in the night.

She was watching. How intent was that vigil, how alert and sharpened her senses, a woman who has watched alone may answer. Now, she felt, was the crisis at hand: the moment when her future, and his was to hang in the balance. The work on the farms, which had hitherto left Chiltern but little time for thought, had relaxed. In these wet days had he begun to brood a little? Did he show signs of a reversion to that other personality, the Chiltern she had not known, yet glimpses of whom she had had? She

recalled the third time she had seen him, the morning at the Lilacs in Newport, that had left upon her the curious sense of having looked on a superimposed portrait. That Chiltern which she called her Viking, and which, with a woman's perversity, she had perhaps loved most of all, was but one expression of the other man of days gone by. The life of that man was a closed book she had never wished to open. Was he dead, or sleeping? And if sleeping, would he awake? How softly she tread!

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And in these days, with what exquisite, yet tremulous skill and courage did she bring up the subject of that other labour they were to undertake together—the life and letters of his father. In the early dusk, when they had returned from their long rides, she contrived to draw Chiltern into his study. The cheerfulness, the hopefulness, the delight with which she approached the task, the increasing enthusiasm she displayed for the character of the General as she read and sorted the letters and documents, and the traits of his she lovingly traced in Hugh, were not without their effect. It was thus she fanned, ceaselessly and with a smile, and with an art the rarest women possess, the drooping flame. And the flame responded.

How feverishly she worked, unknown to him, he never guessed; so carefully and unobtrusively planted her suggestions that they were born again in glory as his inspiration. The mist had lifted a little, and she beheld the next stage beyond. To reach that stage was to keep him intent on this work—and—after that, to publish! Ah, if he would only have patience, or if she could keep him distracted through this winter and their night, she might save him. Love such as hers can even summon genius to its aid, and she took fire herself at the thought of a book worthy of that love, of a book—though signed by him that would redeem them, and bring a scoffing world to its knees in praise. She spent hours in the big library preparing for Chiltern's coming, with volumes in her lap and a note-book by her side.

One night, as they sat by the blazing logs in his study, which had been the General's, Chiltern arose impulsively, opened the big safe in the corner, and took out a leather-bound book and laid it on her lap. Honora stared at it: it was marked: Highlawns, Visitors' Book."

"It's curious I never thought of it before," he said, "but my father, had a habit of jotting down notes in it on important occasions. It may be of some use to us Honora."

She opened it at random and read: "July 5, 1893, Picnic at Psalter's Falls. Temperature 71 at 9 A.M. Bar. 30. Weather clear. Charles left for Washington, summons from President, in the midst of it. Agatha and Victor again look at the Farrar property. Hugh has a ducking. P.S. At dinner night Bessie announces her engagement to Cecil Grainger. Present Sarah and George Grenfell, Agatha and Victor Strange, Gerald Shorter, Lord Kylie—"

Honora looked up. Hugh was at her shoulder, with his eyes on the page.

"Psalter's Falls!" he exclaimed. "How well I remember that day! I was just home from my junior year at Harvard."

"Who was 'Charles'?" inquired Honora.

“Senator Pendleton—Bessie’s father. Just after I jumped into the mill-pond the telegram came for him to go to Washington, and I drove him home in my wet clothes. The old man had a terrible tongue, a whip-lash kind of humour, and he scored me for being a fool. But he rather liked me, on the whole. He told me if I’d only straighten out I could be anything, in reason.”

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“What made you jump in the mill-pond?” Honora asked, laughing.

“Bessie Grainger. She had a devil in her, too, in those days, but she always kept her head, and I didn’t.” He smiled. “I’m willing to admit that I was madly in love with her, and she treated me outrageously. We were standing on the bridge—I remember it as though it were yesterday —and the water was about eight feet deep, with a clear sand bottom. She took off a gold bracelet and bet me I wouldn’t get it if she threw it in. That night, right in the middle of dinner, when there was a pause in the conversation, she told us she was engaged to Cecil Grainger. It turned out, by the way, to have been his bracelet I rescued. I could have wrung his neck, and I didn’t speak to her for a month.”

Honora repressed an impulse to comment on this incident. With his arm over her shoulder, he turned the pages idly, and the long lists of guests which bore witness to the former life and importance of Highlawns passed before her eyes. Distinguished foreigners, peers of England, churchmen, and men renowned in literature: famous American statesmen, scientists, and names that represented more than one generation of wealth and achievement—all were here. There were his school and college friends, five and six at a time, and besides them those of young girls who were now women, some of whom Honora had met and known in New York or Newport.

Presently he closed the book abruptly and returned it to the safe. To her sharpened senses, the very act itself was significant. There were other and blank pages in it for future years; and under different circumstances he might have laid it in its time-honoured place, on the great table in the library.

It was not until some weeks later that Honora was seated one afternoon in the study waiting for him to come in, and sorting over some of the letters that they had not yet examined, when she came across a new lot thrust carelessly at the bottom of the older pile. She undid the elastic. Tucked away in one of the envelopes she was surprised to find a letter of recent date—October. She glanced at it, read involuntarily the first lines, and then, with a little cry, turned it over. It was from Cecil Grainger. She put it back into the envelope whence it came, and sat still.

After a while, she could not tell how long, she heard Hugh stamping the snow from his feet in the little entry beside the study. And in a few moments he entered, rubbing his hands and holding them out to the blaze.

“Hello, Honora,” he said; “are you still at it? What’s the matter—a hitch?”

She reached mechanically into the envelope, took out the letter, and handed it to him.

“I found it just now, Hugh. I didn’t read much of it—I didn’t mean to read any. It’s from Mr. Grainger, and you must have overlooked it.”

He took it.

“From Cecil?” he said, in an odd voice. “I wasn’t aware that he had sent me anything-recently.”

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As he read, she felt the anger rise within him, she saw it in his eyes fixed upon the sheet, and the sense of fear, of irreparable loss, that had come over her as she had sat alone awaiting him, deepened. And yet, long expected verdicts are sometimes received in a spirit of recklessness: He finished the letter, and flung it in her lap.

“Read it,” he said.

“Oh, Hugh!” she protested tremulously. “Perhaps—perhaps I’d better not.” He laughed, and that frightened her the more. It was the laugh, she was sure, of the other man she had not known.

“I’ve always suspected that Cecil was a fool—now I’m sure of it. Read it!” he repeated, in a note of command that went oddly with his next sentence; “You will find that it is only ridiculous.”

This assurance of the comedy it contained, however, did not serve to fortify her misgivings. It was written from a club.

“*Dear Hugh*: Herewith a few letters for the magnum opus which I have extracted from Aunt Agatha, Judge Gaines, and others, and to send you my humble congratulations. By George, my boy, you have dashed off with a prize, and no mistake. I’ve never made any secret, you know, of my admiration for Honora—I hope I may call her so now. And I just thought I’d tell you you could count on me for a friend at court. Not that I’m any use now, old boy. I’ll have to be frank with you—I always was. Discreet silence, and all that sort of thing: as much as my head is worth to open my mouth. But I had an idea it would be an act of friendship to let you know how things stand. Let time and works speak, and Cecil will give the thing a push at the proper moment. I understand from one of the intellectual journals I read that you have gone in for simple life and scientific farming. A deuced canny move. And for the love of heaven, old man, keep it up for a while, anyhow. I know it’s difficult, but keep it up. I speak as a friend.“They received your letters all right, announcing your marriage. You always enjoyed a row—I wish you could have been on hand to see and hear this one. It was no place for a man of peace, and I spent two nights at the club. I’ve never made any secret, you know, of the fact that I think the Pendleton connection hide-bound. And you understand Bessie—there’s no good of my explaining her. You’d have thought divorce a brand-new invention of the devil, instead of a comparatively old institution. And if you don’t mind my saying so, my boy, you took this fence a bit on the run, the way you do everything.“The fact is, divorce is going out of fashion. Maybe it’s because the Pendleton-Grenfell element have always set their patrician faces against it; maybe its been a bit overdone. Most people who have tried it have discovered that the fire is no better than the frying- pan—both hot as soon as they warm up. Of course, old boy, there’s nothing personal in this. Sit tight, and stick to the simple life— that’s your game as I see it. No news—I’ve never known things to be so quiet. Jerry won over two thousand night before last—he made it no trumps in his own hand four times running.

“Yours,

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"*Cecil*."

Honora returned this somewhat unique epistle to her husband, and he crushed it. There was an ill-repressed, terrifying savagery in the act, and her heart was torn between fear and pity for this lone message of good-will. Whatever its wording, such it was. A dark red flush had mounted his forehead to the roots of his short curly hair.

"Well?" he said.

She was fighting for her presence of mind. Flashes of his temper she had known, but she had never seen the cruel, fiendish thing—his anger. Not his anger, but the anger of the destroyer that she beheld waking now after its long sleep, and taking possession of him, and transforming him before her very eyes. She had been able to cope with the new man, but she felt numb and powerless before the resuscitated demon of the old.

"What do you expect me to say, Hugh?" she faltered, with a queer feeling that she was not addressing him.

"Anything you like," he replied.

"Defend Cecil."

"Why should I defend him?" she said dully.

"Because you have no pride."

A few seconds elapsed before the full import and brutality of this insult reached her intelligence, and she cried out his name in a voice shrill with anguish. But he seemed to delight in the pain he had caused.

"You couldn't be expected, I suppose, to see that this letter is a d—d impertinence, filled with an outrageous flippancy, a deliberate affront, an implication that our marriage does not exist."

She sat stunned, knowing that the real pain would come later. That which slowly awoke in her now, as he paced the room, was a high sense of danger, and a persistent inability to regard the man who had insulted her as her husband. He was rather an enemy to them both, and he would overturn, if he could, the frail craft of their happiness in the storm. She cried out to Hugh as across the waters.

"No,—I have no pride, Hugh,—it is gone. I have thought of you only. The fear that I might separate you from your family, from your friends, and ruin your future has killed my pride. He—Mr. Grainger meant to be kind. He is always like that—it's his way of saying things. He wishes to show that he is friendly to you—to me—"

“In spite of my relations,” cried Chiltern, stopping in the middle of the room. “They cease to be my relations from this day. I disown them. I say it deliberately. So long as I live, not one of them shall come into this house. All my life they have begged me to settle down, to come up here and live the life my father did. Very well, now I’ve done it. And I wrote to them and told them that I intended to live henceforth like a gentleman and a decent citizen—more than some of them do. No, I wash my hands of them. If they were to crawl up here from the gate on their knees, I’d turn them out.”

Although he could not hear her, she continued to plead.

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“Hugh, try to think of how—how our marriage must have appeared to them. Not that I blame you for being angry. We only thought of one thing—our love—” her voice broke at the word, “and our own happiness. We did not consider others. It is that which sometimes has made me afraid, that we believed ourselves above the law. And now that we have—begun so well, don’t spoil it, Hugh! Give them time, let them see by our works that we are in earnest, that we intend to live useful lives.

“I don’t mean to beg them,” she cried, at sight of his eyes. “Oh, I don’t mean that. I don’t mean to entreat them, or even to communicate with them. But they are your flesh and blood—you must remember that. Let us prove that we are—not—like the others,” she said, lifting her head, “and then it cannot matter to us what any one thinks. We shall have justified our act to ourselves.”

But he was striding up and down the room again. It was as she feared —her plea—had fallen on unheeding ears. A sudden convulsive leaping of the inner fires sent him to his desk, and he seized some note-paper from the rack. Honora rose to her feet, and took a step towards him.

“Hugh—what are you going to do?”

“Do!” he cried, swinging in his chair and facing her, “I’m going to do what any man with an ounce of self-respect would do under the circumstances. I’m going to do what I was a fool not to have done three months ago—what I should have done if it hadn’t been for you. If in their contemptible, pharisaical notions of morality they choose to forget what my mother and father were to them, they cease to exist for me. If it’s the last act of my life I’m going to tell them so.”

She stood gazing at him, but she was as one of whom he took no account. He turned to the desk and began to write with a deliberation all the more terrible to her because of the white anger he felt. And still she stood. He pressed the button on his desk, and Starling responded.

“I want a man from the stable to be ready to take some letters to town in half an hour,” he said.

It was not until then that she turned and slowly left the room. A mortal sickness seemed to invade her vitals, and she went to her own chamber and flung herself, face downward, on the lace covering of the bed: and the sobs that shook her were the totterings of the foundations of her universe. For a while, in the intensity of her anguish, all thought was excluded. Presently, however, when the body was spent, the mind began to practise its subtle and intolerable torture, and she was invaded by a sense of loneliness colder than the space between the worlds.

Where was she to go, whither flee, now that his wrath was turned against her? On the strength of his love alone she had pinned her faith, discarded and scorned all other help. And at the first contact with that greater power which he had taught her so confidently to despise, that strength had broken!

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Slowly, she gazed back over the path she had trod; where roses once had held up smiling heads. It was choked now by brambles that scratched her nakedness at every step. Ah, how easily she had been persuaded to enter it! "We have the right to happiness," he had said, and she had looked into his eyes and believed him. What was this strange, elusive happiness, that she had so pantingly pursued and never overtaken? that essence pure and unalloyed with baser things? Ecstasy, perhaps, she had found—for was it delirium? Fear was the boon companion of these; or better, the pestilence that stalked behind them, ever ready to strike.

Then, as though some one had turned on a light—a sickening, yet penetrating blue light—she looked at Hugh Chiltern. She did not wish to look, but that which had turned on the light and bade her was stronger than she. She beheld, as it were, the elements of his being, the very sources of the ceaseless, restless energy that was driving him on. And scan as she would, no traces of the vaunted illimitable power that is called love could she discern. Love he possessed; that she had not doubted, and did not doubt, even now. But it had been given her to see that these springs had existed before love had come, and would flow, perchance, after it had departed. Now she understood his anger; it was like the anger of a fiercely rushing river striving to break a dam and invade the lands below with devastating floods. All these months the waters had been mounting . . . .

Turning at length from the consideration of this figure, she asked herself whether, if with her present knowledge she had her choice to make over again, she would have chosen differently. The answer was a startling negative. She loved him. Incomprehensible, unreasonable, and un reasoning sentiment! That she had received a wound, she knew; whether it were mortal, or whether it would heal and leave a scar, she could not say. One salient, awful fact she began gradually to realize, that if she sank back upon the pillows she was lost. Little it would profit her to save her body. She had no choice between her present precarious foothold and the abyss, and wounded as she was she would have to fight. There was no retreat:

She sat up, and presently got to her feet and went to the window and stared through the panes until she distinguished the blue whiteness of the fallen snow on her little balcony. The night, despite the clouds, had a certain luminous quality. Then she drew the curtains, searched for the switch, and flooded the room with a soft glow—that beautiful room in which he had so proudly installed her four months before. She smoothed the bed, and walking to the mirror gazed intently at her face, and then she bathed it. Afterwards she opened her window again, admitting a flurry of snow, and stood for some minutes breathing in the sharp air.

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Three quarters of an hour later she was dressed and descending the stairs, and as she entered the library dinner was announced. Let us spare Honora the account of that repast or rather a recital of the conversation that accompanied it. What she found to say under the eyes of the servants is of little value, although the fact itself deserves to be commended as a high accomplishment; and while she talked, she studied the brooding mystery that he presented, and could make nothing of it. His mood was new. It was not sullenness, nor repressed rage; and his answers were brief, but he was not taciturn. It struck her that in spite of a concentration such as she had never in her life bestowed on any other subject, her knowledge of him of the Chiltern she had married—-was still wofully incomplete, and that in proportion to the lack of perfection of that knowledge her danger was great. Perhaps the Chiltern she had married was as yet in a formative state. Be this as it may, what she saw depicted on his face to-night corresponded to no former experience.

They went back to the library. Coffee was brought and carried off, and Honora was standing before the fire. Suddenly he rose from his chair, crossed the room, and before she could draw away seized and crushed her in his arms without a word. She lay there, inert, bewildered as in the grip of an unknown force, until presently she was aware of the beating of his heart, and a glimmering of what he felt came to her. Nor was it an understandable thing, except to the woman who loved him. And yet and yet she feared it even in that instant of glory.

When at last she dared to look up, he kissed away the tears from her cheeks.

“I love you,” he said. “You must never doubt it—do you understand?”

“Yes, Hugh.”

“You must never doubt it,” he repeated roughly.

His contrition was a strange thing—if it were contrition. And love —woman’s love—is sometimes the counsellor of wisdom. Her sole reproach was to return his kiss.

Presently she chose a book, and he read to her.

CHAPTER XV

THE PILLARS OF SOCIETY

One morning, as he gathered up his mail, Chiltern left lying on the breakfast table a printed circular, an appeal from the trustees of the Grenoble Hospital. As Honora read it she remembered that this institution had been the favourite charity of his mother; and that Mrs. Chiltern, at her death, had bequeathed an endowment which at the time had been ample. But Grenoble having grown since then, the deficit for this year was

something under two thousand dollars, and in a lower corner was a request that contributions be sent to Mrs. Israel Simpson.

With the circular in her hand, Honora went thoughtfully up the stairs to her sitting-room. The month was February, the day overcast and muggy, and she stood for a while apparently watching the holes made in the snow by the steady drip from the cap of the garden wall. What she really saw was the face of Mrs. Israel Simpson, a face that had haunted her these many months. For Mrs. Simpson had gradually grown, in Honora's mind, to typify the hardness of heart of Grenoble. With Grenoble obdurate, what would become of the larger ambitions of Hugh Chiltern?

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Mrs. Simpson was indeed a redoubtable lady, whose virtue shone with a particular high brightness on the Sabbath. Her lamp was brimming with oil against the judgment day, and she was as one divinely appointed to be the chastener of the unrighteous. So, at least, Honora beheld her. Her attire was rich but not gaudy, and had the air of proclaiming the prosperity of Israel Simpson alone as its unimpeachable source: her nose was long, her lip slightly marked by a masculine and masterful emblem, and her eyes protruded in such a manner as to give the impression of watchfulness on all sides.

It was this watchfulness that our heroine grew to regard as a salient characteristic. It never slept—even during Mr. Stopford's sermons. She was aware of it when she entered the church, and she was sure that it escorted her as far as the carriage on her departure. It seemed to oppress the congregation. And Honora had an idea that if it could have been withdrawn, her cruel proscription would have ended. For at times she thought that she read in the eyes of some of those who made way for her, friendliness and even compassion.

It was but natural, perhaps, in the situation in which our heroine found herself, that she should have lost her sense of proportion to the extent of regarding this lady in the light of a remorseless dragon barring her only path to peace. And those who might have helped her—if any there were—feared the dragon as much as she. Mrs. Simpson undoubtedly would not have relished this characterization, and she is not to have the opportunity of presenting her side of the case. We are looking at it from Honora's view, and Honora beheld chimeras. The woman changed, for Honora, the very aspect of the house of God; it was she who appeared to preside there, or rather to rule by terror. And Honora, as she glanced at her during the lessons, often wondered if she realized the appalling extent of her cruelty. Was this woman, who begged so audibly to be delivered from pride, vainglory, and hypocrisy, in reality a Christian? Honora hated her, and yet she prayed that God would soften her heart. Was there no way in which she could be propitiated, appeased? For the sake of the thing desired, and which it was given this woman to withhold, she was willing to humble herself in the dust.

Honora laid the hospital circular on the desk beside her account book. She had an ample allowance from Hugh; but lying in a New York bank was what remained of the unexpected legacy she had received from her father, and it was from this that she presently drew a cheque for five hundred dollars,—a little sacrifice that warmed her blood as she wrote. Not for the unfortunate in the hospital was she making it, but for him: and that she could do this from the little store that was her very own gave her a thrill of pride. She would never need it again. If he deserted her, it mattered little what became of her. If he deserted her!

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She sat gazing out of the window over the snow, and a new question was in her heart. Was it as a husband—that he loved her? Did their intercourse have that intangible quality of safety that belonged to married life? And was it not as a mistress rather than a wife that, in their isolation, she watched his moods so jealously? A mistress! Her lips parted, and she repeated the word aloud, for self-torture is human.

Her mind dwelt upon their intercourse. There were the days they spent together, and the evenings, working or reading. Ah, but had the time ever been when, in the depths of her being, she had felt the real security of a wife? When she had not always been dimly conscious of a desire to please him, of a struggle to keep him interested and contented? And there were the days when he rode alone, the nights when he read or wrote alone, when her joy was turned to misery; there were the alternating periods of passion and alienation. Alienation, perhaps, was too strong a word. Nevertheless, at such times, her feeling was one of desolation.

His heart, she knew, was bent upon success at Grenoble, and one of the books which they had recently read together was a masterly treatise, by an Englishman, on the life-work of an American statesman. The vast width of the country, from the Atlantic to the Pacific, was stirred with politics: a better era was coming, the pulse of the nation beating with renewed life; a stronger generation was arising to take the Republic into its own hands. A campaign was in progress in the State, and twice her husband had gone some distance to hear the man who embodied the new ideas, and had come back moody and restless, like a warrior condemned to step aside. Suppose his hopes were blighted—what would happen? Would the spirit of reckless adventure seize him again? Would the wilds call him? or the city? She did not dare to think.

It was not until two mornings later that Hugh tossed her across the breakfast table a pink envelope with a wide flap and rough edges. Its sender had taken advantage of the law that permits one-cent stamps for local use.

“Who’s your friend, Honora?” he asked.

She tried to look calmly at the envelope that contained her fate.

“It’s probably a dressmaker’s advertisement,” she answered, and went on with the pretence of eating her breakfast.

“Or an invitation to dine with Mrs. Simpson,” he suggested, laughingly, as he rose. “It’s just the stationery she would choose.”

Honora dropped her spoon in her egg-cup. It instantly became evident, however, that his remark was casual and not serious, for he gathered up his mail and departed. Her hand trembled a little as she opened the letter, and for a moment the large gold monogram of its sender danced before her eyes.

“Dear Madam, Permit me to thank you in the name of the Trustees of the Grenoble Hospital for your generous contribution, and believe me, Sincerely yours,

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"*Maria*W. *Simpson*."

The sheet fluttered to the floor.

When Sunday came, for the first time her courage failed her. She had heard the wind complaining in the night, and the day dawned wild and wet. She got so far as to put on a hat and veil and waterproof coat; Starling had opened the doors, and through the frame of the doorway, on the wet steps, she saw the footman in his long mackintosh, his umbrella raised to escort her to the carriage. Then she halted, irresolute. The impassive old butler stood on the sill, a silent witness, she knew, to the struggle going on within her. It seemed ridiculous indeed to play out the comedy with him, who could have recited the lines. And yet she turned to him.

"Starling, you may send the coachman back to the stable."

"Very good, madam."

As she climbed the stairs she saw him gravely closing the doors. She paused on the landing, her sense of relief overborne by a greater sense of defeat. There was still time! She heard the wheels of the carriage on the circle—yet she listened to them die away. Starling softly caught the latch, and glanced up. For an instant their looks crossed, and she hurried on with palpitating breast, reached her boudoir, and closed the door. The walls seemed to frown on her, and she remembered that the sitting-room in St. Louis had worn that same look when, as a child, she had feigned illness in order to miss a day at school. With a leaden heart she gazed out on the waste of melting snow, and then tried in vain to read a novel that a review had declared amusing. But a question always came between her and the pages: was this the turning point of that silent but terrible struggle, when she must acknowledge to herself that the world had been too strong for her? After a while her loneliness became unbearable. Chiltern was in the library.

"Home from church?" he inquired.

"I didn't go, Hugh."

He looked up in surprise.

"Why, I thought I saw you start," he said.

"It's such a dreary day, Hugh."

"But that has never prevented you before."

"Don't you think I'm entitled to one holiday?" she asked.

But it was by a supreme effort she kept back the tears. He looked at her attentively, and got up suddenly and put his hands upon her shoulders. She could not meet his eyes, and trembled under his touch.

“Honora,” he said, “why don’t you tell me the truth?”

“What do you mean, Hugh?”

“I have been wondering how long you’d stand it. I mean that these women, who call themselves Christians, have been brutal to you. They haven’t so much as spoken to you in church, and not one of them has been to this house to call. Isn’t that so?”

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“Don’t let us judge them yet, Hugh,” she begged, a little wildly, feeling again the gathering of another destroying storm in him that might now sweep the last vestige of hope away. And she seized the arguments as they came. “Some of them may be prejudiced, I know. But others—others I am sure are kind, and they have had no reason to believe I should like to know them—to work among them. I—I could not go to see them first, I am glad to wait patiently until some accident brings me near them. And remember, Hugh, the atmosphere in which we both lived before we came here—an atmosphere they regard as frivolous and pleasure-loving. People who are accustomed to it are not usually supposed to care to make friends in a village, or to bother their heads about the improvement of a community. Society is not what it was in your mother’s day, who knew these people or their mothers, and took an interest in what they were doing. Perhaps they think me—haughty.” She tried to smile. “I have never had an opportunity to show them that I am not.”

She paused, breathless, and saw that he was unconvinced.

“Do you believe that, Honora?” he demanded.

“I—I want to believe it. And I am sure, that if it is not true now, it will become so, if we only wait.”

He shook his head.

“Never,” he said, and dropped his hands and walked over to the fire. She stood where he had left her.

“I understand,” she heard him say, “I understand that you sent Mrs. Simpson five hundred dollars for the hospital. Simpson told me so yesterday, at the bank.”

“I had a little money of my own—from my father and I was glad to do it, Hugh. That was your mother’s charity.”

Her self-control was taxed to the utmost by the fact that he was moved. She could not see his face, but his voice betrayed it.

“And Mrs. Simpson?” he asked, after a moment.

“Mrs. Simpson?”

“She thanked you?”

“She acknowledged the cheque, as president. I was not giving it to her, but to the hospital.”

“Let me see the letter.”

“I—I have destroyed it.”

He brought his hands together forcibly, and swung about and faced her.

“Damn them!” he cried, “from this day I forbid you to have anything to do with them, do you hear. I forbid you! They’re a set of confounded, self-righteous hypocrites. Give them time! In all conscience they have had time enough, and opportunity enough to know what our intentions are. How long do they expect us to fawn at their feet for a word of recognition? What have we done that we should be outlawed in this way by the very people who may thank my family for their prosperity? Where would Israel Simpson be to-day if my father had not set him up in business? Without knowing anything of our lives they pretend to sit in judgment on us. Why? Because you have been divorced, and I married you. I’ll make them pay for this!”

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“No!” she begged, taking a step towards him. “You don’t know what you’re saying, Hugh. I implore you not to do anything. Wait a little while! Oh, it is worth trying!” So far the effort carried her, and no farther. Perhaps, at sight of the relentlessness in his eyes, hope left her, and she sank down on a chair and buried her face in her hands, her voice broken by sobs. “It is my fault, and I am justly punished. I have no right to you—I was wicked, I was selfish to marry you. I have ruined your life.”

He went to her, and lifted her up, but she was like a child whom passionate weeping has carried beyond the reach of words. He could say nothing to console her, plead as he might, assume the blame, and swear eternal fealty. One fearful, supreme fact possessed her, the wreck of Chiltern breaking against the rocks, driven there by her . . . .

That she eventually grew calm again deserves to be set down as a tribute to the organism of the human body.

That she was able to breathe, to move, to talk, to go through the pretence of eating, was to her in the nature of a mild surprise. Life went on, but it seemed to Honora in the hours following this scene that it was life only. Of the ability to feel she was utterly bereft. Her calmness must have been appalling: her own indifference to what might happen now,—if she could have realized it,—even more so. And in the afternoon, wandering about the house, she found herself in the conservatory. It had been built on against the library, and sometimes, on stormy afternoons, she had tea there with Hugh in the red-cushioned chairs beside the trickling fountain, the flowers giving them an illusion of summer.

Under ordinary circumstances the sound of wheels on the gravel would have aroused her, for Hugh scarcely ever drove. And it was not until she glanced through the open doors into the library that she knew that a visitor had come to Highlawns. He stood beside the rack for the magazines and reviews, somewhat nervously fingering a heavy watch charm, his large silk hat bottom upward on the chair behind him. It was Mr. Israel Simpson. She could see him plainly, and she was by no means hidden from him by the leaves, and yet she did not move. He had come to see Hugh, she understood; and she was probably going to stay where she was and listen. It seemed of no use repeating to herself that this conversation would be of vital importance; for the mechanism that formerly had recorded these alarms and spread them, refused to work. She saw Chiltern enter, and she read on his face that he meant to destroy. It was no news to her. She had known it for a long, long time—in fact, ever since she had came to Grenoble. Her curiosity, strangely enough—or so it seemed afterwards—was centred on Mr. Simpson, as though he were an actor she had been very curious to see.

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It was this man, and not her husband, whom she perceived from the first was master of the situation. His geniality was that of the commander of an overwhelming besieging force who could afford to be generous. She seemed to discern the cloudy ranks of the legions behind him, and they encircled the world. He was aware of these legions, and their presence completely annihilated the ancient habit of subserviency with which in former years he had been wont to enter this room and listen to the instructions of that formidable old lion, the General: so much was plain from the orchestra. He went forward with a cheerful, if ponderous bonhomie.

“Ah, Hugh,” said he, “I got your message just in time. I was on the point of going over to see old Murdock. Seriously ill—you know—last time, I’m afraid,” and Mr. Simpson shook his head. He held out his hand. Hugh did not appear to notice it.

“Sit down, Mr. Simpson,” he said.

Mr. Simpson sat down. Chiltern took a stand before him.

“You asked me the other day whether I would take a certain amount of the stock and bonds of the Grenoble Light and Power Company, in which you are interested, and which is, I believe, to supply the town with electric light, the present source being inadequate.”

“So I did,” replied Mr. Simpson, urbanely, “and I believe the investment to be a good one. There is no better power in this part of the country than Psalter’s Falls.”

“I wished to inform you that I do not intend to go into the Light and Power Company,” said Chiltern.

“I am sorry to hear it,” Mr. Simpson declared. “In my opinion, if you searched the state for a more profitable or safer thing, you could not find it.”

“I have no doubt the investment is all that could be desired, Mr. Simpson. I merely wished you to know, as soon as possible, that I did not intend to put my money into it. There are one or two other little matters which you have mentioned during the week. You pointed out that it would be an advantage to Grenoble to revive the county fair, and you asked me to subscribe five thousand dollars to the Fair Association.”

This time Mr. Simpson remained silent.

“I have come to the conclusion, to-day, not to subscribe a cent. I also intend to notify the church treasurer that I will not any longer rent a pew, or take any further interest in the affairs of St. John’s church. My wife was kind enough, I believe, to send five hundred dollars to the Grenoble hospital. That will be the last subscription from any member of my family. I will resign as a director of the Grenoble Bank to-morrow, and

my stock will be put on the market. And finally I wished to tell you that henceforth I do not mean to aid in any way any enterprise in Grenoble."

During this announcement, which had been made with an ominous calmness, Mr. Simpson had gazed steadily at the brass andirons. He cleared his throat.

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“My dear Hugh,” said he, “what you have said pains me excessively-excessively. I—-ahem—fail to grasp it. As an old friend of your family—of your father—I take the liberty of begging you to reconsider your words.”

Chiltern’s eyes blazed.

“Since you have mentioned my father, Mr. Simpson,” he exclaimed, “I may remind you that his son might reasonably have expected at your hands a different treatment than that you have accorded him. You have asked me to reconsider my decision, but I notice that you have failed to inquire into my reasons for making it. I came back here to Grenoble with every intention of devoting the best efforts of my life in aiding to build up the community, as my father had done. It was natural, perhaps, that I should expect a little tolerance, a little friendliness, a little recognition in return. My wife was prepared to help me. We did not ask much. But you have treated us like outcasts. Neither you nor Mrs. Simpson, from whom in all conscience I looked for consideration and friendship, have as much as spoken to Mrs. Chiltern in church. You have made it clear that, while you are willing to accept our contributions, you cared to have nothing to do with us whatever. If I have overstated the case, please correct me.”

Mr. Simpson rose protestingly.

“My dear Hugh,” he said. “This is very painful. I beg that you will spare me.”

“My name is Chiltern,” answered Hugh, shortly. “Will you kindly explain, if you can, why the town of Grenoble has ignored us?”

Israel Simpson hesitated a moment. He seemed older when he looked at Chiltern again, and in his face commiseration and indignation were oddly intermingled. His hand sought his watch chain.

“Yes, I will tell you,” he replied slowly, “although in all my life no crueller duty has fallen on me. It is because we in Grenoble are old-fashioned in our views of morality, and I thank God we are so. It is because you have married a divorced woman under circumstances that have shocked us. The Church to which I belong, and whose teachings I respect, does not recognize such a marriage. And you have, in my opinion, committed an offence against society. To recognize you by social intercourse would be to condone that offence, to open the door to practices that would lead, in a short time, to the decay of our people.”

Israel Simpson turned, and pointed a shaking forefinger at the portrait of General Augus Chiltern.

“And I affirm here, fearlessly before you, that he, your father, would have been the last to recognize such a marriage.”

Chiltern took a step forward, and his fingers tightened.

“You will oblige me by leaving my father’s name out of this discussion,” he said.

But Israel Simpson did not recoil.

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“If we learn anything by example in this world, Mr. Chiltern,” he continued, “and it is my notion that we do, I am indebted to your father for more than my start in life. Through many years of intercourse with him, and contemplation of his character, I have gained more than riches. —You have forced me to say this thing. I am sorry if I have pained you. But I should not be true to the principles to which he himself was consistent in life, and which he taught by example so many others, if I ventured to hope that social recognition in Grenoble would be accorded you, or to aid in any way such recognition. As long as I live I will oppose it. There are, apparently, larger places in the world and less humble people who will be glad to receive you. I can only hope, as an old friend and well-wisher of your family, that you may find happiness.”

Israel Simpson fumbled for his hat, picked it up, and left the room. For a moment Chiltern stood like a man turned to stone, and then he pressed the button on the wall behind him.

A MODERN CHRONICLE

By Winston Churchill

Volume 8.

CHAPTER XVI

IN WHICH A MIRROR IS HELD UP

Spring came to Highlawns, Eden tinted with myriad tender greens. Yellow-greens, like the beech boughs over the old wall, and gentle blue-greens, like the turf; and the waters of the lake were blue and white in imitation of the cloud-flecked sky. It seemed to Honora, as she sat on the garden bench, that the yellow and crimson tulips could not open wide enough their cups to the sun.

In these days she looked at her idol, and for the first time believed it to be within her finite powers to measure him. She began by asking herself if it were really she who had ruined his life, and whether he would ultimately have redeemed himself if he had married a woman whom the world would have recognized. Thus did the first doubt invade her heart. It was of him she was thinking still, and always. But there was the doubt. If he could have stood this supreme test of isolation, of the world’s laughter and scorn, although it would have made her own heavy burden of responsibility heavier, yet could she still have rejoiced. That he should crumble was the greatest of her punishments.

Was he crumbling? In these months she could not quite be sure, and she tried to shut her eyes when the little pieces fell off, to remind herself that she must make allowances

for the severity of his disappointment. Spring was here, the spring to which he had so eagerly looked forward, and yet the listlessness with which he went about his work was apparent. Sometimes he did not appear at breakfast, although Honora clung with desperation to the hour they had originally fixed: sometimes Mr. Manning waited for him until nearly ten o'clock, only to receive curt dismissal. He went off for long rides, alone, and to the despair of the groom brought back the horses in a lather, with drooping heads and heaving sides; one of them he ruined. He declared there wasn't a horse in the stable fit to give him exercise.

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Often he sat for hours in his study, brooding, inaccessible. She had the tennis-court rolled and marked, but the contests here were pitifully-unequal; for the row of silver cups on his mantel, engraved with many dates, bore witness to his athletic prowess. She wrote for a book on solitaire, but after a while the sight of cards became distasteful. With a secret diligence she read the reviews, and sent for novels and memoirs which she scanned eagerly before they were begun with him. Once, when she went into his study on an errand, she stood for a minute gazing painfully at the cleared space on his desk where once had lain the papers and letters relative to the life of General Angus Chiltern.

There were intervals in which her hope flared, in which she tasted, fearfully and with bated breath, something that she had not thought to know again. It was characteristic of him that his penitence was never spoken: nor did he exhibit penitence. He seemed rather at such times merely to become normally himself, as one who changes personality, apparently oblivious to the moods and deeds of yesterday. And these occasions added perplexity to her troubles. She could not reproach him —which perhaps in any event she would have been too wise to do; but she could not, try as she would, bring herself to the point of a discussion of their situation. The risk, she felt, was too great; now, at least. There were instances that made her hope that the hour might come.

One fragrant morning Honora came down to find him awaiting her, and to perceive lying on her napkin certain distilled drops of the spring sunshine. In language less poetic, diamonds to be worn in the ears. The wheel of fashion, it appeared, had made a complete revolution since the early days of his mother's marriage. She gave a little exclamation, and her hand went to her heart.

"They are Brazilian stones," he explained, with a boyish pleasure that awoke memories and held her speechless. "I believe it's very difficult, if not impossible, to buy them now. My father got them after the war and I had them remounted." And he pressed them against the pink lobes of her ears. "You look like the Queen of Sheba."

"How do you know?" she asked tremulously. "You never saw her."

"According to competent judges," he replied, "she was the most beautiful woman of her time. Go upstairs and put them on."

She shook her head. An inspiration had come to her.

"Wait," she cried. And that morning, when Hugh had gone out, she sent for Starling and startled him by commanding that the famous Lowestoft set be used at dinner. He stared at her, and the corners of his mouth twitched, and still he stood respectfully in the doorway.

“That is all, Starling.”

“I beg pardon, madam. How—how many will there be at the table?”

“Just Mr. Chiltern and I,” she replied. But she did not look at him.

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It was superstition, undoubtedly. She was well aware that Starling had not believed that the set would be used again. An extraordinary order, that might well have sent him away wondering; for the Lowestoft had been reserved for occasions. Ah, but this was to be an occasion, a festival! The whimsical fancy grew in her mind as the day progressed, and she longed with an unaccustomed impatience for nightfall, and anticipation had a strange taste. Mathilde, with the sympathetic gift of her nation, shared the excitement of her mistress in this fete. The curtains in the pink bedroom were drawn, and on the bed, in all its splendour of lace and roses, was spread out the dinner-gown-a chef-d'oeuvre of Madame Barriere's as yet unworn. And no vulgar, worldly triumph was it to adorn.

Her heart was beating fast as she descended the stairway, bright spots of colour flaming in her cheeks and the diamonds sparkling in her ears. A prima donna might have guessed her feelings as she paused, a little breathless on the wide landing under the windows. She heard a footstep. Hugh came out of the library and stood motionless, looking up at her. But even those who have felt the silence and the stir that prefaces the clamorous applause of the thousands could not know the thrill that swept her under his tribute. She came down the last flight of steps, slowly, and stopped in front of him.

"You are wonderful, Honora!" he said, and his voice was not quite under control. He took her hand, that trembled in his, and he seemed to be seeking to express something for which he could find no words. Thus may the King have looked upon Rosamond in her bower; upon a beauty created for the adornment of courts which he had sequestered for his eyes alone.

Honora, as though merely by the touch of his hand in hers, divined his thought.

"If you think me so, dear," she whispered happily, "it's all I ask."

And they went in to dinner as to a ceremony. It was indeed a ceremony filled for her with some occult, sacred, meaning that she could not put into words. A feast symbolical. Starling was sent to the wine-cellar to bring back a cobwebbed Madeira near a century old, brought out on rare occasions in the family. And Hugh, when his glass was filled, looked at his wife and raised it in silence to his lips.

She never forgot the scene. The red glow of light from the shaded candles on the table, and the corners of the dining room filled with gloom. The old butler, like a high priest, standing behind his master's chair. The long windows, with the curtains drawn in the deep, panelled arches; the carved white mantelpiece; the glint of silver on' the sideboard, with its wine-cooler underneath,—these, spoke of generations of respectability and achievement. Would this absorbed isolation, this marvellous wild love of theirs, be the end of it all? Honora, as one detached, as a ghost in the corner, saw herself in the picture with startling clearness. When she looked up, she met her husband's eyes. Always she met them, and in them a questioning, almost startled look

that was new. “Is it the earrings?” she asked at last. “I don’t know,” he answered. “I can’t tell. They seem to have changed you, but perhaps they have brought out something in your face and eyes I have never seen before.”

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“And—you like it, Hugh?”

“Yes, I like it,” he replied, and added enigmatically, “but I don’t understand it.”

She was silent, and oddly satisfied, trusting to fate to send more mysteries.

Two days had not passed when that restlessness for which she watched so narrowly revived. He wandered aimlessly about the place, and flared up into such a sudden violent temper at one of the helpers in the fields that the man ran as for his life, and refused to set foot again on any of the Chiltern farms. In the afternoon he sent for Honora to ride with him, and scolded her for keeping him waiting. And he wore a spur, and pressed his horse so savagely that she cried out in remonstrance, although at such times she had grown to fear him.

“Oh, Hugh, how can you be so cruel!”

“The beast has no spirit,” he said shortly. “I’ll get one that has.”

Their road wound through the western side of the estate towards misty rolling country, in the folds of which lay countless lakes, and at length they caught sight of an unpainted farmhouse set amidst a white cloud of apple trees in bloom. On the doorstep, whittling, sat a bearded, unkempt farmer with a huge frame. In answer to Hugh’s question he admitted that he had a horse for sale, stuck his knife in the step, rose, and went off towards the barn near by; and presently reappeared, leading by a halter a magnificent black. The animal stood jerking his head, blowing and pawing the ground while Chiltern examined him.

“He’s been ridden?” he asked.

The man nodded.

Chiltern sprang to the ground and began to undo his saddle girths. A sudden fear seized Honora.

“Oh, Hugh, you’re not going to ride him!” she exclaimed.

“Why not? How else am I going to find out anything about him?”

“He looks—dangerous,” she faltered.

“I’m tired of horses that haven’t any life in them,” he said, as he lifted off the saddle.

“I guess we’d better get him in the barn,” said the farmer.

Honora went behind them to witness the operation, which was not devoid of excitement. The great beast plunged savagely when they tightened the girths, and closed his teeth obstinately against the bit; but the farmer held firmly to his nose and shut off his wind. They led him out from the barn floor.

“Your name Chiltern?” asked the farmer.

“Yes,” said Hugh, curtly.

“Thought so,” said the farmer, and he held the horse’s head.

Honora had a feeling of faintness.

“Hugh, do be careful!” she pleaded.

He paid no heed to her. His eyes, she noticed, had a certain feverish glitter of animation, of impatience, such as men of his type must wear when they go into battle. He seized the horse’s mane, he put his foot in the stirrup; the astonished animal gave a snort and jerked the bridle from the farmer’s hand. But Chiltern was in the saddle, with knees pressed tight.

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There ensued a struggle that Honora will never forget. And although she never again saw that farm-house, its details and surroundings come back to her in vivid colours when she closes her eyes. The great horse in every conceivable pose, with veins standing out and knotty muscles twisting in his legs and neck and thighs. Once, when he dashed into the apple trees, she gave a cry; a branch snapped, and Chiltern emerged, still seated, with his hat gone and the blood trickling from a scratch on his forehead. She saw him strike with his spurs, and in a twinkling horse and rider had passed over the dilapidated remains of a fence and were flying down the hard clay road, disappearing into a dip. A reverberating sound, like a single stroke, told them that the bridge at the bottom had been crossed.

In an agony of terror, Honora followed, her head on fire, her heart pounding faster than the hoof beats. But the animal she rode, though a good one, was no match for the great infuriated beast which she pursued. Presently she came to a wooded corner where the road forked thrice, and beyond, not without difficulty,—brought her sweating mare to a stand. The quality of her fear changed from wild terror to cold dread. A hermit thrush, in the wood near by, broke the silence with a song inconceivably sweet. At last she went back to the farm-house, hoping against hope that Hugh might have returned by another road. But he was not there. The farmer was still nonchalantly whittling.

“Oh, how could you let any one get on a horse like that?” she cried.

“You’re his wife, ain’t you?” he asked.

Something in the man’s manner seemed to compel her to answer, in spite of the form of the question.

“I am Mrs. Chiltern,” she said.

He was looking at her with an expression that she found incomprehensible. His glance was penetrating, yet here again she seemed to read compassion. He continued to gaze at her, and presently, when he spoke, it was as though he were not addressing her at all.

“You put me in mind of a young girl I used to know,” he said; “seems like a long time ago. You’re pretty, and you’re young, and ye didn’t know what you were doin,’ I’ll warrant. Lost your head. He has a way of gittin’ ’em—always had.”

Honora did not answer. She would have liked to have gone away, but that which was stronger than her held her.

“She didn’t live here,” he explained, waving his hand deprecatingly towards the weather-beaten house. “We lived over near Morrisville in them days. And he don’t remember me, your husband don’t. I ain’t surprised. I’ve got considerable older.”

Honora was trembling from head to foot, and her hands were cold.

“I’ve got her picture in there, if ye’d like to look at it,” he said, after a while.

“Oh, no!” she cried. “Oh, no!”

“Well, I don’t know as I blame you.” He sat down again and began to whittle. “Funny thing, chance,” he remarked; “who’d a thought I should have owned that there hoss, and he should have come around here to ride it?”

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She tried to speak, but she could not. The hideous imperturbability of the man's hatred sickened her. And her husband! The chips fell in silence until a noise on the road caused them to look up. Chiltern was coming back. She glanced again at the farmer, but his face was equally incapable, or equally unwilling, to express regret. Chiltern rode into the dooryard. The blood from the scratch on his forehead had crossed his temple and run in a jagged line down his cheek, his very hair (as she had sometimes seen it) was damp with perspiration, blacker, kinkier; his eyes hard, reckless, bloodshot. So, in the past, must he have emerged from dozens of such wilful, brutal contests with man and beast. He had beaten the sweat-stained horse (temporarily—such was the impression Honora received), but she knew that he would like to have killed it for its opposition.

"Give me my hat, will you?" he cried to the farmer.

To her surprise the man obeyed. Chiltern leaped to the ground.

"What do you want for him?" he demanded.

"I'll take five hundred dollars."

"Bring him over in the morning," said Chiltern, curtly.

They rode homeward in silence. Honora had not been able to raise her voice against the purchase, and she seemed powerless now to warn her husband of the man's enmity. She was thinking, rather, of the horror of the tragedy written on the farmer's face, to which he had given her the key: Hugh Chiltern, to whom she had intrusted her life and granted her all, had done this thing, ruthlessly, even as he had satisfied to-day his unbridled cravings in maltreating a horse! And she thought of that other woman, on whose picture she had refused to look. What was the essential difference between that woman and herself? He had wanted them both, he had taken them both for his pleasure, heedless of the pain he might cause to others and to them. For her, perhaps, the higher organism, had been reserved the higher torture. She did not know. The vision of the girl in the outer darkness reserved for castaways was terrible.

Up to this point she had, as it were, been looking into one mirror. Now another was suddenly raised behind her, and by its aid she beheld not a single, but countless, images of herself endlessly repeated. How many others besides this girl had there been? The question gave her the shudder of the contemplation of eternity. It was not the first time Honora had thought of his past, but until today it had lacked reality; until to-day she had clung to the belief that he had been misunderstood; until to-day she had considered those acts of his of the existence of which she was collectively aware under the generic term of wild oats. He had had too much money, and none had known how to control him. Now, through this concrete example of another's experience, she was given to understand that which she had strangely been unable to learn from her own.

And she had fancied, in her folly, that she could control him! Unable as yet to grasp the full extent of her calamity, she rode on by his side, until she was aware at last that they had reached the door of the house at Highlawns.

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“You look pale,” he said as he lifted her off her horse. The demon in him, she perceived, was tired.

“Do I?”

“What’s the matter?”

“Nothing,” she answered.

He laughed.

“It’s confoundedly silly to get frightened that way,” he declared. “The beast only wants riding.”

Three mornings later she was seated in the garden with a frame of fancy work. Sometimes she put it down. The weather was overcast, langourous, and there was a feeling of rain in the air. Chiltern came in through the gaffe, and looked at her.

“I’m going to New York on the noon train,” he said.

“To New York?”

“Yes. Why not?”

“There’s no reason why you shouldn’t if you wish to,” she replied, picking up her frame.

“Anything I can get you?” he asked.

“No, thank you.”

“You’ve been in such a deuced queer mood the last few days I can’t make you out, Honora.”

“You ought to have learned something about women by this time,” she said.

“It seems to me,” he announced, “that we need a little livening up.”

CHAPTER XVII

THE RENEWAL OF AN ANCIENT HOSPITALITY

There were six letters from him, written from a club, representing the seven days of his absence. He made no secret of the fact that his visit to the metropolis was in the nature of a relaxation and a change of scene, but the letters themselves contained surprisingly little information as to how he was employing his holiday. He had encountered many

old friends, supposedly all of the male sex: among them—most welcome of surprises to him!—Mr. George Pembroke, a boon companion at Harvard. And this mention of boon companionship brought up to Honora a sufficiently vivid idea of Mr. Pembroke's characteristics. The extent of her knowledge of this gentleman consisted in the facts that he was a bachelor, a member of a prominent Philadelphia family, and that time hung heavy on his hands.

One morning she received a telegram to the effect that her husband would be home that night, bringing three people with him. He sent his love, but neglected to state the names and sexes of the prospective guests. And she was still in a quandary as to what arrangements to make when Starling appeared in answer to her ring.

"You will send the omnibus to the five o'clock train," she said. "There will be three extra places at dinner, and tea when Mr. Chiltern arrives."

Although she strove to speak indifferently, she was sure from the way the old man looked at her that her voice had not been quite steady. Of late her curious feeling about him had increased in intensity; and many times, during this week she had spent alone, she had thought that his eyes had followed her with sympathy. She did not resent this. Her world having now contracted to that wide house, there was

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a comfort in knowing that there was one in it to whom she could turn in need. For she felt that she could turn to Starling; he alone, apparently, had measured the full depth of her trouble; nay, had silently predicted it from the beginning. And to-day, as he stood before her, she had an almost irresistible impulse to speak. Just a word-a human word would have been such a help to her! And how ridiculous the social law that kept the old man standing there, impassive, respectful, when this existed between them! Her tragedy was his tragedy; not in the same proportion, perhaps; nevertheless, he had the air of one who would die of it.

And she? Would she die? What would become of her? When she thought of the long days and months and years that stretched ahead of her, she felt that her soul would not be able to survive the process of steady degradation to which it was sure to be subjected. For she was a prisoner: the uttermost parts of the earth offered no refuge. To-day, she knew, was to see the formal inauguration of that process. She had known torture, but it had been swift, obliterating, excruciating. And hereafter it was to be slow, one turn at a time of the screws, squeezing by infinitesimal degrees the life out of her soul. And in the end—most fearful thought of all—in the end, painless. Painless! She buried her head in her arms on the little desk, shaken by sobs.

How she fought that day to compose herself, fought and prayed! Prayed wildly to a God whose help, nevertheless, she felt she had forfeited, who was visiting her with just anger. At half-past four she heard the carriage on the far driveway, going to the station, and she went down and walked across the lawn to the pond, and around it; anything to keep moving. She hurried back to the house just in time to reach the hall as the omnibus backed up. And the first person she saw descend, after Hugh, was Mrs. Kame.

“Here we are, Honora,” she cried. “I hope you’re glad to see us, and that you’ll forgive our coming so informally. You must blame Hugh. We’ve brought Adele.”

The second lady was, indeed, none other than Mrs. Eustace Rindge, formerly Mrs. Dicky Farnham. And she is worth—even at this belated stage in our chronicle an attempted sketch, or at least an attempted impression. She was fair, and slim as a schoolgirl; not very tall, not exactly petite; at first sight she might have been taken for a particularly immature debutante, and her dress was youthful and rather mannish. Her years, at this period of her career, were in truth but two and twenty, yet she had contrived, in the comparatively brief time since she had reached the supposed age of discretion, to marry two men and build two houses, and incidentally to see a considerable portion of what is known as the world. The suspicion that she was not as innocent as a dove came to one, on closer inspection, as a shock: her eyes were tired, though not from loss of sleep; and her manner—how shall it be

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described to those whose happy lot in life has never been to have made the acquaintance of Mrs. Rindge's humbler sisters who have acquired—more coarsely, it is true—the same camaraderie? She was one of those for whom, seemingly, sex does not exist. Her air of good-fellowship with men was eloquent of a precise knowledge of what she might expect from them, and she was prepared to do her own policing,—not from any deep moral convictions. She belonged, logically, to that world which is disposed to take the law into its own hands, and she was the possessor of five millions of dollars.

"I came along," she said to Honora, as she gave her hand-bag to a footman. "I hope you don't mind. Abby and I were shopping and we ran into Hugh and Georgie yesterday at Sherry's, and we've been together ever since. Not quite that—but almost. Hugh begged us to come up, and there didn't seem to be any reason why we shouldn't, so we telephoned down to Banbury for our trunks and maids, and we've played bridge all the way. By the way, Georgie, where's my pocket-book?"

Mr. Pembroke handed it over, and was introduced by Hugh. He looked at Honora, and his glance somehow betokened that he was in the habit of looking only once. He had apparently made up his mind about her before he saw her. But he looked again, evidently finding her at variance with a preconceived idea, and this time she flushed a little under his stare, and she got the impression that Mr. Pembroke was a man from whom few secrets of a certain kind were hid. She felt that he had seized, at a second glance, a situation that she had succeeded in hiding from the women. He was surprised, but cynically so. He was the sort of person who had probably possessed at Harvard the knowledge of the world of a Tammany politician; he had long ago written his book—such as it was—and closed it: or, rather, he had worked out his system at a precocious age, and it had lasted him ever since. He had decided that undergraduate life, freed from undergraduate restrictions, was a good thing. And he did not, even in these days, object to breaking something valuable occasionally.

His physical attributes are more difficult to describe, so closely were they allied to those which, for want of a better word, must be called mental. He was neither tall nor short, he was well fed, but hard, his shoulders too broad, his head a little large. If he should have happened to bump against one, the result would have been a bruise—not for him. His eyes were blue, his light hair short, and there was a slight baldness beginning; his face was red-tanned. There was not the slightest doubt that he could be effectively rude, and often was; but it was evident, for some reason, that he meant to be gracious (for Mr. Pembroke) to Honora. Perhaps this was the result of the second glance. One of his name had not lacked, indeed, for instructions in gentility. It must not be thought that she was in a condition to care much about what Mr. Pembroke thought or did, and yet she felt instinctively that he had changed his greeting between that first and second glance.

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“I hope you’ll forgive my coming in this way,” he said. “I’m an old friend of Hugh’s.”

“I’m very glad to have Hugh’s friends,” she answered.

He looked at her again.

“Is tea ready?” inquired Mrs. Kame. “I’m famished.” And, as they walked through the house to the garden, where the table was set beside the stone seat: “I don’t see how you ever can leave this place, Honora. I’ve always wanted to come here, but it’s even more beautiful than I thought.”

“It’s very beautiful,” said Honora.

“I’ll have a whiskey and soda, if I may,” announced Mrs. Rindge. “Open one, Georgie.”

“The third to-day,” said Mr. Pembroke, sententiously, as he obeyed.

“I don’t care. I don’t see what business it is of yours.”

“Except to open them,” he replied.

“You’d have made a fortune as a barkeeper,” she observed, dispassionately, as she watched the process.

“He’s made fortunes for a good many,” said Chiltern.

“Not without some expert assistance I could mention,” Mr. Pembroke retorted.

At this somewhat pointed reference to his ancient habits, Chiltern laughed.

“You’ve each had three to-day yourselves,” said Mrs. Rindge, in whose bosom Mr. Pembroke’s remark evidently rankled, “without counting those you had before you left the club.”

Afterwards Mrs. Kame expressed a desire to walk about a little, a proposal received with disfavour by all but Honora, who as hostess responded.

“I feel perfectly delightful,” declared Mrs. Rindge. “What’s the use of moving about?” And she sank back in the cushions of her chair.

This observation was greeted with unrestrained merriment by Mr. Pembroke and Hugh. Honora, sick at heart, led Mrs. Kame across the garden and through the gate in the wall. It was a perfect evening of early June, the great lawn a vivid green in the slanting light. All day the cheerful music of the horse-mowers had been heard, and the air was fragrant with the odour of grass freshly cut. The long shadows of the maples and

beeches stretched towards the placid surface of the lake, dimpled here and there by a fish's swirl: the spiraeas were laden as with freshly fallen snow, a lone Judas-tree was decked in pink. The steep pastures beyond the water were touched with gold, while to the northward, on the distant hills, tender blue lights gathered lovingly around the copses. Mrs. Kame sighed.

"What a terrible thing it is," she said, "that we are never satisfied! It's the men who ruin all this for us, I believe, and prevent our enjoying it. Look at Adele."

Honora had indeed looked at her.

"I found out the other day what is the matter with her. She's madly in love with Dicky."

"With—with her former husband?"

"Yes, with poor little innocent Dicky Farnham, who's probably still congratulating himself, like a canary bird that's got out of a cage. Somehow Dicky's always reminded me of a canary; perhaps it's his name. Isn't it odd that she should be in love with him?"

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“I think,” replied Honora, slowly, “that it’s a tragedy.”

“It is a tragedy,” Mrs. Kame hastily agreed. “To me, this case is one of the most incomprehensible aspects of the tender passion. Adele’s idea of existence is a steeplechase with nothing but water-jumps, Dicky’s to loiter around in a gypsy van, and sit in the sun. During his brief matrimonial experience with her, he nearly died for want of breath—or rather the life was nearly shaken out of him. And yet she wants Dicky again. She’d run away with him to-morrow if he should come within hailing distance of her.”

“And her husband?” asked Honora.

“Eustace? Did you ever see him? That accounts for your question. He only left France long enough to come over here and make love to her, and he swears he’ll never leave it again. If she divorces him, he’ll have to have alimony.”

At last Honora was able to gain her own room, but even seclusion, though preferable to the companionship of her guests, was almost intolerable. The tragedy of Mrs. Rindge had served—if such a thing could be—to enhance her own; a sudden spectacle of a woman in a more advanced stage of desperation. Would she, Honora, ever become like that? Up to the present she felt that suffering had refined her, and a great love had burned away all that was false. But now—now that her god had turned to clay, what would happen? Desperation seemed possible, notwithstanding the awfulness of the example. No, she would never come to that! And she repeated it over and over to herself as she dressed, as though to strengthen her will.

During her conversation with Mrs. Kame she had more than once suspected, in spite of her efforts, that the lady had read her state of mind. For Mrs. Kame’s omissions were eloquent to the discerning: Chiltern’s relatives had been mentioned with a casualness intended to imply that no breach existed, and the fiction that Honora could at any moment take up her former life delicately sustained. Mrs. Kame had adaptably chosen the attitude, after a glance around her, that Honora preferred Highlawns to the world: a choice of which she let it be known that she approved, while deploring that a frivolous character put such a life out of the question for herself. She made her point without over-emphasis. On the other hand, Honora had read Mrs. Kame. No very careful perusal was needed to convince her that the lady was unmoral, and that in characteristics she resembled the chameleon. But she read deeper. She perceived that Mrs. Kame was convinced that she, Honora, would adjust herself to the new conditions after a struggle; and that while she had a certain sympathy in the struggle, Mrs. Kame was of opinion that the sooner it was over with the better. All women were born to be disillusionized. Such was the key, at any rate, to the lady’s conduct that evening at dinner, when she capped the anecdotes of Mr. Pembroke and Mrs. Rindge and even of Chiltern with others not less risque but more fastidiously and ingeniously suggestive. The reader may be spared their recital.

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Since the meeting in the restaurant the day before, which had resulted in Hugh's happy inspiration that the festival begun should be continued indefinitely at Highlawns, a kind of freemasonry had sprung up between the four. Honora found herself, mercifully, outside the circle: for such was the lively character of the banter that a considerable adroitness was necessary to obtain, between the talk and—laughter, the ear of the company. And so full were they of the reminiscences which had been crowded into the thirty hours or so they had spent together, that her comparative silence remained unnoticed. To cite an example, Mr. Pembroke was continually being addressed as the Third Vice-president, an allusion that Mrs. Rindge eventually explained.

"You ought to have been with us coming up on the train," she cried to Honora; "I thought surely we'd be put off. We were playing bridge in the little room at the end of the car when the conductor came for our tickets. Georgie had 'em in his pocket, but he told the man to go away, that he was the third vice-president of the road, and we were his friends. The conductor asked him if he were Mr. Wheeler, or some such name, and Georgie said he was surprised he didn't know him. Well, the man stood there in the door, and Georgie picked up his hand and made it hearts—or was it diamonds, Georgie?"

"Spades," said that gentleman, promptly.

"At any rate," Mrs. Rindge continued, "we all began to play, although we were ready to blow up with laughter, and after a while Georgie looked around and said, 'What, are you there yet?' My dear, you ought to have seen the conductor's face! He said it was his duty to establish Georgie's identity, or something like that, and Georgie told him to get off at the next station and buy Waring's Magazine—was that it, Georgie?"

"How the deuce should I know?"

"Well, some such magazine. Georgie said he'd find an article in it on the Railroad Kings and Princes of America, and that his picture, Georgie's, was among the very first!" At this juncture in her narrative Mrs. Rindge shrieked with laughter, in which she was joined by Mrs. Kame and Hugh; and she pointed a forefinger across the table at Mr. Pembroke, who went on solemnly eating his dinner. "Georgie gave him ten cents with which to buy the magazine," she added a little hysterically. "Well, there was a frightful row, and a lot of men came down to that end of the car, and we had to shut the door. The conductor said the most outrageous things, and Georgie pretended to be very indignant, too, and gave him the tickets under protest. He told Georgie he ought to be in an asylum for the criminally insane, and Georgie advised him to get a photograph album of the high officials of the railroad. The conductor said Georgie's picture was probably in the rogue's gallery. And we lost two packs of cards out of the window."

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Such had been the more innocent if eccentric diversions with which they had whiled away the time. When dinner was ended, a renewal of the bridge game was proposed, for it had transpired at the dinner-table that Mrs. Rindge and Hugh had been partners all day, as a result of which there was a considerable balance in their favour. This balance Mr. Pembroke was palpably anxious to wipe out, or at least to reduce. But Mrs. Kame insisted that Honora should cut in, and the others supported her.

“We tried our best to get a man for you,” said Mrs. Rindge to Honora. “Didn’t we, Abby? But in the little time we had, it was impossible. The only man we saw was Ned Carrington, and Hugh said he didn’t think you’d want him.”

“Hugh showed a rare perception,” said Honora.

Be it recorded that she smiled. One course had been clear to her from the first, although she found it infinitely difficult to follow; she was determined, cost what it might, to carry through her part of the affair with dignity, but without stiffness. This is not the place to dwell upon the tax to her strength.

“Come on, Honora,” said Hugh, “cut in.” His tone was of what may be termed a rough good nature. She had not seen him alone since his return, but he had seemed distinctly desirous that she should enjoy the festivities he had provided. And not to yield would have been to betray herself.

The game, with its intervals of hilarity, was inaugurated in the library, and by midnight it showed no signs of abating. At this hour the original four occupied the table for the second time, and endurance has its limits. The atmosphere of Liberty Hall that prevailed made Honora’s retirement easier.

“I’m sure you won’t mind if I go to bed,” she said. “I’ve been so used to the routine of—-of the chickens.” She smiled. “And I’ve spent the day in the open air.”

“Certainly, my dear,” said Mrs. Kame; “I know exactly how one feels in the country. I’m sure it’s dreadfully late. We’ll have one more rubber, and then stop.”

“Oh, don’t stop,” replied Honora; “please play as long as you like.”

They didn’t stop—at least after one more rubber. Honora, as she lay in the darkness, looking through the open square of her window at the silver stars, heard their voiced and their laughter floating up at intervals from below, and the little clock on her mantel had struck the hour of three when the scraping of chairs announced the breaking up of the party. And even after that an unconscionable period elapsed, beguiled, undoubtedly, by anecdotes; spells of silence—when she thought they had gone—-ending in more laughter. Finally there was a crash of breaking glass, a climax of uproarious mirth, and all was still. . .

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She could not have slept much, but the birds were singing when she finally awoke, the sunlight pouring into her window: And the hands of her clock pointed to half-past seven when she rang her bell. It was a relief to breakfast alone, or at least to sip her coffee in solitude. And the dew was still on the grass as she crossed the wide lawn and made her way around the lake to the path that entered the woods at its farther end. She was not tired, yet she would have liked to have lain down under the green panoply of the forest, where the wild flowers shyly raised sweet faces to be kissed, and lose herself in the forgetfulness of an eternal sleep; never to go back again to an Eden contaminated. But when she lingered the melody of a thrush pierced her through and through. At last she turned and reluctantly retraced her steps, as one whose hour of reprieve has expired.

If Mrs. Rindge had a girlish air when fully arrayed for the day, she looked younger and more angular still in that article of attire known as a dressing gown. And her eyes, Honora remarked, were peculiarly bright: glittering, perhaps, would better express the impression they gave; as though one got a glimpse through them of an inward consuming fire. Her laughter rang shrill and clear as Honora entered the hall by the rear door, and the big clock proclaimed that the hour was half-past eleven. Hugh and Mr. Pembroke were standing at the foot of the stairs, gazing upward. And Honora, following their glances, beheld the two ladies, in the negligee referred to above, with their elbows on the railing of the upper hall and their faces between their hands, engaged in a lively exchange of compliments with the gentlemen. Mrs. Kame looked sleepy.

“Such a night!” she said, suppressing a yawn. “My dear, you did well to go to bed.”

“And to cap it all,” cried Mrs. Rindge, “Georgie fell over backwards in one of those beautiful Adam chairs, and there’s literally nothing left of it. If an ocean steamer had hit it, or a freight tram, it couldn’t have been more thoroughly demolished.”

“You pushed me,” declared Mr. Pembroke.

“Did I, Hugh? I barely touched him.”

“You knocked him into a cocked hat,” said Hugh. “And if you’d been in that kimono, you could have done it even easier.”

“Georgie broke the whole whiskey service,—or whatever it is,” Mrs. Rindge went on, addressing Honora again. “He fell into it.”

“He’s all right this morning,” observed Mrs. Kame, critically.

“I think I’ll take to swallowing swords and glass and things in public. I can do it so well,” said Mr. Pembroke.

“I hope you got what you like for breakfast,” said Honora to the ladies.

“Hurry up and come down, Adele,” said Hugh, “if you want to look over the horses before lunch.”

“It’s Georgie’s fault,” replied Mrs. Rindge; “he’s been standing in the door of my sitting-room for a whole half-hour talking nonsense.”

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A little later they all set out for the stables. These buildings at Highlawns, framed by great trees, were old-fashioned and picturesque, surrounding three sides of a court, with a yellow brick wall on the fourth. The roof of the main building was capped by a lantern, the home of countless pigeons. Mrs. Rindge was in a habit, and one by one the saddle horses were led out, chiefly for her inspection; and she seemed to Honora to become another woman as she looked them over with a critical eye and discussed them with Hugh and O'Grady, the stud-groom, and talked about pedigrees and strains. For she was renowned in this department of sport on many fields, both for recklessness and skill.

"Where did you get that brute, Hugh?" she asked presently.

Honora, who had been talking to Pembroke, looked around with a start. And at the sight of the great black horse, bought on that unforgettable day, she turned suddenly faint.

"Over here in the country about ten miles," Chiltern was saying. "I heard of him, but I didn't expect anything until I went to look at him last week."

"What do you call him?" asked Mrs. Rindge.

"I haven't named him."

"I'll give you a name."

Chiltern looked at her. "What is it?" he said.

"Oblivion," she replied:

"By George, Adele," he exclaimed, "you have a way of hitting it off!"

"Will you let me ride him this afternoon?" she asked.

"I'm a—a candidate for oblivion." She laughed a little and her eyes shone feverishly.

"No you don't," he said. "I'm giving you the grey. He's got enough in him for any woman—even for you: And besides, I don't think the black ever felt a side saddle, or any other kind, until last week."

"I've got another habit," she said eagerly. "I'd rather ride him astride. I'll match you to see who has him."

Chiltern laughed.

"No you don't," he repeated. "I'll ride him to-day, and consider it to-morrow."

“I—I think I’ll go back to the house,” said Honora to Pembroke. “It’s rather hot here in the sun.”

“I’m not very keen about sunshine, either,” he declared.

At lunch she was unable to talk; to sustain, at least, a conversation. That word oblivion, which Mrs. Rindge had so aptly applied to the horse, was constantly on her lips, and it would not have surprised her if she had spoken it. She felt as though a heavy weight lay on her breast, and to relieve its intolerable pressure drew in her breath deeply. She was wild with fear. The details of the great room fixed themselves indelibly in her brain; the subdued light, the polished table laden with silver and glass, the roses, and the purple hot-house grapes. All this seemed in some way to be an ironic prelude to disaster. Hugh, pausing in his badinage with Mrs. Rindge, looked at her.

“Cheer up, Honora,” he said.

“I’m afraid this first house-party is too much for her,” said Mrs. Kame.

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Honora made some protest that seemed to satisfy them, tried to rally herself, and succeeded sufficiently to pass muster. After lunch they repaired again to the bridge table, and at four Hugh went upstairs to change into his riding clothes. Five minutes longer she controlled herself, and then made some paltry excuse, indifferent now as to what they said or thought, and followed him. She knocked at his dressing-room door and entered. He was drawing on his boots. “Hello, Honora,” he said.

Honora turned to his man, and dismissed him.

“I wish to speak to Mr. Chiltern alone.”

Chiltern paused in his tugging at the straps, and looked up at her.

“What’s the matter with you to-day, Honora?” he asked. “You looked like the chief mourner at a funeral all through lunch.”

He was a little on edge, that she knew. He gave another tug at the boot, and while she was still hesitating, he began again.

“I ought to apologize, I know, for bringing these people up without notice, but I didn’t suppose you’d object when you understood how naturally it all came about. I thought a little livening up, as I said, wouldn’t, hurt us. We’ve had a quiet winter, to put it mildly.” He laughed a little. “I didn’t have a chance to see you until this morning, and when I went to your room they told me you’d gone out.”

“Hugh,” she said, laying her hand on his shoulder. “It isn’t the guests. If you want people, and they amuse you, I’m—I’m glad to have them. And if I’ve seemed to be—-cold to them, I’m sorry. I tried my best—I mean I did not intend to be cold. I’ll sit up all night with them, if you like. And I didn’t come to reproach you, Hugh. I’ll never do that—I’ve got no right to.”

She passed her hand over her eyes. If she had any wrongs, if she had suffered any pain, the fear that obsessed her obliterated all. In spite of her disillusionment, in spite of her newly acquired ability to see him as he was, enough love remained to scatter, when summoned, her pride to the winds.

Having got on both boots, he stood up.

“What’s the trouble, then?” he asked. And he took an instant’s hold of her chin—a habit he had—and smiled at her.

He little knew how sublime, in its unconscious effrontery, his question was! She tried to compose herself, that she might be able to present comprehensively to his finite masculine mind the ache of today.

“Hugh, it’s that black horse.” She could not bring herself to pronounce the name Mrs. Rindge had christened him.

“What about him?” he said, putting on his waistcoat.

“Don’t ride him!” she pleaded. “I—I’m afraid of him—I’ve been afraid of him ever since that day.

“It may be a foolish feeling, I know. Sometimes the feelings that hurt women most are foolish. If I tell you that if you ride him you will torture me, I’m sure you’ll grant what I ask. It’s such a little thing and it means so much—so much agony to me. I’d do anything for you—give up anything in the world at your slightest wish. Don’t ride him!”

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“This is a ridiculous fancy of yours, Honora. The horse is all right. I’ve ridden dozens of worse ones.”

“Oh, I’m sure he isn’t,” she cried; “call it fancy, call it instinct, call it anything you like—-but I feel it, Hugh. That woman—Mrs. Rindge—knows something about horses, and she said he was a brute.”

“Yes,” he interrupted, with a short laugh, “and she wants to ride him.”

“Hugh, she’s reckless. I—I’ve been watching her since she came here, and I’m sure she’s reckless with—with a purpose.”

“You’re morbid,” he said. “She’s one of the best sportswomen in the country—that’s the reason she wanted to ride the horse. Look here, Honora, I’d accede to any reasonable request. But what do you expect me to do?” he demanded; “go down and say I’m afraid to ride him? or that my wife doesn’t want me to? I’d never hear the end of it. And the first thing Adele would do would be to jump on him herself—a little wisp of a woman that looks as if she couldn’t hold a Shetland pony! Can’t you see that what you ask is impossible?”

He started for the door to terminate a conversation which had already begun to irritate him. For his anger, in these days, was very near the surface. She made one more desperate appeal.

“Hugh—the man who sold him—he knew the horse was dangerous. I’m sure he did, from something he said to me while you were gone.”

“These country people are all idiots and cowards,” declared Chiltern. “I’ve known ’em a good while, and they haven’t got the spirit of mongrel dogs. I was a fool to think that I could do anything for them. They’re kind and neighbourly, aren’t they?” he exclaimed. “If that old rascal flattered himself he deceived me, he was mistaken. He’d have been mightily pleased if the beast had broken my neck.”

“Hugh!”

“I can’t, Honora. That’s all there is to it, I can’t. Now don’t cut up about nothing. I’m sorry, but I’ve got to go. Adele’s waiting.”

He came back, kissed her hurriedly, turned and opened the door. She followed him into the hallway, knowing that she had failed, knowing that she never could have succeeded. There she halted and watched him go down the stairs, and stand with her hands tightly pressed together: voices reached her, a hurrah from George Pembroke, and the pounding of hoofs on the driveway. It had seemed such a little thing to ask!

But she did not dwell upon this, now, when fear was gnawing her: how she had humbled her pride for days and weeks and months for him, and how he had refused her paltry request lest he should be laughed at. Her reflections then were not on his waning love. She was filled with the terror of losing him—of losing all that remained to her in the world. Presently she began to walk slowly towards the stairs, descended them, and looked around her. The hall, at least, had not changed. She listened, and a bee hummed in through the open doorway. A sudden longing for companionship possessed her-no matter whose; and she walked hurriedly, as though she were followed, through the empty rooms until she came upon George Pembroke stretched at full length on the leather-covered lounge in the library. He opened his eyes, and got up with alacrity.

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“Please don’t move,” she said.

He looked at her. Although his was not what may be called a sympathetic temperament, he was not without a certain knowledge of women; superficial, perhaps. But most men of his type have seen them in despair; and since he was not related to this particular despair, what finer feelings he had were the more easily aroused. It must have been clear to her then that she had lost the power to dissemble, all the clearer because of Mr. Pembroke’s cheerfulness.

“I wasn’t going to sleep,” he assured her. “Circumstantial evidence is against me, I know. Where’s Abby? reading French literature?”

“I haven’t seen her,” replied Honora.

“She usually goes to bed with a play at this hour. It’s a horrid habit —going to bed, I mean. Don’t you think? Would you mind showing me about a little?”

“Do you really wish to?” asked Honora, incredulously.

“I haven’t been here since my senior year,” said Mr. Pembroke. “If the old General were alive, he could probably tell you something of that visit—he wrote to my father about it. I always liked the place, although the General was something of a drawback. Fine old man, with no memory.”

“I should have thought him to have had a good memory,” she said.

“I have always been led to believe that he was once sent away from college in his youth,—for his health,” he explained significantly. “No man has a good memory who can’t remember that. Perhaps the battle of Gettysburg wiped it out.”

Thus, in his own easy-going fashion, Mr. Pembroke sought to distract her. She put on a hat, and they walked about, the various scenes recalling incidents of holidays he had spent at Highlawns. And after a while Honora was thankful that chance had sent her in this hour to him rather than to Mrs. Kame. For the sight, that morning of this lady in her dressing-gown over the stairway, had seemingly set the seal on a growing distaste. Her feeling had not been the same about Mrs. Rindge: Mrs. Kame’s actions savoured of deliberate choice, of an inherent and calculating wickedness.

Had the distraction of others besides himself been the chief business of Mr. Pembroke’s life, he could not have succeeded better that afternoon. He must be given this credit: his motives remain problematical; at length he even drew laughter from her. The afternoon wore on, they returned to the garden for tea, and a peaceful stillness continued to reign about them, the very sky smiling placidly at her fears. Not by assuring her that Hugh was unusual horseman, that he had passed through many dangers beside which this was a bagatelle, could the student of the feminine by her side

have done half so well. And it may have been that his success encouraged him as he saw emerging, as the result of his handiwork, an unexpectedly attractive—if still somewhat serious-woman from the gloom that had enveloped her. That she should still have her distrait moments was but natural.

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He talked to her largely about Hugh, of whom he appeared sincerely fond. The qualities which attracted Mr. Pembroke in his own sex were somewhat peculiar, and seemingly consisted largely in a readiness to drop the business at hand, whatever it might be, at the suggestion of a friend to do something else; the “something else,” of course, to be the conception of an ingenious mind. And it was while he was in the midst of an anecdote proving the existence of this quality in his friend that he felt a sudden clutch on his arm.

They listened. Faintly, very faintly, could be heard the sound of hoof beats; rapid, though distant.

“Do you hear?” she whispered, and still held his arm.

“It’s just like them to race back,” said Pembroke, with admirable nonchalance.

“But they wouldn’t come back at this time—it’s too early. Hugh always takes long rides. They started for Hubbard’s—it’s twelve miles.”

“Adele changes her mind every minute of the day,” he said.

“Listen!” she cried, and her clutch tightened. The hoof beats grew louder. “It’s only one—it’s only one horse!”

Before he could answer, she was already halfway up the garden path towards the house. He followed her as she ran panting through the breakfast room, the dining room, and drawing-room, and when they reached the hall, Starling, the butler, and two footmen were going out at the door. A voice—Mrs. Kame’s—cried out, “What is it?” over the stairs, but they paid no heed. As they reached the steps they beheld the slight figure of Mrs. Rindge on a flying horse coming towards them up the driveway. Her black straw hat had slipped to the back of her neck, her hair was awry, her childish face white as paper. Honora put her hand to her heart. There was no need to tell her the news—-she had known these many hours.

Mrs. Rindge’s horse came over the round grass-plot of the circle and planted his fore feet in the turf as she pulled him up. She lurched forward. It was Starling who lifted her off—George Pembroke stood by Honora.

“My God, Adele,” he exclaimed, “why don’t you speak?”

She was staring at Honora.

“I can’t!” she cried. “I can’t tell you—it’s too terrible! The horse—” she seemed to choke.

It was Honora who went up to her with a calmness that awed them.

“Tell me,” she said, “is he dead?”

Mrs. Rindge nodded, and broke into hysterical sobbing.

“And I wanted to ride him myself,” she sobbed, as they led her up the steps.

In less than an hour they brought him home and laid him in the room in which he had slept from boyhood, and shut the door. Honora looked into his face. It was calm at last, and his body strangely at rest. The passions which had tortured it and driven it hither and thither through a wayward life had fled: the power gone that would brook no guiding hand, that had known no master. It was not until then that she fell upon him, weeping . . . .

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CHAPTER XVIII

IN WHICH MR. ERWIN SEEK PARIS

As she glanced around the sitting-room of her apartment in Paris one September morning she found it difficult, in some respects, to realize that she had lived in it for more than five years. After Chiltern's death she had sought a refuge, and she had found it here: a refuge in which she meant—if her intention may be so definitely stated—to pass the remainder of her days.

As a refuge it had become dear to her. When first she had entered it she had looked about her numbly, thankful for walls and roof, thankful for its remoteness from the haunts of the prying: as a shipwrecked castaway regards, at the first light, the cave into which he has stumbled into the darkness-gratefully. And gradually, castaway that she felt herself to be, she had adorned it lovingly, as one above whose horizon the sails of hope were not to rise; filled it with friends not chosen in a day, whose faithful ministrations were not to cease. Her books, but only those worthy to be bound and read again; the pictures she had bought when she had grown to know what pictures were; the music she had come to love for its eternal qualities—these were her companions.

The apartment was in the old quarter across the Seine, and she had found it by chance. The ancient family of which this hotel had once been the home would scarce have recognized, if they had returned the part of it Honora occupied. The room in which she mostly lived was above the corner of the quiet street, and might have been more aptly called a sitting-room than a salon. Its panels were the most delicate of blue-gray, fantastically designed and outlined by ribbings of blue. Some of them contained her pictures. The chairs, the sofas, the little tabourets, were upholstered in yellow, their wood matching the panels. Above the carved mantel of yellowing marble was a quaintly shaped mirror extending to the high ceiling, and flanked on either side by sconces. The carpet was a golden brown, the hangings in the tall windows yellow. And in the morning the sun came in, not boisterously, but as a well-bred and cheerful guest. An amiable proprietor had permitted her also to add a wrought-iron balcony as an adjunct to this room, and sometimes she sat there on the warmer days reading under the seclusion of an awning, or gazing at the mysterious facades of the houses opposite, or at infrequent cabs or pedestrians below.

An archway led out of the sitting-room into a smaller room, once the boudoir of a marquise, now Honora's library. This was in blue and gold, and she had so far modified the design of the decorator as to replace the mirrors of the cases with glass; she liked to see her books. Beyond the library was a dining room in grey, with dark red hangings; it overlooked the forgotten garden of the hotel.

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One item alone of news from the outer world, vital to her, had drifted to her retreat. Newspapers filled her with dread, but it was from a newspaper, during the first year of her retirement, that she had learned of the death of Howard Spence. A complication of maladies was mentioned, but the true underlying cause was implied in the article, and this had shocked but not surprised her. A ferment was in progress in her own country, the affairs of the Orange Trust Company being investigated, and its president under indictment at the hour of his demise. Her feelings at the time, and for months after, were complex. She had been moved to deep pity, for in spite of what he had told her of his business transactions, it was impossible for her to think of him as a criminal. That he had been the tool of others, she knew, but it remained a question in her mind how clearly he had perceived the immorality of his course, and of theirs. He had not been given to casuistry, and he had been brought up in a school the motto of which he had once succinctly stated: the survival of the fittest. He had not been, alas, one of those to survive.

Honora had found it impossible to unravel the tangled skein of their relationship, and to assign a definite amount of blame to each. She did not shirk hers, and was willing to accept a full measure. That she had done wrong in marrying him, and again in leaving him to marry another man, she acknowledged freely. Wrong as she knew this to have been, severely though she had been punished for it, she could not bring herself to an adequate penitence. She tried to remember him as he had been at Silverdale, and in the first months of their marriage, and not as he had afterwards become. There was no question in her mind, now that it was given her to see things more clearly, that she might have tried harder, much harder, to make their marriage a success. He might, indeed, have done more to protect and cherish her. It was a man's part to guard a woman against the evils with which she had been surrounded. On the other hand, she could not escape the fact, nor did she attempt to escape it, that she had had the more light of the two: and that, though the task were formidable, she might have fought to retain that light and infuse him with it.

That she did not hold herself guiltless is the important point. Many of her hours were spent in retrospection. She was, in a sense, as one dead, yet retaining her faculties; and these became infinitely keen now that she was deprived of the power to use them as guides through life. She felt that the power had come too late, like a legacy when one is old. And she contemplated the Honora of other days—of the flesh, as though she were now the spirit departed from that body; sorrowfully, poignantly regretful of the earthly motives, of the tarnished ideals by which it had been animated and led to destruction.

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Even Hugh Chiltern had left her no illusions. She thought of him at tunes with much tenderness; whether she still loved him or not she could not say. She came to the conclusion that all capacity for intense feeling had been burned out of her. And she found that she could permit her mind to rest upon no period of her sojourn at Grenoble without a sense of horror; there had been no hour when she had seemed secure from haunting terror, no day that had not added its mite to the gathering evidence of an ultimate retribution. And it was like a nightmare to summon again this spectacle of the man going to pieces under her eyes. The whole incident in her life as time wore on assumed an aspect bizarre, incredible, as the follies of a night of madness appear in the saner light of morning. Her great love had bereft her of her senses, for had the least grain of sanity remained to her she might have known that the thing they attempted was impossible of accomplishment.

Her feeling now, after four years, might be described as relief. To employ again the figure of the castaway, she often wondered why she of all others had been rescued from the tortures of slow drowning and thrown up on an island. What had she done above the others to deserve preservation? It was inevitable that she should on occasions picture to herself the years with him that would have stretched ahead, even as the vision of them had come to her that morning when, in obedience to his telegram, she had told Starling to prepare for guests. Her escape had indeed been miraculous!

Although they had passed through a ceremony, the conviction had never taken root in her that she had been married to Chiltern. The tie that had united her to him had not been sacred, though it had been no less binding; more so, in fact. That tie would have become a shackle. Her perception of this, after his death, had led her to instruct her attorney to send back to his relatives all but a small income from his estate, enough for her to live on during her lifetime. There had been some trouble about this matter; Mrs. Grainger, in particular, had surprised her in making objections, and had finally written a letter which Honora received with a feeling akin to gratitude. Whether her own action had softened this lady's feelings, she never understood; she had cherished the letter for its unexpectedly charitable expressions. Chiltern's family had at last agreed to accept the estate on the condition that the income mentioned should be tripled. And to this Honora had consented. Money had less value than ever in her eyes.

She lived here in Paris in what may be called a certain peace, made no demands upon the world, and had no expectations from it. She was now in half mourning, and intended to remain so. Her isolation was of her own choice, if a stronger expression be not used. She was by no means an enforced outcast. And she was even aware that a certain sympathy for her had grown up amongst her former friends which had spread

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to the colony of her compatriots in Paris; in whose numbers there were some, by no means unrecognized, who had defied the conventions more than she. Hugh Chiltern's reputation, and the general knowledge of his career, had no doubt aided to increase this sympathy, but the dignity of her conduct since his death was at the foundation of it. Sometimes, on her walks and drives, she saw people bowing to her, and recognized friends or acquaintances of what seemed to her like a former existence.

Such had been her life in Paris until a certain day in early September, a month before this chapter opens. It was afternoon, and she was sitting in the balcony cutting a volume of memoirs when she heard the rattle of a cab on the cobbles below, and peered curiously over the edge of the railing. Although still half a block away, the national characteristics of the passenger were sufficiently apparent. He was an American—of that she was sure. And many Americans did not stray into that quarter. The length of his legs, for one thing, betrayed him: he found the seat of the fiacre too low, and had crossed one knee over the other. Other and less easily definable attributes he did not lack. And as he leaned against the faded blue cushions regarding with interest the buildings he passed, he seemed, like an ambassador, to convert the cab in which he rode into United States territory. Then she saw that it was Peter Erwin.

She drew back her head from the balcony rail, and tried to sit still and to think, but she was trembling as one stricken with a chill. The cab stopped; and presently, after an interval, his card was handed her. She rose, and stood for a moment with her hand against the wall before she went into the salon. None of the questions she had asked herself were answered. Was she glad to see him? and what would be his attitude towards her? When she beheld him standing before her she had strength only to pronounce his name.

He came forward quickly and took her hand and looked down into her face. She regarded him tremulously, instinctively guessing the vital importance of this moment for him; and she knew then that he had been looking forward to it in mingled hope and dread, as one who gazes seaward after a night of tempest for the ship he has seen at dusk in the offing. What had the tempest done to her? Such was his question. And her heart leaped as she saw the light growing in his eyes, for it meant much to her that he should see that she was not utterly dismantled. She fell; his own hand tremble as he relinquished hers. He was greatly moved; his voice, too, betrayed it.

"You see I have found you," he said.

"Yes," she answered; "—why did you come?"

"Why have I always come to you, when it was possible?" he asked.

“No one ever had such a friend, Peter. Of that I am sure:’

“I wanted to see Paris,” he said, “before I grew too decrepit to enjoy it.”

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She smiled, and turned away.

“Have you seen much of it?”

“Enough to wish to see more.”

“When did you arrive?”

“Some time in the night,” he said, “from Cherbourg. And I’m staying at a very grand hotel, which might be anywhere. A man I crossed with on the steamer took me there. I think I’d move to one of the quieter ones, the French ones, if I were a little surer of my pronunciation and the subjunctive mood.”

“You don’t mean to say you’ve been studying French!”

He coloured a little, and laughed.

“You think it ridiculous at my time of life? I suppose you’re right. You should have seen me trying to understand the cabmen. The way these people talk reminds me more of a Gatling gun than anything I can think of. It certainly isn’t human.”

“Perhaps you have come over as ambassador,” she suggested. “When I saw you in the cab, even before I recognized you, I thought of a bit of our soil broken off and drifted over here.”

Her voice did not quite sustain the lighter note—the emotion his visit was causing her was too great. He brought with him into her retreat not so much a flood of memories as of sensations. He was a man whose image time with difficulty obliterates, whose presence was a shining thing: so she had grown to value it in proportion as she had had less of it. She did inevitably recall the last time she had seen him, in the little Western city, and how he had overwhelmed her, invaded her with doubts and aroused the spirit which had possessed her to fight fiercely for its foothold. And to-day his coming might be likened to the entrance of a great physician into the room of a distant and lonely patient whom amidst wide ministrations he has not forgotten. She saw now that he had been right. She had always seen it, clearly indeed when he had been beside her, but the spirit within her had been too strong, until now. Now, when it had plundered her soul of treasures—once so little valued—it had fled. Such were her thoughts.

The great of heart undoubtedly possess this highest quality of the physician,—if the statement may thus be put backhandedly,—and Peter Erwin instinctively understood the essential of what was going on within her. He appeared to take a delight in the fancy she had suggested; that he had brought a portion of the newer world to France.

“Not a piece of the Atlantic coast, certainly,” he replied. “One of the muddy islands, perhaps, of the Mississippi.”

“All the more representative,” she said. “You seem to have taken possession of Paris, Peter—not Paris of you. You have annexed the seat of the Capets, and brought democracy at last into the Faubourg.”

“Without a Reign of Terror,” he added quizzically.

“If you are not ambassador, what are you?” she asked. “I have expected at any moment to read in the Figaro that you were President of the United States.”

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“I am the American tourist,” he declared, “with Baedeker for my Bible, who desires to be shown everything. And I have already discovered that the legend of the fabulous wealth of the Indies is still in force here. There are many who are willing to believe that in spite of my modest appearance—maybe because of it—I have sailed over in a galleon filled with gold. Already I have been approached from every side by confidential gentlemen who announced that they spoke English—one of them said ’American’—who have offered to show me many things, and who have betrayed enough interest in me to inquire whether I were married or single.”

Honora laughed. They were seated in the balcony by this time, and he had the volume of memoirs on his knee, fingering it idly.

“What did you say to them?” she asked.

“I told them I was the proud father of ten children,” he replied. “That seemed to stagger them, but only for a moment. They offered to take us all to the Louvre.”

“Peter, you are ridiculous! But, in spite of your nationality, you don’t look exactly gullible.”

“That is a relief,” he said. “I had begun to think I ought to leave my address and my watch with the Consul General . . . .”

Of such a nature was the first insidious rupture of that routine she had grown to look upon as changeless for the years to come, of the life she had chosen for its very immutable quality. Even its pangs of loneliness had acquired a certain sweet taste. Partly from a fear of a world that had hurt her, partly from fear of herself, she had made her burrow deep, that heat and cold, the changing seasons, and love and hate might be things far removed. She had sought to remove comparisons, too, from the limits of her vision; to cherish and keep alive, indeed, such regrets as she had, but to make no new ones.

Often had she thought of Peter Erwin, and it is not too much to say that he had insensibly grown into an ideal. He had come to represent to her the great thing she had missed in life, missed by feverish searching in the wrong places, digging for gold where the ground had glittered. And, if the choice had been given her, she would have preferred his spiritual to his bodily companionship—for a while, at least. Some day, when she should feel sure that desire had ceased to throb, when she should have acquired an unshakable and absolute resignation, she would see him. It is not too much to say, if her feeling be not misconstrued and stretched far beyond her own conception of it, that he was her one remaining interest in the world. She had scanned the letters of her aunt and uncle for knowledge of his doings, and had felt her curiosity justified by a certain proprietorship that she did not define, faith in humankind, or the lack of it, usually makes itself felt through one’s comparative contemporaries. That her

uncle was a good man, for instance, had no such effect upon Honora, as the fact that Peter was a good man. And that he had held a true course had gradually become a very vital thing to her, perhaps the most vital thing; and she could have imagined no greater personal calamity now than to have seen him inconsistent. For there are such men, and most people have known them. They are the men who, unconsciously, keep life sweet.

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Yet she was sorry he had invaded her hiding-place. She had not yet achieved peace, and much of the weary task would have to be done over after he was gone.

In the meantime she drifted with astounding ease into another existence. For it was she, and not the confidential gentlemen, who showed Peter Paris: not the careless, pleasure-loving Paris of the restaurants, but of the Cluny and the Carnavalet. The Louvre even was not neglected, and as they entered it first she recalled with still unaccustomed laughter his reply to the proffered services of the guide. Indeed, there was much laughter in their excursions: his native humour sprang from the same well that held his seriousness. She was amazed at his ability to strip a sham and leave it grotesquely naked; shams the risible aspect of which she had never observed in spite of the familiarity four years had given her. Some of his own countrymen and countrywomen afforded him the greatest amusement in their efforts to carry off acquired European “personalities,” combinations of assumed indifference and effrontery, and an accent the like of which was never heard before. But he was neither bitter nor crude in his criticisms. He made her laugh, but he never made her ashamed. His chief faculty seemed to be to give her the power to behold, with astonishing clearness, objects and truths which had lain before her eyes, and yet hidden. And she had not thought to acquire any more truths.

The depth of his pleasure in the things he saw was likewise a revelation to her. She was by no means a bad guide to the Louvre and the Luxembourg, but the light in her which had come slowly flooded him with radiance at the sight of a statue or a picture. He would stop with an exclamation and stand gazing, self-forgetful, for incredible periods, and she would watch him, filled with a curious sense of the limitations of an appreciation she had thought complete. Where during his busy life had he got this thing which others had sought in many voyages in vain?

Other excursions they made, and sometimes these absorbed a day. It was a wonderful month, that Parisian September, which Honora, when she allowed herself to think, felt that she had no right to. A month filled to the brim with colour: the stone facades of the houses, which in certain lights were what the French so aptly call bleuatre; the dense green foliage of the horse-chestnut trees, the fantastic iron grills, the Arc de Triomphe in the centre of its circle at sunset, the wide shaded avenues radiating from it, the bewildering Champs Elysees, the blue waters of the Seine and the graceful bridges spanning it, Notre Dame against the sky. Their walks took them, too, into quainter, forgotten regions where history was grim and half-effaced, and they speculated on the France of other days.

They went farther afield; and it was given them to walk together down green vistas cut for kings, to linger on terraces with the river far below them, and the roofs of Paris in the hazy distance; that Paris, sullen so long, the mutterings of which the kings who had sat there must have heard with dread; that Paris which had finally risen in its wrath and taken the pleasure-houses and the parks for itself.

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Once they went out to Chantilly, the cameo-like chateau that stands mirrored in its waters, and wandered through the alleys there. Honora had left her parasol on the parapet, and as they returned Peter went to get it, while she awaited him at a little distance. A group was chatting gayly on the lawn, and one of them, a middle-aged, well-dressed man hailed him with an air of fellowship, and Peter stopped for a moment's talk.

"We were speaking of ambassadors the other day," he said when he joined her; "that was our own, Minturn."

"We were speaking of them nearly a month ago," she said.

"A month ago! I can't believe it!" he exclaimed.

"What did he say to you?" Honora inquired presently.

"He was abusing me for not letting him know I was in Paris."

"Peter, you ought to have let him know!"

"I didn't come over here to see the ambassador," answered Peter, gayly.

She talked less than usual on their drive homeward, but he did not seem to notice the fact. Dusk was already lurking in the courtyards and byways of the quiet quarter when the porter let them in, and the stone stairway of the old hotel was almost in darkness. The sitting-room, with its yellow, hangings snugly drawn and its pervading but soft light, was a grateful change. And while she was gone to—remove her veil and hat, Peter looked around it.

It was redolent of her. A high vase of remarkable beauty, filled with white roses, stood on the gueridon. He went forward and touched it, and closed his eyes as though in pain. When he opened them he saw her standing in the archway.

She had taken off her coat, and was in a simple white muslin gown, with a black belt—a costume that had become habitual. Her age was thirty. The tragedy and the gravity of her life during these later years had touched her with something that before was lacking. In the street, in the galleries, people had turned to look at her; not with impudent stares. She caught attention, aroused imagination. Once, the year before, she had had a strange experience with a well-known painter, who, in an impulsive note, had admitted following her home and bribing the concierge. He craved a few sittings. Her expression now, as she looked at Peter, was graver than usual.

"You must not come to-morrow," she said.

“I thought we were going to Versailles again,” he replied in surprise. “I have made the arrangements.”

“I have changed my mind. I’m not going.”

“You want to postpone it?” he asked.

She took a chair beside the little blaze in the fireplace.

“Sit down, Peter. I wish to say something to you. I have been wishing to do so for some time.”

“Do you object if I stand a moment?” he said. “I feel so much more comfortable standing, especially when I am going to be scolded.”

“Yes,” she admitted, “I am going to scold you. Your conscience has warned you.”

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“On the contrary,” he declared, “it has never been quieter. If I have offended; it is through ignorance.”

“It is through charity, as usual,” she said m a low voice. “If your conscience be quiet, mine is not. It is in myself that I am disappointed—I have been very selfish. I have usurped you. I have known it all along, and I have done very wrong in not relinquishing you before.”

“Who would have shown me Paris?” he exclaimed.

“No,” she continued, “you would not have been alone. If I had needed proof of that fact, I had it to-day—”

“Oh, Minturn,” he interrupted; “think of me hanging about an Embassy and trying not to spill tea!” And he smiled at the image that presented.

Her own smile was fleeting.

“You would never do that, I know,” she said gravely.

“You are still too modest, Peter, but the time has gone by when I can be easily deceived. You have a great reputation among men of affairs, an unique one. In spite of the fact that you are distinctly American, you have a wide interest in what is going on in the world. And you have an opportunity here to meet people of note, people really worth while from every point of view. You have no right to neglect it.”

He was silent a moment, looking down at her. She was leaning forward, her eyes fixed on the fire, her hands clasped between her knees.

“Do you think I care for that?” he asked.

“You ought to care,” she said, without looking up. “And it is my duty to try to make you care.”

“Honora, why do you think I came over here?” he said.

“To see Paris,” she answered. “I have your own word for it. To—to continue your education. It never seems to stop.”

“Did you really believe that?”

“Of course I believed it. What could be more natural? And you have never had a holiday like this.”

“No,” he agreed. “I admit that.”

“I don’t know how much longer you are going to stay,” she said. “You have not been abroad before, and there are other places you ought to go.”

“I’ll get you to make out an itinerary.”

“Peter, can’t you see that I’m serious? I have decided to take matters in my own hands. The rest of the time you are here, you may come to see me twice a week. I shall instruct the concierge.”

He turned and grasped the mantel shelf with both hands, and touched the log with the toe of his boot.

“What I told you about seeing Paris may be called polite fiction,” he said. “I came over here to see you. I have been afraid to say it until to-day, and I am afraid to say it now.”

She sat very still. The log flared up again, and he turned slowly and looked at the shadows in her face.

“You-you have always been good to me,” she answered. “I have never deserved it—I have never understood it. If it is any satisfaction for you to know that what I have saved of myself I owe to you, I tell you so freely.”

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“That,” he said, “is something for which God forbid that I should take credit. What you are is due to the development of a germ within you, a development in which I have always had faith. I came here to see you, I came here because I love you, because I have always loved you, Honora.”

“Oh, no, not that!” she cried; “not that!”

“Why not?” he asked. “It is something I cannot help, something beyond my power to prevent if I would. But I would not. I am proud of it, and I should be lost without it. I have had it always. I have come over to beg you to marry me.”

“It’s impossible! Can’t you see it’s impossible?”

“You don’t love me?” he said. Into those few words was thrown all the suffering of his silent years.

“I don’t know what I feel for you,” she answered in an agonized voice, her fingers tightening over the backs of her white hands. “If reverence be love—if trust be love, infinite and absolute trust—if gratitude be love—if emptiness after you are gone be a sign of it—yes, I love you. If the power to see clearly only through you, to interpret myself only by your aid be love, I acknowledge it. I tell you so freely, as of your right to know. And the germ of which you spoke is you. You have grown until you have taken possession of—of what is left of me. If I had only been able to see clearly from the first, Peter, I should be another woman to-day, a whole woman, a wise woman. Oh, I have thought of it much. The secret of life was there at my side from the time I was able to pronounce your name, and I couldn’t see it. You had it. You stayed. You took duty where you found it, and it has made you great. Oh, I don’t mean to speak in a worldly sense. When I say that, it is to express the highest human quality of which I can think and feel. But I can’t marry you. You must see it.”

“I cannot see it,” he replied, when he had somewhat gained control of himself.

“Because I should be wronging you.”

“How?” he asked.

“In the first place, I should be ruining your career.”

“If I had a career,” he said, smiling gently, “you couldn’t ruin it. You both overestimate and underestimate the world’s opinion, Honora. As my wife, it will not treat you cruelly. And as for my career, as you call it, it has merely consisted in doing as best I could the work that has come to me. I have tried to serve well those who have employed me, and if my services be of value to them, and to those who may need me in the future, they are not going to reject me. If I have any worth in the world, you will but add to it. Without you I am incomplete.”

She looked up at him wonderingly.

“Yes, you are great,” she said. “You pity me, you think of my loneliness.”

“It is true I cannot bear to picture you here,” he exclaimed. “The thought tortures me, but it is because I love you, because I wish to take and shield you. I am not a man to marry a woman without love. It seems to me that you should know me well enough to believe that, Honora. There never has been any other woman in my life, and there never can be. I have given you proof of it, God knows.”

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“I am not what I was,” she said, “I am not what I was. I have been dragged down.”

He bent and lifted her hand from her knee, and raised it to his lips, a homage from him that gave her an exquisite pain.

“If you had been dragged down,” he answered simply, “my love would have been killed. I know something of the horrors you have been through, as though I had suffered them myself. They might have dragged down another woman, Honora. But they have strangely ennobled you.”

She drew her hand away.

“No,” she said, “I do not deserve happiness. It cannot be my destiny.”

“Destiny,” he repeated. “Destiny is a thing not understandable by finite minds. It is not necessarily continued tragedy and waste, of that I am certain. Only a little thought is required, it seems to me, to assure us that we cannot be the judges of our own punishment on this earth. And of another world we know nothing. It cannot be any one’s destiny to throw away a life while still something may be made of it. You would be throwing your life away here. That no other woman is possible, or ever can be possible, for me should be a consideration with you, Honora. What I ask of you is a sacrifice—-will you make me happy?”

Her eyes filled with tears.

“Oh, Peter, do you care so much as that? If—if I could be sure that I were doing it for you! If in spite—of all that has happened to me, I could be doing something for you—!”

He stooped and kissed her.

“You can if you will,” he said.

PG EDITOR’S BOOKMARKS:

Best way is to leave ’em alone. Don’t dandle ’em (babies)
Blessed are the ugly, for they shall not be tempted
Comparisons, as Shakespeare said, are odorous
Constitutionally honest
Conversation was a mockery
Every one, man or woman, has the right to happiness
Fact should be written like fiction, and fiction like fact
Fetters of love
Happy the people whose annals are blank in history’s book
He has always been too honest to make a great deal of money

Her words of comfort were as few as her silent deeds were many
How can you talk of things other people have and not want them
Immutable love in a changing, heedless, selfish world
Intense longing is always followed by disappointment
Little better than a gambling place (Stock Exchange)
No reason why we should suffer all our lives for a mistake
Often in real danger at the moment when they feel most secure
Providence is accepted by his beneficiaries as a matter of fact
Regarding favourable impressions with profound suspicion
Resented the implication of possession
Rocks to which one might cling, successful or failing
Self-torture is human
She had never

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known the necessity of making friends
Sleep! A despised waste of time in childhood
So glad to have what other people haven't
Sought to remove comparisons
Taking him like daily bread, to be eaten and not thought about
That magic word Change
The greatest wonders are not at the ends of the earth, but near
The days of useless martyrdom are past
Thinking that because you have no ideals, other people haven't
Those who walk on ice will slide against their wills
Time, the unbribeable
Weak coffee and the Protestant religion seemed inseparable
Why should I desire what I cannot have

THE CELEBRITY

By Winston Churchill

VOLUME 1.

CHAPTER I

I was about to say that I had known the Celebrity from the time he wore kilts. But I see I shall have to amend that, because he was not a celebrity then, nor, indeed, did he achieve fame until some time after I had left New York for the West. In the old days, to my commonplace and unobserving mind, he gave no evidences of genius whatsoever. He never read me any of his manuscripts, which I can safely say he would have done had he written any at that time, and therefore my lack of detection of his promise may in some degree be pardoned. But he had then none of the oddities and mannerisms which I hold to be inseparable from genius, and which struck my attention in after days when I came in contact with the Celebrity. Hence I am constrained to the belief that his eccentricity must have arrived with his genius, and both after the age of twenty-five. Far be it from me to question the talents of one upon whose head has been set the laurel of fame!

When I knew him he was a young man without frills or foibles, with an excellent head for business. He was starting in to practise law in a downtown office with the intention of becoming a great corporation lawyer. He used to drop into my chambers once in a while to smoke, and was first-rate company. When I gave a dinner there was generally a cover laid for him. I liked the man for his own sake, and even had he promised to turn

out a celebrity it would have had no weight with me. I look upon notoriety with the same indifference as on the buttons on a man's shirt-front, or the crest on his note-paper.

When I went West, he fell out of my life. I probably should not have given him another thought had I not caught sight of his name, in old capitals, on a daintily covered volume in a book-stand. I had little time or inclination for reading fiction; my days were busy ones, and my nights were spent with law books. But I bought the volume out of curiosity, wondering the while whether he could have written it. I was soon set at rest, for the dedication was to a young woman of whom I had often heard him speak.

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The volume was a collection of short stories. On these I did not feel myself competent to sit in judgment, for my personal taste in fiction, if I could be said to have had any, took another turn. The stories dealt mainly with the affairs of aristocratic young men and aristocratic young women, and were differentiated to fit situations only met with in that society which does not have to send descriptions of its functions to the newspapers. The stories did not seem to me to touch life. They were plainly intended to have a bracing moral effect, and perhaps had this result for the people at whom they were aimed. They left with me the impression of a well-delivered stereopticon lecture, with characters about as life-like as the shadows on the screen, and whisking on and off, at the mercy of the operator. Their charm to me lay in the manner of the telling, the style, which I am forced to admit was delightful.

But the book I had bought was a success, a great success, if the newspapers and the reports of the sales were to be trusted. I read the criticisms out of curiosity more than any other prompting, and no two of them were alike: they veered from extreme negative to extreme positive. I have to confess that it gratified me not a little to find the negatives for the most part of my poor way of thinking. The positives, on the other hand, declared the gifted young author to have found a manner of treatment of social life entirely new. Other critics still insisted it was social ridicule: but if this were so, the satire was too delicate for ordinary detection.

However, with the dainty volume my quondam friend sprang into fame. At the same time he cast off the chrysalis of a commonplace existence. He at once became the hero of the young women of the country from Portland, Maine, to Portland, Oregon, many of whom wrote him letters and asked him for his photograph. He was asked to tell what he really meant by the vague endings of this or that story. And then I began to hear rumors that his head was turning. These I discredited, of course. If true, I thought it but another proof of the undermining influence of feminine flattery, which few men, and fewer young men, can stand. But I watched his career with interest.

He published other books, of a high moral tone and unapproachable principle, which I read carefully for some ray of human weakness, for some stroke of nature untrammelled by the calling code of polite society. But in vain.

CHAPTER II

It was by a mere accident that I went West, some years ago, and settled in an active and thriving town near one of the Great Lakes. The air and bustle and smack of life about the place attracted me, and I rented an office and continued to read law, from force of habit, I suppose. My experience in the service of one of the most prominent of New York lawyers stood me in good stead, and gradually, in addition to a

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heterogeneous business of mines and lumber, I began to pick up a few clients. But in all probability I should be still pegging away at mines and lumber, and drawing up occasional leases and contracts, had it not been for Mr. Farquhar Fenelon Cooke, of Philadelphia. Although it has been specifically written that promotion to a young man comes neither from the East nor the West, nor yet from the South, Mr. Cooke arrived from the East, and in the nick of time for me.

I was indebted to Farrar for Mr. Cooke's acquaintance, and this obligation I have since in vain endeavored to repay. Farrar's profession was forestry: a graduate of an eastern college, he had gone abroad to study, and had roughed it with the skilled woodsmen of the Black Forest. Mr. Cooke, whom he represented, had large tracts of land in these parts, and Farrar likewise received an income from the state, whose legislature had at last opened its eyes to the timber depredations and had begun to buy up reserves. We had rooms in the same Elizabethan building at the corner of Main and Superior streets, but it was more than a year before I got farther than a nod with him. Farrar's nod in itself was a repulsion, and once you had seen it you mentally scored him from the list of your possible friends. Besides this freezing exterior he possessed a cutting and cynical tongue, and had but little confidence in the human race. These qualities did not tend to render him popular in a Western town, if indeed they would have recommended him anywhere, and I confess to have thought him a surly enough fellow, being guided by general opinion and superficial observation. Afterwards the town got to know him, and if it did not precisely like him, it respected him, which perhaps is better. And he gained at least a few warm-friends, among whom I deem it an honor to be mentioned.

Farrar's contempt for consequences finally brought him an unsought-for reputation. Admiration for him was born the day he pushed O'Meara out of his office and down a flight of stairs because he had undertaken to suggest that which should be done with the timber in Jackson County. By this summary proceeding Farrar lost the support of a faction, O'Meara being a power in the state and chairman of the forestry board besides. But he got rid of interference from that day forth.

Oddly enough my friendship with Farrar was an indirect result of the incident I have just related. A few mornings after, I was seated in my office trying to concentrate my mind on page twenty of volume ten of the Records when I was surprised by O'Meara himself, accompanied by two gentlemen whom I remembered to have seen on various witness stands. O'Meara was handsomely dressed, and his necktie made but a faint pretence of concealing the gorgeous diamond in his shirt-front. But his face wore an aggrieved air, and his left hand was neatly bound in black and tucked into his coat. He sank comfortably into my wicker chair, which creaked a protest, and produced

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two yellow-spotted cigars, chewing the end of one with much apparent relish and pushing the other at me. His two friends remained respectfully standing. I guessed at what was coming, and braced myself by refusing the cigar,—not a great piece of self-denial, by the way. But a case meant much to me then, and I did seriously regret that O'Meara was not a possible client. At any rate, my sympathy with Farrar in the late episode put him out of the question.

O'Meara cleared his throat and began gingerly to undo the handkerchief on his hand. Then he brought his fist down on the table so that the ink started from the stand and his cheeks shook with the effort.

"I'll make him pay for this!" he shouted, with an oath.

The other gentlemen nodded their approval, while I put the inkstand in a place of safety.

"You're a pretty bright young man, Mr. Crocker," he went on, a look of cunning coming into his little eyes, "but I guess you ain't had too many cases to object to a big one."

"Did you come here to tell me that?" I asked.

He looked me over queerly, and evidently decided that I meant no effrontery.

"I came here to get your opinion," he said, holding up a swollen hand, "but I want to tell you first that I ought to get ten thousand, not a cent less. That scoundrelly young upstart—"

"If you want my opinion," I replied, trying to speak slowly, "it is that Mr. Farrar ought to get ten thousand dollars. And I think that would be only a moderate reward."

I did not feel equal to pushing him into the street, as Farrar had done, and I have now but a vague notion of what he said and how he got there. But I remember that half an hour afterwards a man congratulated me openly in the bank.

That night I found a new friend, although at the time I thought Farrar's visit to me the accomplishment of a perfunctory courtesy to a man who had refused to take a case against him. It was very characteristic of Farrar not to mention this until he rose to go. About half-past eight he sauntered in upon me, placing his hat precisely on the rack, and we talked until ten, which is to say that I talked and he commented. His observations were apt, if a trifle caustic, and it is needless to add that I found them entertaining. As he was leaving he held out his hand.

"I hear that O'Meara called on you to-day," he said diffidently.

“Yes,” I answered, smiling, “I was sorry not to have been able to take his case.”

I sat up for an hour or more, trying to arrive at some conclusion about Farrar, but at length I gave it up. His visit had in it something impulsive which I could not reconcile with his manner. He surely owed me nothing for refusing a case against him, and must have known that my motives for so doing were not personal. But if I did not understand him, I liked him decidedly from that night forward, and I hoped that his advances had sprung from some

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other motive than politeness. And indeed we gradually drifted into a quasi-friendship. It became his habit, as he went out in the morning, to drop into my room for a match, and I returned the compliment by borrowing his coal oil when mine was out. At such times we would sit, or more frequently stand, discussing the affairs of the town and of the nation, for politics was an easy and attractive subject to us both. It was only in a general way that we touched upon each other's concerns, this being dangerous ground with Farrar, who was ever ready to close up at anything resembling a confidence. As for me, I hope I am not curious, but I own to having had a curiosity about Farrar's Philadelphia patron, to whom Farrar made but slight allusions. His very name—-Farquhar Fenelon Cooke—had an odd sound which somehow betokened an odd man, and there was more than one bit of gossip afloat in the town of which he was the subject, notwithstanding the fact that he had never honored it with a visit. The gossip was the natural result of Mr. Cooke's large properties in the vicinity. It has never been my habit, however, to press a friend on such matters, and I could easily understand and respect Farrar's reluctance to talk of one from whom he received an income.

I had occasion, in the May of that year, to make a somewhat long business trip to Chicago, and on my return, much to my surprise, I found Farrar awaiting me in the railroad station. He smiled his wonted fraction by way of greeting, stopped to buy a newspaper, and finally leading me to his buggy, turned and drove out of town. I was completely mystified at such an unusual proceeding.

"What's this for?" I asked.

"I shan't bother you long," he said; "I simply wanted the chance to talk to you before you got to your office. I have a Philadelphia client, a Mr. Cooke, of whom you may have heard me speak. Since you have been away the railroad has brought suit against him. The row is about the lands west of the Washita, on Copper Rise. It's the devil if he loses, for the ground is worth the dollar bills to cover it. I telegraphed, and he got here yesterday. He wants a lawyer, and I mentioned you."

There came over me then in a flash a comprehension of Farrar which I had failed to grasp before. But I was quite overcome at his suggestion.

"Isn't it rather a big deal to risk me on?" I said. "Better go to Chicago and get Parks. He's an expert in that sort of thing." I am afraid my expostulation was weak.

"I merely spoke of you," replied Farrar, coolly,—"and he has gone around to your office. He knows about Parks, and if he wants him he'll probably take him. It all depends upon how you strike Cooke whether you get the case or not. I have never told you about him," he added with some hesitation; "he's a trifle queer, but a good fellow at the bottom. I should hate to see him lose his land."

“How is the railroad mixed up in it?” I asked.

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“I don’t know much about law, but it would seem as if they had a pretty strong case,” he answered. He went on to tell me what he knew of the matter in his clean, pithy sentences, often brutally cynical, as though he had not a spark of interest in any of it. Mr. Cooke’s claim to the land came from a maternal great-uncle, long since deceased, who had been a settler in these regions. The railroad answered that they had bought the land with other properties from the man, also deceased, to whom the old gentleman was alleged to have sold it. Incidentally I learned something of Mr. Cooke’s maternal ancestry.

We drove back to the office with some concern on my part at the prospect of so large a case. Sunning himself on the board steps, I saw for the first time Mr. Farquhar Fenelon Cooke. He was dressed out in broad gaiters and bright tweeds, like an English tourist, and his face might have belonged to Dagon, idol of the Philistines. A silver snaffle on a heavy leather watch guard which connected the pockets of his corduroy waistcoat, together with a huge gold stirrup in his Ascot tie, sufficiently proclaimed his tastes. But I found myself continually returning to the countenance, and I still think I could have modelled a better face out of putty. The mouth was rather small, thick-tipped, and put in at an odd angle; the brown eyes were large, and from their habit of looking up at one lent to the round face an incongruous solemnity. But withal there was a perceptible acumen about the man which was puzzling in the extreme.

“How are you, old man?” said he, hardly waiting for Farrar to introduce me. “Well, I hope.” It was pure cordiality, nothing more. He seemed to bubble over with it.

I said I was well, and invited him inside.

“No,” he said; “I like the look of the town. We can talk business here.”

And talk business he did, straight and to the point, so fast and indistinctly that at times I could scarcely follow him. I answered his rapid questions briefly, and as best I knew how. He wanted to know what chance he had to win the suit, and I told him there might be other factors involved beside those of which he had spoken. Plainly, also, that the character of his great-uncle was in question, an intimation which he did not appear to resent. But that there was no denying the fact that the railroad had a strong thing of it, and a good lawyer into the bargain.

“And don’t you consider yourself a good lawyer?” he cut in.

I pointed out that the railroad lawyer was a man of twice my age, experience, and reputation.

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Without more ado, and before either Farrar or myself had time to resist, he had hooked an arm into each of us, and we were all three marching down the street in the direction of his hotel. If this was agony for me, I could see that it was keener agony for Farrar. And although Mr. Farquhar Fenelon Cooke had been in town but a scant twenty-four hours, it seemed as if he knew more of its inhabitants than both of us put together. Certain it is that he was less particular with his acquaintances. He hailed the most astonishing people with an easy air of freedom, now releasing my arm, now Farrar's, to salute. He always saluted. He stopped to converse with a dozen men we had never seen, many of whom smelled strongly of the stable, and he invariably introduced Farrar as the forester of his estate, and me as his lawyer in the great quarrel with the railroad, until I began to wish I had never heard of Blackstone. And finally he steered us into the spacious bar of the Lake House.

The next morning the three of us were off early for a look at the contested property. It was a twenty-mile drive, and the last eight miles wound down the boiling Washita, still high with the melting snows of the pine lands. And even here the snows yet slept in the deeper hollows. unconscious of the budding green of the slopes. How heartily I wished Mr. Farquhar Fenelon Cooke back in Philadelphia! By his eternal accounts of his Germantown stables and of the blue ribbons of his hackneys he killed all sense of pleasure of the scene, and set up an irritation that was well-nigh unbearable. At length we crossed the river, climbed the foot-hills, and paused on the ridge. Below us lay the quaint inn and scattered cottages of Asquith, and beyond them the limitless and foam-flecked expanse of lake: and on our right, lifting from the shore by easy slopes for a mile at stretch, Farrar pointed out the timbered lands of Copper Rise, spread before us like a map. But the appreciation of beauty formed no part of Mr. Cooke's composition, —that is, beauty as Farrar and I knew it.

"If you win that case, old man," he cried, striking me a great whack between the shoulder-blades, "charge any fee you like; I'll pay it! And I'll make such a country-place out of this as was never seen west of New York state, and call it Mohair, after my old trotter. I'll put a palace on that clearing, with the stables just over the knoll. They'll beat the Germantown stables a whole lap. And that strip of level," he continued, pointing to a thinly timbered bit, "will hold a mile track nicely."

Farrar and I gasped: it was as if we had tumbled into the Washita.

"It will take money, Mr. Cooke," said Farrar, "and you haven't won the suit yet."

"Damn the money!" said Mr. Cooke, and we knew he meant it.

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Over the episodes of that interminable morning it will, be better to pass lightly. It was spent by Farrar and me in misery. It was spent by Mr. Farquhar Fenelon Cooke in an ecstasy of enjoyment, driving over and laying out Mohair, and I must admit he evinced a surprising genius in his planning, although, according to Farrar, he broke every sacred precept of landscape gardening again and again. He displayed the enthusiasm of a pioneer, and the energy of a Napoleon. And if he were too ignorant to accord to nature a word of praise, he had the grace and intelligence to compliment Farrar on the superb condition of the forests, and on the judgment shown in laying out the roads, which were so well chosen that even in this season they were well drained and dry. That day, too, my views were materially broadened, and I received an insight into the methods and possibilities of my friend's profession sufficient to instil a deeper respect both for it and for him. The crowded spots had been skilfully thinned of the older trees to give the younger ones a chance, and the harmony of the whole had been carefully worked out. Now we drove under dark pines and hemlocks, and then into a lighter relief of birches and wild cherries, or a copse of young beeches. And I learned that the estate had not only been paying the taxes and its portion of Farrar's salary, but also a considerable amount into Mr. Cooke's pocket the while it was being improved.

Mr. Cooke made his permanent quarters at the Lake House, and soon became one of the best-known characters about town. He seemed to enjoy his popularity, and I am convinced that he would have been popular in spite of his now-famous quarrel with the railroad. His easy command of profanity, his generous use of money, his predilection for sporting characters, of whom he was king; his ready geniality and good-fellowship alike with the clerk of the Lake House or the Mayor, not to mention his own undeniable personality, all combined to make him a favorite. He had his own especial table in the dining-room, called all the waiters by their first names, and they fought for the privilege of attending him. He likewise called the barkeepers by their first names, and had his own particular corner of the bar, where none dared intrude, and where he could almost invariably be found when not in my office. From this corner he dealt out cigars to the deserving, held stake moneys, decided all bets, and refereed all differences. His name appeared in the personal column of one of the local papers on the average of twice a week, or in lieu thereof one of his choicest stories in the "Notes about Town" column.

The case was to come up early in July, and I spent most of my time, to the detriment of other affairs, in preparing for it. I was greatly hampered in my work by my client, who filled my office with his tobacco-smoke and that of his friends, and he took it very much for granted that he was going to win the suit. Fortune had always played into his hands, he said, and I had no little difficulty in convincing him that matters had passed from his hands into mine. In this I believe I was never entirely successful. I soon found, too, that he had no ideas whatever on the value of discretion, and it was only by repeated threats of absolute failure that I prevented our secret tactics from becoming the property of his sporting fraternity and of the town.

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The more I worked on the case, the clearer it became to me that Mr. Farquhar Fenelon Cooke's great-uncle had been either a consummate scoundrel or a lunatic, and that our only hope of winning must be based on proving him one or the other; it did not matter much which, for my expectations at best were small. When I had at length settled to this conclusion I confided it as delicately as possible to my client, who was sitting at the time with his feet cocked up on the office table, reading a pink newspaper.

"Which'll be the easier to prove?" he asked, without looking up.

"It would be more charitable to prove he had been out of his mind," I replied, "and perhaps easier."

"Charity be damned," said this remarkable man. "I'm after the property."

So I decided on insanity. I hunted up and subpoenaed white-haired witnesses for miles around. Many of them shook their heads when they spoke of Mr. Cooke's great-uncle, and some knew more of his private transactions than I could have wished, and I trembled lest my own witnesses should be turned against me. I learned more of Mr. Cooke's great-uncle than I knew of Mr. Cooke himself, and to the credit of my client be it said that none of his relative's traits were apparent in him, with the possible exception of insanity; and that defect, if it existed in the grand-nephew, took in him a milder and less criminal turn. The old rascal, indeed, had so cleverly worded his deed of sale as to obtain payment without transfer. It was a trifle easier to avoid being specific in that country in his day than it is now, and the document was, in my opinion, sufficiently vague to admit of a double meaning. The original sale had been made to a man, now dead, whom the railroad had bought out. The Copper Rise property was mentioned among the other lands in the will in favor of Mr. Farquhar Fenelon Cooke, and the latter had gone ahead improving them and increasing their output in spite of the repeated threats of the railroad to bring suit. And it was not until its present attorney had come in and investigated the title that the railroad had resorted to the law. I mention here, by the way, that my client was the sole heir.

But as the time of the sessions drew near, the outlook for me was anything but bright. It is true that my witnesses were quite willing to depose that his actions were queer and out of the common, but these witnesses were for the most part venerable farmers and backwoodsmen: expert testimony was deplorably lacking. In this extremity it was Mr. Farquhar Fenelon Cooke himself who came unwittingly to my rescue. He had bought a horse,—he could never be in a place long without one,—which was chiefly remarkable, he said, for picking up his hind feet as well as his front ones. However he may have differed from the ordinary run of horses, he was shortly attacked by one of the thousand ills to which every horse is subject. I will not pretend to say what it was. I found Mr. Cooke one morning

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at his usual place in the Lake House bar holding forth with more than common vehemence and profanity on the subject of veterinary surgeons. He declared there was not a veterinary surgeon in the whole town fit to hold a certificate, and his listeners nodded an extreme approval to this sentiment. A grizzled old fellow who kept a stock farm back in the country chanced to be there, and managed to get a word in on the subject during one of my client's rare pauses.

"Yes," he said, "that's so. There ain't one of 'em now fit to travel with young Doctor Vane, who was here some fifteen years gone by. He weren't no horse-doctor, but he could fix up a foundered horse in a night as good as new. If your uncle was livin', he'd back me on that, Mr. Cooke."

Here was my chance. I took the old man aside, and two or three glasses of Old Crow launched him into reminiscence.

"Where is Doctor Vane now?" I asked finally.

"Over to Minneapolis, sir, with more rich patients nor he can take care of. Wasn't my darter over there last month, and seen him? And demned if he didn't pull up his carriage and talk to her. Here's luck to him."

I might have heard much more of the stockraiser had I stayed, but I fear I left him somewhat abruptly in my haste to find Farrar. Only three days remained before the case was to come up. Farrar readily agreed to go to Minneapolis, and was off on the first train that afternoon. I would have asked Mr. Cooke to go had I dared trust him, such was my anxiety to have him out of the way, if only for a time. I did not tell him about the doctor. He sat up very late with me that night on the Lake House porch to give me a rubbing down, as he expressed it, as he might have admonished some favorite jockey before a sweepstake. "Take it easy, old man," he would say repeatedly, "and don't give things the bit before you're sure of their wind!"

Days passed, and not a word from Farrar. The case opened with Mr. Cooke's friends on the front benches. The excitement it caused has rarely been equalled in that section, but I believe this was due less to its sensational features than to Mr. Cooke, who had an abnormal though unconscious talent for self-advertisement. It became manifest early that we were losing. Our testimony, as I had feared, was not strong enough, although they said we were making a good fight of it. I was racked with anxiety about Farrar; at last, when I had all but given up hope, I received a telegram from him dated at Detroit, saying he would arrive with the doctor that evening. This was Friday, the fourth day of the trial.

The doctor turned out to be a large man, well groomed and well fed, with a twinkle in his eye. He had gone to Narragansett Pier for the summer, whither Farrar had followed him. On being introduced, Mr. Cooke at once invited him out to have a drink.

“Did you know my uncle?” asked my client.

“Yes,” said the doctor, “I should say I did.”

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“Poor old duffer,” said Mr. Cooke, with due solemnity; “I understand he was a maniac.”

“Well,” said the doctor, while we listened with a breathless interest, “he wasn’t exactly a maniac, but I think I can safely say he was a lunatic.”

“Then here’s to insanity!” said the irrepressible, his glass swung in mid-air, when a thought struck him, and he put it down again and looked hard at the doctor.

“Will you swear to it?” he demanded.

“I would swear to it before Saint Peter,” said the doctor, fervently.

He swore to it before a jury, which was more to the point, and we won our case. It did not even go to the court of appeals; I suppose the railroad thought it cheaper to drop it, since no right of way was involved. And the decision was scarcely announced before Mr. Farquhar Fenelon Cooke had begun work on his new country place, Mohair.

I have oftentimes been led to consider the relevancy of this chapter, and have finally decided to insert it. I concluded that the actual narrative of how Mr. Cooke came to establish his country-place near Asquith would be interesting, and likewise throw some light on that gentleman’s character. And I ask the reader’s forbearance for the necessary personal history involved. Had it not been for Mr. Cooke’s friendship for me I should not have written these pages.

CHAPTER III

Events, are consequential or inconsequential irrespective of their size. The wars of Troy were fought for a woman, and Charles VIII, of France, bumped his head against a stone doorway and died because he did not stoop low enough. And to descend from history down to my own poor chronicle, Mr. Cooke’s railroad case, my first experience at the bar of any gravity or magnitude, had tied to it a string of consequences then far beyond my guessing. The suit was my stepping-stone not only to a larger and more remunerative practice, but also, I believe, to the position of district attorney, which I attained shortly afterwards.

Mr. Cooke had laid out Mohair as ruthlessly as Napoleon planned the new Paris; though not, I regret to say, with a like genius. Fortunately Farrar interposed and saved the grounds, but there was no guardian angel to do a like turn for the house. Mr. Langdon Willis, of Philadelphia, was the architect who had nominal charge of the building. He had regularly submitted some dozen plans for Mr. Cooke’s approval, which were as regularly rejected. My client believed, in common with a great many other people, that architects should be driven and not followed, and was plainly resolved to make this house the logical development of many cherished ideas. It is not strange, therefore,

that the edifice was completed by a Chicago contractor who had less self-respect than Mr. Willis, the latter having abruptly refused to have his name tacked on to the work.

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Mohair was finished and ready for occupation in July, two years after the suit. I drove out one day before Mr. Cooke's arrival to look it over. The grounds, where Farrar had had matters pretty much his own way, to my mind rivalled the best private parks in the East. The stables were filled with a score or so of Mr. Cooke's best horses, brought hither in his private cars, and the trotters were exercising on the track. The middle of June found Farrar and myself at the Asquith Inn. It was Farrar's custom to go to Asquith in the summer, being near the forest properties in his charge; and since Asquith was but five miles from the county-seat it was convenient for me, and gave me the advantages of the lake breezes and a comparative rest, which I should not have had in town. At that time Asquith was a small community of summer residents from Cincinnati, Chicago, St. Louis, and other western cities, most of whom owned cottages and the grounds around them. They were a quiet lot that long association had made clannish; and they had a happy faculty, so rare in summer resorts, of discrimination between an amusement and a nuisance. Hence a great many diversions which are accounted pleasurable elsewhere are at Asquith set down at their true value. It was, therefore, rather with resentment than otherwise that the approaching arrival of Mr. Cooke and the guests he was likely to have at Mohair were looked upon.

I had not been long at Asquith before I discovered that Farrar was acting in a peculiar manner, though I was longer in finding out what the matter was. I saw much less of him than in town. Once in a while in the evenings, after ten, he would run across me on the porch of the inn, or drift into my rooms. Even after three years of more or less intimacy between us, Farrar still wore his exterior of pessimism and indifference, the shell with which he chose to hide a naturally warm and affectionate disposition. In the dining-room we sat together at the end of a large table set aside for bachelors and small families of two or three, and it seemed as though we had all the humorists and story-tellers in that place. And Farrar as a source of amusement proved equal to the best of them. He would wait until a story was well under way, and then annihilate the point of it with a cutting cynicism and set the table in a roar of laughter. Among others who were seated here was a Mr. Trevor, of Cincinnati, one of the pioneers of Asquith. Mr. Trevor was a trifle bombastic, with a tendency towards gesticulation, an art which he had learned in no less a school than the Ohio State Senate. He was a self-made man,—a fact which he took good care should not escape one,—and had amassed his money, I believe, in the dry-goods business. He always wore a long, shiny coat, a low, turned-down collar, and a black tie, all of which united to give him the general appearance of a professional pallbearer.

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But Mr. Trevor possessed a daughter who amply made up for his shortcomings. She was the only one who could meet Farrar on his own ground, and rarely a meal passed that they did not have a tilt. They filled up the holes of the conversation with running commentaries, giving a dig at the luckless narrator and a side-slap at each other, until one would have given his oath they were sworn enemies. At least I, in the innocence of my heart, thought so until I was forcibly enlightened. I had taken rather a prejudice to Miss Trevor. I could find no better reason than her antagonism to Farrar. I was revolving this very thing in my mind one day as I was paddling back to the inn after a look at my client's new pier and boat-houses, when I descried Farrar's catboat some distance out. The lake was glass, and the sail hung lifeless. It was near lunch-time, and charity prompted me to head for the boat and give it a tow homeward. As I drew near, Farrar himself emerged from behind the sail and asked me, with a great show of nonchalance, what I wanted.

"To tow you back for lunch, of course," I answered, used to his ways.

He threw me a line, which I made fast to the stern, and then he disappeared again. I thought this somewhat strange, but as the boat was a light one, I towed it in and hitched it to the wharf, when, to my great astonishment, there disembarked not Farrar, but Miss Trevor. She leaped lightly ashore and was gone before I could catch my breath, while Farrar let down the sail and offered me a cigarette. I had learned a lesson in appearances.

It could not have been very long after this that I was looking over my batch of New York papers, which arrived weekly, when my eye was arrested by a name. I read the paragraph, which announced the fact that my friend the Celebrity was about to sail for Europe in search of "color" for his next novel; this was already contracted for at a large price, and was to be of a more serious nature than any of his former work. An interview was published in which the Celebrity had declared that a new novel was to appear in a short time. I do not know what impelled me, but I began at once to search through the other papers, and found almost identically the same notice in all of them.

By one of those odd coincidents which sometimes start one to thinking, the Celebrity was the subject of a lively discussion when I reached the table that evening. I had my quota of information concerning his European trip, but I did not commit myself when appealed to for an opinion. I had once known the man (which, however, I did not think it worth while to mention) and I did not feel justified in criticising him in public. Besides, what I knew of him was excellent, and entirely apart from the literary merit or demerit of his work. The others, however, were within their right when they censured or praised him, and they did both. Farrar, in particular, surprised me by the violence of his attacks, while Miss Trevor took up the Celebrity's defence with equal ardor. Her motives were beyond me now. The Celebrity's works spoke for themselves, she said, and she could not and would not believe such injurious reports of one who wrote as he did.

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The next day I went over to the county-seat, and got back to Asquith after dark. I dined alone, and afterwards I was strolling up and down one end of the long veranda when I caught sight of a lonely figure in a corner, with chair tilted back and feet on the rail. A gleam of a cigar lighted up the face, and I saw that it was Farrar. I sat down beside him, and we talked commonplaces for a while, Farrar's being almost monosyllabic, while now and again feminine voices and feminine laughter reached our ears from the far end of the porch. They seemed to go through Farrar like a knife, and he smoked furiously, his lips tightly compressed the while. I had a dozen conjectures, none of which I dared voice. So I waited in patience.

"Crocker," said he, at length, "there's a man here from Boston, Charles Wrexell Allen; came this morning. You know Boston. Have you ever heard of him?"

"Allen," I repeated, reflecting; "no Charles Wrexell."

"It is Charles Wrexell, I think," said Farrar, as though the matter were trivial. "However, we can go into the register and make sure."

"What about him?" I asked, not feeling inclined to stir.

The Celebrity

"Oh, nothing. An arrival is rather an occurrence, though. You can hear him down there now," he added, tossing his head towards the other end of the porch, "with the women around him."

In fact, I did catch the deeper sound of a man's voice among the lighter tones, and the voice had a ring to it which was not wholly unfamiliar, although I could not place it.

I threw Farrar a bait.

"He must make friends easily," I said.

"With the women?—yes," he replied, so scathingly that I was forced to laugh in spite of myself.

"Let us go in and look at the register," I suggested. "You may have his name wrong."

We went in accordingly. Sure enough, in bold, heavy characters, was the name Charles Wrexell Allen written out in full. That handwriting was one in a thousand. I made sure I had seen it before, and yet I did not know it; and the more I puzzled over it the more confused I became. I turned to Farrar.

"I have had a poor cigar passed off on me and deceive me for a while. That is precisely the case here. I think I should recognize your man if I were to see him."

“Well,” said Farrar, “here’s your chance.”

The company outside were moving in. Two or three of the older ladies came first, carrying their wraps; then a troop of girls, among whom was Miss Trevor; and lastly, a man. Farrar and I had walked to the door while the women turned into the drawing-room, so that we were brought face to face with him, suddenly. At sight of me he halted abruptly, as though he had struck the edge of a door, changed color, and held out his hand, tentatively. Then he withdrew it again, for I made no sign of recognition.

It was the Celebrity!

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I felt a shock of disgust as I passed out. Masquerading, it must be admitted, is not pleasant to the taste; and the whole farce, as it flashed through my mind,—his advertised trip, his turning up here under an assumed name, had an ill savor. Perhaps some of the things they said of him might be true, after all.

“Who the devil is he?” said Farrar, dropping for once his indifference; “he looked as if he knew you.”

I evaded.

“He may have taken me for some one else,” I answered with all the coolness I could muster. “I have never met any one of his name. His voice and handwriting, however, are very much like those of a man I used to know.”

Farrar was very poor company that evening, and left me early. I went to my rooms and had taken down a volume of Carlyle, who can generally command my attention, when there came a knock at the door.

“Come in,” I replied, with an instinctive sense of prophecy.

This was fulfilled at once by the appearance of the Celebrity. He was attired—for the details of his dress forced themselves upon me vividly —in a rough-spun suit of knickerbockers, a colored-shirt having a large and prominent gold stud, red and brown stockings of a diamond pattern, and heavy walking-boots. And he entered with an air of assurance that was maddening.

“My dear Crocker,” he exclaimed, “you have no idea how delighted I am to see you here!”

I rose, first placing a book-mark in Carlyle, and assured him that I was surprised to see him here.

“Surprised to see me!” he returned, far from being damped by my manner. “In fact, I am a little surprised to see myself here.”

He sank back on the window-seat and clasped his hands behind his head.

“But first let me thank you for respecting my incognito,” he said.

I tried hard to keep my temper, marvelling at the ready way he had chosen to turn my action.

“And now,” he continued, “I suppose you want to know why I came out here.” He easily supplied the lack of cordial solicitation on my part.

“Yes, I should like to know,” I said.

Thus having aroused my curiosity, he took his time about appeasing it, after the custom of his kind. He produced a gold cigarette case, offered me a cigarette, which I refused, took one himself and blew the smoke in rings toward the ceiling. Then, raising himself on his elbow, he drew his features together in such a way as to lead me to believe he was about to impart some valuable information.

“Crocker,” said he, “it’s the very deuce to be famous, isn’t it?”

“I suppose it is,” I replied curtly, wondering what he was driving at; “I have never tried it.”

“An ordinary man, such as you, can’t conceive of the torture a fellow in my position is obliged to go through the year round, but especially in the summer, when one wishes to go off on a rest. You know what I mean, of course.”

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“I am afraid I do not,” I answered, in a vain endeavor to embarrass him.

“You’re thicker than when I used to know you, then,” he returned with candor. “To tell the truth, Crocker, I often wish I were back at the law, and had never written a line. I am paying the penalty of fame. Wherever I go I am hounded to death by the people who have read my books, and they want to dine and wine me for the sake of showing me off at their houses. I am heartily sick and tired of it all; you would be if you had to go through it. I could stand a winter, but the worst comes in the summer, when one meets the women who fire all sorts of socio-psychological questions at one for solution, and who have suggestions for stories.” He shuddered.

“And what has all this to do with your coming here?” I cut in, strangling a smile.

He twisted his cigarette at an acute angle with his face, and looked at me out of the corner of his eye.

“I’ll try to be a little plainer,” he went on, sighing as one unused to deal with people who require crosses on their t’s. “I’ve been worried almost out of my mind with attention—-nothing but attention the whole time. I can’t go on the street but what I’m stared at and pointed out, so I thought of a scheme to relieve it for a time. It was becoming unbearable. I determined to assume a name and go to some quiet little place for the summer, West, if possible, where I was not likely to be recognized, and have three months of rest.”

He paused, but I offered no comment.

“Well, the more I thought of it, the better I liked the idea. I met a western man at the club and asked him about western resorts, quiet ones. ‘Have you heard of Asquith?’ says he. ‘No,’ said I; ‘describe it.’ He did, and it was just the place; quaint, restful, and retired. Of course I put him off the track, but I did not count on striking you. My man boxed up, and we were off in twenty-four hours, and here I am.”

Now all this was very fine, but not at all in keeping with the Celebrity’s character as I had come to conceive it. The idea that adulation ever cloyed on him was ludicrous in itself. In fact I thought the whole story fishy, and came very near to saying so.

“You won’t tell anyone who I am, will you?” he asked anxiously.

He even misinterpreted my silences.

“Certainly not,” I replied. “It is no concern of mine. You might come here as Emil Zola or Ralph Waldo Emerson and it would make no difference to me.”

He looked at me dubiously, even suspiciously.

“That’s a good chap,” said he, and was gone, leaving me to reflect on the ways of genius.

And the longer I reflected, the more positive I became that there existed a more potent reason for the Celebrity’s disguise than ennui. As actions speak louder than words, so does a man’s character often give the lie to his tongue.

CHAPTER IV

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A Lion in an ass's skin is still a lion in spite of his disguise. Conversely, the same might be said of an ass in a lion's skin. The Celebrity ran after women with the same readiness and helplessness that a dog will chase chickens, or that a stream will run down hill. Women differ from chickens, however, in the fact that they find pleasure in being chased by a certain kind of a man. The Celebrity was this kind of a man. From the moment his valet deposited his luggage in his rooms, Charles Wrexell Allen became the social hero of Asquith. It is by straws we are enabled to tell which way the wind is blowing, and I first noticed his partiality for Miss Trevor from the absence of the lively conflicts she was wont to have with Farrar. These ceased entirely after the Celebrity's arrival. It was the latter who now commanded the conversation at our table.

I was truly sorry for Farrar, for I knew the man, the depth of his nature, and the scope of the shock. He carried it off altogether too well, and both the studied lightness of his actions and the increased carelessness of his manner made me fear that what before was feigned, might turn to a real bitterness.

For Farrar's sake, if the Celebrity had been content with women in general, all would have been well; but he was unable to generalize, in one sense, and to particularize, in another. And it was plain that he wished to monopolize Miss Trevor, while still retaining a hold upon the others. For my sake, had he been content with women alone, I should have had no cause to complain. But it seemed that I had an attraction for him, second only to women, which I could not account for. And I began to be cursed with a great deal of his company. Since he was absolutely impervious to hints, and would not take no for an answer, I was helpless. When he had no engagement he would thrust himself on me. He seemed to know by intuition—for I am very sure I never told him—what my amusement was to be the mornings I did not go to the county-seat, and he would invariably turn up, properly equipped, as I was making my way with judge Short to the tennis court, or carrying my oars to the water. It was in vain that I resorted to subterfuge: that I went to bed early intending to be away before the Celebrity's rising hour. I found he had no particular rising hour. No matter how early I came down, I would find him on the veranda, smoking cigarettes, or otherwise his man would be there with a message to say that his master would shortly join me if I would kindly wait. And at last I began to realize in my harassed soul that all elusion was futile, and to take such holidays as I could get, when he was off with a girl, in a spirit of thankfulness.

Much of this persecution I might have put up with, indeed, had I not heard, in one way or another, that he was doing me the honor of calling me his intimate. This I could not stand, and I soberly resolved to leave Asquith and go back to town, which I should indeed have done if deliverance had not arrived from an unexpected quarter.

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One morning I had been driven to the precarious refuge afforded by the steps of the inn, after rejecting offers from the Celebrity to join him in a variety of amusements. But even here I was not free from interruption, for he was seated on a horse-block below me, playing with a fox terrier. Judge Short had gone to town, and Farrar was off for a three days' cruise up the lake. I was bitterly regretting I had not gone with him when the distant notes of a coach horn reached my ear, and I descried a four-in-hand winding its way up the inn road from the direction of Mohair.

"That must be your friend Cooke," remarked the Celebrity, looking up.

There could be no doubt of it. With little difficulty I recognized on the box the familiar figure of my first important client, and beside him was a lady whom I supposed to be Mrs. Farquhar Fenelon Cooke, although I had had no previous knowledge that such a person existed. The horses were on a brisk trot, and Mr. Cooke seemed to be getting the best out of them for the benefit of the sprinkling of people on the inn porch. Indeed, I could not but admire the dexterous turn of the wrist which served Mr. Cooke to swing his leaders into the circle and up the hill, while the liveried guard leaned far out in anticipation of a stumble. Mr. Cooke hailed me with a beaming smile and a flourish of the whip as he drew up and descended from the box.

"Maria," he exclaimed, giving me a hearty grip, "this is the man that won Mohair. My wife, Crocker."

I was somewhat annoyed at this effusiveness before the Celebrity, but I looked up and caught Mrs. Cooke's eye. It was the calm eye of a general.

"I am glad of the opportunity to thank you, Mr. Crocker," she said simply. And I liked her from that moment.

Mr. Cooke at once began a tirade against the residents of Asquith for permitting a sandy and generally disgraceful condition of the roads. So roundly did he vituperate the inn management in particular, and with such a loud flow of words, that I trembled lest he should be heard on the veranda. The Celebrity stood by the block, in an amazement which gave me a wicked pleasure, and it was some minutes before I had the chance to introduce him.

Mr. Cooke's idea of an introduction, however, was no mere word-formula: it was fraught with a deeper and a bibulous meaning. He presented the Celebrity to his wife, and then invited both of us to go inside with him by one of those neat and cordial paraphrases in which he was skilled. I preferred to remain with Mrs. Cooke, and it was with a gleam of hope at a possible deliverance from my late persecution that I watched the two disappear together through the hall and into the smoking-room.

"How do you like Mohair?" I asked Mrs. Cooke.

“Do you mean the house or the park?” she laughed; and then, seeing my embarrassment, she went on: “Oh, the house is just like everything else Fenelon meddles with. Outside it’s a mixture of all the styles, and inside a hash of all the nationalities from Siamese to Spanish. Fenelon hangs the Oriental tinsels he has collected on pieces of black baronial oak, and the coat-of-arms he had designed by our Philadelphia jewellers is stamped on the dining-room chairs, and even worked into the fire screens.”

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There was nothing paltry in her criticism of her husband, nothing she would not have said to his face. She was a woman who made you feel this, for sincerity was written all over her. I could not help wondering why she gave Mr. Cooke line in the matter of household decoration, unless it was that he considered Mohair his own, private hobby, and that she humored him. Mrs. Cooke was not without tact, and I have no doubt she perceived my reluctance to talk about her husband and respected it.

“We drove down to bring you back to luncheon,” she said.

I thanked her and accepted. She was curious to hear about Asquith and its people, and I told her all I knew.

“I should like to meet some of them,” she explained, “for we intend having a cotillon at Mohair,—a kind of house-warming, you know. A party of Mr. Cooke’s friends is coming out for it in his car, and he thought something of inviting the people of Asquith up for a dance.”

I had my doubts concerning the wisdom of an entertainment, the success of which depended on the fusion of a party of Mr. Cooke’s friends and a company from Asquith. But I held my peace. She shot a question at me suddenly:

“Who is this Mr. Allen?”

“He registers from Boston, and only came a fortnight ago,” I replied vaguely.

“He doesn’t look quite right; as though he had been set down on the wrong planet, you know,” said Mrs. Cooke, her finger on her temple. “What is he like?”

“Well,” I answered, at first with uncertainty, then with inspiration, “he would do splendidly to lead your cotillon, if you think of having one.”

“So you do not dance, Mr. Crocker?”

I was somewhat set back by her perspicuity.

“No, I do not,” said I.

“I thought not,” she said, laughing. It must have been my expression which prompted her next remark.

“I was not making fun of you,” she said, more soberly; “I do not like Mr. Allen any better than you do, and I have only seen him once.”

“But I have not said I did not like him,” I objected.

“Of course not,” said Mrs. Cooke, quizzically.

At that moment, to my relief, I discerned the Celebrity and Mr. Cooke in the hallway.

“Here they come, now,” she went on. “I do wish Fenelon would keep his hands off the people he meets. I can feel he is going to make an intimate of that man. Mark my words, Mr. Crocker.”

I not only marked them, I prayed for their fulfilment.

There was that in Mr. Cooke which, for want of a better name, I will call instinct. As he came down the steps, his arm linked in that of the Celebrity, his attitude towards his wife was both apologetic and defiant. He had at once the air of a child caught with a forbidden toy, and that of a stripling of twenty-one who flaunts a cigar in his father’s face.

“Maria,” he said, “Mr. Allen has consented to come back with us for lunch.”

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We drove back to Mohair, Mr. Cooke and the Celebrity on the box, Mrs. Cooke and I behind. Except to visit the boathouses I had not been to Mohair since the day of its completion, and now the full beauty of the approach struck me for the first time. We swung by the lodge, the keeper holding open the iron gate as we passed, and into the wide driveway, hewn, as it were, out of the virgin forest. The sandy soil had been strengthened by a deep road-bed of clay imported from the interior, which was spread in turn with a fine gravel, which crunched under the heavy wheels. From the lodge to the house, a full mile, branches had been pruned to let the sunshine sift through in splotches, but the wild nature of the place had been skilfully retained. We curved hither and thither under the giant trees until suddenly, as a whip straightens in the snapping, one of the ancient tribes of the forest might have sent an arrow down the leafy gallery into the open, and at the far end we caught sight of the palace framed in the vista. It was a triumph for Farrar, and I wished that the palace had been more worthy.

The Celebrity did not stint his praises of Mohair, coming up the drive, but so lavish were his comments on the house that they won for him a lasting place in Mr. Cooke's affections, and encouraged my client to pull up his horses in a favorable spot, and expand on the beauties of the mansion.

"Taking it altogether," said he, complacently, "it is rather a neat box, and I let myself loose on it. I had all these ideas I gathered knocking about the world, and I gave them to Willis, of Philadelphia, to put together for me. But he's honest enough not to claim the house. Take, for instance, that minaret business on the west; I picked that up from a mosque in Algiers. The oriel just this side is whole cloth from Haddon Hall, and the galleried porch next it from a Florentine villa. The conical capped tower I got from a French chateau, and some of the features on the south from a Buddhist temple in Japan. Only a little blending and grouping was necessary, and Willis calls himself an architect, and wasn't equal to it. Now," he added, "get the effect. Did you ever see another house like it?"

"Magnificent!" exclaimed the Celebrity.

"And then," my client continued, warming under this generous appreciation, "there's something very smart about those colors. They're my racing colors. Of course the granite's a little off, but it isn't prominent. Willis kicked hard when it came to painting the oriel yellow, but an architect always takes it for granted he knows it all, and a—"

"Fenelon," said Mrs. Cooke, "luncheon is waiting."

Mrs. Cooke dominated at luncheon and retired, and it is certain that both Mr. Cooke and the Celebrity breathed more freely when she had gone. If her criticisms on the exterior of the house were just, those on the interior were more so. Not only did I find the coat-of-arms set forth on the chairs, fire-screens, and other prominent articles, but it was even cut into the swinging door of the butler's pantry. The motto I am afraid my client

never took the trouble to have translated, and I am inclined to think his jewellers put up a little joke on him when they chose it. “Be Sober and Boast not.”

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I observed that Mrs. Cooke, when she chose, could exert the subduing effect on her husband of a soft pedal on a piano; and during luncheon she kept, the soft pedal on. And the Celebrity, being in some degree a kindred spirit, was also held in check. But his wife had no sooner left the room when Mr. Cooke began on the subject uppermost in his mind. I had suspected that his trip to Asquith that morning was for a purpose at which Mrs. Cooke had hinted. But she, with a woman's tact, had aimed to accomplish by degrees that which her husband would carry by storm.

"You've been at Asquith sometime, Crocker," Mr. Cooke began, "long enough to know the people."

"I know some of them," I said guardedly. But the rush was not to be stemmed.

"How many do you think you can muster for that entertainment of mine? Fifty? I ought to have fifty, at least. Suppose you pick out fifty, and send me up the names. I want good lively ones, you understand, that will stir things up."

"I am afraid there are not fifty of that kind there," I replied.

His face fell, but brightened again instantly. He appealed to the Celebrity.

"How about it, old man?" said he.

The Celebrity answered, with becoming modesty, that the Asquithians were benighted. They had never had any one to show them how to enjoy life. But there was hope for them.

"That's it," exclaimed my client, slapping his thigh, and turning triumphantly to me, he continued, "You're all right, Crocker, and know enough to win a damned big suit, but you're not the man to steer a delicate thing of this kind."

This is how, to my infinite relief, the Celebrity came to engineer the matter of the housewarming; and to him it was much more congenial. He accepted the task cheerfully, and went about it in such a manner as to leave no doubt in my mind as to its ultimate success. He was a master hand at just such problems, and this one had a double attraction. It pleased him to be thought the arbiter of such a worthy cause, while he acquired a prominence at Asquith which satisfied in some part a craving which he found inseparable from incognito.

His tactics were worthy of a skilled diplomatist. Before we left Mohair that day he had exacted as a condition that Mr. Cooke should not appear at the inn or in its vicinity until after the entertainment. To this my client readily pledged himself with that absolute freedom from suspicion which formed one of the most admirable traits of his character. The Celebrity, being intuitively quick where women were concerned, had surmised that Mrs. Cooke did not like him; but as her interests in the affair of the cotillon coincided

with those of Mr. Cooke, she was available as a means to an end. The Celebrity deemed her, from a social standpoint, decidedly the better part of the Mohair establishment, and he contrived, by a system of manoeuvres I failed to grasp, to throw her forward while he kept Mr. Cooke in the background.

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He had much to contend with; above all, an antecedent prejudice against the Cookes, in reality a prejudice against the world, the flesh, and the devil, natural to any quiet community, and of which Mohair and its appurtenances were taken as the outward and visible signs. Older people came to Asquith for simplicity and rest, and the younger ones were brought there for these things. Nearly all had sufficient wealth to seek, if they chose, gayety and ostentation at the eastern resorts. But Asquithians held gayety and ostentation at a discount, and maintained there was gayety enough at home.

If any one were fitted to overcome this prejudice, it was Mrs. Cooke. Her tastes and manners were as simple as her gowns. The Celebrity, by arts unknown, induced Mrs. Judge Short and two other ladies to call at Mohair on a certain afternoon when Mr. Cooke was trying a trotter on the track. The three returned wondering and charmed with Mrs. Cooke; they were sure she had had no hand in the furnishing of that atrocious house. Their example was followed by others at a time when the master of Mohair was superintending in person the docking of some two-year-olds, and equally invisible. These ladies likewise came back to sing Mrs. Cooke's praises. Mrs. Cooke returned the calls. She took tea on the inn veranda, and drove Mrs. Short around Mohair in her victoria. Mr. Cooke being seen only on rare and fleeting occasions, there gradually got abroad a most curious misconception of that gentleman's character, while over his personality floated a mist of legend which the Celebrity took good care not to dispel. Farrar, who despised nonsense, was ironical and non-committal when appealed to, and certainly I betrayed none of my client's attributes. Hence it came that Asquith, before the house-warming, knew as little about Farquhar Fenelon Cooke, the man, as the nineteenth century knows about William Shakespeare, and was every whit as curious. Like Shakespeare, Mr. Cooke was judged by his works, and from these he was generally conceded to be an illiterate and indifferent person of barbarous tastes and a mania for horses. He was further described as ungentlemanly by a brace of spinsters who had been within earshot on the veranda the morning he had abused the Asquith roads, but their evidence was not looked upon as damning. That Mr. Cooke would appear at the cotillon never entered any one's head.

Thus it was, for a fortnight, Mr. Cooke maintained a most rigid seclusion. Would that he had discovered in the shroud of mystery the cloak of fame!

THE CELEBRITY

By Winston Churchill

VOLUME 2.

CHAPTER V

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It was small wonder, said the knowing at Asquith, that Mr. Charles Wrexell Allen should be attracted by Irene Trevor. With the lake breezes of the north the red and the tan came into her cheeks, those boon companions of the open who are best won by the water-winds. Perhaps they brought, too, the spring to the step and the light under the long lashes when she flashed a look across the table. Little by little it became plain that Miss Trevor was gaining ground with the Celebrity to the neglect of the other young women at Asquith, and when it was announced that he was to lead the cotillon with her, the fact was regarded as significant. Even at Asquith such things were talked about. Mr. Allen became a topic and a matter of conjecture. He was, I believe, generally regarded as a good match; his unimpeachable man-servant argued worldly possessions, of which other indications were not lacking, while his crest was cited as a material sign of family. Yet when Miss Brewster, one of the brace of spinsters, who hailed from Brookline and purported to be an up-to-date edition of the Boston Blue Book, questioned the Celebrity on this vital point after the searching manner warranted by the gravity of the subject, he was unable to acquit himself satisfactorily. When this conversation was repeated in detail within the hearing of the father of the young woman in question, and undoubtedly for his benefit, Mr. Trevor threw shame to the winds and scandalized the Misses Brewster then and there by proclaiming his father to have been a country storekeeper. In the eyes of Mr. Farquhar Fenelon Cooke the apotheosis of the Celebrity was complete. The people of Asquith were not only willing to attend the house-warming, but had been worked up to the pitch of eagerness. The Celebrity as a matter of course was master of ceremonies. He originated the figures and arranged the couples, of which there were twelve from Asquith and ten additional young women. These ten were assigned to the ten young men whom Mr. Cooke expected in his private car, and whose appearances, heights, and temperaments the Celebrity obtained from Mr. Cooke, carefully noted, and compared with those of the young women. Be it said in passing that Mrs. Cooke had nothing to do with any of it, but exhibited an almost criminal indifference. Mr. Cooke had even chosen the favors; charity forbids that I should say what they were.

Owing to the frequent consultations which these preparations made necessary the Celebrity was much in the company of my client, which he came greatly to prefer to mine, and I therefore abandoned my determination to leave Asquith. I was settling down delightedly to my old, easy, and unmolested existence when Farrar and I received an invitation, which amounted to a summons, to go to Mohair and make ourselves generally useful. So we packed up and went. We made an odd party before the arrival of the Ten, particularly when the Celebrity dropped in for lunch or dinner. He

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could not be induced to remain permanently at Mohair because Miss Trevor was at Asquith, but he appropriated a Hempstead cart from the Mohair stables and made the trip sometimes twice in a day. The fact that Mrs. Cooke treated him with unqualified disapproval did not dampen his spirits or lessen the frequency of his visits, nor, indeed, did it seem to create any breach between husband and wife. Mr. Cooke took it for granted that his friends should not please his wife, and Mrs. Cooke remarked to Farrar and me that her husband was old enough to know better, and too old to be taught. She loved him devotedly and showed it in a hundred ways, but she was absolutely incapable of dissimulation.

Thanks to Mrs. Cooke, our visit to Mohair was a pleasant one. We were able in many ways to help in the arrangements, especially Farrar, who had charge of decorating the grounds. We saw but little of Mr. Cooke and the Celebrity.

The arrival of the Ten was an event of importance, and occurred the day of the dance. I shall treat the Ten as a whole because they did not materially differ from one another in dress or habits or ambition or general usefulness on this earth. It is true that Mr. Cooke had been able to make delicate distinctions between them for the aid of the Celebrity, but such distinctions were beyond me, and the power to make them lay only in a long and careful study of the species which I could not afford to give. Likewise the life of any one of the Ten was the life of all, and might be truthfully represented by a single year, since each year was exactly like the preceding. The ordinary year, as is well-known, begins on the first of January. But theirs was not the ordinary year, nor the Church year, nor the fiscal year. Theirs began in the Fall with the New York Horse Show. And I am of the opinion, though open to correction, that they dated from the first Horse Show instead of from the birth of Christ. It is certain that they were much better versed in the history of the Association than in that of the Union, in the biography of Excelsior rather than that of Lincoln. The Dog Show was another event to which they looked forward, when they migrated to New York and put up at the country places of their friends. But why go farther?

The Ten made themselves very much at home at Mohair. One of them told the Celebrity he reminded him very much of a man he had met in New York and who had written a book, or something of that sort, which made the Celebrity wince. The afternoon was spent in one of the stable lofts, where Mr. Cooke had set up a mysterious L-shaped box, in one arm of which a badger was placed by a groom, while my client's Sarah, a terrier, was sent into the other arm to invite the badger out. His objections exceeded the highest hopes; he dug his claws into the wood and devoted himself to Sarah's countenance with unremitting industry. This occupation was found so absorbing that it was with difficulty the Ten were induced to abandon it and dress for an early dinner, and only did so after the second peremptory message from Mrs. Cooke.

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“It’s always this way,” said Mr. Cooke, regretfully, as he watched Sarah licking the accessible furrows in her face; “I never started in on anything worth doing yet that Maria did not stop it.”

Farrar and I were not available for the dance, and after dinner we looked about for a quiet spot in which to weather it, and where we could be within reach if needed. Such a place as this was the Florentine galleried porch, which ran along outside the upper windows of the ball-room; these were flung open, for the night was warm. At one end of the room the musicians, imported from Minneapolis by Mr. Cooke, were striking the first discordant notes of the tuning, while at the other the Celebrity and my client, in scarlet hunting-coats, were gravely instructing the Ten, likewise in scarlet hunting-coats, as to their conduct and functions. We were reviewing these interesting proceedings when Mrs. Cooke came hurrying towards us. She held a letter in her hand.

“You know,” said she, “that Mr. Cooke is forgetful, particularly when his mind is occupied with important matters, as it has been for some time. Here is a letter from my niece, Miss Thorn, which he has carried in his pocket since Monday. We expected her two weeks ago, and had given her up. But it seems she was to leave Philadelphia on Wednesday, and will be at that forlorn little station of Asquith at half-past nine to-night. I want you two to go over and meet her.”

We expressed our readiness, and in ten minutes were in the station wagon, rolling rapidly down the long drive, for it was then after nine. We passed on the way the van of the guests from Asquith. As we reached the lodge we heard the whistle, and we backed up against one side of the platform as the train pulled up at the other.

Farrar and I are not imaginative; we did not picture to ourselves any particular type for the girl we were going to meet, we were simply doing our best to get to the station before the train. We jumped from the wagon and were watching the people file out of the car, and I noticed that more than one paused to look back over their shoulders as they reached the door. Then came a maid with hand-bag and shawls, and after her a tall young lady. She stood for a moment holding her skirt above the grimy steps, with something of the stately pose which Richter has given his Queen Louise on the stairway, and the light of the reflector fell full upon her. She looked around expectantly, and recognizing Mrs. Cooke’s maid, who had stepped forward to relieve hers of the shawls, Miss Thorn greeted her with a smile which greatly prepossessed us in her favor.

“How do you do, Jennie?” she said. “Did any one else come?”

“Yes, Miss Marian,” replied Jennie, abashed but pleased,—“these gentlemen.”

Farrar and I introduced ourselves, awkwardly enough, and we both tried to explain at once how it was that neither Mr. nor Mrs. Cooke was there to meet her. Of course we

made an absolute failure of it. She scanned our faces with a puzzled expression for a while and then broke into a laugh.

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“I think I understand,” she said; “they are having the house-warming.”

“She’s first-rate at guessing,” said Farrar to me as we fled precipitately to see that the trunks were hoisted into the basket. Neither of us had much presence of mind as we climbed into the wagon, and, what was even stranger, could not account for the lack of it. Miss Thorn was seated in the corner; in spite of the darkness I could see that she was laughing at us still.

“I feel very badly that I should have taken you away from the dance,” we heard her say.

“We don’t dance,” I answered clumsily, “and we were glad to come.”

“Yes, we were glad to come,” Farrar chimed in.

Then we relapsed into a discomfited silence, and wished we were anywhere else. But Miss Thorn relieved the situation by laughing aloud, and with such a hearty enjoyment that instead of getting angry and more mortified we began to laugh ourselves, and instantly felt better. After that we got along famously. She had at once the air of good fellowship and the dignity of a woman, and she seemed to understand Farrar and me perfectly. Not once did she take us over our heads, though she might have done so with ease, and we knew this and were thankful. We began to tell her about Mohair and the cotillon, and of our point of observation from the Florentine galleried porch, and she insisted she would join us there. By the time we reached the house we were thanking our stars she had come. Mrs. Cooke came out under the port-cochere to welcome her.

“Unfortunately there is no one to dance with you, Marian,” she said; “but if I had not by chance gone through your uncle’s pockets, there would have been no one to meet you.”

I think I had never felt my deficiency in dancing until that moment. But Miss Thorn took her aunt’s hand affectionately in hers.

“My dear Aunt Maria,” said she, “I would not dance to-night if there were twenty to choose from. I should like nothing better than to look on with these two. We are the best of friends already,” she added, turning towards us, “are we not?”

“We are indeed,” we hastened to assure her.

Mrs. Cooke smiled.

“You should have been a man, Marian,” she said as they went upstairs together.

We made our way to the galleried porch and sat down, there being a lull in the figures just then. We each took out a cigar and lighted a match; and then looked across at the other. We solemnly blew our matches out.

“Perhaps she doesn’t like smoke,” said Farrar, voicing the sentiment.

“Perhaps not,” said I.

Silence.

“I wonder how she will get along with the Ten?” I queried.

“Better than with us,” he answered in his usual strain. “They’re trained.”

“Or with Allen?” I added irresistibly.

“Women are all alike,” said Farrar.

At this juncture Miss Thorn herself appeared at the end of the gallery, her shoulders wrapped in a gray cape trimmed with fur. She stood regarding us with some amusement as we rose to receive her.

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“Light your cigars and be sensible,” said she, “or I shall go in.”

We obeyed. The three of us turned to the window to watch the figure, the music of which was just beginning. Mr. Cooke, with the air of an English squire at his own hunt ball, was strutting contentedly up and down one end of the room, now pausing to exchange a few hearty words with some Presbyterian matron from Asquith, now to congratulate Mr. Trevor on the appearance of his daughter. Lined against the opposite wall were the Celebrity and his ten red-coated followers, just rising for the figure. It was very plain that Miss Trevor was radiantly happy; she was easily the handsomest girl in the room, and I could not help philosophizing when I saw her looking up into the Celebrity’s eyes upon the seeming inconsistency of nature, who has armed and warned woman against all but her most dangerous enemy.

And then a curious thing happened. The Celebrity, as if moved by a sudden uncontrollable impulse, raised his eyes until they rested on the window in which we were. Although his dancing was perfect, he lost the step without apparent cause, his expression changed, and for the moment he seemed to be utterly confused. But only for the moment; in a trice he had caught the time again and swept Miss Trevor rapidly down the room and out of sight. I looked instinctively at the girl beside me. She had thrown her head forward, and in the streaming light I saw that her lips were parted in a smile.

I resolved upon a stroke.

“Mr. Allen,” I remarked, “leads admirably.”

“Mr. Allen!” she exclaimed, turning on me.

“Yes, it is Mr. Allen who is leading,” I repeated.

An expression of perplexity spread over her face, but she said nothing. My curiosity was aroused to a high pitch, and questions were rising to my lips which I repressed with difficulty. For Miss Thorn had displayed, purposely or not, a reticence which my short acquaintance with her compelled me to respect; and, besides, I was bound by a promise not to betray the Celebrity’s secret. I was, however, convinced from what had occurred that she had met the Celebrity in the East, and perhaps known him.

Had she fallen in love with him, as was the common fate of all young women he met? I changed my opinion on this subject a dozen times. Now I was sure, as I looked at her, that she was far too sensible; again, a doubt would cross my mind as the Celebrity himself would cross my view, the girl on his arm reduced to adoration. I followed him narrowly when in sight. Miss Thorn was watching him, too, her eyes half closed, as though in thought. But beyond the fact that he threw himself into the dance with a

somewhat increased fervor, perhaps, his manner betokened no uneasiness, and not even by a glance did he betray any disturbing influence from above.

Thus we stood silently until the figure was finished, when Miss Thorn seated herself in one of the wicker chairs behind us.

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“Doesn’t it make you wish to dance?” said Farrar to her. “It is hard luck you should be doomed to spend the evening with two such useless fellows as we are.”

She did not catch his remark at first, as was natural in a person preoccupied. Then she bit her lips to repress a smile.

“I assure you, Mr. Farrar,” she said with force, “I have never in my life wished to dance as little as I do now.”

But a voice interrupted her, and the scarlet coat of the Celebrity was thrust into the light between us. Farrar excused himself abruptly and disappeared.

“Never wished to dance less!” cried the Celebrity. “Upon my word, Miss Thorn, that’s too bad. I came up to ask you to reconsider your determination, as one of the girls from Asquith is leaving, and there is an extra man.”

“You are very kind,” said Miss Thorn, quietly, “but I prefer to remain here.”

My surmise, then, was correct. She had evidently met the Celebrity, and there was that in his manner of addressing her, without any formal greeting, which seemed to point to a close acquaintance.

“You know Mr. Allen, then, Miss Thorn?” said I.

“What can you mean?” she exclaimed, wheeling on me; “this is not Mr. Allen.”

“Hang you, Crocker,” the Celebrity put in impatiently; “Miss Thorn knows who I am as well as you do.”

“I confess it is a little puzzling,” said she; “perhaps it is because I am tired from travelling, and my brain refuses to work. But why in the name of all that is strange do you call him Mr. Allen?”

The Celebrity threw himself into the chair beside her and asked permission to light a cigarette.

“I am going to ask you the favor of respecting my incognito, Miss Thorn, as Crocker has done,” he said. “Crocker knew me in the East, too. I had not counted upon finding him at Asquith.”

Miss Thorn straightened herself and made a gesture of impatience.

“An incognito!” she cried. “But you have taken another man’s name. And you already had his face and figure!”

I jumped.

“That is so,” he calmly returned; “the name was ready to hand, and so I took it. I don’t imagine it will make any difference to him. It’s only a whim of mine, and with me there’s no accounting for a whim. I make it a point to gratify every one that strikes me. I confess to being eccentric, you know.”

“You must get an enormous amount of gratification out of this,” she said dryly. “What if the other man should happen along?”

“Scarcely at Asquith.”

“I have known stranger things to occur,” said she.

The Celebrity smiled and smoked.

“I’ll wager, now,” he went on, “that you little thought to find me here incognito. But it is delicious, I assure you, to lead once more a commonplace and unmolested existence.”

“Delightful,” said Miss Thorn.

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“People never consider an author apart from his work, you know, and I confess I had a desire to find out how I would get along. And there comes a time when a man wishes he had never written a book, and a longing to be sought after for his own sake and to be judged on his own merits. And then it is a great relief to feel that one is not at the beck and call of any one and every one wherever one goes, and to know that one is free to choose one’s own companions and do as one wishes.”

“The sentiment is good,” Miss Thorn agreed, “very good. But doesn’t it seem a little odd, Mr. Crocker,” she continued, appealing to me, “that a man should take the pains to advertise a trip to Europe in order to gratify a whim of this sort?”

“It is indeed incomprehensible to me,” I replied, with a kind of grim pleasure, “but you must remember that I have always led a commonplace existence.”

Although the Celebrity was almost impervious to sarcasm, he was now beginning to exhibit visible signs of uneasiness, the consciousness dawning upon him that his eccentricity was not receiving the ovation it merited. It was with a palpable relief that he heard the first warning notes of the figure.

“Am I to understand that you wish me to do my part in concealing your identity?” asked Miss Thorn, cutting him short as he was expressing pleasure at her arrival.

“If you will be so kind,” he answered, and departed with a bow. There was a mischievous mirth in her eye as she took her place in the window. Below in the ball-room sat Miss Trevor surrounded by men, and I saw her face lighting at the Celebrity’s approach.

“Who is that beautiful girl he is dancing with?” said Miss Thorn.

I told her.

“Have you read his books?” she asked, after a pause.

“Some of them.”

“So have I.”

The Celebrity was not mentioned again that evening.

CHAPTER VI

As an endeavor to unite Mohair and Asquith the cotillon had proved a dismal failure. They were as the clay and the brass. The next morning Asquith was split into factions and rent by civil strife, and the porch of the inn was covered by little knots of women, all

trying to talk at once; their faces told an ominous tale. Not a man was to be seen. The Minneapolis, St. Paul, and Chicago papers, all of which had previously contained elaborate illustrated accounts of Mr. Cooke's palatial park and residence, came out that morning bristling with headlines about the ball, incidentally holding up the residents of a quiet and retiring little community in a light that scandalized them beyond measure. And Mr. Charles Wrexell Allen, treasurer of the widely known Miles Standish Bicycle Company, was said to have led the cotillon in a manner that left nothing to be desired.

So it was this gentleman whom the Celebrity was personating! A queer whim indeed.

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After that, I doubt if the court of Charles the Second was regarded by the Puritans with a greater abhorrence than was Mohair by the good ladies of Asquith. Mr. Cooke and his ten friends were branded as profligates whose very scarlet coats bore witness that they were of the devil. Mr. Cooke himself, who particularly savored of brimstone, would much better have remained behind the arras, for he was denounced with such energy and bitterness that those who might have attempted his defence were silent, and their very silence told against them. Mr. Cooke had indeed outdone himself in hospitality. He had posted punch-bowls in every available corner, and so industriously did he devote himself to the duties of host, as he conceived them, that as many as four of the patriarchs of Asquith and pillars of the church had returned home more or less insensible, while others were quite incoherent. The odds being overwhelming, the master of Mohair had at length fallen a victim to his own good cheer. He took post with Judge Short at the foot of the stair, where, in spite of the protests of the Celebrity and of other well-disposed persons, the two favored the parting guests with an occasional impromptu song and waved genial good-byes to the ladies. And, when Mrs. Short attempted to walk by with her head in the air, as though the judge were in an adjoining county, he so far forgot his judicial dignity as to chuck her under the chin, an act which was applauded with much boyish delight by Mr. Cooke, and a remark which it is just as well not to repeat. The judge desired to spend the night at Mohair, but was afterwards taken home by main force, and the next day his meals were brought up to him. It is small wonder that Mrs. Short was looked upon as the head of the outraged party. The Ten were only spoken of in whispers. Three of them had been unable to come to time when the last figure was called, whereupon their partners were whisked off the scene without so much as being allowed to pay their respects to the hostess. Besides these offences, there were other minor barbarisms too numerous to mention.

Although Mrs. Short's party was all-powerful at Asquith, there were some who, for various reasons, refused to agree in the condemnation of Mr. Cooke. Judge Short and the other gentlemen in his position were, of course, restricted, but Mr. Trevor came out boldly in the face of severe criticism and declared that his daughter should accept any invitation from Mrs. Cooke that she chose, and paid but little attention to the coolness resulting therefrom. He was fast getting a reputation for oddity. And the Celebrity tried to conciliate both parties, and succeeded, though none but he could have done it. At first he was eyed with suspicion and disgust as he drove off to Mohair in his Hempstead cart, and was called many hard names. But he had a way about him which won them in the end.

A few days later I ran over to Mohair and found my client with the colored Sunday supplement of a Chicago newspaper spread out before him, eyeing the page with something akin to childish delight. I discovered that it was a picture of his own hunt ball, and as a bit of color it was marvellous, the scarlet coats being very much in evidence.

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“There, old man!” he exclaimed. “What do you think of that? Something of a sendoff, eh?” And he pointed to a rather stout and important gentleman in the foreground. “That’s me!” he said proudly, “and they wouldn’t do that for Farquhar Fenelon Cooke in Philadelphia.”

“A prophet is without honor in his own country,” I remarked.

“I don’t set up for a prophet,” said Mr. Cooke, “but I did predict that I would start a ripple here, didn’t I?”

I did not deny this.

“How do I stand over there?” he inquired, designating Asquith by a twist of the head. “I hear they’re acting all over the road; that they think I’m the very devil.”

“Well, your stock has dropped some, I admit,” I answered. “They didn’t take kindly to your getting the judge drunk, you know.”

“They oughtn’t to complain about that,” said my client; “and besides, he wasn’t drunk enough to amount to anything.”

“However that may be,” said I, “you have the credit for leading him astray. But there is a split in your favor.”

“I’m glad to know that,” he said, brightening; “then I won’t have to import any more.”

“Any more what?” I asked.

“People from the East to keep things moving, of course. What I have here and those left me at the inn ought to be enough to run through the summer with. Don’t you think so?”

I thought so, and was moving off when he called me back.

“Is the judge locked up, old man?” he demanded.

“He’s under rather close surveillance,” I replied, smiling.

“Crocker;” he said confidentially, “see if you can’t smuggle him over here some day soon. The judge always holds good cards, and plays a number one hand.”

I promised, and escaped. On the veranda I came upon Miss Thorn surrounded by some of her uncle’s guests. I imagine that she was bored, for she looked it.

“Mr. Crocker,” she called out, “you’re just the man I have been wishing to see.”

The others naturally took this for a dismissal, and she was not long in coming to her point when we were alone.

“What is it you know about this queer but gifted genius who is here so mysteriously?” she asked.

“Nothing whatever,” I confessed. “I knew him before he thought of becoming a genius.”

“Retrogression is always painful,” she said; “but tell me something about him then.”

I told her all I knew, being that narrated in these pages. “Now,” said I, “if you will pardon a curiosity on my part, from what you said the other evening I inferred that he closely resembles the man whose name it pleased him to assume. And that man, I learn from the newspapers, is Mr. Charles Wrexell Allen of the ’Miles Standish Bicycle Company.’”

Miss Thorn made a comic gesture of despair.

“Why he chose Mr. Allen’s name,” she said, “is absolutely beyond my guessing. Unless there is some purpose behind the choice, which I do not for an instant believe, it was a foolish thing to do, and one very apt to lead to difficulties. I can understand the rest. He has a reputation for eccentricity which he feels he must keep up, and this notion of assuming a name evidently appealed to him as an inspiration.”

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“But why did he come out here?” I asked. “Can you tell me that?”

Miss Thorn flushed slightly, and ignored the question.

“I met the ‘Celebrity,’ as you call him,” she said, “for the first time last winter, and I saw him frequently during the season. Of course I had heard not a little about him and his peculiarities. His name seems to have gone the length and breadth of the land. And, like most girls, I had read his books and confess I enjoyed them. It is not too much to say,” she added archly, “that I made a sort of archangel out of the author.”

“I can understand that,” said I.

“But that did not last,” she continued hastily. “I see I have got beside my story. I saw a great deal of him in New York. He came to call, and I believe I danced with him once or twice. And then my aunt, Mrs. Rivers, bought a place near Epsom, in Massachusetts, and had a house party there in May. And the Celebrity was invited.”

I smiled.

“Oh, I assure you it was a mere chance,” said Miss Thorn. “I mention this that I may tell you the astonishing part of it all. Epsom is one of those smoky manufacturing towns one sees in New England, and the ’Miles Standish’ bicycle is made there. The day after we all arrived at my aunt’s a man came up the drive on a wheel whom I greeted in a friendly way and got a decidedly uncertain bow in return.

“I thought it rather a strange shift from a marked cordiality, and spoke of the circumstance to my aunt, who was highly amused. ‘Why, my dear,’ said she, ’that was Mr. Allen, of the bicycle company. I was nearly deceived myself.’”

“And is the resemblance so close as that?” I exclaimed.

“So close! Believe me, they are as like as two ices from a mould. Of course, when they are together one can distinguish the Celebrity from the bicycle man. The Celebrity’s chin is a little more square, and his nose straighter, and there are other little differences. I believe Mr. Allen has a slight scar on his forehead. But the likeness was remarkable, nevertheless, and it grew to be a standing joke with us. They actually dressed ludicrously alike. The Celebrity became so sensitive about it that he went back to New York before the party broke up. We grew to be quite fond of the bicycle man.”

She paused and shifted her chair, which had rocked close to mine.

“And can you account for his coming to Asquith?” I asked innocently.

She was plainly embarrassed.

“I suppose I might account for it, Mr. Crocker,” she replied. Then she added, with something of an impulse, “After all, it is foolish of me not to tell you. You probably know the Celebrity well enough to have learned that he takes idiotic fancies to young women.”

“Not always idiotic,” I protested.

“You mean that the young women are not always idiotic, I suppose. No, not always, but nearly always. I imagine he got the idea of coming to Asquith,” she went on with a change of manner, “because I chanced to mention that I was coming out here on a visit.”

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“Oh,” I remarked, and there words failed me.

Her mouth was twitching with merriment.

“I am afraid you will have to solve the rest of it for yourself, Mr. Crocker,” said she; “that is all of my contribution. My uncle tells me you are the best lawyer in the country, and I am surprised that you are so slow in getting at motives.”

And I did attempt to solve it on my way back to Asquith. The conclusion I settled to, everything weighed, was this: that the Celebrity had become infatuated with Miss Thorn (I was far from blaming him for that) and had followed her first to Epsom and now to Asquith. And he had chosen to come West incognito partly through the conceit which he admitted and gloried in, and partly because he believed his prominence sufficient to obtain for him an unpleasant notoriety if he continued long enough to track the same young lady about the country. Hence he had taken the trouble to advertise a trip abroad to account for his absence. Undoubtedly his previous conquests had been made more easily, for my second talk with Miss Thorn had put my mind at rest as to her having fallen a victim to his fascinations. Her arrival at Mohair being delayed, the Celebrity had come nearly a month too soon, and in the interval that tendency of which he was the dupe still led him by the nose; he must needs make violent love to the most attractive girl on the ground,—Miss Trevor. Now that one still more attractive had arrived I was curious to see how he would steer between the two, for I made no doubt that matters had progressed rather far with Miss Trevor. And in this I was not mistaken.

But his choice of the name of Charles Wrexell Allen bothered me considerably. I finally decided that he had taken it because convenient, and because he believed Asquith to be more remote from the East than the Sandwich Islands.

Reaching the inn grounds, I climbed the hillside to a favorite haunt of mine, a huge boulder having a sloping back covered with soft turf. Hence I could watch indifferently both lake and sky. Presently, however, I was aroused by voices at the foot of the rock, and peering over the edge I discovered a kind of sewing-circle gathered there. The foliage hid me completely. I perceived the Celebrity perched upon the low branch of an apple-tree, and Miss Trevor below him, with two other girls, doing fancy-work. I shall not attempt to defend the morality of my action, but I could not get away without discovery, and the knowledge that I had heard a part of their conversation might prove disquieting to them.

The Celebrity had just published a book, under the title of ’The Sybarites’, which was being everywhere discussed; and Asquith, where summer reading was general, came in for its share of the debate. Why it was called The Sybarites I have never discovered. I did not read the book because I was sick and tired of the author and his nonsense, but I imbibed, in spite of myself, something of the story and its moral from hearing it talked about. The Celebrity himself had listened to arguments on the subject with great

serenity, and was nothing loth to give his opinion when appealed to. I realized at once that ‘The Sybarites’ was the present topic.

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“Yes, it is rather an uncommon book,” he was saying languidly, “but there is no use writing a story unless it is uncommon.”

“Dear, how I should like to meet the author!” exclaimed a voice. “He must be a charming man, and so young, too! I believe you said you knew him, Mr. Allen.”

“An old acquaintance,” he answered, “and I am always reminding him that his work is overestimated.”

“How can you say he is overestimated!” said a voice.

“You men are all jealous of him,” said another.

“Is he handsome? I have heard he is.”

“He would scarcely be called so,” said the Celebrity, doubtfully.

“He is, girls,” Miss Trevor interposed; “I have seen his photograph.”

“What does he look like, Irene?” they chorused. “Men are no judges.”

“He is tall, and dark, and broad-shouldered,” Miss Trevor enumerated, as though counting her stitches, “and he has a very firm chin, and a straight nose, and—”

“Perfect!” they cried. “I had an idea he was just like that. I should go wild about him. Does he talk as well as he writes, Mr. Allen?”

“That is admitting that he writes well.”

“Admitting?” they shouted scornfully, “and don’t you admit it?”

“Some people like his writing, I have to confess,” said the Celebrity, with becoming calmness; “certainly his personality could not sell an edition of thirty thousand in a month. I think ‘The Sybarites’ the best of his works.”

“Upon my word, Mr. Allen, I am disgusted with you,” said the second voice; “I have not found a man yet who would speak a good word for him. But I did not think it of you.”

A woman’s tongue, like a firearm, is a dangerous weapon, and often strikes where it is least expected. I saw with a wicked delight that the shot had told, for the Celebrity blushed to the roots of his hair, while Miss Trevor dropped three or four stitches.

“I do not see how you can expect men to like ’The Sybarites’,” she said, with some heat; “very few men realize or care to realize what a small chance the average woman has. I know marriage isn’t a necessary goal, but most women, as well as most men, look

forward to it at some time of life, and, as a rule, a woman is forced to take her choice of the two or three men that offer themselves, no matter what they are. I admire a man who takes up the cudgels for women, as he has done."

"Of course we admire him," they cried, as soon as Miss Trevor had stopped for breath.

"And can you expect a man to like a book which admits that women are the more constant?" she went on.

"Why, Irene, you are quite rabid on the subject," said the second voice; "I did not say I expected it. I only said I had hoped to find Mr. Allen, at least, broad enough to agree with the book."

"Doesn't Mr. Allen remind you a little of Desmond?" asked the first voice, evidently anxious to avoid trouble.

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“Do you know whom he took for Desmond, Mr. Allen? I have an idea it was himself.”

Mr. Allen, had now recovered some of his composure.

“If so, it was done unconsciously,” he said. “I suppose an author must put his best thoughts in the mouth of his hero.”

“But it is like him?” she insisted.

“Yes, he holds the same views.”

“Which you do not agree with.”

“I have not said I did not agree with them,” he replied, taking up his own defence; “the point is not that men are more inconstant than women, but that women have more excuse for inconstancy. If I remember correctly, Desmond, in a letter to Rosamond, says: ’Inconstancy in a woman, because of the present social conditions, is often pardonable. In a man, nothing is more despicable.’ I think that is so. I believe that a man should stick by the woman to whom he has given his word as closely as he sticks by his friends.”

“Ah!” exclaimed the aggressive second voice, “that is all very well. But how about the woman to whom he has not given his word? Unfortunately, the present social conditions allow a man to go pretty far without a definite statement.”

At this I could not refrain from looking at Miss Trevor. She was bending over her knitting and had broken her thread.

“It is presumption for a man to speak without some foundation,” said the Celebrity, “and wrong unless he is sure of himself.”

“But you must admit,” the second voice continued, “that a man has no right to amuse himself with a woman, and give her every reason to believe he is going to marry her save the only manly and substantial one. And yet that is something which happens every day. What do you think of a man who deserts a woman under those conditions?”

“He is a detestable dog, of course,” declared the Celebrity.

And the cock in the inn yard was silent.

“I should love to be able to quote from a book at will,” said the quieting voice, for the sake of putting an end to an argument which bid fair to become disagreeable. “How do you manage to do it?”

“It was simply a passage that stuck in my mind,” he answered modestly; “when I read a book I pick them up just as a roller picks up a sod here and there as it moves over the lawn.”

“I should think you might write, Mr. Allen, you have such an original way of putting things!”

“I have thought of it,” returned the Celebrity, “and I may, some fine day.”

Wherewith he thrust his hands into his pockets and sauntered off with equanimity undisturbed, apparently unaware of the impression he had left behind him. And the Fifth Reader story popped into my head of good King William (or King Frederick, I forgot which), who had a royal fancy for laying aside the gayeties of the court and straying incognito among his plainer subjects, but whose princely origin was invariably detected in spite of any disguise his Majesty could invent.

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CHAPTER VII

I experienced a great surprise a few mornings afterwards. I had risen quite early, and found the Celebrity's man superintending the hoisting of luggage on top of a van.

"Is your master leaving?" I asked.

"He's off to Mohair now, sir," said the valet, with a salute.

At that instant the Celebrity himself appeared.

"Yes, old chap, I'm off to Mohair," he explained. "There's more sport in a day up there than you get here in a season. Beastly slow place, this, unless one is a deacon or a doctor of divinity. Why don't you come up, Crocker? Cooke would like nothing better; he has told me so a dozen times."

"He is very good," I replied. I could not resist the temptation to add, "I had an idea Asquith rather suited your purposes just now."

"I don't quite understand," he said, jumping at the other half of my meaning.

"Oh, nothing. But you told me when you came here, if I am not mistaken, that you chose Asquith because of those very qualities for which you now condemn it."

"Magna est vis consuetudinis," he laughed; "I thought I could stand the life, but I can't. I am tired of their sects and synods and sermons. By the way," said he pulling at my sleeve, "what a deuced pretty girl that Miss Thorn is! Isn't she? Rollins, where's the cart? Well, good-bye, Crocker; see you soon."

He drove rapidly off as the clock struck six, and an uneasy glance he gave the upper windows did not escape me. When Farrar appeared, I told him what had happened.

"Good riddance," he replied sententiously.

We sat in silence until the bell rang, looking at the morning sun on the lake. I was a little anxious to learn the state of Farrar's feelings in regard to Miss Trevor, and how this new twist in affairs had affected them. But I might as well have expected one of King Louis's carp to whisper secrets of the old regime. The young lady came to the breakfast-table looking so fresh and in such high spirits that I made sure she had not heard of the Celebrity's ignoble escape. As the meal proceeded it was easy to mark that her eye now and again fell across his empty chair, and glanced inquiringly towards the door. I made up my mind that I would not be the bearer of evil news, and so did Farrar, so we kept up a vapid small-talk with Mr. Trevor on the condition of trade in the West. Miss

Trevor, however, in some way came to suspect that we could account for that vacant seat. At last she fixed her eye inquiringly on me, and I trembled.

“Mr. Crocker,” she began, and paused. Then she added with a fair unconcern, “do you happen to know where Mr. Allen is this morning?”

“He has gone over to Mohair, I believe,” I replied weakly.

“To Mohair!” she exclaimed, putting down her cup; “why, he promised to go canoeing at ten.

“Probably he will be back by then,” I ventured, not finding it in my heart to tell her the cruel truth. But I kept my eyes on my plate. They say a lie has short legs. Mine had, for my black friend, Simpson, was at that instant taking off the fruit, and overheard my remark.

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“Mr. Allen done gone for good,” he put in, “done give me five dollars last night. Why, sah,” he added, scratching his head, “you was on de poch dis mornin’ when his trunks was took away!”

It was certainly no time to quibble then.

“His trunks!” Miss Trevor exclaimed.

“Yes, he has left us and gone to Mohair,” I said, “bag and baggage. That is the flat truth of it.”

I suppose there is some general rule for calculating beforehand how a young woman is going to act when news of this sort is broken. I had no notion of what Miss Trevor would do. I believe Farrar thought she would faint, for he laid his napkin on the table. She did nothing of the kind, but said simply:

“How unreliable men are!”

I fell to guessing what her feelings were; for the life of me I could not tell from her face. I was sorry for Miss Trevor in spite of the fact that she had neglected to ask my advice before falling in love with the Celebrity. I asked her to go canoeing with me. She refused kindly but very firmly.

It is needless to say that the Celebrity did not come back to the inn, and as far as I could see the desertion was designed, cold-blooded, and complete. Miss Trevor remained out of sight during the day of his departure, and at dinner we noticed traces of a storm about her,—a storm which had come and gone. There was an involuntary hush as she entered the dining-room, for Asquith had been buzzing that afternoon over the episode. And I admired the manner in which she bore her inspection. Already rumors of the cause of Mr. Allen’s departure were in active circulation, and I was astonished to learn that he had been seen that day seated upon Indian rock with Miss Thorn herself. This piece of news gave me a feeling of insecurity about people, and about women in particular, that I had never before experienced. After holding the Celebrity up to such unmeasured ridicule as she had done, ridicule not without a seasoning of contempt, it was difficult to believe Miss Thorn so inconsistent as to go alone with him to Indian rock; and she was not ignorant of Miss Trevor’s experience. But the fact was attested by trustworthy persons.

I have often wondered what prompted me to ask Miss Trevor again to go canoeing. To do myself justice, it was no wish of mine to meddle with or pry into her affairs. Neither did I flatter myself that my poor company would be any consolation for that she had lost. I shall not try to analyze my motive. Suffice it to record that she accepted this second invitation, and I did my best to amuse her by relating a few of my experiences at the bar, and I told that memorable story of Farrar throwing O’Meara into the street. We

were getting along famously, when we descried another canoe passing us at some distance, and we both recognized the Celebrity at the paddle by the flannel jacket of his college boat club. And Miss Thorn sat in the bow!

“Do you know anything about that man, Miss Trevor?” I asked abruptly.

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She grew scarlet, but replied:

“I know that he is a fraud.”

“Anything else?”

“I can’t say that I do; that is, nothing but what he has told me.”

“If you will forgive my curiosity,” I said, “what has he told you?”

“He says he is the author of The Sybarites,” she answered, her lip curling, “but of course I do not believe that, now.”

“But that happens to be true,” I said, smiling.

She clapped her hands.

“I promised him I wouldn’t tell,” she cried, “but the minute I get back to the inn I shall publish it.”

“No, don’t do that just yet,” said I.

“Why not? Of course I shall.”

I had no definite reason, only a vague hope that we should get some better sort of enjoyment out of the disclosure before the summer was over.

“You see,” I said, “he is always getting into scrapes; he is that kind of a man. And it is my humble opinion that he has put his head into a noose this time, for sure. Mr. Allen, of the ’Miles Standish Bicycle Company,’ whose name he has borrowed for the occasion, is enough like him in appearance to be his twin brother.”

“He has borrowed another man’s name!” she exclaimed; “why, that’s stealing!”

“No, merely kleptomania,” I replied; “he wouldn’t be the other man if he could. But it has struck me that the real Mr. Allen might turn up here, or some friend of his, and stir things a bit. My advice to you is to keep quiet, and we may have a comedy worth seeing.”

“Well,” she remarked, after she had got over a little of her astonishment, “it would be great fun to tell, but I won’t if you say so.”

I came to, have a real liking for Miss Trevor. Farrar used to smile when I spoke of this, and I never could induce him to go out with us in the canoe, which we did frequently,—-in fact, every day I was at Asquith, except of course Sundays. And we grew to understand each other very well. She looked upon me in the same light as did my other

friends, —that of a counsellor-at-law,—and I fell unconsciously into the role of her adviser, in which capacity I was the recipient of many confidences I would have got in no other way. That is, in no other way save one, and in that I had no desire to go, even had it been possible. Miss Trevor was only nineteen, and in her eyes I was at least sixty.

“See here, Miss Trevor,” I said to her one day after we had become more or less intimate, “of course it’s none of my business, but you didn’t feel very badly after the Celebrity went away, did you?”

Her reply was frank and rather staggering.

“Yes, I did. I was engaged to him, you know.”

“Engaged to him! I had no idea he ever got that far,” I exclaimed.

Miss Trevor laughed merrily.

“It was my fault,” she said; “I pinned him down, and he had to propose. There was no way out of it. I don’t mind telling you.”

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I did not know whether to be flattered or aggrieved by this avowal.

“You know,” she went on, her tone half apologetic, “the day after he came he told me who he was, and I wanted to stop the people we passed and inform them of the lion I was walking with. And I was quite carried away by the honor of his attentions: any girl would have been, you know.”

“I suppose so,” I assented.

“And I had heard and read so much of him, and I doted on his stories, and all that. His heroes are divine, you must admit. And, Mr. Crocker,” she concluded with a charming naivety, “I just made up my mind I would have him.”

“Woman proposes, and man disposes,” I laughed. “He escaped in spite of you.”

She looked at me queerly.

“Only a jest,” I said hurriedly; “your escape is the one to be thankful for. You might have married him, like the young woman in The Sybarites. You remember, do you not, that the hero of that book sacrifices himself for the lady who adores him, but whom he has ceased to adore?”

“Yes, I remember,” she laughed; “I believe I know that book by heart.”

“Think of the countless girls he must have relieved of their affections before their eyes were opened,” I continued with mock gravity. “Think of the charred trail he has left behind him. A man of that sort ought to be put under heavy bonds not to break any more hearts. But a kleptomaniac isn’t responsible, you understand. And it isn’t worth while to bear any malice.”

“Oh, I don’t bear any malice now,” she said. “I did at first, naturally. But it all seems very ridiculous now I have had time to think it over. I believe, Mr. Crocker, that I never really cared for him.”

“Simply an idol shattered this time,” I suggested, “and not a heart broken.”

“Yes, that’s it,” said she.

“I am glad to hear it,” said I, much pleased that she had taken such a sensible view. “But you are engaged to him.”

“I was.”

“You have broken the engagement, then?”

“No, I—haven’t,” she said.

“Then he has broken it?”

She did not appear to resent this catechism.

“That’s the strange part of it,” said Miss Trevor, “he hasn’t even thought it necessary.”

“It is clear, then, that you are still engaged to him,” said I, smiling at her blank face.

“I suppose I am,” she cried. “Isn’t it awful? What shall I do, Mr. Crocker? You are so sensible, and have had so much experience.”

“I beg your pardon,” I remarked grimly.

“Oh, you know what I mean: not that kind of experience, of course. But breach of promise cases and that sort of thing. I have a photograph of him with something written over it.”

“Something compromising?” I inquired.

“Yes, you would probably call it so,” she answered, reddening. “But there is no need of my repeating it. And then I have a lot of other things. If I write to break off the engagement I shall lose dignity, and it will appear as though I had regrets. I don’t wish him to think that, of all things. What shall I do?”

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“Do nothing,” I said.

“What do you mean?”

“Just that. Do not break the engagement, and keep the photograph and other articles for evidence. If he makes any overtures, don’t consider them for an instant. And I think, Miss Trevor, you will succeed sooner or later in making him very uncomfortable. Were he any one else I shouldn’t advise such a course, but you won’t lose any dignity and self-respect by it, as no one will be likely to hear of it. He can’t be taken seriously, and plainly he has never taken any one else so. He hasn’t even gone to the trouble to notify you that he does not intend marrying you.”

I saw from her expression that my suggestion was favorably entertained.

“What a joke it would be!” she cried delightedly.

“And a decided act of charity,” I added, “to the next young woman on his list.”

CHAPTER VIII

The humor of my proposition appealed more strongly to Miss Trevor than I had looked for, and from that time forward she became her old self again; for, even after she had conquered her love for the Celebrity, the mortification of having been jilted by him remained. Now she had come to look upon the matter in its true proportions, and her anticipation of a possible chance of teaching him a lesson was a pleasure to behold. Our table in the dining-room became again the abode of scintillating wit and caustic repartee, Farrar bracing up to his old standard, and the demand for seats in the vicinity rose to an animated competition. Mr. Charles Wrexell Allen’s chair was finally awarded to a nephew of Judge Short, who could turn a story to perfection.

So life at the inn settled down again to what it had been before the Celebrity came to disturb it.

I had my own reasons for staying away from Mohair. More than once as I drove over to the county-seat in my buggy I had met the Celebrity on a tall tandem cart, with one of Mr. Cooke’s high-steppers in the lead, and Miss Thorn in the low seat. I had forgotten to mention that my friend was something of a whip. At such times I would bow very civilly and pass on; not without a twinge, I confess. And as the result of one of these meetings I had to retrace several miles of my road for a brief I had forgotten. After that I took another road, several miles longer, for the sight of Miss Thorn with him seriously disturbed my peace of mind. But at length the day came, as I had feared, when circumstances forced me to go to my client’s place. One morning Miss Trevor and I were about stepping into the canoe for our customary excursion when one of Mr. Cooke’s footmen arrived with a note for each of us. They were from Mrs. Cooke, and

requested the pleasure of our company that day for luncheon. “If you were I, would you go?” Miss Trevor asked doubtfully.

“Of course,” I replied.

“But the consequences may be unpleasant.”

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“Don’t let them,” I said. “Of what use is tact to a woman if not for just such occasions?”

My invitation had this characteristic note tacked on the end of it

“*Dear Crocker*: Where are you? Where is the judge? F. F. C.”

I corralled the judge, and we started off across the fields, in no very mild state of fear of that gentleman’s wife, whose vigilance was seldom relaxed. And thus we came by a circuitous route to Mohair, the judge occupied by his own guilty thoughts, and I by others not less disturbing. My client welcomed the judge with that warmth of manner which grappled so many of his friends to his heart, and they disappeared together into the Ethiopian card-room, which was filled with the assegais and exclamation point shields Mr. Cooke had had made at the Sawmill at Beaverton.

I learned from one of the lords-in-waiting loafing about the hall that Mrs. Cooke was out on the golf links, chaperoning some of the Asquith young women whose mothers had not seen fit to ostracize Mohair. Mr. Cooke’s ten friends were with them. But this discreet and dignified servant could not reveal the whereabouts of Miss Thorn and of Mr. Allen, both of whom I was decidedly anxious to avoid. I was much disgusted, therefore, to come upon the Celebrity in the smoking-room, writing rapidly, with, sheets of manuscript piled beside him. And he was quite good-natured over my intrusion.

“No,” said he, “don’t go. It’s only a short story I promised for a Christmas number. They offered me fifteen cents a word and promised to put my name on the cover in red, so I couldn’t very well refuse. It’s no inspiration, though, I tell you that.” He rose and pressed a bell behind him and ordered whiskeys and ginger ales, as if he were in a hotel. “Sit down, Crocker,” he said, waving me to a morocco chair. “Why don’t you come over to see us oftener?”

“I’ve been quite busy,” I said.

This remark seemed to please him immensely.

“What a sly old chap you are,” said he; “really, I shall have to go back to the inn and watch you.”

“What the deuce do you mean?” I demanded.

He looked me over in well-bred astonishment and replied:

“Hang me, Crocker, if I can make you out. You seem to know the world pretty well, and yet when a fellow twits you on a little flirtation you act as though you were going to black his eyes.”

“A little flirtation!” I repeated, aghast.

“Oh, well,” he said, smiling, “we won’t quarrel over a definition. Call it anything you like.”

“Don’t you think this a little uncalled for?” I asked, beginning to lose my temper.

“Bless you, no. Not among friends: not among such friends as we are.”

“I didn’t know we were such devilish good friends,” I retorted warmly.

“Oh, yes, we are, devilish good friends,” he answered with assurance; “known each other from boyhood, and all that. And I say, old chap,” he added, “you needn’t be jealous of me, you know. I got out of that long ago. And I’m after something else now.”

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For a space I was speechless. Then the ludicrous side of the matter struck me, and I laughed in spite of myself. Better, after all, to deal with a fool according to his folly. The Celebrity glanced at the door and drew his chair closer to mine.

“Crocker,” he said confidentially, “I’m glad you came here to-day. There is a thing or two I wished to consult you about.”

“Professional?” I asked, trying to head him off.

“No,” he replied, “amateur,—beastly amateur. A bungle, if I ever made one. The truth is, I executed rather a faux pas over there at Asquith. Tell me,” said he, diving desperately at the root of it, “how does Miss Trevor feel about my getting out? I meant to let her down easier; ’pon my word, I did.”

This is a way rascals have of judging other men by themselves.

“Well;” said I, “it was rather a blow, of course.”

“Of course,” he assented.

“And all the more unexpected,” I went on, “from a man who has written reams on constancy.”

I flatter myself that this nearly struck home, for he was plainly annoyed.

“Oh, bother that!” said he. “How many gowns believe in their own sermons? How many lawyers believe in their own arguments?”

“Unhappily, not as many as might.”

“I don’t object to telling you, old chap,” he continued, “that I went in a little deeper than I intended. A good deal deeper, in fact. Miss Trevor is a deuced fine girl, and all that; but absolutely impossible. I forgot myself, and I confess I was pretty close to caught.”

“I congratulate you,” I said gravely.

“That’s the point of it. I don’t know that I’m out of the woods yet. I wanted to see you and find out how she was acting.”

My first impulse was to keep him in hot water. Fortunately I thought twice.

“I don’t know anything about Miss Trevor’s feelings—” I began.

“Naturally not—” he interrupted, with a smile.

“But I have a notion that, if she ever fancied you, she doesn’t care a straw for you to-day.”

“Doesn’t she now,” he replied somewhat regretfully. Here was one of the knots in his character I never could untie.

“Understand, that is simply my guess,” I said. “You must have discovered that it is never possible to be sure of a woman’s feelings.”

“Found that out long ago,” he replied with conviction, and added: “Then you think I need not anticipate any trouble from her?”

“I have told you what I think,” I answered; “you know better than I what the situation is.”

He still lingered.

“Does she appear to be in,—ah,—in good spirits?”

I had work to keep my face straight.

“Capital,” I said; “I never saw her happier.”

This seemed to satisfy him.

“Downcast at first, happy now,” he remarked thoughtfully. “Yes, she got over it. I’m much obliged to you, Crocker.”

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I left him to finish his short story and walked out across the circle of smooth lawn towards the golf links. And there I met Mrs. Cooke and her niece coming in together. The warm red of her costume became Miss Thorn wonderfully, and set off the glossy black of her hair. And her skin was glowing from the exercise. An involuntary feeling of admiration for this tall, athletic young woman swept over me, and I halted in my steps for no other reason, I believe, than that I might look upon her the longer.

What man, I thought resentfully, would not travel a thousand miles to be near her?

“It is Mr. Crocker,” said Mrs. Cooke; “I had given up all hope of ever seeing you again. Why have you been such a stranger?”

“As if you didn’t know, Aunt Maria,” Miss Thorn put in gayly.

“Oh yes, I know,” returned her aunt, “and I have not been foolish enough to invite the bar without the magnet. And yet, Mr. Crocker,” she went on playfully, “I had imagined that you were the one man in a hundred who did not need an inducement.”

Miss Thorn began digging up the turf with her lofter: it was a painful moment for me.

“You might at least have tried me, Mrs. Cooke,” I said.

Miss Thorn looked up quickly from the ground, her eyes searchingly upon my face. And Mrs. Cooke seemed surprised.

“We are glad you came, at any rate,” she answered.

And at luncheon my seat was next to Miss Thorn’s, while the Celebrity was placed at the right of Miss Trevor. I observed that his face went blank from time to time at some quip of hers: even a dull woman may be sharp under such circumstances, and Miss Trevor had wits to spare. And I marked that she never allowed her talk with him to drift into deep water; when there was danger of this she would draw the entire table into their conversation by some adroit remark, or create a laugh at his expense. As for me, I held a discreet if uncomfortable silence, save for the few words which passed between Miss Thorn and me. Once or twice I caught her covert glance on me. But I felt, and strongly, that there could be no friendship between us now, and I did not care to dissimulate merely for the sake of appearances. Besides, I was not a little put out over the senseless piece of gossip which had gone abroad concerning me.

It had been arranged as part of the day’s programme that Mr. Cooke was to drive those who wished to go over the Rise in his new brake. But the table was not graced by our host’s presence, Mrs. Cooke apologizing for him, explaining that he had disappeared quite mysteriously. It turned out that he and the judge had been served with luncheon in the Ethiopian card-room, and neither threats nor fair words could draw him away. The judge had not held such cards for years, and it was in vain that I talked to him of

consequences. The Ten decided to remain and watch a game which was pronounced little short of phenomenal, and my client gave orders for the smaller brake and requested the Celebrity to drive. And this he was nothing loth to do. For the edification as well as the assurance of the party Mr. Allen explained, while we were waiting under the porte cochere, how he had driven the Windsor coach down Piccadilly at the height of the season, with a certain member of Parliament and noted whip on the box seat.

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And, to do him justice, he could drive. He won the instant respect of Mr. Cooke's coachman by his manner of taking up the lines, and clinched it when he dropped a careless remark concerning the off wheeler. And after the critical inspection of the horses which is proper he climbed up on the box. There was much hesitation among the ladies as to who should take the seat of honor: Mrs. Cooke declining, it was pressed upon Miss Thorn. But she, somewhat to my surprise, declined also, and it was finally filled by a young woman from Asquith.

As we drove off I found myself alone with Mrs. Cooke's niece on the seat behind.

The day was cool and snappy for August, and the Rise all green with a lavish nature. Now we, plunged into a deep shade with the boughs lacing each other overhead, and crossed dainty, rustic bridges over the cold trout-streams, the boards giving back the clatter of our horses' feet: or anon we shot into a clearing, with a colored glimpse of the lake and its curving shore far below us. I had always loved that piece of country since the first look I had of it from the Asquith road, and the sight of it rarely failed to set my blood a-tingle with pleasure. But to-day I scarcely saw it. I wondered what whim had impelled Miss Thorn to get into this seat. She paid but little attention to me during the first part of the drive, though a mere look in my direction seemed to afford her amusement. And at last, half way up the Rise, where the road takes to an embankment, I got a decided jar.

"Mr. Allen," she cried to the Celebrity, "you must stop here. Do you remember how long we tarried over this bit on Friday?"

He tightened the lines and threw a meaning glance backward.

I was tempted to say:

"You and Mr. Allen should know these roads rather well, Miss Thorn."

"Every inch of them," she replied.

We must have gone a mile farther when she turned upon me.

"It is your duty to be entertaining, Mr. Crocker. What in the world are you thinking of, with your brow all puckered up, forbidding as an owl?"

"I was thinking how some people change," I answered, with a readiness which surprised me.

"Strange," she said, "I had the same thing in mind. I hear decidedly queer tales of you; canoeing every day that business does not prevent, and whole evenings spent at the dark end of a veranda."

“What rubbish!” I exclaimed, not knowing whether to be angered or amused.

“Come, sir,” she said, with mock sternness, “answer the charge. Guilty or not guilty?”

“First let me make a counter-charge,” said I; “you have given me the right. Not long ago a certain young lady came to Mohair and found there a young author of note with whom she had had some previous acquaintance. She did not hesitate to intimate her views on the character of this Celebrity, and her views were not favorable.”

I paused. There was some satisfaction in seeing Miss Thorn biting her lip.

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“Well?”

“Not at all favorable, mind you,” I went on. “And the young lady’s general appearance was such as to lead one to suppose her the sincerest of persons. Now I am at a loss to account for a discrepancy between her words and her actions.”

While I talked Miss Thorn’s face had been gradually turning from mine until now I saw only the dainty knot at the back of her head. Her shoulders were quivering with laughter. But presently her face came back all gravity, save a suspicious gleam of mirth in the eyes.

“It does seem inconsistent, Mr. Crocker; I grant you that. No doubt it is so. But let me ask you something: did you ever yet know a woman who was not inconsistent?”

I did not realize I had been side-tracked until I came to think over this conversation afterwards.

“I am not sure,” I replied. “Perhaps I merely hoped that one such existed.”

She dropped her eyes.

“Then don’t be surprised at my failing,” said she. “No doubt I criticised the Celebrity severely. I cannot recall what I said. But it is upon the better side of a character that we must learn to look. Did it ever strike you that the Celebrity had some exceedingly fine qualities?”

“No, it did not,” I answered positively.

“Nevertheless, he has,” she went on, in all apparent seriousness. “He drives almost as well as Uncle Farquhar, dances well, and is a capital paddle.”

“You were speaking of qualities, not accomplishments,” I said. A horrible suspicion that she was having a little fun at my expense crossed my mind.

Very good, then. You must admit that he is generous to a fault, amiable; and persevering, else he would never have attained the position he enjoys. And his affection for you, Mr. Crocker, is really touching, considering how little he gets in return.”

“Come, Miss Thorn,” I said severely, “this is ridiculous. I don’t like him, and never shall. I liked him once, before he took to writing drivel. But he must have been made over since then. And what is more, with all respect to your opinion, I don’t believe he likes me.”

Miss Thorn straightened up with dignity and said:

“You do him an injustice. But perhaps you will learn to appreciate him before he leaves Mohair.”

“That is not likely,” I replied—not at all pleasantly, I fear. And again I thought I observed in her the same desire to laugh she had before exhibited.

And all the way back her talk was of nothing except the Celebrity. I tried every method short of absolute rudeness to change the subject, and went from silence to taciturnity and back again to silence. She discussed his books and his mannerisms, even the growth of his popularity. She repeated anecdotes of him from Naples to St. Petersburg, from Tokio to Cape Town. And when we finally stopped under the porte cochere I had scarcely the civility left to say good-bye.

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I held out my hand to help her to the ground, but she paused on the second step.

“Mr. Crocker,” she observed archly, “I believe you once told me you had not known many girls in your life.”

“True,” I said; “why do you ask?”

“I wished to be sure of it,” she replied.

And jumping down without my assistance, she laughed and disappeared into the house.

THE CELEBRITY

By Winston Churchill

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CHAPTER IX

That evening I lighted a cigar and went down to sit on the outermost pile of the Asquith dock to commune with myself. To say that I was disappointed in Miss Thorn would be to set a mild value on my feelings. I was angry, even aggressive, over her defence of the Celebrity. I had gone over to Mohair that day with a hope that some good reason was at the bottom of her tolerance for him, and had come back without any hope. She not only tolerated him, but, wonderful to be said, plainly liked him. Had she not praised him, and defended him, and become indignant when I spoke my mind about him? And I would have taken my oath, two weeks before, that nothing short of hypnotic influence could have changed her. By her own confession she had come to Asquith with her eyes opened, and, what was more, seen another girl wrecked on the same reef.

Farrar followed me out presently, and I had an impulse to submit the problem as it stood to him. But it was a long story, and I did not believe that if he were in my boots he would have consulted me. Again, I sometimes thought Farrar yearned for confidences, though it was impossible for him to confide. And he wore an inviting air to-night. Then, as everybody knows, there is that about twilight and an after-dinner cigar which leads to communication. They are excellent solvents. My friend seated himself on the pile next to mine, and said,

“It strikes me you have been behaving rather queer lately, Crocker.”

This was clearly an invitation from Farrar, and I melted.

“I admit,” said I, “that I am a good deal perplexed over the contradictions of the human mind.”

“Oh, is that all?” he replied dryly. “I supposed it was worse. Narrower, I mean. Didn’t know you ever bothered yourself with abstract philosophy.”

“See here, Farrar,” said I, “what is your opinion of Miss Thorn?”

He stopped kicking his feet against the pile and looked up.

“Miss Thorn?”

“Yes, Miss Thorn,” I repeated with emphasis. I knew he had in mind that abominable twaddle about the canoe excursions.

“Why, to tell the truth,” said he, “I never had any opinion of Miss Thorn.”

“You mean you never formed any, I suppose,” I returned with some tartness.

“Yes, that is it. How darned precise you are getting, Crocker! One would think you were going to write a rhetoric. What put Miss Thorn into your head?”

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“I have been coaching beside her this afternoon.”

“Oh!” said Farrar.

“Do you remember the night she came,” I asked, “and we sat with her on the Florentine porch, and Charles Wrexell recognized her and came up?”

“Yes,” he replied with awakened interest, “and I meant to ask you about that.”

“Miss Thorn had met him in the East. And I gathered from what she told me that he has followed her out here.”

“Shouldn’t wonder,” said Farrar. “Don’t much blame him, do you? Is that what troubles you?” he asked, in surprise.

“Not precisely,” I answered vaguely; “but from what she has said then and since, she made it pretty clear that she hadn’t any use for him; saw through him, you know.”

“Pity her if she didn’t. But what did she say?”

I repeated the conversations I had had with Miss Thorn, without revealing Mr. Allen’s identity with the celebrated author.

“That is rather severe,” he assented.

“He decamped for Mohair, as you know, and since that time she has gone back on every word of it. She is with him morning and evening, and, to crown all, stood up for him through thick and thin to-day, and praised him. What do you think of that?”

“What I should have expected in a woman,” said he, nonchalantly.

“They aren’t all alike,” I retorted.

He shook out his pipe, and getting down from his high seat laid his hand on my knee.

“I thought so once, old fellow,” he whispered, and went off down the dock.

This was the nearest Farrar ever came to a confidence.

I have now to chronicle a curious friendship which had its beginning at this time. The friendships of the other sex are quickly made, and sometimes as quickly dissolved. This one interested me more than I care to own. The next morning Judge Short, looking somewhat dejected after the overnight conference he had had with his wife, was innocently and somewhat ostentatiously engaged in tossing quoits with me in front of the inn, when Miss Thorn drove up in a basket cart. She gave me a bow which proved

that she bore no ill-will for that which I had said about her hero. Then Miss Trevor appeared, and away they went together. This was the commencement. Soon the acquaintance became an intimacy, and their lives a series of visits to each other. Although this new state of affairs did not seem to decrease the number of Miss Thorn's 'tete-a-tetes' with the Celebrity, it put a stop to the canoe expeditions I had been in the habit of taking with Miss Trevor, which I thought just as well under the circumstances. More than once Miss Thorn partook of the inn fare at our table, and when this happened I would make my escape before the coffee. For such was the nature of my feelings regarding the Celebrity that I could not bring myself into cordial relations with one who professed to admire him. I realize how ridiculous such a sentiment must appear, but it existed nevertheless, and most strongly.

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I tried hard to throw Miss Thorn out of my thoughts, and very nearly succeeded. I took to spending more and more of my time at the county-seat, where I remained for days at a stretch, inventing business when there was none. And in the meanwhile I lost all respect for myself as a sensible man, and cursed the day the Celebrity came into the state. It seemed strange that this acquaintance of my early days should have come back into my life, transformed, to make it more or less miserable. The county-seat being several miles inland, and lying in the midst of hills, could get intolerably hot in September. At last I was driven out in spite of myself, and I arrived at Asquith cross and dusty. As Simpson was brushing me off, Miss Trevor came up the path looking cool and pretty in a summer gown, and her face expressed sympathy. I have never denied that sympathy was a good thing.

“Oh, Mr. Crocker,” she cried, “I am so glad you are back again! We have missed you dreadfully. And you look tired, poor man, quite worn out. It is a shame you have to go over to that hot place to work.”

I agreed with her.

“And I never have any one to take me canoeing any more.”

“Let’s go now,” I suggested, “before dinner.”

So we went. It was a keen pleasure to be on the lake again after the sultry court-rooms and offices, and the wind and exercise quickly brought back my appetite and spirits. I paddled hither and thither, stopping now and then to lie under the pines at the mouth of some stream, while Miss Trevor talked. She was almost a child in her eagerness to amuse me with the happenings since my departure. This was always her manner with me, in curious contrast to her habit of fencing and playing with words when in company. Presently she burst out:

“Mr. Crocker, why is it that you avoid Miss Thorn? I was talking of you to her only to-day, and she says you go miles out of your way to get out of speaking to her; that you seemed to like her quite well at first. She couldn’t understand the change.”

“Did she say that?” I exclaimed.

“Indeed, she did; and I have noticed it, too. I saw you leave before coffee more than once when she was here. I don’t believe you know what a fine girl she is.”

“Why, then, does she accept and return the attentions of the Celebrity?” I inquired, with a touch of acidity. “She knows what he is as well, if not better, than you or I. I own I can’t understand it,” I said, the subject getting ahead of me. “I believe she is in love with him.”

Miss Trevor began to laugh; quietly at first, and, as her merriment increased, heartily.

“Shouldn’t we be getting back?” I asked, looking at my watch. “It lacks but half an hour of dinner.”

“Please don’t be angry, Mr. Crocker,” she pleaded. “I really couldn’t help laughing.”

“I was unaware I had said anything funny, Miss Trevor,” I replied.

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“Of course you didn’t,” she said more soberly; “that is, you didn’t intend to. But the very notion of Miss Thorn in love with the Celebrity is funny.”

“Evidence is stronger than argument,” said I. “And now she has even convicted herself.”

I started to paddle homeward, rather furiously, and my companion said nothing until we came in sight of the inn. As the canoe glided into the smooth surface behind the breakwater, she broke the silence.

“I heard you went fishing the other day,” said she.

“Yes.”

“And the judge told me about a big bass you hooked, and how you played him longer than was necessary for the mere fun of the thing.”

“Yes.”

“Perhaps you will find in the feeling that prompted you to do that a clue to the character of our sex.”

CHAPTER X

Mr. Cooke had had a sloop yacht built at Far Harbor, the completion of which had been delayed, and which was but just delivered. She was, painted white, with brass fittings, and under her stern, in big, black letters, was the word Maria, intended as a surprise and delicate conjugal compliment to Mrs. Cooke. The Maria had a cabin, which was finished in hard wood and yellow plush, and accommodations for keeping things cold. This last Mr. Cooke had insisted upon.

The skipper Mr. Cooke had hired at Far Harbor was a God-fearing man with a luke warm interest in his new billet and employer, and had only been prevailed upon to take charge of the yacht for the month after the offer of an emolument equal to half a year’s sea pay of an ensign in the navy. His son and helper was to receive a sum proportionally exorbitant. This worthy man sighted Mohair on a Sunday morning, and at nine o’clock dropped his anchor with a salute which caused Mr. Cooke to say unpleasant things in his sleep. After making things ship-shape and hoisting the jack, both father and son rowed ashore to the little church at Asquith.

Now the butler at Mohair was a servant who had learned, from long experience, to anticipate every wish and whim of his master, and from the moment he descried the white sails of the yacht out of the windows of the butler’s pantry his duty was clear as daylight. Such was the comprehension and despatch with which he gave his

commands that the captain returned from divine worship to find the Maria in profane hands, her immaculate deck littered with straw and sawdust, and covered to the coamings with bottles and cases. This decided the captain, he packed his kit in high dudgeon, and took the first train back to Far Harbor, leaving the yacht to her fate.

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This sudden and inconsiderate departure was a severe blow to Mr. Cooke' who was so constituted that he cared but little about anything until there was danger of not getting it. My client had planned a trip to Bear Island for the following Tuesday, which was to last a week, the party to bring tents with them and rough it, with the Maria as headquarters. It was out of the question to send to Far Harbor for another skipper, if, indeed, one could be found at that late period. And as luck would have it, six of Mr. Cooke's ten guests had left but a day or so since, and among them had been the only yacht-owner. None of the four that remained could do more than haul aft and belay a sheet. But the Celebrity, who chanced along as Mr. Cooke was ruefully gazing at the graceful lines of the Maria from the wharf and cursing the fate that kept him ashore with a stiff wind blowing, proposed a way out of the difficulty. He, the Celebrity, would gladly sail the Maria over to Bear Island provided another man could be found to relieve him occasionally at the wheel, and the like. He had noticed that Farrar was a capable hand in a boat, and suggested that he be sent for.

This suggestion Mr. Cooke thought so well of that he hurried over to Asquith to consult Farrar at once, and incidentally to consult me. We can hardly be blamed for receiving his overtures with a moderate enthusiasm. In fact, we were of one mind not to go when the subject was first broached. But my client had a persuasive way about him that was irresistible, and the mere mention of the favors he had conferred upon both of us at different periods of our lives was sufficient. We consented.

Thus it came to pass that Tuesday morning found the party assembled on the wharf at Mohair, the Four and the Celebrity, as well as Mr. Cooke, having produced yachting suits from their inexhaustible wardrobes. Mr. Trevor and his daughter, Mrs. Cooke and Miss Thorn, and Farrar and myself completed the party. We were to adhere strictly to primeval principles: the ladies were not permitted a maid, while the Celebrity was forced to leave his manservant, and Mr. Cooke his chef. I had, however, thrust into my pocket the Minneapolis papers, which had been handed me by the clerk on their arrival at the inn, which happened just as I was leaving. 'Quod bene notandum!'

Thereby hangs a tale!

For the northern lakes the day was rather dead: a little wind lay in the southeast, scarcely enough to break the water, with the sky an intense blue. But the Maria was hardly cast and under way before it became painfully apparent that the Celebrity was much better fitted to lead a cotillon than to sail a boat. He gave his orders, nevertheless, in a firm, seamanlike fashion, though with no great pertinence, and thus managed to establish the confidence of Mr. Cooke. Farrar, after setting things to rights, joined Mrs. Cooke and me over the cabin.

"How about hoisting the spinnaker, mate?" the Celebrity shouted after him.

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Farrar did not deign to answer: his eye was on the wind. And the boom, which had been acting uneasily, finally decided to gybe, and swept majestically over, carrying two of the Four in front of it, and all but dropped them into the water.

“A common occurrence in a light breeze,” we heard the Celebrity reassure Mr. Cooke and Miss Thorn.

“The Maria has vindicated her sex,” remarked Farrar.

We laughed.

“Why don’t you sail, Mr. Farrar?” asked Mrs. Cooke.

“He can’t do any harm in this breeze,” Farrar replied; “it isn’t strong enough to get anywhere with.”

He was right. The boom gybed twenty times that morning, and the Celebrity offered an equal number of apologies. Mr. Cooke and the Four vanished, and from the uproarious laughter which arose from the cabin transoms I judged they were telling stories. While Miss Thorn spent the time profitably in learning how to conn a yacht. At one, when we had luncheon, Mohair was still in the distance. At two it began to cloud over, the wind fell flat, and an ominous black bank came up from the south. Without more ado, Farrar, calling on me to give him a hand, eased down the halliards and began to close reef the mainsail.

“Hold on,” said the Celebrity, “who told you to do that?”

“I am very sure you didn’t,” Farrar returned, as he hauled out a reef earing.

Here a few drops of rain on the deck warned the ladies to retire to the cabin.

“Take the helm until I get my mackintosh, will you, Farrar?” said the Celebrity, “and be careful what you do.”

Farrar took the helm and hauled in the sheet, while the Celebrity, Mr. Cooke, and the guests donned their rain-clothes. The water ahead was now like blue velvet, and the rain pelting. The Maria was heeling to the squall by the time the Celebrity appeared at the cabin door, enveloped in an ample waterproof, a rubber cover on his yachting cap. A fool despises a danger he has never experienced, and our author, with a remark about a spanking breeze, made a motion to take the wheel. But Farrar, the flannel of his shirt clinging to the muscular outline of his shoulders, gave him a push which sent him sprawling against the lee refrigerator. Well Miss Thorn was not there to see.

“You will have to answer for this,” he cried, as he scrambled to his feet and clutched the weather wash-board with one hand, while he shook the other in Farrar’s face.

“Crocker,” said Farrar to me, coolly, “keep that idiot out of the way for a while, or we’ll all be drowned. Tie him up, if necessary.”

I was relieved from this somewhat unpleasant task. Mr. Cooke, with his back to the rain, sat an amused witness to the mutiny, as blissfully ignorant as the Celebrity of the character of a lake squall.

“I appeal to you, as the owner of this yacht, Mr. Cooke,” the Celebrity shouted, “whether, as the person delegated by you to take charge of it, I am to suffer indignity and insult. I have sailed larger yachts than this time and again on the coast, at—” here he swallowed a portion of a wave and was mercifully prevented from being specific.

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But Mr. Cooke was looking a trifle bewildered. It was hardly possible for him to cling to the refrigerator, much less quell a mutiny. One who has sailed the lakes well knows how rapidly they can be lashed to fury by a storm, and the wind was now spinning the tops of the waves into a blinding spray. Although the Maria proved a stiff boat and a seaworthy, she was not altogether without motion; and the set expression on Farrar's face would have told me, had I not known it, that our situation at that moment was no joke. Repeatedly, as she was held up to it, a precocious roller would sweep from bow to stern, until we without coats were wet and shivering.

The close and crowded cabin of a small yacht is not an attractive place in rough weather; and one by one the Four emerged and distributed themselves about the deck, wherever they could obtain a hold. Some of them began to act peculiarly. Upon Mr. Cooke's unwillingness or inability to interfere in his behalf, the Celebrity had assumed an aggrieved demeanor, but soon the motion of the Maria became more and more pronounced, and the difficulty of maintaining his decorum likewise increased. The ruddy color left his face, which grew pale with effort. I will do him the justice to say that the effort was heroic: he whistled popular airs, and snatches of the grand opera; he relieved Mr. Cooke of his glasses (of which Mr. Cooke had neglected to relieve himself), and scanned the sea line busily. But the inevitable deferred is frequently more violent than the inevitable taken gracefully, and the confusion which at length overtook the Celebrity was utter as his humiliation was complete. We laid him beside Mr. Cooke in the cockpit.

The rain presently ceased, and the wind hauled, as is often the case, to the northwest, which began to clear, while Bear Island rose from the northern horizon. Both Farrar and I were surprised to see Miss Trevor come out; she hooked back the cabin doors and surveyed the prostrate forms with amusement.

We asked her about those inside.

"Mrs. Cooke has really been very ill," she said, "and Miss Thorn is doing all she can for her. My father and I were more fortunate. But you will both catch your deaths," she exclaimed, noticing our condition. "Tell me where I can find your coats."

I suppose it is natural for a man to enjoy being looked after in this way; it was certainly a new sensation to Farrar and myself. We assured her we were drying out and did not need the coats, but nevertheless she went back into the cabin and found them.

"Miss Thorn says you should both be whipped," she remarked.

When we had put on our coats Miss Trevor sat down and began to talk.

"I once heard of a man," she began complacently, "a man that was buried alive, and who contrived to dig himself up and then read his own epitaph. It did not please him,

but he was wise and amended his life. I have often thought how much it might help some people if they could read their own epitaphs."

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Farrar was very quick at this sort of thing; and now that the steering had become easier was only too glad to join her in worrying the Celebrity. But he, if he were conscious, gave no sign of it.

“They ought to be buried so that they could not dig themselves up,” he said. “The epitaphs would only strengthen their belief that they had lived in an unappreciative age.”

“One I happen to have in mind, however, lives in an appreciative age. Most appreciative.”

“And women are often epitaph-makers.”

“You are hard on the sex, Mr. Farrar,” she answered, “but perhaps justly so. And yet there are some women I know of who would not write an epitaph to his taste.”

Farrar looked at her curiously.

“I beg your pardon,” he said.

“Do not imagine I am touchy on the subject,” she replied quickly; “some of us are fortunate enough to have had our eyes opened.”

I thought the Celebrity stirred uneasily.

“Have you read The Sybarites?” she asked.

Farrar was puzzled.

“No,” said he sententiously, “and I don’t want to.”

“I know the average man thinks it a disgrace to have read it. And you may not believe me when I say that it is a strong story of its kind, with a strong moral. There are men who might read that book and be a great deal better for it. And, if they took the moral to heart, it would prove every bit as effectual as their own epitaphs.”

He was not quite sure of her drift, but he perceived that she was still making fun of Mr. Allen.

“And the moral?” he inquired.

“Well,” she said, “the best I can do is to give you a synopsis of the story, and then you can judge of its fitness. The hero is called Victor Desmond. He is a young man of a sterling though undeveloped character, who has been hampered by an indulgent parent with a large fortune. Desmond is a butterfly, and sips life after the approved manner of his kind,—now from Bohemian glass, now from vessels of gold and silver. He chats

with stage lights in their dressing-rooms, and attends a ball in the Bowery or a supper at Sherry's with a ready versatility. The book, apart from its intention, really gives the middle classes an excellent idea of what is called 'high-life.'

"It is some time before Desmond discovers that he possesses the gift of Paris,—a deliberation proving his lack of conceit,—that wherever he goes he unwittingly breaks a heart, and sometimes two or three. This discovery is naturally so painful that he comes home to his chambers and throws himself on a lounge before his fire in a fit of self-deprecation, and reflects on a misspent and foolish life. This, mind you, is where his character starts to develop. And he makes a heroic resolve, not to cut off his nose or to grow a beard, nor get married, but henceforth to live a life of usefulness and seclusion, which was certainly considerate. And furthermore, if

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by any accident he ever again involved the affections of another girl he would marry her, be she as ugly as sin or as poor as poverty. Then the heroine comes in. Her name is Rosamond, which sounds well and may be euphoniously coupled with Desmond; and, with the single exception of a boarding-school girl, she is the only young woman he ever thought of twice. In order to save her and himself he goes away, but the temptation to write to her overpowers him, and of course she answers his letter. This brings on a correspondence. His letters take the form of confessions, and are the fruits of much philosophical reflection. 'Inconstancy in woman,' he says, because of the present social conditions, is often pardonable. In a man, nothing is more despicable.' This is his cardinal principle, and he sticks to it nobly. For, though he tires of Rosamond, who is quite attractive, however, he marries her and lives a life of self-denial. There are men who might take that story to heart."

I was amused that she should give the passage quoted by the Celebrity himself. Her double meaning was, naturally, lost on Farrar, but he enjoyed the thing hugely, nevertheless, as more or less applicable to Mr. Allen. I made sure that gentleman was sensible of what was being said, though he scarcely moved a muscle. And Miss Trevor, with a mirthful glance at me that was not without a tinge of triumph, jumped lightly to the deck and went in to see the invalids.

We were now working up into the lee of the island, whose tall pines stood clean and black against the red glow of the evening sky. Mr. Cooke began to give evidences of life, and finally got up and overhauled one of the ice-chests for a restorative. Farrar put into the little cove, where we dropped anchor, and soon had the chief sufferers ashore; and a delicate supper, in the preparation of which Miss Thorn showed her ability as a cook, soon restored them. For my part, I much preferred Miss Thorn's dishes to those of the Mohair chef, and so did Farrar. And the Four, surprising as it may seem, made themselves generally useful about the camp in pitching the tents under Farrar's supervision. But the Celebrity remained apart and silent.

CHAPTER XI

Our first, night in the Bear Island camp passed without incident, and we all slept profoundly, tired out by the labors of the day before. After breakfast, the Four set out to explore, with trout-rods and shot-guns. Bear Island is, with the exception of the cove into which we had put, as nearly round as an island can be, and perhaps three miles in diameter. It has two clear brooks which, owing to the comparative inaccessibility of the place, still contain trout and grayling, though there are few spots where a fly can be cast on account of the dense underbrush. The woods contain partridge, or ruffed grouse, and other game in smaller quantities. I believe my client entertained some notion of establishing a preserve here.

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The insults which had been heaped upon the Celebrity on the yacht seemed to have raised rather than lowered him in Miss Thorn's esteem, for these two ensconced themselves among the pines above the camp with an edition de luxe of one of his works which she had brought along. They were soon absorbed in one of those famous short stories of his with the ending left open to discussion. Mr. Cooke was indisposed. He had not yet recovered from the shaking up his system had sustained, and he took to a canvas easy chair he had brought with him and placed a decanter of Scotch and a tumbler of ice at his side. The efficacy of this remedy was assured. And he demanded the bunch of newspapers he spied protruding from my pocket.

The rest of us were engaged in various occupations: Mr. Trevor relating experiences of steamboat days on the Ohio to Mrs. Cooke; Miss Trevor buried in a serial in the Century; and Farrar and I taking an inventory of fishing-tackle, when we were startled by aloud and profane ejaculation. Mr. Cooke had hastily put down his glass and was staring at the newspaper before him with eyes as large as after-dinner coffee-cups.

"Come here," he shouted over at us. "Come here, Crocker," he repeated, seeing we were slow to move. "For God's sake, come here!"

In obedience to this emphatic summons I crossed the stream and drew near to Mr. Cooke, who was busily pouring out another glass of whiskey to tide him over this strange excitement. But, as Mr. Cooke was easily excited and on such occasions always drank whiskey to quiet his nerves, I thought nothing of it. He was sitting bolt upright and held out the paper to me with a shaking hand, while he pointed to some headlines on the first page. And this is what I read:

Treasurer takes A *trip*.

Charles Wrexell Allen, *of the miles Standish*
bicycle company, *gets off with* 100,000 *dollars*.

Detectives baffled.

The absconder A *back bay social leader*.

Half way down the column was a picture of Mr. Allen, a cut made from a photograph, and, allowing for the crudities of newspaper reproduction, it was a striking likeness of the Celebrity. Underneath was a short description. Mr. Allen was five feet eleven (the Celebrity's height), had a straight nose, square chin, dark hair and eyes, broad shoulders, was dressed elaborately; in brief, tallied in every particular with the Celebrity with the exception of the slight scar which Allen was thought to have on his forehead.

The situation and all its ludicrous possibilities came over me with a jump. It was too good to be true. Had Mr. Charles Wrexell Allen arrived at Asquith and created a

sensation with the man who stole his name I should have been amply satisfied. But that Mr. Allen had been obliging enough to abscond with a large sum of money was beyond dreaming!

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I glanced at the rest of it: a history of the well-established company followed, with all that Mr. Allen had done for it. The picture, by the way, had been obtained from the St. Paul agent of the bicycle. After doing due credit to the treasurer's abilities as a hustler there followed a summary of his character, hitherto without reproach; but his tastes were expensive ones. Mr. Allen's tendency to extravagance had been noticed by the members of the Miles Standish Company, and some of the older directors had on occasions remonstrated with him. But he had been too valuable a man to let go, and it seems as treasurer he was trusted implicitly. He was said to have more clothes than any man in Boston.

I am used to thinking quickly, and by the time I had read this I had an idea.

"What in hell do you make of that, Crocker?" cried my client, eyeing me closely and repeating the question again and again, as was his wont when agitated.

"It is certainly plain enough," I replied, "but I should like to talk to you before you decide to hand him over to the authorities."

I thought I knew Mr. Cooke, and I was not mistaken.

"Authorities!" he roared. "Damn the authorities! There's my yacht, and there's the Canadian border." And he pointed to the north.

The others were pressing around us by this time, and had caught the significant words which Mr. Cooke had uttered. I imagine that if my client had stopped to think twice, which of course is a preposterous condition, he would have confided his discovery only to Farrar and to me. It was now out of the question to keep it from the rest of the party, and Mr. Trevor got the headlines over my shoulder. I handed him the sheet.

"Read it, Mr. Trevor," said Mrs. Cooke.

Mr. Trevor, in a somewhat unsteady voice, read the headlines and began the column, and they followed breathless with astonishment and agitation. Once or twice the senator paused to frown upon the Celebrity with a terrible sternness, thus directing all other eyes to him. His demeanor was a study in itself. It may be surmised, from what I have said of him, that there was a strain of the actor in his composition; and I am prepared to make an affidavit that, secure in the knowledge that he had witnesses present to attest his identity, he hugely enjoyed the sensation he was creating. That he looked forward with a profound pleasure to the stir which the disclosure that he was the author of The Sybarites would make. His face wore a beatific smile.

As Mr. Trevor continued, his voice became firmer and his manner more majestic. It was a task distinctly to his taste, and one might have thought he was reading the sentence of a Hastings. I was standing next to his daughter. The look of astonishment, perhaps

of horror, which I had seen on her face when her father first began to read had now faded into something akin to wickedness. Did she wink? I can't say, never before having had a young woman wink at me. But the next moment her vinaigrette was rolling down the bank towards the brook, and I was after it. I heard her close behind me. She must have read my intentions by a kind of mental telepathy.

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“Are you going to do it?” she whispered.

“Of course,” I answered. “To miss such a chance would be a downright sin.”

There was a little awe in her laugh.

“Miss Thorn is the only obstacle,” I added, “and Mr. Cooke is our hope. I think he will go by me.”

“Don’t let Miss Thorn worry you,” she said as we climbed back.

“What do you mean?” I demanded. But she only shook her head. We were at the top again, and Mr. Trevor was reading an appended despatch from Buffalo, stating that Mr. Allen had been recognized there, in the latter part of June, walking up and down the platform of the station, in a smoking-jacket, and that he had climbed on the Chicago limited as it pulled out. This may have caused the Celebrity to feel a trifle uncomfortable.

“Ha!” exclaimed Mr. Trevor, as he put down the paper. “Mr. Cooke, do you happen to have any handcuffs on the Maria?”

But my client was pouring out a stiff helping from the decanter, which he still held in his hand. Then he approached the Celebrity.

“Don’t let it worry you, old man,” said he, with intense earnestness. “Don’t let it worry you. You’re my guest, and I’ll see you safe out of it, or bust.”

“Fenelon,” said Mrs. Cooke, gravely, “do you realize what you are saying?”

“You’re a clever one, Allen,” my client continued, and he backed away the better to look him over; “you had nerve to stay as long as you did.”

The Celebrity laughed confidently.

“Cooke,” he replied, “I appreciate your generosity,—I really do. I know no offence is meant. The mistake is, in fact, most pardonable.”

In Mr. Cooke amazement and admiration were clamoring for utterance.

“Damn me,” he sputtered, “if you’re not the coolest embezzler I ever saw.”

The Celebrity laughed again. Then he surveyed the circle.

“My friends,” he said, “this is certainly a most amazing coincidence; one which, I assure you, surprises me no less than it does you. You have no doubt remarked that I have my peculiarities. We all have.

“I flatter thyself I am not entirely unknown. And the annoyances imposed upon me by a certain fame I have achieved had become such that some months ago I began to crave the pleasures of the life of a private man. I determined to go to some sequestered resort where my face was unfamiliar. The possibility of being recognized at Asquith did not occur to me. Fortunately I was. And a singular chance led me to take the name of the man who has committed this crime, and who has the misfortune to resemble me. I suppose that now,” he added impressively, “I shall have to tell you who I am.”

He paused until these words should have gained their full effect. Then he held up the edition de luxe from which he and Miss Thorn had been reading.

“You may have heard, Mrs. Cooke,” said he, addressing himself to our hostess, “you may perhaps have heard of the author of this book.”

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Mrs. Cooke was a calm woman, and she read the name on the cover.

“Yes,” she said, “I have. And you claim to be he?”

“Ask my friend Crocker here,” he answered carelessly, no doubt exulting that the scene was going off so dramatically. “I should indeed be in a tight box,” he went on, “if there were not friends of mine here to help me out.”

They turned to me.

“I am afraid I cannot,” I said with what soberness I could.

“What!” says he with a start. “What! you deny me?”

Miss Trevor had her tongue in her cheek. I bowed.

“I am powerless to speak, Mr. Allen,” I replied.

During this colloquy my client stood between us, looking from one to the other. I well knew that his way of thinking would be with my testimony, and that the gilt name on the edition de luxe had done little towards convincing him of Mr. Allen’s innocence. To his mind there was nothing horrible or incongruous in the idea that a well-known author should be a defaulter. It was perfectly possible. He shoved the glass of Scotch towards the Celebrity, with a smile.

“Take this, old man,” he kindly insisted, “and you’ll feel better. What’s the use of bucking when you’re saddled with a thing like that?” And he pointed to the paper. “Besides, they haven’t caught you yet, by a damned sight.”

The Celebrity waved aside the proffered tumbler.

“This is an infamous charge, and you know it, Crocker,” he cried. “If you don’t, you ought to, as a lawyer. This isn’t any time to have fun with a fellow.”

“My dear sir,” I said, “I have charged you with nothing whatever.”

He turned his back on me in complete disgust. And he came face to face with Miss Trevor.

“Miss Trevor, too, knows something of me,” he said.

“You forget, Mr. Allen,” she answered sweetly, “you forget that I have given you my promise not to reveal what I know.”

The Celebrity chafed, for this was as damaging a statement as could well be uttered against him. But Miss Thorn was his trump card, and she now came forward.

“This is ridiculous, Mr. Crocker, simply ridiculous,” said she.

“I agree with you most heartily, Miss Thorn,” I replied.

“Nonsense!” exclaimed Miss Thorn, and she drew her lips together, “pure nonsense!”

“Nonsense or not, Marian,” Mr. Cooke interposed, “we are wasting valuable time. The police are already on the scent, I’ll bet my hat.”

“Fenelon!” Mrs. Cooke remonstrated.

“And do you mean to say in soberness, Uncle Fenelon, that you believe the author of The Sybarites to be a defaulter?” said Miss Thorn.

“It is indeed hard to believe Mr. Allen a criminal,” Mr. Trevor broke in for the first time. “I think it only right that he should be allowed to clear himself before he is put to further inconvenience, and perhaps injustice, by any action we may take in the matter.”

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Mr. Cooke sniffed suspiciously at the word “action.”

“What action do you mean?” he demanded.

“Well,” replied Mr. Trevor, with some hesitation, “before we take any steps, that is, notify the police.”

“Notify the police!” cried my client, his face red with a generous anger. “I have never yet turned a guest over to the police,” he said proudly, “and won’t, not if I know it. I’m not that kind.”

Who shall criticise Mr. Cooke’s code of morality?

“Fenelon,” said his wife, “you must remember you have never yet entertained a guest of a larcenous character. No embezzlers up to the present. Marian,” she continued, turning to Miss Thorn, “you spoke as if you might, be able to throw some light upon this matter. Do you know whether this gentleman is Charles Wrexell Allen, or whether he is the author? In short, do you know who he is?”

The Celebrity lighted a cigarette. Miss Thorn said indignantly, “Upon my word, Aunt Maria, I thought that you, at least, would know better than to credit this silly accusation. He has been a guest at your house, and I am astonished that you should doubt his word.”

Mrs. Cooke looked at her niece perplexedly.

“You must remember, Marian,” she said gently, “that I know nothing about him, where he came from, or who he is. Nor does any one at Asquith, except perhaps Miss Trevor, by her own confession. And you do not seem inclined to tell what you know, if indeed you know anything.”

Upon this Miss Thorn became more indignant still, and Mrs. Cooke went on “Gentlemen, as a rule, do not assume names, especially other people’s. They are usually proud of their own. Mr. Allen appears among us, from the clouds, as it were, and in due time we learn from a newspaper that he has committed a defalcation. And, furthermore, the paper contains a portrait and an accurate description which put the thing beyond doubt. I ask you, is it reasonable for him to state coolly after all this that he is another man? That he is a well-known author? It’s an absurdity. I was not born yesterday, my dear.”

“It is most reasonable under the circumstances,” replied Miss Thorn, warmly. “Extraordinary? Of course it’s extraordinary. And too long to explain to a prejudiced audience, who can’t be expected to comprehend the character of a genius, to understand the yearning of a famous man for a little quiet.”

Mrs. Cooke looked grave.

“Marian, you forget yourself,” she said.

“Oh, I am tired of it, Aunt Maria,” cried Miss Thorn; “if he takes my advice, he will refuse to discuss it farther.”

She did not seem to be aware that she had put forth no argument whatever, save a woman’s argument. And I was intensely surprised that her indignation should have got the better of her in this way, having always supposed her clear-headed in the extreme. A few words from her, such as I supposed she would have spoken, had set the Celebrity right with all except Mr. Cooke. To me it was a clear proof that the Celebrity had turned her head, and her mind with it.

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The silence was broken by an uncontrollable burst of laughter from Miss Trevor. She was quickly frowned down by her father, who reminded her that this was not a comedy.

“And, Mr. Allen,” he said, “if you have anything to say, or any evidence to bring forward, now is the time to do it.”

He appeared to forget that I was the district attorney.

The Celebrity had seated himself on the trunk of a tree, and was blowing out the smoke in clouds. He was inclined to take Miss Thorn’s advice, for he made a gesture of weariness with his cigarette, in the use of which he was singularly eloquent.

“Tell me, Mr. Trevor,” said he, “why I should sit before you as a tribunal? Why I should take the trouble to clear myself of a senseless charge? My respect for you inclines me to the belief that you are laboring under a momentary excitement; for when you reflect that I am a prominent, not to say famous, author, you will realize how absurd it is that I should be an embezzler, and why I decline to lower myself by an explanation.”

Mr. Trevor picked up the paper and struck it.

“Do you refuse to say anything in the face of such evidence as that?” he cried.

“It is not a matter for refusal, Mr. Trevor. It is simply that I cannot admit the possibility of having committed the crime.”

“Well, sir,” said the senator, his black necktie working out of place as his anger got the better of him, “I am to believe, then, because you claim to be the author of a few society novels, that you are infallible? Let me tell you that the President of the United States himself is liable to impeachment, and bound to disprove any charge he may be accused of. What in Halifax do I care for your divine-right-of-authors theory? I’ll continue to think you guilty until you are shown to be innocent.”

Suddenly the full significance of the Celebrity’s tactics struck Mr. Cooke, and he reached out and caught hold of Mr. Trevor’s coattails. “Hold on, old man,” said he; “Allen isn’t going to be ass enough to own up to it. Don’t you see we’d all be jugged and fined for assisting a criminal over the border? It’s out of consideration for us.”

Mr. Trevor looked sternly over his shoulder at Mr. Cooke.

“Do you mean to say, sir, seriously,” he asked, “that, for the sake of a misplaced friendship for this man, and a misplaced sense of honor, you are bound to shield a guest, though a criminal? That you intend to assist him to escape from justice? I insist, for my own protection and that of my daughter, as well as for that of the others present that, since he refuses to speak, we must presume him guilty and turn him over.”

Mr. Trevor turned to Mrs. Cooke, as if relying on her support.

“Fenelon,” said she, “I have never sought to influence your actions when your friends were concerned, and I shall not begin now. All I ask of you is to consider the consequences of your intention.”

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These words from Mrs. Cooke had much more weight with my client than Mr. Trevor's blustering demands.

"Maria, my dear," he said, with a deferential urbanity, "Mr. Allen is my guest, and a gentleman. When a gentleman gives his word that he is not a criminal, it is sufficient."

The force of this, for some reason, did not overwhelm his wife; and her lip curled a little, half in contempt, half in risibility.

"Pshaw, Fenelon," said she, "what a fraud you are. Why is it you wish to get Mr. Allen over the border, then?" A question which might well have staggered a worthier intellect.

"Why, my dear," answered my client, "I wish to save Mr. Allen the inconvenience, not to say the humiliation, of being brought East in custody and strapped with a pair of handcuffs. Let him take a shooting trip to the great Northwest until the real criminal is caught."

"Well, Fenelon," replied Mrs. Cooke, unable to repress a smile, "one might as well try to argue with a turn-stile or a weather-vane. I wash my hands of it."

But Mr. Trevor, who was both a self-made man and a Western politician, was far from being satisfied. He turned to me with a sweep of the arm he had doubtless learned in the Ohio State Senate.

"Mr. Crocker," he cried, "are you, as attorney of this district, going to aid and abet in the escape of a fugitive from justice?"

"Mr. Trevor," said I, "I will take the course in this matter which seems fit to me, and without advice from any one."

He wheeled on Farrar, repeated the question, and got a like answer.

Brought to bay for a time, he glared savagely around him while groping for further arguments.

But at this point the Four appeared on the scene, much the worse for thickets, and clamoring for luncheon. They had five small fish between them which they wanted Miss Thorn to cook.

CHAPTER XII

The Four received Mr. Cooke's plan for the Celebrity's escape to Canada with enthusiastic acclamation, and as the one thing lacking to make the Bear Island trip a complete success. The Celebrity was hailed with the reverence due to the man who

puts up the ring-money in a prize-fight. He was accorded, too, a certain amount of respect as a defaulter, which the Four would have denied him as an author, for I am inclined to the belief that the discovery of his literary profession would have lowered him rather than otherwise in their eyes. My client was naturally anxious to get under way at once for the Canadian border, but was overruled in this by his henchmen, who demanded something to eat. We sat down to an impromptu meal, which was an odd affair indeed. Mrs. Cooke maintained her usual serenity, but said little, while Miss Trevor and I had many a mirthful encounter at the thought of the turn matters had taken.

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At the other end of the cloth were Mr. Cooke and the Four, in wonderful spirits and unimpaired appetite, and in their midst sat the Celebrity, likewise in wonderful spirits. His behavior now and again elicited a loud grunt of disapproval from Mr. Trevor, who was plying his knife and fork in a manner emblematic of his state of mind. Mr. Allen was laughing and joking airily with Mr. Cooke and the guests, denying, but not resenting, their accusations with all the sang froid of a hardened criminal. He did not care particularly to go to Canada, he said. Why should he, when he was innocent? But, if Mr. Cooke insisted, he would enjoy seeing that part of the lake and the Canadian side.

Afterwards I perceived Miss Thorn down by the brookside, washing dishes. Her sleeves were drawn back to the elbow, and a dainty white apron covered her blue skirt, while the wind from the lake had disentangled errant wisps of her hair. I stood on the brink above, secure, as I thought, from observation, when she chanced to look up and spied me.

“Mr. Crocker,” she called, “would you like to make yourself useful?”

I was decidedly embarrassed. Her manner was as frank and unconstrained as though I had not been shunning her for weeks past.

“If such a thing is possible,” I replied.

“Do you know a dish-cloth when you see one?”

I was doubtful. But I procured the cloth from Miss Trevor and returned. There was an air about Miss Thorn that was new to me.

“What an uncompromising man you are, Mr. Crocker,” she said to me. “Once a person is unfortunate enough to come under the ban of your disapproval you have nothing whatever to do with them. Now it seems that I have given you offence in some way. Is it not so?”

“You magnify my importance,” I said.

“No temporizing, Mr. Crocker,” she went on, as though she meant to be obeyed; “sit down there, and let’s have it out. I like you too well to quarrel with you.”

There was no resisting such a command, and I threw myself on the pebbles at her feet.

“I thought we were going to be great friends,” she said. “You and Mr. Farrar were so kind to me on the night of my arrival, and we had such fun watching the dance together.”

“I confess I thought so, too. But you expressed opinions then that I shared. You have since changed your mind, for some unaccountable reason.”

She paused in her polishing, a shining dish in her hand, and looked down at me with something between a laugh and a frown.

“I suppose you have never regretted speaking hastily,” she said.

“Many a time,” I returned, warming; “but if I ever thought a judgment measured and distilled, it was your judgment of the Celebrity.”

“Does the study of law eliminate humanity?” she asked, with a mock curtsey. “The deliberate sentences are sometimes the unjust ones, and men who are hung by weighed wisdom are often the innocent.”

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“That is all very well in cases of doubt. But here you have the evidences of wrong-doing directly before you.”

Three dishes were taken up, dried, and put down before she answered me. I threw pebbles into the brook, and wished I had held my tongue.

“What evidence?” inquired she. “Well,” said I, “I must finish, I suppose. I had a notion you knew of what I inferred. First, let me say that I have no desire to prejudice you against a person whom you admire.”

“Impossible.”

Something in her tone made me look up.

“Very good, then,” I answered. “I, for one, can have no use for a man who devotes himself to a girl long enough to win her affections, and then deserts her with as little compunction as a dog does a rat it has shaken. And that is how your Celebrity treated Miss Trevor.”

“But Miss Trevor has recovered, I believe,” said Miss Thorn.

I began to feel a deep, but helpless, insecurity.

“Happily, yes,” I assented.

“Thanks to an excellent physician.”

A smile twitched the corners of her mouth, as though she enjoyed my discomfiture. I remarked for the fiftieth time how strong her face was, with its generous lines and clearly moulded features. And a suspicion entered my soul.

“At any rate,” I said, with a laugh, “the Celebrity has got himself into no end of a predicament now. He may go back to New York in custody.”

“I thought you incapable of resentment, Mr. Crocker. How mean of you to deny him!”

“It can do no harm,” I answered; “a little lesson in the dangers of incognito may be salutary. I wish it were a little lesson in the dangers of something else.”

The color mounted to her face as she resumed her occupation.

“I am afraid you are a very wicked man,” she said.

Before I could reply there came a scuffling sound from the bank above us, and the snapping of branches and twigs. It was Mr. Cooke. His descent, the personal

conduction of which he lost half-way down, was irregular and spasmodic, and a rude concussion at the bottom knocked off a choice bit of profanity which was balanced on the tip of his tongue.

“Tobogganing is a little out of season,” said his niece, laughing heartily.

Mr. Cooke brushed himself off, picked up the glasses which he had dropped in his flight and pushed them into my hands. Then he pointed lakeward with bulging eyes.

“Crocker, old man,” he said in a loud whisper, “they tell me that is an Asquith cat-boat.”

I followed his finger and saw for the first time a sail-boat headed for the island, then about two miles off shore. I raised the glasses.

“Yes,” I said, “the Scimitar.”

“That’s what Farrar said,” cried he.

“And what about it?” I asked.

“What about it?” he ejaculated. “Why, it’s a detective come for Allen. I knew sure as hell if they got as far as Asquith they wouldn’t stop there. And that’s the fastest sail-boat he could hire there, isn’t it?”

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I replied that it was. He seized me by the shoulder and began dragging me up the bank.

“What are you going to do?” I cried, shaking myself loose.

“We’ve got to get on the Maria and run for it,” he panted. “There is no time to be lost.”

He had reached the top of the bank and was running towards the group at the tents. And he actually infused me with some of his red-hot enthusiasm, for I hastened after him.

“But you can’t begin to get the Maria out before they will be in here,” I shouted.

He stopped short, gazed at the approaching boat, and then at me.

“Is that so?”

“Yes, of course,” said I, “they will be here in ten minutes.”

The Celebrity stood in the midst of the excited Four. His hair was parted precisely, and he had induced a monocle to remain in his eye long enough to examine the Scimitar, his nose at the critical elevation. This unruffled exterior made a deep impression on the Four. Was the Celebrity not undergoing the crucial test of a true sport? He was an example alike to criminals and philosophers.

Mr. Cooke hurried into the group, which divided respectfully for him, and grasped the Celebrity by the hand.

“Something else has got to be done, old man,” he said, in a voice which shook with emotion; “they’ll be on us before we can get the Maria out.”

Farrar, who was nailing a rustic bench near by, straightened up at this, his lip curling with a desire to laugh.

The Celebrity laid his hand on my client’s shoulder.

“Cooke,” said he, “I’m deeply grateful for all the trouble you wish to take, and for the solicitude you have shown. But let things be. I’ll come out of it all right.”

“Never,” cried Cooke, looking proudly around the Four as some Highland chief might have surveyed a faithful clan. “I’d a damned sight rather go to jail myself.”

“A damned sight,” echoed the Four in unison.

“I insist, Cooke,” said the Celebrity, taking out his eyeglass and tapping Mr. Cooke’s purple necktie, “I insist that you drop this business. I repeat my thanks to you and these gentlemen for the friendship they have shown, but say again that I am as innocent of this crime as a baby.”

Mr. Cooke paid no attention to this speech. His face became radiant.

“Didn’t any of you fellows strike a cave, or a hollow tree, or something of that sort, knocking around this morning?”

One man slapped his knee.

“The very place,” he cried. “I fell into it,” and he showed a rent in his trousers corroboratively. “It’s big enough to hold twenty of Allen, and the detective doesn’t live that could find it.”

“Hustle him off, quick,” said Mr. Cooke.

The mandate was obeyed as literally as though Robin Hood himself had given it. The Celebrity disappeared into the forest, carried rather than urged towards his destined place of confinement.

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The commotion had brought Mr. Trevor to the spot. He caught sight of the Celebrity's back between the trees, then he looked at the cat-boat entering the cove, a man in the stern preparing to pull in the tender.

He intercepted Mr. Cooke on his way to the beach.

"What have you done with Mr. Allen?" he asked, in a menacing voice.

"Good God," said Mr. Cooke, whose contempt for Mr. Trevor was now infinite, "you talk as if I were the governor of the state. What the devil could I do with him?"

"I will have no evasion," replied Mr. Trevor, taking an imposing posture in front of him. "You are trying to defeat the ends of justice by assisting a dangerous criminal to escape. I have warned you, sir, and warn you again of the consequences of your meditated crime, and I give you my word I will do all in my power to frustrate it."

Mr. Cooke dug his thumbs into his waistcoat pockets. Here was a complication he had not looked for. The Scimitar lay at anchor with her sail down, and two men were coming ashore in the tender. Mr. Cooke's attitude being that of a man who reconsiders a rash resolve, Mr. Trevor was emboldened to say in a moderated tone:

"You were carried away by your generosity, Mr. Cooke. I was sure when you took time to think you would see it in another light."

Mr. Cooke started off for the place where the boat had grounded. I did not catch his reply, and probably should not have written it here if I had. The senator looked as if he had been sand-bagged.

The two men jumped out of the boat and hauled it up. Mr. Cooke waved an easy salute to one, whom I recognized as the big boatman from Asquith, familiarly known as Captain Jay. He owned the Scimitar and several smaller boats. The captain went through the pantomime of an introduction between Mr. Cooke and the other, whom my client shook warmly by the hand, and presently all three came towards us.

Mr. Cooke led them to a bar he had improvised by the brook. A pool served the office of refrigerator, and Mr. Cooke had devised an ingenious but complicated arrangement of strings and labels which enabled him to extract any bottle or set of bottles without having to bare his arm and pull out the lot. Farrar and I responded to the call he had given, and went down to assist in the entertainment. My client, with his back to us, was busy manipulating the strings.

"Gentlemen," he said, "let me make you acquainted with Mr. Drew. You all know the captain."

Had I not suspected Mr. Drew's profession, I think I should not have remarked that he gave each of us a keen look as he raised his head. He had reddish-brown hair, and a pair of bushy red whiskers, each of which tapered to a long point. He was broad in the shoulders, and the clothes he wore rather enhanced this breadth. His suit was gray and almost new, the trousers perceptibly bagging at the knee, and he had a felt hat, a necktie of the white and

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flowery pattern, and square-toed “Congress” boots. In short, he was a decidedly ordinary looking person; you would meet a hundred like him in the streets of Far Harbor and Beaverton. He might have been a prosperous business man in either of those towns,—a comfortable lumber merchant or mine owner. And he had chosen just the get-up I should have picked for detective work in that region. He had a pleasant eye and a very fetching and hearty manner. But his long whiskers troubled me especially. I kept wondering if they were real.

“The captain is sailing Mr. Drew over to Far Harbor,” explained Mr. Cooke, “and they have put in here for the night.”

Mr. Drew was plainly not an amateur, for he volunteered nothing further than this. The necessary bottles having been produced, Mr. Cooke held up his glass and turned to the stranger.

“Welcome to our party, old man,” said he.

Mr. Drew drained his glass and complimented Mr. Cooke on the brand,—a sure key to my client’s heart. Whereupon he seated himself between Mr. Drew and the captain and began a discourse on the subject of his own cellar, on which he talked for nearly an hour. His only pauses were for the worthy purpose of filling the detective’s or the captain’s glass, and these he watched with a hospitable solicitude. The captain had the advantage, three to one, and I made no doubt his employer bitterly regretted not having a boatman whose principles were more strict. At the end of the hour Captain Jay, who by nature was inclined to be taciturn and crabbed, waxed loquacious and even jovial. He sang us the songs he had learned in the winter lumber-camps, which Mr. Cooke never failed to encore to the echo. My client vowed he had not spent a pleasanter afternoon for years. He plied the captain with cigars, and explained to him the mystery of the strings and labels; and the captain experimented until he had broken some of the bottles.

Mr. Cooke was not a person who made any great distinction between the three degrees, acquaintance, friendship, and intimacy. When a stranger pleased him, he went from one to the other with such comparative ease that a hardhearted man, and no other, could have resented his advances. Mr. Drew was anything but a hard-hearted man, and he did not object to my client’s familiarity. Mr. Cooke made no secret of his admiration for Mr. Drew, and there were just two things about him that Mr. Cooke admired and wondered at, above all else,—the bushy red whiskers. But it appeared that these were the only things that Mr. Drew was really touchy about. I noticed that the detective, without being impolite, did his best to discourage these remarks; but my client knew no such word as discouragement. He was continually saying: “I think I’ll grow some like that, old man,” or “Have those cut,” and the like,—a kind of humor in which

the captain took an incredible delight. And finally, when a certain pitch of good feeling had been arrived at, Mr. Cooke reached out and playfully grabbed hold of the one near him. The detective drew back. “Mr. Cooke,” said he, with dignity, “I’ll have to ask you to let my whiskers alone.”

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“Certainly, old man,” replied my client, anything but abashed. “You’ll pardon me, but they seemed too good to be true. I congratulate you on them.”

I was amused as well as alarmed at this piece of boldness, but the incident passed off without any disagreeable results, except, perhaps, a slight nervousness noticeable in the detective; and this soon disappeared. As the sun grew low, the Celebrity’s conductors straggled in with fishing-rods and told of an afternoon’s sport, and we left the captain peacefully but sonorously slumbering on the bank.

“Crocker,” said my client to me, afterwards, “they didn’t feel like the real, home-grown article. But aren’t they damned handsome?”

CHAPTER XIII

After supper, Captain Jay was rowed out and put to bed in his own bunk on the Scimitar. Then we heaped together a huge pile of the driftwood on the beach and raised a blazing beacon, the red light of which I doubt not could be seen from the mainland. The men made prongs from the soft wood, while Miss Thorn produced from the stores some large tins of marshmallows.

The memory of that evening lingers with me yet. The fire colored everything. The waves dashed in ruby foam at our feet, and even the tall, frowning pines at our backs were softened; the sting was gone out of the keen night wind from the north. I found a place beside the gray cape I had seen for the first time the night of the cotillon. I no longer felt any great dislike for Miss Thorn, let it be known. Resentment was easier when the distance between Mohair and Asquith separated us,—impossible on a yachting excursion. But why should I be justifying myself?

Mr. Cooke and the Four, in addition to other accomplishments, possessed excellent voices, and Mr. Drew sang a bass which added much to the melody. One of the Four played a banjo. It is only justice to Mr. Drew to say that he seemed less like a detective than any man I have ever met. He told a good story and was quick at repartee, and after a while the music, by tacit consent, was abandoned for the sake of hearing him talk. He related how he had worked up the lake, point by point, from Beaverton to Asquith, and lightened his narrative with snappy accounts of the different boatmen he had run across and of the different predicaments into which he had fallen. His sketches were so vivid that Mr. Cooke forgot to wink at me after a while and sat spellbound, while I marvelled at the imaginative faculty he displayed. He had us in roars of laughter. His stories were far from incredible, and he looked less like a liar than a detective. He showed, too, an accurate and astonishing knowledge of the lake which could hardly have been acquired in any other way than the long-shore trip he had described. Not once did he hint of a special purpose which had brought him to the island, and it was growing late. The fire died down upon the

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stones, and the thought of the Celebrity, alone in a dark cave in the middle of the island, began to prey upon me. I was not designed for a practical joker, and I take it that pity is a part of every self-respecting man's composition. In the cool of the night season the ludicrous side of the matter did not appeal to me quite as strongly as in the glare of day. A joke should never be pushed to cruelty. It was in vain that I argued I had no direct hand in the concealing of him; I felt my responsibility quite as heavy upon me. Perhaps bears still remained in these woods. And if a bear should devour the author of The Sybarites, would the world ever forgive me? Could I ever repay the debt to the young women of these United States? To speak truth, I expected every moment to see him appear. Why, in the name of all his works, did he stay there? Nothing worse could befall him than to go to Far Harbor with Drew, where our words concerning his identity would be taken. And what an advertisement this would be for the great author. The Sybarites, now selling by thousands, would increase its sales to ten thousands. Ah, there was the rub. The clue to his remaining in the cave was this very kink in the Celebrity's character. There was nothing Bohemian in that character; it yearned after the eminently respectable. Its very eccentricities were within the limits of good form. The Celebrity shunned the biscuits and beer of the literary clubs, and his books were bound for the boudoir. To have it proclaimed in the sensational journals that the hands of this choice being had been locked for grand larceny was a thought too horrible to entertain. His very manservant would have cried aloud against it. Better a hundred nights in a cave than one such experience!

Miss Trevor's behavior that evening was so unrestful as to lead me to believe that she, too, was going through qualms of sympathy for the victim. As we were breaking up for the evening she pulled my sleeve.

"Don't you think we have carried our joke a little too far, Mr. Crocker?" she whispered uneasily. "I can't bear to think of him in that terrible place."

"It will do him a world of good," I replied, assuming a gayety I did not feel. It is not pleasant to reflect that some day one's own folly might place one in alike situation. And the night was dismally cool and windy, now that the fire had gone out. Miss Trevor began to philosophize.

"Such practical pleasantries as this," she said, "are like infernal machines: they often blow up the people that start them. And they are next to impossible to steer."

"Perhaps it is just as well not to assume we are the instruments of Providence," I said.

Here we ran into Miss Thorn, who was carrying a lantern.

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“I have been searching everywhere for you two mischief-makers,” said she. “You ought to be ashamed of yourselves. Heaven only knows how this little experiment will end. Here is Aunt Maria, usually serene, on the verge of hysterics: she says he shouldn’t stay in that damp cave another minute. Here is your father, Irene, organizing relief parties and walking the floor of his tent like a madman. And here is Uncle Fenelon insane over the idea of getting the poor, innocent man into Canada. And here is a detective saddled upon us, perhaps for days, and Uncle Fenelon has gotten his boatman drunk. You ought to be ashamed of yourselves,” she repeated.

Miss Trevor laughed, in spite of the gravity of these things, and so did I.

“Oh, come, Marian,” said she, “it isn’t as bad as all that. And you talk as if you hadn’t anything to be reproached for. Your own defence of the Celebrity wasn’t as strong as it might have been.”

By the light of the lantern I saw Miss Thorn cast one meaning look at Miss Trevor.

“What are you going to do about it?” asked Miss Thorn, addressing me. “Think of that unhappy man, without a bed, without blankets, without even a tooth-brush.”

“He hasn’t been wholly off my mind,” I answered truthfully. “But there isn’t anything we can do to-night, with that beastly detective to notice it.”

“Then you must go very early to-morrow morning, before the detective gets up.”

I couldn’t help smiling at the notion of getting up before a detective.

“I am only too willing,” I said.

“It must be by four o’clock,” Miss Thorn went on energetically, “and we must have a guide we can trust. Arrange it with one of Uncle Fenelon’s friends.”

“We?” I repeated.

“You certainly don’t imagine that I am going to be left behind?” said Miss Thorn.

I made haste to invite for the expedition one of the Four, who was quite willing to go; and we got together all the bodily comforts we could think of and put them in a hamper, the Fraction not forgetting to add a few bottles from Mr. Cooke’s immersed bar.

Long after the camp had gone to bed, I lay on the pine-needles above the brook, shielded from the wind by a break in the slope, and thought of the strange happenings of that day. Presently the waning moon climbed reluctantly from the waters, and the stream became mottled, black and white, the trees tall blurs. The lake rose and fell with

a mighty rhythm, and the little brook hurried madly over the stones to join it. One thought chased another from my brain.

At such times, when one's consciousness of outer things is dormant, an earthquake might continue for some minutes without one realizing it. I did not observe, though I might have seen from where I lay, the flap of one of the tents drawn back and two figures emerge. They came and stood on the bank above, under the tree which sheltered me. And I experienced a curious phenomenon. I heard, and understood, and remembered the first part of the conversation which passed between them, and did not know it.

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“I am sorry to disturb you,” said one.

“Not at all,” said the other, whose tone, I thought afterwards, betokened surprise, and no great cheerfulness.

“But I have had no other opportunity to speak with you.”

“No,” said the other, rather uneasily.

Suddenly my senses were alert, and I knew that Mr. Trevor had pulled the detective out of bed. The senator had no doubt anticipated an easier time, and he now began feeling for an opening. More than once he cleared his throat to commence, while Mr. Drew pulled his scant clothing closer about him, his whiskers playing in the breeze.

“In Cincinnati, Mr. Drew,” said Mr. Trevor, at length, “I am a known, if not an influential, citizen; and I have served my state for three terms in its Senate.”

“I have visited your city, Mr. Trevor,” answered Mr. Drew, his teeth chattering audibly, “and I know you by reputation.”

“Then, sir,” Mr. Trevor continued, with a flourish which appeared absolutely grotesque in his attenuated costume, “it must be clear to you that I cannot give my consent to a flagrant attempt by an unscrupulous person to violate the laws of this country.”

“Your feelings are to be respected, sir.”

Mr. Trevor cleared his throat again.
“Discretion is always to be observed, Mr. Drew. And I, who have been in the public service, know the full value of it.”

Mr. Trevor leaned forward, at the same time glancing anxiously up at the tree, for fear, perhaps, that Mr. Cooke might be concealed therein. He said in a stage whisper:

“A criminal is concealed on this island.”

Drew started perceptibly.

“Yes,” said Mr. Trevor, with a glance of triumph at having produced an impression on a detective, “I thought it my duty to inform you. He has been hidden by the followers of the unscrupulous person I referred to, in a cave, I believe. I repeat, sir, as a man of unimpeachable standing, I considered it my duty to tell you.”

“You have my sincere thanks, Mr. Trevor,” said Drew, holding out his hand, “and I shall act on the suggestion.”

Mr. Trevor clasped the hand of the detective, and they returned quietly to their respective tents. And in course of time I followed them, wondering how this incident might affect our morning's expedition.

CHAPTER XIV

My first thought on rising was to look for the detective. The touch of the coming day was on the lake, and I made out the two boats dimly, riding on the dead swell and tugging idly at their chains. The detective had been assigned to a tent which was occupied by Mr. Cooke and the Four, and they were sleeping soundly at my entrance. But Drew's blankets were empty. I hurried to the beach, but the Scimitar's boat was still drawn up there near the Maria's tender, proving that he was still on the island.

Outside of the ladies' tent I came upon Miss Thorn, stowing a large basket. I told her that we had taken that precaution the night before.

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“What did you put in?” she demanded.

I enumerated the articles as best I could. And when I had finished, she said,

“And I am filling this with the things you have forgotten.”

I lost no time in telling her what I had overheard the night before, and that the detective was gone from his tent. She stopped her packing and looked at me in concern.

“He is probably watching us,” she said. “Do you think we had better go?”

I thought it could do no harm. “If we are followed,” said I, “all we have to do is to turn back.”

Miss Trevor came out as I spoke, and our conductor appeared, bending under the hamper. I shouldered some blankets and the basket, and we started. We followed a rough path, evidently cut by a camping party in some past season, but now overgrown. The Fraction marched ahead, and I formed the rear guard. Several times it seemed to me as though someone were pushing after us, and more than once we halted. I put down the basket and went back to reconnoitre. Once I believed I saw a figure flitting in the gray light, but I set it down to my imagination.

Finally we reached a brook, sneaking along beneath the underbrush as though fearing to show itself, and we followed its course. Branches lashed our faces and brambles tore our clothes. And then, as the sunlight was filtering through and turning the brook from blue to crystal, we came upon the Celebrity. He was seated in a little open space on the bank, apparently careless of capture. He did not even rise at our approach. His face showed the effect of a sleepless night, and wore an expression inimical to all mankind. The conductor threw his bundle on the bank and laid his hand on the Celebrity’s shoulder.

“Halloa, old man!” said he, cheerily. “You must have had a hard night of it. But we couldn’t make you any sooner, because that hawk of an officer had his eye on us.”

The Celebrity shook himself free. And in place of the gratitude for which the Fraction had looked, and which he had every reason to expect, he got something different.

“This outrage has gone far enough,” said the Celebrity, with a terrible calmness. The Fraction was a man of the world.

“Come, come, old chap!” he said soothingly, “don’t cut up. We’ll make things a little more homelike here.” And he pulled a bottle from the depths of the hamper. “This will brace you up.”

He picked up the hamper and disappeared into the place of retention, while the Celebrity threw the bottle into the brush. And just then (may I be forgiven if I am imaginative!) I heard a human laugh come from that direction. In the casting of that bottle the Celebrity had given vent to some of the feelings he had been collecting overnight, and it must have carried about thirty yards. I dived after it like a retriever puppy for a stone; but the bottle was gone! Perhaps I could say more, but it doesn't do to believe in yourself too thoroughly when you get up early. I had nothing to say when I returned.

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“You here, Crocker?” said the author, fixing his eye on me. “Deuced kind of you to get up so early and carry a basket so far for me.”

“It has been a real pleasure, I assure you,” I protested. And it had. There was a silent space while the two young ladies regarded him, softened by his haggard and dishevelled aspect, and perplexed by his attitude. Nothing, I believe, appeals to a woman so much as this very lack of bodily care. And the rogue knew it!

“How long is this little game of yours to continue,—this bull-baiting?” he inquired. “How long am I to be made a butt of for the amusement of a lot of imbeciles?”

Miss Thorn crossed over and seated herself on the ground beside him. “You must be sensible,” she said, in a tone that she might have used to a spoiled child. “I know it is difficult after the night you have had. But you have always been willing to listen to reason.”

A pang of something went through me when I saw them together. “Reason,” said the Celebrity, raising his head. “Reason, yes. But where is the reason in all this? Because a man who happens to be my double commits a crime, is it right that I, whose reputation is without a mark, should be made to suffer? And why have I been made a fool of by two people whom I had every cause to suppose my friends?”

“You will have to ask them,” replied Miss Thorn, with a glance at us. “They are mischief-makers, I’ll admit; but they are not malicious. See what they have done this morning! And how could they have foreseen that a detective was on his way to the island?”

“Crocker might have known it,” said he, melting. “He’s so cursed smart!”

“And think,” Miss Thorn continued, quick to follow up an advantage, “think what would have happened if they hadn’t denied you. This horrid man would have gone off with you to Asquith or somewhere else, with handcuffs on your wrists; for it isn’t a detective’s place to take evidence, Mr. Crocker says. Perhaps we should all have had to go to Epsom! And I couldn’t bear to see you in handcuffs, you know.”

“Don’t you think we had better leave them alone?” I said to Miss Trevor.

She smiled and shook her head.

“You are blind as a bat, Mr. Crocker,” she said.

The Celebrity had weighed Miss Thorn’s words and was listening passively now while she talked. There may be talents which she did not possess; I will not pretend to say. But I know there are many professions she might have chosen had she not been a woman. She would have made a name for herself at the bar; as a public speaker she would have excelled. And had I not been so long accustomed to picking holes in

arguments I am sure I should not have perceived the fallacies of this she was making for the benefit of the Celebrity. He surely did not. It is strange how a man can turn under such influence from one feeling to another. The Celebrity lost his resentment; apprehension took its place.

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He became more and more nervous; questioned me from time to time on the law; wished to know whether he would be called upon for testimony at Allen's trial; whether there was any penalty attached to the taking of another man's name; precisely what Drew would do with him if captured; and the tail of his eye was on the thicket as he made this inquiry. It may be surmised that I took an exquisite delight in quenching this new-born thirst for knowledge. And finally we all went into the cave.

Miss Thorn unpacked the things we had brought, while I surveyed the cavern. It was in the solid rock, some ten feet high and irregular in shape, and perfectly dry. It was a marvel to me how cosy she made it. One of the Maria's lanterns was placed in a niche, and the Celebrity's silver toilet-set laid out on a ledge of the rock, which answered perfectly for a dressing-table. Miss Thorn had not forgotten a small mirror. And as a last office, set a dainty breakfast on a linen napkin on the rock, heating the coffee in a chafing-dish.

"There!" she exclaimed, surveying her labors, "I hope you will be more comfortable."

He had already taken the precaution to brush his hair and pull himself together. His thanks, such as they were, he gave to Miss Thorn. It is true that she had done more than any one else.

"Good-bye, old boy!" said the Fraction. "We'll come back when we get the chance, and don't let that hundred thousand keep you awake."

The Fraction and I covered up the mouth of the cave with brush. He became confidential.

"Lucky dog, Allen!" he said. "They'll never get him away from Cooke. And he can have any girl he wants for the asking. By George! I believe Miss Thorn will elope with him if he ever reaches Canada."

I only mention this as a sample of the Fraction's point of view. I confess the remark annoyed me at the time.

Miss Thorn lingered in the cave for a minute after Miss Trevor came out. Then we retraced our way down the brook, which was dancing now in the sunlight. Miss Trevor stopped now and then to rest, in reality to laugh. I do not know what the Fraction thought of such heartless conduct. He and I were constantly on the alert for Mr. Drew, but we sighted the camp without having encountered him. It was half-past six, and we had trusted to slip in unnoticed by any one. But, as we emerged from the trees, the bustling scene which greeted our eyes filled us with astonishment. Two of the tents were down, and the third in a collapsed condition, while confusion reigned supreme.

And in the midst of it all stood Mr. Cooke, an animated central figure pedestalled on a stump, giving emphatic directions in a voice of authority. He spied us from his elevated position before we had crossed the brook.

“Here they come, Maria,” he shouted.

We climbed to the top of the slope, and were there confronted by Mrs. Cooke and Mr. Trevor, with Mr. Cooke close behind them.

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“Where the devil is Allen?” my client demanded excitedly of the Fraction.

“Allen?” repeated that gentleman, “why, we made him comfortable and left him, of course. We had sense enough not to bring him here to be pulled.”

“But, you damfool,” cried Mr. Cooke, slightly forgetting himself, “Drew has escaped.”

“Escaped?”

“Yes, escaped,” said Mr. Cooke, as though our conductor were personally responsible; “he got away this morning. Before we know it, we’ll have the whole police force of Far Harbor out here to jug the lot of us.”

The Fraction, being deficient for the moment in language proper to express his appreciation of this new development, simply volunteered to return for the Celebrity, and left in a great hurry.

“Irene,” said Mr. Trevor, “can it be possible that you have stolen away for the express purpose of visiting this criminal?”

“If he is a criminal, father, it is no reason that he should starve.”

“It is no reason,” cried her father, hotly, “why a young girl who has been brought up as you have, should throw every lady-like instinct to the winds. There are men enough in this camp to keep him from starving. I will not have my daughter’s name connected with that of a defaulter. Irene, you have set the seal of disgrace upon a name which I have labored for a lifetime to make one of the proudest in the land. And it was my fond hope that I possessed a daughter who—”

During this speech my anger had been steadily rising.. But it was Mrs. Cooke who interrupted him.

“Mr. Trevor,” said she, “perhaps you are not aware that while you are insulting your daughter, you are also insulting my niece. It may be well for you to know that Miss Trevor still has my respect as a woman and my admiration as a lady. And, since she has been so misjudged by her father, she has my deepest sympathy. But I wish to beg of you, if you have anything of this nature to say to her, you will take her feelings into consideration as well as ours.”

Miss Trevor gave her one expressive look of gratitude. The senator was effectually silenced. He had come, by some inexplicable inference, to believe that Mrs. Cooke, while subservient to the despotic will of her husband, had been miraculously saved from depravity, and had set her face against this last monumental act of outlawry.

THE CELEBRITY

By Winston Churchill

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CHAPTER XV

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I am convinced that Mr. Cooke possessed at least some of the qualities of a great general. In certain campaigns of past centuries, and even of this, it has been hero-worship that impelled the rank and file rather than any high sympathy with the cause they were striving for. And so it was with us that morning. Our commander was everywhere at once, encouraging us to work, and holding over us in impressive language the awful alternative of capture. For he had the art, in a high degree, of inoculating his followers with the spirit which animated him; and shortly, to my great surprise, I found myself working as though my life depended on it. I certainly did not care very much whether the Celebrity was captured or not, and yet, with the prospect of getting him over the border, I had not thought of breakfast. Farrar had a natural inclination for work of this sort, but even he was infused somewhat with the contagious haste and enthusiasm which filled the air; and together we folded the tents with astonishing despatch and rowed them out to the Maria, Mr. Cooke having gone to his knees in the water to shove the boat off.

“What are we doing this for?” said Farrar to me, as we hoisted the sail.

We both laughed.

“I have just been asking myself that question,” I replied.

“You are a nice district attorney, Crocker,” he said. “You have made a most proper and equitable decision in giving your consent to Allen’s escape. Doesn’t your conscience smart?”

“Not unbearably. I’ll tell you what, Farrar,” said I, “the truth is, that this fellow never embezzled so much as a ten-cent piece. He isn’t guilty: he isn’t the man.”

“Isn’t the man?” repeated Farrar.

“No,” I answered; “it’s a long tale, and no time to tell it now. But he is really, as he claims to be, the author of all those detestable books we have been hearing so much of.”

“The deuce he is!” exclaimed Farrar, dropping the stopper he was tying. “Did he write The Sybarites?”

“Yes, sir; he wrote The Sybarites, and all the rest of that trash.”

“He’s the fellow that maintains a man ought to marry a girl after he has become engaged to her.”

“Exactly,” I said, smiling at his way of putting it.

“Preaches constancy to all men, but doesn’t object to stealing.”

I laughed.

“You’re badly mixed,” I explained. “I told you he never stole anything. He was only ass enough to take the man’s name who is the living image of him. And the other man took the bonds.”

“Oh, come now,” said he, “tell me something improbable while you are about it.”

“It’s true,” I replied, repressing my mirth; “true as the tale of Timothy. I knew him when he was a mere boy. But I don’t give you that as a proof, for he might have become all things to all men since. Ask Miss Trevor; or Miss Thorn; she knows the other man, the bicycle man, and has seen them both together.”

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“Where, in India? Was one standing on the ground looking at his double go to heaven? Or was it at one of those drawing-room shows where a medium holds conversation with your soul, while your body sleeps on the lounge? By George, Crocker, I thought you were a sensible man.”

No wonder I got angry. But I might have come at some proper estimation of Farrar’s incredulity by that time.

“I suppose you wouldn’t take a lady’s word,” I growled.

“Not for that,” he said, busy again with the sail stops; “nor St. Chrysostom’s, were he to come here and vouch for it. It is too damned improbable.”

“Stranger things than that have happened,” I retorted, fuming.

“Not to any of us,” he said. Presently he added, chuckling: “He’d better not get into the clutches of that man Drew.”

“What do you mean?” I demanded. Farrar was exasperating at times.

“Drew will wind those handcuffs on him like tourniquets,” he laughed.

There seemed to be something behind this remark, but before I could inquire into it we were interrupted by Mr. Cooke, who was standing on the beach, swearing and gesticulating for the boat.

“I trust,” said Farrar, as we rowed ashore, “that this blind excitement will continue, and that we shall have the extreme pleasure of setting down our friend in Her Majesty’s dominions with a yachting-suit and a ham sandwich.”

We sat down to a hasty breakfast, in the middle of which the Celebrity arrived. His appearance was unexceptionable, but his heavy jaw was set in a manner which should have warned Mr. Cooke not to trifle with him.

“Sit down, old man, and take a bite before we start for Canada,” said my client.

The Celebrity walked up to him.

“Mr. Cooke,” he began in a menacing tone, “it is high time this nonsense was ended. I am tired of being made a buffoon of for your party. For your gratification I have spent a sleepless night in those cold, damp woods; and I warn you that practical joking can be carried too far. I will not go to Canada, and I insist that you sail me back to Asquith.”

Mr. Cooke winked significantly in our direction and tapped his head.

“I don’t wonder you’re a little upset, old man,” he said, humoringly patting him; “but sit down for a bite of something, and you’ll see things differently.”

“I’ve had my breakfast,” he said, taking out a cigarette.

Then Mr. Trevor got up.

“He demands, sir, to be delivered over to the authorities,” said he, “and you have no right to refuse him. I protest strongly.”

“And you can protest all you damn please,” retorted my client; “this isn’t the Ohio State Senate. Do you know where I would put you, Mr. Trevor? Do you know where you ought to be? In a hencoop, sir, if I had one here. In a hen-coop. What would you do if a man who had gone a little out of his mind asked you for a gun to shoot himself with? Give it him, I suppose. But I put Mr. Allen ashore in Canada, with the funds to get off with, and then my duty’s done.”

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This speech, as Mr. Cooke had no doubt confidently hoped, threw the senator into a frenzy of wrath.

“The day will come, sir,” he shouted, shaking his fist at my client, “the day will come when you will rue this bitterly.”

“Don’t get off any of your oratorical frills on me,” replied Mr. Cooke, contemptuously; “you ought to be tied and muzzled.”

Mr. Trevor was white with anger.

“I, for one, will not go to Canada,” he cried.

“You’ll stay here and starve, then,” said Mr. Cooke; “damned little I care.”

Mr. Trevor turned to Farrar, who was biting his lip.

“Mr. Farrar, I know you to be a rising young man of sound principles, and Mr. Crocker likewise. You are the only ones who can sail. Have you reflected that you are about to ruin your careers?”

“We are prepared to take the chances, I think,” said Farrar.

Mr. Cooke looked us over, proudly and gratefully, as much as to say that while he lived we should not lack the necessities of life.

At nine we embarked, the Celebrity and Mr. Trevor for the same reason that the animals took to the ark,—because they had to. There was a spanking breeze in the west-northwest, and a clear sky, a day of days for a sail. Mr. Cooke produced a map, which Farrar and I consulted, and without much trouble we hit upon a quiet place to land on the Canadian side. Our course was north-northwest, and therefore the wind enabled us to hold it without much trouble. Bear Island is situated some eighteen miles from shore, and about equidistant between Asquith and Far Harbor, which latter we had to pass on our way northward.

Although a brisk sea was on, the wind had been steady from that quarter all night, and the motion was uniform. The Maria was an excellent sea-boat. There was no indication, therefore, of the return of that malady which had been so prevalent on the passage to Bear Island. Mr. Cooke had never felt better, and looked every inch a sea-captain in his natty yachting-suit. He had acquired a tan on the island; and, as is eminently proper on a boat, he affected nautical manners and nautical ways. But his vernacular savored so hopelessly of the track and stall that he had been able to acquire no mastery over the art of marine invective. And he possessed not so much as one maritime oath. As soon as we had swung clear of the cove he made for the weather stays, where he assumed a posture not unlike that in the famous picture of Farragut

ascending Mobile Bay. His leather case was swung over his shoulder, and with his glasses he swept the lake in search of the Scimitar and other vessels of a like unamiable character.

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Although my client could have told you, offhand, jackstraw's last mile in a bicycle sulky, his notion of the Scimitar's speed was as vague as his knowledge of seamanship. And when I informed him that in all probability she had already passed the light on Far Harbor reef, some nine miles this side of the Far Harbor police station, he went into an inordinate state of excitement. Mr. Cooke was, indeed, that day the embodiment of an unselfish if misdirected zeal. He was following the dictates of both heart and conscience in his endeavor to rescue his guest from the law; and true zeal is invariably contagious. What but such could have commanded the unremitting labors of that morning? Farrar himself had done three men's work before breakfast, and it was, in great part, owing to him that we were now leaving the island behind us. He was sailing the Maria that day as she will never be sailed again: her lee gunwale awash, and a wake like a surveyor's line behind her. More than once I called to mind his facetious observation about Mr. Drew, and wondered if he knew more than he had said about the detective.

Once in the open, the Maria showed but small consideration for her passengers, for she went through the seas rather than over them. And Mr. Cooke, manfully keeping his station on the weather bow, likewise went through the seas. No argument could induce him to leave the post he had thus heroically chosen, which was one of honor rather than utility, for the lake was as vacant of sails as the day that Father Marquette (or some one else) first beheld it. Under such circumstances ease must be considered as only a relative term; and the accommodations of the Maria afforded but two comfortable spots,—the cabin, and the lea aft of the cabin bulkhead. This being the case, the somewhat peculiar internal relations of the party decided its grouping.

I know of no worse place than a small yacht, or than a large one for that matter, for uncongenial people. The Four betook themselves to the cabin, which was fortunately large, and made life bearable with a game of cards; while Mrs. Cooke, whose adaptability and sense I had come greatly to, admire, contented herself with a corner and a book. The ungrateful cause of the expedition himself occupied another corner. I caught sight of him through the cabin skylight, and the silver pencil he was holding over his note-book showed unmistakable marks of teeth.

Outside, Mr. Trevor, his face wearing an immutable expression of defiance for the wickedness surrounding him, had placed his daughter for safe-keeping between himself and the only other reliable character on board,—the refrigerator. But Miss Thorn appeared in a blue mackintosh and a pair of heavy yachting-boots, courting rather than avoiding a drenching. Even a mackintosh is becoming to some women. All morning she sat behind Mr. Cooke, on the rise of the cabin, her back against the mast and her hair flying in the wind, and I, for one, was not sorry the Celebrity had given us this excuse for a sail.

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CHAPTER XVI

About half-past eleven Mr. Cooke's vigilance was rewarded by a glimpse of the lighthouse on Far Harbor reef, and almost simultaneously he picked up, to the westward, the ragged outline of the house-tops and spires of the town itself. But as we neared the reef the harbor appeared as quiet as a Sunday morning: a few Mackinaws were sailing hither and thither, and the Far Harbor and Beaverton boat was coming out. My client, in view of the peaceful aspect affairs had assumed, presently consented to relinquish his post, and handed the glasses over to me with an injunction to be watchful.

I promised. And Mr. Cooke, feeling his way aft with more discretion than grace, finally descended into the cabin, where he was noisily received. And I was left with Miss Thorn. While my client had been there in front of us, his lively conversation and naive if profane remarks kept us in continual laughter. When with him it was utterly impossible to see any other than the ludicrous side of this madcap adventure, albeit he himself was so keenly in earnest as to its performance. It was with misgiving that I saw him disappear into the hatchway, and my impulse was to follow him. Our spirits, like those in a thermometer, are never stationary: mine were continually being sent up or down. The night before, when I had sat with Miss Thorn beside the fire, they went up; this morning her anxious solicitude for the Celebrity had sent them down again. She both puzzled and vexed me. I could not desert my post as lookout, and I remained in somewhat awkward suspense as to what she was going to say, gazing at distant objects through the glasses. Her remark, when it came, took me by surprise.

"I am afraid," she said seriously, "that Uncle Fenelon's principles are not all that they should be. His morality is something like his tobacco, which doesn't injure him particularly, but is dangerous to others."

I was more than willing to meet her on the neutral ground of Uncle Fenelon.

"Do you think his principles contagious?" I asked.

"They have not met with the opposition they deserve," she replied. "Uncle Fenelon's ideas of life are not those of other men,—yours, for instance. And his affairs, mental and material, are, happily for him, such that he can generally carry out his notions with small inconvenience. He is no doubt convinced that he is acting generously in attempting to rescue the Celebrity from a term in prison; what he does not realize is that he is acting ungenerously to other guests who have infinitely more at stake."

"But our friend from Ohio has done his best to impress this upon him," I replied, failing to perceive her drift; "and if his words are wasted, surely the thing is hopeless."

"I am not joking," said she. "I was not thinking of Mr. Trevor, but of you. I like you, Mr. Crocker. You may not believe it, but I do." For the life of me I could think of no fitting

reply to this declaration. Why was that abominable word “like” ever put into the English language? “Yes, I like you,” she continued meditatively, “in the face of the fact that you persist in disliking me.”

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“Nothing of the kind.”

“Oh, I know. You mustn’t think me so stupid as all that. It is a mortifying truth that I like you, and that you have no use for me.”

I have never known how to take a jest from a woman. I suppose I should have laughed this off. Instead, I made a fool of myself.

“I shall be as frank with you,” I said, “and declare that I like you, though I should be much happier if I didn’t.”

She blushed at this, if I am not mistaken. Perhaps it was unlooked for.

“At any rate,” she went on, “I should deem it my duty to warn you of the consequences of this joke of yours. They may not be all that you have anticipated. The consequences for you, I mean, which you do not seem to have taken into account.”

“Consequences for me!” I exclaimed.

“I fear that you will think what I am going to say uncalled for, and that I am meddling with something that does not concern me. But it seems to me that you are undervaluing the thing you have worked so hard to attain. They say that you have ability, that you have acquired a practice and a position which at your age give the highest promise for the future. That you are to be counsel for the railroad. In short, that you are the coming man in this section of the state. I have found this out,” said she, cutting short my objections, “in spite of the short time I have been here.”

“Nonsense!” I said, reddening in my turn.

“Suppose that the Celebrity is captured,” she continued, thrusting her hands into the pockets of her mackintosh. “It appears that he is shadowed, and it is not unreasonable to expect that we shall be chased before the day is over. Then we shall be caught red-handed in an attempt to get a criminal over the border. Please wait until I have finished,” she said, holding up her hand at an interruption I was about to make. “You and I know he is not a criminal; but he might as well be as far as you are concerned. As district attorney you are doubtless known to the local authorities. If the Celebrity is arrested after a long pursuit, it will avail you nothing to affirm that you knew all along he was the noted writer. You will pardon me if I say that they will not believe you then. He will be taken East for identification. And if I know anything about politics, and especially the state of affairs in local politics with which you are concerned, the incident and the interval following it will be fatal to your chances with the railroad,—to your chances in general. You perceive, Mr. Crocker, how impossible it is to play with fire without being burned.”

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I did perceive. At the time the amazing thoroughness with which she had gone into the subject of my own unimportant affairs, the astuteness and knowledge of the world she had shown, and the clearness with which she had put the situation, did not strike me. Nothing struck me but the alarming sense of my own stupidity, which was as keen as I have ever felt it. What man in a public position, however humble, has not political enemies? The image of O'Meara was wafted suddenly before me, disagreeably near, and his face wore the smile of victory. All of Mr. Cooke's money could not save me. My spirits sank as the immediate future unfolded itself, and I even read the article in O'Meara's organ, the Northern Lights, which was to be instrumental in divesting me of my public trust and fair fame generally. Yes, if the Celebrity was caught on the other side of Far Harbor, all would be up with John Crocker! But it would never do to let Miss Thorn discover my discomfiture.

"There is something in what you say," I replied, with what bravado I could muster.

"A little, I think," she returned, smiling; "now, what I wish you to do is to make Uncle Fenelon put into Far Harbor. If he refuses, you can go in in spite of him, since you and Mr. Farrar are the only ones who can sail. You have the situation in your own hands."

There was certainly wisdom in this, also. But the die was cast now, and pride alone was sufficient to hold me to the course I had rashly begun upon. Pride! What an awkward thing it is, and more difficult for most of us to swallow than a sponge.

"I thank you for this interest in my welfare, Miss Thorn," I began.

"No fine speeches, please, sir," she cut in, "but do as I advise."

"I fear I cannot."

"Why do you say that? The thing is simplicity itself."

"I should lose my self-respect as a practical joker. And besides," I said maliciously, "I started out to have some fun with the Celebrity, and I want to have it."

"Well," she replied, rather coolly, "of course you can do as you choose."

We were passing within a hundred yards of the lighthouse, set cheerlessly on the bald and sandy tip of the point. An icy silence sat between us, and such a silence is invariably insinuating. This one suggested a horrible thought. What if Miss Thorn had warned me in order to save the Celebrity from humiliation? I thrust it aside, but it returned again and grinned. Had she not practised insincerity before? And any one with half an eye could see that she was in love with the Celebrity; even the Fraction had remarked it. What more natural than, with her cleverness, she had hit upon this means of terminating the author's troubles by working upon my fears?

Human weakness often proves too much for those of us who have the very best intentions. Up to now the refrigerator and Mr. Trevor had kept the strictest and most jealous of vigils over Irene. But at length the senator succumbed to the drowsiness which never failed to attack him at this hour, and he forgot the disrepute of his surroundings in a respectable sleep. Whereupon his daughter joined us on the forecastle.

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“I knew that would happen to papa if I only waited long enough,” she said. “Oh, he thinks you’re dreadful, Mr. Crocker. He says that nowadays young men haven’t any principle. I mustn’t be seen talking to you.”

“I have been trying to convince Mr. Crocker that his stand in the matter is not only immoral, but suicidal,” said Miss Thorn. “Perhaps,” she added meaningly, “he will listen to you.”

“I don’t understand,” answered Miss Trevor.

“Miss Thorn has been good enough to point out,” I explained, “that the political machine in this section, which has the honor to detest me, will seize upon the pretext of the Celebrity’s capture to ruin me. They will take the will for the deed.”

“Of course they will do just that,” cried Miss Trevor. “How bright of you to think of it, Marian!”

Miss Thorn stood up.

“I leave you to persuade him,” said she; “I have no doubt you will be able to do it.”

With that she left us, quite suddenly. Abruptly, I thought. And her manner seemed to impress Miss Trevor.

“I wonder what is the matter with Marian,” said she, and leaned over the skylight. “Why, she has gone down to talk with the Celebrity.”

“Isn’t that rather natural?” I asked with asperity.

She turned to me with an amused expression.

“Her conduct seems to worry you vastly, Mr. Crocker. I noticed that you were quite upset this morning in the cave. Why was it?”

“You must have imagined it,” I said stiffly.

“I should like to know,” she said, with the air of one trying to solve a knotty problem, “I should like to know how many men are as blind as you.”

“You are quite beyond me, Miss Trevor,” I answered; “may I request you to put that remark in other words?”

“I protest that you are a most unsatisfactory person,” she went on, not heeding my annoyance. “Most abnormally modest people are. If I were to stick you with this hat-pin, for instance, you would accept the matter as a positive insult.”

“I certainly should,” I said, laughing; “and, besides, it would be painful.”

“There you are,” said she, exultingly; “I knew it. But I flatter myself there are men who would go into an ecstasy of delight if I ran a hat-pin into them. I am merely taking this as an illustration of my point.”

“It is a very fine point,” said I. “But some people take pleasure in odd things. I can easily conceive of a man gallant enough to suffer the agony for the sake of pleasing a pretty girl.”

“I told you so,” she pouted; “you have missed it entirely. You are hopelessly blind on that side, and numb. Perhaps you didn’t know that you have had a hat-pin sticking in you for some time.”

I began feeling myself, nervously.

“For more than a month,” she cried, “and to think that you have never felt it.” My action was too much for her gravity, and she fell back against the skylight in a fit of merriment, which threatened to wake her father. And I hoped it would.

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“It pleases you to speak in parables this morning,” I said.

“Mr. Crocker,” she began again, when she had regained her speech, “shall I tell you of a great misfortune which might happen to a girl?”

“I should be pleased to hear it,” I replied courteously.

“That misfortune, then, would be to fall in love with you.”

“Happily that is not within the limits of probability,” I answered, beginning to be a little amused. “But why?”

“Lightning often strikes where it is least expected,” she replied archly. “Listen. If a young woman were unlucky enough to lose her heart to you, she might do everything but tell you, and you would never know it. I scarcely believe you would know it if she did tell you.”

I must have jumped unconsciously.

“Oh, you needn’t think I am in love with you.”

“Not for a minute,” I made haste to say.

She pointed towards the timber-covered hills beyond the shore.

“Do you see that stream which comes foaming down the notch into the lake in front of us?” she asked. “Let us suppose that you lived in a cabin beside that brook; and that once in a while, when you went out to draw your water, you saw a nugget of—gold washing along with the pebbles on the bed. How many days do you think you would be in coming to the conclusion that there was a pocket of gold somewhere above you, and in starting in search of it?”

“Not long, surely.”

“Ah, you are not lacking in perception there. But if I were to tell you that I knew of the existence of such a mine, from various proofs I have had, and that the mine was in the possession of a certain person who was quite willing to share it with you on application, you would not believe me.”

“Probably not.”

“Well,” said Miss Trevor, with a nod of finality, “I was actually about to make such a disclosure. But I see it would be useless.”

I confess she aroused my curiosity. No coaxing, however, would induce her to interpret.

“No,” she insisted strangely, “if you cannot put two and two together, I fear I cannot help you. And no one I ever heard of has come to any good by meddling.”

Miss Trevor folded her hands across her lap. She wore that air which I am led to believe is common to all women who have something of importance to disclose; or at least what they consider is of importance. There was an element of pity, too, in her expression. For she had given me my chance, and my wits had been found wanting.

Do not let it be surmised that I attach any great value to such banter as she had been indulging in. At the same time, however, I had an uneasy feeling that I had missed something which might have been to my advantage. It was in vain that I whipped my dull senses; but one conclusion was indicated by all this inference, and I don’t care even to mention that: it was preposterous.

Then Miss Trevor shifted to a very serious mood. She honestly did her best to persuade me to relinquish our enterprise, to go to Mr. Cooke and confess the whole thing.

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“I wish we had washed our hands of this Celebrity from the first,” she said, with a sigh. “How dreadful if you lose your position on account of this foolishness!”

“But I shan’t,” I answered reassuringly; “we are getting near the border now, and no sign of trouble. And besides,” I added, “I think Miss Thorn tried to frighten me. And she very nearly succeeded. It was prettily done.”

“Of course she tried to frighten you. I wish she had succeeded.”

“But her object was transparent.”

“Her object!” she exclaimed. “Her object was to save you.”

“I think not,” I replied; “it was to save the Celebrity.”

Miss Trevor rose and grasped one of the sail rings to keep her balance.
She looked at me pityingly.

“Do you really believe that?”

“Firmly.”

“Then you are hopeless, Mr. Crocker, totally hopeless. I give you up.” And she went back to her seat beside the refrigerator.

CHAPTER XVII

“Crocker, old man, Crocker, what the devil does that mean?”

I turned with a start to perceive a bare head thrust above the cabin roof, the scant hair flying, and two large, brown eyes staring into mine full of alarm and reproach. A plump finger was pointing to where the sandy reef lay far astern of us.

The Mackinaws were flecked far and wide over the lake, and a dirty smudge on the blue showed where the Far Harbor and Beaverton boat had gone over the horizon. But there, over the point and dangerously close to the land, hung another smudge, gradually pushing its way like a writhing, black serpent, lakewards. Thus I was rudely jerked back to face the problem with which we had left the island that morning.

I snatched the neglected glasses from the deck and hurried aft to join my client on the overhang, but a pipe was all they revealed above the bleak hillocks of sand. My client turned to me with a face that was white under the tan.

“Crocker,” he cried, in a tragic voice, “it’s a blessed police boat, or I never picked a winner.”

“Nonsense,” I said; “other boats smoke beside police boats. The lake is full of tugs.”

I was a little nettled at having been scared for a molehill.

“But I know it, sure as hell,” he insisted.

“You know nothing about it, and won’t for an hour. What’s a pipe and a trail of smoke?”

He laid a hand on my shoulder, and I felt it tremble.

“Why do you suppose I came out?” he demanded solemnly.

“You were probably losing,” I said.

“I was winning.”

“Then you got tired of winning.”

But he held up a thumb within a few inches of my face, and with it a ring I had often noticed, a huge opal which he customarily wore on the inside of his hand.

“She’s dead,” said Mr. Cooke, sadly.

“Dead?” I repeated, perplexed.

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“Yes, she’s dead as the day I lost the two thousand at Sheepshead. She’s never gone back on me yet. And unless I can make some little arrangement with those fellows,” he added, tossing his head at the smoke, “you and I will put up to-night in some barn of a jail. I’ve never been in jail but once,” said Mr. Cooke, “and it isn’t so damned pleasant, I assure you.” I saw that he believed every word of it; in fact, that it was his religion. I might as well have tried to argue the Sultan out of Mohammedanism.

The pipe belonged to a tug, that was certain. Farrar said so after a look over his shoulder, disdaining glasses, and he knew the lake better than many who made their living by it. It was then that I made note of a curious anomaly in the betting character; for thus far Mr. Cooke, like a great many of his friends, was a skeptic. He never ceased to hope until the stake had found its way into the other man’s pocket. And it was for hope that he now applied to Farrar. But even Farrar did not attempt to account for the tug’s appearance that near the land.

“She’s in some detestable hurry to get up this way, that’s flat,” he said; “where she is, the channel out of the harbor is not forty feet wide.”

By this time the rest of the party were gathered behind us on the high side of the boat, in different stages of excitement, scrutinizing the smoke. Mr. Cooke had the glasses glued to his eyes again, his feet braced apart, and every line of his body bespeaking the tension of his mind. I imagined him standing thus, the stump of his cigar tightly clutched between his teeth, following the fortunes of some favorite on the far side of the Belmont track.

We waited without comment while the smoke crept by degrees towards the little white spindle on the tip of the point, now and again catching a gleam of the sun’s rays from off the glass of the lantern. And presently, against the white lather of the lake, I thought I caught sight of a black nose pushed out beyond the land. Another moment, and the tug itself was bobbing in the open. Barely had she reached the deep water beyond the sands when her length began to shorten, and the dense cloud of smoke that rose made it plain that she was firing. At the sight I reflected that I had been a fool indeed. A scant flue miles of water lay between us and her, and if they really meant business back there, and they gave every sign of it, we had about an hour and a half to get rid of the Celebrity. The Maria was a good boat, but she had not been built to try conclusions with a Far Harbor tug.

My client, in spite of the ominous condition of his opal, was not slow to make his intentions exceedingly clear. For Mr. Cooke was first and last, and always, a gentleman. After that you might call him anything you pleased. Meditatively he screwed up his glasses and buckled them into the case, and then he descended to the cockpit. It was the Celebrity he singled out of the party.

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“Allen,” said he, when he stood before him, “I want to impress on you that my word’s gold. I’ve stuck to you thus far, and I’ll be damned now if I throw you over, like they did Jonah.”

Mr. Cooke spoke with a fine dignity that in itself was impressive, and when he had finished he looked about him until his eye rested on Mr. Trevor, as though opposition were to come from that quarter. And the senator gave every sign of another eruption. But the Celebrity, either from lack of appreciation of my client’s loyalty, or because of the nervousness which was beginning to show itself in his demeanor, despite an effort to hide it, returned no answer. He turned on his heel and resumed his seat in the cabin. Mr. Cooke was visibly affected.

“I’d sooner lose my whip hand than go back on him now,” he declared.

Then Vesuvius began to rumble.

“Mr. Cooke,” said the senator, “may I suggest something which seems pertinent to me, though it does not appear to have occurred to you?”

His tone was the calm one that the heroes used in the Celebrity’s novels when they were about to drop on and annihilate wicked men.

“Certainly, sir,” my client replied briskly, bringing himself up on his way back to the overhang.

“You have announced your intention of ‘standing by’ Mr. Allen, as you express it. Have you reflected that there are some others who deserve to be consulted and considered beside Mr. Allen and yourself?”

Mr. Cooke was puzzled at this change of front, and unused, moreover, to that veiled irony of parliamentary expression.

“Talk English, my friend,” said he.

“In plain words, sir, Mr. Allen is a criminal who ought to be locked up; he is a menace to society. You, who have a reputation, I am given to understand, for driving four horses, have nothing to lose by a scandal, while I have worked all my life for the little I have achieved, and have a daughter to think about. I will neither stand by Mr. Allen nor by you.”

Mr. Cooke was ready with a retort when the true significance of this struck him. Things were a trifle different now. The tables had turned since leaving the island, and the senator held it in his power to ruin our one remaining chance of escape. Strangely enough, he missed the cause of Mr. Cooke’s hesitation.

“Look here, old man,” said my client, biting off another cigar, “I’m a first-rate fellow when you get to know me, and I’d do the same for you as I’m doing for Allen.”

“I daresay, sir, I daresay,” said the other, a trifle mollified; “I don’t claim that you’re not acting as you think right.”

“I see it,” said Mr. Cooke, with admirable humility; “I see it. I was wrong to haul you into this, Trevor. And the only thing to consider now is, how to get you out of it.”

Here he appeared for a moment to be wrapped in deep thought, and checked with his cigar an attempt to interrupt him.

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“However you put it, old man,” he said at last, “we’re all in a pretty bad hole.”

“All!” cried Mr. Trevor, indignantly.

“Yes, all,” asserted Mr. Cooke, with composure. “There are the police, and here is Allen as good as run down. If they find him when they get abroad, you don’t suppose they’ll swallow anything you have to say about trying to deliver him over. No, sir, you’ll be bagged and fined along with the rest of us. And I’d be damned sorry to see it, if I do say it; and I blame myself freely for it, old man. Now you take my advice and keep your mouth shut, and I’ll take care of you. I’ve got a place for Allen.”

During this somewhat remarkable speech Mr. Trevor, as it were, blew hot and cold by turns. Although its delivery was inconsiderate, its logic was undeniable, and the senator sat down again on the locker, and was silent. But I marked that off and on his fingers would open and shut convulsively.

Time alone would disclose what was to happen to us; in the interval there was nothing to do but wait. We had reached the stage where anxiety begins to take the place of excitement, and we shifted restlessly from spot to spot and looked at the tug. She was ploughing along after us, and to such good purpose that presently I began to catch the white of the seas along her bows, and the bright red with which her pipe was tipped. Farrar alone seemed to take but slight interest in her. More than once I glanced at him as he stood under me, but his eye was on the shuddering leach of the sail. Then I leaned over.

“What do you think of it?” I asked.

“I told you this morning Drew would have handcuffs on him before night,” he replied, without raising his head.

“Hang your joking, Farrar; I know more than you about it.”

“Then what’s the use of asking me?”

“Don’t you see that I’m ruined if we’re caught?” I demanded, a little warmly.

“No, I don’t see it,” he replied. “You don’t suppose I think you fool enough to risk this comedy if the man were guilty, do you? I don’t believe all that rubbish about his being the criminal’s double, either. That’s something the girls got up for your benefit.”

I ignored this piece of brutality.

“But I’m ruined anyway.”

“How?”

I explained shortly what I thought our friend, O'Meara, would do under the circumstances. An inference sufficed Farrar.

"Why didn't you say something about this before?" he asked gravely. "I would have put into Far Harbor."

"Because I didn't think of it," I confessed.

Farrar pulled down the corners of his mouth with trying not to smile.

"Miss Thorn is a woman of brains," he remarked gently; "I respect her."

I wondered by what mysterious train of reasoning he had arrived at this conclusion. He said nothing for a while, but toyed with the spokes of the wheel, keeping the wind in the sail with undue nicety.

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“I can’t make them out,” he said, all at once.

“Then you believe they’re after us?”

“I changed the course a point or two, just to try them.”

“And—”

“And they changed theirs.”

“Who could have informed?”

“Drew, of course,” I said; “who else?”

He laughed.

“Drew doesn’t know anything about Allen,” said he; “and, besides, he’s no more of a detective than I am.”

“But Drew was told there was a criminal on the island.”

“Who told him?”

I repeated the conversation between Drew and Mr. Trevor which I had overheard. Farrar whistled.

“But you did not speak of that this morning,” said he.

“No,” I replied, feeling anything but comfortable. At times when he was facetious as he had been this morning I was wont to lose sight of the fact that with Farrar the manner was not the man, and to forget the warmth of his friendship. I was again to be reminded of this.

“Well, Crocker,” he said briefly, “I would willingly give up this year’s state contract to have known it.”

CHAPTER XVIII

It was, accurately as I can remember, half after noon when Mr. Cooke first caught the smoke over the point, for the sun was very high: at two our fate had been decided. I have already tried to describe a part of what took place in that hour and a half, although even now I cannot get it all straight in my mind. Races, when a great deal is at stake, are more or less chaotic: a close four miles in a college eight is a succession of blurs with lucid but irrelevant intervals. The weary months of hard work are forgotten, and

you are quite as apt to think of your first velocipede, or of the pie that is awaiting you in the boathouse, as of victory and defeat. And a yacht race, with a pair of rivals on your beam, is very much the same.

As I sat with my feet dangling over the washboard, I reflected, once or twice, that we were engaged in a race. All I had to do was to twist my head in order to make sure of it. I also reflected, I believe, that I was in the position of a man who has bet all he owns, with large odds on losing either way. But on the whole I was occupied with more trivial matters a letter I had forgotten to write about a month's rent, a client whose summer address I had mislaid. The sun was burning my neck behind when a whistle aroused me to the realization that the tug was no longer a toy boat dancing in the distance, but a stern fact but two miles away. There could be no mistake now, for I saw the white steam of the signal against the smoke.

I slid down and went into the cabin. The Celebrity was in the corner by the companionway, with his head on the cushions and a book in his hand. And forward, under the low deck beams beyond the skylight, I beheld the crouching figure of my client. He had stripped off his coat and was busy at some task on the floor.

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“They’re whistling for us to stop,” I said to him.

“How near are they, old man?” he asked, without looking up. The perspiration was streaming down his face, and he held a brace and bit in his hand. Under him was the trap-door which gave access to the ballast below, and through this he had bored a neat hole. The yellow chips were still on his clothes.

“They’re not two miles away,” I answered. “But what in mystery are you doing there?”

But he only laid a finger beside his nose and bestowed a wink in my direction. Then he took some ashes from his cigar, wetted his finger, and thus ingeniously removed all appearance of newness from the hole he had made, carefully cleaning up the chips and putting them in his pocket. Finally he concealed the brace and bit and opened the trap, disclosing the rough stones of the ballast. I watched him in amazement as he tore a mattress from an adjoining bunk and forced it through the opening, spreading it fore and aft over the stones.

“Now,” he said, regaining his feet and surveying the whole with undisguised satisfaction, “he’ll be as safe there as in my new family vault.”

“But” I began, a light dawning upon me.

“Allen, old man,” said Mr. Cooke, “come here.”

The Celebrity laid down his book and looked up: my client was putting on his coat.

“Come here, old man,” he repeated.

And he actually came. But he stopped when he caught sight of the open trap and of the mattress beneath it.

“How will that suit you?” asked Mr. Cooke, smiling broadly as he wiped his face with an embroidered handkerchief.

The Celebrity looked at the mattress, then at me, and lastly at Mr. Cooke. His face was a study:

“And—And you think I am going to get in there?” he said, his voice shaking.

My client fell back a step.

“Why not?” he demanded. “It’s about your size, comfortable, and all the air you want” (here Mr. Cooke stuck his finger through the bit hole). “Damn me, if I were in your fix, I wouldn’t stop at a kennel.”

“Then you’re cursed badly mistaken,” said the Celebrity, going back to his corner; “I’m tired of being made an ass of for you and your party.”

“An ass!” exclaimed my client, in proper indignation.

“Yes, an ass,” said the Celebrity. And he resumed his book.

It would seem that a student of human nature, such as every successful writer should be, might by this time have arrived at some conception of my client’s character, simple as it was, and have learned to overlook the slight peculiarity in his mode of expressing himself. But here the Celebrity fell short, if my client’s emotions were not pitched in the same key as those of other people, who shall say that his heart was not as large or his sympathies as wide as many another philanthropist?

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But Mr. Cooke was an optimist, and as such disposed to look at the best side of his friends and ignore the worst; if, indeed, he perceived their faults at all. It was plain to me, even now, that he did not comprehend the Celebrity's attitude. That his guest should reject the one hope of escape left him was, according to Mr. Cooke, only to be accounted for by a loss of mental balance. Nevertheless, his disappointment was keen. He let down the door and slowly led the way out of the cabin. The whistle sounded shrilly in our ears.

Mr. Cooke sat down and drew a wallet from his pocket. He began to count the bills, and, as if by common consent, the Four followed suit. It was a task which occupied some minutes, and when completed my client produced a morocco note-book and a pencil. He glanced interrogatively at the man nearest him.

"Three hundred and fifty."

Mr. Cooke put it down. It was entirely a matter of course. What else was there to be done? And when he had gone the round of his followers he turned to Farrar and me.

"How much are you fellows equal to?" he asked.

I believe he did it because he felt we should resent being left out: and so we should have. Mr. Cooke's instincts were delicate.

We told him. Then he paused, his pencil in the air, and his eyes doubtfully fixed on the senator. For all this time Mr. Trevor had been fidgeting in his seat; but now he opened his long coat, button by button, and thrust his hand inside the flap. Oh, Falstaff!

"Father, father!" exclaimed Miss Trevor. But her tongue was in her cheek.

I have heard it stated that if a thoroughly righteous man were cast away with ninety and nine ruffians, each of the ruffians would gain one-one-hundredth in virtue, whilst the righteous man would sink to their new level. I am not able to say how much better Mr. Cooke's party was for Mr. Trevor's company, but the senator seemed to realize that something serious had happened to him, for his voice was not altogether steady as he pronounced the amount of his contribution.

"Trevor," cried Mr. Cooke, with great fervor, "I take it all back. You're a true, public-spirited old sport."

But the senator had not yet reached that extreme of degradation where it is pleasurable to be congratulated on wickedness.

My client added up the figures and rubbed his hands. I regret to say that the aggregate would have bought up three small police organizations, body and soul.

“Pull up, Farrar, old man,” he shouted.

Farrar released the wheel and threw the Maria into the wind. With the sail cracking and the big boom dodging over our heads, we watched the tug as she drew nearer and nearer, until we could hear the loud beating of her engines. On one side some men were making ready to lower a boat, and then a conspicuous figure in blue stood out by the davits. Then came the faint tinkle of a bell, and the H Sinclair, of Far Harbor, glided up and thrashed the water scarce a biscuit-throw away.

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“Hello, there!” the man in uniform called out. It was Captain McCann, chief of the Far Harbor police.

Mr. Cooke waved his cigar politely.

“Is that Mr. Cooke’s yacht, the Maria?

“The same,” said Mr. Cooke.

“I’m fearing I’ll have to come aboard you, Mr. Cooke.”

“All right, old man, glad to have you,” said my client.

This brought a smile to McCann’s face as he got into his boat. We were all standing in the cockpit, save the Celebrity, who was just inside of the cabin door. I had time to note that he was pale, and no more: I must have been pale myself. A few strokes brought the chief to the Maria’s stern.

“It’s not me that likes to interfere with a gent’s pleasure party, but business is business,” said he, as he climbed aboard.

My client’s hospitality was oriental.

“Make yourself at home, old man,” he said, a box of his largest and blackest cigars in his hand. And these he advanced towards McCann before the knot was tied in the painter.

Then a wave of self-reproach swept over me. Was it possible that I, like Mr. Trevor, had been deprived of all the morals I had ever possessed? Could it be that the district attorney was looking calmly on while Mr. Cooke wilfully corrupted the Far Harbor chief-of-police? As agonizing a minute as I ever had in my life was that which it took McCann to survey those cigars. His broad features became broader still, as a huge, red hand was reached out. I saw it close lingeringly over the box, and then Mr. Cooke had struck a match. The chief stepped over the washboard onto the handsome turkey-red cushions on the seats, and thus he came face to face with me.

“Holy fathers!” he exclaimed. “Is it you who are here, Mr. Crocker?” And he pulled off his cap.

“No other, McCann,” said I, with what I believe was a most pitiful attempt at braggadocio.

McCann began to puff at his cigar. Clouds of smoke came out of his face and floated down the wind. He was so visibly embarrassed that I gained a little courage.

“And what brings you here?” I demanded.

He scrutinized me in perplexity.

“I think you’re guessing, sir.”

“Never a guess, McCann. You’ll have to explain yourself.”

McCann had once had a wholesome respect for me. But it looked now as if the bottom was dropping out of it.

“Sure, Mr. Crocker,” he said, “what would you be doing in such company as I’m hunting for? Can it be that ye’re helping to lift a criminal over the border?”

“McCann,” I asked sternly, “what have you had on the, tug?”

Force of habit proved too much for the man. He went back to the apologetic.

“Never a drop, Mr. Crocker. Upon me soul!”

This reminded Mr. Cooke of something (be it recorded) that he had for once forgotten. He lifted up the top of the refrigerator. The chief’s eye followed him. But I was not going to permit this.

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“Now, McCann,” I commenced again, “if you will state your business here, if you have any, I shall be obliged. You are delaying Mr. Cooke.”

The chief was seized with a nervous tremor. I think we were a pair in that, only I managed to keep mine, under. When it came to the point, and any bribing was to be done, I had hit upon a course. Self-respect demanded a dignity on my part. With a painful indecision McCann pulled a paper from his pocket which I saw was a warrant. And he dropped his cigar. Mr. Cooke was quick to give him another.

“Ye come from Bear Island, Mr. Crocker?” he inquired.

I replied in the affirmative.

“I hope it’s news I’m telling you,” he said soberly; “I’m hoping it’s news when I say that I’m here for Mr. Charles Wrexell Allen,—that’s the gentleman’s name. He’s after taking a hundred thousand dollars away from Boston.” Then he turned to Mr. Cooke. “The gentleman was aboard your boat, sir, when you left that country place of yours,—what d’ye call it? —Mohair? Thank you, sir.” And he wiped the water from his brow. “And they’re telling me he was on Bear Island with ye? Sure, sir, and I can’t see why a gentleman of your standing would be wanting to get him over the border. But I must do my duty. Begging your pardon, Mr. Crocker,” he added, with a bow to me.

“Certainly, McCann,” I said.

For a space there was only the bumping and straining of the yacht and the swish of the water against her sides. Then the chief spoke again.

“It will be saving you both trouble and inconvenience, Mr. Crocker, if you give him up, sir.”

What did the man mean? Why in the name of the law didn’t he make a move? I was conscious that my client was fumbling in his clothes for the wallet; that he had muttered an invitation for the chief to go inside. McCann smoked uneasily.

“I don’t want to search the boat, sir.”

At these words we all turned with one accord towards the cabin. I felt Farrar gripping my arm tightly from behind.

The Celebrity had disappeared!

It was Mr. Cooke who spoke.

“Search the boat!” he said, something between a laugh and a cry.

“Yes, sir,” the chief repeated firmly. “It’s sorry I am to do it, with Mr. Crocker here, too.”

I have always maintained that nature had endowed my client with rare gifts; and the ease with which he now assumed a part thus unexpectedly thrust upon him, as well as the assurance with which he carried it out, goes far to prove it.

“If there’s anything in your line aboard, chief,” he said blandly, “help yourself!”

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Some of us laughed. I thought things a little too close to be funny. Since the Celebrity had lost his nerve and betaken himself to the place of concealment Mr. Cooke had prepared for him, the whole composition of the affair was changed. Before, if McCann had arrested the ostensible Mr. Allen, my word, added to fifty dollars from my client, would probably have been sufficient. Should he be found now, no district attorney on the face of the earth could induce the chief to believe that he was any other than the real criminal; nor would any bribe be large enough to compensate McCann for the consequences of losing so important a prisoner. There was nothing now but to carry it off with a high hand. McCann got up.

“Be your lave, Mr. Crocker,” he said.

“Never you mind me, McCann,” I replied, “but you do what is right.”

With that he began his search. It might have been ludicrous if I had had any desire to laugh, for the chief wore the gingerly air of a man looking for a rattlesnake which has to be got somehow. And my client assisted at the inspection with all the graces of a dancing-master. McCann poked into the forward lockers where we kept the stores,—-dropping the iron lid within an inch of his toe,—and the clothing-lockers and the sail-lockers. He reached under the bunks, and drew out his hand again quickly, as though he expected to be bitten. And at last he stood by the trap with the hole in it, under which the Celebrity lay prostrate. I could hear my own breathing. But Mr. Cooke had his wits about him still, and at this critical juncture he gave McCann a thump on the back which nearly carried him off his feet.

“They say the mast is hollow, old man,” he suggested.

“Be jabers, Mr. Cooke,” said McCann, “and I’m beginning to think it is!

“He took off his cap and scratched his head.

“Well, McCann, I hope you’re contented,” I said.

“Mr. Crocker,” said he, “and it’s that thankful I am for you that the gent ain’t here. But with him cutting high finks up at Mr. Cooke’s house with a valet, and him coming on the yacht with yese, and the whole country in that state about him, begorra,” said McCann, “and it’s domned strange! Maybe it’s swimmin’ in the water he is!”

The whole party had followed the search, and at this speech of the chief’s our nervous tension became suddenly relaxed. Most of us sat down to laugh.

“I’m asking no questions, Mr. Crocker, yell take notice,” he remarked, his voice full of reproachful meaning.

“McCann,” said I, “you come outside. I want to speak to you.”

He followed me out.

“Now,” I went on, “you know me pretty well” (he nodded doubtfully), “and if I give you my word that Charles Wrexell Allen is not on this yacht, and never has been, is that sufficient?”

“Is it the truth you’re saying, sir?”

I assured him that it was.

“Then where is he, Mr. Crocker?”

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“God only knows!” I replied, with fervor. “I don’t, McCann.”

The chief was satisfied. He went back into the cabin, and Mr. Cooke, in the exuberance of his joy, produced champagne. McCann had heard of my client and of his luxurious country place, and moreover it was the first time he had ever been on a yellow-plush yacht. He tarried. He drank Mr. Cooke’s health and looked around him in wonder and awe, and his remarks were worthy of record. These sayings and the thought of the author of The Sybarites stifling below with his mouth to an auger-hole kept us in a continual state of merriment. And at last our visitor rose to go.

As he was stepping over the side, Mr. Cooke laid hold of a brass button and pressed a handful of the black cigars upon him.

“My regards to the detective, old man,” said he.

McCann stared.

“My regards to Drew,” my client insisted.

“Oh!” said McCann, his face lighting up, “him with the whiskers, what came from Bear Island in a cat-boat. Sure, he wasn’t no detective, sir.”

“What was he? A police commissioner?”

“Mr. Cooke,” said McCann, disdainfully, as he got into his boat, “he wasn’t nothing but a prospector doing the lake for one of them summer hotel companies.”

CHAPTER XIX

When the biography of the Celebrity is written, and I have no doubt it will be some day, may his biographer kindly draw a veil over that instant in his life when he was tenderly and obsequiously raised by Mr. Cooke from the trap in the floor of the Maria’s cabin.

It is sometimes the case that a good fright will heal a feud. And whereas, before the arrival of the H. Sinclair, there had been much dissension and many quarrels concerning the disposal of the quasi Charles Wrexell Allen, when the tug steamed away to the southwards but one opinion remained,—that, like Jonah, he must be got rid of. And no one concurred more heartily in this than the Celebrity himself. He strolled about and smoked apathetically, with the manner of one who was bored beyond description, whilst the discussion was going on between Farrar, Mr. Cooke, and myself as to the best place to land him. When considerately asked by my client whether he had any choice in the matter, he replied, somewhat facetiously, that he could not think of making a suggestion to one who had shown such superlative skill in its previous management.

Mr. Trevor, too, experienced a change of sentiment in Mr. Cooke's favor. It is not too much to say that the senator's scare had been of such thoroughness that he was willing to agree to almost anything. He had come so near to being relieved of that most precious possession, his respectability, that the reason in Mr. Cooke's course now appealed to him very strongly. Thus he became a tacit assenter in wrong-doing, for circumstances thrust this, once in a while, upon the best of our citizens.

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The afternoon wore cool; nay, cold is a better word. The wind brought with it a suggestion of the pine-clad wastes of the northwestern wilderness whence it came, and that sure harbinger of autumn, the blue haze, settled around the hills, and benumbed the rays of the sun lingering over the crests. Farrar and I, as navigators, were glad to get into our overcoats, while the others assembled in the little cabin and lighted the gasoline stove which stood in the corner. Outside we had our pipes for consolation, and the sunset beauty of the lake.

By six we were well over the line, and consulting our chart, we selected a cove behind a headland on our left, which seemed the best we could do for an anchorage, although it was shallow and full of rocks. As we were changing our course to run in, Mr. Cooke appeared, bundled up in his reefer. He was in the best of spirits, and was good enough to concur with our plans.

“Now, sir,” asked Farrar, “what do you propose to do with Allen?”

But our client only chuckled.

“Wait and see, old man,” he said; “I’ve got that all fixed.”

“Well,” Farrar remarked, when he had gone in again, “he has steered it deuced well so far. I think we can trust him.”

It was dark when we dropped anchor, a very tired party indeed; and as the Maria could not accommodate us all with sleeping quarters, Mr. Cooke decided that the ladies should have the cabin, since the night was cold. And so it might have been, had not Miss Thorn flatly refused to sleep there. The cabin was stuffy, she said, and so she carried her point. Leaving Farrar and one of Mr. Cooke’s friends to take care of the yacht, the rest of us went ashore, built a roaring fire and raised a tent, and proceeded to make ourselves as comfortable as circumstances would allow. The sense of relief over the danger passed produced a kind of lightheartedness amongst us, and the topics broached at supper would not have been inappropriate at a friendly dinner party. As we were separating for the night Miss Thorn said to me:

“I am so happy for your sake, Mr. Crocker, that he was not discovered.”

For my sake! Could she really have meant it, after all? I went to sleep thinking of that sentence, beside my client beneath the trees. And it was first in my thoughts when I awoke.

As we dipped our faces in the brook the next morning my client laughed softly to himself between the gasps, and I knew that he had in mind the last consummate touch to his successful enterprise. And the revelation came when the party were assembled at breakfast. Mr. Cooke stood up, and drawing from his pocket a small and mysterious

paper parcel he forthwith delivered himself in the tone and manner which had so endeared him to the familiars of the Lake House bar.

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“I’m not much for words, as you all know,” said he, with becoming modesty, “and I don’t set up to be an orator. I am just what you see here,—a damned plain man. And there’s only one virtue that I lay any claim to,—no one can say that I ever went back on a friend. I want to thank all of you (looking at the senator) for what you have done for me and Allen. It’s not for us to talk about that hundred thousand dollars. —My private opinion is (he seemed to have no scruples about making it public) that Allen is insane. No, old man, don’t interrupt me; but you haven’t acted just right, and that’s a fact. And I won’t feel square with myself until I put him where I found him, in safety. I am sorry to say, my friends,” he added, with emotion, “that Mr. Allen is about to leave us.”

He paused for breath, palpably satisfied with so much of it, and with the effect on his audience.

“Now,” continued he, “we start this morning for a place which is only four miles or so from the town of Saville, and I shall then request my esteemed legal adviser, Mr. Crocker, to proceed to the town and buy a ready-made suit of clothes for Mr. Allen, a slouch hat, a cheap necktie, and a stout pair of farmer’s boots. And I have here,” he said, holding up the package, “I have here the rest of it. My friends, you heard the chief tell me that Drew was doing the lake for a summer hotel syndicate. But if Drew wasn’t a detective you can throw me into the lake! He wasn’t exactly Pinkerton, and I flatter myself that we were too many for him,” said Mr. Cooke, with deserved pride; “and he went away in such a devilish hurry that he forgot his hand-bag with some of his extra things.”

Then my client opened the package, and held up on a string before our astonished eyes a wig, a pair of moustaches, and two bushy red whiskers.

And this was Mr. Cooke’s scheme! Did it electrify his hearers? Perhaps. Even the senator was so choked with laughter that he was forced to cast loose one of the buttons which held on his turn-down collar, and Farrar retired into the woods. But the gravity of Mr. Cooke’s countenance remained serene.

“Old man,” he said to the Celebrity, “you’ll have to learn the price of potatoes now. Here are Mr. Drew’s duplicates; try ’em on.”

This the Celebrity politely but firmly refused to do.

“Cooke,” said he, “it has never been my lot to visit so kind and considerate a host, or to know a man who pursued his duty with so little thought and care of his own peril. I wish to thank you, and to apologize for any hasty expressions I may have dropped by mistake, and I would it were possible to convince you that I am neither a maniac nor an embezzler. But, if it’s just the same to you, I believe I can get along without the disguise you mentioned, and so save Mr. Crocker his pains. In short, if you will set me down at

Saville, I am willing to take my chances of reaching the Canadian Pacific from that point without fear of detection."

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The Celebrity's speech produced a good impression on all save Mr. Cooke, who appeared a trifle water-logged. He had dealt successfully with Mr. Allen when that gentleman had been in defiant moods, or in moods of ugly sarcasm. But this good-natured, turn-you-down-easy note puzzled my client not a little. Was this cherished scheme a whim or a joke to be lightly cast aside? Mr. Cooke thought not. The determination which distinguished him still sat in his eye as he bustled about giving orders for the breaking of camp. This refractory criminal must be saved from himself, cost what it might, and responsibility again rested heavy on my client's mind as I rowed him out to the Maria.

"Crocker," he said, "if Allen is scooped in spite of us, you have got to go East and make him out an idiot."

He seemed to think that I had a talent for this particular defence. I replied that I would do my best.

"It won't be difficult," he went on; "not near as tough as that case you won for me. You can bring in all the bosh about his claiming to be an author, you know. And I'll stand expenses."

This was downright generous of Mr. Cooke. We have all, no doubt, drawn our line between what is right and what is wrong, but I have often wondered how many of us with the world's indorsement across our backs trespass as little on the other side of the line as he.

After Farrar and the Four got aboard it fell to my lot to row the rest of the party to the yacht. And this was no slight task that morning. The tender was small, holding but two beside the man at the oars, and owing to the rocks and shallow water of which I have spoken, the Maria lay considerably over a quarter of a mile out. Hence each trip occupied some time. Mr. Cooke I had transferred with a load of canvas and the tent poles, and next I returned for Mrs. Cooke and Mr. Trevor, whom I deposited safely. Then I landed again, helped in Miss Trevor and Miss Thorn, leaving the Celebrity for the last, and was pulling for the yacht when a cry from the tender's stern arrested me.

"Mr. Crocker, they are sailing away without us!"

I turned in my seat. The Maria's mainsail was up, and the jib was being hoisted, and her head was rapidly falling off to the wind. Farrar was casting. In the stern, waving a handkerchief, I recognized Mrs. Cooke, and beside her a figure in black, gesticulating frantically, a vision of coat-tails flapping in the breeze. Then the yacht heeled on her course and forged lakewards.

"Row, Mr. Crocker, row! they are leaving us!" cried Miss Trevor, in alarm.

I hastened to reassure her.

“Farrar is probably trying something,” I said. “They will be turning presently.”

This is just what they did not do. Once out of the inlet, they went about and headed northward, up the coast, and we remained watching them until Mr. Trevor became a mere oscillating black speck against the sail.

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“What can it mean?” asked Miss Thorn.

I had not so much as an idea.

“They certainly won’t desert us, at any rate,” I said. “We had better go ashore again and wait.”

The Celebrity was seated on the beach, and he was whittling. Now whittling is an occupation which speaks of a contented frame of mind, and the Maria’s departure did not seem to have annoyed or disturbed him.

“Castaways,” says he, gayly, “castaways on a foreign shore. Two delightful young ladies, a bright young lawyer, a fugitive from justice, no chaperon, and nothing to eat. And what a situation for a short story, if only an author were permitted to make use of his own experiences!”

“Only you don’t know how it will end,” Miss Thorn put in.

The Celebrity glanced up at her.

“I have a guess,” said he, with a smile.

“Is it true,” Miss Trevor asked, “that a story must contain the element of love in order to find favor with the public?”

“That generally recommends it, especially to your sex, Miss Trevor,” he replied jocosely.

Miss Trevor appeared interested.

“And tell me,” she went on, “isn’t it sometimes the case that you start out intent on one ending, and that your artistic sense of what is fitting demands another?”

“Don’t be silly, Irene,” said Miss Thorn. She was skipping flat pebbles over the water, and doing it capitally, too.

I thought the Celebrity rather resented the question.

“That sometimes happens, of course,” said he, carelessly. He produced his inevitable gold cigarette case and held it out to me. “Be sociable for once, and have one,” he said.

I accepted.

“Do you know,” he continued, lighting me a match, “it beats me why you and Miss Trevor put this thing up on me. You have enjoyed it, naturally, and if you wanted to make me out a donkey you succeeded rather well. I used to think that Crocker was a

pretty good friend of mine when I went to his dinners in New York. And I once had every reason to believe," he added, "that Miss Trevor and I were on excellent terms."

Was this audacity or stupidity? Undoubtedly both.

"So we were," answered Miss Trevor, "and I should be very sorry to think, Mr. Allen," she said meaningly, "that our relations had in any way changed."

It was the Celebrity's turn to flush.

"At any rate," he remarked in his most offhand manner, "I am much obliged to you both. On sober reflection I have come to believe that you did the very best thing for my reputation."

CHAPTER XX

He had scarcely uttered these words before the reason for the Maria's abrupt departure became apparent. The anchorage of the yacht had been at a spot whence nearly the whole south of the lake towards Far Harbor was open, whilst a high tongue of land hid that part from us on the shore. As he spoke, there shot before our eyes a steaming tug-boat, and a second look was not needed to assure me that she was the "H. Sinclair, of Far Harbor." They had perceived her from the yacht an hour since, and it was clear that my client, prompt to act as to think, had decided at once to put out and lead her a blind chase, so giving the Celebrity a chance to make good his escape.

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The surprise and apprehension created amongst us by her sudden appearance was such that none of us, for a space, spoke or moved. She was about a mile off shore, but it was even whether the chief would decide that his quarry had been left behind in the inlet and turn in, or whether he would push ahead after the yacht. He gave us an abominable five minutes of uncertainty. For when he came opposite the cove he slowed up, apparently weighing his chances. It was fortunate that we were hidden from his glasses by a copse of pines. The Sinclair increased her speed and pushed northward after the Maria. I turned to the Celebrity.

“If you wish to escape, now is your chance,” I said.

For contrariness he was more than I have ever had to deal with. Now he crossed his knees and laughed.

“It strikes me you had better escape, Crocker,” said he. “You have more to run for.”

I looked across at Miss Thorn. She had told him, then, of my predicament. And she did not meet my eye. He began to whittle again, and remarked:

“It is only seventeen miles or so across these hills to Far Harbor, old chap, and you can get a train there for Asquith.”

“Just as you choose,” said I, shortly.

With that I started off to gain the top of the promontory in order to watch the chase. I knew that this could not last as long as that of the day before. In less than three hours we might expect the Maria and the tug in the cove. And, to be frank, the indisposition of the Celebrity to run troubled me. Had he come to the conclusion that it was just as well to submit to what seemed the inevitable and so enjoy the spice of revenge over me? My thoughts gave zest to my actions, and I was climbing the steep, pine-clad slope with rapidity when I heard Miss Trevor below me calling out to wait for her. At the point of our ascent the ridge of the tongue must have been four hundred feet above the level of the water, and from this place of vantage we could easily make out the Maria in the distance, and note from time to time the gain of the Sinclair.

“It wasn’t fair of me, I know, to leave Marian,” said Miss Trevor, apologetically, “but I simply couldn’t resist the temptation to come up here.”

“I hardly think she will bear you much ill will,” I answered dryly; “you did the kindest thing possible. Who knows but what they are considering the advisability of an elopement!”

We passed a most enjoyable morning up there, all things taken into account, for the day was too perfect for worries. We even laughed at our hunger, which became keen about noon, as is always the case when one has nothing to eat; so we set out to explore the ridge for blackberries. These were so plentiful that I gathered a hatful for our friends

below, and then I lingered for a last look at the boats. I could make out but one. Was it the yacht? No; for there was a trace of smoke over it. And yet I was sure of a mast. I put my hand over my eyes.

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“What is it?” asked Miss Trevor, anxiously.

“The tug has the Maria in tow,” I said, “and they are coming this way.”

We scrambled down, sobered by this discovery and thinking of little else. And breaking through the bushes we came upon Miss Thorn and the Celebrity. To me, preoccupied with the knowledge that the tug would soon be upon us, there seemed nothing strange in the attitude of these two, but Miss Trevor remarked something out of the common at once. How keenly a woman scents a situation.

The Celebrity was standing with his back to Miss Thorn, at the edge of the water. His chin was in the air, and to a casual observer he looked to be minutely interested in a flock of gulls passing over us. And Miss Thorn? She was enthroned upon a heap of drift-wood, and when I caught sight of her face I forgot the very existence of the police captain. Her lips were parted in a smile.

“You are just in time, Irene,” she said calmly; “Mr. Allen has asked me to be his wife.”

I stood, with the hatful of berries in my hand, like a stiff wax figure in a museum. The expected had come at last; and how little do we expect the expected when it comes! I was aware that both the young women were looking at me, and that both were quietly laughing. And I must have cut a ridiculous figure indeed, though I have since been informed on good authority that this was not so. Much I cared then what happened. Then came Miss Trevor’s reply, and it seemed to shake the very foundations of my wits.

“But, Marian,” said she, “you can’t have him. He is engaged to me. And if it’s quite the same to you, I want him myself. It isn’t often, you know, that one has the opportunity to marry a Celebrity.”

The Celebrity turned around: an expression of extraordinary intelligence shot across his face, and I knew then that the hole in the well-nigh invulnerable armor of his conceit had been found at last. And Miss Thorn, of all people, had discovered it.

“Engaged to you?” she cried, “I can’t believe it. He would be untrue to everything he has written.”

“My word should be sufficient,” said Miss Trevor, stiffly. (May I be hung if they hadn’t acted it all out before.) “If you should wish proofs, however, I have several notes from him which are at your service, and an inscribed photograph. No, Marian,” she added, shaking her head, “I really cannot give him up.”

Miss Thorn rose and confronted him, and her dignity was inspiring. “Is this so?” she demanded; “is it true that you are engaged to marry Miss Trevor?”

The Bone of Contention was badly troubled. He had undoubtedly known what it was to have two women quarrelling over his hand at the same time, but I am willing to bet that the sensation of having them come together in his presence was new to him.

“I did not think—” he began. “I was not aware that Miss Trevor looked upon the matter in that light, and you know—”

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“What disgusting equivocation,” Miss Trevor interrupted. “He asked me point blank to marry him, and of course I consented. He has never mentioned to me that he wished to break the engagement, and I wouldn’t have broken it.”

I felt like a newsboy in a gallery,—I wanted to cheer. And the Celebrity kicked the stones and things.

“Who would have thought,” she persisted, “that the author of The Sybarites, the man who chose Desmond for a hero, could play thus idly with the heart of woman? The man who wrote these beautiful lines: ’Inconstancy in a woman, because of the present social conditions, is sometimes pardonable. In a man, nothing is more despicable.’ And how poetic a justice it is that he has to marry me, and is thus forced to lead the life of self-denial he has conceived for his hero. Mr. Crocker, will you be my attorney if he should offer any objections?”

The humor of this proved too much for the three of us, and Miss Trevor herself went into peals of laughter. Would that the Celebrity could have seen his own face. I doubt if even he could have described it. But I wished for his sake that the earth might have kindly opened and taken him in.

“Marian,” said Miss Trevor, “I am going to be very generous. I relinquish the prize to you, and to you only. And I flatter myself there are not many girls in this world who would do it.”

“Thank you, Irene,” Miss Thorn replied gravely, “much as I want him, I could not think of depriving you.”

Well, there is a limit to all endurance, and the Celebrity had reached his.

“Crocker,” he said, “how far is it to the Canadian Pacific?”

I told him.

“I think I had best be starting,” said he.

And a moment later he had disappeared into the woods.

We stood gazing in the direction he had taken, until the sound of his progress had died away. The shock of it all had considerably muddled my brain, and when at last I had adjusted my thoughts to the new conditions, a sensation of relief, of happiness, of joy (call it what you will), came upon me, and I could scarce restrain an impulse to toss my hat in the air. He was gone at last! But that was not the reason. I was safe from O’Meara and calumny. Nor was this all. And I did not dare to look at Miss Thorn. The knowledge that she had planned and carried out with dignity and success such a

campaign filled me with awe. That I had misjudged her made me despise myself. Then I became aware that she was speaking to me, and I turned.

“Mr. Crocker, do you think there is any danger that he will lose his way?”

“No, Miss Thorn,” I replied; “he has only to get to the top of that ridge and strike the road for Saville, as I told him.”

We were silent again until Miss Trevor remarked:

“Well, he deserved every bit of it.”

“And more, Irene,” said Miss Thorn, laughing; “he deserved to marry you.”

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“I think he won’t come West again for a very long time,” said I.

Miss Trevor regarded me wickedly, and I knew what was coming.

“I hope you are convinced, now, Mr. Crocker, that our sex is not as black as you painted it: that Miss Thorn knew what she was about, and that she is not the inconsistent and variable creature you took her to be.”

I felt the blood rush to my face, and Miss Thorn, too, became scarlet. She went up to the mischievous Irene and grasping her arms from behind, bent them until she cried for mercy.

“How strong you are, Marian! It is an outrage to hurt me so. I haven’t said anything.” But she was incorrigible, and when she had twisted free she began again:

“I took it upon myself to speak a few parables to Mr. Crocker the other day. You know, Marian, that he is one of these level-headed old fogies who think women ought to be kept in a menagerie, behind bars, to be inspected on Saturday afternoons. Now, I appeal to you if it wouldn’t be disastrous to fall in love with a man of such ideas. And just to let you know what a literal old law-brief he is, when I said he had had a hat-pin sticking in him for several weeks, he nearly jumped overboard, and began to feel himself all over. Did you know that he actually believed you were doing your best to get married to the Celebrity?” (Here she dodged Miss Thorn again.) “Oh, yes, he confided in me. He used to worry himself ill over that. I’ll tell you what he said to me only—”

But fortunately at this juncture Miss Trevor was captured again, and Miss Thorn put her hand over her mouth. Heaven only knows what she would have said!

The two boats did not arrive until nearly four o’clock, owing to some trouble to the tug’s propeller. Not knowing what excuse my client might have given for leaving some of his party ashore, I thought it best to go out to meet them. Seated on the cabin roof of the Maria I beheld Mr. Cooke and McCann in conversation, each with a black cigar too big for him.

“Hello, Crocker, old man,” shouted my client, “did you think I was never coming back? I’ve had lots of sport out of this hayseed captain” (and he poked that official playfully), “but I didn’t get any grub. So we’ll have to go to Far Harbor.”

I caught the hint. Mr. Cooke had given out that he had started for Saville to restock the larder.

“No,” he continued, “Brass Buttons didn’t let me get to Saville. You see, when he got back to town last night they told him he had been buncoed out of the biggest thing for years, and they got it into his head that I was child enough to run a ferry for criminals.

They told him he wasn't the sleuth he thought he was, so he came back. They'll have the laugh on him now, for sure."

McCann listened with admirable good-nature, gravely pulling at his cigar, and eyeing Mr. Cooke with a friendly air of admiration.

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“Mr. Crocker,” he said, with melancholy humor, “it’s leery I am with the whole shooting-match. Mr. Cooke here is a gentleman, every inch of him, and so be you, Mr. Crocker. But I’m just after taking a look at the hole in the bottom of the boat. ’Ye have yer bunks in queer places, Mr. Cooke,’ says I. It’s not for me to be doubting a gentleman’s word, sir, but I’m thinking me man is over the hills and far away, and that’s true for ye.”

Mr. Cooke winked expressively.

“McCann, you’ve been jerked,” said he. “Have another bottle!”

The Sinclair towed us to Far Harbor for a consideration, the wind being strong again from the south, and McCann was induced by the affable owner to remain on the yellow-plush yacht. I cornered him before we had gone a great distance.

“McCann,” said I, “what made you come back to-day?”

“Faith, Mr. Crocker, I don’t care if I am telling you. I always had a liking for you, sir, and bechune you and me it was that divil O’Meara what made all the trouble. I wasn’t taking his money, not me; the saints forbid! But glory be to God, if he didn’t raise a rumpus whin I come back without Allen! It was sure he was that the gent left that place, —what are ye calling it?—Mohair, in the Maria, and we telegraphs over to Asquith. He swore I’d lose me job if I didn’t fetch him to-day. Mr. Crocker, sir, it’s the lumber business I’ll be startin’ next week,” said McCann.

“Don’t let that worry you, McCann,” I answered. “I will see that you don’t lose your place, and I give you my word again that Charles Wrexell Allen has never been aboard this yacht, or at Mohair to my knowledge. What is more, I will prove it to-morrow to your satisfaction.”

McCann’s faith was touching.

“Ye’re not to say another word, sir,” he said, and he stuck out his big hand, which I grasped warmly.

My affection for McCann still remains a strong one.

After my talk with McCann I was sitting on the forecastle propped against the bitts of the Maria’s anchor-chain, and looking at the swirling foam cast up by the tug’s propeller. There were many things I wished to turn over in my mind just then, but I had not long been in a state of reverie when I became conscious that Miss Thorn was standing beside me. I got to my feet.

“I have been wondering how long you would remain in that trance, Mr. Crocker,” she said. “Is it too much to ask what you were thinking of?”

Now it so chanced that I was thinking of her at that moment. It would never have done to say this, so I stammered. And Miss Thorn was a young woman of tact.

“I should not have put that to so literal a man as you,” she declared. “I fear that you are incapable of crossing swords. And then,” she added, with a slight hesitation that puzzled me, “I did not come up here to ask you that,—I came to get your opinion.”

“My opinion?” I repeated.

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“Not your legal opinion,” she replied, smiling, “but your opinion as a citizen, as an individual, if you have one. To be frank, I want your opinion of me. Do you happen to have such a thing?”

I had. But I was in no condition to give it.

“Do you think me a very wicked girl?” she asked, coloring. “You once thought me inconsistent, I believe, but I am not that. Have I done wrong in leading the Celebrity to the point where you saw him this morning?”

“Heaven forbid!” I cried fervently; “but you might have spared me a great deal had you let me into the secret.”

“Spared you a great deal,” said Miss Thorn. “I—I don’t quite understand.”

“Well—” I began, and there I stayed. All the words in the dictionary seemed to slip out of my grasp, and I foundered. I realized I had said something which even in my wildest moments I had not dared to think of. My secret was out before I knew I possessed it. Bad enough had I told it to Farrar in an unguarded second. But to her! I was blindly seeking some way of escape when she said softly:

“Did you really care?”

I am man enough, I hope, when there is need to be. And it matters not what I felt then, but the words came back to me.

“Marian,” I said, “I cared more than you will ever learn.”

But it seems that she had known all the time, almost since that night I had met her at the train. And how? I shall not pretend to answer, that being quite beyond me. I am very sure of one thing, however, which is that I never told a soul, man or woman, or even hinted at it. How was it possible when I didn’t know myself?

The light in the west was gone as we were pulled into Far Harbor, and the lamps of the little town twinkled brighter than I had ever seen them before. I think they must have been reflected in our faces, since Miss Trevor, when she came forward to look for us, saw something there and openly congratulated us. And this most embarrassing young woman demanded presently:

“How did it happen, Marian? Did you propose to him?”

I was about to protest indignantly, but Marian laid her hand on my arm.

“Tell it not in Asquith,” said she. “Irene, I won’t have him teased any more.”

We were drawing up to the dock, and for the first time I saw that a crowd was gathered there. The report of this chase had gone abroad. Some began calling out to McCann when we came within distance, among others the editor of the Northern Lights, and beside him I perceived with amusement the generous lines: of the person of Mr. O'Meara himself. I hurried back to give Farrar a hand with the ropes, and it was O'Meara who caught the one I flung ashore and wound it around a pile. The people pressed around, peering at our party on the Maria, and I heard McCann exhorting them to make way. And just then, as he was about to cross the plank, they parted for some one from behind. A breathless messenger halted at the edge of the wharf. He held out a telegram.

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McCann seized it and dived into the cabin, followed closely by my client and those of us who could push after. He tore open the envelope, his eye ran over the lines, and then he began to slap his thigh and turn around in a circle, like a man dazed.

“Whiskey!” shouted Mr. Cooke. “Get him a glass of Scotch!”

But McCann held up his hand.

“Holy Saint Patrick!” he said, in a husky voice, “it’s upset I am, bottom upwards. Will ye listen to this?”

> “’Drew is your man. Reddish hair and long side whiskers, gray clothes. Pretends to represent summer hotel syndicate. Allen at Asquith unknown and harmless.
>
> “’ (Signed.) Everhardt.'”

“Sew me up,” said Mr. Cooke; “if that don’t beat hell!”

CHAPTER XXI

In this world of lies the good and the bad are so closely intermingled that frequently one is the means of obtaining the other. Therefore, I wish very freely to express my obligations to the Celebrity for any share he may have had in contributing to the greatest happiness of my life.

Marian and I were married the very next month, October, at my client’s palatial residence of Mohair. This was at Mr. Cooke’s earnest wish: and since Marian was Mrs. Cooke’s own niece, and an orphan, there seemed no good reason why my client should not be humored in the matter. As for Marian and me, we did not much care whether we were married at Mohair or the City of Mexico. Mrs. Cooke, I think, had a secret preference for Germantown.

Mr. Cooke quite over-reached himself in that wedding. “The knot was tied,” as the papers expressed it, “under a huge bell of yellow roses.” The paper also named the figure which the flowers and the collation and other things cost Mr. Cooke. A natural reticence forbids me to repeat it. But, lest my client should think that I undervalue his kindness, I will say that we had the grandest wedding ever seen in that part of the world. McCann was there, and Mr. Cooke saw to it that he had a punchbowl all to himself in which to drink our healths: Judge Short was there, still followed by the conjugal eye: and Senator Trevor, who remained over, in a new long black coat to kiss the bride. Mr. Cooke chartered two cars to carry guests from the East, besides those who came as ordinary citizens. Miss Trevor was of the party, and Farrar, of course, was

best man. Would that I had the flow of words possessed by the reporter of the Chicago Sunday newspaper!

But there is one thing I must mention before Mrs. Crocker and I leave for New York, in a shower of rice, on Mr. Cooke's own private car, and that is my client's gift. In addition to the check he gave Marian, he presented us with a huge, 'repousse' silver urn he had had made to order, and he expressed a desire that the design upon it should remind us of him forever and ever. I think it will. Mercury is duly set forth in a gorgeous equipage, driving four horses around the world at a furious pace; and the artist, by special instructions, had docked their tails.

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From New York, Mrs. Crocker and I went abroad. And it so chanced, in December, that we were staying a few days at a country-place in Sussex, and the subject of The Sybarites was broached at a dinner-party. The book was then having its sale in England.

“Crocker,” said our host, “do you happen to have met the author of that book? He’s an American.”

I looked across the table at my wife, and we both laughed.

“I happen to know him intimately,” I replied.

“Do you, now?” said the Englishman; “what a very entertaining chap he is, is he not? I had him down in October, and, by Jove, we were laughing the blessed time. He was telling us how he wrote his novels, and he said, ’pon my soul he did, that he had a secretary or something of that sort to whom he told the plot, and the secretary elaborated, you know, and wrote the draft. And he said, ’pon my honor, that sometimes the clark wrote the plot and all,—the whole blessed thing,—and that he never saw the book except to sign his name to it.”

“You say he was here in October?” asked Marian, when the laugh had subsided.

“I have the date,” answered our host, “for he left me an autograph copy of The Sybarites when he went away.” And after dinner he showed us the book, with evident pride. Inscribed on the fly-leaf was the name of the author, October 10th. But a glance sufficed to convince both of us that the Celebrity had never written it.

“John,” said Marian to me, a suspicion of the truth crossing her mind, “John, can it be the bicycle man?”

“Yes, it can be,” I said; “it is.”

“Well,” said Marian, “he’s been doing a little more for our friend than we did.”

Nor was this the last we heard of that meteoric trip through England, which the alleged author of The Sybarites had indulged in. He did not go up to London; not he. It was given out that he was travelling for his health, that he did not wish to be lionized; and there were friends of the author in the metropolis who had never heard of his secretary, and who were at a loss to understand his conduct. They felt slighted. One of these told me that the Celebrity had been to a Lincolnshire estate where he had created a decided sensation by his riding to hounds, something the Celebrity had never been known to do. And before we crossed the Channel, Marian saw another autograph copy of the famous novel.

One day, some months afterwards, we were sitting in our little salon in a Paris hotel when a card was sent up, which Marian took.

“John,” she cried, “it’s the Celebrity.”

It was the Celebrity, in the flesh, faultlessly groomed and clothed, with frock coat, gloves, and stick. He looked the picture of ruddy, manly health and strength, and we saw at once that he bore no ill-will for the past. He congratulated us warmly, and it was my turn to offer him a cigarette. He was nothing loath to reminisce on the subject of his experiences in the wilds of the northern lakes, or even to laugh over them. He asked affectionately after his friend Cooke. Time had softened his feelings, and we learned that he had another girl, who was in Paris just then, and invited us on the spot to dine with her at “Joseph’s.” Let me say, in passing, that as usual she did credit to the Celebrity’s exceptional taste.

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“Now,” said he, “I have something to tell you two.”

He asked for another cigarette, and I laid the box beside him.

“I suppose you reached Saville all right,” I said, anticipating.

“Seven at night,” said he, “and so hungry that I ate what they call marble cake for supper, and a great many other things out of little side dishes, and nearly died of indigestion afterward. Then I took a train up to the main line. An express came along. ‘Why not go West?’ I asked myself, and I jumped aboard. It was another whim—you know I am subject to them. When I got to Victoria I wired for money and sailed to Japan; and then I went on to India and through the Suez, taking things easy. I fell in with some people I knew who were going where the spirit moved them, and I went along.

“Algiers, for one place, and whom do you think I saw there, in the lobby of a hotel?”

“Charles Wrexell Allen,” cried Marian and I together.

The Celebrity looked surprised. “How did you know?” he demanded.

“Go on with your story,” said Marian; “what did he do?”

“What did he do?” said the Celebrity; “why, the blackguard stepped up and shook me by the hand, and asked after my health, and wanted to know whether I were married yet. He was so beastly familiar that I took out my glass, and I got him into a cafe for fear some one would see me with him. ‘My dear fellow,’ said he, ’you did me the turn of my life.—How can I ever repay you?’ ‘Hang your impudence,’ said I, but I wanted to hear what he had to say. ‘Don’t lose your temper, old chap,’ he laughed; ’you took a few liberties with my name, and there was no good reason why I shouldn’t take some with yours. Was there? When I think of it, the thing was most decidedly convenient; it was the hand of Providence.’ ‘You took liberties with my name,’ I cried. With that he coolly called to the waiter to fill our glasses. ‘Now,’ said he, ’I’ve got a story for you. Do you remember the cotillon, or whatever it was, that Cooke gave? Well, that was all in the Chicago papers, and the “Miles Standish” agent there saw it, and he knew pretty well that I wasn’t West. So he sent me the papers, just for fun. You may imagine my surprise when I read that I had been leading a dance out at Mohair, or some such barbarous place in the northwest. I looked it up on the map (Asquith, I mean), and then I began to think. I wondered who in the devil it might be who had taken my name and occupation, and all that. You see, I had just relieved the company of a little money, and it hit me like a clap of thunder one day that the idiot was you. But I couldn’t be sure. And as long as I had to get out very soon anyway, I concluded to go to Mohair and make certain, and then pile things off on you if you happened to be the man.’”

At this point Marian and I were seized with laughter, in which the Celebrity himself joined. Presently he continued:

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"'So I went,' said Allen. 'I provided myself with two disguises, as a careful man should, but by the time I reached that outlandish hole, Asquith, the little thing I was mixed up in burst prematurely, and the papers were full of it that morning. The whole place was out with sticks, so to speak, hunting for you. They told me the published description hit you to a dot, all except the scar, and they quarrelled about that. I posed as the promoter of resort syndicates, and I hired the Scimitar and sailed over to Bear Island; and I didn't have a bad time that afternoon, only Cooke insisted on making remarks about my whiskers, and I was in mortal fear lest he might accidentally pull one off. He came cursed near it. By the way, he's the very deuce of a man, isn't he? I knew he took me for a detective, so I played the part. And in the night that ass of a state senator nearly gave me pneumonia by getting me out in the air to tell me they had hid you in a cave. So I sat up all night, and followed the relief party in the morning, and you nearly disfigured me for life when you threw that bottle into the woods. Then I went back to camp, and left so fast that I forgot my extra pair of red whiskers. I had two of each disguise, you know, so I didn't miss them.

"'I guess,' Mr. Allen went on, gleefully, 'that I got off about as cleanly as any criminal ever did, thanks to you. If we'd fixed the thing up between us it couldn't have been any neater, could it? Because I went straight to Far Harbor and got you into a peck of trouble, right away, and then slipped quietly into Canada, and put on the outfit of a travelling salesman. And right here another bright idea struck me. Why not carry the thing farther? I knew that you had advertised a trip to Europe (why, the Lord only knows), so I went East and sailed for England on the Canadian Line. And let me thank you for a little sport I had in a quiet way as the author of The Sybarites. I think I astonished some of your friends, old boy.'"

The Celebrity lighted another cigarette.

"So if it hadn't been for me," he said, "the 'Miles Standish Bicycle Company' wouldn't have gone to the wall. Can they sentence me for assisting Allen to get away, Crocker? If they can, I believe I shall stay over here."

"I think you are safe," said I. "But didn't Allen tell you any more?"

"No. A man he used to know came into the cafe, and Allen got out of the back door. And I never saw him again."

"I believe I can tell you a little more," said Marian.

……

The Celebrity is still writing books of a high moral tone and unapproachable principle, and his popularity is undiminished. I have not heard, however, that he has given way to any more whims.

PG EDITOR'S BOOKMARKS:

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A man's character often give the lie to his tongue
A lie has short legs
Appearance of a professional pallbearer
Architects should be driven and not followed
Consequential or inconsequential irrespective of their size
Deal with a fool according to his folly
Impervious to hints, and would not take no for an answer
Old enough to know better, and too old to be taught
That abominable word "like"

THE CRISIS

By Winston Churchill

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THE CRISIS

BOOK I

CHAPTER I

WHICH DEALS WITH ORIGINS

Faithfully to relate how Eliphalet Hopper came try St. Louis is to betray no secret. Mr. Hopper is wont to tell the story now, when his daughter-in-law is not by; and sometimes he tells it in her presence, for he is a shameless and determined old party who denies the divine right of Boston, and has taken again to chewing tobacco.

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When Eliphalet came to town, his son's wife, Mrs: Samuel D. (or S. Dwyer as she is beginning to call herself), was not born. Gentlemen of Cavalier and Puritan descent had not yet begun to arrive at the Planters' House, to buy hunting shirts and broad rims, belts and bowies, and depart quietly for Kansas, there to indulge in that; most pleasurable of Anglo-Saxon pastimes, a free fight. Mr. Douglas had not thrown his bone of Local Sovereignty to the sleeping dogs of war.

To return to Eliphalet's arrival,—a picture which has much that is interesting in it. Behold the friendless boy he stands in the prow of the great steamboat 'Louisiana' of a scorching summer morning, and looks with something of a nameless disquiet on the chocolate waters of the Mississippi. There have been other sights, since passing Louisville, which might have disgusted a Massachusetts lad more. A certain deck on the 'Paducah', which took him as far as Cairo, was devoted to cattle —black cattle. Eliphalet possessed a fortunate temperament. The deck was dark, and the smell of the wretches confined there was worse than it should have been. And the incessant weeping of some of the women was annoying, inasmuch as it drowned many of the profane communications of the overseer who was showing Eliphalet the sights. Then a fine-linened planter from down river had come in during the conversation, and paying no attention to the overseer's salute cursed them all into silence, and left.

Eliphalet had ambition, which is not a wholly undesirable quality. He began to wonder how it would feel to own a few of these valuable fellow-creatures. He reached out and touched lightly a young mulatto woman who sat beside him with an infant in her arms. The peculiar dumb expression on her face was lost on Eliphalet. The overseer had laughed coarsely.

"What, skeered on 'em?" said he. And seizing the girl by the cheek, gave it a cruel twinge that brought a cry out of her.

Eliphalet had reflected upon this incident after he had bid the overseer good-by at Cairo, and had seen that pitiful coffle piled aboard a steamer for New Orleans. And the result of his reflections was, that some day he would like to own slaves.

A dome of smoke like a mushroom hung over the city, visible from far down the river, motionless in the summer air. A long line of steamboats —white, patient animals—was tethered along the levee, and the Louisiana presently swung in her bow toward a gap in this line, where a mass of people was awaiting her arrival. Some invisible force lifted Eliphalet's eyes to the upper deck, where they rested, as if by appointment, on the trim figure of the young man in command of the Louisiana. He was very young for the captain of a large New Orleans packet. When his lips moved, something happened. Once he raised his voice, and a negro stevedore rushed frantically aft, as if he had received the end of a lightning-bolt. Admiration burst from the passengers, and one man cried out Captain Brent's age—it was thirty-two.

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Eliphalet snapped his teeth together. He was twenty-seven, and his ambition actually hurt him at such times. After the boat was fast to the landing stage he remained watching the captain, who was speaking a few parting words to some passengers of fashion. The body-servants were taking their luggage to the carriages. Mr. Hopper envied the captain his free and vigorous speech, his ready jokes, and his hearty laugh. All the rest he knew for his own—in times to come. The carriages, the trained servants, the obsequiousness of the humbler passengers. For of such is the Republic.

Then Eliphalet picked his way across the hot stones of the levee, pushing hither and thither in the rough crowd of river men; dodging the mules on the heavy drays, or making way for the carriages of the few people of importance who arrived on the boat. If any recollections of a cool, white farmhouse amongst barren New England hills disturbed his thoughts, this is not recorded. He gained the mouth of a street between the low houses which crowded on the broad river front. The black mud was thick under his feet from an overnight shower, and already steaming in the sun. The brick pavement was lumpy from much travel and near as dirty as the street. Here, too, were drays blocking the way, and sweaty negro teamsters swinging cowhides over the mules. The smell of many wares poured through the open doors, mingling with the perspiration of the porters. On every side of him were busy clerks, with their suspenders much in evidence, and Eliphalet paused once or twice to listen to their talk. It was tinged with that dialect he had heard, since leaving Cincinnati.

Turning a corner, Eliphalet came abruptly upon a prophecy. A great drove of mules was charging down the gorge of the street, and straight at him. He dived into an entrance, and stood looking at the animals in startled wonder as they thundered by, flinging the mud over the pavements. A cursing lot of drovers on ragged horses made the rear guard.

Eliphalet mopped his brow. The mules seemed to have aroused in him some sense of his atomity, where the sight of the pillar of smoke and of the black cattle had failed. The feeling of a stranger in a strange land was upon him at last. A strange land, indeed! Could it be one with his native New England? Did Congress assemble from the Antipodes? Wasn't the great, ugly river and dirty city at the end of the earth, to be written about in Boston journals?

Turning in the doorway, he saw to his astonishment a great store, with high ceilings supported by columns. The door was stacked high with bales of dry goods. Beside him was a sign in gold lettering, "Carvel and Company, Wholesale Dry Goods." And lastly, looking down upon him with a quizzical expression, was a gentleman. There was no mistaking the gentleman. He was cool, which Eliphalet was not. And the fact is the more remarkable because the gentleman was attired according to the fashion of the day for men of his age, in a black coat with a teal of ruffled shirt showing, and a heavy black stock around his collar. He had a white mustache, and a goatee, and white hair under

his black felt hat. His face was long, his nose straight, and the sweetness of its smile had a strange effect upon Eliphalet, who stood on one foot.

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“Well, sonny, scared of mules, are you?” The speech is a stately drawl very different from the nasal twang of Eliphalet’s bringing up. “Reckon you don’t come from anywhere round here?”

“No, sir,” said Eliphalet. “From Willesden, Massachusetts.”

“Come in on the ’Louisiana’?”

“Yes, sir.” But why this politeness?

The elderly gentleman lighted a cigar. The noise of the rushing mules had now become a distant roar, like a whirlwind which has swept by. But Eliphalet did not stir.

“Friends in town?” inquired the gentleman at length.

“No, sir,” sighed Mr. Hopper.

At this point of the conversation a crisp step sounded from behind and wonderful smile came again on the surface.

“Mornin’, Colonel,” said a voice which made Eliphalet jump. And he swung around to perceive the young captain of the Louisiana.

“Why, Captain Lige,” cried the Colonel, without ceremony, “and how do you find yourself to-day, suh? A good trip from Orleans? We did not look for you so soon.”

“Tolluble, Colonel, tolluble,” said the young man, grasping the Colonel’s hand. “Well, Colonel, I just called to say that I got the seventy bales of goods you wanted.”

“Ephum” cried the Colonel, diving toward a counter where glasses were set out,—a custom new to Eliphalet,—“Ephum, some of that very particular Colonel Crittenden sent me over from Kentucky last week.”

An old darkey, with hair as white as the Colonel’s, appeared from behind the partition.

“I ’lowed you’d want it, Marse Comyn, when I seed de Cap’n comin’,” said he, with the privilege of an old servant. Indeed, the bottle was beneath his arm.

The Colonel smiled.

“Hope you’se well, Cap’n,” said Ephum, as he drew the cork.

“Tolluble, Ephum,” replied the Captain. “But, Ephum—say, Ephum!”

“Yes, sah.”

“How’s my little sweetheart, Ephum?”

“Bress your soul, sah,” said Ephum, his face falling perceptibly, “bress your soul, sah, Miss Jinny’s done gone to Halcyondale, in Kaintuck, to see her grandma. Ole Ephum ain’t de same nigger when she’s away.”

The young Captain’s face showed as much disappointment as the darkey’s.

“Cuss it!” said he, strongly, “if that ain’t too bad! I brought her a Creole doll from New Orleans, which Madame Claire said was dressed finer than any one she’d ever seen. All lace and French gewgaws, Colonel. But you’ll send it to her?”

“That I will, Lige,” said the Colonel, heartily. “And she shall write you the prettiest note of thanks you ever got.”

“Bless her pretty face,” cried the Captain. “Her health, Colonel! Here’s a long life to Miss Virginia Carvel, and may she rule forever! How old did you say this was?” he asked, looking into the glass.

“Over half a century,” said Colonel Carvel.

“If it came from the ruins of Pompeii,” cried Captain Brent, “it might be worthy of her!”

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“What an idiot you are about that child, Lige,” said the Colonel, who was not hiding his pleasure. The Colonel could hide nothing. “You ruin her!”

The bluff young Captain put down his glass to laugh.

“Ruin her!” he exclaimed. “Her pa don’t ruin her I eh, Ephum? Her pa don’t ruin her!”

“Lawsy, Marse Lige, I reckon he’s wuss’n any.”

“Ephum,” said the Colonel, pulling his goatee thoughtfully, “you’re a damned impertinent nigger. I vow I’ll sell you South one of these days. Have you taken that letter to Mr. Renault?” He winked at his friend as the old darkey faded into the darkness of the store, and continued: “Did I ever tell you about Wilson Peale’s portrait of my grandmother, Dorothy Carvel, that I saw this summer at my brother Daniel’s, in Pennsylvania? Jinny’s going to look something like her, sir. Um! She was a fine woman. Black hair, though. Jinny’s is brown, like her Ma’s.” The Colonel handed a cigar to Captain Brent, and lit one himself. “Daniel has a book my grandfather wrote, mostly about her. Lord, I remember her! She was the queen-bee of the family while she lived. I wish some of us had her spirit.”

“Colonel,” remarked Captain Lige, “what’s this I heard on the levee just now about your shootin’ at a man named Babcock on the steps here?”

The Colonel became very grave. His face seemed to grow longer as he pulled his goatee.

“He was standing right where you are, sir,” he replied (Captain Lige moved), “and he proposed that I should buy his influence.”

“What did you do?”

Colonel Carvel laughed quietly at the recollection

“Shucks,” said he, “I just pushed him into the streets gave him a little start, and put a bullet past his ear, just to let the trash know the sound of it. Then Russell went down and bailed me out.”

The Captain shook with laughter. But Mr. Eliphalet Hopper’s eyes were glued to the mild-mannered man who told the story, and his hair rose under his hat.

“By the way, Lige, how’s that boy, Tato? Somehow after I let you have him on the ‘Louisiana’, I thought I’d made a mistake to let him run the river. Easter’s afraid he’ll lose the little religion she taught him.”

It was the Captain’s turn to be grave.

“I tell you what, Colonel,” said he; “we have to have hands, of course. But somehow I wish this business of slavery had never been started!”

“Sir,” said the Colonel, with some force, “God made the sons of Ham the servants of Japheth’s sons forever and forever.”

“Well, well, we won’t quarrel about that, sir,” said Brent, quickly. “If they all treated slaves as you do, there wouldn’t be any cry from Boston-way. And as for me, I need hands. I shall see you again, Colonel.”

“Take supper with me to-night, Lige,” said Mr. Carvel. “I reckon you’ll find it rather lonesome without Jinny.”

“Awful lonesome,” said the Captain. “But you’ll show me her letters, won’t you?”

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He started out, and ran against Eliphalet.

“Hello!” he cried. “Who’s this?”

“A young Yankee you landed here this morning, Lige,” said the Colonel. “What do you think of him?”

“Humph!” exclaimed the Captain.

“He has no friends in town, and he is looking for employment. Isn’t that so, sonny?” asked the Colonels kindly.

“Yes.”

“Come, Lige, would you take him?” said Mr. Carvel.

The young Captain looked into Eliphalet’s face. The dart that shot from his eyes was of an aggressive honesty; and Mr. Hopper’s, after an attempt at defiance, were dropped.

“No,” said the Captain.

“Why not, Lige?”

“Well, for one thing, he’s been listening,” said Captain Lige, as he departed.

Colonel Carvel began to hum softly to himself:—

> “’One said it was an owl, and the other he said nay,
> One said it was a church with the steeple torn away,
> Look a’ there now!’

“I reckon you’re a rank abolitionist,” said he to Eliphalet, abruptly.

“I don’t see any particular harm in keepin’ slaves,” Mr. Hopper replied, shifting to the other foot.

Whereupon the Colonel stretched his legs apart, seized his goatee, pulled his head down, and gazed at him for some time from under his eyebrows, so searchingly that the blood flew to Mr. Hopper’s fleshy face. He mopped it with a dark-red handkerchief, stared at everything in the place save the gentleman in front of him, and wondered whether he had ever in his life been so uncomfortable. Then he smiled sheepishly, hated himself, and began to hate the Colonel.

“Ever hear of the Liberator?”

“No, sir,” said Mr. Hopper.

“Where do you come from?” This was downright directness, from which there was no escape.

“Willesden, Massachusetts.”

“Umph! And never heard of Mr. Garrison?”

“I’ve had to work all my life.”

“What can you do, sonny?”

“I cal’late to sweep out a store. I have kept books,” Mr. Hopper vouchsafed.

“Would you like work here?” asked the Colonel, kindly. The green eyes looked up swiftly, and down again.

“What’ll you give me?”

The good man was surprised. “Well,” said he, “seven dollars a week.”

Many a time in after life had the Colonel reason to think over this scene. He was a man the singleness of whose motives could not be questioned. The one and sufficient reason for giving work to a homeless boy, from the hated state of the Liberator, was charity. The Colonel had his moods, like many another worthy man.

The small specks on the horizon sometimes grow into the hugest of thunder clouds. And an act of charity, out of the wisdom of God, may produce on this earth either good or evil.

Eliphalet closed with the bargain. Ephum was called and told to lead the recruit to the presence of Mr. Hood, the manager. And he spent the remainder of a hot day checking invoices in the shipping entrance on Second Street.

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It is not our place here to chronicle Eliphalet's faults. Whatever he may have been, he was not lazy. But he was an anomaly to the rest of the young men in the store, for those were days when political sentiments decided fervent loves or hatreds. In two days was Eliphalet's reputation for wisdom made. During that period he opened his mouth to speak but twice. The first was in answer to a pointless question of Mr. Barbo's (aetat 25), to the effect that he, Eliphalet Hopper, was a Pierce Democrat, who looked with complacency on the extension of slavery. This was wholly satisfactory, and saved the owner of these sentiments a broken head. The other time Eliphalet spoke was to ask Mr. Barbo to direct him to a boardinghouse.

"I reckon," Mr. Barbo reflected, "that you'll want one of them Congregational boarding-houses. We've got a heap of Yankees in the town, and they all flock together and pray together. I reckon you'd ruther go to Miss Crane's nor anywhere."

Forthwith to Miss Crane's Eliphalet went. And that lady, being a Greek herself, knew a Greek when she saw one. The kind-hearted Barbo lingered in the gathering darkness to witness the game which ensued, a game dear to all New Englanders, comical to Barbo. The two contestants calculated. Barbo reckoned, and put his money on his new-found fellow-clerk. Eliphalet, indeed, never showed to better advantage. The shyness he had used with the Colonel, and the taciturnity practised on his fellow-clerks, he slipped off like coat and waistcoat for the battle. The scene was in the front yard of the third house in Dorcas Row. Everybody knows where Dorcas Row was. Miss Crane, tall, with all the severity of side curls and bombazine, stood like a stone lioness at the gate. In the background, by the steps, the boarders sat, an interested group. Eliphalet girded up his loins, and sharpened his nasal twang to cope with hers. The preliminary sparring was an exchange of compliments, and deceived neither party. It seemed rather to heighten mutual respect.

"You be from Willesden, eh?" said Crane. "I calculate you know the Salters."

If the truth were known, this evidence of an apparent omniscience rather staggered Eliphalet. But training stood by him, and he showed no dismay. Yes, he knew the Salters, and had drawed many a load out of Hiram Salters' wood-lot to help pay for his schooling.

"Let me see," said Miss Crane, innocently; "who was it one of them Salters girls married, and lived across the way from the meetin'-house?"

"Spauldin'," was the prompt reply.

"Wal, I want t' know!" cried the spinster: "not Ezra Spauldin'?"

Eliphalet nodded. That nod was one of infinite shrewdness which commended itself to Miss Crane. These courtesies, far from making awkward the material discussion which followed; did not affect it in the least.

“So you want me to board you?” said she, as if in consternation.

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Eliphalet calculated, if they could come to terms. And Mr. Barbo keyed himself to enjoyment.

“Single gentlemen,” said she, “pay as high as twelve dollars.” And she added that they had no cause to complain of her table.

Eliphalet said he guessed he’d have to go somewhere else. Upon this the lady vouchsafed the explanation that those gentlemen had high positions and rented her large rooms. Since Mr. Hopper was from Willesden and knew the Salters, she would be willing to take him for less. Eliphalet said bluntly he would give three and a half. Barbo gasped. This particular kind of courage was wholly beyond him.

Half an hour later Eliphalet carried his carpet-bag up three flights and put it down in a tiny bedroom under the eaves, still pulsing with heat waves. Here he was to live, and eat at Miss Crane’s table for the consideration of four dollars a week.

Such is the story of the humble beginning of one substantial prop of the American Nation. And what a hackneyed story it is! How many other young men from the East have travelled across the mountains and floated down the rivers to enter those strange cities of the West, the growth of which was like Jonah’s gourd.

Two centuries before, when Charles Stuart walked out of a window in Whitehall Palace to die; when the great English race was in the throes of a Civil War; when the Stern and the Gay slew each other at Naseby and Marston Moor, two currents flowed across the Atlantic to the New World. Then the Stern men found the stern climate, and the Gay found the smiling climate.

After many years the streams began to move again, westward, ever westward. Over the ever blue mountains from the wonderland of Virginia into the greater wonderland of Kentucky. And through the marvels of the Inland Seas, and by white conestogas threading flat forests and floating over wide prairies, until the two tides met in a maelstrom as fierce as any in the great tawny torrent of the strange Father of Waters. A city founded by Pierre Laclede, a certain adventurous subject of Louis who dealt in furs, and who knew not Marly or Versailles, was to be the place of the mingling of the tides. After cycles of separation, Puritan and Cavalier united on this clay-bank in the Louisiana Purchase, and swept westward together—like the struggle of two great rivers when they meet the waters for a while were dangerous.

So Eliphalet was established, among the Puritans, at Miss Crane’s. The dishes were to his taste. Brown bread and beans and pies were plentiful, for it was a land of plenty. All kinds of Puritans were there, and they attended Mr. Davitt’s Congregational Church. And may it be added in justice to Mr. Hopper, that he became not the least devout of the boarders.

CHAPTER. II

THE MOLE

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For some years, while Stephen A. Douglas and Franklin Pierce and other gentlemen of prominence were playing at bowls on the United States of America; while Kansas was furnishing excitement free of charge to any citizen who loved sport, Mr. Eliphalet Hopper was at work like the industrious mole, underground. It is safe to affirm that Colonel Carvel forgot his new hand as soon as he had turned him over to Mr. Hood, the manager. As for Mr. Hopper, he was content. We can ill afford to dissect motives. Genius is willing to lay the foundations of her structure unobserved.

At first it was Mr. Barbo alone who perceived Eliphalet's greatness,—Mr. Barbo, whose opinions were so easily had that they counted for nothing. The other clerks, to say the least, found the newcomer uncompanionable. He had no time for skylarking, the heat of the day meant nothing to him, and he was never sleepy. He learned the stock as if by intuition, and such was his strict attention to business that Mr. Hood was heard is say, privately, he did not like the looks of it. A young man should have other interests. And then, although he would not hold it against him, he had heard that Mr. Hopper was a teacher in Mr. Davitt's Sunday School.

Because he did not discuss his ambitions at dinner with the other clerks in the side entry, it must not be thought that Eliphalet was without other interests. He was likewise too shrewd to be dragged into political discussions at the boarding-house table. He listened imperturbably to the outbursts against the Border Ruffian, and smiled when Mr. Abner Reed, in an angry passion, asked him to declare whether or not he was a friend of the Divine Institution. After a while they forgot about him (all save Miss Crane), which was what Mr. Hopper of all things desired.

One other friend besides Miss Crane did Eliphalet take unto himself, wherein he showed much discrimination. This friend was none other than Mr. Davitt, minister for many years of the Congregational Church. For Mr. Davitt was a good man, zealous in his work, unpretentious, and kindly. More than once Eliphalet went to his home to tea, and was pressed to talk about himself and his home life. The minister and his wife ware invariably astonished, after their guest was gone, at the meagre result of their inquiries.

If Love had ever entered such a discreet soul as that into which we are prying, he used a back entrance. Even Mr. Barbo's inquiries failed in the discovery of any young person with whom Eliphalet "kept company." Whatever the notions abroad concerning him, he was admittedly a model. There are many kinds of models. With some young ladies at the Sunday School, indeed, he had a distant bowing acquaintance. They spoke of him as the young man who knew the Bible as thoroughly as Mr. Davitt himself. The only time that Mr. Hopper was discovered showing embarrassment was when Mr. Davitt held his hand before them longer than necessary on the church steps. Mr. Hopper was not sentimental.

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However fascinating the subject, I do not propose to make a whole book about Eliphalet. Yet sidelights on the life of every great man are interesting. And there are a few incidents in his early career which have not gotten into the subscription biographical Encyclopaedias. In several of these volumes, to be sure, we may see steel engravings of him, true likenesses all. His was the type of face which is the glory of the steel engraving,—square and solid, as a corner-stone should be. The very clothes he wore were made for the steel engraving, stiff and wiry in texture, with sharp angles at the shoulders, and sombre in hue, as befit such grave creations.

Let us go back to a certain fine morning in the September of the year 1857, when Mr. Hopper had arrived, all unnoticed, at the age of two and thirty. Industry had told. He was now the manager's assistant; and, be it said in passing, knew more about the stock than Mr. Hood himself. On this particular morning, about nine o'clock, he was stacking bolts of woollen goods near that delectable counter where the Colonel was wont to regale his principal customers, when a vision appeared in the door. Visions were rare at Carvel & Company's. This one was followed by an old negress with leathery wrinkles, whose smile was joy incarnate. They entered the store, paused at the entrance to the Colonel's private office, and surveyed it with dismay.

"Clar t' goodness, Miss Jinny, yo' pa ain't heah! An' whah's Ephum, dat black good-fo'-nuthin'!"

Miracle number one,—Mr. Hopper stopped work and stared. The vision was searching the store with her eyes, and pouting.

"How mean of Pa!" she exclaimed, "when I took all this trouble to surprise him, not to be here! Where are they all? Where's Ephum? Where's Mr. Hood?"

The eyes lighted on Eliphalet. His blood was sluggish, but it could be made to beat faster. The ladies he had met at Miss Crane's were not of this description. As he came forward, embarrassment made him shamble, and for the first time in his life he was angrily conscious of a poor figure. Her first question dashed out the spark of his zeal.

"Oh," said she, "are you employed here?"

Thoughtless Virginia! You little know the man you have insulted by your haughty drawl.

"Yes."

Then find Mr. Carvel, won't you, please? And tell him that his daughter has come from Kentucky, and is waiting for him."

"I callate Mr. Carvel won't be here this morning," said Eliphalet. He went back to the pile of dry goods, and began to work. But he was unable to meet the displeasure in her face.

“What is your name?” Miss Carvel demanded.

“Hopper.”

“Then, Mr. Hopper, please find Ephum, or Mr. Hood.”

Two more bolts were taken off the truck. Out of the corner of his eye he watched her, and she seemed very tall, like her father. She was taller than he, in fact.

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“I ain’t a servant, Miss Carvel,” he said, with a meaning glance at the negress.

“Laws, Miss Jinny,” cried she, “I may’s ’ell find Ephum. I knows he’s loafin’ somewhar hereabouts. An’ I ain’t seed him dese five month.” And she started for the back of the store.

“Mammy!”

The old woman stopped short. Eliphalet, electrified, looked up and instantly down again.

“You say you are employed by Mr. Carvel, and refuse to do what I ask?”

“I ain’t a servant,” Mr. Hopper repeated doggedly. He felt that he was in the right,—and perhaps he was.

It was at this critical juncture in the proceedings that a young man stepped lightly into the store behind Miss Jinny. Mr. Hopper’s eye was on him, and had taken in the details of his costume before realizing the import of his presence. He was perhaps twenty, and wore a coat that sprung in at the waist, and trousers of a light buff-color that gathered at the ankle and were very copious above. His features were of the straight type which has been called from time immemorial patrician. He had dark hair which escaped in waves from under his hat, and black eyes that snapped when they perceived Miss Virginia Carvel. At sight of her, indeed, the gold-headed cane stopped in its gyrations in midair.

“Why, Jinny!” he cried—“Jinny!”

Mr. Hopper would have sold his soul to have been in the young man’s polished boots, to have worn his clothes, and to have been able to cry out to the young lady, “Why, Jinny!”

To Mr. Hopper’s surprise, the young lady did not turn around. She stood perfectly still. But a red flush stole upon her cheek, and laughter was dancing in her eyes yet she did not move. The young man took a step forward, and then stood staring at her with such a comical expression of injury on his face as was too much for Miss Jinny’s serenity. She laughed. That laugh also struck minor chords upon Mr. Hopper’s heart-strings.

But the young gentleman very properly grew angry.

“You’ve no right to treat me the way you do, Virginia,” he cried. “Why didn’t you let me know that you were coming home?” His tone was one of authority. You didn’t come from Kentucky alone!”

“I had plenty of attendance, I assure you,” said Miss Carvel. “A governor, and a senator, and two charming young gentlemen from New Orleans as far as Cairo, where I found

Captain Lige's boat. And Mr. Brinsmade brought me here to the store. I wanted to surprise Pa," she continued rapidly, to head off the young gentleman's expostulations. "How mean of him not to be here!"

"Allow me to escort you home," said he, with ceremony:

"Allow me to decline the honah, Mr. Colfax," she cried, imitating him. "I intend to wait here until Pa comes in."

Then Eliphalet knew that the young gentleman was Miss Virginia's first cousin. And it seemed to him that he had heard a rumor, amongst the clerks in the store; that she was to marry him one day.

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“Where is Uncle Comyn?” demanded Mr. Colfax, swinging his cane with impatience.

Virgina looked hard at Mr. Hopper.

“I don’t know,” she said.

“Ephum!” shouted Mr. Colfax. “Ephum! Easters where the deuce is that good-for-nothing husband of yours?”

“I dunno, Marse Clarence. ’Spec he whah he oughtn’t ter be.”

Mr. Colfax spied the stooping figure of Eliphalet.

“Do you work here?” he demanded.

“I callate.”

“What?”

“I callate to,” responded Mr. Hopper again, without rising.

“Please find Mr. Hood,” directed Mr. Colfax, with a wave of his cane, “and say that Miss Carvel is here—”

Whereupon Miss Carvel seated herself upon the edge of a bale and giggled, which did not have a soothing effect upon either of the young men. How abominably you were wont to behave in those days, Virginia.

“Just say that Mr. Colfax sent you,” Clarence continued, with a note of irritation. “There’s a good fellow.”

Virginia laughed outright. Her cousin did not deign to look at her. His temper was slipping its leash.

“I wonder whether you hear me,” he remarked.

No answer.

“Colonel Carvel hires you, doesn’t he? He pays you wages, and the first time his daughter comes in here you refuse to do her a favor. By thunder, I’ll see that you are dismissed.”

Still Eliphalet gave him no manner of attention, but began marking the tags at the bottom of the pile.

It was at this unpropitious moment that Colonel Carvel walked into the store, and his daughter flew into his arms.

“Well, well,” he said, kissing her, “thought you’d surprise me, eh, Jinny?”

“Oh, Pa,” she cried, looking reproachfully up at his Face. “You knew —how mean of you!”

“I’ve been down on the Louisiana, where some inconsiderate man told me, or I should not have seen you today. I was off to Alton. But what are these goings-on?” said the Colonel, staring at young Mr. Colfax, rigid as one of his own gamecocks. He was standing defiantly over the stooping figure of the assistant manager.

“Oh,” said Virginia, indifferently, “it’s only Clarence. He’s so tiresome. He’s always wanting to fight with somebody.”

“What’s the matter, Clarence?” asked the Colonel, with the mild unconcern which deceived so many of the undiscerning.

“This person, sir, refused to do a favor for your daughter. She told him, and I told him, to notify Mr. Hood that Miss Carvel was here, and he refused.”

Mr. Hopper continued his occupation, which was absorbing. But he was listening.

Colonel Carvel pulled his goatee, and smiled.

“Clarence,” said he, “I reckon I can run this establishment without any help from you and Jinny. I’ve been at it now for a good many years.”

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If Mr. Barbo had not been constitutionally unlucky, he might have perceived Mr. Hopper, before dark that evening, in conversation with Mr. Hood about a certain customer who lived up town, and presently leave the store by the side entrance. He walked as rapidly as his legs would carry him, for they were a trifle short for his body; and in due time, as the lamps were flickering, he arrived near Colonel Carvel's large double residence, on Tenth and Locust streets. Then he walked slowly along Tenth, his eyes lifted to the tall, curtained windows. Now and anon they scanned passers-by for a chance acquaintance.

Mr. Hopper walked around the block, arriving again opposite the Carvel house, and beside Mr. Renault's, which was across from it. Eliphalet had inherited the principle of mathematical chances. It is a fact that the discreet sometimes take chances. Towards the back of Mr. Renault's residence, a wide area was sunk to the depth of a tall man, which was apparently used for the purpose of getting coal and wood into the cellar. Mr. Hopper swept the neighborhood with a glance. The coast was clear, and he dropped into the area.

Although the evening was chill, at first Mr. Hopper perspired very freely. He crouched in the area while the steps of pedestrians beat above his head, and took no thought but of escape. At last, however, he grew cooler, removed his hat, and peeped over the stone coping. Colonel Carvel's house—her house—was now ablaze with lights, and the shades not yet drawn. There was the dining room, where the negro butler was moving about the table; and the pantry, where the butler went occasionally; and the kitchen, with black figures moving about. But upstairs on the two streets was the sitting room. The straight figure of the Colonel passed across the light. He held a newspaper in his hand. Suddenly, full in the window, he stopped and flung away the paper. A graceful shadow slipped across the wall. Virginia laid her hands on his shoulders, and he stooped to kiss her. Now they sat between the curtains, she on the arm of his chair and leaning on him, together looking out of the window.

How long this lasted Mr. Hopper could not say. Even the wise forget themselves. But all at once a wagon backed and bumped against the curb in front of him, and Eliphalet's head dropped as if it had been struck by the wheel. Above him a sash screamed as it opened, and he heard Mr. Renault's voice say, to some person below:

"Is that you, Capitaine Grant?"

"The same," was the brief reply.

"I am charmed that you have brought the wood. I thought that you had forgotten me."

"I try to do what I say, Mr. Renault."

"Attendez—wait!" cried Mr. Renault, and closed the window.

Now was Eliphalet's chance to bolt. The perspiration had come again, and it was cold. But directly the excitable little man, Renault, had appeared on the pavement above him. He had been running.

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“It is a long voyage from Gravois with a load of wood, Capitaine—I am very grateful.”

“Business is business, Mr. Renault,” was the self-contained reply.

“Alphonse!” cried Mr. Renault, “Alphonse!” A door opened in the back wall. “Du vin pour Monsieur le Capitaine.”

“Oui, M’sieu.”

Eliphalet was too frightened to wonder why this taciturn handler of wood was called Captain, and treated with such respect.

“Guess I won’t take any wine to-night, Mr. Renault,” said he. “You go inside, or you’ll take cold.”

Mr. Renault protested, asked about all the residents of Gravois way, and finally obeyed. Eliphalet’s heart was in his mouth. A bolder spirit would have dashed for liberty. Eliphalet did not possess that kind of bravery. He was waiting for the Captain to turn toward his wagon.

He looked down the area instead, with the light from the street lamp on his face. Fear etched an ineffaceable portrait of him on Mr. Hopper’s mind, so that he knew him instantly when he saw him years afterward. Little did he reckon that the fourth time he was to see him this man was to be President of the United States. He wore a close-cropped beard, an old blue army overcoat, and his trousers were tucked into a pair of muddy cowhide boots.

Swiftly but silently the man reached down and hauled Eliphalet to the sidewalk by the nape of the neck.

“What were you doing there?” demanded he of the blue overcoat, sternly.

Eliphalet did not answer. With one frantic wrench he freed himself, and ran down Locust Street. At the corner, turning fearfully, he perceived the man in the overcoat calmly preparing to unload his wood.

CHAPTER III

THE UNATTAINABLE SIMPLICITY

To Mr. Hopper the being caught was the unpardonable crime. And indeed, with many of us, it is humiliation and not conscience which makes the sting. He walked out to the end of the city’s growth westward, where the new houses were going up. He had reflected coolly on consequences, and found there were none to speak of. Many a

moralist, Mr. Davitt included, would have shaken his head at this. Miss Crane's whole Puritan household would have raised their hands in horror at such a doctrine.

Some novelists I know of, who are in reality celebrated surgeons in disguise, would have shown a good part of Mr. Eliphalet Hopper's mental insides in as many words as I have taken to chronicle his arrival in St. Louis. They invite us to attend a clinic, and the horrible skill with which they wield the scalpel holds us spellbound. For God has made all of us, rogue and saint, burglar and burgomaster, marvellously alike. We read a patent medicine circular and shudder with seven diseases. We peruse one of Mr. So and So's intellectual tonics and are sure we are complicated scandals, fearfully and wonderfully made.

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Alas, I have neither the skill nor the scalpel to show the diseases of Mr. Hopper's mind; if, indeed, he had any. Conscience, when contracted, is just as troublesome as croup. Mr. Hopper was thoroughly healthy. He had ambition, as I have said. But he was not morbidly sensitive. He was calm enough when he got back to the boarding-house, which he found in as high a pitch of excitement as New Englanders ever reach.

And over what?

Over the prospective arrival that evening of the Brices, mother and son, from Boston. Miss Crane had received the message in the morning. Palpitating with the news; she had hurried rustling to Mrs. Abner Reed, with the paper in her hand.

"I guess you don't mean Mrs. Appleton Brice," said Mrs. Reed.

"That's just who I mean," answered Miss Crane, triumphantly,—nay, aggressively.

Mrs. Abner shook her curls in a way that made people overwhelm her with proofs.

"Mirandy, you're cracked," said she. "Ain't you never been to Boston?"

Miss Crane bridled. This was an uncalled-for insult.

"I guess I visited down Boston-way oftener than you, Eliza Reed. You never had any clothes."

Mrs. Reed's strength was her imperturbability.

"And you never set eyes on the Brice house, opposite the Common, with the swelled front? I'd like to find out where you were a-visitin'. And you've never heard tell of the Brice homestead, at Westbury, that was Colonel Wilton Brice's, who fought in the Revolution? I'm astonished at you, Mirandy. When I used to be at the Dales', in Mount Vernon Street, in thirty-seven, Mrs. Charles Atterbury Brice used to come there in her carriage, a-callin'. She was Appleton's mother. Severe! Save us," exclaimed Mrs. Reed, "but she was stiff as starched crepe. His father was minister to France. The Brices were in the India trade, and they had money enough to buy the whole of St. Louis."

Miss Crane rattled the letter in her hand. She brought forth her reserves.

"Yes, and Appleton Brice lost it all, in the panic. And then he died, and left the widow and son without a cent."

Mrs. Reed took off her spectacles.

“I want to know!” she exclaimed. “The durned fool! Well, Appleton Brice didn’t have the family brains, ands he was kind of soft-hearted. I’ve heard Mehitabel Dale say that.” She paused to reflect. “So they’re coming here?” she added. “I wonder why.”

Miss Crane’s triumph was not over.

“Because Silas Whipple was some kin to Appleton Brice, and he has offered the boy a place in his law office.”

Miss Reed laid down her knitting.

“Save us!” she said. “This is a day of wonders, Mirandy. Now Lord help the boy if he’s gain’ to work for the Judge.”

“The Judge has a soft heart, if he is crabbed,” declared the spinster. “I’ve heard say of a good bit of charity he’s done. He’s a soft heart.”

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“Soft as a green quince!” said Mrs. Abner, scornfully. “How many friends has he?”

“Those he has are warm enough,” Miss Crane retorted. “Look at Colonel Carvel, who has him to dinner every Sunday.”

“That’s plain as your nose, Mirandy Crane. They both like quarrellin’ better than anything in this world.”

“Well,” said Miss Crane, “I must go make ready for the Brices.”

Such was the importance of the occasion, however, that she could not resist calling at Mrs. Merrill’s room, and she knocked at Mrs. Chandler’s door to tell that lady and her daughter.

No Burke has as yet arisen in this country of ours to write a Peerage. Fame awaits him. Indeed, it was even then awaiting him, at the time of the panic of 1857. With what infinite pains were the pedigree and possessions of the Brice family pieced together that day by the scattered residents from Puritan-land in the City of St. Louis. And few buildings would have borne the wear and tear of many house-cleanings of the kind Miss Crane indulged in throughout the morning and afternoon.

Mr. Eliphalet Hopper, on his return from business, was met on the steps and requested to wear his Sunday clothes. Like the good republican that he was, Mr. Hopper refused. He had ascertained that the golden charm which made the Brices worthy of tribute had been lost. Commercial supremacy,—that was Mr. Hopper’s creed. Family is a good thing, but of what use is a crest without the panels on which to paint it? Can a diamond brooch shine on a calico gown? Mr. Hopper deemed church the place for worship. He likewise had his own idol in his closet.

Eliphalet at Willesden had heard a great deal of Boston airs and graces and intellectuality, of the favored few of that city who lived in mysterious houses, and who crossed the sea in ships. He pictured Mrs. Brice asking for a spoon, and young Stephen sniffing at Mrs. Crane’s boarding-house. And he resolved with democratic spirit that he would teach Stephen a lesson, if opportunity offered. His own discrepancy between the real and the imagined was no greater than that of the rest of his fellow-boarders.

Barring Eliphalet, there was a dress parade that evening,—silks and bombazines and broadcloths, and Miss Crane’s special preserves on the tea-table. Alas, that most of the deserved honors of this world should fall upon barren ground!

The quality which baffled Mr. Hopper, and some other boarders, was simplicity. None save the truly great possess it (but this is not generally known). Mrs. Brice was so natural, that first evening at tea, that all were disappointed. The hero upon the

reviewing stand with the halo of the Unknown behind his head is one thing; the lady of Family who sits beside you at a boarding-house and discusses the weather and the journey is quite another. They were prepared to hear Mrs. Brice rail at the dirt of St. Louis and the crudity of the West. They pictured her referring with sighs to her Connections, and bewailing that Stephen could not have finished his course at Harvard.

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She did nothing of the sort.

The first shock was so great that Mrs. Abner Reed cried in the privacy of her chamber, and the Widow Crane confessed her disappointment to the confiding ear of her bosom friend, Mrs. Merrill. Not many years later a man named Grant was to be in Springfield, with a carpet bag, despised as a vagabond. A very homely man named Lincoln went to Cincinnati to try a case before the Supreme Court, and was snubbed by a man named Stanton.

When we meet the truly great, several things may happen. In the first place, we begin to believe in their luck, or fate, or whatever we choose to call it, and to curse our own. We begin to respect ourselves the more, and to realize that they are merely clay like us, that we are great men without Opportunity. Sometimes, if we live long enough near the Great, we begin to have misgivings. Then there is hope for us.

Mrs. Brice, with her simple black gowns, quiet manner, and serene face, with her interest in others and none in herself, had a wonderful effect upon the boarders. They were nearly all prepared to be humble. They grew arrogant and pretentious. They asked Mrs. Brice if she knew this and that person of consequence in Boston, with whom they claimed relationship or intimacy. Her answers were amiable and self-contained.

But what shall we say of Stephen Brice? Let us confess at once that it is he who is the hero of this story, and not Eliphalet Hopper. It would be so easy to paint Stephen in shining colors, and to make him a first-class prig (the horror of all novelists), that we must begin with the drawbacks. First and worst, it must be confessed that Stephen had at that time what has been called “the Boston manner.” This was not Stephen’s fault, but Boston’s. Young Mr. Brice possessed that wonderful power of expressing distance in other terms besides ells and furlongs,—and yet he was simple enough with it all.

Many a furtive stare he drew from the table that evening. There were one or two of discernment present, and they noted that his were the generous features of a marked man,—if he chose to become marked. He inherited his mother’s look; hers was the face of a strong woman, wide of sympathy, broad of experience, showing peace of mind amid troubles—the touch of femininity was there to soften it.

Her son had the air of the college-bred. In these surroundings he escaped arrogance by the wonderful kindliness of his eye, which lighted when his mother spoke to him. But he was not at home at Miss Crane’s table, and he made no attempt to appear at his ease.

This was an unexpected pleasure for Mr. Eliphalet Hopper. Let it not be thought that he was the only one at that table to indulge in a little secret rejoicing. But it was a peculiar satisfaction to him to reflect that these people, who had held up their heads for so many generations, were humbled at last. To be humbled meant, in Mr. Hopper’s philosophy,

to lose one's money. It was thus he gauged the importance of his acquaintances; it was thus he hoped some day to be gauged. And he trusted and believed that the time would come when he could give his fillip to the upper rim of fortune's wheel, and send it spinning downward.

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Mr. Hopper was drinking his tea and silently forming an estimate. He concluded that young Brice was not the type to acquire the money which his father had lost. And he reflected that Stephen must feel as strange in St. Louis as a cod might amongst the cat-fish in the Mississippi. So the assistant manager of Carvel & Company resolved to indulge in the pleasure of patronizing the Bostonian.

“Callatin’ to go to work?” he asked him, as the boarders walked into the best room.

“Yes,” replied Stephen, taken aback. And it may be said here that, if Mr. Hopper underestimated him, certainly he underestimated Mr. Hopper.

“It ain’t easy to get a job this Fall,” said Eliphalet, “St. Louis houses have felt the panic.”

“I am sorry to hear that.”

“What business was you callatin’ to grapple with?”

“Law,” said Stephen.

“Gosh!” exclaimed Mr. Hopper, “I want to know.” In reality he was a bit chagrined, having pictured with some pleasure the Boston aristocrat going from store to store for a situation. “You didn’t come here figurin’ on makin’ a pile, I guess.”

“A what?”

“A pile.”

Stephen looked down and over Mr. Hopper attentively. He took in the blocky shoulders and the square head, and he pictured the little eyes at a vanishing-point in lines of a bargain. Then humor blessed humor—came to his rescue. He had entered the race in the West, where all start equal. He had come here, like this man who was succeeding, to make his living. Would he succeed?

Mr. Hopper drew something out of his pocket, eyed Miss Crane, and bit off a corner.

“What office was you going into?” he asked genially. Mr. Brice decided to answer that.

“Judge Whipple’s—unless he has changed his mind.” Eliphalet gave him a look more eloquent than words.

“Know the Judge?”

Silent laughter.

“If all the Fourth of Julys we’ve had was piled into one,” said Mr. Hopper, slowly and with conviction, “they wouldn’t be a circumstance to Silas Whipple when he gets mad. My boss, Colonel Carvel, is the only man in town who’ll stand up to him. I’ve seen ’em begin a quarrel in the store and carry it all the way up the street. I callate you won’t stay with him a great while.”

CHAPTER IV

BLACK CATTLE

Later that evening Stephen Brice was sitting by the open windows in his mother’s room, looking on the street-lights below.

“Well, my dear,” asked the lady, at length, “what do you think of it all?”

“They are kind people,” he said.

“Yes, they are kind,” she assented, with a sigh. “But they are not—they are not from among our friends, Stephen.”

“I thought that one of our reasons for coming West, mother,” answered Stephen.

His mother looked pained.

“Stephen, how can you! We came West in order that you might have more chance for the career to which you are entitled. Our friends in Boston were more than good.”

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He left the window and came and stood behind her chair, his hands clasped playfully beneath her chin.

“Have you the exact date about you, mother?”

“What date, Stephen?”

“When I shall leave St. Louis for the United States Senate. And you must not forget that there is a youth limit in our Constitution for senators.”

Then the widow smiled,—a little sadly, perhaps. But still a wonderfully sweet smile. And it made her strong face akin to all that was human and helpful.

“I believe that you have the subject of my first speech in that august assembly. And, by the way, what was it?”

“It was on ‘The Status of the Emigrant,’” she responded instantly, thereby proving that she was his mother.

“And it touched the Rights of Privacy,” he added, laughing, “which do not seem to exist in St. Louis boarding-houses.”

“In the eyes of your misguided profession, statesmen and authors and emigrants and other public charges have no Rights of Privacy,” said she. “Mr. Longfellow told me once that they were to name a brand of flour for him, and that he had no redress.”

“Have you, too, been up before Miss Crane’s Commission?” he asked, with amused interest.

His mother laughed.

“Yes,” she said quietly.

“They have some expert members,” he continued. “This Mrs. Abner Reed could be a shining light in any bar. I overheard a part of her cross-examination. She—she had evidently studied our case—”

“My dear,” answered Mrs. Brice, “I suppose they know all about us.” She was silent a moment, I had so hoped that they wouldn’t. They lead the same narrow life in this house that they did in their little New England towns. They—they pity us, Stephen.”

“Mother!”

“I did not expect to find so many New Englanders here—I wish that Mr. Whipple had directed us elsewhere-”

“He probably thought that we should feel at home among New Englanders. I hope the Southerners will be more considerate. I believe they will,” he added.

“They are very proud,” said his mother. “A wonderful people,—born aristocrats. You don’t remember those Randolphs with whom we travelled through England. They were with us at Hollingdean, Lord Northwell’s place. You were too small at the time. There was a young girl, Eleanor Randolph, a beauty. I shall never forget the way she entered those English drawing-rooms. They visited us once in Beacon Street, afterwards. And I have heard that there are a great many good Southern families here in St. Louis.”

“You did not glean that from Judge Whipple’s letter, mother,” said Stephen, mischievously.

“He was very frank in his letter,” sighed Mrs. Brice.

“I imagine he is always frank, to put it delicately.”

“Your father always spoke in praise of Silas Whipple, my dear. I have heard him call him one of the ablest lawyers in the country. He won a remarkable case for Appleton here, and he once said that the Judge would have sat on the Supreme Bench if he had not been pursued with such relentlessness by rascally politicians.”

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“The Judge indulges in a little relentlessness now and then, himself. He is not precisely what might be termed a mild man, if what we hear is correct.”

Mrs. Brice started.

“What have you heard?” she asked.

“Well, there was a gentleman on the steamboat who said that it took more courage to enter the Judge’s private office than to fight a Border Ruffian. And another, a young lawyer, who declared that he would rather face a wild cat than ask Whipple a question on the new code. And yet he said that the Judge knew more law than any man in the West. And lastly, there is a polished gentleman named Hopper here from Massachusetts who enlightened me a little more.”

Stephen paused and bit his tongue. He saw that she was distressed by these things. Heaven knows that she had borne enough trouble in the last few months.

“Come, mother,” he said gently, “you should know how to take my jokes by this time. I didn’t mean it. I am sure the Judge is a good man,—one of those aggressive good men who make enemies. I have but a single piece of guilt to accuse him of.”

“And what is that?” asked the widow.

“The cunning forethought which he is showing in wishing to have it said that a certain Senator and Judge Brice was trained in his office.”

“Stephen—you goose!” she said.

Her eye wandered around the room,—Widow Crane’s best bedroom. It was dimly lighted by an extremely ugly lamp. The hideous stuffy bed curtains and the more hideous imitation marble mantel were the two objects that held her glance. There was no change in her calm demeanor. But Stephen, who knew his mother, felt that her little elation over her arrival had ebbed, Neither would confess dejection to the other.

“I—even I—” said Stephen, tapping his chest, “have at least made the acquaintance of one prominent citizen, Mr. Eliphalet D. Hopper. According to Mr. Dickens, he is a true American gentleman, for he chews tobacco. He has been in St. Louis five years, is now assistant manager of the largest dry goods house, and still lives in one of Miss Crane’s four-dollar rooms. I think we may safely say that he will be a millionaire before I am a senator.”

He paused.

“And mother?”

“Yes, dear.”

He put his hands in his pockets and walked over to the window.

“I think that it would be better if I did the same thing.”

“What do you mean, my son—”

“If I went to work,—started sweeping out a store, I mean. See here, mother, you’ve sacrificed enough for me already. After paying father’s debts, we’ve come out here with only a few thousand dollars, and the nine hundred I saved out of this year’s Law School allowance. What shall we do when that is gone? The honorable legal profession, as my friend reminded me to-night, is not the swiftest road to millions.”

With a mother’s discernment she guessed the agitation, he was striving to hide; she knew that he had been gathering courage for this moment for months. And she knew that he was renouncing thus lightly, for her sake an ambition he had had from his school days.

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Widow passed her hand over her brow. It was a space before she answered him.

“My son,” she said, let us never speak of this again:

“It was your father’s dearest wish that you should become a lawyer and —and his wishes are sacred God will take care of us.”

She rose and kissed him good-night.

“Remember, my dear, when you go to Judge Whipple in the morning, remember his kindness, and—.”

“And keep my temper. I shall, mother.”

A while later he stole gently back into her room again. She was on her knees by the walnut bedstead.

At nine the next manning Stephen left Miss Crane’s, girded for the struggle with the redoubtable Silas Whipple. He was not afraid, but a poor young man as an applicant to a notorious dragon is not likely to be bandied with velvet, even though the animal had been a friend of his father. Dragons as a rule have had a hard rime in their youths, and believe in others having a hard time.

To a young man, who as his father’s heir in Boston had been the subject of marked consideration by his elders, the situation was keenly distasteful. But it had to be gone through. So presently, after inquiry, he came to the open square where the new Court House stood, the dome of which was indicated by a mass of staging, and one wing still to be completed. Across from the building, on Market Street, and in the middle of the block, what had once been a golden hand pointed up a narrow dusty stairway.

Here was a sign, “Law office of Silas Whipple.”

Stephen climbed the stairs, and arrived at a ground glass door, on which the sign was repeated. Behind that door was the future: so he opened it fearfully, with an impulse to throw his arm above his head. But he was struck dumb on beholding, instead of a dragon, a good-natured young man who smiled a broad welcome. The reaction was as great as though one entered a dragon’s den, armed to the teeth, to find a St. Bernard doing the honors.

Stephen’s heart went out to this young man,—after that organ had jumped back into its place. This keeper of the dragon looked the part. Even the long black coat which custom then decreed could not hide the bone and sinew under it. The young man had a broad forehead, placid Dresden-blue eyes, flaxen hair, and the German coloring. Across one of his high cheek-bones was a great jagged scar which seemed to add

distinction to his appearance. That caught Stephen's eye, and held it. He wondered whether it were the result of an encounter with the Judge.

"You wish to see Mr. Whipple?" he asked, in the accents of an educated German.

"Yes," said Stephen, "if he isn't busy."

"He is out," said the other, with just a suspicion of a 'd' in the word. "You know he is much occupied now, fighting election frauds. You read the papers?"

"I am a stranger here," said Stephen.

"Ach!" exclaimed the German, "now I know you, Mr. Brice. The young one from Boston the Judge spoke of. But you did not tell him of your arrival."

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“I did not wish to bother him,” Stephen replied, smiling.

“My name is Richter—Carl Richter, sir.”

The pressure of Mr. Richter’s big hands warmed Stephen as nothing else had since he had come West. He was moved to return it with a little more fervor than he usually showed. And he felt, whatever the Judge might be, that he had a powerful friend near at hand—Mr. Richter’s welcome came near being an embrace.

“Sit down, Mr. Brice,” he said; “mild weather for November, eh? The Judge will be here in an hour.”

Stephen looked around him: at the dusty books on the shelves, and the still dustier books heaped on Mr. Richter’s big table; at the cuspidors; at the engravings of Washington and Webster; at the window in the jog which looked out on the court-house square; and finally at another ground-glass door on which was printed:

Silas Whipple

Private

This, then, was the den,—the arena in which was to take place a memorable interview. But the thought of waiting an hour for the dragon to appear was disquieting. Stephen remembered that he had something over nine hundred dollars in his pocket (which he had saved out of his last year’s allowance at the Law School). So he asked Mr. Richter, who was dusting off a chair, to direct him to the nearest bank.

“Why, certainly,” said he; “Mr. Brinsmade’s bank on Chestnut Street.” He took Stephen to the window and pointed across the square. “I am sorry I cannot go with you,” he added, “but the Judge’s negro, Shadrach, is out, and I must stay in the office. I will give you a note to Mr. Brinsmade.”

“His negro!” exclaimed Stephen. “Why, I thought that Mr. Whipple was an Abolitionist.”

Mr. Richter laughed.

“The man is free,” said he. “The Judge pays him wages.”

Stephen thanked his new friend for the note to the bank president, and went slowly down the stairs. To be keyed up to a battle-pitch, and then to have the battle deferred, is a trial of flesh and spirit.

As he reached the pavement, he saw people gathering in front of the wide entrance of the Court House opposite, and perched on the copings. He hesitated, curious. Then he walked slowly toward the place, and buttoning his coat, pushed through the loafers and

passers-by dallying on the outskirts of the crowd. There, in the bright November sunlight, a sight met his eyes which turned him sick and dizzy.

Against the walls and pillars of the building, already grimy with soot, crouched a score of miserable human beings waiting to be sold at auction. Mr. Lynch's slave pen had been disgorged that morning. Old and young, husband and wife,—the moment was come for all and each. How hard the stones and what more pitiless than the gaze of their fellow-creatures in the crowd below! O friends, we who live in peace and plenty amongst our families, how little do we realize the terror and the misery and the dumb heart-aches of those days! Stephen thought with agony of seeing his own mother sold before his eyes, and the building in front of him was lifted from its foundation and rocked even as shall the temples on the judgment day.

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The oily auctioneer was inviting the people to pinch the wares. Men came forward to feel the creatures and look into their mouths, and one brute, unshaven and with filthy linen, snatched a child from its mother's lap Stephen shuddered with the sharpest pain he had ever known. An ocean-wide tempest arose in his breast, Samson's strength to break the pillars of the temple to slay these men with his bare hands. Seven generations of stern life and thought had their focus here in him,—from Oliver Cromwell to John Brown.

Stephen was far from prepared for the storm that raged within him. He had not been brought up an Abolitionist—far from it. Nor had his father's friends—who were deemed at that time the best people in Boston—been Abolitionists. Only three years before, when Boston had been aflame over the delivery of the fugitive Anthony Burns, Stephen had gone out of curiosity to the meeting at Faneuil Hall. How well he remembered his father's indignation when he confessed it, and in his anger Mr. Brice had called Phillips and Parker "agitators." But his father, nor his father's friends in Boston had never been brought face to face with this hideous traffic.

Hark! Was that the sing-song voice of the auctioneer He was selling the cattle. High and low, caressing an menacing, he teased and exhorted them to buy. The were bidding, yes, for the possession of souls, bidding in the currency of the Great Republic. And between the eager shouts came a moan of sheer despair. What was the attendant doing now? He was tearing two of then: from a last embrace.

Three—four were sold while Stephen was in a dream

Then came a lull, a hitch, and the crowd began to chatter gayly. But the misery in front of him held Stephen in a spell. Figures stood out from the group. A white-haired patriarch, with eyes raised to the sky; a flat-breasted woman whose child was gone, whose weakness made her valueless. Then two girls were pushed forth, one a quadroon of great beauty, to be fingered. Stephen turned his face away,—to behold Mr. Eliphalet Hopper looking calmly on.

"Wal, Mr. Brice, this is an interesting show now, ain't it? Something we don't have. I generally stop here to take a look when I'm passing." And he spat tobacco juice on the coping.

Stephen came to his senses.

"And you are from New England?" he said.

Mr. Hopper laughed.

“Tarnation!” said he, “you get used to it. When I came here, I was a sort of an Abolitionist. But after you’ve lived here awhile you get to know that niggers ain’t fit for freedom.”

Silence from Stephen.

“Likely gal, that beauty,” Eliphalet continued unrepressed. “There’s a well-known New Orleans dealer named Jenkins after her. I callate she’ll go down river.”

“I reckon you’re right, Mistah,” a man with a matted beard chimed in, and added with a wink: “She’ll find it pleasant enough—fer a while. Some of those other niggers will go too, and they’d rather go to hell. They do treat ’em nefarious down thah on the wholesale plantations. Household niggers! there ain’t none better off than them. But seven years in a cotton swamp,—seven years it takes, that’s all, Mistah.”

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Stephen moved away. He felt that to stay near the man was to be tempted to murder. He moved away, and just then the auctioneer yelled, “Attention!”

“Gentlemen,” he cried, “I have heah two sisters, the prope’ty of the late Mistah Robe’t Benbow, of St. Louis, as fine a pair of wenches as was ever offe’d to the public from these heah steps—”

“Speak for the handsome gal,” cried a wag.

“Sell off the cart hoss fust,” said another.

The auctioneer turned to the darker sister:

“Sal ain’t much on looks, gentlemen,” he said, “but she’s the best nigger for work Mistah Benbow had.” He seized her arm and squeezed it, while the girl flinched and drew back. “She’s solid, gentlemen, and sound as a dollar, and she kin sew and cook. Twenty-two years old. What am I bid?”

Much to the auctioneer’s disgust, Sal was bought in for four hundred dollars, the interest in the beautiful sister having made the crowd impatient. Stephen, sick at heart, turned to leave. Halfway to the corner he met a little elderly man who was the color of a dried gourd. And just as Stephen passed him, this man was overtaken by an old negress, with tears streaming down her face, who seized the threadbare hem of his coat. Stephen paused involuntarily.

“Well, Nancy,” said the little man, “we had marvellous luck. I was able to buy your daughter for you with less than the amount of your savings.”

“T’ank you, Mistah Cantah,” wailed the poor woman, “t’ank you, suh. Praised be de name ob de Lawd. He gib me Sal again. Oh, Mistah Cantah” (the agony in that cry), “is you gwineter stan’ heah an’ see her sister Hester sol’ to—to—oh, ma little Chile! De little Chile dat I nussed, dat I raised up in God’s ’ligion. Mistah Cantah, save her, suh, f’om dat wicked life o’ sin. De Lawd Jesus’ll rewa’d you, suh. Dis ole woman’ll wuk fo’ you twell de flesh drops off’n her fingers, suh.”

And had he not held her, she would have gone down on her knees on the stone flagging before him. Her suffering was stamped on the little man’s face—and it seemed to Stephen that this was but one trial more which adversity had brought to Mr. Canter.

“Nancy,” he answered (how often, and to how many, must he have had to say the same thing), “I haven’t the money, Nancy. Would to God that I had, Nancy!”

She had sunk down on the bricks. But she had not fainted. It was not so merciful as that. It was Stephen who lifted her, and helped her to the coping, where she sat with her bandanna awry.

Stephen was not of a descent to do things upon impulse. But the tale was told in after days that one of his first actions in St. Louis was of this nature. The waters stored for ages in the four great lakes, given the opportunity, rush over Niagara Falls into Ontario.

“Take the woman away,” said Stephen, in a low voice, “and I will buy the girl,—if I can.”

The little man looked up, dazed.

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“Give me your card,—your address. I will buy the girl, if I can, and set her free.”

He fumbled in his pocket and drew out a dirty piece of pasteboard. It read: “R. Canter, Second Hand Furniture, 20 Second Street.” And still he stared at Stephen, as one who gazes upon a mystery. A few curious pedestrians had stopped in front of them.

“Get her away, if you can, for God’s sake,” said Stephen again. And he strode off toward the people at the auction. He was trembling. In his eagerness to reach a place of vantage before the girl was sold, he pushed roughly into the crowd.

But suddenly he was brought up short by the blocky body of Mr. Hopper, who grunted with the force of the impact.

“Gosh,” said that gentleman, “but you are inters’ted. They ain’t begun to sell her yet—-he’s waitin’ for somebody. Callatin’ to buy her?” asked Mr. Hopper, with genial humor.

Stephen took a deep breath. If he knocked Mr. Hopper down, he certainly could not buy her. And it was a relief to know that the sale had not begun.

As for Eliphalet, he was beginning to like young Brice. He approved of any man from Boston who was not too squeamish to take pleasure in a little affair of this kind.

As for Stephen, Mr. Hopper brought him back to earth. He ceased trembling, and began to think.

“Tarnation!” said Eliphalet. “There’s my boss, Colonel Carvel across the street. Guess I’d better move on. But what d’ye think of him for a real Southern gentleman?”

“The young dandy is his nephew, Clarence Colfax. He callates to own this town.” Eliphalet was speaking leisurely, as usual, while preparing to move. “That’s Virginia Carvel, in red. Any gals down Boston-way to beat her? Guess you won’t find many as proud.”

He departed. And Stephen glanced absently at the group. They were picking their way over the muddy crossing toward him. Was it possible that these people were coming to a slave auction? Surely not. And yet here they were on the pavement at his very side.

She wore a long Talma of crimson cashmere, and her face was in that most seductive of frames, a scoop bonnet of dark green velvet, For a fleeting second her eyes met his, and then her lashes fell. But he was aware, when he had turned away, that she was looking at him again. He grew uneasy. He wondered whether his appearance betrayed his purpose, or made a question of his sanity.

Sanity! Yes, probably he was insane from her point of view. A sudden anger shook him that she should be there calmly watching such a scene.

Just then there was a hush among the crowd. The beautiful slave-girl was seized roughly by the man in charge and thrust forward, half fainting, into view. Stephen winced. But unconsciously he turned, to see the effect upon Virginia Carvel.

Thank God! There were tears upon her lashes.

Here was the rasp of the auctioneer's voice:— "Gentlemen, I reckon there ain't never been offered to bidders such an opportunity as this heah. Look at her well, gentlemen. I ask you, ain't she a splendid creature?"

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Colonel Carvel, in annoyance, started to move on. “Come Jinny,” he said, “I had no business to bring you aver.”

But Virginia caught his arm. “Pa,” she cried, “it’s Mr. Benbow’s Hester. Don’t go, dear. Buy her for me You know that I always wanted her. Please!”

The Colonel halted, irresolute, and pulled his goatee Young Colfax stepped in between them.

“I’ll buy her for you, Jinny. Mother promised you a present, you know, and you shall have her.”

Virginia had calmed.

“Do buy her, one of you,” was all she said

“You may do the bidding, Clarence,” said the Colonel, “and we’ll settle the ownership afterward.” Taking Virginia’s arm, he escorted her across the street.

Stephen was left in a quandary. Here was a home for the girl, and a good one. Why should me spend the money which meant so much to him. He saw the man Jenkin elbowing to the front. And yet—suppose Mr. Colfax did not get her? He had promised to buy her if he could, and to set her free:

Stephen had made up his mind: He shouldered his way after Jenkins.

CHAPTER V

THE FIRST SPARK PASSES

“Now, gentlemen,” shouted the auctioneer when he had finished his oration upon the girl’s attractions, “what ’tin I bid? Eight hundred?”

Stephen caught his breath. There was a long pause no one cared to start the bidding.

“Come, gentlemen, come! There’s my friend Alf Jenkins. He knows what she’s worth to a cent. What’ll you give, Alf? Is it eight hundred?”

Mr. Jenkins winked at the auction joined in the laugh.

“Three hundred!” he said.

The auctioneer was mortally offended. Then some one cried:—“Three hundred and fifty!”

It was young Colfax. He was recognized at once, by name, evidently as a person of importance.

“Thank you, Mistah Colfax, suh,” said the auctioneer, with a servile wave of the hand in his direction, while the crowd twisted their necks to see him. He stood very straight, very haughty, as if entirely oblivious to his conspicuous position.

“Three seventy-five!”

“That’s better, Mistah Jenkins,” said the auctioneer, sarcastically. He turned to the girl, who might have stood to a sculptor for a figure of despair. Her hands were folded in front of her, her head bowed down. The auctioneer put his hand under her chin and raised it roughly. “Cheer up, my gal,” he said, “you ain’t got nothing to blubber about now.”

Hester’s breast heaved and from her black eyes there shot a magnificent look of defiance. He laughed. That was the white blood.

The white blood!

Clarence Colfax had his bid taken from his lips. Above the heads of the people he had a quick vision of a young man with a determined face, whose voice rang clear and strong,— “Four hundred!”

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Even the auctioneer, braced two ways, was thrown off his balance by the sudden appearance of this new force. Stephen grew red over the sensation he made. Apparently the others present had deemed competition with such as Jenkins and young Colfax the grossest folly. He was treated to much liberal staring before the oily salesman arranged his wits to grapple with the third factor.

Four hundred from—from—from that gentleman. And the chubby index seemed the finger of scorn.

“Four hundred and fifty!” said Mr. Colfax, defiantly.

Whereupon Mr. Jenkins, the New Orleans dealer, lighted a very long cigar and sat down on the coping. The auctioneer paid no attention to this manoeuvre. But Mr. Brice and Mr. Colfax, being very young, fondly imagined that they had the field to themselves, to fight to a finish.

Here wisdom suggested in a mild whisper to Stephen that there was a last chance to pull out. And let Colfax have the girl? Never. That was pride, and most reprehensible. But second he thought of Mr. Canter and of Nancy, and that was not pride.

“Four seventy-five!” he cried.

“Thank you, suh.”

“Now fur it, young uns!” said the wag, and the crowd howled with merriment.

“Five hundred!” snapped Mr. Colfax.

He was growing angry. But Stephen was from New England, and poor, and he thought of the size of his purse. A glance at his adversary showed that his blood was up. Money was plainly no consideration to him, and young Colfax did not seem to be the kind who would relish returning to a young lady and acknowledge a defeat.

Stephen raised the bid by ten dollars. The Southerner shot up fifty. Again Stephen raised it ten. He was in full possession of himself now, and proof against the thinly veiled irony of the oily man’s remarks in favor of Mr. Colfax. In an incredibly short time the latter’s impetuosity had brought them to eight hundred and ten dollars.

Then several things happened very quickly.

Mr. Jenkins got up from the curb and said, “Eight hundred and twenty-five,” with his cigar in his mouth. Scarcely had the hum of excitement died when Stephen, glancing at Colfax for the next move, saw that young gentleman seized from the rear by his uncle, the tall Colonel. And across the street was bliss Virginia Carvel, tapping her foot on the pavement.

“What are you about, sir?” the Colonel cried. “The wench isn’t worth it.”

“Mr. Colfax shook himself free.

“I’ve got to buy her now, sir,” he cried.

“I reckon not,” said the Colonel. “You come along with me.”

Naturally Mr. Colfax was very angry. He struggled but he went. And so, protesting, he passed Stephen, at whom he did not deign to glance. The humiliation of it must have been great for Mr. Colfax. “Jinny wants her; sir,” he said, “and I have a right to buy her.”

“Jinny wants everything,” was the Colonel’s reply. And in a single look of curiosity and amusement his own gray eyes met Stephen’s. They seemed to regret that this young man, too, had not a guardian. Then uncle and nephew recrossed the street, and as they walked off the Colonel was seen to laugh. Virginia had her chin in the air, and Clarence’s was in his collar.

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The crowd, of course, indulged in roars of laughter, and even Stephen could not repress a smile, a smile not without bitterness. Then he wheeled to face Mr. Jerkins. Out of respect for the personages involved, the auctioneer had been considerately silent daring the event. It was Mr. Brice who was now the centre of observation.

Come, gentlemen, come, this here's a joke—eight twenty-five. She's worth two thousand. I've been in the business twenty yea's, and I neve' seen her equal. Give me a bid, Mr.—Mr.—you have the advantage of me, suh."

"Eight hundred and thirty-five!" said Stephen.

"Now, Mr. Jerkins, now, suh! we've got twenty me' to sell."

"Eight fifty!" said Mr. Jerkins.

"Eight sixty!" said Stephen, and they cheered him.

Mr. Jenkins took his cigar out of his teeth, and stared.

"Eight seventy-five!" said he.

"Eight eighty-five!" said Stephen.

There was a breathless pause.

"Nine hundred!" said the trader.

"Nine hundred and ten!" cried Stephen.

At that Mr. Jerkins whipped his hat from off his head, and made Stephen a derisive bow.

"She's youahs, suh," he said. "These here are panic times. I've struck my limit. I can do bettah in Louisville fo' less. Congratulate you, suh —reckon you want her wuss'n I do."

At which sally Stephen grew scarlet, and the crowd howled with joy.

"What!" yelled the auctioneer. "Why, gentlemen, this heah's a joke. Nine hundred and ten dollars, gents, nine hundred and ten. We've just begun, gents. Come, Mr. Jerkins, that's giving her away."

The trader shook his head, and puffed at his cigar.

"Well," cried the oily man, "this is a slaughter. Going at nine hundred an' ten—nine ten —going—going—" down came the hammer—"gone at nine hundred and ten to Mr.—Mr. —you have the advantage of me, suh."

An attendant had seized the girl, who was on the verge of fainting, and was dragging her back. Stephen did not heed the auctioneer, but thrust forward regardless of stares.

“Handle her gently, you blackguard,” he cried.

The man took his hands off.

“Suttinly, sah,” he said.

Hester lifted her eyes, and they were filled with such gratitude and trust that suddenly he was overcome with embarrassment.

“Can you walk?” he demanded, somewhat harshly.

“Yes, massa.”

“Then get up,” he said, “and follow me.”

She rose obediently. Then a fat man came out of the Court House, with a quill in his hand, and a merry twinkle in his eye that Stephen resented.

“This way, please, sah,” and he led him to a desk, from the drawer of which he drew forth a blank deed.

“Name, please!”

“Stephen Atterbury Brice.”

“Residence, Mr. Brice!”

Stephen gave the number. But instead of writing it clown, the man merely stared at him, while the fat creases in his face deepened and deepened. Finally he put down his quill, and indulged in a gale of laughter, hugely to Mr. Brice’s discomfiture.

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“Shucks!” said the fat man, as soon as he could.

“What are you givin’ us? That the’s a Yankee boa’din’ house.”

“And I suppose that that is part of your business, too,” said Stephen, acidly.

The fat man looked at him, pressed his lips, wrote down the number, shaken all the while with a disturbance which promised to lead to another explosion. Finally, after a deal of pantomime, and whispering and laughter with the notary behind the wire screen, the deed was made out, signed, attested, and delivered. Stephen counted out the money grimly, in gold and Boston drafts.

Out in the sunlight on Chestnut Street, with the girl by his side, it all seemed a nightmare. The son of Appleton Brice of Boston the owner of a beautiful quadroon girl! And he had bought hex with his last cent.

Miss Crane herself opened the door in answer to his ring. Her keen eyes instantly darted over his shoulder and dilated, But Stephen, summoning all his courage, pushed past her to the stairs, and beckoned Hester to follow.

“I have brought this—this person to see my mother,” he said

The spinster bowed from the back of her neck. She stood transfixed on a great rose in the hall carpet until she heard Mrs. Brice’s door open and slam, and then she strode up the stairs and into the apartment of Mrs. Abner Reed. As she passed the first landing, the quadroon girl was waiting in the hall.

CHAPTER VI

SILAS WHIPPLE

The trouble with many narratives is that they tell too much. Stephen’s interview with his mother was a quiet affair, and not historic. Miss Crane’s boarding-house is not an interesting place, and the tempest in that teapot is better imagined than described. Out of consideration for Mr. Stephen Brice, we shall skip likewise a most affecting scene at Mr. Canter’s second-hand furniture store.

That afternoon Stephen came again to the dirty flight of steps which led to Judge Whipple’s office. He paused a moment to gather courage, and then, gripping the rail, he ascended. The ascent required courage now, certainly. He halted again before the door at the top. But even as he stood there came to him, in low, rich tones, the notes of a German song. He entered And Mr. Richter rose in shirt-sleeves from his desk to greet him, all smiling.

“Ach, my friend!” said he, “but you are late. The Judge has been awaiting you.”

“Has he?” inquired Stephen, with ill-concealed anxiety.

The big young German patted him on the shoulder.

Suddenly a voice roared from out the open transom of the private office, like a cyclone through a gap.

“Mr. Richter!”

“Sir!”

“Who is that?”

“Mr. Brice, sir.”

“Then why in thunder doesn’t he come in?”

Mr. Richter opened the private door, and in Stephen walked. The door closed again, and there he was in the dragon’s dens face to face with the dragon, who was staring him through and through. The first objects that caught Stephen’s attention were the grizzly gray eye brows, which seemed as so much brush to mark the fire of the deep-set battery of the eyes. And that battery, when in action, must have been truly terrible.

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The Judge was shaven, save for a shaggy fringe of gray beard around his chin, and the size of his nose was apparent even in the full face.

Stephen felt that no part of him escaped the search of Mr. Whipple's glance. But it was no code or course of conduct that kept him silent. Nor was it fear entirely.

"So you are Appleton Brice's son," said the Judge, at last. His tone was not quite so gruff as it might have been.

"Yes, sir," said Stephen.

"Humph!" said the Judge, with a look that scarcely expressed approval. "I guess you've been patted on the back too much by your father's friends." He leaned back in his wooden chair. "How I used to detest people who patted boys on the back and said with a smirk, 'I know your father.' I never had a father whom people could say that about. But, sir," cried the Judge, bringing down his fist on the litter of papers that covered his desk, "I made up my mind that one day people should know me. That was my spur. And you'll start fair here, Mr. Brice. They won't know your father here—"

If Stephen thought the Judge brutal, he did not say so. He glanced around the little room,—at the bed in the corner, in which the Judge slept, and which during the day did not escape the flood of books and papers; at the washstand, with a roll of legal cap beside the pitcher.

"I guess you think this town pretty crude after Boston, Mr. Brice," Mr. Whipple continued. "From time immemorial it has been the pleasant habit of old communities to be shocked at newer settlements, built by their own countrymen. Are you shocked, sir?"

Stephen flushed. Fortunately the Judge did not give him time to answer.

"Why didn't your mother let me know that she was coming?"

"She didn't wish to put you to any trouble, sir."

"Wasn't I a good friend of your father's? Didn't I ask you to come here and go into my office?"

"But there was a chance, Mr. Whipple—"

"A chance of what?"

"That you would not like me. And there is still a chance of it," added Stephen, smiling.

For a second it looked as if the Judge might smile, too. He rubbed his nose with a fearful violence.

“Mr. Richter tells me you were looking for a bank,” said he, presently.

Stephen quaked.

“Yes, sir, I was, but—”

But Mr. Whipple merely picked up the ‘Counterfeit Bank Note Detector’.

“Beware of Western State Currency as you would the devil,” said he. “That’s one thing we don’t equal the East in—yet. And so you want to become a lawyer?”

“I intend to become a lawyer, sir.”

“And so you shall, sir,” cried the Judge, bringing down his yellow fist upon the ‘Bank Note Detector’. “I’ll make you a lawyer, sir. But my methods ain’t Harvard methods, sir.”

“I am ready to do anything, Mr. Whipple.”

The Judge merely grunted. He scratched among his papers, and produced some legal cap and a bunch of notes.

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“Go out there,” he said, “and take off your coat and copy this brief. Mr. Richter will help you to-day. And tell your mother I shall do myself the honor to call upon her this evening.”

Stephen did as he was told, without a word. But Mr. Richter was not in the outer office when he returned to it. He tried to compose himself to write, although the recollection of each act of the morning hung like a cloud over the back of his head. Therefore the first sheet of legal cap was spoiled utterly. But Stephen had a deep sense of failure. He had gone through the ground glass door with the firm intention of making a clean breast of the ownership of Hester. Now, as he sat still, the trouble grew upon him. He started a new sheet, and ruined that: Once he got as far as his feet, and sat down again. But at length he had quieted to the extent of deciphering ten lines of Mr. Whipple’s handwriting when the creak of a door shattered his nerves completely.

He glanced up from his work to behold—none other than Colonel Comyn Carvel.

Glancing at Mr. Richter’s chair, and seeing it empty, the Colonel’s eye roved about the room until it found Stephen. There it remained, and the Colonel remained in the middle of the floor, his soft hat on the back of his head, one hand planted firmly on the gold head of his stick, and the other tugging at his goatee, pulling down his chin to the quizzical angle.

“Whoopee!” he cried.

The effect of this was to make one perspire freely. Stephen perspired. And as there seemed no logical answer, he made none.

Suddenly Mr. Carvel turned, shaking with a laughter he could not control, and strode into the private office the door slammed behind him. Mr. Brice’s impulse was flight. But he controlled himself.

First of all there was an eloquent silence. Then a ripple of guffaws. Then the scratch-scratch of a quill pen, and finally the Judge’s voice.

“Carvel, what the devil’s the matter with you, sir?”

A squall of guffaws blew through the transom, and the Colonel was heard slapping his knee.

“Judge Whipple,” said he, his voice vibrating from suppressed explosions, “I am happy to see that you have overcome some of your ridiculous prejudices, sir.”

“What prejudices, sir?” the Judge was heard to shout.

“Toward slavery, Judge,” said Mr. Carvel, seeming to recover his gravity. “You are a broader man than I thought, sir.”

An unintelligible gurgle came from the Judge. Then he said.

“Carvel, haven’t you and I quarrelled enough on that subject?”

“You didn’t happen to attend the nigger auction this morning when you were at the court?” asked the Colonel, blandly.

“Colonel,” said the Judge, “I’ve warned you a hundred times against the stuff you lay out on your counter for customers.”

“You weren’t at the auction, then,” continued the Colonel, undisturbed. “You missed it, sir. You missed seeing this young man you’ve just employed buy the prettiest quadroon wench I ever set eyes on.”

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Now indeed was poor Stephen on his feet. But whether to fly in at the one entrance or out at the other, he was undecided.

“Colonel,” said Mr. Whipple, “is that true?”

“Sir!”
“*Mr*. *Brice*!”

It did not seem to Stephen as if he was walking when he went toward the ground glass door. He opened it. There was Colonel Carvel seated on the bed, his goatee in his hand. And there was the Judge leaning forward from his hips, straight as a ramrod. Fire was darting from beneath his bushy eyebrows. “Mr. Brice,” said he, “there is one question I always ask of those whom I employ. I omitted it in your case because I have known your father and your grandfather before you. What is your opinion, sir, on the subject of holding human beings in bondage?”

The answer was immediate,—likewise simple.

“I do not believe in it, Mr. Whipple.”

The Judge shot out of his chair like a long jack-in-the box, and towered to his full height.

“Mr. Brice, did you, or did you not, buy a woman at auction to-day?”

“I did, sir.”

Mr. Whipple literally staggered. But Stephen caught a glimpse of the Colonel’s hand slipping from his chin cover his mouth.

“Good God, sir!” cried the Judge, and he sat down heavily. “You say that you are an Abolitionist?”

“No, sir, I do not say that. But it does not need an Abolitionist to condemn what I saw this morning.”

“Are you a slave-owner, sir?” said Mr. Whipple.

“Yes, sir.”

“Then get your coat and hat and leave my office, Mr. Brice.”

Stephen’s coat was on his arm. He slipped it on, and turned to go. He was, if the truth were told, more amused than angry. It was Colonel Carvel’s voice that stopped him.

“Hold on, Judge,” he drawled, “I reckon you haven’t got all the packing out of that case.”

Mr. Whipple locked at him in a sort of stupefaction. Then he glanced at Stephen.

“Come back here, sir,” he cried. “I’ll give you hearing. No man shall say that I am not just.”

Stephen looked gratefully at the Colonel.

“I did not expect one, sir,” he said..

“And you don’t deserve one, sir,” cried the Judge.

“I think I do,” replied Stephen, quietly.

The Judge suppressed something.

“What did you do with this person?” he demanded

“I took her to Miss Crane’s boarding-house,” said Stephen.

It was the Colonel’s turn to explode. The guffaw which came from hire drowned every other sound.

“Good God!” said the Judge, helplessly. Again he looked at the Colonel, and this time something very like mirth shivered his lean frame. “And what do you intend to do with her?” he asked in strange tones.

“To give her freedom, sir, as soon as I can find somebody to go on her bond.”

Again silence. Mr. Whipple rubbed his nose with more than customary violence, and looked very hard at Mr. Carvel, whose face was inscrutable. It was a solemn moment.

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“Mr. Brice,” said the Judge, at length, “take off your coat, sir I will go her bond.”

It was Stephen’s turn to be taken aback. He stood regarding the Judge curiously, wondering what manner of man he was. He did not know that this question had puzzled many before him.

“Thank you, sir,” he said.

His hand was on the knob of the door, when Mr. Whipple called him back abruptly. His voice had lost some of its gruffness.

“What were your father’s ideas about slavery, Mr. Brice?”

The young man thought a moment, as if seeking to be exact.

“I suppose he would have put slavery among the necessary evils, sir,” he said, at length. “But he never could bear to have the liberator mentioned in his presence. He was not at all in sympathy with Phillips, or Parker, or Summer. And such was the general feeling among his friends.”

“Then,” said the Judge, “contrary to popular opinion in the West and South, Boston is not all Abolition.”

Stephen smiled.

“The conservative classes are not at all Abolitionists, sir.”

“The conservative classes!” growled the Judge, “the conservative classes! I am tired of hearing about the conservative classes. Why not come out with it, sir, and say the moneyed classes, who would rather see souls held in bondage than risk their worldly goods in an attempt to liberate them?”

Stephen flushed. It was not at all clear to him then how he was to get along with Judge Whipple. But he kept his temper.

“I am sure that you do them an injustice, sir,” he said, with more feeling them he had yet shown. “I am not speaking of the rich alone, and I think that if you knew Boston you would not say that the conservative class there is wholly composed of wealthy people. Many of may father’s friends were by no means wealthy. And I know that if he had been poor he would have held the same views.”

Stephen did not mark the quick look of approval which Colonel Carvel gave him. Judge Whipple merely rubbed his nose.

“Well, sir,” he said, “what were his views, then?”

“My father regarded slaves as property, sir. And conservative people” (Stephen stuck to the word) “respect property the world over. My father’s argument was this: If men are deprived by violence of one kind of property which they hold under the law, all other kinds of property will be endangered. The result will be anarchy. Furthermore, he recognized that the economic conditions in the South make slavery necessary to prosperity. And he regarded the covenant made between the states of the two sections as sacred.”

There was a brief silence, during which the uncompromising expression of the Judge did not change.

“And do you, sir?” he demanded.

“I am not sure, sir, after what I saw yesterday. I—I must have time to see more of it.”

“Good Lord,” said Colonel Carvel, “if the conservative people of the North act this way when they see a slave sale, what will the Abolitionists do? Whipple,” he added slowly, but with conviction, “this means war.”

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Then the Colonel got to his feet, and bowed to Stephen with ceremony.

“Whatever you believe, sir,” he said, “permit me to shake your hand. You are a brave man, sir. And although my own belief is that the black race is held in subjection by a divine decree, I can admire what you have done, Mr. Brice. It was a noble act, sir,—a right noble act. And I have more respect for the people of Boston, now, sir, than I ever had before, sir.”

Having delivered himself of this somewhat dubious compliment (which he meant well), the Colonel departed.

Judge Whipple said nothing.

CHAPTER VII

CALLERS

If the Brices had created an excitement upon their arrival, it was as nothing to the mad delirium which raged at Miss Crane’s boarding-house. during the second afternoon of their stay. Twenty times was Miss Crane on the point of requesting Mrs. Brice to leave, and twenty times, by the advice of Mrs. Abner Deed, she desisted. The culmination came when the news leaked out that Mr. Stephen Brice had bought the young woman in order to give her freedom. Like those who have done noble acts since the world began, Stephen that night was both a hero and a fool. The cream from which heroes is made is very apt to turn.

“Phew!” cried Stephen, when they had reached their room after tea, “wasn’t that meal a fearful experience? Let’s find a hovel, mother, and go and live in it. We can’t stand it here any longer.”

“Not if you persist in your career of reforming an Institution, my son,” answered the widow, smiling.

“It was beastly hard luck,” said he, “that I should have been shouldered with that experience the first day. But I have tried to think it over calmly since, and I can see nothing else to have done.” He paused in his pacing up and down, a smile struggling with his serious look. “It was quite a hot-headed business for one of the staid Brices, wasn’t it?”

“The family has never been called impetuous,” replied his mother. “It must be the Western air.”

He began his pacing again. His mother had not said one word about the money. Neither had he. Once more he stopped before her.

“We are at least a year nearer the poor-house,” he said; “you haven’t scolded me for that. I should feel so much better if you would.”

“Oh, Stephen, don’t say that!” she exclaimed. “God has given me no greater happiness in this life than the sight of the gratitude of that poor creature, Nancy. I shall never forget the old woman’s joy at the sight of her daughter. It made a palace out of that dingy furniture shop. Hand me my handkerchief, dear.”

Stephen noticed with a pang that the lace of it was frayed and torn at the corner.

There was a knock at the door.

“Come in,” said Mrs. Brice, hastily putting the handkerchief down.

Hester stood on the threshold, and old Nancy beside her.

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“Evenin’, Mis’ Brice. De good Lawd bless you, lady, an’ Miste’ Brice,” said the old negress.

“Well, Nancy?”

Nancy pressed into the room. “Mis’ Brice!”

“Yes?”

“Ain’ you gwineter’ low Hester an’ me to wuk fo’ you?”

“Indeed I should be glad to, Nancy. But we are boarding.”

“Yassm, yassm,” said Nancy, and relapsed into awkward silence. Then again, “Mis’ Brice!”

“Yes, Nancy?”

“Ef you ‘lows us t’ come heah an’ straighten out you’ close, an’ mend ’em —you dunno how happy you mek me an’ Hester—des to do dat much, Mis’ Brice.”

The note of appeal was irresistible. Mrs. Brice rose and unlocked the trunks.

“You may unpack them, Nancy,” she said.

With what alacrity did the old woman take off her black bonnet and shawl! “Whaffor you stannin’ dere, Hester?” she cried.

“Hester is tired,” said Mrs. Brice, compassionately, and tears came to her eyes again at the thought of what they had both been through that day.

“Tired!” said Nancy, holding up her hands. “No’m, she ain’ tired. She des kinder stupefied by you’ goodness, Mis’ Brice.”

A scene was saved by the appearance of Miss Crane’s hired girl.

“Mr. and Mrs. Cluyme, in the parlor, mum,” she said.

If Mr. Jacob Cluyme sniffed a little as he was ushered into Miss Crane’s best parlor, it was perhaps because of she stuffy dampness of that room. Mr. Cluyme was one of those persons the effusiveness of whose greeting does not tally with the limpness of their grasp. He was attempting, when Stephen appeared, to get a little heat into his hands by rubbing them, as a man who kindles a stick of wood for a visitor. The gentleman had red chop-whiskers,—to continue to put his worst side foremost, which

demanded a ruddy face. He welcomed Stephen to St. Louis with neighborly effusion; while his wife, a round little woman, bubbled over to Mrs. Brice.

“My dear sir,” said Mr. Cluyme, “I used often to go to Boston in the forties. In fact—-ahem—I may claim to be a New Englander. Alas, no, I never met your father. But when I heard of the sad circumstances of his death, I felt as if I had lost a personal friend. His probity, sir, and his religious principles were an honor to the Athens of America. I have listened to my friend, Mr. Atterbury,—Mr. Samuel Atterbury,—eulogize him by the hour.”

Stephen was surprised.

“Why, yes,” said he, “Mr. Atterbury was a friend.”

“Of course,” said Mr. Cluyme, “I knew it. Four years ago, the last business trip I made to Boston, I met Atterbury on the street. Absence makes no difference to some men, sir, nor the West, for that matter. They never change. Atterbury nearly took me in his arms. ‘My dear fellow,’ he cried, ‘how long are you to be in town?’ I was going the next day. ’Sorry I can’t ask you to dinner,’ says he, but step into the Tremont House and have a bite.’—Wasn’t that like Atterbury?”

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Stephen thought it was. But Mr. Cluyme was evidently expecting no answer.

“Well,” said he, “what I was going to say was that we heard you were in town; ‘Friends of Samuel Atterbury, my dear,’ I said to my wife. We are neighbors, Mr. Brace. You must know the girls. You must come to supper. We live very plainly, sir, very simply. I am afraid that you will miss the luxury of the East, and some of the refinement, Stephen. I hope I may call you so, my boy. We have a few cultured citizens, Stephen, but all are not so. I miss the atmosphere. I seemed to live again when I got to Boston. But business, sir,—the making of money is a sordid occupation. You will come to supper?”

“I scarcely think that my mother will go out,” said Stephen.

“Oh, be friends! It will cheer her. Not a dinner-party, my boy, only a plain, comfortable meal, with plenty to eat. Of course she will. Of course she will. Not a Boston social function, you understand. Boston, Stephen, I have always looked upon as the centre of the universe. Our universe, I mean. America for Americans is a motto of mine. Oh, no,” he added quickly, “I don’t mean a Know Nothing. Religious freedom, my boy, is part of our great Constitution. By the way, Stephen—Atterbury always had such a respect for your father’s opinions—”

“My father was not an Abolitionist, sir,” said Stephen, smiling.

“Quite right, quite right,” said Mr. Cluyme.

“But I am not sure, since I have come here, that I have not some sympathy and respect for the Abolitionists.”

Mr. Cluyme gave a perceptible start. He glanced at the heavy hangings on the windows and then out of the open door into the hall. For a space his wife’s chatter to Mrs. Brace, on Boston fashions, filled the room.

“My dear Stephen,” said the gentleman, dropping his voice, “that is all very well in Boston. But take a little advice from one who is old enough to counsel you. You are young, and you must learn to temper yourself to the tone of the place which you have made your home. St. Louis is full of excellent people, but they are not precisely Abolitionists. We are gathering, it is true, a small party who are for gradual emancipation. But our New England population here is small yet compared to the Southerners. And they are very violent, sir.”

Stephen could not resist saying, “Judge Whipple does not seem to have tempered himself, sir.”

“Silas Whipple is a fanatic, sir,” cried Mr. Cluyme.

“His hand is against every man’s. He denounces Douglas on the slightest excuse, and would go to Washington when Congress opens to fight with Stephens and Toombs and Davis. But what good does it do him? He might have been in the Senate, or on the Supreme Bench, had he not stirred up so much hatred. And yet I can’t help liking Whipple. Do you know him?”

A resounding ring of the door-bell cut off Stephen’s reply, and Mrs. Cluyme’s small talk to Mrs. Brice. In the hall rumbled a familiar voice, and in stalked none other than Judge Whipple himself. Without noticing the other occupants of the parlor he strode up to Mrs. Brice, looked at her for an instant from under the grizzled brows, and held out his large hand.

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“Pray, ma’am,” he said, “what have you done with your slave?”

Mrs. Cluyme emitted a muffled shriek, like that of a person frightened in a dream. Her husband grasped the curved back of his chair. But Stephen smiled. And his mother smiled a little, too.

“Are you Mr. Whipple?” she asked.

“I am, madam,” was the reply.

“My slave is upstairs, I believe, unpacking my trunks,” said Mrs. Brice.

Mr. and Mrs. Cluyme exchanged a glance of consternation. Then Mrs. Cluyme sat down again, rather heavily, as though her legs had refused to hold her.

“Well, well, ma’am!” The Judge looked again at Mrs. Brice, and a gleam of mirth lighted the severity of his face. He was plainly pleased with her —this serene lady in black, whose voice had the sweet ring of women who are well born and whose manner was so self-contained. To speak truth, the Judge was prepared to dislike her. He had never laid eyes upon her, and as he walked hither from his house he seemed to foresee a helpless little woman who, once he had called, would fling her Boston pride to the winds and dump her woes upon him. He looked again, and decidedly approved of Mrs. Brice, and was unaware that his glance embarrassed her.

“Mr. Whipple,” she said,—“do you know Mr. and Mrs. Cluyme?”

The Judge looked behind him abruptly, nodded ferociously at Mr. Cluyme, and took the hand that fluttered out to him from Mrs. Cluyme.

“Know the Judge!” exclaimed that lady, “I reckon we do. And my Belle is so fond of him. She thinks there is no one equal to Mr. Whipple. Judge, you must come round to a family supper. Belle will surpass herself.”

“Umph!” said the Judge, “I think I like Edith best of your girls, ma’am.”

“Edith is a good daughter, if I do say it myself,” said Mrs. Cluyme. “I have tried to do right by my children.” She was still greatly flustered, and curiosity about the matter of the slave burned upon her face. Neither the Judge nor Mrs. Brice were people one could catechise. Stephen, scanning the Judge, was wondering how far he regarded the matter as a joke.

“Well, madam,” said Mr. Whipple, as he seated himself on the other end of the horsehair sofa, “I’ll warrant when you left Boston that you did not expect to own a slave the day after you arrived in St. Louis.”

“But I do not own her,” said Mrs. Brice. “It is my son who owns her.”

This was too much for Mr. Cluyme.

“What!” he cried to Stephen. “You own a slave? You, a mere boy, have bought a negress?”

“And what is more, sir, I approve of it,” the Judge put in, severely. “I am going to take the young man into my office.”

Mr. Cluyme gradually retired into the back of his chair, looking at Mr. Whipple as though he expected him to touch a match to the window curtains. But Mr. Cluyme was elastic.

“Pardon me, Judge,” said he, “but I trust that I may be allowed to congratulate you upon the abandonment of principles which I have considered a clog to your career. They did you honor, sir, but they were Quixotic. I, sir, am for saving our glorious Union at any cost. And we have no right to deprive our brethren of their property of their very means of livelihood.”

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The Judge grinned diabolically. Mrs. Cluyme was as yet too stunned to speak. Only Stephen's mother sniffed gunpowder in the air.

"This, Mr. Cluyme," said the Judge, mildly, "is an age of shifting winds. It was not long ago," he added reflectively, "when you and I met in the Planters' House, and you declared that every drop of Northern blood spilled in Kansas was in a holy cause. Do you remember it, sir?"

Mr. Cluyme and Mr. Cluyme's wife alone knew whether he trembled.

"And I repeat that, sir," he cried, with far too much zeal. "I repeat it here and now. And yet I was for the Omnibus Bill, and I am with Mr. Douglas in his local sovereignty. I am willing to bury my abhorrence of a relic of barbarism, for the sake of union and peace."

"Well, sir, I am not," retorted the Judge, like lightning. He rubbed the red spat on his nose, and pointed a bony finger at Mr. Cluyme. Many a criminal had grovelled before that finger. "I, too, am for the Union. And the Union will never be safe until the greatest crime of modern times is wiped out in blood. Mind what I say, Mr. Cluyme, in blood, sir," he thundered.

Poor Mrs. Cluyme gasped.

"But the slave, sir? Did I not understand you to approve of Mr. Brice's ownership?"

"As I never approved of any other. Good night, sir. Good night, madam." But to Mrs. Brice he crossed over and took her hand. It has been further claimed that he bowed. This is not certain.

"Good night, madam," he said. "I shall call again to pay my respects when you are not occupied."

THE CRISIS

By Winston Churchill

Volume 2.

CHAPTER VIII

BELLEGARDE

Miss Virginia Carvel came down the steps in her riding-habit. And Ned, who had been waiting in the street with the horses, obsequiously held his hand while his young

mistress leaped into Vixen's saddle. Leaving the darkey to follow upon black Calhoun, she cantered off up the street, greatly to the admiration of the neighbor. They threw open their windows to wave at her, but Virginia pressed her lips and stared straight ahead. She was going out to see the Russell girls at their father's country place on Bellefontaine Road, especially to proclaim her detestation for a certain young Yankee upstart. She had unbosomed herself to Anne Brinsmade and timid Eugenie Renault the day before.

It was Indian summer, the gold and purple season of the year. Frost had come and gone. Wasps were buzzing confusedly about the eaves again, marvelling at the balmy air, and the two Misses Russell, Puss and Emily, were seated within the wide doorway at needlework when Virginia dismounted at the horseblock.

"Oh, Jinny, I'm so glad to see you," said Miss Russell. "Here's Elise Saint Simon from New Orleans. You must stay all day and to-night."

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“I can’t, Puss,” said Virginia, submitting impatiently to Miss Russell’s warm embrace. She was disappointed at finding the stranger. “I only came —to say that I am going to have a birthday party in a few weeks. You must be sure to come, and bring your guest.”

Virginia took her bridle from Ned, and Miss Russell’s hospitable face fell.

“You’re not going?” she said.

“To Bellegarde for dinner,” answered Virginia.

“But it’s only ten o’clock,” said Puss. “And, Jinny?”

“Yes.”

“There’s a new young man in town, and they do say his appearance is very striking—-not exactly handsome, you know, but strong-looking.”

“He’s horrid!” said Virginia. “He’s a Yankee.”

“How do you know?” demanded Puss and Emily in chorus.

“And he’s no gentleman,” said Virginia.

“But how do you know, Jinny?”

“He’s an upstart.”

“Oh. But he belongs to a very good Boston family, they say.”

“There are no good Boston families,” replied Virginia, with conviction, as she separated her reins. “He has proved that. Who ever heard of a good Yankee family?”

“What has he done to you, Virginia?” asked Puss, who had brains.

Virginia glanced at the guest. But her grievance was too hot within her for suppression.

Do you remember Mr. Benbow’s Hester, girls? The one I always said I wanted. She was sold at auction yesterday. Pa and I were passing the Court House, with Clarence, when she was put up for sale. We crossed the street to see what was going on, and there was your strong-looking Yankee standing at the edge of the crowd. I am quite sure that he saw me as plainly as I see you, Puss Russell.”

“How could he help it?” said Puss, slyly.

Virginia took no notice of the remark.

“He heard me ask Pa to buy her. He heard Clarence say that he would bid her in for me. I know he did. And yet he goes in and outbids Clarence, and buys her himself. Do you think any gentleman would do that, Puss Russell?”

“He bought her himself!” cried the astonished Miss Russell. “Why I thought that all Bostonians were Abolitionists.”

“Then he set her free,” said Miss Carvel, contemptuously Judge Whipple went on her bond to-day.”

“Oh, I’m just crazy to see him now,” said Miss Russell.

“Ask him to your party, Virginia,” she added mischievously.

“Do you think I would have him in my house?” cried Virginia.

Miss Russell was likewise courageous—“I don’t see why not. You have Judge Whipple every Sunday dinner, and he’s an Abolitionist.”

Virginia drew herself up.

“Judge Whipple has never insulted me,” she said, with dignity.

Puss gave way to laughter. Whereupon, despite her protests and prayers for forgiveness, Virginia took to her mare again and galloped off. They saw her turn northward on the Bellefontaine Road.

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Presently the woodland hid from her sight the noble river shining far below, and Virginia pulled Vixen between the gateposts which marked the entrance to her aunt's place, Bellegarde. Half a mile through the cool forest, the black dirt of the driveway flying from Vixen's hoofs, and there was the Colfax house on the edge of the, gentle slope; and beyond it the orchard, and the blue grapes withering on the vines,—and beyond that fields and fields of yellow stubble. The silver smoke of a steamboat hung in wisps above the water. A young negro was busily washing the broad veranda, but he stopped and straightened at sight of the young horsewoman.

"Sambo, where's your mistress?"

"Clar t' goodness, Miss Jinny, she was heah leetle while ago."

"Yo' git atter Miss Lilly, yo' good-fo'-nuthin' niggah," said Ned, warmly. "Ain't yo' be'n raised better'n to stan' theh wif yo'mouf open?"

Sambo was taking the hint, when Miss Virginia called him back.

"Where's Mr. Clarence?

"Young Masr? I'll fotch him, Miss Jinny. He jes come home f'um seein' that thar trottin' hose he's gwine to race nex' week."

Ned, who had tied Calhoun and was holding his mistress's bridle, sniffed. He had been Colonel Carvel's jockey in his younger days.

"Shucks!" he said contemptuously. "I hoped to die befo' the day a gemman'd own er trottah, Jinny. On'y runnin' hosses is fit fo' gemmen."

"Ned," said Virginia, "I shall be eighteen in two weeks and a young lady. On that day you must call me Miss Jinny."

Ned's face showed both astonishment and inquiry.

"Jinny, ain't I nussed you always? Ain't I come upstairs to quiet you when yo' mammy ain't had no power ovah yo'? Ain't I cooked fo' yo', and ain't I followed you everywheres since I quit ridin' yo' pa's bosses to vict'ry? Ain't I one of de fambly? An' yit yo' ax me to call yo' Miss Jinny?"

"Then you've had privileges enough," Virginia answered. "One week from to-morrow you are to say 'Miss Jinny.'"

"I'se tell you what, Jinny," he answered mischievously, with an emphasis on the word, "I'se call you Miss Jinny ef you'll call me Mistah Johnson. Mistah Johnson. You aint gwinter forget? Mistah Johnson."

“I’ll remember,” she said. “Ned,” she demanded suddenly, “would you like to be free?”

The negro started.

“Why you ax me dat, Jinny?”

“Mr. Benbow’s Hester is free,” she said.

“Who done freed her?”

Miss Virginia flushed. “A detestable young Yankee, who has come out here to meddle with what doesn’t concern him. I wanted Hester, Ned. And you should have married her, if you behaved yourself.”

Ned laughed uneasily.

“I reckon I’se too ol’ fo’ Heste’.” And added with privileged impudence, “There ain’t no cause why I can’t marry her now.”

Virginia suddenly leaped to the ground without his assistance.

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“That’s enough, Ned,” she said, and started toward the house.

“Jinny! Miss Jinny!” The call was plaintive.

“Well, what?”

“Miss Jinny, I seed that than young gemman. Lan’ sakes, he ain’ look like er Yankee.”

“Ned,” said Virginia, sternly, “do you want to go back to cooking?”

He quailed. “Oh, no’m—Lan’ sakes, no’m. I didn’t mean nuthin’.”

She turned, frowned, and bit her lip. Around the corner of the veranda she ran into her cousin. He, too, was booted and spurred. He reached out, boyishly, to catch her in his arms. But she drew back from his grasp.

“Why, Jinny,” he cried, “what’s the matter?”

“Nothing, Max.” She often called him so, his middle name being Maxwell. “But you have no right to do that.”

“To do what?” said Clarence, making a face.

“You know,” answered Virginia, curtly. “Where’s Aunt Lillian?”

“Why haven’t I the right?” he asked, ignoring the inquiry.

“Because you have not, unless I choose. And I don’t choose.”

“Are you angry with me still? It wasn’t my fault. Uncle Comyn made me come away. You should have had the girl, Jinny, if it took my fortune.”

“You have been drinking this morning, Max,” said Virginia.

“Only a julep or so,” he replied apologetically. “I rode over to the race track to see the new trotter. I’ve called him Halcyon, Jinny,” he continued, with enthusiasm. “And he’ll win the handicap sure.”

She sat down on the veranda steps, with her knees crossed and her chin resting on her hands. The air was heavy with the perfume of the grapes and the smell of late flowers from the sunken garden near by. A blue haze hung over the Illinois shore.

“Max, you promised me you wouldn’t drink so much.”

“And I haven’t been, Jinny, ’pon my word,” he replied. “But I met old Sparks at the Tavern, and he started to talk about the horses, and—and he insisted.”

“And you hadn’t the strength of character,” she said, scornfully, “to refuse.”

“Pshaw, Jinny, a gentleman must be a gentleman. I’m no Yankee.”

For a space Virginia answered nothing. Then she said, without changing her position:

“If you were, you might be worth something.”

“Virginia!”

She did not reply, but sat gazing toward the water. He began to pace the veranda, fiercely.

“Look here, Jinny,” he cried, pausing in front of her. “There are some things you can’t say to me, even in jest.”

Virginia rose, flicked her riding-whip, and started down the steps.

“Don’t be a fool, Max,” she said.

He followed her, bewildered. She skirted the garden, passed the orchard, and finally reached a summer house perched on a knoll at the edge of the wood. Then she seated herself on a bench, silently. He took a place on the opposite side, with his feet stretched out, dejectedly.

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“I’m tired trying to please you,” he said. “I have been a fool. You don’t care that for me. It was all right when I was younger, when there was no one else to take you riding, and jump off the barn for your amusement, Miss. Now you have Tom Catherwood and Jack Brinsmade and the Russell boys running after you, it’s different. I reckon I’ll go to Kansas. There are Yankees to shoot in Kansas.”

He did not see her smile as he sat staring at his feet.

“Max,” said she, all at once, “why don’t you settle down to something? Why don’t you work?”

Young Mr. Colfax’s arm swept around in a circle.

There are twelve hundred acres to look after here, and a few niggers. That’s enough for a gentleman.”

“Pooh!” exclaimed his cousin, “this isn’t a cotton plantation. Aunt Lillian doesn’t farm for money. If she did, you would have to check your extravagances mighty quick, sir.”

“I look after Pompey’s reports, I do as much work as my ancestors,” answered Clarence, hotly.

“Ah, that is the trouble,” said Virginia.

“What do you mean?” her cousin demanded.

“We have been gentlemen too long,” said Virginia.

The boy straightened up and rose. The pride and wilfulness of generations was indeed in his handsome face. And something else went with it. Around the mouth a grave tinge of indulgence.

“What has your life been?” she went on, speaking rapidly. “A mixture of gamecocks and ponies and race horses and billiards, and idleness at the Virginia Springs, and fighting with other boys. What do you know? You wouldn’t go to college. You wouldn’t study law. You can’t write a decent letter. You don’t know anything about the history of your country. What can you do—?”

“I can ride and fight,” he said. “I can go to New Orleans to-morrow to join Walker’s Nicaragua expedition. We’ve got to beat the Yankees, —they’ll have Kansas away from us before we know it.”

Virginia’s eye flashed appreciation.

“Do you remember, Jinny,” he cried, “one day long ago when those Dutch ruffians were teasing you and Anne on the road, and Bert Russell and Jack and I came along? We whipped ’em, Jinny. And my eye was closed. And you were bathing it here, and one of my buttons was gone. And you counted the rest.”

“Rich man, poor man, beggarman, thief, doctor, lawyer, merchant, chief,” she recited, laughing. She crossed over and sat beside him, and her tone changed. “Max, can’t you understand? It isn’t that. Max, if you would only work at something. That is why the Yankees beat us. If you would learn to weld iron, or to build bridges, or railroads. Or if you would learn business, and go to work in Pa’s store.”

“You do not care for me as I am?”

“I knew that you did not understand,” she answered passionately. “It is because I care for you that I wish to make you great. You care too much for a good time, for horses, Max. You love the South, but you think too little how she is to be saved. If war is to come, we shall want men like that Captain Robert Lee who was here. A man who can turn the forces of the earth to his own purposes.”

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For a moment Clarence was moodily silent.

“I have always intended to go into politics, after Pa’s example,” he said at length.

“Then—” began Virginia, and paused.

“Then—?” he said.

“Then—you must study law.”

He gave her the one keen look. And she met it, with her lips tightly pressed together. Then he smiled.

“Virginia, you will never forgive that Yankee, Brice.”

“I shall never forgive any Yankee,” she retorted quickly. “But we are not talking about him. I am thinking of the South, and of you.”

He stooped toward her face, but she avoided him and went back to the bench.

“Why not?” he said.

“You must prove first that you are a man,” she said.

For years he remembered the scene. The vineyard, the yellow stubble; and the river rushing on and on with tranquil power, and the slow panting of the steamboat. A doe ran out of the forest, and paused, her head raised, not twenty feet away.

“And then you will marry me, Jinny?” he asked finally.

“Before you may hope to control another, we shall see whether you can control yourself, sir.”

“But it has all been arranged,” he exclaimed, “since we played here together years ago!”

“No one shall arrange that for me,” replied Virginia promptly. “And I should think that you would wish to have some of the credit for yourself.”

“Jinny!”

Again she avoided him by leaping the low railing. The doe fled into the forest, whistling fearfully. Virginia waved her hand to him and started toward the house. At the corner of the porch she ran into her aunt Mrs. Colfax was a beautiful woman. Beautiful when Addison Colfax married her in Kentucky at nineteen, beautiful still at three and forty. This, I am aware, is a bald statement. “Prove it,” you say. “We do not believe it. It was told you by some old beau who lives upon the memory of the past.”

Ladies, a score of different daguerrotypes of Lillian Colfax are in existence. And whatever may be said of portraits, daguerrotypes do not flatter. All the town admitted that she was beautiful. All the town knew that she was the daughter of old Judge Colfax's overseer at Halcyondale. If she had not been beautiful, Addison Colfax would not have run away with her. That is certain. He left her a rich widow at five and twenty, mistress of the country place he had bought on the Bellefontaine Road, near St. Louis. And when Mrs. Colfax was not dancing off to the Virginia watering-places, Bellegarde was a gay house.

"Jinny," exclaimed her aunt, "how you scared me! What on earth is the matter?"

"Nothing," said Virginia

"She refused to kiss me," put in Clarence, half in play, half in resentment.

Mrs. Colfax laughed musically. She put one of her white hands on each of her niece's cheeks, kissed her, and then gazed into her face until Virginia reddened.

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“Law, Jinny, you’re quite pretty,” said her aunt

“I hadn’t realized it—but you must take care of your complexion. You’re horribly sunburned, and you let your hair blow all over your face. It’s barbarous not to wear a mask when you ride. Your Pa doesn’t look after you properly. I would ask you to stay to the dance to-night if your skin were only white, instead of red. You’re old enough to know better, Virginia. Mr. Vance was to have driven out for dinner. Have you seen him, Clarence?”

“No, mother.”

“He is so amusing,” Mrs. Colfax continued, “and he generally brings candy. I shall die of the blues before supper.” She sat down with a grand air at the head of the table, while Alfred took the lid from the silver soup-tureen in front of her. “Jinny, can’t you say something bright? Do I have to listen to Clarence’s horse talk for another hour? Tell me some gossip. Will you have some gumbo soup?”

“Why do you listen to Clarence’s horse talk?” said Virginia. “Why don’t you make him go to work!”

“Mercy!” said Mrs. Colfax, laughing, “what could he do?”

“That’s just it,” said Virginia. “He hasn’t a serious interest in life.”

Clarence looked sullen. And his mother, as usual, took his side.

“What put that into your head, Jinny,” she said. “He has the place here to look after, a very gentlemanly occupation. That’s what they do in Virginia.”

“Yes,” said Virginia, scornfully, “we’re all gentlemen in the South. What do we know about business and developing the resources of the country? Not *that*.”

“You make my head ache, my dear,” was her aunt’s reply. “Where did you get all this?”

“You ask me because I am a girl,” said Virginia. “You believe that women were made to look at, and to play with,—not to think. But if we are going to get ahead of the Yankees, we shall have to think. It was all very well to be a gentleman in the days of my great-grandfather. But now we have railroads and steamboats. And who builds them? The Yankees. We of the South think of our ancestors, and drift deeper and deeper into debt. We know how to fight, and we know how to command. But we have been ruined by—” here she glanced at the retreating form of Alfred, and lowered her voice, “by niggers.”

Mrs. Colfax’s gaze rested languidly on her niece’s faces which glowed with indignation.

“You get this terrible habit of argument from Comyn,” she said. “He ought to send you to boarding-school. How mean of Mr. Vance not to come! You’ve been talking with that old reprobate Whipple. Why does Comyn put up with him?”

“He isn’t an old reprobate,” said Virginia, warmly.

“You really ought to go to school,” said her aunt. “Don’t be eccentric. It isn’t fashionable. I suppose you wish Clarence to go into a factory.”

“If I were a man,” said Virginia, “and going into a factory would teach me how to make a locomotive or a cotton press, or to build a bridge, I should go into a factory. We shall never beat the Yankees until we meet them on their own ground.”

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“There is Mr. Vance now,” said Mrs. Colfax, and added fervently, “Thank the Lord!”

CHAPTER IX

A QUIET SUNDAY IN LOCUST STREET

If the truth were known where Virginia got the opinions which she expressed so freely to her aunt and cousin, it was from Colonel Carvel himself. The Colonel would rather have denounced the Dred Scott decision than admit to Judge Whipple that one of the greatest weaknesses of the South lay in her lack of mechanical and manufacturing ability. But he had confessed as much in private to Captain Elijah Brent. The Colonel would often sit for an hour or more, after supper, with his feet tucked up on the mantel and his hat on the back of his head, buried in thought. Then he would saunter slowly down to the Planters’ House bar, which served the purposes of a club in those days, in search of an argument with other prominent citizens. The Colonel had his own particular chair in his own particular corner, which was always vacated when he came in at the door. And then he always had three fingers of the best Bourbon whiskey, no more and no less, every evening.

He never met his bosom friend and pet antagonist at the Planters’ House bar. Judge Whipple, indeed, took his meals upstairs, but he never descended,—it was generally supposed because of the strong slavery atmosphere there. However, the Judge went periodically to his friend’s for a quiet Sunday dinner (so called in derision by St. Louisans), on which occasions Virginia sat at the end of the table and endeavored to pour water on the flames when they flared up too fiercely.

The Sunday following her ride to Bellegarde was the Judge’s Sunday, Certain tastes which she had inherited had hitherto provided her with pleasurable sensations while these battles were in progress. More than once had she scored a fair hit on the Judge for her father,—to the mutual delight of both gentlemen. But to-day she dreaded being present at the argument. Just why she dreaded it is a matter of feminine psychology best left to the reader for solution.

The argument began, as usual, with the tearing apart limb by limb of the unfortunate Franklin Pierce, by Judge Whipple.

“What a miserable exhibition in the eyes of the world,” said the Judge. “Franklin Pierce of New Hampshire” (he pronounced this name with infinite scorn) “managed by Jefferson Davis of Mississippi!”

“And he was well managed, sir,” said the Colonel.

“What a pliant tool of your Southern slaveholders! I hear that you are to give him a plantation as a reward.”

“No such thing, sir.”

“He deserves it,” continued the Judge, with conviction. “See the magnificent forts he permitted Davis to build up in the South, the arsenals he let him stock. The country does not realize this. But the day will, come when they will execrate Pierce before Benedict Arnold, sir. And look at the infamous Kansas-Nebraska act! That is the greatest crime, and Douglas and Pierce the greatest criminals, of the century.”

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“Do have some more of that fried chicken, Judge,” said Virginia.

Mr. Whipple helped himself fiercely, and the Colonel smiled.

“You should be satisfied now,” said he. “Another Northern man is in the White House.”

“Buchanan!” roared the Judge, with his mouth full.

“Another traitor, sir. Another traitor worse than the first. He swallows the Dred Scott decision, and smirks. What a blot on the history of this Republic! O Lord!” cried Mr. Whipple, “what are we coming to? A Northern man, he could gag and bind Kansas and force her into slavery against the will of her citizens. He packs his Cabinet to support the ruffians you send over the borders. The very governors he ships out there, his henchmen, have their stomachs turned. Look at Walker, whom they are plotting against in Washington. He can’t stand the smell of this Lecompton Constitution Buchanan is trying to jam down their throats. Jefferson Davis would have troops there, to be sure that it goes through, if he had his way. Can’t you see how one sin leads to another, Carvel? How slavery is rapidly demoralizing a free people?”

“It is because you won’t let it alone where it belongs, sir,” retorted the Colonel. It was seldom that he showed any heat in his replies. He talked slowly, and he had a way of stretching forth his hand to prevent the more eager Judge from interrupting him.

“The welfare of the whole South, as matters now stand, sir, depends upon slavery. Our plantations could not exist a day without slave labor. If you abolished that institution, Judge Whipple, you would ruin millions of your fellow-countrymen,—you would reduce sovereign states to a situation of disgraceful dependence. And all, sir,” now he raised his voice lest the Judge break in, “all, sir, for the sake of a low breed that ain’t fit for freedom. You and I, who have the Magna Charta and the Declaration of Independence behind us, who are descended from a race that has done nothing but rule for ten centuries and more, may well establish a Republic where the basis of stability is the self-control of the individual—as long as men such as you and I form its citizens. Look at the South Americans. How do Republics go there? And the minute you and I let in niggers, who haven’t any more self-control than dogs, on an equal basis, with as much of a vote as you have,—niggers, sir, that have lived like wild beasts in the depths of the jungle since the days of Ham, —what’s going to become of our Republic?”

“Education,” cried the Judge.

But the word was snatched out of his mouth.

“Education isn’t a matter of one generation. No, sir, nor two, nor three, nor four. But of centuries.”

“Sir,” said the Judge, “I can point out negroes of intelligence and learning.”

“And I reckon you could teach some monkeys to talk English, and recite the catechism, and sing emotional hymns, if you brought over a couple of million from Africa,” answered the Colonel, dryly, as he rose to put on his hat and light a cigar.

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It was his custom to offer a cigar to the Judge, who invariably refused, and rubbed his nose with scornful violence.

Virginia, on the verge of leaving, stayed on, fascinated by the turn the argument had taken.

“Your prejudice is hide-bound, sir,” said Mr. Whipple.

“No, Whipple,” said the Colonel, “when God washed off this wicked earth, and started new, He saw fit to put the sons of Ham in subjection. They’re slaves of each other in Africa, and I reckon they’re treated no better than they are here. Abuses can’t be helped in any system, sir, though we are bettering them. Were the poor in London in the days of the Edwards as well off as our niggers are to-day?”

The Judge snorted.

“A divine institution!” he shouted. “A black curse! Because the world has been a wicked place of oppression since Noah’s day, is that any reason why it should so continue until the day of Judgment?”

The Colonel smiled, which was a sign that he was pleased with his argument.

“Now, see here, Whipple,” said he. “If we had any guarantee that you would let us alone where we are, to manage our slaves and to cultivate our plantations, there wouldn’t be any trouble. But the country keeps on growing and growing, and you’re not content with half. You want everything,—all the new states must abolish slavery. And after a while you will overwhelm us, and ruin us, and make us paupers. Do you wonder that we contend for our rights, tooth and nail? They are our rights.”

“If it had not been for Virginia and Maryland and the South, this nation would not be in existence.”

The Colonel laughed.

“First rate, Jinny,” he cried. “That’s so.”

But the Judge was in a revery. He probably had not heard her.

“The nation is going to the dogs,” he said, mumbling rather to himself than to the others. “We shall never prosper until the curse is shaken off, or wiped out in blood. It clogs our progress. Our merchant marine, of which we were so proud, has been annihilated by these continued disturbances. But, sir,” he cried, hammering his fist upon the table until the glasses rang, “the party that is to save us was born at Pittsburgh last year on Washington’s birthday. The Republican Party, sir.”

“Shucks!” exclaimed Mr. Carvel, with amusement, “The Black Republican Party, made up of old fools and young Anarchists, of Dutchmen and nigger-worshippers. Why, Whipple, that party’s a joke. Where’s your leader?”

“In Illinois,” was the quick response.

“What’s his name?”

“Abraham Lincoln, sir,” thundered Mr. Whipple. “And to my way of thinking he has uttered a more significant phrase on the situation than any of your Washington statesmen. ‘This government,’ said he to a friend of mine, ‘cannot exist half slave and half free.’”

So impressively did Mr. Whipple pronounce these words that Mr. Carvel stirred uneasily, and in spite of himself, as though he were listening to an oracle. He recovered instantly.

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“He’s a demagogue, seeking for striking phrases, sir. You’re too intelligent a man to be taken in by such as he.”

“I tell you he is not, sir.”

“I know him, sir,” cried the Colonel, taking down his feet. “He’s an obscure lawyer. Poor white trash! Torn down poor! My friend Mr. Richardson of Springfield tells me he is low down. He was born in a log cabin, and spends most of his time in a drug-store telling stories that you would not listen to, Judge Whipple.”

“I would listen to anything he said,” replied the Judge. “Poor white trash, sir! The greatest men rise from the people. A demagogue!” Mr. Whipple fairly shook with rage. “The nation doesn’t know him yet. But mark my words, the day will come when it will. He was ballotted for Vice-President in the Philadelphia convention last year. Nobody paid any attention to that. If the convention had heard him speak at Bloomington, he would have been nominated instead of Fremont. If the nation could have heard him, he would be President to-day instead of that miserable Buchanan. I happened to be at Bloomington. And while the idiots on the platform were drivelling, the people kept calling for Lincoln. I had never heard of him then. I’ve never forgot him since. He came ambling out of the back of the hall, a lanky, gawky looking man, ridiculously ugly, sir. But the moment he opened his mouth he had us spellbound. The language which your low-down lawyer used was that of a God-sent prophet, sir. He had those Illinois bumpkins all worked up,—the women crying, and some of the men, too. And mad! Good Lord, they were mad—’We will say to the Southern disunionists,’ he cried,—’we will say to the Southern disunionists, we won’t go out of the Union, and you shan’t.’”

There was a silence when the Judge finished. But presently Mr. Carvel took a match. And he stood over the Judge in his favorite attitude, —with his feet apart,—as he lighted another cigar.

“I reckon we’re going to have war, Silas,” said he, slowly; “but don’t you think that your Mr. Lincoln scares me into that belief. I don’t count his bluster worth a cent. No sirree! It’s this youngster who comes out here from Boston and buys a nigger with all the money he’s got in the world. And if he’s an impetuous young fool; I’m no judge of men.”

“Appleton Brice wasn’t precisely impetuous,” remarked Mr. Whipple. And he smiled a little bitterly, as though the word had stirred a memory.

“I like that young fellow,” Mr. Carvel continued. “It seems to be a kind of fatality with me to get along with Yankees. I reckon there’s a screw loose somewhere, but Brice acted the man all the way through. He goa a fall out of you, Silas, in your room, after the show. Where are you going, Jinny?”

Virginia had risen, and she was standing very erects with a flush on her face, waiting for her father to finish.

“To see Anne Brinsmade,” she said. “Good-by, Uncle Silas.”

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She had called him so from childhood. Hers was the one voice that seemed to soften him—it never failed. He turned to her now with a movement that was almost gentle. “Virginia, I should like you to know my young Yankee,” said he.

“Thank you, Uncle Silas,” said the girl, with dignity, “but I scarcely think that he would care to know me. He feels so strongly.”

“He feels no stronger than I do,” replied the Judge.

“You have gotten used to me in eighteen years, and besides,” she flashed, “you never spent all the money you had in the world for a principle.”

Mr. Whipple smiled as she went out of the door.

“I have spent pretty near all,” he said. But more to himself than to the Colonel.

That evening, some young people came in to tea, two of the four big Catherwood boys, Anne Brinsmade and her brother Jack, Puss Russell and Bert, and Eugenie Renault. But Virginia lost her temper. In an evil moment Puss Russell started the subject of the young Yankee who had deprived her of Hester. Puss was ably seconded by Jack Brinsmade, whose reputation as a tormentor extended far back into his boyhood. In vain; did Anne, the peacemaker, try to quench him, while the big Catherwoods and Bert Russell laughed incessantly. No wonder that Virginia was angry. She would not speak to Puss as that young lady bade her good night. And the Colonel, coming home from an evening with Mr, Brinsmade, found his daughter in an armchair, staring into the sitting-room fire. There was no other light in the room Her chin was in her hand, and her lips were pursed.

“Heigho!” said the Colonel, “what’s the trouble now?”

“Nothing,” said Virginia.

“Come,” he insisted, “what have they been doing to my girl?”

“Pa!”

“Yes, honey.”

“I don’t want to go to balls all my life. I want to go to boarding-school, and learn something. Emily is going to Monticello after Christmas. Pa, will you let me?”

Mr. Carvel winced. He put an arm around her. He, thought of his lonely widowerhood, of her whose place Virginia had taken.

“And what shall I do?” he said, trying to smile.

“It will only be for a little while. And Monticello isn’t very far, Pa.”

“Well, well, there is plenty of time to think it over between now and January,” he said. “And now I have a little favor to ask of you, honey.”

“Yes?” she said.

The Colonel took the other armchair, stretched his feet toward the blaze, and stroked his goatee. He glanced covertly at his daughter’s profile. Twice he cleared hip throat.

“Jinny?”

“Yes, Pa” (without turning her head).

“Jinny, I was going to speak of this young. Brice. He’s a stranger here, and he comes of a good family, and—and I like him.”

“And you wish me to invite him to my party,” finished Virginia.

The Colonel started. “I reckon you guessed it,” he said.

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Virginia remained immovable. She did not answer at once. Then she said:

“Do you think, in bidding against me, that he behaved, like a gentleman?”

The Colonel blundered.

“Lord, Virginia,” he said, “I thought you told the judge this afternoon teat it was done out of principle.”

Virginia ignored this. But she bit her lip

“He is like all Yankees, without one bit of consideration for a woman. He knew I wanted Hester.”

“What makes you imagine that he thought of you at all, my dear?” asked her father, mildly, “He does not know you.”

This time the Colonel scored certainly. The firelight saved Virginia.

“He overheard our conversation,” she answered.

“I reckon that he wasn’t worrying much about us. And besides, he was trying to save Hester from Jennings.”

“I thought that you said that it was to be my party, Pa,” said Virginia, irrelevantly.

The Colonel looked thoughtful, then he began to laugh.

“Haven’t we enough Black Republican friends?” she asked.

“So you won’t have him?” said the Colonel.

“I didn’t say that I wouldn’t have him,” she answered.

The Colonel rose, and brushed the ashes from his goat.

“By Gum!” he said. “Women beat me.”

CHAPTER X

THE LITTLE HOUSE

When Stephen attempted to thank Judge Whipple for going on Hester’s bond, he merely said, “Tut, tut.”

The Judge rose at six, so his man Shadrach told Stephen. He had his breakfast at the Planters' House at seven, read the Missouri Democrat, and returned by eight. Sometimes he would say good morning to Stephen and Richter, and sometimes he would not. Mr. Whipple was out a great part of the day, and he had many visitors. He was a very busy man. Like a great specialist (which he was), he would see only one person at a time. And Stephen soon discovered that his employer did not discriminate between age or sex, or importance, or condition of servitude. In short, Stephen's opinion of Judge Whipple altered very materially before the end of that first week. He saw poor women and disconsolate men go into the private room ahead of rich citizens, who seemed content to wait their turn on the hard wooden chairs against the wall of the main office. There was one incident in particular, when a well-dressed gentleman of middle age paced impatiently for two mortal hours after Shadrach had taken his card into the sanctum. When at last he had been admitted, Mr. Richter whispered to Stephen his name. It was that of a big railroad man from the East. The transom let out the true state of affairs.

"See here, Callender," the Judge was heard to say, "you fellows don't like me, and you wouldn't come here unless you had to. But when your road gets in a tight place, you turn up and expect to walk in ahead of my friends. No, sir, if you want to see me, you've got to wait."

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Mr. Callender made some inaudible reply, “Money!” roared the Judge, “take your money to Stetson, and see if you win your case.”

Mr. Richter smiled at Stephen, as if in sheer happiness at this vindication of an employer who had never seemed to him to need a defence.

Stephen was greatly drawn toward this young German with the great scar on his pleasant face. And he was itching to know about that scar. Every day, after coming in from dinner, Richter lighted a great brown meerschaum, and read the St. Louis ‘Anzeiger’ and the ‘Westliche Post’. Often he sang quietly to himself:

> “Deutschlands Sohne
> Laut ertone
> Euer Vaterlandgesang.
> Vaterland! Du Land des Ruhmes,
> Weih’ zu deines Heiligthumes
> Hutern, uns and unser Schwert.”

There were other songs, too. And some wonderful quality in the German’s voice gave you a thrill when you heard them, albeit you could not understand the words. Richter never guessed how Stephen, with his eyes on his book, used to drink in those airs. And presently he found out that they were inspired.

The day that the railroad man called, and after he and the Judge had gone out together, the ice was broken.

“You Americans from the North are a queer people, Mr. Brice,” remarked Mr. Richter, as he put on his coat. “You do not show your feelings. You are ashamed. The Judge, at first I could not comprehend him—he would scold and scold. But one day I see that his heart is warm, and since then I love him. Have you ever eaten a German dinner, Mr. Brice? No? Then you must come with me, now.”

It was raining, the streets ankle-deep in mud, and the beer-garden by the side of the restaurant to which they went was dreary and bedraggled. But inside the place was warm and cheerful. Inside, to all intents and purposes, it was Germany. A most genial host crossed the room to give Mr. Richter a welcome that any man might have envied. He was introduced to Stephen.

“We were all ‘Streber’ together, in Germany,” said Richter.

“You were all what?” asked Stephen, interested.

“Strivers, you might call it in English. In the Vaterland those who seek for higher and better things—for liberty, and to be rid of oppression —are so called. That is why we fought in ’48 and lost. And that is why we came here, to the Republic. Ach! I fear I will

never be the great lawyer —but the striver, yes, always. We must fight once more to be rid of the black monster that sucks the blood of freedom—vampire. Is it not so in English?"

Stephen was astonished at this outburst.

"You think it will come to war?"

"I fear,—yes, I fear," said the German, shaking his head. "We fear. We are already preparing."

"Preparing? You would fight, Richter? You, a foreigner?"

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“A foreigner!” cried Richter, with a flash of anger in his blue eyes that died as suddenly as it came,—died into reproach. “Call me not a foreigner—we Germans will show whether or not we are foreigners when the time is ripe. This great country belongs to all the oppressed. Your ancestors founded it, and fought for it, that the descendants of mine might find a haven from tyranny. My friend, one-half of this city is German, and it is they who will save it if danger arises. You must come with me one night to South St. Louis, that you may know us. Then you will perhaps understand, Stephen. You will not think of us as foreign swill, but as patriots who love our new Vaterland even as you love it. You must come to our Turner Halls, where we are drilling against the time when the Union shall have need of us.”

“You are drilling now?” exclaimed Stephen, in still greater astonishment. The German’s eloquence had made him tingle, even as had the songs.

“Prosit deine Blume!” answered Richter, smiling and holding up his glass of beer. “You will come to a ‘commerce’, and see.

“This is not our blessed Lichtenhainer, that we drink at Jena. One may have a pint of Lichtenhainer for less than a groschen at Jena. Aber,” he added as he rose, with a laugh that showed his strong teeth, “we Americans are rich.”

As Stephen’s admiration for his employer grew, his fear of him waxed greater likewise. The Judge’s methods of teaching law were certainly not Harvard’s methods. For a fortnight he paid as little attention to the young man as he did to the messengers who came with notes and cooled their heels in the outer office until it became the Judge’s pleasure to answer them. This was a trifle discouraging to Stephen. But he stuck to his Chitty and his Greenleaf and his Kent. It was Richter who advised him to buy Whittlesey’s “Missouri Form Book,” and warned him of Mr. Whipple’s hatred for the new code. Well that he did! There came a fearful hour of judgment. With the swiftness of a hawk Mr. Whipple descended out of a clear sky, and instantly the law terms began to rattle in Stephen’s head like dried peas in a can. It was the Old Style of Pleading this time, without a knowledge of which the Judge declared with vehemence that a lawyer was not fit to put pen to legal cap.

“Now, sir, the pleadings?” he cried.

“First,” said Stephen, “was the Declaration. The answer to that was the Plea. The answer to that was the Replication. Then came the Rejoinder, then the Surrejoinder, then the Rebutter, then the Surrebutter. But they rarely got that far,” he added unwisely.

“A good principle in Law, sir,” said the Judge, “is not to volunteer information.”

Stephen was somewhat cast down when he reached home that Saturday evening. He had come out of his examination with feathers drooping. He had been given no more

briefs to copy, nor had Mr. Whipple vouchsafed even to send him on an errand. He had not learned how common a thing it is with young lawyers to feel that they are of no use in the world. Besides, the rain continued. This was the fifth day.

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His mother, knitting before the fire in her own room, greeted him with her usual quiet smile of welcome. He tried to give her a humorous account of his catechism of the morning, but failed.

“I am quite sure that he doesn’t like me,” said Stephen.

His mother continued to smile.

“If he did, he would not show it,” she answered.

“I can feel it,” said Stephen, dejectedly.

“The Judge was here this afternoon,” said his mother.

“What?” cried Stephen. “Again this week? They say that he never calls in the daytime, and rarely in the evening. What did he say?”

“He said that some of this Boston nonsense must be gotten out of you,” answered Mrs. Brice, laughing. “He said that you were too stiff. That you needed to rub against the plain men who were building up the West. Who were making a vast world-power of the original little confederation of thirteen states. And Stephen,” she added more earnestly, “I am not sure but what he is right.”

Then Stephen laughed. And for a long time he sat staring into the fire.

“What else did he say?” he asked, after a while.

“He told me about a little house which we might rent very cheaply. Too cheaply, it seems. The house is on this street, next door to Mr. Brinsmade, to whom it belongs. And Mr. Whipple brought the key, that we might inspect it to-morrow.”

“But a servant,” objected Stephen, “I suppose that we must have a servant.”

His mother’s voice fell.

“That poor girl whom you freed is here to see me every day. Old Nancy does washing. But Hester has no work and she is a burden to Judge Whipple. Oh, no,” she continued, in response to Stephen’s glance, “the Judge did not mention that, but I think he had it in mind that Nester might come. And I am sure that she would.”

Sunday dawned brightly. After church Mrs. Brice and Stephen walked down Olive Street, and stood looking at a tiny house wedged in between, two large ones with scrolled fronts. Sad memories of Beacon Street filled them both as they gazed, but they said nothing of this to each other. As Stephen put his hand on the latch of the little iron gate, a gentleman came out of the larger house next door. He was past the middle age,

somewhat scrupulously dressed in the old fashion, in swallowtail coat and black stock. Benevolence was in the generous mouth, in the large nose that looked like Washington's, and benevolence fairly sparkled in the blue eyes. He smiled at them as though he had known them always, and the world seemed brighter that very instant. They smiled in return, whereupon the gentleman lifted his hat. And the kindliness and the courtliness of that bow made them very happy. "Did you wish to look at the house, madam?" he asked "Yes, sir," said Mrs. Brice.

"Allow me to open it for you," he said, graciously taking the key from her. "I fear that you will find it inconvenient and incommodious, ma'am. I should be fortunate, indeed, to get a good tenant."

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He fitted the key in the door, while Stephen and his mother smiled at each other at the thought of the rent. The gentleman opened the door, and stood aside to let them enter, very much as if he were showing them a palace for which he was the humble agent.

They went into the little parlor, which was nicely furnished in mahogany and horsehair. And it had back of it a bit of a dining room, with a little porch overlooking the back yard. Mrs. Brice thought of the dark and stately high-ceiled dining-room she had known throughout her married days: of the board from which a royal governor of Massachusetts Colony had eaten, and some governors of the Commonwealth since. Thank God, she had not to sell that, nor the Brice silver which had stood on the high sideboard with the wolves and the shield upon it. The widow's eyes filled with tears. She had not hoped again to have a home for these things, nor the father's armchair, nor the few family treasures that were to come over the mountains.

The gentleman, with infinite tact, said little, but led the way through the rooms. There were not many of them. At the door of the kitchen he stopped, and laid his hand kindly on Stephen's shoulder:— "Here we may not enter. This is your department, ma'am," said he.

Finally, as they stood without waiting for the gentleman, who insisted upon locking the door, they observed a girl in a ragged shawl hurrying up the street. As she approached them, her eyes were fixed upon the large house next door. But suddenly, as the gentleman turned, she caught sight of him, and from her lips escaped a cry of relief. She flung open the gate, and stood before him.

"Oh, Mr. Brinsmade," she cried, "mother is dying. You have done so much for us, sir,—-couldn't you come to her for a little while? She thought if she might see you once more, she would die happy." The voice was choked by a sob.

Mr. Brinsmade took the girl's hand in his own, and turned to the lady with as little haste, with as much politeness, as he had shown before.

"You will excuse me, ma'am," he said, with his hat in his hand.

The widow had no words to answer him. But she and her son watched him as he walked rapidly down the street, his arm in the girl's, until they were out of sight. And then they walked home silently.

Might not the price of this little house be likewise a piece of the Brinsmade charity?

CHAPTER XI

THE INVITATION

Mr. Eliphalet Hopper, in his Sunday-best broadcloth was a marvel of propriety. It seemed to Stephen that his face wore a graver expression on Sunday when he met him standing on Miss Crane's doorstep, picking the lint from his coat. Stephen's intention was not to speak. But he remembered what the Judge had said to his mother, and nodded. Why, indeed, should he put on airs with this man who had come to St. Louis unknown and unrecommended and poor, who by sheer industry had made himself of importance in the large business of Carvel &, Company? As for Stephen Brice, he was not yet earning his salt, but existing by the charity of Judge Silas Whipple.

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“Howdy, Mr. Brice,” said Mr. Hopper, his glance caught by the indefinable in Stephen’s costume. This would have puzzled Mr. Hopper’s tailor more.

“Very well, thanks.”

“A fine day after the rain.”

Stephen nodded, and Mr. Hopper entered the hours after him.

“Be you asked to Virginia Carvel’s party?” he asked abruptly.

“I do not know Miss Carvel,” said Stephen, wondering how well the other did. And if the truth be told, he was a little annoyed at Mr. Hopper’s free use of her name.

“That shouldn’t make no difference,” said Eliphalet with just a shade of bitterness in his tone. “They keep open house, like all Southerners,” Mr. Hopper hesitated,—“for such as come well recommended. I ’most forgot,” said he. “I callate you’re not any too well recommended. I ’most forgot that little transaction down to the Court House. They do say that she wanted that gal almighty bad,—she was most awful cut up not to get her. Served her right, though. I’m glad you did. Show her she can’t have everything her own way. And say,” he added, with laughter, “how you did fix that there stuckup Colfax boy! He’ll never forgive you no more than she. But,” said Mr. Hopper, meditatively, “it was a durned-fool trick.”

I think Stephen’s critics will admit that he had a good right to be angry, and that they will admire him just a little bit because he kept his temper. But Mr. Hopper evidently thought he had gone too far.

“She ain’t got no use for me, neither,” he said.

“She shows poor judgment,” answered Stephen.

“She’s not long sighted, that’s sure,” replied Eliphalet, with emphasis.

At dinner Stephen was tried still further. And it was then he made the determination to write for the newspapers in order to pay the rent on Mr. Brinsmade’s house. Miss Carvel’s coming-out party was the chief topic.

“They do say the Colonel is to spend a sight of money on that ball,” said Mrs. Abner Reed. “I guess it won’t bankrupt him.” And she looked hard at Mr. Hopper.

“I callate he ain’t pushed for money,” that gentleman vouchsafed.

“He’s a good man, and done well by you, Mr. Hopper.”

“So—so,” answered Eliphalet. “But I will say that I done something for the Colonel. I’ve saved him a hundred times my pay since I showed old Hood the leaks. And I got a thousand dollar order from Wright & Company this week for him.”

“I dare say you’d keep a tight hand enough on expenses,” said Miss Crane, half in sarcasm, half in approval.

“If Colonel Carvel was doin’ business in New England,” said Eliphalet, “he’d been bankrupt long ago.”

“That young Clarence Colfax,” Mrs. Abner Reed broke in, “he’ll get a right smart mint o’ money when he marries Virginia. They do say her mother left her independent. How now, Mr. Hopper?”

Eliphalet looked mysterious and knowing. He did not reply.

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“And young Colfax ain’t precisely a pauper,” said Miss Crane.

“I’ll risk a good deal that she don’t marry Colfax,” said Mr. Hopper.

“What on earth do you mean?” cried Mrs. Abner. It ain’t broke off?”

“No,” he answered, “it ain’t broke off. But I callate she won’t have him when the time comes. She’s got too much sense.”

Heavy at heart, Stephen climbed the stairs, thanking heaven that he had not been drawn into the controversy. A partial comprehension of Mr. Hopper was dawning upon him. He suspected that gentleman of an aggressive determination to achieve wealth, and the power which comes with it, for the purpose of using that power upon those beneath him. Nay, when he thought over his conversation, he suspected him of more, —of the intention to marry Virginia Carvel.

It will be seen whether Stephen was right or wrong.

He took a walk that afternoon, as far out as a place called Lindell’s Grove, which afterward became historic. And when he returned to the house, his mother handed him a, little white envelope.

“It came while you were out,” she said.

He turned it over, and stared at his name written across the front in a feminine hand In those days young ladies did not write in the bold and masculine manner now deemed proper. Stephen stared at the note, manlike, and pondered.

“Who brought it, mother?”

“Why don’t you open it, and see?” asked his mother with a smile.

He took the suggestion. What a funny formal little note we should think it now! It was not funny to Stephen—then. He read it, and he read it again, and finally he walked over to the window, still holding it in his hand.

Some mothers would have shown their curiosity. Mrs. Brice did not, wherein she proved herself their superiors in the knowledge of mankind.

Stephen stood for a long while looking out into the gathering dusk. Then he went over to the fireplace and began tearing the note into little bits. Only once did he pause, to look again at his name on the envelope.

“It is an invitation to Miss Carvel’s party,” he said.

By Thursday of that week the Brices, with thanksgiving in their hearts, had taken possession of Mr. Brinsmade's little house.

CHAPTER XII

"*Miss Jinny*"

The years have sped indeed since that gray December when Miss Virginia Carvel became eighteen. Old St. Louis has changed from a pleasant Southern town to a bustling city, and a high building stands on the site of that wide and hospitable home of Colonel Carvel. And the Colonel's thoughts that morning, as Ned shaved him, flew back through the years to a gently rolling Kentucky countryside, and a pillared white house among the oaks. He was riding again with Beatrice Colfax in the springtime. Again he stretched out his arm as if to seize her bridle-hand, and he felt the thoroughbred rear. Then the vision faded, and the memory of his dead wife became an angel's face, far—-so far away.

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He had brought her to St. Louis, and with his inheritance had founded his business, and built the great double house on the corner. The child came, and was named after the noble state which had given so many of her sons to the service of the Republic.

Five simple, happy years—then war. A black war of conquest which, like many such, was to add to the nation's fame and greatness: Glory beckoned, honor called—or Comyn Carvel felt them. With nothing of the profession of arms save that born in the Carvels, he kissed Beatrice farewell and steamed down the Mississippi, a captain in Missouri regiment. The young wife was ailing. Anguish killed her. Had Comyn Carvel been selfish?

Ned, as he shaved his master's face, read his thoughts by the strange sympathy of love. He had heard the last pitiful words of his mistress. Had listened, choking, to Dr. Posthlewaite as he read the sublime service of the burial of the dead. It was Ned who had met his master, the Colonel, at the levee, and had fallen sobbing at his feet.

Long after he was shaved that morning, the Colonel sat rapt in his chair, while the faithful servant busied himself about the room, one eye on his master the while. But presently Mr. Carvel's revery is broken by the swift rustle of a dress, and a girlish figure flutters in and plants itself on the wide arm of his mahogany barber chair, Mammy Easter in the door behind her. And the Colonel, stretching forth his hands, strains her to him, and then holds her away that he may look and look again into her face.

"Honey," he said, "I was thinking of your mother."

Virginia raised her eyes to the painting on the wall over the marble mantel. The face under the heavy coils of brown hair was sweet and gentle, delicately feminine. It had an expression of sorrow that seemed a prophecy.

The Colonel's hand strayed upward to Virginia's head.

"You are not like her, honey," he said: "You may see for yourself. You are more like your Aunt Bess, who lived in Baltimore, and she—"

"I know," said Virginia, "she was the image of the beauty, Dorothy Manners, who married my great-grandfather."

"Yes, Jinny," replied the Colonel, smiling. "That is so. You are somewhat like your great-grandmother."

"Somewhat!" cried Virginia, putting her hand over his mouth, "I like that. You and Captain Lige are always afraid of turning my head. I need not be a beauty to resemble her. I know that I am like her. When you took me on to Calvert House to see Uncle Daniel that time, I remember the picture by, by—"

“Sir Joshua Reynolds.”

“Yes, Sir Joshua.”

“You were only eleven,” says the Colonel.

“She is not a difficult person to remember.”

“No,” said Mr. Carvel, laughing, “especially if you have lived with her.”

“Not that I wish to be that kind,” said Virginia, meditatively,—“to take London by storm, and keep a man dangling for years.”

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“But he got her in the end,” said the Colonel. “Where did you hear all this?” he asked.

“Uncle Daniel told me. He has Richard Carvel’s diary.”

“And a very honorable record it is,” exclaimed the Colonel. “Jinny, we shall read it together when we go a-visiting to Culvert House. I remember the old gentleman as well as if I had seen him yesterday.”

Virginia appeared thoughtful.

“Pa,” she began, “Pa, did you ever see the pearls Dorothy Carvel wore on her wedding day? What makes you jump like that? Did you ever see them?”

“Well, I reckon I did,” replied the Colonel, gazing at her steadfastly.

“Pa, Uncle Daniel told me that I was to have that necklace when I was old enough.”

“Law!” said the Colonel, fidgeting, “your Uncle Daniel was just fooling you.”

“He’s a bachelor,” said Virginia; what use has he got for it?”

“Why,” says the Colonel, “he’s a young man yet, your uncle, only fifty-three. I’ve known older fools than he to go and do it. Eh, Ned?”

“Yes, marsa. Yes, suh. I’ve seed ’em at seventy, an’ shufflin’ about peart as Marse Clarence’s gamecocks. Why, dar was old Marse Ludlow—”

“Now, Mister Johnson,” Virginia put in severely, “no more about old Ludlow.”

Ned grinned from ear to ear, and in the ecstasy of his delight dropped the Colonel’s clothes-brush. “Lan’ sakes!” he cried, “ef she ain’t recommembered.” Recovering his gravity and the brush simultaneously, he made Virginia a low bow. “Mornin’, Miss Jinny. I sholy is gwinter s’lute you dis day. May de good Lawd make you happy, Miss Jinny, an’ give you a good husban’—”

“Thank you, Mister Johnson, thank you,” said Virginia, blushing.

“How come she recommembered, Marse Comyn? Dat’s de quality. Dat’s why. Doan’t you talk to Ned ’bout de quality, Marsa.”

“And when did I ever talk to you about the quality, you scalawag?” asks the Colonel, laughing.

“Th’ ain’t none ‘cept de bes’ quality keep they word dat-a-way,” said Ned, as he went off to tell Uncle Ben in the kitchen.

Was there ever, in all this wide country, a good cook who was not a tyrant? Uncle Ben Carvel was a veritable emperor in his own domain; and the Colonel himself, had he desired to enter the kitchen, would have been obliged to come with humble and submissive spirit. As for Virginia, she had had since childhood more than one passage at arms with Uncle Ben. And the question of who had come off victorious had been the subject of many a debate below stairs.

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There were a few days in the year, however, when Uncle Ben permitted the sanctity of his territory to be violated. One was the seventh of December. On such a day it was his habit to retire to the broken chair beside the sink (the chair to which he had clung for five-and-twenty years). There he would sit, blinking, and carrying on the while an undercurrent of protests and rumblings, while Miss Virginia and other young ladies mixed and chopped and boiled and baked and gossiped. But woe to the unfortunate Rosetta if she overstepped the bounds of respect! Woe to Ned or Jackson or Tato, if they came an inch over the threshold from the hall beyond! Even Aunt Easter stepped gingerly, though she was wont to affirm, when assisting Miss Jinny in her toilet, an absolute contempt for Ben's commands.

"So Ben ordered you out, Mammy?" Virginia would say mischievously.

"Order me out! Hugh! think I'se skeered o' him, honey? Reckon I'd frail 'em good ef he cotched hole of me with his black hands. Jes' let him try to come upstairs once, honey, an' see what I say to 'm."

Nevertheless Ben had, on one never-to-be-forgotten occasion, ordered Mammy Easter out, and she had gone. And now, as she was working the beat biscuits to be baked that evening, Uncle Ben's eye rested on her with suspicion.

What mere man may write with any confidence of the delicacies which were prepared in Uncle's kitchen that morning? No need in those days of cooking schools. What Southern lady, to the manner born, is not a cook from the cradle? Even Ben noted with approval Miss Virginia's scorn for pecks and pints, and grunted with satisfaction over the accurate pinches of spices and flavors which she used. And he did Miss Eugenie the honor to eat one of her praleens.

That night came Captain Lige Brent, the figure of an eager and determined man swinging up the street, and pulling out his watch under every lamp-post. And in his haste, in the darkness of a midblock, he ran into another solid body clad in high boots and an old army overcoat, beside a wood wagon.

"Howdy, Captain," said he of the high boots.

"Well, I just thought as much," was the energetic reply; "minute I seen the rig I knew Captain Grant was behind it."

He held out a big hand, which Captain Grant clasped, just looking at his own with a smile. The stranger was Captain Elijah Brent of the 'Louisiana'.

"Now," said Brent, "I'll just bet a full cargo that you're off to the Planters' House, and smoke an El Sol with the boys."

Mr. Grant nodded. "You're keen, Captain," said he.

“I’ve got something here that’ll outlast an El Sol a whole day,” continued Captain Breast, tugging at his pocket and pulling out a six-inch cigar as black as the night. “Just you try that.”

The Captain instantly struck a match on his boot and was puffing in a silent enjoyment which delighted his friend.

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“Reckon he don’t bring out cigars when you make him a call,” said the steamboat captain, jerking his thumb up at the house. It was Mr. Jacob Cluyme’s.

Captain Grant did not reply to that, nor did Captain Lige expect him to, as it was the custom of this strange and silent man to speak ill of no one. He turned rather to put the stakes back into his wagon.

“Where are you off to, Lige?” he asked.

“Lord bless my soul,” said Captain Lige, “to think that I could forget!” He tucked a bundle tighter under his arm. “Grant, did you ever see my little sweetheart, Jinny Carvel?” The Captain sighed. “She ain’t little any more, and she eighteen to-day.”

Captain Grant clapped his hand to his forehead.

“Say, Lige,” said he, “that reminds me. A month or so ago I pulled a fellow out of Renault’s area across from there. First I thought he was a thief. After he got away I saw the Colonel and his daughter in the window.”

Instantly Captain Lige became excited, and seized Captain Grant by the cape of his overcoat.

“Say, Grant, what kind of appearing fellow was he?”

“Short, thick-set, blocky face.”

“I reckon I know,” said Breast, bringing down his fist on the wagon board; “I’ve had my eye on him for some little time.”

He walked around the block twice after Captain Grant had driven down the muddy street, before he composed himself to enter the Carvel mansion. He paid no attention to the salutations of Jackson, the butler, who saw him coming and opened the door, but climbed the stairs to the sitting-room.

“Why, Captain Lige, you must have put wings on the Louisiana,” said Virginia, rising joyfully from the arm of her father’s chair to meet him. “We had given you up.”

“What?” cried the Captain. “Give me up? Don’t you know better than that? What, give me up when I never missed a birthday,—and this the best of all of ’em.

“If your pa had got sight of me shovin’ in wood and cussin’ the pilot for slowin’ at the crossin’s, he’d never let you ride in my boat again. Bill Jenks said: ‘Are you plum crazy, Brent? Look at them cressets.’ ’Five dollars’’ says I; ’wouldn’t go in for five hundred. To-morrow’s Jinny Carvel’s birthday, and I’ve just got to be there.’ I reckon the time’s come when I’ve got to say Miss Jinny,” he added ruefully.

The Colonel rose, laughing, and hit the Captain on the back.

“Drat you, Lige, why don’t you kiss the girl? Can’t you see she’s waiting?”

The honest Captain stole one glance at Virginia, and turned red copper color.

“Shucks, Colonel, I can’t be kissing her always. What’ll her husband say?”

For an instant Mr. Carvel’s brow clouded.

“We’ll not talk of husbands yet awhile, Lige.”

Virginia went up to Captain Lige, deftly twisted into shape his black tie, and kissed him on the check. How his face burned when she touched him.

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“There!” said she, “and don’t you ever dare to treat me as a young lady. Why, Pa, he’s blushing like a girl. I know. He’s ashamed to kiss me now. He’s going to be married at last to that Creole girl in New Orleans.”

The Colonel slapped his knee, winked slyly at Lige, while Virginia began to sing:

> “I built me a house on the mountain so high,
> To gaze at my true love as she do go by.”

“There’s only one I’d ever marry, Jinny,” protested the Captain, soberly, “and I’m a heap too old for her. But I’ve seen a youngster that might mate with her, Colonel,” he added mischievously. “If he just wasn’t a Yankee. Jinny, what’s the story I hear about Judge Whipple’s young man buying Hester?”

Mr. Carvel looked uneasy. It was Virginia’s turn to blush, and she grew red as a peony.

“He’s a tall, hateful, Black Republican Yankee!” she said.

“Phee-ew!” whistled the Captain. “Any more epithets?”

“He’s a nasty Abolitionist!”

“There you do him wrong, honey,” the Colonel put in.

“I hear he took Hester to Miss Crane’s,” the Captain continued, filling the room with his hearty laughter. “That boy has sand enough, Jinny; I’d like to know him.”

“You’ll have that priceless opportunity to-night,” retorted Miss Virginia, as she flung herself out of the room. “Pa has made me invite him to my party.”

“Here, Jinny! Hold on!” cried the Captain, running after her. “I’ve got something for you.”

She stopped on the stairs, hesitating. Whereupon the Captain hastily ripped open the bundle under his arm and produced a very handsome India shawl. With a cry of delight Virginia threw it over her shoulders and ran to the long glass between the high windows.

“Who spoils her, Lige?” asked the Colonel, fondly.

“Her father, I reckon,” was the prompt reply.

“Who spoils you, Jinny?”

“Captain Lige,” said she, turning to him. “If you had only kept the presents you have brought me from New Orleans, you might sell out your steamboat and be a rich man.”

“He is a rich man,” said the Colonel, promptly. “Did you ever miss bringing her a present, Lige?” he asked.

“When the Cora Anderson burnt,” answered the Captain.

“Why,” cried Virginia, “you brought me a piece of her wheel, with the char on it. You swam ashore with it.”

“So I did,” said Captain Brent. “I had forgotten that. It was when the French dress, with the furbelows, which Madame Pitou had gotten me from Paris for you, was lost.”

“And I think I liked the piece of wheel better,” says Virginia. “It was brought me by a brave man, the last to leave his boat.”

“And who should be the last to leave, but the captain? I saw the thing in the water; and I just thought we ought to have a relic.”

“Lige,” said the Colonel, putting up his feet, “do you remember the French toys you used to bring up here from New Orleans?”

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“Colonel,” replied Brent, “do you recall the rough and uncouth young citizen who came over here from Cincinnati, as clerk on the Vicksburg?”

“I remember, sir, that he was so promising that they made him provisional captain the next trip, and he was not yet twenty-four years of age.”

“And do you remember buying the Vicksburg at the sheriff’s sale for twenty thousand dollars, and handing her over to young Brent, and saying, ’There, my son, she’s your boat, and you can pay for her when you like’?”

“Shucks, Brent!” said Mr. Carvel, sternly, “your memory’s too good. But I proved myself a good business man, Jinny; he paid for her in a year.”

“You don’t mean that you made him pay you for the boat?” cried Jinny. “Why, Pa, I didn’t think you were that mean!”

The two men laughed heartily.

“I was a heap meaner,” said her father. “I made him pay interest.”

Virginia drew in her breath, and looked at the Colonel in amazement.

“He’s the meanest man I know,” said Captain Lige. “He made me pay interest, and a mint julep.”

“Upon my word, Pa,” said Miss Virginia, soberly, “I shouldn’t have believed it of you.”

Just then Jackson, in his white jacket; came to announce that supper was ready, and they met Ned at the dining-room door, fairly staggering under a load of roses.

“Marse Clarence done send ’em in, des picked out’n de hothouse dis afternoon, Miss Jinny. Jackson, fotch a bowl!”

“No,” said Virginia. She took the flowers from Ned, one by one, and to the wonderment of Captain Lige and her—father strewed them hither and thither upon the table until the white cloth was hid by the red flowers. The Colonel stroked his goatee and nudged Captain Lige.

“Look-a-there, now,” said he. “Any other woman would have spent two mortal hours stickin’ ’em in china.”

Virginia, having critically surveyed her work, amid exclamations from Ned and Jackson, had gone around to her place. And there upon her plate lay a pearl necklace. For an instant she clapped her palms together, staring at it in bewilderment. And once more the little childish cry of delight, long sweet to the Colonel’s ears, escaped her.

“Pa,” she said, “is it—?” And there she stopped, for fear that it might not be. But he nodded encouragingly.

“Dorothy Carvel’s necklace! No, it can’t be.”

“Yes, honey,” said the Colonel. “Your Uncle Daniel sent it, as he promised. And when you go upstairs, if Easter has done as I told her, you will see a primrose dress with blue coin-flowers on your bed. Daniel thought you might like that, too, for a keepsake. Dorothy Manners wore it in London, when she was a girl.”

And so Virginia ran and threw her arms about her father’s neck, and kissed him again and again. And lest the Captain feel badly, she laid his India shawl beside her; and the necklace upon it.

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What a joyful supper they had,—just the three of them! And as the fresh roses filled the room with fragrance, Virginia filled it with youth and spirits, and Mr. Carvel and the Captain with honest, manly merriment. And Jackson plied Captain Brent (who was a prime favorite in that house) with broiled chicken and hot beat biscuits and with waffles, until at length he lay back in his chair and heaved a sigh of content, lighting a cigar. And then Virginia, with a little curtsey to both of them, ran off to dress for the party.

"Well," said Captain Brent, "I reckon there'll be gay goings-on here to-night. I wouldn't miss the sight of 'em, Colonel, for all the cargoes on the Mississippi. Ain't there anything I can do?"

"No, thank you, Lige," Mr. Carvel answered. "Do you remember, one morning some five years ago, when I took in at the store a Yankee named Hopper? You didn't like him, I believe."

Captain Brent jumped, and the ashes of his cigar fell on his coat. He had forgotten his conversation with Captain Grant.

"I reckon I do," he said dryly.

For a moment he was on the point of telling the affair. Then he desisted. He could not be sure of Eliphalet from Grant's description. So he decided to await a better time. Captain Brent was one to make sure of his channel before going ahead.

"Well," continued the Colonel, "I have been rather pushed the last week, and Hopper managed things for this dance. He got the music, and saw the confectioner. But he made such a close bargain with both of 'em that they came around to me afterward," he added, laughing.

"Is he coming here to-night?" demanded the Captain, looking disgusted.

"Lige," replied the Colonel, "you never do get over a prejudice. Yes, he's coming, just to oversee things. He seems to have mighty little pleasure, and he's got the best business head I ever did see. A Yankee," said Mr. Carvel, meditatively, as he put on his hat, "a Yankee, when he will work, works like all possessed. Hood don't like him any more than you do, but he allows Hopper is a natural-born business man. Last month Samuels got tight, and Wright & Company were going to place the largest order in years. I called in Hood. 'Go yourself, Colonel,' says he. I I'm too old to solicit business, Hood,' said I. 'Then there's only one man to send,' says he, 'young Hopper. He'll get the order, or I'll give up this place I've had for twenty years.' Hopper 'callated' to get it, and another small one pitched in. And you'd die laughing, Lige, to hear how he did it."

"Some slickness, I'll gamble," grunted Captain Lige.

“Well, I reckon ’twas slick,” said the Colonel, thoughtfully. “You know old man Wright hates a solicitor like poison. He has his notions. And maybe you’ve noticed signs stuck up all over his store, ’No Solicitors nor Travelling Men Allowed Here’”

The Captain nodded.

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“But Hopper—Hopper walks in, sir, bold as you please, right past the signs till he comes to the old man’s cage. ‘I want to see Mr. Wright,’ says he to the clerk. And the clerk begins to grin. ‘Name, please,’ says he. Mr. Hopper whips out his business card. ‘What!’ shouts old Wright, flying ’round in his chair, ’what the devil does this mean? Can’t you read, sir?’ ‘callate to,’ says Mr. Hopper. ’And you dare to come in here?

“‘Business is business,’ says Hopper. ‘You “callate"!’ bellowed the old man; ’I reckon you’re a damned Yankee. I reckon I’ll upset your “callations” for once. And if I catch you in here again, I’ll wring your neck like a roostah’s. Git!’”

“Who told you this?” asked Captain Brent.

“Wright himself,—afterward,” replied Mr. Carvel, laughing. “But listen, Lige. The old man lives at the Planters’ House, you know. What does Mr. Hopper do but go ’round there that very night and give a nigger two bits to put him at the old man’s table. When Wright comes and sees him, he nearly has one of his apoplectic fits. But in marches Hopper the next morning with twice the order. The good Lord knows how he did it.”

There was a silence. Then the door-bell rang.

“He’s dangerous,” said the Captain, emphatically. “That’s what I call him.”

“The Yankees are changing business in this town,” was the Colonel’s answer. “We’ve got to keep the pace, Lige.”

CHAPTER XIII

THE PARTY

To gentle Miss Anne Brinsmade, to Puss Russell of the mischievous eyes, and even to timid Eugenie Renault, the question that burned was: Would he come, or would he not? And, secondarily, how would Virginia treat him if he came? Put our friend Stephen for the subjective, and Miss Carvers party for the objective in the above, and we have the clew. For very young girls are given to making much out of a very little in such matters. If Virginia had not gotten angry when she had been teased a fortnight before, all would have been well.

Even Puss, who walked where angels feared to tread, did not dare to go too far with Virginia. She had taken care before the day of the party to beg forgiveness with considerable humility. It had been granted with a queenly generosity. And after that none of the bevy had dared to broach the subject to Virginia. Jack Brinsmade had. He told Puss afterward that when Virginia got through with him, he felt as if he had taken a rapid trip through the wheel-house of a large steamer. Puss tried, by various ingenious devices, to learn whether Mr. Brice had accepted his invitation. She failed.

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These things added a zest to a party long looked forward to amongst Virginia's intimates. In those days young ladies did not "come out" so frankly as they do now. Mothers did not announce to the world that they possessed marriageable daughters. The world was supposed to know that. And then the matrimonial market was feverishly active. Young men proposed as naturally as they now ask a young girl to go for a walk, —and were refused quite as naturally. An offer of marriage was not the fearful and wonderful thing—to be dealt with gingerly—which it has since become. Seventeen was often the age at which they began. And one of the big Catherwood boys had a habit of laying his heart and hand at Virginia's feet once a month. Nor did his vanity suffer greatly when she laughed at him.

It was with a flutter of excitement, therefore, that Miss Carvel's guests flitted past Jackson, who held the door open obsequiously. The boldest of them took a rapid survey of the big parlor, before they put foot on the stairs to see whether Mr. Brice had yet arrived. And if their curiosity held them too long, they were usually kissed by the Colonel.

Mr. Carvel shook hands heartily with the young mean and called them by their first names, for he knew most of their fathers and grandfathers. And if an older gentleman arrived, perhaps the two might be seen going down the hall together, arm in arm. So came his beloved enemy, Judge Whipple, who did not make an excursion to the rear regions of the house with the Colonel; but they stood and discussed Mr. President Buchanan's responsibility for the recent panic, until the band, which Mr. Hopper had stationed under the stairs, drowned their voices.

As we enter the room, there stands Virginia under the rainbowed prisms of the great chandelier, receiving. But here was suddenly a woman of twenty-eight, where only this evening we knew a slip of a girl. It was a trick she had, to become majestic in a ball-gown. She held her head high, as a woman should, and at her slender throat glowed the pearls of Dorothy Manners.

The result of all this was to strike a little awe into the souls of many of her playmates. Little Eugenie nearly dropped a curtsey. Belle Cluyme was so impressed that she forgot for a whole hour to be spiteful. But Puss Russell kissed her on both cheeks, and asked her if she really wasn't nervous.

"Nervous!" exclaimed Jinny, "why?"

Miss Russell glanced significantly towards the doorway. But she said nothing to her hostess, for fear of marring an otherwise happy occasion. She retired with Jack Brim made to a corner, where she recited:—

> "Oh young Lochinvar is come out of the East;
> Of millions of Yankees I love him the least."

“What a joke if he should come!” cried Jack.

Miss Russell gasped.

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Just as Mr. Clarence Colfax, resplendent in new evening clothes just arrived from New York, was pressing his claim for the first dance with his cousin in opposition to numerous other claims, the chatter of the guests died away. Virginia turned her head, and for an instant the pearls trembled on her neck. There was a young man cordially and unconcernedly shaking hands with her father and Captain Lige. Her memory of that moment is, strangely, not of his face (she did not deign to look at that), but of the muscle of his shoulder half revealed as he stretched forth his arm.

Young Mr. Colfax bent over to her ear.

“Virginia,” he whispered earnestly, almost fiercely, Virginia, who invited him here?”

“I did,” said Virginia, calmly, “of course. Who invites any one here?”

“But!” cried Clarence, “do you know who he is?”

“Yes,” she answered, “I know. And is that any reason why he should not come here as a guest? Would you bar any gentleman from your house on account of his convictions?”

Ah, Virginia, who had thought to hear that argument from your lips? What would frank Captain Lige say of the consistency of women, if he heard you now? And how give an account of yourself to Anne Brinsmade? What contrariness has set you so intense against your own argument?

Before one can answer this, before Mr. Clarence can recover from his astonishment and remind her of her vehement words on the subject at Bellegarde, Mr. Stephen is making thither with the air of one who conquers. Again the natural contrariness of women. What bare-faced impudence! Has he no shame that he should hold his head so high? She feels her color mounting, even as her resentment rises at his self-possession, and yet she would have despised him had he shown self-consciousness in gait or manner in the sight of her assembled guests. Nearly as tall as the Colonel himself, he is plainly seen, and Miss Puss in her corner does not have to stand on tiptoe. Mr. Carvel does the honors of the introduction.

But a daughter of the Carvels was not to fail before such a paltry situation as this. Shall it be confessed that curiosity stepped into the breach? As she gave him her hand she was wondering how he would act.

As a matter of fact he acted detestably. He said nothing whatever, but stood regarding her with a clear eye and a face by far too severe. The thought that he was meditating on the incident of the auction sale crossed through her mind, and made her blood simmer. How dared he behave so! The occasion called for a little small talk. An evil spirit took possession of Virginia. She turned.

“Mr. Brice, do you know my cousin, Mr. Colfax?” she said.

Mr. Brice bowed. “I know Mr. Colfax by sight,” he replied.

Then Mr. Colfax made a stiff bow. To this new phase his sense of humor did not rise. Mr. Brice was a Yankee and no gentleman, inasmuch as he had overbid a lady for Hester.

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“Have you come here to live, Mr. Brice?” he asked.

The Colonel eyed his nephew sharply. But Stephen smiled.

“Yes,” he said, “if I can presently make enough to keep me alive.” Then turning to Virginia, he said, “Will you dance, Miss Carvel?”

The effrontery of this demand quite drew the breath from the impatient young gentlemen who had been waiting their turn. Several of them spoke up in remonstrance. And for the moment (let one confess it who knows), Virginia was almost tempted to lay her arm in his. Then she made a bow that would have been quite as effective the length of the room.

“Thank you, Mr. Brice,” she said, “but I am engaged to Mr. Colfax.”

Abstractedly he watched her glide away in her cousin’s arms. Stephen had a way of being preoccupied at such times. When he grew older he would walk the length of Olive Street, look into face after face of acquaintances, not a quiver of recognition in his eyes. But most probably the next week he would win a brilliant case in the Supreme Court. And so now, indifferent to the amusement of some about him, he stood staring after Virginia and Clarence. Where had he seen Colfax’s face before he came West? Ah, he knew. Many, many years before he had stood with his father in the mellow light of the long gallery at Hollingdean, Kent, before a portrait of the Stuarts’ time. The face was that of one of Lord Northwell’s ancestors, a sporting nobleman of the time of the second Charles. It was a head which compelled one to pause before it. Strangely enough,—it was the head likewise of Clarence Colfax.

The image of it Stephen had carried undimmed in the eye of his memory. White-haired Northwell’s story, also. It was not a story that Mr. Brice had expected his small son to grasp. As a matter of fact Stephen had not grasped it then—but years afterward. It was not a pleasant story,—and yet there was much of credit in it to the young rake its subject,—of dash and courage and princely generosity beside the profligacy and incontinence.

The face had impressed him, with its story. He had often dreamed of it, and of the lace collar over the dull-gold velvet that became it so well. And here it was at last, in a city west of the Mississippi River. Here were the same delicately chiselled features, with their pallor, and satiety engraved there at one and twenty. Here was the same lazy scorn in the eyes, and the look which sleeplessness gives to the lids: the hair, straight and fine and black; the wilful indulgence—not of one life, but of generations—about the mouth; the pointed chin. And yet it was a fact to dare anything, and to do anything.

One thing more ere we have done with that which no man may explain. Had he dreamed, too, of the girl? Of Virginia? Stephen might not tell, but thrice had the Colonel spoken to him before he answered.

“You must meet some of these young ladies, sir.”

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It was little wonder that Puss Russell thought him dull on that first occasion. Out of whom condescension is to flow is a matter of which Heaven takes no cognizance. To use her own words, Puss thought him “stuck up,” when he should have been grateful. We know that Stephen was not stuck up, and later Miss Russell learned that likewise. Very naturally she took preoccupation for indifference. It is a matter worth recording, however, that she did not tease him, because she did not dare. He did not ask her to dance, which was rude. So she passed him back to Mr. Carvel, who introduced him to Miss Renault and Miss Saint Cyr, and other young ladies of the best French families. And finally, drifting hither and thither with his eyes on Virginia, in an evil moment he was presented to Mrs. Colfax. Perhaps it has been guessed that Mrs. Colfax was a very great lady indeed, albeit the daughter of an overseer. She bore Addison Colfax’s name, spent his fortune, and retained her good looks. On this particular occasion she was enjoying herself quite as much as any young girl in the room, and, while resting from a waltz, was regaling a number of gentlemen with a humorous account of a scandal at the Virginia Spring’s.

None but a great lady could have meted out the punishment administered to poor Stephen. None but a great lady could have concerned it. And he, who had never been snubbed before, fell headlong into her trap. How was the boy to know that there was no heart in the smile with which she greeted him? It was all over in an instant. She continued to talk about Virginia Springs, “Oh, Mr. Brice, of course you have been there. Of course you know the Edmunds. No? You haven’t been there? You don’t know the Edmunds? I thought every body had been there. Charles, you look as if you were just dying to waltz. Let’s have a turn before the music stops.”

And so she whirled away, leaving Stephen forlorn, a little too angry to be amused just then. In that state he spied a gentleman coming towards him—a gentleman the sight of whom he soon came to associate with all that is good and kindly in this world, Mr. Brinsmade. And now he put his hand on Stephen’s shoulder. Whether he had seen the incident just past, who can tell?

“My son,” said he, “I am delighted to see you here. Now that we are such near neighbors, we must be nearer friends. You must know my wife, and my son Jack, and my daughter Anne.”

Mrs. Brinsmade was a pleasant little body, but plainly not a fit mate for her husband. Jack gave Stephen a warm grasp of the hand, and an amused look. As for Anne, she was more like her father; she was Stephen’s friend from that hour.

“I have seen you quite often, going in at your gate, Mr. Brice. And I have seen your mother, too. I like her,” said Anne. “She has such a wonderful face.” And the girl raised her truthful blue eyes to his.

“My mother would be delighted to know you,” he ventured, not knowing what else to say. It was an effort for him to reflect upon their new situation as poor tenants to a wealthy family.

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“Oh, do you think so?” cried Anne. “I shall call on her to-morrow, with mother. Do you know, Mr. Brice,” she continued, “do you know that your mother is just the person I should go to if I were in trouble, whether I knew her or not?”

“I have found her a good person in trouble,” said Stephen, simply. He might have said the same of Anne.

Anne was enchanted. She had thought him cold, but these words belied that. She had wrapped him in that diaphanous substance with which young ladies (and sometimes older ones) are wont to deck their heroes. She had approached a mystery—to find it human, as are many mysteries. But thank heaven that she found a dignity, a seriousness,—and these more than satisfied her. Likewise, she discovered something she had not looked for, an occasional way of saying things that made her laugh. She danced with him, and passed him back to Miss Puss Russell, who was better pleased this time; she passed him on to her sister, who also danced with him, and sent him upstairs for her handkerchief.

Nevertheless, Stephen was troubled. As the evening wore on, he was more and more aware of an uncompromising attitude in his young hostess, whom he had seen whispering to various young ladies from behind her fan as they passed her. He had not felt equal to asking her to dance a second time. Honest Captain Lige Breast, who seemed to have taken a fancy to him, bandied him on his lack of courage with humor that was a little rough. And, to Stephen’s amazement, even Judge Whipple had pricked him on.

It was on his way upstairs after Emily Russell’s handkerchief that he ran across another acquaintance. Mr. Eliphalet Hopper, in Sunday broadcloth, was seated on the landing, his head lowered to the level of the top of the high door of the parlor. Stephen caught a glimpse of the picture whereon his eyes were fixed. Perhaps it is needless to add that Miss Virginia Carvel formed the central figure of it.

“Enjoy in’ yourself?” asked Mr. Hopper.

Stephen countered.

“Are you?” he asked.

“So so,” said Mr. Hopper, and added darkly: “I ain’t in no hurry. Just now they callate I’m about good enough to manage the business end of an affair like this here. I guess I can wait. But some day,” said he, suddenly barring Stephen’s way, “some day I’ll give a party. And hark to me when I tell you that these here aristocrats ’ll be glad enough to get invitations.”

Stephen pushed past coldly. This time the man made him shiver. The incident was all that was needed to dishearten and disgust him. Kindly as he had been treated by others, far back in his soul was a thing that rankled. Shall it be told crudely why he went that night? Stephen Brice, who would not lie to others, lied to himself. And when he came downstairs again and presented Miss Emily with her handkerchief, his next move was in his mind. And that was to say good-night to the Colonel, and more frigidly to Miss Carvel herself. But music has upset many a man's calculations.

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The strains of the Jenny Lind waltz were beginning to float through the rooms. There was Miss Virginia in a corner of the big parlor, for the moment alone with her cousin. And thither Stephen sternly strode. Not a sign did she give of being aware of his presence until he stood before her. Even then she did not lift her eyes. But she said: “So you have come at last to try again, Mr. Brice?”

And Mr. Brice said: “If you will do me the honor, Miss Carvel.”

She did not reply at once. Clarence Colfax got to his feet. Then she looked up at the two men as they stood side by side, and perhaps swept them both in an instant’s comparison.

The New Englander’s face must have reminded her more of her own father, Colonel Carvel. It possessed, from generations known, the power to control itself. She afterwards admitted that she accepted him to tease Clarence. Miss Russell, whose intuitions are usually correct, does not believe this.

“I will dance with you,” said Virginia.

But, once in his arms, she seemed like a wild thing, resisting. Although her gown brushed his coat, the space between them was infinite, and her hand lay limp in his, unresponsive of his own pressure. Not so her feet; they caught the step and moved with the rhythm of the music, and round the room they swung. More than one pair paused in the dance to watch them. Then, as they glided past the door, Stephen was disagreeably conscious of some one gazing down from above, and he recalled Eliphalet Hopper and his position. The sneer from Eliphalet’s seemed to penetrate like a chilly draught.

All at once, Virginia felt her partner gathering up his strength, and by some compelling force, more of wild than of muscle, draw her nearer. Unwillingly her hand tightened under his, and her blood beat faster and her color came and went as they two moved as one. Anger—helpless anger —took possession of her as she saw the smiles on the faces of her friends, and Puss Russell mockingly throwing a kiss as she passed her. And then, strange in the telling, a thrill as of power rose within her which she strove against in vain. A knowledge of him who guided her so swiftly, so unerringly, which she had felt with no other man. Faster and faster they stepped, each forgetful of self and place, until the waltz came suddenly to a stop.

“By gum!” said Captain Lige to Judge Whipple, “you can whollop me on my own forecastle if they ain’t the handsomest couple I ever did see.”

THE CRISIS

By Winston Churchill

BOOK II.

Volume 3.

CHAPTER I

RAW MATERIAL

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Summer, intolerable summer, was upon the city at last. The families of its richest citizens had fled. Even at that early day some braved the long railroad journey to the Atlantic coast. Amongst these were our friends the Cluymes, who come not strongly into this history. Some went to the Virginia Springs. But many, like the Brinsmades and the Russells, the Tiptons and the Hollingsworths, retired to the local paradise of their country places on the Bellefontaine road, on the cool heights above the river. Thither, as a respite from the hot office, Stephen was often invited by kind Mr. Brinsmade, who sometimes drove him out in his own buggy. Likewise he had visited Miss Puss Russell. But Miss Virginia Carvel he had never seen since the night he had danced with her. This was because, after her return from the young ladies' school at Monticello, she had gone to Glencoe, Glencoe, magic spot, perched high on wooded highlands. And under these the Meramec, crystal pure, ran lightly on sand and pebble to her bridal with that turbid tyrant, the Father of Waters.

To reach Glencoe you spent two dirty hours on that railroad which (it was fondly hoped) would one day stretch to the Pacific Ocean. You generally spied one of the big Catherwood boys in the train, or their tall sister Maude. The Catherwoods likewise lived at Glencoe in the summer. And on some Saturday afternoons a grim figure in a linen duster and a silk skull-cap took a seat in the forward car. That was Judge Whipple, on his way to spend a quiet Sunday with Colonel Carvel.

To the surprise of many good people, the Judge had recently formed another habit. At least once a week he would drop in at the little house on Olive Street next to Mr. Brinsmade's big one, which was shut up, and take tea with Mrs. Brice. Afterward he would sit on the little porch over the garden in the rear, or on the front steps, and watch the bob-tailed horse-cars go by. His conversation was chiefly addressed to the widow. Rarely to Stephen; whose wholesome respect for his employer had in no wise abated.

Through the stifling heat of these summer days Stephen sat in the outer office, straining at the law. Had it not been for the fact that Mr. Whipple went to his mother's house, despair would have seized him long since. Apparently his goings-out and his comings-in were noted only by Mr. Richter. Truly the Judge's methods were not Harvard methods. And if there were pride in the young Bostonian, Mr. Whipple thought he knew the cure for it.

It was to Richter Stephen owed a debt of gratitude in these days. He would often take his midday meal in the down-town beer garden with the quiet German. Then there came a Sunday afternoon (to be marked with a red letter) when Richter transported him into Germany itself. Stephen's eyes were opened. Richter took him across the Rhine. The Rhine was Market Street, and south of that street was a country of which polite American society took no cognizance.

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Here was an epic movement indeed, for South St. Louis was a great sod uprooted from the Fatherland and set down in all its vigorous crudity in the warm black mud of the Mississippi Valley. Here lager beer took the place of Bourbon, and black bread and sausages of hot rolls and fried chicken. Here were quaint market houses squatting in the middle of wide streets; Lutheran churches, square and uncompromising, and bulky Turner Halls, where German children were taught the German tongue. Here, in a shady grove of mulberry and locust, two hundred families were spread out at their ease.

For a while Richter sat in silence, puffing at a meerschaum with a huge brown bowl. A trick of the mind opened for Stephen one of the histories in his father's library in Beacon Street, across the pages of which had flitted the ancestors of this blue-eyed and great-chested Saxon. He saw them in cathedral forests, with the red hair long upon their bodies. He saw terrifying battles with the Roman Empire surging back and forth through the low countries. He saw a lad of twenty at the head of rugged legions clad in wild skins, sweeping Rome out of Gaul. Back in the dim ages Richter's fathers must have defended grim Eresburg. And it seemed to him that in the end the new Republic must profit by this rugged stock, which had good women for wives and mothers, and for fathers men in whose blood dwelt a fierce patriotism and contempt for cowardice.

This fancy of ancestry pleased Stephen. He thought of the forefathers of those whom he knew, who dwelt north of Market Street. Many, though this generation of the French might know it not, had bled at Calais and at Agincourt, had followed the court of France in clumsy coaches to Blois and Amboise, or lived in hovels under the castle walls. Others had charged after the Black Prince at Poitiers, and fought as serf or noble. in the war of the Roses; had been hatters or tailors in Cromwell's armies, or else had sacrificed lands and fortunes for Charles Stuart. These English had toiled, slow but resistless, over the misty Blue Ridge after Boone and Harrod to this old St. Louis of the French, their enemies, whose fur traders and missionaries had long followed the veins of the vast western wilderness. And now, on to the structure builded by these two, comes Germany to be welded, to strengthen or to weaken.

Richter put down his pipe on the table.

"Stephen," he said suddenly, "you do not share the prejudice against us here?"

Stephen flushed. He thought of some vigorous words that Miss Puss Russell had used on the subject of the Dutch."

"No," said he, emphatically.

"I am glad," answered Richter, with a note of sadness, in his voice. "Do not despise us before you know more of us. We are still feudal in Germany—of the Middle Ages. The peasant is a serf. He is compelled to serve the lord of the land every year with so much labor of his hands. The small farmers, the 'Gross' and 'Mittel Bauern', we call them, are

also mortgaged to the nobles who tyrannize our Vaterland. Our merchants are little merchants—shopkeepers, you would say. My poor father, an educated man, was such. They fought our revolution."

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“And now,” said Stephen, “why do they not keep their hold?”

Richter sighed.

“We were unused to ruling,” he answered. “We knew not how to act—what to do. You must remember that we were not trained to govern ourselves, as are you of the English race, from children. Those who have been for centuries ground under heel do not make practical parliamentarians. No; your heritage is liberty—you Americans and English; and we Germans must desert our native land to partake of it.”

“And was it not hard to leave?” asked Stephen, gently.

The eyes of the German filled at the recollection, nor did he seem ashamed of his tears.

“I had a poor old father whose life was broken to save the Vaterland, but not his spirit,” he cried, “no, not that. My father was born in 1797. God directed my grandfather to send him to the Kolnisches gymnasium, where the great Jahn taught. Jahn was our Washington, the father of Germany that is to be.

“Then our Fatherland was French. Our women wore Parisian clothes, and spoke the language; French immorality and atheism had spread like a plague among us Napoleon the vile had taken the sword of our Frederick from Berlin. It was Father Jahn (so we love to call him), it was Father Jahn who founded the ‘Turnschulen’, that the generations to come might return to simple German ways,—plain fare, high principles, our native tongue; and the development of the body. The downfall of the fiend Napoleon and the Vaterland united—these two his scholars must have written in their hearts. All summer long, in their black caps and linen pantaloons, they would trudge after him, begging a crust here and a cheese there, to spread his teachings far and wide under the thatched roofs.

“Then came 1811. I have heard my father tell how in the heat of that year a great red comet burned in the sky, even as that we now see, my friend. God forbid that this portends blood. But in the coming spring the French conscripts filled our sacred land like a swarm of locusts, devouring as they went. And at their head, with the pomp of Darius, rode that destroyer of nations and homes, Napoleon. What was Germany then? Ashes. But the red embers were beneath, fanned by Father Jahn. Napoleon at Dresden made our princes weep. Never, even in the days of the Frankish kings, had we been so humbled. He dragged our young men with him to Russia, and left them to die moaning on the frozen wastes, while he drove off in his sledge.

“It was the next year that Germany rose. High and low, rich and poor, Jaeger and Landwehr, came flocking into the army, and even the old men, the Landsturm. Russia was an ally, and later, Austria. My father, a last of sixteen, was in the Landwehr, under the noble Blucher in Silesia, when they drove the French into the Katzbach and the

Neisse, swollen by the rains into torrents. It had rained until the forests were marshes. Powder would not burn. But Blucher, ah, there was a man! He whipped his great sabre from under his cloak, crying ‘Vorwarts! Vorwarts!’ And the Landwehr with one great shout slew their enemies with the butts of their muskets until their arms were weary and the bodies were tossed like logs in the foaming waters. They called Blucher Marachall Vorwarts!

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“Then Napoleon was sent to Elba. But the victors quarrelled amongst themselves, while Talleyrand and Metternich tore our Vaterland into strips, and set brother against brother. And our blood, and the grief for the widows and the fatherless, went for nothing.”

Richter paused to light his pipe.

“After a while,” he continued presently, “came the German Confederation, with Austria at the head. Rid of Napoleon, we had another despot in Metternich. But the tree which Jahn had planted grew, and its branches spread. The great master was surrounded by spies. My father had gone to Jena University, when he joined the Burschenschaft, or Students’ League, of which I will tell you later. It was pledged to the rescue of the Vaterland. He was sent to prison for dipping his handkerchief in the blood of Sand, beheaded for liberty at Mannheim. Afterwards he was liberated, and went to Berlin and married my mother, who died when I was young. Twice again he was in prison because the societies met at his house. We were very poor, my friend. You in America know not the meaning of that word. His health broke, and when ’48 came, he was an old man. His hair was white, and he walked the streets with a crutch. But he had saved a little money to send me to Jena.

“He was proud of me. I was big-boned and fair, like my mother. And when I came home at the end of a Semester I can see him now, as he would hobble to the door, wearing the red and black and gold of the Burschenschaft. And he would keep me up half the night-telling him of our ‘Schlager’ fights with the aristocrats. My father had been a noted swordsman in his day.”

He stopped abruptly, and colored. For Stephen was staring at the jagged scar, He had never summoned the courage to ask Richter how he came by it.

“Schlager fights?” he exclaimed.

“Broadswords,” answered the German, hastily. “Some day I will tell you of them, and of the struggle with the troops in the ‘Breite Strasse’ in March. We lost, as I told you because we knew not how to hold what we had gained.

“I left Germany, hoping to make a home here for my poor father. How sad his face as he kissed me farewell! And he said to me: ’Carl, if ever your new Vaterland, the good Republic, be in danger, sacrifice all. I have spent my years in bondage, and I say to you that life without liberty is not worth the living.’ Three months I was gone, and he was dead, without that for which he had striven so bravely. He never knew what it is to have an abundance of meat. He never knew from one day to the other when he would have to embrace me, all he owned, and march away to prison, because he was a patriot.” Richter’s voice had fallen low, but now he raised it. “Do you think, my friend,” he cried, “do you think that I would not die willingly for this new country if the time should come.

Yes, and there are a million like me, once German, now American, who will give their lives to preserve this Union. For without it the world is not fit to live in."

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Stephen had food for thought as he walked northward through the strange streets on that summer evening. Here indeed was a force not to be reckoned, and which few had taken into account.

CHAPTER II

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

It is sometimes instructive to look back and see hour Destiny gave us a kick here, and Fate a shove there, that sent us in the right direction at the proper time. And when Stephen Brice looks backward now, he laughs to think that he did not suspect the Judge of being an ally of the two who are mentioned above. The sum total of Mr. Whipple's words and advices to him that summer had been these. Stephen was dressed more carefully than usual, in view of a visit to Bellefontaine Road. Whereupon the Judge demanded whether he were contemplating marriage. Without waiting for a reply he pointed to a rope and a slab of limestone on the pavement below, and waved his hand unmistakably toward the Mississippi.

Miss Russell was of the opinion that Mr. Whipple had once been crossed in love.

But we are to speak more particularly of a put-up job, although Stephen did not know this at the time.

Towards five o'clock of a certain afternoon in August of that year, 1858, Mr. Whipple emerged from his den. Instead of turning to the right, he strode straight to Stephen's table. His communications were always a trifle startling. This was no exception.

"Mr. Brice," said he, "you are to take the six forty-five train on the St. Louis, Alton, and Chicago road tomorrow morning for Springfield, Illinois."

"Yes sir."

"Arriving at Springfield, you are to deliver this envelope into the hands of Mr. Abraham Lincoln, of the law firm of Lincoln & Herndon."

"Abraham Lincoln!" cried Stephen, rising and straddling his chair. "But, sir—"

"Abraham Lincoln," interrupted the Judge, forcibly "I try to speak plainly, sir. You are to deliver it into Mr. Lincoln's hands. If he is not in Springfield, find out where he is and follow him up. Your expenses will be paid by me. The papers are important. Do you understand, sir?"

Stephen did. And he knew better than to argue the matter with Mr. Whipple. He had read in the Missouri Democrat of this man Lincoln, a country lawyer who had once been

to Congress, and who was even now disputing the senatorship of his state with the renowned Douglas. In spite of their complacent amusement, he had won a little admiration from conservative citizens who did not believe in the efficacy of Judge Douglas's Squatter Sovereignty. Likewise this Mr. Lincoln, who had once been a rail-sputter, was uproariously derided by Northern Democrats because he had challenged Mr. Douglas to seven debates, to be held at different towns in the state of Illinois. David with his sling and his smooth round pebble must have had much of the same sympathy and ridicule.

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For Mr. Douglas, Senator and Judge, was a national character, mighty in politics, invulnerable in the armor of his oratory. And he was known far and wide as the Little Giant. Those whom he did not conquer with his logic were impressed by his person.

Stephen remembered with a thrill that these debates were going on now. One, indeed, had been held, and had appeared in fine print in a corner of the Democrat. Perhaps this Lincoln might not be in; Springfield; perhaps he, Stephen Brice, might, by chance, hit upon a debate, and see and hear the tower of the Democracy, the Honorable Stephen A. Douglas.

But it is greatly to be feared that our friend Stephen was bored with his errand before he arrived at the little wooden station of the Illinois capital. Standing on the platform after the train pulled out, he summoned up courage to ask a citizen with no mustache and a beard, which he swept away when he spat, where was the office of Lincoln & Herndon. The stranger spat twice, regarded Mr. Brice pityingly, and finally led him in silence past the picket fence and the New England-looking meeting-house opposite until they came to the great square on which the State House squatted. The State House was a building with much pretension to beauty, built in the classical style, of a yellow stone, with sold white blinds in the high windows and mighty columns capped at the gently slanting roof. But on top of it was reared a crude wooden dome, like a clay head on a marble statue.

“That there,” said the stranger, “is whar we watches for the County Delegations when they come in to a meetin’.” And with this remark, pointing with a stubby thumb up a well-worn stair, he departed before Stephen could thank him. Stephen paused under the awning, of which there were many shading the brick pavement, to regard the straggling line of stores and houses which surrounded and did homage to the yellow pile. The brick house in which Mr. Lincoln’s office was had decorations above the windows. Mounting the stair, Stephen found a room bare enough, save for a few chairs and law books, and not a soul in attendance. After sitting awhile by the window, mopping his brow with a handkerchief, he went out on the landing to make inquiries. There he met another citizen in shirt sleeves, like unto the first, in the very act of sweeping his beard out of the way of a dexterous expectoration.

“Wal, young man,” said he, “who be you lookin’ for here?”

“For Mr. Lincoln,” said Stephen.

At this the gentleman sat down on the dirty top step; and gave vent to quiet but annoying laughter.

“I reckon you come to the wrong place.”

“I was told this was his office,” said Stephen, with some heat.

“Whar be you from?” said the citizen, with interest.

“I don’t see what that has to do with it,” answered our friend.

“Wal,” said the citizen, critically, “if you was from Philadelphy or Boston, you might stand acquitted.”

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Stephen was on the point of claiming Boston, but wisely hesitated.

“I’m from St. Louis, with a message for Mr. Lincoln,” he replied.

“Ye talk like y e was from down East,” said the citizens who seemed in the humor for conversation. “I reckon old Abe’s’ too busy to see you. Say, young man, did you ever hear of Stephen Arnold Douglas, alias the Little Giant, alias the Idol of our State, sir?”

This was too much for Stephen, who left the citizen without the compliment of a farewell. Continuing around the square, inquiring for Mr. Lincoln’s house, he presently got beyond the stores and burning pavements on to a plank walk, under great shade trees, and past old brick mansions set well back from the street. At length he paused in front of a wooden house of a dirty grayish brown, too high for its length and breadth, with tall shutters of the same color, and a picket fence on top of the retaining wall which lifted the yard above the plank walk. It was an ugly house, surely. But an ugly house may look beautiful when surrounded by such heavy trees as this was. Their shade was the most inviting thing Stephen had seen. A boy of sixteen or so was swinging on the gate, plainly a very mischievous boy, with a round, laughing, sunburned face and bright eyes. In front of the gate was a shabby carriage with top and side curtains, hitched to a big bay horse.

“Can you tell me where Mr. Lincoln lives?” inquired Stephen.

“Well, I guess,” said the boy. “I’m his son, and he lives right here when he’s at home. But that hasn’t been often lately.”

“Where is he?” asked Stephen, beginning to realize the purport of his conversations with citizens.

Young Mr. Lincoln mentioned the name of a small town in the northern part of the state, where he said his father would stop that night. He told Stephen that he looked wilted, invited him into the house to have a glass of lemonade, and to join him and another boy in a fishing excursion with the big bay horse. Stephen told young Mr. Lincoln that he should have to take the first train after his father.

“Jimmy!” exclaimed the other, enviously, “then you’ll hear the Freeport debate.”

Now it has been said that the day was scorching hot. And when Stephen had got back to the wooden station, and had waited an hour for the Bloomington express, his anxiety to hear the Freeport debate was not as keen as it might have been. Late in the afternoon he changed at Bloomington to the Illinois Central Railroad: The sun fell down behind the cardboard edge of the prairie, the train rattled on into the north, wrapped in its dust and Smoke, and presently became a long comet, roaring red, to match that other comet which flashed in the sky.

By this time it may be said that our friend was heartily sick of his mission, He tried to doze; but two men, a farmer and a clerk, got in at a way station, and sat behind him. They began to talk about this man Lincoln.

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“Shucks,” said the clerk, “think of him opposing the Little Giant.”

“He’s right smart, Sam,” said the farmer. “He’s got a way of sayin’ things that’s clear. We boys can foller him. But Steve Douglas, he only mixes you up.”

His companion guffawed.

“Because why?” he shouted. “Because you ain’t had no education: What does a rail-sputter like Abe know about this government? Judge Douglas has worked it all out. He’s smart. Let the territories take care of themselves. Besides, Abe ain’t got no dignity. The fust of this week I seen him side-tracked down the road here in a caboose, while Doug went by in a special.”

“Abe is a plain man, Sam,” the farmer answered solemnly. “But you watch out for him.”

It was ten o’clock when Stephen descended at his destination. Merciful night hid from his view the forlorn station and the ragged town. The baggage man told him that Mr. Lincoln was at the tavern.

That tavern! Will words describe the impression it made on a certain young man from Boston! It was long and low and ramshackly and hot that night as the inside of a brick-kiln. As he drew near it on the single plant walk over the black prairie-mud, he saw countrymen and politicians swarming its narrow porch and narrower hall. Discussions in all keys were in progress, and it, was with vast difficulty that our distracted young man pushed through and found the landlord, This personage was the coolest of the lot. Confusion was but food for his smiles, importunity but increased his suavity. And of the seeming hundreds that pressed him, he knew and utilized the Christian name of all. From behind a corner of the bar he held them all at bay, and sent them to quarters like the old campaigner he was.

“Now, Ben, tain’t no use gettin’ mad. You, and Josh way, an’ Will, an’ Sam, an’ the Cap’n, an’ the four Beaver brothers, will all sleep in number ten. What’s that, Franklin? No, sirree, the Honerable Abe, and Mister Hill, and Jedge Oglesby is sleepin’ in seven.” The smell of perspiration was stifling as Stephen pushed up to the master of the situation. “What’s that? Supper, young man? Ain’t you had no supper? Gosh, I reckon if you can fight your way to the dinin’ room, the gals’ll give you some pork and a cup of coffee.”

After a preliminary scuffle with a drunken countryman in mud-caked boots, Mr. Brice presently reached the long table in the dining-room. A sense of humor not quite extinct made him smile as he devoured pork chops and greasy potatoes and heavy apple pie. As he was finishing the pie, he became aware of the tavern keeper standing over him.

“Are you one of them flip Chicagy reporters?” asked that worthy, with a suspicious eye on Stephen’s clothes.

Our friend denied this.

“You didn’t talk jest like ’em. Guess you’ll be here, tonight—”

“Yes,” said Stephen, wearily. And he added, outs of force of habit, “Can you give me a room?”

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“I reckon,” was the cheerful reply. “Number ten, There ain’t nobody in there but Ben Billings, and the four Beaver brothers, an’ three more. I’ll have a shake-down for ye next the north window.”

Stephen’s thanks for the hospitality perhaps lacked heartiness. But perceiving his host still contemplating him, he was emboldened to say:

“Has Mr. Lincoln gone to bed?”

“Who? Old Abe, at half-past ten? Wal I reckon you don’t know him.”

Stephen’s reflections here on the dignity of the Senatorial candidate of the Republican Party in Illinois were novel, at any rate. He thought of certain senators he had seen in Massachusetts.

“The only reason he ain’t down here swappin’ yarns with the boys, is because he’s havin’ some sort of confab with the Jedge and Joe Medill of the ‘Chicagy Press’ and ’Tribune’.”

“Do you think he would see me?” asked Stephen, eagerly. He was emboldened by the apparent lack of ceremony of the candidate. The landlord looked at him in some surprise.

“Wal, I reckon. Jest go up an’ knock at the door number seven, and say Tom Wright sent ye.”

“How shall I know Mr. Lincoln?” asked Stephen.

“Pick out the ugliest man in the room. There ain’t nobody I kin think of uglier than Abe.”

Bearing in mind this succinct description of the candidate, Stephen climbed the rickety stairs to the low second story. All the bedroom doors were flung open except one, on which the number 7 was inscribed. From within came bursts of uproarious laughter, and a summons to enter.

He pushed open the door, and as soon as his eyes became, accustomed to the tobacco smoke, he surveyed the room. There was a bowl on the floor, the chair where it belonged being occupied. There was a very inhospitable looking bed, two shake-downs, and four Windsor chairs in more or less state of dilapidation—all occupied likewise. A country glass lamp was balanced on a rough shelf, and under it a young man sat absorbed in making notes, and apparently oblivious to the noise around him. Every gentleman in the room was collarless, coatless, tieless, and vestless. Some were engaged in fighting gnats and June bugs, while others battled with mosquitoes—all save the young man who wrote, he being wholly indifferent.

Stephen picked out the homeliest man in the room. There was no mistaking him. And, instead of a discussion of the campaign with the other gentlemen, Mr. Lincoln was defending what do you think? Mr. Lincoln was defending an occasional and judicious use of swear words.

“Judge,” said he, “you do an almighty lot of cussing in your speeches, and perhaps it ain’t a bad way to keep things stirred up.”

“Well,” said the Judge, “a fellow will rip out something once in a while before he has time to shut it off.”

Mr. Lincoln passed his fingers through his tousled hair. His thick lower lip crept over in front of the upper one, A gleam stirred in the deep-set gray eyes.

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“Boys,” he asked, “did I ever tell you about Sam’l, the old Quaker’s apprentice?”

There was a chorus of “No’s” and “Go ahead, Abe?” The young man who was writing dropped his pencil. As for Stephen, this long, uncouth man of the plains was beginning to puzzle him. The face, with its crude features and deep furrows, relaxed into intense soberness. And Mr. Lincoln began his story with a slow earnestness that was truly startling, considering the subject.

“This apprentice, Judge, was just such an incurable as you.” (Laughter.) “And Sam’l, when he wanted to, could get out as many cusses in a second as his anvil shot sparks. And the old man used to wrastle with him nights and speak about punishment, and pray for him in meeting. But it didn’t do any good. When anything went wrong, Sam’l had an appropriate word for the occasion. One day the old man got an inspiration when he was scratching around in the dirt for an odd-sized iron.

“‘Sam’l,’ says he, ‘I want thee.’

“Sam’l went, and found the old man standing over a big rat hole, where the rats came out to feed on the scraps.

“‘Sam’l,’ says he, ‘fetch the tongs.’

“Sam’l fetched the tongs.

“‘Now, Sam’l,’ says the old man, ’thou wilt sit here until thou hast a rat. Never mind thy dinner. And when thou hast him, if I hear thee swear, thou wilt sit here until thou hast another. Dost thou mind?’”

Here Mr. Lincoln seized two cotton umbrellas, rasped his chair over the bare boor into a corner of the room, and sat hunched over an imaginary rat hole, for all the world like a gawky Quaker apprentice. And this was a candidate for the Senate of the United States, who on the morrow was to meet in debate the renowned and polished Douglas!

“Well,” Mr. Lincoln continued, “that was on a Monday, I reckon, and the boys a-shouting to have their horses shod. Maybe you think they didn’t have some fun with Sam’l. But Sam’l sat there, and sat there, and sat there, and after a while the old man pulled out his dinner-pail. Sam’l never opened his mouth. First thing you know, snip went the tongs.” Mr. Lincoln turned gravely around. “What do you reckon Sam’l said, Judge?”

The Judge, at random, summoned up a good one, to the delight of the audience.

“Judge,” said Mr. Lincoln, with solemnity, “I reckon that’s what you’d have said. Sam’l never said a word, and the old man kept on eating his dinner. One o’clock came, and the folks began to drop in again, but Sam’l, he sat there. ’Long towards night the boys collected ’round the door. They were getting kind of interested. Sam’l, he never looked

up." Here Mr. Lincoln bent forward a little, and his voice fell to a loud, drawling whisper. "First thing you know, here come the whiskers peeping up, then the pink eyes a—-blinking at the forge, then—!"

"Suddenly he brought the umbrellas together with whack.

"'By God,' yells Sam'l, 'I have thee at last!'"

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Amid the shouts, Mr. Lincoln stood up, his long body swaying to and fro as he lifted high the improvised tongs. They heard a terrified squeal, and there was the rat squirming and wriggling,—it seemed before their very eyes. And Stephen forgot the country tavern, the country politician, and was transported straightway into the Quaker's smithy.

CHAPTER III

IN WHICH STEPHEN LEARNS SOMETHING

It was Mr. Lincoln who brought him back. The astonishing candidate for the Senate had sunk into his chair, his face relaxed into sadness save for the sparkle lurking in the eyes. So he sat, immobile, until the laughter had died down to silence. Then he turned to Stephen.

"Sonny," he said, "did you want to see me?"

Stephen was determined to be affable and kind, and (shall we say it?) he would not make Mr. Lincoln uncomfortable either by a superiority of English or the certain frigidity of manner which people in the West said he had. But he tried to imagine a Massachusetts senator, Mr. Sumner, for instance, going through the rat story, and couldn't. Somehow, Massachusetts senators hadn't this gift. And yet he was not quite sure that it wasn't a fetching gift. Stephen did not quite like to be called "Sonny." But he looked into two gray eyes, and at the face, and something curious happened to him. How was he to know that thousands of his countrymen were to experience the same sensation?

"Sonny," said Mr. Lincoln again, "did you want to see me?"

"Yes, sir." Stephen wondered at the "sir." It had been involuntary. He drew from his inner pocket the envelope which the Judge had given him.

Mr. Lincoln ripped it open. A document fell out, and a letter. He put the document in his tall hat, which was upside down on the floor. As he got deeper into the letter, he pursed his mouth, and the lines of his face deepened in a smile. Then he looked up, grave again.

Judge Whipple told you to run till you found me, did he, Mr. Brice?"

"Yes, sir."

"Is the Judge the same old criss-cross, contrary, violent fool that he always was?"

Providence put an answer in Stephen's mouth.

“He’s been very good to me, Mr. Lincoln.”

Mr. Lincoln broke into laughter.

“Why, he’s the biggest-hearted man I know. You know him, Oglesby,—Silas Whipple. But a man has to be a Daniel or a General Putnam to venture into that den of his. There’s only one man in the world who can beard Silas, and he’s the finest states-right Southern gentleman you ever saw. I mean Colonel Carvel. You’ve heard of him, Oglesby. Don’t they quarrel once in a while, Mr. Brice?”

“They do have occasional arguments,’ said Stephen, amused.

“Arguments!” cried Mr. Lincoln; “well, I couldn’t come as near to fighting every day and stand it. If my dog and Bill’s dog across the street walked around each other and growled for half a day, and then lay down together, as Carvel and Whipple do, by Jing, I’d put pepper on their noses—”

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“I reckon Colonel Carvel isn’t a fighting man,” said some one, at random.

Strangely enough, Stephen was seized with a desire to vindicate the Colonel’s courage. Both Mr. Lincoln and Judge Oglesby forestalled him.

“Not a fighting man!” exclaimed the Judge. “Why, the other day—”

“Now, Oglesby,” put in Mr. Lincoln, “I wanted to tell that story.”

Stephen had heard it, and so have we. But Mr. Lincoln’s imitation of the Colonel’s drawl brought him a pang like homesickness.

“’No, suh, I didn’t intend to shoot. Not if he had gone off straight. But he wriggled and twisted like a rattlesnake, and I just couldn’t resist, suh. Then I sent m’nigger Ephum to tell him not to let me catch sight of him ‘round the Planters’ House. Yes, suh, that’s what he was. One of these damned Yankees who come South and go into nigger-deals and politics.'”

Mr. Lincoln glanced at Stephen, and then again at the Judge’s letter. He took up his silk hat and thrust that, too, into the worn lining, which was already filled with papers. He clapped the hat on his head, and buttoned on his collar.

“I reckon I’ll go for a walk, boys,” he said, “and clear my head, so as to be ready for the Little Giant to-morrow at Freeport. Mr. Brice, do you feel like walking?”

Stephen, taken aback, said that he did.

“Now, Abe, this is just durned foolishness,” one of the gentlemen expostulated. “We want to know if you’re going to ask Douglas that question.”

“If you do, you kill yourself, Lincoln,” said another, who Stephen afterwards learned was Mr. Medill, proprietor of the great ’Press and Tribune’.

“I guess I’ll risk it, Joe,” said Mr. Lincoln, gravely. Suddenly comes the quiver about the corners of his mouth and the gray eyes respond. “Boys,” said he, “did you ever hear the story of farmer Bell, down in Egypt? I’ll tell it to you, boys, and then perhaps you’ll know why I’ll ask Judge Douglas that question. Farmer Bell had the prize Bartlett pear tree, and the prettiest gal in that section. And he thought about the same of each of ’em. All the boys were after Sue Bell. But there was only one who had any chance of getting her, and his name was Jim Rickets. Jim was the handsomest man in that section. He’s been hung since. But Jim had a good deal out of life,—all the appetites, and some of the gratifications. He liked Sue, and he liked a luscious Bartlett. And he intended to have both. And it just so happened that that prize pear tree had a whopper on that year, and old man Bell couldn’t talk of anything else.

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“Now there was an ugly galoot whose name isn’t worth mentioning. He knew he wasn’t in any way fit for Sue, and he liked pears about as well as Jim Rickets. Well, one night here comes Jim along the road, whistling; to court Susan, and there was the ugly galoot a-yearning on the bank under the pear tree. Jim was all fixed up, and he says to the galoot, ’Let’s have a throw.’ Now the galoot knew old Bell was looking over the fence So he says, ‘All right,’ and he gives Jim the first shot—Jim fetched down the big pear, got his teeth in it, and strolled off to the house, kind of pitiful of the galoot for a, half-witted ass. When he got to the door, there was the old man. ‘What are you here for?’ says he. ‘Why,’ says Rickets, in his off-hand way, for he always had great confidence, ’to fetch Sue.’”

“The old man used to wear brass toes to keep his boots from wearing out,” said Mr. Lincoln, dreamily.

“You see,” continued Mr. Lincoln, “you see the galoot knew that Jim Rickets wasn’t to be trusted with Susan Bell.”

Some of the gentlemen appeared to see the point of this political parable, for they laughed uproariously. The others laughed, too. Then they slapped their knees, looked at Mr. Lincoln’s face, which was perfectly sober, and laughed again, a little fainter. Then the Judge looked as solemn as his title.

“It won’t do, Abe,” said he. “You commit suicide.”

“You’d better stick to the pear, Abe,” said Mr. Medill, “and fight Stephen A. Douglas here and now. This isn’t any picnic. Do you know who he is?”

“Why, yes, Joe,” said Mr. Lincoln, amiably. “He’s a man with tens of thousands of blind followers. It’s my business to make some of those blind followers see.”

By this time Stephen was burning to know the question that Mr. Lincoln wished to ask the Little Giant, and why the other gentlemen were against it. But Mr. Lincoln surprised him still further in taking him by the arm. Turning to the young reporter, Mr. Hill, who had finished his writing, he said:

“Bob, a little air will do you good. I’ve had enough of the old boys for a while, and I’m going to talk to somebody any own age.”

Stephen was halfway down the corridor when he discovered that he had forgotten his hat. As he returned he heard somebody say:

“If that ain’t just like Abe. He stopped to pull a flea out of his stocking when he was going to fight that duel with Shields, and now he’s walking with boys before a debate with the smartest man in this country. And there’s heaps of things he ought to discuss with us.”

“Reckon we haven’t got much to do with it,” said another, half laughing, half rueful. “There’s some things Abe won’t stand.”

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From the stairs Stephen saw Mr. Lincoln threading his way through the crowd below, laughing at one, pausing to lay his hand on the shoulder of another, and replying to a rough sally of a third to make the place a tumult of guffaws. But none had the temerity to follow him. When Stephen caught up with him in the little country street, he was talking earnestly to Mr. Hill, the young reporter of the Press and Tribune. And what do you think was the subject? The red comet in the sky that night. Stephen kept pace in silence with Mr. Lincoln's strides, another shock in store for him. This rail-splitter, this postmaster, this flat-boatman, whom he had not credited with a knowledge of the New Code, was talking Astronomy. And strange to say, Mr. Brice was learning.

"Bob," said Mr. Lincoln, "can you elucidate the problem of the three bodies?"

To Stephen's surprise, Mr. Hill elucidated.

The talk then fell upon novels and stories, a few of which Mr. Lincoln seemed to have read. He spoke, among others, of the "Gold Bug." "The story is grand," said he, "but it might as well have been written of Robinson Crusoe's island. What a fellow wants in a book is to know where he is. There are not many novels, or ancient works for that matter, that put you down anywhere."

"There is that genuine fragment which Cicero has preserved from a last work of Aristotle," said Mr. Hill, slyly. "'If there were beings who lived in the depths & the earth, and could emerge through the open fissures, and could suddenly behold the earth, the sea, and the:—vault of heaven—'"

"But you—you impostor," cried Mr. Lincoln, interrupting, "you're giving us Humboldt's Cosmos."

Mr. Hill owned up, laughing.

It is remarkable how soon we accustom ourselves to a strange situation. And to Stephen it was no less strange to be walking over a muddy road of the prairie with this most singular man and a newspaper correspondent, than it might have been to the sub-terrestrial inhabitant to emerge on the earth's surface. Stephen's mind was in the process of a chemical change: Suddenly it seemed to him as if he had known this tall Illinoisan always. The whim of the senatorial candidate in choosing him for a companion he did not then try to account for.

"Come, Mr. Stephen," said Mr. Lincoln, presently, "where do you hail from?"

"Boston," said Stephen.

"No!" said Mr. Lincoln, incredulously. "And how does it happen that you come to me with a message from a rank Abolitionist lawyer in St. Louis?"

“Is the Judge a friend of yours, sir?” Stephen asked.

“What!” exclaimed Mr. Lincoln, “didn’t he tell you he was?”

“He said nothing at all, sir, except to tell me to travel until I found you.”

“I call the Judge a friend of mine,” said Mr. Lincoln. “He may not claim me because I do not believe in putting all slave-owners to the sword.”

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“I do not think that Judge Whipple is precisely an Abolitionist, sir.”

“What! And how do you feel, Mr. Stephen?”

Stephen replied in figures. It was rare with him, and he must have caught it from Mr. Lincoln.

“I am not for ripping out the dam suddenly, sir, that would drown the nation. I believe that the water can be drained off in some other way.”

Mr. Lincoln’s direct answer to this was to give Stephen stinging slap between the shoulder-blades.

“God bless the boy!” he cried. “He has thought it out. Bob, take that down for the Press and Tribune as coming from a rising young politician of St. Louis.”

“Why,” Stephen blurted out, “I—I thought you were an Abolitionist, Mr. Lincoln.”

“Mr. Brice,” said Mr. Lincoln, “I have as much use for the Boston Liberator as I have for the Charleston Courier. You may guess how much that is. The question is not whether we shall or shall not have slavery, but whether slavery shall stay where it is, or be extended according to Judge Douglas’s ingenious plan. The Judge is for breeding worms. I am for cauterizing the sore so that it shall not spread. But I tell you, Mr. Brice, that this nation cannot exist half slave and half free.”

Was it the slap on the back that opened Stephen’s eyes? It was certain that as they returned to the tavern the man at his side was changed. He need not have felt chagrined. Men in high places underestimated Lincoln, or did not estimate him at all. Affection came first. The great warm heart had claimed Stephen as it claimed all who came near it.

The tavern was deserted save for a few stragglers. Under the dim light at the bar Mr. Lincoln took off his hat and drew the Judge’s letter from the lining.

“Mr. Stephen,” said he, “would you like to come to Freeport with me to-morrow and hear the debate?”

An hour earlier he would have declined with thanks. But now! Now his face lighted at the prospect, and suddenly fell again. Mr. Lincoln guessed the cause. He laid his hand on the young man’s shoulder, and laughed.

“I reckon you’re thinking of what the Judge will say.”

Stephen smiled.

“I’ll take care of the Judge,” said Mr. Lincoln. “I’m not afraid of him.” He drew forth from the inexhaustible hat a slip of paper, and began to write.

“There,” said he, when he had finished, “a friend of mine is going to Springfield in the morning, and he’ll send that to the Judge.”

And this is what he had written:—

“I have borrowed Steve for a day or two, and guarantee
to return him a good Republican.
A. *Lincoln*.”

It is worth remarking that this was the first time Mr. Brice had been called “Steve” and had not resented it.

Stephen was embarrassed. He tried to thank Mr. Lincoln, but that gentleman’s quizzical look cut him short. And the next remark made him gasp.

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“Look here, Steve,” said he, “you know a parlor from a drawing-room. What did you think of me when you saw me to-night?”

Stephen blushed furiously, and his tongue clave to the roof of his mouth.

“I’ll tell you,” said Mr. Lincoln, with his characteristic smile, “you thought that you wouldn’t pick me out of a bunch of horses to race with the Senator.”

CHAPTER IV

THE QUESTION

Many times since Abraham Lincoln has been called to that mansion which God has reserved for the patriots who have served Him also, Stephen Brice has thought of that steaming night in the low-ceiled room of the country tavern, reeking with the smell of coarse food and hot humanity. He remembers vividly how at first his gorge rose, and recalls how gradually there crept over him a forgetfulness of the squalidity and discomfort. Then came a space gray with puzzling wonder. Then the dawning of a worship for a very ugly man in a rumpled and ill-made coat.

You will perceive that there was hope for Stephen. On his shake-down that night, oblivious to the snores of his companions and the droning of the insects, he lay awake. And before his eyes was that strange, marked face, with its deep lines that blended both humor and sadness there. It was homely, and yet Stephen found himself reflecting that honesty was just as homely, and plain truth. And yet both were beautiful to those who had learned to love them. Just so this Mr. Lincoln.

He fell asleep wondering why Judge Whipple had sent him.

It was in accord with nature that reaction came with the morning. Such a morning, and such a place!

He was awakened, shivering, by the beat of rain on the roof, and stumbling over the prostrate forms of the four Beaver brothers, reached the window. Clouds filled the sky, and Joshway, whose pallet was under the sill, was in a blessed state of moisture.

No wonder some of his enthusiasm had trickled away!

He made his toilet in the wet under the pump outside; where he had to wait his turn. And he rather wished he were going back to St. Louis. He had an early breakfast of fried eggs and underdone bacon, and coffee which made him pine for Hester’s. The dishes were neither too clean nor too plentiful, being doused in water as soon as ever they were out of use.

But after breakfast the sun came out, and a crowd collected around the tavern, although the air was chill and the muck deep in the street. Stephen caught glimpses of Mr. Lincoln towering above the knots of country politicians who surrounded him, and every once in a while a knot would double up with laughter. There was no sign that the senatorial aspirant took the situation seriously; that the coming struggle with his skilful antagonist was weighing him down in the least. Stephen held aloof from the groups, thinking that Mr. Lincoln had forgotten him. He decided to leave for St. Louis on the morning train, and was even pushing toward the tavern entrance with his bag in his hand, when he was met by Mr. Hill.

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“I had about given you up, Mr. Brice,” he said. “Mr. Lincoln asked me to get hold of you, and bring you to him alive or dead.”

Accordingly Stephen was led to the station, where a long train of twelve cars was pulled up, covered with flags and bunting. On entering one of these, he perceived Mr. Lincoln sprawled (he could think of no other word to fit the attitude) on a seat next the window, and next him was Mr. Medill of the Press and Tribune. The seat just in front was reserved for Mr. Hill, who was to make any notes necessary. Mr. Lincoln looked up. His appearance was even less attractive than the night before, as he had on a dirty gray linen duster.

“I thought you’d got loose, Steve,” he said, holding out his hand. “Glad to see you. Just you sit down there next to Bob, where I can talk to you.”

Stephen sat down, diffident, for he knew that there were others in that train who would give ten years of their lives for that seat.

“I’ve taken a shine to this Bostonian, Joe,” said Mr Lincoln to Mr. Medill. “We’ve got to catch ’em young to do anything with ’em, you know. Now, Steve, just give me a notion how politics are over in St. Louis. What do they think of our new Republican party? Too bran new for old St. Louis, eh?”

Stephen saw expostulation in Mr. Medill’s eyes, and hesitated. And Mr. Lincoln seemed to feel Medill’s objections, as by mental telepathy. But he said:— “We’ll come to that little matter later, Joe, when the cars start.”

Naturally, Stephen began uneasily. But under the influence of that kindly eye he thawed, and forgot himself. He felt that this man was not one to feign an interest. The shouts of the people on the little platform interrupted the account, and the engine staggered off with its load.

“I reckon St. Louis is a nest of Southern Democrats,” Mr. Lincoln remarked, “and not much opposition.”

“There are quite a few Old Line Whigs, sir,” ventured Stephen, smiling.

“Joe,” said Mr. Lincoln, “did you ever hear Warfield’s definition of an Old Line Whig?”

Mr. Medill had not.

“A man who takes his toddy regularly, and votes the Democratic ticket occasionally, and who wears ruffled shirts.”

Both of these gentlemen laughed, and two more in the seat behind, who had an ear to the conversation.

“But, sir,” said Stephen, seeing that he was expected to go on, “I think that the Republican party will gather a considerable strength there in another year or two. We have the material for powerful leaders in Mr. Blair and others” (Mr. Lincoln nodded at the name). “We are getting an ever increasing population from New England, mostly of young men who will take kindly to the new party.” And then he added, thinking of his pilgrimage the Sunday before: “South St. Louis is a solid mass of Germans, who are all antislavery. But they are very foreign still, and have all their German institutions.”

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“The Turner Halls?” Mr. Lincoln surprised him by inquiring.

“Yes. And I believe that they drill there.”

“Then they will the more easily be turned into soldiers if the time should come,” said Mr. Lincoln. And he added quickly, “I pray that it may not.”

Stephen had cause to remember that observation, and the acumen it showed, long afterward.

The train made several stops, and at each of them shoals of country people filled the aisles, and paused for a most familiar chat with the senatorial candidate. Many called him Abe. His appearance was the equal in roughness to theirs, his manner if anything was more democratic,—yet in spite of all this Stephen in them detected a deference which might almost be termed a homage. There were many women among them. Had our friend been older, he might have known that the presence of good women in a political crowd portends something. As it was, he was surprised. He was destined to be still more surprised that day.

When they had left behind them the shouts of the little down of Dixon, Mr. Lincoln took off his hat, and produced a crumpled and not too immaculate scrap of paper from the multitude therein.

“Now, Joe,” said he, “here are the four questions I intend to ask Judge Douglas. I am ready for you. Fire away.”

“We don’t care anything about the others,” answered Mr. Medill. “But I tell you this. If you ask that second one, you’ll never see the United States Senate.”

“And the Republican party in this state will have had a blow from which it can scarcely recover,” added Mr. Judd, chairman of the committee.

Mr. Lincoln did not appear to hear them. His eyes were far away over the wet prairie.

Stephen held his breath. But neither he, nor Medill, nor Judd, nor Hill guessed at the pregnancy of that moment. How were they to know that the fate of the United States of America was concealed in that Question, —was to be decided on a rough wooden platform that day in the town of Freeport, Illinois?

But Abraham Lincoln, the uncouth man in the linen duster with the tousled hair, knew it. And the stone that was rejected of the builders was to become the corner-stone of the temple.

Suddenly Mr. Lincoln recalled himself, glanced at the paper, and cleared his throat. In measured tones, plainly heard above the rush and roar of the train, he read the Question:

“Can the people of a United States Territory, in any lawful way, against the wish of any citizen of the United States, exclude slavery from its limits prior to the formation of a State Constitution?”

Mr. Medill listened intently.

“Abe,” said he, solemnly, “Douglas will answer yes, or equivocate, and that is all the assurance these Northern Democrats want to put Steve Douglas in the Senate. They’ll snow you under.”

“All right,” answered Mr. Lincoln, quietly.

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“All right?” asked Mr. Medill, reflecting the sheer astonishment of the others; “then why the devil are you wearing yourself out? And why are we spending our time and money on you?”

Mr. Lincoln laid his hand on Medill’s sleeve.

“Joe,” said he, “a rat in the larder is easier to catch than a rat that has the run of the cellar. You know, where to set your trap in the larder. I’ll tell you why I’m in this campaign: to catch Douglas now, and keep him out of the White House in 1860. To save this country of ours, Joe. She’s sick.”

There was a silence, broken by two exclamations.

“But see here, Abe,” said Mr. Medill, as soon as ever he got his breath, “what have we got to show for it? Where do you come in?”

Mr. Lincoln smiled wearily.

“Nowhere, I reckon,” he answered simply.

“Good Lord!” said Mr. Judd.

Mr. Medill gulped.

“You mean to say, as the candidate of the Republican party, you don’t care whether you get to the Senate?”

“Not if I can send Steve Douglas there with his wings broken,” was the calm reply.

“Suppose he does answer yes, that slavery can be excluded?” said Mr. Judd.

“Then,” said Mr. Lincoln, “then Douglas loses the vote of the great slave-holders, the vote of the solid South, that he has been fostering ever since he has had the itch to be President. Without the solid South the Little Giant will never live in the White House. And unless I’m mightily mistaken, Steve Douglas has had his aye as far ahead as 1860 for some time.”

Another silence followed these words. There was a stout man standing in the aisle, and he spat deftly out of the open window.

“You may wing Steve Douglas, Abe,” said he, gloomily, “but the gun will kick you over the bluff.”

“Don’t worry about me, Ed,” said Mr. Lincoln. “I’m not worth it.”

In a wave of comprehension the significance of all this was revealed to Stephen Brice, The grim humor, the sagacious statesmanship, and (best of all)—the superb self sacrifice of it, struck him suddenly. I think it was in that hour that he realized the full extent of the wisdom he was near, which was like unto Solomon's.

Shame surged in Stephen's face that he should have misjudged him. He had come to patronize. He had remained to worship. And in after years, when he thought of this new vital force which became part of him that day, it was in the terms of Emerson: "Pythagoras was misunderstood, and Socrates, and Jesus, and Luther, and Copernicus, and Galileo, and Newton, and every pure and wise spirit that ever took flesh. To be great is to be misunderstood."

How many have conversed with Lincoln before and since, and knew him not!

If an outward and visible sign of Mr. Lincoln's greatness were needed, —he had chosen to speak to them in homely parables. The story of Farmer Bell was plain as day. Jim Rickets, who had life all his own way, was none other than Stephen A. Douglas, the easily successful. The ugly galoot, who dared to raise his eyes only to the pear, was Mr. Lincoln himself. And the pear was the Senatorship, which the galoot had denied himself to save Susan from being Mr. Rickets' bride.

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Stephen could understand likewise the vehemence of the Republican leaders who crowded around their candidate and tried to get him to retract that Question. He listened quietly, he answered with a patient smile. Now and then he threw a story into the midst of this discussion which made them laugh in spite of themselves. The hopelessness of the case was quite plain to Mr. Hill, who smiled, and whispered in Stephen's ear: "He has made up his mind. They will not budge him an inch, and they know it."

Finally Mr. Lincoln took the scrap of paper, which was even more dirty and finger-marked by this time, and handed it to Mr. Hill. The train was slowing down for Freeport. In the distance, bands could be heard playing, and along the track, line upon line of men and women were cheering and waving. It was ten o'clock, raw and cold for that time of the year, and the sun was trying to come out.

"Bob," said Mr. Lincoln, "be sure you get that right in your notes. And, Steve, you stick close to me, and you'll see the show. Why, boys," he added, smiling, "there's the great man's private car, cannon and all."

All that Stephen saw was a regular day-car on a sidetrack. A brass cannon was on the tender hitched behind it.

CHAPTER V

THE CRISIS

Stephen A. Douglas, called the Little Giant on account of his intellect, was a type of man of which our race has had some notable examples, although they are not characteristic. Capable of sacrifice to their country, personal ambition is, nevertheless, the mainspring of their actions. They must either be before the public, or else unhappy. This trait gives them a large theatrical strain, and sometimes brands them as adventurers. Their ability saves them from being demagogues.

In the case of Douglas, he had deliberately renewed some years before the agitation on the spread of slavery, by setting forth a doctrine of extreme cleverness. This doctrine, like many others of its kind, seemed at first sight to be the balm it pretended, instead of an irritant, as it really was. It was calculated to deceive all except thinking men, and to silence all save a merciless logician. And this merciless logician, who was heaven-sent in time of need, was Abraham Lincoln.

Mr. Douglas was a juggler, a political prestidigitateur. He did things before the eyes of the Senate and the nation. His balm for the healing of the nation's wounds was a patent medicine so cleverly concocted that experts alone could show what was in it. So

abstruse and twisted were some of Mr. Douglas's doctrines that a genius alone might put them into simple words, for the common people.

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The great panacea for the slavery trouble put forth by Mr. Douglas at that time was briefly this: that the people of the new territories should decide for themselves, subject to the Constitution, whether they should have slavery or not, and also decide for themselves all other questions under the Constitution. Unhappily for Mr. Douglas, there was the famous Dred Scott decision, which had set the South wild with joy the year before, and had cast a gloom over the North. The Chief Justice of the United States had declared that under the Constitution slaves were property,—and as such every American citizen owning slaves could carry them about with him wherever he went. Therefore the territorial legislatures might pass laws until they were dumb, and yet their settlers might bring with them all the slaves they pleased.

And yet we must love the Judge. He was a gentleman, a strong man, and a patriot. He was magnanimous, and to his immortal honor be it said that he, in the end, won the greatest of all struggles. He conquered himself. He put down that mightiest thing that was in him,—his ambition for himself. And he set up, instead, his ambition for his country. He bore no ill-will toward the man whose fate was so strangely linked to his, and who finally came to that high seat of honor and of martyrdom which he coveted. We shall love the Judge, and speak of him with reverence, for that sublime act of kindness before the Capitol in 1861.

Abraham Lincoln might have prayed on that day of the Freeport debate:

“Forgive him, Lord. He knows not what he does.” Lincoln descried the danger afar, and threw his body into the breach.

That which passed before Stephen’s eyes, and to which his ears listened at Freeport, was the Great Republic pressing westward to the Pacific. He wondered whether some of his Eastern friends who pursed their lips when the Wrest was mentioned would have sneered or prayed. A young English nobleman who was there that day did not sneer. He was filled instead with something like awe at the vigor of this nation which was sprung from the loins of his own. Crudeness he saw, vulgarity he heard, but Force he felt, and marvelled.

America was in Freeport that day, the rush of her people and the surprise of her climate. The rain had ceased, and quickly was come out of the northwest a boisterous wind, chilled by the lakes and scented by the hemlocks of the Minnesota forests. The sun smiled and frowned Clouds hurried in the sky, mocking the human hubbub below. Cheering thousands pressed about the station as Mr. Lincoln’s train arrived. They hemmed him in his triumphal passage under the great arching trees to the new Brewster House. The Chief Marshal and his aides, great men before, were suddenly immortal. The county delegations fell into their proper precedence like ministers at a state dinner. “We have faith in Abraham, Yet another County for the Rail-sputter, Abe the Giant-killer,”—so the banners

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read. Here, much bedecked, was the Galena Lincoln Club, part of Joe Davies's shipment. Fifes skirled, and drums throbbed, and the stars and stripes snapped in the breeze. And here was a delegation headed by fifty sturdy ladies on horseback, at whom Stephen gaped like a countryman. Then came carryalls of all ages and degrees, wagons from this county and that county, giddily draped, drawn by horses from one to six, or by mules, their inscriptions addressing their senatorial candidate in all degrees of familiarity, but not contempt. What they seemed proudest of was that he had been a rail-splitter, for nearly all bore a fence-rail.

But stay, what is this wagon with the high sapling flagstaff in the middle, and the leaves still on it?

> "Westward the Star of Empire takes its way.
> The girls link on to Lincoln; their mothers were for Clay."

Here was glory to blind you,—two and thirty maids in red sashes and blue liberty caps with white stars. Each was a state of the Union, and every one of them was for Abraham, who called them his "Basket of Flowers." Behind them, most touching of all, sat a thirty-third shackled in chains. That was Kansas. Alas, the men of Kansas was far from being as sorrowful as the part demanded,—in spite of her instructions she would smile at the boys. But the appealing inscription she bore, "Set me free" was greeted with storms of laughter, the boldest of the young men shouting that she was too beautiful to be free, and some of the old men, to their shame be it said likewise shouted. No false embarrassment troubled Kansas. She was openly pleased. But the young men who had brought their sweethearts to town, and were standing hand in hand with them, for obvious reasons saw nothing: They scarcely dared to look at Kansas, and those who did were so loudly rebuked that they turned down the side streets.

During this part of the day these loving couples, whose devotion was so patent to the whole world, were by far the most absorbing to Stephen. He watched them having their fortunes told, the young women blushing and crying, "Say!" and "Ain't he wicked?" and the young men getting their ears boxed for certain remarks. He watched them standing open-mouthed at the booths and side shows with hands still locked, or again they were chewing cream candy in unison. Or he glanced sidewise at them, seated in the open places with the world so far below them that even the insistent sound of the fifes and drums rose but faintly to their ears.

And perhaps,—we shall not say positively,—perhaps Mr. Brice's thoughts went something like this, "O that love were so simple a matter to all!" But graven on his face was what is called the "Boston scorn." And no scorn has been known like unto it since the days of Athens.

So Stephen made the best of his way to the Brewster House, the elegance and newness of which the citizens of Freeport openly boasted. Mr. Lincoln had preceded him, and was even then listening to a few remarks of burning praise by an honorable gentleman. Mr. Lincoln himself made a few remarks, which seemed so simple and rang so true, and were so free from political rococo and decoration generally, that even the young men forgot their sweethearts to listen. Then Mr. Lincoln went into the hotel, and the sun slipped under a black cloud.

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The lobby was full, and rather dirty, since the supply of spittoons was so far behind the demand. Like the firmament, it was divided into little bodies which revolved about larger bodies. But there lacked not here supporters of the Little Giant, and discreet farmers of influence in their own counties who waited to hear the afternoon's debate before deciding. These and others did not hesitate to tell of the magnificence of the Little Giant's torchlight procession the previous evening. Every Dred-Scottite had carried a torch, and many transparencies, so that the very glory of it had turned night into day. The Chief Lictor had distributed these torches with an unheard-of liberality. But there lacked not detractors who swore that John Dibble and other Lincolnites had applied for torches for the mere pleasure of carrying them. Since dawn the delegations had been heralded from the house-tops, and wagered on while they were yet as worms far out or the prairie. All the morning these continued to came in, and form in line to march past their particular candidate. The second great event of the day was the event of the special over the Galena roar, of sixteen cars and more than a thousand pairs of sovereign lungs. With military precision they repaired to the Brewster House, and ahead of then a banner was flung: "Winnebago County for the Tall Sucker." And the Tall Sucker was on the steps to receive them.

But Mr. Douglas, who had arrived the evening before to the booming of two and thirty guns, had his banners end his bunting, too. The neighborhood of Freeport was stronghold of Northern Democrats, ardent supporters of the Little Giant if once they could believe that he did not intend to betray them.

Stephen felt in his bones the coming of a struggle, and was thrilled. Once he smiled at the thought that he had become an active partisan—nay, a worshipper—of the uncouth Lincoln. Terrible suspicion for a Bostonian,—had he been carried away? Was his hero, after all, a homespun demagogue? Had he been wise in deciding before he had taught a glimpse of the accomplished Douglas, whose name end fame filled the land? Stephen did not waver in his allegiance. But in his heart there lurked a fear of the sophisticated Judge and Senator and man of the world whom he had not yet seen. In his notebook he had made a, copy of the Question, and young Mr. Hill discovered him pondering in a corner of the lobby at dinnertime. After dinner they went together to their candidate's room. They found the doors open and the place packed, and there was Mr. Lincoln's very tall hat towering above those of the other politicians pressed around him. Mr. Lincoln took three strides in Stephen's direction and seized him by the shoulder.

"Why, Steve," said he, "I thought you had got away again." Turning to a big burly man with a good-natures face, who was standing by, he added. "Jim, I want you to look out for this young man. Get him a seat on the stands where he can hear."

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Stephen stuck close to Jim. He never knew what the gentleman's last name was, or whether he had any. It was but a few minutes' walk to the grove where the speaking was to be. And as they made their way thither Mr. Lincoln passed them in a Conestoga wagon drawn by six milk-white horses. Jim informed Stephen that the Little Giant had had a six-horse coach. The grove was black with people. Hovering about the hem of the crowd were the sunburned young men in their Sunday best, still clinging fast to the hands of the young women. Bands blared "Columbia, Gem of the Ocean." Fakirs planted their stands in the way, selling pain-killers and ague cures, watermelons and lemonade, Jugglers juggled, and beggars begged. Jim said that there were sixteen thousand people in that grove. And he told the truth.

Stephen now trembled for his champion. He tried to think of himself as fifty years old, with the courage to address sixteen thousand people on such a day, and quailed. What a man of affairs it must take to do that! Sixteen thousand people, into each of whose breasts God had put different emotions and convictions. He had never even imagined such a crowd as this assembles merely to listen to a political debate. But then he remembered, as they dodged from in front of the horses, what it was not merely a political debate: The pulse of nation was here, a great nation stricken with approaching fever. It was not now a case of excise, but of existence.

This son of toil who had driven his family thirty miles across the prairie, blanketed his tired horses and slept on the ground the night before, who was willing to stand all through the afternoon and listen with pathetic eagerness to this debate, must be moved by a patriotism divine. In the breast of that farmer, in the breast of his tired wife who held her child by the hand, had been instilled from birth that sublime fervor which is part of their life who inherit the Declaration of Independence. Instinctively these men who had fought and won the West had scented the danger. With the spirit of their ancestors who had left their farms to die on the bridge at Concord, or follow Ethan Allen into Ticonderoga, these had come to Freeport. What were three days of bodily discomfort! What even the loss of part of a cherished crop, if the nation's existence were at stake and their votes might save it!

In the midst of that heaving human sea rose the bulwarks of a wooden stand. But how to reach it? Jim was evidently a personage. The rough farmers commonly squeezed a way for him. And when they did not, he made it with his big body. As they drew near their haven, a great surging as of a tidal wave swept them off their feet. There was a deafening shout, and the stand rocked on its foundations. Before Stephen could collect his wits, a fierce battle was raging about him. Abolitionist and Democrat, Free Soiler and Squatter Sov, defaced one another in a rush for the platform. The committeemen and reporters on top of it rose to its defence. Well for Stephen that his companion was along. Jim was recognized and hauled bodily into the fort, and Stephen after him. The populace were driven off, and when the excitement died down again, he found himself in the row behind the reporters. Young Mr. Hill paused while sharpening his pencil to wave him a friendly greeting.

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Stephen, craning in his seat, caught sight of Mr. Lincoln slouched into one of his favorite attitudes, his chin resting in his hand.

But who is this, erect, compact, aggressive, searching with a confident eye the wilderness of upturned faces? A personage, truly, to be questioned timidly, to be approached advisedly. Here indeed was a lion, by the very look of him, master of himself and of others. By reason of its regularity and masculine strength, a handsome face. A man of the world to the cut of the coat across the broad shoulders. Here was one to lift a youngster into the realm of emulation, like a character in a play, to arouse dreams of Washington and its senators and great men. For this was one to be consulted by the great alone. A figure of dignity and power, with magnetism to compel moods. Since, when he smiled, you warmed in spite of yourself, and when he frowned the world looked grave.

The inevitable comparison was come, and Stephen's hero was shrunk once more. He drew a deep breath, searched for the word, and gulped. There was but the one word. How country Abraham Lincoln looked beside Stephen Arnold Douglas!

Had the Lord ever before made and set over against each other two such different men? Yes, for such are the ways of the Lord.

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The preliminary speaking was in progress, but Stephen neither heard nor saw until he felt the heavy hand of his companion on his knee.

"There's something mighty strange, like fate, between them two," he was saying. "I recklect twenty-five years ago when they was first in the Legislatur' together. A man told me that they was both admitted to practice in the S'preme Court in '39, on the same day, sir. Then you know they was nip an' tuck after the same young lady. Abe got her. They've been in Congress together, the Little Giant in the Senate, and now, here they be in the greatest set of debates the people of this state ever heard; Young man, the hand of fate is in this here, mark my words—"

There was a hush, and the waves of that vast human sea were stilled. A man, lean, angular, with coat-tail: flapping-unfolded like a grotesque figure at a side-show.

No confidence was there. Stooping forward, Abraham Lincoln began to speak, and Stephen Brice hung his head and shuddered. Could this shrill falsetto be the same voice to which he had listened only that morning? Could this awkward, yellow man with his hands behind his back be he whom he had worshipped? Ripples of derisive

laughter rose here and there, on the stand and from the crowd. Thrice distilled was the agony of those moments!

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But what was this feeling that gradually crept over him? Surprise? Cautiously he raised his eyes. The hands were coming around to the front. Suddenly one of them was thrown sharply back, with a determined gesture, the head was raised,—and.—and his shame was for gotten. In its stead wonder was come. But soon he lost even that, for his mind was gone on a journey. And when again he came to himself and looked upon Abraham Lincoln, this was a man transformed. The voice was no longer shrill. Nay, it was now a powerful instrument which played strangely on those who heard. Now it rose, and again it fell into tones so low as to start a stir which spread and spread, like a ripple in a pond, until it broke on the very edge of that vast audience.

“Can the people of a United States Territory, in any lawful way, against the wish of any citizen of the United States, exclude slavery from its limits prior to the formation of a State Constitution?”

It was out, at last, irrevocably writ in the recording book of History, for better, for worse. Beyond the reach of politician, committee, or caucus. But what man amongst those who heard and stirred might say that these minutes even now basting into eternity held the Crisis of a nation that is the hope of the world? Not you, Judge Douglas who sit there smiling. Consternation is a stranger in your heart,—but answer the question if you can. Yes, your nimble wit has helped you out of many a tight corner. You do not feel the noose—as yet. You do not guess that your reply will make or mar the fortunes of your country. It is not you who can look ahead two short years and see the ship of Democracy splitting on the rocks at Charleston and at Baltimore, when the power of your name might have steered her safely.

But see! what is this man about whom you despise? One by one he is taking the screws out of the engine which you have invented to run your ship. Look, he holds them in his hands without mixing them, and shows the false construction of its secret parts.

For Abraham Lincoln dealt with abstruse questions in language so limpid that many a farmer, dulled by toil, heard and understood and marvelled. The simplicity of the Bible dwells in those speeches, and they are now classics in our literature. And the wonder in Stephen’s mind was that this man who could be a buffoon, whose speech was coarse and whose person unkempt, could prove himself a tower of morality and truth. That has troubled many another, before and since the debate at Freeport.

That short hour came all too quickly to an end. And as the Moderator gave the signal for Mr. Lincoln, it was Stephen’s big companion who snapped the strain, and voiced the sentiment of those about him.

“By Gosh!” he cried, “he baffles Steve. I didn’t think Abe had it in him.”

The Honorable Stephen A. Douglas, however, seemed anything but baffled as he rose to reply. As he waited for the cheers which greeted him to die out, his attitude was easy and indifferent, as a public man's should be. The question seemed not to trouble him in the least. But for Stephen Brice the Judge stood there stripped of the glamour that made him, even as Abraham Lincoln had stripped his doctrine of its paint and colors, and left it punily naked.

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Standing up, the very person of the Little Giant was contradictory, as was the man himself. His height was insignificant. But he had the head and shoulders of a lion, and even the lion's roar. What at contrast the ring of his deep bass to the tentative falsetto of Mr. Lincoln's opening words. If Stephen expected the Judge to tremble, he was greatly disappointed. Mr. Douglas was far from dismay. As if to show the people how lightly he held his opponent's warnings, he made them gape by putting things down Mr. Lincoln's shirt-front and taking them out of his mouth: But it appeared to Stephen, listening with all his might, that the Judge was a trifle more on the defensive than his attitude might lead one to expect. Was he not among his own Northern Democrats at Freeport? And yet it seemed to give him a keen pleasure to call his hearers "Black Republicans." "Not black," came from the crowd again and again, and once a man: shouted, "Couldn't you modify it and call it brown?" "Not a whit!" cried the Judge, and dubbed them "Yankees," although himself a Vermonter by birth. He implied that most of these Black Republicans desired negro wives.

But quick,—to the Question, How was the Little Giant, artful in debate as he was, to get over that without offence to the great South? Very skillfully the judge disposed of the first of the interrogations. And then, save for the gusts of wind rustling the trees, the grove might have been empty of its thousands, such was the silence that fell. But tighter and tighter they pressed against the stand, until it trembled.

Oh, Judge, the time of all artful men will come at length. How were you to foresee a certain day under the White Dome of the Capitol? Had your sight been long, you would have paused before your answer. Had your sight been long, you would have seen this ugly Lincoln bareheaded before the Nation, and you are holding his hat. Judge Douglas, this act alone has redeemed your faults. It has given you a nobility of which we did not suspect you. At the end God gave you strength to be humble, and so you left the name of a patriot.

Judge, you thought there was a passage between Scylla and Charybdis which your craftiness might overcome.

"It matters not," you cried when you answered the Question, "it matters not which way the Supreme Court may hereafter decide as to the abstract question whether slavery may or may not go into a territory under the Constitution. The people have the lawful means to introduce or to exclude it as they please, for the reason that slavery cannot exist a day or an hour anywhere unless it is supported by local police regulations."

Judge Douglas, uneasy will you lie to-night, for you have uttered the Freeport Heresy.

It only remains to be told how Stephen Brice, coming to the Brewster House after the debate, found Mr. Lincoln. On his knee, in transports of delight, was a small boy, and Mr. Lincoln was serenely playing on the child's Jew's-harp. Standing beside him was a proud father who had dragged his son across two counties in a farm wagon, and who

was to return on the morrow to enter this event in the family Bible. In a corner of the room were several impatient gentlemen of influence who wished to talk about the Question.

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But when he saw Stephen, Mr. Lincoln looked up with a smile of welcome that is still, and ever will be, remembered and cherished.

“Tell Judge Whipple that I have attended to that little matter, Steve,” he said.

“Why, Mr. Lincoln,” he exclaimed, “you have had no time.”

“I have taken the time,” Mr. Lincoln replied, “and I think that I am well repaid. Steve,” said he, “unless I’m mightily mistaken, you know a little more than you did yesterday.”

“Yes, sir! I do,” said Stephen.

“Come, Steve,” said Mr. Lincoln, “be honest. Didn’t you feel sorry for me last night?”

Stephen flushed scarlet.

“I never shall again, sir,” he said.

The wonderful smile, so ready to come and go, flickered and went out. In its stead on the strange face was ineffable sadness,—the sadness of the world’s tragedies, of Stephen stoned, of Christ crucified.

“Pray God that you may feel sorry for me again,” he said.

Awed, the child on his lap was still. The politician had left the room. Mr. Lincoln had kept Stephen’s hand in his own.

“I have hopes of you, Stephen,” he said. “Do not forget me.”

Stephen Brice never has. Why was it that he walked to the station with a heavy heart? It was a sense of the man he had left, who had been and was to be. This Lincoln of the black loam, who built his neighbor’s cabin and hoed his neighbor’s corn, who had been storekeeper and postmaster and flat-boatman. Who had followed a rough judge dealing a rough justice around a rough circuit; who had rolled a local bully in the dirt; rescued women from insult; tended the bedside of many a sick coward who feared the Judgment; told coarse stories on barrels by candlelight (but these are pure beside the vice of great cities); who addressed political mobs in the raw, swooping down from the stump and flinging embroilers east and west. This physician who was one day to tend the sickbed of the Nation in her agony; whose large hand was to be on her feeble pulse, and whose knowledge almost divine was to perform the miracle of her healing. So was it that, the Physician Himself performed His cures, and when work was done, died a martyr.

Abraham Lincoln died in His name

CHAPTER VI

It was nearly noon when Stephen walked into the office the next day, dusty and travel-worn and perspiring. He had come straight from the ferry, without going home. And he had visions of a quiet dinner with Richter under the trees at the beer-garden, where he could talk about Abraham Lincoln. Had Richter ever heard of Lincoln?

But the young German met him at the top of the stair—and his face was more serious than usual, although he showed his magnificent teeth in a smile of welcome.

“You are a little behind your time, my friend,” said he, “What has happened you?”

“Didn’t the Judge get Mr, Lincoln’s message?” asked Stephen, with anxiety.

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The German shrugged his shoulders.

“Ah, I know not,” he answered, “He has gone is Glencoe. The Judge is ill, Stephen. Doctor Polk says that he has worked all his life too hard. The Doctor and Colonel Carvel tried to get him to go to Glencoe. But he would not budge until Miss Carvel herself comes all the way from the country yesterday, and orders him. Ach!” exclaimed Richter, impulsively, “what wonderful women you have in America! I could lose my head when I think of Miss Carvel.”

“Miss Carvel was here, you say?” Stephen repeated, in a tone of inquiry.

“Donner!” said Richter, disgusted, “you don’t care.”

Stephen laughed, in spite of himself.

“Why should I?” he answered. And becoming grave again, added: “Except on Judge Whipple’s account. Have you heard from him to-day, Carl?”

“This morning one of Colonel Carvel’s servants came for his letters. He must be feeling better. I—I pray that he is better,” said Richter, his voice breaking. “He has been very good to me.”

Stephen said nothing. But he had been conscious all at once of an affection for the Judge of which he had not suspected himself. That afternoon, on his way home, he stopped at Carvel & Company’s to inquire. Mr. Whipple was better, so Mr. Hopper said, and added that he “presumed likely the Colonel would not be in for a week.” It was then Saturday. Eliphalet was actually in the Colonel’s sanctum behind the partition, giving orders to several clerks at the time. He was so prosperous and important that he could scarce spare a moment to answer Stephen, who went away wondering whether he had been wise to choose the law.

On Monday, when Stephen called at Carvel & Company’s, Eliphalet was too busy to see him. But Ephum, who went out to Glencoe every night with orders, told him that the “Jedge was wuss, suh.” On Wednesday, there being little change, Mrs. Brice ventured to despatch a jelly by Ephum. On Friday afternoon, when Stephen was deep in Whittlesey and the New Code, he became aware of Ephum standing beside him. In reply to his anxious question Ephum answered:

“I reckon he better, suh. He an’ de Colonel done commence wrastlin’ ’bout a man name o’ Linkum. De Colonel done wrote you dis note, suh.”

It was a very polite note, containing the Colonel’s compliments, asking Mr. Brice to Glencoe that afternoon with whatever papers or letters the Judge might wish to see. And since there was no convenient train in the evening, Colonel Carvel would feel

honored if Mr. Brice would spend the night. The Colonel mentioned the train on which Mr. Brice was expected.

The Missouri side of the Mississippi is a very different country from the hot and treeless prairies of Illinois. As Stephen alighted at the little station at Glencoe and was driven away by Ned in the Colonel's buggy, he drew in deep breaths of the sweet air of the Meramec Valley.

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There had been a shower, and the sun glistened on the drops on grass and flowers, and the great trees hung heavy over the clay road. At last they came to a white gate in the picket fence, in sight of a rambling wooden house with a veranda in front covered with honeysuckle. And then he saw the Colonel, in white marseilles, smoking a cigar. This, indeed, was real country.

As Stephen trod the rough flags between the high grass which led toward the house, Colonel Carvel rose to his full height and greeted him.

“You are very welcome, sir,” he said gravely. “The Judge is asleep now,” he added. “I regret to say that we had a little argument this morning, and my daughter tells me it will be well not to excite him again to-day. Jinny is reading to him now, or she would be here to entertain you, Mr. Brice. Jackson!” cried Mr. Carvel, “show Mr. Brice to his room.”

Jackson appeared hurriedly, seized Stephen’s bag, and led the way upstairs through the cool and darkened house to a pretty little room on the south side, with matting, and roses on the simple dressing-table. After he had sat awhile staring at these, and at the wet flower-garden from between the slats of his shutters, he removed the signs of the railroad upon him, and descended. The Colonel was still on the porch, in his easy-chair. He had lighted another, cigar, and on the stand beside him stood two tall glasses, green with the fresh mint. Colonel Carvel rose, and with his own hand offered one to Stephen.

“Your health, Mr. Brice,” he said, “and I hope you will feel at home here, sir. Jackson will bring you anything you desire, and should you wish to drive, I shall be delighted to show you the country.”

Stephen drank that julep with reverence, and then the Colonel gave him a cigar. He was quite overcome by this treatment of a penniless young Yankee. The Colonel did not talk politics—such was not his notion of hospitality to a stranger. He talked horse, and no great discernment on Stephen’s part was needed to perceive that this was Mr. Carvel’s hobby.

“I used to have a stable, Mr. Brice, before they ruined gentleman’s sport with these trotters ten years ago. Yes sir, we used to be at Lexington one week, and Louisville the next, and over here on the Ames track after that. Did you ever hear of Water Witch and Netty Boone?”

Yes, Stephen had, from Mr. Jack Brinsmade.

The Colonel’s face beamed.

“Why, sir,” he cried, “that very nigger, Ned, who drove you here from the cars-he used to ride Netty Boone. Would you believe that, Mr. Brice? He was the best jockey ever strode a horse on the Elleardsville track here. He wore my yellow and green, sir, until he got to weigh one hundred and a quarter. And I kept him down to that weight a whole year, Mr. Brice. Yes, sirree, a whole year.”

“Kept him down!” said Stephen.

“Why, yes, sir. I had him wrapped in blankets and set in a chair with holes bored in the seat. Then we lighted a spirit lamp under him. Many a time I took off ten pounds that way. It needs fire to get flesh off a nigger, sir.”

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He didn't notice his guest's amazement.

"Then, sir," he continued, "they introduced these damned trotting races; trotting races are for white trash, Mr. Brice."

"Pa!"

The Colonel stopped short. Stephen was already on his feet. I wish you could have seen Miss Virginia Carvel as he saw her then. She wore a white lawn dress. A tea-tray was in her hand, and her head was tilted back, as women are apt to do when they carry a burden. It was so that these Southern families, who were so bitter against Abolitionists and Yankees, entertained them when they were poor, and nursed them when they were ill.

Stephen, for his life, could not utter a word. But Virginia turned to him with perfect self-possession.

"He has been boring you with his horses, Mr. Brice," she said. "Has he told you what a jockey Ned used to be before he weighed one hundred and a quarter?" (A laugh.) "Has he given you the points of Water Witch and Netty Boone?" (More laughter, increasing embarrassment for Stephen.) "Pa, I tell you once more that you will drive every guest from this house. Your jockey talk is intolerable."

O that you might have a notion of the way in which Virginia pronounced intolerable.

Mr. Carvel reached for another cigar asked, "My dear," he asked, "how is the Judge?"

"My dear," said Virginia, smiling, "he is asleep. Mammy Easter is with him, trying to make out what he is saying. He talks in his sleep, just as you do—"

"And what is he saying?" demanded the Colonel, interested.

Virginia set down the tray.

"'A house divided against itself,'" said Miss Carvel, with a sweep of her arm, "'cannot stand. I believe that this Government cannot endure permanently, half slave and half free. I do not expect the Union to dissolve—I do not expect the house to fall—but I do expect it will cease to be divided.' Would you like any more?" added Miss Virginia.

"No," cried the Colonel, and banged his fist down on the table. "Why," said he, thoughtfully, stroking the white goatee on his chin, "cuss me if that ain't from the speech that country bumpkin, Lincoln, made in June last before the Black Republican convention in Illinois."

Virginia broke again into laughter. And Stephen was very near it, for he loved the Colonel. That gentleman suddenly checked himself in his tirade, and turned to him.

“I beg your pardon, sir,” he said; “I reckon that you have the same political sentiments as the Judge. Believe me, sir, I would not willingly offend a guest.”

Stephen smiled. “I am not offended, sir,” he said. A speech which caused Mr. Carvel to bestow a quick glance upon him. But Stephen did not see it. He was looking at Virginia.

The Colonel rose.

“You will pardon my absence for a while, sir,” he said.

“My daughter will entertain you.”

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In silence they watched him as he strode off under the trees through tall grass, a yellow setter at his heels. A strange peace was over Stephen. The shadows of the walnuts and hickories were growing long, and a rich country was giving up its scent to the evening air. From a cabin behind the house was wafted the melody of a plantation song. To the young man, after the burnt city, this was paradise. And then he remembered his mother as she must be sitting on the tiny porch in town, and sighed. Only two years ago she had been at their own place at Westbury.

He looked up, and saw the girl watching him. He dared not think that the expression he caught was one of sympathy, for it changed instantly.

“I am afraid you are the silent kind, Mr. Brice,” said she; “I believe it is a Yankee trait.”

Stephen laughed.

“I have known a great many who were not,” said he, “When they are garrulous, they are very much so.”

“I should prefer a garrulous one,” said Virginia.

“I should think a Yankee were bad enough, but a noisy Yankee not to be put up with,” he ventured.

Virginia did not deign a direct reply to this, save by the corners of her mouth.

“I wonder,” said she, thoughtfully, “whether it is strength of mind or a lack of ideas that makes them silent.”

“It is mostly prudence,” said Mr. Brice. “Prudence is our dominant trait.”

Virginia fidgeted. Usually she had an easier time.

“You have not always shown it,” she said, with an innocence which in women is often charged with meaning.

Stephen started. Her antagonism was still there. He would have liked greatly to know whether she referred to his hasty purchase of Hester, or to his rashness in dancing with her at her party the winter before.

“We have something left to be thankful for,” he answered. “We are still capable of action.”

“On occasions it is violence,” said Virginia, desperately. This man must not get ahead of her.

“It is just as violent,” said he, “as the repressed feeling which prompts it.”

This was a new kind of conversation to Virginia. Of all the young men she knew, not one had ever ventured into anything of the sort. They were either flippant, or sentimental, or both. She was at once flattered and annoyed, flattered, because, as a woman, Stephen had conceded her a mind. Many of the young men she knew had minds, but deemed that these were wasted on women, whose language was generally supposed to be a kind of childish twaddle. Even Jack Brinsmade rarely risked his dignity and reputation at an intellectual tilt. This was one of Virginia’s grievances. She often argued with her father, and, if the truth were told, had had more than one victory over Judge Whipple.

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Virginia's annoyance came from the fact that she perceived in Stephen a natural and merciless logic,—a faculty for getting at the bottom of things. His brain did not seem to be thrown out of gear by local magnetic influences,—by beauty, for instance. He did not lose his head, as did some others she knew, at the approach of feminine charms. Here was a grand subject, then, to try the mettle of any woman. One with less mettle would have given it up. But Virginia thought it would be delightful to bring this particular Yankee to his knees; and—and leave him there.

"Mr. Brice," she said, "I have not spoken to you since the night of my party. I believe we danced together."

"Yes, we did," said he, "and I called, but was unfortunate."

"You called?"

Ah, Virginia!

"They did not tell you!" cried Stephen.

Now Miss Carvel was complacency itself.

"Jackson is so careless with cards," said she, "and very often I do not take the trouble to read them."

"I am sorry," said he, "as I wished for the opportunity to tell you how much I enjoyed myself. I have found everybody in St. Louis very kind to strangers."

Virginia was nearly disarmed. She remembered how, she had opposed his coning. But honesty as well as something else prompted her to say: "It was my father who invited you."

Stephen did not reveal the shock his vanity had received.

"At least you were good enough to dance with me."

"I could scarcely refuse a guest," she replied.

He held up his head.

"Had I thought it would have given you annoyance," he said quietly, "I should not have asked you."

"Which would have been a lack of good manners," said Virginia, biting her lips.

Stephen answered nothing, but wished himself in St. Louis. He could not comprehend her cruelty. But, just then, the bell rang for supper, and the Colonel appeared around the end of the house.

It was one of those suppers for which the South is renowned. And when at length he could induce Stephen to eat no more, Colonel Carvel reached for his broad-brimmed felt bat, and sat smoking, with his feet against the mantle. Virginia, who had talked but little, disappeared with a tray on which she had placed with her own hands some dainties to tempt the Judge.

The Colonel regaled Stephen, when she was gone, with the pedigree and performance of every horse he had had in his stable. And this was a relief, as it gave him an opportunity to think without interruption upon Virginia's pronounced attitude of dislike. To him it was inconceivable that a young woman of such qualities as she appeared to have, should assail him so persistently for freeing a negress, and so depriving her of a maid she had set her heart upon. There were other New England young men in society. Mr. Weston and Mr. Carpenter, and more. They were not her particular friends, to be sure. But they called on her and danced with her, and she had shown them not the least antipathy. But it was to Stephen's credit that he did not analyze her further.

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He was reflecting on these things when he got to his room, when there came a knock at the door. It was Mammy Easter, in bright turban and apron,—was hospitality and comfort in the flesh.

“Is you got all you need, suh?” she inquired.

Stephen replied that he had. But Mammy showed no inclination to go, and he was too polite to shut the door:

“How you like Glencoe, Mistah Bride?”

He was charmed with it.

“We has some of de fust fam’lies out heah in de summer,” said she. “But de Colonel, he a’n’t much on a gran’ place laik in Kaintuck. Shucks, no, suh, dis ain’t much of a ’stablishment! Young Massa won’t have no lawns, no greenhouses, no nothin’. He say he laik it wil’ and simple. He on’y come out fo’ two months, mebbe. But Miss Jinny, she make it lively. Las’ week, until the Jedge come we hab dis house chuck full, two-three young ladies in a room, an’ five young gemmen on trunnle beds.”

“Until the Judge came?” echoed Stephen.

“Yassuh. Den Miss Jinny low dey all hatter go. She say she a’n’t gwineter have ’em noun’ ‘sturbin’ a sick man. De Colonel ’monstrated. He done give the Judge his big room, and he say he and de young men gwine ober to Mista, Catherwood’s. You a’n’t never seen Miss Jinny rise up, suh! She des swep’ ’em all out” (Mammy emphasized this by rolling her hands) “an’ declah she gwine ten’ to the Jedge herself. She a’n’t never let me bring up one of his meals, suh.” And so she left Stephen with some food for reflection.

Virginia was very gay at breakfast, and said that the Judge would see Stephen; so he and the Colonel, that gentleman with his hat on, went up to his room. The shutters were thrown open, and the morning sunlight filtered through the leaves and fell on the four-poster where the Judge sat up, gaunt and grizzled as ever. He smiled at his host, and then tried to destroy immediately the effect of the smile.

“Well, Judge,” cried the Colonel, taking his hand, “I reckon we talked too much.”

“No such thing, Carvel,” said the Judge, forcibly, “if you hadn’t left the room, your popular sovereignty would have been in rags in two minutes.”

Stephen sat down in a corner, unobserved, in expectation of a renewal. But at this moment Miss Virginia swept into the room, very cool in a pink muslin.

“Colonel Carvel,” said she, sternly, “I am the doctor’s deputy here. I was told to keep the peace at any cost. And if you answer back, out you go, like that!” and she snapped her fingers.

The Colonel laughed. But the Judge, whose mind was on the argument, continued to mutter defiantly until his eye fell upon Stephen.

“Well, sir, well, sir,” he said, “you’ve turned up at last, have you? I send you off with papers for a man, and I get back a piece of yellow paper saying that he’s borrowed you. What did he do with you, Mr. Brice?”

“He took me to Freeport, sir, where I listened to the most remarkable speech I ever expect to hear.”

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“What!” cried the Judge, “so far from Boston?”

Stephen hesitated, uncertain whether to laugh, until he chanced to look at Virginia. She had pursed her lips.

“I was very much surprised, sir,” he said.

“Humph!” grunted Mr. Whipple, “and what did you chink of that ruffian, Lincoln?”

“He is the most remarkable man that I have ever met, sir,” answered Stephen, with emphasis.

“Humph!”

It seemed as if the grunt this time had in it something of approval. Stephen had doubt as to the propriety of discussing Mr. Lincoln there, and he reddened. Virginia’s expression bore a trace of defiance, and Mr. Carvel stood with his feet apart, thoughtfully stroking his goatee. But Mr. Whipple seemed to have no scruples.

“So you admired Lincoln, Mr. Brice?” he went on. “You must agree with that laudatory estimation of him which I read in the Missouri Democrat.”

Stephen fidgeted.

“I do, sir, most decidedly,” he answered.

“I should hardly expect a conservative Bostonian, of the class which respects property, to have said that. It might possibly be a good thing if more from your town could hear those debates.”

“They will read them, sir; I feel confident of it.”

At this point the Colonel could contain himself no longer.

“I reckon I might tell the man who wrote that Democrat article a few things, if I could find out who he is,” said he.

“Pa!” said Virginia, warningly.

But Stephen had turned a fiery red, “I wrote it, Colonel Carvel,” he said.

For a dubious instant of silence Colonel Carvel stared. Then—then he slapped his knees, broke into a storm of laughter, and went out of the room. He left Stephen in a moist state of discomfiture.

The Judge had bolted upright from the pillows.

“You have been neglecting your law, sir,” he cried.

“I wrote the article at night,” said Stephen, indignantly.

“Then it must have been Sunday night, Mr. Brice.”

At this point Virginia hid her face in her handkerchief which trembled visibly. Being a woman, whose ways are unaccountable, the older man took no notice of her. But being a young woman, and a pretty one, Stephen was angry.

“I don’t see what right you have to ask me that sir,” he said.

“The question is withdrawn, Mr. Brice,” said the Judge, “Virginia, you may strike it from the records. And now, sir, tell me something about your trip.”

Virginia departed.

An hour later Stephen descended to the veranda, and it was with apprehension that he discerned Mr. Carvel seated under the vines at the far end. Virginia was perched on the railing.

To Stephen’s surprise the Colonel rose, and, coming toward him, laid a kindly hand on his shoulder.

“Stephen,” said he, “there will be no law until Monday you must stay with us until then. A little rest will do you good.”

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Stephen was greatly touched.

“Thank you, sir,” he said. “I should like to very much. But I can’t.”

“Nonsense,” said the Colonel. “I won’t let the Judge interfere.”

“It isn’t that, sir. I shall have to go by the two o’clock train, I fear.”

The Colonel turned to Virginia, who, meanwhile, had sat silently by.

“Jinny,” he said, “we must contrive to keep him.”

She slid off the railing.

“I’m afraid he is determined, Pa,” she answered. “But perhaps Mr. Brice would like to see a little of the place before he goes. It is very primitive,” she explained, “not much like yours in the East.”

Stephen thanked her, and bowed to the Colonel. And so she led him past the low, crooked outbuildings at the back, where he saw old Uncle Ben busy over the preparation of his dinner, and frisky Rosetta, his daughter, playing with one of the Colonel’s setters. Then Virginia took a well-worn path, on each side of which the high grass bent with its load of seed, which entered the wood. Oaks and hickories and walnuts and persimmons spread out in a glade, and the wild grape twisted fantastically around the trunks. All this beauty seemed but a fit setting to the strong girlish figure in the pink frock before him. So absorbed was he in contemplation of this, and in wondering whether indeed she were to marry her cousin, Clarence Colfax, that he did not see the wonders of view unrolling in front of him. She stopped at length beside a great patch of wild race bushes. They were on the edge of the bluff, and in front of them a little rustic summer-house, with seats on its five sides. Here Virginia sat down. But Stephen, going to the edge, stood and marvelled. Far, far below him, down the wooded steep, shot the crystal Meramec, chafing over the shallow gravel beds and tearing headlong at the deep passes.

Beyond, the dimpled green hills rose and fell, and the stream ran indigo and silver. A hawk soared over the, water, the only living creature in all that wilderness.

The glory of the place stirred his blood. And when at length he turned, he saw that the girl was watching him.

“It is very beautiful,” he said.

Virginia had taken other young men here, and they had looked only upon her. And yet she was not offended. This sincerity now was as new to her as that with which he had surprised her in the Judge’s room.

And she was not quite at her ease. A reply to those simple words of his was impossible. At honest Tom Catherwood in the same situation she would have laughed, Clarence never so much as glanced at scenery. Her replies to him were either flippant, or else maternal, as to a child.

A breeze laden with the sweet abundance of that valley stirred her hair. And with that womanly gesture which has been the same through the ages she put up her hand; deftly tucking in the stray wisp behind.

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She glanced at the New Englander, against whom she had been in strange rebellion since she had first seen him. His face, thinned by the summer in town, was of the sternness of the Puritan. Stephen's features were sharply marked for his age. The will to conquer was there. Yet justice was in the mouth, and greatness of heart. Conscience was graven on the broad forehead. The eyes were the blue gray of the flint, kindly yet imperishable. The face was not handsome.

Struggling, then yielding to the impulse, Virginia let herself be led on into the years. Sanity was the word that best described him. She saw him trusted of men, honored of women, feared by the false. She saw him in high places, simple, reserved, poised evenly as he was now.

"Why do you go in this afternoon?" she asked abruptly.

He started at the change in her tone.

"I wish that I might stay," he said regretfully. "But I cannot, Miss Carvel."

He gave no reason. And she was too proud to ask it. Never before had she stooped to urge young men to stay. The difficulty had always been to get them to go. It was natural, perhaps, that her vanity was wounded. But it hurt her to think that she had made the overture, had tried to conquer whatever it was that set her against him, and had failed through him.

"You must find the city attractive. Perhaps," she added, with a little laugh, "perhaps it is Bellefontaine Road."

"No," he answered, smiling.

"Then" (with a touch of derision), "then it is because you cannot miss an afternoon's work. You are that kind."

"I was not always that kind," he answered. "I did not work at Harvard. But now I have to or—or starve," he said.

For the second time his complete simplicity had disarmed her. He had not appealed to her sympathy, nor had he hinted at the luxury in which he was brought up. She would have liked to question Stephen on this former life. But she changed the subject suddenly.

"What did you really think of Mr. Lincoln?" she asked.

"I thought him the ugliest man I ever saw, and the handsomest as well."

"But you admired him?"

“Yes,” said Stephen, gravely.

“You believe with him that this government cannot exist half slave and half free. Then a day will come, Mr. Brice, when you and I shall be foreigners one to the other.”

“You have forgotten,” he said eagerly, “you have forgotten the rest of the quotation. ’I do not expect the Union to be dissolved—I do not expect the house to fall—but cease to be divided.’ It will become all one thing or all the other.”

Virginia laughed. “That seemed to me very equivocal,” said she. “Your rail-sputter is well named.”

“Will you read the rest of that speech?” he asked

“Judge Whipple is very clever. He has made a convert of you,” she answered.

“The Judge has had nothing to do with it,” cried Stephen. “He is not given to discussion with me, and until I went to Springfield had never mentioned Lincoln’s name to me.”

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Glancing at her, he surprised a sparkle of amusement in her eyes. Then she laughed openly.

“Why do you suppose that you were sent to Springfield?” she asked.

“With an important communication for Mr. Lincoln,” he answered.

“And that most important communication was—your self. There, now, I have told you,” said Virginia.

“Was myself? I don’t understand.”

Virginia puckered her lips.

“Then you haven’t the sense I thought you had,” she replied impatiently. “Do you know what was in that note? No? Well, a year ago last June this Black Republican lawyer whom you are all talking of made a speech before a convention in Illinois. Judge Whipple has been crazy on the subject ever since—he talks of Lincoln in his sleep; he went to Springfield and spent two days with him, and now he can’t rest until you have seen and known and heard him. So he writes a note to Lincoln and asks him to take you to the debate—”

She paused again to laugh at his amazement.

“But he told me to go to Springfield!” he exclaimed.

“He told you to find Lincoln. He knew that you would obey his orders, I suppose.”

“But I didn’t know—” Stephen began, trying to come pass within an instant the memory of his year’s experience with Mr. Whipple.

“You didn’t know that he thought anything about you,” said Virginia. “That is his way, Mr. Brice. He has more private charities on his list than any man in the city except Mr. Brinsmade. Very few know it. He thinks a great deal of you. But there,” she added, suddenly blushing crimson, “I am sorry I told you.”

“Why?” he asked.

She did not answer, but sat tapping the seat with her fingers. And when she ventured to look at him, he had fallen into thought.

“I think it must be time for dinner,” said Virginia, “if you really wish to catch the train.”

The coldness in her voice, rather than her words, aroused him. He rose, took one lingering look at the river, and followed her to the house.

At dinner, when not talking about his mare, the Colonel was trying to persuade Stephen to remain. Virginia did not join in this, and her father thought the young man's refusal sprang from her lack of cordiality. Colonel Carvel himself drove to the station.

When he returned, he found his daughter sitting idly on the porch.

"I like that young man, if he is a Yankee," he declared.

"I don't," said Virginia, promptly.

"My dear," said her father, voicing the hospitality of the Carvels, "I am surprised at you. One should never show one's feelings toward a guest. As mistress of this house it was your duty to press him to stay."

"He did not want to stay."

"Do you know why he went, my dear," asked the Colonel.

"No," said Virginia.

"I asked him," said the Colonel.

"Pa! I did not think it of you!" she cried. And then, "What was it?" she demanded.

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“He said that his mother was alone in town, and needed him.”

Virginia got up without a word, and went into Judge Whipple’s room. And there the Colonel found her some hours later, reading aloud from a scrap-book certain speeches of Mr. Lincoln’s which Judge Whipple had cut from newspapers. And the Judge, lying back with his eyes half closed, was listening in pure delight. Little did he guess at Virginia’s penance!

THE CRISIS

By Winston Churchill

Volume 4.

CHAPTER VII

AN EXCURSION

I am going ahead two years. Two years during which a nation struggled in agony with sickness, and even the great strength with which she was endowed at birth was not equal to the task of throwing it off. In 1620 a Dutch ship had brought from Guinea to his Majesty’s Colony of Virginia the germs of that disease for which the Nation’s blood was to be let so freely. During these years signs of dissolution, of death, were not wanting.

In the city by the Father of Waters where the races met, men and women were born into the world, who were to die in ancient Cuba, who were to be left fatherless in the struggle soon to come, who were to live to see new monsters rise to gnaw at the vitals of the Republic, and to hear again the cynical laugh of Europe. But they were also to see their country a power in the world, perchance the greatest power. While Europe had wrangled, the child of the West had grown into manhood and taken a seat among the highest, to share with them the responsibilities of manhood.

Meanwhile, Stephen Brice had been given permission to practise law in the sovereign state of Missouri. Stephen understood Judge Whipple better. It cannot be said that he was intimate with that rather formidable personage, although the Judge, being a man of habits, had formed that of taking tea at least once a week with Mrs. Brice. Stephen had learned to love the Judge, and he had never ceased to be grateful to him for a knowledge of that man who had had the most influence upon his life, —Abraham Lincoln.

For the seed, sowed in wisdom and self-denial, was bearing fruit. The sound of gathering conventions was in the land, and the Freeport Heresy was not for gotten.

We shall not mention the number of clients thronging to Mr. Whipple's office to consult Mr. Brice. These things are humiliating. Some of Stephen's income came from articles in the newspapers of that day. What funny newspapers they were, the size of a blanket! No startling headlines such as we see now, but a continued novel among the advertisements on the front page and verses from some gifted lady of the town, signed Electra. And often a story of pure love, but more frequently of ghosts or other eerie phenomena taken from a magazine, or an anecdote of a cat or a chicken. There were letters from citizens who had the mania of print, bulletins of different ages from all parts of the Union, clippings out of day-before-yesterday's newspaper of Chicago or Cincinnati to three-weeks letters from San Francisco, come by the pony post to Lexington and then down the swift Missouri. Of course, there was news by telegraph, but that was precious as fine gold,—not to be lightly read and cast aside.

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In the autumn of ’59, through the kindness of Mr. Brinsmade, Stephen had gone on a steamboat up the river to a great convention in Iowa. On this excursion was much of St. Louis’s bluest blood. He widened his circle of acquaintances, and spent much of his time walking the guards between Miss Anne Brinsmade and Miss Puss Russell. Perhaps it is unfair to these young ladies to repeat what they said about Stephen in the privacy of their staterooms, gentle Anne remonstrating that they should not gossip, and listening eagerly the while, and laughing at Miss Puss, whose mimicry of Stephen’s severe ways brought tears to her eyes.

Mr. Clarence Colfax was likewise on the boat, and passing Stephen on the guards, bowed distantly. But once, on the return trip, when Stephen had a writing pad on his knee, the young Southerner came up to him in his frankest manner and with an expression of the gray eyes which was not to be withstood.

“Making a case, Brice?” he said. “I hear you are the kind that cannot be idle even on a holiday.”

“Not as bad as all that,” replied Stephen, smiling at him.

“Reckon you keep a diary, then,” said Clarence, leaning against the rail. He made a remarkably graceful figure, Stephen thought. He was tall, and his movements had what might be called a commanding indolence. Stephen, while he smiled, could not but admire the tone and gesture with which Colfax bade a passing negro to get him a handkerchief from his cabin. The alacrity of the black to do the errand was amusing enough. Stephen well knew it had not been such if he wanted a handkerchief.

Stephen said it was not a diary. Mr. Colfax was too well bred to inquire further; so he never found out that Mr. Brice was writing an account of the Convention and the speechmaking for the Missouri Democrat.

“Brice,” said the Southerner, “I want to apologize for things I’ve done to you and said about you. I hated you for a long time after you beat me out of Hester, and—” he hesitated.

Stephen looked up. For the first time he actually liked Colfax. He had been long enough among Colfax’s people to understand how difficult it was for him to say the thing he wished.

“You may remember a night at my uncle’s, Colonel Carvel’s, on the occasion of my cousin’s birthday?”

“Yes,” said Stephen, in surprise.

“Well,” blurted Clarence, boyishly, “I was rude to you in my uncle’s house, and I have since been sorry.”

“He held out his hand, and Stephen took it warmly.

“I was younger then, Mr. Colfax,” he said, “and I didn’t understand your point of view as well as I do now. Not that I have changed my ideas,” he added quickly, “but the notion of the girl’s going South angered me. I was bidding against the dealer rather than against you. Had I then known Miss Carvel—” he stopped abruptly.

The winning expression died from the face of the other.

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He turned away, and leaning across the rail, stared at the high bluffs, red-bronzed by the autumn sun. A score of miles beyond that precipice was a long low building of stone, surrounded by spreading trees,—the school for young ladies, celebrated throughout the West, where our mothers and grandmothers were taught,—Monticello. Hither Miss Virginia Carvel had gone, some thirty days since, for her second winter.

Perhaps Stephen guessed the thought in the mind of his companion, for he stared also. The music in the cabin came to an abrupt pause, and only the tumbling of waters through the planks of the great wheels broke the silence. They were both startled by laughter at their shoulders. There stood Miss Russell, the picture of merriment, her arm locked in Anne Brinsmade's.

"It is the hour when all devout worshippers turn towards the East," she said. "The goddess is enshrined at Monticello."

Both young men, as they got to their feet, were crimson. Whereupon Miss Russell laughed again. Anne, however, blushed for them. But this was not the first time Miss Russell had gone too far. Young Mr. Colfax, with the excess of manner which was his at such times, excused himself and left abruptly. This to the further embarrassment of Stephen and Anne, and the keener enjoyment of Miss Russell.

"Was I not right, Mr. Brice?" she demanded. "Why, you are even writing verses to her!"

"I scarcely know Miss Carvel," he said, recovering. "And as for writing verse—"

"You never did such a thing in your life! I can well believe it."

Miss Russell made a face in the direction Colfax had taken.

"He always acts like that when you mention her," she said.

"But you are so cruel, Puss," said Anne. "You can't blame him."

"Hairpins!" said Miss Russell.

"Isn't she to marry him?" said Stephen, in his natural voice.

He remembered his pronouns too late.

"That has been the way of the world ever since Adam and Eve," remarked Puss. "I suppose you meant to ask: Mr. Brice, whether Clarence is to marry Virginia Carvel."

Anne nudged her.

"My dear, what will Mr. Brice think of us?"

“Listen, Mr. Brice,” Puss continued, undaunted. “I shall tell you some gossip. Virginia was sent to Monticello, and went with her father to Kentucky and Pennsylvania this summer, that she might be away from Clarence. Colfax.”

“Oh, Puss!” cried Anne.

Miss Russell paid not the slightest heed.

“Colonel Carvel is right,” she went on. “I should do the same thing. They are first cousins, and the Colonel doesn’t like that. I am fond of Clarence. But he isn’t good for anything in the world except horse racing and—and fighting. He wanted to help drive the Black Republican emigrants out of Kansas, and his mother had to put a collar and chain on him. He wanted to go filibustering with Walker, and she had to get down on her knees. And yet,” she cried, “if you Yankees push us as far as war, Mr. Brice, just look out for him.”

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“But—” Anne interposed.

“Oh, I know what you are going to say,—that Clarence has money.”

“Puss!” cried Anne, outraged. “How dare you!”

Miss Russell slipped an arm around her waist.

“Come, Anne,” she said, “we mustn’t interrupt the Senator any longer. He is preparing his maiden speech.”

That was the way in which Stephen got his nickname. It is scarcely necessary to add that he wrote no more until he reached his little room in the house on Olive Street.

They had passed Alton, and the black cloud that hung in the still autumn air over the city was in sight. It was dusk when the ‘Jackson’ pushed her nose into the levee, and the song of the negro stevedores rose from below as they pulled the gang-plank on to the landing-stage. Stephen stood apart on the hurricane deck, gazing at the dark line of sooty warehouses. How many young men with their way to make have felt the same as he did after some pleasant excursion. The presence of a tall form beside him shook him from his revery, and he looked up to recognize the benevolent face of Mr. Brinsmade.

“Mrs. Brice may be anxious, Stephen, at the late hour,” said he. “My carriage is here, and it will give me great pleasure to convey you to your door.”

Dear Mr. Brinsmade! He is in heaven now, and knows at last the good he wrought upon earth. Of the many thoughtful charities which Stephen received from him, this one sticks firmest in his remembrance: A stranger, tired and lonely, and apart from the gay young men and women who stepped from the boat, he had been sought out by this gentleman, to whom had been given the divine gift of forgetting none.

“Oh, Puss,” cried Anne, that evening, for Miss Russell had come to spend the night, “how could you have talked to him so? He scarcely spoke on the way up in the carriage. You have offended him.”

“Why should I set him upon a pedestal?” said Puss, with a thread in her mouth; “why should you all set him upon a pedestal? He is only a Yankee,” said Puss, tossing her head, “and not so very wonderful.”

“I did not say he was wonderful,” replied Anne, with dignity.

“But you girls think him so. Emily and Eugenie and Maude. He had better marry Belle Cluyme. A great man, he may give some decision to that family. Anne!”

“Yes.”

“Shall I tell you a secret?”

“Yes,” said Anne. She was human, and she was feminine.

“Then—Virginia Carvel is in love with him.”

“With Mr. Brice!” cried astonished Anne. “She hates him!”

“She thinks she hates him,” said Miss Russell, calmly.

Anne looked up at her companion admiringly. Her two heroines were Puss and Virginia. Both had the same kind of daring, but in Puss the trait had developed into a somewhat disagreeable outspokenness which made many people dislike her. Her judgments were usually well founded, and her prophecies had so often come to pass that Anne often believed in them for no other reason.

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“How do you know?” said Anne, incredulously.

“Do you remember that September, a year ago, when we were all out at Glencoe, and Judge Whipple was ill, and Virginia sent us all away and nursed him herself?”

“Yes,” said Anne.

“And did you know that Mr. Brice had gone out, with letters, when the Judge was better?”

“Yes,” said Anne, breathless.

“It was a Saturday afternoon that he left, although they had begged him to stay over Sunday. Virginia had written for me to come back, and I arrived in the evening. I asked Easter where Jinny was, and I found her —”

“You found her—?” said Anne.

Sitting alone in the summer-house over the river. Easter said she had been there for two hours. And I have never known Jinny to be such miserable company as she was that night.”

“Did she mention Stephen?” asked Anne.

“No.”

“But you did,” said Anne, with conviction.

Miss Russell’s reply was not as direct as usual.

“You know Virginia never confides unless she wants to,” she said.

Anne considered.

“Virginia has scarcely seen him since then,” she said. “You know that I was her room-mate at Monticello last year, and I think I should have discovered it.”

“Did she speak of him?” demanded Miss Russell.

“Only when the subject was mentioned. I heard her repeat once what Judge Whipple told her father of him; that he had a fine legal mind. He was often in my letters from home, because they have taken Pa’s house next door, and because Pa likes them. I used to read those letters to Jinny,” said Anne, “but she never expressed any desire to hear them.”

“I, too, used to write Jinny about him,” confessed Puss.

“Did she answer your letter?”

“No,” replied Miss Puss,—“but that was just before the holidays, you remember. And then the Colonel hurried her off to see her Pennsylvania relatives, and I believe they went to Annapolis, too, where the Carvels come from.”

Stephen, sitting in the next house, writing out his account, little dreamed that he was the subject of a conference in the third story front of the Brinsmades’. Later, when the young ladies were asleep, he carried his manuscript to the Democrat office, and delivered it into the hands of his friend, the night editor, who was awaiting it.

Toward the end of that week, Miss Virginia Carvel was sitting with her back to one of the great trees at Monticello reading a letter. Every once in a while she tucked it under her cloak and glanced hastily around. It was from Miss Anne Brinsmade.

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“I have told you all about the excursion, my dear, and how we missed you. You may remember” (ah, Anne, the guile there is in the best of us), “you may remember Mr. Stephen Brice, whom we used to speak of. Pa and Ma take a great interest in him, and Pa had him invited on the excursion. He is more serious than ever, since he has become a full-fledged lawyer. But he has a dry humor which comes out when you know him well, of which I did not suspect him. His mother is the dearest lady I have ever known, so quiet, so dignified, and so well bred. They come in to supper very often. And the other night Mr. Brice told Pa so many things about the people south of Market Street, the Germans, which he did not know; that Pa was astonished. He told all about German history, and how they were persecuted at home, and why they came here. Pa was surprised to hear that many of them were University men, and that they were already organizing to defend the Union. I heard Pa say, ’That is what Mr. Blair meant when he assured me that we need not fear for the city.’

“Jinny dear, I ought not to have written you this, because you are for Secession, and in your heart you think Pa a traitor, because he comes from a slave state and has slaves of his own. But I shall not tear it up.

“It is sad to think how rich Mrs. Brice lived in Boston, and what she has had to come to. One servant and a little house, and no place to go to in the summer, when they used to have such a large one. I often go in to sew with her, but she has never once mentioned her past to me.

“Your father has no doubt sent you the Democrat with the account of the Convention. It is the fullest published, by far, and was so much admired that Pa asked the editor who wrote it. Who do you think, but Stephen Brice! So now Pa knows why Mr. Brice hesitated when Pa asked him to go up the river, and then consented. This is not the end. Yesterday, when I went in to see Mrs. Brice, a new black silk was on her bed, and as long as I live I shall never forget how sweet was her voice when she said, ’It is a surprise from my son, my dear. I did not expect ever to have another.’ Jinny, I just know he bought it with the money he got for the article. That was what he was writing on the boat when Clarence Colfax interrupted him. Puss accused him of writing verses to you.”

At this point Miss Virginia Carvel stopped reading. Whether she had read that part before, who shall say? But she took Anne’s letter between her fingers and tore it into bits and flung the bits into the wind, so that they were tossed about and lost among the dead leaves under the great trees. And when she reached her room, there was the hated Missouri Democrat lying, still open, on her table. A little later a great black piece of it came tossing out of the chimney above, to the affright of little Miss Brown, teacher of Literature, who was walking in the grounds, and who ran to the principal’s room with the story that the chimney was afire.

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CHAPTER VIII

THE COLONEL IS WARNED

It is difficult to refrain from mention of the leave-taking of Miss Virginia Carvel from the Monticello “Female Seminary,” so called in the ‘Democrat’. Most young ladies did not graduate in those days. There were exercises. Stephen chanced to read in the ‘Republican’ about these ceremonies, which mentioned that Miss Virginia Carvel, “Daughter of Colonel Comyn Carvel, was without doubt the beauty of the day. She wore —” but why destroy the picture? I have the costumes under my hand. The words are meaningless to all males, and young women might laugh at a critical time. Miss Emily Russell performed upon “that most superb of all musical instruments the human voice.” Was it ‘Auld Robin Gray’ that she sang? I am sure it was Miss Maude Catherwood who recited ‘To My Mother’, with such effect. Miss Carvel, so Stephen learned with alarm, was to read a poem by Mrs. Browning, but was “unavoidably prevented.” The truth was, as he heard afterward from Miss Puss Russell, that Miss Jinny had refused point blank. So the Lady Principal, to save her reputation for discipline, had been forced to deceive the press.

There was another who read the account of the exercises with intense interest, a gentleman of whom we have lately forborne to speak. This is Mr. Eliphalet Hopper. Eliphalet has prospered. It is to be doubted if that somewhat easy-going gentleman, Colonel Carvel, realized the full importance of Eliphalet to Carvel & Company. Mr. Hood had been superseded. Ephum still opened the store in the mornings, but Mr. Hopper was within the ground-glass office before the place was warm, and through warerooms and shipping rooms, rubbing his hands, to see if any were late. Many of the old force were missed, and a new and greater force were come in. These feared Eliphalet as they did the devil, and worked the harder to please him, because Eliphalet had hired that kind. To them the Colonel was lifted high above the sordid affairs of the world. He was at the store every day in the winter, and Mr. Hopper always followed him obsequiously into the ground-glass office, called in the book-keeper, and showed him the books and the increased earnings.

The Colonel thought of Mr. Hood and his slovenly management, and sighed, in spite of his doubled income. Mr. Hopper had added to the Company’s list of customers whole districts in the growing Southwest, and yet the honest Colonel did not like him. Mr. Hopper, by a gradual process, had taken upon his own shoulders, and consequently off the Colonel’s, responsibility after responsibility. There were some painful scenes, of course, such as the departure of Mr. Hood, which never would have occurred had not Eliphalet proved without question the incapacity of the ancient manager. Mr. Hopper only narrowed his lids when the Colonel pensioned Mr. Hood. But the Colonel had a will before which, when roused, even Mr. Hopper trembled. So that Eliphalet was always polite to Ephum, and careful never to say anything in the darkey’s presence against

incompetent clerks or favorite customers, who, by the charity of the Colonel, remained on his books.

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One spring day, after the sober home-coming of Colonel Carvel from the Democratic Convention at Charleston, Ephum accosted his master as he came into the store of a morning. Ephum's face was working with excitement.

"What's the matter with you, Ephum?" asked the Colonel, kindly. "You haven't been yourself lately."

"No, Marsa, I ain't 'zactly."

Ephum put down the duster, peered out of the door of the private office, and closed it softly.

"Marse Comyn?"

"Yes?"

"Marse Comyn, I ain't got no use fo' dat Misteh Hoppa', Ise kinder sup'stitious 'bout him, Marsa."

The Colonel put down his newspaper.

"Has he treated you badly, Ephum?" he asked quietly.

The faithful negro saw another question in his master's face. He well knew that Colonel Carvel would not descend to ask an inferior concerning the conduct of a superior.

"Oh no, suh. And I ain't sayin' nuthin' gin his honesty. He straight, but he powerful sharp, Marse Comyn. An' he jus' mussiless down to a cent."

The Colonel sighed. He realized that which was beyond the grasp of the negro's mind. New and thriftier methods of trade from New England were fast replacing the old open-handedness of the large houses. Competition had begun, and competition is cruel. Edwards, James, & Company had taken a Yankee into the firm. They were now Edwards, James, & Doddington, and Mr. Edwards's coolness towards the Colonel was manifest since the rise of Eliphalet. They were rivals now instead of friends. But Colonel Carvel did not know until after years that Mr. Hopper had been offered the place which Mr. Doddington filled later.

As for Mr. Hopper, increase of salary had not changed him. He still lived in the same humble way, in a single room in Miss Crane's boarding-house, and he paid very little more for his board than he had that first week in which he swept out Colonel Carvel's store. He was superintendent, now, of Mr. Davitt's Sunday School, and a church officer. At night, when he came home from business, he would read the widow's evening paper, and the Colonel's morning paper at the office. Of true Puritan abstemiousness, his only indulgence was chewing tobacco. It was as early as 1859

that the teller of the Boatman's Bank began to point out Mr. Hopper's back to casual customers, and he was more than once seen to enter the president's room, which had carpet on the floor.

Eliphalet's suavity with certain delinquent customers from the Southwest was A wording to Scripture. When they were profane, and invited him into the street, he reminded them that the city had a police force and a jail. While still a young man, he had a manner of folding his hands and smiling which is peculiar to capitalists, and he knew the laws concerning mortgages in several different states.

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But Eliphalet was content still to remain in the sphere in which Providence had placed him, and so to be an example for many of us. He did not buy, or even hire, an evening suit. He was pleased to superintend some of the details for a dance at Christmas-time before Virginia left Monticello, but he sat as usual on the stair-landing. There Mr. Jacob Cluyme (who had been that day in conversation with the teller of the Boatman's Bank) chanced upon him. Mr. Cluyme was so charmed at the facility with which Eliphalet recounted the rise and fall of sugar and cotton and wheat that he invited Mr. Hopper to dinner. And from this meal may be reckoned the first appearance of the family of which Eliphalet Hopper was the head into polite society. If the Cluyme household was not polite, it was nothing. Eliphalet sat next to Miss Belle, and heard the private history of many old families, which he cherished for future use. Mrs. Cluyme apologized for the dinner, which (if the truth were told) needed an apology. All of which is significant, but sordid and uninteresting. Jacob Cluyme usually bought stocks before a rise.

There was only one person who really bothered Eliphalet as he rose into prominence, and that person was Captain Elijah Brent. If, upon entering the ground-glass office, he found Eliphalet without the Colonel, Captain Lige would walk out again just as if the office were empty. The inquiries he made were addressed always to Ephum. Once, when Mr. Hopper had bidden him good morning and pushed a chair toward him, the honest Captain had turned his back and marched straight to the house or Tenth Street, where he found the Colonel alone at breakfast. The Captain sat down opposite.

"Colonel," said he, without an introduction. "I don't like this here business of letting Hopper run your store. He's a fish, I tell you."

The Colonel drank his coffee in silence.

"Lige," he said gently, "he's nearly doubled my income. It isn't the old times, when we all went our own way and kept our old customers year in and year out. You know that."

The Captain took a deep draught of the coffee which Jackson had laid before him.

"Colonel Carvel," he said emphatically, "the fellow's a damned rascal, and will ruin you yet if you don't take advice."

The Colonel shifted uneasily.

"The books show that he's honest, Lige."

"Yes," cried Lige, with his fist on the table. "Honest to a mill. But if that fellow ever gets on top of you, or any one else, he'll grind you into dust."

"He isn't likely to get on top of me, Lige. I know the business, and keep watch. And now that Jinny's coming home from Monticello, I feel that I can pay more attention to her —kind of take her mother's place," said the Colonel, putting on his felt hat and tipping

his chair. “Lige, I want that girl to have every advantage. She ought to go to Europe and see the world. That trip East last summer did her a heap of good. When we were at Calvert House, Dan read her something that my grandfather had written about London, and she was regularly fired. First I must take her to the Eastern Shore to see Carvel Hall. Dan still owns it. Now it’s London and Paris.”

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The Captain walked over to the window, and said nothing. He did not see the searching gray eyes of his old friend upon him.

“Lige!” said the Colonel.

The Captain turned.

“Lige, why don’t you give up steamboating and come along to Europe? You’re not forty yet, and you have a heap of money laid by.”

The Captain shook his head with the vigor that characterized him.

“This ain’t no time for me to leave,” he said. “Colonel; I tell you there’s a storm comin’.”

The Colonel pulled his goatee uneasily. Here, at last, was a man in whom there was no guile.

“Lige,” he said, “isn’t it about time you got married?”

Upon which the Captain shook his head again, even with more vigor. He could not trust himself to speak. After the Christmas holidays he had driven Virginia across the frozen river, all the way to Monticello, in a sleigh. It was night when they had reached the school, the light of its many windows casting long streaks on the snow under the trees. He had helped her out, and had taken her hand as she stood on the step.

“Be good, Jinny,” he had said. “Remember what a short time it will be until June. And your Pa will come over to see you.”

She had seized him by the buttons of his great coat, and said tearfully: “O Captain Lige! I shall be so lonely when you are away. Aren’t you going to kiss me?”

He had put his lips to her forehead, driven madly back to Alton, and spent the night. The first thing he did the next day when he reached St. Louis was to go straight to the Colonel and tell him bluntly of the circumstance.

“Lige, I’d hate to give her up,” Mr. Carvel said; “but I’d rather you’d marry her than any man I can think of.”

CHAPTER IX

SIGNS OF THE TIMES

In that spring of 1860 the time was come for the South to make her final stand. And as the noise of gathering conventions shook the ground, Stephen Brice was not the only

one who thought of the Question at Freeport. The hour was now at hand for it to bear fruit.

Meanwhile, his hero, the hewer of rails and forger of homely speech, Abraham Lincoln, had made a little tour eastward the year before, and had startled Cooper Union with a new logic and a new eloquence. They were the same logic and the same eloquence which had startled Stephen.

Even as he predicted who had given it birth, the Question destroyed the great Democratic Party. Colonel Carvel travelled to the convention in historic Charleston soberly and fearing God, as many another Southern gentleman. In old Saint Michael's they knelt to pray for harmony, for peace; for a front bold and undismayed toward those who wronged them. All through the week chosen orators wrestled in vain. Judge Douglas, you flattered yourself that you had evaded the Question. Do you see the Southern delegates rising in their seats? Alabama leaves the hall, followed by her sister stakes. The South has not forgotten your Freeport Heresy. Once she loved you now she will have none of you.

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Gloomily, indeed, did Colonel Carvel return home. He loved the Union and the flag for which his grandfather Richard had fought so bravely. That flag was his inheritance. So the Judge, laying his hand upon the knee of his friend, reminded him gravely. But the Colonel shook his head. The very calmness of their argument had been portentous.

“No, Whipple,” said he. “You are a straightforward man. You can’t disguise it. You of the North are bent upon taking away from us the rights we had when our fathers framed the Constitution. However the nigger got to this country, sir, in your Bristol and Newport traders, as well as in our Virginia and Maryland ships, he is here, and he was here when the Constitution was written. He is happier in slavery than are your factory hands in New England; and he is no more fit to exercise the solemn rights of citizenship, I say, than the halfbreeds in the South American states.”

The Judge attempted to interrupt, but Mr. Carvel stopped him.

“Suppose you deprive me of my few slaves, you do not ruin me. Yet you do me as great a wrong as you do my friend Samuels, of Louisiana, who depends on the labor of five hundred. Shall I stand by selfishly and see him ruined, and thousands of others like him?”

Profoundly depressed, Colonel Carvel did not attend the adjourned Convention at Baltimore, which split once more on Mason and Dixon’s line. The Democrats of the young Northwest stood for Douglas and Johnson, and the solid South, in another hall, nominated Breckenridge and Lane. This, of course, became the Colonel’s ticket.

What a Babel of voices was raised that summer! Each with its cure for existing ills. Between the extremes of the Black Republican Negro Worshippers and the Southern Rights party of Breckenridge, your conservative had the choice of two candidates,—of Judge Douglas or Senator Bell. A most respectable but practically extinct body of gentlemen in ruffled shirts, the Old Line Whigs, had likewise met in Baltimore. A new name being necessary, they called themselves Constitutional Unionists Senator Bell was their candidate, and they proposed to give the Nation soothing-syrup. So said Judge Whipple, with a grunt of contempt, to Mr. Cluyme, who was then a prominent Constitutional Unionist. Other and most estimable gentlemen were also Constitutional Unionists, notably Mr. Calvin Brinsmade. Far be it from any one to cast disrespect upon the reputable members of this party, whose broad wings sheltered likewise so many weak brethren.

One Sunday evening in May, the Judge was taking tea with Mrs. Brice. The occasion was memorable for more than one event—which was that he addressed Stephen by his first name for the first time.

“You’re an admirer of Abraham Lincoln,” he had said.

Stephen, used to Mr. Whipple's ways, smiled quietly at his mother. He had never dared mention to the Judge his suspicions concerning his journey to Springfield and Freeport.

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“Stephen,” said the Judge (here the surprise came in), “Stephen, what do you think of Mr. Lincoln’s chances for the Republican nomination?”

“We hear of no name but Seward’s, sir,” said Stephen, When he had recovered.

The Judge grunted.

“Do you think that Lincoln would make a good President?” he added.

“I have thought so, sir, ever since you were good enough to give me the opportunity of knowing him.”

It was a bold speech—the Judge drew his great eyebrows together, but he spoke to Mrs. Brice.

“I’m not as strong as I was once, ma’am,” said he. “And yet I am going to that Chicago convention.”

Mrs. Brice remonstrated mildly, to the effect that he had done his share of political work. He scarcely waited for her to finish.

“I shall take a younger man with me, in case anything happens. In fact, ma’am, I had thought of taking your son, if you can spare him.”

And so it was that Stephen went to that most dramatic of political gatherings,—in the historic Wigwam. It was so that his eyes were opened to the view of the monster which maims the vitality of the Republic, —the political machine. Mr. Seward had brought his machine from New York, —a legion prepared to fill the Wigwam with their bodies, and to drown with their cries all names save that of their master.

Stephen indeed had his eyes opened. Through the kindness of Judge Whipple he heard many quiet talks between that gentleman and delegates from other states—-Pennsylvania and Illinois and Indiana and elsewhere. He perceived that the Judge was no nonentity in this new party. Mr. Whipple sat in his own room, and the delegates came and ranged themselves along the bed. Late one night, when the delegates were gone, Stephen ventured to speak what was in his mind.

“Mr. Lincoln did not strike me as the kind of man, sir; who would permit a bargain.”

“Mr. Lincoln’s at home playing barn-ball,” said the Judge, curtly. “He doesn’t expect the nomination.”

“Then,” said Stephen, rather hotly, “I think you are unfair to him.”

You are expecting the Judge to thunder. Sometimes he liked this kind of speech.

“Stephen, I hope that politics may be a little cleaner when you become a delegate,” he answered, with just the suspicion of a smile. “Supposing you are convinced that Abraham Lincoln is the only man who can save the Union, and supposing that the one way to get him nominated is to meet Seward’s gang with their own methods, what would you do, sir? I want a practical proposition, sir,” said Mr. Whipple, “one that we can use to-night. It is now one ’clock.”

As Stephen was silent, the Judge advised him to go to bed. And the next morning, while Mr. Seward’s henchmen, confident and uproarious, were parading the streets of Chicago with their bands and their bunting, the vast Wigwam was quietly filling up with bony Westerners whose ally was none other than the state of Pennsylvania. These gentlemen possessed wind which they had not wasted in processions. And the Lord delivered Seward and all that was his into their hands.

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How the light of Mr. Seward's hope went out after the first ballot, and how some of the gentlemen attached to his person wept; and how the voices shook the Wigwam, and the thunder of the guns rolled over the tossing water of the lake, many now living remember. That day a name was delivered to the world through the mouths political schemers which was destined to enter history that of the saviour of the Nation.

Down in little Springfield, on a vacant lot near the station, a tall man in his shirt sleeves was playing barn-ball with some boys. The game finished, he had put on his black coat and was starting homeward under the tree—when a fleet youngster darted after him with a telegram. The tall man read it, and continued on his walk his head bent and his feet taking long strides, Later in the day he was met by a friend.

"Abe," said the friend, "I'm almighty glad there somebody in this town's got notorious at last."

In the early morning of their return from Chicago Judge Whipple and Stephen were standing in the front of a ferry-boat crossing the Mississippi. The sun was behind them. The Judge had taken off his hat, and his gray hair was stirred by the river breeze. Illness had set a yellow seal on the face, but the younger man remarked it not. For Stephen, staring at the black blur of the city outline, was filled with a strange exaltation which might have belonged to his Puritan forefathers. Now at length was come his chance to be of use in life,—to dedicate the labor of his hands and of his brains to Abraham Lincoln uncouth prophet of the West. With all his might he would work to save the city for the man who was the hope of the Union.

The bell rang. The great paddles scattered the brow waters with white foam, and the Judge voiced his thoughts.

"Stephen," said he, "I guess we'll have to put on shoulders to the wheel this summer. If Lincoln is not elected I have lived my sixty-five years for nothing."

As he descended the plank, he laid a hand on Stephen's arm, and tottered. The big Louisiana, Captain Brent's boat, just in from New Orleans, was blowing off her steam as with slow steps they climbed the levee and the steep pitch of the street beyond it. The clatter of hooves and the crack of whips reached their ears, and, like many others before them and since, they stepped into Carvel & Company's. On the inside of the glass partition of the private office, a voice of great suavity was heard. It was Eliphalet Hopper's.

"If you will give me the numbers of the bales, Captain Brent, I'll send a dray down to your boat and get them."

It was a very decisive voice that answered.

“No, sir, I prefer to do business with my friend, Colonel Carvel. I guess I can wait.”

“I could sell the goods to Texas buyers who are here in the store right now.”

“Until I get instructions from one of the concern,” vowed Captain Lige, “I shall do as I always have done, sir. What is your position here, Mr. Hopper?”

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“I am manager, I callate.”

The Captain’s fist was heard to come down on the desk.

“You don’t manage me,” he said, “and I reckon you don’t manage the Colonel.”

Mr. Hopper’s face was not pleasant to see as he emerged. But at sight of Judge Whipple on the steps his suavity returned.

“The Colonel will be in any minute, sir,” said he.

But the Judge walked past him without reply, and into the office. Captain Brent, seeing him; sprang to his feet.

“Well, well, Judge,” said he, heartily, “you fellows have done it now, sure. I’ll say this for you, you’ve picked a smart man.”

“Better vote for him, Lige,” said the Judge, setting down.

The Captain smiled at Stephen.

“A man’s got a lot of choice this year;” said he. “Two governments, thirty-three governments, one government patched up for a year ox two.”

“Or no government,” finished the Judge. “Lige, you’re not such a fool as to vote against the Union?”

“Judge,” said the Captain, instantly, “I’m not the only one in this town who will have to decide whether my sympathies are wrong. My sympathies are with the South.”

“It’s not a question of sympathy, Captain,” answered the Judge, dryly. “Abraham Lincoln himself was born in Kentucky.”

They had not heard a step without.

“Gentlemen, mark my words. If Abraham Lincoln is elected, the South leaves this Union.”

The Judge started, and looked up. The speaker was Colonel Carvel himself.

“Then, sir,” Mr. Whipple cried hotly, “then you will be chastised and brought back. For at last we have chosen a man who is strong enough, —who does not fear your fire-eaters, —whose electors depend on Northern votes alone.”

Stephen rose apprehensively, So did Captain Lige The Colonel had taken a step forward, and a fire was quick to kindle in his gray eyes. It was as quick to die. Judge Whipple, deathly pale, staggered and fell into Stephen' arms. But it was the Colonel who laid him on the horsehair sofa.

"Silas!" he said, "Silas!"

Nor could the two who listened sound the depth of the pathos the Colonel put into those two words.

But the Judge had not fainted. And the brusqueness in his weakened voice was even more pathetic— "Tut, tut," said he. "A little heat, and no breakfast."

The Colonel already had a bottle of the famous Bourbon day his hand, and Captain Lige brought a glass of muddy iced water. Mr. Carvel made an injudicious mixture of the two, and held it to the lips of his friend. He was pushed away.

"Come, Silas," he said.

"No!" cried the Judge, and with this effort he slipped back again. Those who stood there thought that the stamp of death was already on Judge Whipple's face.

But the lips were firmly closed, bidding defiance, as ever, to the world. The Colonel, stroking his goatee, regarded him curiously.

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“Silas,” he said slowly, “if you won’t drink it for me, perhaps you will drink it—for—-Abraham—Lincoln.”

The two who watched that scene have never forgotten it. Outside, in the great cool store, the rattle of the trucks was heard, and Mr. Hopper giving commands. Within was silence. The straight figure of the Colonel towered above the sofa while he waited. A full minute passed. Once Judge Whipple’s bony hand opened and shut, and once his features worked. Then, without warning, he sat up.

“Colonel,” said he, “I reckon I wouldn’t be much use to Abe if I took that. But if you’ll send Ephum after, cup of coffee—”

Mr. Carvel set the glass down. In two strides he had reached the door and given the order. Then he came hack and seated himself on the sofa.

Stephen found his mother at breakfast. He had forgotten the convention He told her what had happened at Mr. Carvel’s store, and how the Colonel had tried to persuade Judge Whipple to take the Glencoe house while he was in Europe, and how the Judge had refused. Tears were in the widow’s eyes when Stephen finished.

“And he means to stay here in the heat and go through, the campaign?” she asked.

“He says that he will not stir.”

“It will kill him, Stephen,” Mrs. Brice faltered.

“So the Colonel told him. And he said that he would die willingly—after Abraham Lincoln was elected. He had nothing to live for but to fight for that. He had never understood the world, and had quarrelled with at all his life.”

’He said that to Colonel Carvel?”

“Yes.”

“Stephen!”

He didn’t dare to look at his mother, nor she at him. And when he reached the office, half an hour later, Mr. Whipple was seated in his chair, defiant and unapproachable. Stephen sighed as he settled down to his work. The thought of one who might have accomplished what her father could not was in his head. She was at Monticello.

Some three weeks later Mr. Brinsmade’s buggy drew up at Mrs. Brice’s door. The Brinsmade family had been for some time in the country. And frequently, when that gentleman was detained in town by business, he would stop at the little home for tea.

The secret of the good man's visit came out as he sat with them on the front steps afterward.

"I fear that it will be a hot summer, ma'am," he had said to Mrs. Brice. "You should go to the country."

"The heat agrees with me remarkably, Mr. Brinsmade," said the lady, smiling.

"I have heard that Colonel Carvel wishes to rent his house at Glencoe," Mr. Brinsmade continued, "The figure is not high." He mentioned it. And it was, indeed nominal. "It struck me that a change of air would do you good, Mrs. Brice, and Stephen. Knowing that you shared in our uneasiness concerning Judge Whipple, I thought—"

He stopped, and looked at her. It was a hard task even for that best and roost tactful of gentlemen, Mr. Brinsmade. He too had misjudged this calm woman.

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“I understand you, Mr. Brinsmade,” she said. She saw, as did Stephen, the kindness behind the offer—Colonel Carvel’s kindness and his own. The gentleman’s benevolent face brightened:

“And, my dear Madam, do not let the thought of this little house trouble you. It was never my expectation to have it occupied in the summer. If we could induce the Judge to go to Glencoe with you for the summer; I am sure it would be a relief for us all.”

He did not press the matter; but begged Stephen to call on him in a day or two, at the bank.

“What do you think, Stephen,” asked his mother, when Mr. Brinsmade was gone, Stephen did not reply at once. What, indeed, could he say? The vision of that proud figure of Miss Virginia was before him, and he revolted. What was kindness from Colonel Carvel and Mr. Brinsmade was charity from her. He could not bear the thought of living in a house haunted by her. And yet why should he let his pride and his feelings stand in the way of the health—perhaps of the life—of Judge Whipple?

It was characteristic of his mothers strength of mind not to mention the subject again that evening. Stephen did not sleep in the hot night. But when he rose in the morning he had made up his mind. After breakfast he went straight to the Colonel’s store, and fortunately found. Mr. Carvel at his desk, winding up his affairs.

The next morning, when the train for the East pulled out of Illinoistown, Miss Jinny Carvel stood on the plat form tearfully waving good-by to a knot of friends. She was leaving for Europe. Presently she went into the sleeping-car to join the Colonel, who wore a gray liners duster. For a long time she sat gazing at the young, corn waving on the prairie, fingering the bunch of June roses on her lap. Clarence had picked them only a few hours ago, in the dew at Bellegarde. She saw her cousin standing disconsolate under the train sheds, just as she had left him. She pictured him riding out the Bellefontaine Road that afternoon, alone. Now that the ocean was to be between them, was it love that she felt for Clarence at last? She glanced at her father. Once or twice she had suspected him of wishing to separate them. Her Aunt Lillian, indeed, had said as much, and Virginia had silenced her. But when she had asked the Colonel to take Clarence to Europe, he had refused. And yet she knew that he had begged Captain Lige to go.

Virginia had been at home but a week. She had seen the change in Clarence and exulted. The very first day she had surprised him on the porch at Bellegarde with “Hardee’s tactics”. From a boy Clarence had suddenly become a man with a Purpose, —and that was the Purpose of the South.

“They have dared to nominate that dirty Lincoln,” he said.—“Do you think that we will submit to nigger equality rule? Never! never!” he cried. “If they elect him, I will stand

and fight them until my legs are shot from under me, and then I will shoot down the Yankees from the ground."

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Virginia's heart had leaped within her at the words, and into her eyes had flashed once more the look for which the boy had waited and hoped in vain. He had the carriage of a soldier, the animation and endurance of the thoroughbred when roused. He was of the stuff that made the resistance of the South the marvel of the world. And well we know, whatever the sound of it, that his speech was not heroics. Nor was it love for his cousin that inspired it, save in this: he had apotheosized Virginia. To him she was the inspired goddess of the South—his country. His admiration and affection had of late been laid upon an altar. Her ambition for him he felt was likewise the South's ambition for him.

His mother, Virginia's aunt, felt this too, and strove against it with her feeble might. She never had had power over her son; nor over any man, save the temporal power of beauty. And to her mortification she found herself actually in fear of this girl who might have been her daughter. So in Virginia's presence she became more trivial and petty than ever. It was her one defence.

It had of course been a foregone conclusion that Clarence should join Company A. Few young men of family did not. And now he ran to his room to don for Virginia that glorious but useless full dress,—the high bearskin rat, the red pigeon-tailed coat, the light blue trousers, and the gorgeous, priceless shackle. Indeed, the boy looked stunning. He held his big rifle like a veteran, and his face was set with a high resolve there was no mistaking. The high color of her pride was on the cheek of the girl as he brought his piece to the salute of her, his mistress. And yet, when he was gone, and she sat alone amid the roses awaiting him, came wilfully before her another face that was relentless determination,—the face of Stephen Brice, as he had stood before her in the summer house at Glencoe. Strive as she might against the thought, deny it to herself and others, to Virginia Carvel his way become the face of the North. Her patriotism and all that was in her of race rebelled. To conquer that face she would have given her own soul, and Clarence's. Angrily she had arisen and paced the garden walks, and cried out aloud that it was not inflexible.

And now, by the car window, looking out over the endless roll of the prairie, the memory of this was bitter within her.

Suddenly she turned to her father.

"Did you rent our house at Glencoe?" she asked.

"No, Jinny."

"I suppose Mr. Brice was too proud to accept it at your charitable rent, even to save Mr, Whipple's life."

The Colonel turned to his daughter in mild surprise. She was leaning back on the seat, her eyes half closed.

“Once you dislike a person, Jinny, you never get over it. I always had a fancy for the young man, and now I have a better opinion of him than ever before. It was I who insulted them by naming that rent.”

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“What did he do?” Virginia demanded.

“He came to my office yesterday morning. ‘Colonel Carvel,’ said he, ’I hear you wish to rent your house.’ I said yes. ’You rented it once before, sir,’ said he. ‘Yes,’ said I. ’May I ask you what price you got for it?’ said he.”

“And what did you say?” she asked, leaning forward.

“I told him,” said the Colonel, smiling. “But I explained that I could not expect to command that price now on short notice. He replied that they would pay it, or not consider the place.”

Virginia turned her head away and stared out over the fields.

“How could they afford it!” she murmured.

“Mr. Brinsmade tells me that young Brice won rather a remarkable case last winter, and since then has had some practice. And that he writes for the newspapers. I believe he declined some sort of an editorial position, preferring to remain at the law.”

“And so they are going into the house?” she asked presently.

“No,” said the Colonel. “Whipple refused point-blank to go to the country. He said that he would be shirking the only work of his life likely to be worth anything. So the Brices remain in town.”

Colonel Carvel sighed. But Virginia said nothing.

CHAPTER X.

RICHTER’S SCAR

This was the summer when Mr. Stephen Brice began to make his appearance in public. The very first was rather encouraging than otherwise, although they were not all so. It was at a little town on the outskirts of the city where those who had come to scoff and jeer remained to listen.

In writing that speech Stephen had striven to bear in mind a piece of advice which Mr. Lincoln had given him. “Speak so that the lowest may understand, and the rest will have no trouble.” And it had worked. At the halting lameness of the beginning an egg was thrown,—fortunately wide of the mark. After this incident Stephen fairly astonished his audience, —especially an elderly gentleman who sat on a cracker-box in the rear, out of sight of the stand. This may have been Judge Whipple, although we have no proof of the fact.

Stephen himself would not have claimed originality for that speech. He laughs now when it is spoken of, and calls it a boyish effort, which it was. I have no doubt that many of the master's phrases slipped in, as young Mr. Brice could repeat most of the Debates, and the Cooper Union speech by heart. He had caught more than the phrasing, however. So imbued was he with the spirit of Abraham Lincoln that his hearers caught it; and that was the end of the rotten eggs and the cabbages. The event is to be especially noted because they crowded around him afterward to ask questions. For one thing, he had not mentioned abolition. Wasn't it true, then, that this Lincoln wished to tear the negro from his master, give him a vote and a subsidy, and set him up as the equal of the man that owned him? "Slavery may stay where it is," cried the young orator. "If it is content there, so are we content. What we say is that it shall not go one step farther. No, not one inch into a northern territory."

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On the next occasion Mr. Brice was one of the orators at a much larger meeting in a garden in South St. Louis. The audience was mostly German. And this was even a happier event, inasmuch as Mr. Brice was able to trace with some skill the history of the Fatherland from the Napoleonic wars to its Revolution. Incidentally he told them why they had emigrated to this great and free country. And when in an inspired moment he coupled the names of Abraham Lincoln and Father Jahn, the very leaves of the trees above them trembled at their cheers.

And afterwards there was a long-remembered supper in the moonlit grove with Richter and a party of his college friends from Jena. There was Herr Tiefel with the little Dresden-blue eyes, red and round and jolly; and Hauptmann, long and thin and sallow; and Korner, redbearded and ponderous; and Konig, a little clean-cut man with a blond mustache that pointed upward. They clattered their steins on the table and sang wonderful Jena songs, while Stephen was lifted up and his soul carried off to far-away Saxony,—to the clean little University town with its towers and crooked streets. And when they sang the Trolksmelodie, "Bemooster Bursche zieh' ich aus,—Ade!" a big tear rolled down the scar on Richter's cheek.

> "Fahrt wohl, ihr Strassen grad and krumm
> Ich zieh' nicht mehr in euch herum,
> Durchton euch nicht mehr mit Gesang,
> Mit Larm nicht mehr and Sporenklang."

As the deep tones died away, the soft night was steeped in the sadness of that farewell song. It was Richter who brought the full force of it home to Stephen.

"Do you recall the day you left your Harvard, and your Boston, my friend?" he asked.

Stephen only nodded. He had never spoken of the bitterness of that, even to his mother. And here was the difference between the Saxon and the Anglo-Saxon.

Richter smoked his pipe 'mid dreamy silence, the tear still wet upon his face.

"Tiefel and I were at the University together," he said at length. "He remembers the day I left Jena for good and all. Ah, Stephen, that is the most pathetic thing in life, next to leaving the Fatherland. We dine with our student club for the last time at the Burg Keller, a dingy little tavern under a grim old house, but very dear to us. We swear for the last time to be clean and honorable and patriotic, and to die for the Fatherland, if God so wills. And then we march at the head of a slow procession out of the old West Gate, two and two, old members first, then the fox major and the foxes."

"The foxes?" Stephen interrupted.

"The youngsters—the freshmen, you call them," answered Richter, smiling.

“And after the foxes,” said Herr Tiefel, taking up the story, “after the foxes comes the empty carriage, with its gay postilion and four. It is like a long funeral. And every man is chanting that song. And so we go slowly until we; come to the Oil Mill Tavern, where we have had many a schlager-bout with the aristocrats. And the president of our society makes his farewell speech under the vines, and we drink to you with all the honors. And we drank to you, Carl, renowned swordsman!” And Herr Tiefel, carried away by the recollection, rose to his feet.

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The others caught fire, and stood up with their mugs high in the air, shouting:

“Lebe wohl, Carl! Lebe wohl! Salamander, salamander, salamander! Ein ist ein, zwei ist zwei, drei ist drei! Lebe wohl!”

And so they toasted every man present, even Stephen himself, whom they complimented on his speech. And he soon learned to cry Salamander, and to rub his mug on the table, German fashion. He was not long in discovering that Richter was not merely a prime favorite with his companions, but likewise a person of some political importance in South St. Louis. In the very midst of their merriment an elderly man whom Stephen recognized as one of the German leaders (he afterwards became a United States general) came and stood smiling by the table and joined in the singing. But presently he carried Richter away with him.

“What a patriot he would have made, had our country been spared to us!” exclaimed Herr Konig. “I think he was the best man with the Schlager that Jena ever saw. Even Korner likes not to stand against him in mask and fencing hat, all padded. Eh, Rudolph?”

Herr Korner gave a good-natured growl of assent.

“I have still a welt that he gave me a month since,” he said. “He has left his mark on many an aristocrat.”

“And why did you always fight the aristocrats?” Stephen asked.

They all tried to tell him at once, but Tiefel prevailed.

“Because they were for making our country Austrian, my friend,” he cried. “Because they were overbearing, and ground the poor. Because the most of them were immoral like the French, and we knew that it must be by morality and pure living that our ‘Vaterland’ was to be rescued. And so we formed our guilds in opposition to theirs. We swore to live by the standards of the great Jahn, of whom you spoke. We swore to strive for the freedom of Germany with manly courage. And when we were not duelling with the nobles, we had Schlager-bouts among ourselves.”

“Broadswords?” exclaimed Stephen, in amazement.

“Ja wohl,” answered Korner, puffing heavily. The slit in his nose was plain even in the moonlight. “To keep our hands in, as you would say. You Americans are a brave people—without the Schlager. But we fought that we might not become effete.”

It was then that Stephen ventured to ask a question that, had been long burning within him.

“See here, Mr. Korner,” said he, “how did Richter come by that scar? He always gets red when I mention it. He will never tell me.”

“Ah, I can well believe that,” answered Korner. “I will recount that matter,—if you do not tell Carl, lieber Freund. He would not forgive me. I was there in Berlin at the time. It was a famous time. Tiefel will bear me out.”

“Ja, ja!” said Tiefel, eagerly.

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“Mr. Brice,” Herr Korner continued, “has never heard of the Count von Kalbach. No, of course. We at Jena had, and all Germany. Many of us of the Burschenschaft will bear to the grave the marks of his Schlager. Von Kalbach went to Bonn, that university of the aristocrats, where he was worshipped. When he came to Berlin with his sister, crowds would gather to look at them. They were like Wodan and Freya. ’Donner’!” exclaimed Herr Korner, “there is something in blood, when all is said. He was as straight and strong as an oak of the Black Forest, and she as fair as a poplar. It is so with the Pomeranians.

“It was in the year ’47, when Carl Richter was gone home to Berlin before his last semester, to see his father: One fine morning von Kalbach rode in at the Brandenburg gate on a great black stallion. He boasted openly that day that none of the despised ‘Burschenschaft’ dare stand before him. And Carl Richter took up the challenge. Before night all Berlin had heard of the temerity of the young Liberal of the Jena ‘Burschenschaft’. To our shame be it said, we who knew and loved Carl likewise feared for him.

“Carl chose for his second Ebhardt, a man of our own Germanian Club at Jena, since killed in the Breite Strasse. And if you will believe me, my friend. I tell you that Richter came to the glade at daybreak smoking his pipe. The place was filled, the nobles on one side and the Burschenschaft on the other, and the sun coming up over the trees. Richter would not listen to any of us, not even the surgeon. He would not have the silk wound on his arm, nor the padded breeches, nor the neck covering —Nothing! So Ebhardt put on his gauntlets and peaked cap, and his apron with the device of the Germanians.

“There stood the Count in his white shirt in the pose of a statue. And when it was seen that Richter likewise had no protection, but was calmly smoking the little short pipe, with a charred bowl, a hush fell upon all. At the sight of the pipe von Kalbach ground his heel in the turf, and when the word was given he rushed at Richter like a wild beast. You, my friend, who have never heard the whistle of sharp Schlager cannot know the song which a skilled arm draws from the blade. It was music that morning: You should have seen the noble’s mighty strokes—’Prim und Second und Terz und Quart’. You would have marked how Richter met him at every blow. Von Kalbach never once took his eyes from the blue smoke from the bowl. He was terrible in his fury, and I shiver now to think how we of the Burschenschaft trembled when we saw that our champion was driven back a step, and then another. You must know that it is a lasting disgrace to be forced over one’s own line. It seemed as if we could not bear the agony. And then, while we counted out the last seconds of the half, came a snap like that of a whip’s lash, and the bowl of Richter’s pipe lay smouldering on the grass. The noble had cut the stem as clean as

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it were sapling twig, and there stood Richter with the piece still clenched in his teeth, his eyes ablaze, and his cheek running blood. He pushed the surgeon away when he came forward with his needles. The Count was smiling as he put up his sword, his friends crowding around him, when Ebhardt cried out that his man could fight the second mensur,—though the wound was three needles long. Then Kalbach cried aloud that he would kill him. But he had not seen Carl's eyes. Something was in them that made us think as we washed the cut. But when we spoke to him he said nothing. Nor could we force the pipe stems from his teeth.

"Donner Schock!" exclaimed Herr Korner, but reverently, "if I live to a hundred I never hope to see such a sight as that 'Mensur'. The word was given. The Schlager flew so fast that we only saw the light and heard the ring alone. Before we of the Burschenschaft knew what had happened the Count von Kalbach was over his line and had flung his Schlager into a great tree, and was striding from the place with his head hung and the tears streamin down his face."

Amid a silence, Herr Korner lifted his great mug and emptied it slowly. A wind was rising, bearing with it song and laughter from distant groups, —Teutonic song and, laughter. The moonlight trembled through the shifting leaves. And Stephen was filled with a sense of the marvelous. It was as if this fierce duel, so full of national significance to a German, had been fought in another existence, It was incredible to him that the unassuming lawyer he knew, so wholly Americanized, had been the hero of it. Strange, indeed, that the striving life of these leaders of European Revolution had been suddenly cut off in its vigor. There came to Stephen a flash of that world-comprehension which marks great statesmen. Was it not with a divine purpose that this measureless force of patriotism and high ideal had been given to this youngest of the nations, that its high mission might be fulfilled?

Miss Russell heard of Stephen's speeches. She and her brothers and Jack Brinsmade used to banter him when he came a-visiting in Bellefontaine Road. The time was not yet come when neighbor stared coldly upon neighbor, when friends of long standing passed each other with averted looks. It was not even a wild dream that white-trash Lincoln would be elected. And so Mr. Jack, who made speeches for Breckenridge in the face of Mr. Brinsmade's Union leanings, laughed at Stephen when he came to spend the night. He joined forces with Puss in making clever fun of the booby Dutch, which Stephen was wise enough to take good-naturedly. But once or twice when he met Clarence Colfax at these houses he was aware of a decided change in the attitude of that young gentleman. This troubled him more than he cared to admit. For he liked Clarence, who reminded him of Virginia—at once a pleasure and a pain.

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It is no harm to admit (for the benefit of the Society for Psychical Research) that Stephen still dreamed of her. He would go about his work absently all the morning with the dream still in his head, and the girl so vividly near him that he could not believe her to be travelling in England, as Miss Russell said. Puss and Anne were careful to keep him informed as to her whereabouts. Stephen set this down as a most natural supposition on their part that all young men must have an interest in Virginia Carvel.

How needless to add that Virginia in her correspondence never mentioned Stephen, although Puss in her letters took pains to record the fact every time that he addressed a Black Republican meeting: Miss Carvel paid no attention to this part of the communications. Her concern for Judge Whipple Virginia did not hide. Anne wrote of him. How he stood the rigors of that campaign were a mystery to friend and foe alike.

CHAPTER XI

HOW A PRINCE CAME

Who has not heard of the St. Louis Agricultural Fair. And what memories of its October days the mere mention of at brings back to us who knew that hallowed place as children. There was the vast wooden amphitheatre where mad trotting races were run; where stolid cattle walked past the Chinese pagoda in the middle circle, and shook the blue ribbons on their horns. But it was underneath the tiers of seats (the whole way around the ring) that the chief attractions lay hid. These were the church booths, where fried oysters and sandwiches and cake and whit candy and ice-cream were sold by your mothers and sister for charity. These ladies wore white aprons as they waited on the burly farmers. And toward the close of the day for which they had volunteered they became distracted. Christ Church had a booth, and St. George's; and Dr. Thayer's, Unitarian, where Mrs. Brice might be found and Mr. Davitt's, conducted by Mr. Eliphalet Hopper on strictly business principles, and the Roman Catholic Cathedral, where Miss Renault and other young ladies of French descent presided: and Dr. Posthelwaite's, Presbyterian, which we shall come to presently. And others, the whole way around the ring.

There is one Fair which old St. Louisans still delight to recall,—that of the autumn of 1860—Think for a minute. You will remember that Virginia Carvel came back from Europe; and made quite a stir in a town where all who were worth knowing were intimates. Stephen caught a glimpse of her an the street, received a distant bow, and dreamed of her that night. Mr. Eliphalet Hopper, in his Sunday suit, was at the ferry to pay his respects to the Colonel, to offer his services, and to tell him how the business fared. His was the first St. Louis face that Virginia saw (Captain Lige being in New Orleans), and if she conversed with Eliphalet on the ferry with more warmth than ever before, there is nothing strange in that. Mr. Hopper rode home with them in the

carriage, and walked to Miss Crane's with his heart thumping against his breast, and wild thoughts whirling in his head.

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The next morning, in Virginia's sunny front room tears and laughter mingled. There was a present for Eugenie and Anne and Emily and Puss and Maude, and a hear kiss from the Colonel for each. And more tears and laughter and sighs as Mammy Easter and Rosetta unpacked the English trunks, and with trembling hands and rolling eyes laid each Parisian gown upon the bed.

But the Fair, the Fair!

At the thought of that glorious year my pen fails me. Why mention the dread possibility of the negro-worshiper Lincoln being elected the very next month? Why listen, to the rumblings in the South? Pompeii had chariot-races to the mutterings of Vesuvius. St. Louis was in gala garb to greet a Prince.

That was the year that Miss Virginia Carvel was given charge of the booth in Dr. Posthelwaite's church,—the booth next one of the great arches through which prancing horses and lowing cattle came.

Now who do you think stopped at the booth for a chat with Miss Jinny? Who made her blush as pink as her Paris gown? Who slipped into her hand the contribution for the church, and refused to take the cream candy she laughingly offered him as an equivalent?

None other than Albert Edward, Prince of Wales, Duke of Saxony, Duke of Cornwall and Rothesay, Earl of Chester and Carrick, Baron Renfrew, and Lord of the Isles. Out of compliment to the Republic which he visited, he bore the simple title of Lord Renfrew.

Bitter tears of envy, so it was said, were shed in the other booths. Belle Cluyme made a remark which is best suppressed. Eliphalet Hopper, in Mr. Davitt's booths, stared until his eyes watered. A great throng peered into the covered way, kept clear for his Royal Highness and suite, and for the prominent gentlemen who accompanied them. And when the Prince was seen to turn to His Grace, the Duke of Newcastle, and the subscription was forthcoming, a great cheer shook the building, while Virginia and the young ladies with her bowed and blushed and smiled. Colonel Carvel, who was a Director, laid his hand paternally on the blue coat of the young Prince. Reversing all precedent, he presented his Royal Highness to his daughter and to the other young ladies. It was done with the easy grace of a Southern gentleman. Whereupon Lord Renfrew bowed and smiled too, and stroked his mustache, which was a habit he had, and so fell naturally into the ways of Democracy.

Miss Puss Russell, who has another name, and whose hair is now white, will tell you how Virginia carried off the occasion with credit to her country.

It is safe to say that the Prince forgot "Silver Heels" and "Royal Oak," although they had been trotted past the Pagoda only that morning for his delectation. He had forgotten his

Honor the Mayor, who had held fast to the young man's arm as the four coal-black horses had pranced through the crowds all the way from Barnum's Hotel to the Fair Grounds. His Royal Highness forgot himself still further, and had at length withdrawn his hands from the pockets of his ample pantaloons and thrust his thumbs into his yellow waistcoat. And who shall blame him if Miss Virginia's replies to his sallies enchained him?

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Not the least impressive of those who stood by, smiling, was the figure of the tall Colonel, his hat off for once, and pride written on his face. Oh, that his dear wife might have lived to see this!

What was said in that historic interview with a future Sovereign of England, far from his royal palaces, on Democratic sawdust, with an American Beauty across a board counter, was immediately recorded by the Colonel, together with an exact description of his Royal Highness's blue coat, and light, flowing pantaloons, and yellow waist-coat, and colored kids; even the Prince's habit of stroking his mustache did not escape the watchful eye. It is said that his Grace of Newcastle smiled twice at Miss Virginia's retorts, and Lord Lyons, the British Minister, has more than two to his credit. But suddenly a strange thing happened. Miss Virginia in the very midst of a sentence paused, and then stopped. Her eyes had strayed from the Royal Countenance, and were fixed upon a point in the row of heads outside the promenade. Her sentence was completed—with some confusion. Perhaps it is no wonder that my Lord Renfrew, whose intuitions are quick, remarked that he had already remained too long, thus depriving the booth of the custom it otherwise should have had. This was a graceful speech, and a kingly. Followed by his retinue and the prominent citizens, he moved on. And it was remarked by keen observers that his Honor the Mayor had taken hold once more of the Prince's elbow, who divided his talk with Colonel Carver.

Dear Colonel Carvel! What a true American of the old type you were. You, nor the Mayor, nor the rest of the grave and elderly gentlemen were not blinded by the light of a royal Presence. You saw in him only an amiable and lovable young man, who was to succeed the most virtuous and lovable of sovereigns, Victoria. You, Colonel Carvel, were not one to cringe to royalty. Out of respect for the just and lenient Sovereign, his mother, you did honor to the Prince. But you did not remind him, as you might have, that your ancestors fought for the King at Marston Moor, and that your grandfather was once an intimate of Charles James Fox. But what shall we say of Mr. Cluyme, and of a few others whose wealth alone enabled them to be Directors of the Fair? Miss Isabel Cluyme was duly presented, in proper form, to his Royal Highness. Her father owned a "peerage," and had been abroad likewise. He made no such bull as the Colonel. And while the celebrated conversation of which we have spoken was in progress, Mr. Cluyme stood back and blushed for his countryman, and smiled apologetically at the few gentlemen of the royal suite who glanced his way.

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His Royal Highness then proceeded to luncheon, which is described by a most amiable Canadian correspondent who sent to his newspaper an account of it that I cannot forbear to copy. You may believe what he says, or not, just as you choose: "So interested was his Royal Highness in the proceedings that he stayed in the ring three and a half hours witnessing these trotting matches. He was invited to take lunch in a little wooden shanty prepared for the Directors, to which he accordingly repaired, but whether he got anything to eat or not, I cannot tell. After much trouble he forced his way to the table, which he found surrounded by a lot of ravenous animals. And upon some half dozen huge dishes were piled slices of beef, mutton, and buffalo tongue; beside them were great jugs of lager beer, rolls of bread, and plates of a sort of cabbage cut into thin shreds, raw, and mixed with vinegar. There were neither salt spoons nor mustard spoons, the knives the gentlemen were eating with serving in their stead; and, by the aid of nature's forks, the slices of beef and mutton were transferred to the plates of those who desired to eat. While your correspondent stood looking at the spectacle, the Duke of Newcastle came in, and he sat looking too. He was evidently trying to look democratic, but could not manage it. By his side stood a man urging him to try the lager beer, and cabbage also, I suppose. Henceforth, let the New York Aldermen who gave to the Turkish Ambassador ham sandwiches and bad sherry rest in peace."

Even that great man whose memory we love and revere, Charles Dickens, was not overkind to us, and saw our faults rather than our virtues. We were a nation of grasshoppers, and spat tobacco from early morning until late at night. This some of us undoubtedly did, to our shame be it said. And when Mr. Dickens went down the Ohio, early in the '40's, he complained of the men and women he met; who, bent with care, bolted through silent meals, and retired within their cabins. Mr. Dickens saw our ancestors bowed in a task that had been too great for other blood,—the task of bringing into civilization in the compass of a century a wilderness three thousand miles it breadth. And when his Royal Highness came to St. Louis and beheld one hundred thousand people at the Fair, we are sure that he knew how recently the ground he stood upon had been conquered from the forest.

A strange thing had happened, indeed. For, while the Prince lingered in front of the booth of Dr. Posthelwaite's church and chatted with Virginia, a crowd had gathered without. They stood peering over the barricade into the covered way, proud of the self-possession of their young countrywoman. And here, by a twist of fate, Mr. Stephen Brice found himself perched on a barrel beside his friend Richter. It was Richter who discovered her first.

"Himmel! It is Miss Carvel herself, Stephen," he cried, impatient at the impassive face of his companion. "Look, Stephen, look there."

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“Yes,” said Stephen, “I see.”

“Ach!” exclaimed the disgusted German, “will nothing move you? I have seen German princesses that are peasant women beside her. How she carries it off! See, the Prince is laughing!”

Stephen saw, and horror held him in a tremor. His one thought was of escape. What if she should raise her eyes, and amid those vulgar stares discern his own? And yet that was within him which told him that she would look up. It was only a question of moments, and then,—and then she would in truth despise him! Wedged tightly between the people, to move was to be betrayed. He groaned.

Suddenly he rallied, ashamed of his own false shame. This was because of one whom he had known for the short, space of a day—whom he was to remember for a lifetime. The man he worshipped, and she detested. Abraham Lincoln would not have blushed between honest clerks and farmers Why should Stephen Brice? And what, after all, was this girl to him? He could not tell. Almost the first day he had come to St. Louis the wires of their lives had crossed, and since then had crossed many times again, always with a spark. By the might of generations she was one thing, and he another. They were separated by a vast and ever-widening breach only to be closed by the blood and bodies of a million of their countrymen. And yet he dreamed of her.

Gradually, charmed like the simple people about him, Stephen became lost in the fascination of the scene. Suddenly confronted at a booth in a public fair with the heir to the English throne, who but one of her own kind might have carried it off so well, have been so complete a mistress of herself? Since, save for a heightened color, Virginia gave no sign of excitement. Undismayed, forgetful of the admiring crowd, unconscious of their stares until—until the very strength of his gaze had compelled her own. Such had been the prophecy within him. Nor did he wonder because, in that multitude of faces, her eyes had flown so straightly homeward to his.

With a rough effort that made an angry stir, Stephen flung the people aside and escaped, the astonished Richter following in his wake. Nor could the honest German dissuade him from going back to the office for the rest of the day, or discover what had happened.

But all through the afternoon that scene was painted on the pages of Stephen’s books. The crude booth in the darkened way. The free pose of the girl standing in front of her companions, a blue wisp of autumn sunlight falling at her feet. The young Prince laughing at her sallies, and the elderly gentleman smiling with benevolence upon the pair.

CHAPTER XII

INTO WHICH A POTENTATE COMES

Virginia danced with the Prince, “by Special Appointment,” at the ball that evening. So did her aunt, Mrs. Addison Colfax. So likewise was Miss Belle Cluyme among those honored and approved. But Virginia wore the most beautiful of her Paris gowns, and seemed a princess to one watching from the gallery. Stephen was sure that his Royal Highness made that particular dance longer than the others. It was decidedly longer than the one he had with Miss Cluyme, although that young lady had declared she was in heaven.

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Alas, that princes cannot abide with us forever! His Royal Highness bade farewell to St. Louis, and presently that same 'City of Alton' which bore him northward came back again in like royal state, and this time it was in honor of a Democrat potentate. He is an old friend now, Senator and Judge and Presidential Candidate,—Stephen Arnold Douglas,—father of the doctrine of Local Sovereignty, which he has come to preach. So goes the world. We are no sooner rid of one hero than we are ready for another.

Blow, you bandsmen on the hurricane deck, let the shores echo with your national airs! Let the gay bunting wave in the river breeze! Uniforms flash upon the guards, for no campaign is complete without the military. Here are brave companies of the Douglas Guards, the Hickory Sprouts, and the Little Giants to do honor to the person of their hero. Cannon are booming as he steps into his open carriage that evening on the levee, where the piles of river freight are covered with people. Transparencies are dodging in the darkness. A fresh band strikes up "Hail Columbia," and the four horses prance away, followed closely by the "Independent Broom Rangers." "The shouts for Douglas," remarked a keen observer who was present, "must have penetrated Abraham's bosom at Springfield."

Mr. Jacob Cluyme, who had been a Bell and Everett man until that day, was not the only person of prominence converted. After the speech he assured the Judge that he was now undergoing the greatest pleasure of his life in meeting the popular orator, the true representative man of the Great West, the matured statesman, and the able advocate of national principles. And although Mr. Douglas looked as if he had heard something of the kind before, he pressed Mr. Cluyme's hand warmly.

So was the author of Popular Sovereignty, "the great Bulwark of American Independence," escorted to the Court House steps, past houses of his stanch supporters; which were illuminated in his honor. Stephen, wedged. among the people, remarked that the Judge had lost none of his self-confidence since that day at Freeport. Who, seeing the Democratic candidate smiling and bowing to the audience that blocked the wide square, would guess that the Question troubled him at all, or that he missed the votes of the solid South? How gravely the Judge listened to the eulogy of the prominent citizen, who reminded him that his work was not yet finished, and that he still was harnessed to the cause of the people! And how happy was the choice of that word harnessed!

The Judge had heard (so he said) with deep emotion the remarks of the chairman. Then followed one of those masterful speeches which wove a spell about those who listened,—which, like the most popular of novels, moved to laughter and to tears, to anger and to pity. Mr. Brice and Mr Richter were not the only Black Republicans who were depressed that night. And they trudged homeward with the wild enthusiasm still ringing in their ears, heavy with the thought that the long, hot campaign of their own Wide-Awakes might be in vain.

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They had a grim reproof from Judge Whipple in the morning.

“So you too, gentlemen, took opium last night,” was all he said.

The dreaded possibility of Mr. Lincoln’s election did not interfere with the gayeties. The week after the Fair Mr. Clarence Colfax gave a great dance at Bellegarde, in honor of his cousin, Virginia, to which Mr. Stephen Brice was not invited. A majority of Company A was there. Virginia would have liked to have had them in uniform.

It was at this time that Anne Brinsmade took the notion of having a ball in costume. Virginia, on hearing the news, rode over from Bellegarde, and flinging her reins to Nicodemus ran up to Anne’s little dressing-room.

“Whom have you invited, Anne?” she demanded.

Anne ran over the long list of their acquaintance, but there was one name she omitted.

“Are you sure that that is all?” asked Virginia, searchingly, when she had finished.

Anne looked mystified.

“I have invited Stephen Brice, Jinny,” she said. But!—”

“But!” cried Virginia. “I knew it. Am I to be confronted with that Yankee everywhere I go? It is always ‘Stephen Brice’, and he is ushered in with a but.”

Anne was quite overcome by this outburst. She had dignity, however, and plenty of it. And she was a loyal friend.

“You have no right to criticise my guests, Virginia.”

Virginia, seated on the arm of a chair, tapped her foot on the floor.

“Why couldn’t things remain as they were?” she said. “We were so happy before these Yankees came. And they are not content in trying to deprive us of our rights. They must spoil our pleasure, too.”

“Stephen Brice is a gentleman,” answered Anne. “He spoils no one’s pleasure, and goes no place that he is not asked.”

“He has not behaved according to my idea of a gentleman, the few times that I have been unfortunate enough to encounter him,” Virginia retorted.

“You are the only one who says so, then.” Here the feminine got the better of Anne’s prudence, and she added. “I saw you waltz with him once, Jinny Carvel, and I am sure you never enjoyed a dance as much in your life.”

Virginia blushed purple.

“Anne Brinsmade!” she cried. “You may have your ball, and your Yankees, all of them you want. But I shan’t come. How I wish I had never seen that horrid Stephen Brice! Then you would never have insulted me.”

Virginia rose and snatched her riding-whip. This was too much for Anne. She threw her arms around her friend without more ado.

“Don’t quarrel with me, Jinny,” she said tearfully. “I couldn’t bear it. He—Mr. Brice is not coming, I am sure.”

Virginia disengaged herself.

“He is not coming?”

“No,” said Anne. “You asked me if he was invited. And I was going on to tell you that he could not come.”

She stopped, and stared at Virginia in bewilderment. That young lady, instead of beaming, had turned her back. She stood flicking her whip at the window, gazing out over the trees, down the slope to the river. Miss Russell might have interpreted these things. Simple Anne!

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“Why isn’t he coming?” said Virginia, at last.

“Because he is to be one of the speakers at a big meeting that night. Have you seen him since you got home, Jinny? He is thinner than he was. We are much worried about him, because he has worked so hard this summer.”

“A Black Republican meeting!” exclaimed Virginia, scornfully ignoring the rest of what was said. “Then I’ll come, Anne dear,” she cried, tripping the length of the room. “I’ll come as Titania. Who will you be?”

She cantered off down the drive and out of the gate, leaving a very puzzled young woman watching her from the window. But when Virginia reached the forest at the bend of the road, she pulled her horse down to a walk.

She bethought herself of the gown which her Uncle Daniel had sent her from Calvert House, and of the pearls. And she determined to go as her great-grandmother, Dorothy Carvel.

Shades of romance! How many readers will smile before the rest of this true incident is told?

What had happened was this. Miss Anne Brinsmade had driven to town in her mother’s Jenny Lind a day or two before, and had stopped (as she often did) to pay a call on Mrs. Brice. This lady, as may be guessed, was not given to discussion of her husband’s ancestors, nor of her own. But on the walls of the little dining-room hung a Copley and two Stuarts. One of the Stuarts was a full length of an officer in the buff and blue of the Continental Army. And it was this picture which caught Anne’s eye that day.

“How like Stephen!” she exclaimed. And added. “Only the face is much older. Who is it, Mrs. Brice?”

“Colonel Wilton Brice, Stephen’s grandfather. There is a marked look about all the Brices. He was only twenty years of age when the Revolution began. That picture was painted much later in life, after Stuart came back to America, when the Colonel was nearly forty. He had kept his uniform, and his wife persuaded him to be painted in it.”

“If Stephen would only come as Colonel Wilton Brice!” she cried. “Do you think he would, Mrs. Brice?”

Mrs. Brice laughed, and shook her head.

“I am afraid not, Anne,” she said. “I have a part of the uniform upstairs, but I could never induce him even to try it on.”

As she drove from shop to shop that day, Anne reflected that it certainly would not be like Stephen to wear his grandfather's uniform to a ball. But she meant to ask him, at any rate. And she had driven home immediately to write her invitations. It was with keen disappointment that she read his note of regret.

However, on the very day of the ball, Anne chanced to be in town again, and caught sight of Stephen pushing his way among the people on Fourth Street. She waved her hand to him, and called to Nicodemus to pull up at the sidewalk.

"We are all so sorry that you are not coming," said she, impulsively. And there she stopped short. For Anne was a sincere person, and remembered Virginia. "That is, I am so sorry," she added, a little hastily. "Stephen, I saw the portrait of your grandfather, and I wanted you to come in his costume."

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Stephen, smiling down on her, said nothing. And poor Anne, in her fear that he had perceived the shade in her meaning, made another unfortunate remark.

“If you were not a—a Republican—” she said.

“A Black Republican,” he answered, and laughed at her discomfiture. “What then?”

Anne was very red.

“I only meant that if you were not a Republican, there would be no meeting to address that night.”

“It does not make any difference to you what my politics are, does it?” he asked, a little earnestly.

“Oh, Stephen!” she exclaimed, in gentle reproof.

“Some people have discarded me,” he said, striving to smile.

She wondered whether he meant Virginia, and whether he cared. Still further embarrassed, she said something which she regretted immediately.

“Couldn’t you contrive to come?”

He considered.

“I will come, after the meeting, if it is not too late,” he said at length. “But you must not tell any one.”

He lifted his hat, and hurried on, leaving Anne in a quandary. She wanted him. But what was she to say to Virginia? Virginia was coming on the condition that he was not to be there. And Anne was scrupulous.

Stephen, too, was almost instantly sorry that he had promised. The little costumer’s shop (the only one in the city at that time) had been ransacked for the occasion, and nothing was left to fit him. But when he reached home there was a strong smell of camphor in his mother’s room. Colonel Brice’s cocked hat and sword and spurs lay on the bed, and presently Hester brought in the blue coat and buff waistcoat from the kitchen, where she had been pressing them. Stephen must needs yield to his mother’s persuasions and try them on—they were more than a passable fit. But there were the breeches and cavalry boots to be thought of, and the ruffled shirt and the powdered wig. So before tea he hurried down to the costumer’s again, not quite sure that he was not making a fool of himself, and yet at last sufficiently entered into the spirit of the thing. The coat was mended and freshened. And when after tea he dressed in the character, his appearance was so striking that his mother could not refrain from some

little admiration. As for Hester, she was in transports. Stephen was human, and young. But still the frivolity of it all troubled him. He had inherited from Colonel Wilton Brice, the Puritan, other things beside clothes. And he felt in his heart as he walked soberly to the hall that this was no time for fancy dress balls. All intention of going was banished by the time his turn had come to speak.

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But mark how certain matters are beyond us. Not caring to sit out the meeting on the platform, he made his way down the side of the crowded hall, and ran into (of all people) big Tom Catherwood. As the Southern Rights politics of the Catherwood family were a matter of note in the city, Stephen did not attempt to conceal his astonishment. Tom himself was visibly embarrassed. He congratulated Stephen on his speech, and volunteered the news that he had come in a spirit of fairness to hear what the intelligent leaders of the Republican party, such as Judge Whipple, had to say. After that he fidgeted. But the sight of him started in Stephen a train of thought that closed his ears for once to the Judge's words. He had had before a huge liking for Tom. Now he admired him, for it was no light courage that took one of his position there. And Stephen remembered that Tom was not risking merely the displeasure of his family and his friends, but likewise something of greater value than, either. From childhood Tom had been the devoted slave of Virginia Carvel, with as little chance of marrying her as a man ever had. And now he was endangering even that little alliance.

And so Stephen began to think of Virginia, and to wonder what she would wear at Anne's party; and to speculate how she would have treated him if had gone. To speak truth, this last matter had no little weight in his decision to stay away. But we had best leave motives to those whose business and equipment it is to weigh to a grain. Since that agonizing moment when her eyes had met his own among the curiously vulgar at the Fair, Stephen's fear of meeting Virginia had grown to the proportions of a terror. And yet there she was in his mind, to take possession of it on the slightest occasion.

When Judge Whipple had finished, Tom rose. He awoke Mr. Brice from a trance.

"Stephen," said he, "of course you're going to the Brinsmade's."

Stephen shook his head.

"Why not?" said Tom, in surprise. "Haven't you a costume?"

"Yes," he answered dubiously.

"Why, then, you've got to come with me," says Tom, heartily. "It isn't too late, and they'll want you. I've a buggy, and I'm going to the Russells' to change my clothes. Came along"

Steven went.

CHAPTER XIII

AT MR. BRINSMADE'S GATE

The eastern side of the Brinsmade house is almost wholly taken up by the big drawing-room where Anne gave her fancy-dress ball. From the windows might be seen, through the trees in the grounds, the Father of Waters below. But the room is gloomy now, that once was gay, and a heavy coat of soot is spread on the porch at the back, where the apple blossoms still fall thinly in the spring. The huge black town has coiled about the place the garden still struggles on, but the giants of the forest are dying and dead. Bellefontaine Road itself, once the drive of fashion, is no more. Trucks and cars crowd the streets which follow its once rural windings, and gone forever are those comely wooded hills and green pastures,—save in the memory of those who have been spared to dream.

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Still the old house stands, begrimed but stately, rebuking the sordid life around it. Still come into it the Brinsmades to marriage and to death. Five and sixty years are gone since Mr. Calvin Brinsmade took his bride there. They sat on the porch in the morning light, harking to the whistle of the quail in the corn, and watching the frightened deer scamper across the open. Do you see the bride in her high-waisted gown, and Mr. Calvin in his stock and his blue tail-coat and brass buttons?

Old people will tell you of the royal hospitality then, of the famous men and women who promenaded under those chandeliers, and sat down to the game-laden table. In 1835 General Atkinson and his officers thought nothing of the twenty miles from Jefferson Barracks below, nor of dancing all night with the Louisville belles, who were Mrs. Brinsmade's guests. Thither came Miss Todd of Kentucky, long before she thought of taking for a husband that rude man of the people, Abraham Lincoln. Foreigners of distinction fell in love with the place, with its open-hearted master and mistress, and wrote of it in their journals. Would that many of our countrymen, who think of the West as rough, might have known the quality of the Brinsmades and their neighbors!

An era of charity, of golden simplicity, was passing on that October night of Anne Brinsmade's ball. Those who made merry there were soon to be driven and scattered before the winds of war; to die at Wilson's Creek, or Shiloh, or to be spared for heroes of the Wilderness. Some were to eke out a life of widowhood in poverty. All were to live soberly, chastened by what they had seen. A fear knocked at Colonel Carvel's heart as he stood watching the bright figures.

"Brinsmade," he said, "do you remember this room in May, '46?"

Mr. Brinsmade, startled, turned upon him quickly.

"Why, Colonel, you have read my very thoughts," he said. "Some of those who were here then are—are still in Mexico."

"And some who came home, Brinsmade, blamed God because they had not fallen," said the Colonel.

"Hush, Comyn, His will be done," he answered; "He has left a daughter to comfort you."

Unconsciously their eyes sought Virginia. In her gown of faded primrose and blue with its quaint stays and short sleeves, she seemed to have caught the very air of the decorous century to which it belonged. She was standing against one of the pilasters at the side of the room, laughing demurely at the antics of Becky Sharp and Sir John Falstaff,—Miss Puss Russell and Mr. Jack Brinsmade, respectively.

Mr. Tennyson's "Idylls" having appeared but the year before, Anne was dressed as Elaine, a part which suited her very well. It was strange indeed to see her waltzing with

Daniel Boone (Mr. Clarence Colfax) in his Indian buckskins. Eugenie went as Marie Antoinette. Tall Maude Catherwood was most imposing as Rebecca; and her brother George made a towering Friar Tuck, Even little fifteen-year-old Spencer Catherwood, the contradiction of the family, was there. He went as the lieutenant Napoleon, walking about with his hands behind his back and his brows thoughtfully contracted.

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The Indian summer night was mild. It was at tine very height of the festivities that Dorothy Carvel and Mr. Daniel Boone were making their way together to the porch when the giant gate-keeper of Kenilworth Castle came stalking up the steps out of the darkness, brandishing his club in their faces. Dorothy screamed, and even the doughty Daniel gave back a step.

“Tom Catherwood! How dare you? You frightened me nearly to death.”

“I’m sorry, Jinny, indeed I am,” said the giant, repentant, and holding her hand in his.

“Where have you been?” demanded Virginia, a little mollified. “What makes you so late?”

“I’ve been to a Lincoln meeting,” said honest Tom; “where I heard a very fine speech from a friend of yours.”

Virginia tossed her head.

“You might have been better employed,” said she, and added, with dignity, “I have no friends who speak at Black Republican meetings.”

“How about Judge Whipple?” said Tom.

She stopped. “Did you mean the Judge?” she asked, over her shoulder.

“No,” said Tom, “I meant—”

He got no further. Virginia slipped her arm through Clarence’s, and they went off together to the end of the veranda. Poor Tom! He passed on into the gay drawing-room, but the zest had been taken out of his antics for that night.

“Whom did he mean, Jinny?” said Clarence, when they were on the seat under the vines.

“He meant that Yankee, Stephen Brice,” answered Virginia, languidly. “I am so tired of hearing about him.”

“So am I,” said Clarence, with a fervor by no means false. “By George, I think he will make a Black Republican out of Tom, if he keeps on. Puss and Jack have been talking about him all summer, until I am out of patience. I reckon he has brains. But suppose he has addressed fifty Lincoln meetings, as they say, is that any reason for making much of him? I should not have him at Bellegarde. I am surprised that Mr. Russell allows him in his house. I can see why Anne likes him.”

“Why?”

“He is on the Brinsmade charity list.”

“He is not on their charity list, nor on any other,” said Virginia, quickly. “Stephen Brice is the last person who would submit to charity.”

“And you are the last person who I supposed would stand up for him,” cried her cousin, surprised and nettled.

There was an instant’s silence.

“I want to be fair, Max,” she said quietly. “Pa offered them our Glencoe House last summer at a low price, and they insisted on paying what Mr. Edwards gave five years ago,—or nothing. You know that I detest a Yankee as much as you do,” she continued, indignation growing in her voice. “I did not come out here with you to be insulted.”

With her hand on the rail, she made as if to rise. Clarence was perforce mollified.

“Don’t go, Jinny,” he said beseechingly. “I didn’t mean to make you angry—”

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“I can’t see why you should always be dragging in this Mr. Brice,” she said, almost tearfully. (It will not do to pause now and inquire into Virginia’s logic.) “I came out to hear what you had to tell me.”

“Jinny, I have been made second lieutenant of Company A.”

“Oh, Max, I am so glad! I am so proud of you!”

“I suppose that you have heard the result of the October elections, Jinny.”

“Pa said something about them to-night,” she answered; why?”

“It looks now as if there were a chance of the Republicans winning,” he answered. But it was elation that caught his voice, not gloom.

“You mean that this white trash Lincoln may be President?” she exclaimed, seizing his arm.

“Never!” he cried. “The South will not submit to that until every man who can bear arms is shot down.” He paused. The strains of a waltz mingled with talk and laughter floated out of the open window. His voice dropped to a low intensity. “We are getting ready in Company A,” he said; “the traitors will be dropped. We are getting ready to fight for Missouri and for the South.”

The girl felt his excitement, his exaltation.

“And if you were not, Max, I should disown you,” she whispered.

He leaned forward until his face was close to hers.

“And now?” he said.

“I am ready to work, to starve, to go to prison, to help—”

He sank back heavily into the corner.

“Is that all, Jinny?”

“All?” she repeated. “Oh, if a woman could only do more!”

“And is there nothing—for me?”

Virginia straightened.

“Are you doing this for a reward?” she demanded.

“No,” he answered passionately. “You know that I am not. Do you remember when you told me that I was good for nothing, that I lacked purpose?”

“Yes, Max.”

“I have thought it over since,” he went on rapidly; “you were right. I cannot work—it is not in me. But I have always felt that I could make a name for myself—for you—in the army. I am sure that I could command a regiment. And now the time is coming.”

She did not answer him, but absently twisted the fringe of his buckskins in her fingers.

“Ever since I have known what love is I have loved you, Jinny. It was so when we climbed the cherry trees at Bellegarde. And you loved me then—I know you did. You loved me when I went East to school at the Military Institute. But it has not been the same of late,” he faltered. “Something has happened. I felt it first on that day you rode out to Bellegarde when you said that my life was of no use. Jinny, I don’t ask much. I am content to prove myself. War is coming, and we shall have to free ourselves from Yankee insolence. It is what we have both wished for. When I am a general, will you marry me?”

For a wavering instant she might have thrown herself into his outstretched arms. Why not, and have done with sickening doubts? Perhaps her hesitation hung on the very boyishness of his proposal. Perhaps the revelation that she did not then fathom was that he had not developed since those childish days. But even while she held back, came the beat of hoofs on the gravel below them, and one of the Bellegarde servants rode into the light pouring through the open door. He called for his master.

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Clarence muttered his dismay as he followed his cousin to the steps.

“What is it?” asked Virginia, alarmed.

“Nothing; I forgot to sign the deed to the Elleardsville property, and Worington wants it to-night.” Cutting short Sambo’s explanations, Clarence vaulted on the horse. Virginia was at his stirrup. Leaning over in the saddle, he whispered: “I’ll be back in a quarter of an hour Will you wait?”

“Yes,” she said, so that he barely heard.

“Here?”

She nodded.

He was away at a gallop, leaving Virginia standing bareheaded to the night, alone. A spring of pity, of affection for Clarence suddenly welled up within her. There came again something of her old admiration for a boy, impetuous and lovable, who had tormented and defended her with the same hand.

Patriotism, stronger in Virginia than many of us now can conceive, was on Clarence’s side. Ambition was strong in her likewise. Now was she all afire with the thought that she, a woman, might by a single word give the South a leader. That word would steady him, for there was no question of her influence. She trembled at the reckless lengths he might go in his dejection, and a memory returned to her of a day at Glencoe, before he had gone off to school, when she had refused to drive with him. Colonel Carvel had been away from home. She had pretended not to care. In spite of Ned’s beseechings Clarence had ridden off on a wild thoroughbred colt and had left her to an afternoon of agony. Vividly she recalled his home-coming in the twilight, his coat torn and muddy, a bleeding cut on his forehead, and the colt quivering tame.

In those days she had thought of herself unreservedly as meant for him. Dash and courage and generosity had been the beacon lights on her horizon. But now? Were there not other qualities? Yes, and Clarence should have these, too. She would put them into him. She also had been at fault, and perhaps it was because of her wavering loyalty to him that he had not gained them.

Her name spoken within the hall startled Virginia from her reverie, and she began to walk rapidly down the winding drive. A fragment of the air to which they were dancing brought her to a stop. It was the Jenny Lind waltz. And with it came clear and persistent the image she had sought to shut out and failed. As if to escape it now, she fairly ran all the way to the light at the entrance and hid in the magnolias clustered beside the gateway. It was her cousin’s name she whispered over and over to herself as she waited, vibrant with a strange excitement. It was as though the very elements

might thwart her wail. Clarence would be delayed, or they would miss her at the house, and search. It seemed an eternity before she heard the muffled thud of a horse cantering in the clay road.

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Virginia stood out in the light fairly between the gate posts. Too late she saw the horse rear as the rider flew back in his seat, for she had seized the bridle. The beams from the lamp fell upon a Revolutionary horseman, with cooked hat and sword and high riding-boots. For her his profile was in silhouette, and the bold nose and chin belonged to but one man she knew. He was Stephen Brice. She gave a cry of astonishment and dropped the rein in dismay. Hot shame was surging in her face. Her impulse was to fly, nor could she tell what force that stayed her feet.

As for Stephen, he stood high in his stirrups and stared down at the girl. She was standing full in the light,—her lashes fallen, her face crimson. But no sound of surprise escaped him because it was she, nor did he wonder at her gown of a gone-by century. Her words came first, and they were low. She did not address him by name.

“I—I thought that you were my cousin,” she said. “What must you think of me!”

Stephen was calm.

“I expected it,” he answered.

She gave a step backward, and raised her frightened eyes to his.

“You expected it?” she faltered.

“I can’t say why,” he said quickly, “but it seems to me as if this had happened before. I know that I am talking nonsense—”

Virginia was trembling now. And her answer was not of her own choosing.

“It has happened before,” she cried. “But where? And when?”

“It may have been in a dream,” he answered her, “that I saw you as you stand there by my bridle. I even know the gown you wear.”

She put her hand to her forehead. Had it been a dream? And what mystery was it that sent him here this night of all nights? She could not even have said that it was her own voice making reply.

“And I—I have seen you, with the sword, and the powdered hair, and the blue coat and the buff waistcoat. It is a buff waistcoat like that my great-grandfather wears in his pictures.”

“It is a buff waistcoat,” he said, all sense of strangeness gone.

The roses she held dropped on the gravel, and she put out her hand against his horse’s flank. In an instant he had leaped from his saddle, and his arm was holding her. She

did not resist, marvelling rather at his own steadiness, nor did she then resent a tenderness in his voice.

“I hope you will forgive me—Virginia,” he said. “I should not have mentioned this. And yet I could not help it.”

She looked up at him rather wildly.

“It was I who stopped you,” she said; “I was waiting for—”

“For whom?”

The interruption brought remembrance.

“For my cousin, Mr. Colfax,” she answered, in another tone. And as she spoke she drew away from him, up the driveway. But she had scarcely taken five steps whey she turned again, her face burning defiance. “They told me you were not coming,” she said almost fiercely. “Why did you come?”

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It was a mad joy that Stephen felt.

“You did not wish me to come?” he demanded.

“Oh, why do you ask that?” she cried. “You know I would not have been here had I thought you were coming. Anne promised me that you would not come.”

What would she not have given for those words back again

Stephen took astride toward her, and to the girl that stride betokened a thousand things that went to the man’s character. Within its compass the comparison in her mind was all complete. He was master of himself when he spoke.

“You dislike me, Miss Carvel,” he said steadily. “I do not blame you. Nor do I flatter myself that it is only because you believe one thing, and I another. But I assure you that it is my misfortune rather than my fault that I have not pleased you,—that I have met you only to anger you.”

He paused, for she did not seem to hear him. She was gazing at the distant lights moving on the river. Had he come one step farther?—but he did not. Presently she knew that he was speaking again, in the same measured tone.

“Had Miss Brinsmade told me that my presence here would cause you annoyance, I should have stayed away. I hope that you will think nothing of the—the mistake at the gate. You may be sure that I shall not mention it. Good night, Miss Carvel.”

He lifted his hat, mounted his horse, and was gone. She had not even known that he could ride—that was strangely the first thought. The second discovered herself intent upon the rhythm of his canter as it died southward upon the road. There was shame in this, mingled with a thankfulness that he would not meet Clarence. She hurried a few steps toward the house, and stopped again. What should she say to Clarence now? What could she say to him?

But Clarence was not in her head. Ringing there was her talk with Stephen Brice, as though it were still rapidly going on. His questions and her replies—over and over again. Each trivial incident of an encounter real and yet unreal! His transformation in the uniform, which had seemed so natural. Though she strove to make it so, nothing of all this was unbearable now, nor the remembrance of the firm torch of his arm about her nor yet again his calling her by her name.

Absently she took her way again up the drive, now pausing, now going on, forgetful. First it was alarm she felt when her cousin leaped down at her side,—then dread.

“I thought I should never get back,” he cried breathlessly, as he threw his reins to Sambo. “I ought not to have asked you to wait outside. Did it seem long, Jinny?”

She answered something, There was a seat near by under the trees. To lead her to it he seized her hand, but it was limp and cold, and a sudden fear came into his voice.

“Jinny!”

“Yes.”

She resisted, and he dropped her fingers. She remembered long how he stood in the scattered light from the bright windows, a tall, black figure of dismay. She felt the yearning in his eyes. But her own response, warm half an hour since, was lifeless.

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“Jinny,” he said, “what is the matter?”

“Nothing, Max. Only I was very foolish to say I would wait for you.”

“Then—then you won’t marry me?”

“Oh, Max,” she cried, “it is no time to talk of that now. I feel to-night as if something dreadful were to happen.”

“Do you mean war?” he asked.

“Yes,” she said. “Yes.”

“But war is what we want,” he cried, “what we have prayed for, what we have both been longing for to-night, Jinny. War alone will give us our rights—”

He stopped short. Virginia had bowed her head an her hands, and he saw her shoulders shaken by a sob. Clarence bent over her in bewilderment and anxiety.

“You are not well, Jinny,” he said.

“I am not well,” she answered. “Take me into the house.”

But when they went in at the door, he saw that her eyes were dry.

Those were the days when a dozen young ladies were in the habit of staying all night after a dance in the country; of long whispered talks (nay, not always whispered) until early morning. And of late breakfasts. Miss Russell had not been the only one who remarked Virginia’s long absence with her cousin; but Puss found her friend in one of those moods which even she dared not disturb. Accordingly Miss Russell stayed all night with Anne.

And the two spent most of the dark hours remaining in unprofitable discussion as to whether Virginia were at last engaged to her cousin, and in vain queried over another unsolved mystery. This mystery was taken up at the breakfast table the next morning, when Miss Carvel surprised Mrs. Brinsmade and the male household by appearing at half-past seven.

“Why, Jinny,” cried Mr. Brinsmade, “what does this mean? I always thought that young ladies did not get up after a ball until noon.”

Virginia smiled a little nervously.

“I am going to ask you to take me to town when you go, Mr. Brinsmade.”

“Why, certainly, my dear,” he said. “But I under stood that your aunt was to send for you this afternoon from Bellegarde.”

Virginia shook her head. There is something I wis to do in town.”

“I’ll drive her in, Pa,” said Jack. “You’re too old. Will you go with me, Jinny?”

“Of course, Jack.”

“But you must eat some breakfast, Jinny,” said Mrs Brinsmade, glancing anxiously at the girl.

Mr. Brinsmade put down his newspaper.

“Where was Stephen Brice last night, Jack?” he asked. “I understood Anne to say that he had spoke; of coming late.”

“Why, sir,” said Jack, “that’s what we can’t make out. Tom Catherwood, who is always doing queer things, you know, went to a Black Republican meeting last night, and met Stephen there. They came out in Tom’s buggy to the Russells’, and Tom got into his clothes first and rode over. Stephen was to have followed on Puss Russell’s horse. But he never got here. At least I can find no one who saw him. Did you, Jinny?”

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But Virginia did not raise her eyes from her plate. A miraculous intervention came through Mrs. Brinsmade.

“There might have been an accident, Jack,” said that lady, with concern. “Send Nicodemus over to Mrs. Russell’s at once to inquire. You know that Mr. Brice is a Northerner, and may not be able to ride.”

Jack laughed.

“He rides like a dragoon, mother,” said he. “I don’t know where he picked it up.”

“The reason I mentioned him,” said Mr. Brinsmade, lifting the blanket sheet and adjusting his spectacles, “was because his name caught my eye in this paper. His speech last night at the Library Hall is one of the few sensible Republican speeches I have read. I think it very remarkable for a man as young as he.” Mr. Brinsmade began to read: “’While waiting for the speaker of the evening, who was half an hour late, Mr. Tiefel rose in the audience and called loudly for Mr. Brice. Many citizens in the hall were astonished at the cheering which followed the mention of this name. Mr. Brice is a young lawyer with a quiet manner and a determined face, who has sacrificed much to the Party’s cause this summer. He was introduced by Judge Whipple, in whose office he is. He had hardly begun to speak before he had the ear of everyone in the house. Mr. Brice’s personality is prepossessing, his words are spoken sharply, and he has a singular emphasis at times which seems to drive his arguments into the minds of his hearers. We venture to say that if party orators here and elsewhere were as logical and temperate as Mr. Brice; if, like him, they appealed to reason rather than to passion, those bitter and lamentable differences which threaten our country’s peace might be amicably adjusted.’ Let me read what he said.”

But he was interrupted by the rising of Virginia. A high color was on the girl’s face as she said:

“Please excuse me, Mrs. Brinsmade, I must go and get ready.”

“But you’ve eaten nothing, my dear.”

Virginia did not reply. She was already on the stairs.

“You ought not have read that, Pa,” Mr. Jack remonstrated; “you know that she detests Yankees”

CHAPTER XIV

The breach becomes too wide
Abraham Lincoln!

At the foot of Breed's Hill in Charlestown an American had been born into the world, by the might of whose genius that fateful name was sped to the uttermost parts of the nation. Abraham Lincoln was elected President of the United States. And the moan of the storm gathering in the South grew suddenly loud and louder.

Stephen Brice read the news in the black headlines and laid down the newspaper, a sense of the miraculous upon him. There again was the angled, low-celled room of the country tavern, reeking with food and lamps and perspiration; for a central figure the man of surpassing homeliness,—coatless, tieless, and vestless,—telling a story in the vernacular. He reflected that it might well seem strange yea, and intolerable—to many that this comedian of the country store, this crude lawyer and politician, should inherit the seat dignified by Washington and the Adamses.

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And yet Stephen believed. For to him had been vouchsafed the glimpse beyond.

That was a dark winter that followed, the darkest in our history. Gloom and despondency came fast upon the heels of Republican exultation. Men rose early for tidings from Charleston, the storm centre. The Union was cracking here and there. Would it crumble in pieces before Abraham Lincoln got to Washington?

One smoky morning early in December Stephen arrived late at the office to find Richter sitting idle on his stool, concern graven on his face.

“The Judge has had no breakfast, Stephen,” he whispered. “Listen! Shadrach tells me he has been doing that since six this morning, when he got his newspaper.”

Stephen listened, and he heard the Judge pacing and pacing in his room. Presently the door was flung open, And they saw Mr. Whipple standing in the threshold, stern and dishevelled. Astonishment did not pause here. He came out and sat down in Stephen’s chair, striking the newspaper in his hand, and they feared at first that his Mind had wandered.

“Propitiate!” he cried, “propitiate, propitiate, and again propitiate. How long, O Lord?” Suddenly he turned upon Stephen, who was frightened. But now his voice was natural, and he thrust the paper into the young man’s lap. “Have you read the President’s message to Congress, sir? God help me that I am spared to call that wobbling Buchanan President. Read it. Read it, sir. You have a legal brain. Perhaps you can tell me why, if a man admits that it is wrong for a state to abandon this Union, he cannot call upon Congress for men and money to bring her back. No, this weakling lets Floyd stock the Southern arsenals. He pays tribute to Barbary. He is for bribing them not to be angry. Take Cuba from Spain, says he, and steal the rest of Mexico that the maw of slavery may be filled, and the demon propitiated.”

They dared not answer him. And so he went back into his room, shutting the door. That day no clients saw him, even those poor ones dependent on his charity whom had never before denied. Richter and Stephen took counsel together, and sent Shadrach out for his dinner.

Three weeks passed. There arrived a sparkling Sunday, brought down the valley of the Missouri from the frozen northwest. The Saturday had been soggy and warm.

Thursday had seen South Carolina leave that Union into which she was born, amid prayers and the ringing of bells. Tuesday was to be Christmas day. A young lady, who had listened to a solemn sermon of Dr. Posthelwaite’s, slipped out of Church before the prayers were ended, and hurried into that deserted portion of the town about the Court House where on week days business held its sway.

She stopped once at the bottom of the grimy flight of steps leading to Judge Whipple's office. At the top she paused again, and for a short space stood alert, her glance resting on the little table in the corner, on top of which a few thumbed law books lay neatly piled. Once she made a hesitating step in this direction. Then, as if by a resolution quickly taken, she turned her back and softly opened the door of the Judge's room. He was sitting upright in his chair. A book was open in his lap, but it did not seem to Virginia that he was reading it.

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“Uncle Silas,” she said, “aren’t you coming to dinner any more?”

He looked up swiftly from under his shaggy brows. The book fell to the floor.

“Uncle Silas,” said Virginia, bravely, “I came to get you to-day.”

Never before had she known him to turn away from man or woman, but now Judge Whipple drew his handkerchief from his pocket and blew his nose violently. A woman’s intuition told her that locked tight in his heart was what he longed to say, and could not. The shiny black overcoat he wore was on the bed. Virginia picked it up and held it out to him, an appeal in her eyes.

He got into it. Then she handed him his hat. Many people walking home from church that morning marvelled as they saw these two on Locust Street together, the young girl supporting the elderly man over the slippery places at the crossings. For neighbor had begun to look coldly upon neighbor.

Colonel Carvel beheld them from his armchair by the sitting-room window, and leaned forward with a start. His lips moved as he closed his Bible reverently and marked his place. At the foot of the stairs he surprised Jackson by waving him aside, for the Colonel himself flung open the door and held out his hand to his friend. The Judge released Virginia’s arm, and his own trembled as he gave it.

“Silas,” said the Colonel, “Silas, we’ve missed you.”

Virginia stood by, smiling, but her breath came deeply. Had she done right? Could any good come of it all? Judge Whipple did not go in at the door—He stood uncompromisingly planted on the threshold, his head flung back, and actual fierceness in his stare.

“Do you guess we can keep off the subject, Comyn?” he demanded.

Even Mr. Carvel, so used to the Judge’s ways, was a bit taken aback by this question. It set him tugging at his goatee, and his voice was not quite steady as he answered:

“God knows, Silas. We are human, and we can only try.”

Then Mr. Whipple marched in. It lacked a quarter of an hour of dinner, —a crucial period to tax the resources of any woman. Virginia led the talk, but oh, the pathetic lameness of it. Her own mind was wandering when it should not, and recollections she had tried to strangle had sprung up once more. Only that morning in church she had lived over again the scene by Mr. Brinsmade’s gate, and it was then that a wayward but resistless impulse to go to the Judge’s office had seized her. The thought of the old man lonely and bitter in his room decided her. On her knees she prayed that she might save the bond between him and her father. For the Colonel had been morose on

Sundays, and had taken to reading the Bible, a custom he had not had since she was a child.

In the dining-room Jackson, bowing and smiling, pulled out the Judge's chair, and got his customary curt nod as a reward. Virginia carved.

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“Oh, Uncle Silas,” she cried, “I am so glad that we have a wild turkey. And you shall have your side-bone.” The girl carved deftly, feverishly, talking the while, aided by that most kind and accomplished of hosts, her father. In the corner the dreaded skeleton of the subject grinned sardonically. Were they going to be able to keep it off? There was to be no help from Judge Whipple, who sat in grim silence. A man who feels his soul burning is not given to small talk. Virginia alone had ever possessed the power to make him forget.

“Uncle Silas, I am sure there are some things about our trip that we never told you. How we saw Napoleon and his beautiful Empress driving in the Bois, and how Eugenie smiled and bowed at the people. I never saw such enthusiasm in my life. And oh, I learned such a lot of French history. All about Francis the First, and Pa took me to see his chateaus along the Loire. Very few tourists go there. You really ought to have gone with us.”

Take care, Virginia!

“I had other work to do, Jinny,” said the Judge.

Virginia rattled an.

“I told you that we stayed with a real lord in England, didn’t I?” said she. “He wasn’t half as nice as the Prince. But he had a beautiful house in Surrey, all windows, which was built in Elizabeth’s time. They called the architecture Tudor, didn’t they, Pa?”

“Yes, dear,” said the Colonel, smiling.

“The Countess was nice to me,” continued the girl, “and took me to garden parties. But Lord Jermyn was always talking politics.”

The Colonel was stroking his goatee.

“Tell Silas about the house, Jinny—Jackson, help the Judge again.”

“No,” said Virginia, drawing a breath. “I’m going to tell him about that queer club where my great-grand-father used to bet with Charles Fox. We saw a great many places where Richard Carvel had been in England. That was before the Revolution. Uncle Daniel read me some of his memoirs when we were at Calvert House. I know that you would be interested in them, Uncle Silas. He sailed under Paul Jones.”

“And fought for his country and for his flag, Virginia,” said the Judge, who had scarcely spoken until then. “No, I could not bear to read them now, when those who should love that country are leaving it in passion.”

There was a heavy silence. Virginia did not dare to look at her father. But the Colonel said, gently:

“Not in passion, Silas, but in sorrow.”

The Judge tightened his lips. But the effort was beyond him, and the flood within him broke loose.

“Colonel Carvel,” he cried, “South Carolina is mad—She is departing in sin, in order that a fiendish practice may be perpetuated. If her people stopped to think they would know that slavery cannot exist except by means of this Union. But let this milksop of a President do his worst. We have chosen a man who has the strength to say, ‘You shall not go!’”

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It was an awful moment. The saving grace of it was that respect and love for her father filled Virginia's heart. In his just anger Colonel Carvel remembered that he was the host, and strove to think only of his affection for his old friend.

"To invade a sovereign state, sir, is a crime against the sacred spirit of this government," he said.

"There is no such thing as a sovereign state, sir," exclaimed the Judge, hotly. I am an American, and not a Missourian."

"When the time comes, sir," said the Colonel, with dignity, "Missouri will join with her sister sovereign states against oppression."

"Missouri will not secede, sir."

"Why not, sir!" demanded the Colonel.

Because, sir, when the worst comes, the Soothing Syrup men will rally for the Union. And there are enough loyal people here to keep her straight."

"Dutchmen, sir! Hessians? Foreign Republican hirelings, sir," exclaimed the Colonel, standing up. "We shall drive them like sheep if they oppose us. You are drilling them now that they may murder your own blood when you think the time is ripe."

The Colonel did not hear Virginia leave the room, so softly had she gone, He made a grand figure of a man as he stood up, straight and tall, those gray eyes a-kindle at last. But the fire died as quickly as it had flared. Pity had come and quenched it,—pity that an unselfish life of suffering and loneliness should be crowned with these. The Colonel longed then to clasp his friend in his arms. Quarrels they had had by the hundred, never yet a misunderstanding. God had given to Silas Whipple a nature stern and harsh that repelled all save the charitable few whose gift it was to see below the surface, and Colonel Carvel had been the chief of them. But now the Judge's vision was clouded.

Steadying himself by his chair, he had risen glaring, the loose skin twitching on his sallow face. He began firmly but his voice shook ere he had finished.

"Colonel Carvel," said he, "I expect that the day has come when you go your way and I go mine. It will be better if—we do not meet again, sir."

And so he turned from the man whose friendship had stayed him for the score of years he had battled with his enemies, from that house which had been for so long his only home. For the last time Jackson came forward to help him with his coat. The Judge did not see him, nor did he see the tearful face of a young girl leaning over the banisters above. Ice was on the stones. And Mr. Whipple, blinded by a moisture strange to his

eyes, clung to the iron railing as he felt his way down the steps. Before he reached the bottom a stronger arm had seize his own, and was helping him.

The Judge brushed his eyes with his sleeve, and turned a defiant face upon Captain Elijah Brent—then his voice broke. His anger was suddenly gone, and his thought had flown back to the Colonel's thousand charities.

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“Lige,” he said, “Lige, it has come.”

In answer the Captain pressed the Judge’s hand, nodding vigorously to hide his rising emotion. There was a pause.

“And you, Lige?” said Mr. Whipple, presently.

“My God!” cried the Captain, “I wish I knew.”

“Lige,” said the Judge, gravely, “you’re too good a man to be for Soothing Syrup.”

The Captain choked.

“You’re too smart to be fooled, Lige,” he said, with a note near to pleading. “The time has come when you Bell people and the Douglas people have got to decide. Never in my life did I know it to do good to dodge a question. We’ve got to be white or black, Lige. Nobody’s got much use for the grays. And don’t let yourself be fooled with Constitutional Union Meetings, and compromises. The time is almost here, Lige, when it will take a rascal to steer a middle course.”

Captain Lige listened, and he shifted from one foot to the other, and rubbed his hands, which were red. Some odd trick of the mind had put into his head two people—Eliphalet Hopper and Jacob Cluyme. Was he like them?

“Lige, you’ve got to decide. Do you love your country, sir? Can you look on while our own states defy us, and not lift a hand? Can you sit still while the Governor and all the secessionists in this state are plotting to take Missouri, too, out of the Union? The militia is riddled with rebels, and the rest are forming companies of minute men.”

“And you Black Republicans,” the Captain cried “have organized your Dutch Wideawakes, and are arming them to resist Americans born.”

“They are Americans by our Constitution, sir, which the South pretends to revere,” cried the Judge. “And they are showing themselves better Americans than many who have been on the soil for generations.”

“My sympathies are with the South,” said the Captain, doggedly, “and my love is for the South.”

“And your conscience?” said the Judge.

There was no answer. Both men raised their eyes to the house of him whose loving hospitality had been a light in the lives of both. When at last the Captain spoke, his voice was rent with feeling.

“Judge,” he began, “when I was a poor young man on the old ‘Vicksburg’, second officer under old Stetson, Colonel Carvel used to take me up to his house on Fourth Street to dinner. And he gave me the clothes on my back, so that I might not be ashamed before the fashion which came there. He treated me like a son, sir. One day the sheriff sold the Vicksburg. You remember it. That left me high and dry in the mud. Who bought her, sir? Colonel Carvel. And he says to me, ’Lige, you’re captain now, the youngest captain on the river. And she’s your boat. You can pay me principal and interest when you get ready.’

“Judge Whipple, I never had any other home than right in, this house. I never had any other pleasure than bringing Jinny presents, and tryin’ to show ’em gratitude. He took me into his house and cared for me at a time when I wanted to go to the devil along with the stevedores when I was a wanderer he kept me out of the streets, and out of temptation. Judge, I’d a heap rather go down and jump off the stern of my boat than step in here and tell him I’d fight for the North.”

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The Judge steadied himself on his hickory stick and walked off without a word. For a while Captain Lige stood staring after him. Then he slowly climbed the steps and disappeared.

CHAPTER, XV

MUTTERINGS

Early in the next year, 1861,—that red year in the Calendar of our history,—several gentlemen met secretly in the dingy counting-room of a prominent citizen to consider how the state of Missouri might be saved to the Union. One of these gentlemen was Judge Whipple, another, Mr. Brinsmade; and another a masterly and fearless lawyer who afterward became a general, and who shall be mentioned in these pages as the Leader. By his dash and boldness and statesmanlike grasp of a black situation St. Louis was snatched from the very bosom of secession.

Alas, that chronicles may not stretch so as to embrace all great men of a time. There is Captain Nathaniel Lyon,—name with the fateful ring. Nathaniel Lyon, with the wild red hair and blue eye, born and bred a soldier, ordered to St. Louis, and become subordinate to a wavering officer of ordnance. Lyon was one who brooked no trifling. He had the face of a man who knows his mind and intention; the quick speech and action which go with this. Red tape made by the reel to bind him, he broke. Courts-martial had no terrors for him. He proved the ablest of lieutenants to the strong civilian who was the Leader. Both were the men of the occasion. If God had willed that the South should win, there would have been no occasion.

Even as Judge Whipple had said, the time was come for all men to decide. Out of the way, all hopes of compromises that benumbed Washington. No Constitutional Unionists, no Douglas Democrats, no Republicans now.

All must work to save the ship. The speech-making was not done with yet. Partisanship must be overcome, and patriotism instilled in its place. One day Stephen Brice saw the Leader go into Judge Whipple's room, and presently he was sent for. After that he was heard of in various out-of-the-way neighborhoods, exhorting all men to forget their quarrels and uphold the flag.

The Leader himself knew not night from day in his toil,—in organizing, conciliating, compelling when necessary. Letters passed between him and Springfield. And, after that solemn inauguration, between him and Washington. It was an open secret that the Governor of Missouri held out his arms to Jefferson Davis, just elected President of the new Southern Confederacy. It soon became plain to the feeblest brain what the Leader and his friends had perceived long before, that the Governor intended to use the militia (purged of Yankee sympathizers) to save the state for the South.

The Government Arsenal, with its stores of arms and ammunition, was the prize. This building and its grounds lay to the south of the City, overlooking the river. It was in command of a doubting major of ordnance; the corps of officers of Jefferson Barracks hard by was mottled with secession. Trade was still. The Mississippi below was practically closed. In all the South, Pickens and Sumter alone stood stanch to the flag. A general, wearing the uniform of the army of the United States, surrendered the whole state of Texas.

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The St. Louis Arsenal was next in succession, and the little band of regulars at the Barracks was powerless to save it. What could the Leader and Captain Lyon do without troops? That was the question that rang in Stephen's head, and in the heads of many others. For, if President Lincoln sent troops to St. Louis, that would precipitate the trouble. And the President had other uses for the handful in the army.

There came a rain-sodden night when a mysterious message arrived at the little house in Olive Street. Both anxiety and pride were in Mrs. Brice's eyes as they followed her son out of the door. At Twelfth Street two men were lounging on the corners, each of whom glanced at him listessly as he passed. He went up a dark and narrow stair into a lighted hall with shrouded windows. Men with sober faces were forming line on the sawdust of the floors. The Leader was there giving military orders in a low voice. That marked the beginning of the aggressive Union movement.

Stephen, standing apart at the entrance, remarked that many of the men were Germans. Indeed, he spied his friend Tiefel there, and presently Richter came from the ranks to greet him.

"My friend," he said, "you are made second lieutenant of our company, the Black Jaegers."

"But I have never drilled in my life," said Stephen.

"Never mind. Come and see the Leader."

The Leader, smiling a little, put a vigorous stop to his protestations, and told him to buy a tactics. The next man Stephen saw was big Tom Catherwood, who blushed to the line of his hair as he returned Stephen's grip.

"Tom, what does this mean?" He asked.

"Well," said Tom, embarrassed, "a fellow has got to do what he think's right."

"And your family?" asked Stephen.

A spasm crossed Tom's face.

"I reckon they'll disown me, Stephen, when they find it out."

Richter walked home as far as Stephen's house. He was to take the Fifth Street car for South St. Louis. And they talked of Tom's courage, and of the broad and secret military organization the Leader had planned that night. But Stephen did not sleep till the dawn. Was he doing right? Could he afford to risk his life in the war that was coming, and leave his mother dependent upon charity?

It was shortly after this that Stephen paid his last visit for many a long day upon Miss Puss Russell. It was a Sunday afternoon, and Puss was entertaining, as usual, a whole parlor-full of young men, whose leanings and sympathies Stephen divined while taking off his coat in the hall. Then he heard Miss Russell cry:

“I believe that they are drilling those nasty Dutch hirelings in secret.”

“I am sure they are,” said George Catherwood. “One of the halls is on Twelfth Street, and they have sentries posted out so that you can’t get near them. Pa has an idea that Tom goes there. And he told him that if he ever got evidence of it, he’d show him the door.”

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“Do you really think that Tom is with the Yankees?” asked Jack Brinsmade.

“Tom’s a fool,” said George, with emphasis, “but he isn’t a coward. He’d just as soon tell Pa to-morrow that he was drilling if the Yankee leaders wished it known.”

“Virginia will never speak to him again,” said Eugenie, in an awed voice.

“Pooh!” said Puss, “Tom never had a chance with Jinny. Did he, George? Clarence is in high favor now. Did you ever know any one to change so, since this military business has begun? He acts like a colonel. I hear that they are thinking of making him captain of a company of dragoons.”

“They are,” George answered. “And that is the company I intend to join.”

“Well,” began Puss, with her usual recklessness, “it’s a good thing for Clarence that all this is happening. I know somebody else—”

Poor Stephen in the hall knew not whether to stay or fly. An accident decided the question. Emily Russell came down the stairs at that instant and spoke to him. As the two entered the parlor, there was a hush pregnant with many things unsaid. Puss’s face was scarlet, but her hand was cold as she held it out to him. For the first time in that house he felt like an intruder. Jack Brinsmade bowed with great ceremony, and took his departure. There was scarcely a distant cordiality in the greeting of the other young men. And Puss, whose tongue was loosed again, talked rapidly of entertainments to which Stephen either had not been invited, or from which he had stayed away. The rest of the company were almost moodily silent.

Profoundly depressed, Stephen sat straight in the velvet chair, awaiting a seasonable time to bring his visit to a close.

This was to be the last, then, of his intercourse with a warmhearted and lovable people. This was to be the end of his friendship with this impetuous and generous girl who had done so much to brighten his life since he had come to St: Louis. Henceforth this house would be shut to him, and all others save Mr. Brinsmade’s.

Presently, in one of the intervals of Miss Russell’s feverish talk, he rose to go. Dusk was gathering, and a deep and ominous silence penetrated like the shadows into the tall room. No words came to him. Impulsively, almost tearfully, Puss put her hand in his. Then she pressed it unexpectedly, so that he had to gulp down a lump that was in his throat. Just then a loud cry was heard from without, the men jumped from their chairs, and something heavy dropped on the carpet.

Some ran to the window, others to the door. Directly across the street was the house of Mr. Harmsworth, a noted Union man. One of the third story windows was open, and out

of it was pouring a mass of gray wood smoke. George Catherwood was the first to speak.

“I hope it will burn down,” he cried.

Stephen picked up the object on the floor, which had dropped from his pocket, and handed it to him.

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It was a revolver.

THE CRISIS

By Winston Churchill

Volume 5.

CHAPTER XVI

THE GUNS OF SUMTER

Winter had vanished. Spring was come with a hush. Toward a little island set in the blue waters of Charleston harbor anxious eyes were strained.

Was the flag still there?

God alone may count the wives and mothers who listened in the still hours of the night for the guns of Sumter. One sultry night in April Stephen's mother awoke with fear in her heart, for she had heard them. Hark! that is the roar now, faint but sullen. That is the red flash far across the black Southern sky. For in our beds are the terrors and cruelties of life revealed to us. There is a demon to be faced, and nought alone.

Mrs. Brice was a brave woman. She walked that night with God.

Stephen, too, awoke. The lightning revealed her as she bent over him. On the wings of memory be flew back to his childhood in the great Boston house with the rounded front, and he saw the nursery with its high windows looking out across the Common. Often in the dark had she come to him thus, her gentle hand passing over aim to feel if he were covered.

"What is it, mother?" he said.

She said: "Stephen, I am afraid that the war has come."

He sat up, blindly. Even he did not guess the agony in her heart.

"You will have to go, Stephen."

It was long before his answer came.

"You know that I cannot, mother. We have nothing left but the little I earn. And if I were —" He did not finish the sentence, for he felt her trembling. But she said again, with that courage which seems woman's alone:

“Remember Wilton Brice. Stephen—I can get along. I can sew.”

It was the hour he had dreaded, stolen suddenly upon him out of the night. How many times had he rehearsed this scene to himself! He, Stephen Brice, who had preached and slaved and drilled for the Union, a renegade to be shunned by friend and foe alike! He had talked for his country, but he would not risk his life for it. He heard them repeating the charge. He saw them passing him silently on the street. Shamefully he remembered the time, five months agone, when he had worn the very uniform of his Revolutionary ancestor. And high above the tier of his accusers he saw one face, and the look of it stung to the very quick of his soul.

Before the storm he had fallen asleep in sheer weariness of the struggle, that face shining through the black veil of the darkness. If he were to march away in the blue of his country (alas, not of hers!) she would respect him for risking life for conviction. If he stayed at home, she would not understand. It was his plain duty to his mother. And yet he knew that Virginia Carvel and the women like her were ready to follow with bare feet the march of the soldiers of the South.

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The rain was come now, in a flood. Stephen's mother could not see in the blackness the bitterness on his face. Above the roar of the waters she listened for his voice.

"I will not go, mother," he said. "If at length every man is needed, that will be different."

"It is for you to decide, my son," she answered. "There are many ways in which you can serve your country here. But remember that you may have to face hard things."

"I have had to do that before, mother," he replied calmly. "I cannot leave you dependent upon charity."

She went back into her room to pray, for she knew that he had laid his ambition at her feet.

It was not until a week later that the dreaded news came. All through the Friday shells had rained on the little fort while Charleston looked on. No surrender yet. Through a wide land was that numbness which precedes action. Force of habit sent men to their places of business, to sit idle. A prayerful Sunday intervened. Sumter had fallen. South Carolina had shot to bits the flag she had once revered.

On the Monday came the call of President Lincoln for volunteers. Missouri was asked for her quota. The outraged reply of her governor went back, —never would she furnish troops to invade her sister states. Little did Governor Jackson foresee that Missouri was to stand fifth of all the Union in the number of men she was to give. To her was credited in the end even more men than stanch Massachusetts.

The noise of preparation was in the city—in the land. On the Monday morning, when Stephen went wearily to the office, he was met by Richter at the top of the stairs, who seized his shoulders and looked into his face. The light of the zealot was on Richter's own.

"We shall drill every night now, my friend, until further orders. It is the Leader's word. Until we go to the front, Stephen, to put down rebellion." Stephen sank into a chair, and bowed his head. What would he think,—this man who had fought and suffered and renounced his native land for his convictions? Who in this nobler allegiance was ready to die for them? How was he to confess to Richter, of all men?

"Carl," he said at length, "I—I cannot go."

"You—you cannot go? You who have done so much already! And why?"

Stephen did not answer. But Richter, suddenly divining, laid his hands impulsively on Stephen's shoulders.

“Ach, I see,” he said. “Stephen, I have saved some money. It shall be for your mother while you are away.”

At first Stephen was too surprised for speech. Then, in spite of his feelings, he stared at the German with a new appreciation of his character. Then he could merely shake his head.

“Is it not for the Union?” implored Richter, “I would give a fortune, if I had it. Ah, my friend, that would please me so. And I do not need the money now. I ’have—nobody.”

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Spring was in the air; the first faint smell of verdure wafted across the river on the wind. Stephen turned to the open window, tears of intense agony in his eyes. In that instant he saw the regiment marching, and the flag flying at its head.

“It is my duty to stay here, Carl,” he said brokenly.

Richter took an appealing step toward him and stopped. He realized that with this young New Englander a decision once made was unalterable. In all his knowledge of Stephen he never remembered him to change. With the demonstrative sympathy of his race, he yearned to comfort him, and knew not how. Two hundred years of Puritanism had reared barriers not to be broken down.

At the end of the office the stern figure of the Judge appeared.

“Mr. Brice!” he said sharply.

Stephen followed him into the littered room behind the ground glass door, scarce knowing what to expect,—and scarce caring, as on that first day he had gone in there. Mr. Whipple himself closed the door, and then the transom. Stephen felt those keen eyes searching him from their hiding-place.

“Mr. Brice,” he said at last, “the President has called for seventy-five thousand volunteers to crush this rebellion. They will go, and be swallowed up, and more will go to fill their places. Mr. Brice, people will tell you that the war will be over in ninety days. But I tell you, sir, that it will not be over in seven times ninety days.” He brought down his fist heavily upon the table. “This, sir, will be a war to the death. One side or the other will fight until their blood is all let, and until their homes are all ruins.” He darted at Stephen one look from under those fierce eyebrows. “Do you intend to go sir?”

Stephen met the look squarely. “No, sir,” he answered, steadily, “not now.”

“Humph,” said the Judge. Then he began what seemed a never-ending search among the papers on his desk. At length he drew out a letter, put on his spectacles and read it, and finally put it down again.

“Stephen,” said Mr. Whipple, “you are doing a courageous thing. But if we elect to follow our conscience in this world, we must not expect to escape persecution, sir. Two weeks ago,” he continued slowly, “two weeks ago I had a letter from Mr. Lincoln about matters here. He mentions you.”

“He remembers me!” cried Stephen

The Judge smiled a little. “Mr. Lincoln never forgets any one,” said he. “He wishes me to extend to you his thanks for your services to the Republican party, and sends you his kindest regards.”

This was the first and only time that Mr. Whipple spoke to him of his labors. Stephen has often laughed at this since, and said that he would not have heard of them at all had not the Judge's sense of duty compelled him to convey the message. And it was with a lighter heart than he had felt for many a day that he went out of the door.

Some weeks later, five regiments were mustered into the service of the United States. The Leader was in command of one. And in response to his appeals, despite the presence of officers of higher rank, the President had given Captain Nathaniel Lyon supreme command in Missouri.

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Stephen stood among the angry, jeering crowd that lined the streets as the regiments marched past. Here were the 'Black Jaegers.' No wonder the crowd laughed. Their step was not as steady, nor their files as straight as Company A. There was Richter, his head high, his blue eyes defiant. And there was little Tiefel marching in that place of second lieutenant that Stephen himself should have filled. Here was another company, and at the end of the first four, big Tom Catherwood. His father had disowned him the day before, His two brothers, George and little Spencer, were in a house not far away —a house from which a strange flag drooped.

Clouds were lowering over the city, and big drops falling, as Stephen threaded his way homeward, the damp anal gloom of the weather in his very soul. He went past the house where the strange flag hung against its staff In that big city it flaunted all unchallenged. The house was thrown wide open that day, and in its window lounged young men of honored families. And while they joked of German boorishness and Yankee cowardice they held rifles across their knees to avenge any insult to the strange banner that they had set up. In the hall, through the open doorway, the mouth of a shotted field gun could be seen. The guardians were the Minute Men, organized to maintain the honor and dignity of the state of Missouri.

Across the street from the house was gathered a knot of curious people, and among these Stephen paused. Two young men were standing on the steps, and one was Clarence Colfax. His hands were in his pockets, and a careless, scornful smile was on his face when he glanced down into the street. Stephen caught that smile. Anger swept over him in a hot flame, as at the slave auction years agone. That was the unquenchable fire of the war. The blood throbbed in his temples as his feet obeyed,—-and yet he stopped.

What right had he to pull down that flag, to die on the pavement before that house?

CHAPTER XVII

CAMP JACKSON

What enthusiasm on that gusty Monday morning, the Sixth of May, 1861! Twelfth Street to the north of the Market House is full three hundred feet across, and the militia of the Sovereign State of Missouri is gathering there. Thence by order of her Governor they are to march to Camp Jackson for a week of drill and instruction.

Half a mile nearer the river, on the house of the Minute Men, the strange flag leaps wildly in the wind this day.

On Twelfth Street the sun is shining, drums are beating, and bands are playing, and bright aides dashing hither and thither on spirited chargers. One by one the companies

are marching up, and taking place in line; the city companies in natty gray fatigue, the country companies often in their Sunday clothes. But they walk with heads erect and chests out, and the ladies wave their gay parasols and cheer them. Here are the aristocratic St. Louis Grays, Company A; there come the Washington Guards and Washington Blues, and Laclede Guards and Missouri Guards and Davis Guards. Yes, this is Secession Day, this Monday. And the colors are the Stars and Stripes and the Arms of Missouri crossed.

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What are they waiting for? Why don't they move? Hark! A clatter and a cloud of dust by the market place, an ecstasy of cheers running in waves the length of the crowd. Make way for the dragoons! Here they come at last, four and four, the horses prancing and dancing and pointing quivering ears at the tossing sea of hats and parasols and ribbons. Maude Catherwood squeezes Virginia's arm. There, riding in front, erect and firm in the saddle, is Captain Clarence Colfax. Virginia is red and white, and red again, —true colors of the Confederacy. How proud she was of him now! How ashamed that she even doubted him! Oh, that was his true calling, a soldier's life. In that moment she saw him at the head of armies, from the South, driving the Yankee hordes northward and still northward until the roar of the lakes warns them of annihilation. She saw his chivalry sparing them. Yes, this is Secession Monday.

Down to a trot they slow, Clarence's black thorough-bred arching his long neck, proud as his master of the squadron which follows, four and four. The square young man of bone and sinew in the first four, whose horse is built like a Crusader's, is George Catherwood. And Eugenie gives a cry and points to the rear where Maurice is riding.

Whose will be the Arsenal now? Can the Yankee regiments with their slouchy Dutchmen hope to capture it! If there are any Yankees in Twelfth Street that day, they are silent. Yes, there are some. And there are some, even in the ranks of this Militia—-who will fight for the Union. These are sad indeed.

There is another wait, the companies standing at ease. Some of the dragoons dismount, but not the handsome young captain, who rides straight to the bright group which has caught his eye, Colonel Carvel wrings his gauntleted hand.

"Clarence, we are proud of you, sir," he says.

And Virginia, repeats his words, her eyes sparkling, her fingers caressing the silken curve of Jefferson's neck.

"Clarence, you will drive Captain Lyon and his Hessians into the river."

"Hush, Jinny," he answered, "we are merely going into camp to learn to drill, that we may be ready to defend the state when the time comes."

Virginia laughed. "I had forgotten," she said.

"You will have your cousin court-martialed, my dear," said the Colonel.

Just then the call is sounded. But he must needs press Virginia's hand first, and allow admiring Maude and Eugenie to press his. Then he goes off at a slow canter to join his dragoons, waving his glove at them, and turning to give the sharp order, "Attention"! to his squadron.

Virginia is deliriously happy. Once more she has swept from her heart every vestige of doubt. Now is Clarence the man she can admire. Chosen unanimously captain of the Squadron but a few days since, Clarence had taken command like a veteran. George Catherwood and Maurice had told the story.

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And now at last the city is to shake off the dust of the North. “On to Camp Jackson!” was the cry. The bands are started, the general and staff begin to move, and the column swings into the Olive Street road, followed by a concourse of citizens awheel and afoot, the horse cars crowded. Virginia and Maude and the Colonel in the Carvel carriage, and behind Ned, on the box, is their luncheon in a hamper Standing up, the girls can just see the nodding plumes of the dragoons far to the front.

Olive Street, now paved with hot granite and disfigured by trolley wires, was a country road then. Green trees took the place of crowded rows of houses and stores, and little “bob-tail” yellow cars were drawn by plodding mules to an inclosure in a timbered valley, surrounded by a board fence, known as Lindell Grove. It was then a resort, a picnic ground, what is now covered by close residences which have long shown the wear of time.

Into Lindell Grove flocked the crowd, the rich and the poor, the proprietor and the salesmen, to watch the soldiers pitch their tents under the spreading trees. The gallant dragoons were off to the west, across a little stream which trickled through the grounds. By the side of it Virginia and Maude, enchanted, beheld Captain Colfax shouting his orders while his troopers dragged the canvas from the wagons, and staggered under it to the line. Alas! that the girls were there! The Captain lost his temper, his troopers, perspiring over Gordian knots in the ropes, uttered strange soldier oaths, while the mad wind which blew that day played a hundred pranks.

To the discomfiture of the young ladies, Colonel Carvel pulled his goatee and guffawed. Virginia was for moving away.

“How mean, Pa,” she said indignantly. “How car, you expect them to do it right the first day, and in this wind?”

“Oh! Jinny, look at Maurice!” exclaimed Maude, giggling. “He is pulled over on his head.”

The Colonel roared. And the gentlemen and ladies who were standing by laughed, too. Virginia did not laugh. It was all too serious for her.

“You will see that they can fight,” she said. “They can beat the Yankees and Dutch.”

This speech made the Colonel glance around him: Then he smiled,—in response to other smiles.

“My dear,” he said, “you must remember that this is a peaceable camp of instruction of the state militia. There fly the Stars and Stripes from the general’s tent. Do you see that they are above the state flag? Jinny; you forget yourself.”

Jinny stamped her foot

“Oh, I hate dissimulation,” she cried, “Why can’t we, say outright that we are going to run that detestable Captain Lyon and his Yankees and Hessians out of the Arsenal.”

“Why not, Colonel Carvel?” cried Maude. She had forgotten that one of her brothers was with the Yankees and Hessians.

“Why aren’t women made generals and governors?” said the Colonel.

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“If we were,” answered Virginia, “something might be accomplished.”

“Isn’t Clarence enough of a fire-eater to suit you?” asked her father.

But the tents were pitched, and at that moment the young Captain was seen to hand over his horse to an orderly, and to come toward them. He was followed by George Catherwood.

“Come, Jinny,” cried her cousin, “let us go over to the main camp.”

“And walk on Davis Avenue,” said Virginia, flushing with pride. “Isn’t there a Davis Avenue?”

“Yes, and a Lee Avenue, and a Beauregard Avenue,” said George, taking his sister’s arm.

“We shall walk in them all,” said Virginia.

What a scene of animation it was. The rustling trees and the young grass of early May, and the two hundred and forty tents in lines of military precision. Up and down the grassy streets flowed the promenade, proud fathers and mothers, and sweethearts and sisters and wives in gala dress. Wear your bright gowns now, you devoted women. The day is coming when you will make them over and over again, or tear them to lint, to stanch the blood of these young men who wear their new gray so well.

Every afternoon Virginia drove with her father and her aunt to Camp Jackson. All the fashion and beauty of the city were there. The bands played, the black coachmen flecked the backs of their shining horses, and walking in the avenues or seated under the trees were natty young gentlemen in white trousers and brass-buttoned jackets. All was not soldier fare at the regimental messes. Cakes and jellies and even ices and more substantial dainties were laid beneath those tents. Dress parade was one long sigh of delight: Better not to have been born than to have been a young man in St. Louis, early in Camp Jackson week, and not be a militiaman.

One young man whom we know, however, had little of pomp and vanity about him,—-none other than the young manager (some whispered “silent partner”) of Carvel & Company. If Mr. Eliphalet had had political ambition, or political leanings, during the half-year which had just passed, he had not shown them. Mr. Cluyme (no mean business man himself) had pronounced Eliphalet a conservative young gentleman who attended to his own affairs and let the mad country take care of itself. This is precisely the wise course Mr. Hopper chose. Seeing a regiment of Missouri Volunteers slouching down Fifth street in citizens’ clothes he had been remarked to smile cynically. But he kept his opinions so close that he was supposed not to have any.

On Thursday of Camp Jackson week, an event occurred in Mr. Carvel's store which excited a buzz of comment. Mr. Hopper announced to Mr. Barbo, the book-keeper, that he should not be there after four o'clock. To be sure, times were more than dull. The Colonel that morning had read over some two dozen letters from Texas and the Southwest, telling of the impossibility of meeting certain obligations in the present state of the country. The Colonel had gone home to dinner with his brow furrowed. On the other hand, Mr. Hopper's equanimity was spoken of at the widow's table.

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At four o'clock, Mr. Hopper took an Olive Street car, tucking himself into the far corner where he would not be disturbed by any ladies who might enter. In the course of an hour or so, he alighted at the western gate of the camp on the Olive Street road. Refreshing himself with a little tobacco, he let himself be carried leisurely by the crowd between the rows of tents. A philosophy of his own (which many men before and since have adopted) permitted him to stare with a superior good nature at the open love-making around him. He imagined his own figure,—which was already growing a little stout,—in a light gray jacket and duck trousers, and laughed. Eliphalet was not burdened with illusions of that kind. These heroes might have their hero-worship. Life held something dearer for him.

As he was sauntering toward a deserted seat at the foot of a tree, it so chanced that he was overtaken by Mr. Cluyme and his daughter Belle. Only that morning, this gentleman, in glancing through the real estate column of his newspaper, had fallen upon a deed of sale which made him wink. He reminded his wife that Mr. Hopper had not been to supper of late. So now Mr. Cluyme held out his hand with more than common cordiality. When Mr. Hopper took it, the fingers did not close any too tightly over his own. But it may be well to remark that Mr. Hopper himself did not do any squeezing. He took off his hat grudgingly to Miss Belle. He had never liked the custom.

"I hope you will take pot luck with us soon again, Mr. Hopper," said the elder gentleman. "We only have plain and simple things, but they are wholesome, sir. Dainties are poor things to work on. I told that to his Royal Highness when he was here last fall. He was speaking to me on the merits of roast beef—"

"It's a fine day," said Mr. Hopper.

"So it is," Mr. Cluyme assented. Letting his gaze wander over the camp, he added casually, "I see that they have got a few mortars and howitzers since yesterday. I suppose that is the stuff we heard so much about, which came on the 'Swon' marked 'marble.' They say Jeff Davis sent the stuff to 'em from the Government arsenal the Secesh captured at Baton Rouge. They're pretty near ready to move on our arsenal now."

Mr. Hopper listened with composure. He was not greatly interested in this matter which had stirred the city to the quick. Neither had Mr. Cluyme spoken as one who was deeply moved. Just then, as if to spare the pains of a reply, a "Jenny Lind" passed them. Miss Belle recognized the carriage immediately as belonging to an elderly lady who was well known in St. Louis. Every day she drove out, dressed in black bombazine, and heavily veiled. But she was blind. As the mother-in-law of the stalwart Union leader of the city, Miss Belle's comment about her appearance in Camp Jackson was not out of place.

"Well!" she exclaimed, "I'd like to know what she's doing here!"

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Mr. Hopper's answer revealed a keenness which, in the course of a few days, engendered in Mr. Cluyme as lusty a respect as he was capable of.

"I don't know," said Eliphalet; "but I cal'late she's got stouter."

"What do you mean by that?" Miss Belle demanded.

"That Union principles must be healthy," said he, and laughed.

Miss Cluyme was prevented from following up this enigma. The appearance of two people on Davis Avenue drove the veiled lady from her mind. Eliphalet, too, had seen them. One was the tall young Captain of Dragoons, in cavalry boots, and the other a young lady with dark brown hair, in a lawn dress.

"Just look at them!" cried Miss Belle. "They think they are alone in the garden of Eden. Virginia didn't use to care for him. But since he's a captain, and has got a uniform, she's come round pretty quick. I'm thankful I never had any silly notions about uniforms."

She glanced at Eliphalet, to find that his eyes were fixed on the approaching couple.

"Clarence is handsome, but worthless," she continued in her sprightly way. "I believe Jinny will be fool enough to marry him. Do you think she's so very pretty, Mr. Hopper?"

Mr. Hopper lied.

"Neither do I," Miss Belle assented. And upon that, greatly to the astonishment of Eliphalet, she left him and ran towards them. "Virginia!" she cried; "Jinny, I have something so interesting to tell you!"

Virginia turned impatiently. The look she bestowed upon Miss Cluyme was not one of welcome, but Belle was not sensitive. Putting her arm through Virginia's, she sauntered off with the pair toward the parade grounds, Clarence maintaining now a distance of three feet, and not caring to hide his annoyance.

Eliphalet's eyes smouldered, following the three until they were lost in the crowd. That expression of Virginia's had reminded him of a time, years gone, when she had come into the store on her return from Kentucky, and had ordered him to tell her father of her arrival. He had smarted then. And Eliphalet was not the sort to get over smarts.

"A beautiful young lady," remarked Mr. Cluyme. "And a deserving one, Mr. Hopper. Now, she is my notion of quality. She has wealth, and manners, and looks. And her father is a good man. Too bad he holds such views on secession. I have always thought, sir, that you were singularly fortunate in your connection with him."

There was a point of light now in each of Mr. Hopper's green eyes. But Mr. Cluyme continued:

"What a pity, I say, that he should run the risk of crippling himself by his opinions. Times are getting hard."

"Yes," said Mr. Hopper.

"And southwestern notes are not worth the paper they are written on—"

But Mr. Cluyme has misjudged his man. If he had come to Eliphalet for information of Colonel Carvel's affairs, or of any one else's affairs, he was not likely to get it. It is not meet to repeat here the long business conversation which followed. Suffice it to say that Mr. Cluyme, who was in dry goods himself, was as ignorant when he left Eliphalet as when he met him. But he had a greater respect than ever for the shrewdness of the business manager of Carvel & Company.

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That same Thursday, when the first families of the city were whispering jubilantly in each other's ears of the safe arrival of the artillery and stands of arms at Camp Jackson, something of significance was happening within the green inclosure of the walls of the United States arsenal, far to the southward.

The days had become alike in sadness to Stephen. Richter gone, and the Judge often away in mysterious conference, he was left for hours at a spell the sole tenant of the office. Fortunately there was work of Richter's and of Mr. Whipple's left undone that kept him busy. This Thursday morning, however, he found the Judge getting into that best black coat which he wore on occasions. His manner had recently lost much of its gruffness.

"Stephen," said he, "they are serving out cartridges and uniforms to the regiments at the arsenal. Would you like to go down with me?"

"Does that mean Camp Jackson?" asked Stephen, when they had reached the street.

"Captain Lyon is not the man to sit still and let the Governor take the first trick, sir," said the Judge.

As they got on the Fifth Street car, Stephen's attention was at once attracted to a gentleman who sat in a corner, with his children about him. He was lean, and he had a face of great keenness and animation. He had no sooner spied Judge Whipple than he beckoned to him with a kind of military abruptness.

"That is Major William T. Sherman," said the Judge to Stephen. "He used to be in the army, and fought in the Mexican War. He came here two months ago to be the President of this Fifth Street car line."

They crossed over to him, the Judge introducing Stephen to Major Sherman, who looked at him very hard, and then decided to bestow on him a vigorous nod.

"Well, Whipple," he said, "this nation is going to the devil; eh?"

Stephen could not resist a smile. For it was a bold man who expressed radical opinions (provided they were not Southern opinions) in a St. Louis street car early in '61.

The Judge shook his head. "We may pull out," he said.

"Pull out!" exclaimed Mr. Sherman. "Who's man enough in Washington to shake his fist in a rebel's face? Our leniency—our timidity—has paralyzed us, sir."

By this time those in the car began to manifest considerable interest in the conversation. Major Sherman paid them no attention, and the Judge, once launched in an argument, forgot his surroundings.

“I have faith in Mr. Lincoln. He is calling out volunteers.”

“Seventy-five thousand for three months!” said the Major, vehemently, “a bucketful on a conflagration I tell you, Whipple, we’ll need all the water we’ve got in the North.”

The Judge expressed his belief in this, and also that Mr. Lincoln would draw all the water before he got through.

“Upon my soul,” said Mr. Sherman, “I’m disgusted. Now’s the time to stop ’em. The longer we let ’em rear and kick, the harder to break ’em. You don’t catch me going back to the army for three months. If they want me, they’ve got to guarantee me three years. That’s more like it.” Turning to Stephen, he added: “Don’t you sign any three months’ contract, young man.”

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Stephen grew red. By this time the car was full, and silent. No one had offered to quarrel with the Major. Nor did it seem likely that any one would.

“I’m afraid I can’t go, sir.”

“Why not?” demanded Mr. Sherman.

“Because, sir,” said the Judge, bluntly, “his mother’s a widow, and they have no money. He was a lieutenant in one of Blair’s companies before the call came.”

The Major looked at Stephen, and his expression changed.

“Find it pretty hard?” he asked.

Stephen’s expression must have satisfied him, but he nodded again, more vigorously than before.

“Just you *wait*, Mr. Brice,” he said. “It won’t hurt you any.”

Stephen was grateful. But he hoped to fall out of the talk. Much to his discomfiture, the Major gave him another of those queer looks. His whole manner, and even his appearance, reminded Stephen strangely of Captain Elijah Brent.

“Aren’t you the young man who made the Union speech in Mercantile Library Hall?”

“Yes, sir,” said the Judge. “He is.”

At that the Major put out his hand impulsively, and gripped Stephen’s.

“Well, sir,” he said, “I have yet to read a more sensible speech, except some of Abraham Lincoln’s. Brinsmade gave it to me to read. Whipple, that speech reminded me of Lincoln. It was his style. Where did you get it, Mr. Brice?” he demanded.

“I heard Mr. Lincoln’s debate with Judge Douglas at ’Freeport,” said Stephen; beginning to be amused.

The Major laughed.

“I admire your frankness, sir,” he said. “I meant to say that its logic rather than its substance reminded one of Lincoln.”

“I tried to learn what I could from him, Major Sherman.”

At length the car stopped, and they passed into the Arsenal grounds. Drawn up in lines on the green grass were four regiments, all at last in the blue of their country’s service. Old soldiers with baskets of cartridges were stepping from file to file, giving handfuls to

the recruits. Many of these thrust them in their pockets, for there were not enough belts to go around. The men were standing at ease, and as Stephen saw them laughing and joking lightheartedly his depression returned. It was driven away again by Major Sherman's vivacious comments. For suddenly Captain Lyon, the man of the hour, came into view.

"Look at him!" cried the Major, "he's a man after my own heart. Just look at him running about with his hair flying in the wind, and the papers bulging from his pockets. Not dignified, eh, Whipple? But this isn't the time to be dignified. If there were some like Lyon in Washington, our troops would be halfway to New Orleans by this time. Don't talk to me of Washington! Just look at him!"

The gallant Captain was a sight, indeed, and vividly described by Major Sherman's picturesque words as he raced from regiment to regiment, and from company to company, with his sandy hair awry, pointing, gesticulating, commanding. In him Stephen recognized the force that had swept aside stubborn army veterans of wavering faith, that snapped the tape with which they had tied him.

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Would he be duped by the Governor's ruse of establishing a State Camp at this time? Stephen, as he gazed at him, was sure that he would not. This man could see to the bottom, through every specious argument. Little matters of law and precedence did not trouble him. Nor did he believe elderly men in authority when they told gravely that the state troops were there for peace.

After the ranks were broken, Major Sherman and the Judge went to talk to Captain Lyon and the Union Leader, who was now a Colonel of one of the Volunteer regiments. Stephen sought Richter, who told him that the regiments were to assemble the morning of the morrow, prepared to march.

"To Camp Jackson?" asked Stephen.

Richter shrugged his shoulders.

"We are not consulted, my friend," he said. "Will you come into my quarters and have a bottle of beer with Tiefel?"

Stephen went. It was not their fault that his sense at their comradeship was gone. To him it was as if the ties that had bound him to them were asunder, and he was become an outcast.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE STONE THAT IS REJECTED

That Friday morning Stephen awoke betimes with a sense that something was to happen. For a few moments he lay still in the half comprehension which comes after sleep when suddenly he remembered yesterday's incidents at the Arsenal, and leaped out of bed.

"I think that Lyon is going to attack Camp Jackson to-day," he said to his mother after breakfast, when Hester had left the room.

Mrs. Brice dropped her knitting in her lap.

"Why, Stephen?"

"I went down to the Arsenal with the Judge yesterday and saw them finishing the equipment of the new regiments. Something was in the wind. Any one could see that from the way Lyon was flying about. I think he must have proof that the Camp Jackson people have received supplies from the South."

Mrs. Brice looked fixedly at her son, and then smiled in spite of the apprehension she felt.

“Is that why you were working over that map of the city last night?” she asked.

“I was trying to see how Lyon would dispose his troops. I meant to tell you about a gentleman we met in the street car, a Major Sherman who used to be in the army. Mr. Brinsmade knows him, and Judge Whipple, and many other prominent men here. He came to St. Louis some months ago to take the position of president of the Fifth Street Line. He is the keenest, the most original man I have ever met. As long as I live I shall never forget his description of Lyon.”

“Is the Major going back into the army?” said Mrs. Brice, Stephen did not remark the little falter in her voice. He laughed over the recollection of the conversation in the street car.

“Not unless matters in Washington change to suit him,” he said. “He thinks that things have been very badly managed, and does not scruple to say so anywhere. I could not have believed it possible that two men could have talked in public as he and Judge Whipple did yesterday and not be shot down. I thought that it was as much as a man’s life is worth to mention allegiance to the Union here in a crowd. And the way Mr. Sherman pitched into the Rebels in that car full of people was enough to make your hair stand on end.”

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“He must be a bold man,” murmured Mrs. Brice.

“Does he think that the—the Rebellion can be put down?”

“Not with seventy-five thousand men, nor with ten times that number.”

Mrs. Brice sighed, and furtively wiped her eyes with her handkerchief.

“I am afraid we shall see great misery, Stephen,” she said.

He was silent. From that peaceful little room war and its horrors seemed very far away. The morning sun poured in through the south windows and was scattered by the silver on the sideboard. From above, on the wall, Colonel Wilton Brice gazed soberly down. Stephen’s eyes lighted on the portrait, and his thoughts flew back to the boyhood days when he used to ply his father with questions about it. Then the picture had suggested only the glory and honor which illumines the page of history. Something worthy to look back upon, to keep ones head high. The hatred and the suffering and the tears, the heartrending, tearing apart for all time of loving ones who have grown together,—these were not upon that canvas, Will war ever be painted with a wart?

The sound of feet was heard on the pavement. Stephen rose, glancing at his mother. Her face was still upon her knitting.

“I am going to the Arsenal,” he said. “I must see what as happening.”

To her, as has been said, was given wisdom beyond most women. She did not try to prevent him as he kissed her good-by. But when the door had shut behind him, a little cry escaped her, and she ran to the window to strain her eyes after him until he had turned the corner below.

His steps led him irresistibly past the house of the strange flag, ominously quiet at that early hour. At sight of it anger made him hot again. The car for South St. Louis stood at the end of the line, fast filling with curious people who had read in their papers that morning of the equipment of the new troops. There was little talk among them, and that little guarded.

It was a May morning to rouse a sluggard; the night air tingled into life at the touch of the sunshine, the trees in the flitting glory of their first green. Stephen found the shaded street in front of the Arsenal already filled with an expectant crowd. Sharp commands broke the silence, and he saw the blue regiments forming on the lawn inside the wall. Truly, events were in the air,—great events in which he had no part.

As he stood leaning against a tree-box by the curb, dragged down once more by that dreaded feeling of detachment, he heard familiar voices close beside him. Leaning

forward, he saw Eliphalet Hopper and Mr. Cluyme. It was Mr. Cluyme who was speaking.

“Well, Mr. Hopper,” he said, “in spite of what you say, I expect you are dust as eager as I am to see what is going on. You’ve taken an early start this morning for sightseeing.”

Eliphalet’s equanimity was far from shaken.

“I don’t cal’late to take a great deal of stock in the military,” he answered. “But business is business. And a man must keep an eye on what is moving.”

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Mr. Cluyme ran his hand through his chop whiskers, and lowered his voice.

“You’re right, Hopper,” he assented. “And if this city is going to be Union, we ought to know it right away.”

Stephen, listening with growing indignation to this talk, was unaware of a man who stood on the other side of the tree, and who now came forward before Mr. Hopper. He presented a somewhat uncompromising front. Mr. Cluyme instantly melted away.

“My friend,” said the stranger, quietly, “I think we have met before, when your actions were not greatly to your credit. I do not forget a face, even when I see it in the dark. Now I hear you utter words which are a disgrace to a citizen of the United States. I have some respect for a rebel. I have none for you, sir.”

As soon as Stephen recovered from the shock of his surprise, he saw that Eliphalet had changed countenance. The manner of an important man of affairs, which he hay so assiduously cultivated, fell away from him. He took a step backward, and his eyes made an ugly shift. Stephen rejoiced to see the stranger turn his back on the manager of Carvel & Company before that dignitary had time to depart, and stand unconcernedly there as if nothing had occurred.

Then Stephen stared at him.

He was not a man you would look at twice, ordinarily, he was smoking a great El Sol cigar. He wore clothes that were anything but new, a slouch hat, and coarse grained, square-toed boots. His trousers were creased at the knees. His head fell forward a little from his square shoulders, and leaned a bit to one side, as if meditatively. He had a light brown beard that was reddish in the sun, and he was rather short than otherwise.

This was all that Stephen saw. And yet the very plainness of the man’s appearance only added to his curiosity. Who was this stranger? His words, his action, too, had been remarkable. The art of administering a rebuke like that was not given to many men. It was perfectly quiet, perfectly final. And then, when it was over, he had turned his back and dismissed it.

Next Stephen began to wonder what he could know about Hopper. Stephen had suspected Eliphalet of subordinating principles to business gain, and hence the conversation with Mr. Cluyme had given him no shock in the way of a revelation, But if Hopper were a rogue, ought not Colonel Carvel to hear it? Ought not he, Stephen Brice, to ask this man with the cigar what he knew, and tell Judge Whipple? The sudden rattle of drums gave him a start, and cruelly reminded him of the gulf of prejudice and hatred fast widening between the friends.

All this time the stranger stood impassively chewing his cigar, his hand against the tree-box. A regiment in column came out of the Arsenal gate, the Union leader in his colonel's uniform, on horseback at its head. He pulled up in the street opposite to Stephen, and sat in his saddle, chatting with other officers around him.

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Then the stranger stepped across the limestone gutter and walked up to the Colonel's horse, He was still smoking. This move, too, was surprising enough, It argued even more assurance. Stephen listened intently.

"Colonel Blair, my name is Grant," he said briefly.

The Colonel faced quickly about, and held out his gloved hand cordially, "Captain Ulysses Grant," said he; "of the old army?"

Mr. Grant nodded.

"I wanted to wish you luck," he said.

"Thank you, Grant," answered the Colonel. "But you? Where are you living now?"

"I moved to Illinois after I left here," replied Mr. Grant, as quietly as before, "and have been in Galena, in the Leather business there. I went down to Springfield with the company they organized in Galena, to be of any help I could. They made me a clerk in the adjutant general's office of the state I ruled blanks, and made out forms for a while." He paused, as if to let the humble character of this position sink into the Colonel's comprehension. "Then they found out that I'd been quartermaster and commissary, and knew something about military orders Now I'm a state mustering officer. I came down to Belleville to muster in a regiment, which wasn't ready. And so I ran over here to see what you fellows were doing."

If this humble account had been delivered volubly, and in another tone, it is probable that the citizen-colonel would not have listened, since the events of that day were to crown his work of a winter. But Mr. Grant possessed a manner of holding attention.. It was very evident, however; that Colonel Blair had other things to think of. Nevertheless he said kindly:

"Aren't you going in, Grant?"

"I can't afford to go in as a captain of volunteers," was the calm reply: "I served nine years in the regular army and I think I can command a regiment."

The Colonel, whose attention was called away at that moment, did not reply. Mr. Grant moved off up the street. Some of the younger officers who were there, laughed as they followed his retreating figure.

"Command a regiment!" cried one, a lieutenant whom Stephen recognized as having been a bookkeeper at Edwards, James, & Doddington's, and whose stiff blue uniform coat creased awkwardly. "I guess I'm about as fit to command a regiment as Grant is."

“That man’s forty years old, if he’s a day,” put in another. “I remember when he came here to St. Louis in ’54, played out. He’d resigned from the army on the Pacific Coast. He put up a log cabin down on the Gravois Road, and there he lived in the hardest luck of any man I ever saw until last year. You remember him, Joe.”

“Yep,” said Joe. “I spotted him by the El Sol cigar. He used to bring a load of wood to the city once in a while, and then he’d go over to the Planters’ House, or somewhere else, and smoke one of these long fellows, and sit against the wall as silent as a wooden Indian. After that he came up to the city without his family and went into real estate one winter. But he didn’t make it go. Curious, it is just a year ago this month than he went over to Illinois. He’s an honest fellow, and hard working enough, but he don’t know how. He’s just a dead failure.”

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“Command a regiment!” laughed the first, again, as of this in particular had struck his sense of humor. “I guess he won’t get a regiment in a hurry, There’s lots of those military carpet-baggers hanging around for good jobs now.”

“He might fool you fellows yet,” said the one caller, though his tone was not one of conviction. “I understand he had a first-rate record an the Mexican War.”

Just then an aide rode up, and the Colonel gave a sharp command which put an end to this desultory talk. As the First Regiment took up the march, the words “Camp Jackson” ran from mouth to mouth on the sidewalks. Catching fire, Stephen ran with the crowd, and leaping on passing street car, was borne cityward with the drums of the coming hosts beating in his ears.

In the city, shutters were going up on the stores. The streets were filled with, restless citizens seeking news, and drays were halted here and there on the corners, the white eyes and frenzied calls of the negro drivers betraying their excitement. While Stephen related to his mother the events of the morning, Hester burned the dinner. It lay; still untouched, on the table when the throbbing of drums sent them to the front steps. Sigel’s regiment had swung into the street, drawing in its wake a seething crowd.

Three persons came out of the big house next door. One was Anna Brinsmade; and there was her father, his white hairs uncovered. The third was Jack. His sister was cringing to him appealingly, and he struggling in her grasp. Out of his coat pocket hung the curved butt of a pepperbox revolver.

“Let me go, Anne!” he cried. “Do you think I can stay here while my people are shot down by a lot of damned Dutchman?”

“John,” said Mr. Brinsmade, sternly, “I cannot let you join a mob. I cannot let you shoot at men who carry the Union flag.”

“You cannot prevent me, sir,” shouted the young man, in a frenzy. “When foreigners take our flag for them own, it is time for us to shoot them down.”

Wrenching himself free, he ran down the steps and up the street ahead of the regiment. Then the soldiers and the noisy crowd were upon them and while these were passing the two stood there as in a dream. After that silence fell upon the street, and Mr. Brinsmade turned and went back into the house, his head bowed as in prayer. Stephen and his mother drew back, but Anne saw them.

“He is a rebel,” she faltered. “It will break my father’s heart.”

She looked at Stephen appealingly, unashamed of the tears in her eyes. Then she, too went in.

“I cannot stay here mother,” he said.

As he slammed the gate, Anne ran down the steps calling his name. He paused, and she caught his sleeve.

“I knew you would go,” she said, “I knew you would go. Oh, Stephen, you have a cool head. Try to keep Jack—out of mischief.”

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He left her standing on the pavement. But when he reached the corner and looked back he saw that she had gone in at his own little gate to meet his mother. Then he walked rapidly westward. Now and again he was stopped by feverish questions, but at length he reached the top of the second ridge from the river, along which crowded Eighteenth Street now runs. There stood the new double mansion Mr. Spencer Catherwood had built two years before on the outskirts of the town, with the wall at the side, and the brick stable and stable yard. As Stephen approached it, the thought came to him how little this world's goods avail in times of trouble. One of the big Catherwood boys was in the blue marching regiment that day, and had been told by his father never again to darken his doors. Another was in Clarence Colfax's company of dragoons, and still another had fled southward the night after Sumter.

Stephen stopped at the crest of the hill, in the white dust of the new-turned street, to gaze westward. Clouds were gathering in the sky, but the sun still shone brightly, Half way up the rise two blue lines had crawled, followed by black splotches, and at the southwest was the glint of the sun on rifle barrels. Directed by a genius in the art of war, the regiments were closing about Camp Jackson.

As he stood there meditating and paying no attention to those who hurried past, a few familiar notes were struck on a piano. They came through the wide-shuttered window above his head. Then a girl's voice rose above the notes, in tones that were exultant: —

> "Away down South in de fields of cotton,
> Cinnamon seed and sandy bottom,
> Look away, look away, Look away, look away.
> Den I wish I was in Dixie's Land,
> Oh, oh! oh, oh!
> In Dixie's Land I'll take my stand,
> And live and die in Dixie's Land.
> Away, away, away.
> Away down South in Dixie."

The song ceased amid peals of girlish laughter. Stephen was rooted to the spot.

"Jinny! Jinny Carvel, how dare you!" came through the shutters. "We shall have a whole regiment of Hessians in here."

Old Uncle Ben, the Catherwoods' coachman, came out of the stable yard. The whites of his eyes were rolling, half in amusement, half in terror. Seeing Stephen standing there, he exclaimed:

"Mistah Brice, if de Dutch take Camp Jackson, is we niggers gwinter be free?"

Stephen did not answer, for the piano had started again,

> "If ever I consent to be married,
> And who could refuse a good mate?
> The man whom I give my hand to,
> Must believe in the Rights of the State."

More laughter. Then the blinds were flung aside, and a young lady in a dress of white trimmed with crimson stood in the window, smiling. Suddenly she perceived Stephen in the road. Her smile faded. For an instant she stared at him, and then turned to the girls crowding behind her. What she said, he did not wait to hear. He was striding down the hill.

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CHAPTER XIX.

THE TENTH OF MAC

Would the sons of the first families surrender, “Never!” cried a young lady who sat behind the blinds in Mrs. Catherwood’s parlor. It seemed to her when she stopped to listen for the first guns of the coming battle that the tumult in her heart would drown their roar.

“But, Jinny,” ventured that Miss Puss Russell who never feared to speak her mind, “it would be folly for them to fight. The Dutch and Yankees outnumber them ten to one, and they haven’t any powder and bullets.”

“And Camp Jackson is down in a hollow,” said Maude Catherwood, dejectedly. And yet hopefully, too, for at the thought of bloodshed she was near to fainting.

“Oh,” exclaimed Virginia, passionately, “I believe you want them to surrender. I should rather see Clarence dead than giving his sword to a Yankee.”

At that the other two were silent again, and sat on through an endless afternoon of uncertainty and hope and dread in the darkened room. Now and anon Mr. Catherwood’s heavy step was heard as he paced the hall. From time to time they glanced at Virginia, as if to fathom her thought. She and Puss Russell had come that day to dine with Maude. Mr. Catherwood’s Ben, reeking of the stable, had brought the rumor of the marching on the camp into the dining-room, and close upon the heels of this the rumble of the drums and the passing of Sigel’s regiment. It was Virginia who had the presence of mind to slam the blinds in the faces of the troops, and the crowd had cheered her. It was Virginia who flew to the piano to play Dixie ere they could get by, to the awe and admiration of the girls and the delight of Mr. Catherwood who applauded her spirit despite the trouble which weighed upon him. Once more the crowd had cheered,—and hesitated. But the Dutch regiment slouched on, impassive, and the people followed.

Virginia remained at the piano, her mood exalted patriotism, uplifted in spirit by that grand song. At first she had played it with all her might. Then she sang it. She laughed in very scorn of the booby soldiers she had seen. A million of these, with all the firearms in the world, could not prevail against the flower of the South. Then she had begun whimsically to sing a verse of a song she had heard the week before, and suddenly her exaltation was fled, and her fingers left the keys. Gaining the window, trembling, half-expectant, she flung open a blind. The troops, the people, were gone, and there alone in the road stood—Stephen Brice. The others close behind her saw him, too, and Puss cried out in her surprise. The impression, when the room was dark once more, was of

sternness and sadness,—and of strength. Effaced was the picture of the plodding recruits with their coarse and ill-fitting uniforms of blue.

Virginia shut the blinds. Not a word escaped her, nor could they tell why—they did not dare to question her then. An hour passed, perhaps two, before the shrill voice of a boy was heard in the street below.

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“Camp Jackson has surrendered!”

They heard the patter of his bare feet on the pavement, and the cry repeated.

“Camp Jackson has surrendered!”

And so the war began for Virginia. Bitter before, now was she on fire. Close her lips as tightly as she might, the tears forced themselves to her eyes. The ignominy of it!

How hard it is for us of this age to understand that feeling.

“I do not believe it!” she cried. “I cannot believe it!”

The girls gathered around her, pale and frightened and anxious. Suddenly courage returned to her, the courage which made Spartans of Southern women. She ran to the front door. Mr. Catherwood was on the sidewalk, talking to a breathless man. That man was Mr. Barbo, Colonel Carvel’s book-keeper.

“Yes,” he was saying, “they—they surrendered. There was nothing else for them to do. They were surrounded and overpowered.”

Mr. Catherwood uttered an oath. But it did not shock Virginia.

“And not a shot fired?” he said.

“And not a shot fired?” Virginia repeated, mechanically. Both men turned. Mr. Barbo took off his hat.

“No, ma’am.”

“Oh, how could they!” exclaimed Virginia.

Her words seemed to arouse Mr. Catherwood from a kind of stupor. He turned, and took her hand.

“Virginia, we shall make them smart for this yet, My God!” he cried, “what have I done that my son should be a traitor, in arms against his own brother fighting for his people? To think that a Catherwood should be with the Yankees! You, Ben,” he shouted, suddenly perceiving an object for his anger. “What do you mean by coming out of the yard? By G-d, I’ll have you whipped. I’ll show you niggers whether you’re to be free or not.”

And Mr. Catherwood was a good man, who treated his servants well. Suddenly he dropped Virginia’s hand and ran westward down the hill. Well that she could not see beyond the second rise.

Let us go there—to the camp. Let us stand on the little mound at the northeast of it, on the Olive Street Road, whence Captain Lyon's artillery commands it. What a change from yesterday! Davis Avenue is no longer a fashionable promenade, flashing with bright dresses. Those quiet men in blue, who are standing beside the arms of the state troops, stacked and surrendered, are United States regulars. They have been in Kansas, and are used to scenes of this sort.

The five Hessian regiments have surrounded the camp. Each commander has obeyed the master mind of his chief, who has calculated the time of marching with precision. Here, at the western gate, Colonel Blair's regiment is in open order. See the prisoners taking their places between the ranks, some smiling, as if to say all is not over yet; some with heads hung down, in sulky shame. Still others, who are true to the Union, openly relieved. But who is this officer breaking his sword to bits against the fence, rather than surrender it to a Yankee? Listen to the crowd as they cheer him. Listen to the epithets and vile names which they hurl at the stolid blue line of the victors, "Mudsills!" "Negro Worshippers."

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Yes, the crowd is there, seething with conflicting passions. Men with brows bent and fists clenched, yelling excitedly. Others pushing, and eager to see,—there in curiosity only. And, alas, women and children by the score, as if what they looked upon were not war, but a parade, a spectacle. As the gray uniforms file out of the gate, the crowd has become a mob, now flowing back into the fields on each side of the road, now pressing forward vindictively until stopped by the sergeants and corporals. Listen to them calling to sons, and brothers, and husbands in gray! See, there is a woman who spits in a soldier's face!

Throughout it all, the officers sit their horses, unmoved. A man on the bank above draws a pistol and aims at a captain. A German private steps from the ranks, forgetful of discipline, and points at the man, who is cursing the captain's name. The captain, imperturbable, orders his man back to his place. And the man does not shoot—yet.

Now are the prisoners of that regiment all in place between the two files of it. A band (one of those which played lightsome music on the birthday of the camp) is marched around to the head of the column. The regiment with its freight moves on to make place for a battalion of regulars, amid imprecations and cries of "Hurrah for Jeff Davis!" and "Damn the Dutch! Kill the Hessians!"

Stephen Brice stood among the people in Lindell's Grove, looking up at the troops on the road, which was on an embankment. Through the rows of faces he had searched in vain for one. His motive he did not attempt to fathom—in truth, he was not conscious at the time of any motive. He heard the name shouted at the gate.

"Here they are,—the dragoons! Three cheers for Colfax! Down with the Yankees!"

A storm of cheers and hisses followed. Dismounted, at the head of his small following, the young Captain walked erect. He did not seem to hear the cheers. His face was set, and he held his gloved hand over the place where his sword had been, as if over a wound. On his features, in his attitude, was stamped the undying determination of the South. How those thoroughbreds of the Cavaliers showed it! Pain they took lightly. The fire of humiliation burned, but could not destroy their indomitable spirit. They were the first of their people in the field, and the last to leave it. Historians may say that the classes of the South caused the war; they cannot say that they did not take upon themselves the greatest burden of the suffering.

Twice that day was the future revealed to Stephen. Once as he stood on the hill-crest, when he had seen a girl in crimson and white in a window, —in her face. And now again he read it in the face of her cousin. It was as if he had seen unrolled the years of suffering that were to come.

In that moment of deep bitterness his reason wavered. What if the South should win? Surely there was no such feeling in the North as these people betrayed. That most

dangerous of gifts, the seeing of two sides of a quarrel, had been given him. He saw the Southern view. He sympathized with the Southern people. They had befriended him in his poverty. Why had he not been born, like Clarence Colfax, the owner of a large plantation, the believer in the divine right of his race to rule?

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Then this girl who haunted his thoughts! Would that his path had been as straight, his duty as easy, as that of the handsome young Captain.

Presently these thoughts were distracted by the sight of a back strangely familiar. The back belonged to a, gentleman who was energetically climbing the embankment in front of him, on the top of which Major Sexton, a regular, army officer, sat his horse. The gentleman was pulling a small boy after him by one hand, and held a newspaper tightly rolled in the other. Stephen smiled to himself when it came over him that this gentleman was none other than that Mr. William T. Sherman he had met in the street car the day before. Somehow Stephen was fascinated by the decision and energy of Mr. Sherman's slightest movements. He gave Major Saxton a salute, quick and genial. Then, almost with one motion he unrolled the newspaper, pointed to a paragraph, and handed it to the officer. Major Saxton was still reading when a drunken ruffian clambered up the bank behind them and attempted to pass through the lines. The column began to move forward. Mr. Sherman slid down the bank with his boy into the grove beside Stephen. Suddenly there was a struggle. A corporal pitched the drunkard backwards over the bank, and he rolled at Mr. Sherman's feet. With a curse, he picked himself up, fumbling in his pocket. There was a flash, and as the smoke rolled from before his eyes, Stephen saw a man of a German regiment stagger and fall.

It was the signal for a rattle of shots. Stones and bricks filled the air, and were heard striking steel and flesh in the ranks. The regiment quivered,—then halted at the loud command of the officers, and the ranks faced out with level guns, Stephen reached for Mr. Sherman's boy, but a gentleman had already thrown him and was covering his body. He contrived to throw down a woman standing beside him before the mini-balls swished over their heads, and the leaves and branches began to fall. Between the popping of the shots sounded the shrieks of wounded women and children, the groans and curses of men, and the stampeding of hundreds.

"Lie down, Brice! For God's sake lie down!" Mr. Sherman cried.

He was about to obey when a young; man, small and agile, ran past him from behind, heedless of the panic. Stopping at the foot of the bank he dropped on one knee, resting his revolver in the hollow of his left arm. It, was Jack Brinsmade. At the same time two of the soldiers above lowered their barrels to cover him. Then smoke hid the scene. When it rolled away, Brinsmade lay on the ground. He staggered to his feet with an oath, and confronted a young man who was hatless, and upon whose forehead was burned a black powder mark.

"Curse you!" he cried, reaching out wildly, "curse you, you d—d Yankee. I'll teach you to fight!"

Maddened, he made a rush at Stephen's throat. But Stephen seized his hands and bent them down, and held them firmly while he kicked and struggled.

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“Curse you!” he panted; “curse you, you let me go and I’ll kill you,—you Yankee upstart!”

But Stephen held on. Brinsmade became more and more frantic. One of the officers, seeing the struggle, started down the bank, was reviled, and hesitated. At that moment Major Sherman came between them.

“Let him go, Brice,” he said, in a tone of command. Stephen did as he was bid. Whereupon Brinsmade made a dash for his pistol on the ground. Mr. Sherman was before him.

“Now see here, Jack,” he said, picking it up, “I don’t want to shoot you, but I may have to. That young man saved your life at the risk of his own. If that fool Dutchman had had a ball in his gun instead of a wad, Mr. Brice would have been killed.”

A strange thing happened. Brinsmade took one long look at Stephen, turned on his heel, and walked off rapidly through the grove. And it may be added that for some years after he was not seen in St. Louis.

For a moment the other two stood staring after him. Then Mr. Sherman took his boy by the hand.

“Mr. Brice,” he said, “I’ve seen a few things done in my life, but nothing better than this. Perhaps the day may come when you and I may meet in the army. They don’t seem to think much of us now,” he added, smiling, “but we may be of use to ’em later. If ever I can serve you, Mr. Brice, I beg you to call on me.”

Stephen stammered his acknowledgments. And Mr. Sherman, nodding his head vigorously, went away southward through the grove, toward Market Street.

The column was moving on. The dead were being laid in carriages, and the wounded tended by such physicians as chanced to be on the spot. Stephen, dazed at what had happened, took up the march to town. He strode faster than the regiments with their load of prisoners, and presently he found himself abreast the little file of dragoons who were guarded by some of Blair’s men. It was then that he discovered that the prisoners’ band in front was playing “Dixie.”

They are climbing the second hill, and are coming now to the fringe of new residences which the rich citizens have built. Some of them are closed and dark. In the windows and on the steps of others women are crying or waving handkerchiefs and calling out to the prisoners, some of whom are gay, and others sullen. A distracted father tries to break through the ranks and rescue his son. Ah, here is the Catherwood house. That is open. Mrs. Catherwood, with her hand on her husband’s arm, with red eyes, is scanning those faces for the sight of George.

Will he ever come back to her? Will the Yankees murder him for treason, or send him North to languish the rest of his life? No, she will not go inside. She must see him. She will not faint, though Mrs. James has, across the street, and is even now being carried into the house. Few of us can see into the hearts of those women that day, and speak of the suffering there.

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Near the head of Mr. Blair's regiment is Tom. His face is cast down as he passes the house from which he is banished. Nor do father, or mother, or sister in their agony make any sound or sign. George is coming. The welcome and the mourning and the tears are all for him.

The band is playing "Dixie" once more. George is coming, and some one else. The girls are standing in a knot bend the old people, dry-eyed, their handkerchiefs in their hands. Some of the prisoners take off their hats and smile at the young lady with the chiselled features and brown hair, who wears the red and white of the South as if she were born to them. Her eyes are searching. Ah, at last she sees him, walking erect at the head of his dragoons. He gives her one look of entreaty, and that smile which should have won her heart long ago. As if by common consent the heads of the troopers are uncovered before her. How bravely she waves at them until they are gone down the street! Then only do her eyes fill with tears, and she passes into the house.

Had she waited, she might have seen a solitary figure leaving the line of march and striding across to Pine Street.

That night the sluices of the heavens were opened, and the blood was washed from the grass in Lindell Grove. The rain descended in floods on the distracted city, and the great river rose and flung brush from Minnesota forests high up on the stones of the levee. Down in the long barracks weary recruits, who had stood and marched all the day long, went supperless to their hard pallets.

Government fare was hard. Many a boy, prisoner or volunteer, sobbed himself to sleep in the darkness. All were prisoners alike, prisoners of war. Sobbed themselves to sleep, to dream of the dear homes that were here within sight and sound of them, and to which they were powerless to go. Sisters, and mothers, and wives were there, beyond the rain, holding out arms to them.

Is war a thing to stir the blood? Ay, while the day lasts. But what of the long nights when husband and wife have lain side by side? What of the children who ask piteously where their father is going, and who are gathered by a sobbing mother to her breast? Where is the picture of that last breakfast at home? So in the midst of the cheer which is saddest in life comes the thought that, just one year ago, he who is the staff of the house was wont to sit down just so merrily to his morning meal, before going to work in the office. Why had they not thanked God on their knees for peace while they had it?

See the brave little wife waiting on the porch of her home for him to go by. The sun shines, and the grass is green on the little plot, and the geraniums red. Last spring she was sewing here with a song on her lips, watching for him to turn the corner as he came back to dinner. But now! Hark! Was that the beat of the drums? Or was it thunder? Her good neighbors, the doctor and his wife, come in at the little gate to cheer her. She does not hear them. Why does God mock her with sunlight and with friends?

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Tramp, tramp, tramp! They are here. Now the band is blaring. That is his company. And that is his dear face, the second from the end. Will she ever see it again? Look, he is smiling bravely, as if to say a thousand tender things. “Will, are the flannels in your knapsack? You have not forgotten that medicine for your cough?” What courage sublime is that which lets her wave at him? Well for you, little woman, that you cannot see the faces of the good doctor and his wife behind you. Oh, those guns of Sumter, how they roar in your head! Ay, and will roar again, through forty years of widowhood!

Mrs. Brice was in the little parlor that Friday night, listening to the cry of the rain outside. Some thoughts such as these distracted her. Why should she be happy, and other mothers miserable? The day of reckoning for her happiness must surely come, when she must kiss Stephen a brave farewell and give him to his country. For the sins of the fathers are visited on the children, unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Him who is the Ruler of all things.

The bell rang, and Stephen went to the door. He was startled to see Mr. Brinsmade. That gentleman was suddenly aged, and his clothes were wet and spattered with mud. He sank into a chair, but refused the spirits and water which Mrs. Brice offered him in her alarm.

“Stephen,” he said, “I have been searching the city for John. Did you see him at Camp Jackson—was he hurt?”

“I think not, sir,” Stephen answered, with clear eyes.

“I saw him walking southward after the firing was all over.”

“Thank God,” exclaimed Mr. Brinsmade, fervently. “If you will excuse me, madam, I shall hurry to tell my wife and daughter. I have been able to find no one who saw him.”

As he went out he glanced at Stephen’s forehead. But for once in his life, Mr. Brinsmade was too much agitated to inquire about the pain of another.

“Stephen, you did not tell me that you saw John,” said his mother, when the door was closed.

CHAPTER XX

IN THE ARSENAL

There was a dismal tea at Colonel Carvel’s house in Locust Street that evening Virginia did not touch a mouthful, and the Colonel merely made a pretence of eating. About six o’clock Mrs. Addison Colfax had driven in from Bellegarde, nor could it rain fast enough or hard enough to wash the foam from her panting horses. She did not wait for Jackson

to come out with an umbrella, but rushed through the wet from the carriage to the door in her haste to urge the Colonel to go to the Arsenal and demand Clarence's release. It was in vain that Mr. Carvel assured her it would do no good, in vain that he told her of a more important matter that claimed him. Could there be a more important matter than his own nephew kept in durance, and in danger of being murdered by Dutch butchers in the frenzy of their victory? Mrs. Colfax shut herself up in her room, and through the door Virginia heard her sobs as she went down to tea.

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The Colonel made no secret of his uneasiness. With his hat on his head, and his hands in his pockets, he paced up and down the room. He let his cigar go out,—a more serious sign still. Finally he stood with his face to the black window, against which the big drops were beating in a fury.

Virginia sat expressionless at the head of the table, still in that gown of white and crimson, which she had worn in honor of the defenders of the state. Expressionless, save for a glance of solicitation at her father's back. If resolve were feminine, Virginia might have sat for that portrait. There was a light in her dark blue eyes. Underneath there were traces of the day's fatigue. When she spoke, there was little life in her voice.

"Aren't you going to the Planters' House, Pa The Colonel turned, and tried to smile.

"I reckon not to-night, Jinny. Why?"

"To find out what they are going to do with Clarence," she said indignantly.

"I reckon they don't know at the Planters' House," he said.

"Then—" began Virginia, and stopped.

"Then what?" he asked, stroking her hair.

"Then why not go to the Barracks? Order the carriage, and I will go with you."

His smile faded. He stood looking down at her fixedly, as was sometimes his habit. Grave tenderness was in his tone.

"Jinny," he said slowly, "Jinny, do you mean to marry Clarence?"

The suddenness of the question took her breath. But she answered steadily:

"Yes."

"Do you love him?

"Yes," she answered. But her lashes fell.

Still he stood, and it seemed to her that her father's gaze pierced to her secret soul.

"Come here, my dear," he said.

He held out his arms, and she fluttered into them. The tears were come at last. It was not the first time she had cried out her troubles against that great heart which had ever been her strong refuge. From childhood she had been comforted there. Had she broken her doll, had Mammy Easter been cross, had lessons gone wrong at school,

was she ill, or weary with that heaviness of spirit which is woman's inevitable lot,—this was her sanctuary. But now! This burden God Himself had sent, and none save her Heavenly Father might cure it. Through his great love for her it was given to Colonel Carvel to divine it—only vaguely.

Many times he strove to speak, and could not. But presently, as if ashamed of her tears, she drew back from him and took her old seat on the arm of his chair.

By the light of his intuition, the Colonel chose tins words well. What he had to speak of was another sorrow, yet a healing one.

"You must not think of marriage now, my dear, when the bread we eat may fail us. Jinny, we are not as rich as we used to be. Our trade was in the South and West, and now the South and West cannot pay. I had a conference with Mr. Hopper yesterday, and he tells me that we must be prepared."

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She laid her hand upon his.

“And did you think I would care, dear?” she asked gently. “I can bear with poverty and rags, to win this war.”

“His own eyes were dim, but pride shone in them. Jackson came in on tiptoe, and hesitated. At the Colonel’s motion he took away the china and the silver, and removed the white cloth, and turned low the lights in the chandelier. He went out softly, and closed the door.

“Pa,” said Virginia, presently, “do you trust Mr. Hopper?”

The Colonel gave a start.

“Why, yes, Jinny. He improved the business greatly before this trouble came. And even now we are not in such straits as some other houses.”

“Captain Lige doesn’t like him.”

“Lige has prejudices.”

“So have I,” said Virginia. “Eliphalet Hopper will serve you so long as he serves himself. No longer.”

“I think you do him an injustice, my dear,” answered the Colonel. But uneasiness was in his voice. “Hopper is hard working, scrupulous to a cent. He owns two slaves now who are running the river. He keeps out of politics, and he has none of the Yankee faults.”

“I wish he had,” said Virginia.

The Colonel made no answer to this. Getting up, he went over to the bell-cord at the door and pulled it. Jackson came in hurriedly.

“Is my bag packed?”

“Yes, Marsa.”

“Where are you going?” cried Virginia, in alarm.

“To Jefferson City, dear, to see the Governor. I got word this afternoon.”

“In the rain?”

He smiled, and stooped to kiss her.

“Yes,” he answered, “in the rain as far as the depot, I can trust you, Jinny. And Lige’s boat will be back from New Orleans to-morrow or Sunday.”

The next morning the city awoke benumbed, her heart beating but feebly. Her commerce had nearly ceased to flow. A long line of boats lay idle, with noses to the levee. Men stood on the street corners in the rain, reading of the capture of Camp Jackson, and of the riot, and thousands lifted up their voices to execrate the Foreign City below Market Street. A vague terror, maliciously born, subtly spread. The Dutch had broken up the camp, a peaceable state institution, they had shot down innocent women and children. What might they not do to the defenceless city under their victorious hand, whose citizens were nobly loyal to the South? Sack it? Yes, and burn, and loot it. Ladies who ventured out that day crossed the street to avoid Union gentlemen of their acquaintance.

It was early when Mammy Easter brought the news paper to her mistress. Virginia read the news, and ran joyfully to her aunt’s room. Three times she knocked, and then she heard a cry within. Then the key was turned and the bolt cautiously withdrawn, and a crack of six inches disclosed her aunt.

“Oh, how you frightened me, Jinny!” she cried. “I thought it was the Dutch coming to murder us all, What have they done to Clarence?”

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“We shall see him to-day, Aunt Lillian,” was the joyful answer. “The newspaper says that all the Camp Jackson prisoners are to be set free to-day, on parole. Oh, I knew they would not dare to hold them. The whole state would have risen to their rescue.”

Mrs. Colfax did not receive these tidings with transports. She permitted her niece to come into her room, and then: sank into a chair before the mirror of her dressing-table, and scanned her face there.

“I could not sleep a wink, Jinny, all night long. I look wretchedly. I am afraid I am going to have another of my attacks. How it is raining! What does the newspaper say?”

“I’ll get it for you,” said Virginia, used to her aunt’s vagaries.

“No, no, tell me. I am much too nervous to read it.”

“It says that they will be paroled to-day, and that they passed a comfortable night.”

“It must be a Yankee lie,” said the lady. “Oh, what a night! I saw them torturing him in a thousand ways the barbarians! I know he had to sleep on a dirty floor with low-down trash.”

“But we shall have him here to-night, Aunt Lillian!” cried Virginia. “Mammy, tell Uncle Ben that Mr. Clarence will be here for tea. We must have a feast for him. Pa said that they could not hold them.”

“Where is Comyn?” inquired Mrs. Colfax. “Has he gone down to see Clarence?”

“He went to Jefferson City last night,” replied Virginia. “The Governor sent for him.”

Mrs. Colfax exclaimed in horror at this news.

“Do you mean that he has deserted us?” she cried. “That he has left us here defenceless,—at the mercy of the Dutch, that they may wreak their vengeance upon us women? How can you sit still, Virginia? If I were your age and able to drag myself to the street, I should be at the Arsenal now. I should be on my knees before that detestable Captain Lyon, even if he is a Yankee.” Virginia kept her temper.

“I do not go on my knees to any man,” she said. “Rosetta, tell Ned I wish the carriage at once.”

Her aunt seized her convulsively by the arm.

“Where are you going, Jinny?” she demanded. “Your Pa would never forgive me if anything happened to you.”

A smile, half pity, crossed the girl's anxious face.

"I am afraid that I must risk adding to your misfortune, Aunt Lillian," she said, and left the room.

Virginia drove to Mr. Brinsmade's. His was one of the Union houses which she might visit and not lose her self respect. Like many Southerners, when it became a question of go or stay, Mr. Brinsmade's unfaltering love for the Union had kept him in. He had voted for Mr. Bell, and later had presided at Crittenden Compromise meetings. In short, as a man of peace, he would have been willing to sacrifice much for peace. And now that it was to be war, and he had taken his stand uncompromisingly with the Union, the neighbors whom he had befriended for so

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many years could not bring themselves to regard him as an enemy. He never hurt their feelings; and almost as soon as the war began he set about that work which has been done by self-denying Christians of all ages,—the relief of suffering. He visited with comfort the widow and the fatherless, and many a night in the hospital he sat through beside the dying, Yankee and Rebel alike, and wrote their last letters home.

And Yankee and Rebel alike sought his help and counsel in time of perplexity or trouble, rather than hotheaded advice from their own leaders.

Mr. Brinsmade's own carriage was drawn up at his door; and that gentleman himself standing on the threshold. He came down his steps bareheaded in the wet to hand Virginia from her carriage.

Courteous and kind as ever, he asked for her father and her aunt as he led her into the house. However such men may try to hide their own trials under a cheerful mien, they do not succeed with spirits of a kindred nature. With the others, who are less generous, it matters not. Virginia was not so thoughtless nor so selfish that she could not perceive that a trouble had come to this good man. Absorbed as she was in her own affairs, she forgot some of them in his presence. The fire left her tongue, and to him she could not have spoken harshly even of an enemy. Such was her state of mind, when she was led into the drawing-room. From the corner of it Anne arose and came forward to throw her arms around her friend.

"Jinny, it was so good of you to come. You don't, hate me?"

"Hate you, Anne dear!"

"Because we are Union," said honest Anne, wishing to have no shadow of doubt.

Virginia was touched. "Anne," she cried, "if you were German, I believe I should love you."

"How good of you to come. I should not have dared go to your house, because I know that you feel so deeply. You—you heard?"

"Heard what?" asked Virginia, alarmed.

"That Jack has run away—has gone South, we think. Perhaps," she cried, "perhaps he may be dead." And tears came into the girl's eyes.

It was then that Virginia forgot Clarence. She drew Anne to the sofa and kissed her.

“No, he is not dead,” she said gently, but with a confidence in her voice of rare quality. “He is not dead, Anne dear, or you would have heard.”

Had she glanced up, she would have seen Mr. Brinsmade’s eye upon her. He looked kindly at all people, but this expression he reserved for those whom he honored. A life of service to others had made him guess that, in the absence of her father, this girl had come to him for help of some kind.

“Virginia is right, Anne,” he said. “John has gone to fight for his principles, as every gentleman who is free should; we must remember that this is his home, and that we must not quarrel with him, because we think differently.” He paused, and came over to Virginia. “There is something I can do for you, my dear?” said he.

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She rose. “Oh, no, Mr. Brinsmade,” she cried. And yet her honesty was as great as Anne’s. She would not have it thought that she came for other reasons. “My aunt is in such a state of worry over Clarence that I came to ask you if you thought the news true, that the prisoners are to be paroled. She thinks it is a—” Virginia flushed, and bit a rebellious tongue. “She does not believe it.”

Even good Mr. Brinsmade smiled at the slip she had nearly made. He understood the girl, and admired her. He also understood Mrs. Colfax.

“I’ll drive to the Arsenal with you, Jinny,” he answered. “I know Captain Lyon, and we shall find out certainly.”

“You will do nothing of the kind, sir,” said Virginia, with emphasis.” Had I known this—-about John, I should not have come.”

He checked her with a gesture. What a gentleman of the old school he was, with his white ruffled shirt and his black stock and his eye kindling with charity.

“My dear,” he answered, “Nicodemus is waiting. I was just going myself to ask Captain Lyon about John.” Virginia’s further objections were cut short by the violent clanging of the door-bell, and the entrance of a tall, energetic gentleman, whom Virginia had introduced to her as Major Sherman, late of the army, and now president of the Fifth Street Railroad. The Major bowed and shook hands. He then proceeded, as was evidently his habit, directly to the business on which he was come.

“Mr. Brinsmade,” he said, “I heard, accidentally, half an hour ago that you were seeking news of your son. I regret to say, sir, that the news I have will not lead to a knowledge of his whereabouts. But in justice to a young gentleman of this city I think I ought to tell you what happened at Camp Jackson.”

“I shall be most grateful, Major. Sit down, sir.”

But the Major did not sit down. He stood in the middle of the room. With some gesticulation which added greatly to the force of the story, he gave a most terse and vivid account of Mr. John’s arrival at the embankment by the grove—of his charging a whole regiment of Union volunteers. Here was honesty again. Mr. Sherman did not believe in mincing matters even to a father and sister.

“And, sir,” said he, “you may thank the young man who lives next door to you—Mr. Brice, I believe—for saving your son’s life.”

“Stephen Brice!” exclaimed Mr, Brinsmade, in astonishment.

Virginia felt Anne’s hand tighten But her own was limp. A hot wave swept over her, Was she never to hear the end of this man.

“Yes, sir, Stephen Brice,” answered Mr. Sherman. “And I never in my life saw a finer thing done, in the Mexican War or out of it.”

Mr. Brinsmade grew a little excited. “Are you sure that you know him?”

“As sure as I know you,” said the Major, with excessive conviction.

“But,” said Mr. Brinsmade, “I was in there last night, I knew the young man had been at the camp. I asked him if he had seen Jack. He told me that he had, by the embankment. But he never mentioned a word about saving his life.”

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“He didn’t,” cried the Major. “By glory, but he’s even better than I thought him, Did you see a black powder mark on his face?”

“Why, yes, sir, I saw a bad burn of some kind on his forehead.”

“Well, sir, if one of the Dutchmen who shot at Jack had known enough to put a ball in his musket, he would have killed Mr. Brice, who was only ten feet away, standing before your son.”

Anne gave a little cry—Virginia was silent—Her lips were parted. Though she realized it not, she was thirsting %a hear the whole of the story.

The Major told it, soldier fashion, but well. How John rushed up to the line. How he (Mr. Sherman) had seen Brice throw the woman down and had cried to him to lie down himself how the fire was darting down the regiment, and how men and women were falling all about them; and how Stephen had flung Jack and covered him with his body.

It was all vividly before Virginia’s eyes. Had she any right to treat such a man with contempt? She remembered hour he had looked, at her when he stood on the corner by the Catherwoods’ house. And, worst of all, she remembered many spiteful remarks she had made, even to Anne, the gist of which had been that Mr. Brice was better at preaching than at fighting. She knew now—and she had known in her heart before—-that this was the greatest injustice she could have done him.

“But Jack? What did Jack do?”

It was Anne who tremblingly asked the Major. But Mr. Sherman, apparently, was not the man to say that Jack would have shot Stephen had he not interfered. That was the ugly part of the story. John would have shot the man who saved his life. To the day of his death neither Mr. Brinsmade nor his wife knew this. But while Mr. Brinsmade and Anne had gone upstairs to the sickbed, these were the tidings the Major told Virginia, who kept it in her heart. The reason he told her was because she had guessed a part of it.

Nevertheless Mr. Brinsmade drove to the Arsenal with her that Saturday, in his own carriage. Forgetful of his own grief, long habit came to him to talk cheerily with her. He told her many little anecdotes of his travel, but not one of them did she hear. Again, at the moment when she thought her belief in Clarence and her love for him at last secure, she found herself drawing searching comparisons between him and the quieter young Bostonian. In spite of herself she had to admit that Stephen’s deed was splendid. Was this disloyal? She flushed at the thought. Clarence had been capable of the deed,—-even to the rescue of an enemy. But—alas, that she should carry it out to a remorseless end—would Clarence have been equal to keeping silence when Mr. Brinsmade came to him? Stephen Brice had not even told his mother, so Mr. Brinsmade believed.

As if to aggravate her torture, Mr. Brinsmade's talk drifted to the subject of young Mr. Brice. This was but natural. He told her of the brave struggle Stephen had made, and how he had earned luxuries, and often necessities, for his mother by writing for the newspapers.

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“Often,” said Mr. Brinsmade, “often I have been unable to sleep, and have seen the light in Stephen’s room until the small hours of the morning.”

“Oh, Mr. Brinsmade,” cried Virginia. “Can’t you tell me something bad about him? Just once.”

The good gentleman started, and looked searchingly at the girl by his side, flushed and confused. Perhaps he thought—but how can we tell what he thought? How can we guess that our teachers laugh at our pranks after they have caned us for them? We do not remember that our parents have once been young themselves, and that some word or look of our own brings a part of their past vividly before them. Mr. Brinsmade was silent, but he looked out of the carriage window, away from Virginia. And presently, as they splashed through the mud near the Arsenal, they met a knot of gentlemen in state uniforms on their way to the city. Nicodemus stopped at his master’s signal. Here was George Catherwood, and his father was with him.

“They have released us on parole,” said George. “Yes, we had a fearful night of it. They could not have kept us—they had no quarters.”

How changed he was from the gay trooper of yesterday! His bright uniform was creased and soiled and muddy, his face unshaven, and dark rings of weariness under his eyes.

“Do you know if Clarence Colfax has gone home?” Mr. Brinsmade inquired.

“Clarence is an idiot,” cried George, ill-naturedly. Mr. Brinsmade, of all the prisoners here, he refused to take the parole, or the oath of allegiance. He swears he will remain a prisoner until he is exchanged.”

“The young man is Quixotic,” declared the elder Catherwood, who was not himself in the best of humors.

“Sir,” said Mr. Brinsmade, with as much severity as he was ever known to use, “sir, I honor that young man for this more than I can tell you. Nicodemus, you may drive on.” And he slammed the door.

Perhaps George had caught sight of a face in the depths of the carriage, for he turned purple, and stood staring on the pavement after his choleric parent had gone on.

It was done. Of all the thousand and more young men who had upheld the honor of their state that week, there was but the one who chose to remain in durance vile within the Arsenal wall—Captain Clarence Colfax, late of the Dragoons.

Mr. Brinsmade was rapidly admitted to the Arsenal, and treated with the respect which his long service to the city deserved. He and Virginia were shown into the bare military

room of the commanding officer, and thither presently came Captain Lyon himself. Virginia tingled with antagonism when she saw this man who had made the city tremble, who had set an iron heel on the flaming brand of her Cause. He, too, showed the marks of his Herculean labors, but only on his clothes and person. His long red hair was unbrushed, his boots covered with black mud, and his coat unbuttoned. His face was ruddy, and his eye as clear as though he had arisen from twelve hours' sleep. He bowed to Virginia (not too politely, to be sure). Her own nod of are recognition did not seem to trouble him.

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“Yes, sir,” he said incisively, in response to Mr. Brinsmade’s question, “we are forced to retain Captain Colfax. He prefers to remain a prisoner until he is exchanged. He refuses to take the oath of allegiance to the United States.

“And why should he be made to, Captain Lyon? In what way has he opposed the United States troops?”

It was Virginia who spoke. Both looked at her in astonishment.

“You will pardon me, Miss Carvel,” said Captain Lyon, gravely, “if I refuse to discuss that question with you.” Virginia bit her tongue.

“I understand that Mr. Colfax is a near relative of yours, Miss Carvel,” the Captain continued. “His friends may come here to see him during the day. And I believe it is not out of place for me to express my admiration of the captain’s conduct. You may care to see him now—”

“Thank you,” said Virginia, curtly.

“Orderly, my respects to Captain Colfax, and ask him if a he will be kind enough to come in here. Mr. Brinsmade,” said the Captain, “I should like a few words with you, sir.” And so, thanks to the Captain’s delicacy, when Clarence arrived he found Virginia alone. She was much agitated She ran toward him as he entered the door, calling his name.

“Max, you are going to stay here?”

“Yes, until I am exchanged.”

Aglow with admiration, she threw herself into his arms. Now, indeed, was she proud of him. Of all the thousand defenders of the state, he alone was true to his principles—to the South. Within sight of home, he alone had chosen privation.

She looked up into his face, which showed marks of excitement and fatigue. But above all, excitement. She knew that he could live on excitement. The thought came to her—-was it that which sustained him now? She put it away as treason. Surely the touch of this experience would transform the boy into the man. This was the weak point in the armor which she wore so bravely for her cousin.

He had grown up to idleness. He had known neither care nor responsibility. His one longing from a child had been that love of fighting and adventure which is born in the race. Until this gloomy day in the Arsenal, Virginia had never characterized it as a love of excitement——as any thing which contained a selfish element. She looked up into his face, I say, and saw that which it is given to a woman only to see. His eyes burned with a light that was far away. Even with his arms around her he seemed to have forgotten

her presence, and that she had come all the way to the Arsenal to see him. Her hands dropped limply from his shoulders She drew away, as he did not seem to notice.

So it is with men. Above and beyond the sacrifice of a woman's life, the joy of possessing her soul and affection, is something more desirable still—fame and glory—-personal fame and glory, The woman may share them, of course, and be content with the radiance. When the Governor in making his inauguration speech, does he always think of the help the little wife has given him. And so, in moments of excitement, when we see far ahead into a glorious future, we do not feel the arms about us, or value the sweets which, in more humdrum days, we labored so hard to attain.

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Virginia drew away, and the one searching glance she gave him he did not see. He was staring far beyond; tears started in her eyes, and she turned from him to look out over the Arsenal grounds, still wet and heavy with the night's storm. The day itself was dark and damp. She thought of the supper cooking at home. It would not be eaten now.

And yet, in that moment of bitterness Virginia loved him. Such are the ways of women, even of the proudest, who love their country too. It was but right that he should not think of her when the honor of the South was at stake; and the anger that rose within her was against those nine hundred and ninety-nine who had weakly accepted the parole.

"Why did Uncle Comyn not come?" asked Clarence.

"He has gone to Jefferson City, to see the Governor.."

"And you came alone?"

"No, Mr. Brinsmade brought me."

"And mother?"

She was waiting for that question. What a relief that should have come among the first.

"Aunt Lillian feels very badly. She was in her room when I left. She was afraid," (Virginia had to smile), "she was afraid the Yankees would kill you."

"They have behaved very well for Yankees," replied he, "No luxury, and they will not hear of my having a servant. They are used to doing their own work. But they have treated me much better since I refused to take their abominable oath."

"And you will be honored for it when the news reaches town."

"Do you think so, Jinny?" Clarence asked eagerly, "I reckon they will think me a fool!"

"I should like to hear any one say so," she flashed out.

"No," said Virginia, "our friends will force them to release you. I do not know much about law. But you have done nothing to be imprisoned for."

Clarence did not answer at once. Finally he said. "I do not want to be released."

"You do not want to be released," she repeated.

"No," he said. "They can exchange me. If I remain a prisoner, it will have a greater effect—for the South."

She smiled again, this time at the boyish touch of heroics. Experience, responsibility, and he would get over that. She remembered once, long ago, when his mother had shut him up in his room for a punishment, and he had tortured her by remaining there for two whole days.

It was well on in the afternoon when she drove back to the city with Mr. Brinsmade. Neither of them had eaten since morning, nor had they even thought of hunger. Mr. Brinsmade was silent, leaning back in the corner of the carriage, and Virginia absorbed in her own thoughts. Drawing near the city, that dreaded sound, the rumble of drums, roused them. A shot rang out, and they were jerked violently by the starting of the horses. As they dashed across Walnut at Seventh came the fusillade. Virginia leaned out of the window. Down the vista of the street was a mass of blue uniforms, and a film of white smoke hanging about the columns of the old Presbyterian Church Mr. Brinsmade quietly drew her back into the carriage.

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The shots ceased, giving place to an angry roar that struck terror to her heart that wet and lowering afternoon. The powerful black horses galloped on. Nicodemus tugging at the reins, and great splotches of mud flying in at the windows. The roar of the crowd died to an ominous moaning behind them. Then she knew that Mr. Brinsmade was speaking:— “From battle and murder, and from sudden death—from all sedition, privy conspiracy, and rebellion,—Good Lord, deliver us.”

He was repeating the Litany—that Litany which had come down through the ages. They had chanted it in Cromwell’s time, when homes were ruined and laid waste, and innocents slaughtered. They had chanted it on the dark, barricaded stairways of mediaeval Paris, through St. Bartholomew’s night, when the narrow and twisted streets, ran with blood. They had chanted it in ancient India, and now it was heard again in the New World and the New Republic of Peace and Good Will.

Rebellion? The girl flinched at the word which the good gentleman had uttered in his prayers. Was she a traitor to that flag for which her people had fought in three wars? Rebellion! She burned to blot it forever from the book Oh, the bitterness of that day, which was prophecy of the bitterness to come.

Rain was dropping as Mr. Brinsmade escorted her up her own steps. He held her hand a little at parting, and bade her be of good cheer. Perhaps he guessed something of the trial she was to go through that night alone with her aunt, Clarence’s mother. Mr. Brinsmade did not go directly home. He went first to the little house next door to his. Mrs. Brice and Judge Whipple were in the parlor: What passed between them there has not been told, but presently the Judge and Mr. Brinsmade came out together and stood along time in, the yard, conversing, heedless of the rain.

CHAPTER XXI

THE STAMPEDE

Sunday dawned, and the people flocked to the churches. But even in the house of God were dissension and strife. From the Carvel pew at Dr. Posthelwaite’s Virginia saw men and women rise from their knees and walk out—their faces pale with anger. At St. Mark’s the prayer for the President of the United States was omitted. Mr. Russell and Mr. Catherwood nodded approvingly over the sermon in which the South was justified, and the sanction of Holy Writ laid upon her Institution. With not indifferent elation these gentlemen watched the departure of brethren with whom they had labored for many years, save only when Mr. Brinsmade walked down the aisle never to return. So it is that war, like a devastating flood, creeps insistent into the most sacred places, and will not be denied. Mr. Davitt, at least, preached that day to an united congregation,—which is to say that none of them went out. Mr. Hopper, who now shared a pew with Miss Crane, listened as usual with a most reverent attention. The clouds were

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low and the streets wet as people walked home to dinner, to discuss, many in passion and some in sorrow, the doings of the morning. A certain clergyman had prayed to be delivered from the Irish, the Dutch, and the Devil. Was it he who started the old rumor which made such havoc that afternoon? Those barbarians of the foreign city to the south, drunk with power, were to sack and loot the city. How it flew across street and alley, from yard to yard, and from house to house! Privileged Ned ran into the dining-room where Virginia and her aunt were sitting, his eyes rolling and his face ashen with terror, crying out that the Dutch were marching on the city, firebrands in hand and murder in their hearts.

“De Gen’ral done gib out er procl’mation, Miss Jinny,” he cried. “De Gen’ral done say in dat procl’mation dat he ain’t got no control ober de Dutch soldiers.”

Mrs. Colfax fainted.

“Oh Miss Jinny, ain’t you gwineter Glencoe? Ain’t you gwineter flee away? Every fambly on dis here street’s gwine away—is packin’ up fo’ de country. Doan’t you hear ’em, Miss Jinny? What’ll your pa say to Ned of he ain’t make you clear out! Doan’t you hear de carridges a-rattlin’ off to de country?”

Virginia rose in agitation, yet trying to be calm, and to remember that the safety of the household depended upon her alone. That was her thought,—bred into her by generations,—the safety of the household, of the humblest slave whose happiness and welfare depended upon her father’s bounty. How she longed in that instant for her father or Captain Lige, for some man’s strength, to depend upon. Would there be wisdom in flight?

“Do you want to go, Ned?” she asked. She has seen her aunt swoon before, and her maid Susan knows well what to do. “Do you want to go, Ned?”

“Laws Mussy, no, Miss Jinny. One nigger laik me doan’t make no difference. My Marsa he say: ’Whaffor you leave ma house to be ramsacked by de Dutch?’

“What I gwineter answer? Oh Miss Jinny, you an’ Miss Lill an’ Mammy Easter an’ Susan’s gwine with Jackson, an’ de othah niggahs can walk. Ephum an’ me’ll jes’ put up de shutters an’ load de Colonel’s gun.”

By this time the room was filled with excited negroes, some crying, and some laughing hysterically. Uncle Ben had come in from the kitchen; Jackson was there, and the women were a wailing bunch in the corner by the sideboard. Old Ephum, impassive, and Ned stood together. Virginia’s eye rested upon them, and the light of love and affection was in it. She went to the window. Yes, carriages were indeed rattling outside,

though a sharp shower was falling. Across the street Alphonse, M. Renault's butler, was depositing bags and bundles on the steps. M. Renault himself bustled out into the rain, gesticulating excitedly. Spying her at the window, he put his hands to his mouth, cried out something, and ran in again. Virginia flung open the sash and listened for the dreaded sound of drums. Then she crossed quickly over to where her aunt was lying on the lounge.

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“O Jinny,” murmured that lady, who had revived, “can’t you do something? Haven’t you done anything? They will be here any moment to burn us, to murder us—to—oh, my poor boy! Why isn’t he here to protect his mother! Why was Comyn so senseless, so thoughtless, as to leave us at such a time!”

“I don’t think there is any need to be frightened,” said Virginia, with a calmness that made her aunt tremble with anger. “It is probably only a rumor. Ned, run to Mr. Brinsmade’s and ask him about it.”

However loath to go, Ned departed at once. All honor to those old-time negroes who are now memories, whose devotion to their masters was next to their love of God. A great fear was in Ned’s heart, but he went. And he believed devoutly that he would never see his young mistress any more.

And while Ned is running to Mr. Brinsmade’s, Mrs. Colfax is summoning that courage which comes to persons of her character at such times. She gathers her jewels into a bag, and her fine dresses into her trunk, with trembling hands, although she is well enough now. The picture of Clarence in the diamond frame she puts inside the waist of her gown. No, she will not go to Bellegarde. That is too near the city. With frantic haste she closes the trunk, which Ephum and Jackson carry downstairs and place between the seats of the carriage. Ned had had the horses in it since church time. It is not safe outside. But where to go?

To Glencoe? It is three in the afternoon, and Jackson explains that, with the load, they would not reach there until midnight, if at all. To Kirkwood or Webster? Yes; many of the first families live there, and would take them in for the night. Equipages of all sorts are passing, —private carriages and public, and corner-stand hacks. The black drivers are cracking whips over galloping horses.

Pedestrians are hurrying by with bundles under their arms, some running east, and some west, and some stopping to discuss excitedly the chances of each direction. From the river comes the hoarse whistle of the boats breaking the Sabbath stillness there. It is a panic to be remembered.

Virginia leaned against the iron railing of the steps, watching the scene, and waiting for Ned to return from Mr. Brinsmade’s. Her face was troubled, as well it might be. The most alarming reports were cried up to her from the street, and she looked every moment for the black smoke of destruction to appear to the southward. Around her were gathered the Carvel servants, most of them crying, and imploring her not to leave them. And when Mrs. Colfax’s trunk was brought down and placed in the carriage where three of them might have ridden to safety, a groan of despair and entreaty rose from the faithful group that went to her heart.

“Miss Jinny, you ain’t gwineter leave yo’ ol mammy?”

“Hush, Mammy,” she said. “No, you shall all go, if I have to stay myself. Ephum, go to the livery stable and get another carriage.”

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She went up into her own deserted room to gather the few things she would take with her—the little jewellery case with the necklace of pearls which her great-grandmother had worn at her wedding. Rosetta and Mammy Easter were of no use, and she had sent them downstairs again. With a flutter she opened her wardrobe door, to take one last look at the gowns there. You will pardon her. They were part of happier days gone by. She fell down on her knees and opened the great drawer at the bottom, and there on the top lay the dainty gown which had belonged to Dorothy Manners. A tear fell upon one of the flowers of the stays. Irresistibly pressed into her mind the memory of Anne's fancy dress ball,—of the episode by the gate, upon which she had thought so often with burning face.

The voices below grow louder, but she does not hear. She is folding the gown hurriedly into a little package. It was her great-grandmother's; her chief heirloom after the pearls. Silk and satin from Paris are left behind. With one glance at the bed in which she had slept since childhood, and at the picture over it which had been her mother's, she hurries downstairs. And Dorothy Manners's gown is under her arm. On the landing she stops to brush her eyes with her handkerchief. If only her father were here!

Ah, here is Ned back again. Has Mr. Brinsmade come?

What did he say? Ned simply pointed out a young man standing on the steps behind the negroes. Crimson stains were on Virginia's cheeks, and the package she carried under her arm was like lead. The young man, although he showed no signs of excitement, reddened too as he came forward and took off his hat. But the sight of him had acurious effect upon Virginia, of which she was at first unconscious. A sense of security came upon her as she looked at his face and listened to his voice.

"Mr. Brinsmade has gone to the hospital, Miss Carvel," he said. "Mrs. Brinsmade asked me to come here with your man in the hope that I might persuade you to stay where you are."

"Then the Germans are not moving on the city?" she said.

In spite of himself, Stephen smiled. It was that smile that angered her, that made her rebel against the advice he had to offer; that made her forget the insult he had risked at her hands by coming there. For she believed him utterly, without reservation. The moment he had spoken she was convinced that the panic was a silly scare which would be food for merriment in future years. And yet—was not that smile in derision of herself—of her friends who were running away? Was it not an assumption of Northern superiority, to be resented?

"It is only a malicious rumor, Miss Carvel," he answered. "You have been told so upon good authority, I suppose," she said dryly. And at the change in her tone she saw his face fall.

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“I have not,” he replied honestly, “but I will submit it to your own judgment. Yesterday General Harney superseded Captain Lyon in command in St. Louis. Some citizens of prominence begged the General to send the troops away, to avoid further ill-feeling and perhaps—bloodshed.” (They both winced at the word.) “Colonel Blair represented to the General that the troops could not be sent away, as they had been enlisted to serve only in St. Louis; whereupon the General in his proclamation states that he has no control over these Home Guards. That sentence has been twisted by some rascal into a confession that the Home Guards are not to be controlled. I can assure you, Miss Carvel,” added Stephen, speaking with a force which made her start and thrill, “I can assure you from a personal knowledge of the German troops that they are not a riotous lot, and that they are under perfect control. If they were not, there are enough regulars in the city to repress them.”

He paused. And she was silent, forgetful of the hub-bub around her. It was then that her aunt called out to her, with distressing shrillness, from the carriage:— “Jinny, Jinny, how can you stand there talking to young men when our lives are in danger?”

She glanced hurriedly at Stephen, who said gently; “I do not wish to delay you, Miss Carvel, if you are bent upon going.”

She wavered. His tone was not resentful, simply quiet. Ephum turned the corner of the street, the perspiration running on his black face.

“Miss Jinny, dey ain’t no carridges to be had in this town. No’m, not for fifty dollars.”

This was the occasion for another groan from the negroes, and they began once more to beseech her not to leave them. In the midst of their cries she heard her aunt calling from the carriage, where, beside the trunk, there was just room for her to squeeze in.

“Jinny,” cried that lady, frantically, “are you to go or stay? The Hessians will be here at any moment. Oh, I cannot stay here to be murdered!”

Unconsciously the girl glanced again at Stephen. He had not gone, but was still standing in the rain on the steps, the one figure of strength and coolness she had seen this afternoon. Distracted, she blamed the fate which had made this man an enemy. How willingly would she have leaned upon such as he, and submitted to his guidance. Unluckily at that moment came down the street a group which had been ludicrous on any other day, and was, in truth, ludicrous to Stephen then. At the head of it was a little gentleman with red mutton-chop whiskers, hatless, in spite of the rain beginning to fall. His face was the very caricature of terror. His clothes, usually neat, were awry, and his arms were full of various things, not the least conspicuous of which was a magnificent bronze clock. It was this object that caught Virginia’s eye. But years passed before she laughed over it. Behind Mr. Cluyme (for it was he) trotted his family. Mrs. Cluyme, in a pink wrapper, carried an armful of the family silver; then came Belle with certain articles

of feminine apparel which need not be enumerated, and the three small Cluymes of various ages brought up the rear.

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Mr. Cluyme, at the top of his speed, was come opposite to the carriage when the lady occupant got out of it. Clutching at his sleeve, she demanded where he was going. The bronze clock had a narrow escape.

“To the river,” he gasped. “To the river, madame!” His wife coming after him had a narrower escape still. Mrs. Colfax retained a handful of lace from the wrapper, the owner of which emitted a shriek of fright.

“Virginia, I am going to the river,” said Mrs. Colfax. “You may go where you choose. I shall send the carriage back for you. Ned, to the levee!” Ned did not lift a rein.

“What, you black rascal! You won’t obey me?”

Ned swung on his seat. “No, indeedy, Miss Lilly, I ain’t a-gwine ’thout young Miss. The Dutch kin cotch me an’ hang me, but I ain’t a-gwine ’thout Miss Jinny.”

Mrs. Colfax drew her shawl about her shoulders with dignity.

“Very well, Virginia,” she said. “Ill as I am, I shall walk. Bear witness that I have spent a precious hour trying to save you. If I live to see your father again, I shall tell him that you preferred to stay here and carry on disgracefully with a Yankee, that you let your own aunt risk her life alone in the rain. Come, Susan!”

Virginia was very pale. She did not run down the steps, but she caught her aunt by the arm ere that lady had taken six paces. The girl’s face frightened Mrs. Colfax into submission, and she let herself be led back into the carriage beside the trunk. Those words of Mrs. Colfax’s stung Stephen to righteous anger and resentment—for Virginia.

As to himself, he had looked for insult. He turned to go that he might not look upon her confusion; and hanging on the resolution, swung on his heel again, his eyes blazeing. He saw in hers the deep blue light of the skies after an evening’s storm. She was calm, and save for a little quiver of the voice, mistress of herself as she spoke to the group of cowering servants.

“Mammy,” she said, “get up on the box with Ned. And, Ned, walk the horses to the levee, so that the rest may follow. Ephum, you stay here with the house, and I will send Ned back to keep you company.”

With these words, clasping tightly the precious little bundle under her arm, she stepped into the carriage. Heedless of the risk he ran, sheer admiration sent Stephen to the carriage door.

“If I can be of any service, Miss Carvel,” he said, “I shall be happy.”

She glanced at him wildly.

“No,” she cried, “no. Drive on, Ned!”

And as the horses slipped and started she slammed the door in his face.

Down on the levee wheels rattled over the white stones washed clean by the driving rain. The drops pelted the chocolate water into froth, and a blue veil hid the distant bluffs beyond the Illinois bottom-lands. Down on the Levee rich and poor battled for places on the landing-stages, and would have thrown themselves into the flood had there been no boats to save them from the dreaded Dutch. Attila and his Huns were not more feared. Oh, the mystery of that foreign city! What might not its Barbarians do when roused? The rich and poor struggled together; but money was a power that day, and many were pitilessly turned off because they did not have the high price to carry them—who knew where?

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Boats which screamed, and boats which had a dragon's roar were backing out of the close ranks where they had stood wheel-house to wheel-house, and were dodging and bumping in the channel. See, their guards are black with people! Mrs. Colfax, when they are come out of the narrow street into the great open space, remarks this with alarm. All the boats will be gone before they can get near one. But Virginia does not answer. She is thinking of other things than the steamboats, and wondering whether it had not been preferable to be killed by Hessians.

Ned spies the 'Barbara Lane'. He knows that her captain, Mr. Vance, is a friend of the family. What a mighty contempt did Ned and his kind have for foot passengers! Laying about him with his whip, and shouting at the top of his voice to make himself heard, he sent the Colonel's Kentucky bays through the crowd down to the Barbara's landing stage, the people scampering to the right and left, and the Carvel servants, headed by Uncle Ben, hanging on to the carriage springs, trailing behind.

Here was a triumph for Ned, indeed! He will tell you to this day how Mr. Catherwood's carriage was pocketed by drays and bales, and how Mrs. James's horses were seized by the bridles and turned back. Ned had a head on his shoulders, and eyes in his head. He spied Captain Vance himself on the stage, and bade Uncle Ben hold to the horses while he shouldered his way to that gentleman. The result was that the Captain came bowing to the carriage door, and offered his own cabin to the ladies. But the niggers ——he would take no niggers except a maid for each; and he begged Mrs. Colfax's pardon—he could not carry her trunk.

So Virginia chose Mammy Easter, whose red and yellow turban was awry from fear lest she be left behind and Ned was instructed to drive the rest with all haste to Bellegarde. Captain Vance gave Mrs. Colfax his arm, and Virginia his eyes. He escorted the ladies to quarters in the texas, and presently was heard swearing prodigiously as the boat was cast off. It was said of him that he could turn an oath better than any man on the river, which was no mean reputation.

Mrs. Colfax was assisted to bed by Susan. Virginia stood by the little window of the cabin, and as the Barbara paddled and floated down the river she looked anxiously for signals of a conflagration. Nay, in that hour she wished that the city might burn. So it is that the best of us may at times desire misery to thousands that our own malice may be fed. Virginia longed to see the yellow flame creep along the wet, gray clouds. Passionate tears came to her eyes at the thought of the humiliation she had suffered,—-and before him, of all men. Could she ever live with her aunt after what she had said? "Carrying on with that Yankee!" The horrible injustice of it!

Her anger, too, was still against Stephen. Once more he had been sent by circumstances to mock her and her people. If the city would only burn, that his cocksure judgment might for once be mistaken, his calmness for once broken!

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The rain ceased, the clouds parted, and the sun turned the muddy river to gold. The bluffs shone May-green in the western flood of light, and a haze hung over the bottom-lands. Not a sound disturbed the quiet of the city receding to the northward, and the rain had washed the pall of smoke from over it. On the boat excited voices died down to natural tones; men smoked on the guards and promenaded on the hurricane deck, as if this were some pleasant excursion. Women waved to the other boats flocking after. Laughter was heard, and joking. Mrs. Colfax stirred in her berth and began to talk.

“Virginia, where are we going?” Virginia did not move

“Jinny!”

She turned. In that hour she remembered that great good-natured man, her mother’s brother, and for his sake Colonel Carvel had put up with much from his wife’s sister in-law. She could pass over, but never forgive what her aunt had said to her that afternoon. Mrs. Colfax had often been cruel before, and inconsiderate. But as the girl thought of the speech, staring out on the waters, it suddenly occurred to her that no lady would have uttered it. In all her life she had never realized till now that her aunt was not a lady. From that time forth Virginia’s attitude toward her aunt was changed.

She controlled herself, however, and answered something, and went out listlessly to find the Captain and inquire the destination of the boat. Not that this mattered much to her. At the foot of the companionway leading to the saloon deck she saw, of all people, Mr. Eliphalet Hopper leaning on the rail, and pensively expectorating on the roof of the wheel-house. In another mood Virginia would have laughed, for at sight of her he straightened convulsively, thrust his quid into his cheek, and removed his hat with more zeal than the grudging deference he usually accorded to the sex. Clearly Eliphalet would not have chosen the situation.

“I cal’late we didn’t get out any too soon, Miss Carvel,” he remarked, with a sad attempt at jocoseness. “There won’t be a great deal in that town when the Dutch get through with it.”

“I think that there are enough men left in it to save it,” said Virginia.

Apparently Mr. Hopper found no suitable answer to this, for he made none. He continued to glance at her uneasily. There was an impudent tribute in his look which she resented strongly.

“Where is the Captain?” she demanded.

“He’s down below—ma’am,” he replied. “Can—can I do anything?”

“Yes,” she said, with abrupt maliciousness, “you may tell me where you are going.”

“I cal’late, up the Cumberland River. That’s where she’s bound for, if she don’t stop before she gets there Guess there ain’t many of ’em inquired where she was goin’, or cared much,” he added, with a ghastly effort to be genial.

“Do you care?” she demanded, curiously. Eliphalet grinned.

“Not a great deal,” he said. Then he felt called upon to defend himself. “I didn’t see any use in gettin’ murdered, when I couldn’t do anything.”

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She left him. He stared after her up the companionway, bit off a generous piece of tobacco, and ruminated. If to be a genius is to possess an infinite stock of patience, Mr. Hopper was a genius. There was patience in his smile. But it was not a pleasant smile to look upon.

Virginia did not see it. She had told her aunt the news, and stood in the breeze on the hurricane deck looking southward, with her hand shading her eyes. The 'Barbara Lane' happened to be a boat with a record, and her name was often in the papers. She had already caught up with and distanced others which had had half an hour's start of her, and was near the head of the procession.

Virginia presently became aware that people were gathering around her in knots, gazing at a boat coming toward them. Others had been met which, on learning the dread news, turned back. But this one kept her bow steadily up the current, although she had passed within a biscuit-toss of the leader of the line of refugees. It was then that Captain Vance's hairy head appeared above the deck.

"Dang me!" he said, "if here ain't pig-headed Brent, steaming the 'Jewanita' straight to destruction."

"Oh, are you sure it's Captain Brent?" cried Virginia. The Captain looked around in surprise.

"If that there was Shreve's old Enterprise come to life again, I'd lay cotton to sawdust that Brent had her. Danged if he wouldn't take her right into the jaws of the Dutch."

The Captain's words spread, and caused considerable excitement. On board the Barbara Lane were many gentlemen who had begun to be shamefaced over their panic, and these went in a body to the Captain and asked him to communicate with the 'Juanita'. Whereupon a certain number of whistles were sounded, and the Barbara's bows headed for the other side of the channel.

As the Juanita drew near, Virginia saw the square figure and clean, smooth-shaven face of Captain Lige standing in front of his wheel-house Peace crept back into her soul, and she tingled with joy as the bells clanged and the bucket-planks churned, and the great New Orleans packet crept slowly to the Barbara's side.

"You ain't goin' in, Brent?" shouted the Barbara's captain.

"Why not?" responded Mr. Brent. At the sound of his voice Virginia could have wept.

"The Dutch are sacking the city," said Vance. "Didn't they tell you?"

"The Dutch—hell!" said Mr, Brent, calmly. "Who's afraid of the Dutch?"

A general titter went along the guards, and Virginia blushed. Why could not the Captain see her?

“I’m on my reg’lar trip, of course,” said Vance. Out there on the sunlit river the situation seemed to call for an apology.

“Seems to be a little more loaded than common,” remarked Captain Lige, dryly, at which there was another general laugh.

“If you’re really goin’ up,” said Captain Vance, I reckon there’s a few here would like to be massacred, if you’ll take ’em.”

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“Certainly,” answered Mr. Brent; “I’m bound for the barbecue.” And he gave a command.

While the two great boats were manoeuvring, and slashing with one wheel and the other, the gongs sounding, Virginia ran into the cabin.

“Oh, Aunt Lillian,” she exclaimed, “here is Captain Lige and the Juanita, and he is going to take us back with him. He says there is no danger.”

It its unnecessary here to repeat the moral persuasion which Virginia used to get her aunt up and dressed. That lady, when she had heard the whistle and the gongs, had let her imagination loose. Turning her face to the wall, she was in the act of repeating her prayers as her niece entered.

A big stevedore carried her down two decks to where the gang-plank was thrown across. Captain Lige himself was at the other end. His face lighted, Pushing the people aside, he rushed across, snatched the lady from the negro’s arms, crying:

“Jinny! Jinny Carvel! Well, if this ain’t fortunate.” The stevedore’s services were required for Mammy Easter. And behind the burly shield thus formed, a stoutish gentleman slipped over, all unnoticed, with a carpet-bag in his hand It bore the initials E. H.

The plank was drawn in. The great wheels began to turn and hiss, the Barbara’s passengers waved good-by to the foolhardy lunatics who had elected to go back into the jaws of destruction. Mrs. Colfax was put into a cabin; and Virginia, in a glow, climbed with Captain Lige to the hurricane deck. There they stood for a while in silence, watching the broad stern of the Barbara growing smaller. “Just to think,” Miss Carvel remarked, with a little hysterical sigh, “just to think that some of those people brought bronze clocks instead of tooth-brushes.”

“And what did you bring, my girl?” asked the Captain, glancing at the parcel she held so tightly under her arm.

He never knew why she blushed so furiously.

CHAPTER XXII

THE STRAINING OF ANOTHER FRIENDSHIP

Captain Lige asked but two questions: where was the Colonel, and was it true that Clarence had refused to be paroled? Though not possessing over-fine susceptibilities, the Captain knew a mud-drum from a lady’s watch, as he himself said. In his solicitude for Virginia, he saw that she was in no state of mind to talk of the occurrences of the last

few days. So he helped her to climb the little stair that winds to the top of the texas,—-that sanctified roof where the pilot-house squats. The girl clung to her bonnet Will you like her any the less when you know that it was a shovel bonnet, with long red ribbons that tied under her chin? It became her wonderfully. “Captain Lige,” she said, almost tearfully, as she took his arm, “how I thank heaven that you came up the river this afternoon!”

“Jinny,” said the Captain, “did you ever know why cabins are called staterooms?”

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“Why, no,” answered she, puzzled.

“There was an old fellow named Shreve who ran steamboats before Jackson fought the redcoats at New Orleans. In Shreve’s time the cabins were curtained off, just like these new-fangled sleeping-car berths. The old man built wooden rooms, and he named them after the different states, Kentuck, and Illinois, and Pennsylvania. So that when a fellow came aboard he’d say: ‘What state am I in, Cap?’ And from this river has the name spread all over the world—stateroom. That’s mighty interesting,” said Captain Lige.

“Yea,” said Virginia; “why didn’t you tell me long ago.”

“And I’ll bet you can’t say,” the Captain continued, “why this house we’re standing on is called the texas.”

“Because it is annexed to the states,” she replied, quick a flash.

“Well, you’re bright,” said he. “Old Tufts got that notion, when Texas came in. Like to see Bill Jenks?”

“Of course,” said Virginia.

Bill Jenks was Captain Brent’s senior pilot. His skin hung on his face in folds, like that of a rhinoceros It was very much the same color. His grizzled hair was all lengths, like a worn-out mop; his hand reminded one of an eagle’s claw, and his teeth were a pine yellow. He greeted only such people as he deemed worthy of notice, but he had held Virginia in his arms.

“William,” said the young lady, roguishly, “how is the eye, location, and memory?”

William abandoned himself to a laugh. When this happened it was put in the Juanita’s log.

“So the Cap’n be still harpin’ on that?” he said, “Miss Jinny, he’s just plumb crazy on a pilot’s qualifications.”

“He says that you are the best pilot on the river, but I don’t believe it,” said Virginia.

William cackled again. He made a place for her on the leather-padded seat at the back of the pilot house, where for a long time she sat staring at the flag trembling on the jackstaff between the great sombre pipes. The sun fell down, but his light lingered in the air above as the big boat forged abreast the foreign city of South St. Louis. There was the arsenal—grim despite its dress of green, where Clarence was confined alone.

Captain Lige came in from his duties below. “Well, Jinny, we’ll soon be at home,” he said. “We’ve made a quick trip against the rains.”

“And—and do you think the city is safe?”

“Safe!” he cried. “As safe as London!” He checked himself. “Jinny, would you like to blow the whistle?”

“I should just love to,” said Virginia. And following Mr. Jenks’s directions she put her toe on the tread, and shrank back when the monster responded with a snort and a roar. River men along the levee heard that signal and laughed. The joke was certainly not on sturdy Elijah Brent.

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An hour later, Virginia and her aunt and the Captain, followed by Mammy aster and Rosetta and Susan, were walking through the streets of the stillest city in the Union. All that they met was a provost's guard, for St. Louis was under Martial Law. Once in a while they saw the light of some contemptuous citizen of the residence district who had stayed to laugh. Out in the suburbs, at the country houses of the first families, people of distinction slept five and six in a room—many with only a quilt between body and matting. Little wonder that these dreamed of Hessians and destruction. In town they slept with their doors open, those who remained and had faith. Martial law means passes and explanations, and walking generally in the light of day. Martial law means that the Commander-in-chief, if he be an artist in well doing, may use his boot freely on politicians bland or beetle-browed. No police force ever gave the sense of security inspired by a provost's guard.

Captain Lige sat on the steps of Colonel Carvel's house that night, long after the ladies were gone to bed. The only sounds breaking the silence of the city were the beat of the feet of the marching squads and the call of the corporal's relief. But the Captain smoked in agony until the clouds of two days slipped away from under the stars, for he was trying to decide a Question. Then he went up to a room in the house which had been known as his since the rafters were put down on that floor.

The next morning, as the Captain and Virginia sit at breakfast together with only Mammy Easter to cook and Rosetta to wait on them, the Colonel bursts in. He is dusty and travel-stained from his night on the train, but his gray eyes light with affection as he sees his friend beside his daughter.

"Jinny," he cries as he kisses her, "Jinny, I'm proud oil you, my girl! You didn't let the Yankees frighten you—But where is Jackson?"

And so the whole miserable tale has to be told over again, between laughter and tears on Virginia's part, and laughter and strong language on Colonel Carvel's. What—-blessing that Lige met them, else the Colonel might now be starting for the Cumberland River in search of his daughter. The Captain does not take much part in the conversation, and he refuses the cigar which is offered him. Mr. Carvel draws back in surprise.

"Lige," he says, "this is the first time to my knowledge."

"I smoked too many last night," says the Captain. The Colonel sat down, with his feet against the mantel, too full of affairs to take much notice of Mr. Brent's apathy.

"The Yanks have taken the first trick—that's sure," he said. "But I think we'll laugh last, Jinny. Jefferson City isn't precisely quiet. The state has got more militia, or will have more militia in a day or two. We won't miss the thousand they stole in Camp Jackson.

They’re organizing up there. And I’ve got a few commissions right here,” and he tapped his pocket.

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“Pa,” said Virginia, “did you volunteer?”

The Colonel laughed.

“The Governor wouldn’t have me,” he answered. “He said I was more good here in St. Louis. I’ll go later. What’s this I hear about Clarence?”

Virginia related the occurrences of Saturday. The Colonel listened with many exclamations, slapping his knee from time to time as she proceeded.

“By gum!” he cried, when she had finished, “the boy has it in him, after all! They can’t hold him a day—can they, Lige?” (No answer from the Captain, who is eating his breakfast in silence.) “All that we have to do is to go for Worington and get a habeas corpus from the United States District Court. Come on, Lige.” The Captain got up excitedly, his face purple.

“I reckon you’ll have to excuse me, Colonel,” he said. “There’s a cargo on my boat which has got to come off.” And without more ado he left the room. In consternation they heard the front door close behind him. And yet, neither father nor daughter dared in that hour add to the trial of the other by speaking out the dread that was in their hearts. The Colonel smoked for a while, not a word escaping him, and then he patted Virginia’s cheek.

“I reckon I’ll run over and see Russell, Jinny,” he said, striving to be cheerful. “We must get the boy out. I’ll see a lawyer.” He stopped abruptly in the hall and pressed his hand to his forehead. “My God,” he whispered to himself, “if I could only go to Silas!”

The good Colonel got Mr. Russell, and they went to Mr. Worington, Mrs. Colfax’s lawyer, of whose politics it is not necessary to speak. There was plenty of excitement around the Government building where his Honor issued the writ. There lacked not gentlemen of influence who went with Mr. Russell and Colonel Carvel and the lawyer and the Commissioner to the Arsenal. They were admitted to the presence of the indomitable Lyon, who informed them that Captain Colfax was a prisoner of war, and, since the arsenal was Government property, not in the state. The Commissioner thereupon attested the affidavit to Colonel Carvel, and thus the application for the writ was made legal.

These things the Colonel reported to Virginia; and to Mrs. Colfax, who received them with red eyes and a thousand queries as to whether that Yankee ruffian would pay any attention to the Sovereign law which he pretended to uphold; whether the Marshal would not be cast over the Arsenal wall by the slack of his raiment when he went to serve the writ. This was not the language, but the purport, of the lady’s questions. Colonel Carvel had made but a light breakfast: he had had no dinner, and little rest on the train. But he answered his sister-in-law with unfailing courtesy. He was too honest

to express a hope which he did not feel. He had returned that evening to a dreary household. During the day the servants had straggled in from Bellegarde, and Virginia had had prepared those dishes which her

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father loved. Mrs. Colfax chose to keep her room, for which the two were silently thankful. Jackson announced supper. The Colonel was humming a tune as he went down the stairs, but Virginia was not deceived. He would not see the yearning in her eyes as he took his chair; he would not glance at Captain Lige's empty seat. It was because he did not dare. She caught her breath when she saw that the food on his plate lay untouched.

"Pa, are you ill?" she faltered.

He pushed his chair away, such suffering in his look as she had never seen.

"Jinny," he said, "I reckon Lige is for the Yankees."

"I have known it all along," she said, but faintly.

"Did he tell you?" her father demanded. "No."

"My God," cried the Colonel, in agony, "to think that he kept it from me I to think that Lige kept it from me!"

"It is because he loves you, Pa," answered the girl, gently, "it is because he loves us."

He said nothing to that. Virginia got up, and went softly around the table. She leaned over his shoulder. "Pa!"

"Yes," he said, his voice lifeless.

But her courage was not to be lightly shaken. "Pa, will you forbid him to come here—-now?"

A long while she waited for his answer, while the big clock ticked out the slow seconds in the hall, and her heart beat wildly.

"No," said the Colonel. "As long as I have a roof, Lige may come under it."

He rose abruptly and seized his bat. She did not ask him where he was going, but ordered Jackson to keep the supper warm, and went into the drawing-room. The lights were out, then, but the great piano that was her mother's lay open. Her fingers fell upon the keys. That wondrous hymn which Judge Whipple loved, which for years has been the comfort of those in distress, floated softly with the night air out of the open window. It was "Lead, Kindly Light." Colonel Carvel heard it, and paused.

Shall we follow him?

He did not stop again until he reached the narrow street at the top of the levee bank, where the quaint stone houses of the old French residents were being loaded with wares. He took a few steps back-up the hill. Then he wheeled about, walked swiftly down the levee, and on to the landing-stage beside which the big 'Juanita' loomed in the night. On her bows was set, fantastically, a yellow street-car.

The Colonel stopped mechanically. Its unexpected appearance there had served to break the current of his meditations. He stood staring at it, while the roustabouts passed and repassed, noisily carrying great logs of wood on shoulders padded by their woollen caps.

"That'll be the first street-car used in the city of New Orleans, if it ever gets there, Colonel."

The Colonel jumped. Captain Lige was standing beside him.

"Lige, is that you? We waited supper for you."

"Reckon I'll have to stay here and boss the cargo all night. Want to get in as many trips as I can before—navigation closes," the Captain concluded significantly.

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Colonel Carvel shook his head. “You were never too busy to come for supper, Lige. I reckon the cargo isn’t all.”

Captain Lige shot at him a swift look. He gulped.

“Come over here on the levee,” said the Colonel, sternly. They walked out together, and for some distance in silence.

“Lige,” said the elder gentleman, striking his stick on the stones, “if there ever was a straight goer, that’s you. You’ve always dealt squarely with me, and now I’m going to ask you a plain question. Are you North or South?”

“I’m North, I reckon,” answered the Captain, bluntly. The Colonel bowed his head. It was a long time before he spoke again. The Captain waited like a man who expects and deserve, the severest verdict. But there was no anger in Mr. Carvel’s voice—only reproach.

“And you wouldn’t tell me, Lige? You kept it from me.”

“My God, Colonel,” exclaimed the other, passionately, “how could I? I owe what I have to your charity. But for you and—and Jinny I should have gone to the devil. If you and she are taken away, what have I left in life? I was a coward, sir, not to tell you. You must have guessed it. And yet,—God help me,—I can’t stand by and see the nation go to pieces. Your nation as well as mine, Colonel. Your fathers fought that we Americans might inherit the earth—” He stopped abruptly. Then he continued haltingly, “Colonel, I know you’re a man of strong feelings and convictions. All I ask is that you and Jinny will think of me as a friend—”

He choked, and turned away, not heeding the direction of his feet. The Colonel, his stick raised, stood looking after him. He was folded in the near darkness before he called his name.

“Lige!”

“Yes, Colonel.”

He came back, wondering, across the rough stones until he stood beside the tall figure. Below them, the lights glided along the dark water.

“Lige, didn’t I raise you? Haven’t I taught you that my house was your home? Come back, Lige. But—but never speak to me again of this night! Jinny is waiting for us.”

Not a word passed between them as they went up the quiet street. At the sound of their feet in the entry the door was flung open, and Virginia, with her hands out stretched, stood under the hall light.

“Oh, Pa, I knew you would bring him back,” she said.

CHAPTER XXIII

OF CLARENCE

Captain Clarence Colfax, late of the State Dragoons, awoke on Sunday morning the chief of the many topics of the conversation of a big city. His conduct drew forth enthusiastic praise from the gentlemen and ladies who had thronged Beauregard and Davis avenues, and honest admiration from the party which had broken up the camp. The boy had behaved well. There were many doting parents, like Mr. Catherwood, whose boys had accepted the parole, whose praise was a trifle lukewarm, to be sure. But popular opinion, when once aroused, will draw a grunt from the most grudging.

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We are not permitted, alas, to go behind these stern walls and discover how Captain Colfax passed that eventful Sunday of the Exodus. We know that, in his loneliness, he hoped for a visit from his cousin, and took to pacing his room in the afternoon, when a smarting sense of injustice crept upon him. Clarence was young. And how was he to guess, as he looked out in astonishment upon the frightened flock of white boats swimming southward, that his mother and his sweetheart were there?

On Monday, while the Colonel and many prominent citizens were busying themselves about procuring the legal writ which was at once to release Mr. Colfax, and so cleanse the whole body of Camp Jackson's defenders from any, veiled intentions toward the Government, many well known carriages drew up before the Carvel House in Locust Street to congratulate the widow and the Colonel upon the possession of such a son and nephew. There were some who slyly congratulated Virginia, whose martyrdom it was to sit up with people all the day long. For Mrs, Colfax kept her room, and admitted only a few of her bosom friends to cry with her. When the last of the callers was gone, Virginia was admitted to her aunt's presence.

"Aunt Lillian, to-morrow morning Pa and I are going to the Arsenal with a basket for Max. Pa seems to think there is a chance that he may come back with us. You will go, of course."

The lady smiled wearily at the proposal, and raised her hands in protest, the lace on the sleeves of her dressing gown falling away from her white arms.

"Go, my dear?" she exclaimed, "when I can't walk to my bureau after that terrible Sunday. You are crazy, Jinny. No," she added, with conviction, "I never again expect to see him alive. Comyn says they may release him, does he? Is he turning Yankee, too?"

The girl went away, not in anger or impatience, but in sadness. Brought up to reverence her elders, she had ignored the shallowness of her aunt's character in happier days. But now Mrs. Colfax's conduct carried a prophecy with it. Virginia sat down on the landing to ponder on the years to come,—on the pain they were likely to bring with them from this source—Clarence gone to the war; her father gone (for she felt that he would go in the end), Virginia foresaw the lonely days of trial in company with this vain woman whom accident made her cousin's mother. Ay, and more, fate had made her the mother of the man she was to marry. The girl could scarcely bear the thought—through the hurry and swing of the events of two days she had kept it from her mind.

But now Clarence was to be released. To-morrow he would be coming home to her joyfully for his reward, and she did not love him. She was bound to face that again and again. She had cheated herself again and again with other feelings. She had set up intense love of country in the shrine where it did not belong, and it had answered—for a while. She saw Clarence in a hero's light—until a fatal intimate knowledge made her

shudder and draw back. And yet her resolution should not be water. She would carry it through.

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Captain Lige's cheery voice roused her from below—and her father's laugh. And as she went down to them she thanked God that this friend had been spared to him. Never had the Captain's river yarns been better told than at the table that evening. Virginia did not see him glance at the Colonel when at last he had brought a smile to her face.

"I'm going to leave Jinny with you, Lige," said Mr. Carvel, presently. "Worington has some notion that the Marshal may go to the Arsenal to-night with the writ. I mustn't neglect the boy."

Virginia stood in front of him. "Won't you let me go?" she pleaded

The Colonel was taken aback. He stood looking down at her, stroking his goatee, and marvelling at the ways of woman.

"The horses have been out all day, Jinny," he said, "I am going in the cars."

"I can go in the cars, too."

The Colonel looked at Captain Lige.

"There is only a chance that we shall see Clarence," he went on, uneasily.

"It is better than sitting still," cried Virginia, as she ran away to get the bonnet with the red strings.

"Lige,—" said the Colonel, as the two stood awaiting her in the hall, "I can't make her out. Can you?"

The Captain did not answer.

It was a long journey, in a bumping car with had springs that rattled unceasingly, past the string of provost guards. The Colonel sat in the corner, with his head bent down over his stick At length, cramped and weary, they got out, and made their way along the Arsenal wall, past the sentries to the entrance. The sergeant brought his rifle to a "port".

"Commandant's orders, sir. No one admitted," he said.

"Is Captain Colfax here?" asked Mr. Carver

"Captain Colfax was taken to Illinois in a skiff, quarter of an hour since."

Captain Lige gave vent to a long, low whistle.

"A skiff!" he exclaimed, "and the river this high! A skiff!"

Virginia clasped his arm in terror. "Is there danger?"

Before he could answer came the noise of steps from the direction of the river, and a number of people hurried up excitedly. Colonel Carvel recognized Mr. Worington, the lawyer, and caught him by the sleeve.

“Anything happened?” he demanded.

Worington glanced at the sentry, and pulled the Colonel past the entrance and into the street. Virginia and Captain Lige followed.

“They have started across with him in a light skiff——four men and a captain. The young fool! We had him rescued.”

“Rescued!”

“Yes. There were but five in the guard. And a lot of us, who suspected what they were up to, were standing around. When we saw ’em come down, we made a rush and had the guard overpowered But Colfax called out to stand back.”

“Well, sir.”

“Cuss me if I understand him,” said Mr. Worington. “He told us to disperse, and that he proposed to remain a prisoner and go where they sent him.”

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There was a silence. Then— “Move on please, gentlemen,” said the sentry, and they started to walk toward the car line, the lawyer and the Colonel together. Virginia put her hand through the Captain’s arm. In the darkness he laid his big one over it.

“Don’t you be frightened, Jinny, at what I said, I reckon they’ll fetch up in Illinois all right, if I know Lyon. There, there,” said Captain Lige, soothingly. Virginia was crying softly. She had endured more in the past few days than often falls to the lot of one-and-twenty.

“There, there, Jinny.” He felt like crying himself. He thought of the many, many times he had taken her on his knee and kissed her tears. He might do that no more, now. There was the young Captain, a prisoner on the great black river, who had a better right, Elijah Brent wondered, as they waited in the silent street for the lonely car, if Clarence loved her as well as he.

It was vary late when they reached home, and Virginia went silently up to her room. Colonel Carvel stared grimly after her, then glanced at his friend as he turned down the lights. The eyes of the two met, as of old, in true understanding.

The sun was still slanting over the tops of the houses the next morning when Virginia, a ghostly figure, crept down the stairs and withdrew the lock and bolt on the front door. The street was still, save for the twittering of birds and the distant rumble of a cart in its early rounds. The chill air of the morning made her shiver as she scanned the entry for the newspaper. Dismayed, she turned to the clock in the hall. Its hands were at quarter past five.

She sat long behind the curtains in her father’s little library, the thoughts whirling in her brain as she watched the growing life of another day. What would it bring forth? Once she stole softly back to the entry, self-indulgent and ashamed, to rehearse again the bitter and the sweet of that scene of the Sunday before. She summoned up the image of the young man who had stood on these steps in front of the frightened servants. She seemed to feel again the calm power and earnestness of his face, to hear again the clear-cut tones of his voice as he advised her. Then she drew back, frightened, into the sombre library, conscience-stricken that she should have yielded to this temptation then, when Clarence—She dared not follow the thought, but she saw the light skiff at the mercy of the angry river and the dark night.

This had haunted her. If he were spared, she prayed for strength to consecrate herself to him A book lay on the table, and Virginia took refuge in it. And her eyes glancing over the pages, rested on this verse:—

> “Thy voice is heard thro’ rolling drums,
> That beat to battle where he stands;
> Thy face across his fancy comes,
> And gives the battle to his hands.”

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The paper brought no news, nor mentioned the ruse to which Captain Lyon had resorted to elude the writ by transporting his prisoner to Illinois. Newspapers were not as alert then as now. Colonel Carvel was off early to the Arsenal in search of tidings. He would not hear of Virginia's going with him. Captain Lige, with a surer instinct, went to the river. What a morning of suspense! Twice Virginia was summoned to her aunt, and twice she made excuse. It was the Captain who returned first, and she met him at the door.

"Oh, what have you heard?" she cried.

"He is alive," said the Captain, tremulously, "alive and well, and escaped South."

She took a step toward him, and swayed. The Captain caught her. For a brief instant he held her in his arms and then he led her to the great armchair that was the Colonel's.

"Lige," she said,—are you sure that this is not—a kindness?"

"No, Jinny," he answered quickly, "but things were mighty close. I was afraid last night. The river was roarin'. They struck out straight across, but they drifted and drifted like log-wood. And then she began to fill, and all five of 'em to bail. Then——then she went down. The five soldiers came up on that bit of an island below the Arsenal. They hunted all night, but they didn't find Clarence. And they got taken off to the Arsenal this morning."

"And how do you know?" she faltered.

"I knew that much this morning," he continued, "and so did your pa. But the Andrew Jackson is just in from Memphis, and the Captain tells me that he spoke the Memphis packet off Cape Girardeau, and that Clarence was aboard. She picked him up by a miracle, after he had just missed a round trip through her wheel-house."

THE CRISIS

By Winston Churchill

BOOK III

Volume 6.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCING A CAPITALIST

A cordon of blue regiments surrounded the city at first from Carondelet to North St. Louis, like an open fan. The crowds liked best to go to Compton Heights, where the tents of the German citizen-soldiers were spread out like so many slices of white cake on the green beside the city's reservoir. Thence the eye stretched across the town, catching the dome of the Court House and the spire of St. John's. Away to the west, on the line of the Pacific railroad that led halfway across the state, was another camp. Then another, and another, on the circle of the fan, until the river was reached to the northward, far above the bend. Within was a peace that passed understanding,—the peace of martial law.

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Without the city, in the great state beyond, an irate governor had gathered his forces from the east and from the west. Letters came and went between Jefferson City and Jefferson Davis, their purport being that the Governor was to work out his own salvation, for a while at least. Young men of St. Louis, struck in a night by the fever of militarism, arose and went to Glencoe. Prying sergeants and commissioned officers, mostly of hated German extraction, thundered at the door of Colonel Carvel's house, and other houses, there—for Glencoe was a border town. They searched the place more than once from garret to cellar, muttered guttural oaths, and smelled of beer and sauerkraut, The haughty appearance of Miss Carvel did not awe them—they were blind to all manly sensations. The Colonel's house, alas, was one of many in Glencoe written down in red ink in a book at headquarters as a place toward which the feet of the young men strayed. Good evidence was handed in time and time again that the young men had come and gone, and red-faced commanding officers cursed indignant subalterns, and implied that Beauty had had a hand in it. Councils of war were held over the advisability of seizing Mr. Carvel's house at Glencoe, but proof was lacking until one rainy night in June a captain and ten men spurred up the drive and swung into a big circle around the house. The Captain took off his cavalry gauntlet and knocked at the door, more gently than usual. Miss Virginia was home so Jackson said. The Captain was given an audience more formal than one with the queen of Prussia could have been, Miss Carvel was infinitely more haughty than her Majesty. Was not the Captain hired to do a degrading service? Indeed, he thought so as he followed her about the house and he felt like the lowest of criminals as he opened a closet door or looked under a bed. He was a beast of the field, of the mire. How Virginia shrank from him if he had occasion to pass her! Her gown would have been defiled by his touch. And yet the Captain did not smell of beer, nor of sauerkraut; nor did he swear in any language. He did his duty apologetically, but he did it. He pulled a man (aged seventeen) out from under a great hoop skirt in a little closet, and the man had a pistol that refused its duty when snapped in the Captain's face. This was little Spencer Catherwood, just home from a military academy.

Spencer was taken through the rain by the chagrined Captain to the headquarters, where he caused a little embarrassment. No damning evidence was discovered on his person, for the pistol had long since ceased to be a firearm. And so after a stiff lecture from the Colonel he was finally given back into the custody of his father. Despite the pickets, the young men filtered through daily,—or rather nightly. Presently some of them began to come back, gaunt and worn and tattered, among the grim cargoes that were landed by the thousands and tens of thousands on the levee. And they took them (oh, the pity

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of it!) they took them to Mr. Lynch's slave pen, turned into a Union prison of detention, where their fathers and grandfathers had been wont to send their disorderly and insubordinate niggers. They were packed away, as the miserable slaves had been, to taste something of the bitterness of the negro's lot. So came Bert Russell to welter in a low room whose walls gave out the stench of years. How you cooked for them, and schemed for them, and cried for them, you devoted women of the South! You spent the long hot summer in town, and every day you went with your baskets to Gratiot Street, where the infected old house stands, until—until one morning a lady walked out past the guard, and down the street. She was civilly detained at the corner, because she wore army boots. After that permits were issued. If you were a young lady of the proper principles in those days, you climbed a steep pair of stairs in the heat, and stood in line until it became your turn to be catechised by an indifferent young officer in blue who sat behind a table and smoked a horrid cigar. He had little time to be courteous. He was not to be dazzled by a bright gown or a pretty face; he was indifferent to a smile which would have won a savage. His duty was to look down into your heart, and extract therefrom the nefarious scheme you had made to set free the man you loved ere he could be sent north to Alton or Columbus. My dear, you wish to rescue him, to disguise him, send him south by way of Colonel Carvel's house at Glencoe. Then he will be killed. At least, he will have died for the South.

First politics, and then war, and then more politics, in this our country. Your masterful politician obtains a regiment, and goes to war, sword in hand. He fights well, but he is still the politician. It was not a case merely of fighting for the Union, but first of getting permission to fight. Camp Jackson taken, and the prisoners exchanged south, Captain Lyon; who moved like a whirlwind, who loved the Union beyond his own life, was thrust down again. A mutual agreement was entered into between the Governor and the old Indian fighter in command of the Western Department, to respect each other. A trick for the Rebels. How Lyon chafed, and paced the Arsenal walks while he might have saved the state. Then two gentlemen went to Washington, and the next thing that happened was Brigadier General Lyon, Commander of the Department of the West.

Would General Lyon confer with the Governor of Missouri? Yes, the General would give the Governor a safe-conduct into St. Louis, but his Excellency must come to the General. His Excellency came, and the General deigned to go with the Union leader to the Planters House. Conference, five hours; result, a safe-conduct for the Governor back. And this is how General Lyon ended the talk. His words, generously preserved by a Confederate colonel who accompanied his Excellency, deserve to be writ in gold on the National Annals.

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“Rather than concede to the state of Missouri the right to demand that my Government shall not enlist troops within her limits, or bring troops into the state whenever it pleases; or move its troops at its own will into, out of, or through, the state; rather than concede to the state of Missouri for one single instant the right to dictate to my Government in any matter, however unimportant, I would” (rising and pointing in turn to every one in the room) “see you, and you, and you, and you, and every man, woman, and child in this state, dead and buried.” Then, turning to the Governor, he continued, “This means war. In an hour one of my officers will call for you and conduct you out of my lines.”

And thus, without another word, without an inclination of the head, he turned upon his heel and strode out of the room, rattling his spurs and clanking his sabre.

It did mean war. In less than two months that indomitable leader was lying dead beside Wilson’s Creek, among the oaks on Bloody Hill. What he would have been to this Union, had God spared him, we shall never know. He saved Missouri, and won respect and love from the brave men who fought against him.

Those first fierce battles in the state! What prayers rose to heaven, and curses sank to hell, when the news of them came to the city by the river! Flags were made by loving fingers, and shirts and bandages. Trembling young ladies of Union sympathies presented colors to regiments on the Arsenal Green, or at Jefferson Barracks, or at Camp Benton to the northwest near the Fair Grounds. And then the regiments marched through the streets with bands playing that march to which the words of the Battle Hymn were set, and those bright ensigns snapping at the front; bright now, and new, and crimson. But soon to be stained a darker red, and rent into tatters, and finally brought back and talked over and cried over, and tenderly laid above an inscription in a glass case, to be revered by generations of Americans to confer What can stir the soul more than the sight of those old flags, standing in ranks like the veterans they are, whose duty has been nobly done? The blood of the color-sergeant is there, black now with age. But where are the tears of the sad women who stitched the red and the white and the blue together?

The regiments marched through the streets and aboard the boats, and pushed off before a levee of waving handkerchiefs and nags. Then heart-breaking suspense. Later—much later, black headlines, and grim lists three columns long,—three columns of a blanket sheet! “The City of Alton has arrived with the following Union dead and wounded, and the following Confederate wounded (prisoners).” Why does the type run together?

In a never-ceasing procession they steamed up the river; those calm boats which had been wont to carry the white cargoes of Commerce now bearing the red cargoes of war. And they bore away to new battlefields thousands of fresh-faced boys from Wisconsin and Michigan and Minnesota, gathered at Camp Benton. Some came back

with their color gone and their red cheeks sallow and bearded and sunken. Others came not back at all.

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Stephen Brice, with a pain over his heart and a lump in his throat, walked on the pavement beside his old company, but his look avoided their faces. He wrung Richter's hand on the landing-stage. Richter was now a captain. The good German's eyes were filled as he said good-by.

"You will come, too, my friend, when the country needs you," he said. "Now" (and he shrugged his shoulders), "now have we many with no cares to go. I have not even a father—" And he turned to Judge Whipple, who was standing by, holding out a bony hand.

"God bless you, Carl," said the Judge And Carl could scarce believe his ears. He got aboard the boat, her decks already blue with troops, and as she backed out with her whistle screaming, the last objects he saw were the gaunt old man and the broad-shouldered young man side by side on the edge of the landing.

Stephen's chest heaved, and as he walked back to the office with the Judge, he could not trust himself to speak. Back to the silent office where the shelves mocked them. The Judge closed the ground-glass door behind him, and Stephen sat until five o'clock over a book. No, it was not Whittlesey, but Hardee's "Tactics." He shut it with a slam, and went to Verandah Hall to drill recruits on a dusty floor,—narrow-chested citizens in suspenders, who knew not the first motion in right about face. For Stephen was an adjutant in the Home Guards—what was left of them.

One we know of regarded the going of the troops and the coming of the wounded with an equanimity truly philosophical. When the regiments passed Carvel & Company on their way riverward to embark, Mr. Hopper did not often take the trouble to rise from his chair, nor was he ever known to go to the door to bid them Godspeed. This was all very well, because they were Union regiments. But Mr. Hopper did not contribute a horse, nor even a saddle-blanket, to the young men who went away secretly in the night, without fathers or mothers or sisters to wave at them. Mr. Hopper had better use for his money.

One scorching afternoon in July Colonel Carvel came into the office, too hurried to remark the pain in honest Ephum's face as he watched his master. The sure signs of a harassed man were on the Colonel. Since May he had neglected his business affairs for others which he deemed public, and which were so mysterious that even Mr. Hopper could not get wind of them. These matters had taken the Colonel out of town. But now the necessity of a pass made that awkward, and he went no farther than Glencoe, where he spent an occasional Sunday. Today Mr. Hopper rose from his chair when Mr. Carvel entered,—a most unprecedented action. The Colonel cleared his throat. Sitting down at his desk, he drummed upon it uneasily.

"Mr. Hopper!" he said at length.

Eliphalet crossed the room quickly, and something that was very near a smile was on his face. He sat down close to Mr. Carvel's chair with a semi-confidential air,—one wholly new, had the Colonel given it a thought. He did not, but began to finger some printed slips of paper which had indorsements on their backs. His fine lips were tightly closed, as if in pain.

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“Mr. Hopper,” he said, “these Eastern notes are due this week, are they not?”

“Yes, sir.”

The Colonel glanced up swiftly.

“There is no use mincing matters, Hopper. You know as well as I that there is no money to pay them,” said he, with a certain pompous attempt at severity which characterized his kind nature. “You have served me well. You have brought this business up to a modern footing, and made it as prosperous as any in the town. I am sorry, sir, that those contemptible Yankees should have forced us to the use of arms, and cut short many promising business careers such as yours, sir. But we have to face the music. We have to suffer for our principles.

“These notes cannot be met, Mr. Hopper.” And the good gentleman looked out of the window. He was thinking of a day, before the Mexican War, when his young wife had sat in the very chair filled by Mr. Hopper now. “These notes cannot be met,” he repeated, and his voice was near to breaking.

The flies droning in the hot office made the only sound. Outside the partition, among the bales, was silence.

“Colonel,” said Mr. Hopper, with a remarkable ease, “I cal’late these notes can be met.”

The Colonel jumped as if he had heard a shot, and one of the notes fell to the floor. Eliphalet picked it up tenderly, and held it.

“What do you mean, sir?” Mr. Carvel cried. “There isn’t a bank in town that will lend me money. I—I haven’t a friend—a friend I may ask who can spare it, sir.”

Mr. Hopper lifted up his hand. It was a fat hand. Suavity was come upon it like a new glove and changed the man. He was no longer cringing. Now he had poise, such poise as we in these days are accustomed to see in leather and mahogany offices. The Colonel glared at him uncomfortably.

“I will take up those notes myself, sir.”

“You!” cried the Colonel, incredulously, “You?”

We must do Eliphalet justice. There was not a deal of hypocrisy in his nature, and now he did not attempt the part of Samaritan. He did not beam upon the Colonel and remind him of the day on which, homeless and friendless, he had been frightened into his store by a drove of mules. No. But his day,—the day toward which he had striven unknown and unnoticed for so many years—the day when he would laugh at the pride of those who had ignored and insulted him, was dawning at last. When we are thoughtless of

our words, we do not reckon with that spark in little bosoms that may burst into flame and burn us. Not that Colonel Carvel had ever been aught but courteous and kind to all. His station in life had been his offence to Eliphalet, who strove now to hide an exultation that made him tremble.

“What do you mean, sir?” demanded the Colonel, again.

“I cal’late that I can gather together enough to meet the notes, Colonel. Just a little friendly transaction.” Here followed an interval of sheer astonishment to Mr. Carvel.

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“You have this money?” he said at length. Mr. Hopper nodded.

“And you will take my note for the amount?”

“Yes, sir.”

The Colonel pulled his goatee, and sat back in his chair, trying to face the new light in which he saw his manager. He knew well enough that the man was not doing this out of charity, or even gratitude. He reviewed his whole career, from that first morning when he had carried bales to the shipping room, to his replacement of Mr. Hood, and there was nothing with which to accuse him. He remembered the warnings of Captain Lige and Virginia. He could not in honor ask a cent from the Captain now. He would not ask his sister-in-law, Mrs. Colfax, to let him touch the money he had so ably invested for her; that little which Virginia’s mother had left the girl was sacred.

Night after night Mr. Carvel had lain awake with the agony of those Eastern debts. Not to pay was to tarnish the name of a Southern gentleman. He could not sell the business. His house would bring nothing in these times. He rose and began to pace the floor, tugging at his chin. Twice he paused to stare at Mr. Hopper, who sat calmly on, and the third time stopped abruptly before him.

“See here,” he cried. “Where the devil did you get this money, sir?”

Mr. Hopper did not rise.

“I haven’t been extravagant, Colonel, since I’ve worked for you,” he said. “It don’t cost me much to live. I’ve been fortunate in investments.”

The furrows in the Colonel’s brow deepened.

“You offer to lend me five times more than I have ever paid you, Mr. Hopper. Tell me how you have made this money before I accept it.”

Eliphalet had never been able to meet that eye since he had known it. He did not meet it now. But he went to his desk, and drew a long sheet of paper from a pigeonhole.

“These be some of my investments,” he answered, with just a tinge of surliness. “I cal’late they’ll stand inspection. I ain’t forcing you to take the money, sir,” he flared up, all at once. “I’d like to save the business.”

Mr. Carvel was disarmed. He went unsteadily to his desk, and none save God knew the shock that his pride received that day. To rescue a name which had stood untarnished since he had brought it into the world, he drew forth some blank notes, and filled them out. But before he signed them he spoke:

“You are a business man, Mr. Hopper,” said he, “And as a business man you must know that these notes will not legally hold. It is martial law. The courts are abolished, and all transactions here in St. Louis are invalid.”

Eliphalet was about to speak.

“One moment, sir,” cried the Colonel, standing up and towering to his full height. “Law or no law, you shall have the money and interest, or your security, which is this business. I need not tell you, sir, that my word is sacred, and binding forever upon me and mine.”

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“I’m not afraid, Colonel,” answered Mr. Hopper, with a feeble attempt at geniality. He was, in truth, awed at last.

“You need not be, sir!” said the Colonel, with equal force. “If you were —this instant you should leave this place.” He sat down, and continued more calmly: “It will not be long before a Southern Army marches into St. Louis, and the Yankee Government submits.” He leaned forward. “Do you reckon we can hold the business together until then, Mr. Hopper?”

God forbid that we should smile at the Colonel’s simple faith. And if Eliphalet Hopper had done so, his history would have ended here.

“Leave that to me, Colonel,” he said soberly.

Then came the reaction. The good Colonel sighed as he signed, away that business which had been an honor to the, city where it was founded, I thank heaven that we are not concerned with the details of their talk that day. Why should we wish to know the rate of interest on those notes, or the time? It was war-time.

Mr. Hopper filled out his check, and presently departed. It was the signal for the little force which remained to leave. Outside, in the store; Ephum paced uneasily, wondering why his master did not come out. Presently he crept to the door of the office, pushed it open, and beheld Mr. Carvel with his head bowed, down in his hands.

“Marse Comyn!” he cried, “Marse Comyn!”

The Colonel looked up. His face was haggard.

“Marse Comyn, you know what I done promise young *miss* long time ago, befo’—befo’ she done left us?”

“Yes, Ephum.”

He saw the faithful old negro but dimly. Faintly he heard the pleading voice.

“Marse Comyn, won’ you give Ephum a pass down, river, ter fotch Cap’n Lige?”

“Ephum,” said the Colonel, sadly, “I had a letter from the Captain yesterday. He is at Cairo. His boat is a Federal transport, and he is in Yankee pay.”

Ephum took a step forward, appealingly, “But de Cap’n’s yo’ friend, Marse Comyn. He ain’t never fo’get what you done fo’ him, Marse Comyn. He ain’t in de army, suh.”

“And I am the Captain’s friend, Ephum,” answered the Colonel, quietly. “But I will not ask aid from any man employed by the Yankee Government. No—not from my own brother, who is in a Pennsylvania regiments.”

Ephum shuffled out, and his heart was lead as he closed the store that night.

Mr. Hopper has boarded a Fifth Street car, which jangles on with many halts until it comes to Bremen, a German settlement in the north of the city. At Bremen great droves of mules fill the street, and crowd the entrances of the sale stables there. Whips are cracking like pistol shots, Gentlemen with the yellow cavalry stripe of the United States Army are pushing to and fro among the drivers and the owners, and fingering the frightened animals. A herd breaks from the confusion and is driven like a whirlwind down the street, dividing at the Market House. They are going to board the Government transport—to die on the battlefields of Kentucky and Missouri.

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Mr. Hopper alights from the car with complacency. He stands for a while on a corner, against the hot building, surveying the busy scene, unnoticed. Mules! Was it not a prophecy,—that drove which sent him into Mr. Carvel's store?

Presently a man with a gnawed yellow mustache and a shifty eye walks out of one of the offices, and perceives our friend.

"Howdy, Mr. Hopper?" says he.

Eliphalet extends a hand to be squeezed and returned. "Got them vouchers?" he asks. He is less careful of his English here.

"Wal, I jest reckon," is the answer: The fellow was interrupted by the appearance of a smart young man in a smart uniform, who wore an air of genteel importance. He could not have been more than two and twenty, and his face and manners were those of a clerk. The tan of field service was lacking on his cheek, and he was black under the eyes.

"Hullo, Ford," he said, jocularly.

"Howdy, Cap," retorted the other. "Wal, suh, that last lot was an extry, fo' sure. As clean a lot as ever I seed. Not a lump on 'em. Gov'ment ain't cheated much on them there at one-eighty a head, I reckon."

Mr. Ford said this with such an air of conviction and such a sober face that the Captain smiled. And at the same time he glanced down nervously at the new line of buttons on his chest.

"I guess I know a mule from a Newfoundland dog by this time," said he.

"Wal, I jest reckon," asserted Mr. Ford, with a loud laugh. "Cap'n Wentworth, allow me to make you acquainted with Mr. Hopper. Mr. Hopper, Cap'n Wentworth."

The Captain squeezed Mr. Hoppers hand with fervor. "You interested in mules, Mr. Hopper?" asked the military man.

"I don't cal'late to be," said. Mr. Hopper. Let us hope that our worthy has not been presented as being wholly without a sense of humor. He grinned as he looked upon this lamb in the uniform of Mars, and added, "I'm just naturally patriotic, I guess. Cap'n, 'll you have a drink?"

"And a segar," added Mr. Ford.

"Just one," says the Captain. "It's d—d tiresome lookin' at mules all day in the sun."

Well for Mr. Davitt that his mission work does not extend to Bremen, that the good man's charity keeps him at the improvised hospital down town. Mr. Hopper has resigned the superintendency of his Sunday School, it is true, but he is still a pillar of the church.

The young officer leans against the bar, and listens to stories by Mr. Ford, which it behooves no church members to hear. He smokes Mr. Hopper's cigar and drinks his whiskey. And Eliphalet understands that the good Lord put some fools into the world in order to give the smart people a chance to practise their talents. Mr. Hopper neither drinks nor smokes, but he uses the spittoon with more freedom in this atmosphere.

When at length the Captain has marched out, with a conscious but manly air, Mr. Hopper turns to Ford— "Don't lose no time in presenting them vouchers at headquarters," says he. "Money is worth something now. And there's grumbling about this Department in the Eastern papers, If we have an investigation, we'll whistle. How much to-day?"

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“Three thousand,” says Mr. Ford. He tosses off a pony of Bourbon, but his face is not a delight to look upon, “Hopper, you’ll be a d—d rich man some day.”

“I cal’late to.”

“I do the dirty work. And because I ain’t got no capital, I only get four per cent.”

“Don’t one-twenty a day suit you?”

“You get blasted near a thousand. And you’ve got horse contracts, and blanket contracts besides. I know you. What’s to prevent my goin’ south when the vouchers is cashed?” he cried. “Ain’t it possible?”

“I presume likely,” said Mr. Hopper, quietly. “Then your mother’ll have to move out of her little place.”

CHAPTER II

NEWS FROM CLARENCE

The epithet aristocrat may become odious and fatal on the banks of the Mississippi as it was on the banks of the Seine. Let no man deceive himself! These are fearful times. Thousands of our population, by the sudden stoppage of business, are thrown out of employment. When gaunt famine intrudes upon their household, it is but natural that they should inquire the cause. Hunger began the French Revolution.

Virginia did not read this editorial, because it appeared in that abhorred organ of the Mudsills, the ‘Missouri Democrat.’ The wheels of fortune were turning rapidly that first hot summer of the war time. Let us be thankful that our flesh and blood are incapable of the fury of the guillotine. But when we think calmly of those days, can we escape without a little pity for the aristocrats? Do you think that many of them did not know hunger and want long before that cruel war was over?

How bravely they met the grim spectre which crept so insidiously into their homes!

“Virginia, child.” said Mrs. Colfax, peevishly, one morning as they sat at breakfast, “why do you persist it wearing that old gown? It has gotten on my nerves, my dear. You really must have something new made, even if there are no men here to dress for.”

“Aunt Lillian, you must not say such things. I do not think that I ever dressed to please men.”

“Tut, tut; my dear, we all do. I did, even after married your uncle. It is natural. We must not go shabby in such times as these, or be out of fashion, Did you know that Prince

Napoleon was actually coming here for a visit this autumn? We must be ready for him. I am having a fitting at Miss Elder's to-day."

Virginia was learning patience. She did not reply as she poured out her aunt's coffee.

"Jinny," said that lady, "come with me to Elder's, and I will give you some gowns. If Comyn had been as careful of his own money as of mine, you could dress decently."

"I think I do dress decently, Aunt Lillian," answered the girl. "I do not need the gowns. Give me the money you intend to pay for them, and I can use it for a better purpose."

Mrs. Colfax arranged her lace pettishly.

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“I am sick and tired of this superiority, Jinny.” And in the same breath. “What would you do with it?”

Virginia lowered her voice. “Hodges goes through the lines to-morrow night. I should send it to Clarence.” “But you have no idea where Clarence is.”

“Hodges can find him.”

“Pshaw!” exclaimed her aunt, “I would not trust him. How do you know that he will get through the Dutch pickets to Price’s army? Wasn’t Souther captured last week, and that rash letter of Puss Russell’s to Jack Brinsmade published in the Democrat?” She laughed at the recollection, and Virginia was fain to laugh too. “Puss hasn’t been around much since. I hope that will cure her of saying what she thinks of people.”

“It won’t,” said Virginia.

“I’ll save my money until Price drives the Yankees from the state, and Clarence marches into the city at the head of a regiment,” Mrs. Colfax went on, “It won’t be long now.”

Virginia’s eyes flashed.

“Oh, you can’t have read the papers. And don’t you remember the letter Maude had from George? They need the bare necessities of life, Aunt Lillian. And half of Price’s men have no arms at all.”

“Jackson,” said Mrs. Colfax, “bring me a newspaper. Is there any news to-day?”

“No,” answered Virginia, quickly. “All we know is that Lyon has left Springfield to meet our troops, and that a great battle is coming, Perhaps—perhaps it is being fought to-day.”

Mrs. Colfax burst into tears, “Oh, Jinny,” she cried, “how can you be so cruel!”

That very evening a man, tall and lean, but with the shrewd and kindly eye of a scout, came into the sitting-room with the Colonel and handed a letter to Mrs. Colfax. In the hall he slipped into Virginia’s hand another, in a “Jefferson Davis” envelope, and she thrust it in her gown —the girl was on fire as he whispered in her ear that he had seen Clarence, and that he was well. In two days an answer might be left at Mr. Russell’s house. But she must be careful what she wrote, as the Yankee scouts were active.

Clarence, indeed, had proven himself a man. Glory and uniform became him well, but danger and deprivation better. The words he had written, careless and frank and boyish, made Virginia’s heart leap with pride. Mrs. Colfax’s letter began with the adventure below the Arsenal, when the frail skiff had sunk near the island, He told how he had heard the captain of his escort sing out to him in the darkness, and how he had

floated down the current instead, until, chilled and weary, he had contrived to seize the branches of a huge tree floating by. And how by a miracle the moon had risen. When the great Memphis packet bore down upon him, he had, been seen from her guards, and rescued and made much of; and set ashore at the next landing, for fear her captain would get into trouble. In the morning he had walked into the country, first providing himself with butternuts and rawhide boots and a bowie-knife. Virginia would never have recognized her dashing captain of dragoons in this guise.

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The letter was long for Clarence, and written under great difficulties from date to date. For nearly a month he had tramped over mountains and across river bottoms, waiting for news of an organized force of resistance in Missouri. Begging his way from cabin to cabin, and living on greasy bacon and corn pone, at length he crossed the swift Gasconade (so named by the French settlers because of its brawling ways) where the bridge of the Pacific railroad had been blown up by the Governor's orders. Then he learned that the untiring Lyon had steamed up the Missouri and had taken possession of Jefferson City without a blow, and that the ragged rebel force had fought and lost at Booneville. Footsore, but undaunted, he pushed on to join the army, which he heard was retreating southward along the western tier of counties of the state.

On the banks of the Osage he fell in with two other young amen in as bad a plight as himself. They travelled together, until one day some rough farmers with shotguns leaped out of a bunch of willows on the borders of a creek and arrested all three for Union spies. And they laughed when Mr. Clarence tried to explain that he had not long since been the dapper captain of the State Dragoons.

His Excellency, the Governor of Missouri (so acknowledged by all good Southerners), likewise laughed when Mr. Colfax and the two others were brought before him. His Excellency sat in a cabin surrounded by a camp which had caused the dogs of war to howl for very shame.

"Colfax!" cried the Governor. "A Colfax of St. Louis in butternuts and rawhide boots?"

"Give me a razor," demanded Clarence, with indignation, "a razor and a suit of clothes, and I will prove it." The Governor laughed once more.

"A razor, young man! A suit of clothes You know not what you ask."

"Are there any gentlemen from St. Louis here?" George Catherwood was brought in,—-or rather what had once been George. Now he was a big frontiersman with a huge blond beard, and a bowie, knife stuck into his trousers in place of a sword. He recognized his young captain of dragoons the Governor apologized, and Clarence slept that night in the cabin. The next day he was given a horse, and a bright new rifle which the Governor's soldiers had taken from the Dutch at Cole Camp on the way south, And presently they made a junction with three thousand more who were their images. This was Price's army, but Price had gone ahead into Kansas to beg the great McCulloch and his Confederates to come to their aid and save the state.

"Dear mother, I wish that you and Jinny and Uncle Comyn could have seen this country rabble. How you would have laughed, and cried, because we are just like them. In the combined army two thousand have only bowie-knives or clubs. Some have long rifles of Daniel Boone's time, not fired for thirty years. And the impedimenta are a sight. Open wagons and conestogas and

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carryalls and buggies, and even barouches, weighted down with frying-pans and chairs and feather beds. But we've got spirit, and we can whip Lyon's Dutchmen and Yankees just as we are. Spirit is what counts, and the Yankees haven't got it, I was made to-day a Captain of Cavalry under Colonel Rives. I ride a great, raw-boned horse like an elephant. He jolts me until I am sore,—not quite as easy as my thoroughbred, Jefferson. Tell Jinny to care for him, and have him ready when we march into St. Louis."

"*Cowskinprairie*, 9th July.

"We have whipped Sigel on the prairie by Coon Creek and killed—we don't know how many. Tell Maude that George distinguished himself in the fight. We cavalry did not get a chance.

"We have at last met McCulloch and his real soldiers. We cheered until we cried when we saw their ranks of gray, with the gold buttons and the gold braid and the gold stars. General McCulloch has taken me on his staff, and promised me a uniform. But how to clothe and feed and arm our men! We have only a few poor cattle, and no money. But our men don't complain. We shall whip the Yankees before we starve."

For many days Mrs. Colfax did not cease to bewail the hardship which her dear boy was forced to endure. He, who was used to linen sheets and eider down, was without rough blanket or shelter; who was used to the best table in the state, was reduced to husks.

"But, Aunt Lillian," cried Virginia, "he is fighting for the South. If he were fed and clothed like the Yankees, we should not be half so proud of him."

Why set down for colder gaze the burning words that Clarence wrote to Virginia. How she pored over that letter, and folded it so that even the candle-droppings would not be creased and fall away! He was happy, though wretched because he could not see her. It was the life he had longed for. At last (and most pathetic!) he was proving his usefulness in this world. He was no longer the mere idler whom she had chidden.

"Jinny, do you remember saying so many years ago that our ruin would come of our not being able to work? How I wish you could see us felling trees to make bullet-moulds, and forging slugs for canister, and making cartridges at night with our bayonets as candlesticks. Jinny dear, I know that you will keep up your courage. I can see you sewing for us, I can hear you praying for us."

It was, in truth, how Virginia learned to sew. She had always detested it. Her fingers were pricked and sore weeks after she began. Sad to relate, her bandages, shirts, and havelocks never reached the front, —those havelocks, to withstand the heat of the tropic sun, which were made in thousands by devoted Union women that first summer of the war, to be ridiculed as nightcaps by the soldiers.

“Why should not our soldiers have them, too?” said Virginia to the Russell girls. They were never so happy as when sewing on them against the arrival of the Army of Liberation, which never came.

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The long, long days of heat dragged slowly, with little to cheer those families separated from their dear ones by a great army. Clarence might die, and a month—perhaps a year—pass without news, unless he were brought a prisoner to St. Louis. How Virginia envied Maude because the Union lists of dead and wounded would give her tidings of her brother Tom, at least! How she coveted the many Union families, whose sons and brothers were at the front, this privilege!

We were speaking of the French Revolution, when, as Balzac remarked, to be a spy was to be a patriot. Heads are not so cheap in our Anglo-Saxon countries; passions not so fierce and uncontrollable. Compare, with a prominent historian, our Boston Massacre and St. Bartholomew.

They are both massacres. Compare Camp Jackson, or Baltimore, where a few people were shot, with some Paris street scenes after the Bastille. Feelings in each instance never ran higher. Our own provost marshal was hissed in the street, and called "Robespierre," and yet he did not fear the assassin's knife. Our own Southern aristocrats were hemmed in in a Union city (their own city). No women were thrown into prison, it is true. Yet one was not permitted to shout for Jeff Davis on the street corner before the provost's guard. Once in a while a detachment of the Home Guards, commanded by a lieutenant; would march swiftly into a street and stop before a house, whose occupants would run to the rear, only to encounter another detachment in the alley.

One day, in great excitement, Eugenie Renault rang the bell of the Carvel house, and ran past the astounded Jackson up the stairs to Virginia's room, the door of which she burst open.

"Oh, Jinny!" she cried, "Puss Russell's house is surrounded by Yankees, and Puss and Emily and all the family are prisoners!"

"Prisoners! What for?" said Virginia, dropping in her excitement her last year's bonnet, which she was trimming with red, white, and red.

"Because," said Eugenie, sputtering with indignation "because they waved at some of our poor fellows who were being taken to the slave pen. They were being marched past Mr. Russell's house under guard—Puss had a small—"

"Confederate flag," put in Virginia, smiling in spite of herself.

"And she waved it between the shutters," Eugenie continued. And some one told, the provost marshal. He has had the house surrounded, and the family have to stay there."

"But if the food gives out?"

“Then,” said Miss Renault, in a voice of awe, “then each one of the family is to have just a common army ration. They are to be treated as prisoners.”

“Oh, those Yankees are detestable!” exclaimed Virginia. “But they shall pay for it. As soon as our army is organized and equipped, they shall pay for it ten times over.” She tried on the bonnet, conspicuous with its red and white ribbons, before the glass. Then she ran to the closet and drew forth the white gown with its red trimmings. “Wait for me, Genie,” she said, “and we’ll go down to Puss’s house together. It may cheer her to see us.”

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“But not in that dress,” said Eugenie, aghast. “They will arrest you.” “Oh, how I wish they would!” cried Virginia. And her eyes flashed so that Eugenie was frightened. “How I wish they would!”

Miss Renault regarded her friend with something of adoration from beneath her black lashes. It was about five in the afternoon when they started out together under Virginia’s white parasol, Eugenie’s slimmer courage upheld by her friend’s bearing. We must remember that Virginia was young, and that her feelings were akin to those our great-grandmothers experienced when the British held New York. It was as if she had been born to wear the red and white of the South. Elderly gentlemen of Northern persuasion paused in their homeward walk to smile in admiration, —some sadly, as Mr. Brinsmade. Young gentlemen found an excuse to retrace their steps a block or two. But Virginia walked on air, and saw nothing. She was between fierce anger and exaltation. She did not deign to drop her eyes as low as the citizen sergeant and guard in front of Puss Russell’s house (these men were only human, after all); she did not so much as glance at the curious people standing on the corner, who could not resist a murmur of delight. The citizen sergeant only smiled, and made no move to arrest the young lady in red and white. Nor did Puss fling open the blinds and wave at her.

“I suppose its because Mr. Russell won’t let her,” said Virginia, disconsolately, “Genie, let’s go to headquarters, and show this Yankee General Fremont that we are not afraid of him.”

Eugenie’s breath was taken away by the very boldness of this proposition.. She looked up timidly into Virginia’s face, and hero-worship got the better of prudence.

The house which General Fremont appropriated for his use when he came back from Europe to assume command in the West was not a modest one. It still stands, a large mansion of brick with a stone front, very tall and very wide, with an elaborate cornice and plate-glass windows, both tall and broad, and a high basement. Two stately stone porches capped by elaborate iron railings adorn it in front and on the side. The chimneys are generous and proportional. In short, the house is of that type built by many wealthy gentlemen in the middle of the century, which has best stood the test of time,—the only type which, if repeated to-day, would not clash with the architectural education which we are receiving. A spacious yard well above the pavement surrounds it, sustained by a wall of dressed stones, capped by an iron fence. The whole expressed wealth, security, solidity, conservatism. Alas, that the coal deposits under the black mud of our Western states should, at length, have driven the owners of these houses out of them! They are now blackened, almost buried in soot; empty, or half-tenanted by boarders, Descendants of the old families pass them on their way to business or to the theatre with a sigh. The sons of those who owned them have built westward, and west-ward again, until now they are six miles from the river.

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On that summer evening forty years ago, when Virginia and Eugenie came in sight of the house, a scene of great animation was before them. Talk was rife over the commanding general's pomp and circumstance. He had just returned from Europe, where pomp and circumstance and the military were wedded. Foreign officers should come to America to teach our army dress and manners. A dashing Hungarian commanded the general's body-guard, which honorable corps was even then drawn up in the street before the house, surrounded at a respectable distance by a crowd that feared to jest. They felt like it save when they caught the stern military eye of the Hungarian captain. Virginia gazed at the glittering uniforms, resplendent in the sun, and at the sleek and well-fed horses, and scalding tears came as she thought of the half-starved rabble of Southern patriots on the burning prairies. Just then a sharp command escaped in broken English from the Hungarian. The people in the yard of the mansion parted, and the General himself walked proudly out of the gate to the curb, where his charger was pawing the gutter. As he put foot to the stirrup, the eye of the great man (once candidate, and again to be, for President) caught the glint of red and white on the corner. For an instant he stood transfixed to the spot, with one leg in the air. Then he took it down again and spoke to a young officer of his staff, who smiled and began to walk toward them. Little Eugenie's knees trembled. She seized Virginia's arm, and whispered in agony.

"Oh, Jinny, you are to be arrested, after all. Oh, I wish you hadn't been so bold!"

"Hush," said Virginia, as she prepared to slay the young officer with a look. She felt like flying at his throat, and choking him for the insolence of that smile. How dare he march undaunted to within six paces of those eyes? The crowd drew back, But did Miss Carvel retreat? Not a step. "Oh, I hope he will arrest me," she said passionately, to Eugenie. "He will start a conflagration beyond the power of any Yankee to quell."

But hush! he was speaking. "You are my prisoners"? No, those were not the words, surely. The lieutenant had taken off his cap. He bowed very low and said:

"Ladies, the General's compliments, and he begs that this much of the sidewalk may be kept clear for a few moments."

What was left for them, after that, save a retreat? But he was not precipitate. Miss Virginia crossed the street with a dignity and bearing which drew even the eyes of the body-guard to one side. And there she stood haughtily until the guard and the General had thundered away. A crowd of black-coated civilians, and quartermasters and other officers in uniform, poured out of the basement of the house into the yards. One civilian, a youngish man a little inclined to stoutness, stopped at the gate, stared, then thrust some papers in his pocket and hurried down the side street. Three blocks thence he appeared abreast of Miss Carvel. More remarkable still, he lifted his hat clear of his head. Virginia drew back. Mr. Hopper, with his newly acquired equanimity and poise, startled her.

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“May I have the pleasure,” said that gentleman, “of accompanying you home?”

Eugenie giggled, Virginia was more annoyed than she showed.

“You must not come out of your way,” she said. Then she added. “I am sure you must go back to the store. It is only six o’clock.”

Had Virginia but known, this occasional tartness in her speech gave Eliphalet an infinite delight, even while it hurt him. His was a nature which liked to gloat over a goal on the horizon He cared not a whit for sweet girls; they cloyed. But a real lady was something to attain. He had revised his vocabulary for just such an occasion, and thrown out some of the vernacular.

“Business is not so pressing nowadays, Miss Carvel,” he answered, with a shade of meaning.

“Then existence must be rather heavy for you,” she said. She made no attempt to introduce him to Eugenie. “If we should have any more victories like Bull Run, prosperity will come back with a rush,” said the son of Massachusetts. “Southern Confederacy, with Missouri one of its stars an industrial development of the South—-fortunes in cotton”

Virginia turned quickly, “Oh, how dare you?” she cried. “How dare you speak flippantly of such things?” His suavity was far from overthrown.

“Flippantly Miss Carvel?” said he. “I assure you that I want to see the South win.” What he did not know was that words seldom convince women. But he added something which reduced her incredulity for the time. “Do you cal’late,” said he,—that I could work for your father, and wish ruin to his country?”

“But you are a Yankee born,” she exclaimed.

“There be a few sane Yankees,” replied Mr. Hopper, dryly. A remark which made Eugenie laugh outright, and Virginia could not refrain from a smile.

But much against her will he walked home with her. She was indignant by the time she reached Locust Street. He had never dared do such a thing before, What had got into the man? Was it because he had become a manager, and governed the business during her father’s frequent absences? No matter what Mr. Hopper’s politics, he would always be to her a low-born Yankee, a person wholly unworthy of notice.

At the corner of Olive Street, a young man walking with long strides almost bumped into them. He paused looked back, and bowed as if uncertain of an acknowledgment. Virginia barely returned his bow. He had been very close to her, and she had had time to notice that his coat was threadbare. When she looked again, he had covered half the

block. Why should she care if Stephen Brice had seen her in company with Mr, Hopper? Eliphalet, too, had seen Stephen, and this had added zest to his enjoyment. It was part of the fruits of his reward. He wished in that short walk that he might meet Mr. Cluyme and Belle, and every man and woman and child in the city whom he knew. From time to time he glanced at the severe profile of the aristocrat beside him (he had to look up a bit, likewise), and that look set him down among the beasts of prey. For she was his rightful prey, and he meant not to lose one tittle of enjoyment in the progress of the game. Many and many a night in the bare little back room at Miss Crane's, Eliphalet had gloated over the very event which was now come to pass. Not a step of the way but what he had lived through before.

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The future is laid open to such men as he. Since he had first seen the black cloud of war rolling up from the South, a hundred times had he rehearsed the scene with Colonel Carvel which had actually taken place a week before. A hundred times had he prepared his speech and manner for this first appearance in public with Virginia after he had forced the right to walk in her company. The words he had prepared—commonplace, to be sure, but carefully chosen—flowed from his lips in a continual nasal stream. The girl answered absently, her feminine instinct groping after a reason for it all. She brightened when she saw her father at the doors and, saying good by to Eugenie, tripped up the steps, bowing to Eliphalet coldly.

“Why, bless us, Jinny,” said the Colonel, “you haven’t been parading the town in that costume! You’ll have us in Lynch’s slave pen by to-morrow night. My land!” laughed he, patting her under the chin, “there’s no doubt about your sentiments, anyhow.”

“I’ve been over to Puss Russell’s house,” said she, breathless. “They’ve closed it up, you know—” (He nodded.) “And then we went—Eugenie and I, to headquarters, just to see what the Yankees would do.”

The Colonel’s smile faded. He looked grave. “You must take care, honey,” he said, lowering his voice. “They suspect me now of communicating with the Governor and McCulloch. Jinny, it’s all very well to be brave, and to stand by your colors. But this sort of thing,” said he, stroking the gown, “this sort of thing doesn’t help the South, my dear, and only sets spies upon us. Ned tells me that there was a man in plain clothes standing in the alley last night for three hours.”

“Pa,” cried the girl, “I’m so sorry.” Suddenly searching his face with a swift instinct, she perceived that these months had made it yellow and lined. “Pa, dear, you must come to Glencoe to-morrow and rest You must not go off on any more trips.”

The Colonel shook his head sadly.

“It isn’t the trips, Jinny There are duties, my dear, pleasant duties —Jinny—”

“Yes?”

The Colonel’s eye had suddenly fallen on Mr, Hopper, who was still standing at the bottom of the steps. He checked himself abruptly as Eliphalet pulled off his hat,

“Howdy, Colonel?” he said.

Virginia was motionless, with her back to the intruder, She was frozen by a presentiment. As she saw her father start down the steps, she yearned to throw herself in front of him—to warn him of something; she knew not what. Then she heard the Colonel’s voice, courteous and kindly as ever. And yet it broke a little as he greeted his visitor.

“Won’t—won’t you come in, Mr. Hopper?”

Virginia started

“I don’t know but what I will, thank you, Colonel,” he answered; easily. “I took the liberty of walking home with your daughter.”

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Virginia fairly flew into the house and up the stairs. Gaining her room, she shut the door and turned the key, as though he might pursue her there. The man's face had all at once become a terror. She threw herself on the lounge and buried her face in her hands, and she saw it still leering at her with a new confidence. Presently she grew calmer; rising, she put on the plainest of her scanty wardrobe, and went down the stairs, all in a strange trepidation new to her. She had never been in fear of a man before. She hearkened over the banisters for his voice, heard it, and summoned all her courage. How cowardly she had been to leave her father alone with him.

Eliphalet stayed to tea. It mattered little to him that Mrs. Colfax ignored him as completely as if his chair had been vacant He glanced at that lady once, and smiled, for he was tasting the sweets of victory. It was Virginia who entertained him, and even the Colonel never guessed what it cost her. Eliphalet himself marvelled at her change of manner, and gloated over that likewise. Not a turn or a quiver of the victim's pain is missed by your beast of prey. The Colonel was gravely polite, but preoccupied. Had he wished it, he could not have been rude to a guest. He offered Mr. Hopper a cigar with the same air that he would have given it to a governor.

"Thank'ee, Colonel, I don't smoke," he said, waving the bog away.

Mrs. Colfax flung herself out of the room.

It was ten o'clock when Eliphalet reached Miss Crane's, and picked his way up the front steps where the boarders were gathered.

"The war doesn't seem to make any difference in your business, Mr. Hopper," his landlady remarked, "where have you been so late?"

"I happened round at Colonel Carvel's this afternoon, and stayed for tea with 'em," he answered, striving to speak casually.

Miss Crane lingered in Mrs. Abner Reed's room later than usual that night.

CHAPTER III

THE SCOURGE OF WAR

"Virginia," said Mrs. Colfax, the next morning on coming downstairs, "I am going back to Bellegarde today. I really cannot put up with such a person as Comyn had here to tea last night."

"Very well, Aunt Lillian. At what time shall I order the carriage?"

The lady was surprised. It is safe to say that she had never accurately gauged the force which Virginia's respect for her elders, and affection for her aunt through Clarence, held in check. Only a moment since Mrs. Colfax had beheld her niece. Now there had arisen in front of her a tall person of authority, before whom she deferred instinctively. It was not what Virginia said, for she would not stoop to tirade. Mrs. Colfax sank into a chair, seeing only the blurred lines of a newspaper the girl had thrust into her hand.

"What—what is it?" she gasped. "I cannot read."

"There has been a battle at Wilson's Creek," said Virginia, in an emotionless voice. "General Lyon is killed, for which I suppose we should be thankful. More than seven hundred of the wounded are on their way here. They are bringing them one hundred and twenty miles, from Springfield to Rollo, in rough army wagons, with scarcely anything to eat or drink."

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“And—Clarence?”

“His name is not there.”

“Thank God!” exclaimed Mrs. Colfax. “Are the Yankees beaten?”

“Yes,” said Virginia, coldly. “At what time shall I order the carriage to take you to Bellegarde?”

Mrs. Colfax leaned forward and caught the hem of her niece’s gown. “Oh, let me stay,” she cried, “let me stay. Clarence may be with them.”

Virginia looked down at her without pity.

“As you please, Aunt Lillian,” she answered. “You know that you may always stay here. I only beg of you one thing, that when you have anything to complain of, you will bring it to me, and not mention it before Pa. He has enough to worry him.”

“Oh, Jinny,” sobbed the lady, in tears again, “how can you be so cruel at such a time, when my nerves are all in pieces?”

But she did not lift her voice at dinner, which was very poor indeed for Colonel Carvel’s house. All day long Virginia, assisted by Uncle Ben and Aunt Easter, toiled in the stifling kitchen, preparing dainties which she had long denied herself. At evening she went to the station at Fourteenth Street with her father, and stood amongst the people, pressed back by the soldiers, until the trains came in. Alas, the heavy basket which the Colonel carried on his arm was brought home again. The first hundred to arrive, ten hours in a hot car without food or water, were laid groaning on the bottom of great furniture vans, and carted to the new House of Refuge Hospital, two miles to the south of the city.

The next day many good women went there, Rebel and Union alike, to have their hearts wrung. The new and cheap building standing in the hot sun reeked with white wash and paint. The miserable men lay on the hard floor, still in the matted clothes they had worn in battle. Those were the first days of the war, when the wages of our passions first came to appal us. Many of the wounds had not been tended since they were dressed on the field weeks before.

Mrs. Colfax went too, with the Colonel and her niece, although she declared repeatedly that she could not go through with such an ordeal. She spoke the truth, for Mr. Carvel had to assist her to the waiting-room. Then he went back to the improvised wards to find Virginia busy over a gaunt Arkansan of Price’s army, whose pitiful, fever-glazed eyes were following her every motion. His frontiersman’s clothes, stained with blackened blood, hung limp over his wasted body. At Virginia’s bidding the Colonel ran downstairs for a bucket of fresh water, and she washed the caked dust from his face and hands. It was Mr. Brinsmade who got the surgeon to dress the man’s wound, and

to prescribe some of the broth from Virginia's basket. For the first time since the war began something of happiness entered her breast.

It was Mr. Brinsmade who was everywhere that day, answering the questions of distracted mothers and fathers and sisters who thronged the place; consulting with the surgeons; helping the few who knew how to work in placing mattresses under the worst cases; or again he might have been seen seated on the bare floor with a pad on his knee, taking down the names of dear ones in distant states,—that he might spend his night writing to them.

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They put a mattress under the Arkansan. Virginia did not leave him until he had fallen asleep, and a smile of peace was come upon his sunken face. Dismayed at the fearful sights about her, awed by the groans that rose on every side, she was choosing her way swiftly down the room to join her father and aunt in the carriage below.

The panic of flight had seized her. She felt that another little while in this heated, horrible place would drive her mad. She was almost at the door when she came suddenly upon a sight that made her pause.

An elderly lady in widow's black was kneeling beside a man groaning in mortal agony, fanning away the flies already gathering about his face. He wore the uniform of a Union sergeant,—dusty and splotched and torn. A small Testament was clasped convulsively in the fingers of his right band. The left sleeve was empty. Virginia lingered, whelmed in pity, thrilled by a wonderful womanliness of her who knelt there. Her face the girl had not even seen, for it was bent over the man. The sweetness of her voice held Virginia as in a spell, and the sergeant stopped groaning that he might listen:

"You have a wife?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"And a child?"

The answer came so painfully.

"A boy, ma'am—born the week—before I came—away."

"I shall write to your wife," said the lady, so gently that Virginia could scarce hear, "and tell her that you are cared for. Where does she live?"

He gave the address faintly—some little town in Minnesota. Then he added, "God bless you, lady."

Just then the chief surgeon came and stood over them. The lady turned her face up to him, and tears sparkled in her eyes. Virginia felt them wet in her own. Her worship was not given to many. Nobility, character, efficiency,-all were written on that face. Nobility spoke in the large features, in the generous mouth, in the calm, gray eyes. Virginia had seen her often before, but not until now was the woman revealed to her.

"Doctor, could this man's life be saved if I took him to my home?"

The surgeon got down beside her and took the man's pulse. The eyes closed. For a while the doctor knelt there, shaking his head. "He has fainted," he said.

“Do you think he can be saved?” asked the lady again. The surgeon smiled,—such a smile as a good man gives after eighteen hours of amputating, of bandaging, of advising,—work which requires a firm hand, a clear eye and brain, and a good heart.

“My dear Mrs. Brice,” he said, “I shall be glad to get you permission to take him, but we must first make him worth the taking. Another hour would have been too late.” He glanced hurriedly about the busy room, and then added, “We must have one more to help us.”

Just then some one touched Virginia’s arm. It was her father.

“I am afraid we must go, dear,” he said, “your aunt is getting impatient.”

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“Won’t you please go without me, Pa?” she asked. “Perhaps I can be of some use.”

The Colonel cast a wondering glance at the limp uniform, and went away. The surgeon, who knew the Carvel family, gave Virginia a look of astonishment. It was Mrs. Brice’s searching gaze that brought the color to the girl’s, face.

“Thank you, my dear,” she said simply.

As soon as he could get his sister-in-law off to Locust Street in the carriage, Colonel Carvel came back. For two reeking hours he stood against the newly plastered wall. Even he was surprised at the fortitude and skill Virginia showed from the very first, when she had deftly cut away the stiffened blue cloth, and helped to take off the rough bandages. At length the fearful operation was finished, and the weary surgeon, gathering up his box, expressed with all the energy left to him, his thanks to the two ladies.

Virginia stood up, faint and dizzy. The work of her hands had sustained her while it lasted, but now the ordeal was come. She went down the stairs on her father’s arm, and out into the air. All at once she knew that Mrs. Brice was beside her, and had taken her by the hand.

“My dear?” she was saying, “God will reward you for this act. You have taught many of us to-day a lesson we should have learned in our Bibles.”

Virginia trembled with many emotions, but she answered nothing. The mere presence of this woman had a strange effect upon the girl,—she was filled with a longing unutterable. It was not because Margaret Brice was the mother of him whose life had been so strangely blended with hers —whom she saw in her dreams. And yet now some of Stephen’s traits seemed to come to her understanding, as by a revelation. Virginia had labored through the heat of the day by Margaret Brice’s side doing His work, which levels all feuds and makes all women sisters. One brief second had been needful for the spell.

The Colonel bowed with that courtesy and respect which distinguished him, and Mrs. Brice left them to go back into the room of torment, and watch by the sergeant’s pallet. Virginia’s eyes followed her up the stairs, and then she and her father walked slowly to the carriage. With her foot on the step Virginia paused.

“Pa,” she said, “do you think it would be possible to get them to let us take that Arkansan into our house?”

“Why, honey, I’ll ask Brinsmade if you like,” said the Colonel. “Here he comes now, and Anne.”

It was Virginia who put the question to him.

“My dear,” replied that gentleman, patting her, “I would do anything in the world for you. I’ll see General Fremont this very afternoon. Virginia,” he added, soberly, “it is such acts as yours to-day that give us courage to live in these times.”

Anne kissed her friend.

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“Oh, Jinny, I saw what you were doing for one of our men. What am I saying?” she cried. “They are your men, too. This horrible war cannot last. It cannot last. It was well that Virginia did not see the smile on the face of the commanding general when Mr. Brinsmade at length got to him with her request. This was before the days when the wounded arrived by the thousands, when the zeal of the Southern ladies threatened to throw out of gear the workings of a great system. But the General, had had his eye on Mr. Carvel from the first. Therefore he smiled.

“Colonel Carvel,” said Mr. Brinsmade, with dignity, “is a gentleman. When he gives his word, it is sacred, sir.”

“Even to an enemy,” the General put in, “By George, Brinsmade, unless I knew you, I should think that you were half rebel yourself. Well, well, he may have his Arkansan.”

Mr. Brinsmade, when he conveyed the news to the Carvel house, did not say that he had wasted a precious afternoon in the attempt to interview his Excellency, the Commander in-chief. It was like obtaining an audience with the Sultan or the Czar. Citizens who had been prominent in affairs for twenty years, philanthropists and patriotic-spirited men like Mr. Brinsmade, the mayor, and all the ex-mayors mopped their brows in one of the general’s anterooms of the big mansion, and wrangled with beardless youths in bright uniforms who were part of the chain. The General might have been a Richelieu, a Marlborough. His European notions of uniformed inaccessibility he carried out to the letter. He was a royal personage, seldom seen, who went abroad in the midst of a glittering guard. It did not seem to weigh with his Excellency that these simple and democratic gentlemen would not put up with this sort of thing. That they who had saved the city to the Union were more or less in communication with a simple and democratic President; that in all their lives they had never been in the habit of sitting idly for two hours to mop their brows.

On the other hand, once you got beyond the gold lace and the etiquette, you discovered a good man and a patriot. It was far from being the General’s fault that Mr. Hopper and others made money in mules and worthless army blankets. Such things always have been, and always will be unavoidable when this great country of ours rises from the deep sleep of security into which her sons have lulled her, to demand her sword. We shall never be able to realize that the maintenance of a standing army of comfortable size will save millions in the end. So much for Democracy when it becomes a catchword.

The General was a good man, had he done nothing else than encourage the Western Sanitary Commission, that glorious army of drilled men and women who gave up all to relieve the suffering which the war was causing. Would that a novel—a great novel—-might be written setting forth with truth its doings. The hero of it could be Calvin Brinsmade, and a nobler hero than he was never under a man’s hand. For the glory of generals fades beside his glory.

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It was Mr. Brinsmade's carriage that brought Mrs. Brice home from her trying day in the hospital. Stephen, just returned from drill at Verandah hall, met her at the door. She would not listen to his entreaties to rest, but in the evening, as usual, took her sewing to the porch behind the house, where there was a little breeze.

"Such a singular thing happened to-day, Stephen," she said. "It was while we were trying to save the life of a poor sergeant who had lost his arm. I hope we shall be allowed to have him here. He is suffering horribly."

"What happened, mother?" he asked.

"It was soon after I had come upon this poor fellow," she said. "I saw the—the flies around him. And as I got down beside him to fan them away I had such a queer sensation. I knew that some one was standing behind me, looking at me. Then Dr. Allerdyce came, and I asked him about the man, and he said there was a chance of saving him if we could only get help. Then some one spoke up,—such a sweet voice. It was that Miss Carvel my dear, with whom you had such a strange experience when you bought Hester, and to whose party you once went. Do you remember that they offered us their house in Glencoe when the Judge was so ill?"

"Yes," said Stephen.

"She is a wonderful creature," his mother continued. "Such personality, such life! And wasn't it a remarkable offer for a Southern woman to make? They feel so bitterly, and —and I do not blame them." The good lady put down on her lap the night-shirt she was making. "I saw how it happened. The girl was carried away by her pity. And, my dear, her capability astonished me. One might have thought that she had always been a nurse. The experience was a dreadful one for me—what must it have been for her. After the operation was over, I followed her downstairs to where she was standing with her father in front of the building, waiting for their carriage. I felt that I must say something to her, for in all my life I have never seen a nobler thing done. When I saw her there, I scarcely knew what to say. Words seemed so inadequate. It was then three o'clock, and she had been working steadily in that place since morning. I am sure she could not have borne it much longer. Sheer courage carried her through it, I know, for her hand trembled so when I took it, and she was very pale. She usually has color, I believe. Her father, the Colonel, was with her, and he bowed to me with such politeness. He had stood against the wall all the while we had worked, and he brought a mattress for us. I have heard that his house is watched, and that they have him under suspicion for communicating with the Confederate leaders." Mrs. Brice sighed. He seems such a fine character. I hope they will not get into any trouble."

"I hope not, mother," said Stephen.

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It was two mornings later that Judge Whipple and Stephen drove to the Iron Mountain depot, where they found a German company of Home Guards drawn up. On the long wooden platform under the sheds Stephen caught sight of Herr Korner and Herr Hauptmann amid a group of their countrymen. Little Korner came forward to clasp his hands. The tears ran on his cheeks, and he could not speak for emotion. Judge Whipple, grim and silent, stood apart. But he uncovered his head with the others when the train rolled in. Reverently they entered a car where the pine boxes were piled one on another, and they bore out the earthly remains of Captain Carl Richter.

Far from the land of his birth, among those same oaks on Bloody Hill where brave Lyon fell, he had gladly given up his life for the new country and the new cause he had made his own.

That afternoon in the cemetery, as the smoke of the last salute to a hero hung in the flickering light and drifted upward through the great trees, as the still air was yet quivering with the notes of the bugle-call which is the soldiers requiem, a tall figure, gaunt and bent, stepped out from behind the blue line of the troops. It was that of Judge Whipple. He carried in his hand a wreath of white roses—the first of many to be laid on Richter's grave.

Poor Richter! How sad his life had been! And yet he had not filled it with sadness. For many a month, and many a year, Stephen could not look upon his empty place without a pang. He missed the cheery songs and the earnest presence even more than he had thought. Carl Richter,—as his father before him,—had lived for others. Both had sacrificed their bodies for a cause. One of them might be pictured as he trudged with Father Jahn from door to door through the Rhine country, or shouldering at sixteen a heavy musket in the Landwehr's ranks to drive the tyrant Napoleon from the beloved Fatherland Later, aged before his time, his wife dead of misery, decrepit and prison-worn in the service of a thankless country, his hopes lived again in Carl, the swordsman of Jena. Then came the pitiful Revolution, the sundering of all ties, the elder man left to drag out his few weary days before a shattered altar. In Carl a new aspiration had sprung up, a new patriotism stirred. His, too, had been the sacrifice. Happy in death, for he had helped perpetuate that great Union which should be for all time the refuge of the oppressed.

CHAPTER IV

THE LIST OF SIXTY

One chilling day in November, when an icy rain was falling on the black mud of the streets, Virginia looked out of the window. Her eye was caught by two horses which were just skeletons with the skin stretched over them. One had a bad sore on his flank, and was lame. They were pulling a rattle-trap farm wagon with a buckled wheel. On

the seat a man, pallid and bent and scantily clad, was holding the reins in his feeble hands, while beside him cowered

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a child of ten wrapped in a ragged blanket. In the body of the wagon, lying on a mattress pressed down in the midst of broken, cheap furniture and filthy kitchen ware, lay a gaunt woman in the rain. Her eyes were closed, and a hump on the surface of the dirty quilt beside her showed that a child must be there. From such a picture the girl fled in tears. But the sight of it, and of others like it, haunted her for weeks. Through those last dreary days of November, wretched families, which a year since had been in health and prosperity, came to the city, beggars, with the wrecks of their homes. The history of that hideous pilgrimage across a state has never been written. Still they came by the hundred, those families. Some brought little corpses to be buried. The father of one, hale and strong when they started, died of pneumonia in the public lodging-house. The walls of that house could tell many tales to wring the heart. So could Mr. Brinsmade, did he choose to speak of his own charities. He found time, between his labors at the big hospital newly founded, and his correspondence, and his journeys of love,—between early morning and midnight,—to give some hours a day to the refugees.

Throughout December they poured in on the afflicted city, already overtaxed. All the way to Springfield the road was lined with remains of articles once dear—a child's doll, a little rocking-chair, a colored print that has hung in the best room, a Bible text.

Anne Brinsmade, driven by Nicodemus, went from house to house to solicit old clothes, and take them to the crowded place of detention. Christmas was drawing near—a sorry Christmas, in truth. And many of the wanderers were unclothed and unfed.

More battles had been fought; factions had arisen among Union men. Another general had come to St. Louis to take charge of the Department, and the other with his wondrous body-guard was gone.

The most serious problem confronting the new general—was how to care for the refugees. A council of citizens was called at headquarters, and the verdict went forth in the never-to-be-forgotten Orders No. 24.

"Inasmuch," said the General, "as the Secession army had driven these people from their homes, Secession sympathizers should be made to support them." He added that the city was unquestionably full of these.

Indignation was rife the day that order was published. Sixty prominent "disloyalists" were to be chosen and assessed to make up a sum of ten thousand dollars.

"They may sell my house over my head before I will pay a cent," cried Mr. Russell. And he meant it. This was the way the others felt. Who were to be on this mysterious list of "Sixty"? That was the all-absorbing question of the town. It was an easy matter to pick the conspicuous ones. Colonel Carvel was sure to be there, and Mr. Catherwood and

Mr. Russell and Mr. James, and Mr. Worington the lawyer. Mrs. Addison Colfax lived for days in

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a fermented state of excitement which she declared would break her down; and which, despite her many cares and worries, gave her niece not a little amusement. For Virginia was human, and one morning she went to her aunt's room to read this editorial from the newspaper:— "For the relief of many palpitating hearts it may be well to state that we understand only two ladies are on the ten thousand dollar list."

"Jinny," she cried, "how can you be so cruel as to read me that, when you know that I am in a state of frenzy now? How does that relieve me? It makes it an absolute certainty that Madame Jules and I will have to pay. We are the only women of importance in the city."

That afternoon she made good her much-uttered threat, and drove to Bellegarde. Only the Colonel and Virginia and Mammy Easter and Ned were left in the big house. Rosetta and Uncle Ben and Jackson had been hired out, and the horses sold,—all save old Dick, who was running, long-haired, in the fields at Glencoe.

Christmas eve was a steel-gray day, and the sleet froze as it fell. Since morning Colonel Carvel had sat poking the sitting-room fire, or pacing the floor restlessly. His occupation was gone. He was observed night and day by Federal detectives. Virginia strove to amuse him, to conceal her anxiety as she watched him. Well she knew that but for her he would long since have fled southward, and often in the bitterness of the night-time she blamed herself for not telling him to go. Ten years had seemed to pass over him since the war had begun.

All day long she had been striving to put away from her the memory of Christmas eves past and gone of her father's early home-coming from the store, a mysterious smile on his face; of Captain Lige stamping noisily into the house, exchanging uproarious jests with Ned and Jackson. The Captain had always carried under his arm a shapeless bundle which he would confide to Ned with a knowing wink. And then the house would be lighted from top to bottom, and Mr. Russell and Mr. Catherwood and Mr. Brinsmade came in for a long evening with Mr. Carvel over great bowls of apple toddy and egg-nog. And Virginia would have her own friends in the big parlor. That parlor was shut up now, and icy cold.

Then there was Judge Whipple, the joyous event of whose year was his Christmas dinner at Colonel Carvel's house. Virginia pictured him this year at Mrs. Brice's little table, and wondered whether he would miss them as much as they missed him. War may break friendships, but it cannot take away the sacredness of memories.

The sombre daylight was drawing to an early close as the two stood looking out of the sitting-room window. A man's figure muffled in a greatcoat slanting carefully across the

street caught their eyes. Virginia started. It was the same United States deputy marshal she had seen the day before at Mr. Russell's house.

"Pa," she cried, "do you think he is coming here?"

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“I reckon so, honey.”

“The brute! Are you going to pay?”

“No, Jinny.”

“Then they will take away the furniture.”

“I reckon they will.”

“Pa, you must promise me to take down the mahogany bed in your room. It —it was mother’s. I could not bear to see them take that. Let me put it in the garret.”

The Colonel was distressed, but he spoke without a tremor.

“No, Jinny. We must leave this house just as it is.” Then he added, strangely enough for him, “God’s will be done.”

The bell rang sharply. And Ned, who was cook and housemaid, came in with his apron on.

“Does you want to see folks, Marse Comyn?”

The Colonel rose, and went to the door himself. He was an imposing figure as he stood in the windy vestibule, confronting the deputy. Virginia’s first impulse was to shrink under the stairs. Then she came out and stood beside her father.

“Are you Colonel Carvel?”

“I reckon I am. Will you come in?”

The officer took off his cap. He was a young man with a smooth face, and a frank brown eye which paid its tribute to Virginia. He did not appear to relish the duty thrust upon him. He fumbled in his coat and drew from his inner pocket a paper.

“Colonel Carvel,” said he, “by order of Major General Halleck, I serve you with this notice to pay the sum of three hundred and fifty dollars for the benefit of the destitute families which the Rebels have driven from their homes. In default of payment within a reasonable time such personal articles will be seized and sold at public auction as will satisfy the demand against you.”

The Colonel took the paper. “Very well, sir,” he said. “You may tell the General that the articles may be seized. That I will not, while in my right mind, be forced to support persons who have no claim upon me.”

It was said in the tone in which he might have refused an invitation to dinner. The deputy marvelled. He had gone into many houses that week; had seen indignation, hysterics, frenzy. He had even heard men and women whose sons and brothers were in the army of secession proclaim their loyalty to the Union. But this dignity, and the quiet scorn of the girl who had stood silent beside them, were new. He bowed, and casting his eyes to the vestibule, was glad to escape from the house.

The Colonel shut the door. Then he turned toward Virginia, thoughtfully pulled his goatee, and laughed gently. “Lordy, we haven’t got three hundred and fifty dollars to our names,” said he.

The climate of St. Louis is capricious. That fierce valley of the Missouri, which belches fitful blizzards from December to March, is sometimes quiet. Then the hot winds come up from the Gulf, and sleet melts, and windows are opened. In those days the streets will be fetlock deep in soft mud. It is neither summer, nor winter, nor spring, nor anything.

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It was such a languorous afternoon in January that a furniture van, accompanied by certain nondescript persons known as United States Police, pulled up at the curb in front of Mr. Carvel's house. Eugenie, watching at the window across the street, ran to tell her father, who came out on his steps and reviled the van with all the fluency of his French ancestors.

Mammy Easter opened the door, and then stood with her arms akimbo, amply filling its place. Her lips protruded, and an expression of defiance hard to describe sat on her honest black face.

"Is this Colonel Carvel's house?"

"Yassir. I 'low you knows dat jes as well as me." An embarrassed silence, and then from Mammy, "Whaffor you laffin at?"

"Is the Colonel at home?"

"Now I reckon you knows dat he ain't. Ef he was, you ain't come here 'quirin' in dat honey voice." (Raising her own voice.) "You tink I dunno whaffor you come? You done come heah to rifle, an' to loot, an' to steal, an' to seize what ain't your'n. You come heah when young Marse ain't to home ter rob him." (Still louder.) "Ned, whaffor you hidin' yonder? Ef yo' ain't man to protect Marse Comyn's prop-ty, jes han' over Marse Comyn's gun."

The marshal and his men had stood, half amused, more than half baffled by this unexpected resistance. Mammy Easter looked so dangerous that it was evident she was not to be passed without extreme bodily discomfort.

"Is your mistress here?"

This question was unfortunate in the extreme.

"You—you white trash!" cried Mammy, bursting with indignation. "Who is you to come heah 'quiring fo' her! I ain't agwine—"

"Mammy!"

"Yas'm! Yas, Miss Jinny." Mammy backed out of the door and clutched at her bandanna.

"Mammy, what is all this noise about?" The torrent was loosed once more.

"These heah men, Miss Jinny, was gwine f'r t' carry away all yo' pa's blongin's. I jes' tol' 'em dey ain't comin' in ovah dis heah body."

The deputy had his foot on the threshold. He caught sight of the face of Miss Carvel within, and stopped abruptly.

“I have a warrant here from the Provost Marshal, ma’am, to seize personal property to satisfy a claim against Colonel Carvel.”

Virginia took the order, read it, and handed it back. “I do not see how I am to prevent you,” she said. The deputy was plainly abashed.

“I’m sorry, Miss. I—I can’t tell you how sorry I am. But it’s got to be done.”

Virginia nodded coldly. And still the man hesitated. “What are you waiting for?” she said.

The deputy wiped his muddy feet. He made his men do likewise. Then he entered the chill drawing-room, threw open the blinds and glanced around him.

“I expect all that we want is right here,” he said. And at the sight of the great chandelier, with its cut-glass crystals, he whistled. Then he walked over to the big English Rothfield piano and lifted the lid.

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The man was a musician. Involuntarily he rested himself on the mahogany stool, and ran his fingers over the keys. They seemed to Virginia, standing motionless in the ball, to give out the very chords of agony.

The piano, too, had been her mother's. It had once stood in the brick house of her grandfather Colfax at Halcyondale. The songs of Beatrice lay on the bottom shelf of the what-not near by. No more, of an evening when they were alone, would Virginia quietly take them out and play them over to the Colonel, as he sat dreaming in the window with his cigar, —dreaming of a field on the borders of a wood, of a young girl who held his hand, and sang them softly to herself as she walked by his side. And, when they reached the house in the October twilight, she had played them for him on this piano. Often he had told Virginia of those days, and walked with her over those paths.

The deputy closed the lid, and sent out to the van for a truck. Virginia stirred. For the first time she heard the words of Mammy Easter.

"Come along upstairs wid yo' Mammy, honey. Dis ain't no place for us, I reckon." Her words were the essence of endearment. And yet, while she pronounced them, she glared unceasingly at the intruders. "Oh, de good Lawd'll burn de wicked!"

The men were removing the carved legs. Virginia went back into the room and stood before the deputy.

"Isn't there something else you could take? Some jewellery?" She flushed. "I have a necklace—"

"No, miss. This warrant's on your father. And there ain't nothing quite so salable as pianos."

She watched them, dry-eyed, as they carried it away. It seemed like a coffin. Only Mammy Easter guessed at the pain in Virginia's breast, and that was because there was a pain in her own. They took the rosewood what-not, but Virginia snatched the songs before the men could touch them, and held them in her arms. They seized the mahogany velvet-bottomed chairs, her uncle's wedding present to her mother; and, last of all, they ruthlessly tore up the Brussels carpet, beginning near the spot where Clarence had spilled ice-cream at one of her children's parties.

She could not bear to look into the dismantled room when they had gone. It was the embodied wreck of her happiness. Ned closed the blinds once more, and she herself turned the key in the lock, and went slowly up the stairs.

CHAPTER V

THE AUCTION

“Stephen,” said the Judge, in his abrupt way, “there isn’t a great deal doing. Let’s go over to the Secesh property sales.”

Stephen looked up in surprise. The seizures and intended sale of secession property had stirred up immense bitterness and indignation in the city. There were Unionists (lukewarm) who denounced the measure as unjust and brutal. The feelings of Southerners, avowed and secret, may only be surmised. Rigid ostracism was to be the price of bidding on any goods displayed, and men who bought in handsome furniture on that day because it was cheap have still, after forty years, cause to remember it.

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It was not that Stephen feared ostracism. Anne Brinsmade was almost the only girl left to him from among his former circle of acquaintances. Miss Carvel's conduct is known. The Misses Russell showed him very plainly that they disapproved of his politics. The hospitable days at that house were over. Miss Catherwood, when they met on the street, pretended not to see him, and Eugenie Renault gave him but a timid nod. The loyal families to whose houses he now went were mostly Southerners, in sentiment against forced auctions.

However, he put on his coat, and sallied forth into the sharp air, the Judge leaning on his arm. They walked for some distance in silence.

"Stephen," said he, presently, "I guess I'll do a little bidding."

Stephen did not reply. But he was astonished. He wondered what Mr. Whipple wanted with fine furniture. And, if he really wished to bid, Stephen knew likewise that no consideration would stop him.

"You don't approve of this proceeding, sir, I suppose," said the Judge.

"Yes, sir, on large grounds. War makes many harsh things necessary."

"Then," said the Judge, tartly, "by bidding, we help to support starving Union families. You should not be afraid to bid, sir."

Stephen bit his lip. Sometimes Mr. Whipple made him very angry.

"I am not afraid to bid, Judge Whipple." He did not see the smile on the Judge's face.

"Then you will bid in certain things for me," said Mr. Whipple. Here he hesitated, and shook free the rest of the sentence with a wrench. "Colonel Carvel always had a lot of stuff I wanted. Now I've got the chance to buy it cheap."

There was silence again, for the space of a whole block. Finally, Stephen managed to say:— "You'll have to excuse me, sir. I do not care to do that."

"What?" cried the Judge, stopping in the middle of a cross-street, so that a wagon nearly ran over his toes.

"I was once a guest in Colonel Carvel's house, sir. And—"

"And what?"

Neither the young man nor the old knew all it was costing the other to say these things. The Judge took a grim pleasure in eating his heart. And as for Stephen, he often went to his office through Locust Street, which was out of his way, in the hope that he might

catch a glimpse of Virginia. He had guessed much of the privations she had gone through. He knew that the Colonel had hired out most of his slaves, and he had actually seen the United States Police drive across Eleventh Street with the piano that she had played on.

The Judge was laughing quietly,—not a pleasant laugh to hear,—as they came to Morgan's great warerooms. A crowd blocked the pavement, and hustled and shoved at the doors,—roughs, and soldiers off duty, and ladies and gentlemen whom the Judge and Stephen knew, and some of whom they spoke to. All of these were come out of curiosity, that they might see for themselves any who had the

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temerity to bid on a neighbor's household goods. The long hall, which ran from street to street, was packed, the people surging backward and forward, and falling roughly against the mahogany pieces; and apologizing, and scolding, and swearing all in a breath. The Judge, holding tightly to Stephen, pushed his way fiercely to the stand, vowing over and over that the commotion was a secession trick to spoil the furniture and stampede the sale. In truth, it was at the Judge's suggestion that a blue provost's guard was called in later to protect the seized property.

How many of those mahogany pieces, so ruthlessly tumbled about before the public eye, meant a heartache! Wedding presents of long ago, dear to many a bride with silvered hair, had been torn from the corner where the children had played—children who now, alas, were grown and gone to war. Yes, that was the Brussels rug that had lain before the fire, and which the little feet had worn in the corner. Those were the chairs the little hands had harnessed, four in a row, and fallen on its side was the armchair—the stage coach itself. There were the books, held up to common gaze, that a beloved parent had thumbed with affection. Yes, and here in another part of the hall were the family horses and the family carriage that had gone so often back and forth from church with the happy brood of children, now scattered and gone to war.

As Stephen reached his place beside the Judge, Mr. James's effects were being cried. And, if glances could have killed, many a bidder would have dropped dead. The heavy dining-room table which meant so much to the family went for a song to a young man recently come from Yankeeland, whose open boast it was—like Eliphalet's secret one—that he would one day grow rich enough to snap his fingers in the face of the Southern aristocrats. Mr. James was not there. But Mr. Catherwood, his face haggard and drawn, watched the sideboard he had given his wife on her silver wedding being sold to a pawnbroker.

Stephen looked in vain for Colonel Carvel—for Virginia. He did not want to see them there. He knew by heart the list of things which had been taken from their house. He understood the feeling which had sent the Judge here to bid them in. And Stephen honored him the more.

When the auctioneer came to the Carvel list, and the well-known name was shouted out, the crowd responded with a stir and pressed closer to the stand. And murmurs were plainly heard in more than one direction.

"Now, gentlemen, and ladies," said the seller, "this here is a genuine English Rothfield piano once belonging to Colonel Carvel, and the celebrated Judge Colfax of Kaintucky." He lingered fondly over the names, that the impression might have time to sink deep. "This here magnificent instrument's worth at the very least" (another pause) "twelve hundred dollars. What am I bid?"

He struck a base note of the keys, then a treble, and they vibrated in the heated air of the big hall. Had he hit the little C of the top octave, the tinkle of that also might have been heard.

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“Gentlemen and ladies, we have to begin somewheres. What am I bid?”

A menacing murmur gave place to the accusing silence. Some there were who gazed at the Rothfield with longing eyes, but who had no intention of committing social suicide. Suddenly a voice, the rasp of which penetrated to St. Charles Street, came out with a bid. The owner was a seedy man with a straw-colored, drunkard’s mustache. He was leaning against the body of Mrs. Russell’s barouche (seized for sale), and those about him shrank away as from smallpox. His hundred-dollar offer was followed by a hiss. What followed next Stephen will always remember. When Judge Whipple drew himself up to his full six feet, that was a warning to those that knew him. As he doubled the bid, the words came out with the aggressive distinctness of a man who through a long life has been used to opposition. He with the gnawed yellow mustache pushed himself clear of the barouche, his smouldering cigar butt dropping to the floor. But there were no hisses now.

And this is how Judge Whipple braved public opinion once more. As he stood there, defiant, many were the conjectures as to what he could wish to do with the piano of his old friend. Those who knew the Judge (and there were few who did not) pictured to themselves the dingy little apartment where he lived, and smiled. Whatever his detractors might have said of him, no one was ever heard to avow that he had bought or sold anything for gain.

A tremor ran through the people. Could it have been of admiration for the fine old man who towered there glaring defiance at those about him? “Give me a strong and consistent enemy,” some great personage has said, “rather than a lukewarm friend.” Three score and five years the Judge had lived, and now some were beginning to suspect that he had a heart. Verily he had guarded his secret well. But it was let out to many more that day, and they went home praising him who had once pronounced his name with bitterness.

This is what happened. Before he of the yellow mustache could pick up his cigar from the floor and make another bid, the Judge had cried out a sum which was the total of Colonel Carvel’s assessment. Many recall to this day how fiercely he frowned when the applause broke forth of itself; and when he turned to go they made a path for him, in admiration, the length of the hall, down which he stalked, looking neither to the right nor left. Stephen followed him, thankful for the day which had brought him into the service of such a man.

And so it came about that the other articles were returned to Colonel Carvel with the marshal’s compliments, and put back into the cold parlor where they had stood for many years. The men who brought them offered to put down the carpet, but by Virginia’s orders the rolls were stood up in the corner, and the floor left bare. And days passed into weeks, and no sign or message came from Judge Whipple in regard to the piano he had bought. Virginia did not dare mention it to the Colonel.

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Where was it? It had been carried by six sweating negroes up the narrow stairs into the Judge's office. Stephen and Shadrach had by Mr. Whipple's orders cleared a corner of his inner office and bedroom of papers and books and rubbish, and there the bulky instrument was finally set up. It occupied one-third of the space. The Judge watched the proceeding grimly, choking now and again from the dust that was raised, yet uttering never a word. He locked the lid when the van man handed him the key, and thrust that in his pocket.

Stephen had of late found enough to do in St. Louis. He was the kind of man to whom promotions came unsought, and without noise. In the autumn he had been made a captain in the Halleck Guards of the State Militia, as a reward for his indefatigable work in the armories and his knowledge of tactics. Twice his company had been called out at night, and once they made a campaign as far as the Merimec and captured a party of recruits who were destined for Jefferson Davis. Some weeks passed before Mr. Brinsmade heard of his promotion and this exploit, and yet scarcely a day went by that he did not see the young man at the big hospital. For Stephen helped in the work of the Sanitary Commission too, and so strove to make up in zeal for the service in the field which he longed to give.

After Christmas Mr. and Mrs. Brinsmade moved out to their place on the Bellefontaine Road. This was to force Anne to take a rest. For the girl was worn out with watching at the hospitals, and with tending the destitute mothers and children from the ranks of the refugees. The Brinsmade place was not far from the Fair Grounds,—now a receiving camp for the crude but eager regiments of the Northern states. To Mr. Brinsmade's, when the day's duty was done, the young Union officers used to ride, and often there would be half a dozen of them to tea. That house, and other great houses on the Bellefontaine Road with which this history has no occasion to deal, were as homes to many a poor fellow who would never see home again. Sometimes Anne would gather together such young ladies of her acquaintance from the neighbor hood and the city as their interests and sympathies permitted to waltz with a Union officer, and there would be a little dance. To these dances Stephen Brice was usually invited.

One such occasion occurred on a Friday in January, and Mr. Brinsmade himself called in his buggy and drove Stephen to the country early in the afternoon. He and Anne went for a walk along the river, the surface of which was broken by lumps of yellow ice. Gray clouds hung low in the sky as they picked their way over the frozen furrows of the ploughed fields. The grass was all a yellow-brown, but the north wind which swayed the bare trees brought a touch of color to Anne's cheeks. Before they realized where they were, they had nearly crossed the Bellegarde estate, and the house itself was come into view, standing high on the slope above the withered garden. They halted.

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“The shutters are up,” said Stephen. “I understood that Mrs. Colfax had come out here not long a—”

“She came out for a day just before Christina,” said Anne, smiling, “and then she ran off to Kentucky. I think she was afraid that she was one of the two women on the list of Sixty.”

“It must have been a blow to her pride when she found that she was not,” said Stephen, who had a keen remembrance of her conduct upon a certain Sunday not a year gone.

Impelled by the same inclination, they walked in silence to the house and sat down on the edge of the porch. The only motion in the view was the smoke from the slave quarters twisting in the wind, and the hurrying ice in the stream.

“Poor Jinny!” said Anne, with a sigh, “how she loved to romp! What good times we used to have here together!”

“Do you think that she is unhappy?” Stephen demanded, involuntarily.

“Oh, yes,” said Anne. “How can you ask? But you could not make her show it. The other morning when she came out to our house I found her sitting at the piano. I am sure there were tears in her eyes, but she would not let me see them. She made some joke about Spencer Catherwood running away. What do you think the Judge will do with that piano, Stephen?”

He shook his head.

“The day after they put it in his room he came in with a great black cloth, which he spread over it. You cannot even see the feet.”

There was a silence. And Anne, turning to him timidly, gave him a long, searching look.

“It is growing late,” she said. “I think that we ought to go back.”

They went out by the long entrance road, through the naked woods. Stephen said little. Only a little while before he had had one of those vivid dreams of Virginia which left their impression, but not their substance, to haunt him. On those rare days following the dreams her spirit had its mastery over his. He pictured her then with a glow on her face which was neither sadness nor mirth,—a glow that ministered to him alone. And yet, he did not dare to think that he might have won her, even if politics and war had not divided them.

When the merriment of the dance was at its height that evening, Stephen stood at the door of the long room, meditatively watching the bright gowns and the flash of gold on the uniforms as they flitted past. Presently the opposite door opened, and he heard Mr.

Brinsmade's voice mingling with another, the excitable energy of which recalled some familiar episode. Almost—so it seemed—at one motion, the owner of the voice had come out of the door and had seized Stephen's hand in a warm grasp,—a tall and spare figure in the dress of a senior officer. The military frock, which fitted the man's character rather than the man, was carelessly open, laying bare a gold-buttoned white waistcoat and an expanse of shirt bosom which ended in a black stock tie. The ends of the collar were apart the width of the red clipped beard, and the mustache was cropped straight along the line of the upper lip. The forehead rose high, and was brushed carelessly free of the hair. The nose was almost straight, but combative. A fire fairly burned in the eyes.

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“The boy doesn’t remember me,” said the gentleman, in quick tones, smiling at Mr. Brinsmade.

“Yes, sir, I do,” Stephen made haste to answer. He glanced at the star on the shoulder strap, and said. “You are General Sherman.”

“First rate!” laughed the General, patting him. “First rate!”

“Now in command at Camp Benton, Stephen,” Mr. Brinsmade put in. “Won’t you sit down, General?”

“No,” said the General, emphatically waving away the chair. “No, rather stand.” Then his keen face suddenly lighted with amusement,—and mischief, Stephen thought. “So you’ve heard of me since we met, sir?” “Yes, General.”

“Humph! Guess you heard I was crazy,” said the General, in his downright way.

Stephen was struck dumb.

“He’s been reading the lies in the newspapers too, Brinsmade,” the General went on rapidly. “I’ll make ’em eat their newspapers for saying I was crazy. That’s the Secretary of War’s doings. Ever tell you what Cameron did, Brinsmade? He and his party were in Louisville last fall, when I was serving in Kentucky, and came to my room in the Galt House. Well, we locked the door, and Miller sent us up a good lunch and wine, After lunch, the Secretary lay on my bed, and we talked things over. He asked me what I thought about things in Kentucky. I told him. I got a map. I said, ’Now, Mr. Secretary, here is the whole Union line from the Potomac to Kansas. Here’s McClellan in the East with one hundred miles of front. Here’s Fremont in the West with one hundred miles. Here we are in Kentucky, in the centre, with three hundred miles to defend. McClellan has a hundred thousand men, Fremont has sixty thousand. You give us fellows with over three hundred miles only eighteen thousand.’ ’How many do you want?’ says Cameron, still on the bed. ’Two hundred thousand before we get through,’ said I. Cameron pitched up his hands in the air. ‘Great God?’ says he, ‘where are they to come from?’ ’The northwest is chuck full of regiments you fellows at Washington won’t accept,’ said I. ’Mark my words, Mr. Secretary, you’ll need ’em all and more before we get done with this Rebellion.’ Well, sir, he was very friendly before we finished, and I thought the thing was all thrashed out. No, sir! he goes back to Washington and gives it out that I’m crazy, and want two hundred thousand men in Kentucky. Then I am ordered to report to Halleck in Missouri here, and he calls me back from Sedalia because he believes the lies.”

Stephen, who had in truth read the stories in question a month or two before, could not conceal his embarrassment He looked at the man in front of him,—alert, masterful

intelligent, frank to any stranger who took his fancy,—and wondered how any one who had talked to him could believe them.

Mr. Brinsmade smiled. “They have to print something, General,” he said.

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“I’ll give ’em something to print later on,” answered the General, grimly. Then his expression changed. “Brinsmade, you fellows did have a session with Fremont, didn’t you? Anderson sent me over here last September, and the first man I ran across at the Planters’ House was Appleton. ‘—What are you in town for?’ says he. ‘To see Fremont,’ I said. You ought to have heard Appleton laugh. ’You don’t think Fremont’ll see you, do you?’ says he. ‘Why not?’ ‘Well,’ says Tom, ’go ’round to his palace at six to-morrow morning and bribe that Hungarian prince who runs his body-guard to get you a good place in the line of senators and governors and first citizens, and before nightfall you may get a sight of him, since you come from Anderson. Not one man in a hundred,’ says Appleton, I not one man in a hundred, reaches his chief-of-staff.’ Next morning,” the General continued in a staccato which was often his habit, “had breakfast before daybreak and went ’round there. Place just swarming with Californians—army contracts.” (The General sniffed.) Saw Fremont. Went back to hotel. More Californians, and by gad—old Baron Steinberger with his nose hanging over the register.”

“Fremont was a little difficult to get at, General,” said Mr. Brinsmade. “Things were confused and discouraged when those first contracts were awarded. Fremont was a good man, and it wasn’t his fault that the inexperience of his quartermasters permitted some of those men to get rich.”

“No,” said the General. “His fault! Certainly not. Good man! To be sure he was—didn’t get along with Blair. These court-martials you’re having here now have stirred up the whole country. I guess we’ll hear now how those fortunes were made. To listen to those witnesses lie about each other on the stand is better than the theatre.”

Stephen laughed at the comical and vivid manner in which the General set this matter forth. He himself had been present one day of the sittings of the court-martial when one of the witnesses on the prices of mules was that same seedy man with the straw-colored mustache who had bid for Virginia’s piano against the Judge.

“Come, Stephen,” said the General, abruptly, “run and snatch one of those pretty girls from my officers. They’re having more than their share.”

“They deserve more, sir,” answered Stephen. Whereupon the General laid his hand impulsively on the young man’s shoulder, divining what Stephen did not say.

“Nonsense!” said be; “you are doing the work in this war, not we. We do the damage—-you repair it. If it were not for Mr. Brinsmade and you gentlemen who help him, where would our Western armies be? Don’t you go to the front yet a while, young man. We need the best we have in reserve.” He glanced critically at Stephen. “You’ve had military training of some sort?”

“He’s a captain in the Halleck Guards, sir,” said Mr. Brinsmade, generously, “and the best drillmaster we’ve had in this city. He’s seen service, too, General.”

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Stephen reddened furiously and started to protest, when the General cried:— “It’s more than I have in this war. Come, come, I knew he was a soldier. Let’s see what kind of a strategist he’ll make. Brinsmade, have you got such a thing as a map?” Mr. Brinsmade had, and led the way back into the library. The General shut the door, lighted a cigar with a single vigorous stroke of a match, and began to smoke with quick puffs. Stephen was puzzled how to receive the confidences the General was giving out with such freedom.

When the map was laid on the table, the General drew a pencil from his pocket and pointed to the state of Kentucky. Then he drew a line from Columbus to Bowling Green, through Forts Donelson and Henry.

“Now, Stephen,” said he, “there’s the Rebel line. Show me the proper place to break it.”

Stephen hesitated a while, and then pointed at the centre.

“Good!” said the General. “Very good!” He drew a heavy line across the first, and it ran almost in the bed of the Tennessee River. He swung on Mr. Brinsmade. “Very question Halleck asked me the other day, and that’s how I answered it. Now, gentlemen, there’s a man named Grant down in that part of the country. Keep your eyes on him. Ever heard of him, Brinsmade? He used to live here once, and a year ago he was less than I was. Now he’s a general.”

The recollection of the scene in the street by the Arsenal that May morning not a year gone came to Stephen with a shock.

“I saw him,” he cried; “he was Captain Grant that lived on the Gravois Road. But surely this can’t be the same man who seized Paducah and was in that affair at Belmont.”

“By gum!” said the General, laughing. “Don’t wonder you’re surprised. Grant has stuff in him. They kicked him around Springfield awhile, after the war broke out, for a military carpet-bagger. Then they gave him for a regiment the worst lot of ruffians you ever laid eyes on. He fixed ’em. He made ’em walk the plank. He made ’em march halfway across the state instead of taking the cars the Governor offered. Belmont! I guess he is the man that chased the Rebs out of Belmont. Then his boys broke loose when they got into the town. That wasn’t Grant’s fault. The Rebs came back and chased ’em out into their boats on the river. Brinsmade, you remember hearing about that.

“Grant did the coolest thing you ever saw. He sat on his horse at the top of the bluff while the boys fell over each other trying to get on the boat. Yes, sir, he sat there, disgusted, on his horse, smoking a cigar, with the Rebs raising pandemonium all around him. And then, sir,” cried the General, excitedly, “what do you think he did? Hanged if he didn’t force his horse right on to his haunches, slide down the whole length of the bank and ride him across a teetering plank on to the steamer. And the Rebs just stood

on the bank and stared. They were so astonished they didn't even shoot the man. You watch Grant," said the General. "And now, Stephen," he added, "just you run off and take hold of the prettiest girl you can find. If any of my boys object, say I sent you."

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The next Monday Stephen had a caller. It was little Tiefel, now a first lieutenant with a bristly beard and tanned face, come to town on a few days' furlough. He had been with Lyon at Wilson's Creek, and he had a sad story to tell of how he found poor Richter, lying stark on that bloody field, with a smile of peace upon his face. Strange that he should at length have been killed by a sabre!

It was a sad meeting for those two, since each reminded the other of a dear friend they would see no more on earth. They went out to sup together in the German style; and gradually, over his beer, Tiefel forgot his sorrow. Stephen listened with an ache to the little man's tales of the campaigns he had been through. So that presently Tiefel cried out:

"Why, my friend, you are melancholy as an owl. I will tell you a funny story. Did you ever hear of one General Sherman? He that they say is crazy?"

"He is no more crazy than I am," said Stephen, warmly—

"Is he not?" answered Tiefel, "then I will show you a mistake. You recall last November he was out to Sedalia to inspect the camp there, and he sleeps in a little country store where I am quartered. Now up gets your General Sherman in the middle of the night, —midnight,—and marches up and down between the counters, and waves his arms. So, says he, 'land so,' says he, 'Sterling Price will be here, and Steele here, and this column will take that road, and so-and-so's a damned fool. Is not that crazy? So he walks up and down for three eternal hours. Says he, 'Pope has no business to be at Osterville, and Steele here at Sedalia with his regiments all over the place. They must both go into camp at La Mine River, and form brigades and divisions, that the troops may be handled.'"

"If that's insanity," cried Stephen so strongly as to surprise the little man; "then I wish we had more insane generals. It just shows how a malicious rumor will spread. What Sherman said about Pope's and Steele's forces is true as Gospel, and if you ever took the trouble to look into that situation, Tiefel, you would see it." And Stephen brought down his mug on the table with a crash that made the bystanders jump.

"Himmel!" exclaimed little Tiefel. But he spoke in admiration.

It was not a month after that that Sherman's prophecy of the quiet general who had slid down the bluff at Belmont came true. The whole country bummed with Grant's praises. Moving with great swiftness and secrecy up the Tennessee, in company with the gunboats of Commodore Foote, he had pierced the Confederate line at the very point Sherman had indicated. Fort Henry had fallen, and Grant was even then moving to besiege Donelson.

Mr. Brinsmade prepared to leave at once for the battlefield, taking with him too Paducah physicians and nurses. All day long the boat was loading with sanitary stores and boxes of dainties for the wounded. It was muggy and wet—characteristic of that winter—as Stephen pushed through the drays on the slippery levee to the landing.

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He had with him a basket his mother had put up. He also bore a message to Mr. Brinsmade from the Judge It was while he was picking his way along the crowded decks that he ran into General Sherman. The General seized him unceremoniously by the shoulder.

“Good-by, Stephen,” he said.

“Good-by, General,” said Stephen, shifting his basket to shake hands. “Are you going away?”

“Ordered to Paducah,” said the General. He pulled Stephen off the guards into an empty cabin. “Brice,” said he, earnestly, “I haven’t forgotten how you saved young Brinsmade at Camp Jackson. They tell me that you are useful here. I say, don’t go in unless you have to. I don’t mean force, you understand. But when you feel that you can go in, come to me or write me a letter. That is,” he added, seemingly inspecting Stephen’s white teeth with approbation, “if you’re not afraid to serve under a crazy man.”

It has been said that the General liked the lack of effusiveness of Stephen’s reply.

CHAPTER VI

ELIPHALET PLAYS HIS TRUMPS

Summer was come again. Through interminable days, the sun beat down upon the city; and at night the tortured bricks flung back angrily the heat with which he had filled them. Great battles had been fought, and vast armies were drawing breath for greater ones to come.

“Jinny,” said the Colonel one day, “as we don’t seem to be much use in town, I reckon we may as well go to Glencoe.”

Virginia, threw her arms around her father’s neck. For many months she had seen what the Colonel himself was slow to comprehend—that his usefulness was gone. The days melted into weeks, and Sterling Price and his army of liberation failed to come. The vigilant Union general and his aides had long since closed all avenues to the South. For, one fine morning toward the end of the previous summer, when the Colonel was contemplating a journey, he had read that none might leave the city without a pass, whereupon he went hurriedly to the office of the Provost Marshal. There he had found a number of gentlemen in the same plight, each waving a pass made out by the Provost Marshal’s clerks, and waiting for that officer’s signature. The Colonel also procured one of these, and fell into line. The Marshal gazed at the crowd, pulled off his coat, and readily put his name to the passes of several gentlemen going east. Next came Mr. Bub Ballington, whom the Colonel knew, but pretended not to.

“Going to Springfield?” asked the Marshal, genially.

“Yes,” said Bub.

“Not very profitable to be a minute-man, eh?” in the same tone.

The Marshal signs his name, Mr, Ballington trying not to look indignant as he makes for the door. A small silver bell rings on the Marshal’s desk, the one word: “Spot!” breaks the intense silence, which is one way of saying that Mr. Ballington is detained, and will probably be lodged that night at Government expense.

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“Well, Colonel Carvel, what can I do for you this morning?” asked the Marshal, genially.

The Colonel pushed back his hat and wiped his brow. “I reckon I’ll wait till next week, Captain,” said Mr. Carvel. “It’s pretty hot to travel just now.”

The Provost Marshal smiled sweetly. There were many in the office who would have liked to laugh, but it did not pay to laugh at some people. Colonel Carvel was one of them.

In the proclamation of martial law was much to make life less endurable than ever. All who were convicted by a court-martial of being rebels were to have property confiscated, and slaves set free. Then there was a certain oath to be taken by all citizens who did not wish to have guardians appointed over their actions. There were many who swallowed this oath and never felt any ill effects. Mr. Jacob Cluyme was one, and came away feeling very virtuous. It was not unusual for Mr. Cluyme to feel virtuous. Mr. Hopper did not have indigestion after taking it, but Colonel Carvel would sooner have eaten, gooseberry pie, which he had never tasted but once.

That summer had worn away, like a monster which turns and gives hot gasps when you think it has expired. It took the Arkansan just a month, under Virginia’s care, to become well enough to be sent to a Northern prison He was not precisely a Southern gentleman, and he went to sleep over the “Idylls of the King.” But he was admiring, and grateful, and wept when he went off to the boat with the provost’s guard, destined for a Northern prison. Virginia wept too. He had taken her away from her aunt (who would have nothing to do with him), and had given her occupation. She nor her father never tired of hearing his rough tales of Price’s rough army.

His departure was about the time when suspicions were growing set. The favor had caused comment and trouble, hence there was no hope of giving another sufferer the same comfort. The cordon was drawn tighter. One of the mysterious gentlemen who had been seen in the vicinity of Colonel Carvel’s house was arrested on the ferry, but he had contrived to be rid of the carpet-sack in which certain precious letters were carried.

Throughout the winter, Mr. Hopper’s visits to Locust Street had continued at intervals of painful regularity. It is not necessary to dwell upon his brilliant powers of conversation, nor to repeat the platitudes which he repeated, for there was no significance in Mr. Hopper’s tales, not a particle. The Colonel had found that out, and was thankful. His manners were better; his English decidedly better.

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It was for her father's sake, of course, that Virginia bore with him. Such is the appointed lot of women. She tried to be just, and it occurred to her that she had never before been just. Again and again she repeated to herself that Eliphalet's devotion to the Colonel at this low ebb of his fortunes had something in it of which she did not suspect him. She had a class contempt for Mr. Hopper as an uneducated Yankee and a person of commercial ideals. But now he was showing virtues,—if virtues they were,—and she tried to give him the benefit of the doubt. With his great shrewdness and business ability, why did he not take advantage of the many opportunities the war gave to make a fortune? For Virginia had of late been going to the store with the Colonel,—who spent his mornings turning over piles of dusty papers, and Mr. Hopper had always been at his desk.

After this, Virginia even strove to be kind to him, but it was uphill work. The front door never closed after one of his visits that suspicion was not left behind. Antipathy would assert itself. Could it be that there was a motive under all this plotting? He struck her inevitably as the kind who would be content to mine underground to attain an end. The worst she could think of him was that he wished to ingratiate himself now, in the hope that, when the war was ended, he might become a partner in Mr. Carvel's business. She had put even this away as unworthy of her.

Once she had felt compelled to speak to her father on the subject.

"I believe I did him an injustice, Pa," she said. "Not that I like him any better now. I must be honest about that. I simply can't like him. But I do think that if he had been as unscrupulous as I thought, he would have deserted you long ago for something more profitable. He would not be sitting in the office day after day making plans for the business when the war is over."

She remembered how sadly he had smiled at her over the top of his paper.

"You are a good girl, Jinny," he said.

Toward the end of July of that second summer riots broke out in the city, and simultaneously a bright spot appeared on Virginia's horizon. This took the form, for Northerners, of a guerilla scare, and an order was promptly issued for the enrollment of all the able-bodied men in the ten wards as militia, subject to service in the state, to exterminate the roving bands. Whereupon her Britannic Majesty became extremely popular, —even with some who claimed for a birthplace the Emerald Isle. Hundreds who heretofore had valued but lightly their British citizenship made haste to renew their allegiance; and many sought the office of the English Consul whose claims on her Majesty's protection were vague, to say the least. Broken heads and scandal followed. For the first time, when Virginia walked to the store with her father, Eliphalet was not there. It was strange indeed that Virginia defended him.

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“I don’t blame him for not wanting to fight for the Yankees,” she said.

The Colonel could not resist a retort.

“Then why doesn’t he fight for the South he asked”

“Fight for the South!” cried the young lady, scornfully. “Mr. Hopper fight? I reckon the South wouldn’t have him.”

“I reckon not, too,” said the Colonel, dryly.

For the following week curiosity prompted Virginia to take that walk with the Colonel. Mr. Hopper being still absent, she helped him to sort the papers—those grimy reminders of a more prosperous time gone by. Often Mr. Carvel would run across one which seemed to bring some incident to his mind; for he would drop it absently on his desk, his hand seeking his chin, and remain for half an hour lost in thought. Virginia would not disturb him.

Meanwhile there had been inquiries for Mr. Hopper. The Colonel answered them all truthfully—generally with that dangerous suavity for which he was noted. Twice a seedy man with a gnawed yellow mustache had come in to ask Eliphalet’s whereabouts. On the second occasion this individual became importunate.

“You don’t know nothin’ about him, you say?” he demanded.

“No,” said the Colonel.

The man took a shuffle forward.

“My name’s Ford,” he said. “I ’low I kin ’lighten you a little.”

“Good day, sir,” said the Colonel.

“I guess you’ll like to hear what I’ve got to say.”

“Ephum,” said Mr. Carvel in his natural voice, “show this man out.”

Mr. Ford slunk out without Ephum’s assistance. But he half turned at the door, and shot back a look that frightened Virginia.

“Oh, Pa,” she cried, in alarm, “what did he mean?”

“I couldn’t tell you, Jinny,” he answered. But she noticed that he was very thoughtful as they walked home. The next morning Eliphalet had not returned, but a corporal and guard were waiting to search the store for him. The Colonel read the order, and invited

them in with hospitality. He even showed them the way upstairs, and presently Virginia heard them all tramping overhead among the bales. Her eye fell upon the paper they had brought, which lay unfolded on her father's desk. It was signed Stephen A. Brice, Enrolling Officer.

That very afternoon they moved to Glencoe, and Ephum was left in sole charge of the store. At Glencoe, far from the hot city and the cruel war, began a routine of peace. Virginia was a child again, romping in the woods and fields beside her father. The color came back to her cheeks once more, and the laughter into her voice. The two of them, and Ned and Mammy, spent a rollicking hour in the pasture the freedom of which Dick had known so long, before the old horse was caught and brought back into bondage. After that Virginia took long drives with her father, and coming home, they would sit in the summer house high above the Merimec, listening to the crickets' chirp, and watching the day fade upon the water. The Colonel, who had always detested pipes, learned to smoke a corncob. He would sit by the hour, with his feet on the rail of the porch and his hat tilted back, while Virginia read to him. Poe and Wordsworth and Scott he liked, but Tennyson was his favorite. Such happiness could not last.

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One afternoon when Virginia was sitting in the summer house alone, her thoughts wandering back, as they sometimes did, to another afternoon she had spent there,—it seemed so long ago,—when she saw Mammy Easter coming toward her.

“Honey, dey’s comp’ny up to de house. Mister Hopper’s done arrived. He’s on de porch, talkin’ to your Pa. Lawsey, look wha he come!”

In truth, the solid figure of Eliphalet himself was on the path some twenty yards behind her. His hat was in his hand; his hair was plastered down more neatly than ever, and his coat was a faultless and sober creation of a Franklin Avenue tailor. He carried a cane, which was unheard of. Virginia sat upright, and patted her skirts with a gesture of annoyance—what she felt was anger, resentment. Suddenly she rose, swept past Mammy, and met him ten paces from the summer house.

“How-dy-do, Miss Virginia,” he cried pleasantly. “Your father had a notion you might be here.” He said faythe r.

Virginia gave him her hand limply. Her greeting would have frozen a man of ardent temperament. But it was not precisely ardor that Eliphalet showed. The girl paused and examined him swiftly. There was something in the man’s air to-day.

“So you were not caught?” she said.

Her words seemed to relieve some tension in him. He laughed noiselessly.

“I just guess I wahn’t.”

“How did you escape?” she asked, looking at him curiously.

“Well, I did, first of all. You’re considerable smart, Miss Jinny, but I’ll bet you can’t tell me where I was, now.”

“I do not care to know. The place might save you again.”

He showed his disappointment. “I cal’lated it might interest you to know how I dodged the Sovereign State of Missouri. General Halleck made an order that released a man from enrolling on payment of ten dollars. I paid. Then I was drafted into the Abe Lincoln Volunteers; I paid a substitute. And so here I be, exercising life, and liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.”

“So you bought yourself free?” said Virginia. “If your substitute gets killed, I suppose you will have cause for congratulation.”

Eliphalet laughed, and pulled down his cuffs. “That’s his lookout, I cal’late,” said he. He glanced at the girl in a way that made her vaguely uneasy. She turned from him, back

toward the summer house. Eliphalet's eyes smouldered as they rested upon her figure. He took a step forward.

"Miss Jinny?" he said.

"Yes?"

"I've heard considerable about the beauties of this place. Would you mind showing me 'round a bit?" Virginia started. It was his tone now. Not since that first evening in Locust Street had it taken on such assurance, And yet she could not be impolite to a guest.

"Certainly not," she replied, but without looking up. Eliphalet led the way. He came to the summer house, glanced around it with apparent satisfaction, and put his foot on the moss-grown step. Virginia did a surprising thing. She leaped quickly into the doorway before him, and stood facing him, framed in the climbing roses.

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“Oh, Mr. Hopper!” she cried. “Please, not in here.” He drew back, staring in astonishment at the crimson in her face.

“Why not?” he asked suspiciously—almost brutally. She had been groping wildly for excuses, and found none.

“Because,” she said, “because I ask you not to.” With dignity: “That should be sufficient.”

“Well,” replied Eliphalet, with an abortive laugh, “that’s funny, now. Womenkind get queer notions, which I cal’late we’ve got to respect and put up with all our lives—eh?”

Her anger flared at his leer and at his broad way of gratifying her whim. And she was more incensed than ever at his air of being at home—it was nothing less.

The man’s whole manner was an insult. She strove still to hide her resentment.

“There is a walk along the bluff,” she said, coldly, “where the view is just as good.”

But she purposely drew him into the right-hand path, which led, after a little, back to the house. Despite her pace he pressed forward to her side.

“Miss Jinny,” said he, precipitately, “did I ever strike you as a marrying man?”

Virginia stopped, and put her handkerchief to her face, the impulse strong upon her to laugh. Eliphalet was suddenly transformed again into the common commercial Yankee. He was in love, and had come to ask her advice. She might have known it.

“I never thought of you as of the marrying kind, Mr. Hopper,” she answered, her voice quivering.

Indeed, he was irresistibly funny as he stood hot and ill at ease. The Sunday coat bore witness to his increasing portliness by creasing across from the buttons; his face, fleshy and perspiring, showed purple veins, and the little eyes receded comically, like a pig’s.

“Well, I’ve been thinking serious of late about getting married,” he continued, slashing the rose bushes with his stick. “I don’t cal’late to be a sentimental critter. I’m not much on high-sounding phrases, and such things, but I’d give you my word I’d make a good husband.”

“Please be careful of those roses, Mr. Hopper.”

“Beg pardon,” said Eliphalet. He began to lose track of his tenses—that was the only sign he gave of perturbation. “When I come to St. Louis without a cent, Miss Jinny, I made up my mind I’d be a rich man before I left it. If I was to die now, I’d have kept that

promise. I'm not thirty-four, and I cal'late I've got as much money in a safe place as a good many men you call rich. I'm not saying what I've got, mind you. All in proper time.

"I'm a pretty steady kind. I've stopped chewing—there was a time when I done that. And I don't drink nor smoke."

"That is all very commendable, Mr. Hopper," Virginia said, stifling a rebellious titter. "But,—but why did you give up chewing?"

"I am informed that the ladies are against it," said Eliphalet,—"dead against it. You wouldn't like it in a husband, now, would you?"

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This time the laugh was not to be put down. “I confess I shouldn’t,” she said.

“Thought so,” he replied, as one versed. His tones took on a nasal twang. “Well, as I was saying, I’ve about got ready to settle down, and I’ve had my eye on the lady this seven years.”

“Marvel of constancy!” said Virginia. “And the lady?”

“The lady,” said Eliphalet, bluntly, “is you.” He glanced at her bewildered face and went on rapidly: “You pleased me the first day I set eyes on you in the store I said to myself, ’Hopper, there’s the one for you to marry.’ I’m plain, but my folks was good people. I set to work right then to make a fortune for you, Miss Jinny. You’ve just what I need. I’m a plain business man with no frills. You’ll do the frills. You’re the kind that was raised in the lap of luxury. You’ll need a man with a fortune, and a big one; you’re the sort to show it off. I’ve got the foundations of that fortune, and the proof of it right here. And I tell you,”—his jaw was set,—“I tell you that some day Eliphalet Hopper will be one of the richest men in the West.”

He had stopped, facing her in the middle of the way, his voice strong, his confidence supreme. At first she had stared at him in dumb wonder. Then, as she began to grasp the meaning of his harangue, astonishment was still dominant,—sheer astonishment. She scarcely listened. But, as he finished, the thatch of the summer house caught her eye. A vision arose of a man beside whom Eliphalet was not worthy to crawl. She thought of Stephen as he had stood that evening in the sunset, and this proposal seemed a degradation. This brute dared to tempt her with money. Scalding words rose to her lips. But she caught the look on Eliphalet’s face, and she knew that he would not understand. This was one who rose and fell, who lived and loved and hated and died and was buried by—money.

For a second she looked into his face as one who escapes a pit gazes over the precipice, and shuddered. As for Eliphalet, let it not be thought that he had no passion. This was the moment for which he had lived since the day he had first seen her and been scorned in the store. That type of face, that air,—these were the priceless things he would buy with his money. Crazed with the very violence of his long-pent desire, he seized her hand. She wrung it free again.

“How—how dare you!” she cried.

He staggered back, and stood for a moment motionless, as though stunned. Then, slowly, a light crept into his little eyes which haunted her for many a day.

“You—won’t—marry me?” he said.

“Oh, how dare you ask me!” exclaimed Virginia, her face burning with the shame of it. She was standing with her hands behind her, her back against a great walnut trunk, the crusted branches of which hung over the bluff. Even as he looked at her, Eliphalet lost his head, and indiscretion entered his soul.

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“You must!” he said hoarsely. “You must! You’ve got no notion of my money, I say.”

“Oh!” she cried, “can’t you understand? If you owned the whole of California, I would not marry you.” Suddenly he became very cool. He slipped his hand into a pocket, as one used to such a motion, and drew out some papers.

“I cal’late you ain’t got much idea of the situation, Miss Carvel,” he said; “the wheels have been a-turning lately. You’re poor, but I guess you don’t know how poor you are,—eh? The Colonel’s a man of honor, ain’t he?”

For her life she could not have answered,—nor did she even know why she stayed to listen.

“Well,” he said, “after all, there ain’t much use in your lookin’ over them papers. A woman wouldn’t know. I’ll tell you what they say: they say that if I choose, I am Carvel & Company.”

The little eyes receded, and he waited a moment, seemingly to prolong a physical delight in the excitement and suffering of a splendid creature. The girl was breathing fast and deep.

“I cal’late you despise me, don’t you?” he went on, as if that, too, gave him pleasure. “But I tell you the Colonel’s a beggar but for me. Go and ask him if I’m lying. All you’ve got to do is to say you’ll be my wife, and I tear these notes in two. They go over the bluff.” (He made the motion with his hands.) “Carvel & Company’s an old firm,—a respected firm. You wouldn’t care to see it go out of the family, I cal’late.”

He paused again, triumphant. But she did none of the things he expected. She said, simply:—“Will you please follow me, Mr. Hopper.”

And he followed her,—his shrewdness gone, for once.

Save for the rise and fall of her shoulders she seemed calm. The path wound through a jungle of waving sunflowers and led into the shade in front of the house. There was the Colonel sitting on the porch. His pipe lay with its scattered ashes on the boards, and his head was bent forward, as though listening. When he saw the two, he rose expectantly, and went forward to meet them. Virginia stopped before him.

“Pa,” she said, “is it true that you have borrowed money from this man?”

Eliphalet had seen Mr. Carvel angry once, and his soul had quivered. Terror, abject terror, seized him now, so that his knees smote together. As well stare into the sun as into the Colonel’s face. In one stride he had a hand in the collar of Eliphalet’s new coat, the other pointing down the path.

“It takes just a minute to walk to that fence, sir,” he said sternly. “If you are any longer about it, I reckon you’ll never get past it. You’re a cowardly hound, sir!” Mr. Hopper’s gait down the flagstones was an invention of his own. It was neither a walk, nor a trot, nor a run, but a sort of sliding amble, such as is executed in nightmares. Singing in his head was the famous example of the eviction of Babcock from the store, —the only time that the Colonel’s bullet had gone wide. And down in the small of his back Eliphalet listened for the crack of a pistol, and feared that a clean hole might be bored there any minute. Once outside, he took to the white road, leaving a trail of dust behind him that a wagon might have raised. Fear lent him wings, but neglected to lift his feet.

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The Colonel passed his arm around his daughter, and pulled his goatee thoughtfully. And Virginia, glancing shyly upward, saw a smile in the creases about his mouth: She smiled, too, and then the tears hid him from her.

Strange that the face which in anger withered cowards and made men look grave, was capable of such infinite tenderness,—tenderness and sorrow. The Colonel took Virginia in his arms, and she sobbed against his shoulder, as of old.

“Jinny, did he—?”

“Yes—”

“Lige was right, and—and you, Jinny—I should never have trusted him. The sneak!”

Virginia raised her head. The sun was slanting in yellow bars through the branches of the great trees, and a robin’s note rose above the bass chorus of the frogs. In the pauses, as she listened, it seemed as if she could hear the silver sound of the river over the pebbles far below.

“Honey,” said the Colonel,—“I reckon we’re just as poor as white trash.”

Virginia smiled through her tears.

“Honey,” he said again, after a pause, “I must keep my word and let him have the business.”

She did not reproach him.

“There is a little left, a very little,” he continued slowly, painfully. “I thank God that it is yours. It was left you by Becky—by your mother. It is in a railroad company in New York, and safe, Jinny.”

“Oh, Pa, you know that I do not care,” she cried. “It shall be yours and mine together. And we shall live out here and be happy.”

But she glanced anxiously at him nevertheless. He was in his familiar posture of thought, his legs slightly apart, his felt hat pushed back, stroking his goatee. But his clear gray eyes were troubled as they sought hers, and she put her hand to her breast.

“Virginia,” he said, “I fought for my country once, and I reckon I’m some use yet awhile. It isn’t right that I should idle here, while the South needs me, Your Uncle Daniel is fifty-eight, and Colonel of a Pennsylvania regiment.—Jinny, I have to go.”

Virginia said nothing. It was in her blood as well as his. The Colonel had left his young wife, to fight in Mexico; he had come home to lay flowers on her grave. She knew that

he thought of this; and, too, that his heart was rent at leaving her. She put her hands on his shoulders, and he stooped to kiss her trembling lips.

They walked out together to the summer-house, and stood watching the glory of the light on the western hills. “Jinn,” said the Colonel, “I reckon you will have to go to your Aunt Lillian. It—it will be hard. But I know that my girl can take care of herself. In case—in case I do not come back, or occasion should arise, find Lige. Let him take you to your Uncle Daniel. He is fond of you, and will be all alone in Calvert House when the war is over. And I reckon that is all I have to say. I won’t pry into your heart, honey. If you love Clarence, marry him. I like the boy, and I believe he will quiet down into a good man.”

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Virginia did not answer, but reached out for her father's hand and held its fingers locked tight in her own. From the kitchen the sound of Ned's voice rose in the still evening air.

> "Sposin' I was to go to N' Orleans an' take sick and die,
> Laik a bird into de country ma spirit would fly."

And after a while down the path the red and yellow of Mammy Easter's bandanna was seen.

"Supper, Miss Jinny. Laws, if I ain't ramshacked de premises fo' you bof. De co'n bread's gittin' cold."

That evening the Colonel and Virginia thrust a few things into her little leather bag they had chosen together in London. Virginia had found a cigar, which she hid until they went down to the porch, and there she gave it to him; when he lighted the match she saw that his hand shook.

Half an hour later he held her in his arms at the gate, and she heard his firm tread die in the dust of the road. The South had claimed him at last.

THE CRISIS

By Winston Churchill

Volume 7.

CHAPTER VII

WITH THE ARMIES OF THE WEST

We are at Memphis,—for a while,—and the Christmas season is approaching once more. And yet we must remember that war recognizes no Christmas, nor Sunday, nor holiday. The brown river, excited by rains, whirled seaward between his banks of yellow clay. Now the weather was crisp and cold, now hazy and depressing, and again a downpour. Memphis had never seen such activity. A spirit possessed the place, a restless spirit called William T. Sherman. He prodded Memphis and laid violent hold of her. She groaned, protested, turned over, and woke up, peopled by a new people. When these walked, they ran, and they wore a blue uniform. They spoke rapidly and were impatient. Rain nor heat nor tempest kept them in. And yet they joked, and Memphis laughed (what was left of her), and recognized a bond of fellowship. The General joked, and the Colonels and the Commissary and the doctors, down to the sutlers and teamsters and the salt tars under Porter, who cursed the dishwater Mississippi, and also a man named Eads, who had built the new-fangled iron boxes

officially known as gunboats. The like of these had never before been seen in the waters under the earth. The loyal citizens—loyal to the South—had been given permission to leave the city. The General told the assistant quartermaster to hire their houses and slaves for the benefit of the Federal Government. Likewise he laid down certain laws to the Memphis papers defining treason. He gave out his mind freely to that other army of occupation, the army of speculation, that flocked thither with permits to trade in cotton. The speculators gave the Confederates gold, which they needed most, for the bales, which they could not use at all.

The forefathers of some of these gentlemen were in old Egypt under Pharaoh—for whom they could have had no greater respect and fear than their descendants had in New Egypt for Grant or Sherman. Yankees were there likewise in abundance. And a certain acquaintance of ours materially added to his fortune by selling in Boston the cotton which cost him fourteen cents, at thirty cents.

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One day the shouting and the swearing and the running to and fro came to a climax. Those floating freaks which were all top and drew nothing, were loaded down to the guards with army stores and animals and wood and men, —men who came from every walk in life.

Whistles bellowed, horses neighed. The gunboats chased hither and thither, and at length the vast processions paddled down the stream with naval precision, under the watchful eyes of a real admiral.

Residents of Memphis from the river's bank watched the pillar of smoke fade to the southward and ruminated on the fate of Vicksburg. The General paced the deck in thought. A little later he wrote to the Commander-in-Chief at Washington, "The valley of the Mississippi is America."

Vicksburg taken, this vast Confederacy would be chopped in two.

Night fell to the music of the paddles, to the scent of the officers' cigars, to the blood-red vomit of the tall stacks and the smoky flame of the torches. Then Christmas Day dawned, and there was Vicksburg lifted two hundred feet above the fever swamps, her court-house shining in the morning sun. Vicksburg, the well-nigh impregnable key to America's highway. When old Vick made his plantation on the Walnut Hills, he chose a site for a fortress of the future Confederacy that Vauban would have delighted in.

Yes, there were the Walnut Hills, high bluffs separated from the Mississippi by tangled streams and bayous, and on their crests the Parrotts scowled. It was a queer Christmas Day indeed, bright and warm; no snow, no turkeys nor mince pies, no wine, but just hardtack and bacon and foaming brown water.

On the morrow the ill-assorted fleet struggled up the sluggish Yazoo, past impenetrable forests where the cypress clutched at the keels, past long-deserted cotton fields, until it came at last to the black ruins of a home. In due time the great army was landed. It spread out by brigade and division and regiment and company, the men splashing and paddling through the Chickasaw and the swamps toward the bluffs. The Parrotts began to roar. A certain regiment, boldly led, crossed the bayou at a narrow place and swept resistless across the sodden fields to where the bank was steepest. The fire from the battery scorched the hair of their heads. But there they stayed, scooping out the yellow clay with torn hands, while the Parrotts, with lowered muzzles, ploughed the slope with shells. There they stayed, while the blue lines quivered and fell back through the forests on that short winter's afternoon, dragging their wounded from the stagnant waters. But many were left to die in agony in the solitude.

Like a tall emblem of energy, General Sherman stood watching the attack and repulse, his eyes ever alert. He paid no heed to the shells which tore the limbs from the trees about him, or sent the swamp water in thick spray over his staff. Now and again a

sharp word broke from his lips, a forceful home thrust at one of the leaders of his columns.

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“What regiment stayed under the bank?”

“Sixth Missouri, General,” said an aide, promptly.

The General sat late in the Admiral’s gunboat that night, but when he returned to his cabin in the Forest Queen, he called for a list of officers of the Sixth Missouri. His finger slipping down the roll paused at a name among the new second lieutenants.

“Did the boys get back?” he asked. “Yes, General, when it fell dark.”

“Let me see the casualties,—quick.”

That night a fog rolled up from the swamps, and in the morning jack-staff was hid from pilot-house. Before the attack could be renewed, a political general came down the river with a letter in his pocket from Washington, by virtue of which he took possession of the three army core, and their chief, subpoenaed the fleet and the Admiral, and went off to capture Arkansas Post.

Vicksburg had a breathing spell.

Three weeks later, when the army was resting at Napoleon, Arkansas, a self-contained man, with a brown beard arrived from Memphis, and took command. This way General U. S. Grant. He smoked incessantly in his cabin. He listened. He spoke but seldom. He had look in his face that boded ill to any that might oppose him. Time and labor be counted as nothing, compared with the accomplishment of an object. Back to Vicksburg paddled the fleet and transports. Across the river from the city, on the pasty mud behind the levee’s bank were dumped Sherman’s regiments, condemned to week of ditch-digging, that the gunboats might arrive at the bend of the Mississippi below by a canal, out of reach of the batteries. Day in and day out they labored, officer and men. Sawing off stumps under the water, knocking poisonous snakes by scores from the branches, while the river rose and rose and rose, and the rain crept by inches under their tent flies, and the enemy walked the parapet of Vicksburg and laughed. Two gunboats accomplished the feat of running the batteries, that their smiles might be sobered.

To the young officers who were soiling their uniform with the grease of saws, whose only fighting was against fever and water snakes, the news of an expedition into the Vicksburg side of the river was hailed with caps in the air. To be sure, the saw and axe, and likewise the levee and the snakes, were to be there, too. But there was likely to be a little fighting. The rest of the corps that was to stay watched grimly as the detachment put off in the little ‘Diligence’ and ‘Silver Wave’.

All the night the smoke-pipes were batting against the boughs of oak and cottonwood, and snapping the trailing vines. Some other regiments went by another route. The ironclads, followed in hot haste by General Sherman in a navy tug, had gone ahead,

and were even then shoving with their noses great trunks of trees in their eagerness to get behind the Rebels. The Missouri regiment spread out along the waters, and were soon waist deep, hewing a path

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for the heavier transports to come. Presently the General came back to a plantation half under water, where Black Bayou joins Deer Creek, to hurry the work in cleaning out that Bayou. The light transports meanwhile were bringing up more troops from a second detachment. All through the Friday the navy great guns were heard booming in the distance, growing quicker and quicker, until the quivering air shook the hanging things in that vast jungle. Saws stopped, and axes were poised over shoulders, and many times that day the General lifted his head anxiously. As he sat down in the evening in a slave cabin redolent with corn pone and bacon, the sound still hovered among the trees and rolled along the still waters.

The General slept lightly. It was three o'clock Saturday morning when the sharp challenge of a sentry broke the silence. A negro, white eyed, bedraggled, and muddy, stood in the candle light under the charge of a young lieutenant. The officer saluted, and handed the General a roll of tobacco.

"I found this man in the swamp, sir. He has a message from the Admiral—"

The General tore open the roll and took from it a piece of tissue paper which he spread out and held under the candle. He turned to a staff officer who had jumped from his bed and was hurrying into his coat.

"Porter's surrounded," he said. The order came in a flash. "Kilby Smith and all men here across creek to relief at once. I'll take canoe through bayou to Hill's and hurry reenforcements."

The staff officer paused, his hand on the latch of the door.

"But your escort, General. You're not going through that sewer in a canoe without an escort!"

"I guess they won't look for a needle in that haystack," the General answered. For a brief second he eyed the lieutenant. "Get back to your regiment, Brice, if you want to go," he said.

Stephen saluted and went out. All through the painful march that followed, though soaked in swamp water and bruised by cypress knees, he thought of Sherman in his canoe, winding unprotected through the black labyrinth, risking his life that more men might be brought to the rescue of the gunboats.

The story of that rescue has been told most graphically by Sherman himself. How he picked up the men at work on the bayou and marched them on a coal barge; how he hitched the barge to a navy tug; how he met the little transport with a fresh load of troops, and Captain Elijah Brent's reply when the General asked if he would follow him.

“As long as the boat holds together, General.” And he kept his word. The boughs hammered at the smoke-pipes until they went by the board, and the pilothouse fell like a pack of cards on the deck before they had gone three miles and a half. Then the indomitable Sherman disembarked, a lighted candle in his hand, and led a stiff march through thicket and swamp and breast-deep backwater, where the little drummer boys carried their drums on their heads. At length, when they were come to some Indian mounds, they found a picket of three, companies of the force which had reached the flat the day before, and had been sent down to prevent the enemy from obstructing further the stream below the fleet.

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“The Admiral’s in a bad way, sir,” said the Colonel who rode up to meet the General. “He’s landlocked. Those clumsy ironclads of his can’t move backward or forward, and the Rebs have been peppering him for two days.”

Just then a fusillade broke from the thickets, nipping the branches from the cottonwoods about them.

“Form your line,” said the General. “Drive ’em out.”

The force swept forward, with the three picket companies in the swamp on the right. And presently they came in sight of the shapeless ironclads with their funnels belching smoke, a most remarkable spectacle. How Porter had pushed them there was one of the miracles of the war.

Then followed one of a thousand memorable incidents in the life of a memorable man. General Sherman, jumping on the bare back of a scrawny horse, cantered through the fields. And the bluejackets, at sight of that familiar figure, roared out a cheer that might have shaken the drops from the wet boughs. The Admiral and the General stood together on the deck, their hands clasped. And the Colonel astutely remarked, as he rode up in answer to a summons, that if Porter was the only man whose daring could have pushed a fleet to that position, Sherman was certainly the only man who could have got him out of it.

“Colonel,” said the General, “that move was well executed, sir. Admiral, did the Rebs put a bullet through your rum casks? We’re just a little tired. And now,” he added, wheeling on the Colonel when each had a glass in his hand, “who was in command of that company on the right, in the swamp? He handled them like a regular.”

“He’s a second lieutenant, General, in the Sixth Missouri. Captain wounded at Hindman, and first lieutenant fell out down below. His name is Brice, I believe.”

“I thought so,” said the General.

Some few days afterward, when the troops were slopping around again at Young’s Point, opposite Vicksburg, a gentleman arrived on a boat from St. Louis. He paused on the levee to survey with concern and astonishment the flood of waters behind it, and then asked an officer the way to General Sherman’s headquarters. The officer, who was greatly impressed by the gentleman’s looks, led him at once to a trestle bridge which spanned the distance from the levee bank over the flood to a house up to its first floor in the backwaters. The orderly saluted.

“Who shall I say, sir?”

The officer looked inquiringly at the gentleman, who gave his name.

The officer could not repress a smile at the next thing that happened. Out hurried the General himself, with both hands outstretched.

“Bless my soul!” he cried, “if it isn’t Brinsmade. Come right in, come right in and take dinner. The boys will be glad to see you. I’ll send and tell Grant you’re here. Brinsmade, if it wasn’t for you and your friends on the Western Sanitary Commission, we’d all have been dead of fever and bad food long ago.” The General sobered abruptly. “I guess a good many of the boys are laid up now,” he added.

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“I’ve come down to do what I can, General,” responded Mr. Brinsmade, gravely. “I want to go through all the hospitals to see that our nurses are doing their duty and that the stores are properly distributed.”

“You shall, sir, this minute,” said the General. He dropped instantly the affairs which he had on hand, and without waiting for dinner the two gentlemen went together through the wards where the fever raged. The General surprised his visitor by recognizing private after private in the cots, and he always had a brief word of cheer to brighten their faces, to make them follow him with wistful eyes as he passed beyond them. “That’s poor Craig,” he would say, “corporal, Third Michigan. They tell me he can’t live,” and “That’s Olcott, Eleventh Indiana. Good God!” cried the General, when they were out in the air again, “how I wish some of these cotton traders could get a taste of this fever. They keep well—the vultures—And by the way, Brinsmade, the man who gave me no peace at all at Memphis was from your city. Why, I had to keep a whole corps on duty to watch him.”

“What was his name, sir?” Mr. Brinsmade asked.

“Hopper!” cried the General, with feeling. “Eliphalet Hopper. As long as I live I shall never forget it. How the devil did he get a permit? What are they about at Washington?”

“You surprise me,” said Mr. Brinsmade. “He has always seemed inoffensive, and I believe he is a prominent member of one of our churches.”

“I guess that’s so,” answered the General, dryly. “I ever I set eyes on him again, he’s clapped into the guardhouse. He knows it, too.”

“Speaking of St. Louis, General,” said Mr. Brinsmade, presently, “have you ever heard of Stephen Brice? joined your army last autumn. You may remember talking to him one evening at my house.”

“He’s one of my boys!” cried the General. “Remember him? Guess I do!” He paused on the very brink of relating again the incident at Camp Jackson, when Stephen had saved the life of Mr. Brinsmade’s own son. “Brinsmade, for three days I’ve had it on my mind to send for that boy. I’ll have him at headquarters now. I like him,” cried General Sherman, with tone and gesture there was no mistaking. And good Mr. Brinsmade, who liked Stephen, too, rejoiced at the story he would have to tell the widow. “He has spirit, Brinsmade. I told him to let me know when he was ready to go to war. No such thing. He never came near me. The first thing I hear of him is that he’s digging holes in the clay of Chickasaw Bluff, and his cap is fanned off by the blast of a Parrott six feet above his head. Next thing he turns up on that little expedition we took to get Porter to sea again. When we got to the gunboats, there was Brice’s company on the flank. He handled those men surprisingly, sir—surprisingly. I shouldn’t have blamed the boy if

one or two Rebs got by him. But no, he swept the place clean." By this time they had come back to the bridge leading to headquarters, and the General beckoned quickly to an orderly.

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“My compliments to Lieutenant Stephen Brice, Sixth Missouri, and ask him to report here at once. At once, you understand!”

“Yes, General.”

It so happened that Mr. Brice’s company were swinging axes when the orderly arrived, and Mr. Brice had an axe himself, and was up to his boot tops in yellow mud.

The orderly, who had once been an Iowa farmer, was near grinning when he gave the General’s message and saw the lieutenant gazing ruefully at his clothes.

Entering headquarters, Stephen paused at the doorway of the big room where the officers of the different staffs were scattered about, smoking, while the negro servants were removing the dishes from the table. The sunlight, reflected from the rippling water outside, danced on the ceiling. At the end of the room sat General Sherman, his uniform, as always, a trifle awry. His soft felt hat with the gold braid was tilted forward, and his feet, booted and spurred, were crossed. Small wonder that the Englishman who sought the typical American found him in Sherman.

The sound that had caught Stephen’s attention was the General’s voice, somewhat high-pitched, in the key that he used in telling a story. These were his closing words.

“Sin gives you a pretty square deal, boys, after all. Generally a man says, ‘Well, I can resist, but I’ll have my fun just this once.’ That’s the way it happens. They tell you that temptation comes irresistibly. Don’t believe it. Do you, Mr. Brice? Come over here, sir. Here’s a friend of yours.”

Stephen made his way to the General, whose bright eyes wandered rapidly over him as he added:

“This is the condition my officers report in, Brinsmade,—mud from head to heel.”

Stephen had sense enough to say nothing, but the staff officers laughed, and Mr. Brinsmade smiled as he rose and took Stephen’s hand.

“I am delighted to see that you are well, sir,” said he, with that formal kindliness which endeared him to all. “Your mother will be rejoiced at my news of you. You will be glad to hear that I left her well, Stephen.”

Stephen inquired for Mrs. Brinsmade and Anne.

“They are well, sir, and took pleasure in adding to a little box which your mother sent. Judge Whipple put in a box of fine cigars, although he deplores the use of tobacco.”

“And the Judge, Mr. Brinsmade—how is he?”

The good gentleman's face fell.

"He is ailing, sir, it grieves me to say. He is in bed, sir. But he is ably looked after. Your mother desired to have him moved to her house, but he is difficult to stir from his ways, and he would not leave his little room. He is ably nursed. We have got old Nancy, Hester's mother, to stay with him at night, and Mrs. Brice divides the day with Miss Jinny Carvel, who comes in from Bellegarde every afternoon."

"Miss Carvel?" exclaimed Stephen, wondering if he heard aright. And at the mention of her name he tingled.

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“None other, sir,” answered Mr. Brinsmade. “She has been much honored for it. You may remember that the Judge was a close friend of her father’s before the war. And—-well, they quarrelled, sir. The Colonel went South, you know.”

“When—when was the Judge taken ill, Mr. Brinsmade?” Stephen asked. The thought of Virginia and his mother caring for him together was strangely sweet.

“Two days before I left, sir, Dr. Polk had warned him not to do so much. But the Doctor tells me that he can see no dangerous symptoms.”

Stephen inquired now of Mr. Brinsmade how long he was to be with them.

“I am going on to the other camps this afternoon,” said he. “But I should like a glimpse of your quarters, Stephen, if you will invite me. Your mother would like a careful account of you, and Mr. Whipple, and—your many friends in St. Louis.”

“You will find my tent a little wet, air,” replied Stephen, touched.

Here the General, who had been sitting by watching them with a very curious expression, spoke up.

“That’s hospitality for you, Brinsmade!”

Stephen and Mr. Brinsmade made their way across plank and bridge to Stephen’s tent, and his mess servant arrived in due time with the package from home. But presently, while they sat talking of many things, the canvas of the fly was thrust back with a quick movement, and who should come stooping in but General Sherman himself. He sat down on a cracker box. Stephen rose confusedly.

“Well, well, Brice,” said the General, winking at Mr. Brinsmade, “I think you might have invited me to the feast. Where are those cigars Mr. Brinsmade was talking about?”

Stephen opened the box with alacrity. The General chose one and lighted it.

“Don’t smoke, eh?” he inquired. “Why, yes, sir, when I can.”

“Then light up, sir,” said the General, “and sit down, I’ve been thinking lately of court-martialing you, but I decided to come ’round and talk it over with you first. That isn’t strictly according to the rules of the service. Look here, Mr. Brice, why did you leave St. Louis?”

“They began to draft, sir, and I couldn’t stand it any longer.”

“But you wouldn’t have been drafted. You were in the Home Guards, if I remember right. And Mr. Brinsmade tells me you were useful in many ways What was your rank in the Home Guards?”

“Lieutenant colonel, sir.”

“And what are you here?”

“A second lieutenant in temporary command, General.” “You have commanded men?”

“Not in action, sir. I felt that that was different.”

“Couldn’t they do better for you than a second-lieutenancy?”

Stephen did not reply at once, Mr. Brinsmade spoke up, “They offered him a lieutenant-colonelcy.”

The General was silent a moment: Then he said “Do you remember meeting me on the boat when I was leaving St. Louis, after the capture of Fort Henry?”

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Stephen smiled. “Very well, General,” he replied, General Sherman leaned forward.

“And do you remember I said to you, ’Brice, when you get ready to come into this war, let me know.’ Why didn’t you do it?”

Stephen thought a minute. Then he said gravely, but with just a suspicion of humor about his mouth:— “General, if I had done that, you wouldn’t be here in my tent to-day.”

Like lightning the General was on his feet, his hand on Stephen’s shoulder.

“By gad, sir,” he cried, delighted, “so I wouldn’t.”

CHAPTER VIII

A STRANGE MEETING

The story of the capture of Vicksburg is the old, old story of failure turned into success, by which man is made immortal. It involves the history of a general who never retraced his steps, who cared neither for mugwump murmurs nor political cabals, who took both blame and praise with equanimity. Through month after month of discouragement, and work gone for naught, and fever and death, his eyes never left his goal. And by grace of the wisdom of that President who himself knew sorrow and suffering and defeat and unjust censure, General Grant won.

Boldness did it. The canal abandoned, one red night fleet and transports swept around the bend and passed the city’s heights, on a red river. The Parrotts and the Dahlgrens roared, and the high bluffs flung out the sound over the empty swamp land.

Then there came the landing below, and the cutting loose from a base —unheard of. Corps behind cursed corps ahead for sweeping the country clear of forage. Battles were fought. Confederate generals in Mississippi were bewildered.

One night, while crossing with his regiment a pontoon bridge, Stephen Brice heard a shout raised on the farther shore. Sitting together on a log under a torch, two men in slouch hats were silhouetted. That one talking with rapid gestures was General Sherman. The impassive profile of the other, the close-cropped beard and the firmly held cigar that seemed to go with it,—Stephen recognized as that of the strange Captain Grant who had stood beside him in the street by the Arsenal He had not changed a whit. Motionless, he watched corps after corps splash by, artillery, cavalry, and infantry, nor gave any sign that he heard their plaudits.

At length the army came up behind the city to a place primeval, where the face of the earth was sore and tortured, worn into deep gorges by the rains, and flung up in great mounds. Stripped of the green magnolias and the cane, the banks of clay stood forth in

hideous yellow nakedness, save for a lonely stunted growth, or a bare trunk that still stood tottering on the edge of a banks its pitiful withered roots reaching out below. The May weather was already sickly hot.

First of all there was a murderous assault, and a still more murderous repulse. Three times the besiegers charged, sank their color staffs into the redoubts, and three times were driven back. Then the blue army settled into the earth and folded into the ravines. Three days in that narrow space between the lines lay the dead and wounded suffering untold agonies in the moist heat. Then came a truce to bury the dead, to bring back what was left of the living.

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The doomed city had no rest. Like clockwork from the Mississippi's banks beyond came the boom and shriek of the coehorns on the barges. The big shells hung for an instant in the air like birds of prey, and then could be seen swooping down here and there, while now and anon a shaft of smoke rose straight to the sky, the black monument of a home.

Here was work in the trenches, digging the flying sap by night and deepening it by day, for officers and men alike. From heaven a host of blue ants could be seen toiling in zigzags forward, ever forward, along the rude water-cuts and through the hills. A waiting carrion from her vantage point on high marked one spot then another where the blue ants disappeared, and again one by one came out of the burrow to hurry down the trench,—each with his ball of clay.

In due time the ring of metal and sepulchred voices rumbled in the ground beneath the besieged. Counter mines were started, and through the narrow walls of earth commands and curses came. Above ground the saps were so near that a strange converse became the rule. It was "Hello, Reb!" "Howdy, Yank!" Both sides were starving, the one for tobacco and the other for hardtack and bacon. These necessities were tossed across, sometimes wrapped in the Vicksburg news-sheet printed on the white side of a homely green wall paper. At other times other amenities were indulged in. Hand-grenades were thrown and shells with lighted fuses rolled down on the heads of acquaintances of the night before, who replied from wooden coehorns hooped with iron.

The Union generals learned (common item in a siege) that the citizens of Vicksburg were eating mule meat. Not an officer or private in the Vicksburg armies who does not remember the 25th of June, and the hour of three in an afternoon of pitiless heat. Silently the long blue files wound into position behind the earth barriers which hid them from the enemy, coiled and ready to strike when the towering redoubt on the Jackson road should rise heavenwards. By common consent the rifle crack of day and night was hushed, and even the Parrotts were silent. Stillness closed around the white house of Shirley once more, but not the stillness it had known in its peaceful homestead days. This was the stillness of the death prayer. Eyes staring at the big redoubt were dimmed. At last, to those near, a little wisp of blue smoke crept out.

Then the earth opened with a quake. The sun was darkened, and a hot blast fanned the upturned faces. In the sky, through the film of shattered clay, little black dots scurried, poised, and fell again as arms and legs and head less trunks and shapeless bits of wood and iron. Scarcely had the dust settled when the sun caught the light of fifty thousand bayonets, and a hundred shells were shrieking across the crater's edge. Earth to earth, alas, and dust to dust! Men who ran across that rim of a summer's afternoon died in torture under tier upon tier of their comrades,—and so the hole was filled.

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An upright cannon marks the spot where a scrawny oak once stood on a scarred and baked hillside, outside of the Confederate lines at Vicksburg. Under the scanty shade of that tree, on the eve of the Nation's birthday, stood two men who typified the future and the past. As at Donelson, a trick of Fortune's had delivered one comrade of old into the hands of another. Now she chose to kiss the one upon whom she had heaped obscurity and poverty and contumely. He had ceased to think or care about Fortune. And hence, being born a woman, she favored him.

The two armies watched and were still. They noted the friendly greeting of old comrades, and after that they saw the self-contained Northerner biting his cigar, as one to whom the pleasantries of life were past and gone. The South saw her General turn on his heel. The bitterness of his life was come. Both sides honored him for the fight he had made. But war does not reward a man according to his deserts.

The next day—the day our sundered nation was born Vicksburg surrendered: the obstinate man with the mighty force had conquered. See the gray regiments marching silently in the tropic heat into the folds of that blue army whose grip has choked them at last. Silently, too, the blue coats stand, pity and admiration on the brick-red faces. The arms are stacked and surrendered, officers and men are to be parolled when the counting is finished. The formations melt away, and those who for months have sought each other's lives are grouped in friendly talk. The coarse army bread is drawn eagerly from the knapsacks of the blue, smoke quivers above a hundred fires, and the smell of frying bacon brings a wistful look into the gaunt faces. Tears stand in the eyes of many a man as he eats the food his Yankee brothers have given him on the birthday of their country.

Within the city it is the same. Stephen Brice, now a captain in General Lauman's brigade, sees with thanksgiving the stars and stripes flutter from the dome of that court-house which he had so long watched from afar.

Later on, down a side street, he pauses before a house with its face blown away. On the verge of one of its jagged floors is an old four-posted bed, and beside it a child's cot is standing pitifully,—the tiny pillow still at the head and the little sheets thrown across the foot. So much for one of the navy's shells.

While he was thinking of the sadness of it all, a little scene was acted: the side door of the house opened, a weeping woman came out, and with her was a tall Confederate Colonel of cavalry. Gallantly giving her his arm, he escorted her as far as the little gate, where she bade him good by with much feeling. With an impulsive movement he drew some money from his pocket, thrust it upon her, and started hurriedly away that he might not listen to her thanks. Such was his preoccupation that he actually brushed into Stephen, who was standing beside a tree. He stopped and bowed.

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“Excuse me, seh,” he said contritely. “I beg your pardon, seh.”

“Certainly,” said Stephen, smiling; it was my fault for getting in your way.”

“Not at all, seh,” said the cavalry Colonel; “my clumsiness, seh.” He did not pass on, but stood pulling with some violence a very long mustache. “Damn you Yankees,” he continued, in the same amiable tone, “you’ve brought us a heap of misfortune. Why, seh, in another week we’d been fo’ced to eat niggers.”

The Colonel made such a wry face that Stephen laughed in spite of himself. He had marked the man’s charitable action, and admired his attempt to cover it. The Colonel seemed to be all breadth, like a card. His shoulders were incredible. The face was scant, perchance from lack of food, the nose large, with a curved rim, and the eyes blue gray. He wore clay-flecked cavalry boots, and was six feet five if an inch, so that Stephen’s six seemed insignificant beside him.

“Captain,” he said, taking in Stephen’s rank, “so we won’t qua’l as to who’s host heah. One thing’s suah,” he added, with a twinkle, “I’ve been heah longest. Seems like ten yeahs since I saw the wife and children down in the Palmetto State. I can’t offer you a dinner, seh. We’ve eaten all the mules and rats and sugar cane in town.” (His eye seemed to interpolate that Stephen wouldn’t be there otherwise.) “But I can offer you something choicer than you have in the No’th.”

Whereupon he drew from his hip a dented silver flask. The Colonel remarked that Stephen’s eyes fell on the coat of arms.

“Prope’ty of my grandfather, seh, of Washington’s Army. My name is Jennison,—-Catesby Jennison, at your service, seh,” he said. “You have the advantage of me, Captain.”

“My name is Brice,” said Stephen.

The big Colonel bowed decorously, held out a great, wide hand, and thereupon unscrewed the flask. Now Stephen had never learned to like straight whiskey, but he took down his share without a face. The exploit seemed to please the Colonel, who, after he likewise had done the liquor justice, screwed on the lid with ceremony, offered Stephen his arm with still greater ceremony, and they walked off down the street together. Stephen drew from his pocket several of Judge Whipple’s cigars, to which his new friend gave unqualified praise.

On every hand Vicksburg showed signs of hard usage. Houses with gaping chasms in their sides, others mere heaps of black ruins; great trees felled, cabins demolished, and here and there the sidewalk ploughed across from curb to fence.

“Lordy,” exclaimed the Colonel. “Lordy I how my ears ache since your damned coehorns have stopped. The noise got to be silence with us, seh, and yesterday I reckoned a hundred volcanoes had bust. Tell me,” said he “when the redoubt over the Jackson road was blown up, they said a nigger came down in your lines alive. Is that so?”

“Yes,” said Stephen, smiling; “he struck near the place where my company was stationed. His head ached a mite. That seemed to be all.”

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“I reckon he fell on it,” said Colonel Catesby Jennison, as if it were a matter of no special note.

“And now tell me something,” said Stephen. “How did you burn our sap-rollers?”

This time the Colonel stopped, and gave himself up to hearty laughter.

“Why, that was a Yankee trick, sure enough,” he cried. “Some ingenious cuss soaked port fire in turpentine, and shot the wad in a large-bore musket.”

“We thought you used explosive bullets.”

The Colonel laughed again, still more heartily. “Explosive bullets! —Good Lord, it was all we could do to get percussion caps. Do you know how we got percussion caps, seh? Three of our officers—dare-devils, seh —floated down the Mississippi on logs. One fellow made his way back with two hundred thousand. He’s the pride of our Vicksburg army. Not afraid of hell. A chivalrous man, a forlorn-hope man. The night you ran the batteries he and some others went across to your side in skiffs—in skiffs, seh, I say—and set fire to the houses in De Soto, that we might see to shoot. And then he came back in the face of our own batteries and your guns. That man was wounded by a trick of fate, by a cussed bit of shell from your coehorns while eating his dinner in Vicksburg. He’s pretty low, now, poor fellow,” added the Colonel, sadly.

“Where is he?” demanded Stephen, fired with a desire to see the man.

“Well, he ain’t a great ways from here,” said the Colonel. “Perhaps you might be able to do something for him,” he continued thoughtfully. “I’d hate to see him die. The doctor says he’ll pull through if he can get care and good air and good food.” He seized Stephen’s arm in a fierce grip. “You ain’t fooling?” he said.

“Indeed I am not,” said Stephen.

“No,” said the Colonel, thoughtfully, as to himself, “you don’t look like the man to fool.”

Whereupon he set out with great strides, in marked contrast to his former languorous gait, and after a while they came to a sort of gorge, where the street ran between high banks of clay. There Stephen saw the magazines which the Confederates had dug out, and of which he had heard. But he saw something, too, of which he had not heard, Colonel Catesby Jennison stopped before an open doorway in the yellow bank and knocked. A woman’s voice called softly to him to enter.

They went into a room hewn out of the solid clay. Carpet was stretched on the floor, paper was on the walls, and even a picture. There was a little window cut like a port in a prison cell, and under it a bed, beside which a middle-aged lady was seated. She had a kindly face which seemed to Stephen a little pinched as she turned to them with a

gesture of restraint. She pointed to the bed, where a sheet lay limply over the angles of a wasted frame. The face was to the wall.

“Hush!” said the lady,—“it is the first time in two days that he has slept.”

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But the sleeper stirred wearily, and woke with a start. He turned over. The face, so yellow and peaked, was of the type that grows even more handsome in sickness, and in the great fever-stricken eyes a high spirit burned. For an instant only the man stared at Stephen, and then he dragged himself to the wall.

The eyes of the other two were both fixed on the young Union Captain.

“My God!” cried Jennison, seizing Stephen’s rigid arm, “does he look as bad as that? We’ve seen him every day.”

“I—I know him,” answered Stephen. He stepped quickly to the bedside, and bent over it. “Colfax!” he said. “Colfax!”

“This is too much, Jennison,” came from the bed a voice that was pitifully weak; “why do you bring Yankees in here?”

“Captain Brice is a friend of yours, Colfax,” said the Colonel, tugging at his mustache.

“Brice?” repeated Clarence, “Brice? Does he come from St. Louis?”

“Do you come from St. Louis, sir?”

“Yes. I have met Captain Colfax—”

“Colonel, sir.”

“Colonel Colfax, before the war! And if he would like to go to St. Louis, I think I can have it arranged at once.”

In silence they waited for Clarence’s answer Stephen well knew what was passing in his mind, and guessed at his repugnance to accept a favor from a Yankee. He wondered whether there was in this case a special detestation. And so his mind was carried far to the northward to the memory of that day in the summer-house on the Meramee heights. Virginia had not loved her cousin then—of that Stephen was sure. But now,—-now that the Vicksburg army was ringing with his praise, now that he was unfortunate—Stephen sighed. His comfort was that he would be the instrument.

The lady in her uneasiness smoothed the single sheen that covered the sick man. From afar came the sound of cheering, and it was this that seemed to rouse him. He faced them again, impatiently.

“I have reason to remember Mr. Brice,” he said steadily. And then, with some vehemence, “What is he doing in Vicksburg?”

Stephen looked at Jennison, who winced.

“The city has surrendered,” said that officer.

They counted on a burst of anger. Colfax only groaned.

“Then you can afford to be generous,” he said, with a bitter laugh. “But you haven’t whipped us yet, by a good deal. Jennison,” he cried, “Jennison, why in hell did you give up?”

“Colfax,” said Stephen, coming forward, “you’re too sick a man to talk. I’ll look up the General. It may be that I can have you sent North to-day.”

“You can do as you please,” said Clarence, coldly, “with a—prisoner.”

The blood rushed to Stephen’s face. Bowing to the lady, he strode out of the room. Colonel Jennison, running after him, caught him in the street.

“You’re not offended, Brice?” he said. “He’s sick—and God Almighty, he’s proud—I reckon,” he added with a touch of humility that went straight to Stephen’s heart. “I reckon that some of us are too derned proud—But we ain’t cold.”

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Stephen grasped his hand.

“Offended!” he said. “I admire the man. I’ll go to the General directly. But just let me thank you. And I hope, Colonel, that we may meet again —as friends.” “Hold on, seh,” said Colonel Catesby Jennison; “we may as well drink to that.”

Fortunately, as Stephen drew near the Court House, he caught sight of a group of officers seated on its steps, and among them he was quick to recognize General Sherman.

“Brice,” said the General, returning his salute, “been celebrating this glorious Fourth with some of our Rebel friends?”

“Yes, sir,” answered Stephen, “and I came to ask a favor for one of them.” Seeing that the General’s genial, interested expression did not change, he was emboldened to go on. “This is one of their colonels, sir. You may have heard of him. He is the man who floated down the river on a log and brought back two hundred thousand percussion caps—”

“Good Lord,” interrupted the General, “I guess we all heard of him after that. What else has he done to endear himself?” he asked, with a smile.

“Well, General, he rowed across the river in a skiff the night we ran these batteries, and set fire to De Soto to make targets for their gunners.”

“I’d like to see that man,” said the General, in his eager way. “Where is he?”

“What I was going to tell you, sir. After he went through all this, he was hit by a piece of mortar shell, while sitting at his dinner. He’s rather far gone now, General, and they say he can’t live unless he can be sent North. I—I know who he is in St. Louis. And I thought that as long as the officers are to be paroled I might get your permission to send him up to-day.”

“What’s his name?”

“Colfax, sir.”

The General laughed. “I know the breed,” said he, “I’ll bet he didn’t thank you.”

“No, sir, he didn’t.”

“I like his grit,” said the General, emphatically, “These young bloods are the backbone of this rebellion, Brice. They were made for war. They never did anything except horse-racing and cock-fighting. They ride like the devil, fight like the devil, but don’t care a picayune for anything. Walker had some of ’em. Crittenden had some. And, good

Lord, how they hate a Yankee! I know this Colfax, too. He's a cousin of that fine-looking girl Brinsmade spoke of. They say he's engaged to her. Be a pity to disappoint her—eh?"

"Yes, General."

"Why, Captain, I believe you would like to marry her yourself! Take my advice, sir, and don't try to tame any wildcats."

"I'm glad to do a favor for that young man," said the General, when Stephen had gone off with the slip of paper he had given him. "I like to do that kind of a favor for any officer, when I can. Did you notice how he flared up when I mentioned the girl?"

This is why Clarence Colfax found himself that evening on a hospital steamer of the Sanitary Commission, bound north for St. Louis.

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CHAPTER XI

BELLEGARDE ONCE MORE

Supper at Bellegarde was not the simple meal it had been for a year past at Colonel Carvel's house in town. Mrs. Colfax was proud of her table, proud of her fried chickens and corn fritters and her desserts. How Virginia chafed at those suppers, and how she despised the guests whom her aunt was in the habit of inviting to some of them! And when none was present, she was forced to listen to Mrs. Colfax's prattle about the fashions, her tirades against the Yankees.

"I'm sure he must be dead," said that lady, one sultry evening in July. Her tone, however, was not one of conviction. A lazy wind from the river stirred the lawn of Virginia's gown. The girl, with her hand on the wicker back of the chair, was watching a storm gather to the eastward, across the Illinois prairie.

"I don't see why you say that, Aunt Lillian," she replied. "Bad news travels faster than good."

"And not a word from Comyn. It is cruel of him not to send us a line, telling us where his regiment is."

Virginia did not reply. She had long since learned that the wisdom of silence was the best for her aunt's unreasonableness. Certainly, if Clarence's letters could not pass the close lines of the Federal troops, news of her father's Texas regiment could not come from Red River.

"How was Judge Whipple to-day?" asked Mrs. Colfax presently.

"Very weak. He doesn't seem to improve much."

"I can't see why Mrs. Brice,—isn't that her name?—doesn't take him to her house. Yankee women are such prudes."

Virginia began to rock slowly, and her foot tapped the porch.

"Mrs. Brice has begged the Judge to come to her. But he says he has lived in those rooms, and that he will die there,—when the time comes."

"How you worship that woman, Virginia! You have become quite a Yankee yourself, I believe, spending whole days with her, nursing that old man."

"The Judge is an old friend of my father's; I think he would wish it," replied the girl, in a lifeless voice.

Her speech did not reveal all the pain and resentment she felt. She thought of the old man racked with pain and suffering in the heat, lying patient on his narrow bed, the only light of life remaining the presence of the two women. They came day by day, and often Margaret Brice had taken the place of the old negress who sat with him at night. Worship Margaret Brice! Yes, it was worship; it had been worship since the day she and her father had gone to the little whitewashed hospital. Providence had brought them together at the Judge's bedside. The marvellous quiet power of the older woman had laid hold of the girl in spite of all barriers.

Often when the Judge's pain was eased sufficiently for him to talk, he would speak of Stephen. The mother never spoke of her son, but a light would come into her eyes at this praise of him which thrilled Virginia to see. And when the good lady was gone, and the Judge had fallen into slumber, it would still haunt her.

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Was it out of consideration for her that Mrs. Brice would turn the Judge from this topic which he seemed to love best? Virginia could not admit to herself that she resented this. She had heard Stephen's letters to the Judge. They came every week. Strong and manly they were, with plenty of praises for the Southern defenders of Vicksburg. Only yesterday Virginia had read one of these to Mr. Whipple, her face burning. Well that his face was turned to the window, and that Stephen's mother was not there!

"He says very little about himself," Mr. Whipple complained. "Had it not been for Brinsmade, we should never know that Sherman had his eye on him, and had promoted him. We should never have known of that exploit at Chickasaw Bluff. But what a glorious victory was Grant's capture of Vicksburg, on the Fourth of July! I guess we'll make short work of the Rebels now."

No, the Judge had not changed much, even in illness. He would never change. Virginia laid the letter down, and tears started to her eyes as she repressed a retort. It was not the first time this had happened. At every Union victory Mr. Whipple would loose his tongue. How strange that, with all his thought of others, he should fall short here!

One day, after unusual forbearance, Mrs. Brice had overtaken Virginia on the stairway. Well she knew the girl's nature, and how difficult she must have found repression. Margaret Brice had taken her hand.

"My dear," she had said, "you are a wonderful woman." That was all. But Virginia had driven back to Belle. garde with a strange elation in her heart.

Some things the Judge had forborne to mention, and for this Virginia was thankful. One was the piano. But she had overheard Shadrach telling old Nancy how Mrs. Brice had pleaded with him to move it, that he might have more room and air. He had been obdurate. And Colonel Carvel's name had never once passed his lips.

Many a night the girl had lain awake listening to the steamboats as they toiled against the river's current, while horror held her. Horror lest her father at that moment be in mortal agony amongst the heaps left by the battle's surges; heaps in which, like mounds of ashes, the fire was not yet dead. Fearful tales she had heard in the prison hospitals of wounded men lying for days in the Southern sun between the trenches at Vicksburg, or freezing amidst the snow and sleet at Donelson.

Was her bitterness against the North not just? What a life had been Colonel Carvel's! It had dawned brightly. One war had cost him his wife. Another, and he had lost his fortune, his home, his friends, all that was dear to him. And that daughter, whom he loved best in all the world, he was perchance to see no more.

Mrs. Colfax, yawning, had taken a book and gone to bed. Still Virginia sat on the porch, while the frogs sang of rain, and the lightning quivered across the eastern sky. She heard the crunch of wheels in the gravel.

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A bar of light, peopled by moths, slanted out of the doorway and fell on a closed carriage. A gentleman slowly ascended the steps. Virginia recognized him as Mr. Brinsmade.

“Your cousin Clarence has come home, my dear,” he said. “He was among the captured at Vicksburg, and is paroled by General Grant.”

Virginia gave a little cry and started forward. But he held her hands.

“He has been wounded!”

“Yes,” she exclaimed, “yes. Oh, tell me, Mr. Brinsmade, tell me—all—”

“No, he is not dead, but he is very low. Mr. Russell has been kind enough to come with me.”

She hurried to call the servants. But they were all there in the light, in African postures of terror,—Alfred, and Sambo, and Mammy Easter, and Ned. They lifted the limp figure in gray, and carried it into the hall chamber, his eyes closed, his face waxen under a beard brown and shaggy. Heavily, Virginia climbed the stairs to break the news to her aunt.

There is little need to dwell on the dark days which followed—Clarence hanging between life and death. That his life was saved was due to Virginia and to Mammy Easter, and in no particle to his mother. Mrs. Colfax flew in the face of all the known laws of nursing, until Virginia was driven to desperation, and held a council of war with Dr. Polk. Then her aunt grew jealous, talked of a conspiracy, and threatened to send for Dr. Brown—which Dr. Polk implored her to do. By spells she wept, when they quietly pushed her from the room and locked the door. She would creep in to him in the night during Mammy Easter’s watches and talk him into a raging fever. But Virginia slept lightly and took the alarm. More than one scene these two had in the small hours, while Ned was riding post haste over the black road to town for the Doctor.

By the same trusty messenger did Virginia contrive to send a note to Mrs. Brice, begging her to explain her absence to Judge Whipple. By day or night Virginia did not leave Bellegarde. And once Dr. Polk, while walking in the garden, found the girl fast asleep on a bench, her sewing on her lap. Would that a master had painted his face as he looked down at her!

’Twas he who brought Virginia daily news of Judge Whipple. Bad news, alas! for he seemed to miss her greatly. He had become more querulous and exacting with patient Mrs. Brice, and inquired for her continually.

She would not go. But often, when he got into his buggy the Doctor found the seat filled with roses and fresh fruit. Well he knew where to carry them.

What Virginia's feelings were at this time no one will ever know. God had mercifully given her occupation, first with the Judge, and later, when she needed it more, with Clarence. It was she whom he recognized first of all, whose name was on his lips in his waking moments. With the petulance of returning reason, he pushed his mother away. Unless Virginia was at his bedside when he awoke, his fever rose. He put his hot hand into her cool one, and it rested there sometimes for hours. Then, and only then, did he seem contented.

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The wonder was that her health did not fail. People who saw her during that fearful summer, fresh and with color in her cheeks, marvelled. Great-hearted Puss Russell, who came frequently to inquire, was quieted before her friend, and the frank and jesting tongue was silent in that presence. Anne Brinsmade came with her father and wondered. A miracle had changed Virginia. Her poise, her gentleness, her dignity, were the effects which people saw. Her force people felt. And this is why we cannot of ourselves add one cubit to our stature. It is God who changes, —who cleanses us of our levity with the fire of trial. Happy, thrice happy, those whom He chasteneth. And yet how many are there who could not bear the fire—who would cry out at the flame.

Little by little Clarence mended, until he came to sit out on the porch in the cool of the afternoon. Then he would watch for hours the tassels stirring over the green fields of corn and the river running beyond, while the two women sat by. At times, when Mrs. Colfax's headaches came on, and Virginia was alone with him, he would talk of the war; sometimes of their childhood, of the mad pranks they played here at Bellegarde, of their friends. Only when Virginia read to him the Northern account of the battles would he emerge from a calm sadness into excitement; and he clenched his fists and tried to rise when he heard of the capture of Jackson and the fall of Port Hudson. Of love he spoke not a word, and now that he was better he ceased to hold her hand. But often when she looked up from her book, she would surprise his dark eyes fixed upon her, and a look in them of but one interpretation. She was troubled.

The Doctor came but every other day now, in the afternoon. It was his custom to sit for a while on the porch chatting cheerily with Virginia, his stout frame filling the rocking-chair. Dr. Polk's indulgence was gossip—though always of a harmless nature: how Mr. Cluyme always managed to squirm over to the side which was in favor, and how Maude Catherwood's love-letter to a certain dashing officer of the Confederate army had been captured and ruthlessly published in the hateful Democrat. It was the Doctor who gave Virginia news of the Judge, and sometimes he would mention Mrs. Brice. Then Clarence would raise his head; and once (she saw with trepidation) he had opened his lips to speak.

One day the Doctor came, and Virginia looked into his face and divined that he had something to tell her. He sat but a few moments, and when he arose to go he took her hand.

"I have a favor to beg of you, Jinny," he said, "Judge has lost his nurse. Do you think Clarence could spare you for a little while every day? I shouldn't ask it," Dr. Polk continued, somewhat hurriedly for him, "but the Judge cannot bear a stranger near him, and I am afraid to have him excited while in this condition."

"Mrs. Brice is ill?" she cried. And Clarence, watching, saw her color go.

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“No,” replied Dr. Polk, “but her son Stephen has come home from the army. He was transferred to Lauman’s brigade, and then he was wounded.” He jangled the keys in his pocket and continued “It seems that he had no business in the battle. Johnston in his retreat had driven animals into all the ponds and shot them, and in the hot weather the water was soon poisoned. Mr. Brice was scarcely well enough to stand when they made the charge, and he is now in a dreadful condition He is a fine fellow,” added the Doctor, with a sigh, “General Sherman sent a special physician to the boat with him. He is—” Subconsciously the Doctor’s arm sought Virginia’s back, as though he felt her swaying. But he was looking at Clarence, who had jerked himself forward in his chair, his thin hands convulsively clutching at the arms of it. He did not appear to see Virginia.

“Stephen Brice, did you say?” he cried, “will he die?”

In his astonishment the Doctor passed his palm across his brow, and for a moment he did not answer. Virginia had taken a step from him, and was standing motionless, almost rigid, her eyes on his face.

“Die?” he said, repeating the word mechanically; “my God, I hope not. The danger is over, and he is resting easily. If he were not,” he said quickly and forcibly, “I should not be here.”

The Doctor’s mare passed more than one fleet—footed trotter on the road. to town that day. And the Doctor’s black servant heard his master utter the word “fool” twice, and with great emphasis.

For a long time Virginia stood on the end of the porch, until the heaving of the buggy harness died on the soft road, She felt Clarence gaze upon her before she turned to face him.

“Virginia!” He had called her so of late. “Yes, dear.”

“Virginia, sit here a moment; I have something to tell you.”

She came and took the chair beside him, her heart beating, her breast rising and falling. She looked into his eyes, and her own lashes fell before the hopelessness there But he put out his fingers wasted by illness, and she took them in her own.

He began slowly, as if every word cost him pain.

“Virginia, we were children together here. I cannot remember the time when I did not love you, when I did not think of you as my wife. All I did when we played together was to try to win your applause. That was my nature I could not help it. Do you remember the day I climbed out on the rotten branch of the big pear tree yonder to get you that pear—when I fell on the roof of Alfred’s cabin? I did not feel the pain. It was because

you kissed it and cried over me. You are crying now," he said tenderly. "Don't, Jinny. It isn't to make you sad that I am saying this.

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“I have had a great deal of time to think lately, Jinny, I was not brought up seriously,—to be a man. I have been thinking of that day just before you were eighteen, when you rode out here. How well I remember it. It was a purple day. The grapes were purple, and a purple haze was over there across the river. You had been cruel to me. You were grown a woman then, and I was still nothing but a boy. Do you remember the doe coming out of the forest, and how she ran screaming when I tried to kiss you? You told me I was good for nothing. Please don’t interrupt me. It was true what you said, that I was wild and utterly useless, I had never served or pleased any but myself,—and you. I had never studied or worked, You were right when you told me I must learn something,—do something,—become of some account in the world. I am just as useless to day.”

“Clarence, after what you have done for the South?”

He smiled with peculiar bitterness.

“What have I done for her?” he added. “Crossed the river and burned houses. I could not build them again. Floated down the river on a log after a few percussion caps. That did not save Vicksburg.”

“And how many had the courage to do that?” she exclaimed.

“Pooh,” he said, “courage! the whole South has it, Courage! If I did not have that, I would send Sambo to my father’s room for his ebony box and blow my brains out. No, Jinny, I am nothing but a soldier of fortune. I never possessed any quality but a wild spirit for adventure, to shirk work. I wanted to go with Walker, you remember. I wanted to go to Kansas. I wanted to distinguish myself,” he added with a gesture. “But that is all gone now, Jinny. I wanted to distinguish myself for you. Now I see how an earnest life might have won you. No, I have not done yet.”

She raised her head, frightened, and looked at him searchingly.

“One day,” he said, “one day a good many years ago you and I and Uncle Comyn were walking along Market Street in front of Judge Whipple’s office, and a slave auction was going on. A girl was being sold on whom you had set your heart. There was some one in the crowd, a Yankee, who bid her in and set her free. Do you remember him?”

He saw her profile, her lips parted, her look far away, She inclined her head.

“Yes,” said her cousin, “so do I remember him. He has crossed my path many times since, Virginia. And mark what I say—it was he whom you had in mind on that birthday when you implored me to make something of myself, It was Stephen Brice.”

Her eyes flashed upon him quickly.

“Oh, how dare you?” she cried.

“I dare anything, Virginia,” he answered quietly. “I am not blaming you. And I am sure that you did not realize that he was the ideal which you had in mind.”

The impression of him has never left it. Fate is in it. Again, that night at the Brinsmades’, when we were in fancy dress, I felt that I had lost you when I got back. He had been there when I was away, and gone again. And—and—you never told me.”

Page 3006

“It was a horrible mistake, Max,” she faltered. “I was waiting for you down the road, and stopped his horse instead. It—it was nothing—”

“It was fate, Jinny. In that half-hour I lost you. How I hated that man,” he cried, “how I hated him?”

“Hated!” exclaimed Virginia, involuntarily. “Oh, no!”

“Yes,” he said, “hated! I would have killed him if I could. But now—”

“But now?”

“Now he has saved my life. I have not—I could not tell you before: He came into the place where I was lying in Vicksburg, and they told him that my only chance was to come North, I turned my back upon him, insulted him. Yet he went to Sherman and had me brought home—to you, Virginia. If he loves you,—and I have long suspected that he does—”

“Oh, no,” she cried, hiding her face “No.”

“I know he loves you, Jinny,” her cousin continued calmly, inexorably. “And you know that he does. You must feel that he does. It was a brave thing to do, and a generous. He knew that you were engaged to me. He thought that he was saving me for you. He was giving up the hope of marrying you himself.”

Virginia sprang to her feet. Unless you had seen her then, you had never known the woman in her glory.

“Marry a Yankee!” she cried. “Clarence Colfax, have you known and loved me all my life that you might accuse me of this? Never, never, never!” Transformed, he looked incredulous admiration.

“Jinny, do you mean it?” he cried.

In answer she bent down with all that gentleness and grace that was hers, and pressed her lips to his forehead. Long after she had disappeared in the door he sat staring after her.

But later, when Mammy Easter went to call her mistress for supper, she found her with her face buried in the pillows.

CHAPTER X

IN JUDGE WHIPPLE’S OFFICE

After this Virginia went to the Judge's bedside every day, in the morning, when Clarence took his sleep. She read his newspapers to him when he was well enough. She read the detested Missouri Democrat, which I think was the greatest trial Virginia ever had to put up with. To have her beloved South abused, to have her heroes ridiculed, was more than she could bear. Once, when the Judge was perceptibly better, she flung the paper out of the window, and left the room. He called her back penitently.

"My dear," he said, smiling admiration, "forgive an old bear. A selfish old bear, Jinny; my only excuse is my love for the Union. When you are not here, I lie in agony, lest she has suffered some mortal blow unknown to me, Jinny. And if God sees fit to spare our great country, the day will come when you will go down on your knees and thank Him for the inheritance which He saved for your children. You are a good woman, my dear, and a strong one. I have hoped that you will see the right. That you will marry a great citizen, one unwavering in his service and devotion to our Republic." The Judge's voice trembled with earnestness as he spoke. And the gray eyes under the shaggy brows were alight with the sacred fire of his life's purpose. Undaunted as her spirit was, she could not answer him then.

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Once, only once, he said to her: "Virginia, I loved your father better than any man I ever knew. Please God I may see him again before I die."

He never spoke of the piano. But sometimes at twilight his eyes would rest on the black cloth that hid it.

Virginia herself never touched that cloth to her it seemed the shroud upon a life of happiness that was dead and gone.

Virginia had not been with Judge Whipple during the critical week after Stephen was brought home. But Anne had told her that his anxiety was a pitiful thing to see, and that it had left him perceptibly weaker. Certain it was that he was failing fast. So fast that on some days Virginia, watching him, would send Ned or Shadrach in hot haste for Dr. Polk.

At noon Anne would relieve Virginia,—Anne or her mother,—and frequently Mr. Brinsmade would come likewise. For it is those who have the most to do who find the most time for charitable deeds. As the hour for their coming drew near, the Judge would be seeking the clock, and scarce did Anne's figure appear in the doorway before the question had arisen to his lips—"And how is my young Captain to-day?"

That is what he called him,—"My young Captain." Virginia's choice of her cousin, and her devotion to him, while seemingly natural enough, had drawn many a sigh from Anne. She thought it strange that Virginia herself had never once asked her about Stephen's condition and she spoke of this one day to the Judge with as much warmth as she was capable of.

"Jinny's heart is like steel where a Yankee is concerned. If her best friend were a Yankee—"

Judge Whipple checked her, smiling.

"She has been very good to one Yankee I know of," he said. "And as for Mrs. Brice, I believe she worships her."

"But when I said that Stephen was much better to-day, she swept out of the room as if she did not care whether he lived or died."

"Well, Anne," the Judge had answered, "you women are a puzzle to me. I guess you don't understand yourselves," he added.

That was a strange month in the life of Clarence Colfax,—the last of his recovery, while he was waiting for the news of his exchange. Bellegarde was never more beautiful, for Mrs. Colfax had no whim of letting the place run down because a great war was in

progress. Though devoted to the South, she did not consecrate her fortune to it. Clarence gave as much as he could.

Whole afternoons Virginia and he would sit in the shaded arbor seat; or at the cool of the day descend to the bench on the lower tier of the summer garden, to steep, as it were, in the blended perfumes of the roses and the mignonettes and the pinks. He was soberer than of old. Often through the night he pondered on the change in her. She, too, was grave. But he was troubled to analyze her gravity, her dignity. Was this merely strength of character, the natural result of the trials through which she had passed, the habit acquired of being the Helper and comforter instead of the helped and comforted? Long years afterward the brightly colored portrait of her remained in his eye,—the simple linen gown of pink or white, the brown hair shining in the sunlight, the graceful poise of the head. And the background of flowers—flowers everywhere, far from the field of war.

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Sometimes, when she brought his breakfast on a tray in the morning, there was laughter in her eyes. In the days gone by they had been all laughter.

They were engaged. She was to be his wife. He said it over to himself many, many times in the day. He would sit for a space, feasting his eyes upon her until she lifted her look to his, and the rich color flooded her face. He was not a lover to sit quietly by, was Clarence. And yet, as the winged days flew on, that is what he did, It was not that she did not respond to his advances, he did not make them. Nor could he have told why. Was it the chivalry inherited from a long life of Colfaxes who were gentlemen? Not wholly. Something of awe had crept into his feeling for her.

As the month wore on, and the time drew near for him to go back to the war, a state that was not quite estrangement, and yet something very like it, set in. Poor Clarence. Doubts bothered him, and he dared not give them voice. By night he would plan his speeches,—impassioned, imploring. To see her in her marvellous severity was to strike him dumb. Horrible thought! Whether she loved him, whether she did not love him, she would not give him up. Through the long years of their lives together, he would never know. He was not a weak man now, was Clarence Colfax. He was merely a man possessed of a devil, enchained by the power of self-repression come upon her whom he loved.

And day by day that power seemed to grow more intense,—invulnerable. Among her friends and in the little household it had raised Virginia to heights which she herself did not seem to realize. She was become the mistress of Bellegarde. Mrs. Colfax was under its sway, and doubly miserable because Clarence would listen to her tirades no more.

“When are you to be married?” she had ventured to ask him once. Nor had she taken pains to hide the sarcasm in her voice.

His answer, bringing with it her remembrance of her husband at certain times when it was not safe to question him, had silenced her. Addison Colfax had not been a quiet man. When he was quiet he was dangerous.

“Whenever Virginia is ready, mother,” he had replied. Whenever Virginia was ready! He knew in his heart that if he were to ask her permission to send for Dr, Posthelwaite to-morrow that she would say yes. Tomorrow came,—and with it a great envelope, an official, answer to Clarence’s report that he was fit for duty once more. He had been exchanged. He was to proceed to Cairo, there to await the arrival of the transport Indianapolis, which was to carry five hundred officers and men from Sandusky Prison, who were going back to fight once more for the Confederacy. O that they might have seen the North, all those brave men who made that sacrifice. That they might have realized the numbers and the resources and the wealth arrayed against them!

Page 3009

It was a cool day for September, a perfect day, an auspicious day, and yet it went the way of the others before it. This was the very fulness of the year, the earth giving out the sweetness of her maturity, the corn in martial ranks, with golden plumes nodding. The forest still in its glory of green. They walked in silence the familiar paths, and Alfred, clipping the late roses for the supper table, shook his white head as they passed him. The sun, who had begun to hurry on his southward journey, went to bed at six. The few clothes Clarence was to take with him had been packed by Virginia in his bag, and the two were standing in the twilight on the steps of the house, when Ned came around the corner. He called his young mistress by name, but she did not hear him. He called again.

“Miss Jinny!”

She started as from a sleep, and paused.

“Yes, Mr. Johnson,” said she, and smiled. He wore that air of mystery so dear to darkeys.

“Gemmen to see you, Miss Jinny.”

“A gentleman!” she said in surprise. “Where?”

The negro pointed to the lilac shrubbery.

“Thar!”

“What’s all this nonsense, Ned?” said Clarence, sharply: “If a man is there, bring him here at once.”

“Reckon he won’t come, Marse Clarence.” said Ned, “He fearful skeered ob de light ob day. He got suthin very pertickler fo’ Miss Jinny.”

“Do you know him?” Clarence demanded.

“No sah—yessah—leastwise I’be seed ’um. Name’s Robimson.”

The word was hardly out of his mouth before Virginia had leaped down the four feet from the porch to the flower-bed and was running across the lawn toward the shrubbery. Parting the bushes after her, Clarence found his cousin confronting a large man, whom he recognized as the carrier who brought messages from the South.

“What’s the matter, Jinny?” he demanded.

“Pa has got through the lines,” she said breathlessly. “He—he came up to see me. Where is he, Robinson?”

“He went to Judge Whipple’s rooms, ma’am. They say the Judge is dying. I reckoned you knew it, Miss Jinny,” Robinson added contritely.

“Clarence,” she said, “I must go at once.”

“I will go with you,” he said; “you cannot go alone.” In a twinkling Ned and Sambo had the swift pair of horses harnessed, and the light carriage was flying over the soft clay road toward the city. As they passed Mr. Brinsmade’s place, the moon hung like a great round lantern under the spreading trees about the house. Clarence caught a glimpse of his cousin’s face in the light. She was leaning forward, her gaze fixed intently on the stone posts which stood like monuments between the bushes at the entrance. Then she drew back again into the dark corner of the barouche. She was startled by a sharp challenge, and the carriage stopped. Looking out, she saw the provost’s guard like black card figures on the road, and Ned fumbling for his pass.

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On they drove into the city streets until the dark bulk of the Court House loomed in front of them, and Ned drew rein at the little stairway which led to the Judge's rooms. Virginia, leaping out of the carriage, flew up the steps and into the outer office, and landed in the Colonel's arms.

"Jinny!"

"Oh, Pa!" she cried. "Why do you risk your life in this way? If the Yankees catch you—"

"They won't catch me, honey," he answered, kissing her. Then he held her out at arm's length and gazed earnestly into her face. Trembling, she searched his own. "Pa, how old you look!"

"I'm not precisely young, my dear," he said, smiling. His hair was nearly white, and his face scared. But he was a fine erect figure of a man, despite the shabby clothes he wore, and the mud-bespattered boots.

"Pa," she whispered, "it was foolhardy to come here. Why did you come to St. Louis at all?"

"I came to see you, Jinny, I reckon. And when I got home to-night and heard Silas was dying, I just couldn't resist. He's the oldest friend I've got in St. Louis, honey and now —now—"

"Pa, you've been in battle?"

"Yes," he said.

"And you weren't hurt; I thank God for that," she whispered. After a while: "Is Uncle Silas dying?"

"Yes, Jinny; Dr. Polk is in there now, and says that he can't last through the night. Silas has been asking for you, honey, over and over. He says you were very good to him,—-that you and Mrs. Brice gave up everything to nurse him."

"She did," Virginia faltered. "She was here night and day until her son came home. She is a noble woman—"

"Her son?" repeated the Colonel. "Stephen Brice? Silas has done nothing the last half-hour but call his name. He says he must see the boy before he dies. Polk says he is not strong enough to come."

"Oh, no, he is not strong enough," cried Virginia. The Colonel looked down at her queerly. "Where is Clarence?" he asked.

She had not thought of Clarence. She turned hurriedly, glanced around the room, and then peered down the dark stairway.

“Why, he came in with me. I wonder why he did not follow me up?”

“Virginia.”

“Yes, Pa.”

“Virginia, are you happy?”

“Why, yes, Pa.”

“Are you going to marry Clarence?” he asked.

“I have promised,” she said simply.

Then after a long pause, seeing her father said nothing, she added, “Perhaps he was waiting for you to see me alone. I will go down to see if he is in the carriage.”

The Colonel started with her, but she pulled him back in alarm.

“You will be seen, Pa,” she cried. “How can you be so reckless?”

He stayed at the top of the passage, holding open the door that she might have light. When she reached the sidewalk, there was Ned standing beside the horses, and the carriage empty.

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“Ned!”

“Yass’m, Miss Jinny.”

“Where’s Mr. Clarence?”

“He done gone, Miss Tinny.”

“Gone?”

“Yass’m. Fust I seed was a man plump out’n Willums’s, Miss Jinny. He was a-gwine shufflin’ up de street when Marse Clarence put out after him, pos’ has’e. Den he run.”

She stood for a moment on the pavement in thought, and paused on the stairs again, wondering whether it were best to tell her father. Perhaps Clarence had seen—she caught her breath at the thought and pushed open the door.

“Oh, Pa, do you think you are safe here?” she cried. “Why, yes, honey, I reckon so,” he answered. “Where’s Clarence?”

“Ned says he ran after a man who was hiding in an entrance. Pa, I am afraid they are watching the place.”

“I don’t think so, Jinny. I came here with Polk, in his buggy, after dark.”

Virginia, listening, heard footsteps on the stairs, and seized her father’s sleeve.

“Think of the risk you are running, Pa,” she whispered. She would have dragged him to the closet. But it was too late. The door opened, and Mr. Brinsmade entered, and with him a lady veiled.

At sight of Mr. Carvel Mr. Brinsmade started back in surprise. How long he stared at his old friend Virginia could not say. It seemed to her an eternity. But Mrs. Brice has often told since how straight the Colonel stood, his fine head thrown back, as he returned the glance. Then Mr. Brinsmade came forward, with his hand outstretched.

“Comyn,” said he, his voice breaking a little, “I have known you these many years as a man of unstained honor. You are safe with me. I ask no questions. God will judge whether I have done my duty.”

Mr. Carvel took his friend’s hand. “Thank you, Calvin,” he said. “I give you my word of honor as a gentleman that I came into this city for no other reason than to see my daughter. And hearing that my old friend was dying, I could not resist the temptation, sir—”

Mr. Brinsmade finished for him. And his voice shook.

“To come to his bedside. How many men do you think would risk their lives so, Mrs. Brice?”

“Not many, indeed, Mr. Brinsmade,” she answered. “Thank God he will now die happy. I know it has been much on his mind.”

The Colonel bowed over her hand.

“And in his name, madam,—in the name of my oldest and best friend,—I thank you for what you have done for him. I trust that you will allow me to add that I have learned from my daughter to respect and admire you. I hope that your son is doing well.”

“He is, thank you, Colonel Carvel. If he but knew that the Judge were dying, I could not have kept him at home. Dr. Polk says that he must not leave the house, or undergo any excitement.”

Just then the door of the inner room opened, and Dr. Polk came out. He bowed gravely to Mrs. Brice and Mr. Brinsmade, and he patted Virginia.

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“The Judge is still asleep,” he said gently. “And—he may not wake up in this world.”

Silently, sadly, they went together into that little room where so much of Judge Whipple’s life had been spent. How little it was! And how completely they filled it,—these five people and the big Rothfield covered with the black cloth. Virginia pressed her father’s arm as they leaned against it, and brushed her eyes. The Doctor turned the wick of the night-lamp.

What was that upon the sleeper’s face from which they drew back? A smile? Yes, and a light. The divine light which is shed upon those who have lived for others, who have denied themselves the lusts of the flesh, For a long space, perhaps an hour, they stayed, silent save for a low word now and again from the Doctor as he felt the Judge’s heart. Tableaux from the past floated before Virginia’s eyes. Of the old days, of the happy days in Locust Street, of the Judge quarrelling with her father, and she and Captain Lige smiling nearby. And she remembered how sometimes when the controversy was finished the Judge would rub his nose and say:

“It’s my turn now, Lige.”

Whereupon the Captain would open the piano, and she would play the hymn that he liked best. It was “Lead, Kindly Light.”

What was it in Silas Whipple’s nature that courted the pain of memories? What pleasure could it have been all through his illness to look upon this silent and cruel reminder of days gone by forever? She had heard that Stephen Brice had been with the Judge when he had bid it in. She wondered that he had allowed it, for they said that he was the only one who had ever been known to break the Judge’s will. Virginia’s eyes rested on Margaret Brice, who was seated at the head of the bed, smoothing the pillows The strength of Stephen’s features were in hers, but not the ruggedness. Her features were large, indeed, yet stanch and softened. The widow, as if feeling Virginia’s look upon her, glanced up from the Judge’s face and smiled at her. The girl colored with pleasure, and again at the thought which she had had of the likeness between mother and son.

Still the Judge slept on, while they watched. And at length the thought of Clarence crossed Virginia’s mind.

Why had he not returned? Perhaps he was in the office without. Whispering to her father, she stole out on tiptoe. The office was empty. Descending to the street, she was unable to gain any news of Clarence from Ned, who was becoming alarmed likewise.

Perplexed and troubled, she climbed the stairs again. No sound came from the Judge’s room Perhaps Clarence would be back at any moment. Perhaps her father was in danger. She sat down to think,—her elbows on the desk in front of her, her chin in her

hand, her eyes at the level of a line of books which stood on end.—Chitty's Pleadings, Blackstone, Greenleaf on Evidence. Absently; as a person whose mind is in trouble, she reached out and took one of them down and opened it. Across the flyleaf, in a high and bold hand, was written the name, Stephen Atterbury Brice.

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It was his desk! She was sitting in his chair!

She dropped the book, and, rising abruptly, crossed quickly to the other side of the room. Then she turned, hesitatingly, and went back. This was his desk—his chair, in which he had worked so faithfully for the man who lay dying beyond the door. For him whom they all loved—whose last hours they were were to soothe. Wars and schisms may part our bodies, but stronger ties unite our souls. Through Silas Whipple, through his mother, Virginia knew that she was woven of one piece with Stephen Brice. In a thousand ways she was reminded, lest she drive it from her belief. She might marry another, and that would not matter.

She sank again into his chair, and gave herself over to the thoughts crowding in her heart. How the threads of his life ran next to hers, and crossed and recrossed them. The slave auction, her dance with him, the Fair, the meeting at Mr. Brinsmade's gate,—-she knew them all. Her love and admiration for his mother. Her dreams of him—for she did dream of him. And now he had saved Clarence's life that she might marry her cousin. Was it true that she would marry Clarence? That seemed to her only a dream. It had never seemed real. Again she glanced at the signature in the book, as if fascinated by the very strength of it. She turned over a few pages of the book, "Supposing the defendant's counsel essays to prove by means of—" that was his writing again, a marginal, note. There were marginal notes on every page—even the last was covered with them, And then at the end, "First reading, February, 1858. Second reading, July, 1858. Bought with some of money obtained by first article for M. D." That capacity for work, incomparable gift, was what she had always coveted the most. Again she rested her elbows on the desk and her chin on her hands, and sighed unconsciously.

She had not heard the step on the stair. She had not seen the door open. She did not know that any one wage in the room until she heard his voice, and then she thought that she was dreaming.

"Miss Carvel!"

"Yes?" Her head did not move. He took a step toward her.

"Miss Carvel!"

Slowly she raised her face to his, unbelief and wonder in her eyes, —unbelief and wonder and fright. No; it could not be he. But when she met the quality of his look, the grave tenderness of it, she trembled, and our rendered her own to the page where his handwriting quivered and became a blur.

He never knew the effort it cost her to rise and confront him. She herself had not measured or fathomed the power which his very person exhaled. It seemed to have

come upon him suddenly. He needed not to have spoken for her to have felt that. What it was she could not tell. She knew alone that it was nigh irresistible, and she grasped the back of the chair as though material support might sustain her.

“Is he—dead?”

She was breathing hard.

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“No,” she said. “Not—not yet, They are waiting for the end.”

“And you?” he asked in grave surprise, glancing at the door of the Judge’s room.

Then she remembered Clarence.

“I am waiting for my cousin,” she said.

Even as she spoke she was with this man again at the Brinsmade gate. Those had been her very words! Intuition told her that he, too, was thinking of that time. Now he had found her at his desk, and, as if that were not humiliation enough, with one of his books taken down and laid open at his signature. Suffused, she groped for words to carry her on.

“I am waiting for Clarence, Mr. Brice. He was here, and is gone somewhere.”

He did not seem to take account of the speech. And his silence—goad to indiscretion—pressed her to add:— “You saved him, Mr. Brice. I—we all —thank you so much. And that is not all I want to say. It is a poor enough acknowledgment of what you did,—for we have not always treated you well.” Her voice faltered almost to faintness, as he raised his hand in pained protest. But she continued: “I shall regard it as a debt I can never repay. It is not likely that in my life to come I can ever help you, but I shall pray for that opportunity.”

He interrupted her.

“I did nothing, Miss Carvel, nothing that the most unfeeling man in our army would not do. Nothing that I would not have done for the merest stranger.”

“You saved him for me,” she said.

O fateful words that spoke of themselves! She turned away from him for very shame, and yet she heard him saying:— “Yes, I saved him for you.”

His voice was in the very note of the sadness which has the strength to suffer, to put aside the thought of self. A note to which her soul responded with anguish when she turned to him with the natural cry of woman.

“Oh, you ought not to have come here to-night. Why did you come? The Doctor forbade it. The consequences may kill you.”

“It does not matter much,” he answered. “The Judge was dying.”

“How did you know?”

“I guessed it,—because my mother had left me.”

“Oh, you ought not to have come!” she said again.

“The Judge has been my benefactor,” he answered quietly. I could walk, and it was my duty to come.”

“You did not walk!” she gasped.

He smiled, “I had no carriage,” he said.

With the instinct of her sex she seized the chair and placed it under him. “You must sit down at once,” she cried.

“But I am not tired,” he replied.

“Oh, you must sit down, you must, Captain Brice.” He started at the title, which came so prettily from her lips, “Won’t you please!” she said pleadingly.

He sat down. And, as the sun peeps out of a troubled sky, she smiled.

“It is your chair,” she said.

He glanced at the book, and the bit of sky was crimson. But still he said nothing.

Page 3015

“It is your book,” she stammered. “I did not know that it was yours when I took it down. I—I was looking at it while I was waiting for Clarence.”

“It is dry reading,” he remarked, which was not what he wished to say.

“And yet—”

“Yes?”

“And yet you have read it twice.” The confession had slipped to her lips.

She was sitting on the edge of his desk, looking down at him. Still he did not look at her. All the will that was left him averted his head. And the seal of honor was upon his speech. And he wondered if man were ever more tempted.

Then the evil spread its wings, and soared away into the night. And the moment was past. Peace seemed to come upon them both, quieting the tumult in their hearts, and giving them back their reason. Respect like wise came to the girl,—respect that was akin to awe. It was he who spoke first.

“My mother has me how faithfully you nursed the Judge, Miss Carvel. It was a very noble thing to do.”

“Not noble at all,” she replied hastily, “your mother did the most of it, And he is an old friend of my father—”

“It was none the less noble,” said Stephen, warmly, “And he quarrelled with Colonel Carvel.”

“My father quarrelled with him,” she corrected. “It was well that I should make some atonement. And yet mine was no atonement, I love Judge Whipple. It was a—a privilege to see your mother every day—oh, how he would talk of you! I think he loves you better than any one on this earth.”

“Tell me about him,” said Stephen, gently.

Virginia told him, and into the narrative she threw the whole of her pent-up self. How patient the Judge had been, and the joy he had derived from Stephen’s letters. “You were very good to write to him so often,” she said. It seemed like a dream to Stephen, like one of the many dreams of her, the mystery of which was of the inner life beyond our ken. He could not recall a time when she had not been rebellious, antagonistic. And now—as he listened to her voice, with its exquisite low tones and modulations, as he sat there in this sacred intimacy, perchance to be the last in his life, he became dazed. His eyes, softened, with supreme eloquence cried out that she, was his, forever

and forever. The magnetic force which God uses to tie the worlds together was pulling him to her. And yet the Puritan resisted.

Then the door swung open, and Clarence Colfax, out of breath, ran into the room. He stopped short when he saw them, his hand fell to his sides, and his words died on his lips. Virginia did not stir.

It was Stephen who rose to meet him, and with her eyes the girl followed his motions. The broad and loosely built frame of the Northerner, his shoulders slightly stooping, contrasted with Clarence's slighter figure, erect, compact, springy. The Southerner's eye, for that moment, was flint struck with the spark from the steel. Stephen's face, thinned by illness, was grave. The eyes kindly, yet penetrating. For an instant they stood thus regarding each other, neither offering a hand. It was Stephen who spoke first, and if there was a trace of emotion in his voice, one who was listening intently failed to mark it.

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“I am glad to see that you have recovered, Colonel Colfax,” he said.

“I should indeed be without gratitude if I did not thank Captain Brice for my life,” answered Clarence. Virginia flushed. She had detected the undue accent on her cousin’s last words, and she glanced apprehensively at Stephen. His forceful reply surprised them both.

“Miss Carvel has already thanked me sufficiently, sir,” he said. “I am happy to have been able to have done you a good turn, and at the same time to have served her so well. It was she who saved your life. It is to her your thanks are chiefly due. I believe that I am not going too far, Colonel Colfax,” he added, “when I congratulate you both.”

Before her cousin could recover, Virginia slid down from the desk and had come between them. How her eyes shone and her lip trembled as she gazed at him, Stephen has never forgotten. What a woman she was as she took her cousin’s arm and made him a curtsey.

“What you have done may seem a light thing to you, Captain Brice,” she said. “That is apt to be the way with those who have big hearts. You have put upon Colonel Colfax, and upon me, a life’s obligation.”

When she began to speak, Clarence raised his head. As he glanced, incredulous, from her to Stephen, his look gradually softened, and when she had finished, his manner had become again frank, boyish, impetuous —nay, penitent. He seized Stephen’s hand.

“Forgive me, Brice,” he cried. “Forgive me. I should have known better. I—I did you an injustice, and you, Virginia. I was a fool—a scoundrel.” Stephen shook his head.

“No, you were neither,” he said. Then upon his face came the smile of one who has the strength to renounce, all that is dearest to him—that smile of the unselfish, sweetest of all. It brought tears to Virginia. She was to see it once again, upon the features of one who bore a cross, —Abraham Lincoln. Clarence looked, and then he turned away toward the door to the stairway, as one who walks blindly, in a sorrow.

His hand was on the knob when Virginia seemed to awake. She flew after him:

“Wait!” she whispered.

Then she raised her eyes, slowly, to Stephen, who was standing motionless beside his chair.

“Captain Brice!”

“Yes,” he answered.

“My father is in the Judge’s room,” she said.

“Your father!” he exclaimed. “I thought—”

“That he was an officer in the Confederate Army. So he is.” Her head went up as she spoke.

Stephen stared at her, troubled. Suddenly her manner, changed. She took a step toward him, appealingly.

“Oh, he is not a spy,” she cried. “He has given Mr Brinsmade his word that he came here for no other purpose than to see me. Then he heard that the Judge was dying—”

“He has given his word to Mr. Brinsmade?

“Yes.”

“Then,” said Stephen, “what Mr. Brinsmade sanctions is not for me to question.”

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She gave him yet another look, a fleeting one which he did not see. Then she softly opened the door and passed into the room of the dying man. Stephen followed her. As for Clarence, he stood for a space staring after them. Then he went noiselessly down the stairs into the street.

CHAPTER XI

LEAD, KINDLY LIGHT

When the Judge opened his eyes for the last time in this world, they fell first upon the face of his old friend, Colonel Carvel. Twice he tried to speak his name, and twice he failed. The third time he said it faintly.

“Comyn!”

“Yes, Silas.”

“Comyn, what are you doing here?

“I reckon I came to see you, Silas,” answered the Colonel.

“To see me die,” said the Judge, grimly.

Colonel Carvel’s face twitched, and the silence in that little room seemed to throb.

“Comyn,” said the Judge again, “I heard that you had gone South to fight against your country. I see you here. Can it be that you have at last returned in your allegiances to the flag for which your forefathers died?”

Poor Colonel Carvel

“I am still of the same mind, Silas,” he said.

The Judge turned his face away, his thin lips moving as in prayer. But they knew that he was not praying, “Silas,” said Mr. Carvel, “we were friends for twenty years. Let us be friends again, before—”

“Before I die,” the Judge interrupted, “I am ready to die. Yes, I am ready. I have had a hard life, Comyn, and few friends. It was my fault. I—I did not know how to make them. Yet no man ever valued those few more than! But,” he cried, the stern fire unquenched to the last, “I would that God had spared me to see this Rebellion stamped out. For it will be stamped out.” To those watching, his eyes seemed fixed on a distant point, and the light of prophecy was in them. “I would that God had spared me to see this Union supreme once more. Yes, it will be supreme. A high destiny is reserved for

this nation—! I think the highest of all on this earth." Amid profound silence he leaned back on the pillows from which he had risen, his breath coming fast. None dared look at the neighbor beside them.

It was Stephen's mother who spoke. "Would you not like to see a clergyman, Judge?" she asked.

The look on his face softened as he turned to her.

"No, madam," he answered; "you are clergyman enough for me. You are near enough to God—there is no one in this room who is not worthy to stand in the presence of death. Yet I wish that a clergyman were here, that he might listen to one thing I have to say. When I was a boy I worked my way down the river to New York, to see the city. I met a bishop there. He said to me, 'Sit down, my son, I want to talk to you. I know your father in Albany. You are Senator Whipple's son.' I said to him, 'No, sir, I am not Senator Whipple's

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son. I am no relation of his.' If the bishop had wished to talk to me after that, Mrs. Brice, he might have made my life a little easier—a little sweeter. I know that they are not all like that. But it was by just such things that I was embittered when I was a boy." He stopped, and when he spoke again, it was more slowly, more gently, than any of them had heard him speak in all his life before. "I wish that some of the blessings which I am leaving now had come to me then—when I was a boy. I might have done my little share in making the world a brighter place to live in, as all of you have done. Yes, as all of you are now doing for me. I am leaving the world with a better opinion of it than I ever held in life. God hid the sun from me when I was a little child. Margaret Brice," he said, "if I had had such a mother as you, I would have been softened then. I thank God that He sent you when He did."

The widow bowed her head, and a tear fell upon his pillow.

"I have done nothing," she murmured, "nothing."

"So shall they answer at the last whom He has chosen," said the Judge. "I was sick, and ye visited me. He has promised to remember those who do that. Hold up your head, my daughter. God has been good to you. He has given you a son whom all men may look in the face, of whom you need never be ashamed. Stephen," said the Judge, "come here."

Stephen made his way to the bedside, but because of the moisture in his eyes he saw but dimly the gaunt face. And yet he shrank back in awe at the change in it. So must all of the martyrs have looked when the fire of the faggots licked their feet. So must John Bunyan have stared through his prison bars at the sky.

"Stephen," he said, "you have been faithful in a few things. So shall you be made ruler over many things. The little I have I leave to you, and the chief of this is an untarnished name. I know that you will be true to it because I have tried your strength. Listen carefully to what I have to say, for I have thought over it long. In the days gone by our fathers worked for the good of the people, and they had no thought of gain. A time is coming when we shall need that blood and that bone in this Republic. Wealth not yet dreamed of will flow out of this land, and the waters of it will rot all save the pure, and corrupt all save the incorruptible. Half-tried men wilt go down before that flood. You and those like you will remember how your fathers governed,—strongly, sternly, justly. It was so that they governed themselves.

"Be vigilant. Serve your city, serve your state, but above all serve your country."

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He paused to catch his breath, which was coming painfully now, and reached out his bony hand to seek Stephen's. "I was harsh with you at first, my son," he went on. "I wished to try you. And when I had tried you I wished your mind to open, to keep pace with the growth of this nation. I sent you to see Abraham Lincoln that you might be born again —in the West. You were born again. I saw it when you came back—I saw it in your face. O God," he cried, with sudden eloquence. "I would that his hands—-Abraham Lincoln's hands—might be laid upon all who complain and cavil and criticise, and think of the little things in life: I would that his spirit might possess their spirit!"

He stopped again. They marvelled and were awed, for never in all his days had such speech broken from this man. "Good-by, Stephen," he said, when they thought he was not to speak again. "Hold the image of Abraham Lincoln in front of you. Never forget him. You—you are a man after his own heart—and—and mine."

The last word was scarcely audible. They started for ward, for his eyes were closed. But presently he stirred again, and opened them.

"Brinsmade," he said, "Brinsmade, take care of my orphan girls. Send Shadrach here."

The negro came forth, shuffling and sobbing, from the doorway.

"You ain't gwine away, Marse Judge?"

"Yes, Shadrach, good-by. You have served me well, I have left you provided for."

Shadrach kissed the hand of whose secret charity he knew so much. Then the Judge withdrew it, and motioned to him to rise. He called his oldest friend by name. And Colonel Carvel came from the corner where he had been listening, with his face drawn.

"Good-by, Comyn. You were my friend when there was none other. You were true to me when the hand of every man was against me. You—you have risked your life to come to me here, May God spare it for Virginia."

At the sound of her name, the girl started. She came and bent over him. And when she kissed him on the forehead, he trembled.

"Uncle Silas!" she faltered.

Weakly he reached up and put his hands on her shoulders. He whispered in her ear. The tears came and lay wet upon her lashes as she undid the button at his throat.

There, on a piece of cotton twine, hung a little key, She took it off, but still his hands held her.

“I have saved it for you, my dear,” he said. “God bless you—” why did his eyes seek Stephen’s?—“and make your life happy. Virginia—will you play my hymn—once more—once more?”

They lifted the night lamp from the piano, and the medicine. It was Stephen who stripped it of the black cloth it had worn, who stood by Virginia ready to lift the lid when she had turned the lock. The girl’s exaltation gave a trembling touch divine to the well-remembered chords, and those who heard were lifted, lifted far above and beyond the power of earthly spell.

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"Lead, Kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom
Lead Thou me on
The night is dark, and I am far from home;
Lead Thou me on.
Keep Thou my feet! I do not ask to see
The distant scene; one step enough for me."

A sigh shook Silas Whipple's wasted frame, and he died.

THE CRISIS

By Winston Churchill

Volume 8.

CHAPTER XII

THE LAST CARD

Mr. Brinsmade and the Doctor were the first to leave the little room where Silas Whipple had lived and worked and died, Mr. Brinsmade bent upon one of those errands which claimed him at all times. He took Shadrach with him. Virginia sat on, a vague fear haunting her,—a fear for her father's safety. Where was Clarence? What had he seen? Was the place watched? These questions, at first intruding upon her sorrow, remained to torture her.

Softly she stirred from the chair where she had sat before the piano, and opened the door of the outer office. A clock in a steeple near by was striking twelve. The Colonel did not raise his head. Only Stephen saw her go; she felt his eyes following her, and as she slipped out lifted hers to meet them for a brief instant through the opening of the door. Then it closed behind her.

First of all she knew that the light in the outer office was burning dimly, and the discovery gave her a shock. Who had turned it down? Had Clarence? Was he here? Fearfully searching the room for him, her gaze was held by a figure in the recess of the window at the back of the room. A solid, bulky figure it was, and, though uncertainly outlined in the semi-darkness, she knew it. She took a step nearer, and a cry escaped her.

The man was Eliphalet Hopper. He got down from the sill with a motion at once sheepish and stealthy. Her breath caught, and instinctively she gave back toward the door, as if to open it again.

“Hold on!” he said. “I’ve got something I want to say to you, Miss Virginia.”

His tones seemed strangely natural. They were not brutal. But she shivered and paused, horrified at the thought of what she was about to do. Her father was in that room—and Stephen. She must keep them there, and get this man away. She must not show fright before him, and yet she could not trust her voice to speak just then. She must not let him know that she was afraid of him—this she kept repeating to herself. But how to act? Suddenly an idea flashed upon her.

Virginia never knew how she gathered the courage to pass him, even swiftly, and turn up the gas. He started back, blinking as the jet flared. For a moment she stood beside it, with her head high; confronting him and striving to steady herself for speech.

“Why have you come here?” she said. “Judge Whipple—died—to-night.”

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The dominating note in his answer was a whine, as if, in spite of himself, he were awed.

“I ain’t here to see the Judge.”

She was pale, and quite motionless. And she faltered now. She felt her lips moving, but knew not whether the words had come.

“What do you mean?”

He gained confidence. The look in his little eyes was the filmy look of those of an animal feasting.

“I came here to see you,” he said, “—you.” She was staring at him now, in horror. “And if you don’t give me what I want, I cal’late to see some one else—in there,” said Mr. Hopper.

He smiled, for she was swaying, her lids half closed. By a supreme effort she conquered her terror and looked at him. The look was in his eyes still, intensified now.

“How dare you speak to me after what has happened! she said. If Colonel Carvel were here, he would—kill you.”

He flinched at the name and the word, involuntarily. He wiped his forehead, hot at the very thought.

“I want to know!” he exclaimed, in faint-hearted irony. Then, remembering his advantage, he stepped close to her.

“He is here,” he said, intense now. “He is here, in that there room.” He seized her wrists. Virginia struggled, and yet she refrained from crying out. “He never leaves this city without I choose. I can have him hung if I choose,” he whispered, next to her.

“Oh!” she cried; “oh, if you choose!”

Still his body crept closer, and his face closer. And her strength was going.

“There’s but one price to pay,” he said hoarsely, “there’s but one price to pay, and that’s you—you. I cal’late you’ll marry me now.”

Delirious at the touch of her, he did not hear the door open. Her senses were strained for that very sound. She heard it close again, and a footstep across the room. She knew the step—she knew the voice, and her heart leaped at the sound of it in anger. An arm in a blue sleeve came between them, and Eliphalet Hopper staggered and fell across the books on the table, his hand to his face. Above him towered Stephen Brice. Towered was the impression that came to Virginia then, and so she thought of the

scene ever afterward. Small bits, like points of tempered steel, glittered in Stephen's eyes, and his hands following up the mastery he had given them clutched Mr. Hopper's shoulders. Twice Stephen shook him so that his head beat upon the table.

"You—you beast!" he cried, but he kept his voice low. And then, as if he expected Hopper to reply: "Shall I kill you?"

Again he shook him violently. He felt Virginia's touch on his arm.

"Stephen!" she cried, "your wounds! Be careful! Oh, do be careful!"

She had called him Stephen. He turned slowly, and his hands fell from Mr. Hopper's cowering form as his eyes met hers. Even he could not fathom the appeal, the yearning, in their dark blue depths. And yet what he saw there made him tremble. She turned away, trembling too.

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“Please sit down,” she entreated. “He—he won’t touch me again while you are here.”

Eliphalet Hopper raised himself from the desk, and one of the big books fell with a crash to the floor. Then they saw him shrink, his eyes fixed upon some one behind them. Before the Judge’s door stood Colonel Carvel, in calm, familiar posture, his feet apart, and his head bent forward as he pulled at his goatee.

“What is this man doing here, Virginia?” he asked. She did not answer him, nor did speech seem to come easily to Mr. Hopper in that instant. Perhaps the sight of Colonel Carvel had brought before him too, vividly the memory of that afternoon at Glencoe.

All at once Virginia grasped the fulness of the power in this man’s hands. At a word from him her father would be shot as a spy—and Stephen Brice, perhaps, as a traitor. But if Colonel Carvel should learn that he had seized her,—here was the terrible danger of the situation. Well she knew what the Colonel would do. Would. Stephen tell him? She trusted in his coolness that he would not.

Before a word of reply came from any of the three, a noise was heard on the stairway. Some one was coming up. There followed four seconds of suspense, and then Clarence came in. She saw that his face wore a worried, dejected look. It changed instantly when he glanced about him, and an oath broke from his lips as he singled out Eliphalet Hopper standing in sullen aggressiveness, beside the table.

“So you’re the spy, are you?” he said in disgust. Then he turned his back and faced his uncle. “I saw, him in Williams’s entry as we drove up. He got away from me.”

A thought seemed to strike him. He strode to the open window at the back of the office, and looked out, There was a roof under it.

“The sneak got in here,” he said. “He knew I was waiting for him in the street. So you’re the spy, are you?”

Mr. Hopper passed a heavy hand across the cheek where Stephen had struck him.

“No, I ain’t the spy,” he said, with a meaning glance at the Colonel.

“Then what are you doing here?” demanded Clarence, fiercely.

“I cal’late that he knows,” Eliphalet replied, jerking his head toward Colonel Carvel. “Where’s his Confederate uniform? What’s to prevent my calling up the provost’s guard below?” he continued, with a smile that was hideous on his swelling face.

It was the Colonel who answered him, very quickly and very clearly.

“Nothing whatever, Mr. Hopper,” he said. “This is the way out.” He pointed at the door. Stephen, who was watching him, could not tell whether it were a grim smile that creased the corners of the Colonel’s mouth as he added. “You might prefer the window.”

Mr. Hopper did not move, but his eyes shifted to Virginia’s form. Stephen deliberately thrust himself between them that he might not see her.

“What are you waiting for?” said the Colonel, in the mild voice that should have been an ominous warning. Still Mr. Hopper did not move. It was clear that he had not reckoned upon all of this; that he had waited in the window to deal with Virginia alone. But now the very force of a desire which had gathered strength in many years made him reckless. His voice took on the oily quality in which he was wont to bargain.

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“Let’s be calm about this business, Colonel,” he said. “We won’t say anything about the past. But I ain’t set on having you shot. There’s a consideration that would stop me, and I cal’late you know what it is.”

Then the Colonel made a motion. But before he had taken a step Virginia had crossed the room swiftly, and flung herself upon him.

“Oh, don’t, Pa!” she cried. “Don’t! Tell him that I will agree to it. Yes, I will. I can’t have you—shot.” The last word came falteringly, faintly.

“Let me go,—honey,” whispered the Colonel, gently. His eyes did not leave Eliphalet. He tried to disengage himself, but her fingers were clasped about his neck in a passion of fear and love. And then, while she clung to him, her head was raised to listen. The sound of Stephen Brice’s voice held her as in a spell. His words were coming coldly, deliberately, and yet so sharply that each seemed to fall like a lash.

“Mr. Hopper, if ever I hear of your repeating what you have seen or heard in this room, I will make this city and this state too hot for you to live in. I know you. I know how you hide in areas, how you talk sedition in private, how you have made money out of other men’s misery. And, what is more, I can prove that you have had traitorous dealings with the Confederacy. General Sherman has been good enough to call himself a friend of mine, and if he prosecutes you for your dealings in Memphis, you will get a term in a Government prison, You ought to be hung. Colonel Carvel has shown you the door. Now go.”

And Mr, Hopper went.

CHAPTER XIII

FROM THE LETTERS OF MAJOR STEPHEN BRICE

Of the Staff of General Sherman on the March to the Sea, and on the March from Savannah Northward.

Headquarters military division of the Mississippi Goldsboro, N.C. *March* 24, 1865

Dear mother: The South Carolina Campaign is a thing of the past. I pause as I write these words—they seem so incredible to me. We have marched the four hundred and twenty-five miles in fifty days, and the General himself has said that it is the longest and most important march ever made by an organized army in a civilized country. I know that you will not be misled by the words “civilized country.” Not until the history of this campaign is written will the public realize the wide rivers and all but impassable swamps we have crossed with our baggage trains and artillery. The roads (by courtesy so called) were a sea of molasses and every mile of them has had to be corduroyed. For

fear of worrying you I did not write you from Savannah how they laughed at us for starting at that season of the year. They said we would not go ten miles, and I most solemnly believe that no one but “Uncle Billy” and an army organized and equipped by him could have gone ten miles. Nothing seems to stop him. You have probably remarked in the tone of my letters ever since we left Kingston for the sea, a growing admiration for “my General.”

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It seems very strange that this wonderful tactician can be the same man I met that day going to the Arsenal in the streetcar, and again at Camp Jackson. I am sure that history will give him a high place among the commanders of the world. Certainly none was ever more tireless than he. He never fights a battle when it can be avoided, and his march into Columbia while threatening Charleston and Augusta was certainly a master stroke of strategy.

I think his simplicity his most remarkable trait. You should see him as he rides through the army, an erect figure, with his clothes all angular and awry, and an expanse of white sock showing above his low shoes. You can hear his name running from file to file; and some times the new regiments can't resist cheering. He generally says to the Colonel: —"Stop that noise, sir. Don't like it."

On our march to the sea, if the orders were ever given to turn northward, "the boys" would get very much depressed. One moonlight night I was walking my horse close to the General's over the pine needles, when we overheard this conversation between two soldiers:— "Say, John," said one, "I guess Uncle Billy don't know our corps is goin' north."

"I wonder if he does,'" said John. "If I could only get a sight of them white socks, I'd know it was all right."

The General rode past without a word, but I heard him telling the story to Mower the next day.

I can find little if any change in his manner since I knew him first. He is brusque, but kindly, and he has the same comradeship with officers and men—and even the negroes who flock to our army. But few dare to take advantage of it, and they never do so twice. I have been very near to him, and have tried not to worry him or ask many foolish questions. Sometimes on the march he will beckon me to close up to him, and we have a conversation something on this order:— "There's Kenesaw, Brice."

"Yes, sir."

Pointing with his arm.

"Went beyond lines there with small party. Rebel battery on summit. Had to git. Fired on. Next day I thought Rebels would leave in the night. Got up before daylight, fixed telescope on stand, and waited. Watched top of Kenesaw. No Rebel. Saw one blue man creep up, very cautious, looked around, waved his hat. Rebels gone. Thought so."

This gives you but a faint idea of the vividness of his talk. When we make a halt for any time, the general officers and their staffs flock to headquarters to listen to his stories.

When anything goes wrong, his perception of it is like a lightning flash,—and he acts as quickly.

By the way, I have just found the letter he wrote me, offering this staff position. Please keep it carefully, as it is something I shall value all my life.

Gaylesville, *Alabama*, October 25, 1864.

Major Stephen A. *Brice*:

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Dear Sir,—The world goes on, and wicked men sound asleep. Davis has sworn to destroy my army, and Beauregard has come to do the work,—so if you expect to share in our calamity, come down. I offer you this last chance for staff duty, and hope you have had enough in the field. I do not wish to hurry you, but you can't get aboard a ship at sea. So if you want to make the trip, come to Chattanooga and take your chances of meeting me.

Yours truly,

W. T. *Sherman*, Major General.

One night—at Cheraw, I think it was—he sent for me to talk to him. I found him lying on a bed of Spanish moss they had made for him. He asked me a great many questions about St. Louis, and praised Mr. Brinsmade, especially his management of the Sanitary Commission.

"Brice," he said, after a while, "you remember when Grant sent me to beat off Joe Johnston's army from Vicksburg. You were wounded then, by the way, in that dash Lauman made. Grant thought he ought to warn me against Johnston.

"'He's wily, Sherman,' said he. 'He's a dangerous man.'

"'Grant,' said I, 'you give me men enough and time enough to look over the ground, and I'm not afraid of the devil.'"

Nothing could sum up the man better than that. And now what a trick of fate it is that he has Johnston before him again, in what we hope will prove the last gasp of the war! He likes Johnston, by the way, and has the greatest respect for him.

I wish you could have peeped into our camp once in a while. In the rare bursts of sunshine on this march our premises have been decorated with gay red blankets, and sombre gray ones brought from the quartermasters, and white Hudson's Bay blankets (not so white now), all being between forked sticks. It is wonderful how the pitching of a few tents, and the busy crackle of a few fires, and the sound of voices—sometimes merry, sometimes sad, depending on the weather, will change the look of a lonely pine knoll. You ask me how we fare. I should be heartily ashamed if a word of complaint ever fell from my lips. But the men! Whenever I wake up at night with my feet in a puddle between the blankets, I think of the men. The corduroy roads which our horses stumble over through the mud, they make as well as march on. Our flies are carried in wagons, and our utensils and provisions. They must often bear on their backs the little dog-tents, under which, put up by their own labor, they crawl to sleep, wrapped in a blanket they have carried all day, perhaps waist deep in water. The food they eat has been in their haversacks for many a weary mile, and is cooked in the little skillet and pot which have also been a part of their burden. Then they have their musket and

accoutrements, and the “forty rounds” at their backs. Patiently, cheerily tramping along, going they know not where, nor care much either, so it be not in retreat. Ready to make roads, throw up works, tear up railroads, or hew out and build wooden bridges; or, best of all, to go for the Johnnies under hot sun or heavy rain, through swamp and mire and quicksand. They marched ten miles to storm Fort McAllister. And how the cheers broke from them when the pop pop pop of the skirmish line began after we came in sight of Savannah! No man who has seen but not shared their life may talk of personal hardship.

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We arrived at this pretty little town yesterday, so effecting a junction with Schofield, who got in with the 3d Corps the day before. I am writing at General Schofield's headquarters. There was a bit of a battle on Tuesday at Bentonville, and we have come hither in smoke, as usual. But this time we thank Heaven that it is not the smoke of burning homes, —only some resin the "Johnnies" set on fire before they left.

I must close. General Sherman has just sent for me.

On board despatch boat "*Martin*."
At sea, March 25, 1865.

Dear mother: A most curious thing has happened. But I may as well begin at the beginning. When I stopped writing last evening at the summons of the General, I was about to tell you something of the battle of Bentonville on Tuesday last. Mower charged through as bad a piece of wood and swamp as I ever saw, and got within one hundred yards of Johnston himself, who was at the bridge across Mill Creek. Of course we did not know this at the time, and learned it from prisoners.

As I have written you, I have been under fire very little since coming to the staff. When the battle opened, however, I saw that if I stayed with the General (who was then behind the reserves) I would see little or nothing; I went ahead "to get information" beyond the line of battle into the woods. I did not find these favorable to landscape views, and just as I was turning my horse back again I caught sight of a commotion some distance to my right. The Rebel skirmish line had fallen back just that instant, two of our skirmishers were grappling with a third man, who was fighting desperately. It struck me as singular that the fellow was not in gray, but had on some sort of dark clothes.

I could not reach them in the swamp on horseback, and was in the act of dismounting when the man fell, and then they set out to carry him to the rear, still farther to my right, beyond the swamp. I shouted, and one of the skirmishers came up. I asked him what the matter was.

"We've got a spy, sir," he said excitedly.

"A spy! Here?"

"Yes, Major. He was hid in the thicket yonder, lying flat on his face. He reckoned that our boys would run right over him and that he'd get into our lines that way. Tim Foley stumbled on him, and he put up as good a fight with his fists as any man I ever saw."

Just then a regiment swept past us. That night I told the General, who sent over to the headquarters of the 17th Corps to inquire. The word came back that the man's name was Addison, and he claimed to be a Union sympathizer who owned a plantation near by. He declared that he had been conscripted by the Rebels, wounded, sent back

home, and was now about to be pressed in again. He had taken this method of escaping to our lines. It was a common story enough, but General Mower added in his message that he thought the story fishy. This was because

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the man's appearance was very striking, and he seemed the type of Confederate fighter who would do and dare anything. He had a wound, which had been a bad one, evidently got from a piece of shell. But they had been able to find nothing on him. Sherman sent back word to keep the man until he could see him in person. It was about nine o'clock last night when I reached the house the General has taken. A prisoner's guard was resting outside, and the hall was full of officers. They said that the General was awaiting me, and pointed to the closed door of a room that had been the dining room. I opened it.

Two candles were burning in pewter sticks on the bare mahogany table. There was the General sitting beside them, with his legs crossed, holding some crumpled tissue paper very near his eyes, and reading. He did not look up when I entered. I was aware of a man standing, tall and straight, just out of range of the candles' rays. He wore the easy dress of a Southern planter, with the broad felt hat. The head was flung back so that there was just a patch of light on the chin, and the lids of the eyes in the shadow were half closed.

My sensations are worth noting. For the moment I felt precisely as I had when I was hit by that bullet in Lauman's charge. I was aware of something very like pain, yet I could not place the cause of it. But this is what since has made me feel queer: you doubtless remember staying at Hollingdean, when I was a boy, and hearing the story of Lord Northwell's daredevil Royalist ancestor,—the one with the lace collar over the dull-gold velvet, and the pointed chin, and the lazy scorn in the eyes. Those eyes are painted with drooping lids. The first time I saw Clarence Colfax I thought of that picture—and now I thought of the picture first.

The General's voice startled me.

"Major Brice, do you know this gentleman?" he asked.

"Yes, General."

"Who is he?"

"His name is Colfax, sir—Colonel Colfax, I think"

"Thought so," said the General.

I have thought much of that scene since, as I am steaming northward over green seas and under cloudless skies, and it has seemed very unreal. I should almost say supernatural when I reflect how I have run across this man again and again, and always opposing him. I can recall just how he looked at the slave auction, which seem, so long ago: very handsome, very boyish, and yet with the air of one to be deferred to. It was

sufficiently remarkable that I should have found him in Vicksburg. But now—to be brought face to face with him in this old dining room in Goldsboro! And he a prisoner. He had not moved. I did not know how he would act, but I went up to him and held out my hand, and said.—“How do you do, Colonel Colfax?”

I am sure that my voice was not very steady, for I cannot help liking him And then his face lighted up and he gave me his hand. And he smiled at me and again at the General, as much as to say that it was all over. He has a wonderful smile.

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“We seem to run into each other, Major Brice,” said he.

The pluck of the man was superb. I could see that the General, too, was moved, from the way he looked at him. And he speaks a little more abruptly at such times.

“Guess that settles it, Colonel,” he said.

“I reckon it does, General,” said Clarence, still smiling. The General turned from him to the table with a kind of jerk and clapped his hand on the tissue paper.

“These speak for themselves, sir,” he said. “It is very plain that they would have reached the prominent citizens for whom they were intended if you had succeeded in your enterprise. You were captured out of uniform You know enough of war to appreciate the risk you ran. Any statement to make?”

“No, sir.”

“Call Captain Vaughan, Brice, and ask him to conduct the prisoner back.”

“May I speak to him, General?” I asked. The General nodded.

I asked him if I could write home for him or do anything else. That seemed to touch him. Some day I shall tell you what he said.

Then Vaughan took him out, and I heard the guard shoulder arms and tramp away in the night. The General and I were left alone with the mahogany table between us, and a family portrait of somebody looking down on us from the shadow on the wall. A moist spring air came in at the open windows, and the candles flickered. After a silence, I ventured to say:

“I hope he won’t be shot, General.”

“Don’t know, Brice,” he answered. “Can’t tell now. Hate to shoot him, but war is war. Magnificent class he belongs to—pity we should have to fight those fellows.”

He paused, and drummed on the table. “Brice,” said he, “I’m going to send you to General Grant at City Point with despatches. I’m sorry Dunn went back yesterday, but it can’t be helped. Can you start in half an hour?”

“Yes, sir.”

“You’ll have to ride to Kinston. The railroad won’t be through until to-morrow: I’ll telegraph there, and to General Easton at Morehead City. He’ll have a boat for you. Tell Grant I expect to run up there in a day or two myself, when things are arranged here. You may wait until I come.”

“Yes, sir.”

I turned to go, but Clarence Colfax was on my mind “General?”

“Eh! what?”

“General, could you hold Colonel Colfax until I see you again?”

It was a bold thing to say, and I quaked. And he looked at me in his keen way, through and through “You saved his life once before, didn’t you?”

“You allowed me to have him sent home from Vicksburg, sir.”

He answered with one of his jokes—apropos of something he said on the Court House steps at Vicksburg. Perhaps I shall tell it to you sometime.

“Well, well,” he said, “I’ll see, I’ll see. Thank God this war is pretty near over. I’ll let you know, Brice, before I shoot him.”

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I rode the thirty odd miles to Kinston in—little more than three hours. A locomotive was waiting for me, and I jumped into a cab with a friendly engineer. Soon we were roaring seaward through the vast pine forests. It was a lonely journey, and you were much in my mind. My greatest apprehension was that we might be derailed and the despatches captured; for as fast as our army had advanced, the track of it had closed again, like the wake of a ship at sea. Guerillas were roving about, tearing up ties and destroying bridges.

There was one five-minute interval of excitement when, far down the tunnel through the forest, we saw a light gleaming. The engineer said there was no house there, that it must be a fire. But we did not slacken our speed, and gradually the leaping flames grew larger and redder until we were upon them.

Not one gaunt figure stood between them and us. Not one shot broke the stillness of the night. As dawn broke I beheld the flat, gray waters of the Sound stretching away to the eastward, and there was the boat at the desolate wharf beside the warehouse, her steam rising white in the chill morning air.

CHAPTER XIV

THE SAME, CONTINUED

Headquarters armies of the united states,
city point, *Virginia*, March 28, 1865.

Dear mother: I arrived here safely the day before yesterday, and I hope that you will soon receive some of the letters I forwarded on that day. It is an extraordinary place, this City Point; a military city sprung up like a mushroom in a winter. And my breath was quite taken away when I first caught sight of it on the high table-land. The great bay in front of it, which the Appomattox helps to make, is a maze of rigging and smoke-pipes, like the harbor of a prosperous seaport. There are gunboats and supply boats, schooners and square-riggers and steamers, all huddled together, and our captain pointed out to me the ‘Malvern’ flying Admiral Porter’s flag. Barges were tied up at the long wharves, and these were piled high with wares and flanked by squat warehouses. Although it was Sunday, a locomotive was puffing and panting along the foot of the ragged bank.

High above, on the flat promontory between the two rivers, is the city of tents and wooden huts, the great trees in their fresh faint green towering above the low roofs. At the point of the bluff a large flag drooped against its staff, and I did not have to be told that this was General Grant’s headquarters.

There was a fine steamboat lying at the wharf, and I had hardly stepped ashore before they told me she was President Lincoln's. I read the name on her—the 'River Queen'. Yes, the President is here, too, with his wife and family.

There are many fellows here with whom I was brought up in Boston. I am living with Jack Hancock, whom you will remember well. He is a captain now, and has a beard.

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But I must go on with my story. I went straight to General Grant's headquarters,—just a plain, rough slat house such as a contractor might build for a temporary residence. Only the high flagstaff and the Stars and Stripes distinguish it from many others of the same kind. A group of officers stood chatting outside of it, and they told me that the General had walked over to get his mail. He is just as unassuming and democratic as "my general." General Rankin took me into the office, a rude room, and we sat down at the long table there. Presently the door opened, and a man came in with a slouch hat on and his coat unbuttoned. He was smoking a cigar. We rose to our feet, and I saluted.

It was the general-in-chief. He stared at me, but said nothing.

"General, this is Major Brice of General Sherman's staff. He has brought despatches from Goldsboro," said Rankin.

He nodded, took off his hat and laid it on the table, and reached out for the despatches. While reading them he did not move, except to light another cigar. I am getting hardened to unrealities,—perhaps I should say marvels, now. Our country abounds in them. It did not seem so strange that this silent General with the baggy trousers was the man who had risen by leaps and bounds in four years to be general-in-chief of our armies. His face looks older and more sunken than it did on that day in the street near the Arsenal, in St. Louis, when he was just a military carpet-bagger out of a job. He is not changed otherwise. But how different the impressions made by the man in authority and the same man out of authority!

He made a sufficient impression upon me then, as I told you at the time. That was because I overheard his well-merited rebuke to Hopper. But I little dreamed that I was looking on the man who was to come out of the West and save this country from disunion. And how quietly and simply he has done it, without parade or pomp or vainglory. Of all those who, with every means at their disposal, have tried to conquer Lee, he is the only one who has in any manner succeeded. He has been able to hold him fettered while Sherman has swept the Confederacy. And these are the two men who were unknown when the war began.

When the General had finished reading the despatches, he folded them quickly and put them in his pocket.

"Sit down and tell me about this last campaign of yours, Major," he said.

I talked with him for about half an hour. I should rather say talked to him. He is a marked contrast to Sherman in this respect. I believe that he only opened his lips to ask two questions. You may well believe that they were worth the asking, and they revealed an intimate knowledge of our march from Savannah. I was interrupted many times by the arrival of different generals, aides, *etc*. He sat there smoking, imperturbable.

Sometimes he said “yes” or “no,” but oftener he merely nodded his head. Once he astounded by a brief question an excitable young lieutenant, who floundered. The General seemed to know more than he about the matter he had in hand.

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When I left him, he asked me where I was quartered, and said he hoped I would be comfortable.

Jack Hancock was waiting for me, and we walked around the city, which even has barber shops. Everywhere were signs of preparation, for the roads are getting dry, and the General preparing for a final campaign against Lee. Poor Lee! What a marvellous fight he has made with his material. I think that he will be reckoned among the greatest generals of our race.

Of course, I was very anxious to get a glimpse of the President, and so we went down to the wharf, where we heard that he had gone off for a horseback ride. They say that he rides nearly every day, over the corduroy roads and through the swamps, and wherever the boys see that tall hat they cheer. They know it as well as the lookout tower on the flats of Bermuda Hundred. He lingers at the campfires and swaps stories with the officers, and entertains the sick and wounded in the hospitals. Isn't it like him?

He hasn't changed, either. I believe that the great men don't change. Away with your Napoleons and your Marlboroughs and your Stuarts. These are the days of simple men who command by force of character, as well as knowledge. Thank God for the American! I believe that he will change the world, and strip it of its vainglory and hypocrisy.

In the evening, as we were sitting around Hancock's fire, an officer came in.

"Is Major Brice here?" he asked. I jumped up.

"The President sends his compliments, Major, and wants to know if you would care to pay him a little visit."

If I would care to pay him a little visit! That officer had to hurry to keep up with the as I walked to the wharf. He led me aboard the River Queen, and stopped at the door of the after-cabin.

Mr. Lincoln was sitting under the lamp, slouched down in his chair, in the position I remembered so well. It was as if I had left him but yesterday. He was whittling, and he had made some little toy for his son Tad, who ran out as I entered.

When he saw me, the President rose to his great height, a sombre, towering figure in black. He wears a scraggly beard now. But the sad smile, the kindly eyes in their dark caverns, the voice—all were just the same. I stopped when I looked upon the face. It was sad and lined when I had known it, but now all the agony endured by the millions, North and South, seemed written on it.

"Don't you remember me, Major?" he asked.

The wonder was that he had remembered me! I took his big, bony hand, which reminded me of Judge Whipple's. Yes, it was just as if I had been with him always, and he were still the gaunt country lawyer.

"Yes, sir," I said, "indeed I do."

He looked at me with that queer expression of mirth he sometimes has.

"Are these Boston ways, Steve?" he asked. "They're tenacious. I didn't think that any man could travel so close to Sherman and keep 'em."

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“They’re unfortunate ways, sir,” I said, “if they lead you to misjudge me.”

He laid his hand on my shoulder, just as he had done at Freeport.

“I know you, Steve,” he said. “I shuck an ear of corn before I buy it. I’ve kept tab on you a little the last five years, and when I heard Sherman had sent a Major Brice up here, I sent for you.”

What I said was boyish. “I tried very hard to get a glimpse of you to-day, Mr. Lincoln. I wanted to see you again.”

He was plainly pleased.

“I’m glad to hear it, Steve,” he said. “Then you haven’t joined the ranks of the grumblers? You haven’t been one of those who would have liked to try running this country for a day or two, just to show me how to do it?”

“No, sir,” I said, laughing.

“Good!” he cried, slapping his knee. “I didn’t think you were that kind, Steve. Now sit down and tell me about this General of mine who wears seven-leagued boots. What was it—four hundred and twenty miles in fifty days? How many navigable rivers did he step across?” He began to count on those long fingers of his. “The Edisto, the Broad, the Catawba, the Pedee, and—?”

“The Cape Fear,” I said.

“Is—is the General a nice man?” asked Mr. Lincoln, his eyes twinkling.

“Yes, sir, he is that,” I answered heartily. “And not a man in the army wants anything when he is around. You should see that Army of the Mississippi, sir. They arrived in Goldsboro’ in splendid condition.”

He got up and gathered his coat-tails under his arms, and began to walk up and down the cabin.

“What do the boys call the General?” he asked.

I told him “Uncle Billy.” And, thinking the story of the white socks might amuse him, I told him that. It did amuse him.

“Well, now,” he said, “any man that has a nickname like that is all right. That’s the best recommendation you can give the General—just say ‘Uncle Billy.’” He put one lip over the other. “You’ve given ’Uncle Billy’ a good recommendation, Steve,” he said. “Did you ever hear the story of Mr. Wallace’s Irish gardener?”

“No, sir.”

“Well, when Wallace was hiring his gardener he asked him whom he had been living with.

“‘Misther Dalton, sorr.’

“‘Have you a recommendation, Terence?’

“’A ricommindation is it, sorr? Sure I have nothing agin Misther Dalton, though he moightn’t be knowing just the respict the likes of a first-class garthener is entitled to.’”

He did not laugh. He seldom does, it seems, at his own stories. But I could not help laughing over the “ricommindation” I had given the General. He knew that I was embarrassed, and said kindly:— “Now tell me something about ‘Uncle Billy’s Bummers.’ I hear that they have a most effectual way of tearing up railroads.”

I told him of Poe’s contrivance of the hook and chain, and how the heaviest rails were easily overturned with it, and how the ties were piled and fired and the rails twisted out of shape. The President listened to every word with intense interest.

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“By Jing!” he exclaimed, “we have got a general. Caesar burnt his bridges behind him, but Sherman burns his rails. Now tell me some more.”

He helped me along by asking questions. Then I began to tell him how the negroes had flocked into our camps, and how simply and plainly the General had talked to them, advising them against violence of any kind, and explaining to them that “Freedom” meant only the liberty to earn their own living in their own way, and not freedom from work.

“We have got a general, sure enough,” he cried. “He talks to them plainly, does he, so that they understand? I say to you, Brice,” he went on earnestly, “the importance of plain talk can’t be overestimated. Any thought, however abstruse, can be put in speech that a boy or a negro can grasp. Any book, however deep, can be written in terms that everybody can comprehend, if a man only tries hard enough. When I was a boy I used to hear the neighbors talking, and it bothered me so because I could not understand them that I used to sit up half the night thinking things out for myself. I remember that I did not know what the word demonstrate meant. So I stopped my studies then and there and got a volume of Euclid. Before I got through I could demonstrate everything in it, and I have never been bothered with demonstrate since.”

I thought of those wonderfully limpid speeches of his: of the Freeport debates, and of the contrast between his style and Douglas’s. And I understood the reason for it at last. I understood the supreme mind that had conceived the Freeport Question. And as I stood before him then, at the close of this fearful war, the words of the Gospel were in my mind. ’So the last shall be first, and the first, last; for many be called, but few chosen.’

How I wished that all those who have maligned and tortured him could talk with him as I had talked with him. To know his great heart would disarm them of all antagonism. They would feel, as I feel, that his life is so much nobler than theirs, and his burdens so much heavier, that they would go away ashamed of their criticism.

He said to me once, “Brice, I hope we are in sight of the end, now. I hope that we may get through without any more fighting. I don’t want to see any more of our countrymen killed. And then,” he said, as if talking to himself, “and then we must show them mercy —mercy.”

I thought it a good time to mention Colfax’s case. He has been on my mind ever since. Mr. Lincoln listened attentively. Once he sighed, and he was winding his long fingers around each other while I talked.

“I saw the man captured, Mr. Lincoln,” I concluded, “And if a technicality will help him out, he was actually within his own skirmish line at the time. The Rebel skirmishers had not fallen back on each side of him.”

“Brice,” he said, with that sorrowful smile, “a technicality might save Colfax, but it won’t save me. Is this man a friend of yours?” he asked.

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That was a poser.

“I think he is, Mr. Lincoln. I should like to call him so. I admire him.” And I went on to tell of what he had done at Vicksburg, leaving out, however, my instrumentality in having him sent north. The President used almost Sherman’s words.

“By Jing!” he exclaimed. (That seems to be a favorite expression of his.) “Those fellows were born to fight. If it wasn’t for them, the South would have quit long ago.” Then he looked at me in his funny way, and said, “See here, Steve, if this Colfax isn’t exactly a friend of yours, there must be some reason why you are pleading for him in this way.”

“Well, sir,” I said, at length, “I should like to get him off on account of his cousin, Miss Virginia Carvel.” And I told him something about Miss Carvel, and how she had helped you with the Union sergeant that day in the hot hospital. And how she had nursed Judge Whipple.”

“She’s a fine woman,” he said. “Those women have helped those men to prolong this war about three years.

“And yet we must save them for the nation’s sake. They are to be the mothers of our patriots in days to come. Is she a friend of yours, too, Steve?”

What was I to say?

“Not especially, sir,” I answered finally. I have had to offend her rather often. But I know that she likes my mother.”

“Why!” he cried, jumping up, “she’s a daughter of Colonel Carvel. I always had an admiration for that man. An ideal Southern gentleman of the old school,—courteous, as honorable and open as the day, and as brave as a lion. You’ve heard the story of how he threw a man named Babcock out of his store, who tried to bribe him?”

“I heard you tell it in that tavern, sir. And I have heard it since.” It did me good to hear the Colonel praised.

“I always liked that story,” he said. “By the way, what’s become of the Colonel?”

“He got away—South, sir,” I answered. “He couldn’t stand it. He hasn’t been heard of since the summer of ’63. They think he was killed in Texas. But they are not positive. They probably never will be,” I added. He was silent awhile.

“Too bad!” he said. “Too bad. What stuff those men are made of! And so you want me to pardon this Colfax?”

“It would be presumptuous in me to go that far, sir,” I replied. “But I hoped you might speak of it to the General when he comes. And I would be glad of the opportunity to testify.”

He took a few strides up and down the room.

“Well, well,” he said, “that’s my vice—pardoning, saying yes. It’s always one more drink with me. It—” he smiled—“it makes me sleep better. I’ve pardoned enough Rebels to populate New Orleans. Why,” he continued, with his whimsical look, “just before I left Washington, in comes one of your Missouri senators with a list of Rebels who are shut up in McDowell’s and Alton. I said:— “’Senator, you’re not going to ask me to turn loose all those at once?’

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“He said just what you said when you were speaking of Missouri a while ago, that he was afraid of guerilla warfare, and that the war was nearly over. I signed ’em. And then what does he do but pull out another batch longer than the first! And those were worse than the first.

“‘What! you don’t want me to turn these loose, too?’

“‘Yes, I do, Mr. President. I think it will pay to be merciful.’

“‘Then durned if I don’t,’ I said, and I signed ’em.”

Steamer“*River queen*.”
On the Potomac, April 9, 1865.

Dear mother: I am glad that the telegrams I have been able to send reached you safely. I have not had time to write, and this will be but a short letter.

You will be surprised to see this heading. I am on the President’s boat, in the President’s party, bound with him for Washington. And this is how it happened: The very afternoon of the day I wrote you, General Sherman himself arrived at City Point on the steamer ‘Russia’. I heard the salutes, and was on the wharf to meet him. That same afternoon he and General Grant and Admiral Porter went aboard the River Queen to see the President. How I should have liked to be present at that interview! After it was over they all came out of the cabin together General Grant silent, and smoking, as usual; General Sherman talking vivaciously; and Lincoln and the Admiral smiling and listening. That was historic! I shall never expect to see such a sight again in all my days. You can imagine my surprise when the President called me from where I was standing at some distance with the other officers. He put his hand on my shoulder then and there, and turned to General Sherman.

“Major Brice is a friend of mine, General,” he said. “I knew him in Illinois.”

“He never told me that,” said the General.

“I guess he’s got a great many important things shut up inside of him,” said Mr. Lincoln, banteringly. “But he gave you a good recommendation, Sherman. He said that you wore white socks, and that the boys liked you and called you ‘Uncle Billy.’ And I told him that was the best recommendation he could give anybody.”

I was frightened. But the General only looked at me with those eyes that go through everything, and then he laughed.

“Brice,” he said, “You’ll have my reputation ruined.”

“Sherman,” said Mr. Lincoln, “you don’t want the Major right away, do you? Let him stay around here for a while with me. I think he’ll find it interesting.” He looked at the general-in-chief, who was smiling just a little bit. “I’ve got a sneaking notion that Grant’s going to do something.”

Then they all laughed.

“Certainly, Mr. Lincoln,” said my General, “you may have Brice. Be careful he doesn’t talk you to death—he’s said too much already.”

That is how I came to stay.

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I have no time now to tell you all that I have seen and heard. I have ridden with the President, and have gone with him on errands of mercy and errands of cheer. I have been almost within sight of what we hope is the last struggle of this frightful war. I have listened to the guns of Five Forks, where Sheridan and Warren bore their own colors in the front of the charge, I was with Mr. Lincoln while the battle of Petersburg was raging, and there were tears in his eyes.

Then came the retreat of Lee and the instant pursuit of Grant, and —Richmond. The quiet General did not so much as turn aside to enter the smoking city he had besieged for so long. But I went there, with the President. And if I had one incident in my life to live over again, I should choose this. As we were going up the river, a disabled steamer lay across the passage in the obstruction of piles the Confederates had built. Mr. Lincoln would not wait. There were but a few of us in his party, and we stepped into Admiral Porter's twelve-oared barge and were rowed to Richmond, the smoke of the fires still darkening the sky. We landed within a block of Libby Prison.

With the little guard of ten sailors he marched the mile and a half to General Weitzel's headquarters,—the presidential mansion of the Confederacy. You can imagine our anxiety. I shall remember him always as I saw him that day, a tall, black figure of sorrow, with the high silk hat we have learned to love. Unafraid, his heart rent with pity, he walked unharmed amid such tumult as I have rarely seen. The windows filled, the streets ahead of us became choked, as the word that the President was coming ran on like quick-fire. The mob shouted and pushed. Drunken men reeled against him. The negroes wept aloud and cried hosannas. They pressed upon him that they might touch the hem of his coat, and one threw himself on his knees and kissed the President's feet.

Still he walked on unharmed, past the ashes and the ruins. Not as a conqueror was he come, to march in triumph. Not to destroy, but to heal. Though there were many times when we had to fight for a path through the crowds, he did not seem to feel the danger.

Was it because he knew that his hour was not yet come?

To-day, on the boat, as we were steaming between the green shores of the Potomac, I overheard him reading to Mr. Sumner:—

> "Duncan is in his grave;
> After life's fitful fever he sleeps well;
> Treason has done his worst; nor steel, nor poison,
> Malice domestic, foreign levy, nothing,
> Can touch him further."

WILLARD'S *hotel*, *Washington*, April 10, 1865.

I have looked up the passage, and have written it in above. It haunts me.

CHAPTER XV

MAN OF SORROW

The train was late—very late. It was Virginia who first caught sight of the new dome of the Capitol through the slanting rain, but she merely pressed her lips together and said nothing. In the dingy brick station of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad more than one person paused to look after them, and a kind-hearted lady who had been in the car kissed the girl good-by.

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“You think that you can find your uncle’s house, my dear?” she asked, glancing at Virginia with concern. Through all of that long journey she had worn a look apart. “Do you think you can find your uncle’s house?”

Virginia started. And then she smiled as she looked at the honest, alert, and squarely built gentleman beside her.

“Captain Brent can, Mrs. Ware,” she said. “He can find anything.”

Whereupon the kind lady gave the Captain her hand. “You look as if you could, Captain,” said she. “Remember, if General Carvel is out of town, you promised to bring her to me.”

“Yes, ma’am,” said Captain Lige, “and so I shall.”

“Kerridge, kerridge! Right dis-a-way! No sah, dat ain’t de kerridge you wants. Dat’s it, lady, you’se lookin at it. Kerridge, kerridge, kerridge!”

Virginia tried bravely to smile, but she was very near to tears as she stood on the uneven pavement and looked at the scrawny horses standing patiently in the steady downpour. All sorts of people were coming and going, army officers and navy officers and citizens of states and territories, driving up and driving away.

And this was Washington!

She was thinking then of the multitude who came here with aching hearts, —with heavier hearts than was hers that day. How many of the throng hurrying by would not flee, if they could, back to the peaceful homes they had left? But perhaps those homes were gone now. Destroyed, like her own, by the war. Women with children at their breasts, and mothers bowed with sorrow, had sought this city in their agony. Young men and old had come hither, striving to keep back the thoughts of dear ones left behind, whom they might never see again. And by the thousands and tens of thousands they had passed from here to the places of blood beyond.

“Kerridge, sah! Kerridge!”

“Do you know where General Daniel Carvel lives?”

“Yes, sah, reckon I does. I Street, sah. Jump right in, sah.”

Virginia sank back on the stuffy cushions of the rattle-trap, and then sat upright again and stared out of the window at the dismal scene. They were splashing through a sea of mud. Ever since they had left St. Louis, Captain Lige had done his best to cheer her, and he did not intend to desist now.

“This beats all,” he cried. “So this is Washington, Why, it don’t compare to St. Louis, except we haven’t got the White House and the Capitol. Jinny, it would take a scow to get across the street, and we don’t have ramshackly stores and nigger cabins bang up against fine Houses like that. This is ragged. That’s what it is, ragged. We don’t have any dirty pickaninnies dodging among the horses in our residence streets. I declare, Jinny, if those aren’t pigs!”

Virginia laughed. She could not help it.

“Poor Lige!” she said. “I hope Uncle Daniel has some breakfast for you. You’ve had a good deal to put up with on this trip.”

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“Lordy, Jinny,” said the Captain, “I’d put up with a good deal more than this for the sake of going anywhere with you.”

“Even to such a doleful place as this?” she sighed.

“This is all right, if the sun’ll only come out and dry things up and let us see the green on those trees,” he said, “Lordy, how I do love to see the spring green in the sunlight!”

She put out her hand over his.

“Lige,” she said, “you know you’re just trying to keep up my spirits. You’ve been doing that ever since we left home.”

“No such thing,” he replied with vehemence. “There’s nothing for you to be cast down about.”

“Oh, but there is!” she cried. “Suppose I can’t make your Black Republican President pardon Clarence!”

“Pooh!” said the Captain, squeezing her hand and trying to appear unconcerned. “Your Uncle Daniel knows Mr. Lincoln. He’ll have that arranged.”

Just then the rattletrap pulled up at the sidewalk, the wheels of the near side in four inches of mud, and the Captain leaped out and spread the umbrella. They were in front of a rather imposing house of brick, flanked on one side by a house just like it, and on the other by a series of dreary vacant lots where the rain had collected in pools. They climbed the steps and rang the bell. In due time the door was opened by a smiling yellow butler in black.

“Does General Carvel live here?”

“Yas, miss, But he ain’t to home now. Done gone to New York.”

“Oh,” faltered Virginia. “Didn’t he get my telegram day before yesterday? I sent it to the War Department.”

“He’s done gone since Saturday, miss.” And then, evidently impressed by the young lady’s looks, he added hospitably, “Kin I do anything fo’ you, miss?”

“I’m his niece, Miss Virginia Carvel, and this is Captain Brent.”

The yellow butler’s face lighted up.

“Come right in, Miss Jinny, Done heerd de General speak of you often —yas’m. De General’ll be to home dis a’ternoon, suah. ’Twill do him good ter see you, Miss Jinny.

He's been mighty lonesome. Walk right in, Cap'n, and make yo'selves at home. Lizbeth—Lizbeth!"

A yellow maid came running down the stairs. "Heah's Miss Jinny."

"Lan' of goodness!" cried Lizbeth. "I knows Miss Jinny. Done seed her at Calve't House. How is you, Miss Jinny?"

"Very well, Lizbeth," said Virginia, listlessly sitting down on the hall sofa. "Can you give us some breakfast?"

"Yas'm," said Lizbeth, "jes' reckon we kin." She ushered them into a walnut dining room, big and high and sombre, with plush-bottomed chairs placed about—walnut also; for that was the fashion in those days. But the Captain had no sooner seated himself than he shot up again and started out.

"Where are you going, Lige?"

"To pay off the carriage driver," he said.

"Let him wait," said Virginia. "I'm going to the White House in a little while."

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“What—what for?” he gasped.

“To see your Black Republican President,” she replied, with alarming calmness.

“Now, Jinny,” he cried, in excited appeal, “don’t go doin’ any such fool trick as that. Your Uncle Dan’l will be here this afternoon. He knows the President. And then the thing’ll be fixed all right, and no mistake.”

Her reply was in the same tone—almost a monotone—which she had used for three days. It made the Captain very uneasy, for he knew when she spoke in that way that her will was in it.

“And to lose that time,” she answered, “may be to have him shot.”

“But you can’t get to the President without credentials,” he objected.

“What,” she flashed, “hasn’t any one a right to see the President? You mean to say that he will not see a woman in trouble? Then all these pretty stories I hear of him are false. They are made up by the Yankees.”

Poor Captain Lige! He had some notion of the multitude of calls upon Mr. Lincoln, especially at that time. But he could not, he dared not, remind her of the principal reason for this,—Lee’s surrender and the approaching end of the war. And then the Captain had never seen Mr. Lincoln. In the distant valley of the Mississippi he had only heard of the President very conflicting things. He had heard him criticised and reviled and praised, just as is every man who goes to the White House, be he saint or sinner. And, during an administration, no man at a distance may come at a President’s true character and worth. The Captain had seen Lincoln caricatured vilely. And again he had read and heard the pleasant anecdotes of which Virginia had spoken, until he did not know what to believe.

As for Virginia, he knew her partisanship to, and undying love for, the South; he knew the class prejudice which was bound to assert itself, and he had seen enough in the girl’s demeanor to fear that she was going to demand rather than implore. She did not come of a race that was wont to bend the knee.

“Well, well,” he said despairingly, “you must eat some breakfast first, Jinny.”

She waited with an ominous calmness until it was brought in, and then she took a part of a roll and some coffee.

“This won’t do,” exclaimed the Captain. “Why, why, that won’t get you halfway to Mr. Lincoln.”

She shook her head, half smiling.

“You must eat enough, Lige,” she said.

He was finished in an incredibly short time, and amid the protestations of Lizbeth and the yellow butler they got into the carriage again, and splashed and rattled toward the White House. Once Virginia glanced out, and catching sight of the bedraggled flags on the houses in honor of Lee’s surrender, a look of pain crossed her face. The Captain could not repress a note of warning.

“Jinny,” said he, “I have an idea that you’ll find the President a good deal of a man. Now if you’re allowed to see him, don’t get him mad, Jinny, whatever you do.”

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Virginia stared straight ahead.

“If he is something of a man, Lige, he will not lose his temper with a woman.”

Captain Lige subsided. And just then they came in sight of the house of the Presidents, with its beautiful portico and its broad wings. And they turned in under the dripping trees of the grounds. A carriage with a black coachman and footman was ahead of them, and they saw two stately gentlemen descend from it and pass the guard at the door. Then their turn came. The Captain helped her out in his best manner, and gave some money to the driver.

“I reckon he needn’t wait for us this time, Jinny,” said be. She shook her head and went in, he following, and they were directed to the anteroom of the President’s office on the second floor. There were many people in the corridors, and one or two young officers in blue who stared at her. She passed them with her head high.

But her spirits sank when they came to the anteroom. It was full of all sorts of people. Politicians, both prosperous and seedy, full faced and keen faced, seeking office; women, officers, and a one-armed soldier sitting in the corner. He was among the men who offered Virginia their seats, and the only one whom she thanked. But she walked directly to the doorkeeper at the end of the room. Captain Lige was beside her.

“Can we see the President?” he asked.

“Have you got an appointment?” said the old man.

“No.”

“Then you’ll have to wait your turn, sir,” he said, shaking his head and looking at Virginia. And he added. “It’s slow work waiting your turn, there’s so many governors and generals and senators, although the session’s over. It’s a busy time, miss.”

Virginia went very close to him.

“Oh, can’t you do something?” she said. And added, with an inspiration, “I must see him. It’s a matter of life and death.”

She saw instantly, with a woman’s instinct, that these words had had their effect. The old man glanced at her again, as if demurring.

“You’re sure, miss, it’s life and death?” he said.

“Oh, why should I say so if it were not?” she cried.

“The orders are very strict,” he said. “But the President told me to give precedence to cases when a life is in question. Just you wait a minute, miss, until Governor Doddridge comes out, and I’ll see what I can do for you. Give me your name, please, miss.”

She remained standing where she was. In a little while the heavy door opened, and a portly, rubicund man came out with a smile on his face. He broke into a laugh, when halfway across the room, as if the memory of what he had heard were too much for his gravity. The doorkeeper slipped into the room, and there was a silent, anxious interval. Then he came out again.

“The President will see you, miss.”

Captain Lige started forward with her, but she restrained him.

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“Wait for me here, Lige,” she said.

She swept in alone, and the door closed softly after her. The room was a big one, and there were maps on the table, with pins sticking in them. She saw that much, and then —!

Could this fantastically tall, stooping figure before her be that of the President of the United States? She stopped, as from the shock he gave her. The lean, yellow face with the mask-like lines all up and down, the unkempt, tousled hair, the beard—why, he was a hundred times more ridiculous than his caricatures. He might have stood for many of the poor white trash farmers she had seen in Kentucky—save for the long black coat.

“Is—is this Mr. Lincoln?” she asked, her breath taken away.

He bowed and smiled down at her. Somehow that smile changed his face a little.

“I guess I’ll have to own up,” he answered.

“My name is Virginia Carvel,” she said. “I have come all the way from St. Louis to see you.”

“Miss Carvel,” said the President, looking at her intently, “I have rarely been so flattered in my life. I—I hope I have not disappointed you.”

Virginia was justly angry.

“Oh, you haven’t,” she cried, her eyes flashing, “because I am what you would call a Rebel.”

The mirth in the dark corners of his eyes disturbed her more and more. And then she saw that the President was laughing.

“And have you a better name for it, Miss Carvel?” he asked. “Because I am searching for a better name—just now.”

She was silent—sternly silent. And she tapped her foot on the carpet. What manner of man was this? “Won’t you sit down?” said the President, kindly. “You must be tired after your journey.” And he put forth a chair.

“No, thank you,” said Virginia; “I think that I can say what I have come to say better standing.”

“Well,” said Mr. Lincoln, “that’s not strange. I’m that way, too. The words seem to come out better. That reminds me of a story they tell about General Buck Tanner. Ever heard of Buck, Miss Carvel? No? Well, Buck was a character. He got his title in the Mormon

war. One day the boys asked him over to the square to make a speech. The General was a little uneasy.

"'I'm all right when I get standing up, Liza,' he said to his wife. Then the words come right along. Only trouble is they come too cussed fast. How'm I going to stop 'em when I want to?'

"'Well, I du declare, Buck,' said she, 'I gave you credit for some sense. All you've got to do is to set down. That'll end it, I reckon.'

"So the General went over to the square and talked for about an hour and a half, and then a Chicago man shouted to him to dry up. The General looked pained.

"'Boys,' said he, 'it's jest every bit as bad for me as it is for you. You'll have to hand up a chair, boys, because I'm never going to get shet of this goldarned speech any anther way.'"

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Mr. Lincoln had told this so comically that Virginia was forced to laugh, and she immediately hated herself. A man who could joke at such a time certainly could not feel the cares and responsibilities of his office. He should have been a comedian. And yet this was the President who had conducted the war, whose generals had conquered the Confederacy. And she was come to ask him a favor. Virginia swallowed her pride.

“Mr. Lincoln,” she began, “I have come to talk to you about my cousin, Colonel Clarence Colfax.”

“I shall be happy to talk to you about your cousin, Colonel Colfax, Miss Carvel. Is he your third or fourth cousin?”

“He is my first cousin,” she retorted.

“Is he in the city?” asked Mr. Lincoln, innocently. “Why didn’t he come with you?”

“Oh, haven’t you heard?” she cried. “He is Clarence Colfax, of St. Louis, now a Colonel in the army of the Confederate States.”

“Which army?” asked Mr. Lincoln. Virginia tossed her head in exasperation.

“In General Joseph Johnston’s army,” she replied, trying to be patient. “But now,” she gulped, “now he has been arrested as a spy by General Sherman’s army.”

“That’s too bad,” answered Mr. Lincoln.

“And—and they are going to shoot him.”

“That’s worse,” said Mr. Lincoln, gravely. “But I expect he deserves it.”

“Oh, no, he doesn’t,” she cried. “You don’t know how brave he is! He floated down the Mississippi on a log, out of Vicksburg, and brought back thousands and thousands of percussion caps. He rowed across the river when the Yankee fleet was going down, and set fire to De Soto so that they could see to shoot.”

“Well,” said Mr. Lincoln, “that’s a good starter.” Then he looked thoughtful.

“Miss Carvel,” said he, “that argument reminds me of a story about a man I used to know in the old days in Illinois. His name was McNeil, and he was a lawyer.

“One day he was defending a prisoner for assault and battery before Judge Drake.

“’Judge, says McNeil, ’you oughtn’t to lock this man up. It was a fair fight, and he’s the best man in the state in a fair fight. And, what’s more, he’s never been licked in a fair fight in his life.’

"'And if your honor does lock me up,' the prisoner put in, 'I'll give your honor a thunderin' big lickin' when I get out.'

"The Judge took off his coat.

"'Gentlemen,' said he, 'it's a powerful queer argument, but the Court will admit it on its merits. The prisoner will please to step out on the grass.'"

This time Virginia contrived merely to smile. She was striving against something, she knew not what. Her breath was coming deeply, and she was dangerously near to tears. Why? She could not tell. She had come into this man's presence despising herself for having to ask him a favor. The sight of his face she had ridiculed. Now she could not look into it without an odd sensation. What was in it? Sorrow? Yes, that was nearest it.

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What had the man done? Told her a few funny stories—given quizzical answers to some of her questions. Quizzical, yes; but she could not be sure then there was not wisdom in them, and that humiliated her. She had never conceived of such a man. And, be it added gratuitously, Virginia deemed herself something of an adept in dealing with men.

“And now,” said Mr. Lincoln, “to continue for the defence, I believe that Colonel Colfax first distinguished himself at the time of Camp Jackson, when of all the prisoners he refused to accept a parole.”

Startled, she looked up at him swiftly, and then down again. “Yes,” she answered, “yes. But oh, Mr. Lincoln, please don’t hold that against him.”

If she could only have seen his face then. But her lashes were dropped.

“My dear young lady,” replied the President, “I honor him for it. I was merely elaborating the argument which you have begun. On the other hand, it is a pity that he should have taken off that uniform which he adorned and attempted to enter General Sherman’s lines as a civilian,—as a spy.”

He had spoken these last words very gently, but she was too excited to heed his gentleness. She drew herself up, a gleam in her eyes like the crest of a blue wave in a storm.

“A spy!” she cried; “it takes more courage to be a spy than anything else in war. Then he will be shot. You are not content in, the North with what you have gained. You are not content with depriving us of our rights, and our fortunes, with forcing us back to an allegiance we despise. You are not content with humiliating our generals and putting innocent men in prisons. But now I suppose you will shoot us all. And all this mercy that I have heard about means nothing—nothing—”

Why did she falter and stop?

“Miss Carvel,” said the President, “I am afraid from what I have heard just now, that it means nothing.” Oh, the sadness of that voice,—the ineffable sadness,—the sadness and the woe of a great nation! And the sorrow in those eyes, the sorrow of a heavy cross borne meekly,—how heavy none will ever know. The pain of a crown of thorns worn for a world that did not understand. No wonder Virginia faltered and was silent. She looked at Abraham Lincoln standing there, bent and sorrowful, and it was as if a light had fallen upon him. But strangest of all in that strange moment was that she felt his strength. It was the same strength she had felt in Stephen Brice. This was the thought that came to her.

Slowly she walked to the window and looked out across the green grounds where the wind was shaking the wet trees, past the unfinished monument to the Father of her country, and across the broad Potomac to Alexandria in the hazy distance. The rain beat upon the panes, and then she knew that she was crying softly to herself. She had met a force that she could not conquer, she had looked upon a sorrow that she could not fathom, albeit she had known sorrow.

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Presently she felt him near. She turned and looked through her tears at his face that was all compassion. And now she was unashamed. He had placed a chair behind her.

“Sit down, Virginia,” he said. Even the name fell from him naturally.

She obeyed him then like a child. He remained standing.

“Tell me about your cousin,” he said; “are you going to marry him?”

She hung an instant on her answer. Would that save Clarence? But in that moment she could not have spoken anything but the truth to save her soul.

“No, Mr. Lincoln,” she said; “I was—but I did not love him. I—I think that was one reason why he was so reckless.”

Mr. Lincoln smiled.

“The officer who happened to see Colonel Colfax captured is now in Washington. When your name was given to me, I sent for him. Perhaps he is in the anteroom now. I should like to tell you, first of all, that this officer defended your cousin and asked me to pardon him.”

“He defended him! He asked you to pardon him! Who is he?” she exclaimed.

Again Mr. Lincoln smiled. He strode to the bell-cord, and spoke a few words to the usher who answered his ring.

The usher went out. Then the door opened, and a young officer, spare, erect, came quickly into the room, and bowed respectfully to the President. But Mr. Lincoln’s eyes were not on him. They were on the girl. He saw her head lifted, timidly. He saw her lips part and the color come flooding into her face. But she did not rise.

The President sighed But the light in her eyes was reflected in his own. It has been truly said that Abraham Lincoln knew the human heart.

The officer still stood facing the President, the girl staring at his profile. The door closed behind him. “Major Brice,” said Mr. Lincoln, when you asked me to pardon Colonel Colfax, I believe that you told me he was inside his own skirmish lines when he was captured.”

“Yes, sir, he was.”

Suddenly Stephen turned, as if impelled by the President’s gaze, and so his eyes met Virginia’s. He forgot time and place,—for the while even this man whom he revered

above all men. He saw her hand tighten on the arm of her chair. He took a step toward her, and stopped. Mr. Lincoln was speaking again.

“He put in a plea, a lawyer’s plea, wholly unworthy of him, Miss Virginia. He asked me to let your cousin off on a technicality. What do you think of that?”

“Oh!” said Virginia. Just the exclamation escaped her—nothing more. The crimson that had betrayed her deepened on her cheeks. Slowly the eyes she had yielded to Stephen came back again and rested on the President. And now her wonder was that an ugly man could be so beautiful.

“I wish it understood, Mr. Lawyer,” the President continued, “that I am not letting off Colonel Colfax on a technicality. I am sparing his life,” he said slowly, “because the time for which we have been waiting and longing for four years is now at hand—the time to be merciful. Let us all thank God for it.”

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Virginia had risen now. She crossed the room, her head lifted, her heart lifted, to where this man of sorrows stood smiling down at her.

“Mr. Lincoln,” she faltered, “I did not know you when I came here. I should have known you, for I had heard him—I had heard Major Brice praise you. Oh,” she cried, “how I wish that every man and woman and child in the South might come here and see you as I have seen you to-day. I think—I think that some of their bitterness might be taken away.”

Abraham Lincoln laid his hands upon the girl. And Stephen, watching, knew that he was looking upon a benediction.

“Virginia,” said Mr. Lincoln, “I have not suffered by the South, I have suffered with the South Your sorrow has been my sorrow, and your pain has been my pain. What you have lost, I have lost. And what you have gained,” he added sublimely, “I have gained.”

He led her gently to the window. The clouds were flying before the wind, and a patch of blue sky shone above the Potomac. With his long arm he pointed across the river to the southeast, and as if by a miracle a shaft of sunlight fell on the white houses of Alexandria.

“In the first days of the war,” he said, “a flag flew there in sight of the place where George Washington lived and died. I used to watch that flag, and thank God that Washington had not lived to see it. And sometimes, sometimes I wondered if God had allowed it to be put in irony just there.” His voice seemed to catch. “That was wrong,” he continued. “I should have known that this was our punishment—that the sight of it was my punishment. Before we could become the great nation He has destined us to be, our sins must be wiped out in blood. You loved that flag, Virginia. You love it still.

“I say in all sincerity, may you always love it. May the day come when this Nation, North and South, may look back upon it with reverence. Thousands upon thousands of brave Americans have died under it for what they believed was right. But may the day come again when you will love that flag you see there now—Washington’s flag—better still.”

He stopped, and the tears were wet upon Virginia’s lashes. She could not have spoken then.

Mr. Lincoln went over to his desk and sat down before it. Then he began to write, slouched forward, one knee resting on the floor, his lips moving at the same time. When he got up again he seemed taller than ever.

“There!” he said, “I guess that will fix it. I’ll have that sent to Sherman. I have already spoken to him about the matter.”

They did not thank him. It was beyond them both. He turned to Stephen with that quizzical look on his face he had so often seen him wear.

“Steve,” he said, “I’ll tell you a story. The other night Harlan was here making a speech to a crowd out of the window, and my boy Tad was sitting behind him.

“‘What shall we do with the Rebels?’ said Harlan to the crowd.

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"'Hang 'em!' cried the people. "'No,' says Tad, 'hang on to 'em.'

"And the boy was right. That is what we intend to do,—hang on to 'em. And, Steve," said Mr. Lincoln, putting his hand again on Virginia's shoulder, "if you have the sense I think you have, you'll hang on, too."

For an instant he stood smiling at their blushes,—he to whom the power was given to set apart his cares and his troubles and partake of the happiness of others. For of such was his happiness.

Then the President drew out his watch. "Bless me!" he said, "I am ten minutes behind my appointment at the Department. Miss Virginia, you may care to thank the Major for the little service he has done you. You can do so undisturbed here. Make yourselves at home."

As he opened the door he paused and looked back at them. The smile passed from his face, and an ineffable expression of longing—longing and tenderness—came upon it.

Then he was gone.

For a space, while his spell was upon them, they did not stir. Then Stephen sought her eyes that had been so long denied him. They were not denied him now. It was Virginia who first found her voice, and she called him by his name.

"Oh, Stephen," she said, "how sad he looked!"

He was close to her, at her side. And he answered her in the earnest tone which she knew so well.

"Virginia, if I could have had what I most wished for in the world, I should have asked that you should know Abraham Lincoln."

Then she dropped her eyes, and her breath came quickly.

"I—I might have known," she answered, "I might have known what he was. I had heard you talk of him. I had seen him in you, and I did not know. Do you remember that day when we were in the summer-house together at Glencoe, long ago? When you had come back from seeing him?"

"As yesterday," he said.

"You were changed then," she said bravely. "I saw it. Now I understand. It was because you had seen Mr. Lincoln."

"When I saw him," said Stephen, reverently, "I knew how little and narrow I was."

Then, overcome by the incense of her presence, he drew her to him until her heart beat against his own. She did not resist, but lifted her face to him, and he kissed her.

“You love me, Virginia!” he cried.

“Yes, Stephen,” she answered, low, more wonderful in her surrender than ever before. “Yes—dear.” Then she hid her face against his blue coat. “I—I cannot help it. Oh, Stephen, how I have struggled against it! How I have tried to hate you, and couldn’t. No, I couldn’t. I tried to insult you, I did insult you. And when I saw how splendidly you bore it, I used to cry.” He kissed her brown hair.

“I loved you through it all,” he said.

“Virginia!”

“Yes, dearest.”

“Virginia, did you dream of me?”

She raised her head quickly, and awe was in her eyes. “How did you know?”

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“Because I dreamed of you,” he answered. And those dreams used to linger with me half the day as I went about my work. I used to think of them as I sat in the saddle on the march.”

“I, too, treasured them,” she said. “And I hated myself for doing it.”

“Virginia, will you marry me?”

“Yes.”

“To-morrow?”

“Yes, dear, to-morrow.” Faintly, “I have no one but you—now.”

Once more he drew her to him, and she gloried in his strength.

“God help me to cherish you, dear,” he said, “and guard you well.”

She drew away from him, gently, and turned toward the window.

“See, Stephen,” she cried, “the sun has come out at last.”

For a while they were silent, looking out; the drops glistened on blade and leaf, and the joyous new green of the earth entered into their hearts.

CHAPTER XVI

ANNAPOLIS

It was Virginia’s wish, and was therefore sacred. As for Stephen, he little cared whither they went. And so they found themselves on that bright afternoon in mid-April under the great trees that arch the unpaved streets of old Annapolis.

They stopped by direction at a gate, and behind it was a green cluster of lilac bushes, which lined the walk to the big plum-colored house which Lionel Carvel had built. Virginia remembered that down this walk on a certain day in June, a hundred years agone, Richard Carvel had led Dorothy Manners.

They climbed the steps, tottering now with age and disuse, and Virginia playfully raised the big brass knocker, brown now, that Scipio had been wont to polish until it shone. Stephen took from his pocket the clumsy key that General Carvel had given him, and turned it in the rusty lock. The door swung open, and Virginia stood in the hall of her ancestors.

It was musty and damp this day as the day when Richard had come back from England and found it vacant and his grandfather dead. But there, at the parting of the stairs, was the triple-arched window which he had described. Through it the yellow afternoon light was flooding now, even as then, checkered by the branches in their first fringe of green. But the tall clock which Lionel Carvel used to wind was at Calvert House, with many another treasure.

They went up the stairs, and reverently they walked over the bare floors, their footfalls echoing through the silent house. A score of scenes in her great-grandfather's life came to Virginia. Here was the room—the cornet one at the back of the main building, which looked out over the deserted garden—that had been Richard's mother's. She recalled how he had stolen into it on that summer's day after his return, and had flung open the shutters. They were open now, for their locks were off. The prie-dieu was gone, and the dresser. But the high bed was there, stripped of its poppy counterpane and white curtains; and the steps by which she had entered it.

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And next they went into the great square room that had been Lionel Carvel's, and there, too, was the roomy bed on which the old gentleman had lain with the gout, while Richard read to him from the Spectator. One side of it looked out on the trees in Freshwater Lane; and the other across the roof of the low house opposite to where the sun danced on the blue and white waters of the Chesapeake.

"Honey," said Virginia, as they stood in the deep recess of the window, "wouldn't it be nice if we could live here always, away from the world? Just we two! But you would never be content to do that," she said, smiling reproachfully. "You are the kind of man who must be in the midst of things. In a little while you will have far more besides me to think about."

He was quick to catch the note of sadness in her voice. And he drew her to him.

"We all have our duty to perform in the world, dear," he answered. "It cannot be all pleasure."

"You—you Puritan!" she cried. "To think that I should have married a Puritan! What would my great-great-great-great-grandfather say, who was such a stanch Royalist? Why, I think I can see him frowning at me now, from the door, in his blue velvet goat and silverlaced waistcoat."

"He was well punished," retorted Stephen, "his own grandson was a Whig, and seems to have married a woman of spirit."

"She had spirit," said Virginia. "I am sure that she did not allow my great-grandfather to kiss her—unless she wanted to."

And she looked up at him, half smiling, half pouting; altogether bewitching.

"From what I hear of him, he was something of a man," said Stephen. "Perhaps he did it anyway."

"I am glad that Marlborough Street isn't a crowded thoroughfare," said Virginia.

When they had seen the dining room, with its carved mantel and silver door-knobs, and the ballroom in the wing, they came out, and Stephen locked the door again. They walked around the house, and stood looking down the terraces,—once stately, but crumbled now,—where Dorothy had danced on the green on Richard's birthday. Beyond and below was the spring-house, and there was the place where the brook dived under the ruined wall,—where Dorothy had wound into her hair the lilies of the valley before she sailed for London.

The remains of a wall that had once held a balustrade marked the outlines of the formal garden. The trim hedges, for seventy years neglected, had grown incontinent. The

garden itself was full of wild green things coming up through the brown of last season's growth. But in the grass the blue violets nestled, and Virginia picked some of these and put them in Stephen's coat.

"You must keep them always," she said, "because we got them here."

They spied a seat beside a hoary trunk. There on many a spring day Lionel Carvel had sat reading his Gazette. And there they rested now. The sun hung low over the old-world gables in the street beyond the wall, and in the level rays was an apple tree dazzling white, like a bride. The sweet fragrance which the day draws from the earth lingered in the air.

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It was Virginia who broke the silence.

“Stephen, do you remember that fearful afternoon of the panic, when you came over from Anne Brinsmade’s to reassure me?”

“Yes, dear,” he said. “But what made you think of it now?”

She did not answer him directly.

“I believed what you said, Stephen. But you were so strong, so calm, so sure of yourself. I think that made me angry when I thought how ridiculous I must have been.”

He pressed her hand.

“You were not ridiculous, Jinny.” She laughed.

“I was not as ridiculous as Mr. Cluyme with his bronze clock. But do you know what I had under my arm—what I was saving of all the things I owned?”

“No,” he answered; “but I have often wondered.” She blushed.

“This house—this place made me think of it. It was Dorothy Manners’s gown, and her necklace. I could not leave them. They were all the remembrance I had of that night at Mr. Brinsmade’s gate, when we came so near to each other.”

“Virginia,” he said, “some force that we cannot understand has brought us together, some force that we could not hinder. It is foolish for me to say so, but on that day of the slave auction, when I first saw you, I had a premonition about you that I have never admitted until now, even to myself.”

She started.

“Why, Stephen,” she cried, “I felt the same way!”

“And then,” he continued quickly, “it was strange that I should have gone to Judge Whipple, who was an intimate of your father’s—such a singular intimate. And then came your party, and Glencoe, and that curious incident at the Fair.”

“When I was talking to the Prince, and looked up and saw you among all those people.”

He laughed.

“That was the most uncomfortable of all, for me.”

“Stephen,” she said, stirring the leaves at her feet, “you might have taken me in your arms the night Judge Whipple died—if you had wanted to. But you were strong enough to resist. I love you all the more for that.”

Again she said:— “It was through your mother, dearest, that we were most strongly drawn together. I worshipped her from the day I saw her in the hospital. I believe that was the beginning of my charity toward the North.”

“My mother would have chosen you above all women, Virginia,” he answered.

In the morning came to them the news of Abraham Lincoln’s death. And the same thought was in both their hearts, who had known him as it was given to few to know him. How he had lived in sorrow; how he had died a martyr on the very day of Christ’s death upon the cross. And they believed that Abraham Lincoln gave his life for his country even as Christ gave his for the world.

And so must we believe that God has reserved for this Nation a destiny high upon the earth.

Many years afterward Stephen Brice read again to his wife those sublime closing words of the second inaugural:—

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"With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in, to bind up the nation's wounds, to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow and his children —to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations."

AFTERWORD

The author has chosen St. Louis for the principal scene of this story for many reasons. Grant and Sherman were living there before the Civil War, and Abraham Lincoln was an unknown lawyer in the neighboring state of Illinois. It has been one of the aims of this book to show the remarkable contrasts in the lives of these great men who came out of the West. This old city of St. Louis, which was founded by Laclede in 1765, likewise became the principal meeting-place of two great streams of emigration which had been separated, more or less, since Cromwell's day. To be sure, they were not all Cavaliers who settled in the tidewater Colonies. There were Puritan settlements in both Maryland and Virginia. But the life in the Southern states took on the more liberal tinge which had characterized that of the Royalists, even to the extent of affecting the Scotch Calvinists, while the asceticism of the Roundheads was the keynote of the Puritan character in New England. When this great country of ours began to develop, the streams moved westward; one over what became the plain states of Ohio and Indiana and Illinois, and the other across the Blue Ridge Mountains into Kentucky and Tennessee. They mixed along the line of the Ohio River. They met at St. Louis, and, farther west, in Kansas.

Nor can the German element in St. Louis be ignored. The part played by this people in the Civil War is a matter of history. The scope of this book has not permitted the author to introduce the peasantry and trading classes which formed the mass in this movement. But Richter, the type of the university-bred revolutionist which emigrated after '48, is drawn more or less from life. And the duel described actually took place in Berlin.

St. Louis is the author's birthplace, and his home, the home of those friends whom he has known from childhood and who have always treated him with unfaltering kindness. He begs that they will believe him when he says that only such characters as he loves are reminiscent of those he has known there. The city has a large population,—large enough to include all the types that are to be found in the middle West.

One word more. This book is written of a time when feeling ran high. It has been necessary to put strong speech into the mouths of the characters. The breach that threatened our country's existence is healed now. There is no side but Abraham Lincoln's side. And this side, with all reverence and patriotism, the author has tried to take.

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Abraham Lincoln loved the South as well as the North.

PG EDITOR'S BOOKMARKS:

Behind that door was the future: so he opened it fearfully
Being caught was the unpardonable crime
Believe in others having a hard time
Freedom meant only the liberty to earn their own living
Humiliation and not conscience which makes the sting
Most dangerous of gifts, the seeing of two sides of a quarrel
Naturally she took preoccupation for indifference
Principle in law not to volunteer information
Read a patent medicine circular and shudder with seven diseases
She could pass over, but never forgive what her aunt had said
Silence—goad to indiscretion
Simple men who command by force of character
So much for Democracy when it becomes a catchword
They have to print something
To be great is to be misunderstood

DR. JONATHAN

By Winston Churchill

A Play in Three Acts

PREFACE

This play was written during the war. But owing to the fact that several managers politely declined to produce it, it has not appeared on any stage. Now, perhaps, its theme is more timely, more likely to receive the attention it deserves, when the smoke of battle has somewhat cleared. Even when the struggle with Germany and her allies was in progress it was quite apparent to the discerning that the true issue of the conflict was one quite familiar to American thought, of self-determination. On returning from abroad toward the end of 1917 I ventured into print with the statement that the great war had every aspect of a race with revolution. Subliminal desires, subliminal fears, when they break down the censor of law, are apt to inspire fanatical creeds, to wind about their victims the flaming flag of a false martyrdom. Today it is on the knees of the gods whether the insuppressible impulses for human freedom that come roaring up from the subliminal chaos, fanned by hunger and hate, are to thrash themselves out in anarchy and insanity, or to take an ordered, intelligent and conscious course. Of the Twentieth Century, industrial democracy is the watchword, even as political democracy was the

watchword of the two centuries that preceded it. Economic power is at last realized to be political power. No man owns himself, no woman owns herself if the individual is not economically free. Perhaps the most encouraging omen of the day is the fact that many of our modern employers, and even our modern financiers and bankers seem to be recognizing this truth, to be growing aware of the danger to civilization of its continued suppression. Educators and sociologists may supply the theories; but by experiment, by trial and error,—yes, and by prayer, —the solution must be found in the practical domain of industry.

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DR. JONATHAN

ACT I

Scene:
The library of *Asher Pindar's* house in Foxon Falls, a New England village of some three thousand souls, over the destinies of which the Pindars for three generations have presided. It is a large, dignified room, built early in the nineteenth century, with white doors and gloss woodwork. At the rear of the stage,—which is the front of the house,—are three high windows with small, square panes of glass, and embrasures into which are fitted white inside shutters. These windows reach to within a foot or so of the floor; a person walking on the lawn or the sidewalk just beyond it may be seen through them. The trees bordering the Common are also seen through these windows, and through a gap in the foliage a glimpse of the terraced steeple of the Pindar Church, the architecture of which is of the same period as the house. Upper right, at the end of the wall, is a glass door looking out on the lawn. There is another door, lower right, and a door, lower left, leading into *Asher Pindar's* study. A marble mantel, which holds a clock and certain ornaments, is just beyond this door. The wall spaces on the right and left are occupied by high bookcases filled with respectable volumes in calf and dark cloth bindings. Over the mantel is an oil painting of the Bierstadt school, cherished by *Asher* as an inheritance from his father, a huge landscape with a self-conscious sky, mountains, plains, rivers and waterfalls, and two small figures of Indians—who seem to have been talking to a missionary. In the spaces between the windows are two steel engravings, "The Death of Wolfe on the Plains of Abraham" and "Washington Crossing the Delaware!" The furniture, with the exception of a few heirlooms, such as the stiff sofa, is mostly of the Richardson period of the '80s and '90s. On a table, middle rear, are neatly spread out several conservative magazines and periodicals, including a religious publication.

Time: A bright morning in October, 1917,

George pindar, in the uniform of a first lieutenant of the army, enters by the doorway, upper right. He is a well set up young man of about twenty-seven, bronzed from his life in a training camp, of an adventurous and social nature. He glances about the room, and then lights a cigarette.*Asher pindar*, his father, enters, lower right. He is a tall, strongly built man of about sixty, with iron grey hair and beard. His eyes are keen,

shadowed by bushy brows, and his New England features bear the stamp of inflexible "character." He wears a black "cutaway" coat and dark striped trousers; his voice is strong and resonant. But he is evidently preoccupied and worried, though he smiles with affection as he perceives *George*. *George's* fondness for him is equally apparent.

George. Hello, dad.

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Asher. Oh, you're here, George.

George (looking, at *Asher*). Something troubling you?

Asher (attempting dissimulation). Well, you're going off to France, they've only given you two days' leave, and I've scarcely seen anything of you. Isn't that enough?

George. I know how busy you've been with that government contract on your hands. I wish I could help.

Asher. You're in the army now, my boy. You can help me again when you come back.

George. I want to get time to go down to the shops and say goodbye to some of the men.

Asher. No, I shouldn't do that, George.

George (surprised). Why not? I used to be pretty chummy with them, you know,—-smoke a pipe with them occasionally in the noon hour.

Asher. I know. But it doesn't do for an employer to be too familiar with the hands in these days.

George. I guess I've got a vulgar streak in me somewhere, I get along with the common people. There'll be lots of them in the trenches, dad.

Asher. Under military discipline.

George (laughing). We're supposed to be fighting a war for democracy. I was talking to old Bains yesterday,—he's still able to run a lathe, and he was in the Civil War, you know. He was telling me how the boys in his regiment stopped to pick blackberries on the way to the battle of Bull Run.

Asher. That's democracy! It's what we're doing right now—stopping to pick blackberries. This country's been in the war six months, since April, and no guns, no munitions, a handful of men in France—while the world's burning!

George. Well, we won't sell Uncle Sam short yet. Something is bothering you, dad.

Asher. No—no, but the people in Washington change my specifications every week, and Jonathan's arriving today, of all days.

George. Has Dr. Jonathan turned up?

Asher. I haven't seen him yet. It seems he got here this morning. No telegram, nothing. And he had his house fixed up without consulting me. He must be queer, like his father, your great uncle, Henry Pindar.

George. Tell me about Dr. Jonathan. A scientist,—isn't he? Suddenly decided to come back to live in the old homestead.

Asher. On account of his health. He was delicate as a boy. He must have been about eight or nine years old when Uncle Henry left Foxon Falls for the west,—that was before you were born. Uncle Henry died somewhere in Iowa. He and my father never got along. Uncle Henry had as much as your grandfather to begin with, and let it slip through his fingers. He managed to send Jonathan to a medical school, and it seems that he's had some sort of a position at Johns Hopkins's—research work. I don't know what he's got to live on.

George. Uncle Henry must have been a philanthropist.

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Asher. It's all very well to be a philanthropist when you make more than you give away. Otherwise you're a sentimentalist.

George. Or a Christian.

Asher. We can't take Christianity too literally.

George (smiling). That's its great advantage, as a religion.

Asher. George, I don't like to say anything just as you're going to fight for your country, my boy, but your attitude of religious skepticism has troubled me, as well as your habit of intimacy with the shop hands. I confess to you that I've been a little afraid at times that you'd take after Jonathan's father. He never went to church, he forgot that he owed something to his position as a Pindar. He used to have that house of his overrun with all sorts of people, and the yard full of dirty children eating his fruit and picking his flowers. There's such a thing as being too democratic. I hope I'm as good an American as anybody, I believe that any man with brains, who has thrift, ought to rise—but wait until they do rise. You're going to command men, and when you come back here into the business again you'll be in a position of authority. Remember what I say, if you give these working people an inch, they'll take all you have.

George (laying his hand on ASHER's shoulder). Something is worrying you, dad. We've always been pretty good pals, haven't we?

Asher. Yes, ever since you were a little shaver. Well, George, I didn't want to bother you with it—today. It seems there's trouble in the shops,—in our shops, of all places,—-it's been going on for some time, grumbling, dissatisfaction, and they're getting higher wages than ever before—ruinous wages. They want me to recognize the union.

George. Well, that beats me. I thought we were above the labour-trouble line, away up here in New England.

Asher (grimly). Oh, I can handle them.

George. I'll bet you can. You're a regular old war horse when you get started. It's your capital, it's your business, you've put it all at the disposal of the government. What right have they to kick up a row now, with this war on? I must say I haven't any sympathy with that.

Asher (proudly). I guess you're a real Pindar after all, George.

(Enter an elderly maid, lower right.)

Maid. Timothy Farrell, the foreman's here,

(Enter, lower right, *Timothy*, a big Irishman of about sixty, in working clothes.)

Timothy. Here I am, sir. They're after sending word you wanted me.

George (going up to *Timothy* and shaking his hand warmly). Old Timothy! I'm glad to get sight of you before I go.

Timothy. And it's glad I am to see you, Mr. George, before you leave. And he an officer now! Sure, I mind him as a baby being wheeled up and down under the trees out there. My boy Bert was saying only this morning how we'd missed the sight of him in the shops this summer. You have a way with the men, Mr. George, of getting into their hearts, like. I was thinking just now, if Mr. George had only been home, in the shops, maybe we wouldn't be having all this complaint and trouble.

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George. Who's at the bottom of this, Timothy? Rench? Hillman? I thought so. Well, they're not bad chaps when you get under their skins.

(He glances at his wrist watch)

Let me go down and talk with them, dad,—I've got time, my train doesn't leave until one thirty.

Asher (impatiently, almost savagely). No, I'll settle this, George, this is my job. I won't have any humoring. Come into my study, Timothy.

Timothy, shaking his head, follows *Asher* out of the door, left.

After a moment *George* goes over to the extreme left hand corner of the room, where several articles are piled. He drags out a kit bag, then some necessary wearing apparel, underclothes, socks, a sweater, *etc*., then a large and rather luxurious lunch kit, a pin cushion. with his monogram, a small travelling pillow with his monogram, a linen toilet case embroidered in blue, to hang on the wall—these last evidently presents from admiring lady friends. Finally he brings forth a large rubber life preserving suit. He makes a show of putting all these things in the bag, including the life- preserving suit; and reveals a certain sentiment, not too deep, for the pillow, the pincushion and the toilet case. At length he strews everything over the floor, and is surveying the litter with mock despair when a girl appears on the lawn outside, through one of the windows. She throws into the room a small parcel wrapped in tissue paper, and disappears. *George* picks up the parcel and looks surprised, and suddenly runs out of the door, upper right. He presently returns, dragging the girl by the wrists, she resisting.*Minnie Farrell* is about twenty one, with black hair and an abundant vitality. Her costume is a not wholly ineffective imitation of those bought at a great price at certain metropolitan establishments. A string of imitation pearls gleams against her ruddy skin.

Minnie. Cut it out, George! (Glancing around apprehensively.) Say, if your mother was to find me here she'd want to send me up to the reformatory (she frees herself).

George. Where the deuce did you blow in from? (Regarding her with admiration.) Is this the little Minnie Farrell who left Foxon Falls two years ago? Gee whiz! aren't we smart!

Minnie. Do you like me? I'm making good money, since the war.

George. Do I like you? What are you doing here?

Minnie. My brother Bert's out there—he ain't working today. Mr. Pindar sent for father, and we walked up here with him. Where is he?

George (nodding toward the study). In there. But what are you doing, back in Foxon Falls?

Minnie. Oh, visiting the scenes of my childhood.

George (tearing open the tissue paper from the parcel). Did you make these for me?
(He holds up a pair of grey woollen wristlets.)

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Minnie. Well, I wanted to do something for a soldier, and when I heard you was going to France I thought you might as well have ’em.

George. How did you hear I was going?

Minnie. Bert told me when I came home yesterday. They say it’s cold in the trenches, and nothing keeps the hands so warm as wristlets. I know, because I’ve had ’em on winter mornings, early, when I was going to work. Will you wear ’em, George?

George. Will I wear them! (He puts then on his wrists.) I’ll never take them off till the war’s over.

Minnie (pleased). You always were a josher!

George. Tell me, Minnie, why did you run away from me two years ago?

Minnie. Run away from you! I left because I couldn’t stand this village any longer. It was too quiet for me.

George. You’re a josher! You went off while I was away, without telling me you were going. And then, when I found out where you were and hustled over to Newcastle in my car, you turned me down hard.

Minnie. You didn’t have a mortgage on me. There were plenty of girls of your own kind at that house party you went to. I guess you made love to them, too.

George. They weren’t in the same class with you. You’ve got the ginger.

Minnie. I’ve still got the ginger, all right.

George. I thought you cared for me.

Minnie. You always had the nerve, George.

George. You acted as if you did.

Minnie. I’m a good actor. Say, what was there in it for me?—packing tools in the Pindar shops, and you the son of my boss? You didn’t want nothing from me except what all men want, and you wouldn’t have wanted that long.

George. I was crazy about you.

Minnie (her eyes falling on the travelling pillow and the pincushion; picking theron: up in turn). I guess you told them that, too.

George (embarrassed). Oh, I'm popular enough when I'm going away. They don't care anything about me.

Minnie (indicating the wristlets). You don't want them,—I'll give 'em to Bert.

George. No, you won't.

Minnie. I was silly. But we had a good time while it lasted,—didn't we, George?

(She evades him deftly, and picks up the life-preserving suit.)

What's this?—a full dress uniform?

George. When a submarine gets you, all you've got to do is to jump overboard and blow this—

(He draws the siren from the pocket and starts to blow it, but she seizes his hand.)

—and float around until a destroyer picks you up.

(Takes from another pocket a metal lunch box.)

This is for pate de foie gras sandwiches, and there's room in here—

(Indicating another pocket.)

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—for a bottle of fizz. Come along with me, Minnie, ship as a Red Cross nurse, and I'll buy you one. The Atlantic wouldn't be such a bad place, with you,—and we wouldn't be in a hurry to blow the siren. You'd look like a peach in a white costume, too.

Minnie. Don't you like me in this?

George. Sure, but I'd like that better.

Minnie. I'd make a good nurse, if I do say it myself. And I'd take good care of you, George,—as good as any of them.

(She nods toward the pillow and pincushion.)

George. Better!

(He seizes her hands and attempts to draw her toward him.)

You used to let me!

Minnie. That ain't any reason.

George. Just once, Minnie,—I'm going away.

Minnie. No. I didn't mean to come in here—I just wanted to see what you looked like in your uniform.

(She draws away from him, just as Dr. *Jonathan* appears in the doorway, lower right.)

Goodbye, George.

(She goes out through the doorway, upper right.)

(*Dr*. *Jonathan* may be almost any age,—in reality about thirty five. His head is that of the thinker, high above the eyes. His face bears evidence in its lines of years of labour and service, as well as of a triumphant struggle against ill health. In his eyes is a thoughtful yet illuminating smile, now directed toward *George* who, when he perceives him, is taken aback,)

Dr. *Jonathan*. Hello! I was told to come in here,—I hope I'm not intruding.

George. Not at all. How—how long have you been here?

Dr. *Jonathan*. Just long enough to get my bearings. I came this morning.

George. Oh! Are you—are you Dr. Jonathan?

Dr. *Jonathan*. I'm Jonathan. And you're George, I suppose.

George. Yes. (He goes to him and shakes hands.) I'm sorry to be leaving just as you come.

Dr. *Jonathan*. I'll be here when you return.

George. I hope so (a pause). You won't find Foxon Falls a bad old town.

Dr. *Jonathan*. And it will be a better one when you come back.

George. Why do you say that?

Dr. *Jonathan* (smiling). It seems a safe conjecture.

(Dr. *Jonathan* is looking at the heap of articles on the floor.)

George (grinning, and not quite at ease). You might imagine I was embarking in the gent's furnishing business, instead of going to war. (He picks up the life-preserving suit.) Some friend of mother's told her about this, and she insisted upon sending for it. I don't want to hurt her feelings, but I can't take it, of course.

(He rolls it up and thrusts it under the sofa, upper left.)

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You won't give me away?

Dr. *Jonathan*. Never!

George. Dad ought to be here in a minute, he's in there with old Timothy Farrell, the moulder foreman. It seems that things are in a mess at the shops. Rotten of the men to make trouble now—don't you think?—when the country's at war! Darned unpatriotic, I say.

Dr. *Jonathan*. I saw a good many stars in your service flag as I passed the office door this morning.

George. Yes. Over four hundred of our men have enlisted. I don't understand it.

Dr. *Jonathan*. Perhaps you will, George, when you come home.

George. You mean—

(*George* is interrupted by the entrance, lower right, of his mother, *Augusta pindar*. She is now in the fifties, and her hair is turning grey. Her uneventful, provincial existence as ASHER'S wife has confirmed and crystallized her traditional New England views, her conviction that her mission is to direct for good the lives of the less fortunate by whom she is surrounded. She carries her knitting in her hand,—a pair of socks for *George*. And she goes at once to *Dr*. *Jonathan*.)

Augusta. So you are Jonathan. They told me you'd arrived—why didn't you come to us? Do you think it's wise to live in that old house of your father's before it's been thoroughly heated for a few days?

Dr. *Jonathan* (taking her hand). Oh, I'm going to live with the doors and windows open.

Augusta. Dear me! I understand you've been quite ill, and you were never very strong as a child. I made it my business to go through the house yesterday, and I must say it looks comfortable. But the carpenters and plumbers have ruined the parlour, with that bench, and the sink in the corner. What are you going to do there?

Dr. *Jonathan*. I'm having it made into a sort of laboratory.

Augusta. You don't mean to say you intend to do any work!

Dr. *Jonathan*. Work ought to cure me, in this climate.

Augusta. You mean to practise medicine? You ought to have consulted us. I'm afraid you won't find it remunerative, Jonathan,—but your father was impractical, too. Foxon

Falls is still a small place, in spite of the fact that the shops have grown. Workmen's families can't afford to pay big fees, you know.

Dr. *Jonathan* (smiling). I know.

Augusta. And we already have an excellent physician here, Dr. Senn.

Dr. *Jonathan*. I shan't interfere with Dr. Senn.

George (laying his hand on AUGUSTA's shoulder: apologetically). Mother feels personally responsible for every man, woman and child in Foxon Falls. I shouldn't worry about Dr. Jonathan if I were you, mother, I've got a notion he can take care of himself.

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Augusta (a little baffled by *Dr*. JONATHAN's self-command, sits down and begins to knit). I must get these socks finished for you to take with you, my dear. (To *Dr*. *Jonathan*) I can't realize he's going! (To *George*) You haven't got all your things in your bag! Where's the life-preserving suit I sent for?

George (glancing at *Dr*. *Jonathan*). Oh that's gone, mother.

Augusta. He always took cold so easily, and that will keep him warm and dry, if those terrible Germans sink his ship. But your presents, George! (To *Dr*. *Jonathan*:) Made for him by sisters of his college friends.

George (amused but embarrassed). I can't fit up a section of the trenches as a boudoir.

Augusta. Such nice girls! I wish he'd marry one of them. Who made you the wristlets? I hadn't seen them.

George (taking of the wristlets and putting them in his bag). Oh, I can't give her away. I was—just trying them on, to see if they fitted.

Augusta. When did they come?

George (glancing at *Dr*. *Jonathan*). Er—this morning.

(Enter *Asher* and *Timothy* from the study, left. *Asher* is evidently wrought up from his talk with *Timothy*.)

Asher. Remember, Timothy, I rely on sensible men like you to put a stop to this nonsense.

Augusta. Asher, here's Jonathan.

Asher. Oh! (He goes up to *Dr*. *Jonathan* and takes his hand, though it is quite evident that his mind is still on the trouble in the shops). Glad to see you back in Foxon Falls, Jonathan. I heard you'd arrived, and would have dropped in on you, but things are in a muddle here just now.

Dr. *Jonathan*. Not only here, but everywhere.

Asher. You're right. The country's going to the dogs. I don't know what will straighten it out.

Dr. *Jonathan*. Intelligence, open-mindedness, cooperation, Asher.

Asher (arrested: looking at him). Hum!

Dr. *Jonathan* (leaving him and going up to *Timothy*). You don't remember me, Timothy?

Timothy. Sure and I do, sir,—though you were only a little lad. You mind me of your father,—your smile, like. He was the grand, simple man! It's happy I am to see you back in Foxon Falls.

Dr. *Jonathan*. Yes, I've been ordered to the rear.

Timothy. The rear, is it? I'm thinking we'll be fighting this war in Foxon Falls, too.

Dr. *Jonathan*. Yes, much of it will be fought behind the battle lines.

Augusta. You think the Germans will come over here?

Dr. *Jonathan*. No, but the issue is over here already.

(*Dr*. *Jonathan* picks up her ball of wool, which has fallen to the floor.)

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Augusta (looking at him apprehensively: puzzled). Thank you, Jonathan.

(She turns to *Timothy*, who has started toward the door, lower right)

Wait a moment, Timothy, I want to ask you about your children. What do you hear from Minnie? I always took an interest in her, you know, —especially when she was in the tool packing department of the shops, and I had her in my Bible class. I appreciated your letting her come, —an Irishman and a Catholic as you are.

Timothy. The Church has given me up as a heathen, ma'am, when I married your cook, and she a Protestant.

Augusta. I've been worried about Minnie since she went to Newcastle. She has so much vitality, and I'm afraid she's pleasure loving though she seemed to take to religion with her whole soul. And where's Jamesy?

Timothy. Jamesy, is it? It's gone to the bad entirely he is, with the drink. He left the shops when the twelve-hour shifts began—wherever he's at now. It's home Minnie came from Newcastle yesterday, ma'am, for a visit,—she's outside there now, with Bert, —they walked along with me.

Augusta. Bring them in, I want to see them,—especially Minnie. I must say I'm surprised she should have come home without calling on me.

Timothy. I'll get them, ma'am.

(He goes out of the door, upper right. *George*, who has been palpably ill at ease during this conversation, now makes for the door, lower right.)

Augusta. Where are you going, my dear?

George (halting). I thought I'd look around and see if I'd forgotten anything, mother.

Augusta. Stay with us,—there's plenty of time.

(*Timothy* returns through the doorway, upper right, with *Bert*, but without *Minnie*.)

Timothy. It's disappeared entirely she is, ma'am,—here one minute and there the next, the way with young people nowadays. And she's going back to Newcastle this afternoon, to her job at the Wire Works.

Augusta. I must see her before she goes. I feel in a measure responsible for her. You'll tell her?

Timothy. I'll tell her.

Augusta. How are you getting along, Bert?

Bert. Very well, thank you, Mrs. Pindar.

(The *maid* enters, lower right.)

Maid. Miss Thorpe wishes to speak with you, ma'am.

Augusta (gathering up her knitting). It's about the wool for the Red Cross.

(Exit, lower right.)

George (shaking hands with *Bert*). Hello, Bert,—how goes it?

Bert. All right, thank you, lieutenant.

George. Oh, cut out the title.

(*Bert Farrell* is about twenty three. He wears a brown flannel shirt and a blue four-in-hand tie, and a good ready-made suit. He holds his hat in front of him. He is a self-respecting, able young Irish American of the blue-eyed type that have died by thousands on the battle fields of France, and whose pictures may be seen in our newspapers.)

Asher. You're not working today, Bert?

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Bert. I've left the shops, Mr. Pindar,—I got through last night.

Asher. Left the shops! You didn't say anything about this, Timothy!

Timothy. No, sir,—you have trouble enough today.

Asher (to *Bert*). Why did you leave?

Bert. I'm going to enlist, Mr. Pindar,—with the Marines. From what I've heard of that corps, I think I'd like to join it.

Asher (exasperated). But why do you do a thing like this when you must know I need every man here to help turn out these machines? And especially young men like you, good mechanics! If you wanted to serve your country, you were better off where you were. I got you exempted —(catching himself) I mean, you were exempted from the draft.

Bert. I didn't want to be exempted, sir. More than four hundred of the boys have gone from the shops, as well as Mr. George here, and I couldn't stand it no longer.

Asher. What's Mr. George got to do with it? The cases are different.

Bert (stoutly). I don't see that, Mr. Pindar. Every man, no matter who he is, has to decide a thing like this for himself.

George. Bert's right, dad.

Asher. You say he's right, when you know that I need every hand I can get to carry out this contract?

George. He's going to make a contract, too. He's giving up all he has.

Asher. And you approve of this, Timothy?

Timothy. Sure, I couldn't stop him, Mr. Pindar! And it's proud I am of him, the same as you are of Mr. George, that he'd be fighting for America and liberty.

Asher. Liberty! License is what we're getting now! The workman thinks he can do as he pleases. And after all I've done for my workmen, —building them a club house with a piano in it, and a library and a billiard table, trying to do my best to make them comfortable and contented. I pay them enough to buy pianos and billiard tables for themselves, and you tell me they want still higher wages.

Timothy. They're saying they can go down to the shipyards, where they'd be getting five dollars and thirty cents a day.

Asher. Let them go to the shipyards, if they haven't any sense of gratitude! What else do they say?

Timothy. That you have a contract, sir, and making millions out of it.

Asher. What can they know about my profits?

Timothy. It's just that, sir,—they know nothing at all. But they're saying they ought to know, since things is different now, and they're working for the war and the country, the same as yourself.

Asher. Haven't I established a system of bonuses, to share my profits with the efficient and the industrious?

Timothy. They don't understand the bonuses,—how you come by them. Autocracy is the word they use. And they say you put up a notice sudden like, without asking them, that there'd be two long shifts instead of three eight-hour ones. They're willing to work twelve hours on end, for the war, they say, but they'd want to be consulted.

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Asher. What business is it of theirs?

Timothy. Well, it's them that has to do the hard work, sir. There was a meeting last night, I understand, with Rench and Hillman and a delegate come from Newcastle making speeches, the only way they'd get their rights would be for you to recognize the union.

Asher. I'll never recognize a union! I won't have any outsiders, meddlers and crooks dictating my business to me.

Timothy. I've been with you thirty years, come December, Mr. Pindar, and you've been a good employer to me. I don't hold with the unions—you know it well, sir, or you wouldn't be asking me advice. I'm telling you what they're saying.

Asher. I didn't mean to accuse you,—you've been a good and loyal employee—that's why I sent for you. Find out what their game is, and let me know.

Timothy. It's not a detective I am, Mr. Pindar. I'm a workman meself. That's another thing they're saying, that you'd pay detectives to go among them, like workingmen.

Asher (impatiently). I'm not asking you to be a detective,—I only want you to give me warning if we are to have a strike.

Timothy. I've warned you, sir,—if it's only for the sake of beating the Germans, the dirty devils.

George (turning to *Bert*). Well, here's wishing you luck, Bert, and hoping we'll meet over there. I know how you feel,—you want to be in it, just as I do.

Asher (turning). Perhaps I said more than I meant to, Bert. I've got to turn out these machines in order that our soldiers may have shrapnel to fight with, and what with enlistments and the determination of unscrupulous workmen to take advantage of the situation, I'm pretty hard pressed. I can't very well spare steady young men like you, who have too much sense and too much patriotism to mix yourselves up with trouble makers. But I, too, can understand your feeling,—I'd like to be going myself. You might have consulted me, but your place will be ready for you when you come back.

Bert. Thank you, sir. (He turns his hat over in his hands.) Maybe it would be fair to tell you, Mr. Pindar, that I've got a union card in my pocket.

Asher. You, Timothy Farrell's son!

Timothy. What's that? And never a word to me!

Bert (to *Timothy*). Why wouldn't I join the union? I took out the card this morning, when I see that that's the only way we'll get what's coming to us. We ain't got a chance against the, employers without the union.

Timothy. God help me, to think my son would join the union,—and he going to be a soldier!

Bert (glancing at *George*). I guess there'll be other union men in the trenches besides me.

Asher. Soldier or no soldier, I'll never employ any man again who's joined a union.

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George (perturbed). Hold on, dad!

Asher. I mean what I say, I don't care who he is.

Bert (who retains his self-possession). Excuse me, Mr. Pindar, but I'd like to ask you a question—I've heard the men talking about this in the shops. You don't like it if we go off to—fight, but if we join the union you fire us, no matter how short-handed you are.

Asher. It's a principle with me,—I won't have any outside agency dictating to me.

Bert. But if it came to recognizing the union, or shutting down?

Asher. I'd shut down tomorrow.

(*George*, who sees the point, makes a gesture as if about to interrupt.)

Bert. That's what I'm getting at, Mr. Pindar. You say you'd shut down for a principle, whether the government gets the machines or not. And the men say they'd join the union for a principle, whether the government gets the machines or not. It looks to me as if both was hindering the war for a principle, and the question is, which principle is it that agrees best with what we're fighting for?

Asher. No man joins a union for a principle, but for extortion. I can't discuss it,—I won't!

Bert. I'm sorry, sir.

(He turns to go out, lower right.)

George (overtaking him and grasping his hand). So long, Bert. I'll look you up, over there!

Bert (gazing at him). All right, Mr. George.

George. Goodbye, Timothy. Don't worry about the boy.

Timothy. It's proud I am to have him go. Mr. George,—but I can't think why he'd be joining the union, and never telling me.

(He stands for a moment troubled, glancing at *Asher*, torn between loyalty to his employer and affection for his son. Then he goes out slowly, upper right. All the while *Dr*. *Jonathan* has stood in the rear of the room, occasionally glancing at *George*. He now comes forward, unobtrusively, yet withal impressively.)

Asher. I never expected to hear such talk from a son of Timothy Farrell,—a boy I thought was level-headed. (To *Dr*. *Jonathan*) What do you think of that? You heard it.

Dr. *Jonathan*. Well, he stated the issue, Asher.

Asher. The issue of what?

Dr. *Jonathan*. Of the new century.

George. The issue of the new century

Asher. You're right, we've got to put these people down. After the war they'll come to heel,—we'll have a cheap labour market then.

Dr. *Jonathan*. Humanity has always been cheap, but we're spending it rather lavishly just now.

Asher, You mean that there will be a scarcity of labour? And that they can continue to blackmail us into paying these outrageous wages?

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Dr. *Jonathan*. When you pay a man wages, Asher, you own him,—until he is turned over to somebody else.

Asher (puzzled, a little suspicious for the first time). I own his labour, of course.

Dr. *Jonathan*. Then you own his body, and his soul. Perhaps he resents being regarded as a commodity.

Asher. What else is labour?

Dr. *Jonathan*. How would you like to be a commodity?

Asher. I? I don't see what that has to do with it. These men have no consideration, no gratitude, after the way I've treated them.

Dr. *Jonathan*. Isn't that what they object to?

Asher. What?

Dr. *Jonathan*. To being treated.

Asher. Object to kindness?

Dr. *Jonathan*. To benevolence.

Asher. Well, what's the difference?

Dr. *Jonathan*. The difference between self-respect and dependence.

Asher. Are—are you a Socialist?

Dr. *Jonathan*. *No*, I'm a scientist.

(*Asher* is standing staring at him when the *maid* enters, lower right.)

Maid. Your long distance call to Washington, sir.

Asher. Very well.

(As he starts to go out he halts and looks at *Dr*. *Jonathan* again, and then abruptly leaves the room, lower right, following the *maid*.)

George (who has been regarding *Dr*. *Jonathan*: after a moment's hesitation). You seem to think there's something to be said for the workman's attitude, Dr. Jonathan.

Dr. *Jonathan*. What is his attitude, George?

George. Well, you heard Bert just now. I thought he had poor old dad on the hip when he accused the employer of holding up the war, too. But after all, what labour is after is more money, isn't it? and they're taking advantage of a critical situation to get it. And when they get money, most of them blow it in on sprees.

Dr. *Jonathan*. George, what are you going to France to fight for?

George. Germany's insulted our flag, murdered our people on the high seas and wants to boss the world.

Dr. *Jonathan* (smiling). The issue, then, is human freedom.

George. Sure thing!

Dr. *Jonathan*. And you think every man and woman in this country is reasonably free?

George. Every man can rise if he has the ability.

Dr. *Jonathan*. What do you mean by rise?

George. He can make money, set up for himself and be his own boss.

Dr. *Jonathan*. In other words, he can become free.

George (grinning). I suppose that's one way of putting it.

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Dr. *Jonathan*. Money gives him freedom, doesn't it? Money gave you yours,—to go to school and college until you were twenty four, and get an education,—such as it was.

George. Such as it was!

Dr. *Jonathan*. Money gave you the choice of engaging in an occupation in which you could take an interest and a pride, and enabled you occasionally to go on a spree, if you ever went on a spree, George.

George. Once in awhile.

Dr. *Jonathan*. But this craving for amusement, for excitement and adventure isn't peculiar to you and me. Workingmen have it too,—and working girls.

George. You're a wise guy, I guess.

Dr. *Jonathan*. Oh no,—not that! But I've found out that you and I are not so very different from Timothy Farrell and his children,—Bert and Jamesy and—Minnie.

George (startled, and looking around to follow *Dr*. *Jonathan's* glance toward the windows). What do you know about them?

Dr. *Jonathan*. Oh, nothing at first hand. But I can see why Bert's going to the war, and why Jamesy took to drink, and why Minnie left Foxon Falls.

George. The deuce you can!

Dr. *Jonathan*. And so can you, George. When you get back from France you will know what you have been fighting for.

George. And what's that?

Dr. *Jonathan*. Economic freedom, without which political freedom is a farce. Industrial democracy.

George. Industrial democracy! Well, it wasn't included in my education at Harvard.

Dr. *Jonathan*. Our education begins, unfortunately, after we leave Harvard,—with Bert and Jamesy and Minnie. And here's Minnie, now!

George (hastily). I'll beat it! Mother wants to talk to her.

Dr. *Jonathan* (his hand on *George's* arm). No,—wait.

(Enter, lower right, *Augusta*, followed by *Minnie Farrell*. *Minnie*, *Augusta's* back being turned toward her, gives *George* a wink, which he acknowledges, and then glances

toward *Dr*. *Jonathan*. *Augusta*, with her knitting, seats herself in an armchair. Her attitude is somewhat inquisitorial; her tone, as she addresses *Minnie*, non- committal. She is clearly offended by *Minnie's* poise and good- natured self-assertion.)

Augusta. You remember Mr. Pindar, Minnie.

Minnie (demurely). Glad to meet you again, Mr. Pindar. I hear you're going off to the war. Well, that's great.

George (squeezing her hand; she winces a little). Oh, yes,-I remember Minnie.

Augusta. And this is Dr. Jonathan Pindar.

Minnie (who has been eyeing *Dr*. *Jonathan* as a possible enemy; with reserve). Glad to meet you, I'm sure.

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Dr. *Jonathan* (smiling at her as he takes her hand). The pleasure is —mutual.

Minnie (puzzled, but somewhat reassured). Glad to meet you.

Dr. *Jonathan*. I've come to live in Foxon Falls. I hope we'll be friends.

Minnie. I hope so. I'm going back to Newcastle this afternoon, there's nothing doing here.

Dr. *Jonathan*. Would you stay, if there were something doing?

Minnie. I—I don't know. What would I be doing here?

Augusta (disapprovingly, surveying, *Minnie's* costume). I don't think I should have recognized you, Minnie.

Minnie. City life agrees with me, Mrs. Pindar. But I needed a little rest cure, and I came to see what the village looked like.

Dr. *Jonathan*. A sort of sentimental journey, Minnie.

Minnie (flashing a look at *George*, and another at *Dr*. *Jonathan*). Well, you might call it that. I get you.

Augusta. Minnie, what church do you attend in Newcastle?

Minnie. Well, I haven't got a seat in any particular church, Mrs. Pindar.

Augusta. I didn't expect you to go to the expense of getting a seat. I hope you delivered the letter our minister gave you to the minister of the First Church in Newcastle.

Minnie. No, I didn't, Mrs. Pindar, and that's the truth. I never went near a church.

Augusta (drily). It's a pity you ever went to Newcastle, I think.

Minnie. It's some town! Every time you ride into it you see a big sign, "Welcome to Newcastle, population one hundred and six thousand, and growing every day. Goodbye, and thank you!"

Augusta (knitting). You drive about in automobiles!

Minnie. Oh, sometimes I get a joy ride.

Augusta. It grieves me to hear you talk in this way. I knew you were pleasure loving, I thought I saw certain tendencies in you, yet you seemed to realize the grace of religion when you were in my Bible class. Your brother Jamesy took to drink—

Minnie. And I took to religion. You meant to be kind, Mrs. Pindar, and I thank you. But now I know why Jamesy took to drink—it was for the same reason I took to religion.

Augusta (scandalized). Minnie!

Minnie. We were both trying to be free, to escape.

Augusta. To escape? From what?

Minnie (with a gesture indicating futility). I guess it would be pretty hard to get it across to you, Mrs. Pindar. But I was working ten hours a day packing tools in your shops, and all you gave me when the whistle blew was—Jesus.

(A pause: *George* takes a step toward her.)

Jamesy took to drink, and I took to Jesus. I'm not saying anything against Him. He had His life, but I wanted mine. Maybe He would have understood.

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(Turning impulsively toward *Dr*. *Jonathan*.)

I've got a hunch that you understand.

Augusta. Minnie, I can't let you talk about religion in this way in my presence.

Minnie. I'm sorry, Mrs. Pindar, I knew it wasn't no use to come and see you,—I told father so.

Augusta. I suppose, if you're determined to continue this life of—(she catches herself) I can't stop you.

Minnie (flaring up). What life? Don't worry about me, Mrs. Pindar,—I get twenty five dollars a week at the Shale Works making barb wire to trip up the Huns with,—enough to get nice clothes—(she glances down at her dress) and buy good food, and have a good time on the side.

Augusta (whose conceptions of what she believes to be MINNIE's kind are completely upset). You still work?

Minnie. Work! Sure I work. I wouldn't let any man get a strangle hold on me. And I don't kick at a little overtime, neither. I'm working for what he's going to fight for—-(indicating *George*) it ain't for myself only, but for everybody that ain't been free, all over the world. (To *Dr*. *Jonathan*.) Ain't that right? (She does not wait for his nod of approval.) I was just saying this morning—(she looks toward *George* and catches herself)—I've been wishing all along I could do more—go as a nurse for some of the boys.

Augusta. A nurse!

Minnie (to *Dr*. *Jonathan*). If I was a man, I'd have been a doctor, like you. Sick people don't bother me, I give myself to 'em. Before mother died, when she was sick, she always said I'd ought to have been a nurse. (A pause.) Well, I guess I'll go along. The foreman only give me a couple of days off to see the old home town.

George. Hold on, Minnie.

Minnie. What is it?

George (to *Augusta*). Minnie and I are old friends, mother.

Augusta. Old friends?

George. Yes. I knew her—very well before she went away from Foxon Falls, and I went to Newcastle and took her out for a drive in my car.

Minnie (vehemently). No, you never.

George. Why do you deny it?

Minnie. There's nothing to it.

Augusta (aghast). George!

George. Well, it's true. I'm not ashamed of it, though Minnie appears to be.

Minnie (on the verge of tears). If you wasn't ashamed, why didn't you tell, her before? I'm not ashamed of it, neither. It was natural.

Augusta (after a pause, with a supreme effort to meet the situation). Well, I suppose men are different. But there's no excuse for you, after all I tried to do for you.

Minnie. Thank God men are different!

(*Augusta* rises. The ball of wool drops to the floor again, and *Dr*. *Jonathan* picks it up.)

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George. Mother, I'd like to tell you about it. You don't understand.

Augusta. I'm afraid I do understand, dear.

(As she leaves the room, with dignity, *George* glances appealingly at *Dr*. *Jonathan*.)

Dr. *Jonathan* (going up to *Minnie* and taking her hand). Do you think you'd have time to drop in to see me, Minnie, before your train goes?

Minnie (gazing at him; after a moment). Sure! I guess I'd like to talk to you.

Dr. *Jonathan*. It's the little white house across the Common.

Minnie. Oh, I know, that's been shut up all these years.

Dr. *Jonathan*. And is open now again.

(He goes out, lower right, and there is a brief silence as the two look after him.)

Minnie. Say, who is he?

George. Why, he's a cousin of mine—

Minnie. I don't mean that. He's somebody, ain't he?

George. By jingo, I'm beginning to think he is!

(They stand gazing at one another.)

Minnie (remembering her grievance: passionately). Now you've gone and done it—-telling your mother we were friends.

George. But we are—aren't we? You couldn't expect me to keep quiet, under the circumstances.

Minnie. She thinks I'm not fit to talk to you. Not that I care, except that I was fond of her, she's been good to me in her way, and I felt real bad when I went off to Newcastle with the letter to the minister I never laid eyes on. She'll believe—you know what she'll believe,—it'll trouble her. She's your mother, and you're going away. You might have kept still.

George. I couldn't keep still. What would you have thought of me?

Minnie. It don't make any difference what I'd have thought of you.

George. It makes a difference to me, and it makes some difference what I think of myself. I seem to be learning a good many things this morning.

Minnie. From him?

George: You mean Dr. Jonathan?

Minnie. Yes.

George (reflecting). I don't know. I'm learning them from you, from everybody.

Minnie. Maybe he put you wise.

George. Well, I don't feel wise. And seeing you again this morning brought it all back to me.

Minnie. You were only fooling.

George. I began that way,—I'll own up. But I told you I'd never met a girl like you, you're full of pep—courage—something I can't describe. I was crazy about you,—that's straight,—but I didn't realize it until you ran off, and then I went after you,—but it was no good! I don't claim to have been square with you, and I've been thinking—well, that I'm responsible.

Minnie. Responsible for what?

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George. Well-for your throwing yourself away down there at Newcastle. You're too good.

Minnie (with heat). Throwing myself away?

George. Didn't you? Didn't you break loose?—have a good time?

Minnie. Why wouldn't I have a good time? That's what you were having, —a good time with me,—wasn't it? And say, did you ever stop to think what one day of a working girl's life was like?

George. One day?

Minnie. With an alarm clock scaring you out of sweet dreams in the winter, while it's dark, and you get up and dress in the cold and heat a little coffee over a lamp and beat it for the factory,—and stand on your feet all morning, in a noise that would deafen you, feeding a thing you ain't got no interest in? It don't never need no rest! By eleven o'clock you think you're all in, that the morning'll never end, but at noon you get a twenty five cent feed that lasts you until about five in the afternoon,—and then you don't know which way the machine's headed. I've often thought of one of them cutters at Shale's as a sort of monster, watching you all day, waiting to get you when you're too tired to care. (Dreamily.) When it looks all blurred, and you want to put your hand in it.

George. Good God, Minnie!

Minnie. And when the whistle blows at night all you have is your little hall bedroom in a rooming house that smells of stale smoke and cabbage. There's no place to go except the streets—but you've just got to go somewhere, to break loose and have a little fun, —even though you're so tired you want to throw yourself on the bed and cry.

(A pause.)

Maybe it's because you're tired. When you're tired that way is when you want a good time most. It's funny, but it's so.

(A pause.)

You ain't got no friends except a few girls with hall bedrooms like yourself, and if a chance comes along for a little excitement, you don't turn it down, I guess.

George (after a pause). I never knew what your life was like.

Minnie. Why would you?—with friends, and everything you want, only to buy it? But since the war come on, I tell you, I ain't kicking, I can go to a movie or the theatre once

in a while, and buy nice clothes, and I don't get so tired as I used to. I don't want nothing from anybody, I can take care of myself. It's money that makes you free.

George. Money!

Minnie. When I looked into this room this morning and saw you standing here in your uniform, I says to myself, "He's changed." Not that you wasn't kind and good natured and generous, George, but you didn't know. How could you? You'd never had a chance to learn anything!

George (bitterly, yet smiling in spite of himself). That's so!

Minnie. I remember that first night I ran into you,—I was coming home from your shops, and you made love to me right off the bat! And after that we used to meet by the watering trough on the Lindon road. We were kids then. And it didn't make no difference how tired I was, I'd get over it as soon as I saw you. You were the live wire!

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George. Minnie, tell me, what made you come back to Foxon Falls today?

(He seizes her hand.)

Minnie (struggling). Don't, George,—don't go and be foolish again!

(The shop whistle blows. She pulls away from him and backs toward the doorway, upper right.)

There's the noon whistle! Goodbye, I'll be thinking of you, over there.

George. I'll write to you. Will you write to me, Minnie?

Minnie (shaking her head). Don't lose any sleep about me. Good luck, George!

(She goes to the doorway, upper right, turns, kisses her hand to *George* and disappears. He goes to the doorway and gazes after her; presently he raises his hand and waves in answer to another signal, and smiles. He remains there until *Minnie* is out of sight, and then is about to come back into the room when a man appears on the sidewalk, seen through the windows. The man is *Prag*. He is a gaunt workman, with high cheek bones and a rather fanatical light in his blue eyes. He stands motionless, gazing at the house.)

George (calling). Do you want anything, Prag?

Prag. I joost come to look at your house, where you live. It is no harm, is it?

George. None at all.

(*Prag* continues to stare at the house, and *George* obeys a sudden impulse.)

Won't you come in, Prag?

Prag (looking fixedly at the house). No, I stay here.

George. Come in a while,—don't be unsociable.

(*Prag* crosses the lawn and enters, upper right. He surveys the room curiously, defiantly, and then *George* in uniform, as he cones down the stage.)

You're not working today?

Prag (with bitter gloom). I lose my job, you don't hear? No, it is nothings to you, and you go away to fight for liberty,—ain't it?

George. How did you lose your job?

Prag. The foreman come to me last night and says, "Prag I hear you belong to the union. You gets out."

George (after a moment's hesitation). But—there are plenty of other jobs these days. You can go down to the coast and get more than five dollars a day at a shipyard.

Prag. It is easy, yes, when you have a little home bought already, and mortgaged, and childrens who go to school here, and a wife a long time sick.

George. I'm sorry. But weren't you getting along all right here, except your wife's illness? I don't want to be impertinent,—I recognize that it's your affair, but I'd like to know why you joined the union.

Prag. Why is it you join the army? To fight for somethings you would give your life for—not so? Und you are a soldier,—would you run away from your comrades to live safe and happy? No! That is like me. I lose my job, I go away from my wife and childrens, but it is not for me, it is for all, to get better things for all,—freedoms for all.

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George. Then—you think this isn't a free country.

Prag. When. I sail up the harbour at New York twenty years ago and see that Liberty shining in the sun, I think so, yes. But now I know, for the workmens, she is like the Iron Woman of Nuremberg, with her spikes when she holds you in her arms. You call me a traitor, yes, when I say that.

George. No—I want to understand.

Prag. I am born in Bavaria, but I am as good an American as any,—better than you, because I know what I fight for, what I suffer for. I am not afraid of the Junkers here,—I have spirits,—but the Germans at home have no spirits. You think you fight for freedoms, for democracy, but you fight for this! (He waves his hand to indicate the room.) If I had a million dollars, maybe I fight for it, too,—I don't know.

George. So you think I'm going to fight for this—for money?

Prag. Are you going to fight for me, for the workmens and their childrens? No, you want to keep your money, to make more of it from your war contracts. It is for the capitalist system you fight.

George. Come, now, capital has some rights.

Prag. I know this, that capital is power. What is the workmen's vote against it? against your newspapers and your system? America, she will not be free until your money power is broken. You don't like kings and emperors, no,—you say to us workmens, you are not patriots, you are traitors if you do not work and fight to win this war for democracy against kings. Are we fools that we should worry about kings? Kings will fall of themselves. Now you can put me in jail.

George. I don't want to put you in jail, God knows! How would you manage it?

Prag. Why does not the employer say to his workmens, "This is our war, yours and mines. Here is my contract, here is my profits, we will have no secrets, we will work together and talk together and win the war together to make the world brighter for our childrens." Und then we workmens say, "Yes, we will work night and day so hard as we can, because we are free mens."

(A fanatical gleams comes into his eyes.)

But your employer, he don't say that,—no. He says, "This is my contract, this is my shop, and if you join the unions to get your freedoms you cannot work with me, you are traitors!"

(He rises to a frenzy of exaltation.)

After this there will be another war, and the capitalists will be swept away like the kings!

(He pauses; *George* is silent.)

Und now I go away, and maybe my wife she die before I get to the shipyard at Newcastle.

(He goes slowly out, upper right, and *George* does not attempt to stay him. Enter *Asher*, lower right.)

Asher. I've just called up the Department in Washington and given them a piece of my mind—told 'em they'd have to conscript labour. Damn these unions, making all this trouble, and especially today, when you're going off. I haven't had a chance to talk to you. Well, you know that I'm proud of you, my boy. Your grandfather went off to the Civil War when he was just about your age.

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George. And he knew what he was going to fight for.

Asher. What?

George. I thought I knew, this morning. Now I'm not so sure.

Asher. You say that, when Germany intended to come over here and crush us, when she got through with the Allies.

George. No, it's not so simple as that, dad, it's bigger than that.

Asher. Who's been talking to you? Jonathan Pindar? I wish to God he'd never come to Foxon Falls! I might have known what his opinions would be, with his inheritance. (Reproachfully.) I didn't suppose you could be so easily influenced by sentimentalism, George, I'd hoped you'd got over that.

George. Are you sure it's sentimentalism, dad? Dr. Jonathan didn't say much, but I'll admit he started me thinking. I've begun to realize a few things—

Asher. What things?

George (glancing at the clock on the mantel). I haven't got time to tell you,—I'm afraid I couldn't make it clear, anyway,—it isn't clear in my own mind yet. But,—go slow with this labour business, dad, there's dynamite in it.

Asher. Dynamite?

George. Human dynamite. They're full of it,—we're full of it, too, I guess. They're not so different from you and me, though I'll admit that many of them are ignorant, prejudiced and bitter. But this row isn't just the result of restlessness and discontent,—-that's the smoke, but the fire's there, too. I've heard enough this morning to be convinced that they're struggling for something fundamental, that has to do with human progress,—the issue behind the war. It's obscured now, in the smoke. Now if that's so you can't ignore it, dad, you can't suppress it, the only thing to do is to sit down with them and try to understand it. If they've got a case, if the union has come to stay, recognize it and deal with it.

Asher. You—you, my son, are not advising me to recognize the union! To give our employees a voice in our private affairs!

George (courageously). But is the war our private affair, dad? Hasn't it changed things already?

(*Asher* makes a gesture of pain, of repudiation. *George* approaches him appealingly.)

Dad, you know how much we've always been to each other, I'd hate to have any misunderstanding between us,—especially today. I've always accepted your judgment. But I'm over twenty one, I'm going to fight this war, I've got to make up my own mind about it.

Asher (extending his arms and putting his hands on *George's* shoulders). Something's upset you today, my boy,—you don't know what you're saying. When you get over there and take command of your men you'll see things in a truer proportion.

George. No, I can't leave it this way, dad. I've come to feel this thing, it's got hold of me now, I shan't change. And I'll be thinking of it over there, all the time, if we don't talk it out.

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Asher. For God's sake, George, don't speak of it again,—don't think of it! There's no sacrifice I wouldn't make for you, in reason, but you're asking me to go against my life-long convictions. As your father, I forbid you to entertain such ideas—(he breaks off, choking). Don't speak of them, don't think of them!

(*Timothy Farrell* Steps inside the doorway, upper right, followed by *Bert*, and after a few moments by *Dr*. *Jonathan*.)

Timothy. Excuse me sir, but you asked me to be letting you know if I heard anything. There's a meeting called for tonight, and they'll strike on Monday morning. It's certain I am, from the way the men are talking, —unless ye'd agree to meet the committee this afternoon and come to an understanding like.

Asher. Let them strike. If they burned down the shops this afternoon, I wouldn't stop them! (He waves *Timothy* Off.) My boy is leaving for France, and I'm going to New York with him.

Timothy (with a sudden flaring up of sympathy). It's meself has a boy going, too, Mr. Pindar. And maybe it's almost the last I'll be seeing of him, this noon hour. Just a word with ye, before it's too late, sir.

Asher (suppressing him). No, let them strike!

(He turns to hide his emotion and then rushes out of the door, lower right. *George* and *Bert* come forward and stand with *Timothy*, silent after ASHER's dramatic exit; when *Timothy* perceives *Dr*. *Jonathan*.)

Timothy. Did you see my Minnie, doctor? She went to your house.

Dr. *Jonathan*. I met her on the street just now, and left her with Mrs. Prag.

George. Prag's wife! You've been to see her?

Dr. *Jonathan*. Yes. Her condition is serious. She needs a nurse, and Minnie volunteered.

Timothy. My Minnie, is it? Then she won't be going back to Newcastle.

Dr. *Jonathan* (looking at *George*). She won't be going back to Newcastle.

Timothy. That's Minnie! (he turns to *George*). Well, goodbye, Mr. George,—I'll say God bless you again. (He looks at *Bert*.) You'll be fighting over there, the pair of you, for freedom. Have an eye on him, Sir, if you can,—give him some good advice.

George (his hand on *Bert's* shoulder). Bert can take care of himself, I guess. I'll be needing the advice!

(He shakes hands with *Timothy*.)

Curtain.

ACT II

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Scene:
A fairly large room in *Dr*. JONATHAN's house in Foxon Falls, which has been converted into a laboratory. The house antedates the *pindar* mansion, having been built in the first decade of the nineteenth century, and though not large, has a certain distinction and charm. The room has a panelled wainscoting and a carved wooden mantel, middle left, painted white, like the doors. Into the fireplace is set a Franklin stove. The windows at the rear have small panes; the lower sashes are raised; the tops of the hollyhocks and foxgloves in the garden bed may be seen above the window sills, and the apple trees beyond. Under the windows is a long table, on which are chemical apparatus. A white enamelled sink is in the rear right corner. The walls are whitewashed, the wooden floor bare. A door, left, in the rear, leads into *Dr*. *Jonathan's* office; another, middle right, into a little front hall.

Time: A July morning, 1918.

Minnie Farrell, in the white costume worn by nurses and laboratory workers, is at the bench, pouring liquid into a test tube and holding its up to the light, when *Dr*. *Jonathan* enters from the right.

Dr. *Jonathan*. Has anyone been in, Minnie?

Minnie (turning, with the test tube in her hand). Now, what a question to ask, Dr. Jonathan! Was there ever a morning or afternoon that somebody didn't stray in here with their troubles? (Fiercely.) They don't think a scientist has a real job,—they don't understand, if you put this across—(she holds up the test tube)—you'll save the lives of thousands of soldiers, and a few ordinary folks, too, I guess. But you won't let me tell anyone.

Dr. *Jonathan*. It will be time enough to tell them when we do put it across.

Minnie. But we're going to,—that is, you're going to.

Dr. *Jonathan*. You're too modest, Minnie.

Minnie. Me modest! But what makes me sore is that they don't give you a chance to put this thing across. Dr. Senn's a back number, and if they're sick they come here and expect you to cure 'em for nothing.

Dr. *Jonathan*. But they can't complain if I don't cure them.

Minnie. And half the time they ain't sick at all,—they only imagine it.

Dr. *Jonathan*. Well, that's interesting too,—part of a doctor's business. It's pretty hard to tell in these days where the body ends and the soul begins.

Minnie. It looks like you're cutting out the minister, too. You'd ought to be getting his salary.

Dr. *Jonathan*. Then I'd have to do his job.

Minnie. I get you—you'd be paid to give 'em all the same brand of dope. You wouldn't be free.

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Dr. *Jonathan*. To experiment.

Minnie. You couldn't be a scientist. Say, every time I meet the minister I want to cry, he says to himself, "She ran away from Jesus and went to the bad. What right has she got to be happy?" And Mrs. Pindar's just the same. If you leave the straight and narrow path you can't never get back—they keep pushing you off.

Dr. *Jonathan* (who has started to work at the bench). I've always had my doubts about your sins, Minnie.

Minnie. Oh, I was a sinner, all right, they'll never get that out of their craniums. But being a sinner isn't a patch on being a scientist! It's nearly a year now since you took me in. The time's flown! When I was in the Pindar Shops, and in the Wire Works at Newcastle I could always beat the other girls to the Main Street when the whistle blew, but now I'm sorry when night comes. I can't hardly wait to get back here —honest to God! Say, Dr. Jonathan, I've found out one thing,—it's being in the right place that keeps a man or a woman straight. If you're in the wrong place, all the religion in the world won't help you. If you're doing work you like, that you've got an interest in, and that's some use, you don't need religion (she pauses). Why, that's religion,—it ain't preaching and praying and reciting creeds, it's doing—it's fun. There's no reason why religion oughtn't to be fun, is there?

Dr. *Jonathan*. None at all!

Minnie. Now, if we could get everybody in the right job, we wouldn't have any more wars, I guess.

Dr. *Jonathan*. The millennium always keeps a lap ahead—we never catch up with it.

Minnie. Well, I don't want to catch up with it. We wouldn't have anything more to do. Say, it's nearly eleven o'clock—would you believe it?—and I've been expecting Mr. Pindar to walk in here with the newspaper. I forgot he was in Washington.

Dr. *Jonathan*. He was expected home this morning.

Minnie. What gets me is the way he hangs around here, too, like everybody else, and yet I've heard him call you a Socialist, and swear he hasn't any use for Socialists.

Dr. *Jonathan*. Perhaps he's trying to find out what a Socialist is. Nobody seems to know.

Minnie. He don't know, anyway. If it hadn't been for you, his shops would have been closed down last winter.

Dr. *Jonathan*. It looks as if they'd be closed down now, anyway.

Minnie (concerned, looking up). Is that so? Well, he won't recognize the union—he doesn't know what century he's living in. But he's human, all the same, and he's good to the people he's fond of, like my father, —and he sure loves George. He's got George's letters all wore out, reading them, to people. (A pause.) He don't know where George is, does he, Dr. Jonathan?

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Dr. Jonathan. Somewhere in France.

Minnie. We spotted Bert because he's with the Marines, at that place where they put a crimp in the Huns the other day when they were going to walk into Paris.

Dr. Jonathan. Chateau-Thierry.

Minnie. I'll leave it to you. But say, Dr. Jonathan, things don't look good to me,—I'm scared we won't get enough of our boys over there before the deal's closed up. I've got so I don't want to look at a paper.

(A brief silence.)

I never told you George wrote me a couple of letters, did I?

Dr. Jonathan. No, I'm quite sure you didn't.

Minnie. I never told nobody. His father and mother would be wild if they knew it. I didn't answer them—I just sent him two post cards with no writing on except the address—just pictures.

Dr. Jonathan. Pictures?

Minnie. One of the Pindar Church and the Other of the Pindar Shops. I guess he'll understand they were from me, all right. You see, when I ran away from the Pindar Shops and the Pindar Church—I always connect them together—I was stuck on George. That's why I ran away.

Dr. Jonathan. I see.

Minnie. Oh, I never let him know. I don't know why I told you—I had to tell somebody, —and you won't give me away.

Dr. Jonathan. You may count on me.

Minnie. He didn't care nothing about me, really. But you can't help liking George. He's human, all right! If he was boss of the Pindar Shops there wouldn't be any strike.

(A knock at the door, right.)

I wonder who's butting in now!

(She goes to the door and jerks it open.)

(A man's voice, without.) Good morning, Miss Farrell. Is the doctor in?

Minnie. This is his busy day.

Dr. *Jonathan* (going toward the door). Oh, it's you, Hillman. Come in.

Minnie. I guess I'll go for the mail.

(With a resigned expression she goes oust right as *Hillman* comes in, followed by *Rench* and *Fersen*. They are the strike committee. *Hillman* is a little man, with red hair and a stiff, bristling red moustache. He holds himself erect, and walks on the balls of his feet, quietly. *Rench* is tall and thin, with a black moustache, like a seal's. He has a loud, nasal voice, and an assertive manner. *Fersen* is a blond Swede.)

(*Dr*. *Jonathan* puts one or two objects in place on the bench. His manner is casual but cordial, despite the portentous air of the Committee.)

(The men, their hats in their hands, go toward the bench and inspect the test tubes and apparatus.)

Rench (New England twang). Always manage to have something on hand when you ain't busy with the folks, doctor. It must be interestin' to fool with these here chemicals.

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Dr. Jonathan. It keeps me out of mischief.

Hillman. I guess you haven't much time to get into mischief.

Fersen. We don't like to bother you.

Dr. Jonathan. No bother, Fersen,—sit down. (He draws forward some chairs, and they sit down.) How is the baby?

Fersen. Oh, she is fine, now, since we keep her outside in the baby carriage, like you tell us.

(*Fersen* grins, and immediately becomes serious again. A brief silence.)

Hillman (clearing his throat). The fact is, Dr. Jonathan, the boys have struck,—voted last night to walk out at noon today.

Fersen. We thought we tell you now. You been such a good friend to us and our families.

Dr. Jonathan. But isn't this rather sudden, with Mr. Pindar in Washington?

Rench. We couldn't wait no longer,—he's been standing us off for more than a year. When he comes back from Washington there'll be nothing doing. He's got to recognize the union or lose his contract.

Dr. Jonathan. He may prefer to lose his contract.

Rench. Well, he can afford to. Then he can go to hell.

Hillman. Hold on, Sam, that ain't no way to talk to the doctor!

Rench. I didn't mean no disrespect to him. He don't go 'round preachin', like some fellers I could mention, but actions is louder than words. Ain't that the reason we're here, because he sympathizes with us and thinks we're entitled to a little more of this freedom that's bein' handed 'round? We want you to help us, doctor.

Dr. Jonathan. It seems to me you've come a little late, Rench,—after the event.

Hillman. Maybe if you'd said a word, they'd never have voted to strike.

Fersen. But you never said nothing, Doctor.

Dr. Jonathan. Well, when you get around to admitting doctors to your labour unions, perhaps they'll talk.

Hillman. If all the doctors was like you!

Dr. *Jonathan*. Give ’em a chance, Hillman.

Hillman. We don’t have to explain to you why we want the union,—it’s the only way we’ll ever get a say about the conditions in which we work and live, now that the day of individual bargaining is gone by. You understand. Mr. Pindar raised our wages when we threatened to strike last fall, but he calculates to drop ’em again when the soldiers come home.

Fersen (nodding). Sure thing!

Hillman. It’s this way, doctor. We notice Mr. Pindar comin’ in here to see you every day or so,—like the rest of Foxon Falls. And we thought you could make him see this thing straight, if any man could.

Dr. *Jonathan*. So the shops will be idle.

Rench. Not a shaft’ll turn over till he recognizes the union.

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Hillman. We don't want to do nothin' to obstruct the war, but we've got to have our rights.

Dr. *Jonathan*. Can you get your rights now, without obstructing the war?

Rench (aggressively). I get what you're driving at, doctor. You're going to say that we've just reached quantity production on these here machines, and if labour gets from under now, the Huns win. But tell me this,—where'll labour be if America wins and our Junkers (he pronounces the J) come out on top?—as they callate to.

Dr. *Jonathan* (smiling). When a building with dry rot catches fire,
Rench, can you put limit to how much of it will burn?

Rench (after a pause). Maybe not. I get you—but—

Dr. *Jonathan*. No nation, no set of men in any nation can quench that fire or make the world that is coming out of this war. They may think they can, but they can't.

Hillman. That's so!

Dr. *Jonathan*. Germany will be beaten, because it is the temper of the nation, the temper of the times—your temper. You don't want Germany to win, Rench?

Rench. No, I guess not.

Dr. *Jonathan*. And if you don't work here, you'll go off to work somewhere else.

Rench. Where they recognize the union.

Dr. *Jonathan*. A good many of your friends have enlisted, haven't they?
(*Rench* nods.) And what do you suppose they are fighting for?

Rench. For the same thing as we want, a square deal.

Dr. *Jonathan*. And what do you think George Pindar is fighting for?

Rench. I ain't got nothing to say against him.

Dr. *Jonathan*. If you close down the Pindar Shops, won't it mean that a few more of your friends will lose their lives? These men are fighting for something they don't yet understand, but when they come back they'll know more about it. Why not wait until George Pindar comes back?

Rench. He mayn't never come back.

Dr. *Jonathan*. Give him the opportunity.

Rench. I like George,—he's always been friendly—what we call a common man up here in New England—naturally democratic. But at bottom employers is all alike. What makes you think he won't take his ideas about labour from the old man?

Dr. *Jonathan*. Because he belongs to the generation that fights this war.

Hillman (shuffling). It ain't no use, doctor. Unless you can bring Mr. Pindar 'round, the shops'll close down.

Dr. *Jonathan*. I can't, but something else can.

Hillman. What?

Dr. *Jonathan*. Circumstances. No man can swim up stream very long in these days, Hillman. Wait a while, and see.

Rench (rising). We've voted to put this strike through, and by God, we'll do it.

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Fersen (rising and shaking hands with *Dr*. *Jonathan*). It's fine weather, doctor.

Rench (bursting into a laugh). He's like the man who said, when Congress declared war, "It's a fine day for it!" It's a fine day for a strike!

Hillman (who has risen, shaking hands with *Dr*. *Jonathan*). But you'll talk to Mr. Pindar, anyway?

Dr. *Jonathan* (smiling). Yes, I'll talk with him.

(Enter *Timothy Farrell*, right, in working clothes.)

Timothy. Good morning, doctor. (Surveying the committee.) So it's here ye are, after voting to walk out of the shops just when we're beginning to turn out the machines for the soldiers!

Rench. If we'd done right we'd have called the strike a year ago.

Timothy. Fine patriots ye are—as I'm sure the doctor is after telling you—to let the boys that's gone over there be murdered because ye must have your union!

Hillman. If Mr. Pindar recognizes the union, Timothy, we'll go to work tomorrow.

Timothy. He recognize the union! He'll recognize the devil first! Even Dr. Jonathan, with all the persuasion he has, couldn't get Mr. Pindar to recognize the union. He'll close down the shops, and it's hunting a job I'll be, and I here going on thirty years.

Rench. If he closes the shops—what then? The blood of the soldiers'll be on his head, not ours. If there were fewer scabs in the country—

Hillman. Hold on, Sam.

Timothy. A scab, is it? If I was the government do you know what I'd do with the likes of you—striking in war time? I'd send ye over there to fight the Huns with your bare fists. I'm a workman meself, but I don't hold with traitors.

Rench. Who's a traitor? It's you who are a traitor to your class. If a union card makes a man a traitor, your own son had one in his pocket the day he enlisted.

Timothy. A traitor, and he fighting for his country, while you'd be skulking here to make trouble for it!

(*Minnie* appears on the threshold of the door, right. *Dr*. *Jonathan*, who is the first to perceive from her expression that there is something wrong, takes a step toward her. After a moment's silence she comes up to *Timothy* and lays a hand on his arm.)

Timothy (bewildered). What is it, Minnie?

Minnie. Come home, father.

Timothy. What is it? It's not a message ye have—it's not a message about Bert?

(*Minnie* continues to gaze at him.)

The one I'd be looking for these many days! (He seizes her.) Can't ye speak, girl? Is the boy dead?

Minnie. Yes, father.

Timothy (puts his hand to his forehead and lets fall his hat.
Dr. *Jonathan* picks it up). Me boy! The dirty devils have killed him!

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Minnie. Come, father, we'll go home.

Timothy. Home, is it? It's back to the shops I'm going. (To the committee) Damn ye—-we'll run the shops in spite of ye! Where's me hat?

(*Dr*. *Jonathan* hands it to him as the committee file out in silence.)

Come with me as far as the shops, Minnie. Thank you, doctor—(as *Dr*. *Jonathan* gives him the hat)—it's you I'll be wanting to see when I get me mind again.

(*Dr*. *Jonathan* goes with *Timothy* and *Minnie* as far as the door, right, and then comes back thoughtfully to the bench, takes up a test tube and holds it to the, light. Presently *Asher pindar* appears in the doorway, right.)

Asher. Good morning, Jonathan.

Dr. *Jonathan*. Good morning, Asher. I didn't know you'd got back from Washington.

Asher. I came in on the mail train.

Dr. *Jonathan*. Have you been to the office?

Asher. No. I stopped at the house to speak to Augusta, and then—(he speaks a trifle apologetically)—well, I went for a little walk.

Dr. *Jonathan*. A walk.

Asher. I've been turning something over in my mind. And the country looked so fine and fresh I crossed the covered bridge to the other side of the river. When George was a child I used to go over there with him on summer afternoons. He was such a companionable little shaver—he'd drop his toys when he'd see me coming home from the office. I can see him now, running along that road over there, stopping to pick funny little bouquets—the kind a child makes, you know—ox-eyed daisies and red clover and buttercups all mixed up together, and he'd carry them home and put them in a glass on the desk in my study.

(A pause.)

It seems like yesterday! It's hard to realize that he's a grown man, fighting over there in the trenches, and that any moment I may get a telegram, or be called to the telephone—Have you seen today's paper?

Dr. *Jonathan*. No.

Asher. It looks like more bad news,—the Germans have started another one of those offensives. I was afraid they were getting ready for it. West of Verdun this time. And George may be in that sector, for all I know. How is this thing going to end, Jonathan? That damned military machine of theirs seems invincible—it keeps grinding on. Are we going to be able to stem the tide, or to help stem it with a lot of raw youths. They've only had a year's training.

Dr. *Jonathan*. Germany can't win, Asher.

Asher. What makes you say that? We started several years too late.

Dr. *Jonathan*. And Germany started several centuries too late.

Asher. My God, I hope you're right. I don't know.

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(He walks once or twice up and down the room..)

I've had another letter.

Dr. *Jonathan*. This morning?

Asher. No—I got it before I left for Washington. But I didn't bring it in to you I wanted to think about it.

(He draws the letter, together with a folded paper, from his pocket, and lays the paper down on the bench. Then he adjusts his glasses and begins to read.)

"Dear dad,

"The sky is the colour of smeared charcoal. We haven't been in the trenches long enough to evolve web feet, so mine are resting on a duck board spread over a quagmire of pea soup. The Heinies are right here, soaking in another ditch beyond a barbed wire fence, about the distance of second base from the home plate. Such is modern war!

"But these aren't the things that trouble me. Last night, when I was wet to the skin and listening to the shells—each singing its own song in the darkness—I was able to think with astonishing ease better than if I were sitting at a mahogany desk in a sound proof room! I was thinking over the talk we had the day I left home,—do you remember it?—-about the real issue of this war. I've thought of it time and again, but I've never written you about it. Since I have been in France I have had a liberal education gathered from all sorts and conditions of men. Right here in the trench near me are a street car conductor, a haberdasher, a Swedish farm hand, a grocery clerk, a college professor, a Pole from the Chicago Stock Yards, an Irish American janitor of a New York apartment house, and Grierson from Cleveland, whose father has an income of something like a million a year. We have all decided that this is a war for the under dog, whether he comes from Belgium or Armenia or that so-called land of Democracy, the United States of America. The hope that spurs us on and makes us willing to endure these swinish surroundings and die here in the mud, if need be, is that the world will now be reorganized on some intelligent basis; that Grierson and I, if we get back, won't have to rot on a large income and petrified ideas, but will have some interesting and creative work to do. Economic inequalities must be reduced, and those who toil must be given a chance to live, not merely to exist. Their lives must include a little leisure, comfortable homes, art and beauty and above all an education that none of us, especially those of us who went to universities, never got,—but which now should be available for all.

"The issue of this war is industrial democracy, without which political democracy is a farce. That sentence is Dr. Jonathan's. But when I was learning how to use the

bayonet from a British sergeant in Picardy I met an English manufacturer from Northumberland. He is temporarily an officer. I know your opinion of theorists, but this man is working out the experiment with human chemicals. After all, the Constitution of the United States, now antiquated and revered, once existed only in the brains of French theorists! In the beginning was the Word, but the deed must follow. This Englishman, whose name is Wray, has given me the little pamphlet he wrote from his experience, and I shall send it to you.

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"Though I am writing this letter in what to me is a solemn and undoubtedly exalted hour, I am sure that my mind was never clearer or saner. Dad, I have set my heart on inaugurating an experiment in industrial democracy in Foxon Falls! I'd like to be able to think—if anything happened to me—that the Pindar shops were among the first in America to recognize that we are living in a new era and a changed world."

(*Asher* walks over to the bench and lays down the open letter on it.)

If anything should happen to that boy, Jonathan, there wouldn't be anything in life left for me! Industrial democracy! So you put that into his head! Socialism, I suppose.

Dr. *Jonathan*. No, experimental science.

Asher. Call it what you like. What surprises me is, when I look back over the months you've been here, how well we've got along in spite of your views.

Dr. *Jonathan*. Why not say in spite of yours, Asher?

Asher (smiling involuntarily). Well, it's been a comfort to drop in here and talk to you, in spite of what you believe. You've got the gift of sympathy, Jonathan. But I don't approve of you're spending your time in this sort of work—(he waves a hand toward the bench)—which may never come to anything, and in doctoring people for nothing and patching up their troubles. I daresay you enjoy it, but what worries me is how you are going to live?

Dr. *Jonathan*. By practising your cardinal virtue, thrift.

Asher. I've got a proposal to make to you part of a scheme I've been turning over in my mind for the last six months—and when George's letter came I decided to put it through. I went to New York and had Sterry, a corporation lawyer, draw it up. I'm going to prove I'm not a mossback. It will reorganize the Pindar Shops.

Dr. *Jonathan*. Well, that's good news.

Asher. First, with reference to your part in it, I shall establish a free hospital for my employees, and put you in charge of it, at a salary of five thousand a year. After all, you're the only Pindar left except George, and I'm satisfied that as a doctor you're up to the job, since you've driven Dr. Senn out of business.

Dr. *Jonathan*. Practical proof, Asher. Fortunately Dr. Senn has enough to live on.

Asher. In offering you this position I have only one stipulation to make—(he clears his throat)—it's about Minnie Farrell. I think the world of Timothy, I wouldn't willingly hurt his feelings, but I can't have Minnie with you in the hospital, Jonathan. You deserve a great deal of credit for what you've done for the girl, you've kept her out of mischief, but

considering her past, her life at Newcastle—well, even if I approved of having her in the hospital Augusta would never hear of it. And then she had some sort of an affair with George—I daresay there was nothing wrong—

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Dr. Jonathan. Wrong is a question of code, Asher. We've all had pasts —What interests me is Minnie's future.

Asher. Of course you wouldn't decline my offer on Minnie's account.

Dr. Jonathan. On my own account, Asher. We'll say no more about Minnie.

Asher. You refuse to help me, when I'm starting out on a liberal scheme which I thought you would be the first to endorse?

Dr. Jonathan. I have not refused to help you,—but you have not told me the scheme?

Asher. Well. (He' taps the paper in his hand.) For those employees who serve me faithfully I have arranged pensions.

Dr. Jonathan. For those, in other words, who refrain from taking their destinies in their own hands, and who do as you wish.

Asher. For those who are industrious and make no trouble. And I have met the objection that they have no share in the enterprise by allowing them, on favourable terms, to acquire stock in the company.

Dr. Jonathan. I see. You will let them acquire half of the stock, in order that they may have an equal voice.

Asher. Equal? It's my company, isn't it?

Dr. Jonathan. At present.

Asher. I supply the capital. Furthermore, I have arranged for a system of workmen's committees, which I recognize, and with which I will continually consult. That's democratic enough—isn't it? If the men have any grievances, these will be presented in an orderly manner through the committees.

Dr. Jonathan. And if you find the demands—reasonable, you grant them.

Asher. Certainly. But one thing I set my face against as a matter of principle, I won't recognize the unions.

Dr. Jonathan. But—who is to enforce the men's side of this contract?

Asher. What do you mean?

Dr. Jonathan. What guarantee have they, other than a union organization, that you will keep faith?

Asher. My word.

Dr. *Jonathan*. Oh!

Asher. Never in my life have I regarded my possessions as my own. I am a trustee.

Dr. *Jonathan*. The sole trustee.

Asher. Under God.

Dr. *Jonathan*. And you have God's proxy. Well, it seems to me that that is a very delightful arrangement, Asher—William appears to approve of it, too.

Asher. William? William who?

Dr. *Jonathan*. William Hohenzollern.

Asher. You compare me to the Kaiser!

Dr. *Jonathan*. Only in so far as you have in common a certain benevolence, Asher. Wouldn't your little plan, if your workmen accepted it, keep you in as a benevolent autocrat?

Asher. Me? an autocrat?

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Dr. *Jonathan*. You are preparing to give your men more privileges, and perhaps more money on the condition that they will renounce rights to which they are entitled as free men. You are ready to grant anything but a constitution. So is William.

Asher. Do you seriously suggest that I give labour a voice in my business?

Dr. *Jonathan*. Doesn't George suggest it, when he pleads for industrial democracy? He seems to think that he is ready to give his life for it. And Bert Farrell has already given his life for it.

Asher (agitatedly). What? Timothy's boy, Bert? Is he dead? Why didn't you tell me?

Dr. *Jonathan* (gently). I've had no chance. Minnie and Timothy were here just before you came in.

Asher. Oh God, I'm sorry—I'm sorry for Timothy. It might have been —I'll go and see Timothy. Where is he?—at his house.

Dr. *Jonathan*. No, at the shops. He wanted to keep working until they close down.

Asher (who has started for the door, right, turns). What do you mean?

(There is a knock at the door.)

Dr. *Jonathan*. I mean that the moment has come, Asher, to remember George. That your opportunity is here—heed it.

Asher. I can't, I won't desert my principles

(The knock is repeated. *Dr*. *Jonathan* goes to the door and opens it. Enter, in the order named, *Hillman*, *Rench* and *Fersen*.)

Hillman. Beg your pardon, Mr. Pindar, we've been waiting for you at the office, and we heard you was here.

Asher (facing them with a defiance almost leonine). Well, what is it?

Hillman (glancing at *Dr*. *Jonathan*). There's a matter we'd like to talk over with you, Mr. Pindar, as soon as convenient.

Asher. This is as convenient as any time, right now.

Hillman. The men voted to strike, last night. Maybe Dr. Jonathan has told you.

Asher. Voted to strike behind my back while I was in Washington attending to the nation's business!

Rench. It ain't as if this was anything new, Mr. Pindar, as if we hadn't been discussing this here difference for near a year. You've had your warning right along.

Asher. Didn't I raise your wages last January?

Hillman. Wait a minute, Mr. Pindar. (He looks at *Dr*. *Jonathan*.) It oughtn't to be only what you say—what capital says. Collective bargaining is only right and fair, now that individual bargaining has gone by. We want to be able to talk to you as man to man,—-that's only self-respecting on our part. All you've got to do is to say one word, that you'll recognize the union, and I'll guarantee there won't be any trouble.

Rench. If you don't, we walk out at noon.

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Hillman (with an attempt at conciliation). I know if we could sit down and talk this thing out with you, Mr. Pindar, you'd see it reasonable.

Asher. Reasonable? Treasonable, you mean,—to strike when the lives of hundreds of thousands of your fellow countrymen depend on your labour.

Rench. We ain't striking—you're striking!

Fersen (nodding). That's right!

Rench. We're ready to go back to work this afternoon if you treat us like Americans. (*Fersen* nods.) You say we're obstructing the war by not giving in,—what's the matter with you giving in? Ain't the employers just as much traitors as we?

Hillman. Hold on, Sam,—we won't get nowhere by calling names. Let's discuss it cool!

Asher. I refuse to discuss it.

(He takes the paper out of his docket and holds it up.)

Do you see this paper? It's a plan I had made, of my own free will, for the betterment and advancement of the working class. It was inspired by the suggestion of my son, who is now fighting in France. I came back to Foxon Falls this morning happy in the hope that I was to do something to encourage what was good in labour—and how have I been met? With a demand, with a threat. I was a fool to think you could stand decent treatment!

(He seizes the paper, and tears it in two.)

Hillman. Wait a minute, Mr. Pindar. If you won't listen to us, maybe Dr. Jonathan would say a word for us. He understands how we feel.

Asher (savagely tearing the paper in two, and then again in four). That's my answer! I won't have Dr. Pindar or anyone else interfering in my private affairs.

Rench. All right—I guess we're wasting time here, boys. We walk out and stay out. (Threateningly.) Not a shaft'll turn over in them shops until you recognize the union. And if that's treason, go back to Washington and tell 'em so. Come on boys!

(He walks out, followed by *Fersen*, nodding, and lastly by *Hillman*, who glances at *Dr. Jonathan*. *Asher* stares hard at them as they leave. Then an expression of something like agony crosses his face.)

Asher. My God, it's come! My shops shut down, for the first time in my life, and when the government relies on me!

(*Dr*. *Jonathan* stoops down and picks up the fragments of the document from the floor.)

What are you doing?

Dr. *Jonathan*. Trying to save the pieces, Asher.

Asher. I've got no use for them now.

Dr. *Jonathan*. But history may have.

Asher. History. History will brand these men with shame for all time. I'll fix 'em! I'll go back to Washington, and if the government has any backbone, if it's still American, they'll go to work or fight! (Pointedly.) This is what comes of your Utopian dreams, of your socialism!

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(A *Polak woman* is seen standing in the doorway, right.)

Woman. Doctor!

Dr. *Jonathan*. Yes.

Woman. My baby is seek—I think maybe you come and see him. Mrs. Ladislaw she tell me you cure her little boy, and that maybe you come, if I ask you.

Dr. *Jonathan*. Yes, I'll come. What is your name?

Woman. Sasenoshky.

Dr. *Jonathan*. Your husband is in the shops?

Woman. He was, doctor. Now he is in the American army.

Dr. *Jonathan*. Sasenoshky—in the American army.

Woman (proudly). Yes, he is good American now,—he fight to make them free in the old country, too.

Dr. *Jonathan*. Well, we'll have a look at the baby. He may be in the White House some day—President Sasenoshky! I'll be back, Asher.

(The noon whistle blows.)

Asher. That's the signal! I'll get along, too.

Dr. *Jonathan*. Where are you going?

Asher. I guess it doesn't make much difference where I go.

(He walks out, followed by *Dr*. *Jonathan* and the *woman*. The room is empty for a moment, and then *Minnie Farrell* enters through the opposite door, left, from *Dr*. *Jonathan's* office. She gazes around the room, and then goes resolutely to the bench and takes up several test tubes in turn, holding theme to the light. Suddenly her eye falls on *George's* letter, which *Asher* has left open on the bench with the envelope beside it. *Minnie* Slowly reaches out and picks it up, and then holds it to her lips . . . She still has the letter in her hand, gazing at it, when *Augusta pindar* enters, right.)

Augusta. Oh, I thought Mr. Pindar was here!

Minnie. Perhaps he's been here—I don't know. I just came in. (She hesitates a second, then goes to the bench and lays the letter down.)

Augusta. He must have been here,—he told me he was coming to talk with Dr. Pindar.

(She approaches the bench and glances at the letter.)

Isn't that a letter from my son?

Minnie (a little defiantly, yet almost in tears). I guess it is.

Augusta. It was written to you?

Minnie. No.

Augusta. Then what were you doing with it?

Minnie. I just—picked it up. You think I was reading it? Well, I wouldn't.

Augusta. Then how did you know it was written by my son?

(*Minnie* is silent.)

You must be familiar with his handwriting. I think I'd better take it. (She folds it up and puts it in the envelope.) Does George write to you?

Minnie. I've had letters from him.

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Augusta. Since he went to France?

Minnie. Yes.

Augusta (after a pause). I've never approved of Dr. Findar employing you here. I warned him against you—I told him that you would betray his kindness as you betrayed mine, but he wouldn't listen to me. I told him that a girl who was capable of drawing my son into an intrigue while she was a member of the church and of my Bible class, a girl who had the career you had in Newcastle, couldn't become a decent and trustworthy woman. The very fact that you had the audacity to come back to Foxon Falls and impose on Dr. Pindar's simplicity, proves it.

Minnie. You know all about me, Mrs. Pindar.

Augusta. I wasn't born yesterday.

Minnie. Oh, ladies like you, Christian ladies, are hard! They won't believe nothing good of anybody—only the bad. You've always been sheltered, you've always had everything you'd want, and you come and judge us working girls. You'd drive me out of the only real happiness I ever had, being here with a man like Dr. Jonathan, doing work it's a pleasure to do—a pleasure every minute!—work that may do good to thousands of people, to the soldiers over there—maybe to George, for all you know! (She burst into tears.) You can't understand—how could you? After all, you're his mother. I oughtn't to forget it.

Augusta. Yes, I'm his mother. And you? You haven't given up the idea that he may marry you some day, if you stay here and pretend to have reformed. You write to him. George may have been foolish, but he isn't as foolish as that!

Minnie. He doesn't care about me.

Augusta. I'm glad you realize it. But you mean to stay here in Foxon Falls, nevertheless. You take advantage of Dr. Pindar, who is easily imposed upon, as his father was before him. But if I told you that you might harm Dr. Pindar by staying here, interfere with his career, would you be willing to leave?

Minnie. Me? Me doing Dr. Jonathan harm?

Augusta, Yes. I happen to know that he has very little money. He makes none, he never asks anyone for a bill. He spends what he has on this kind of thing—research, for the benefit of humanity, as he thinks,—but very little research work succeeds, and even then it doesn't pay.

Minnie. He doesn't care about money.

Augusta. Perhaps not. He is one of those impractical persons who have to be looked out for, if they are fortunate enough to have anyone to look out for them. Since he is a cousin of my husband, Mr. Pindar considers him as one of his many responsibilities. Mr. Pindar has always had, in a practical way, the welfare of his working people at heart, and now he proposes to establish a free hospital for them and to put Dr. Pindar in charge of it. This will give him a good living as well as a definite standing in the community, which he needs also.

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Minnie. He's the biggest man in Foxon Falls today!

Augusta. That is as one thinks. At any rate, he has this opportunity.
Are you going to stand in the way of it?

Minnie. Me stand in the way of it?

Augusta. If Dr. Pindar accepts the place, you can't go with him,—you will have to find some other position. Mr. Pindar is firm about that, and rightly so. But I believe Dr. Pindar would be quite capable of refusing rather than inconvenience anyone with whom he is connected.

Minnie. You're right there!

Augusta. He's quixotic.

Minnie. If that's a compliment, you're right again.

Augusta. It isn't exactly a compliment.

Minnie. I guess you mean he's queer—but you're wrong—you're wrong! He's the only man in Foxon Falls who knows what kind of a world we're going to live in from now on. Why? Because he's a scientist, because he's trained himself to think straight, because he understands people like you and people like me. He don't blame us for what we do —he knows why we do it.

(A pause.)

That's the reason I try not to blame you for being hard—you can't understand a girl like me. You can't understand George.

Augusta (white). We'll leave my son out of the conversation, if you please. We were talking of Dr. Pindar. You seem to have some consideration for him, at least.

Minnie. I'd go to the electric chair for him!

Augusta. I'm not asking you to do that.

Minnie. You want me to go away and get another place. I remember a lesson you gave us one day in Bible class, "Judge not, that you be not judged,"—that was what you talked about. But you're judging me on what you think is my record,—and you'd warn people against hiring me. If everybody was a Christian like that these days, I'd starve or go on the street.

Augusta. We have to pay for what we do.

Minnie. And you make it your business to see that we pay.

(A pause.)

Well, I'll go. I didn't know how poor Dr. Jonathan was,—he never said anything about it to me. I'll disappear.

Augusta. You have some good in you.

Minnie. Don't begin talking to me about good!

(*Timothy Farrell* enters, right.)

Timothy. Good morning, ma'am. (Looking at *Minnie* and *Augusta*). I came to fetch Minnie to pass an hour with me.

Augusta (agitated and taken aback). Were—were having a little talk. (She goes up to *Timothy*.) I'm distressed to hear about Bert!

Timothy. Thank you for your sympathy, ma'am.

(A brief silence. Enter *Asher*, right.)

Asher (surveying the group). You here, Augusta? (He goes up to *Timothy* and presses his hand.) I wanted to see you, Timothy,—I understand how you feel. We both gave our sons in this war. You've lost yours, and I expect to lose mine.

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Augusta. Asher!

Timothy. Don't say that, Mr. Pindar

Asher. Why not? What right have I to believe, after what has happened in my shops today, that he'll come back?

Timothy. God forbid that he should be lost, too! There's trouble enough—sorrow enough—

Asher. Sorrow enough! But if a man has one friend left, Timothy, it's something.

Timothy (surprised). Sure, I hope it's a friend I am, sir,—a friend this thirty years.

Asher. We're both old fashioned, Timothy,—we can't help that.

Timothy. I'm old fashioned enough to want to be working. And now that the strike's on, whatever will I do? Well, Bert is after giving his life for human liberty,—the only thing a great-hearted country like America would be fighting for. There's some comfort in that! I think of him as a little boy, like when he'd be carrying me dinner pail to the shops at noon, runnin' and leppin' and callin' out to me, and he only that high!

Asher. As a little boy!

Timothy. Yes, sir, it's when I like to think of him best. There's a great comfort in childher, and when they grow up we lose them anyway. But it's fair beset I'll be now, with nothing to do but think of him.

Asher. You can thank these scoundrels who are making this labour trouble for that.

Timothy. Scoundrels, is it? Scoundrels is a hard word, Mr. Pindar.

Asher. What else are they? Scoundrels and traitors! Don't tell me that you've gone over to them, Timothy—that you've deserted me, too! That you sympathize with these agitators who incite class against class!

Timothy. I've heard some of them saying, sir, that if the unions gain what they're after, there'll be no classes at all at all. And classes is what some of us didn't expect to find in this country, but freedom.

Asher. Freedom! They're headed for anarchy. And they haven't an ounce of patriotism.

Timothy (meaningly). Don't say that, sir. Me own boy is after dying over there, and plenty have gone out of your own shops, as ye can see for yourself every time you pass

under the office door with some of the stars in the flag turning to gold. And those who stays at home and works through the night is patriots, too. The unions may be no better than they should be, but the working man isn't wanting anyone to tell him whether he'd be joining them or not.

Asher. I never expected to hear you talk like this!

Timothy. Nor I, sir. But it's the sons, Mr. Pindar,—the childher that changes us. I've been thinking this morning that Bert had a union card in his pocket when he went away,—and if he died for that kind of liberty, it's good enough for his old father to live for. I see how wicked it was to be old fashioned.

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Asher. Wicked?

Timothy. Isn't it the old fashioned nation we're fighting, with its kings and emperors and generals that would crush the life and freedom out of them that need life. And why wouldn't the men have the right to organize, sir, the way that they'd have a word to say about what they'd be doing?

Asher. You—you ask me to sacrifice my principles and yield to men who are deliberately obstructing the war?

Timothy. Often times principles is nothing but pride, sir. And it might be yourself that's obstructing the war, when with a simple word from you they'd go on working.

Asher (agitatedly). I can't, I won't recognize a labour union!

Timothy. Have patience, sir. I know ye've a kind heart, and that ye've always acted according to your light, the same as me. But there's more light now, sir,—it's shining through the darkness, brighter than the flashes of the cannon over there. In the moulding room just now it seems to break all around me, and me crying like a child because the boy was gone. There was things I hadn't seen before or if I saw them, it was only dim-like, to trouble me (*Asher* turns away) the same as you are troubled now. And to think it's me that would pity you, Mr. Pindar! I says to myself, I'll talk to him. I ain't got no learning, I can't find the words I'm after—but maybe I can persuade him it ain't the same world we're living in.

Asher. I was ready to recognize that. Before they came to me this morning I had made a plan to reorganize the shops, to grant many privileges.

Timothy. You'll excuse me, sir, but it's what they don't want,—anyone to be granting them privileges, but to stand on their own feet, the same as you. I never rightly understood until just now,—and that because I was always looking up, while you'd be looking down, and seeing nothing but the bent backs of them. It's inside we must be looking, sir,—and God made us all the same, you and me, and Mr. George and my son Bert, and the Polak and his wife and childher. It's the strike in every one of us, sir,—and half the time we'd not know why we're striking!

Asher. You're right there, Timothy

Timothy. But that makes no difference, sir. It's what we can't be reasoning, but the nature in us all—

(He flings his arm toward the open windows.)

—like the flowers and the trees in the doctor's garden groping to the light of the sun. Maybe the one'll die for lack of the proper soil, and many is cruelly trampled on, but the rest'll be growing, and none to stop 'em.

Asher (pacing to the end of the room, and turning). No, I won't listen to it! You—you ask me to yield to them, when you have lost your son, when they're willing to sacrifice —to murder my son on the field of battle?

(He pauses and looks toward the doorway, right. *Dr. Jonathan* standing there, holding in his hand a yellow envelope. *Asher* starts forward.)

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A telegram? For me?

Dr. *Jonathan*. Yes, Asher.

(After giving it to *Asher*, *Dr*. *Jonathan* takes his stand beside *Minnie*, who is at the back of the room, near the bench. He lays a hand on her arm. *Asher* tears open the envelope and stares at the telegram, his hands trembling.)

Asher (exclaiming, in a half whisper). George!

Augusta. Oh Asher, not—not—!

(She reaches for the telegram. He gives it to her. She reads.)
"Captain George Pindar severely wounded, condition critical."

Timothy. Please God he'll be spared to ye!

Curtain.

ACT III

Scene: Same as in Act I, the library of *Asher Pindar's* house.

Time:
The following day, early afternoon. A storm is raging, with wind and rain and occasional bright flashes of lightning and heavy peals of thunder. *Asher* is pacing up and down the room, folding and unfolding his hands behind his back, when *Augusta* enters, lower right, her knitting in her hand. There is a flash and a peal of thunder.

Augusta. Oh! Asher, did you know that the elm at the end of the Common was struck just now?—that splendid old landmark!

Asher. All the old landmarks are being struck down, one after another.

Augusta (going up to him and putting her hand on his arm). I've been so nervous all day. Do be careful how you go about during this strike. Those sullen and angry groups of men on the street this morning—

Asher. Oh, they wouldn't dare touch me. If we only had a state constabulary we'd soon break that sort of thing up. But the Legislature trembles whenever a labour leader opens his mouth.

Augusta (sitting down and taking up her knitting). If only I could be of some help to you! But it's always been so.

Asher. You've been a good wife, Augusta!

Augusta. I don't know. I've kept your house, I've seen that you were well fed, but I've been thinking lately how little that is for a woman —for a human being.

Asher (surprised). Why, Augusta! I can't remember the time when you haven't been busy. You've taken an active part in church work and looked out for the people of the village.

Augusta. Yes, and what has it all amounted to? The poor are ungrateful, they won't go near the church, and today they're buying pianos. Soon there won't be any poor to help.

Asher. That's so. We'll be the paupers, if this sort of thing keeps on.

Augusta. I've tried to do my duty as a Christian woman, but the world has no use, apparently, for Christians in these times. And whenever you have any really serious trouble, I seem to be the last person you take into your confidence.

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Asher. I don't worry you with business matters.

Augusta. Because you do not regard me as your intellectual equal.

Asher. A woman has her sphere. You have always filled it admirably.

Augusta. "Adorn" is the word, I believe.

Asher. To hear you talk, one would think you'd been contaminated by Jonathan. You, of all people!

Augusta. There seems to be no place for a woman like me in these days, —I don't recognize the world I'm living in.

Asher. You didn't sleep a wink last night, thinking of George.

Augusta. I've given up all hope of ever seeing him again alive.

(Enter *Dr*. *Jonathan*, lower right. His calmness is in contrast to the storm, and to the mental states of *Asher* and *Augusta*.)

Why, Jonathan, what are you doing out in this storm?

Dr. *Jonathan*. I came to see you, Augusta.

Augusta (knitting, trying to hide her perturbation at his appearance). Did you? You might have waited until the worst was over. You still have to be careful of your health, you know.

Dr. *Jonathan* (sitting down). There are other things more important than my health. No later news about George, I suppose.

Asher. Yes. I got another telegram early this morning saying that he is on his way home on a transport.

Dr. *Jonathan*. On his way home!

Asher. If he lives to arrive. I'll show you the wire. Apparently they can't make anything out of his condition, but think it's shell shock. This storm has been raging along the coast ever since nine o'clock, the wires are down, but I did manage to telephone to New York and get hold of Frye, the shell-shock specialist. In case George should land today, he'll meet him.

Dr. *Jonathan*. Frye is a good man.

Asher. George is hit by a shell and almost killed nearly a month ago, and not a word do I hear of it until I get that message in your house yesterday! Then comes this other telegram this morning. What's to be said about a government capable of such inefficiency? Of course the chances of his landing today are small, but I can't leave for New York until tonight because that same government sends a labour investigator here to pry into my affairs, and make a preliminary report. They're going to decide whether or not I shall keep my property or hand it over to them! And whom do they send? Not a business man, who's had practical experience with labour, but a professor out of some university,—a theorist!

Dr. *Jonathan*. Awkward people, these professors. But what would you do about it, Asher? Wall up the universities?

Asher. Their trustees, who are business men, should forbid professors meddling in government and politics. This fellow had the impudence to tell me to my face that my own workmen, whom I am paying, aren't working for me. I'm only supposed to be supplying the capital. We talk about Germany being an autocracy it's nothing to what this country has become!

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Dr. *Jonathan* (smiling). An autocracy of professors instead of business men. Well, every dog has his day. And George is coming home.

Asher. And what is there left to hand over to him if he lives? What future has the Pindar Shops,—which I have spent my life to build up?

Dr. *Jonathan*. If George lives, as we hope, you need not worry about the future of the Pindar Shops, I think.

Augusta. If God will only spare him!

Asher. I guess I've about got to the point where I don't believe that a God exists.

(A flash and a loud peal of thunder.)

Augusta. Asher

Asher. Then let Him strike me!

(He hurries abruptly out of the door, left.)

Augusta (after a silence). During all the years of our married life, he has never said such a thing as that. Asher an atheist!

Dr. *Jonathan*. So was Job, Augusta,—for a while.

Augusta (avoiding *Dr*. *Jonathan's* glance, and beginning to knit). You wanted to speak to me, Jonathan?

(The *maid* enters, lower right.)

Maid. Timothy Farrell, ma'am.

(Exit maid, enter *Timothy Farrell*.)

Augusta. I'm afraid Mr. Pindar can't see you just now, Timothy.

Timothy. It's you I've come to see, ma'am, if you'll bear with me, —who once took an interest in Minnie.

Augusta. It is true that I once took an interest in her, Timothy, but I'm afraid I have lost it. I dislike to say this to you, her father, but it's so.

Timothy. Don't be hard on her, Mrs. Pindar. She may have been wild-like in Newcastle, but since she was back here to work for the doctor she's been a good girl, and that

happy I wouldn't know her, and a comfort to me in me old age,—what with Bert gone, and Jamesy taken to drink! And now she's run away and left me alone entirely, with the shops closed, and no work to do.

Augusta (knitting). She's left Foxon Falls?

Timothy (breaking down for a moment). When I woke up this morning I found a letter beside me bed—I'm not to worry, she says and I know how fond of me she was—be the care she took of me. She's been keeping company with no young man—that I know. If she wasn't working with the doctor on that discovery she'd be home with me.

Augusta. I'm sorry for you, Timothy, but I don't see what I can do.

Timothy. I minded that you were talking to her yesterday in the lab'rat'ry, before the telegram came about Mr. George.

Augusta. Well?

Timothy. It was just a hope, ma'am, catching at a straw-like.

Augusta (tightening her lips). I repeat that I'm sorry for you, Timothy.
I have no idea where she has gone.

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Timothy (looking at her fixedly. She pauses in her knitting and returns his look). Very well, ma'am—there's no need of my bothering you. You've heard nothing more of Mr. George?

Augusta (with sudden tears). They're sending him home.

Timothy. And now that ye're getting him back, ma'am, ye might think with a little more charity of her that belongs to me—the only one I'd have left.

(*Timothy* goes out, lower right. *Augusta* is blinded by tears. She lets fall her ball of wool. *Dr*. *Jonathan* picks it up.)

Augusta. I try to be fair in my judgments, and true to my convictions, but what Minnie has done cannot be condoned.

Dr. *Jonathan* (sitting down beside *Augusta*) And what has Minnie done, Augusta?

Augusta. You ask me that? I try hard to give you credit, Jonathan, for not knowing the ways of the world—but it's always been difficult to believe that Minnie Farrell had become well—a bad woman.

Dr. *Jonathan*. A bad woman. I gather, then, that you don't believe in the Christian doctrines of repentance and regeneration.

Augusta (bridling). The leopard doesn't change his spots. And has she shown any sign of repentance? Has she come to me and asked my pardon for the way in which she treated me? Has she gone to church and asked God's forgiveness? But I know you are an agnostic, Jonathan,—it grieves me. I couldn't expect you to see the necessity of that.

Dr. *Jonathan*. If it hadn't been for Minnie, I shouldn't have been able to achieve a discovery that may prove of value to our suffering soldiers, as well as to injured operatives in factories. In spite of the news of her brother's death, Minnie worked all afternoon and evening. It was midnight when we made the successful test, after eight months of experiment.

Augusta. I hope the discovery may be valuable. It seems to me that there is too much science in these days and too little religion. I've never denied that the girl is clever.

Dr. *Jonathan*. But you would deny her the opportunity to make something of her cleverness because in your opinion; she has broken the Seventh Commandment. Is that it?

Augusta. I can't listen to you when you talk in this way.

Dr. *Jonathan*. But you listen every Sunday to Moses—if it was Moses? —when he talks in this way. You have made up your mind, haven't you, that Minnie has broken the Commandment?

Augusta. I'm not a fool, Jonathan.

Dr. *Jonathan*. You are what is called a good woman. Have you proof that Minnie is what you would call a bad one?

Augusta. Has she ever denied it? And you heard her when she stood up in this room and spoke of her life in Newcastle.

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Dr. *Jonathan*. But no court of law would convict her on that.

Augusta. And she had an affair with George. Oh, I can't talk about it!

Dr. *Jonathan*. I'm afraid that George will wish to talk about it, when he comes back.

Augusta, She's been corresponding with George—scheming behind my back.

Dr. *Jonathan*. Are you sure of that?

Augusta. She confessed to me that she had had letters from him.

Dr. *Jonathan*. And that she'd written letters in return?

Augusta. What right have you to catechize me, Jonathan?

Dr. *Jonathan*. The same right, Augusta, that you have to catechize Minnie. Only I wish to discover the truth, and apparently you do not. She left me a letter, too, in which she said, "Don't try to find me—I wouldn't come back if you did. Mrs. Pindar was right about me, after all—I had to break loose again." Now, Augusta, I'd like to know what you make of that?

Augusta. It's pretty plain, isn't it?

Dr. *Jonathan*. If the girl were really "bad," as you insist, would she say a thing like that?

Augusta. I'm afraid I'm not an authority on Minnie's kind.

Dr. *Jonathan*. Well, I am. The only motive which could have induced her to leave my laboratory and Foxon Falls—her father—is what you would call a Christian motive.

Augusta. What do you mean?

Dr. *Jonathan*. An unselfish motive. She went because she thought she could help someone by going.

Augusta. Why—do you discuss this with me?

Dr. *Jonathan*. Because I've come to the conclusion that you know something about Minnie's departure, Augusta.

Augusta (again on the verge of tears). Well, then, I do. I am responsible for her going—I'm not ashamed of it. Her remaining here was an affront to all right thinking people. I appealed to her, and she had the decency to leave.

Dr. *Jonathan*. Decency is a mild word to apply to her sacrifice.

Augusta. I suppose, with your extraordinary radical views, you mean that she might have remained here and married George. One never can predict the harm that a woman of that kind can do.

Dr. *Jonathan* (rising). The harm that a bad woman can do, Augusta, is sometimes exceeded only by the harm a good woman can do. You are unfortunately steeped in a religion which lacks the faith in humanity that should be its foundation. The girl has just given you the strongest proof of an inherent goodness, and you choose to call her bad. But if you will not listen to Moses and the prophets, how will you listen to Christ?

Augusta. Jonathan! Where are you going?

Dr. *Jonathan*. To find Minnie Farrell and bring her back to Foxon Falls.

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(He goes out, lower right. *Augusta* sits for a while, motionless, and then makes an attempt to go on with her knitting. A man's face is seen pressed against the glass of the middle window. *Augusta* does not perceive him. He disappears, the glass door, upper right, opens slowly and *Prag* enters! His clothes are wet, he is unshaven, he is gaunt and ill, and his eyed gleans. He leaves the door open behind him. Once inside the room, he halts and stares at *Augusta*, who gathers up her knitting and rises. She does not lack courage.)

Augusta. What do you want?

Prag. I come to see Mr. Pindar.

Augusta. The proper place to see Mr. Pindar is in his office. What do you mean by forcing your way into this house?

Prag (advancing). I have no right here—it is too fine for me, yes?

(Through the window the figure of a woman is seen running across the lawn, and a moment later *Minnie Farrell* comes in through the open doorway, upper right. She is breathless and somewhat wet.)

Augusta. Minnie!

Prag (turning and confronting *Minnie*). So! You come back to Foxon Falls, too!

Minnie. You guessed it.

Prag. You follow me?

Minnie. But you're some sprinter! (She seizes him by the arm.) Come on, Prag,—you haven't got any business here, and you know it.

Prag (stubbornly). I come to see Mr. Pindar. I vill see him!

Augusta. He isn't home.

Prag. Then I vait for him.

Minnie (glancing toward the study door, where she suspects *Asher* is). No you don't, either! You come along with me.

(She pulls him, and he resists. They begin to struggle. *Augusta* cries out and runs to MINNIE's assistance.)

Keep away, Mrs. Pindar. If Mr. Pindar's home, find him and tell him not to come in here. This man's crazy.

Prag (struggling with *Minnie*). Crazy, is it? What is it to you—what I do with Mr. Pindar. He is also your enemy—the enemy of all work-peoples.

(*Augusta*, after a second's indecision, turns and runs toward the door, left, that leads into ASHER's study. *Minnie* tries to push *Prag* toward the doorway, upper right, but she is no match for the nervous strength he is able to summon up in his fanatical frenzy. Just as *Augusta* reaches the study door, it is flung open and *Asher* appears.)

Asher. What's the matter?

(Then he sees *Minnie* and *Prag* struggling and strides toward them. *Augusta* tries to prevent him reaching them. *Prag* wrenches himself free from *Minnie* and draws a pistol front his pocket. *Minnie* flings herself between him and *Asher*, who momentarily halts, too astonished to act.)

Prag (to *Minnie*). Get avay! He kill my wife, he drive me out of my home—he will not have the unions. I shoot him! Get oudt!

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Asher. Stand aside, Minnie, I'll take care of him.

(*Augusta* cries out. *Asher* advances, seizes *Minnie* by the shoulder and thrusts her aside. *Prag* has the pistol levelled at him.)

Prag. Recognize the unions, or I shoot!

Asher. Lower that pistol! Do you think you can intimidate me?

Prag. They can hang me,—I die for freedoms!

(He is apparently about to pull the trigger, but he does not. His eyes are drawn away from *Asher*, toward the doorway, lower right, where *Dr*. *Jonathan* is seen standing, gazing at him. Gradually his arm drops to his side, and *Dr*. *Jonathan* goes up to him and takes the pistol from his hand. *Prag* breaks down, sobbing violently.)

It is no good! I can't—now.

Dr. *Jonathan* (his hand on *Prag's* shoulder). Come with me, Prag, to my house.

(He leads *Prag*, shaken by sobs, out of the doorway, upper right, and they are seen through the windows crossing the lawn and disappearing.)

Augusta. Oh, Asher!

(She goes up to him and puts her hand on his arm, and then turns to *Minnie*.)

You saved him

Minnie. Dr. Jonathan saved him. He'd save everybody, if they'd let him. Ever since he took care of Prag's wife, when she died, he's got him hypnotized.

Asher. You've done a brave thing, Minnie. I shan't forget it.

Minnie. I want you to forget it. I wouldn't like to see anybody hurt.

Augusta. But—how did you happen to be here—in Foxon Falls?

Minnie. Oh, I didn't mean to come back. I'm going away again.

Augusta. I have no right to ask you to go away, now.

Asher. What's this? Did you ask Minnie to leave Foxon Falls?

Augusta. Asher, I'd like to talk with Minnie, if you don't mind.

Asher (glancing at the two women). Well, I shan't forget what you've done, Minnie.

(He goes out, lower right.)

Minnie (who is on the verge of losing her self-control). I didn't come back to Foxon Falls to talk to you again, Mrs. Pindar. I'm sorry, but I've got to go.

Augusta. Where?

Minnie. You didn't care yesterday—why should you care today?

Augusta (with an effort). I ought to tell you that Dr. Pindar has declined Mr. Pindar's offer.

Minnie. He isn't going to take charge of the hospital?

Augusta. No.

Minnie. But if he's so poor, how's he going to live? He can't afford to hire me to help him.

Augusta. I don't know. Dr. Pindar was about to leave in search of you.

Minnie. I was afraid of that—when he ought to be going to New York to test the discovery at the hospitals there. He meant to.

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Augusta. You must see him.

Minnie. Oh, I'll see him now. That was what hurt me most, lying to him about why I was leaving—letting him think I was sick of working with him.

Augusta. Minnie, I'm willing to say that I was mistaken about you. You may have been unwise, but you never did anything wrong. Isn't it so?

Minnie. Why do you think that now? What changed you? Just because I might have helped to keep Mr. Pindar from being shot by a crazy man—that didn't change you, did it?

Augusta. I was mistaken!

Minnie. If you thought I was bad yesterday, I'm bad today.

Augusta. A bad woman couldn't have done what you did just now.

Minnie. Don't you believe it, Mrs. Pindar. I knew a woman in Newcastle —but there's no use going into that, I guess. There's worse kinds of badness than what you call bad.

Augusta. I—I can't discuss it. But I want to be just. I'm convinced that I did you a wrong—and I'm sorry. Won't you believe me?

Minnie. But you'll never forgive me—even if I hadn't done what you thought—on account of what happened with George.

Augusta. I—I'll try.

Minnie. No, don't try—forgiveness doesn't come that way, Mrs. Pindar. (With sudden acuteness.) It was on account of George, not Dr. Jonathan, that you wanted to get me out of Foxon Falls.

Augusta. I repeat—I shouldn't have asked you to go. Isn't that enough?

Minnie. I told you not to worry about me and George. I ran away from him once—I guess I won't have to do it again.

Augusta. You—you ran away from him?

Minnie. From the church, too, and from the Bible class and from you, and from the shops. But I'm free now, there isn't any danger of my going wrong,—I know what I can do, I've learned my job—Dr. Jonathan's taught me. You needn't have me on your conscience, either. I'll go across and see if I can help Dr. Jonathan take care of that poor wreck, Prag. Life's been too tough for him—

Augusta (starting forward to detain her). Wait a moment, Minnie,—tell me how you happened to come back, to be here so—providentially.

Minnie. There wasn't anything providential about it. I took the six o'clock train to Newcastle this morning. Not that I had any notion of staying there. I ran into Prag at the station. I nursed his wife, you know—and he started in to tell me how he was coming up to Foxon Falls to shoot Mr. Pindar because he'd closed down the works rather than recognize the union. I knew that Prag was just about crazy enough to do it, because I've heard Dr. Jonathan talk about the mental disease he's got. That was about ten, and the train for Foxon Falls was leaving in a few minutes. I ran into the booth to phone Dr. Jonathan, but the storm had begun down there, and I couldn't get a connection. So I caught the train, and when it pulled in here I saw Pray jump out of the smoking car and start to run. I couldn't run as fast as he could, and I'd only got to the other side of the Common when I saw him walk into the house.

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Augusta (after a pause). Minnie, you'll stay here now? Your father needs you—I—I should never forgive myself if you left.

Minnie. Tell me, Mrs. Pindar,—have you heard anything more from George?

Augusta (hesitating). Yes—Mr. Pindar got a telegram this morning.

Minnie. He's coming home! When will he get here?

Augusta. I—don't know. Oh, I'm afraid he may never get here—alive.

Minnie. Don't say that! George will live—he's got to live.

Augusta (gazing, at her). What makes you think so?

Minnie. Because he's needed so in the world—in Foxon Falls.

(She starts for the doorway, upper right.)

Augusta. You're not going?

Minnie. I couldn't stay here—now.

Augusta. Why—why not?

Minnie (in tears). I should think you'd know why not!

Augusta. You mean—you care—you care that much?

Minnie. I'm going.

(She turns to leave the room when the sound of an automobile is heard without, the brakes going on, *etc*. *Minnie*, who has got as far as the doorway, upper right halts and stares.)

Augusta (excitedly). What is it?

Minnie. An automobile. Oh, Mrs. Pindar—it's him—it's George!

(She draws back from the doorway, her hands clasped.)

Augusta. George! (She hurries toward the doorway, speaking as she goes.) Where is he?

Why doesn't he come in?

Minnie (staring out). He can't. Oh, I'll get Dr. Jonathan!

(She is speaking as *Augusta* goes out.)

(Mingling with other voices, ASHER's resonant and commanding voice is heard.)

Asher (without). Bring him in through the library—it's easier for you, George.

(*Minnie* who obviously cannot now escape through the doorway, upper right, without *George* seeing her, after a second's resolution dashes across the room and out of the door, lower right. A moment later *George* is brought in through the doorway, upper right, leaning heavily on Dr. *Frye*, a capable looking man, whose well fitting business suit and general appearance indicate a prosperous city practice. *George* is in uniform. He is much thinner, and his face betrays acute suffering. His left arm hangs helpless at his side.)

(*Asher* and *Augusta* follow, *Asher* with a look of pain which has been increased by an incident which occurred at the automobile, where *George* refused to allow *Asher* to help support him.)

(*George* gets a little way into the room when he stops, sways a little, and spasmodically puts his hand to his heart. *Asher*, in a frenzy of anxiety, again approaches to help him, but *George* repulses him.)

George (protesting with what strength he has, as if in fear). N—no, dad, I'd rather not —I—I can get along.

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(*Asher* halts and gazes at him mutely, and then looks at *Augusta*.)

Dr. *Frye*. You'd better sit down here a minute and rest, Captain Pindar.

(*Asher* starts to pull up an armchair, but *Augusta* looks at him and shakes her head, and pulls it up herself. *George* sinks into the chair, leans back his head and closes his eyes. *Augusta* hovers over him, smoothing his hair.)

Augusta. Is there nothing we can do, Dr. Frye? A little brandy—?

Dr. *Frye* (who is evidently trying to hide his own concern by a show of professional self-confidence), I think I'd wait a few moments.

George (murmuring). I—I'll be all right, mother

(*Dr*. *Frye* stands gazing down at him a few seconds and then comes forward into the room to join *Asher*.)

Asher. For God's sake tell me what it is, doctor! Why did you leave New York with him when he was in this condition? Was it because?

Dr. *Frye* (speaking more rapidly than is his wont). He was surprisingly well, considering everything, when we left New York, and the army medical men advised taking him home. I thought an automobile better than a slow train. I tried to telephone you, but the storm—

Asher. I know.

Dr. *Frye*. I sent you a wire.

Asher. I didn't get it.

Dr. *Frye*. It was impossible to get a good nurse on account of the influenza epidemic. In fact, I didn't think he needed one—but I thought you'd feel more comfortable if I came. He seemed extraordinary well, even cheerful until we got right into Foxon Falls. We were passing your shops, and a big crowd of men were there, making a noise, shouting at a speaker. Is there a strike on here?

Asher. Yes. You say he got like this when he saw the crowd?

Dr. *Frye* (indicating *George*). As you see. He fell back on the cushions as though he'd been hit—it all happened in a second. I have the history of the case from the army people—he had an attack something like this abroad.

Asher. Did you notice how he avoided me?

Dr. *Frye* (with reluctance). That may not be anything. It's his heart, at present,—and yet I'm convinced that this is a case for a psychologist as well as for a medical man. I confess I'm puzzled, and as soon as we can get a connection with New York I want to summon Barnwell.

Asher. I'll see if I can get a wire through.

Dr. *Frye*. Telephone Plaza 4632.

(*Asher* hurries out, lower right. Dr. *Frye* returns to *George* to take his pulse when *Dr*. *Jonathan* enters, upper right. He crosses the room directly to *George* and stands looking down at him.)

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Augusta (who is a little behind *George's* chair, gives *Dr*. *Jonathan* an agonized glance, which she transfers to Dr. *Frye* when he drops *George's* wrist). George! George, dear!

(*Dr*. *Frye* is silent Then *Asher* reenters.)

Asher (in a low tone, to Dr. *Frye*). They think they can get New York within half an hour.

(*Dr*. *Frye* nods. His attention is now fixed upon *Dr*. *Jonathan*, whose gaze is still focussed on *George*. *Asher* and *Augusta* now begin to look at *Dr*. *Jonathan*. Gradually, as though by the compulsion of *Dr*. *Jonathan's* regard; *George* slowly opens his eyes.)

George (stammering). Dr. Jonathan!

Dr. *Jonathan*. I'm here, George.

George. Is there-is there a strike in the shops?

(*Dr*. *Jonathan* glances at *Asher*.)

Asher (hesitating, speaking with difficulty). Don't worry about that now, George.

George. Why—why are they striking?

Asher. I'll tell you all about it later—when you feel better.

George (feebly, yet insistent). I—I want to know.

Asher. We can't talk about it now, my boy—later.

George. Did—did you get my letter—the letter in which I begged you—

Asher. Yes, yes—I'll explain it all tomorrow.

George. I—I may not be here—tomorrow. You didn't do what—I asked? It's—so simple—when you've thought about it—when you've fought for it.

Asher. I—I had a plan, George. We'll go over it

(He approaches *George*.)

George (shrinking). No—no!

(*Asher* recoils. *Minnie Farrell* appears, upper right, from the direction of the Common. She carries a phial, a dropper and some water in a glass. Seeing the group gathered about *George*, she hesitates, but *Dr*. *Jonathan* motions her to come forward.)

W—who is that? Minnie?

(*George* makes an attempt to sit up, but his head falls back and his eyes close again. Then *Dr*. *Jonathan* lays his hand on Dr. FRYE's arm, as though to draw him aside.)

Dr. *Frye*. Is this Dr. Jonathan Pindar? I wondered if you were a relation—(he glances at *Asher*)—but I wasn't looking for you in Foxon Falls. If you have something to suggest—?

Dr. *Jonathan* (taking the phial and the dropper from *Minnie*). With your permission. In any case it can do no harm.

Dr. *Frye*. By all means: If I had realized you were here—!

(*Asher* looks on in astonishment. *Dr*. *Jonathan* measures out a few drops of the liquid from the phial into the glass of water, which *Minnie* holds.)

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Dr. *Jonathan*. George, will you take this?

(He holds the glass while *George* drinks. To Dr. *Frye*:)

There's a lounge in Mr. Pindar's study.

(To *Augusta*:) Get a blanket.

(*Augusta* goes toward the door, lower right, while *Minnie* Starts to retire.)

We'll need you, Minnie.

(He hands *Minnie* the glass, dropper and phial. The two physicians pick *George* up and carry him out, left, followed by *Minnie*. *Asher* goes a little way and then halts with a despairing gesture. *Augusta* having gone for the blanket, *Asher* is left alone, pacing, until she returns.)

Augusta (going through the room from right to left, with the blanket).
Ah, Asher!

(*Asher* begins pacing again, when Dr. *Frye* reenters from the left.)

Asher. Is there—is there any hope?

Dr. *Frye* (his hand on ASHER'S sleeve). I can tell you more when I have had a chance to talk with Dr. Pindar. This seems to be one of his cases —but I confess, when I mentioned Barnwell, I didn't think of him. The situation came so suddenly. And in spite of his name being yours, I didn't expect to find him here.

Asher. Then you know of Jonathan?

Dr. *Frye*. I didn't know of him until I read the book which he published about a year ago. When I was in Baltimore in March, I asked for him at Johns Hopkins's, and they told me that he had gone to New England for his health. Extraordinary to meet him here —and today!

Asher. What book? He's never spoken to me of any book.

Dr. *Frye*. On the Physical Effects of Mental Crises. There has been a good deal of controversy about it in the profession, but I'm one of those who believe that the physician must seek to cure, not only the body, but the soul. We make a guess—-though he's published no religion—the true scientist is the minister of the future.

Asher. I never realized that Jonathan—!

Dr. *Frye* (smiling a little). No prophet is without honour save in his own country.

Asher. What has he given George?

Dr. *Frye*. I can't tell you exactly, but I can make a guess—though he's published no account of his recent experiments.

(As *Dr*. *Jonathan* reenters from the left.)

He will undoubtedly tell you himself. (Exit Dr. *Frye*, left.)

Asher. Will he live?

Dr. *Jonathan*. I'll be frank with you, Asher,—I don't know. All we can do is to wait.

Asher. I call God to witness there's nothing I wouldn't do, no sacrifice I wouldn't make, if that boy could be saved!

Dr. *Jonathan*. Remember that, Asher.

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Asher. Remember what?

Dr. *Jonathan*. If his life is saved, you will be called upon to make a sacrifice, to do your part.

Asher. My part?

Dr. *Jonathan*. Yes. What I have given him—the medicine—is only half the battle—-should it succeed. My laboratory experiments were only completed last night.

Asher. This is what you have been working on?

Dr. *Jonathan*. It happens to be. But I have had no chance to test it —except on animals. I meant to have gone to a war hospital in New York today. If it works, then we shall have to try the rest of the experiment,—your half of it.

Asher. What's that?

Dr. *Jonathan*. You probably noticed that George avoided you.

Asher. It's more than I can bear. You know what we've been to each other. If he should die—feeling that way—!

Dr. *Jonathan*. George hasn't lost his affection for you; if it were so, we shouldn't have that symptom. I will tell you, briefly, my theory of the case. But first let me say, in justice to Frye, that he was in no position to know certain facts that give the clue to George's condition the mental history.

Asher. I don't understand.

Dr. *Jonathan*. The day he left home, for France, certain things happened to him to arouse his sympathy with what we call working people, their lives and aspirations. As you know, George has a very human side,—he loves his fellow men. He'd never thought of these things before. He went with them, naturally, to you, and I infer that you suppressed him!

Asher. I told him I couldn't discuss certain aspects. His emotional state troubled me,—-he was going away, and I imagined he would get over it.

Dr. *Jonathan*. He didn't get over it. It was an emotional crisis. He left home with a conflict in his mind,—a conflict between his affection for you and that which he had suddenly come to see was right. I mean, right for today, for the year and hour in which we are living. This question of the emancipation of labour began a hundred years ago, with the introduction of machinery and the rise of modern industry, and in this war it has come to a head. Well, as the time approached for George to risk his life for his new

beliefs, his mental conflict deepened. He talked with other young men who believed they were fighting for the same cause. And then—it must have been shortly before he was wounded—he wrote you that appeal.

Asher. The letter I read to you!

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Dr. *Jonathan*. The fact that in his own home, in the shops which bore his name, no attempt had been made to meet the new issues for which he was going into battle, weighed upon him. Then came the shell that shattered his body. But the probabilities are that he was struck down, unconscious, at the very moment when the conflict in his mind was most acute. He was thinking of you, of the difference you and he had had, he was lonely, he was afraid for the bravest men feel fear. To him the bursting of the shell was the bursting of the conflict within him. I won't go into the professional side of the matter, the influence of the mental state on the physical—but after the wound healed, whenever anything occurred to remind him of the conflict,—a letter from you, the sight of the strikers this afternoon at the shops, meeting you once more, a repetition came of what happened when the shell struck him. Certain glands fail in their functions, the heart threatens to stop and put an end to life. If my theory is correct, what I have given him may tide over that danger, but only on one condition can he continue to live and become a useful member of society.

Asher. What condition?

Dr. *Jonathan*. That the mental conflict, the real cause of the trouble, he resolved. The time has come, Asher, when you must make your choice between your convictions and your son.

Asher. Speak out.

Dr. *Jonathan*. I mean that you must be prepared to tell George, if he recovers, that you have abandoned your attitude toward the workmen, that you are willing to recognize their union, settle the strike, and go even further than in their ignorance they ask. You must try the experiment in the democratization of industry on which George's heart is set. Otherwise I will not answer for his sanity, I cannot even give you the hope that he will live.

Asher. I never heard of a mental conflict producing such a state!

Dr. *Jonathan*. Remember, you have said that you will make any sacrifice to save George's life.

Asher (turning on *Dr*. *Jonathan*). You're not trying to play on my—my superstition,—at a time like this!

Dr. *Jonathan*. I'm not dealing with superstition, Asher, but with science. If George revives, he will wish to talk with you.

Asher. When?

Dr. *Jonathan*. Probably this evening—or never. I ask you the question —will you yield your convictions?

(*Asher* bows his head. *Dr*. *Jonathan* gazes at him for a moment, compassionately.)

I'll go back to him now. I think he'd better be moved to his room, and put to bed.

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(Exit *Dr*. *Jonathan*, left. For a minute *Asher* remains alone, and then *Dr*. *Jonathan* and Dr. *Frye* reappear, carrying *George*. The blanket is flung over his knees, and he seems lifeless. They are followed by *Minnie*, carrying the phial and the glass, and by *Augusta*. They cross the room and go out, lower right. *Asher* walks behind them as far as the door, hesitates, and then goes out.)(*The curtain* falls and remains down a minute to indicate a lapse of three hours. When it rises again night has come, the lamps are lighted and the window curtains drawn. *Asher* and *Augusta* are discovered standing together. *Asher* has a black, leather covered book in his hand, with one finger in the place where he has been reading. Both show the effects of a strain.)

Augusta (who has been speaking). And when we took him upstairs, I was sure he was going to die—it seemed to me as if nothing could save him. He's been sitting up and talking to us—of course he's pale and weak and wasted, but in spite of that, Asher, he seems to have a strength, a force that he didn't have before he went away. He isn't a boy any more. I can't describe it, but I'm almost afraid of him—!

Asher. He—he hasn't mentioned me?

Augusta. No, my dear—and since Jonathan warned me not to, I've said nothing about you. Why is it?

Asher. Jonathan's the master now.

Augusta. In spite of what I've felt about him, he has saved George for us. It seems a miracle.

Asher. A scientific miracle.

Augusta (indicating the book *Asher* holds). And yet you were reading the Bible!

Asher. I just took it down. (He lays it on the table, and touches *Augusta*, with an unwonted tenderness, on the shoulder). I think we may hope, now, Augusta. But before we can be sure that he'll get well, there's something else to be done.

Augusta (anxiously). What?

Asher. Go back to George,—I'll tell you later. It seems that we must trust Jonathan. Here he is now.

(Enter *Dr*. *Jonathan*, lower right, as *Augusta* departs.)

Dr. *Jonathan*. George wants to get dressed, and come down.

Asher. You think it wise?

Dr. *Jonathan*. Under the circumstances yes. The heart is practically normal again, we have done all that is physically possible. One half of the experiment seems to have succeeded, and the sooner we try the other half, the better. Are you still willing?

Asher. I'm prepared. I've carried out your—instructions—sent for the committee.

Dr. *Jonathan* (looking at him). Good!

Asher (with an effort). Jonathan, I—I guess I misjudged you—

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Dr. *Jonathan* (Smiling). Wait until you are sure. Nothing matters if we can save that boy. By the way, he asked for Timothy, and I've sent for him.

Asher. He asked for Timothy, and not for me!

Dr. *Jonathan*. It seems he saw an officer of Bert's regiment, after the boy was killed. Here's the committee, I think.

(The *maid* enters, lower right. She does not speak, but ushers in *Hillman*, *Rench* and *Fersen*, and retires.)

Hillman. |
Rench. |-Good evening, Mr. Pindar. Good evening, doctor.
Fersen. |

Asher. Good evening.

(An awkward silence. From habit, *Asher* stares at them defiantly, as *Dr*. *Jonathan* goes out, lower right.)

Hillman (going up to *Asher*). How's your son, Mr. Pindar?

Rench. We're real anxious about the Captain.

Fersen (nodding). The boys think a whole lot of him, Mr. Pindar.

Asher. He's better, thank you. The medicine Dr. Pindar has given him

Rench. Didn't I say so? When I heard how he was when he got back, I said to Fred Hillman here,—if anybody can cure him, it's Dr. Jonathan, right here in Foxon Falls!

(A pause.)

I'm sorry this here difference came up just now, Mr. Pindar, when the Captain come home. We was a little mite harsh—but we was strung up, I guess, from the long shifts. If we'd known your son was comin'—

Asher. You wouldn't have struck?

Rench. We'd have agreed to put it off. When a young man like that is near dying for his country why—anything can wait. But what we're asking is only right.

Asher. Well, right or not right, I sent for you to say, so far as I'm concerned, the strike's over.

Rench. You'll—you'll recognize the union?

Asher. I grant—(he catches himself)—I consent to your demands.

(After a moment of stupefaction, their faces light up, and they approach him.)

Rench. We appreciate it, Mr. Pindar. This'll make a lot of families happy tonight.

Fersen. It will that.

Hillman. Maybe you won't believe me, Mr. Pindar, but it was hard to see the shops closed down—as hard on us as it was on you. We take pride in them, too. I guess you won't regret it.

Asher (waving them away). I hope not. I ought to tell you that you may thank my son for this—my son and Dr. Pindar.

Rench. We appreciate it,—just the same.

(*Asher* makes a gesture as thought to dismiss the subject, as well as the committee. They hesitate, and are about to leave when *George*, followed by *Dr*. *Jonathan*, comes in, lower right. His entrance is quite dramatic. He walks with the help of a stick, slowly, but his bearing is soldierly, authoritative, impressive. He halts when he perceives the committee.)

Hillman (going up to *George*). How are you, Captain?

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Fersen. Good to have you home once more.

Rench (going up to *George*). Good to see you, Captain, on a day like this. As Larz Fersen said when we were going to strike, "It's a fine day for it." Well, this is a better day—you home and well, and the strike off.

George (glancing from one to the other, and then at *Asher*). What do you mean?

Rench. Why, Mr. Pindar—your father here's just made everybody happy. He's recognized the union, and we're going back to work. We'll turn out machines to make shrapnel enough to kill every Hun in France,—get square with 'em for what they done to you.

(They all watch *George*, absorbed in the effect this announcement has on him. An expression of happiness grows in his eyes. After a moment he goes up to *Asher*.)

George. Dad, why did you do this?

Asher. I'll tell you, George. When you came home this afternoon I realized something I hadn't realized before. I saw that the tide was against me, that I was like that old English king who set his throne on the sands and thought he could stay the waters. If —if anything had happened to you, I couldn't have fought on, but now that you're here with me again, now that you've risked your life and almost lost it for this —this new order in which you believe, why, it's enough for me—I can surrender with honour. I'm tired, I need a rest. I'd have gone down fighting, but I guess you've saved me. I've been true to my convictions,—you, who belong to the new generation, must be true to yours. And as I told you once, all I care about this business is to hand it over to you.

George. You'll help me!

Asher. This seems to be Jonathan's speciality,—science. But I never give my word half heartedly, my boy, and I'll back you to my last dollar. Be prepared for disappointments, —but if you accomplish something, I'll be glad. And if you fail, George,—any failure for a man's convictions is a grand failure.

George. Well, it means life to me, dad. I owe it to you.

Asher (turning toward *Dr*. *Jonathan*). No, you owe it to him,—to science.

(He puts one hand on *George's* shoulder, and the other, with an abrupt movement, on *Dr*. *Jonathan's*.)

And if science will do as much for democracy, then—

George. Then, you're from Missouri. Good old dad!

Asher (huskily, trying, to carry it off, and almost overcome by emotion at the reconciliation). I'm from Missouri, my boy.

Dr. *Jonathan*. Then you're a true scientist, Asher, for science, too, waits to be shown.

(*Asher* goes out, lower right. Dr. *Jonathan*, evidently in support and sympathy, goes with him. *George* and the committee look after them, and then *George* sits down, and smiles at the men.)

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George. And we've got to be scientists, too. Are you fellows willing to take your share in the experiment?

Hillman. What experiment's that, Captain?

George. Now that you've got your union, what's the good of it?

Rench (after a pause). Why, I thought we'd made that pretty clear, Captain. We've got something to fall back on in case the employers don't live up to their agreements. I'm not speaking of you—

George. In other words, you've got a weapon.

Rench. Well, you might call it that.

George. But weapons imply warfare,—don't they?

Rench. We wouldn't fight with you.

George. Yes, you would,—if our interests conflicted. When I was in the trenches I kept thinking of the quotation Lincoln used, "A house divided against itself cannot stand." We're going to try to perpetuate that house, just as he did.

Hillman. Lincoln had common sense.

George. Another name for intelligence. And what we've got to decide is whether the old house will do—for democracy—industrial democracy? Can we shore up the timbers—or shall we have to begin to build a new house?

Rench (glancing at *Hillman*). The old one sure enough looks rotten to me. I've said that all along.

George. It seems to have served its day. Has your union got the plans of a new house ready—consulted an architect?

Rench. I'm afraid we don't get you, Captain.

George. You belong to the American Federation of Labour, don't you? Has it got a new house ready to move into?

Rench. Well, I haven't seen any plans.

George. If the old structure's too small, one party or the other will have to be shoved out. The capitalist or the employee. Which will it be?

Rench (laughing). If it comes to that—

George (smiling). There's no question in your mind. But you hadn't thought about it—-your Federation hasn't thought about it, or doesn't want to think about it, and your employers don't want to, either.

Hillman (stroking his moustache). That's so

George. I'll tell you who have thought about it—the Bolshevists and the I. W. W. And because they have a programme,—some programme, any programme, they're more intelligent than we, for the time.

Rench. Those guys?

George. Exactly,—those guys. At least they see that the house isn't fit to live in. They want to pull it down, and go back to living in trees and caves.

Hillman. That's about right.

George. But you're conservatives, you labour union people—the aristocrats of labour, which means that you don't think. What you really object to, when you come down to it, is that men like my father and me, and the bankers,—we're all in the same boat, most of 'us own banks, too,—control the conditions of life for you and men like you.

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Rench. I never heard it put in those words, but by gum, it's so.

George. And your Confederation, your unions are for the skilled workers, whose conditions aren't so bad,—and they're getting better every time you jack up the wages. You complain that we employers aren't thinking of you, but are you thinking of the millions of the unskilled who live from hand to mouth? The old structure's good enough for you, too. But what will the miserable men, who don't sit in, be doing while we're squabbling to see who'll have the best rooms?

Rench. Blow the house up, I guess.

George. If they're rough with it, it'll tumble down like a pack of cards—simply because we're asses. Can't we build a house big enough for all—for a hundred million people and their descendants? A house in which, after a while, there will be no capitalists and no exploiters and no wreckers, only workers—each man and woman on the job they were fitted for? It's a man-sized job, but isn't it worth tackling?

Rench (enthused). It's sure worth tackling, Captain.

George. And can't we begin it, in a modest way, by making a little model of the big house right here in Foxon Falls? Dr. Jonathan will help us.

Rench. Go to it, Captain. We'll trust him and you.

George. Trust is all right, but you've got to go to it, too, and use your headpieces. We've got to sit down together and educate ourselves, who are now employers and employees, get hold of all the facts, the statistics,—and all the elements, the human nature side of it, from the theorists, the students, whom we've despised.

Rench. Well, it's a fact, I hadn't thought much of them intellectuals.

George. They're part of the game—their theories are the basis for an intelligent practice. And what should we be able to do without their figures? Look at what we've worked out in large scale production and distribution in this war! That's a new world problem. Shall we be pioneers here in Foxon Falls in the new experiment?

Rench. An experiment in human chemicals, as the doctor would say. Pioneers! I kind of like that word. You can put me in the wagon, Captain.

George. It will be a Conestoga with the curtains rolled up, so that everybody can see in. No secrets. And it will be a wagon with an industrial constitution.

Fersen. Excuse me, Captain,—but what's that?

(*Rench* laughs.)

George (smiling). Hasn't it struck you, Fersen, that unless a man has a voice and an interest in the industry in which he works his voice, and interest in the government for which he votes is a mockery?

(*Fersen* nods.)

Rench. We'll have to give Larz a little education.

George. Oh, I guess he'll make a good industrial citizen. But that's part of the bargain.

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Rench. That's fair. Human nature ain't so rotten, when you give it a chance.

George. Well, then, are you willing to try it out, on the level?

Rench. I cal'late we'll stick, Captain.

Hillman. We sure will.

Fersen. We'll be pioneers!

George. That's good American, Fersen, not to be afraid of an ideal.
Shake! We'll sit down with it in a day or two.

(They all shake. The members of the committee file out of the room, lower right. *George* is left alone for a brief interval, when *Minnie*, in the white costume of a nurse, enters, lower right, with a glass of medicine in her hand.)

Minnie (halting). You're all alone? Where's Dr. Jonathan?

George. He's gone off with dad.

Minnie. It's nine o'clock.

(She hands him the glass, he drinks the contents and sets the glass on the table. Then he takes her hands and draws her to him and kisses her. She submits almost passively.)

Why are you doing this, George?

George. Because I love you, because I need you, because I'm going to marry you.

Minnie (shaking her head: slowly). No you're not.

George. Why not?

Minnie. You know why not, as well as I do.

(She gazes up at him. He is still holding her in his arms. Suddenly she kisses him passionately, breaks away from him and starts to fly from the room, when she runs into *Dr*. *Jonathan*, who is entering, lower right.)

Dr. *Jonathan*. Where are you going, Minnie?

(*Minnie* halts, and is silent. *Dr*. *Jonathan* lays a detaining hand on her arm, and looks from one to the other, comprehendingly.)

George. I've asked her to marry me, Dr. Jonathan.

Dr. *Jonathan*. And what are your objections, Minnie?

Minnie. You know why I can't, Dr. Jonathan. What kind of a wife would I make for him, with his family and friends. I'd do anything for him but that! He wouldn't be happy.

Dr. *Jonathan*. And what's your answer, George?

George. I don't want her for my family and friends,—I want her for myself. This isn't a snap judgment—I've had time to think it over.

Minnie. I didn't mean to be here when you got home. I know I'm not fit to be your wife I haven't had any education.

George. Neither have I. We start level there. I've lived among people of culture, and I've found out that culture chiefly consists of fixed ideas, and obstruction to progress, of hating the President,—of knowing the right people and eating fish with a fork.

Minnie (smiling, though in tears). Well, I never ate fish with a knife, anyway.

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George. I spent my valuable youth learning Greek and Latin, and I can't speak or read either of them. I know that Horace wrote odes, and Cicero made orations, but I can't quote them. All I remember about biology is that the fittest are supposed to survive, and in this war I've seen the fittest killed off like flies. You've had several years of useful work in the Pindar Shops and the Wire Works, to say nothing of a course in biological chemistry, psychology and sociology under Dr. Jonathan. I'll leave it to him whether you don't know more about life than I do—about the life and problems of the great mass of people in this country. And now that the strike's over—

Minnie. The strike's over!

George. Yes. I've chosen my life. It isn't going to be divided between a Wall Street office and Newport and Palm Beach. A girl out of a finishing school wouldn't be of any use to me. I'm going to stay right here in Foxon Falls, Minnie, I've got a real job on my hands, and I need a real woman with special knowledge to help me. I don't mean to say we won't have vacations, and we'll sit down and get our education together. Dr. Jonathan will be the schoolmaster.

Minnie. It's a dream, George.

George. Well, Minnie, if it's a dream worth dying for it's a dream worth living for. Your brother Bert died for it.

Curtain

PG EDITOR'S BOOKMARKS:

Economic freedom, without which political freedom is a farce
Flaming flag of a false martyrdom
It's money that makes you free
Often times principles is nothing but pride
We can't take Christianity too literally

A TRAVELLER IN WARTIME.

By Winston Churchill

PREFACE

I am reprinting here, in response to requests, certain recent experiences in Great Britain and France. These were selected in the hope of conveying to American readers some idea of the atmosphere, of "what it is like" in these countries under the immediate shadow of the battle clouds. It was what I myself most wished to know. My idea was

first to send home my impressions while they were fresh, and to refrain as far as possible from comment and judgment until I should have had time to make a fuller survey. Hence I chose as a title for these articles,—intended to be preliminary, “A Traveller in War-Time.” I tried to banish from my mind all previous impressions gained from reading. I wished to be free for the moment to accept and record the chance invitation or adventure, wherever met with, at the Front, in the streets of Paris, in Ireland, or on the London omnibus. Later on, I hoped to write a book summarizing the changing social conditions as I had found them.

Unfortunately for me, my stay was unexpectedly cut short. I was able to avail myself of but few of the many opportunities offered. With this apology, the articles are presented as they were written.

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I have given the impression that at the time of my visit there was no lack of food in England, but I fear that I have not done justice to the frugality of the people, much of which was self-imposed for the purpose of helping to win the war. On very, good authority I have been given to understand that food was less abundant during the winter just past; partly because of the effect of the severe weather on our American railroads, which had trouble in getting supplies to the coast, and partly because more and more ships were required for transporting American troops and supplies for these troops, to France. This additional curtailment was most felt by families of small income, whose earners were at the front or away on other government service. Mothers had great difficulty in getting adequate nourishment for growing children. But the British people cheerfully submitted to this further deprivation. Summer is at hand. It is to be hoped that before another winter sets in, American and British shipping will have sufficiently increased to remedy the situation.

In regard to what I have said of the British army, I was profoundly struck, as were other visitors to that front, by the health and morale of the men, by the marvel of organization accomplished in so comparatively brief a time. It was one of the many proofs of the extent to which the British nation had been socialized. When one thought of that little band of regulars sent to France in 1914, who became immortal at Mons, who shared the glory of the Marne, and in that first dreadful winter held back the German hosts from the Channel ports, the presence on the battle line of millions of disciplined and determined men seemed astonishing indeed. And this had been accomplished by a nation facing the gravest crisis in its history, under the necessity of sustaining and financing many allies and of protecting an Empire. Since my return to America a serious reverse has occurred.

After the Russian peace, the Germans attempted to overwhelm the British by hurling against them vastly superior numbers of highly trained men. It is for the military critic of the future to analyse any tactical errors that may have been made at the second battle of the Somme. Apparently there was an absence of preparation, of specific orders from high sources in the event of having to cede ground. This much can be said, that the morale of the British Army remains unimpaired; that the presence of mind and ability of the great majority of the officers who, flung on their own resources, conducted the retreat, cannot be questioned; while the accomplishment of General Carey, in stopping the gap with an improvised force of non-combatants, will go down in history. In an attempt to bring home to myself, as well as to my readers, a realization of what American participation in this war means or should mean.

A TRAVELLER IN WAR-TIME

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CHAPTER I

Toward the end of the summer of 1917 it was very hot in New York, and hotter still aboard the transatlantic liner thrust between the piers. One glance at our cabins, at the crowded decks and dining-room, at the little writing-room above, where the ink had congealed in the ink-wells, sufficed to bring home to us that the days of luxurious sea travel, of a la carte restaurants, and Louis Seize bedrooms were gone—at least for a period. The prospect of a voyage of nearly two weeks was not enticing. The ship, to be sure, was far from being the best of those still running on a line which had gained a magic reputation of immunity from submarines; three years ago she carried only second and third class passengers! But most of us were in a hurry to get to the countries where war had already become a grim and terrible reality. In one way or another we had all enlisted.

By “we” I mean the American passengers. The first welcome discovery among the crowd wandering aimlessly and somewhat disconsolately about the decks was the cheerful face of a friend whom at first I did not recognize because of his amazing disguise in uniform. Hitherto he had been associated in my mind with dinner parties and clubs.

That life was past. He had laid up his yacht and joined the Red Cross and, henceforth, for an indeterminable period, he was to abide amidst the discomforts and dangers of the Western Front, with five days’ leave every three months. The members of a group similarly attired whom I found gathered by the after-rail were likewise cheerful. Two well-known specialists from the Massachusetts General Hospital made significant the hegira now taking place that threatens to leave our country, like Britain, almost doctorless. When I reached France it seemed to me that I met all the celebrated medical men I ever heard of. A third in the group was a business man from the Middle West who had wound up his affairs and left a startled family in charge of a trust company. Though his physical activities had hitherto consisted of an occasional mild game of golf, he wore his khaki like an old campaigner; and he seemed undaunted by the prospect—still somewhat remotely ahead of him—of a winter journey across the Albanian Mountains from the Aegean to the Adriatic.

After a restless night, we sailed away in the hot dawn of a Wednesday. The shores of America faded behind us, and as the days went by, we had the odd sense of threading uncharted seas; we found it more and more difficult to believe that this empty, lonesome ocean was the Atlantic in the twentieth century. Once we saw a four-master; once a shy, silent steamer avoided us, westward bound; and once in mid-ocean, tossed on a sea sun-silvered under a rack of clouds, we overtook a gallant little schooner out of New Bedford or Gloucester—a forthfarer, too.

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Meanwhile, amongst the Americans, the socializing process had begun. Many elements which in a former stratified existence would never have been brought into contact were fusing by the pressure of a purpose, of a great adventure common to us all. On the upper deck, high above the waves, was a little 'fumoir' which, by some odd trick of association, reminded me of the villa formerly occupied by the Kaiser in Corfu—perhaps because of the faience plaques set in the walls—although I cannot now recall whether the villa has faience plaques or not. The room was, of course, on the order of a French provincial cafe, and as such delighted the bourgeoisie monopolizing the alcove tables and joking with the fat steward. Here in this 'fumoir', lawyers, doctors, business men of all descriptions, newspaper correspondents, movie photographers, and millionaires who had never crossed save in a 'cabine de luxe', rubbed elbows and exchanged views and played bridge together. There were Y. M. C. A. people on their way to the various camps, reconstruction workers intending to build temporary homes for the homeless French, and youngsters in the uniform of the American Field Service, going over to drive camions and ambulances; many of whom, without undue regret, had left college after a freshman year. They invaded the 'fumoir', undaunted, to practise atrocious French on the phlegmatic steward; they took possession of a protesting piano in the banal little salon and sang: "We'll not come back till it's over over there." And in the evening, on the darkened decks, we listened and thrilled to the refrain:

> "There's a long, long trail a-winding
> Into the land of my dreams."

We were Argonauts—even the Red Cross ladies on their way to establish rest camps behind the lines and brave the mud and rains of a winter in eastern France. None, indeed, were more imbued with the forthfaring spirit than these women, who were leaving, without regret, sheltered, comfortable lives to face hardships and brave dangers without a question. And no sharper proof of the failure of the old social order to provide for human instincts and needs could be found than the conviction they gave of new and vitalizing forces released in them. The timidities with which their sex is supposedly encumbered had disappeared, and even the possibility of a disaster at sea held no terrors for them. When the sun fell down into the warm waters of the Gulf Stream and the cabins below were sealed—and thus become insupportable—they settled themselves for the night in their steamer-chairs and smiled at the remark of M. le Commissaire that it was a good "season" for submarines. The moonlight filtered through the chinks in the burlap shrouding the deck. About 3 a.m. the khaki-clad lawyer from Milwaukee became communicative, the Red Cross ladies produced chocolate. It was the genial hour before the final nap, from which one awoke abruptly at the sound of squeegees and brooms to find the deck a river of sea water, on whose banks a wild scramble for slippers and biscuit-boxes invariably ensued. No experience could have been more socializing.

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“Well, it’s a relief,” one of the ladies exclaimed, “not to be travelling with half a dozen trunks and a hat-box! Oh, yes, I realize what I’m doing. I’m going to live in one of those flimsy portable houses with twenty cots and no privacy and wear the same clothes for months, but it’s better than thrashing around looking for something to do and never finding it, never getting anything real to spend one’s energy-on. I’ve closed my country house, I’ve sublet my apartment, I’ve done with teas and bridge, and I’m happier than I’ve been in my life even if I don’t get enough sleep.”

Another lady, who looked still young, had two sons in the army. “There was nothing for me to do but sit around the house and wait, and I want to be useful. My husband has to stay at home; he can’t leave his business.” Be useful! There she struck the new and aggressive note of emancipation from the restricted self-sacrifice of the old order, of wider service for the unnamed and the unknown; and, above all, for the wider self-realization of which service is but a by-product. I recall particularly among these women a young widow with an eager look in clear grey eyes that gazed eastward into the unknown with hope renewed. Had she lived a quarter of a century ago she might have been doomed to slow desiccation. There are thousands of such women in France today, and to them the great war has brought salvation.

From what country other than America could so many thousands of pilgrims —even before our nation had entered the war—have hurried across a wide ocean to take their part? No matter what religion we profess, whether it be Calvinism, or Catholicism, we are individualists, pragmatists, empiricists for ever. Our faces are set toward strange worlds presently to rise out of the sea and take on form and colour and substance—-worlds of new aspirations, of new ideas and new values. And on this voyage I was reminded of Josiah Royce’s splendid summary of the American philosophy—of the American religion as set forth by William James:

“The spirit of the frontiers-man, of the gold-seeker or the home-builder transferred to the metaphysical or to the religious realm. There is a far-off home, our long lost spiritual fortune. Experience alone can guide us to the place where these things are, hence indeed you need experience. You can only win your way on the frontier unless you are willing to live there.”

Through the pall of horror and tragedy the American sees a vision; for him it is not merely a material and bloody contest of arms and men, a military victory to be gained over an aggressive and wrong-minded people. It is a world calamity, indeed, but a calamity, since it has come, to be spiritualized and utilized for the benefit of the future society of mankind. It must be made to serve a purpose in helping to liberate the world from sentimentalism, ignorance, close-mindedness, and cant.

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II

One night we entered the danger zone. There had been an entertainment in the little salon which, packed with passengers, had gradually achieved the temperature and humidity of a Turkish bath. For the ports had been closed as tight as gaskets could make them, the electric fans, as usual, obstinately “refused to march.” After the amateur speechmaking and concert pieces an Italian violinist, who had thrown over a lucrative contract to become a soldier, played exquisitely; and one of the French sisters we had seen walking the deck with the mincing steps of the cloister sang; somewhat precariously and pathetically, the Ave Maria. Its pathos was of the past, and after she had finished, as we fled into the open air, we were conscious of having turned our backs irrevocably yet determinedly upon an era whose life and convictions the music of the composer so beautifully expressed. And the sister’s sweet withered face was reminiscent of a missal, one bright with colour, and still shining faintly. A missal in a library of modern books!

On deck a fine rain was blowing through a gap in our burlap shroud, a phosphorescent fringe of foam hissed along the sides of the ship, giving the illusory appearance of our deadlights open and ablaze, exaggerating the sinister blackness of the night. We were, apparently, a beacon in that sepia waste where modern undersea monsters were lurking.

There were on board other elements which in the normal times gone by would have seemed disquieting enough. The evening after we had left New York, while we were still off the coast of Long Island, I saw on the poop a crowd of steerage passengers listening intently to harangues by speakers addressing them from the top of a pile of life rafts. Armenians, I was told, on their way to fight the Turks, all recruited in America by one frenzied woman who had seen her child cut in two by a German officer. Twilight was gathering as I joined the group, the sea was silvered by the light of an August moon floating serenely between swaying stays. The orator’s passionate words and gestures evoked wild responses from his hearers, whom the drag of an ancient hatred had snatched from the peaceful asylum of the west. This smiling, happy folk, which I had seen in our manufacturing towns and cities, were now transformed, atavistic—all save one, a student, who stared wistfully through his spectacles across the waters. Later, when twilight deepened, when the moon had changed from silver to gold, the orators gave place to a singer. He had been a bootblack in America. Now he had become a bard. His plaintive minor chant evoked, one knew not how, the flavour of that age-long history of oppression and wrong these were now determined to avenge. Their conventional costumes were proof that we had harboured them—almost, indeed, assimilated them. And suddenly they had reverted. They were going to slaughter the Turks.

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On a bright Saturday afternoon we steamed into the wide mouth of the Gironde, a name stirring vague memories of romance and terror. The French passengers gazed wistfully at the low-lying strip of sand and forest, but our uniformed pilgrims crowded the rail and hailed it as the promised land of self-realization. A richly coloured watering-place slid into view, as in a moving-picture show. There was, indeed, all the reality and unreality of the cinematograph about our arrival; presently the reel would end abruptly, and we should find ourselves pushing our way out of the emptying theatre into a rainy street. The impression of unreality in the face of visual evidence persisted into the night when, after an afternoon at anchor, we glided up the river, our decks and ports ablaze across the land. Silhouettes of tall poplars loomed against the blackness; occasionally a lamp revealed the milky blue facade of a house. This was France! War-torn France—at last vividly brought home to us when a glare appeared on the sky, growing brighter and brighter until, at a turn of the river, abruptly we came abreast of vomiting furnaces, thousands of electric lights strung like beads over the crest of a hill, and, below these, dim rows of houses, all of a sameness, stretching along monotonous streets. A munitions town in the night.

One could have tossed a biscuit on the stone wharfs where the workmen, crouching over their tasks, straightened up at sight of us and cheered. And one cried out hoarsely, “Vous venez nous sauver, vous Americains” —“You come to save us”—an exclamation I was to hear again in the days that followed.

III

All day long, as the ‘rapide’ hurried us through the smiling wine country and past the well-remembered chateaux of the Loire, we wondered how we should find Paris—-beautiful Paris, saved from violation as by a miracle! Our first discovery, after we had pushed our way out of the dim station into the obscurity of the street, was that of the absence of taxicabs. The horse-drawn buses ranged along the curb were reserved for the foresighted and privileged few. Men and women were rushing desperately about in search of conveyances, and in the midst of this confusion, undismayed, debonnair, I spied a rugged, slouch-hatted figure standing under a lamp—the unmistakable American soldier.

“Aren’t there any cabs in Paris?” I asked.

“Oh, yes, they tell me they’re here,” he said. “I’ve given a man a dollar to chase one.”

Evidently one of our millionaire privates who have aroused such burnings in the heart of the French poilu, with his five sous a day! We left him there, and staggered across the Seine with our bags. A French officer approached us. “You come from America,” he said. “Let me help you.” There was just enough light in the streets to prevent us from getting utterly lost, and we recognized the dark mass of the Tuileries as we crossed the

gardens. The hotel we sought was still there, and its menu, save for the war-bread and the tiny portion of sugar, as irreproachable as ever.

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The next morning, as if by magic, hundreds of taxis had sprung into existence, though they were much in demand. And in spite of the soldiers thronging the sunlit streets, Paris was seemingly the same Paris one had always known, gay—insouciante, pleasure-bent. The luxury shops appeared to be thriving, the world-renowned restaurants to be doing business as usual; to judge from the prices, a little better than usual; the expensive hotels were full. It is not the real France, of course, yet it seemed none the less surprising that it should still exist. Oddly enough the presence of such overwhelming numbers of soldiers should have failed to strike the note of war, emphasized that of lavishness, of the casting off of mundane troubles for which the French capital has so long been known. But so it was. Most of these soldiers were here precisely with the object of banishing from their minds the degradations and horrors of the region from which they had come, and which was so unbelievably near; a few hours in an automobile—less than that in one of those dragon-fly machines we saw intermittently hovering in the blue above our heads!

Paris, to most Americans, means that concentrated little district de luxe of which the Place Vendome is the centre, and we had always unconsciously thought of it as in the possession of the Anglo-Saxons. So it seems today. One saw hundreds of French soldiers, of course, in all sorts of uniforms, from the new grey blue and visor to the traditional cloth blouse and kepi; once in a while a smart French officer. The English and Canadians, the Australians, New Zealanders, and Americans were much in evidence. Set them down anywhere on the face of the globe, under any conditions conceivable, and you could not surprise them; such was the impression. The British officers and even the British Tommies were blase, wearing the air of the ‘semaine Anglaise’, and the “five o’clock tea,” as the French delight to call it. That these could have come direct from the purgatory of the trenches seemed unbelievable. The Anzacs, with looped-up hats, strolled about, enjoying themselves, halting before the shops in the Rue de la Paix to gaze at the priceless jewellery there, or stopping at a sidewalk cafe to enjoy a drink. Our soldiers had not seen the front; many of them, no doubt, were on leave from the training-camps, others were on duty in Paris, but all seemed in a hurry to get somewhere, bound for a definite destination. They might have been in New York or San Francisco. It was a novel sight, indeed, to observe them striding across the Place Vendome with out so much as deigning to cast a glance at the column dedicated to the great emperor who fought that other world-war a century ago; to see our square-shouldered officers hustling around corners in Ford and Packard automobiles. And the atmosphere of our communication headquarters was so essentially one of “getting things done” as to make one forget the mediaeval narrowness of the Rue Sainte Anne, and the inconvenient French private-dwelling arrangements of the house. You were transported back to America. Such, too, was the air of our Red Cross establishment in the ancient building facing the Palace de la Concorde, where the unfortunate Louis lost his head.

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History had been thrust into the background. I was never more aware of this than when, shortly after dawn Wednesday, the massive grey pile of the Palace of Versailles suddenly rose before me. As the motor shot through the empty Place d'Armes I made a desperate attempt to summon again a vivid impression, when I had first stood there many years ago, of an angry Paris mob beating against that grill, of the Swiss guards dying on the stairway for their Queen. But it was no use. France has undergone some subtle change, yet I knew I was in France. I knew it when we left Paris and sped through the dim leafy tunnels of the Bois; when I beheld a touch of filtered sunlight on the dense blue thatch of the 'marroniers' behind the walls of a vast estate once dedicated to the sports and pleasures of Kings; when I caught glimpses of silent chateaux mirrored in still waters.

I was on my way, with one of our naval officers, to visit an American naval base on the western coast. It was France, but the laughter had died on her lips. A few women and old men and children were to be seen in the villages, a bent figure in a field, an occasional cart that drew aside as we hurried at eighty kilometers an hour along deserted routes drawn as with a ruler across the land. Sometimes the road dipped into a canyon of poplars, and the sky between their crests was a tiny strip of mottled blue and white. The sun crept in and out, the clouds cast shadows on the hills; here and there the tower of lonely church or castle broke the line of a distant ridge. Morning-glories nodded over lodge walls where the ivy was turning crimson, and the little gardens were masses of colours—French colours like that in the beds of the Tuileries, brick-red geraniums and dahlias, yellow marigolds and purple asters.

We lunched at one of the little inns that for generations have been tucked away in the narrow streets of provincial towns; this time a Cheval Blanc, with an unimposing front and a blaze of sunshine in its heart. After a dejeuner fit for the most exacting of bon viveurs we sat in that courtyard and smoked, while an ancient waiter served us with coffee that dripped through silver percolators into our glasses. The tourists have fled. "If happily you should come again, monsieur," said madame, as she led me with pardonable pride through her immaculate bedrooms and salons with wavy floors. And I dwelt upon a future holiday there, on the joys of sharing with a friend that historic place. The next afternoon I lingered in another town, built on a little hill ringed about with ancient walls, from whose battlements tide-veined marshes stretched away to a gleaming sea. A figure flitting through the cobbled streets, a woman in black who sat sewing, sewing in a window, only served to heighten the impression of emptiness, to give birth to the odd fancy that some alchemic quality in the honeyed sunlight now steeping it must have preserved the place through the ages. But in the white close surrounding the church were signs that life still persisted. A peasant was drawing water at the pump, and the handle made a noise; a priest chatted with three French ladies who had come over from a neighbouring seaside resort. And then a woman in deep mourning emerged from a tiny shop and took her bicycle from against the wall and spoke to me.

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“Vous etes Americain, monsieur?”

I acknowledged it.

“Vous venez nous sauver”—the same question I had heard on the lips of the workman in the night. “I hope so, madame,” I replied, and would have added, “We come also to save ourselves.” She looked at me with sad, questioning eyes, and I knew that for her—and alas for many like her—we were too late. When she had mounted her wheel and ridden away I bought a ‘Matin’ and sat down on a doorstep to read about Kerensky and the Russian Revolution. The thing seemed incredible here—war seemed incredible, and yet its tentacles had reached out to this peaceful Old World spot and taken a heavy toll. Once more I sought the ramparts, only to be reminded by those crumbling, machicolated ruins that I was in a war-ridden land. Few generations had escaped the pestilence.

At no great distance lay the little city which had been handed over to us by the French Government for a naval base, one of the ports where our troops and supplies are landed. Those who know provincial France will visualize its narrow streets and reticent shops, its grey-white and ecru houses all more or less of the same design, with long French windows guarded by ornamental balconies of cast iron—a city that has never experienced such a thing as a real-estate boom. Imagine, against such a background, the bewildering effect of the dynamic presence of a few regiments of our new army! It is a curious commentary on this war that one does not think of these young men as soldiers, but as citizens engaged in a scientific undertaking of a magnitude unprecedented. You come unexpectedly upon truck-loads of tanned youngsters, whose features, despite flannel shirts and campaign hats, summon up memories of Harvard Square and the Yale Yard, of campuses at Berkeley and Ithaca. The youthful drivers of these camions are alert, intent, but a hard day’s work on the docks by no means suffices to dampen the spirits of the passengers, who whistle ragtime airs as they bump over the cobbles. And the note they strike is presently sustained by a glimpse, on a siding, of an efficient-looking Baldwin, ranged alongside several of the tiny French locomotives of yesterday; sustained, too, by an acquaintance with the young colonel in command of the town. Though an officer of the regular army, he brings home to one the fact that the days of the military martinet have gone for ever. He is military, indeed-erect and soldierly —but fortune has amazingly made him a mayor and an autocrat, a builder, and in some sense a railway-manager and superintendent of docks. And to these functions have been added those of police commissioner, of administrator of social welfare and hygiene. It will be a comfort to those at home to learn that their sons in our army in France are cared for as no enlisted men have ever been cared for before.

IV

By the end of September I had reached England, eager to gain a fresh impression of conditions there.

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The weather in London was mild and clear. The third evening after I had got settled in one of those delightfully English hotels in the heart of the city, yet removed from the traffic, with letter-boxes that still bear the initials of Victoria, I went to visit some American naval officers in their sitting-room on the ground floor. The cloth had not been removed from the dinner-table, around which we were chatting, when a certain strange sound reached our ears—a sound not to be identified with the distant roar of the motor-busses in Pall Mall, nor with the sharp bark of the taxi-horns, although not unlike them. We sat listening intently, and heard the sound again.

“The Germans have come,” one of the officers remarked, as he finished his coffee. The other looked at his watch. It was nine o’clock. “They must have left their lines about seven,” he said.

In spite of the fact that our newspapers at home had made me familiar with these aeroplane raids, as I sat there, amidst those comfortable surroundings, the thing seemed absolutely incredible. To fly one hundred and fifty miles across the Channel and southern England, bomb London, and fly back again by midnight! We were going to be bombed! The anti-aircraft guns were already searching the sky for the invaders. It is sinister, and yet you are seized by an overwhelming curiosity that draws you, first to pull aside the heavy curtains of the window, and then to rush out into the dark street both proceedings in the worst possible form! The little street was deserted, but in Pall Mall the dark forms of busses could be made out scurrying for shelter, one wondered where? Above the roar of London, the pop pop pop! of the defending guns could be heard now almost continuously, followed by the shrieks and moans of the shrapnel shells as they passed close overhead. They sounded like giant rockets, and even as rockets some of them broke into a cascade of sparks. Star shells they are called, bursting, it seemed, among the immutable stars themselves that burned serenely on. And there were other stars like November meteors hurrying across space—the lights of the British planes scouring the heavens for their relentless enemies. Everywhere the restless white rays of the searchlights pierced the darkness, seeking, but seeking in vain. Not a sign of the intruders was to be seen. I was induced to return to the sitting-room.

“But what are they shooting at?” I asked.

“Listen,” said one of the officers. There came a lull in the firing and then a faint, droning noise like the humming of insects on a still summer day. “It’s all they have to shoot at, that noise.”

“But their own planes?” I objected.

“The Gotha has two engines, it has a slightly different noise, when you get used to it. You’d better step out of that window. It’s against the law to show light, and if a bomb

falls in the street you'd be filled with glass." I overcame my fascination and obeyed. "It isn't only the bombs," my friend went on, "it's the falling shrapnel, too."

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The noise made by those bombs is unmistakable, unforgetable, and quite distinct from the chorus of the guns and shrapnel—a crashing note, reverberating, sustained, like the E minor of some giant calliope.

In face of the raids, which coincide with the coming of the moon, London is calm, but naturally indignant over such methods of warfare. The damage done is ridiculously small; the percentage of deaths and injuries insignificant. There exists, in every large city, a riffraff to get panicky: these are mostly foreigners; they seek the Tubes, and some the crypt of St. Paul's, for it is wise to get under shelter during the brief period of the raids, and most citizens obey the warnings of the police. It is odd, indeed, that more people are not hurt by shrapnel. The Friday following the raid I have described I went out of town for a week-end, and returned on Tuesday to be informed that a shell had gone through the roof outside of the room I had vacated, and the ceiling and floor of the bedroom of one of the officers who lived below. He was covered with dust and debris, his lights went out, but he calmly stepped through the window. "You'd best have your dinner early, sir," I was told by the waiter on my return. "Last night a lady had her soup up-stairs, her chicken in the office, and her coffee in the cellar." It is worth while noting that she had all three. Another evening, when I was dining with Sir James Barrie, he showed me a handful of shrapnel fragments. "I gathered them off the roof," he informed me. And a lady next to whom I sat at luncheon told me in a matter-of-fact tone that a bomb had fallen the night before in the garden of her town house. "It was quite disagreeable," she said, "and broke all our windows on that side." During the last raids before the moon disappeared, by a new and ingenious system of barrage fire the Germans were driven off. The question of the ethics of reprisals is agitating London.

One "raid," which occurred at midday, is worth recording. I was on my way to our Embassy when, in the residential quarter through which I passed, I found all the housemaids in the areas gazing up at the sky, and I was told by a man in a grocer's cart that the Huns had come again. But the invader on this occasion turned out to be a British aviator from one of the camps who was bringing a message to London. The warmth of his reception was all that could be desired, and he alighted hastily in the first open space that presented itself.

Looking back to the time when I left America, I can recall the expectation of finding a Britain beginning to show signs of distress. I was prepared to live on a small ration. And the impression of the scarcity of food was seemingly confirmed when the table was being set for the first meal at my hotel; when the waiter, who chanced to be an old friend, pointed to a little bowl half-full of sugar and exclaimed: "I ought to warn you, sir, it's all you're

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to have for a week, and I'm sorry to say you're only allowed a bit of bread, too." It is human perversity to want a great deal of bread when bread becomes scarce; even war bread, which, by the way, is better than white. But the rest of the luncheon, when it came, proved that John Bull was under no necessity of stinting himself. Save for wheat and sugar; he is not in want. Everywhere in London you are confronted by signs of an incomprehensible prosperity; everywhere, indeed, in Great Britain. There can be no doubt about that of the wage-earners—nothing like it has ever been seen before. One sure sign of this is the phenomenal sale of pianos to households whose occupants had never dreamed of such luxuries. And not once, but many times, have I read in the newspapers of workingmen's families of four or five which are gaining collectively more than five hundred pounds a year. The economic and social significance of this tendency, the new attitude of the working classes, the ferment it is causing need not be dwelt upon here. That England will be a changed England is unquestionable.

The London theatres are full, the "movies" crowded, and you have to wait your turn for a seat at a restaurant. Bond Street and Piccadilly are doing a thriving business—never so thriving, you are told, and presently you are willing to believe it. The vendor beggars, so familiar a sight a few years ago, have all but disappeared, and you may walk from Waterloo Station to the Haymarket without so much as meeting a needy soul anxious to carry your bag. Taxicabs are in great demand. And one odd result of the scarcity of what the English are pleased to call "petrol," by which they mean gasoline, is the reappearance of that respectable, but almost obsolete animal, the family carriage-horse; of that equally obsolete vehicle, the victoria. The men on the box are invariably in black. In spite of taxes to make the hair of an American turn grey, in spite of lavish charities, the wealthy classes still seem wealthy—if the expression may be allowed. That they are not so wealthy as they were goes without saying. In the country houses of the old aristocracy the most rigid economy prevails. There are new fortunes, undoubtedly, munitions and war fortunes made before certain measures were taken to control profits; and some establishments, including a few supported by American accumulations, still exhibit the number of men servants and amount of gold plate formerly thought adequate. But in most of these great houses maids have replaced the butlers and footmen; mansions have been given over for hospitals; gardeners are fighting in the trenches, and courts and drives of country places are often overgrown with grass and weeds.

"Yes, we do dine in public quite often," said a very great lady. "It's cheaper than keeping servants."

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Two of her three sons had been killed in France, but she did not mention this. The English do not advertise their sorrows. Still another explanation when husbands and sons and brothers come back across the Channel for a few days' leave after long months in the trenches, nothing is too good for them. And when these days have flown, there is always the possibility that there may never be another leave. Not long ago I read a heart-rending article about the tragedies of the goodbyes in the stations and the terminal hotels—tragedies hidden by silence and a smile. "Well, so long," says an officer "bring back a V. C.," cries his sister from the group on the platform, and he waves his hand in deprecation as the train pulls out, lights his pipe, and pretends to be reading the Sphere.

Some evening, perchance, you happen to be in the dark street outside of Charing Cross station. An occasional hooded lamp throws a precarious gleam on a long line of men carrying—so gently—stretchers on which lie the silent forms of rich and poor alike.

CHAPTER II

For the student of history who is able to place himself within the stream of evolution the really important events of today are not taking place on the battle lines, but behind them. The key-note of the new era has been struck in Russia. And as I write these words, after the Italian retreat, a second revolution seems possible. For three years one has thought inevitably of 1789, and of the ensuing world conflict out of which issued the beginnings of democracy. History does not repeat itself, yet evolution is fairly consistent. While our attention has been focused on the military drama enacted before our eyes and recorded in the newspapers, another drama, unpremeditated but of vastly greater significance, is unfolding itself behind the stage. Never in the history of the world were generals and admirals, statesmen and politicians so sensitive to or concerned about public opinion as they are today. From a military point of view the situation of the Allies at the present writing is far from reassuring. Germany and her associates have the advantage of interior lines, of a single dominating and purposeful leadership, while our five big nations, democracies or semi-democracies, are stretched in a huge ring with precarious connections on land, with the submarine alert on the sea. Much of their territory is occupied. They did not seek the war; they still lack co-ordination and leadership in waging it. In some of these countries, at least, politicians and statesmen are so absorbed by administrative duties, by national rather than international problems, by the effort to sustain themselves, that they have little time for allied strategy. Governments rise and fall, familiar names and reputations are juggled about like numbered balls in a shaker, come to the top to be submerged again in a new 'emeute'. There are conferences and conferences without end. Meanwhile a social ferment is at work, in Russia conspicuously, in Italy a little less so, in Germany and Austria undoubtedly, in France and England, and even in our own country—once of the most radical in the world, now become the most conservative.

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What form will the social revolution take? Will it be unbridled, unguided; will it run through a long period of anarchy before the fermentation begun shall have been completed, or shall it be handled, in all the nations concerned, by leaders who understand and sympathize with the evolutionary trend, who are capable of controlling it, of taking the necessary international steps of co-operation in order that it may become secure and mutually beneficial to all? This is an age of co-operation, and in this at least, if not in other matters, the United States of America is in an ideal position to assume the leadership.

To a certain extent, one is not prepared to say how far, the military and social crises are interdependent. And undoubtedly the military problem rests on the suppression of the submarine. If Germany continues to destroy shipping on the seas, if we are not able to supply our new armies and the Allied nations with food and other things, the increasing social ferment will paralyze the military operations of the Entente. The result of a German victory under such circumstances is impossible to predict; but the chances are certainly not worth running. In a, sense, therefore, in a great sense, the situation is “up” to us in more ways than one, not only to supply wise democratic leadership but to contribute material aid and brains in suppressing the submarine, and to build ships enough to keep Britain, France, and Italy from starving. We are looked upon by all the Allies, and I believe justly, as being a disinterested nation, free from the age-long jealousies of Europe. And we can do much in bringing together and making more purposeful the various elements represented by the nations to whose aid we have come.

I had not intended in these early papers to comment, but to confine myself to such of my experiences abroad as might prove interesting and somewhat illuminating. So much I cannot refrain from saying.

It is a pleasure to praise where praise is due, and too much cannot be said of the personnel of our naval service—something of which I can speak from intimate personal experience. In these days, in that part of London near the Admiralty, you may chance to run across a tall, erect, and broad-shouldered man in blue uniform with three stars on his collar, striding rapidly along the sidewalk, and sometimes, in his haste, cutting across a street. People smile at him—costermongers, clerks, and shoppers—and whisper among themselves, “There goes the American admiral!” and he invariably smiles back at them, especially at the children. He is an admiral, every inch a seaman, commanding a devoted loyalty from his staff and from the young men who are scouring the seas with our destroyers. In France as well as in England the name Sims is a household word, and if he chose he might be feted every day of the week. He does not choose. He spends long hours instead in the quarters devoted to his administration in Grosvenor Gardens, or in travelling in France and Ireland supervising the growing forces under his command.

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It may not be out of place to relate a characteristic story of Admiral Sims, whose career in our service, whose notable contributions to naval gunnery are too well known to need repetition. Several years ago, on a memorable trip to England, he was designated by the admiral of the fleet to be present at a banquet given our sailors in the Guildhall. Of course the lord mayor called upon him for a speech, but Commander Sims insisted that a bluejacket should make the address. "What, a bluejacket!" exclaimed the lord mayor in astonishment. "Do bluejackets make speeches in your country?" "Certainly they do," said Sims. "Now there's a fine-looking man over there, a quartermaster on my ship. Let's call on him and see what he has to say." The quartermaster, duly summoned, rose with aplomb and delivered himself of a speech that made the hall ring, that formed the subject of a puzzled and amazed comment by the newspapers of the British Capital. Nor was it ever divulged that Commander Sims had foreseen the occasion and had picked out the impressive quartermaster to make a reputation for oratory for the enlisted force.

As a matter of fact, it is no exaggeration to add that there were and are other non-commissioned officers and enlisted men in the service who could have acquitted themselves equally well. One has only to attend some of their theatrical performances to be assured of it.

But to the European mind our bluejacket is still something of an anomaly. He is a credit to our public schools, a fruit of our system of universal education. And he belongs to a service in which are reconciled, paradoxically, democracy and discipline. One moment you may hear a bluejacket talking to an officer as man to man, and the next you will see him salute and obey an order implicitly.

On a wet and smoky night I went from the London streets into the brightness and warmth of that refuge for American soldiers and sailors, the "Eagle Hut," as the Y. M. C. A. is called. The place was full, as usual, but my glance was at once attracted by three strapping, intelligent-looking men in sailor blouses playing pool in a corner. "I simply can't get used to the fact that people like that are ordinary sailors," said the lady in charge to me as we leaned against the soda-fountain. "They're a continual pride and delight to us Americans here—always so willing to help when there's anything to be done, and so interesting to talk to." When I suggested that her ideas of the navy must have been derived from Pinafore she laughed. "I can't imagine using a cat-o'-nine-tails on them!" she exclaimed—and neither could I. I heard many similar comments. They are indubitably American, these sailors, youngsters with the stamp of our environment on their features, keen and self-reliant. I am not speaking now only of those who have enlisted since the war, but of those others, largely from the small towns and villages of our Middle West, who in the past dozen

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years or so have been recruited by an interesting and scientific system which is the result of the genius of our naval recruiting officers. In the files at Washington may be seen, carefully tabulated, the several reasons for their enlisting. Some have “friends in the service”; others wish to “perfect themselves in a trade,” to “complete their education” or “see the world” —our adventurous spirit. And they are seeing it. They are also engaged in the most exciting and adventurous sport—with the exception of aerial warfare ever devised or developed—that of hunting down in all weathers over the wide spaces of the Atlantic those modern sea monsters that prey upon the Allied shipping. For the superdreadnought is reposing behind the nets, the battle-cruiser ignominiously laying mines; and for the present at least, until some wizard shall invent a more effective method of annihilation, victory over Germany depends primarily on the airplane and the destroyer. At three o’clock one morning I stood on the crowded deck of an Irish mail-boat watching the full moon riding over Holyhead Mountain and shimmering on the Irish Sea. A few hours later, in the early light, I saw the green hills of Killarney against a washed and clearing sky, the mud-flats beside the railway shining like purple enamel. All the forenoon, in the train, I travelled through a country bathed in translucent colours, a country of green pastures dotted over with white sheep, of banked hedges and perfect trees, of shadowy blue hills in the high distance. It reminded one of nothing so much as a stained-glass-window depicting some delectable land of plenty and peace. And it was Ireland! When at length I arrived at the station of the port for which I was bound, and which the censor does not permit me to name, I caught sight of the figure of our Admiral on the platform; and the fact that I was in Ireland and not in Emmanuel’s Land was brought home to me by the jolting drive we took on an “outside car,” the admiral perched precariously over one wheel and I over the other. Winding up the hill by narrow roads, we reached the gates of the Admiralty House.

The house sits, as it were, in the emperor’s seat of the amphitheatre of the town, overlooking the panorama of a perfect harbour. A ring of emerald hills is broken by a little gap to seaward, and in the centre is a miniature emerald isle. The ships lying at anchor seemed like children’s boats in a pond. To the right, where a river empties in, were scattered groups of queer, rakish craft, each with four slanting pipes and a tiny flag floating from her halyards; a flag—as the binoculars revealed—of crimson bars and stars on a field of blue. These were our American destroyers. And in the midst of them, swinging to the tide, were the big “mother ships” we have sent over to nurse them when, after many days and nights of hazardous work at sea, they have brought their flock of transports and merchantmen safely to

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port. This “mothering” by repair-ships which are merely huge machine-shops afloat—-this trick of keeping destroyers tuned up and constantly ready for service has inspired much favourable comment from our allies in the British service. It is an instance of our national adaptability, learned from an experience on long coasts where navy-yards are not too handy. Few landsmen understand how delicate an instrument the destroyer is.

A service so hazardous, demanding as it does such qualities as the ability to make instantaneous decisions and powers of mental and physical endurance, a service so irresistibly attractive to the young and adventurous, produces a type of officer quite unmistakable. The day I arrived in London from France, seeking a characteristically English meal, I went to Simpson’s in the Strand, where I found myself seated by the side of two very junior officers of the British navy. It appeared that they were celebrating what was left of a precious leave. At a neighbouring table they spied two of our officers, almost equally youthful. “Let’s have ’em over,” suggested one of the Britishers; and they were “had” over; he raised his glass. “Here’s how—as you say in America!” he exclaimed. “You destroyer chaps are certainly top hole.” And then he added, with a blush, “I say, I hope you don’t think I’m cheeking you!”

I saw them afloat, I saw them coming ashore in that Irish port, these young destroyer captains, after five wakeful nights at sea, weather-bitten, clear-eyed, trained down to the last ounce. One, with whom I had played golf on the New England hills, carried his clubs in his hand and invited me to have a game with him. Another, who apologized for not being dressed at noon on Sunday—he had made the harbour at three that morning!—was taking his racquet out of its case, preparing to spend the afternoon on the hospitable courts of Admiralty House with a fellow captain and two British officers. He was ashamed of his late rising, but when it was suggested that some sleep was necessary he explained that, on the trip just ended, it wasn’t only the submarines that kept him awake. “When these craft get jumping about in a seaway you can’t sleep even if you want to.” He who has had experience with them knows the truth of this remark. Incidentally, though he did not mention it, this young captain was one of three who had been recommended by the British admiral to his government for the Distinguished Service Order. The captain’s report, which I read, is terse, and needs to be visualized. There is simply a statement of the latitude and longitude, the time of day, the fact that the wave of a periscope was sighted at 1,500 yards by the quartermaster first class on duty; general quarters rung, the executive officer signals full speed ahead, the commanding officer takes charge and manoeuvres for position—and then something happens which the censor may be fussy about mentioning. At any rate, oil and other things rise to the surface of the sea, and the Germans are minus another submarine. The chief machinist’s mate, however, comes in for special mention. It seems that he ignored the ladder and literally fell down the hatch, dislocating his shoulder but getting the throttle wide open within five seconds!

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In this town, facing the sea, is a street lined with quaint houses painted in yellows and browns and greens, and under each house the kind of a shop that brings back to the middleaged delectable memories of extreme youth and nickels to spend. Up and down that street on a bright Saturday afternoon may be seen our Middle-Western jackies chumming with the British sailors and Tommies, or flirting with the Irish girls, or gazing through the little panes of the show-windows, whose enterprising proprietors have imported from the States a popular brand of chewing-gum to make us feel more at home. In one of these shops, where I went to choose a picture post-card, I caught sight of an artistic display of a delicacy I had thought long obsolete—the everlasting gum-drop. But when I produced a shilling the shopkeeper shook his head. “Sure, every day the sailors are wanting to buy them of me, but it’s for ornament I’m keeping them,” he said. “There’s no more to be had till the war will be over. Eight years they’re here now, and you wouldn’t get a tooth in them, sir!” So I wandered out again, joined the admiral, and inspected the Bluejackets’ Club by the water’s edge. Nothing one sees, perhaps, is so eloquent of the change that has taken place in the life and fabric of our navy. If you are an enlisted man, here in this commodious group of buildings you can get a good shore meal and entertain your friends among the Allies, you may sleep in a real bed, instead of a hammock, you may play pool, or see a moving-picture show, or witness a vaudeville worthy of professionals, like that recently given in honour of the visit of the admiral of our Atlantic fleet. A band of thirty pieces furnished the music, and in the opinion of the jackies one feature alone was lacking to make the entertainment a complete success—the new drop-curtain had failed to arrive from London. I happened to be present when this curtain was first unrolled, and beheld spread out before me a most realistic presentation of “little old New York,” seen from the North River, towering against blue American skies. And though I have never been overfond of New York, that curtain in that place gave me a sensation!

Such is the life of our officers and sailors in these strange times that have descended upon us. Five to eight days of vigilance, of hardship and danger—in short, of war—and then three days of relaxation and enjoyment in clubs, on golf-courses and tennis-courts, barring the time it takes to clean ship and paint. There need be no fear that the war will be neglected. It is eminently safe to declare that our service will be true to its traditions.

III

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“Dogged does it” ought to be added to “Dieu et mon droit” and other devices of England. On a day when I was lunching with Mr. Lloyd George in the dining-room at 10 Downing Street that looks out over the Horse Guards’ Parade, the present premier, with a characteristic gesture, flung out his hand toward the portrait of a young man in the panel over the mantel. It was of the younger Pitt, who had taken his meals and drunk his port in this very room in that other great war a hundred years ago. The news of Austerlitz, brought to him during his illness, is said to have killed him. But England, undismayed, fought on for a decade, and won. Mr. Lloyd George, in spite of burdens even heavier than Pitt’s, happily retains his health; and his is the indomitable spirit characteristic of the new Britain as well as of the old. For it is a new Britain one sees. Mr. Lloyd George is prime minister of a transformed Britain, a Britain modernized and democratized. Like the Englishman who, when he first witnessed a performance of “Uncle Tom’s Cabin,” cried out, “How very unlike the home life of our dear Queen!” the American who lunches in Downing Street is inclined to exclaim: “How different from Lord North and Palmerston!” We have, I fear, been too long accustomed to interpret Britain in terms of these two ministers and of what they represented to us of the rule of a George the Third or of an inimical aristocracy. Three out of the five men who form the war cabinet of an empire are of what would once have been termed an “humble origin.” One was, if I am not mistaken, born in Nova Scotia. General Smuts, unofficially associated with this council, not many years ago was in arms against Britain in South Africa, and the prime minister himself is the son of a Welsh tailor. A situation that should mollify the most exacting and implacable of our anti-British democrats!

I listened to many speeches and explanations of the prejudice that existed in the mind of the dyed-in-the-wool American against England, and the reason most frequently given was the “school-book” reason; our histories kept the feeling alive. Now; there is no doubt that the histories out of which we were taught made what psychologists would call “action patterns,” or “complexes,” in our brains, just as the school-books have made similar complexes in the brains of German children and prepared them for this war. But, after all, there was a certain animus behind the histories. Boiled down, the sentiment was one against the rule of a hereditary aristocracy, and our forefathers had it long before the separation took place. The Middle-Western farmer has no prejudice against France, because France is a republic. The French are lovable, and worthy of all the sympathy and affection we can give them. But Britain is still nominally a monarchy; and our patriot thinks of its people very much as the cowboy used to regard citizens of New York. They all lived on Fifth Avenue. For the cowboy, the residents of the dreary side streets simply did not exist. We have been wont to think of all the British as aristocrats, while they have returned the compliment by visualizing all Americans as plutocrats—-despite the fact that one-tenth of our population is said to own nine-tenths of all our wealth!

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But the war will change that, is already changing it.

‘Tout comprendre c’est tout pardonner’. We have been soaked in the same common law, literature, and traditions of liberty—or of chaos, as one likes. Whether we all be of British origin or not, it is the mind that makes the true patriot; and there is no American so dead as not to feel a thrill when he first sets foot on British soil. Our school-teachers felt it when they began to travel some twenty years ago, and the thousands of our soldiers who pass through on their way to France are feeling it today, and writing home about it. Our soldiers and sailors are being cared for and entertained in England just as they would be cared for and entertained at home. So are their officers. Not long ago one of the finest town houses in London was donated by the owner for an American officers’ club, the funds were raised by contributions from British officers, and the club was inaugurated by the King and Queen—and Admiral Sims. Hospitality and good-will have gone much further than this. Any one who knows London will understand the sacredness of those private squares, surrounded by proprietary residences, where every tree and every blade of grass has been jealously guarded from intrusion for a century or more. And of all these squares that of St. James’s is perhaps the most exclusive, and yet it is precisely in St. James’s there is to be built the first of those hotels designed primarily for the benefit of American officers, where they can get a good room for five shillings a night and breakfast at a reasonable price. One has only to sample the war-time prices of certain hostelries to appreciate the value of this.

On the first of four unforgettable days during which I was a guest behind the British lines in France the officer who was my guide stopped the motor in the street of an old village, beside a courtyard surrounded by ancient barns.

“There are some of your Americans,” he remarked.

I had recognized them, not by their uniforms but by their type. Despite their costumes, which were negligible, they were eloquent of college campuses in every one of our eight and forty States, lean, thin-hipped, alert. The persistent rains had ceased, a dazzling sunlight made that beautiful countryside as bright as a coloured picture post-card, but a riotous cold gale was blowing; yet all wore cotton trousers that left their knees as bare as Highlanders’ kilts. Above these some had an sweaters, others brown khaki tunics, from which I gathered that they belonged to the officers’ training corps. They were drawn up on two lines facing each other with fixed bayonets, a grim look on their faces that would certainly have put any Hun to flight. Between the files stood an unmistakable gipling sergeant with a crimson face and a bristling little chestnut moustache, talking like a machine gun.

“Now, then, not too lidylike!—there’s a Bosch in front of you! Run ’im through! Now, then!”

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The lines surged forward, out went the bayonets, first the long thrust and then the short, and then a man's gun was seized and by a swift backward twist of the arm he was made helpless.

"Do you feel it?" asked the officer, as he turned to me. I did. "Up and down your spine," he added, and I nodded. "Those chaps will do," he said. He had been through that terrible battle of the Somme, and he knew. So had the sergeant.

Presently came a resting-spell. One of the squad approached me, whom I recognized as a young man I had met in the Harvard Union.

"If you write about this," he said, "just tell our people that we're going to take that sergeant home with us when the war's over. He's too good to lose."

IV

It is trite to observe that democracies are organized—if, indeed, they are organized at all—not for war but for peace. And nowhere is this fact more apparent than in Britain. Even while the war is in progress has that internal democratic process of evolution been going on, presaging profound changes in the social fabric. And these changes must be dealt with by statesmen, must be guided with one hand while the war is being prosecuted with the other. The task is colossal. In no previous war have the British given more striking proof of their inherent quality of doggedness. Greatness, as Confucius said, does not consist in never falling, but in rising every time you fall. The British speak with appalling frankness of their blunders. They are fighting, indeed, for the privilege of making blunders—since out of blunders arise new truths and discoveries not contemplated in German philosophy.

America must now contribute what Britain and France, with all their energies and resources and determination, have hitherto been unable to contribute. It must not be men, money, and material alone, but some quality that America has had in herself during her century and a half of independent self-realization. Mr. Chesterton, in writing about the American Revolution, observes that the real case for the colonists is that they felt that they could be something which England would not help them to be. It is, in fact, the only case for separation. What may be called the English tradition of democracy, which we inherit, grows through conflicts and differences, through experiments and failures and successes, toward an intellectualized unity,—experiments by states, experiments by individuals, a widely spread development, and new contributions to the whole.

Democracy has arrived at the stage when it is ceasing to be national and selfish.

It must be said of England, in her treatment of her colonies subsequent to our Revolution, that she took this greatest of all her national blunders to heart. As a result, Canada and Australia and New Zealand have sent their sons across the seas to fight for an empire that refrains from coercion; while, thanks to the policy of the British Liberals—which was the expression of the sentiment of the British nation—we have the spectacle today of a Botha and a Smuts fighting under the Union Jack.

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And how about Ireland? England has blundered there, and she admits it freely. They exist in England who cry out for the coercion of Ireland, and who at times have almost had their way. But to do this, of course, would be a surrender to the German contentions, an acknowledgment of the wisdom of the German methods against which she is protesting with all her might. Democracy, apparently, must blunder on until that question too, is solved.

V

Many of those picturesque features of the older England, that stir us by their beauty and by the sense of stability and permanence they convey, will no doubt disappear or be transformed. I am thinking of the great estates, some of which date from Norman times; I am thinking of the aristocracy, which we Americans repudiated in order to set up a plutocracy instead. Let us hope that what is fine in it will be preserved, for there is much. By the theory of the British constitution —that unwritten but very real document —in return for honours, emoluments, and titles, the burden of government has hitherto been thrown on a class. Nor can it be said that they have been untrue to their responsibility. That class developed a tradition and held fast to it; and they had a foreign policy that guided England through centuries of greatness. Democracy too must have a foreign policy, a tradition of service; a trained if not hereditary group to guide it through troubled waters. Even in an intelligent community there must be leadership. And, if the world will no longer tolerate the old theories, a tribute may at least be paid to those who from conviction upheld them; who ruled, perhaps in affluence, yet were also willing to toil and, if need be, to die for the privilege.

One Saturday afternoon, after watching for a while the boys playing fives and football and romping over the green lawns at Eton, on my way to the head master's rooms I paused in one of the ancient quads. My eye had been caught by a long column of names posted there, printed in heavy black letters. 'Etona non, immemora'! Every week many new names are added to those columns. On the walls of the chapel and in other quads and passages may be found tablets and inscriptions in memory of those who have died for England and the empire in by-gone wars. I am told that the proportion of Etonians of killed to wounded is greater than that of any other public school—which is saying a great deal. They go back across the channel and back again until their names appear on the last and highest honour list of the school and nation.

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In one of the hospitals I visited lay a wounded giant who had once been a truckman in a little town in Kent. Incidentally, in common with his neighbours, he had taken no interest in the war, which had seemed as remote to him as though he had lived in North Dakota. One day a Zeppelin dropped a bomb on that village, whereupon the able-bodied males enlisted to a man, and he with them. A subaltern in his company was an Eton boy. "We just couldn't think of 'im as an orficer, sir; in the camps 'e used to play with us like a child. And then we went to France. And one night when we was wet to the skin and the Boschs was droppin' shell all around us we got the word. It was him leaped over the top first of all, shouting back at us to come on. He tumbled right back and died in my arms, 'e did, as I was climbin' up after 'im. I shan't ever forget 'im."

As you travel about in these days you become conscious, among the people you meet, of a certain bewilderment. A static world and a static order are dissolving; and in England that order was so static as to make the present spectacle the more surprising. Signs of the disintegration of the old social strata were not lacking, indeed, in the earlier years of the twentieth century, when labour members and north-country radicals began to invade parliament; but the cataclysm of this war has accelerated the process. In the muddy trenches of Flanders and France a new comradeship has sprung up between officers and Tommies, while time-honoured precedent has been broken by the necessity of giving thousands of commissions to men of merit who do not belong to the "officer caste." At the Haymarket Theatre I saw a fashionable audience wildly applaud a play in which the local tailor becomes a major-general and returns home to marry the daughter of the lord of a mayor whose clothes he used to cut before the war.

"The age of great adventure," were the words used by Mr. H. G. Wells to describe this epoch as we discussed it. And a large proportion of the descendants of those who have governed England for centuries are apparently imbued with the spirit of this adventure, even though it may spell the end of their exclusive rule. As significant of the social mingling of elements which in the past never exchanged ideas or points of view I shall describe a week-end party at a large country house of Liberal complexion; on the Thames. I have reason to believe it fairly typical. The owner of this estate holds an important position in the Foreign Office, and the hostess has, by her wit and intelligent grasp of affairs, made an enviable place for herself. On her right, at luncheon on Sunday, was a labour leader, the head of one of the most powerful unions in Britain, and next him sat a member of one of the oldest of England's titled families. The two were on terms of Christian names. The group included two or three women, a sculptor and an educator, another Foreign Office official who has made a reputation since the beginning of the war, and finally an employer of labour, the chairman of the biggest shipbuilding company in England.

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That a company presenting such a variety of interests should have been brought together in the frescoed dining-room of that particular house is noteworthy.

The thing could happen nowhere save in the England of today. At first the talk was general, ranging over a number of subjects from that of the personality of certain politicians to the conduct of the war and the disturbing problem raised by the "conscientious objector"; little by little, however, the rest of us became silent, to listen to a debate which had begun between the labour leader and the ship-builder on the "labour question." It is not my purpose here to record what they said. Needless to add that they did not wholly agree, but they were much nearer to agreement than one would have thought possible. What was interesting was the open-mindedness with which, on both sides, the argument was conducted, and the fact that it could seriously take place then and there. For the subject of it had long been the supreme problem in the lives of both these men, their feelings concerning it must at times have been tinged with bitterness, yet they spoke with courtesy and restraint, and though each maintained his contentions he was quick to acknowledge a point made by the other. As one listened one was led to hope that a happier day is perhaps at hand when such things as "complexes" and convictions will disappear.

The types of these two were in striking contrast. The labour leader was stocky, chestnut-coloured, vital, possessing the bulldog quality of the British self-made man combined with a natural wit, sharpened in the arena, that often startled the company into an appreciative laughter. The ship-builder, on the other hand, was one of those spare and hard Englishmen whom no amount of business cares will induce to neglect the exercise of his body, the obligation at all times to keep "fit"; square-rigged, as it were, with a lean face and a wide moustache accentuating a square chin. Occasionally a gleam of humour, a ray of idealism, lighted his practical grey eyes. Each of these two had managed rather marvellously to triumph over early training by self-education: the labour leader, who had had his first lessons in life from injustices and hard knocks; and the ship-builder, who had overcome the handicap of the public-school tradition and of Manchester economics.

"Yes, titles and fortunes must go," remarked our hostess with a smile as she rose from the table and led the way out on the sunny, stone-flagged terrace. Below us was a wide parterre whose flower-beds, laid out by a celebrated landscape-gardener in the days of the Stuarts, were filled with vegetables. The day was like our New England Indian summerthough the trees were still heavy with leaves—and a gossamer-blue veil of haze stained the hills between which the shining river ran. If the social revolution, or evolution, takes place, one wonders what will become of this long-cherished beauty.

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I venture to dwell upon one more experience of that week-end party. The Friday evening of my arrival I was met at the station, not by a limousine with a chauffeur and footman, but by a young woman with a taxicab—one of the many reminders that a war is going on. London had been reeking in a green-yellow fog, but here the mist was white, and through it I caught glimpses of the silhouettes of stately trees in a park, and presently saw the great house with its clock-tower looming up before me. A fire was crackling in the hall, and before it my hostess was conversing amusedly with a well-known sculptor—a sculptor typical of these renaissance times, large, full-blooded, with vigorous opinions on all sorts of matters.

“A lecturer is coming down from London to talk to the wounded in the amusement-hall of the hospital,” our hostess informed us. “And you both must come and speak too.”

The three of us got into the only motor of which the establishment now boasts, a little runabout using a minimum of “petrol,” and she guided us rapidly by devious roads through the fog until a blur of light proclaimed the presence of a building, one of some score or more built on the golf-course by the British Government. I have not space hereto describe that hospital, which is one of the best in England; but it must be observed that its excellence and the happiness of its inmates are almost wholly due to the efforts of the lady who now conducted us across the stage of the amusement-hall, where all the convalescents who could walk or who could be rolled thither in chairs were gathered. The lecturer had not arrived. But the lady of the manor seated herself at the speaker’s table, singling out Scotch wits in the audience—for whom she was more than a match—while the sculptor and I looked on and grinned and resisted her blandishments to make speeches. When at last the lecturer came he sat down informally on the table with one foot hanging in the air and grinned, too, at her bantering but complimentary introduction. It was then I discovered for the first time that he was one of the best educational experts of that interesting branch of the British Government, the Department of Reconstruction, whose business it is to teach the convalescents the elements of social and political science. This was not to be a lecture, he told them, but a debate in which every man must take a part. And his first startling question was this:

“Why should Mr. Lloyd George, instead of getting five thousand pounds a year for his services as prime minister, receive any more than a common labourer?”

The question was a poser. The speaker folded his hands and beamed down at them; he seemed fairly to radiate benignity.

“Now we mustn’t be afraid of him, just because he seems to be intelligent,” declared our hostess. This sally was greeted with spasmodic laughter. Her eyes flitted from bench to bench, yet met nothing save averted glances. “Jock! Where are you, Jock? Why don’t you speak up?—you’ve never been downed before.”

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More laughter, and craning of necks for the Jocks. This appeared to be her generic name for the vita. But the Jocks remained obdurately modest. The prolonged silence did not seem in the least painful to the lecturer, who thrust his hand in his pocket and continued to beam. He had learned how to wait. And at last his patience was rewarded. A middleaged soldier with a very serious manner arose hesitatingly, with encouraging noises from his comrades.

“It’s not Mr. Lloyd George I’m worrying about, sir,” he said, “all I wants is enough for the missus and me. I had trouble to get that before the war.”

Cries of “Hear! Hear!”

“Why did you have trouble?” inquired the lecturer mildly.

“The wages was too low.”

“And why were the wages too low?”

“You’ve got me there. I hadn’t thought.”

“But isn’t it your business as a voter to think?” asked the lecturer. “That’s why the government is sending me here, to start you to thinking, to remind you that it is you soldiers who will have to take charge of this country and run it after the war is over. And you won’t be able to do that unless you think, and think straight.”

“We’ve never been taught to think,” was the illuminating reply.

“And if we do think we’ve never been educated to express ourselves, same as you!” shouted another man, in whom excitement had overcome timidity.

“I’m here to help you educate yourselves,” said the lecturer. “But first let’s hear any ideas you may have on the question I asked you.”

There turned out to be plenty of ideas, after all. An opinion was ventured that Mr. Lloyd George served the nation, not for money but from public spirit; a conservative insisted that ability should be rewarded and rewarded well; whereupon ensued one of the most enlightening discussions, not only as a revelation of intelligence, but of complexes and obsessions pervading many of the minds in whose power lies the ultimate control of democracies. One, for instance, declared that—“if every man went to church proper of a Sunday and minded his own business the country would get along well enough.” He was evidently of the opinion that there was too much thinking and not enough of what he would have termed “religion.” Gradually that audience split up into liberals and conservatives; and the liberals noticeably were the younger men who had had the advantages of better board schools, who had formed fewer complexes and had had less time in which to get them set. Of these, a Canadian made a plea for the American

system of universal education, whereupon a combative “stand-patter” declared that every man wasn’t fit to be educated, that the American plan made only for discontent. “Look at them,” he exclaimed, “They’re never satisfied to stay in their places.” This provoked laughter, but it was too much for the sculptor —and for me. We both broke our vows and made speeches in favour of equality and

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mental opportunity, while the lecturer looked on and smiled. Mr. Lloyd George and his salary were forgotten. By some subtle art of the chairman the debate had been guided to the very point where he had from the first intended to guide it—to the burning question of our day —education as the true foundation of democracy! Perhaps, after all, this may be our American contribution to the world's advance.

As we walked homeward through the fog I talked to him of Professor Dewey's work and its results, while he explained to me the methods of the Reconstruction Department. "Out of every audience like that we get a group and form a class," he said. "They're always a bit backward at first, just as they were tonight, but they grow very keen. We have a great many classes already started, and we see to it that they are provided with text-books and teachers. Oh, no, it's not propaganda," he added, in answer to my query; "all we do is to try to give them facts in such a way as to make them able to draw their own conclusions and join any political party they choose—just so they join one intelligently." I must add that before Sunday was over he had organized his class and arranged for their future instruction.

CHAPTER III

I would speak first of a contrast—and yet I have come to recognize how impossible it is to convey to the dweller in America the difference in atmosphere between England and France on the one hand and our country on the other. And when I use the word "atmosphere" I mean the mental state of the peoples as well as the weather and the aspect of the skies. I have referred in another article to the anxious, feverish prosperity one beholds in London and Paris, to that apparent indifference, despite the presence on the streets of crowds of soldiers to the existence of a war of which one is ever aware. Yet, along with this, one is ever conscious of pressure. The air is heavy; there is a corresponding lack of the buoyancy of mind which is the normal American condition. Perhaps, if German troops occupied New England and New York, our own mental barometer might be lower. It is difficult to say. At any rate, after an ocean voyage of nine days one's spirits rise perceptibly as the ship nears Nantucket; and the icy-bright sunlight of New York harbour, the sight of the buildings aspiring to blue skies restore the throbbing optimism which with us is normal; and it was with an effort, when I talked to the reporters on landing, that I was able to achieve and express the pessimism and darkness out of which I had come. Pessimism is perhaps too strong a word, and takes no account of the continued unimpaired morale and determination of the greater part of the British and French peoples. They expect much from us. Yet the impression was instantaneous, when I set forth in the streets of New York, that we had not fully measured the magnitude of our task—an impression that has been amply confirmed as the weeks have passed.

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The sense of relief I felt was not only the result of bright skies and a high barometer, of the palpable self-confidence of the pedestrians, of the white bread on the table and the knowledge that there was more, but also of the ease of accomplishing things. I called for a telephone number and got it cheerfully and instantly. I sent several telegrams, and did not have to wait twenty minutes before a wicket while a painstaking official multiplied and added and subtracted and paused to talk with a friend; the speed of the express in which I flew down-town seemed emblematic of America itself. I had been transported, in fact, into another world—my world; and in order to realize again that from which I had come I turned to a diary recording a London filled with the sulphur fumes of fog, through which the lamps of the taxis and buses shone as yellow blots reflected on glistening streets; or, for some reason a still greater contrast, a blue, blue November Sunday afternoon in parts, the Esplanade of the Invalides black with people—sad people —and the Invalides itself all etched in blue as seen through the wide vista from the Seine.

A few days later, with some children, I went to the Hippodrome. And it remained for the Hippodrome, of all places, to give me the thrill I had not achieved abroad, the thrill I had not experienced since the first months of the war. Mr. George Cohan accomplished it. The transport with steam up, is ready to leave the wharf, the khaki-clad regiment of erect and vigorous young Americans marches across the great stage, and the audience strains forward and begins to sing, under its breath, the words that proclaim, as nothing else perhaps proclaims, how America feels.

> "Send the word, send the word over there . . .
> We'll be o-ver, we're coming o-ver,
> And we won't come back till it's o-ver, over there!"

Is it the prelude of a tragedy? We have always been so successful, we Americans. Are we to fail now? I am an American, and I do not believe we are to fail. But I am soberer, somehow a different American than he who sailed away in August. Shall we learn other things than those that have hitherto been contained in our philosophy?

Of one thing I am convinced. It is the first war of the world that is not a miltary war, although miltary genius is demanded, although it is the bloodiest war in history. But other qualities are required; men and women who are not professional soldiers are fighting in it and will aid in victory. The pomp and circumstance of other wars are lacking in this, the greatest of all. We had the thrills, even in America, three years ago, when Britain and France and Canada went in. We tingled when we read of the mobilizing of the huge armies, of the leave-takings of the soldiers. We bought every extra for news of those first battles on Belgian soil. And I remember my sensations when in the province of Quebec in the autumn of 1914, looking out of the car-window at the troops gathering on the platforms who were to go across the seas to fight for the empire and liberty. They were singing "Tipperary!" "Tipperary!" One seldoms hears it now, and the way has proved long—longer than we reckoned. And we are singing "Over There!"

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In those first months of the war there was, we were told, in England and France a revival of “religion,” and indeed many of the books then written gave evidence of having been composed in exalted, mystic moods. I remember one in particular, called “En Campagne,” by a young French officer. And then, somehow, the note of mystic exaltation died away, to be succeeded by a period of realism. Read “Le Feu,” which is most typical, which has sold in numberless editions. Here is a picture of that other aspect—the grimness, the monotony, and the frequent bestiality of trench life, the horror of slaughtering millions of men by highly specialized machinery. And yet, as an American, I strike inevitably the note of optimism once more. Even now the truer spiritual goal is glimpsed through the battle clouds, and has been hailed in world-reverberating phrases by our American President. Day by day the real issue is clearer, while the “religion” it implies embraces not one nation, wills not one patriotism, but humanity itself. I heard a Frenchwoman who had been deeply “religious” in the old sense exclaim: “I no longer have any faith in God; he is on the side of the Germans.” When the war began there were many evidences of a survival of that faith that God fights for nations, interferes in behalf of the “righteous” cause. When General Joffre was in America he was asked by one of our countrywomen how the battle of the Marne was won. “Madame,” he is reported to have said, “it was won by me, by my generals and soldiers.” The tendency to regard this victory, which we hope saved France and the Western humanitarian civilization we cherish, as a special interposition of Providence, as a miracle, has given place to the realization that the battle was won by the resourcefulness, science, and coolness of the French commander-in-chief. Science preserves armies, since killing, if it has to be done, is now wholly within that realm; science heals the wounded, transports them rapidly to the hospitals, gives the shattered something still to live for; and, if we are able to abandon the sentimental view and look facts in the face—as many anointed chaplains in Europe are doing—science not only eliminates typhoid but is able to prevent those terrible diseases that devastate armies and nations. And science is no longer confined to the physical but has invaded the social kingdom, is able to weave a juster fabric into the government of peoples. On all sides we are beginning to embrace the religion of self-reliance, a faith that God is on the side of intelligence—intelligence with a broader meaning than the Germans have given it, for it includes charity.

II

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It seems to me that I remember, somewhere in the realistic novel I have mentioned “Le Feu”—reading of singing soldiers, and an assumption on the part of their hearers that such songs are prompted only by a devil-may-care lightness of heart which the soldier achieves. A shallow psychology (as the author points out), especially in these days of trench warfare! The soldier sings to hide his real feelings, perhaps to give vent to them. I am reminded of all this in connection with my trip to the British front. I left London after lunch on one of those dreary, grey days to which I have referred; the rain had begun to splash angrily against the panes of the car windows before we reached the coast. At five o’clock the boat pushed off into a black channel, whipped by a gale that drove the rain across the decks and into every passage and gangway. The steamer was literally loaded with human beings, officers and men returning from a brief glimpse of home. There was nothing of the glory of war in the embarkation, and, to add to the sad and sinister effect of it, each man as he came aboard mounted the ladder and chose, from a pile on the hatch combing, a sodden life-preserver, which he flung around his shoulders as he went in search of a shelter. The saloon below, where we had our tea, was lighted indeed, but sealed so tight as to be insupportable; and the cabin above, stifling too, was dark as a pocket. One stumbled over unseen passengers on the lounges, or sitting on kits on the floor. Even the steps up which I groped my way to the deck above were filled, while on the deck there was standing-room only and not much of that. Mal de mer added to the discomforts of many. At length I found an uncertain refuge in a gangway amidships, hedged in between unseen companions; but even here the rain stung our faces and the spray of an occasional comber drenched our feet, while through the gloom of the night only a few yards of white water were to be discerned. For three hours I stood there, trying to imagine what was in the minds of these men with whose bodies I was in such intimate contact. They were going to a foreign land to fight, many of them to die, not in one of those adventurous campaigns of times gone by, but in the wet trenches or the hideous No Man’s Land between. What were the images they summoned up in the darkness? Visions of long-familiar homes and long-familiar friends? And just how were they facing the future? Even as I wondered, voices rose in a song, English voices, soldier voices. It was not “Tipperary,” the song that thrilled us a few years ago. I strove to catch the words:

> “I want to go home!
> I don’t want to go back to the trenches no more,
> Where there are bullets and shrapnel galore,
> I want to go home!”

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It was sung boisterously, in a defiant tone of mockery of the desire it expressed, and thus tremendously gained in pathos. They did want to go home—naturally. It was sung with the same spirit our men sing "We won't come back till it's over, over there!" The difference is that these Britishers have been over there, have seen the horrors face to face, have tasted the sweets of home, and in spite of heartsickness and seasickness are resolved to see it through. Such is the morale of the British army. I have not the slightest doubt that it will be the morale of our own army also, but at present the British are holding the fort. Tommy would never give up the war, but he has had a realistic taste of it, and his songs reflect his experience. Other songs reached my ears each night, above the hissing and pounding of the Channel seas, but the unseen group returned always to this. One thought of Agincourt and Crecy, of Waterloo, of the countless journeys across this same stormy strip of water the ancestors of these man had made in the past, and one wondered whether war were eternal and inevitable, after all.

And what does Tommy think about it—this war? My own limited experience thoroughly indorses Mr. Galsworthy's splendid analysis of British-soldier psychology that appeared in the December North American. The average man, with native doggedness, is fighting for the defence of England. The British Government itself, in its reconstruction department for the political education of the wounded, has given partial denial to the old maxim that it is the soldier's business not to think but to obey; and the British army is leavened with men who read and reflect in the long nights of watching in the rain, who are gaining ideas about conditions in the past and resolutions concerning those of the future. The very army itself has had a miracle happen to it: it has been democratized—and with the cheerful consent of the class to which formerly the possession of commissions was largely confined. Gradually, to these soldier-thinkers, as well as to the mass of others at home, is unfolding the vision of a new social order which is indeed worth fighting for and dying for.

III

At last, our knees cramped and our feet soaked, we saw the lights of the French port dancing across the veil of rain, like thistledowns of fire, and presently we were at rest at a stone quay. As I stood waiting on the deck to have my passport vised, I tried to reconstruct the features of this little seaport as I had seen it, many years before, on a bright summer's day when I had motored from Paris on my way to London. The gay line of hotels facing the water was hidden in the darkness. Suddenly I heard my name called, and I was rescued from the group of civilians by a British officer who introduced himself as my host. It was after nine o'clock, and he had been on the lookout for me since half past seven.

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The effect of his welcome at that time and place was electrical, and I was further immensely cheered by the news he gave me, as we hurried along the street, that two friends of mine were here and quite hungry, having delayed dinner for my arrival. One of them was a young member of Congress who had been making exhaustive studies of the situation in Italy, France and England, and the other one of our best-known writers, both bound for London. We sat around the table until nearly eleven, exchanging impressions and experiences. Then my officer declared that it was time to go home.

“Home” proved to be the big chateau which the British Government has leased for the kindly purpose of entertaining such American guests as they choose to invite. It is known as the “American Chateau,” and in the early morning hours we reached it after a long drive through the gale. We crossed a bridge over a moat and traversed a huge stone hall to the Gothic drawing-room. Here a fire was crackling on the hearth, refreshments were laid out, and the major in command rose from his book to greet me. Hospitality, with these people, has attained to art, and, though I had come here at the invitation of his government, I had the feeling of being his personal guest in his own house. Presently he led the way up the stone stairs and showed me the room I was to occupy.

I awoke to the sound of the wind whistling through the open lattice, and looking down on the ruffled blue waters of the moat I saw a great white swan at his morning toilet, his feathers dazzling in the sun. It was one of those rare crisp and sparkling days that remind one of our American autumn. A green stretch of lawn made a vista through the woods. Following the example of the swan, I plunged into the tin tub the orderly had placed beside my bed and went down to porridge in a glow. Porridge, for the major was Scotch, and had taught his French cook to make it as the Scotch make it. Then, going out into the hall, from a table on which lay a contour map of the battle region, the major picked up a hideous mask that seemed to have been made for some barbaric revelries.

“We may not strike any gas,” he said, “but it’s as well to be on the safe side,” whereupon he made me practise inserting the tube in my mouth, pinching the nostrils instantly with the wire-covered nippers. He also presented me with a steel helmet. Thus equipped for any untoward occurrence, putting on sweaters and heavy overcoats, and wrapping ourselves in the fur rugs of the waiting automobile, we started off, with the gale on our quarter, for the front.

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Picardy, on whose soil has been shed so much English blood, never was more beautiful than on that October day. The trees were still in full leaf, the fields green, though the crops had been gathered, and the crystal air gave vivid value to every colour in the landscape. From time to time we wound through the cobble-stoned streets of historic villages, each having its stone church end the bodki-shaped steeple of blue slate so characteristic of that country. And, as though we were still in the pastoral times of peace, in the square of one of these villages a horse-fair was in progress, blue-smocked peasants were trotting chunky ponies over the stones. It was like a picture from one of De Maupassant's tales. In other villages the shawled women sat knitting behind piles of beets and cabbages and apples, their farm-carts atilt in the sun. Again and again I tried to grasp the fact that the greatest of world wars was being fought only a few miles away—and failed.

We had met, indeed, an occasional officer or orderly, huddled in a greatcoat and head against the wind, exercising those wonderful animals that are the pride of the British cavalry and which General Sir Douglas Haig, himself a cavalryman, some day hopes to bring into service. We had overtaken an artillery train rumbling along toward the east, the men laughing and joking as they rode, as though they were going to manoeuvres. Farther on, as the soldiers along the highroads and in the towns grew more and more numerous, they seemed so harmoniously part of the peaceful scene that war was as difficult to visualize as ever. Many sat about smoking their pipes and playing with the village children, others were in squads going to drill or exercise—something the Briton never neglects. The amazing thing to a visitor who has seen the trenches awash on a typical wet day, who knows that even billeting in cold farms and barns behind the lines can scarcely be compared to the comforts of home, is how these men keep well under the conditions. To say that they are well is to understate the fact: the ruddy faces and clear eyes and hard muscles—even of those who once were pale London clerks—-proclaim a triumph for the system of hygiene of their army.

Suddenly we came upon a house with a great round hole in its wall, and then upon several in ruins beside the village street. Meanwhile, at work under the windswept trees of the highway, were strange, dark men from the uttermost parts of the earth, physiognomies as old as the tombs of Pharaoh. It was, indeed, not so much the graven red profiles of priests and soldiers that came tome at sight of these Egyptians, but the singing fellaheen of the water-buckets of the Nile. And here, too, shovelling the crushed rock, were East Indians oddly clad in European garb, careless of the cold. That sense of the vastness of the British Empire, which at times is so profound, was mingled now with a knowledge that it was fighting for its life, marshalling all its resources for Armageddon.

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Saint Eloi is named after the good bishop who ventured to advise King Dagobert about his costume. And the church stands—what is left of it —all alone on the greenest of terraces jutting out toward the east; and the tower, ruggedly picturesque against the sky, resembles that of some crumbled abbey. As a matter of fact, it has been a target for German gunners. Dodging an army-truck and rounding one of those military traffic policemen one meets at every important corner we climbed the hill and left the motor among the great trees, which are still fortunately preserved. And we stood for a few minutes, gazing over miles and miles of devastation. Then, taking the motor once more, we passed through wrecked and empty villages until we came to the foot of Vimy Ridge. Notre Dame de Lorette rose against the sky-line to the north.

Vimy and Notre Dame de Lorette—sweet but terrible names! Only a summer had passed since Vimy was the scene of one of the bloodiest battles of the war. From a distance the prevailing colour of the steep slope is ochre; it gives the effect of having been scraped bare in preparation for some gigantic enterprise. A nearer view reveals a flush of green; nature is already striving to heal. From top to bottom it is pockmarked by shells and scarred by trenches—trenches every few feet, and between them tangled masses of barbed wire still clinging to the “knife rests” and corkscrew stanchions to which it had been strung. The huge shell-holes, revealing the chalk subsoil, were half-filled with water. And even though the field had been cleaned by those East Indians I had seen on the road, and the thousands who had died here buried, bits of uniform, shoes, and accoutrements and shattered rifles were sticking in the clay—and once we came across a portion of a bedstead, doubtless taken by some officer from a ruined and now vanished village to his dugout. Painfully, pausing frequently to ponder over these remnants, so eloquent of the fury of the struggle, slipping backward at every step and despite our care getting tangled in the wire, we made our way up the slope. Buttercups and daisies were blooming around the edges of the craters.

As we drew near the crest the major warned me not to expose myself. “It isn’t because there is much chance of our being shot,” he explained,” but a matter of drawing the German fire upon others.” And yet I found it hard to believe—despite the evidence at my feet—that war existed here. The brightness of the day, the emptiness of the place, the silence—save for the humming of the gale—denied it. And then, when we had cautiously rounded a hummock at the top, my steel helmet was blown off—not by a shrapnel, but by the wind! I had neglected to tighten the chin-strap.

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Immediately below us I could make out scars like earthquake cracks running across the meadows—the front trenches. Both armies were buried like moles in these furrows. The country was spread out before us, like a map, with occasionally the black contour of a coal mound rising against the green, or a deserted shaft-head. I was gazing at the famous battlefield of Lens. Villages, woods, whose names came back to me as the major repeated them, lay like cloud shadows on the sunny plain, and the faintest shadow of all, far to the eastward, was Lens itself. I marked it by a single white tower. And suddenly another white tower, loftier than the first, had risen up! But even as I stared its substance seemed to change, to dissolve, and the tower was no longer to be seen. Not until then did I realize that a monster shell had burst beside the trenches in front of the city. Occasionally after that there came to my ears the muffed report of some hidden gun, and a ball like a powder-puff lay lightly on the plain, and vanished. But even the presence of these, oddly enough, did not rob the landscape of its air of Sunday peace.

We ate our sandwiches and drank our bottle of white wine in a sheltered cut of the road that runs up that other ridge which the French gained at such an appalling price, Notre Dame de Lorette, while the major described to me some features of the Lens battle, in which he had taken part. I discovered incidentally that he had been severely wounded at the Somme. Though he had been a soldier all his life, and a good soldier, his true passion was painting, and he drew my attention to the rare greens and silver-greys of the stones above us, steeped in sunlight—all that remained of the little church of Notre Dame—more beautiful, more significant, perhaps, as a ruin. It reminded the major of the Turners he had admired in his youth. After lunch we lingered in the cemetery, where the graves and vaults had been harrowed by shells; the trenches ran right through them. And here, in this desecrated resting-place of the village dead, where the shattered gravestones were mingled with barbed wire, death-dealing fragments of iron, and rusting stick-bombs that had failed to explode, was a wooden cross, on which was rudely written the name of Hans Siebert. Mouldering at the foot of the cross was a grey woollen German tunic from which the buttons had been cut.

We kept the road to the top, for Notre Dame de Lorette is as steep as Vimy. There we looked upon the panorama of the Lens battle-field once more, and started down the eastern slope, an apparently smooth expanse covered now with prairie grasses, in reality a labyrinth of deep ditches, dugouts, and pits; gruesome remnants of the battle lay half-concealed under the grass. We walked slowly, making desperate leaps over the trenches, sometimes perforce going through them, treading gingerly on the “duck board” at the bottom. We stumbled over stick-bombs and unexploded shells. No plough can be put here—the only solution for the land for years to come is forest. Just before we gained the road at the bottom, where the car was awaiting us, we were startled by the sudden flight of a covey of partridges.

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The skies were grey when we reached the banal outskirts of a town where the bourgeoise houses were modern, commonplace, save those which had been ennobled by ruin. It was Arras, one of those few magic names, eloquent with suggestions of mediaeval romance and art, intrigue and chivalry; while upon their significance, since the war began, has been superimposed still another, no less eloquent but charged with pathos. We halted for a moment in the open space before the railroad station, a comparatively new structure of steel and glass, designed on geometrical curves, with an uninspiring, cheaply ornamented front. It had been, undoubtedly, the pride of the little city. Yet finding it here had at first something of the effect of the discovery of an office-building—let us say—on the site of the Reims Cathedral. Presently, however, its emptiness, its silence began to have their effects—these and the rents one began to perceive in the roof. For it was still the object of the intermittent yet persistent fire of the German artillery. One began to realize that by these wounds it had achieved a dignity that transcended the mediocre imagination of its provincial designer. A fine rain had set in before we found the square, and here indeed one felt a certain desolate satisfaction; despite the wreckage there the spirit of the ancient town still poignantly haunted it. Although the Hotel de Ville, which had expressed adequately the longings and aspirations, the civic pride of those bygone burghers, was razed to the ground, on three sides were still standing the varied yet harmonious facades of Flemish houses made familiar by photographs. Of some of these the plaster between the carved beams had been shot away, the roofs blown off, and the tiny hewn rafters were bared to the sky. The place was empty in the gathering gloom of the twilight. The gaiety and warmth of the hut erected in the Public Gardens which houses the British Officers' Club were a relief.

The experiences of the next day will remain for ever in my memory etched, as it were, in sepia. My guide was a younger officer who had seen heroic service, and I wondered constantly how his delicate frame had survived in the trenches the constant hardship of such weather as now, warmly wrapped and with the car-curtains drawn, we faced. The inevitable, relentless rain of that region had set in again, the rain in which our own soldiers will have to fight, and the skies were of a darkness seldom known in America. The countryside was no longer smiling. After some two hours of progress we came, in that devastated district near the front, to an expanse where many monsters were clumsily cavorting like dinosaurs in primeval slime. At some distance from the road others stood apparently tethered in line, awaiting their turn for exercise. These were the far-famed tanks. Their commander, or chief mahout—as I was inclined to call him—was a cheerful young giant of colonial origin, who has often driven

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them serenely across No Man's Land and into the German trenches. He had been expecting us, and led me along a duck board over the morass, to where one of these leviathans was awaiting us. You crawl through a greasy hole in the bottom, and the inside is as full of machinery as the turret of the Pennsylvania, and you grope your way to the seat in front beside that of the captain and conductor, looking out through a slot in the armour over a waste of water and mud. From here you are supposed to operate a machine gun. Behind you two mechanics have started the engines with a deafening roar, above which are heard the hoarse commands of the captain as he grinds in his gears. Then you realize that the thing is actually moving, that the bosses on the belt have managed to find a grip on the slime—and presently you come to the brink of what appears, to your exaggerated sense of perception, a bottomless chasm, with distant steep banks on the farther side that look unattainable and insurmountable. It is an old German trench which the rains have worn and widened. You brace yourself, you grip desperately a pair of brass handles in front of you, while leviathan hesitates, seems to sit up on his haunches, and then gently buries his nose in the pasty clay and paws his way upward into the field beyond. It was like sitting in a huge rocking-chair. That we might have had a bump, and a bone-breaking one, I was informed after I had left the scene of the adventure. It all depends upon the skill of the driver. The monsters are not as tractable as they seem.

That field in which the tanks manoeuvre is characteristic of the whole of this district of levelled villages and vanished woods. Imagine a continuous clay vacant lot in one of our Middle Western cities on the rainiest day you can recall; and further imagine, on this limitless lot, a network of narrow-gauge tracks and wagon roads, a scattering of contractors' shanties, and you will have some idea of the daily life and surroundings of one of oar American engineer regiments, which is running a railroad behind the British front. Yet one has only to see these men and talk with them to be convinced of the truth that human happiness and even human health thanks to modern science—are not dependent upon an existence in a Garden of Eden. I do not mean exactly that these men would choose to spend the rest of their existences in this waste, but they are happy in the consciousness of a job well done. It was really inspiring to encounter here the familiar conductors and brakemen, engineers and firemen, who had voluntarily, and for an ideal, left their homes in a remote and peaceful republic three thousand miles away, to find contentment and a new vitality, a wider vision, in the difficult and dangerous task they were performing. They were frequently under fire —when they brought back the wounded or fetched car-loads of munitions to the great guns on the ridiculous little trains of flat cars with open-work wheels, which they

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named—with American humour—the Federal Express and the Twentieth Century Limited. And their officers were equally happy. Their colonel, of our regular Army Engineer Corps, was one of those broad-shouldered six-footers who, when they walk the streets of Paris, compel pedestrians to turn admiringly and give one a new pride in the manhood of our nation. Hospitably he drew us out of the wind and rain into his little hut, and sat us down beside the stove, cheerfully informing us that, only the night before, the gale had blown his door in, and his roof had started for the German lines. In a neighbouring hut, reached by a duck board, we had lunch with him and his officers baked beans and pickles, cakes and maple syrup. The American food, the American jokes and voices in that environment seemed strange indeed! But as we smoked and chatted about the friends we had in common, about political events at home and the changes that were taking place there, it seemed as if we were in America once more. The English officer listened and smiled in sympathy, and he remarked, after our reluctant departure, that America was an extraordinary land.

He directed our chauffeur to Bapaume, across that wilderness which the Germans had so wantonly made in their retreat to the Hindenburg line. Nothing could have been more dismal than our slow progress in the steady rain, through the deserted streets of this town. Home after home had been blasted—their intimate yet harrowing interiors were revealed. The shops and cafes, which had been thoroughly looted, had their walls blown out, but in many cases the signs of the vanished and homeless proprietors still hung above the doors. I wondered how we should feel in New England if such an outrage had been done to Boston, for instance, or little Concord! The church, the great cathedral on its terrace, the bishop's house, all dynamited, all cold and wet and filthy ruins! It was dismal, indeed, but scarcely more dismal than that which followed; for at Bapaume we were on the edge of the battle-field of the Somme. And I chanced to remember that the name had first been indelibly impressed on my consciousness at a comfortable breakfast-table at home, where I sat looking out on a bright New England garden. In the headlines and columns of my morning newspaper I had read again and again, during the summer of 1916, of Thiepval and La Boisselle, of Fricourt and Mametz and the Bois des Trones. Then they had had a sinister but remote significance; now I was to see them, or what was left of them!

As an appropriate and characteristic setting for the tragedy which had happened here, the indigo afternoon could not have been better chosen. Description fails to do justice to the abomination of desolation of that vast battle-field in the rain, and the imagination, refuses to reconstruct the scene of peace—the chateaux and happy villages, the forests and pastures, that flourished here so brief a time ago. In

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my fancy the long, low swells of land, like those of some dreary sea, were for the moment the subsiding waves of the cataclysm that had rolled here and extinguished all life. Beside the road only the blood-red soil betrayed the sites of powdered villages; and through it, in every direction, trenches had been cut. Between the trenches the earth was torn and tortured, as though some sudden fossilizing process, in its moment of supreme agony, had fixed it thus. On the hummocks were graves, graves marked by wooden crosses, others by broken rifles thrust in the ground. Shattered gun-carriages lay in the ditches, modern cannon that had cost priceless hours of skilled labour; and once we were confronted by one of those monsters, wounded to the death, I had seen that morning. The sight of this huge, helpless thing oddly recalled the emotions I had felt, as a child, when contemplating dead elephants in a battle picture of the army of a Persian king.

Presently, like the peak of some submerged land, we saw lifted out of that rolling waste the “Butt” of Warlencourt—the burial-mound of this modern Marathon. It is honeycombed with dugouts in which the Germans who clung to it found their graves, while the victorious British army swept around it toward Bapaume. Everywhere along that road, which runs like an arrow across the battle-field to Albert, were graves. Repetition seems the only method of giving an adequate impression of their numbers; and near what was once the village of Pozieres was the biggest grave of all, a crater fifty feet deep and a hundred feet across. Seven months the British sappers had toiled far below in the chalk, digging the passage and chamber; and one summer dawn, like some tropical volcano, it had burst directly under the German trench. Long we stood on the slippery edge of it, gazing down at the tangled wire and litter of battle that strewed the bottom, while the rain fell pitilessly. Just such rain, said my officer-guide, as had drenched this country through the long winter months of preparation. “We never got dry,” he told me; and added with a smile, in answer to my query: “Perhaps that was the reason we never caught colds.”

When we entered Albert, the starting point of the British advance, there was just light enough to see the statue of the Virgin leaning far above us over the street. The church-tower on which it had once stood erect had been struck by a German shell, but its steel rod had bent and not broken. Local superstition declares that when the Virgin of Albert falls the war will be ended.

IV

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I come home impressed with the fact that Britain has learned more from this war than any other nation, and will probably gain more by that knowledge. We are all wanting, of course, to know what we shall get out of it, since it was forced upon us; and of course the only gain worth considering—as many of those to whom its coming has brought home the first glimmerings of social science are beginning to see—is precisely a newly acquired vision of the art of self-government. It has been unfortunately necessary—or perhaps fortunately necessary—for the great democracies to turn their energies and resources and the inventive ingenuity of their citizens to the organization of armies and indeed of entire populations to the purpose of killing enough Germans to remove democracy's exterior menace. The price we pay in human life is appallingly unfortunate. But the necessity for national organization socializes the nation capable of it; or, to put the matter more truly, if the socializing process had anticipated the war—as it had in Great Britain—the ability to complete it under stress is the test of a democratic nation; and hence the test of democracy, since the socializing process becomes international. Britain has stood the test, even from the old-fashioned militarist point of view, since it is apparent that no democracy can wage a sustained great war unless it is socialized. After the war she will probably lead all other countries in a sane and scientific liberalization. The encouraging fact is that not in spite of her liberalism, but because of it, she has met military Germany on her own ground and, to use a vigorous expression, gone her one better. In 1914, as armies go today, the British Army was a mere handful of men whose officers belonged to a military caste. Brave men and brave officers, indeed! But at present it is a war organization of an excellence which the Germans never surpassed. I have no space to enter into a description of the amazing system, of the network of arteries converging at the channel ports and spreading out until it feeds and clothes every man of those millions, furnishes him with newspapers and tobacco, and gives him the greatest contentment compatible with the conditions under which he has to live. The number of shells flung at the enemy is only limited by the lives of the guns that fire them. I should like to tell with what swiftness, under the stress of battle, the wounded are hurried back to the coast and even to England itself. I may not state the thousands carried on leave every day across the channel and back again—in spite of submarines. But I went one day through Saint Omer, with its beautiful church and little blue chateau, past the rest-camps of the big regiments of guards to a seaport on the downs, formerly a quiet little French town, transformed now into an ordered Babel. The term is paradoxical, but I let it stand. English, Irish, and Scotch from the British Isles and the ends of the earth mingle there with Indians, Egyptians, and the chattering Mongolians in queer fur caps who work in the bakeries.

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I went through one of these bakeries, almost as large as an automobile factory, fragrant with the aroma of two hundred thousand loaves of bread. This bakery alone sends every day to the trenches two hundred thousand loaves made from the wheat of western Canada! Of all sights to be seen in this place, however, the reclamation "plant" is the most wonderful. It covers acres. Everything which is broken in war, from a pair of officer's field-glasses to a nine-inch howitzer carriage is mended here —if it can be mended. Here, when a battle-field is cleared, every article that can possibly be used again is brought; and the manager pointed with pride to the furnaces in his power-house, which formerly burned coal and now are fed with refuse—broken wheels of gun-carriages, sawdust, and even old shoes. Hundreds of French girls and even German prisoners are resoling and patching shoes with the aid of American machinery, and even the uppers of such as are otherwise hopeless are cut in spirals into laces. Tunics, breeches, and overcoats are mended by tailors; rusty camp cookers are retinned, and in the foundries the precious scraps of cast iron are melted into braziers to keep Tommy in the trenches warm. In the machine-shops the injured guns and cannon are repaired. German prisoners are working there, too. At a distance, in their homely grey tunics, with their bullet-shaped heads close-cropped and the hairs standing out like the needles of a cylinder of a music-box, they had the appearance of hard citizens who had become rather sullen convicts. Some wore spectacles. A closer view revealed that most of them were contented, and some actually cheerful. None, indeed, seemed more cheerful than a recently captured group I saw later, who were actually building the barbed-wire fence that was to confine them.

My last visit in this town was to the tiny but on a "corner lot," in which the Duchess of Sutherland has lived now for some years. As we had tea she told me she was going on a fortnight's leave to England; and no Tommy in the trenches could have been more excited over the prospect. Her own hospital, which occupies the rest of the lot, is one of those marvels which individual initiative and a strong social sense such as hers has produced in this war. Special enterprise was required to save such desperate cases as are made a specialty of here, and all that medical and surgical science can do has been concentrated, with extraordinary success, on the shattered men who are brought to her wards. That most of the horrible fractures I saw are healed, and healed quickly —-thanks largely to the drainage system of our own Doctor Carrel—is not the least of the wonders of the remarkable times in which we live.

The next day, Sunday, I left for Paris, bidding farewell regretfully to the last of my British-officer hosts. He seemed like an old, old friend —though I had known him but a few days. I can see him now as he waved me a good-bye from the platform in his Glengarry cap and short tunic and plaid trousers. He is the owner of a castle and some seventy square miles of land in Scotland alone. For the comfort of his nation's guests, he toils like a hired courier.

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PG EDITOR'S BOOKMARKS:

American religion as set forth by William James
Be useful!
Privilege of making blunders
Rising every time you fall (Confucius on greatness)
Sentimentalism, ignorance, close-mindedness, and cant
The English do not advertise their sorrows

AN ESSAY ON THE AMERICAN CONTRIBUTION AND THE DEMOCRATIC IDEA

By Winston Churchill

Failure to recognize that the American, is at heart an idealist is to lack understanding of our national character. Two of our greatest interpreters proclaimed it, Emerson and William James. In a recent address at the Paris Sorbonne on "American Idealism," M. Firmin Roz observed that a people is rarely justly estimated by its contemporaries. The French, he says, have been celebrated chiefly for the skill of their chefs and their vaudeville actors, while in the disturbed 'speculum mundi' Americans have appeared as a collection of money grabbers whose philosophy is the dollar. It remained for the war to reveal the true nature of both peoples. The American colonists, M. Roz continues, unlike other colonists, were animated not by material motives, but by the desire to safeguard and realize an ideal; our inherent characteristic today is a belief in the virtue and power of ideas, of a national, indeed, of a universal, mission. In the Eighteenth Century we proposed a Philosophy and adopted a Constitution far in advance of the political practice of the day, and set up a government of which Europe predicted the early downfall. Nevertheless, thanks partly to good fortune, and to the farseeing wisdom of our early statesmen who perceived that the success of our experiment depended upon the maintenance of an isolation from European affairs, we established democracy as a practical form of government.

We have not always lived up to our beliefs in ideas. In our dealings with other nations, we yielded often to imperialistic ambitions and thus, to a certain extent, justified the cynicism of Europe. We took what we wanted—and more. From Spain we seized western Florida; the annexation of Texas and the subsequent war with Mexico are acts upon which we cannot look back with unmixed democratic pride; while more than once we professed a naive willingness to fight England in order to push our boundaries further north. We regarded the Monroe Doctrine as altruistic, while others smiled. But it suited England, and her sea power gave it force.

Our war with Spain in 1898, however, was fought for an idea, and, despite the imperialistic impulse that followed it, marks a transition, an advance, in international ethics. Imperialistic cynics were not lacking to scoff at our protestation that we were

fighting Spain in order to liberate Cuba; and yet this, for the American people at large, was undoubtedly the inspiration of the war. We kept our promise, we did not annex Cuba, we introduced into international affairs what is known as the Big Brother idea. Then came the Platt Amendment. Cuba was free, but she must not wallow near our shores in an unhygienic state, or borrow money without our consent. We acquired valuable naval bases. Moreover, the sudden and unexpected acquisition of Porto Rico and the Philippines made us imperialists in spite of ourselves.

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Nations as well as individuals, however, must be judged by their intentions. The sound public opinion of our people has undoubtedly remained in favour of ultimate self-government for the Philippines, and the greatest measure of self-determination for little Porto Rico; it has been unquestionably opposed to commercial exploitation of the islands, desirous of yielding to these peoples the fruits of their labour in developing the resources of their own lands. An intention, by the way, diametrically different from that of Germany. In regard to our protectorate in the island of San Domingo, our “semi-protectorate” in Nicaragua, the same argument of intention may fairly be urged. Germany, who desired them, would have exploited them. To a certain extent, no doubt, as a result of the momentum of commercial imperialism, we are still exploiting them. But the attitude of the majority of Americans toward more backward peoples is not cynical; hence there is hope that a democratic solution of the Caribbean and Central American problem may be found. And we are not ready, as yet, to accept without further experiment the dogma that tropical and sub-tropical people will not ultimately be able to govern themselves. If this eventually, prove to be the case at least some such experiment as the new British Labour Party has proposed for the Empire may be tried. Our general theory that the exploitation of foreign peoples reacts unfavourably on the exploiters is undoubtedly sound.

Nor are the ethics of the manner of our acquisition of a part of Panama and the Canal wholly defensible from the point of view of international democracy. Yet it must be remembered that President Roosevelt was dealing with a corrupt, irresponsible, and hostile government, and that the Canal had become a necessity not only for our own development, but for that of the civilization of the world.

The Spanish War, as has been said, marked a transition, a development of the American Idea. In obedience to a growing perception that dominion and exploitation are incompatible with and detrimental to our system of government, we fought in good faith to gain self-determination for an alien people. The only real peril confronting democracy is the arrest of growth. Its true conquests are in the realms of ideas, and hence it calls for a statesmanship which, while not breaking with the past, while taking into account the inherent nature of a people, is able to deal creatively with new situations—always under the guidance of current social science.

Woodrow Wilson’s Mexican policy, being a projection of the American Idea to foreign affairs, a step toward international democracy, marks the beginning of a new era. Though not wholly understood, though opposed by a powerful minority of our citizens, it stirred the consciousness of a national mission to which our people are invariably ready to respond. Since it was essentially experimental, and therefore not lacking in mistakes, there was ample opportunity for a criticism that seemed at times extremely plausible. The old and tried method of dealing with such anarchy as existed across our southern border was made to seem the safe one; while the new, because it was untried, was presented as disastrous. In reality, the reverse was the case.

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Mr. Wilson's opponents were, generally speaking, the commercial classes in the community, whose environment and training led them to demand a foreign policy similar to that of other great powers, a financial imperialism which is the logical counterpart in foreign affairs of the commercial exploitation of domestic national resources and domestic labour. These were the classes which combated the growth of democracy at home, in national and state politics. From their point of view—not that of the larger vision—they were consistent. On the other hand, the nation grasped the fact that to have one brand of democracy at home and another for dealing with foreign nations was not only illogical but, in the long run, would be suicidal to the Republic. And the people at large were committed to democratic progress at home. They were struggling for it.

One of the most important issues of the American liberal movement early in this century had been that for the conservation of what remains of our natural resources of coal and metals and oil and timber and waterpower for the benefit of all the people, on the theory that these are the property of the people. But if the natural resources of this country belong to the people of the United States, those of Mexico belong to the people of Mexico. It makes no difference how "lazy," ignorant, and indifferent to their own interests the Mexicans at present may be. And even more important in these liberal campaigns was the issue of the conservation of human resources—men and women and children who are forced by necessity to labour. These must be protected in health, given economic freedom and a just reward for their toil. The American democracy, committed to the principle of the conservation of domestic natural and human resources, could not without detriment to itself persist in a foreign policy that ignored them. For many years our own government had permitted the squandering of these resources by adventurous capitalists; and gradually, as we became a rich industrial nation, these capitalists sought profitable investments for their increasing surplus in foreign lands. Their manner of acquiring "concessions" in Mexico was quite similar to that by which they had seized because of the indifference and ignorance of our own people—our own mines and timber lands which our government held in trust. Sometimes these American "concessions" have been valid in law though the law itself violated a democratic principle; more often corrupt officials winked at violations of the law, enabling capitalists to absorb bogus claims.

The various rulers of Mexico sold to American and other foreign capitalists the resources belonging to the people of their country, and pocketed, with their followers, the proceeds of the sale. Their control of the country rested upon force; the stability of the Diaz rule, for instance, depended upon the "President's" ability to maintain his dictatorship—a precarious guarantee to the titles he had given. Hence the premium on revolutions. There was always the incentive to the upstart political and military buccaneer to overthrow the dictator and gain possession of the spoils, to sell new doubtful concessions and levy new tribute on the capitalists holding claims from a former tyrant.

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The foreign capitalists appealed to their governments; commercial imperialism responded by dispatching military forces to protect the lives and “property” of its citizens, in some instances going so far as to take possession of the country. A classic case, as cited by Hobson, is Britain’s South African War, in which the blood and treasure of the people of the United Kingdom were expended because British capitalists had found the Boers recalcitrant, bent on retaining their own country for themselves. To be sure, South Africa, like Mexico is rich in resources for which advancing civilization continually makes demands. And, in the case of Mexico, the products of the tropics, such as rubber, are increasingly necessary to the industrial powers of the temperate zone. On the other hand, if the exploiting nation aspire to self-government, the imperialistic method of obtaining these products by the selfish exploitation of the natural and human resources of the backward countries reacts so powerfully on the growth of democracy at home—and hence on the growth of democracy throughout the world—as to threaten the very future of civilization. The British Liberals, when they came into power, perceived this, and at once did their best to make amends to South Africa by granting her autonomy and virtual independence, linking her to Britain by the silken thread of Anglo-Saxon democratic culture. How strong this thread has proved is shown by the action of those of Dutch blood in the Dominion during the present war.

Eventually, if democracy is not to perish from the face of the earth, some other than the crude imperialistic method of dealing with backward peoples, of obtaining for civilization the needed resources of their lands, must be inaugurated—a democratic method. And this is perhaps the supreme problem of democracy today. It demands for its solution a complete reversal of the established policy of imperialism, a new theory of international relationships, a mutual helpfulness and partnership between nations, even as democracy implies cooperation between individual citizens. Therefore President Wilson laid down the doctrine that American citizens enter Mexico at their own risk; that they must not expert that American blood will be shed or the nation’s money be expended to protect their lives or the “property” they have acquired from Mexican dictators. This applies also to the small capitalists, the owners of the coffee plantations, as well as to those Americans in Mexico who are not capitalists but wage earners. The people of Mexico are entitled to try the experiment of self-determination. It is an experiment, we frankly acknowledge that fact, a democratic experiment dependent on physical science, social science, and scientific education. The other horn of the dilemma, our persistence in imperialism, is even worse—since by such persistence we destroy ourselves.

A subjective judgment, in accordance with our own democratic standards, by the American Government as to the methods employed by a Huerta, for instance, is indeed demanded; not on the ground, however, that such methods are “good” or “bad”; but whether they are detrimental to Mexican self-determination, and hence to the progress of our own democracy.

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II

If America had started to prepare when Belgium was invaded, had entered the war when the Lusitania was sunk, Germany might by now have been defeated, hundreds of thousands of lives might have been spared. All this may be admitted. Yet, looking backward, it is easy to read the reason for our hesitancy in our national character and traditions. We were pacifists, yes, but pacifists of a peculiar kind. One of our greatest American prophets, William James, knew that there was an issue for which we were ready to fight, for which we were willing to make the extreme sacrifice,—and that issue he defined as “war against war.” It remained for America to make the issue.

Peoples do not rush to arms unless their national existence is threatened. It is what may be called the environmental cause that drives nations quickly into war. It drove the Entente nations into war, though incidentally they were struggling for certain democratic institutions, for international justice. But in the case of America, the environmental cause was absent. Whether or not our national existence was or is actually threatened, the average American does not believe that it is. He was called upon to abandon his tradition, to mingle in a European conflict, to fight for an idea alone. Ideas require time to develop, to seize the imagination of masses. And it must be remembered that in 1914 the great issue had not been defined. Curiously enough, now that it is defined, it proves to be an American issue—a logical and positive projection of our Washingtonian tradition and Monroe doctrine. These had for their object the preservation and development of democracy, the banishment from the Western Hemisphere of European imperialistic conflict and war. We are now, with the help of our allies, striving to banish these things from the face of the earth. It is undoubtedly the greatest idea for which man has been summoned to make the supreme sacrifice.

Its evolution has been traced. Democracy was the issue in the Spanish War, when we fought a weak nation. We have followed its broader application to Mexico, when we were willing to ignore the taunts and insults of another weak nation, even the loss of “prestige,” for the sake of the larger good. And we have now the clue to the President’s interpretation of the nation’s mind during the first three years of the present war. We were willing to bear the taunts and insults of Germany so long as it appeared that a future world peace night best be brought about by the preservation of neutrality, by turning the weight of the impartial public opinion of our democracy and that of other neutrals against militarism and imperialism. Our national aim was ever consistent with the ideal of William James, to advance democracy and put an end to the evil of war.

The only sufficient reason for the abandonment of the Washingtonian policy is the furtherance of the object for which it was inaugurated, the advance of democracy. And we had established the precedent, with Spain and Mexico, that the Republic shall engage in no war of imperialistic conquest. We war only in behalf of, or in defence of, democracy.

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Before the entrance of America, however, the issues of the European War were by no means clear cut along democratic lines. What kind of democracy were the allies fighting for? Nowhere and at no time had it been defined by any of their statesmen. On the contrary, the various allied governments had entered into compacts for the transference of territory in the event of victory; and had even, by the offer of rewards, sought to play one small nation against another. This secret diplomacy of bargains, of course, was a European heritage, the result of an imperialistic environment which the American did not understand, and from which he was happily free. Its effect on France is peculiarly enlightening. The hostility of European governments, due to their fear of her republican institutions, retarded her democratic growth, and her history during the reign of Napoleon III is one of intrigue for aggrandizement differing from Bismarck's only in the fact that it was unsuccessful. Britain, because she was separated from the continent and protected by her fleet, virtually withdrew from European affairs in the latter part of the nineteenth century, and, as a result, made great strides in democracy. The aggressions of Germany forced Britain in self-defence into coalitions. Because of her power and wealth she became the Entente leader, yet her liberal government was compelled to enter into secret agreements with certain allied governments in order to satisfy what they deemed to be their needs and just ambitions. She had honestly sought, before the war, to come to terms with Germany, and had even proposed gradual disarmament. But, despite the best intentions, circumstances and environment, as well as the precarious situation of her empire, prevented her from liberalizing her foreign relations to conform with the growth of democracy within the United Kingdom and the Dominions. Americans felt a profound pity for Belgium. But she was not, as Cuba had been, our affair. The great majority of our citizens sympathized with the Entente, regarded with amazement and disgust the sudden disclosure of the true character of the German militaristic government. Yet for the average American the war wore the complexion of other European conflicts, was one involving a Balance of Power, mysterious and inexplicable. To him the underlying issue was not democratic, but imperialistic; and this was partly because he was unable to make a mental connection between a European war and the brand of democracy he recognized. Preaching and propaganda fail unless it can be brought home to a people that something dear to their innermost nature is at stake, that the fate of the thing they most desire, and are willing to make sacrifices for, hangs in the balance.

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During a decade the old political parties, between which there was now little more than an artificial alignment, had been breaking up. Americans were absorbed in the great liberal movement begun under the leadership of President Roosevelt, the result of which was to transform democracy from a static to a pragmatic and evolutionary conception,—in order to meet and correct new and unforeseen evils. Political freedom was seen to be of little worth unless also accompanied by the economic freedom the nation had enjoyed before the advent of industrialism. Clerks and farmers, professional men and shopkeepers and artisans were ready to follow the liberal leaders in states and nation; intellectual elements from colleges and universities were enlisted. Paralleling the movement, at times mingling with it, was the revolt of labour, manifested not only in political action, but in strikes and violence. Readily accessible books and magazines together with club and forum lectures in cities, towns, and villages were rapidly educating the population in social science, and the result was a growing independent vote to make politicians despair.

Here was an instance of a democratic culture growing in isolation, resentful of all external interference. To millions of Americans —especially in our middle western and western states—bent upon social reforms, the European War appeared as an arresting influence. American participation meant the triumph of the forces of reaction. Colour was lent to this belief because the conservative element which had opposed social reforms was loudest in its demand for intervention. The wealthy and travelled classes organized preparedness parades and distributed propaganda. In short, those who had apparently done their utmost to oppose democracy at home were most insistent that we should embark upon a war for democracy across the seas. Again, what kind of democracy? Obviously a status quo, commercially imperialistic democracy, which the awakening liberal was bent upon abolishing.

There is undoubtedly in such an office as the American presidency some virtue which, in times of crisis, inspires in capable men an intellectual and moral growth proportional to developing events. Lincoln, our most striking example, grew more between 1861 and 1865 than during all the earlier years of his life. Nor is the growth of democratic leaders, when seen through the distorted passions of their day, apparently a consistent thing. Greatness, near at hand, is startlingly like inconsistency; it seems at moments to vacillate, to turn back upon and deny itself, and thus lays itself open to seemingly plausible criticism by politicians and time servers and all who cry out for precedent. Yet it is an interesting and encouraging fact that the faith of democratic peoples goes out, and goes out alone, to leaders who—whatever their minor faults and failings —do not fear to reverse themselves when occasion demands; to enunciate new doctrines, seemingly in contradiction to former assertions, to meet new crises. When a democratic leader who has given evidence of greatness ceases to develop new ideas, he loses the public confidence. He flops back into the ranks of the conservative he formerly opposed, who catch up with him only when he ceases to grow.

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In 1916 the majority of the American people elected Mr. Wilson in the belief that he would keep them out of war. In 1917 he entered the war with the nation behind him. A recalcitrant Middle West was the first to fill its quota of volunteers, and we witnessed the extraordinary spectacle of the endorsement of conscription: What had happened? A very simple, but a very great thing Mr. Wilson had made the issue of the war a democratic issue, an American issue, in harmony with our national hopes and traditions. But why could not this issue have been announced in 1914 or 1915? The answer seems to be that peoples, as well as their leaders and interpreters, must grow to meet critical situations. In 1861 the, moral idea of the Civil War was obscured and hidden by economic and material interests. The Abraham Lincoln who entered the White House in 1881 was indeed the name man who signed the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863; and yet, in a sense, he was not the same man; events and responsibilities had effected a profound but logical growth in his personality. And the people of the Union were not ready to endorse Emancipation in 1861. In 1863, in the darkest hour of the war, the spirit of the North responded to the call, and, despite the vilification of the President, was true to him to victory. More significant still, in view of the events of today, is what then occurred in England. The British Government was unfriendly; the British people as a whole had looked upon our Civil War very much in the same light as the American people regarded the present war at its inception—which is to say that the economic and materialistic issue seemed to overshadow the moral one. When Abraham Lincoln proclaimed it to be a war for human freedom, the sentiment of the British people changed—of the British people as distinct from the governing classes; and the textile workers of the northern counties, whose mills could not get cotton on account of the blockade, declared their willingness to suffer and starve if the slaves in America might be freed.

Abraham Lincoln at that time represented the American people as the British Government did not represent the British people. We are concerned today with peoples rather than governments.

It remained for an American President to announce the moral issue of the present war, and thus to solidify behind him, not only the liberal mind of America, but the liberal elements within the nations of Europe. He became the democratic leader of the world. The issue, simply stated, is the advancement of democracy and peace. They are inseparable. Democracy, for progress, demands peace. It had reached a stage, when, in a contracting world, it could no longer advance through isolation: its very existence in every country was threatened, not only by the partisans of reaction from within, but by the menace from without of a militaristic and imperialistic nation determined to crush it, restore superimposed authority, and dominate

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the globe. Democracy, divided against itself, cannot stand. A league of democratic nations, of democratic peoples, has become imperative. Hereafter, if democracy wins, self-determination, and not imperialistic exploitation, is to be the universal rule. It is the extension, on a world scale, of Mr. Wilson's Mexican policy, the application of democratic principles to international relationships, and marks the inauguration of a new era. We resort to force against force, not for dominion, but to make the world safe for the idea on which we believe the future of civilization depends, the sacred right of self-government. We stand prepared to treat with the German people when they are ready to cast off autocracy and militarism. Our attitude toward them is precisely our attitude toward the Mexican People. We believe, and with good reason, that the German system of education is authoritative and false, and was more or less deliberately conceived in order to warp the nature and produce complexes in the mind of the German people for the end of preserving and perpetuating the power of the Junkers. We have no quarrel with the duped and oppressed, but we war against the agents of oppression. To the conservative mind such an aspiration appears chimerical. But America, youngest of the nations, was born when modern science was gathering the momentum which since has enabled it to overcome, with a bewildering rapidity, many evils previously held by superstition to be ineradicable. As a corollary to our democratic creed, we accepted the dictum that to human intelligence all things are possible. The virtue of this dictum lies not in dogma, but in an indomitable attitude of mind to which the world owes its every advance in civilization; quixotic, perhaps, but necessary to great accomplishment. In searching for a present-day protagonist, no happier example could be found than Mr. Henry Ford, who exhibits the characteristic American mixture of the practical and the ideal. He introduces into industry humanitarian practices that even tend to increase the vast fortune which by his own efforts he has accumulated. He sees that democratic peoples do not desire to go to war, he does not believe that war is necessary and inevitable, he lays himself open to ridicule by financing a Peace Mission. Circumstances force him to abandon his project, but he is not for one moment discouraged. His intention remains. He throws all his energy and wealth into a war to end war, and the value of his contribution is inestimable.

A study of Mr. Ford's mental processes and acts illustrates the true mind of America. In the autumn of 1916 Mr. Wilson declared that "the people of the United States want to be sure what they are fighting about, and they want to be sure that they are fighting for the things that will bring the world justice and peace. Define the elements; let us know that we are not fighting for the prevalence of this nation over that, for the ambitions of this group of nations as compared with the ambitions of that group of nations, let us once be convinced that we are called in to a great combination for the rights of mankind, and America will unite her force and spill her blood for the great things she has always believed in and followed."

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“America is always ready to fight for the things which are American.” Even in these sombre days that mark the anniversary of our entrance into the war. But let it be remembered that it was in the darkest days of the Civil War Abraham Lincoln boldly proclaimed the democratic, idealistic issue of that struggle. The Russian Revolution, which we must seek to understand and not condemn, the Allied defeats that are its consequences, can only make our purpose the firmer to put forth all our strength for the building up of a better world. The President’s masterly series of state papers, distributed in all parts of the globe, have indeed been so many Proclamations of Emancipation for the world’s oppressed. Not only powerful nations shall cease to exploit little nations, but powerful individuals shall cease to exploit their fellow men. Henceforth no wars for dominion shall be waged, and to this end secret treaties shall be abolished. Peoples through their representatives shall make their own treaties. And just as democracy insures to the individual the greatest amount of self-determination, nations also shall have self-determination, in order that each shall be free to make its world contribution. All citizens have duties to perform toward their fellow citizens; all democratic nations must be interdependent.

With this purpose America has entered the war. But it implies that our own household must be swept and cleaned. The injustices and inequalities existing in our own country, the false standards of worth, the materialism, the luxury and waste must be purged from our midst.

III

In fighting Germany we are indeed fighting an evil Will—evil because it seeks to crush the growth of individual and national freedom. Its object is to put the world back under the thrall of self-constituted authority. So long as this Will can compel the bodies of soldiers to do its bidding, these bodies must be destroyed. Until the Will behind them is broken, the world cannot be free. Junkerism is the final expression of reaction, organized to the highest efficiency. The war against the Junkers marks the consummation of a long struggle for human liberty in all lands, symbolizes the real cleavage dividing the world. As in the French Revolution and the wars that followed it, the true significance of this war is social. But today the Russian Revolution sounds the keynote. Revolutions tend to express the extremes of the philosophies of their times—-human desires, discontents, and passions that cannot be organized. The French Revolution was a struggle for political freedom; the underlying issue of the present war is economic freedom—without which political freedom is of no account. It will not, therefore, suffice merely to crush the Junkers, and with them militarism and autocracy. Unless, as the fruit of this appalling bloodshed and suffering, the democracies achieve economic freedom, the war

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will have been fought in vain. More revolutions, wastage and bloodshed will follow, the world will be reduced to absolute chaos unless, in the more advanced democracies, an intelligent social order tending to remove the causes of injustice and discontent can be devised and ready for inauguration. This new social order depends, in turn, upon a world order of mutually helpful, free peoples, a league of Nations.—If the world is to be made safe for democracy, this democratic plan must be ready for the day when the German Junker is beaten and peace is declared.

The real issue of our time is industrial democracy we must face that fact. And those in America and the Entente nations who continue to oppose it will do so at their peril. Fortunately, as will be shown, that element of our population which may be designated as domestic Junkers is capable of being influenced by contemporary currents of thought, is awakening to the realization of social conditions deplorable and dangerous. Prosperity and power had made them blind and arrogant. Their enthusiasm for the war was, however, genuine; the sacrifices they are making are changing and softening them; but as yet they can scarcely be expected, as a class, to rejoice over the revelation—just beginning to dawn upon their minds—that victory for the Allies spells the end of privilege. Their conception of democracy remains archaic, while wealth is inherently conservative. Those who possess it in America have as a rule received an education in terms of an obsolete economics, of the thought of an age gone by. It is only within the past few years that our colleges and universities have begun to teach modern economics, social science and psychology—and this in the face of opposition from trustees. Successful business men, as a rule, have had neither the time nor the inclination to read books which they regard as visionary, as subversive to an order by which they have profited. And that some Americans are fools, and have been dazzled in Europe by the glamour of a privilege not attainable at home, is a deplorable yet indubitable fact. These have little sympathy with democracy; they have even been heard to declare that we have no right to dictate to another nation, even an enemy nation, what form of government it shall assume. We have no right to demand, when peace comes, that the negotiations must be with the representatives of the German people. These are they who deplore the absence among us of a tradition of monarchy, since the American people “should have something to look up to.” But this state of mind, which needs no comment, is comparatively rare, and represents an extreme. We are not lacking, however, in the type of conservative who, innocent of a knowledge of psychology, insists that “human nature cannot be changed,” and that the “survival of the fittest” is the law of life, yet these would deny Darwin if he were a contemporary. They reject the idea that society can be organized by intelligence, and

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war ended by eliminating its causes from the social order. On the contrary they cling to the orthodox contention that war is a necessary and salutary thing, and proclaim that the American fibre was growing weak and flabby from luxury and peace, curiously ignoring the fact that their own economic class, the small percentage of our population owning sixty per cent. of the wealth of the country, and which therefore should be most debilitated by luxury, was most eager for war, and since war has been declared has most amply proved its courage and fighting quality. This, however, and other evidences of the patriotic sacrifices of those of our countrymen who possess wealth, prove that they are still Americans, and encourages the hope and belief that as Americans they ultimately will do their share toward a democratic solution of the problem of society. Many of them are capable of vision, and are beginning to see the light today.

In America we succeeded in eliminating hereditary power, in obtaining a large measure of political liberty, only to see the rise of an economic power, and the consequent loss of economic liberty. The industrial development of the United States was of course a necessary and desirable thing, but the economic doctrine which formed the basis of American institutions proved to be unsuited to industrialism, and introduced unforeseen evils that were a serious menace to the Republic. An individualistic economic philosophy worked admirably while there was ample land for the pioneer, equality of opportunity to satisfy the individual initiative of the enterprising. But what is known as industrialism brought in its train fear and favour, privilege and poverty, slums, disease, and municipal vice, fostered a too rapid immigration, established in America a tenant system alien to our traditions. The conditions which existed before the advent of industrialism are admirably pictured, for instance, in the autobiography of Mr. Charles Francis Adams, when he describes his native town of Quincy in the first half of the Nineteenth Century. In those early communities, poverty was negligible, there was no great contrast between rich and poor; the artisan, the farmer, the well-to-do merchant met on terms of mutual self-respect, as man to man; economic class consciousness was non-existent; education was so widespread that European travellers wonderingly commented on the fact that we had no “peasantry”; and with few exceptions every citizen owned a piece of land and a home. Property, a refuge a man may call his own, and on which he may express his individuality, is essential to happiness and self-respect. Today, less than two thirds of our farmers own their land, while vast numbers of our working men and women possess nothing but the labour of their hands. The designation of labour as “property” by our courts only served to tighten the bonds, by obstructing for a time the movement to decrease the tedious and debilitating hours of contact of the human organism with the machine,—a menace to the future of the race, especially in the case of women and children. If labour is “property,” wretches driven by economic necessity have indeed only the choice of a change of masters. In addition to the manual workers, an army of clerical workers of both sexes likewise became tenants, and dependents who knew not the satisfaction of a real home.

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Such conditions gradually brought about a profound discontent, a grouping of classes. Among the comparatively prosperous there was set up a social competition in luxury that was the bane of large and small communities. Skilled labour banded itself into unions, employers organized to oppose them, and the result was a class conflict never contemplated by the founders of the Republic, repugnant to democracy which by its very nature depends for its existence on the elimination of classes. In addition to this, owing to the unprecedented immigration of ignorant Europeans to supply the labour demand, we acquired a sinister proletariat of unskilled economic slaves. Before the war labour discovered its strength; since the war began, especially in the allied nations with quasi-democratic institutions, it is aware of its power to exert a leverage capable of paralyzing industry for a period sufficient to destroy the chances of victory. The probability of the occurrence of such a calamity depends wholly on whether or not the workman can be convinced that it is his war, for he will not exert himself to perpetuate a social order in which he has lost faith, even though he now obtains a considerable increase in wages. Agreements entered into with the government by union leaders will not hold him if at any time he fails to be satisfied that the present world conflict will not result in a greater social justice. This fact has been demonstrated by what is known as the “shop steward” movement in England, where the workers repudiated the leaders’ agreements and everywhere organized local strikes. And in America, the unskilled workers are largely outside of the unions.

The workman has a natural and laudable desire to share more fully in the good things of life. And it is coming to be recognized that material prosperity, up to a certain point, is the foundation of mental and spiritual welfare: clean and comfortable surroundings, beauty, rational amusements, opportunity for a rational satisfaction of, the human. instincts are essential to contentment and progress. The individual, of course, must be enlightened; and local labour unions, recognizing this, are spending considerable sums all over the country on schools to educate their members. If a workman is a profiteer, he is more to be excused than the business profiteer, against whom his anger is directed; if he is a spendthrift, prodigality is a natural consequence of rapid acquisition. We have been a nation of spendthrifts.

A failure to grasp the psychology of the worker involves disastrous consequences. A discussion as to whether or not his attitude is unpatriotic and selfish is futile. No more profound mistake could be made than to attribute to any element of the population motives wholly base. Human nature is neither all black nor all white, yet is capable of supreme sacrifices when adequately appealed to. What we must get into our minds is the fact that a social

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order that insured a large measure of democracy in the early days of the Republic is inadequate to meet modern industrial conditions. Higher wages, material prosperity alone will not suffice to satisfy aspirations for a fuller self-realization, once the method by which these aspirations can be gained is glimpsed. For it cannot be too often repeated that the unquenchable conflicts are those waged for ideas and not dollars. These are tinged with religious emotion.

IV

Mr. Wilson's messages to the American people and to the world have proclaimed a new international order, a League of Democracies. And in a recent letter to New Jersey Democrats we find him warning his party, or more properly the nation, of the domestic social changes necessarily flowing from his international program. While rightly resolved to prosecute the war on the battle lines to the utmost limit of American resources, he points out that the true significance of the conflict lies in "revolutionary change." "Economic and social forces," he says, "are being released upon the world, whose effect no political seer dare to conjecture." And we "must search our hearts through and through and make them ready for the birth of a new day—a day we hope and believe of greater opportunity and greater prosperity for the average mass of struggling men and women." He recognizes that the next great step in the development of democracy which the war must bring about—is the emancipation of labour; to use his own phrase, the redemption of masses of men and women from "economic serfdom." "The old party slogans," he declares, "will mean nothing to the future."

Judging from this announcement, the President seems prepared to condemn boldly all the rotten timbers of the social structure that have outlived their usefulness—a position that hitherto no responsible politician has dared to take. Politicians, on the contrary, have revered the dead wood, have sought to shore the old timbers for their own purposes. But so far as any party is concerned, Mr. Wilson stands alone. Both of the two great parties, the Republican and the Democratic, in order to make a show of keeping abreast of the times, have merely patched their platforms with the new ideas. The Socialist Party in the United States is relatively small, is divided against itself, and has given no evidence of a leadership of broad sanity and vision. It is fortunate we have been spared in this country the formation of a political labour party, because such a party would have been composed of manual workers alone, and hence would have tended further to develop economic class consciousness, to crystallize class antagonisms. Today, however, neither the Republican nor the Democratic party represents the great issue of the times; the cleavage between them is wholly artificial. The formation of a Liberal Party, with a platform avowedly based on modern social science, has become essential.

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Such a party, to be in harmony with our traditions and our creed, to arrest in our democracy the process of class stratification which threatens to destroy it, must not draw its members from the ranks of manual labour alone, but from all elements of our population. It should contain all the liberal professions, and clerks and shopkeepers, as well as manual workers; administrators, and even those employers who have become convinced that our present economic system does not suffice to meet the needs of the day. In short, membership in such a party, as far as possible, should not be based upon occupation or economic status, but on an honest difference of view from that of the conservative opposition. This would be a distinctly American solution. In order to form such a party a campaign of education will be necessary. For today Mr. Wilson's strength is derived from the independent vote representing the faith of the people as a whole; but the majority of those who support the President, while they ardently desire the abolition in the world of absolute monarchy, of militarism and commercial imperialism, while they are anxious that this war shall expedite and not retard the social reforms in which they are interested, have as yet but a vague conception of the social order which these reforms imply.

It marks a signal advance in democracy when liberal opinion in any nation turns for guidance and support to a statesman of another nation. No clearer sign of the times could be desired than the fact that our American President has suddenly become the liberal leader of the world. The traveller in France, and especially in Britain, meets on all sides striking evidence of this. In these countries, until America's entrance into the war, liberals had grown more and more dissatisfied with the failure of their governments to define in democratic terms the issue of the conflict, had resented the secret inter-allied compacts, savouring of imperialism and containing the germs of future war. They are now looking across the Atlantic for leadership. In France M. Albert Thomas declared that Woodrow Wilson had given voice to the aspirations of his party, while a prominent Liberal in England announced in a speech that it had remained for the American President to express the will and purpose of the British people. The new British Labour Party and the Inter-Allied Labour and Socialist Conferences have adopted Mr. Wilson's program and have made use of his striking phrases. But we have between America and Britain this difference: in America the President stands virtually alone, without a party behind him representing his views; in Britain the general democratic will of the nation is now being organized, but has obtained as yet no spokesman in the government.

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Extraordinary symptomatic phenomena have occurred in Russia as well as in Britain. In Russia the rebellion of an awakening people against an age-long tyranny has almost at once leaped to the issue of the day, taken on the complexion of a struggle for industrial democracy. Whether the Germans shall be able to exploit the country, bring about a reaction and restore for a time monarchical institutions depends largely upon the fortunes of the war. In Russia there is revolution, with concomitant chaos; but in Britain there is evolution, an orderly attempt of a people long accustomed to progress in self-government to establish a new social order, peacefully and scientifically, and in accordance with a traditional political procedure.

The recent development of the British Labour Party, although of deep significance to Americans, has taken place almost without comment in this country. It was formally established in 1900, and was then composed of manual workers alone. In 1906, out of 50 candidates at the polls, 39 were elected to Parliament; in 1910, 42 were elected. The Parliamentary Labour Party, so called, has now been amalgamated with four and a half millions of Trade Unionists, and with the three and a half millions of members of the Co-operative Wholesale Society and the Co-operative Union. Allowing for duplication of membership, these three organizations —according to Mr. Sidney Webb—probably include two fifths of the population of the United Kingdom. “So great an aggregation of working class organizations,” he says, “has never come shoulder to shoulder in any country.” Other smaller societies and organizations are likewise embraced, including the Socialists. And now that the suffrage has been extended, provision is made for the inclusion of women. The new party is organizing in from three to four hundred constituencies, and at the next general election is not unlikely to gain control of the political balance of power.

With the majority of Americans, however, the word “labour” as designating a party arouses suspicion and distrust. By nature and tradition we are inclined to deplore and oppose any tendency toward the stratification of class antagonisms—the result of industrial discontent—into political groups. The British tradition is likewise hostile to such a tendency. But in Britain the industrial ferment has gone much further than with us, and such a result was inevitable. By taking advantage of the British experience, of the closer ties now being knit between the two democracies, we may in America be spared a stage which in Britain was necessary. Indeed, the program of the new British Labour Party seems to point to a distinctly American solution, one in harmony with the steady growth of Anglo-Saxon democracy. For it is now announced that the word “labour,” as applied to the new party, does not mean manual labour alone, but also mental labour. The British unions have gradually developed

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and placed in power leaders educated in social science, who have now come into touch with the intellectual leaders of the United Kingdom, with the sociologists, economists, and social scientists. The surprising and encouraging result of such association is the announcement that the new Labour Party is today publicly thrown open to all workers, both by hand and by brain, with the object of securing for these the full fruits of their industry. This means the inclusion of physicians, professors, writers, architects, engineers, and inventors, of lawyers who no longer regard their profession as a bulwark of the status quo; of clerks, of administrators of the type evolved by the war, who indeed have gained their skill under the old order but who now in a social spirit are dedicating their gifts to the common weal, organizing and directing vast enterprises for their governments. In short, all useful citizens who make worthy contributions—as distinguished from parasites, profiteers, and drones, are invited to be members; there is no class distinction here. The fortunes of such a party are, of course, dependent upon the military success of the allied armies and navies. But it has defined the kind of democracy the Allies are fighting for, and thus has brought about an unqualified endorsement of the war by those elements of the population which hitherto have felt the issue to be imperialistic and vague rather than democratic and clear cut. President Wilson's international program is approved of and elaborated.

The Report on Reconstruction of the new British Labour Party is perhaps the most important political document presented to the world since the Declaration of Independence. And like the Declaration, it is written in the pure English that alone gives the high emotional quality of sincerity. The phrases in which it tersely describes its objects are admirable. "What is to be reconstructed after the war is over is not this or that government department, this or that piece of social machinery, but Society itself." There is to be a systematic approach towards a "healthy equality of material circumstance for every person born into the world, and not an enforced dominion over subject nations, subject colonies, subject classes, or a subject sex." In industry as well as in government the social order is to be based "on that equal freedom, that general consciousness of consent, and that widest participation in power, both economic and political, which is characteristic of democracy." But all this, it should be noted, is not to be achieved in a year or two of "feverish reconstruction"; "each brick that the Labour Party helps to lay shall go to erect the structure it intends and no other."

In considering the main features of this program, one must have in mind whether these are a logical projection and continuation of the Anglo-Saxon democratic tradition, or whether they constitute an absolute break with that tradition. The only valid reason for the adoption of such a program in America would be, of course, the restoration of some such equality of opportunity and economic freedom as existed in our Republic before we became an industrial nation. "The first condition of democracy,"—to quote again from the program, "is effective personal freedom."

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What is called the “Universal Enforcement of the National Minimum” contemplates the extension of laws already on the statute books in order to prevent the extreme degradation of the standard of life brought about by the old economic system under industrialism. A living minimum wage is to be established. The British Labour Party intends “to secure to every member of the community, in good times and bad alike . . . all the requisites of healthy life and worthy citizenship.”

After the war there is to be no cheap labour market, nor are the millions of workers and soldiers to fall into the clutches of charity; but it shall be a national obligation to provide each of these with work according to his capacity. In order to maintain the demand for labour at a uniform level, the government is to provide public works. The population is to be rehoused in suitable dwellings, both in rural districts and town slums; new and more adequate schools and training colleges are to be inaugurated; land is to be reclaimed and afforested, and gradually brought under common ownership; railways and canals are to be reorganized and nationalized, mines and electric power systems. One of the significant proposals under this head is that which demands the retention of the centralization of the purchase of raw materials brought about by the war.

In order to accomplish these objects there must be a “Revolution in National Finance.” The present method of raising funds is denounced; and it is pointed out that only one quarter of the colossal expenditure made necessary by the war has been raised by taxation, and that the three quarters borrowed at onerous rates is sure to be a burden on the nation’s future. The capital needed, when peace comes, to ensure a happy and contented democracy must be procured without encroaching on the minimum standard of life, and without hampering production. Indirect taxation must therefore be concentrated on those luxuries of which it is desirable that the consumption be discouraged. The steadily rising unearned increment of urban and mineral land ought, by appropriate direct taxation, to be brought into the public exchequer; “the definite teachings of economic science are no longer to be disregarded.” Hence incomes are to be taxed above the necessary cost of family maintenance, private fortunes during life and at death; while a special capital levy must be made to pay off a substantial portion of the national debt.

“The Democratic Control of Industry” contemplates the progressive elimination of the private capitalist and the setting free of all who work by hand and brain for the welfare of all.

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The Surplus Wealth is to be expended for the Common Good. That which Carlyle designates as the “inward spiritual,” in contrast to the “outward economical,” is also to be provided for. “Society,” says the document, “like the individual, does not live by bread alone, does not exist only for perpetual wealth production.” First of all, there is to be education according to the highest modern standard; and along with education, the protection and advancement of the public health, ’mens sana in corpore sano’. While large sums must be set aside, not only for original research in every branch of knowledge, but for the promotion of music, literature, and fine art, upon which “any real development of civilization fundamentally depends.”

In regard to the British Empire, the Labour Party urges self-government for any people, whatever its colour, proving itself capable, and the right of that people to the proceeds of its own toil upon the resources of its territory. An unequivocal stand is taken for the establishment, as a part of the treaty of peace, of a Universal Society of Nations; and recognizing that the future progress of democracy depends upon co-operation and fellowship between liberals of all countries, the maintenance of intimate relationships is advocated with liberals oversea.

Finally, a scientific investigation of each succeeding problem in government is insisted upon, and a much more rapid dissemination among the people of the science that exists. “A plutocratic party may choose to ignore science, but no labour party can hope to maintain its position unless its proposals are, in fact, the outcome of the best political science of its time.”

V

There are, it will be seen, some elements in the program of the new British Labour Party apparently at variance with American and English institutions, traditions, and ideas. We are left in doubt, for instance, in regard to its attitude toward private property. The instinct for property is probably innate in humanity, and American conservatism in this regard is, according to certain modern economists, undoubtedly sound. A man should be permitted to acquire at least as much property as is required for the expression of his personality; such a wise limitation, also, would abolish the evil known as absentee ownership. Again, there will arise in many minds the question whether the funds for the plan of National finance outlined in the program may be obtained without seriously deranging the economic system of the nation and of the world. The older school denounces the program as Utopian. On the other hand, economists of the modern school who have been consulted have declared it practical. It is certain that before the war began it would not have been thought possible to raise the billions which in four years have been expended on sheer destruction; and one of our saddest reflections today must be of

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regret that a small portion of these billions which have gone to waste could not have been expended for the very purposes outlined—education, public health, the advancement of science and art, public buildings, roads and parks, and the proper housing of populations! It is also dawning upon us, as a result of new practices brought about by the war, that our organization of industry was happy-go-lucky, inefficient and wasteful, and that a more scientific and economical organization is imperative. Under such a new system it may well be, as modern economists claim, that, we shall have an ample surplus for the Common Good.

The chief objection to a National or Democratic Control of Industry has been that it would tend to create vast political machines and thus give the politicians in office a nefarious power. It is not intended here to attempt a refutation of this contention. The remedy lies in a changed attitude of the employee and the citizen toward government, and the fact that such an attitude is now developing is not subject to absolute proof. It may be said, however, that no greater menace to democracy could have arisen than the one we seem barely to have escaped—the control of politics and government by the capitalistic interests of the nation. What seems very clear is that an evolutionary drift toward the national control of industry has for many years been going on, and that the war has tremendously speeded up the tendency. Government has stepped in to protect the consumer of necessities from the profiteer, and is beginning to set a limit upon profits; has regulated exports and imports; established a national shipping corporation and merchant marine, and entered into other industries; it has taken over the railroads at least for the duration of the war, and may take over coal mines, and metal resources, as well as the forests and water power; it now contemplates the regulation of wages.

The exigency caused by the war, moreover, has transformed the former practice of international intercourse. Co-operation has replaced competition. We are reorganizing and regulating our industries, our business, making sacrifices and preparing to make more sacrifices in order to meet the needs of our Allies, now that they are sore beset. For a considerable period after the war is ended, they will require our aid. We shall be better off than any other of the belligerent nations, and we shall therefore be called upon to practice, during the years of reconstruction, a continuation of the same policy of helpfulness. Indeed, for the nations of the world to spring, commercially speaking, at one another's throats would be suicidal even if it were possible. Mr. Sidney Webb has thrown a flood of light upon the conditions likely to prevail. For example, speculative export trade is being replaced by collective importing, bringing business more directly under the control of the consumer. This has been done by co-operative societies, by municipalities

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and states, in Switzerland, France, the United Kingdom, and in Germany. The Co-operative Wholesale Society of Great Britain, acting on behalf of three and a half million families, buys two and a half million dollars of purchases annually. And the Entente nations, in order to avoid competitive bidding, are buying collectively from us, not only munitions of war, but other supplies, while the British Government has made itself the sole importer of such necessities as wheat, sugar, tea, refrigerated meat, wool, and various metals. The French and Italian governments, and also certain neutral states, have done likewise. A purchasing commission for all the Allies and America is now proposed. After the war, as an inevitable result, for one thing, of transforming some thirty million citizens into soldiers, of engaging a like number of men and women at enhanced wages on the manufacture of the requisites of war, Mr. Webb predicts a world shortage not only in wheat and foodstuffs but in nearly all important raw materials. These will be required for the resumption of manufacture. In brief, international co-operation will be the only means of salvation. The policy of international trade implied by world shortage is not founded upon a law of "supply and demand." The necessities cannot be permitted to go to those who can afford to pay the highest prices, but to those who need them most. For the "free play of economic forces" would mean famine on a large scale, because the richer nations and the richer classes within the nations might be fully supplied; but to the detriment and ruin of the world the poorer nations and the poorer classes would be starved. Therefore governments are already beginning to give consideration to a new organization of international trade for at least three years after the war. Now if this organization produce, as it may produce, a more desirable civilization and a happier world order, we are not likely entirely to go back—especially in regard to commodities which are necessities—to a competitive system. The principle of "priority of need" will supersede the law of "supply and demand." And the organizations built up during the war, if they prove efficient, will not be abolished. Hours of labour and wages in the co-operative League of Nations will gradually be equalized, and tariffs will become things of the past. "The axiom will be established," says Mr. Webb, "that the resources of every country must, be held for the benefit not only of its own people but of the world . . . . The world shortage will, for years to come, make import duties look both oppressive and ridiculous."

So much may be said for the principle of Democratic Control. In spite of all theoretical opposition, circumstances and evolution apparently point to its establishment. A system that puts a premium on commercial greed seems no longer possible.

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The above comments, based on the drift of political practice during the past decade and a half, may be taken for what they are worth. Predictions are precarious. The average American will be inclined to regard the program of the new British Labour Party as the embodiment of what he vaguely calls Socialism, and to him the very word is repugnant. Although he may never have heard of Marx, it is the Marxian conception that comes to his mind, and this implies coercion, a government that constantly interferes with his personal liberty, that compels him to tasks for which he has no relish. But your American, and your Englishman, for that matter, is inherently an individualist he wants as little government as is compatible with any government at all. And the descendants of the continental Europeans who flock to our shores are Anglo-Saxonized, also become by environment and education individualists. The great importance of preserving this individualism, this spirit in our citizens of self-reliance, this suspicion against too much interference with personal liberty, must at once be admitted. And any scheme for a social order that tends to eliminate and destroy it should by Americans be summarily rejected.

The question of supreme interest to us, therefore, is whether the social order implied in the British program is mainly in the nature of a development of, or a break with, the Anglo-Saxon democratic tradition. The program is derived from an English source. It is based on what is known as modern social science, which has as its ultimate sanction the nature of the human mind as revealed by psychology. A consideration of the principles underlying this proposed social order may prove that it is essentially—if perhaps paradoxically—individualistic, a logical evolution of institutions which had their origin in the Magna Charta. Our Declaration of Independence proclaimed that every citizen had the right to “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness,” which means the opportunity to achieve the greatest self-development and self-realization. The theory is that each citizen shall find his place, according to his gifts and abilities, and be satisfied therewith. We may discover that this is precisely what social science, in an industrial age, and by spiritualizing human effort, aims to achieve. We may find that the appearance of such a program as that of the British Labour Party, supported as it is by an imposing proportion of the population of the United Kingdom, marks a further step, not only in the advance of social science and democracy, but also of Christianity.

I mention Christianity, not for controversial or apologetic reasons, but because it has been the leaven of our western civilization ever since the fall of the Roman Empire. Its constant influence has been to soften and spiritualize individual and national relationships. The bitter controversies, wars, and persecutions which have raged in its name are utterly alien to its being. And that the present war is now being fought by the Allies in the hope of putting an end to war, and is thus in the true spirit of Christianity, marks an incomparable advance.

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Almost up to the present day, both in our conception and practice of Christianity, we have largely neglected its most important elements. Christian orthodoxy, as Auguste Sabatier points out, is largely derived from the older supernatural religions. The preservative shell of dogma and superstition has been cracking, and is now ready to burst, and the social teaching of Jesus would seem to be the kernel from which has sprung modern democracy, modern science, and modern religion—a trinity and unity.

For nearly two thousand years orthodoxy has insisted that the social principles of Christianity are impractical. And indeed, until the present day, they have been so. Physical science, by enormously accelerating the means of transportation and communication, has so contracted the world as to bring into communion peoples and races hitherto far apart; has made possible an intelligent organization of industry which, for the first time in history, can create a surplus ample to maintain in comfort the world's population. But this demands the will to co-operation, which is a Christian principle—a recognition of the brotherhood of man. Furthermore, physical science has increased the need for world peace and international co-operation because the territories of all nations are now subject to swift and terrible invasion by modern instruments of destruction, while the future submarine may sweep commerce from the seas.

Again, orthodoxy declares that human nature is inherently "bad," while true Christianity, endorsed by psychology, proclaims it inherently "good," which means that, properly guided, properly educated, it is creative and contributive rather than destructive. No more striking proof of this fact can be cited than the modern experiment in prison reform in which hardened convicts, when "given a chance," frequently become useful citizens. Unjust and unintelligent social conditions are the chief factors in making criminals.

Our most modern system of education, of which Professor John Dewey is the chief protagonist, is based upon the assertions of psychology that human nature is essentially "good" creative. Every normal child is supposed to have a special "distinction" or gift, which it is the task of the educator to discover. This distinction found, the child achieves happiness in creation and contribution. Self-realization demands knowledge and training: the doing of right is not a negative but a positive act; it is not without significance that the Greek word for sin is literally "missing the mark." Christianity emphasizes above all else the worth of the individual, yet recognizes that the individual can develop only in society. And if the individual be of great worth, this worth must be by society developed to its utmost. Universal suffrage is a logical corollary.

Universal suffrage, however, implies individual judgment, which means that the orthodox principle of external authority is out of place both in Christianity and democracy. The Christian theory is that none shall intervene between a man's Maker and himself; democracy presupposes that no citizen shall accept his beliefs and convictions from others, but shall make up his own mind and act accordingly. Open-mindedness is the first requisite of science and democracy.

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What has been deemed, however, in Christianity the most unrealizable ideal is that which may be called pacifism—to resist not evil, to turn the other cheek, to agree with your adversary while you are in the way with him. “I come not,” said Jesus, in one of those paradoxical statements hitherto so difficult to understand, “I come not to bring peace, but a sword.” It is indeed what we are fighting for—peace. But we believe today, more strongly than ever before, as democracy advances, as peoples tend to gain more and more control over their governments, that even this may not be an unrealizable ideal. Democracies, intent on self-realization and self-development, do not desire war.

The problem of social science, then, appears to be to organize human society on the principles and ideals of Christianity. But in view of the fact that the trend of evolution is towards the elimination of commercial competition, the question which must seriously concern us today is—What in the future shall be the spur of individual initiative? Orthodoxy and even democratic practice have hitherto taken it for granted—in spite of the examples of highly socialized men, benefactors of society—that the average citizen will bestir himself only for material gain. And it must be admitted that competition of some sort is necessary for self-realization, that human nature demands a prize. There can be no self-sacrifice without a corresponding self-satisfaction. The answer is that in the theory of democracy, as well as in that of Christianity, individualism and co-operation are paradoxically blended. For competition, Christianity substitutes emulation. And with democracy, it declares that mankind itself can gradually be rained towards the level of the choice individual who does not labour for gain, but in behalf of society. For the process of democracy is not degrading, but lifting. Like Christianity, democracy demands faith, and has as its inspiring interpretation of civilization evolution towards a spiritual goal. Yet the kind of faith required is no longer a blind faith, but one founded on sane and carefully evolved theories. Democracy has become a scientific experiment.

In this connection, as one notably inspired by emulation, by the joy of creative work and service, the medical profession comes first to mind. The finer element in this profession is constantly increasing in numbers, growing more and more influential, making life less easy for the quack, the vendor of nostrums, the commercial proprietor of the bogus medical college. The doctor who uses his talents for gain is frowned upon by those of his fellow practitioners whose opinion really counts. Respected physicians in our cities give much of their time to teaching, animating students with their own spirit; and labour long hours, for no material return, in the clinics of the poor. And how often, in reading our newspapers, do we learn that some medical scientist, by patient work, and

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often at the risk of life and health, has triumphed over a scourge which has played havoc with humanity throughout the ages! Typhoid has been conquered, and infant paralysis; gangrene and tetanus, which have taken such toll of the wounded in Flanders and France; yellow fever has been stamped out in the tropics; hideous lesions are now healed by a system of drainage. The very list of these achievements is bewildering, and latterly we are given hope of the prolongation of life itself. Here in truth are Christian deeds multiplied by science, made possible by a growing knowledge of and mastery over Nature.

Such men by virtue of their high mission are above the vicious social and commercial competition poisoning the lives of so many of their fellow citizens. In our democracy they have found their work, and the work is its own reward. They give striking testimony to the theory that absorption in a creative or contributive task is the only source of self-realization. And he has little faith in mankind who shall declare that the medical profession is the only group capable of being socialized, or, rather, of socializing themselves—for such is the true process of democracy. Public opinion should be the leaven. What is possible for the doctor is also possible for the lawyer, for the teacher. In a democracy, teaching should be the most honoured of the professions, and indeed once was,—before the advent of industrialism, when it gradually fell into neglect,—-occasionally into deplorable submission to the possessors of wealth. Yet a wage disgracefully low, hardship, and even poverty have not hindered men of ability from entering it in increasing numbers, renouncing ease and luxuries. The worth of the contributions of our professors to civilization has been inestimable; and fortunately signs are not lacking that we are coming to an appreciation of the value of the expert in government, who is replacing the panderer and the politician. A new solidarity of teaching professional opinion, together with a growing realization by our public of the primary importance of the calling, is tending to emancipate it, to establish it in its rightful place.

Nor are our engineers without their ideal. A Goethals did not cut an isthmus in two for gain.

Industrialism, with its concomitant “corporation” practice, has undoubtedly been detrimental to the legal profession, since it has resulted in large fees; in the accumulation of vast fortunes, frequently by methods ethically questionable. Grave social injustices have been done, though often in good faith, since the lawyer, by training and experience, has hitherto been least open to the teachings of the new social science, has been an honest advocate of the system of ’laissez faire’. But to say that the American legal profession is without ideals and lacking in the emulative spirit would be to do it a grave injustice. The increasing influence of national and state bar associations evidences a

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professional opinion discouraging to the unscrupulous; while a new evolutionary and more humanitarian conception of law is now beginning to be taught, and young men are entering the ranks imbued with this. Legal clinics, like medical clinics, are established for the benefit of those who cannot afford to pay fees, for the protection of the duped from the predatory quack. And, it must be said of this profession, which hitherto has held a foremost place in America, that its leaders have never hesitated to respond to a public call, to sacrifice their practices to serve the nation. Their highest ambition has even been to attain the Supreme Court, where the salary is a mere pittance compared to what they may earn as private citizens.

Thus we may review all the groups in the nation, but the most significant transformation of all is taking place within the business group,—where indeed it might be least expected. Even before the war there were many evidences that the emulative spirit in business had begun to modify the merely competitive, and we had the spectacle of large employers of labour awakening to the evils of industrialism, and themselves attempting to inaugurate reforms. As in the case of labour, it would be obviously unfair to claim that the employer element was actuated by motives of self-interest alone; nor were their concessions due only to fear. Instances could be cited, if there were space, of voluntary shortening of hours of labour, of raising of wages, when no coercion was exerted either by the labour unions or the state; and—perhaps to their surprise employers discovered that such acts were not only humane but profitable! Among these employers, in fact, may be observed individuals in various stages of enlightenment, from the few who have educated themselves in social science, who are convinced that the time has come when it is not only practicable but right, who realize that a new era has dawned; to others who still believe in the old system, who are trying to bolster it up by granting concessions, by establishing committees of conference, by giving a voice and often a financial interest, but not a vote, in the conduct of the corporation concerned. These are the counterpart, in industry, of sovereigns whose away has been absolute, whose intentions are good, but who hesitate, often from conviction, to grant constitutions. Yet even these are responding in some degree to social currents, though the aggressive struggles of labour may have influenced them, and partially opened their eyes. They are far better than their associates who still seek to control the supplies of food and other necessities, whose efficiency is still solely directed, not toward a social end, but toward the amassing of large fortunes, and is therefore wasted so far as society is concerned. They do not perceive that by seeking to control prices they merely hasten the tendency of government control, for it is better to have government regulation for the benefit of the many than proprietary control, however efficient, for the benefit of the few.

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That a significant change of heart and mind has begun to take place amongst capitalists, that the nucleus of a “public opinion” has been formed within an element which, by the use and wont of business and habits of thought might be regarded as least subject to the influence of social ideas, is a most hopeful augury. This nascent opinion has begun to operate by shaming unscrupulous and recalcitrant employers into better practices. It would indeed fare ill with democracy if, in such an era, men of large business proved to be lacking in democratic initiative, wholly unreceptive and hostile to the gradual introduction of democracy into industry, which means the perpetuation of the American Idea. Fortunately, with us, this capitalistic element is of comparatively recent growth, the majority of its members are essentially Americans; they have risen from small beginnings, and are responsive to a democratic appeal—if that appeal be properly presented. And, as a matter of fact, for many years a leaven had been at work among them; the truth has been brought home to them that the mere acquisition of wealth brings neither happiness nor self-realization; they have lavished their money on hospitals and universities, clinics, foundations for scientific research, and other gifts of inestimable benefit to the nation and mankind. Although the munificence was on a Medicean scale, this private charity was in accord with the older conception of democracy, and paved the way for a new order.

The patriotic and humanitarian motive aroused by the war greatly accelerated the socializing transformation of the business man and the capitalist. We have, indeed, our profiteers seeking short cuts to luxury and wealth; but those happily most representative of American affairs, including the creative administrators, hastened to Washington with a willingness to accept any position in which they might be useful, and in numerous instances placed at the disposal of the government the manufacturing establishments which, by industry and ability, they themselves had built up. That in thus surrendering the properties for which they were largely responsible they hoped at the conclusion of peace to see restored the ‘status quo ante’ should not be held against them. Some are now beginning to surmise that a complete restoration is impossible; and as a result of their socializing experience, are even wondering whether it is desirable. These are beginning to perceive that the national and international organizations in the course of construction to meet the demands of the world conflict must form the model for a future social structure; that the unprecedented pressure caused by the cataclysm is compelling a recrystallization of society in which there must be fewer misfits, in which many more individuals than formerly shall find public or semi-public tasks in accordance with their gifts and abilities.

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It may be argued that war compels socialization, that after the war the world will perforce return to materialistic individualism. But this calamity, terrible above all others, has warned us of the imperative need of an order that shall be socializing, if we are not to witness the destruction of our civilization itself. Confidence that such an order, thanks to the advancement of science, is now within our grasp should not be difficult for Americans, once they have rightly conceived it. We, who have always pinned our faith to ideas, who entered the conflict for an Idea, must be the last to shirk the task, however Herculean, of world reconstruction along the lines of our own professed faith. We cannot be renegades to Democracy.

Above all things, then, it is essential for us as a people not to abandon our faith in man, our belief that not only the exceptional individual but the majority of mankind can be socialized. What is true of our physicians, our scientists and professional men, our manual workers, is also true of our capitalists and business men. In a more just and intelligent organization of society these will be found willing to administer and improve for the common weal the national resources which formerly they exploited for the benefit of themselves and their associates. The social response, granted the conditions, is innate in humanity, and individual initiative can best be satisfied in social realization.

Universal education is the cornerstone of democracy. And the recognition of this fact may be called the great American contribution. But in our society the fullest self-realization depends upon a well balanced knowledge of scientific facts, upon a rounded culture. Thus education, properly conceived, is a preparation for intelligent, ethical, and contented citizenship. Upon the welfare of the individual depends the welfare of all. Without education, free institutions and universal suffrage are mockeries; semi-learned masses of the population are at the mercy of scheming politicians, controversialists, and pseudo-scientific religionists, and their votes are swayed by prejudice.

In a materialistic competitive order, success in life depends upon the knack—innate or acquired, and not to be highly rated—of outwitting one's neighbour under the rules of the game—the law; education is merely a cultural leaven within the reach of the comparatively few who can afford to attend a university. The business college is a more logical institution. In an emulative civilization, however, the problem is to discover and develop in childhood and youth the personal aptitude or gift of as many citizens as possible, in order that they may find self-realization by making their peculiar contribution towards the advancement of society.

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The prevailing system of education, which we have inherited from the past, largely fails to accomplish this. In the first place, it has been authoritative rather than scientific, which is to say that students have been induced to accept the statements of teachers and text books, and have not been trained to weigh for themselves their reasonableness and worth; a principle essentially unscientific and undemocratic, since it inculcates in the future citizen convictions rather than encourages the habit of open-mindedness so necessary for democratic citizenship. For democracy—it cannot be too often repeated—is a dynamic thing, experimental, creative in its very essence. No static set of opinions can apply to the constantly changing aspect of affairs. New discoveries, which come upon us with such bewildering rapidity, are apt abruptly to alter social and industrial conditions, while morals and conventions are no longer absolute. Sudden crises threaten the stability of nations and civilizations. Safety lies alone in the ability to go forward, to progress. Psychology teaches us that if authoritative opinions, convictions, or “complexes” are stamped upon the plastic brain of the youth they tend to harden, and he is apt to become a Democrat or Republican, an Episcopalian or a Baptist, a free trader or a tariff advocate or a Manchester economist without asking why. Such “complexes” were probably referred to by the celebrated physician who emphasized the hopelessness of most individuals over forty. And every reformer and forum lecturer knows how difficult it is to convert the average audience of seasoned adults to a new idea: he finds the most responsive groups in the universities and colleges. It is significant that the “educated” adult audiences in clubs and prosperous churches are the least open to conversion, because, in the scientific sense, the “educated” classes retain complexes, and hence are the least prepared to cope with the world as it is today. The German system, which has been bent upon installing authoritative conviction instead of encouraging freedom of thought, should be a warning to us.

Again, outside of the realm of physical science, our text books have been controversial rather than impartial, especially in economics and history; resulting in erroneous and distorted and prejudiced ideas of events, such for instance, as our American Revolution. The day of the controversialist is happily coming to an end, and of the writer who twists the facts of science to suit a world of his own making, or of that of a group with which he is associated. Theory can now be labelled theory, and fact, fact. Impartial and painstaking investigation is the sole method of obtaining truth.

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The old system of education benefited only the comparatively few to whose nature and inclination it was adapted. We have need, indeed, of classical scholars, but the majority of men and women are meant for other work; many, by their very construction of mind, are unfitted to become such. And only in the most exceptional cases are the ancient languages really mastered; a smattering of these, imposed upon the unwilling scholar by a principle opposed to psychology,—a smattering from which is derived no use and joy in after life, and which has no connection with individual inclination—is worse than nothing. Precious time is wasted during the years when the mind is most receptive. While the argument of the old school that discipline can only be inculcated by the imposition of a distasteful task is unsound. As Professor Dewey points out, unless the interest is in some way involved there can be no useful discipline. And how many of our university and high school graduates today are in any sense disciplined? Stimulated interest alone can overcome the resistance imposed by a difficult task, as any scientist, artist, organizer or administrator knows. Men will discipline themselves to gain a desired end. Under the old system of education a few children succeed either because they are desirous of doing well, interested in the game of mental competition; or else because they contrive to clothe with flesh and blood some subject presented as a skeleton. It is not uncommon, indeed, to recognize in later years with astonishment a useful citizen or genius whom at school or college we recall as a dunce or laggard. In our present society, because of archaic methods of education, the development of such is largely left to chance. Those who might have been developed in time, who might have found their task, often become wasters, drudges, and even criminals.

The old system tends to make types, to stamp every scholar in the same mould, whether he fits it or not. More and more the parents of today are looking about for new schools, insisting that a son or daughter possesses some special gift which, under teachers of genius, might be developed before it is too late. And in most cases, strange to say, the parents are right. They themselves have been victims of a standardized system.

A new and distinctly American system of education, designed to meet the demands of modern conditions, has been put in practice in parts of the United States. In spite of opposition from school boards, from all those who cling to the conviction that education must of necessity be an unpalatable and “disciplinary” process, the number of these schools is growing. The objection, put forth by many, that they are still in the experimental stage, is met by the reply that experiment is the very essence of the system. Democracy is experimental, and henceforth education will remain experimental for all time. But, as in any other branch of science, the element of ascertained fact will gradually increase: the latent possibilities in the mind of the healthy child will be discovered by knowledge gained through impartial investigation. The old system, like all other institutions handed down to us from the ages, proceeds on no intelligent theory, has no basis on psychology, and is accepted merely because it exists.

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The new education is selective. The mind of each child is patiently studied with the view of discovering the peculiar bent, and this bent is guided and encouraged. The child is allowed to forge ahead in those subjects for which he shows an aptitude, and not compelled to wait on a class. Such supervision, of course, demands more teachers, teachers of an ability hitherto deplorably rare, and thoroughly trained in their subjects, with a sympathetic knowledge of the human mind. Theirs will be the highest and most responsible function in the state, and they must be rewarded in proportion to their services.

A superficial criticism declares that in the new schools children will study only “what they like.” On the contrary, all subjects requisite for a wide culture, as well as for the ability to cope with existence in a highly complex civilization, are insisted upon. It is true, however, that the trained and gifted teacher is able to discover a method of so presenting a subject as to seize the imagination and arouse the interest and industry of a majority of pupils. In the modern schools French, for example, is really taught; pupils do not acquire a mere smattering of the language. And, what is more important, the course of study is directly related to life, and to practical experience, instead of being set forth abstractly, as something which at the time the pupil perceives no possibility of putting into use. At one of the new schools in the south, the ignorant child of the mountains at once acquires a knowledge of measurement and elementary arithmetic by laying out a garden, of letters by inscribing his name on a little signboard in order to identify his patch—for the moment private property. And this principle is carried through all the grades. In the Gary Schools and elsewhere the making of things in the shops, the modelling of a Panama Canal, the inspection of industries and governmental establishments, the designing, building, and decoration of houses, the discussion and even dramatization of the books read,—all are a logical and inevitable continuation of the abstract knowledge of the schoolroom. The success of the direct application of learning to industrial and professional life may also be observed in such colleges as those at Cincinnati and Schenectady, where young men spend half the time of the course in the shops of manufacturing, corporations, often earning more than enough to pay their tuition.

Children are not only prepared for democratic citizenship by being encouraged to think for themselves, but also to govern and discipline themselves. On the moral side, under the authoritative system of lay and religious training, character was acquired at the expense of mental flexibility—the Puritan method; our problem today, which the new system undertakes, is to produce character with open-mindedness—the kind of character possessed by many great scientists. Absorption in an appropriate task creates a moral will, while science, knowledge, informs the mind why a thing is “bad” or “good,” disintegrating or upbuilding. Moreover, these children are trained for democratic government by the granting of autonomy. They have their own elected officials, their own courts; their decisions are, of course, subject to reversal by the principal, but in practice this seldom occurs.

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The Gary Schools and many of the new schools are public schools. And the principle of the new education that the state is primarily responsible for the health of pupils—-because an unsound body is apt to make an unsound citizen of backward intelligence—is now being generally adopted by public schools all over the country. This idea is essentially an element of the democratic contention that all citizens must be given an equality of opportunity—though all may not be created equal—now becoming a positive rather than a negative right, guaranteed by the state itself. An earnest attempt is thus made by the state to give every citizen a fair start that in later years he may have no ground for discontent or complaint. He stands on his own feet, he rises in proportion to his ability and industry. Hence the program of the British Labour Party rightly lays stress on education, on “freedom of mental opportunity.” The vast sums it proposes to spend for this purpose are justified.

If such a system of education as that briefly outlined above is carefully and impartially considered, the objection that democratic government founded on modern social science is coercive must disappear. So far as the intention and effort of the state is able to confer it, every citizen will have his choice of the task he is to perform for society, his opportunity for self-realization. For freedom without education is a myth. By degrees men and women are making ready to take their places in an emulative rather than a materialistically competitive order. But the experimental aspect of this system should always be borne in mind, with the fact that its introduction and progress, like that of other elements in the democratic program, must be gradual, though always proceeding along sound lines. For we have arrived at that stage of enlightenment when we realize that the only mundane perfection lies in progress rather than achievement. The millennium is always a lap ahead. There would be no satisfaction in overtaking it, for then we should have nothing more to do, nothing more to work for.

The German Junkers have prostituted science by employing it for the destruction of humanity. In the name of Christianity they have waged the most barbaric war in history. Yet if they shall have demonstrated to mankind the futility of efficiency achieved merely for material ends; if, by throwing them on a world screen, they shall have revealed the evils of power upheld alone by ruthlessness and force, they will unwittingly have performed a world service. Privilege and dominion, powers and principalities acquired by force must be sustained by force. To fail will be fatal. Even a duped people, trained in servility, will not consent to be governed by an unsuccessful autocracy. Arrogantly Germany has staked her all on world domination. Hence a victory for the Allies must mean a democratic Germany.

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Nothing short of victory. There can be no arrangement, no agreement, no parley with or confidence in these modern scions of darkness —Hohenzollerns, Hindenburgs, Zudendorffs and their tools. Propaganda must not cease; the eyes of Germans still capable of sight must be opened. But, as the President says, force must be used to the limit—force for a social end as opposed to force for an evil end. There are those among us who advocate a boycott of Germany after peace is declared. These would seem to take it for granted that we shall fall short of victory, and hence that selfish retaliative or vindictive practices between nations, sanctioned by imperialism, will continue to flourish after the war. But should Germany win she will see to it that there is no boycott against her. A compromised peace would indeed mean the perpetuation of both imperialism and militarism.

It is characteristic of those who put their faith in might alone that they are not only blind to the finer relationships between individuals and nations, but take no account of the moral forces in human affairs which in the long run are decisive,—a lack of sensitiveness which explains Germany's colossal blunders. The first had to do with Britain. The German militarists persisted in the belief that the United Kingdom was degenerated by democracy, intent upon the acquisition of wealth, distracted by strife at home, uncertain of the Empire, and thus would selfishly remain aloof while the Kaiser's armies overran and enslaved the continent. What happened, to Germany's detriment, was the instant socialization of Britain, and the binding together of the British Empire. Germany's second great blunder was an arrogant underestimation of a self-reliant people of English culture and traditions. She believed that we, too, had been made flabby by democracy, were wholly intent upon the pursuit of the dollar—only to learn that America would lavish her vast resources and shed her blood for a cause which was American. Germany herself provided that cause, shaped the issues so that there was no avoiding them. She provided the occasion for the socializing of America also; and thus brought about, within a year, a national transformation which in times of peace might scarce in half a century have been accomplished.

Above all, as a consequence of these two blunders, Germany has been compelled to witness the consummation of that which of all things she had most to fear, the cementing of a lasting fellowship between the English speaking Republic and the English speaking Empire. For we had been severed since the 18th Century by misunderstandings which of late Germany herself had been more or less successful in fostering. She has furnished a bond not only between our governments, but—what is vastly more important for democracy—a bond between our peoples. Our soldiers are now side by side with those of the Empire on the Frontier of Freedom; the blood of all is shed and mingled for

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a great cause embodied in the Anglo-Saxon tradition of democracy; and our peoples, through the realization of common ideas and common ends, are learning the supreme lesson of co-operation between nations with a common past, are being cemented into a union which is the symbol and forerunner of the democratic league of Nations to come. Henceforth, we believe, because of this union, so natural yet so long delayed, by virtue of the ultimate victory it forecasts, the sun will never set on the Empire of the free, for the drum beats of democracy have been heard around the world. To this Empire will be added the precious culture of France, which the courage of her sons will have preserved, the contributions of Italy, and of Russia, yes, and of Japan.

Our philosophy and our religion are changing; hence it is more and more difficult to use the old terms to describe moral conduct. We say, for instance, that America's action in entering the war has been "unselfish." But this merely means that we have our own convictions concerning the ultimate comfort of the world, the manner of self-realization of individuals and nations. We are attempting to turn calamity into good. If this terrible conflict shall result in the inauguration of an emulative society, if it shall bring us to the recognition that intelligence and science may be used for the upbuilding of such an order, and for an eventual achievement of world peace, every sacrifice shall have been justified.

Such is the American Issue. Our statesmen and thinkers have helped to evolve it, our people with their blood and treasure are consecrating it. And these statesmen and thinkers, of whom our American President is not the least, are of democracy the pioneers. From the mountain tops on which they stand they behold the features of the new world, the dawn of the new day hidden as yet from their brothers in the valley. Let us have faith always that it is coming, and struggle on, highly resolving that those who gave their lives in the hour of darkness shall not have died in vain.

PG EDITOR'S BOOKMARKS OF THE ENTIRE PG WORKS OF WINSTON CHURCHILL:

A man ought never to be frightened by appearances
A man's character often give the lie to his tongue
A bold front is half the battle
A people is rarely justly estimated by its contemporaries
A lie has short legs
Absurd to promise to love
Acceptance of authority is not faith, it is mere credulity
Affections warm despite absence, and years, and interest
Always getting glimpses of things when it is too late

American religion as set forth by William James
Antipathy to forms
Appearance of a professional pallbearer
Architects should be driven and not followed
As little government as is compatible with any government at all
Bad music, she said,

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offended her
Be useful!
Behind that door was the future: so he opened it fearfully
Being caught was the unpardonable crime
Believe in others having a hard time
Best way is to leave ’em alone. Don’t dandle ’em (babies)
Blessed are the ugly, for they shall not be tempted
Can’t believe in the doctrine of the virgin birth
Clothes of one man are binding on another
Comparisons, as Shakespeare said, are odorous
Consequential or inconsequential irrespective of their size
Constitutionally honest
Conversation was a mockery
Conviction that all things were as they ought to be
Deal with a fool according to his folly
Deification of beauty to the exclusion of all else
Do not fear to reverse themselves when occasion demands
Economic freedom, without which political freedom is a farce
Economic slavery
Elaborate attention little men are apt to bestow upon women
Even after all these ages, the belief, the hope would not down
Ever been my nature to turn forward instead of back
Every one, man or woman, has the right to happiness
Fact should be written like fiction, and fiction like fact
Faith may be likened to an egg
Fetters of love
Flaming flag of a false martyrdom
Foolish sacrifices are worse than useless
For ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter
Freedom meant only the liberty to earn their own living
Freedom without education is a myth
Futility of the traditional words of comfort
Genius honored but never encouraged
Genius, analyzed, is often disappointing
God himself would have divorced us
God bless their backs, which is the only part I ever care to see
Had a habit of not waiting for answers to her questions
Happiness of gratitude and wonder, too wise to exult
Happy the people whose annals are blank in history’s book
He was what is known as a “success”—always that magic word
He was our macaroni of Annapolis
He has always been too honest to make a great deal of money

Hell's here—isn't it?
Her words of comfort were as few as her silent deeds were many
How to be silent with a clamouring heart
How can you talk of things other people have and not want them
Human multitude with its infinity of despairs and joys
Humiliation and not conscience which makes the sting
I see no one upon whom I can rely but myself
I hate humility
I'm always searching for things to do
If Christians were logical, they should be Socialists
Immortality as orthodox Christianity depicts it
Immutable love in a changing, heedless, selfish world
Impervious to hints, and would not take no for an answer

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Impulse had brought him thus far
Indiscriminate, unreasoning self-sacrifice
Individualism with which the Church can have no sympathy
Intellectually lazy
Intense longing is always followed by disappointment
It is sorrow which lifts us nearest to heaven
It's money that makes you free
Know a great deal and don't believe anything
Knowledge puts faith out of the question
Leaders and interpreters, must grow to meet critical situations
Little better than a gambling place (Stock Exchange)
Logical result of independent thinking is anarchy
Love," she added, "plays such havoc with one's opinions
Luxuries formerly unthought of seemed to become necessities
Material proof, it seems to me, is a denial of faith
Mistaking the effect for the cause
Mixture of awkwardness and straightforwardness
Most dangerous of gifts, the seeing of two sides of a quarrel
Naturally she took preoccupation for indifference
No reason why we should suffer all our lives for a mistake
No real prosperity comes out of double-dealing
Not given to trite acquiescence
Often in real danger at the moment when they feel most secure
Often times principles is nothing but pride
Old enough to know better, and too old to be taught
Olmah which Isaiah uses does not mean virgin
Only one regret as to what you said—that it is true
Outwitting one's neighbour under the rules of the game—the law
Pleasure? Yes. It makes me feel as if I were of some use
Principle in law not to volunteer information
Privilege of making blunders
Providence is accepted by his beneficiaries as a matter of fact
Read a patent medicine circular and shudder with seven diseases
Regarding favourable impressions with profound suspicion
Religion, I think, should be everybody's (profession)
Resented the implication of possession
Rising every time you fall (Confucius on greatness)
Rocks to which one might cling, successful or failing
Rule which you so confidently apply to fit all cases
Scandalously forced through the council of Nicaea

Seeking a forgiveness out of all proportion to the trespass
Self-torture is human
Sentimentalism, ignorance, close-mindedness, and cant
Shaped his politics according to the company he was in
She had never known the necessity of making friends
She could pass over, but never forgive what her aunt had said
Sight of happiness is often a pleasure for those who are sad
Silence—goad to indiscretion
Simple men who command by force of character
Sir, I have not yet begun to fight
Sleep! A despised waste of time in childhood
So glad to have what other people haven't

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So much for Democracy when it becomes a catchword
Sought to remove comparisons
St Paul, you say, put us in our proper place
Success—which was really failure
Sunday was then a day essentially different from other days
Taking him like daily bread, to be eaten and not thought about
That abominable word “like”
That magic word Change
The law cannot fit all cases
The weak always sink
The English do not advertise their sorrows
The hours of greatest suffering are the empty hours
The worse the disease, the more remarkable the cure
The days of useless martyrdom are past
The greatest wonders are not at the ends of the earth, but near
Their lines belonged rather to the landscape (cottages)
They have to print something
Thinking isn’t—believing
Thinking that because you have no ideals, other people haven’t
Those who walk on ice will slide against their wills
Thy politics are not over politic
Time, the unbribeable
Tis no so bad it micht-na be waur
To be great is to be misunderstood
Universal suffrage, however, implies individual judgment
Unquenchable conflicts are those waged for ideas and not dollars
Vagueness generally attributed to her sex
Vividly unreal, as a toy village comes painted from the shop
We never can foresee how we may change
We must believe, if we believe at all, without authority
We are always trying to get away from ourselves
We have no control over our affections
We can’t take Christianity too literally
Weak coffee and the Protestant religion seemed inseparable
When our brief span of usefulness is done
Who had learned the lesson of mothers,—how to wait
Whole conception of charity is a crime against civilization
Why should I desire what I cannot have
Within every man’s province to make himself what he will
Ya maun ken th’ incentive’s the maist o’ the battle

You and your religion are as far apart as the poles
Youth is in truth a mystery